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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

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

Prayers.

[Translation]

Thank you, colleagues. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[English]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: Honourable senators, today we are in the midst of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, an international campaign. Like every year, this 16-day period began on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, includes December 6, which marks the sad anniversary of the tragedy at Montreal's École Polytechnique, and runs until December 10, Human Rights Day.

Violence against women is a reality that requires real action. Men and women across the country wear a white ribbon to honour those who have suffered and to support those who are still suffering in silence. These weeks of solidarity serve as a reminder of the importance of recognizing the courage of survivors, bereaved families and everyone, men and women, who fights every day for a world where equality and respect prevail.

This campaign also reminds us that meaningful steps have been taken. Laws have been passed here, actions have been initiated, and civil society remains highly mobilized. However, there is still much to be done. We must continue our efforts to ensure women's equality and safety.

This vigilance is all the more necessary given that, as Simone de Beauvoir reminded us, all it takes is a political, economic, or religious crisis for women's rights to be called into question. Nothing is ever definitively achieved, and we must remain vigilant throughout our lives. This is especially true when we see setbacks in women's rights in certain countries that are not so far away.

I would like to take a moment to thank you, my colleagues. Thank you to all the senators here who are fighting for a more just, more equal, and violence-free society. Every day, I see your sincere commitment to building a future where everyone, regardless of their identity, can thrive without fear of hatred or violence.

In the Senate, combatting violence against women is not just a women's issue. To our male colleagues, I sincerely thank you for understanding this from the outset. This is an issue that concerns us all. Thank you, senators, for being our allies in this essential cause.

The 16 days of activism will end, but our commitment will remain. Together, let's continue to defend the rights and dignity of everyone in Canada.

WORLD AIDS DAY

Hon. Kristopher Wells: Honourable senators, I rise today to commemorate World AIDS Day, which is recognized each year on December 1.

This week, we pause to remember the more than 40 million lives lost globally to HIV and AIDS since the beginning of this epidemic. This includes over 40,000 Canadians who were our friends, lovers, family members, colleagues and community leaders whose absence is felt every single day. Their memories strengthen our resolve. Their stories remind us that progress has never come easily and that it has never come without courage.

We also pay tribute to the advocates, caregivers, researchers, front-line workers and community organizations who have carried this work forward for more than four decades. Their efforts have saved countless lives. Their advocacy has given hope where once there was none. Because of them, treatments have become more effective, prevention tools have become more accessible and stigma — slowly but steadily — has been challenged.

Yet, colleagues, our work is far from finished. In Canada, for the first time in many years, HIV infections are on the rise in some parts of our country, disproportionately affecting those who are already marginalized, including Black, Indigenous and 2SLGBTQI+ communities, as well as people who use substances, newcomers and those facing poverty or unstable housing. Rising rates of sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections remind us that inequities in access to prevention, testing and care remain deeply entrenched and driven by social inequities.

Globally, the picture is even more sobering. Millions still lack access to life-saving antiretroviral therapies and prevention treatments. Young women and girls in the Global South continue to bear the brunt of new infections. Individuals around the world face criminalization, discrimination and barriers to essential health services. Science has given us the tools to end HIV as a public health threat, but injustice prevents us from fully using them.

Honourable senators, Canada has long been a leader in the global HIV response, but leadership requires ongoing commitment. We call on the government to increase investment in treatment, prevention and research, both at home and abroad. This includes support for community-based organizations, investments in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and enhanced contributions to the Global Fund.

We also urge the government to ensure equitable access across Canada to prevention tools, including PrEP and doxycycline, which remain uneven and far too often out of reach for those who need it most.

We must act with urgency, compassion and renewed determination. Ending HIV is possible. It is just a matter of political will, resources and our collective commitment to human dignity.

On this World AIDS Day, let us recommit to a future where no one is left behind, where stigma has no place in our policies, laws or communities, and where the promise of an AIDS-free generation becomes not a dream but a much-needed reality. Thank you. *Meegwetich*.

TELLING OUR STORY

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, many of you have asked me why I present chapters to “Telling Our Story.” The reason I began the series “Telling Our Story” was because in 2016, we marked the one hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel during the First World War where hundreds of young Newfoundland men were killed or missing in action on July 1, 1916.

Along with that, since arriving in Ottawa almost 20 years ago, I have encountered many people who tell me that they have been everywhere in Canada except Newfoundland and Labrador, which still amazes me to this day. I decided then that my initiative would be that of “Telling Our Story,” and I would present 100 chapters through our three-minute Senators’ Statements to pay honour to the soldiers who fought for our freedom and, at the same time, promote the people, places and events that make my home province such a special place.

I announced my intentions in the Senate Chamber on May 19, 2016, and my plan at that time was that Chapter 1 would be about the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel, but that changed a couple of days later on May 21, which was my fifty-second birthday. As I sat in my office on Parliament Hill, I received a call from my oldest brother Eugene who informed me that our dad, who had been bedridden for almost two years, had taken a turn for the worse, and within a few hours he passed away.

At that time, I received overwhelming support and expressions of sympathy from my Senate colleagues. When I returned to Ottawa following my dad’s funeral, I had decided that my first chapter would be about my dad, Walter Joseph Manning.

Sitting in my office later that evening, I decided then and there that if I ever reached my goal of 100 chapters, my last chapter would be about my mom, Julia Mary Manning. Yesterday, I presented Chapter 99, so next week I will have the honour to present Chapter 100 and tell you all about a very special lady.

• (1410)

I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to those of you who have told me how much you enjoy my stories of Newfoundland and Labrador. For those of you who have not paid a visit yet, the planes do go both ways.

[Senator Wells (Alberta)]

Thanks again, and don’t forget to tune in next week — same place, same channel.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Elizabeth Paul. She is the granddaughter of the Honourable Senator Tannas.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, COP 30 opened as a beacon of hope for environmental advocates and frontline communities. However, the outcomes remain modest when measured against the accelerating pace and scale of the planetary crisis we’re facing.

[*English*]

The Global Implementation Accelerator was launched, but it creates no obligations. Despite overwhelming scientific evidence and broad public support for a phase-down of fossil fuels, in the end, even the words “fossil fuel” were kept out of the final statement, and countries were only able to agree to a joint declaration.

As in previous COPs, momentum could not overcome the influence of fossil fuel lobbyists, who outnumbered the delegation of every country in attendance except Brazil. Negotiations failed to resolve the longstanding structural tension between the needs of developing countries and the deeply unequal responsibility of developed nations for the impacts of fossil fuel dependence.

At COP 30, I emphasized that climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are not separate crises; they are interconnected parts of one emergency. Science confirms that seven of the nine planetary boundaries that make Earth safe for life have now been breached. This is not a warning of future catastrophe; it is our present reality, and it threatens our food systems, water supplies, health and economies.

In alignment with a recent International Court of Justice advisory decision, which clarifies that states have an obligation to align their actions with climate science and prevent significant environmental harm, COP 30 did deliver meaningful progress toward climate justice with a call for the development of a just transition mechanism, or JTM, along with transition pathways that will uphold human and labour rights, social dialogue, gender equality and the needs of marginalized communities.

The Tropical Forests Forever Facility, or TFFF, aimed at supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities, was also launched at COP 30.

Today it is clear, dear colleagues, that two futures are emerging. One is led by China, Europe and a handful of U.S. states, which are leading the way as they transition to electro-state economies. The other is driven by petrostates opposing an unstoppable transition while risking stranded assets and economic instability. Our peers in the G7 are transitioning, and global clean energy investment is expected to reach US \$3.3 trillion in 2025. How much of these funds will reach Canada?

The world is shifting. Science is unequivocal. International law is evolving. History will judge not our intentions but our actions.

