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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I received a notice from the Leader of the Opposition, who requests, pursuant to rule 4-3(1), that the time provided for the consideration of Senators' Statements be extended today for the purpose of paying tribute to the Honourable David Richards.

Is it agreed that the time for tributes be extended into regular statements until the conclusion of the anticipated tributes?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: I remind senators that pursuant to our Rules, each senator will be allowed only three minutes, and they may speak only once.

These times do not include the time allotted to the response of the senator.

many of us. In truth, it didn't feel like he was joining us so much as finding his way to a group of colleagues who already saw him as one of their own.

David, your presence in our caucus, however brief, has been meaningful. Your insights have always challenged us to think more deeply, and your words reminded us of the responsibilities we bear. Your courage in joining us in our caucus reaffirmed the importance of standing firm in one's convictions.

As you now turn the page on your time here, we know that your voice won't go silent; far from it. Whether through your writing or your continued contributions to Canadian life, you will no doubt continue to provoke, inspire and lead.

I also had the privilege of meeting and spending some time with Peggy McIntyre-Richards. I can tell you, she is even more wonderful — if that's possible — than Senator Richards himself.

Peggy, thank you for lending your husband to this institution and this country. We wish you, of course, only the best.

Colleagues, with the retirement of Senator Richards, his executive assistant Diane Lacombe, a long-time member on the Hill, is retiring, too. She had the opportunity to work for two great senators.

Diane worked for me when I first came to the Senate of Canada, and I know that Senator Richards found her support invaluable. Of course, Diane and I go back to municipal politics in the great City of Montreal.

Diane, we wish you all the best.

Senator Richards, on behalf of the entire Senate caucus, thank you for your friendship, your honesty, your service and your tremendous integrity. We wish you and your family only continued health and all the best in the next chapter of your wonderful life. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of the Government Representative's Office, or GRO, and all of my colleagues to pay tribute to our colleague the Honourable Senator David Richards.

While I may not have the same way with words that Senator Richards possesses, I hope in this desperate hour that this tribute will do you justice, senator.

Born in Newcastle, New Brunswick, Senator Richards has been a lifelong advocate for his fellow New Brunswickers, particularly those living in Miramichi. A writer from a very young age, he won his first of many literary awards in 1972 while still an unpublished university student.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE DAVID RICHARDS

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a colleague, a great Canadian and a friend, Senator David Richards, as he prepares to retire from this chamber.

Senator Richards joined this place with a voice already well known and deeply respected across Canada, a Giller Prize winner, an Order of Canada recipient and a novelist whose work has chronicled the soul of our country with clarity and compassion. From the moment he took his seat here, it was clear that the Senate had gained something rare. Indeed, his words in this institution have always carried the weight of thought, conviction and deep compassion.

Whether at committee or in this chamber, he has stood up time and again for individual dignity and defended the fundamental freedoms at the heart of our democracy, bringing a conscience to our deliberations that is all too rare in public life. His powerful speeches on the importance of free expression, on resisting ideological conformity and on the dangers of silencing opposition views have left their mark not only on this chamber but on Canadians far beyond it. That's why, when he made the decision to join the Conservative Senate caucus, it felt like a welcomed alignment. His principles had always resonated with

While I do not have enough time to list all of the awards that Senator Richards has received, I do want to highlight that he has been the recipient of nearly every major Canadian literary prize, including the Governor General's Literary Award in both fiction and non-fiction, an achievement matched by only two other Canadians.

Senator Richards' ability to capture the stories of the working-class people of Miramichi brought to life their experiences, struggles and triumphs to a broader audience across Canada and beyond. His penmanship has been nothing short of remarkable.

I know a little bit about being a published author and definitely know how many struggles and hurdles one faces when seeking to get published previously unheard voices and stories. The consistency and quality of Senator Richards' work underlie a dedication to his craft that is often forgotten in the arts.

Since his appointment to the Senate, Senator Richards has passionately represented these same people, once again bringing their voices and stories to the national stage. When serving on the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, where we both worked together, particularly on Bill C-69; when he ardently shared his son's experiences in the oil and gas sector; and in his steadfast support of hunters, Senator Richards has always been a fiercely independent voice.

At the time of his appointment, Senator Richards was quoted as saying:

I'm sitting as an independent man. I'll make my own decisions to the best of my ability when I'm in the chamber.

Senator Richards, I think we can all agree that those words have been true throughout your time here in the Senate.

On behalf of the GRO, I wish you all the best in your retirement. I hope you and your wife, Peggy, enjoy more time with family and friends. Once again, congratulations on your retirement.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. John M. McNair: Honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of the Independent Senators Group to pay tribute to our colleague Senator Richards on the occasion of his retirement.

• (1410)

I believe most of you know that David is the author of 19 novels — soon to be 20 — and has written extensively in other forms, including poetry, non-fiction, short stories and plays.

However, you may not be aware of the long list of accolades and awards that he has received for his writing. David is very humble. The list is too long to mention today. Suffice it to say, all are well deserved.

In fall of 2023, we were all invited to a screening at the Bytowne Cinema of the National Film Board film about David entitled *The Geographies of DAR*. The film offers an incredibly moving and personal glimpse of David and his home region of Miramichi. On display are his kindness and gentle sense of

humour, as well as his innate ability to connect with people on an individual basis and, perhaps most importantly, his love for his wife, Peg.

As his novels, David's speeches have proudly drawn attention to Miramichi, to New Brunswick and to Canada. Time and again, he wove tapestries for us, painting vivid pictures of his home and his neighbours. It seems appropriate that we are paying tribute to David today, since it is the two-hundredth anniversary of the Great Miramichi Fire, which David has described to us on multiple occasions.

David, in the Senate you have always been clear about your beliefs and convictions but unfailingly respectful in debate. It is one of the things I admire most about you.

Colleagues, I personally got to best see David in action during our work on the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs around homelessness for veterans, where he always demonstrated an ability to connect and relate to witnesses during often very emotional testimony.

One of the direct quotes that I found very revealing from the National Film Board film is when David said:

People sometimes mistake the idea that I'm writing about poverty and desperation. I'm not going to shun the fact that I do write about it. Of course I do. But I'm writing about the absolute greatness of the human soul. And we all have the same greatness. And it is our obligation to use that.

David, you have met that obligation consistently in the Senate of Canada. Simply put, you truly are a gentleman and a scholar. Thank you for your contributions to the Senate, to the province of New Brunswick and to our country.

On behalf of the Independent Senators Group, I wish you and Peg happy retirement and continued success in all your next adventures, wherever they may take you.

Hon. Scott Tannas: "Now the end is going to come — in one fashion or another," Bines said, softly, and again he turned to Ralphie and smiled. "We all know, the end will come. You either face your hunters or run from them."

Honourable senators, those are the haunting words of Senator David Richards in *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down*.

I was reluctant to use that quote, since Senator Richards once told us the story of Samuel Johnson, a towering intellect of the 18th century who said the rudest thing a person could ever do is quote something someone once said to use it against them. But I assure you that I'm not quoting to use it against you, as we all hold you in the highest esteem.

Next week, we see the departure of Senator Richards from this place as he hits his mandatory retirement age. We not only lose an award-winning novelist, essayist, screenwriter and poet; we also lose a voice of common sense and the view from the street, so to speak.

He brought a strict tell-it-like-it-is approach to legislating and policy-making. His interventions always had literary flair and were always from the heart; that heart included his beloved Miramichi. It is part of his DNA. I am sure that my colleagues will agree that he is one of the River Valley's greatest ambassadors.

I had the privilege of working closely with him when he was part of the Canadian Senators Group. We all remember warmly his participation in our weekly discussions when he brought reasoned, sensible and solid views on the matters before this chamber.

At times, he stood alone, and we respected him immensely. As Senator Richards wrote in *Mercy Among the Children*, "There is no worse flaw in man's character than that of wanting to belong."

Senator Richards, while your time in this chamber is coming to end, rest assured that you leave this place with a legacy, good friends and having contributed to the betterment of this country. To us, you will always be more than a thug with Tolstoy in your pocket, which is also from your book *Mercy Among the Children*.

David, on behalf of the senators in the Canadian Senators Group, we wish you a happy retirement from the Senate.

Hon. Judy A. White: Honourable senators, I too rise today, on behalf of the Progressive Senate Group, to pay tribute to the Honourable David Adams Richards, who, as we have heard, will be celebrating his seventy-fifth birthday next Friday.

As he is an acclaimed writer, it seems fitting that he tends to be judicious about how he uses his voice here. Though his words outside of this chamber are certainly prolific, he is deliberate in how he participates here in this chamber. We do not see him rising on every occasion, but once he does, it is clear that when Senator Richards enters debate, he has judged it to be more important to speak than to stay silent on that particular issue.

He often used his voice to highlight why we are all here, reminding us of the real impacts of our decisions on Canadians — especially those he represents, both New Brunswickers and rural Canadians — and asking poignant and thoughtful questions.

It also seems very fitting that his body of work in terms of Senate chamber interventions, of course, is quite neatly bookended right now, if you'll pardon the writerly pun. We heard last month as Senator Richards paid tribute to a friend and fellow Canadian writer, the late Ray Fraser of New Brunswick. In fact, his very first intervention in this chamber was also a tribute to a fellow Canadian writer. That time, it was the late Alden Nowlan, who was born in Nova Scotia but resettled in New Brunswick.

With your indulgence, Senator Richards, I'd like to quote from one of his poems:

... it's what we all want, in the end,
not to be worshipped, not to be admired,
not to be famous, not to be feared,
not even to be loved, but simply to be held.

Your voice in Canadian literature has been so important to so many people, and we are so fortunate that you have brought that voice into this chamber for the last eight years. New Brunswickers and all Canadians have been ably represented by you.

On behalf of the Progressive Senate Group, I wish you the very best in the future and in your impending retirement.

Hon. Denise Batters: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a great man among us, Senator David Richards. Recently, I have been proud to finally call Senator Richards my Conservative caucus colleague. I only wish that he had more time to spend with us here. I know I speak on behalf of our whole caucus when I say we will hate to see him go.

As you may know, I was never a big fan of former prime minister Justin Trudeau or his decisions, but I do think one thing he did get right was appointing David Richards to the Senate of Canada.

Senator Richards is a deeply thoughtful man of principle and integrity. He is a brilliant award-winning writer and a treasure of our Canadian literary landscape, yet he remains humble and unassuming, never one to draw attention to his many accomplishments. He has served the people of his region of New Brunswick admirably in this place.

Senator Richards recognizes that no one has a monopoly on truth. He has never been afraid to call out the sacred cows held high by elites, academics and urbanites. David Richards' literary works focused on stories of the people he grew up with in Miramichi, characters who might not have been fancy but people who lived by the values of truth, authenticity and love.

Senator Richards represented the people of New Brunswick in the Senate with the same passion as he reflected them in his literature. A true independent spirit, Senator Richards did not compromise the values of his region for the sake of political expediency. He has not hesitated to stand up for the interests of New Brunswick and Canadians in this chamber, even when those interests may run afoul of the Liberal government's line on an issue. One example was Senator Richards' forceful opposition to the debacle of the Liberal government's Bill C-11, the Online Streaming Act.

In 2023, the National Film Board produced a film about Senator Richards, entitled *The Geographies of DAR*.

• (1420)

I had the honour to attend that Ottawa screening of the film. I even met Peg there. Certainly, the documentary reveals Senator Richards' literary genius, but I was also struck by his remarks at the close of the film where I think they are indicative of, not only his attitude toward his writing, but his time in the Senate as well. Speaking of his past work, Senator Richards said:

I did it because I love the Miramichi. I did it because I love the people. I wouldn't have written a word if I didn't love the people. I wouldn't have written a word if I didn't find in them something sanctified and something of beauty, and I hope I wrote about them with compassion and love because that's how I feel.

Senator Richards, you have always brought that love and compassion for the people of your region to this chamber, and you have represented them so capably. I would say that is about the highest praise a parliamentarian could ever receive. Thank you for always staying true to yourself and your region, and for sharing with us and with all Canadians your wit, your wisdom and your common-sense perspective. We will sorely miss you, but we wish you all the best in your future endeavours. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Margaret Richards, Senator Richards' spouse; Brenden Marshall, his nephew; and Michel Vandecasteele, their friend.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Richards, before calling on you, I do wish to mention that at 2:45 p.m. I will be required to interrupt proceedings for Question Period, and if I must interrupt you, I do apologize in advance.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

THE HONOURABLE DAVID RICHARDS

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. David Richards: Thank you, Your Honour.

Honourable senators, I will try to read fast, and I don't have a lot to say, actually. My friend upstairs asked, "Are you going to mention a lot of Cicero?" Well, no, I'm not, not today. This is a different kind of parting speech. It's about how I got here. Not how I filled out the application, but how I actually got to the chamber. So hopefully you'll bear with me.

Dear colleagues, I want to thank the security in this grand building, who are willing every day to protect and put their lives on the line for the senators here. They are among the true heroes of our nation, unheralded as they sometimes might be. I also want to thank the Clerk of the Senate, Shaila Anwar, Gérald Lafrenière, Deputy Clerk, and their team, as well as the pages who have been our support team while we are in our seats. I want to thank the Usher of the Black Rod, Greg Peters, a man who — I have come to discover — is of noble and unflappable character.

I would also like to thank the committee clerks for their diligence, the Library of Parliament analysts and the interpreters for theirs, without which no committee could ever function, and thank you to all our dedicated staff.

I would like to thank my Director of Parliamentary Affairs, Diane Lacombe, who has been with me for eight years now, who persistently organized my affairs, meticulously went over my speeches and translated them, corrected my awful spelling and continued day to day to be a true blessing to me as I made my way on this journey, a strange enough journey for me.

And, of course, my wife Peg, who has been with me from the time we were kids, making this drive from Fredericton to Ottawa countless times in winter, spring and fall, making sure, though it wasn't ever easy, that I was dressed properly when I left for the chamber.

I would like to express my gratitude for all members of the Senate who were kind enough to befriend me at this time in my life — those I agreed with and those I did not — were gracious enough to me and at times kinder to me than anyone else I knew. I thank you all for making my time here a revelatory time in my life.

And how did I get here? I am not so sure.

You see, I am not speaking about how I got here by filling out an application and sending it to the Prime Minister's Office, and when the Prime Minister did call, I accepted — for when one's Prime Minister does call, one should answer — if at all — in the affirmative.

No, that is not it. However, I am still wondering how I got from Metcalfe Street into the Centre Block Senate Chamber without being arrested.

For you see, I had no idea where the Senate Chamber was. I had never been on the Hill before. I had seen Parliament Hill in pictures. I had driven by it once, at 11 at night. I was in no position to call myself an expert on Canadian affairs.

The only thing I knew was that Marie Jose Entwistle phoned and asked me to meet her in the foyer of the Senate Chamber, which was in the Centre Block left.

But being as directionless as I am, or often tend to be, I did not know where this left side was — that is, was it on the left of the Centre Block facing me, or was it on my left, which was in the opposite direction? Or was it the building on my right, which was to the Centre Block's left, which I came to discover was the East

Block, or might it be on the Centre Block's right, which was, as you may guess, on my left, which would be, I discovered, the West Block?

So I started to wander first to the left and then to the right and then to the left and then in complete circles until an RCMP gentleman, who was watching me with some degree of mystification, came over and said, "Can I help you, sir? You seem to be uncertain where you are. You seem to be distracted."

"Well," I said, as dignified as possible, "Where do I go," I said, "to become a senator?"

He looked at me with a certain amount of pity as if to say, "A regular nutbar."

But he didn't say that. He did say, "Sir, you have to be chosen."

Again, trying to be very venerable, I answered after a pause, "Yes, you see, I am chosen."

"You are chosen?" he queried.

"Quite," I said. "Yes, I have been chosen, and I am chosen. So since I was chosen, where do I go to get chosen?" "If," I said, "you know what I mean."