We must choose coherence and foresight, align our economy with science, protect nature and support the most vulnerable.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of our former colleague the Honourable Brent Cotter.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Shi Yaobin, Yu Xubo and Zhang Tao, parliamentarians from the National People's Congress of China. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Gignac.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Clément Gignac: Honourable senators, I rise today as co-chair of the Canada-China Legislative Association to welcome a delegation of parliamentarians from the People's Republic of China. They are here today to attend the twenty-fifth bilateral meeting of our association. Among our guests are

Mr. Shi Yaobin and Mr. Zhang Tao, members of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, as well as Mr. Yu Xubo, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. The delegation is accompanied today by representatives of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Canada.

This year marks the fifty-fifth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and China, which makes our guests' visit to Canada particularly significant. Let me remind my colleagues that these diplomatic relations were established by the prime minister at the time, the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, even before Washington had established diplomatic relations with China.

I hope that all senators have had the opportunity to see the photo exhibit in the Senate foyer, which was kindly loaned to us by the Chinese Embassy to mark this important milestone in diplomatic relations between our two countries. This anniversary has also highlighted the efforts of successive governments in the development of Canada-China relations. Through this work, parliamentarians in both Canada and China have demonstrated their ongoing commitment.

[*English*]

Established in 1998, the Canada-China Legislative Association represents all officially recognized parties and groups from both the Senate and the other place. The association now has more than 100 members and counting.

The association has helped to sustain a steady dialogue between parliamentary counterparts. Since its establishment, it has held bilateral meetings across China and hosted numerous delegations.

Indeed, I had the opportunity to lead a delegation to China in late March. There, I had the chance to witness China's significant progress, both economically and environmentally.

[*Translation*]

I noticed the difference myself last March compared to a trip I took 10 years ago when I was Quebec's minister of trade and economic development. We've just concluded in-depth discussions on major bilateral issues, including ties between our two peoples, economic and trade cooperation and fundamental multilateral issues like climate change and the vital role of our multilateral institutions in supporting international cooperation and resolving shared challenges. To better understand and deal with the challenges we face, we first need to open a dialogue. We very much appreciate these constructive discussions.

Colleagues, the art of parliamentary diplomacy involves building bridges, not walls, despite of our differences. In closing, allow me to acknowledge the efforts that Prime Minister Carney is making to better identify sectors where cooperation is possible.

Please join me in wishing our guests a warm welcome.

Thank you, *xiexie*.

[English]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Samuel Anderson and Isaiah Anderson. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator McCallum.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

“DUMPING DAY” IN NOVA SCOTIA

Hon. Allister W. Surette: Honourable senators, the last Monday in November is known as Dumping Day in southwest Nova Scotia. It marks the official opening of the lobster fishery in Lobster Fishing Areas, or LFAs, 33 and 34, from Burns Point in Digby County to Eastern Passage in Halifax County.

Every year on this date, over 1,600 independently owned fishing boats across the region, with an estimated 12,000 people on board, set out with between 250 and 375 lobster traps each. These fishers dump them in the ocean one by one in the hopes of luring the delicious and lucrative *Homarus americanus*, or American lobster.

• (1420)

Lobster thrives in coastal Atlantic waters, but the South Shore of Nova Scotia is particularly blessed with LFAs 33 and 34, accounting for 30% of all lobster landings in Canada. That's 53 million pounds of lobster in 2024, worth over \$598 million.

The fishery is carefully managed so that a limited number of licences are issued and a maximum number of traps are permitted for each license holder. The start and length of the fishing season, which extends from the last Monday in November to the end of May, is carefully timed to avoid the summer spawning season. This has allowed the lobster population to stabilize and thrive.

Colleagues, that means the fishery operates throughout the winter months. I know it gets cold in Ottawa, but can you imagine being at sea in choppy waters in the middle of winter?

Today lobster has become Canada's most valuable food export species, worth \$2.9 billion in 2024, with major markets in China, the U.S. and South Korea, where Nova Scotia lobster is particularly prized for its quality. The entire marine economy in Nova Scotia, of which the lobster fishery is the largest component, contributes \$11 billion to the province's GDP. Over 18,000 people are employed in the seafood harvesting and processing sectors alone.

The spinoff effects of the lobster fishery contribute to the entire supply chain: boat building and repair, equipment manufacturing, construction, tourism and shipping. The lobster fishery is a critical lynchpin for the economic success of

Nova Scotia. The lobster fishery is the lifeblood of many coastal communities, and the fishers are their backbone. It's not just the licence holders who benefit; entire communities benefit.

Dumping Day is truly something to behold. This year, every single license holder set out at 5 a.m. on Monday, November 24. Hundreds of boats set sail from many wharves in southwestern Nova Scotia. I would like to take this opportunity to ask you to join me in wishing every captain and crew a safe and prosperous season. Thank you.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

JUSTICE

STATUTES REPEAL ACT—NOTICE OF MOTION TO RESOLVE THAT THE ACT AND THE PROVISIONS OF OTHER ACTS NOT BE REPEALED

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

That, pursuant to section 3 of the *Statutes Repeal Act*, S.C. 2008, c. 20, the Senate resolve that the Act and the provisions of the other Acts listed below, which have not come into force in the period since their adoption, not be repealed:

1. *Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. 33 (2nd Supp):

-Part II;
2. *Contraventions Act*, S.C. 1992, c. 47:

-paragraph 8(1)(d), sections 9, 10 and 12 to 16, subsections 17(1) to (3), sections 18 and 19, subsection 21(1) and sections 22, 23, 25, 26, 28 to 38, 40, 41, 44 to 47, 50 to 53, 56, 57, 60 to 62, 84 (in respect of the following sections of the schedule: 2.1, 2.2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 7.1, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 16) and 85;
3. *Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Implementation Act*, S.C. 1998, c. 32;
4. *Public Sector Pension Investment Board Act*, S.C. 1999, c. 34:

-sections 155, 157, 158 and 160, subsections 161(1) and (4) and section 168;
5. *Yukon Act*, S.C. 2002, c. 7:

-sections 70 to 75 and 77, subsection 117(2), sections 167, 168, 210, 211, 221, 227, 233 and 283;

6. *An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*, S.C. 2003, c. 26:
 -sections 4 and 5, subsection 13(3), section 21, subsections 26(1) to (3) and sections 30, 32, 34, 36 (with respect to section 81 of the *Canadian Forces Superannuation Act*), 42 and 43;
7. *Budget Implementation Act*, 2009, S.C. 2009, c. 2:
 -section 394;
 -sections 401 to 404;
8. *Payment Card Networks Act*, S.C. 2010, c. 12, s. 1834:
 -sections 6 and 7;
9. *Financial System Review Act*, S.C. 2012, c. 5:
 -sections 54 and 56 to 59;
10. *Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act*, S.C. 2012, c. 17:
 -sections 70 to 77;
11. *Jobs, Growth and Long-term Prosperity Act*, S.C. 2012, c. 19:
 -sections 459, 460, 462 and 463;
12. *Strengthening Military Justice in the Defence of Canada Act*, S.C. 2013, c. 24:
 -sections 12, 13 and 46;
13. *Economic Action Plan 2013 Act, No. 1*, S.C. 2013, c. 33:
 -subsection 228(2);
14. *Northwest Territories Devolution Act*, S.C. 2014, c. 2:
 -section 47;
15. *Safeguarding Canada's Seas and Skies Act*, S.C. 2014, c. 29:
 -section 28, subsection 29(1), sections 31, 33, 35, 37 to 39, subsection 40(1), sections 41 to 49, subsections 50(2) and (5), sections 52, 53, 55 and 56;
16. *Economic Action Plan 2014 Act, No. 2*, S.C. 2014, c. 39:
 -sections 306, 308, subsection 309(1), section 311, subsection 313(2);
 -sections 387 to 400;

17. *Tougher Penalties for Child Predators Act*, S.C. 2015, c. 23:
 -section 32;
18. *Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act*, S.C. 2015, c. 27:
 -sections 10, 15 and 35;
19. *Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act*, S.C. 2015, c. 29:
 -section 2; and
20. *Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area Act*, S.C. 2015, c. 38:
 -section 4.

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AFFECT SITTING ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2025, AND AUTHORIZE COMMITTEES TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE SENATE

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Monday, December 8, 2025, at 6 p.m.;

That rule 3-3(1) be suspended on that day;

That, notwithstanding rule 9-10(2), if a vote has been or is deferred to that day, it take place at the end of Question Period; and

That committees of the Senate scheduled to meet on that day be authorized to sit even though the Senate may then be sitting and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 2 p.m.

• (1430)

[English]

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

WINTER MEETING, FEBRUARY 20-21, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly concerning the Twenty-fourth Winter Meeting, held in Vienna, Austria, on February 20 and 21, 2025.

MEETING OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION,
MARCH 20-21, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly concerning the Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, held in Madrid and Canary Islands, Spain, on March 20 and 21, 2025.

ANNUAL SESSION, JUNE 29-JULY 3, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly concerning the Thirty-second Annual Session, held in Porto, Portugal, from June 29 to July 3, 2025.

[Translation]

NATIONAL FINANCE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO MEET
DURING SITTING OF THE SENATE

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 meet on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, for the purpose of examining the subject matter of all of Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, even though the Senate may then be sitting, and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

QUESTION PERIOD

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

CANADA-ALBERTA MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Hon. Denise Batters: Senator Moreau, media reports about Steven Guilbeault quitting cabinet clearly show that Prime Minister Carney's memorandum of understanding, or MOU, with Alberta was not approved by cabinet. One article of the events last Tuesday said, "Then [Guilbeault] headed into cabinet, where the agreement with Alberta wasn't discussed at all."

In fact, when Guilbeault — still a cabinet minister — heard about the rumoured MOU with Alberta, he had to ask the Prime Minister's Office for a briefing on it since he did not have information from being at the cabinet table. Senator Moreau, there are two possibilities: The Government of Canada's MOU was either not properly approved or it is completely meaningless. Which is it?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The short answer is none of it. The government, specifically the Prime Minister and the Minister of Indigenous Services, has been very clear in its commitment to its legal obligation to consult with Indigenous Peoples; it is within the MOU. I think that if you were here yesterday, it's not something that is useless. It is very important.

The MOU lays out clearly that the federal government has a fiduciary duty to consult. It states:

Canada and Alberta are committed to respecting Aboriginal and Treaty rights, engaging in early, consistent, and meaningful consultation with Indigenous Peoples, in a manner that promotes reconciliation, and respects the rights and cultures of Indigenous Peoples while advancing economic opportunities through Indigenous ownership and partnerships.

The MOU with Alberta is for Canada's future, particularly the economy and the environment as well; it's not useless.

Senator Batters: You didn't answer if cabinet approved it. Prime Minister Carney seems to fundamentally misunderstand his role as Prime Minister. He signs fake executive order-type documents in front of the press like he's a president. He makes sudden announcements without consultation like he's a CEO. And now he's acting like a king, signing documents that bind the Crown without consulting the very cabinet that forms the basis of our government. If this MOU is not being discussed at cabinet meetings, then what the heck is?

Senator Moreau: You probably do not believe the premise of your question. You certainly know that the MOU has been discussed within cabinet first, and it's very important not only for Alberta but also for Indigenous Peoples, for the economy of this country and for the environment of this country.

If you really worry about the economy, the environment and the future of Canada, why do you say such things that are not accurate?

[Translation]

FINANCE

COST OF LIVING

Hon. Claude Carignan: My question is for the government leader.

Leader, a recent report by the Observatoire québécois des inégalités states that food insecurity now affects large portions of Quebec's middle class. Apparently, the rate of food insecurity went from 8.5% in 2020 to 18.5% in 2024, affecting 1.7 million Quebecers. This is an alarming problem in a context where housing costs and the overall cost of living continue to rise. The social safety net is unravelling after 10 years of Liberal government. During that period, the gap between rich and poor has widened and more and more Canadian families find themselves unable to provide the bare minimum for their children.

Leader, how do you justify the fact that, after a decade in power, your government is allowing Canadian families to experience food insecurity, even though it has the levers to act? How do you explain that 10 years of Liberal governance have produced such disastrous and disturbing results?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, obviously Canadians disagree with the conclusions you've drawn in the introduction to your question.

The government tabled a budget that will cut taxes for 22 million Canadians and eliminate the consumer carbon tax. This same government is investing \$13 billion in housing, \$1.5 billion in the Affordable Housing Fund and \$1 billion in low-interest loans to help people who are at risk of losing their homes.

Do you know what? Your colleagues in the other place voted against these measures. How can you seriously stand up in this chamber and say that you empathize with Canadians when your colleagues are opposing any action the government takes?

Senator Carignan: Leader, can you name five real, practical measures that will guarantee that workers, single-parent families and middle-class families will not have to choose between putting a roof over their heads and putting food on the table? I don't just want you throwing numbers around, please.

Senator Moreau: The first measure is the one that I already spoke about. Senator Carignan, the government is cutting taxes for 22 million Canadians. Do you know what a tax cut means? If you know, then stand up and tell us the answer and stop asking that question. It means more money in Canadians' pockets, and more money in Canadians' pockets means we're one step closer to food security.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

Hon. Chantal Petitclerc: Senator Moreau, today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. A few days ago, a report by the Office of Public Service Accessibility indicated that the federal government is significantly behind in implementing its own accessibility policy for public servants with disabilities.

Of course, hiring targets have been met, but many employees still don't have accessible computer tools, adequate offices or an accessible, work-friendly environment. That is a problem.

My question is this: How are we to believe that the goal of an accessible Canada is realistic if the government itself doesn't set an example in its own accessibility policies for its own employees?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): This issue is very important, especially today, and I want to thank you for pointing out that the employment objectives for persons with disabilities have been met.

Obviously, in the current technological situation where the government is operating under a hybrid model, the issue of properly setting up workstations is a lot more complicated than it would be if people were working in offices, with some degree of operational consistency.

This is an important question and a legitimate concern that I intend to raise with the government. I'll get back to you about the time frames for reaching these objectives. As you know, we're looking at changing things around in terms of hybrid-type government operations and office-based work.

• (1440)

Senator Petitclerc: Thank you.

[English]

The document also reveals that there is a significant lack of external consultation with people with disabilities. It says such consultation would provide essential feedback from the public to help the government departments align and better deliver. This concerns me, because we've heard "nothing about us without us" so many times from ministers in committees.

Is the government going to address that?

Senator Moreau: This is a very important question. “Consultation” has been the main word in this room for many days now. I will certainly raise the question with the minister, and I’ll get back to you on whether concrete action will be taken on that subject.

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

Hon. Kim Pate: Senator Moreau, on this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I recall a sincere promise, made by the first minister responsible for disability inclusion to herself live with a disability, that the Canada Disability Benefit, or CDB, would lift hundreds of thousands of people out of poverty. The month after the Senate passed legislation based on that trusted minister’s promise and commitment to develop the benefit in consultation with persons with disabilities, the government removed the minister from her role. Budget 2025 contains steps to patch the benefit that resulted, but disability groups like Inclusion Canada highlight that “. . . Budget 2025 stops short of delivering real change. The Canada Disability Benefit remains too low and too narrow . . .”

What is the timeline for honouring the government’s promise to lift hundreds of thousands of persons with disabilities out of poverty?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Timelines are very difficult to assess, as you probably know, but I know you continue your advocacy on this very important measure. I thank you for the question.