He put his hands behind his back and looked down upon me, imposingly. "Well, sir, I am not sure what you mean, but I am sure I cannot allow you to go toward the Senate at this moment."

Actually, he said that.

I looked at him quite perplexed. I shrugged. I looked to the right and left. Then I said very sternly, "Well, if not now, when?" I blinked. I blinked rapidly. Trying to show I was harmless.

By this time, another RCMP gentleman walked over. He, however, seemed to recognize me in some mysterious way. I, by the way, was trying to look as distinguished as possible.

"Oh," he said, "you are the new senator from New Brunswick?"

"That is me," I said.

And so he directed me toward the Senate Chamber, where dear Marie Jose was waiting. I imagine both these officers were thinking, "A new senator. He's got the brain of a houseplant."

However, though most people here might know that I am easily confused and discombobulated, I don't think I have the brain of a houseplant.

Then came the big day I was to enter the Red Chamber. I awoke early that morning and decided to get ready, to look as spiffy as possible. But then as soon as I looked at my big, heavy, brand-new shoes, I started to worry. Since I have long been almost completely unstable on my feet, I asked Peggy if I actually had to wear shoes. "Might it be better all around for everyone concerned if I didn't wear shoes? Just bigger socks?"

"Why?"

"I am going to trip and fall flat on my ass."

"No," she said.

"Wait and see — wait and see — I am going to trip —"

"Don't be silly," she said. "You'll be fine."

"Yes," I said, "you wait and see — I'll be fine."

So that moment did come, as we senators know, and I walked toward the two senators who were to guide me in: Senator Harder and the late Senator McCoy. Both these senators I learned to admire very much. And as I was coming into the foyer to meet them, a photographer said, "Mr. Richards, look this way." I did and walked headlong into one of the Canadian flags guarding the Senate Chamber.

It would not have fallen over, I don't think, but how was I to know? So I grabbed it quickly and aggressively with both arms extended as the picture was taken, a look of sudden panic on my face. It did actually look as if I was trying to strangle it.

So I was very worried that some paper would print that picture the next morning with the caption: "Newest Senator David Adams Richards hates our Canadian flag."

However, that did not happen, and I came to this chamber and was welcomed by some of the finest and brightest people I have ever met.

• (1430)

There are some regrets. I never stood on a point of order, for I wasn't really sure what a point of order was. I felt I would have made my mark if I had stood just once and said, "Point of order, Your Honour." However, I was never able to do that.

Nor did I ever introduce a bill. I would have liked to, but I really couldn't think of one. Don't you worry; if I had thought of one, I certainly would have introduced it.

I have sat with three groups and as an unaffiliated senator twice. I have supported some government bills, but most of them I didn't. Nor would I if they came forward again. I didn't support them only because I felt they were bad for our country. I feel that way now.

I relied upon my speeches to inform the public that Canada deserves better than the bills sometimes coming across from the other place. But that is the way it was and is.

As one biographer said about me:

By the time he was nineteen, not only did David Adams Richards disagree with authority, he disagreed with everyone who disagreed with authority — he must have been impossible to live with.

Well, I leave that to others to decide.

I have lived most of my life as a semi-recluse, doing my books. But I have met so many grand people here who gave me their friendships as a blessing.

Make no mistake; the Senate is essential to Canada. Without it, no government could function. I have become aware of how great and important this Red Chamber is. If we speak of greater issues, not our own, we might do a bit better. For if we all threw our little problems into the centre of this floor, all of us would pick up our own problems again.

Let us try to remember that the individual is everything or life is nothing. No governmental policy or self-indulgent angst can ever change that.

Let us remember, too, that God calls upon us not to be comfortable but to be great.

As one of my characters once said in a book long ago, “I love you all.” So I think I will leave you with that.

The Hon. the Speaker: I’m so glad that I didn’t have to interrupt Senator Richards.

[Translation]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of members of the organization ResearchNB as well as researchers and scientists from New Brunswick. They are the guests of the Honourable Senators Cormier and Ross.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

RESEARCHNB

Hon. René Cormier: Honourable senators, the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, the APF, met recently in Quebec City to discuss foreign interference and artificial intelligence. According to one speaker, and I’m paraphrasing here, believing false information is not the worst thing; the worst thing is no longer believing the truth.

This is exactly why research and science are so important to our country and to the world.

[English]

As we all know, at a time when disinformation and misinformation spread so quickly, research is more important than ever. It allows us to shape public policy and legislation based on solid evidence rather than impressions or prejudice. Science and research are, in this sense, our strongest allies in protecting democracy, building trust and guiding decisions with clarity.

It is therefore with great pride that, alongside Senator Ross, I welcome to this august chamber the distinguished researchers from my province, the members of Research New Brunswick, or ResearchNB.

Today, artificial intelligence, or AI, is poised to play an ever greater role in our personal and professional lives. It has the power to accelerate the way we gather, analyze and share knowledge. Yet, as powerful as AI may be, it can also amplify the spread of false or misleading information.

In this context, the work carried out by organizations such as ResearchNB is of paramount importance. ResearchNB fuels innovation, funds research, strengthens our collective capacity and positions both New Brunswick and Canada as key players in this vital field. Its efforts ensure that Canada continues to innovate, to cultivate world-class talent and to deliver solutions to the pressing challenges of our time.

[Translation]

I would be remiss if I did not mention the challenges facing francophone researchers in minority communities in particular.

In its June 2024 report, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research stated that francophone researchers, being less visible internationally, have to contend with having less access to financial and material resources than their anglophone colleagues.

[English]

That being said, I am particularly honoured, as a senator from New Brunswick, to celebrate and promote the work of ResearchNB and to invite you, colleagues, to meet them at the New Brunswick Research and Innovation Showcase tonight from 5:30 to 7:30 at 1 Wellington Street, Room 180.

This is a unique opportunity for you and your teams to discover the cutting-edge research and innovation taking place in this most beautiful province of Canada, the province of Senator Richards, New Brunswick.

[Translation]

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Hon. Sharon Burey: Honourable senators, today I would like to draw your attention to World Mental Health Day, which will be observed on October 10, 2025. I also want to note that October is ADHD and learning disabilities awareness month. As such, I would like to introduce you to Brain Story training and invite you to events sponsored by the Palix Foundation and the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative taking place from October 7 to 9, 2025, at the Château Laurier Hotel here in Ottawa.

Nowadays, approximately 50% of Canadians report having unmet mental health needs, and there is a real child and youth mental health crisis.

[English]

Each of us has been touched in some way by mental health and well-being concerns.

The Palix Foundation is a leader in the areas of mental health, addiction and early childhood development through science, evidence-based policy and practice. The foundation's commitment to knowledge mobilization and its support for the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative and other initiatives have helped bridge the gap between science and service delivery. Importantly, the Palix Foundation's work reinforces the urgent need for early intervention and a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, key recommendations from my Senate round-table report on mental health parity across the lifespan released last year.

The Brain Story is about how early experiences shape our lives and how this shapes lifelong health and mental wellness outcomes, like heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and mental health and addiction disorders. It is also about how to build resilient brains.

The foundation's mission is guided by a distinguished expert council, which includes leaders from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, or CIHR, the U.S. National Institutes of Health and former governor of the Bank of Canada David Dodge. With the vision and support of Ms. Nancy Mannix, Chair and Patron of the Foundation, Palix continues to influence how we understand wellness, prevention, resilience and recovery across Canada.

Honourable senators, I have devoted my career to these very issues because they are foundational to the health, wellness, economic prosperity, resilience and sustainability of our society. In truth, they are central to the democratic foundations of our country.

So it is with great excitement that I invite you to attend as many of these events as possible at the Château Laurier in the coming week, from October 7 to 9. There can be no true health without mental health.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

• (1440)

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of members of the 1834 Fellowship. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Clement.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Senator Burey]

2SLGBTQI+ HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Kristopher Wells: Honourable senators, October marks 2SLGBTQI+ History Month, an important recognition that we hope to celebrate and formalize over the course of this Parliament.

During this month, I encourage all Canadians and parliamentarians to take the time to reflect upon, recognize and celebrate the amazing stories of resistance, strength and courage that have helped to shape and define our 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Our story is one of standing up, speaking out, fighting back and refusing to let injustice stand. It is a story of how community members found each other, organized and courageously fought for truth and justice. It is important that we begin this month by recognizing members of the Two-Spirit community who were accepted and celebrated by Indigenous Peoples long before contact and colonialism sought to erase these identities and traditions.

We should also take time to pause and reflect upon the countless individuals who've had to live their lives in secret or suffered in silence lest they faced the consequences of a society where their love and identities were considered a dangerous crime.

In celebration of 2SLGBTQI+ History Month, we are inspired by all those who have fought for and demanded the right to be who they are, to have the freedom to love and work without threat of persecution and to live as full and equal members of Canadian society. We feel immense gratitude for our chosen and biological families who have marched with us along the path of truth, justice and reconciliation, and we give thanks to our allies who have helped us to open both hearts and minds.

As we reflect upon this important history, which is an integral part of Canada's history, let us also recommit ourselves to the critical work of protecting and defending human rights. Across the globe, including right here in Canada, there are efforts to turn back the clock and take away the fundamental human rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people. In particular, we are witnessing attacks on queer and trans youth premised on political ideology rather than actual facts and research.

As members of the Canadian Pride Caucus collectively observed in a public statement just a few short weeks ago:

The past several years have witnessed an unprecedented attack against trans and sexual minority students in Canada. Discriminatory legislation passed in Saskatchewan, Alberta and later rescinded in New Brunswick has been central to regressive movements seeking to roll back social progress and undermine the health, safety and well-being of vulnerable 2SLGBTQI+ youth and their families.

Such efforts have manifested themselves in the form of attempted book bans, dehumanizing language from politicians, discriminatory laws and — perhaps most disturbingly — the use of the “notwithstanding” clause against the 2SLGBTQI+ community in Saskatchewan and reports that it is about to be invoked in Alberta.

These are scary times for many. However, by calling upon the spirit and courage of all those who have come before us, we stand here today during 2SLGBTQI+ History Month with a clear message: Canada is a nation built on diversity, and we will not allow our great country to move backwards. We are united in building a country that includes everyone and continues to be a beacon of light for inclusive democracies across the world.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER 7 ATTACK ON ISRAEL

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, two years ago today, Hamas carried out the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, murdering 1,200 innocent men, women and children and taking over 200 others hostage, many of whom still remain in captivity today. Their immediate release and safe return home must be a united, urgent demand from all of us.

Among the murdered were fellow Canadians Shir Hana Georgy, Alexandre Look, Ben Mizrachi, Adi Vital-Kaploun, Judih Weinstein Haggai, Vivian Silver, Tiferet Lapidot and Netta Epstein. They were sons and daughters, friends and classmates — citizens of our great country. They were human beings cut down by a death cult that has never hidden its intentions, only acted on them.

The bullets and rockets may have been aimed at Israel, but the shock waves were felt around the world. In the years that have followed, we have witnessed a resurgence of anti-Semitism not seen in generations. Just days ago, the horrific terrorist attack in Manchester was only the most recent example.

Closer to home, we've seen it here in Canada: synagogues barricaded, Jewish schools under police protection, mobs threatening Jewish businesses and students harassed on campuses like Concordia University in Montreal, where rallies like the one organized today — of all days — openly glorify the murders of October 7 with chants like, "Glory to the martyrs!"

All this paints a shameful portrait of the current reality: Jews are no longer safe in Canada. Let us be clear: This is not just a failure of law enforcement or campus policy. It is a moral collapse across institutions — politicians, police, universities — and, most gravely, our own government. After October 7, instead of standing with the victims of terror, Canada rewarded it by recognizing a non-existent Palestinian state led by the very forces that committed these atrocities and turned the murder of Jews into a political bargaining chip.

We have been told that Israel must show restraint, that it must accept ceasefires that Hamas has no intention of honouring and that it must fight a genocidal enemy while meeting impossible moral standards no other nation on earth would be held to. That is not diplomacy; it is complicity.

Today, we find ourselves at an inflection point. Talks of potential negotiations for peace leave us hopeful that this could mark the beginning of a path forward. But, colleagues, let us not be lulled into false equivalencies or revisionist narratives. Hope is welcome, but it must not come at the expense of truth. And the

truth is that this war ends tomorrow if Hamas does two simple things: Release the hostages and disarm. That's it. The only obstacle to peace is Hamas. Every death since October 7 — Israeli or Palestinian — flows from their decision to pursue terror, and there can be no lasting peace while it remains in power.

Following the release of all hostages, the fundamental condition for peace is the total disarmament of Hamas. That's not only what the people of Israel deserve — it is also what the people in Gaza deserve, who have suffered for decades under Hamas' corrupt and brutal rule.

Today, we remember the victims. We pray for the immediate and safe return of all hostages, and we recommit ourselves to the only path that leads to justice and peace and a firm, united stand against the hate that has once again made Jews a target, both abroad and here in Canada. Thank you, colleagues.

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker: We will resume Senators' Statements after Question Period.

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it is now past 2:45 p.m. Before proceeding to Question Period with the secretary of state, 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 secretary 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 secretary to enter and take her seat.

[Translation]

QUESTION PERIOD

(Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, to receive a Minister of the Crown, the Honourable Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors), appeared before honourable senators during Question Period.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, today we have with us for Question Period the Honourable Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors), to respond to questions concerning her ministerial responsibilities. On behalf of all senators, I welcome the secretary.

Secretary, 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.

• (1450)

[English]

MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Welcome, Secretary of State McLean. Canadians are living through an unprecedented affordability crisis, and seniors, often on fixed incomes, are among the hardest hit. A recent aging and affordability report shows that more than half of Canadians nearing retirement are cutting back on essentials to safeguard their savings while over a third of seniors are now considering part-time work just to afford rising costs.

Secretary, why does your government continue to penalize hard-working retirees and their lifetime savings through reckless spending that fuels inflation and erodes financial dignity?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you, honourable senator. The seniors who built this country should never have to choose between paying for groceries or heating their homes, and that's why our government has taken action to ensure that seniors in Canada age with dignity. We are cutting red tape, building homes faster and investing in Canada's seniors. That's something Canada's seniors can rely on our government for. When we talk about spending money, we're spending it well and ensuring that things seniors rely on, such as dental care, are funded. Now, more than 2 million seniors have signed up for and received dental treatment.

We are building an economy for everyone with seniors at heart.

Senator Martin: But the fact remains, and it is showing clearly, that the affordability crisis is hitting seniors harder than many others. Secretary, when one in three retirees are supporting their children or grandchildren at the expense of their own pensions and quality of life, your government's failure is clear. Seniors need meaningful relief now.

What is your government's comprehensive affordability plan for seniors that addresses the rising costs of living, housing and health care?

Ms. McLean: Seniors know that they can rely on our government to build an economy that works for everyone. They know that we're making investments in the things that matter and that help bring down costs for their children, like the National School Food Program, which ensures that children's bellies are full when they're at school.

These are the kinds of programs that the Conservatives have time and again voted against. Conservatives also have a record of pushing the retirement age higher, cutting benefits and leaving seniors behind. Seniors know they can count on our government, as they did when they put their trust in us to ensure that retirement age would be maintained at age 65.

While Conservatives are voting against support for seniors, we are empowering older Canadians and protecting not only their dignity but also their peace of mind.

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: Minister, seniors on fixed incomes are being squeezed harder every year as the costs of housing, heat and other basic necessities continue to rise, especially in Atlantic Canada. Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement have not kept pace with the regional realities. Senior on fixed incomes fall behind every year. What new and recurring support, if any, will you deliver for the Atlantic seniors this fiscal year?

Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. As a coastal MP myself and with many seniors on Vancouver Island, I appreciate the nature of the question and where it's coming from in particular.

Our government continues to build a stronger and more equitable public pension system including Old Age Security, and that's why we increased the Guaranteed Income Supplement for single seniors and enhanced the earning exemption protecting working, low-income seniors. In July of 2022, the Old Age Security pension was permanently increased by 10% for seniors aged 75 and older, and this provides more than an additional \$800 for full pensioners over the first year.

Together with the Guaranteed Income Supplement, Old Age Security does a great deal to provide a dignified retirement to seniors in Canada. Thank you.

Senator Poirier: Minister, this isn't just a regional problem. It's a national one. Across Canada, seniors on fixed incomes are watching the cost of their rent, utilities and groceries climb while Old Age Security has not kept pace. Since 2020, grocery prices have gone up 27% across Canada, and rents are still climbing more than 5.1% year over year nationally as of this July. Whether you live in Saint-Louis de Kent in New Brunswick, Calgary or Vancouver, seniors don't need a one-time cheque or temporary relief program; they need permanent solutions that keep pace with the real cost of living. Minister, when will you step up with Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement improvements that keep pace with housing and food costs, not another one-time cheque?

Ms. McLean: I'm grateful for the opportunity to clarify for you that the Old Age Security benefit is indexed quarterly. This means that it's a benefit that protects seniors' incomes against inflation. It's a system that is designed to protect seniors from benefit reductions even during economic downturns, and over the past year, Old Age Security benefits increased by 2.3%, protecting seniors against the impact of cost of living pressures.

So when inflation rises, the benefits automatically increase to protect seniors' purchasing power. Canadians can expect and trust that this government will focus on income security and protecting the standard of living for seniors.

REGISTERED RETIREMENT INCOME FUNDS

Hon. Mary Coyle: Welcome, Secretary of State McLean. As you're aware, your party ran on the promise of reducing the minimum withdrawal from Registered Retirement Income Funds, or RRIFs, by 25% for one year in order to temporarily protect seniors from volatile market conditions. The Canadian Association of Retired Persons have long called mandatory withdrawal rules for RRIFs — which have not been revised since 1978, when people died younger and investments paid more — a very serious financial strain on seniors. In an interview in *The Globe and Mail* this summer, you said the government plans to keep its election promise.

Madam Secretary, seniors are waiting. Will this promise of a one-time reduction be implemented, and will your government also consider an overhaul of the RRIF withdrawal regime to better reflect the reality of seniors today and tomorrow?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you for the question. We know that the Guaranteed Income Supplement, Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan, as well as seniors' private personal retirement savings, make up the total portfolio of what seniors rely on for their retirement, and this government is committed to our mission of protecting the dignity and security of those who built this country through a lifetime of hard work.

We know these programs provided by the government, Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement, are crucial. These are social safety nets that Canadians rely on and have been able to rely on for decades, and we are committed to protecting those.

This government is focused on bringing down costs, keeping communities safe, diversifying trade and building one Canadian economy for Canadians and seniors, and we will continue to review and consider all measures that make life more affordable for them.

Senator Coyle: Thank you. I wish you had answered the question on RRIFs, but regardless, I have a different question.

Another election promise was to put in place an automatic tax-filing system, starting with low-income households and seniors. We know that 430,000 seniors in Canada live below the poverty line today, and the complex application process, lack of awareness and heavy administrative burdens related to qualifying for benefits contribute to this poverty.

Madam Secretary, are you committed to providing automatic tax filing for low-income seniors so they can access the benefits they need and are entitled to and are able to live with the dignity that they deserve?

Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. Tax filing is not under my portfolio. I believe it's under Secretary of State Long's or Minister Champagne's.

Regarding what we are doing through Employment and Social Development Canada to ensure that seniors have access to programs, we are modernizing the platform used to access Old Age Security, Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan benefits. This is an effort to streamline it to make it more efficient, secure and accessible for seniors to be able to access seniors' programming, services and benefits. Thank you.

ELDER ABUSE

Hon. Marnie McBean: Madam Secretary, Canadians have read with horror the many stories of elder abuse and neglect affecting our seniors. According to your own government, between 4% and 10% of older adults in Canada experience some form of abuse and neglect, in every region and setting, including retirement and long-term care communities.

• (1500)

This issue has touched my own office. One of my staff members lost his father in a retirement residence last winter. Despite living on an assisted-living floor and suffering from dementia and mobility challenges, he was able to leave the building unchecked in the middle of the night and was later found in the parking lot, having died from exposure to temperatures of minus 20 degrees Celsius. This tragedy is not an isolated incident.

What concrete steps is your government taking to better protect seniors and ensure that elder abuse and neglect, in all its forms, is prevented and addressed across Canada?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you for the question. I am very sorry to hear about what happened in that particular situation.

To be clear, there is no room for any form of violence or abuse.

This summer, when I toured some seniors' residences and service organizations, we certainly heard concern about abuse. We heard concern about long-term care homes.

When it comes to abuse and violence of that nature, that is a crime. Our criminal justice system will deal with that. It will not be tolerated. That's why we are taking action to strengthen our bail reform system, investing in law enforcement and taking action to protect victims, ensuring that our justice system puts community safety first.

Last April, every senior in this country chose between a position they could not trust and one in which they could get results. They chose results. They have trusted this government to defend their rights and safety. We are upholding their rights through our justice system to ensure that those who commit criminal acts —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Senator McBean: You mentioned criminal acts.

In the last Parliament, a private member's bill proposed making long-term care homes criminally liable in cases of neglect of vulnerable adults occurring on their premises. That bill died on the Order Paper when Parliament dissolved.

Advocates have continued to call for stronger legal accountability to ensure that elder neglect is met with justice.

Madam Secretary, will your government commit to reviving that legislation or introducing a similar measure to hold care facilities accountable?

Ms. McLean: I'm not familiar with that legislation. I was not part of that government.

In terms of whether or not legislation of that nature would be taken on, unfortunately, that would belong to Minister Fraser. I can't speak to that.

What I can say is that we are going to be bringing forward legislation that deals with hatred and law reform and ensures we have a bail system in which individuals who are committing acts of violence, domestic violence and forms of abuse against seniors are not able to continue committing those crimes.

STRATEGY FOR SENIORS

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Madam Secretary, thank you for being here. My question is about the lack of a national seniors strategy in Canada. For example, social well-being comprises building and maintaining healthy relationships, as well as having meaningful interactions with others and your community.

Examples of poor social well-being include social isolation and chronic loneliness. Seniors are at higher risk for loneliness with negative impacts on their physical and mental health.

It is estimated that 30% of seniors in Canada are at risk of social isolation. Canada has over eight million seniors; their social well-being transcends jurisdictional boundaries and is a shared responsibility.

Will the government commit to a comprehensive national seniors strategy?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you for your question. I think you hit on a very important point talking about social isolation and how seniors are supported. Our government is helping Canadians and caregivers to provide the care and supports they need.

We've made historic investments to strengthen the social infrastructure that is the care economy, which includes work to ensure all families in Canada have accessible, high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive caregiving and improved support for caregivers through the Canada caregiver credit.

We have also improved access to long-term care and other continuing care services through Aging with Dignity agreements, which are signed with each province and territory.

Senator Osler: Thank you for the work on caregivers and the care economy.

Advocacy groups, like the National Association of Federal Retirees, have long advocated for a single overarching, comprehensive strategy.

What barriers have you and your department identified that are standing in the way of a comprehensive national seniors strategy?

Ms. McLean: A caregiving strategy overlaps with much of the national senior strategy.

At this time, we are focused on ensuring we have a caregiving strategy that takes into account all the perspectives and hears all voices at the table.

Despite the fact that health and social programs mostly fall under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, we are providing an array of support for the care economy and to caregivers, which is absolutely fundamental to ensuring that seniors have the support they need. This includes Canada Health Transfers and Aging with Dignity bilateral agreements with provinces and territories.

[Translation]

CAREGIVERS

Hon. Danièle Henkel: Thank you, Madam Secretary of State. Every day, thousands of Canadians, mostly women, put their careers, their plans and sometimes their health on hold to care for an elderly parent. Without these caregivers, our senior care system would crumble, yet their role remains largely invisible and the support they receive is fragmented, consisting of tax credits, limited leave and one-time initiatives.

Is your government prepared to show leadership by working with the provinces and territories to create a true national caregiver support framework that gives full recognition to caregivers' contributions, ensures their economic security and provides them with protection and guidance, while strengthening intergenerational solidarity and the dignity of Canada's seniors?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you, senator, for your question on an important topic.

[English]

Personal support workers are extremely important to seniors and are a critical part of the care economy. Our government is dead set on supporting care workers. We know this is going to become more important as we have an increasing aging population.

One of the things I'm proud we have done recently is that through the Personal Support Worker Retirement Savings Innovation Program we're helping to build retirement security for personal support workers.

As much as \$42.2 million in pilot funding is testing what supports most effectively encourage savings and protect the financial future of personal support workers. This is one of the ways we are ensuring that personal support workers are retained and recruited into the industry.

[Translation]

Senator Henkel: Madam Secretary of State, population aging is one of the biggest challenges of our time, but the dignity of our seniors depends directly on the ability of their loved ones to support them without burning out. As a caregiver to my mother for 10 years, I understand the full weight and nobility of this role.

If the government isn't going to create a national framework, does it intend to improve benefits, job protections and community support immediately, to give caregivers a meaningful safety net?

[English]

Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. I, too, know what it is like to be a support to someone who needs a lot of care. My father struggled with cancer for six years before passing away when I was a young person, and I provided that care to him. So I understand it intimately.

This government is working with provinces and territories to build stronger recruitment and retention systems and to support those who are depended upon, whether it's family members or professional support workers, to be able to provide things like respite and ensure there is support for the supporters. Thank you.

• (1510)

SECRETARIES OF STATE

Hon. Denise Batters: Secretary McLean, the Senate's current sessional order states that it is to be ministers who are invited to Question Period, while the Office of the Prime Minister's website plainly states that secretaries of state "... are not members of Cabinet ..." After all, this is ministerial Question Period and not secretarial Question Period.

I will ask you the questions that the Carney government Senate leader could not answer for me in June: Do you have your own department and departmental budget, what is your salary, what is your office budget and do you have a car and driver?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): I believe these questions are not within my portfolio. I think these questions need to be directed to the Department of Finance Canada which is responsible for budgets, et cetera, or the Office of the Prime Minister which is responsible for appointments.

I'm pleased to have received an invite, even if your Rules say that I'm not to be invited. Thank you.

Senator Batters: You are a secretary of state. I'm asking about your position. The Senate government leader could not answer questions about it, so that's why I'm asking you about your own thing.

If you do have a department, I also want to know if your department's deputy minister reports to you or to a minister.

Secretary McLean, your seniors portfolio used to be a full ministry, but it has now been downgraded by the Carney government to a secretary of state. That does not say much about the priority your government places on the seniors who built our country.

How many full cabinet meetings have you attended since you were appointed to this position in May?

Ms. McLean: Again, the determinations of how cabinet is arranged are within the portfolio of the Office of the Prime Minister, so I will direct you there.

With respect to the portfolio of seniors, I think that by having a secretary of state for seniors, the Prime Minister has shown leadership and dedication to ensuring that seniors have their perspectives represented throughout government decision making, particularly at a time where an agile, small cabinet is needed for really important economic decision making, given the times that we find ourselves in within the global economic context.

Thank you.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Madam Secretary, going back to the subject of affordability, young Canadians are not alone in their struggle to find affordable, accessible housing. We know that seniors are facing rising rents, property taxes and home heating costs that are forcing many to downsize or move far from their communities. Seniors' advocacy groups have been calling for stronger federal investment in affordable housing, yet, as is often the case with your government, no concrete action has followed.

Would you explain your government's plan to specifically address the housing affordability crisis facing Canadian seniors?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you. I think it's a bit odd to say that the government is not doing anything, given that Build Canada Homes is one of our marquee projects that we have taken on. This new initiative — with a dedicated group of folks to ensure that we are building 500,000 affordable homes per year — will make a significant difference for all Canadians, including seniors. We know that housing is not a luxury; it is a right, and this government has taken leadership that we have not seen since World War II.

When the Conservatives were in power, they built all of four homes. This country will see building at a rate that they have not seen since World War II.

We are doing so much on the housing front. We know that not all seniors are homeowners. Many are renters, and there is the \$1.5-billion Canada Rental Protection Fund that helps protect affordable apartments for seniors at risk of losing their homes.

We are also partnering with provinces and territories to build and renew community housing, with over \$15.4 billion in joint investments. These are initiatives that the Conservatives have voted against time and time over.

Senator Martin: In regard to Build Canada Homes, I'm on the Senate Banking Committee, and we had witnesses who spoke about the timeline: Two years from now is when we will see the first homes.

I'm talking about affordability for seniors right now. Advocacy groups like the Canadian Association of Retired Persons have urged the government to invest in home and community care.

What is your plan to ensure seniors aren't forced into long-term care facilities simply because home care is unavailable or unaffordable?

Ms. McLean: I'm happy to talk more about housing and what our government is doing. The Canada Housing Benefit is helping seniors right now by providing direct support. And through the Affordable Housing Fund and the Rapid Housing Initiative, we are building new homes and protecting the affordability of existing ones.

We know seniors deserve homes that are safe, secure and affordable, and this is about more than housing; it is about protecting the dignity of those who built this country and ensuring they have a safe and affordable place to call home.

We are also taking action to protect the most vulnerable amongst us, including seniors facing homelessness. Through Reaching Home, our government committed over \$4 billion to address homelessness across the country.

I see that I am out of time, but I certainly have more to say on this.

[Translation]

SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: Good afternoon, Madam Secretary. According to Statistics Canada, the prevalence of women aged 75 and over living on a low income was 21%, compared with 14% of men in the same age group. Poverty among seniors has increased, and women continue to be the hardest hit. More senior women than men live below the poverty line. Behind these figures are women who have helped build this country, but whose reality often remains invisible in public policy.

As secretary of state, what are you doing, in practical terms, to incorporate a gender-sensitive approach into the development and implementation of your policies?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you for your question, senator, because it's an important one.

[English]

If you don't mind, I'll answer in English.

We know that women tend to live longer than men and that senior women often face poverty at greater rates than men do, particularly single senior women. That is why programs like the Guaranteed Income Supplement are so crucial, and it's crucial that we protect this vital support that helps those with little or no income beyond their Old Age Security. We know it's a crucial program, and it provides up to \$1,086 per month to the most financially vulnerable.

We are focused on ensuring that Canadian seniors, including senior women, receive every dollar that they're entitled to. This is a very important social safety net for preventing homelessness and ensuring that vulnerable Canadian seniors, including women, are receiving a retirement that can provide some measure of dignity. Over \$18 billion in Guaranteed Income Supplement benefits have gone to 2.5 million low-income seniors.

[Translation]

Senator Oudar: Thank you for your answer. However, real progress must be measured with specific indicators. What specific targets will you commit to achieving to reduce the poverty rate among older women in the next two years? How can Canadians monitor the progress of these results to ensure that gender gaps are eliminated?

[English]

Ms. McLean: Thank you again.

We use the Gender-based Analysis Plus, or GBA Plus, framework wherever possible for all of our programs, policies and delivery outcomes. We work really closely with Women and Gender Equality Canada, or WAGE, to ensure that senior women and other minority or diverse groups are accounted for and considered in all decision making. This means that for each decision that comes forward, ideally we're attempting to implement this on a greater basis throughout, and I certainly hold officials to account on my end to ensure that GBA Plus is applied so that we have measures as to how this impacts aggregate groups.

INVESTMENTS IN HEALTH CARE

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Madam Secretary of State, welcome. Earlier today, our National Finance Committee had the privilege of hearing from award-winning Canadian economist Armine Yalnizyan who spoke compellingly about the care economy — the systems and services that support the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of our citizens. The care economy, as you know, is foundational to the functioning of our broader economy and our seniors. Without healthy people, no sector of the economy can thrive.

• (1520)

Given our aging population and the growing pressures on our health care system — and considering that the care economy now accounts for more than one in five jobs in Canada — can you further elaborate on how the government is approaching investments in health care and the care economy with a smart, forward-looking economic strategy that reflects these realities?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you very much for the question.