I cannot speak for the previous government to which you referred; however, the measures introduced in Budget 2025 are meant to directly address the advocacy requests of stakeholders. Additionally, the government is committed to not clawing back from the Canada Disability Benefit. The government will continue to work across departments to deliver on making the CDB income-tax-exempt.

Senator Pate: Thank you, Senator Moreau.

How many additional people does the government project will access the Canada Disability Benefit through the Budget 2025 measures, and how many of those individuals will be lifted out of poverty by a benefit of less than \$7 per day?

Senator Moreau: My understanding is that, in total, including Budget 2025 measures, the government estimates that 600,000 people will benefit from the Canada Disability Benefit. This will help lift 40,000 Canadians out of poverty by 2028. It is important to keep in mind that the benefit is meant to supplement, not replace, existing benefits, such as the Canada Child Benefit as well as benefits from provinces and territories.

FINANCE

OMNIBUS BILLS

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Senator Moreau, in your first meeting with those of us who are part of the Canadian Senators Group, or CSG, we all shared our core concern: that we be allowed to do our work and for that work to be respected. Omnibus bills of whatever size — such as the budget implementation act, or BIA, and Bill C-4 — undermine our ability to meet our constitutional obligations. I realize that the attempt to hide clause 4 in Bill C-4 was obviously made because people are embarrassed, and they should be. This bill would exempt political parties from privacy considerations.

Would you please consider separating clause 4 from Bill C-4 so that we can provide the scrutiny necessary to let the economic measures go ahead but allow that clause to be studied?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I’ll be very honest with you: I’m not aware that it is the intention of the government to change Bill C-4 as it is now in the other place. Bill C-4 is still at the other place. We’ll have the privilege to study Bill C-4 as soon as it comes here — hopefully before Christmas, but it’s not for me to say if it will be here by then. I think you should ask questions of Senator Housakos, who would probably be able to answer regarding whether Bill C-4 will be here as soon as next week.

My understanding is that there is no intention to withdraw clause 4 from Bill C-4.

Senator Wallin: We don’t want to hold up economic measures, and I think all political parties support this, but the problem is that people go to the door and collect data. It’s not just questions — those questions are deemed consent — but they look around; they see what car you drive, what dog you have, how many kids are there, et cetera.

The consumer, the voter, the citizen — they can’t challenge this because they don’t know what’s been collected. Can we please study this separately?

Senator Moreau: I know it’s a concern that not only you but also some of your colleagues are sharing with me. For instance, I made sure it was possible for one of your colleagues to speak with the government leader in the other place concerning that matter. But my understanding is that there is no intention to change the way the bill is written at this time.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CANADIANS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: My question is for the government leader. Senator Moreau, I want to ask you about equality and affordability today.

On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we look to improve the status of people with disabilities in this country. My question regards looking at the big picture and the long term. What is the vision of the federal government? What is the vision that you aspire to in order to substantively and substantially improve the status of Canadians living with disabilities?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): If I may, I will just repeat some parts of the answer I gave to your colleague Senator Pate. Including Budget 2025 measures, the government estimates that 600,000 people will benefit from the Canada Disability Benefit. This will help lift 40,000 Canadians out of poverty by 2028.

My understanding is that — and this is clear because of Budget 2025 — the government remains committed to supporting the most vulnerable Canadians, and those people are among them.

Senator Cardozo: Thank you.

The National Pharmacare Committee of Experts, established by the Minister of Health in November last year, issued a report last week. It made a series of recommendations, including that the government fully fund access to essential medicines for Canadians.

Will the government commit to implementing these recommendations, and can you tell us about the status of the agreements with those provinces that have not yet signed on to pharmacare?

Senator Moreau: You're aware that the government already has agreements with many provinces and territories: British Columbia, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Yukon. The Quebec government has its own pharmacare.

My understanding is that there are ongoing negotiations with other provinces and territories to sign agreements similar to what we already have with those provinces and territories I mentioned. There is a commitment from the government to continue working with the provinces to achieve that.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): During the campaign, your government promised a dramatic surge in home building — what you called the most ambitious housing plan since the Second World War — yet the PBO's latest report shows Build Canada Homes is on track to deliver just 26,000 units over five years, significantly short of your goal of 500,000 homes and barely a 2% increase over existing projections.

So, leader, how can you look Canadians in the eye and claim this resembles anything close to a doubling of home building while families across the country face soaring rents, shrinking options and a deepening housing crisis?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I will give the same answer I provided to Senator Housakos: If you care about housing, Canadians and the difficulties Canadians are facing, will you be supporting Budget 2025 here? Will you vote for the budget? Because your colleagues in the other place voted against all the measures put forward in Budget 2025.

• (1450)

Thank you for the question because it underlines that we have an initial \$13 billion in capitalization to bolster industry, other orders of government and Indigenous communities to build affordable housing everywhere in Canada. We already have six sites that have been targeted — Dartmouth, Longueuil, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton — for 4,000 factory-built homes, and, in the end, it will be up to 45,000.

Senator Martin: The numbers are truly abysmal, and your track record as a government is failing Canadians. The only paradigm your government is shifting is how quickly a Liberal can break a promise.

The PBO also warns federal housing spending will drop by more than half, leaving Canada almost 700,000 homes short of market demand by 2035. Leader, Canadians don't need any more photo ops or announcements. They need homes. When will the government drop the fantasy, face reality and actually deliver results?

Senator Moreau: You agree we need homes, but you won't agree to cut GST for first-time home buyers, because you voted against the budget. You don't agree to foster building new houses everywhere in Canada, because you voted against the budget.

This is \$13 billion, an unprecedented amount. That's the record of the new government. I don't agree with your premises.

PUBLIC SAFETY

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE DRONES

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, at our National Security and Defence Committee here in the Senate, we revealed that 79% of the RCMP drones are Chinese-made. Each is deemed a high security risk due to data-handling vulnerabilities, supply chain concerns and potential foreign access.

These drones support evidence gathering, monitoring and tactical operations, yet they come from the same adversarial regime now openly attempting to intimidate Canadians on our soil. This week, for example, candidate Joe Tay testified that Chinese Communist Party agents stalked his campaign, threatened volunteers, monitored his home and circulated mock wanted posters, while the Prime Minister initially dismissed a Liberal MP's public amplification of a bounty on Tay's head as harmless.

Leader, how did your government allow Canada's national policy to rely on nearly a thousand risky Chinese drones while failing to confront Beijing's escalating interference in —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, Senator Housakos.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The Chinese drones you are referring to are not used in sensitive operations by the RCMP. My understanding is that when those drones are used, they are used for rescue operations, which are not sensitive operations. The RCMP is provided with many other drones that are used whenever there is a public safety issue, and that is the reality.

The idea of the government is to make sure that the RCMP is well equipped, and when you have a rescue operation, I can tell you that those people who need to be rescued don't bother about the origin of the drone. They want to have the equipment, the proper equipment, used in order to save their life.

Senator Housakos: You're absolutely right. The RCMP don't use the drones for VIP operations. They don't use them for intelligence gathering. They hardly use them for anything when it comes to our defence situation, and, by the way, 80% of the RCMP drones are these particular drones, so the only thing they're using them for is maybe birdwatching.

Senator Moreau, this is the nation of engineers where the Prime Minister admires while Canadians get the security risks and traffic, and in the meantime, China gets all the contracts. Is this what we're going to be expecting from a Mark Carney government?

Senator Moreau: Birdwatching is better done when you are on the ground, not when you're flying a drone overhead.

The main idea is that those drones are not used for security purposes whenever there is a security risk to Canada, and they are quite useful when they're for rescue operations.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

Hon. Mary Coyle: Senator Moreau, the Canada Disability Benefit Bill came to the Senate in 2023. Since then, I have raised concerns nine times about the status of that benefit. Each time, I've been reassured the government is focused on persons with disabilities receiving the benefit in a timely and reliable manner.

Yesterday, *The Globe and Mail* reported that Canadians with disabilities are waiting three to six months for the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, to review their applications for the Disability Tax Credit, which is a government-imposed requirement for the Canada Disability Benefit.

In September, the Minister of Finance said they have a 100-day plan to improve the CRA service standards. On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, could you assure Canadians with disabilities that they will receive timely service so they can finally receive the Canada Disability Benefit?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Coyle. I'm happy to rise, as did my predecessor, to say this remains a priority for the government and to ensure that persons with disabilities receive their benefits in a timely and effective manner. That's why Budget 2025 announced a blanket \$150 cheque to cover Disability Tax Credit costs for persons receiving the Canada Disability Benefit because they have to incur costs in order to be able to receive and continue to receive the benefit.

This will help remove financial barriers and help lift Canadians out of poverty. The government remains committed to building on their cross-departmental work to improve the Canada Disability Benefit and the Disability Tax Credit as well.

Senator Coyle: Thank you. I hope that does speed things up. I think it will help with the cost issue, but will it help accelerate it?

According to the latest available data from 2017, up to 80% of Canadians with severe disabilities had not claimed the Disability Tax Credit. It's concerning that the majority of Canadians with severe disabilities do not claim this credit. What is the government doing to increase uptake in this tax credit so more people can rightfully take advantage of it and claim that disability benefit?

Senator Moreau: Thank you for the question. I mentioned that the government introduced the blanket \$150 cheque to ensure that people with disabilities are able to cover the cost and access the Disability Tax Credit. For some people, it's very important to have that additional amount.

In addition, the government has committed to automatic tax filing for low-income Canadians to ensure that they receive the benefits they are owed. This is important work to support Canadians with disabilities, and the government remains committed to that.

PUBLIC SAFETY

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Senator Moreau, I join my colleagues today in raising questions on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. I want to ask you about often unseen disabilities in a population that is also unseen.

Correctional Investigator Ivan Zinger, before announcing his early resignation, published an annual report with a focus on mental health care within corrections services. This is how the Correctional Investigator described regional treatment centres run by Correctional Service Canada, or CSC:

These facilities are not positioned to provide specialized, psychiatric hospital care, particularly to those with severe levels of mental and physical needs. . . .

Senator Moreau, CSC accepted some of Mr. Zinger's recommendations, but how will they address these issues?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): As you point out, the CSC has accepted some of the recommendations. I do not have a list of health care professionals that CSC intends to consult in their important work, but since they accepted most of the recommendations, I will certainly inquire to find out when they think they will finalize this. I will get you a copy of the list of professionals they want to bring to help them.

Senator Clement: Senator Moreau, the Black Justice Strategy calls for support for hidden disabilities, too. Recommendation 28 calls on the government to do the following:

Prioritize funding to programs that identify and train Black mental health professionals to provide culturally-sensitive mental health care and early intervention to Black children, families, and individuals, and ensure that individuals in need of these services can access them without regard to cost.

What progress has been made on this?

Senator Moreau: I've been told that there has been a lot of progress, but I do want to highlight the Promoting Health Equity: Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund, the objectives of which are to increase the understanding of the unique barriers to social determinants of mental health for Black Canadians and to increase knowledge of effective, culturally focused approaches and programs for improving mental health and addressing its key social determinants for Black Canadians, including a focus on youth and their families, as well as community environments.

FINANCE

BUDGET 2025

Hon. Krista Ross: Senator Moreau, as you will be aware, the copies of the budget distributed during lock-up on budget day didn't include multiple annexes, including Annex 5 on legislative measures. That meant that senators and their staff were not able to review these various measures prior to the tabling of the budget. Not only were documents missing during the lockup, but copies of the budget were not distributed to senators' offices after its tabling.

• (1500)

It has been a month, and I am aware of multiple senators — including me, a member of the National Finance Committee — who have still not been able to obtain a full copy of the budget. Why is the government not distributing copies of the budget to all parliamentarians? Why would it leave senators out?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): My understanding is that the objective of cost reduction is behind the idea of why copies have not been distributed as they were in the past.

That being said, I have received a number of requests from colleagues who would like to have a written copy of the budget. I have asked, and as soon as I have extra copies — if I receive any — I will be glad to provide you with one.

Senator Ross: Thank you, Senator Moreau. I am aware that an online version is available, however, copies of the budget were distributed to members of Parliament but not to senators. It used to be standard practice for copies to be delivered to all senators' offices upon tabling. Other than what you have just said, do you have any other reason why that would no longer be the practice? Can we reinstate it going forward?

Senator Moreau: I will certainly ask that this very good practice be reinstated. As I mentioned earlier, I am not aware of any other reason why hard copies of the budget have not been distributed as they were in the past.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INDIAN ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Michèle Audette moved third reading of Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Indian Act (new registration entitlements), as amended.

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

She said: Honourable senators, I thank the Anishinaabe people. Thank you for allowing me to tread on your land every day when I put on my senator's moccasins.

Before we began, I had a big surprise that made me cry. I didn't think my partner would be there to support us. It's true, this affects your children and mine. You supported me during the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, when Joyce Echaquan's case came to light, and especially during the study of Bill S-2 since June, with all the reading I had to do. What's more, you feed me every day, and I thank you for your patience.

I don't know how he manages to be so patient, but in my message, I will try, with a lot of love, to share with you the impatience and injustice that far too many people suffer. Naturally, I rise today with what I was going to call an unshakeable sense of conviction about my responsibilities, as we begin consideration of Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Indian Act (new registration entitlements), at third reading, now that it has been strengthened and transformed by the Senate's amendments.

I also want to point out that it was the Senate that was asked to carry out the initial review, as our colleague Senator Ringuette explained it so well. Thank you for raising this important issue, something I believed in. I believed in it when Bill C-38 came before the previous Parliament, which was apparently a previous government as well when, in fact, it was the same Liberal Party in power.

When Bill S-2 came along, my message was the same, knowing that we have court-imposed deadlines, imposed this time by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. Over time, deadlines changed, which was perfectly normal for people thirsting for justice and reparations, because we finally had the opportunity and the momentum to bring back to the forefront what we had always been saying, namely that all discrimination stems from the Indian Act.

Furthermore, the love and pride that I feel for this person, for Mandy Gull-Masty, are unshakable. In a family like mine, with five children, consensus is a rare thing. All of us are diverse, whether emotionally, intellectually, debate-wise or generationally, and both of us are trying to engage in this debate respectfully.

The minister expressed it well this morning at the Special Chiefs Assembly, and with a lot of tact, by saying that she and I had taken two different paths. I liked that. During our discussions, I told her out of respect that the other place is an elected chamber — and I have tremendous respect for that — but that this chamber is elected with a beginning and an end, elected on the basis of a certain priority and a certain government. I respect that. However, Canada has embraced a type of democracy that seeks balance, or sober second thought. This time, it is the Senate's turn to have the first look, to be able to amend, change or adopt bills that come its way during this journey, which is my life as well — and I hope that my health will allow me to stay here for a long time to come.

I would like to thank all the courageous individuals who came forward to speak, to once again repeat and relive these palpable traumas. I would also like to thank all the others who, through their work, their healing and their empowerment, have given us countless ideas of how to strengthen the Indigenous Peoples Committee's position with the proposed amendments.

Chiefs came to testify, as did former Chiefs, experts, lawyers and even women who studied law in order to challenge the bill. I'm referring to Sharon McIvor, who has been fighting for 50 years. I'd like to mention something before delving into Bill S-2. We are not little silos; we are senators and we have a great duty toward every bill. I take certain bills very personally. I'm human, but I try to remain respectful.