I've spoken to how we are supporting personal support workers and working on a caregiver strategy. We're doing that thoughtfully with partners across the country — stakeholders who have deep experience, both lived and expertise, in the care economy. They are working with us along with Health Canada to develop strategies that will service senior Canadians.

The majority of your question is best answered by Health Canada, and I can't pre-empt my colleague with respect to your specific health-related questions.

Senator Loffreda: Our witness raised concerns about the increasing influence of private equity in the care economy, calling for clear guardrails to ensure that the public interest remains protected. She urged parliamentarians to take a closer look at this. While I recognize the potential value of private capital, we also have a responsibility to ensure that it doesn't come at the expense of care quality or accountability.

Is this an issue the government is examining — specifically, the role of private equity in the care economy and the need for appropriate regulatory safeguards to protect our seniors and other citizens?

Ms. McLean: Much of the delivery of health services is under provincial jurisdiction, and the provinces would have a much better perspective as to what this looks like in terms of each province's health care spending. As I'm sure you know, jurisdictions take different approaches with respect to private versus public delivery of services, so this varies provincially.

Unfortunately, in terms of any statistics that the government might have on this, they are not within my portfolio, so I don't have that for you. I believe that would be under Health Canada.

SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

Hon. Percy E. Downe: The 2024 federal budget noted that seniors' benefits are a rapidly increasing expense. The Canada Pension Plan, or CPP, and Old Age Security, or OAS, benefits are financially important for seniors who need that income, but other well-off seniors are also collecting benefits. While the CPP is self-funded, OAS is totally unfunded.

A senior couple with a household income of over \$180,000 are still able to collect almost \$20,000 every year in OAS benefits, and the total elimination of the benefit only occurs at a household income of some \$300,000. Payments to seniors have more than doubled since 2010, reaching over \$80 billion this year and set to reach over \$230 billion over the next 30 years. The unfunded OAS will put incredible financial pressure on the federal government.

Do you believe is it fair to younger generations who have to pay increased taxes to cover this cost for high-income seniors, and do you believe that this unfunded liability for the OAS is sustainable?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, or GIS, have been part of the fabric of this country going back decades. They are things that our seniors rely upon and that future generations should be able to rely upon and are entitled to as well. They are an investment that we put into people and are core to our Canadian identity. This government can be trusted — and seniors know that — to respect the need for these programs and the value that they have for Canadian identity. We will continue to ensure that our public pension system properly supports Canadians through the generations.

Senator Downe: My second question is about intergenerational fairness, comparing Old Age Security to the Canada Child Benefit. A household of two seniors over 75 can have a combined income of over \$180,000 a year and still collect almost \$20,000 a year in OAS benefits, but for parents receiving the Canada Child Benefit, cutbacks begin at a household income of \$37,000, and the benefit is eliminated at a much lower amount than the \$300,000 at which OAS is cut off.

How is that considered fair, and what is the government doing to correct this imbalance?

Ms. McLean: Personally, I would not compare apples to oranges. It is very important that we focus on the dignity of seniors and their retirement. It is also important that we continue to support parents and children, and there are many ways in which we do that. I encourage you to ask the secretary and minister those questions.

With respect to seniors, we are going to continue to ensure that pensioners — both couples and single seniors — have a dignified retirement and access to the resources they need to retire in this country.

SUPPORT FOR 2SLGBTQI+ SENIORS

Hon. Kristopher Wells: Madam Secretary, your government has made historic progress for 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians, from protecting gender identity and expression to launching Canada's first Federal 2SLGBTQIA+ Action Plan. Yet many 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors who have fought for those rights now face renewed discrimination and isolation as they age, sometimes even feeling pressure to go back into the closet when entering care.

Can you tell this chamber what steps your government is taking to ensure that 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors have access to inclusive and affirming care, as well as housing, so they can age with dignity, safety and pride?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you for the question, Honourable Senator Wells. It was a privilege to be able to work with you in our past lives on the "X" identity marker in Alberta. I find myself privileged once again to be working with you in this capacity, and I'm excited for this question.

As you mentioned, statistics show that 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors are more likely to experience some type of homelessness or housing insecurity. One survey showed that 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors have fallen behind on rent or mortgage payments within the prior five years. With that in mind, the \$1.5-billion Canada Rental Protection Fund is designed to help protect affordable housing for seniors at risk of losing their home, and the National Housing Strategy, or NHS, is a 10-year and over \$72-billion plan that will give more Canadians a place to call home.

The NHS supports the most vulnerable Canadians, including 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors. Organizations and projects specifically supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ communities have received housing-related funding through NHS initiatives. The Age Well at Home initiative also funds senior-serving organizations, providing practical supports so seniors can age at home. That initiative has also funded and supported projects that specifically target low-income and vulnerable seniors, including 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors.

Senator K. Wells: Thank you, Madam Secretary. Inclusion means creating spaces where 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors can truly belong.

Across Canada, there is a growing need for dedicated housing for 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors — safe, welcoming communities that honour their identities and contributions. Can you share how the government is supporting the development of inclusive and affordable housing for 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors so no one has to hide who they are in their later years?

Ms. McLean: Thank you. I think I touched upon that a bit. I'm also particularly proud of our historic investment in cooperative housing. We know that cooperative housing often provides a housing system that is community-based and that provides a supportive community environment for folks to find affordable and income-related housing.

Another way we are focusing on inclusion and combatting social isolation of 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors is through the New Horizons for Seniors Program. This program helps ensure that seniors can benefit from and contribute to the quality of life in their community, and 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations have specifically benefited.

• (1530)

ELDER ABUSE

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Madam Secretary, Canadians are alarmed by the growing reports of elder abuse across the country. In British Columbia, seniors' advocates report a 21% rise in cases since 2019. In Ottawa, police have logged over 500 incidents of physical abuse and 417 cases of financial abuse in just five years. In Quebec, a provincial ombudsman has condemned the systematic use of restraints in a Montreal hospital as a form of abuse.

These are not isolated incidents; they point to a national crisis of neglect. Yet, after nearly a decade in power, this government still lacks a coordinated strategy or reliable data system to address this problem. Why has your government failed to show leadership or accountability in protecting Canada's seniors from abuse?

Senator Batters: Hear, hear.

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): I addressed this in a prior question, and I want to reiterate that abuse against seniors in any form is despicable. It is a crime and will not be tolerated.

We rely on and trust our officials and policing operations to ensure that they are holding people who commit these abuses and crimes to account. That's why we are also taking action where the federal government is best positioned to do so, including through taking assault-style rifles off the street, strengthening bail reform, investing in law enforcement, protecting victims and ensuring that the justice system puts community safety first.

As you mentioned, financial fraud and other financial crimes are also occurring. We're certainly aware of, and are tracking, scams targeting seniors, ones that falsely claim that government agencies are providing some sort of payment to those with low incomes. These are happening particularly often these days. These types of false information and scams often target those who may be less familiar with the latest technology. So we're taking action to safeguard sensitive information and making that a top priority for all government departments.

Senator Ataullahjan: Given that only one in five incidents of elder abuse are estimated to come to official attention, and with Canada's aging population, will you, secretary, in consultation with your minister, commit to establishing a national elder abuse reporting and tracking system to close the data gap and better guide prevention policies across our country?

Senator Batters: Good question.

Ms. McLean: Thank you for the suggestion. I will certainly look into that. It terms of national tracking, I'm always interested in data and making data-informed decisions. That's something that I know Canadians can rely on our Liberal government for. Thank you.

FRAUD AGAINST SENIORS

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Madam Secretary, a recent CBC report shows Toronto has seen a staggering 1,235% increase in distraction thefts this year, primarily targeting seniors and vulnerable citizens. These are not minor offences; they are predatory, organized and increasingly violent. Yet, like many other crimes, your government continues to treat them lightly, often allowing repeat offenders to roam free on bail.

When will your government admit that the catch-and-release framework is broken and commit to bail reform rather than allowing more seniors to fall victim due to poor enforcement?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): I have spoken, at a high level — as I am able to — to the fact that we are bringing in bail reform legislation. That being said, the answers to your question are not within my department, and you will have to address them to Minister Fraser. Thank you.

Senator Ataullahjan: Secretary, distraction theft often marks the start of a criminal rampage. Without swift, tough consequences, repeat offenders will only escalate. When will your government finally get serious, increase prosecution, reform bail policies and ensure that those who prey on vulnerable Canadians see real jail time, not loopholes and leniency?

Senator Batters: Exactly, help seniors.

Ms. McLean: Our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that seniors feel safe. That being said, specific answers to your question are within the Department of Justice. Thank you.

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Hon. Margo Greenwood: Thank you, Madam Secretary, for appearing before the Senate today. Article 22(1) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration.

As the Secretary of State for seniors, what are you and the department doing to ensure that the principles that underlie the declaration are being applied to the work of Employment and Social Development Canada, or ESDC, in relation to seniors?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you for the question. I've mentioned the GBA Plus analysis before. It is a helpful intersectional lens that includes the perspective of Indigenous People and seniors, as well as women and other intersectionalities. I've always found that it's an important lens to be applied. That is — I think — one of the core ways in which we ensure that programs, policies and legislation are developed with intersectionalities in mind.

One piece of work that ESDC has done in participation with the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Social Isolation and Social Innovation is the publication of a tool kit called *Social isolation of seniors: A Focus on Indigenous Seniors in Canada*.

This was created as a supplementary resource to help organizations and service providers adopt approaches to help Indigenous seniors strengthen human connections. We know that social isolation is a silent reality experienced by many seniors, particularly Indigenous seniors. It is hoped that this resource will be a tool that will heighten awareness and sensitivity and help organizations address their particular social needs.

Senator Greenwood: Thank you for your response. Work on a UN convention on the rights of older persons has been ongoing for the last several decades. What is Canada doing to support the proposed convention?

Ms. McLean: Canada has always been a leader on the global stage when it comes to protecting the rights of older persons. We are working with the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, because we believe in building international consensus and securing a world where seniors are empowered, respected and protected.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons requires global collaboration, and Canada is certainly ready to do its part. We are united, engaged and determined to protect the rights of seniors, not just here at home, but around the world. Thank you for your attention to that matter.

SOCIAL ISOLATION

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Madam Secretary, the number of seniors in Canada is increasing rapidly. Members of this chamber will be contributing to that. It is projected that by 2038 the number of seniors will have doubled since 2013. The Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Social Isolation and Social Innovation reminded us that loneliness affects about one quarter of seniors and is a well-documented risk factor for many negative health outcomes and a poor quality of life.

What is the federal government doing to prepare for what could become an epidemic of loneliness among seniors?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you for the important question. This is a growing issue, and we know that social isolation is part of the consideration of the social determinants of health that impact health outcomes and can impact other budgetary areas if individuals are not living healthfully.

This is an area that requires attention, and one of the ways that we are ensuring that we're combating social isolation is through the New Horizons for Seniors Program. This is a program that funds initiatives, builds stronger, more inclusive communities and is focused on supporting projects that are led by and for seniors to combat social isolation.

Over the summer I had the opportunity to see the impacts of the New Horizons for Seniors Program in many communities, including in some of the communities with the highest ratio of seniors in Canada. I can tell you that there are seniors out there who are coming together, designing their own programs, including chair yoga for seniors or a men's shed focusing on creating Diwali celebrations. Seniors are finding creative ways through using this funding, which has financed over 43,000 local community-based projects. Every year, it funds over 2,900 community-based projects across the country to combat social isolation.

• (1540)

Senator Kutcher: Thank you for that. That's good to hear. The World Health Organization, in collaboration with the Government of Canada, has created an initiative called

Age-Friendly Communities, which helps address seniors' loneliness, but only a small number of Canadian communities are participating. Is the government actively encouraging municipalities to increase the number of communities in Canada participating in this program, and, if so, how is it doing so?

Ms. McLean: Thank you. Yes, I've seen some great reports myself as well as some of these communities, great anecdotes and heartwarming stories. Certainly, in my conversations with local community leaders, this is something that I bring up.

The federal government's part to play in that is through the funding initiatives we have with the provinces and territories, but a lot of those dollars are used locally at the municipal level, and there are a lot of innovative ideas being piloted across the country. Some are in my own riding. Certainly, this is something that we definitely encourage the use of those dollars to go towards.

SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

Hon. Percy E. Downe: When the Old Age Security, or OAS, was created in 1952, it paid \$40 a month, or \$467 in today's dollars, for those aged 70 and older when the average lifespan at the time was 69 years.

Today, the average lifespan is 83 years, and monthly payments of \$740 start at age 65. Retired couples with six-figure incomes of as much as \$300,000 are receiving OAS. While the Canada Pension Plan, the CPP, is a prepaid system, the OAS is not funded. These OAS payments of billions of dollars to well-off seniors are not sustainable.

The organization Generation Squeeze is recommending that shifting the starting threshold for reductions of OAS payments from \$90,000 of individual income to \$100,000 of household income would save \$36 billion over the next five years. Do you support this?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): The Old Age Security system is a very important system to Canadians, and it is an income-tested program. At about \$140,000, it drops off.

While a senior can receive the full Old Age Security, not every senior receives the full Old Age Security amount. Those who are the most vulnerable receive more funding.

It's really important to know that this government can be trusted to protect the Old Age Security, to invest in what is important to Canadians and ensure that future generations have access to Old Age Security, to CPP and to GIS, the Guaranteed Income Supplement. We will ensure that investment continues to be in what Canadians find important. Thank you.

Senator Downe: The problem, of course, is that the system is not sustainable. We have a desperate need for seniors who need the money. At the same time, well-off seniors are getting the money. We should condense that into a system helping those who actually need it. At the same time, younger Canadians are paying far more in taxes today than baby boomers paid back in the day, because they have to pay for these benefits for high-income seniors. The system should be adjusted before the money runs

out. The young people of today will not have any of these benefits when they age, unless the government takes action now. Will the government take action?

Ms. McLean: The government is protecting the rights of Canadians to Old Age Security. We continue to build a stronger, more equitable public pension system.

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: Madam Secretary of State, let's talk about climate change. Climate change is an important issue for seniors. Deadly heat domes, lengthy power outages, forest fires and floods have a disproportionate impact on seniors, especially those with mobility issues or chronic medical conditions and those who experience isolation.

However, national climate change adaptation strategies and programs to support seniors seem to operate completely separately, without adequate frameworks for measuring and monitoring.

Where is the integrated national plan to protect seniors from the impact of climate change?

What concrete measures is your government taking to ensure that we have specific measures in place for seniors before the next disaster?

[English]

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you. In terms of my role as Secretary of State (Seniors), I provide the seniors' perspective both with respect to overseeing the parts that are directly within my portfolio and within the portfolio of Employment and Social Development Canada, and with respect to providing the perspective to the ministers responsible for climate change and for emergency preparedness. In terms of being able to answer the actions that those departments are taking, you will have to direct questions to them.

We've certainly heard the concerns that you're speaking about with emergency preparedness and the disproportionate impact on seniors. My department provides those perspectives to those who are making the decisions around how to ensure that seniors are protected when it comes to climate and emergency preparedness.

[Translation]

Senator Oudar: In 2023, Canada released its National Adaptation Strategy for climate change, but it was one of the last OECD countries to do so. The strategy contains very few measures for seniors.

In June 2025, the Auditor General criticized the strategy because it lacked an effective framework for measuring and monitoring and did not contain specific targets.

Can you tell us what concrete steps your department plans to take in the next 12 months to protect vulnerable seniors?

[English]

Ms. McLean: Again, I'll have to direct you to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change with respect to the "how." Thank you.