Sometimes we do things without realizing how quickly everything is moving. I have truly felt that the gap is widening between the rights of Indigenous women and those recognized elsewhere within our own legal system.

That I know. I feel it and I have seen it. We have seen it together. We have witnessed it and have even been party to it. I also know that it was not out of malice or ill intent. I know that this is often done out of ignorance. An old doctrine of power is to keep people in ignorance. This time, I don't want to say that we are going to be kept in ignorance, but if we know something, then now is the time to say something.

Yes, Bill C-5 was rammed through, and I'm sure there are various explanations for that. However, I want to talk about another bill that was passed. Bill C-5 will be the subject of another important debate. When did I feel that there were two separate constitutional regimes and that one was detrimental to the other? That is what I felt.

• (1510)

I'm trying to understand why the legal and, of course, political systems in Canada are poised to recognize the second generation born abroad but have maintained a phasing-out mechanism since 1985, when the Indian Act was amended to add the cut-off rule after the second generation without our consent.

When examining the text of Bill C-3 — formerly Bill C-71 under the previous government of the same political party — the website states that:

On December 19, 2023, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice declared that key provisions of the first-generation limit for those born abroad are unconstitutional.

When I saw that, I thought it was an argument in our favour. There cannot be two standards of justice. That is simply not possible. Further on the website, it states that the Government of Canada didn't appeal the decision because we agree that the current law has unacceptable consequences for Canadians whose children were born outside the country. We're talking about our children who were born here. As Innu mothers, Mohawk mothers, Atikamekw mothers, we do not have those rights. Tell me why? I simply cannot and will not accept this.

I want to scream. We all want to scream, but we're intelligent people. In the legislative summary, we come across documentation that still includes the term "lost Canadian" in this important bill. Further on, it states the following:

Lost Canadians and their descendants refer to anyone who was born abroad to a Canadian parent in the second or subsequent generations before the legislation comes into force. To demonstrate a substantial connection to Canada, a parent who was born abroad would need to have a cumulative 1,095 days of physical presence in Canada before the birth or adoption of the child. As far as I'm concerned, this is a no-brainer; it refers to a parent. So they are going to say yes to them, but no to me because I am an Indian woman under the Indian Act.

In my heart, in the circumstances before us today, I don't feel like a lost Indian woman, but that just proves to me once again that there are two separate constitutional systems. We honour and celebrate identity, as Senator Coyle so eloquently said concerning Bill C-3, and I thank her, but I'd like to be able to celebrate the identity of our women, our sons, our brothers and Indigenous men, rather than continue on the path of identity extinction.

It is therefore imperative that we pass Bill S-2 with the amendments proposed by the committee. I will list them for you again to refresh your memories. I think it is important. The bill proposes the following:

To restore eligibility for Indian status for individuals and their descendants who lost it because of enfranchisement, in accordance with *Nicholas*.

Enable individuals to remove their names from the Indian Register if they so desire. This was not set out in *Nicholas*; it was added.

Remove the use of outdated and offensive language, particularly the expression "mentally incompetent Indians." That is a good thing, but I want to reiterate here that this wasn't included in *Nicholas*.

Enable women who were automatically transferred to their husband's band to go back to their birth band.

That is good. They should be given back that right. In the amendments that we examined, debated and adopted by 10 senators to one, the message was unequivocal. The people who came to talk to us confirmed that we need to take action to eliminate any remaining forms of discrimination stemming from the Indian Act. It is essential that we eliminate the non-liability clauses.

Eliminating the second-generation cut-off tore families apart and continues to do so today. From a purely mathematical point of view, consider how the Department of Indian Affairs, as it was once known, or Indigenous Services Canada today, performs a complex calculation to ensure that we are enfranchised, that we are no longer there, and, as Sharon McIvor so aptly put it this morning at the Assembly of Chiefs, when there are no more Indians, the lands will revert to the Crown.

This is a very powerful political issue, but unfortunately it is not being discussed openly. I'm telling you, I've witnessed it, I know what I'm talking about. We conducted a national inquiry into missing and murdered women. We have seen the evidence. I also want to highlight the work of my colleagues.

[English]

Senator Francis, when you were Chair of the Indigenous Peoples Committee, the report was very clear.

[Translation]

The Indian Act perpetuates assimilation. The full name of the Indian Act is An Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians.

It's the same act but under a different name. First of all, I'm not a lost Indian woman. Second, I'm not a savage, but this legislation still decides whether or not my child will be recognized. That doesn't cut it for me.

The amendments propose eliminating persisting sex-based inequities, repealing non-liability clauses, and reinstating the one-parent eligibility rule if one parent is deceased. I was in Maliotenam not long ago and had to accompany a fearful and stressed mother to collect the father's signature. How is it possible that today, in 2025, we have to escort a woman to protect her safety because she can't go there alone. That is also unacceptable to me. Fortunately, the person concerned gave his signature, but women who brought children into the world shouldn't have to go to such lengths; they shouldn't have to come face-to-face with people who were once violent or possibly absent.

Of course, there's another important amendment, the one that calls for a 12-month implementation period.

[English]

Senator Tannas, thank you so much for proposing this amendment. It is clear that you have expertise. Whichever pair of shoes or moccasins you wear, it is clear that you have expertise with the Indigenous Peoples Committee as well.

He stated in committee that 12 months would provide some acknowledgement of Minister Gull-Masty's pleas to complete the consultation.

I agree with him that the government should continue its consultation process. This consultation should be about how to support First Nations communities in welcoming new members. This is very important.

The concern of fraud was also mentioned. We have that concern — well beyond the Indian Act. However, that is another subject, because it also affects universities, when people apply for funding, jobs or to boards whose postings indicate that they are looking for an applicant who is First Nation, Métis or Inuk. When it is fraud, it's an important subject to debate. I agree that we are all concerned about fraud.

[Translation]

The witnesses want the government to do away with the second-generation cut-off. Everyone agrees, except one Chief from Kahnawà:ke, who wants nothing to do with Bill S-2. I am putting that on the record out of respect, because, yes, one nation, one individual, opposed the entire bill. The National Chief came to tell us that.

She stated that while the Assembly of First Nations supports the fight against discrimination and the bill is intended to eliminate discrimination, it also believes that this bill is yet another piecemeal approach to combatting discrimination, an approach that has never worked. It does not restore justice and will never offer lasting solutions.

• (1520)

She added that the Assembly of First Nations endorses the amendments to the Indian Act that repeal the second-generation rule and that introduce a system for granting Indian status to direct descendants of a registered Indian or a person eligible for registration who may be eligible for that right.

[English]

I agree with Sharon McIvor when she said this morning that you are the leaders of today and tomorrow of what she has been doing for 50 years, and many of us walk beside you. Thank you so much.

[Translation]

Zoe Craig-Sparrow said during testimony that the second-generation cut-off has devastated families for 40 years. All major consultations, including those conducted by the federal government, have concluded that it is discriminatory. We don't need another decade of studies. We need action.

Chief Barbara Côté, representing 204 First Nations — or one-third of First Nations in Canada — said that ending the second-generation cut-off and doing away with non-liability clauses are not controversial in our communities. It is urgent. We have been ready for a long time.

Chief Verreault-Paul pointed out that these exclusion rules have broken our families and excluded our children. They jeopardize our languages and cultures. Patching them up is not enough. They must be eliminated entirely.

Serge and I are proof of this. Our mothers married the most handsome Québécois men. We were expelled from the community. We no longer speak the Innu language every day. We have to live in Montreal or Dupuis, in Abitibi, and so on. We have experienced the effects of this discrimination when a woman marries a non-Indian, and later those who correspond to subsections 6(1) and 6(2).