STRATEGY FOR SENIORS

Hon. Rebecca Patterson: I'm going to come back to the national seniors framework that we're talking about. It is very important — the care economy and the caregivers, et cetera — but I want to focus on the seniors themselves. I'm looking at one of the very vulnerable groups — seniors in seniors' homes — and I'm going back to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In two of the most populous areas in Canada, as well as in some of our First Nations, some seniors had no care. These were privately owned homes in many cases. It meant that you had to actually call in the Canadian Armed Forces to provide care for these seniors. There were at least two provincial inquiries into why this occurred. One of the things that came out of those inquiries is the absolute lack of standards in nursing homes. My question goes back to the value of a national seniors strategy that would include within it the requirement to have standards for care in all residential seniors' —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, senator.

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Yes. That inquiry and the recommendations that came out of it were certainly welcomed by our government. My understanding from my colleague in the Department of Health is we work closely with provincial and territorial parties that are responsible for the delivery of health care and for the adoption and implementation of those recommendations.

Certainly, we encourage the adoption of those recommendations and their implementation at the provincial level, while also respecting the jurisdiction of the provinces, with their right to the administration of health care.

Senator Patterson: Will your government commit to creating a national seniors' care strategy that includes these standards in order to even reassure things like the federal health care funding transfer?

Ms. McLean: Thank you. Yes, we are working on a national caregiving strategy. Despite the fact that health and social programs mostly fall under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, we are providing an array of support for the care economy and caregivers. That includes the Canada Health Transfer, the Aging with Dignity bilateral agreements, which are absolutely key, as well as additional caregiving benefits and work with Employment Insurance on leave for other caregivers as well. Thank you.

• (1550)

SUPPORT FOR SENIORS

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: I am struck by the balance that you're trying to bring about in terms of looking at seniors in poverty and seniors who are relatively comfortable in their lives. As Secretary of State, are you thinking about a more focused strategy around lifting seniors out of poverty?

Hon. Stephanie McLean, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Seniors): Thank you. In terms of lifting seniors out of poverty, we have key initiatives. One of the government's biggest poverty-combatting initiatives is the Guaranteed Income Supplement. This is something Canadians rely on, and we hear from folks constantly that it's what helps them make ends meet.

In terms of seniors' poverty, this is something that spans government departments. There are elements found within several, whether it's Health, Justice or others.

I can provide the seniors' perspective on any of those initiatives to ensure that seniors who live in poverty are considered when those programs and policies or laws are being developed.

Senator McPhedran: I appreciate the way you've described it. It is why I asked the question: because it is scattered here and there. Let me be a little clearer in my question.

Is there a comprehensive connecting strategy? Are you in a position to gather data on the effects of different programs that may fall under in different departments? From the recipients' perspective, it all comes to them. Is there a strategy for poorer seniors in development?

Ms. McLean: In terms of collating and comparing the efficacy and needs of seniors' programs that are found and housed within multiple departments, that is work continually done by the departments. By having a specific portfolio dedicated to seniors, we are ensuring that work is being done on a daily basis to monitor what is happening in terms of seniors' poverty across the country.

Much of this data collection and reporting is also done through Statistics Canada. I believe that's under Heritage. We work with Minister Guilbeault to ensure the seniors' perspective is included in data collection as well.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

EASTER SEALS CANADA

Hon. Chantal Petitclerc: Honourable senators, it is truly my honour to welcome to Parliament Hill the amazing team of Easter Seals Canada, Canada's largest provider of programs, services and leadership for Canadians living with disabilities.

Founded in 1922, Easter Seals Canada and its provincial members have, for more than one century, supported children, youth, adults and seniors through every stage of life, helping them access programs that foster independence, confidence and inclusion. These programs include fully accessible summer camps, access to assistive and adaptive equipment, education scholarships, employment preparation, skills training and much more.

[Translation]

Every year, tens of thousands of Canadians directly benefit from local programs and services delivered through the federation. In 2024 alone, over 4,700 children and their families took part in accessible camps.

On a personal note, barely nine months after the accident that left me a paraplegic, I myself went to Camp Papillon in Saint-Alphonse-Rodriguez as a camper, while I was getting my bearings as a person newly living with a disability. This experience had a major impact on my confidence and my ability to believe that anything is possible.

Easter Seals Canada and its nationwide network of accessible camps literally change lives, including my own. Last year alone, 130 youths received job preparation training, and 192 participants and caregivers took financial literacy training. In addition, more than 31,900 days at camp were made possible through donations.

[English]

Since 1922, Easter Seals Canada has worked hard to build a society that embraces and celebrates the contributions of Canadians of all abilities, a vision that aligns deeply with our shared commitment to equality and inclusion.

[Translation]

Easter Seals Canada has a real impact. It breaks down barriers, develops people's confidence and skills, and gives thousands of Canadians a chance to fully participate in the community and the economy.

[English]

Today, as we mark over 100 years of remarkable work, let us recognize what it truly represents: the belief that every Canadian, regardless of ability, deserves the chance to shine, grow and belong. Easter Seals Canada, thank you, *meegwetch*.

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 30, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

• (1600)

[English]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY OCEAN CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

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

That the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans be authorized to examine and report on ocean carbon sequestration and its use in Canada;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee 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, 2025, 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 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.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY REGULATORY FRAMEWORK OF PART VII OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Hon. Allister W. Surette: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages be authorized to examine and report on the regulatory framework of Part VII of the *Official Languages Act*; and

ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

STUDY ON EMERGING ISSUES RELATED TO ITS MANDATE—NOTICE OF MOTION TO PLACE FOURTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED DURING FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT ON ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

That the fourth report (interim) of the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, entitled *Hydrogen: A Viable Option for a Net-Zero Canada in 2050?*, presented in the Senate on May 9, 2023, during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament, be placed on the Orders of the Day under the rubric Other Business, Reports of Committees — Other, for consideration at the next sitting.

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY CLIMATE CHANGE AND OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

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

That the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources be authorized to examine and report on climate change and Canada's oil and gas industry;

That, in particular, the committee should examine:

- (a) the industry's relevance to our country and economy;
- (b) the industry's record in reducing its carbon footprint: expected further improvements, competitiveness and efficiency and alignment with Canada's climate goals;
- (c) the transition plan to a more sustainable future, particularly with regard to the industry's workers;
- (d) the industry's strategic positioning to better respond to risk and world trends; and
- (e) within this scope, how the industry is competing against international competitors who have different taxation and subsidy levels;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee on this subject since the beginning of the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than June 30, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR'S OFFSHORE
PETROLEUM INDUSTRY

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

That the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources be authorized to examine and report on Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore petroleum industry, including, but not limited to:

- (a) the unique nature of Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore hydrocarbon resources and offshore petroleum industry;
- (b) the value of and prospects for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore hydrocarbon resources in relation to energy security and Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada's economy, as well as the opportunities to increase exports to international markets;
- (c) industry regulation, including health and safety, environmental stewardship, impacts on marine ecosystems and Indigenous traditional fisheries, resource management and industrial benefits; and
- (d) Indigenous and other stakeholders and key interactions with other industries; 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.

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY
MAINTENANCE OF ACTIVITIES OR ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN
FEDERALLY REGULATED RAIL AND MARINE SECTORS IN
THE CASE OF LABOUR DISRUPTIONS

Hon. Larry W. Smith: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications be authorized to examine and report on maintenance of activities or essential services in the federally regulated rail and marine sectors in the case of labour disruptions;

That, in particular, the committee should examine:

- (a) how "immediate and serious danger to the safety or health of the public" is applied when determining when work is considered essential under section 87.4 of the *Canada Labour Code*, and the circumstances under which certain activities must be maintained in the event of a strike or lockout;
- (b) the impacts of labour disruptions on users of federally regulated rail and marine networks, on Canadian consumers, and on Canada's supply chains;
- (c) in light of these impacts, whether the transportation of certain goods on federally regulated transportation networks should be maintained in the event of a strike or lockout;
- (d) the recent use by the Minister of Labour of section 107 of the *Canada Labour Code* to refer labour disputes in federally regulated transportation sectors to the Canada Industrial Relations Board in order to maintain or secure industrial peace; and
- (e) the use of section 107 of the *Canada Labour Code* by the Minister — instead of "back to work" legislation passed by both Houses of Parliament — as a means to end a labour disruption;

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit 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 June 26, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

NATIONAL SECURITY, DEFENCE
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY
IMPACTS OF RUSSIA'S DISINFORMATION AND REFER PAPERS AND
EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH
PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

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

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs be authorized to examine and report on the impacts of Russia's disinformation on Canada;

That the papers and evidence received and taken, and the work accomplished by the committee on the topic of disinformation, in December 2024, April 2024, and May 2023 during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament under its order of reference relating to national defence and security generally, including veterans affairs, be referred to the committee;

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

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than April 30, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings until 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY VETERANS AFFAIRS

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

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs be authorized to examine and report on:

- (a) services and benefits provided to members of the Canadian Armed Forces, to veterans who have served honorably in the past, to members and former members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and its antecedents, and their families;
- (b) commemorative activities undertaken by the Department of Veterans Affairs Canada, to keep alive for all Canadians the memory of Canadian veterans' achievements and sacrifices; and
- (c) continuing implementation of the *Veterans Well-being Act*; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than October 10, 2027, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

[Translation]

NATIONAL FINANCE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY PRACTICE OF INCLUDING NON-FINANCIAL MATTERS IN BILLS IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS OF BUDGETS AND ECONOMIC STATEMENTS

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

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to study and report on the practice of including non-financial matters in bills implementing provisions of budgets and economic statements, including, but not limited to:

- (a) examining how the Senate generally reviews and considers non-financial provisions in budget implementation acts;
- (b) examining how other legislatures review financial legislation; and
- (c) providing recommendations and guidelines to the Senate and its committees on methods to provide proper scrutiny of non-financial provisions found within budget implementation acts while permitting financial provisions to proceed in a timely manner;

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;

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit 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 papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee on this subject since the beginning of the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament be referred to the committee.

• (1610)

[English]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to the order adopted June 4, 2025, I would like to inform the Senate that Question Period with the Honourable

Tim Hodgson, P.C., M.P., Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, will take place on Thursday, October 9, 2025, at 2 p.m.

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Donna Dasko moved second reading of Bill S-213, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (demographic information).

(On motion of Senator Dasko, debate adjourned.)

SPECIAL ECONOMIC MEASURES ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Donna Dasko moved second reading of Bill S-214, An Act to amend the Special Economic Measures Act (disposal of foreign state assets).

(On motion of Senator Dasko, debate adjourned.)

CONSTITUTION ACT, 1982

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Harder, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Wilson, for the second reading of Bill S-218, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1982 (notwithstanding clause).

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, Nelson Mandela said, “To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.” I rise to join our second-reading debate on Bill S-218. This is Senator Harder’s proposal to amend the Constitution Act, 1982, to establish process requirements to use the “notwithstanding” clause at the federal level.

In other words, we’re debating whether to make it more difficult for Parliament to use section 33 of the Charter to infringe constitutionally protected human rights in Canada’s federal law.

At second reading, we debate the principle of legislation. I will support sending this bill to committee. Thank you, Senator Harder, for bringing the debate forward.

Today, in the style of a future star witness on this bill, the Honourable Brent Cotter, I’ll speak on five subjects: one, the contents of Bill S-218; two, the importance of upholding Charter rights in our federal jurisdiction, including with any reasonable limits that can be justified in a free and democratic society under section 1 of the Charter; three, developments in Saskatchewan; four, as a helpful example, the international and Canadian

framework for upholding individual human rights in the exercise of collective rights in Indigenous jurisdictions; and five, two questions raised by this bill in considering potential amendments.

Let’s begin with the contents of Bill S-218. As a refresher, this bill proposes multiple process requirements for Parliament to use the “notwithstanding” clause.

Under the bill, the following new requirements would apply: infringing legislation must originate in the House of Commons and be introduced by a minister; next, a bill using the “notwithstanding” clause may only be introduced following a ruling of the Supreme Court, by reference, that the bill at issue would infringe a Charter right or freedom; in addition, the bill’s preamble must include a specific declaration of the proposed infringement and the reasons; further, the minister must table a statement in the House of Commons outlining the potential effects of the bill on the infringed rights and freedoms, and why the measures cannot be justified under section 1; as well, neither the other place nor the Senate may use time allocation to curtail debate and force a vote on the bill, and their committee processes may not be completed by a Committee of the Whole; and finally, the third-reading vote on the bill in the other place would require a two-thirds supermajority, including members of at least two recognized parties.

Bill S-218 would achieve these requirements by amending the Constitution Act, 1982, with the unilateral federal formula in section 44 of that act, which I’ll return to.

For my part, the bill’s changes would enhance accountability, transparency, due diligence and the degree of support required to infringe Charter rights at the federal level. At the same time, the federal government would retain the possibility of doing so in extraordinary circumstances, provided there is sufficient support from MPs and senators.

Of course, provincial and territorial jurisdictions are free to adopt their own process requirements for using the “notwithstanding” clause if they wish.

I turn to my second subject, the importance of upholding Charter rights in our federal jurisdiction, including with any reasonable limits that can be justified in a free and democratic society under section 1 of the Charter.

If a government or legislature acts to limit Charter rights through section 1, known as the “reasonable limits” clause, that limitation must meet the four criteria of the *Oakes* test in a court of law: First, the objective of the law must be pressing and substantial; second, the law must be rationally connected to that objective; third, the law must impair the Charter right in a minimal way to achieve its objective; and fourth, the benefits of the law must not be outweighed by the negatives — there must be proportionality.

Unlike section 1, the “notwithstanding” clause appears to grant Parliament a virtually unlimited power to override the human rights and freedoms contained in sections 2 and 7 to 15 of the Charter. These sections include the following: freedom of religion, belief, expression and the press; freedom of peaceful assembly; freedom of association; the right to life, liberty and security of the person; the right to be secure against unreasonable

search or seizure; rights in relation to detention and criminal matters, such as habeas corpus, the presumption of innocence and the right against cruel and unusual punishment; and equality rights against discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Senators, these values are fundamental to human dignity, freedom and well-being. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982 is a product of the relative global consensus around human rights following the horrors of World War II. Related developments have included the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, authored primarily by Canadian lawyer John Peters Humphrey and adopted by the UN in 1948, and the Canadian Bill of Rights of 1960.

Today, Charter rights are at the heart of Canadian society, restraining government, upholding justice, preserving freedom and setting an example for the world. However, individual rights and freedoms must often strike a balance with collective rights and objectives.

For this reason, as I mentioned, section 1 of the Charter authorizes Canada's federal, provincial and territorial legislatures to place reasonable limits on the rights I listed.

Again, in contrast, the use of the "notwithstanding" clause allows infringement of fundamental rights beyond these reasonable limits. By inference, this means that the "notwithstanding" clause can be used to override human rights without a pressing and substantial objective, without a rational connection to the objective, with an unnecessarily heavy-handed approach to achieving the goal, and in such a way that the harms would far outweigh the benefits, according to the evidence and judgment of the Supreme Court. With this context, I turn to developments in Saskatchewan.

• (1620)

In 2023, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan passed Bill 137 to require parental consent in schools for students under 16 who want to use their preferred name or pronoun. The bill pre-emptively used the "notwithstanding" clause as regards several sections of the Charter. This year, the Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan ruled that the Court of King's Bench may still comment on whether the law complies with the Charter. The Saskatchewan government has not conceded that Bill 137 limits Charter rights.

Personally, I have an open mind on striking a balance on parental rights and young people's rights in this area.

I was also moved by Senator Wilson's powerful speech on this bill. In general, on any subject, I would like to see an attempt to comply with the reasonable limits in section 1 before the "notwithstanding" clause is used, if justified in the judgment of a legislature. After all, the "notwithstanding" clause may not be needed to achieve a given purpose, and a tailored approach may be best.

As Senator Cotter said of the "notwithstanding" clause on October 31 last year when speaking on a related motion:

It pre-emptively delegitimizes many rights and, implicitly, the value of section 1 — the rights-limiting clause — and the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court of Canada in crafting a sophisticated approach to section 1.