Concerning the non-liability clauses, my experience has been that, for a long time, regardless of the government in power, the public service — operating under different names, like Indian Affairs, Aboriginal or Indigenous Services or Relations, and the like — kept telling me, and I do mean for a very long time, “Yes, discrimination exists, Michèle, but we're waiting on court proceedings, and then we'll make changes based on how the proceedings turn out.” I was naive enough to wonder if that was just the way that bills worked. I soon learned that it wasn't. What was clear was the message that I was given each time: If you want to argue, argue with your Chiefs. I have no problem challenging my Chief, but I'm challenging a federal law, an outdated federal policy that you forced on us, and I'm supposed to complain to my band council? No. As I see it, it's important to keep things in their proper place.

Let's not forget that Indigenous women have only been able to file complaints before a human rights tribunal since 2007-08. For us, the case law is recent. We are witnesses; we know that exists. I believe we shouldn't keep putting things off. It's important to pass Bill S-2 as amended and send it to the other side quickly.

[Senator Audette]

Senator Pate explained very clearly that she couldn't find any clauses indicating that an individual could not file a complaint after being discriminated against. The same goes for our great leader, Sharon McIvor, who pointed out that nowhere does it say that when the Charter is violated in terms of equality, it cannot be challenged.

I can tell you, for example, that when we get involved, the Canadian Human Rights Commission has a hard time when it receives complaints relating to Indian status and membership. The federal government will immediately appeal, saying that it has no jurisdiction over this matter. Once again, it shuts down any opportunity for women and men to seek justice. Of course, in my view, the courts are not the only solution, but that is the path we are told to take. It's starting to feel normalized that the courts are the only option, but there is a long list of individuals, families and class actions relating to the Indian Act and section 6 of the Indian Act. If this bill passes with these amendments, many cases in the courts would be resolved.

We're talking about taxpayers' money in court. Where does these women's money go? Where are they getting it? There's no real Court Challenges Program anymore, but perhaps it's back, which wouldn't be a bad thing. I'm telling you that the courts are being swamped with cases and legal challenges. I want to reassure the minister, who tells us that she doesn't want to appear in court, that the problem is not the minister; the problem is Canada and its government. If people are afraid of the amendments — that's something I was told, that people don't want to appear in court — let's just pass them, and lots of people will drop their court cases.

Does it bother you to hear that 40 years of consultations have come and gone? It bothers me too. I'm tired of repeating myself. There have been consultations of every description — scientific, social, legal and academic — imposed by commissions of inquiry and experts. All kinds of consultations have taken place, and every time we reiterated, repeated and hammered home the same thing: The second-generation cut-off is causing pain, extreme confusion and deep division in our families. Among the exploratory processes proposed by various governments since 2011, even the consultations launched following Bill C-3 were referred to as an “exploratory process.” I assure you, nothing has changed since then.

Special Representative Claudette Dumont Smith — a woman I admire — also says that there's no doubt that the second-generation cut-off was the most troubling inequity that was discussed throughout the collaborative process. The Senate published a report entitled *Make it stop!* A report is no small thing. Consultations were held, the evidence is overwhelming and the harm is known. It is Parliament that is slow to act. Even during the national inquiry, I made sure to add Call for Justice 1.2(v) on eliminating gender-based discrimination in the Indian Act. This is not an option; it is a legal imperative.

This is a national commitment. There is great debate around the duty to consult. You heard me speak about this yesterday. My rights as an Indian woman are non-negotiable. My rights are non-negotiable. I can't believe that we are heading in that direction. I agree completely with what the first female Cree minister said in the consultation about wanting to ensure that First Nations are able to welcome people, grow and work around

this, but not when it comes to subsections 6(1) and 6(2). By fixing up these provisions, we will just be doing the same thing again, making small corrections when we should be honouring the major principles set out in section 35 regarding our Aboriginal and treaty rights. I have frequently heard the expression “nation to nation” used here in this chamber.

[English]

How can we build a real, honest relationship on something that is crooked, not good and unacceptable, which is this policy that we call the Indian Act? We cannot build a nation-to-nation relationship — an honest one. But if we do it on a modern treaty or a treaty or by honouring the treaty already in place, I will honour that every day.

• (1530)

The beauty of section 35 is that we also know as women, the entire section guarantees equality to men and women. When Minister Gull-Masty will go with a nation-to-nation approach, we will make sure to ask, “Did you involve women? Did you involve youth?” And we’ll say, “I’m sure you did, because it’s written in the federal guidelines on how we do consultation and accommodation.”

We fought to have that, and court decisions helped us to clarify and ensure we honour that.

[Translation]

The duty to consult, which was upheld in *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)* and *Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada (Governor General in Council)*, is very clear. This duty exists when measures are likely to affect Aboriginal or treaty rights.

[English]

This morning, the Assembly of First Nations, or AFN, was saying the Indian Act and citizenship are totally different. It’s the Indian Act and status Indian. We’re not debating on citizenship. For me, the real debate in having a first-time-ever Indigenous minister should be on this part: a nation-to-nation relationship and citizenship, as well as how we honour, how we celebrate, how we welcome them back and how we connect with them. For me, that is a real and honest consultation.

[Translation]

It worries me when there are calls to extend this duty to consult to other areas, particularly to the reform of discriminatory provisions of the Indian Act. Parliament is exercising its duty when correcting constitutional injustices that have been recognized by the courts. That is what I’m trying to do, with conviction.

In *Nicholas v. Canada (AGC)*, Canada recognized that the inability to transmit Indian status because of the enfranchisement of parents constituted an unjustifiable infringement of the rights guaranteed by section 15 of the Charter on the grounds of discrimination based on race and ethnic origin.

[English]

Even there, Canada agreed that they suffered a historical disadvantage, and the infringement was not justified.

[Translation]

As witnesses who are experiencing this and thinking about the next seven generations, we cannot pretend that this didn’t happen. Several reports have outlined the many psychosocial, physical and political effects. We could name them all. They are there; they are palpable.

It was my understanding that the Senate has an obligation to minority groups and to Indigenous women and men. When an opportunity like this arises, a wave of ancestors and living people do it not only for today, but also for the next seven generations.

Political uncertainty is alive and well. Budget 2025 passed recently by just two votes. Do you understand why we’re concerned when we’re asked to trust the first Indigenous person who wants to bring about change? It’s not that we don’t trust her. On the contrary, we want to support her. We are afraid because of the system and the political uncertainty. I can only hope, but also, I can’t do nothing. We have an opportunity and we have obligations. We must act now. I don’t think that’s up for debate.

Today, I heard that she may no longer be here. She mentioned that. I don’t know why people are saying that. However, we need to support her, whether she’s here or not. Discrimination has been proven, and we have the opportunity to remedy it, once and for all, with Bill S-2 and its amendments.

Thank you.

[English]

Hon. Jim Quinn: Senator, would you take a question?

Senator Audette: Yes.

Senator Quinn: Thank you for your speeches yesterday and today. This is a very critical time in our history in our relationship with First Nations. The one thing I question and worry about is we heard yesterday that we will have a year for consultations. You indicated that the budget just passed by two votes, but even in normal circumstances, having worked in Indian and Northern Affairs, I worry that one year will fly by before anything is done. The year will go by quickly, and the consultations will not have been done, or they will not have been done in a thorough, forthright manner.

Is that something that would concern you? Despite the narrow margin of the budget and the minority government, is that not something we should be concerned about, given our history of discussions in trying to advance the democracies that surround our First Nations?