I agree with the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney when he said:

For me, the backbone of our democracy, the strength of our democracy is the independence and confidence of the court system in Canada. . . .

He added of the "notwithstanding" clause: "How the [bleep] did this thing get in our Constitution"

Yes, you can chuckle.

In my view, it's prudent to continue to treat the "notwithstanding" clause as an extraordinary measure. We must never normalize infringing human rights in Canada. Consider that even actions taken under the Emergencies Act, such as during a terrorist attack or a war, must also comply with the Charter.

I turn to my fourth subject as a helpful example: the international and Canadian framework for upholding individual human rights in the exercise of collective rights in Indigenous jurisdictions.

In 2007, the UN adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP, as an international legal framework for Indigenous Peoples' collective human rights. In 2021, with Bill C-15, Parliament adopted UNDRIP in federal law. Notably, the declaration emphasizes that collective rights must be exercised consistently with individual rights. Article 1 states:

Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law.

Accordingly, distinct Indigenous nations must exercise self-determination, including collective cultural rights, in balance with the individual rights upheld in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In Canada, Indigenous jurisdictions' embrace of UNDRIP, including collective and individual rights, is a positive example in our federation.

Senators, I turn to my fifth subject: two questions raised by this bill as regards potential amendments. These questions are for the consideration of our sponsor, scholars inside and outside our chamber and hopefully our Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee with expert testimony.

My first question — a legal one — relates to the unilateral amending formula. As an overview, using section 44 of the Constitution Act, 1982, Parliament can only unilaterally amend

the Constitution in relation to “. . . the executive government of Canada or the Senate and House of Commons.” However, this power is subject to sections 41 and 42.

Section 41, requiring unanimity of the provinces and both houses of Parliament, does not appear relevant to this bill. Section 42 requires the general procedure for some changes, which is the support of at least seven provinces representing at least 50% of Canada’s population. Notably, section 42(1)(b) requires the general procedure for changes involving “the powers of the Senate.”

In their 2014 decision in *Reference re Senate Reform*, the Supreme Court clarified how section 44 can be used:

It does not permit amendments that engage the interests of the provinces by modifying the Senate’s fundamental nature or role. . . .

Therefore, my first question is this: Does limiting the power to introduce an infringing bill to a minister in the House of Commons modify the Senate’s fundamental nature or role and, thus, fall outside the scope of the section 44 unilateral federal amending formula?

Though not a lawyer by any means, I answer this question in the negative. For one, the Senate’s main job is sober second thought. For two, the “notwithstanding” clause has never been used federally. It, therefore, seems like a stretch to construe introducing infringing bills as fundamental to the Senate’s nature or role. However, if this question is answered in the affirmative, this clause could be amended.

My second question — a procedural one — relates to barring the use of time allocation to pass an infringing bill in either chamber. Though time allocation may be used to cut off debate, it is also a remedy to excessive delay, and I have had experience with that. The intent here, I trust, is not to grant a parliamentary minority a procedural veto against ever having a vote.

My second question, then, is this: Would barring time allocation allow a parliamentary minority to block a vote on an infringing bill? If the answer is “yes,” rather than barring time allocation, an amendment could be adopted to establish a minimum period of debate before voting, such as a certain number of days, like in the Senate Rules for voting on Ethics Committee reports.

In raising these questions, I support sending this bill to our Legal Committee for thorough study. In other words, let’s get the legal beagles on the trail and see if this dog can hunt.

To conclude, I note that the interpretation of the “notwithstanding” clause is currently before the Supreme Court. However, the interpretation of the existing clause is distinct from whether this bill would better protect Charter rights at the federal level. It would, and that’s why I support it going to committee.

Thank you. *Hiy kitatamihin.*

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Senator Klyne, would you take a question?

Senator Klyne: Yes.

Senator Wallin: I want to cast everyone’s mind back to 1980, 1981 and 1982 when this was being negotiated and debated and the country was caught up in this. I happened to be part of these processes as a reporter.

At the time, when Prime Minister Trudeau said and made his intentions known that he wanted a charter of rights, the provinces — many of them, including the Western premiers — said that the cost of a charter of rights in this bargain, which we are all engaged in, would be a “notwithstanding” clause. That was because they fundamentally believed that the rights of an elected legislature or body should be superior to those of a court.

Are you prepared to jeopardize the Charter of Rights to undo the bargain —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Wallin, I apologize but Senator Klyne’s time has expired.

Senator Klyne: I was in high school at the time —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Klyne, are you asking for more time?

Senator Klyne: I’m asking for a couple of minutes, please.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Klyne: My concern — although it’s not a concern — is with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Constitution, there would be a constitutional challenge. Instead of an answer, I would like to suggest that we send this bill to committee so that it gets a thorough study.

Hon. Denise Batters: Senator Klyne, would you take another question?

Senator Klyne: Sure.

Senator Batters: Thank you. I was listening to your remarks in the back on the television, so I missed a short bit of it, but at one point, you quoted former prime minister Brian Mulroney asking how this got into our Constitution. Namely, it got into our Constitution because of our Province of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan was leading in demanding that it be included in our Constitution, or they wouldn’t agree to the patriation of the Constitution and the Charter of Rights accompanying that. The “notwithstanding” clause is actually included as part of that Charter of Rights.

More specifically, it was at the time when you said you were in high school — I was in elementary school. It was former NDP premier and constitutional law scholar Allan Blakeney who actually made that demand and forced the federal government to adhere to that, or they would not agree to it.

• (1630)

Does that colour your perspective on the issue?

Senator Klyne: It seems to me, senator, that former Premier Blakeney was definitely involved. Given some afterthought, I don't think he would have changed it. I do recall that former Premier Blakeney was involved in it.

Senator Batters: He later wrote a book where he talked about the importance of it and the necessity of balancing rights between, as Senator Wallin was referring, the judiciary and the legislative branches where those rights become a bit unbalanced. The purpose of the "notwithstanding" clause is to ensure that the proper balance exists.

Senator Klyne: I don't think that was a question. Thank you for the information.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES DAY BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Éric Forest moved second reading of Bill S-237, An Act respecting a Cities and Municipalities Day.

He said: Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise today to launch the debate on Bill S-237 to designate October 31 as "Cities and Municipalities Day" in Canada.

October 31 was chosen because, in 2013, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the last day of October as World Cities Day to promote sustainable urban development policies.

We decided to hitch our wagon to this day to highlight the role of municipal organizations.

[English]

Let's first talk about what municipalities represent for our country.

[Translation]

They are the places where democracy takes root. They are the local governments par excellence. They are the institutions that, day after day, shape the quality of life of our fellow citizens.

When Canadians leave home in the morning, the first thing they see is not Ottawa, the Parliament of Canada or the provincial or territorial legislature. What they see are the streets they'll drive down, the sidewalks cleared of snow, the water that flows from their taps, the bus that takes them to work, the arena where their kids skate and the park where families gather.

What they experience every day are municipal services. Municipalities, large and small, urban and rural, from north to south, are at the heart of Canadians' collective well-being. They

provide drinking water, waste management services, local road maintenance and public transit, and take care of local economic development and land-use planning.

[English]

They manage our libraries, community centres, playgrounds and urban forests.

[Translation]

They welcome newcomers, support seniors, assist families, tackle homelessness and do their part for the climate crisis. Consider the adage "think global, act local." They are the front line of public services, the first door citizens knock on, and often the last hope they cling to.

Their responsibilities nowadays are substantial, diverse and growing. Globalization, technological transformation, climate change, rapid urbanization and demographic pressure are all phenomena that are felt at the local level first. That is where innovative solutions are often found.

When a flood devastates a region, municipalities sound the alarm and protect citizens. When a heat wave hits our cities, municipalities open cooling centres. When a housing crisis arises, they see first-hand the families who are in distress. When a newcomer settles in Canada, municipalities are the ones that welcome them to their new community.

As we can see, municipal governments are close to the people. They operate on the front lines of the major issues marking the 21st century. They play a vital role in the challenges that define our era, such as the housing crisis, climate change adaptation, social inclusion and sustainable economic prosperity. However, they operate with limited resources, often obtained through transfers and interminable negotiations. Worse still, municipalities are victims of an outdated tax system that prevents them from reaping the benefits of the economic growth they help create in their locality.

That's why it is vital that this "Cities and Municipalities Day" raise Canadians' awareness of this reality: We can't build a future for this country without a solid partnership with municipalities, cities and the people responsible for the day-to-day administration of our communities.

First and foremost, "Cities and Municipalities Day" would provide an opportunity to celebrate this unique contribution. It would publicly honour this contribution and send a clear message that, in Canada, municipal action matters. It is recognized, valued and deserving of our gratitude.

Second, "Cities and Municipalities Day" would act as a tool to raise awareness. Too often, residents are unaware of the full scope of municipal responsibilities. They think municipalities just deal with garbage bins and potholes. But this perception is untrue and unwarranted.

This day will give municipalities a national platform where they can explain their role, showcase their successes and share their challenges. It will open the eyes of the general public to the fact that municipalities are key players in our shared future.

It will also serve to enhance dialogue between citizens and their local councillors, encourage citizen involvement in municipal affairs, and foster pride and a sense of belonging to their town, village or community.

We also hope that this day will motivate citizens to get involved in municipal politics once they understand the scope of the challenges facing their communities.

This day will also be a tribute to the hard work of municipal elected representatives and employees. It will highlight the work of municipal elected officials — many of whom do this job part-time, sometimes for meagre pay, but always with a strong sense of duty — and the dedication of mayors and councillors who, despite the constraints, find creative solutions, innovate, and mobilize their communities.

Being mayor of a small municipality means being on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to deal with water system problems, neighbourhood disputes and emergency situations.

Being a municipal councillor means going out to meet residents at grocery stores, farmers' markets and arenas and hearing first-hand what they're concerned about, sometimes what they're mad about, and often what they hope for.

Being the city manager of a municipality means juggling tight budgets, applying for grants and negotiating with the other levels of government, while staying focused on local priorities.

These women and men don't do these jobs for glory, but they deserve our gratitude. A national day is a powerful symbolic gesture to collectively say thank you.

This day will also highlight the dedication of municipal employees, such as engineers, urban planners, firefighters, police officers, public works employees, librarians, educators and community workers. I'm talking about thousands of women and men who take meaningful action every day to make life easier, safer and better for their fellow citizens.

Finally, "Cities and Municipalities Day" will serve as an annual reminder of the importance of constructive dialogue between the three levels of government: federal, provincial, and municipal.

Municipalities are not mentioned in the Constitution of 1867.

• (1640)

They fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, but in reality, they are essential partners of the federal government.

Whether it's infrastructure, affordable housing, public transit, public safety or the integration of newcomers, municipalities are always on the front line.

That's why it's our responsibility as federal parliamentarians to reach out, build bridges and support these local governments. October 31 will become an annual reminder of this need for collaboration. I dream of seeing our communities come together every October 31 to celebrate their local successes with open door events at city halls, talks in schools to explain the role of municipalities, events to recognize municipal volunteers and employees, public information campaigns about local services, and intergenerational dialogue on the future of our cities, towns and villages.

This day will be both a celebration and an opportunity for reflection — a celebration of what we have achieved together and a reflection on what remains to be built if we want more respectful and supportive communities. Let me stress that our ability to overcome the challenges of the 21st century will depend on what happens at the local level. The fight against climate change will depend on our urban planning, the transformation of our public transit systems, our waste management, and the resilience of our local infrastructure.

Our ability to integrate immigrants will depend on the vitality of our neighbourhoods, the quality of our housing, the strength of our communities and the efficiency of our reception services. Our economic prosperity will depend on the creativity of our local ecosystems, the development of regional know-how, support for our SMEs and the creation of appropriate infrastructure and diverse, competitive services to make our cities, towns and villages appealing to new families.

In other words, if we want Canada to remain a strong, inclusive and sustainable country, we have to equip our municipalities accordingly. Before we even begin to discuss resources, let's start by granting them the recognition they deserve. I know that some people might claim that this is just a symbolic day, but as we all know, politics is all about symbols. Symbols have immense power. They have the power to transform attitudes, to guide priorities and to inspire action.

By recognizing October 31 as "Cities and Municipalities Day," the Parliament of Canada would be sending a strong message, showing that it acknowledges the value of our municipalities as local governments, that it respects the actions of municipal elected officials, and that it wants to strengthen intergovernmental dialogue. This would be a small gesture for us, but it would carry a deeply meaningful message for municipalities.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that this bill transcends partisan divisions. It is not a left-wing or right-wing initiative, an urban or rural undertaking, or a provincial or federal issue. It is a tribute to the people on the ground who carry our democracy forward and improve the daily lives of millions of Canadians. I therefore urge my colleagues in all parliamentary groups to make this bill a unifying one. Let's give Canada's municipalities the recognition they deserve.

Let's make sure that, every October 31, all citizens who walk through the doors of their town hall or encounter a municipal employee can say to themselves, "Today is our day. Today, together, we recognize the value of our cities and municipalities."

It's important to note that this day would not be a public holiday. It would be a day to recognize and reflect on the values that are expressed every day by the people who make a positive difference in our communities.

[English]

It is with pride and conviction that I present this bill and ask this chamber to support the establishment of "Cities and Municipalities Day" in Canada.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Carignan, debate adjourned.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO CALL ON GOVERNMENT TO INVESTIGATE THE CREATION OF A SOVEREIGN, DOMESTIC VERIFIED TRAVELLERS PROGRAM—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Simons, seconded by the Honourable Senator Woo:

That the Senate call on the Government of Canada to investigate the creation of a sovereign, domestic Verified Travellers Program for Canadians.

Hon. Kristopher Wells: Honourable senators, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to this important issue that was raised by my honourable colleague and fellow Albertan, Senator Simons.

This motion is a very timely one. It is yet another example of the turmoil and uncertainty that many Canadians across the country are living through in the face of a fundamental shift in our relationship with the United States. For decades, Canadians trusted that our prosperity, security and, indeed, our livelihoods were and would always be bound up in the deep connections we shared with our neighbours to the south. That was just the way it was. It was a foundation upon which we could count, build and rely for our future.

The NEXUS program was just one expression of that closeness, designed to make cross-border and domestic travel more efficient and expedient for those who met its requirements. While there were, of course, individuals who have expressed concerns about the program, it made perfect sense to many that any trusted traveller program that would help Canadians have an easier time through security at the airport and across borders would involve close cooperation with the United States.

For many Canadian NEXUS holders, including me, a trip to Vancouver or Seattle would often be a simple question of which airline was cheaper or more convenient. Going to a concert in Toronto or Detroit might just be a question of which night works better for your schedule. If you were already going to a festival in Montreal, why not get a car for a quick trip down to New England to see old friends?

Many of us graciously accepted the synergy of working with the United States on a program that would also help Canadians travel more easily domestically. Many of us concluded there was no point in having two different programs. After all, we could always rely on our friends the Americans, right?

What a difference a presidential election can make. The reality of today is starkly different. As Prime Minister Mark Carney has recently reminded us, Canada's old relationship with the U.S. "... is over." Those are stark words, but they represent Canada's, if not the world's, new reality. The United States is no longer the same reliable partner it once was, and nostalgia cannot be the basis for sound policy.

In response to the United States' increasingly aggressive stance toward Canada, Canadians themselves are pushing back. We have seen trade disputes reignited, with punitive tariffs on Canadian steel, aluminum and softwood lumber. We have witnessed trusted agreements, once celebrated as symbols of mutual respect, unilaterally challenged or undermined. Indeed, just recently we heard the U.S. Ambassador to Canada call into question arrangements such as pre-clearance at Canadian airports.

Canadians are taking notice. More and more, they are choosing to vote with their wallets, supporting Canadian products and industries as an act of resilience, solidarity and nation building. We are seeing a marked cultural shift. Where once a weekend trip across the border was almost second nature, many Canadians are now choosing to avoid travel to the United States altogether.

Instead, they are rediscovering what our own country has to offer: our festivals, natural landscapes, artists and diverse communities. In the face of hostility, Canadians are not retreating into fear or bitterness. Rather, we are turning inward with pride, celebrating our culture, identity and iconic landmarks here at home.

Colleagues, the foundation upon which programs like NEXUS were built has shifted, and it is time for a difficult but honest conversation. It comes in the midst of a wider discussion about how we can support our systems of moving goods and people. Airports are calling for everything from embracing new technologies to adjusting our fee structures. It is clear that more work needs to be done.

Colleagues, let me be clear: This is not simply a question of a lack of trust or a protest against the Trump administration. I am not arguing for a change in policy as a political statement. In fact, the actions of the U.S. government in the area of fundamental rights and freedoms have made this change a necessity.

• (1650)

Canadians are watching as hard-fought protections for women, racialized people and especially 2SLGBTQI+ communities are being rolled back in state legislatures and even in the great halls of the United States Congress. We see free speech being banned, medical care denied and families forced to live in fear on the streets of their own communities.

These are not abstract debates. They are real actions that rightfully make us ask what kind of society our closest neighbour is becoming. These actions diverge sharply from the commitments we have made under our own Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Constitution of Canada affirms the equality and dignity of every person. We have a responsibility to ensure that our national programs reflect these key values. In fact, Canadian courts have already begun to grapple with the consequences of this divergence. We are seeing cases where individuals are seeking refuge in Canada from rising anti-2SLGBTQI+ discrimination and violence in the United States. Indeed, our refugee system is increasingly recognizing the force of such claims. It is becoming impossible to ignore the reality of the hostility of the Trump administration toward trans, queer and gender-diverse individuals.

This brings me to one of the most concerning aspects of the NEXUS program itself — its refusal to recognize trans and non-binary Canadians.

As recently reported, the NEXUS program will no longer allow gender-diverse individuals to use the “X” marker for gender. Renewals and new applications must, by decree of the Trump administration, reflect a person’s sex assigned at birth. Thus, Canadians who do not fit neatly into a gender binary must now choose between their own lived identity or access to an important government program.

This is the very definition of discrimination.

Imagine being told by your government that who you are disqualifies you from equal access and opportunity. Imagine knowing that your neighbour, co-worker, sibling or child is being denied access to a government-sponsored program because of how a foreign government chooses to categorize them.

This is not a minor administrative oversight. It is systematic exclusion. These changes run directly counter to Canadian law and Canadian values.

This is not simply a theoretical concern. Just this week, the Canadian government updated its travel advisory for the United States, which included an ominous warning for 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, informing us that our community is at risk of higher scrutiny based on a person’s lived gender identity. If we are at a point where we need to warn our 2SLGBTQI+ citizens that they may face discrimination at U.S. airports, then we are clearly at a point where we need a new program at our Canadian airports.

This is why Senator Simons’s motion is so important. A made-in-Canada trusted-traveller program that upholds and respects Canadian values and continues to provide critical security and efficiency at our airports would also fundamentally ensure that every Canadian, regardless of their identity, is treated with dignity and fairness.

We must not allow the rights of our citizens to be contingent on the politics or prejudices of another country. A program designed here, by Canadians and for Canadians, can and must reflect the full diversity of our nation. It is time to begin this important discussion.

[Senator Wells (Alberta)]

As I was preparing for my remarks, I spoke with Marni Panas, a courageous leader within Canada’s trans community, who stated:

The fact that Canada relies on Homeland Security to determine whether I can travel safely in my own country is disgusting at best. The entire reason I got a NEXUS card was to minimize any interaction with CBSA or CATSA. Traveling while trans is already scary enough, especially when selected for secondary searches . . . My NEXUS card is a vital part of my ability to travel throughout Canada and to return to Canada. These changes are terrifying to me.

In Canada, in 2025, our citizens should not be terrified to go to the airport.

If our Charter is to mean anything and our commitment to equality is to be more than words, then we must ensure that every Canadian can access the same opportunities and protections of citizenship without discrimination. That is what a made-in-Canada trusted-traveller program would accomplish.

It is time for open discussion. It is time to do the hard work to build policies and programs that genuinely reflect who we are and aspire to be as Canadians.

I am honoured to support Senator Simons’s motion, and I urge my honourable colleagues to do the same.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

MOTION PERTAINING TO THE SITUATION IN GAZA—DEBATE

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo, pursuant to notice of June 25, 2025, moved:

That, in light of findings and orders from the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court on the situation in Gaza, the Senate call on the Government to examine the risk to Canada and Canadians of complicity in violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and to report on its findings within three months of the adoption of this motion.

He said: Honourable senators, on this solemn day, exactly two years after the killing of over 1,200 men, women and children in southern Israel, I am calling on this chamber to reflect on the horror of that day and the horror of its aftermath every day since — not just in Israel but also Gaza and the West Bank.

I condemn the killing of innocent civilians on October 7, 2023, which has been described as the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. I also condemn the recent attacks on Jews in synagogues and community spaces, in Manchester, Berlin, Warsaw and Tokyo, as well as right here in Ottawa, where an elderly woman was attacked at a grocery store just a month ago. The Jewish community is reeling from these assaults and has called for more action against anti-Semitism and more education about the Holocaust.

Even though we are four months away from International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we would do well to mark every day leading up to January 27 in the way that the occasion was meant to serve: as a solemn commitment to remember the 6 million Jews and millions of others murdered by the Nazis and to say “never again” to genocide.

We need to mark every day as International Holocaust Remembrance Day because we are allowing again today what was to be never again. I can see how difficult it is for many of us to contemplate the idea that the modern state representing a Semitic people who suffered so much at the hands of the Nazis could inflict unspeakable horror on another Semitic people. There are those who say that it is anti-Semitic to suggest that the State of Israel could be committing a genocide against Palestinians, but that argument is disingenuous and illogical. It also dishonours the very purpose of Holocaust remembrance and the spirit of “never again.”

There are, of course, some who deny that a genocide has taken place. Genocide has been described as “the crime of crimes” in international law, and the term has been used liberally to describe many troubling situations around the world where there have been serious abuses of human rights. I do not use the term lightly and defer to experts who apply strict criteria to a claim of genocide.

In the case of Israel’s assault on Palestine since October 7, 2023, the consensus that a genocide has happened is so overwhelming that we cannot look away. Just last month, a UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry —

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Point of order. I’m referring to Rule 6-13(1) that has to do with sharp and taxing language, and I really do find the use of the word “genocide,” this language, offensive.

I don’t think genocide has been established, and I find it particularly offensive on this day, when we are commemorating the grotesque murder of some 1,200 souls, including Canadians. I think it reflects badly on this chamber.

• (1700)

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Are there other senators who want to intervene?

Senator Woo: Your Honour, I’m just about to give the evidence for why a genocide has taken place, including a citation from the UN International Commission on Human Rights, which made its judgment only a month ago.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Are there other senators who want to intervene on this point of order?

[Translation]

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: If I may, Your Honour, I believe that today, we are commemorating a day that was sad and unacceptable, not only for all the Jews in the world, but also for all human beings on this planet. I move that the senator be allowed to continue his speech tomorrow if it has to do with any topic other than the tragic events of October 7.

[English]

Senator Woo: Your Honour, I consider that a breach of my privilege. I’ve started my speech. I will, in the course of my speech, elaborate on the points that I’ve started on. I was just about to make the case that Senator Wallin has objected to.

If senators indulge me to allow me to continue this speech, they will see why this case is very strong and why we need to take this very seriously.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): If I may, I just want to support what Senator Wallin and Senator Saint-Germain have stated — that this is a very significant day and we heard a statement about the horrors of October 7 two years ago. So out of my sincere respect for the Jewish community around the world and for those especially here in Canada, if Senator Woo would consider continuing the statement, which he has every right to do, tomorrow out of that respect that, I think, all of us share at this time.

Senator Woo: Your Honour, I make this speech out of the deepest respect for the Jewish community. I have already stated very clearly how I condemn the horror of October 7, 2023, how I condemn the acts of violence against Jewish people in Canada and around the world.

I think it does a disservice to Jewish people to not allow this speech to continue on the grounds that some senators’ sensibilities may be offended. If the case you are arguing is there was no genocide, let that be debated in this chamber, and let me present the evidence for you to consider.

SPEAKER’S RULING

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I will ask all senators to follow rule 6-13, which I will read just to remind us that “[a]ll personal, sharp, or taxing speeches are unparliamentary and are out of order.” I would ask Senator Woo, and all senators, to consider this rule and to take it into account in debate.

MOTION PERTAINING TO THE SITUATION IN GAZA—
DEBATE ADJOURNED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Woo, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dean:

That, in light of findings and orders from the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court on the situation in Gaza, the Senate call on the Government to examine the risk to Canada and Canadians of complicity in violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and to report on its findings within three months of the adoption of this motion.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: The Independent International Commission of Inquiry found that Israel has violated the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide by:

. . . killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the destruction of the Palestinians in whole or in part, and imposing measures intended to prevent births.

The responsibility for ending the genocide rests, above all, with Israel, but not Israel alone. All states, including Canada, have legal obligations under international and domestic law to end the genocide and punish those responsible for it.

This brings me to my motion. I am calling on the Government of Canada to examine the risk to Canada and Canadians of complicity in violations of international law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and to report on its findings within three months of the adoption of this motion.

Why do we need this motion? Well, over the last two years, serious violations of international law have been perpetrated in Gaza. These vile acts have been livestreamed on our phones and broadcast by Israeli leaders with arrogance and seeming impunity.

What did we do to try and prevent it? What have we done to make it easier for Israel to commit war crimes? Why did we proscribe and punish Canadians for trying to do what they could to raise the alarm? Why is there a double standard in the way we have responded to the situation in Gaza compared to, say, Ukraine? These are just some of the questions that my motion seeks answers to, and not just answers from the government, because these are questions that we need to ask more broadly of Canadian society.

How have universities acted against students and teachers advocating for Palestinian justice? What have they done about the investments in Israel? What about corporate Canada and our pension funds? How have professional bodies, hospitals and school boards weaponized anti-Semitism to silence their members from speaking out against atrocities in Palestine?

Why has the media been so one-sided in its reporting on the situation in Palestine, and what role did that play in allowing the genocide to unfold? What amount of foreign interference and disinformation, on behalf of Israel and its allies, did our security and intelligence agencies allow in Canada — in service of war crimes?

The prohibition to commit genocide is a *jus cogens*, or peremptory norm, from which no party, including individuals and corporations, can derogate.

In tabling this motion, I am calling on Canadians to have a national conversation about what we did while a genocide was unfolding before our very eyes. This may be an uncomfortable conversation, but it is a necessary one that is already taking place across the country. For example, a citizens' tribunal on Canadian complicity is being planned for November, mirroring the work of The Gaza Tribunal in the U.K. and modelled on the famous Bertrand Russell Tribunal on U.S. war crimes in Vietnam.

The question of complicity is not an academic debate. It is a matter of international law, which Canada claims to uphold. The ultimate test of our adherence to international law is when we find ourselves on the wrong side of it. And in the case of Israel's genocide in Gaza, we may well be in that uncomfortable position.

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory said in their October 2024 position paper:

The Commission also takes note of State responsibility through complicity, namely when a State knowingly aids or assists another State in the commission of an internationally wrongful act. The Commission notes, for violations of international humanitarian law, it has already reported that Israel has committed war crimes in the context of the war in Gaza since 7 October 2023. On the issue of genocide, the Commission notes the provisional measures orders issued by the Court in the *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip* The Commission finds that all States are on notice that Israel may be or is committing internationally wrongful acts in both its conduct in the military operations in Gaza and its unlawful occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Thus, the Commission finds that, unless States cease their aid and assistance to Israel in the commission of these acts, those States shall be deemed to be complicit in those internationally wrongful acts.

The Canadian government's position, as articulated most recently by our newly appointed ambassador to the UN, is that it is waiting on the International Court of Justice, or ICJ, to come to a final pronouncement on whether a genocide has taken place in Gaza. This is, at best, a misunderstanding of international law.

The Genocide Convention is as much about preventing a genocide as it is about punishing the perpetrators. Canada has been put on notice of an impending genocide at least as early as January 2024. In the latest advisory from the ICJ in April 2024, the court said that all states must “. . . employ all means reasonably available to them to prevent genocide so far as possible.”

Throughout those early months in Israel's assault on Gaza, the Canadian government position was largely to defend Israel's actions. We heard it in this very chamber from the former government representative, who, in answer to my repeated questions on the subject, claimed that humanitarian aid was not impeded by Israel, that there was no targeting of civilians by the Israel Defense Forces, or IDF, and that Israel's actions were well within its right of self-defence.

• (1710)

Yet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and numerous human rights organizations have documented the intentional blockade of humanitarian aid and food as well as the weaponization of aid through private contractors.

All this information is known to the Government of Canada. The government has acknowledged as much by issuing periodic statements expressing dismay about the situation in Gaza.

Perhaps the strongest statement came on May 19, 2025, when, together with the United Kingdom and France, Canada stated:

We strongly oppose the expansion of Israel's military operations in Gaza. The level of human suffering in Gaza is intolerable. . . . We call on the Israeli Government to stop its military operations in Gaza and immediately allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza.

If Israel does not cease the renewed military offensive and lift its restrictions on humanitarian aid, we will take further concrete actions in response.

Well, the military offensive was ramped up, and Israel continued to restrict humanitarian aid to the point that the United Nations has called Gaza "the hungriest place in the world." Four months after the statement, Canada still has not taken any concrete actions to stop the slaughter and restore humanitarian aid into Gaza. In the meantime, the horror has deepened. Today, with more than 200,000 Palestinians killed or injured and almost all of Gaza's infrastructure obliterated, we can look back on our empty, pious statements and see them for what they were.

Under the genocide convention, as well as domestic law, Canada is obliged to take all reasonable actions within its power to stop the assault on Gaza. Instead of upholding our legal responsibilities, however, Canada has continued to assist Israel by maintaining strong military, political and economic ties with the Israeli government.

For example, Canada permitted exports of military equipment to Israel between October and December 2023 amounting to \$28.5 million, more than the total amounts approved for the full years of 2021 and 2022. It was not until March 2024 that the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that Canada would suspend future applications for the export of arms to Israel.

Yet, a group of non-governmental agencies, or NGOs, released a report in July 2025 documenting ongoing shipments of military goods from Canada to Israel, including shipments of bullets, military equipment, weapons parts, aircraft components and communication devices between October 2023 and July 2025.

When asked to explain these shipments, the best that Global Affairs Canada could offer was that the information employed by the NGOs, drawing on Israeli customs data, was not consistent with the datasets used to administer the Export and Import Permits Act.

The Government of Canada also allows the recruitment of volunteers into the Israeli military for combat as well as non-combat assignments in contravention of the Foreign Enlistment Act. We are, in effect, turning a blind eye to Canadians who are aiding and abetting war crimes on behalf of Israel.

Another factor in possible Canadian complicity is our failure to impose financial or economic measures on Israel. Canada has not sanctioned any member of the Israeli military or Israel as a state.

In other words, in the words of the International Court of Justice, or ICJ, July 2024 Advisory Opinion, Canada has failed to cease all financial, trade, investment and economic relations with Israel that maintain the unlawful occupation or contribute to maintaining it.

Canada continues to provide trade benefits to Israel through the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement. CIFTA, as it's called, has long been in violation of international law by failing to differentiate between goods and services from Israel and those from the illegally occupied territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan. That we still offer preferential market access to Israel during its genocide in Palestine only compounds our disregard for international law.

Honourable colleagues, some of you will be thinking that it is self-defeating for our government to admit to complicity because of damage to our national interest. I am sure that is going through the minds of legal advisors in the Department of Justice Canada and Global Affairs Canada, as well as around the cabinet table. The instinct of the government is, of course, to plead plausible deniability: that we did what we could, that we didn't know until now, that our hands were tied and that we are interested in solutions rather than blame, et cetera. We may even end up arguing that a genocide did not take place, as a way of absolving ourselves from the responsibility of not acting sufficiently to prevent it. That would be the kind of cynical, twisted logic that allowed Canada to pretend for 150 years that it did its best for Indigenous Peoples, that it had no idea of the harms caused and that the past is best left buried and forgotten.

It took Canada over a decade to acknowledge and apologize for its inaction on the Rwandan genocide. Will it take as long again on Palestine? That the world failed to stop another genocide when it had the chance to do so is a stain on all countries. The sooner that Canada can come to terms with its role in that failure, the better it will be for our moral standing in the world and our ability to be taken seriously on global issues.

Now that we have recognized the state of Palestine, our responsibility to uphold international law for Palestine is greater than ever. There are many angles to this motion, and I invite honourable colleagues to speak to any of them. If we pass this motion soon, we may even have a response from the government in time for International Holocaust Remembrance Day. We will then learn, on January 27, 2026, if Canada really means "never again" when it says, "Never again."

Thank you.

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, today, as I rise to speak in support of Senator Woo's motion, I recognize this is the second anniversary of horrific attacks by Hamas during the holiest time of year for Jewish people. My heart, thoughts and prayers are with the millions of people whose lives have ended or were forever impacted by those events. They are also with those whose lives have been destroyed and those who continue to deal with the anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial that Senator Woo so appropriately addressed. We must end those discriminations. We must end anti-Semitism in a Holocaust denial period.

We must also come to face the lives of those who have been destroyed by the unending horrors of the escalating violence in Gaza, the West Bank, Israel and Lebanon. The motion rightly calls on the federal government to examine the risk to Canada and Canadians of complicity in violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza in light of the findings and orders by both the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Canadians who have been in Gaza, including as doctors and aid workers — no strangers to humanitarian and human rights crises — have struggled to describe the extent of the atrocities they have witnessed.

Alex Neve, who is delivering this year's CBC Massey Lectures, focused on the state of international human rights, has stated simply that the word "... apocalyptic seems insufficient."

The tens of thousands dead from bullets and bombardments but also from malnutrition and diseases, most of them women and children, "... shatters the collective heart of humanity."

Canada has a reputation as a country committed to human rights and justice. This motion asks the government to do the bare minimum in line with those commitments — to assess whether we are complicit in war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Tens of thousands have died. Civilians live in constant fear and grief. Homes, schools and hospitals have been destroyed. International law is being ignored. World leaders are failing to pursue peace and justice, enabling war through arms and silence.

A decade ago, I was involved in work with academics and civil society organizations like the International Crisis Group to designate Gaza as an open-air prison. The goal was to draw attention to conditions that even then were dire: restrictions on movement, impassable borders and people trapped without regard to safety or human rights.

I was struck by how few people felt able to speak out. Many knew the reality but chose silence as a result of political costs or calculations or the risks of being accused of anti-Semitism or disloyalty.

[Senator Woo]

Today, as the evidence of violations of international law mounts, the risk of backlash increases, and yet the cost of silence also becomes ever more dangerous.

• (1720)

To quote Naomi Klein:

There's . . . a great deal of effort to suppress an honest examination of what has happened in Gaza and what is ongoing in Gaza. This has to do with an escalation of attacks on the Palestine solidarity movement globally, using these anti-terror laws to intimidate funders, to intimidate universities, to intimidate all of civil society. . . . all of Gaza is a crime scene. It's too large a crime to cover up. So all you can do is target the witnesses, which is what the war on journalists, the killing of so many courageous Palestinian journalists in Gaza, has been about. It's been about getting rid of the witnesses.

. . . We need to understand what this is about. This is about . . . not calling a genocide a genocide, not doing the research, presenting any of it as a form of antisemitism. . . . This is neo-McCarthyism... This is an attempt to just shut down discussion, because the evidence is so overwhelming.

I teach at a university, and you would think that we would be talking about this in every classroom, but the chill is real. I visit universities, I talk at universities, and I've been approached by so many students who have told me their professors will not talk about this in class. I don't think we can underestimate the extent to which this chilling effect can work. But thankfully we still have courageous human rights defenders, including working within the UN system, like —

— Special Rapporteur —

— Francesca Albanese, who are going to continue the pressure for an arms embargo, for the types of strategies that we need at all of our institutions to divest from companies that are involved in the systematic violation of human rights.

Many of us know by heart the words that German pastor Martin Niemöller used to condemn his initial inaction, and that of others around him, as the horrors of the Holocaust unfolded. It goes like this:

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews

And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me.

How many times must those of us in places of relative privilege learn the brutal lesson that human rights violations are never just someone else's problem? There is no such thing as staying silent or looking away without consequence. In Gaza, we see the deadly costs.

Canada's recent action to formally recognize the state of Palestine is an important diplomatic step. It does not, however, absolve us of further obligations or protect us from complicity in breaches of international, humanitarian and human rights law.

The international court processes highlighted by this motion underscore that every country will eventually be called to answer for what it did — or failed to do — in Gaza. It is not just Canada's reputation on the line. We are at risk of undermining the international institutions that we helped build and all that we work and hope for, at home and globally: justice, equality and peace.

We cannot turn away now and send the message that international law is optional or subject to political expediency.

The motion before us is a vital step toward accountability with respect to the Geneva Conventions, the Genocide Convention and Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as our values.

Upholding these obligations will mean working with international allies to bring about peace, secure humanitarian access to Gaza and support the work of international courts. Canada must also take steps at home to stop any remaining arms exports and other economic ties to those violating international law. We must also oppose dehumanizing rhetoric, wherever it occurs, understanding the role it all too often plays as a first and calculated step toward eroding human rights and inciting violence.

Colleagues, history judges not only those who commit atrocities, but also those who stand by silently while they are committed. It is not enough for Canada to champion human rights while refusing to investigate credible evidence that our trade, diplomatic and military policies may be enabling war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Those most marginalized and vulnerable may bear the cost of our silence first, but eventually it will reach all of us. Today, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure Canada finds the courage to do what is right and reaffirm our commitment to human rights at home and abroad.

Meegwetich, thank you.

(On motion of Senator White, debate adjourned.)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY MATTERS RELATING TO THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Hon. Margo Greenwood, for Senator Audette, pursuant to notice of September 25, 2025, moved:

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.

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

Hon. Margo Greenwood, for Senator Audette, pursuant to notice of September 25, 2025, moved:

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.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED 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. Margo Greenwood, for Senator Audette, pursuant to notice of September 25, 2025, moved:

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.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY

MOTION, AS MODIFIED, TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY HOUSING CRISIS AND CHALLENGES CURRENTLY FACING HOME BUYERS AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION ADOPTED

Hon. Clément Gignac, pursuant to notice of October 1, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy be authorized to examine and report on Canada's housing crisis and the challenges currently facing Canadian homebuilders, with a particular focus on government taxes, fees and levies;

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;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and the work accomplished by the committee on this subject, between October 5, 2023, and November 23, 2023, during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament under its order of reference relating to banking and commerce generally, 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 until 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

He said: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 5-10(1), I ask leave of the Senate to modify the motion so that it reads as follows:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy be authorized to examine and report on Canada's housing crisis and the challenges currently facing Canadian home buyers, with a particular focus on government taxes, fees and levies;

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;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and the work accomplished by the committee on this subject, between October 5, 2023, and November 23, 2023, during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament under its order of reference relating to banking and commerce generally, 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 until 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, as modified.)

[English]

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

STUDY ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS PEOPLES—COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO FOURTEENTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TABLED DURING FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM PREVIOUS SESSION TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Margo Greenwood, for Senator Audette, pursuant to notice of October 2, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples be authorized to examine and report on the government response, dated April 26, 2024, to the committee's fourteenth report (interim), entitled *Honouring the Children Who Never Came Home: Truth, Education and Reconciliation*, tabled in the Senate on July 19, 2023, during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee 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 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.)

STUDY ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS PEOPLES—COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO SIXTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TABLED DURING FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM PREVIOUS SESSION TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Margo Greenwood, for Senator Audette, pursuant to notice of October 2, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples be authorized to examine and report on the government response, dated February 23, 2023, to the committee's sixth report (interim), entitled *Not Enough: All*

Words and No Action on MMIWG, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 22, 2022, during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee 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 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.)

• (1730)

STUDY ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS PEOPLES—COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO TWELFTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TABLED DURING FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM PREVIOUS SESSION TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Margo Greenwood, for Senator Audette, pursuant to notice of October 2, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples be authorized to examine and report on the government response, dated March 21, 2024, to the committee's twelfth report (interim), entitled *On the Outside Looking In: The Implementation of the Cannabis Act and its Effects on Indigenous Peoples*, tabled in the Senate on June 14, 2023, during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee 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 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.)

STUDY ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO
FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS PEOPLES—MOTION TO PLACE
TWENTIETH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED DURING FIRST
SESSION OF FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT ON
ORDERS OF THE DAY ADOPTED

Hon. Margo Greenwood, for Senator Audette, pursuant to notice of October 2, 2025, moved:

That the twentieth report (interim) of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, entitled *Missing Records, Missing Children*, tabled in the Senate on July 25, 2024, during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament, be placed on the Orders of the Day under the rubric Other Business, Reports of Committees — Other, for consideration at the next sitting.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

STUDY ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO
FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS PEOPLES—MOTION TO PLACE
TWENTY-FIRST REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED DURING FIRST
SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT ON
ORDERS OF THE DAY ADOPTED

Hon. Margo Greenwood, for Senator Audette, pursuant to notice of October 2, 2025, moved:

That the twenty-first report (interim) of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, entitled *Respected and Protected: Towards the establishment of an Indigenous human rights framework*, tabled in the Senate on December 12, 2024, during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament, be placed on the Orders of the Day under the rubric Other Business, Reports of Committees — Other, for consideration at the next sitting.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY CANADA'S INTERESTS AND
ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE
FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT TO
CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Peter Harder, for Senator Boehm, pursuant to notice of October 2, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade be authorized to examine and report on Canada's interests and engagement in Africa, and other related matters;

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

That the committee be authorized, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit 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 no later than March 31, 2026, and that it 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.)

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF JANE GOODALL

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Marty Klyne rose pursuant to notice of October 2, 2025:

That he will call the attention of the Senate to the life and legacy of Jane Goodall.

He said: Honourable senators, with a heavy heart, I rise to honour Dr. Jane Goodall who passed away last week at the age of 91. She was a lovely lady to spend time with, and I am privileged and honoured to call her a friend.

We remember Dr. Goodall as a world-renowned primatologist, conservationist and United Nations Messenger of Peace. She also founded the Jane Goodall Institute, a community-driven organization working around the globe to save wildlife, including in Canada. To this Senate, Dr. Goodall was a friend who inspired and contributed to our efforts to pass the world's strongest legal protection for captive wild animals, the Jane Goodall act.

As I said when she visited us in April of last year, Dr. Goodall's discoveries about our closest living relatives — chimpanzees — revolutionized humanity's understanding of our relationship with animals. Dr. Goodall used science to prove what many Indigenous Peoples have always known: We are not separate from our fellow creatures but connected to them as "all our relations." The late Honourable Murray Sinclair, who authored the original Jane Goodall act, called her "... truly an elder of our global society ..."

With Dr. Goodall's passing, Mother Nature has lost her greatest champion. Humanity has lost a hero who embodied the best of us. Yet her spirit and work live on in those she inspired, including thousands of young people through her Roots and Shoots program, which is active in over 75 countries.

At this hour of climate change, mass extinction and cruelty to animals and each other, Dr. Goodall taught us that mission number one is to keep hope alive. She showed us that hope is not an attitude; it's an action. She taught us we can make a difference every day, and we must never give up.

I'll speak more about Dr. Goodall's legacy. First, here is a little more about her life.

As a child growing up in England, Dr. Goodall dreamed of going to Africa to live among and learn from wild animals. As she often joked, the plan was also to give Tarzan the chance to marry the right Jane. Her family didn't have much money, and the world was different then for girls. As she said, everyone except her mother laughed at her dream. Yet she persevered.

In her early twenties, Dr. Goodall got a job as a secretary to Louis Leakey, the anthropologist who discovered fossils of early humans in East Africa. He sensed her promise and hired her to study chimpanzees, our closest living relatives. In 1960, Dr. Goodall and her mother travelled to Gombe Stream in Tanzania. Young Jane's dream of living in the forest had come true. The stage was set for Dr. Goodall to revolutionize biology, break barriers for women and girls everywhere and change the world.

Patiently gaining the chimpanzees' trust over months, she observed an individual chimpanzee whom she named David Greybeard make and use tools to fish for termites. At the time, scientists believed toolmaking separated humans from animals. In response, Dr. Leakey sent his famous telegram, "Now we must redefine tool, redefine man, or accept chimpanzees as humans."

Dr. Goodall had proven, contrary to the male-dominated scientific understanding of the time, that animals have minds, personalities and emotions. Her discovery has had profound implications including, in her view, spiritual ones. In Dr. Goodall's words:

Being out in the forest, I had this great sense of spiritual awareness, of some spiritual power. And it was so strong out in the forest. You cannot help but understand how everything is interconnected. I often used to think sitting out there on my own that ... maybe there is a spark of that great spiritual power in each one of us. And if it's so, then maybe

it's in every animal too. Maybe it's what gives us life. Because we must label everything, we call it a soul. So if we have a soul, then so do the chimpanzees.

Over time, Dr. Goodall's work transformed into a vision and a mission to save our closest relatives and all living species from extinction, with a focus on community-based conservation. Until her death, Dr. Goodall travelled 300 days a year, spreading her message of hope, including with a visit to Ottawa just last month.

As Prime Minister Carney said at Dr. Goodall's passing, we must now "... take up her torch." I turn to her legacy and what we can all do to be a little more like Dr. Goodall.

Senators, this past weekend, you may have seen the documentary on Netflix entitled *Famous Last Words*. It turns out that Dr. Goodall pre-recorded an interview to air only after her passing.

If you didn't see it, you may have heard about it. This is because Dr. Goodall commented on several world leaders whom she would like to see Elon Musk invite for a very long trip on his spaceship. I add Dr. Goodall's last words to our record at some length:

In the place where I am now, I look back over my life. I look back at the world I've left behind. What message do I want to leave? I want to make sure that you all understand that each and every one of you has a role to play. You may not know it, you may not find it, but your life matters, and you are here for a reason.

And I just hope that reason will become apparent as you live through your life. I want you to know that, whether or not you find that role that you're supposed to play, your life does matter, and that every single day you live, you make a difference in the world. And you get to choose the difference that you make.

I want you to understand that we are part of the natural world. And even today, when the planet is dark, there still is hope. Don't lose hope. If you lose hope, you become apathetic and do nothing. And if you want to save what is still beautiful in this world — if you want to save the planet for the future generations, your grandchildren, their grandchildren — then think about the actions you take each day.

Because, multiplied a million, a billion times, even small actions will make for great change. ... I just hope that you understand that this life on Planet Earth isn't the end. I believe, and now I know, that there is life beyond death. That consciousness survives.

I can't tell you, from where I am, secrets that are not mine to share. I can't tell you what you will find when you leave Planet Earth. But I want you to know that your life on Planet Earth will make some difference in the kind of life you find after you die.

Above all, I want you to think about the fact that we are part — when we're on Planet Earth — we are part of Mother Nature. We depend on Mother Nature for clean air, for water, for food, for clothing, for everything. And as we destroy one ecosystem after another, as we create worse climate change, worse loss of diversity, we have to do everything in our power to make the world a better place for the children alive today, and for those that will follow.

You have it in your power to make a difference. Don't give up. There is a future for you. Do your best while you're still on this beautiful Planet Earth that I look down upon from where I am now.

God bless you all.

• (1740)

That was from Jane Goodall.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator White, debate adjourned.)

(At 5:41 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.)

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