[Translation]

Senator Audette: I will try to use the simplest words possible. In my opinion, consultations must always be held, whether they occur over six years, two years or a few months and whether they happen between several levels of government. That is important. However, in this case, I cannot accept that the government wants to consult on a matter of discrimination. Whether the government holds a majority or a minority, we know that discrimination exists. The courts and Canada confirmed it in *Nicholas v. Canada (AGC)*. Discrimination exists and it goes against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. For me, it is very clear that we need to move forward with the amendments.

To do that, we need to speed up the conclusion of modern day treaties and facilitate First Nations claims and processes to enable them to determine what it means to be a citizen and what their responsibilities, rights and contributions to Canadian society are, rather than constantly depending on taxes. For me, and this is very personal, being self-sufficient means having rights and responsibilities. This is not about fixing up subsections 6(1) and 6(2) of the Indian Act. It is about getting rid of them altogether. It's official: Subsection 6(2) of the act is discriminatory.

Thank you.

[English]

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, I rise today on the unceded lands of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation to speak at third reading of Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Indian Act (new registration entitlements).

Tomorrow, December 4, I will celebrate eight years of being a senator. I remember that day well. Senator Mary Jane McCallum and I were being sworn in at the same time. I was extremely honoured to be sharing that important rite of passage with such a remarkable leader — an accomplished medical professional who was committed to community-based care. She's a residential school Survivor and a laser-focused, fierce advocate for Indigenous rights.

We both carried eagle feathers into the chamber that day. Mine was given to me by our colleague and my neighbour and friend from Paqtnekek Mi'kmaw Nation, Senator PJ Prosper, who was at the time Regional Chief of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland with the Assembly of First Nations. Thank you, senator.

• (1540)

Colleagues, you heard me refer to my long-standing membership on the Indigenous Peoples Committee in our debate on the committee report on Bill S-2. Although no longer on the committee in this very new Parliament, I attended some meetings on this bill, and — with the help of my talented team — I have been following very closely as it is an important government bill.

Colleagues, I believe that we have thus far had a very good, thorough, informative, respectful and helpful debate on the Indigenous Peoples Committee report on Bill S-2.

Thank you to my colleague Senator Audette for her leadership, wisdom and everything she has brought to this bill as the sponsor. I'd like to congratulate Minister Gull-Masty for her

important and appreciated work on this critical bill. Our senate colleagues in the Office of the Government Representative — Senators Moreau, LaBoucane-Benson and Duncan — have supported us in our desire to fully debate this bill and have made helpful contributions to that debate.

Our hard-working Indigenous Peoples Committee members should be commended for their thorough work on the bill, as well as all other colleagues who participated in this historic debate. Your contributions shine a light on the variety of issues we need to take into account as we move toward our final vote on Bill S-2 at third reading and determine what we will send to the House of Commons, the other place.

In essence, the original bill restores entitlement to registration to individuals and their descendants who lost it through enfranchisement, often involuntarily. It gives First Nations individuals the power to remove themselves from the Indian Register; some will want to do that.

It eliminates offensive language by replacing the term “mentally incompetent Indian” with the term “dependent adult” in the Indian Act; and it makes it easier for people, especially women, to rejoin the First Nation band of their birth.

After 12 meetings, hearing from 62 unique witnesses representing over half of all 634 First Nations and receiving 49 written briefs, the committee voted to amend the bill.

A large majority of the witnesses supported the original provisions of Bill S-2, but the majority advised the committee that it didn't go far enough. The amendments to the bill keep the core provisions of the original bill required to meet the purposes I just outlined.

The main purpose of the amendments is to once and for all end the remaining discrimination in the Indian Act and specifically the second-generation cut-off rule.

This is something that was called for in an amendment to Bill S-3, which was passed into law in 2017. New clauses were added to Bill S-3, in amendment, related to consultations and reports.

Subsection 8.1(1) states:

The Minister must, within six months after the day on which this Act receives royal assent, initiate consultations with First Nations and other interested parties in order to address, in collaboration with those First Nations and other parties, issues raised by the provisions of the Indian Act related to registration and band membership, including consultations . . .

It goes on to mention several; the third one is the second-generation cut-off. That was in 2017.

The Senate Standing Committee on Indigenous Peoples 2022 report entitled *Make it stop! Ending the remaining discrimination in Indian registration* called for the Government of Canada to introduce new legislation repealing subsection 6(2) of the Indian Act, thus ending the discriminatory second-generation cut-off. So the first report was from 2017; the second was from 2022.

[Senator Quinn]

Colleagues, we have heard a lot about the need to give the minister and the government the time and space needed to complete constitutionally mandated consultation on the matter of the second-generation cut-off, which is currently under way.

Another amendment to Bill S-2, just mentioned by my colleague and passed by committee and this chamber in passing the report yesterday, is designed to address that concern.

The fourth amendment to Bill S-2 calls for a 12-month delay in the coming-into-force provision related to the other amendments. This was agreed to in order to allow the minister time to complete the consultative work and introduce stand-alone legislation that could address any additional concerns.

Honourable senators, like some others here, I reached out to our former Senate colleagues the Honourable Lillian Dyck and the Honourable Dan Christmas over the weekend, after listening attentively to Senator Moreau's mention of them in his speech on the committee report last week. We had some good discussions.

Colleagues, I know that every one of us takes our responsibilities to legislate, represent, study and examine very seriously.

As I started preparing these remarks, I kept a mental image of Lady Justice — Justitia — balancing her scales in her right hand.

I found it helpful as I attempted to balance the relative substance, weight and value of the various arguments and evidence for and against proceeding to pass the amended Bill S-2 with its enhancements.

Honourable senators, I will take a few minutes to outline what I have placed on the two sides of my scale of justice. Of course, my list is not exhaustive.

On the side of not passing this amended legislation and returning Bill S-2 to its original form, we have the following arguments:

First, we must allow for the constitutionally required consultation to be completed. The Senate needs to heed our constitutional duty.

Second, committee amendments go beyond the scope of the bill.

Third, the House of Commons will likely reject the amendments, so we should not waste time as there is a court-imposed deadline looming and people are waiting for this bill.

Fourth, instead of amending this bill, the Senate should strongly instruct the minister to ensure a rapid conclusion of the consultations and to expeditiously co-develop a bill to address the second-generation cut-off problem.

Fifth, we should accept the process and timeline provided in the letter from Minister Gull-Masty and trust that the concerns covered by the amendments would be dealt with in a reasonable time frame by the government.

Those arguments are all on one side of the scale. I'm sure there are more.

On the other side of the scale, for arguments and evidence that suggests we should pass Bill S-2 as amended, I would place these following points:

First, you cannot end discrimination incrementally. It hasn't worked, has it?

Second, obligations under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples create a statutory requirement to ensure that all laws of Canada are consistent with UNDRIP. Its articles refer to a right to nationality and a right to belong to an Indigenous community or nation. The amended bill would be aligned with UNDRIP.

Third, our constitutional duties and roles as senators call for us to scrutinize legislation, suggest improvements, fix mistakes, defend regional interests and give voice to under-represented groups like Indigenous Peoples.

Fourth, eliminating the two-tiered system of entitlement to registration, i.e., belonging and benefiting, is urgently needed to stop the harms happening now to multiple generations. These include daily harms to children and others and real, documented threats of extinction for First Nations.

Fifth, all laws must comply with section 15 equality rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and Bill S-2 doesn't comply without the amendments.

Sixth, consultation is a delay tactic. Despite political promises to the contrary, we heard that no consultation on Indian registration has ever resulted in voluntary legislative amendments to the Indian Act. To date, the 2017 and 2022 calls from the amendment to Bill S-3 and the Indigenous Peoples Committee *Make it stop!* report for remedies for second-generation cut-off discrimination have had no result.

In my exchange with Senator Moreau last week, you heard me mention this serious issues of track record and trust. Colleagues, looking to that balanced scale of Lady Justice, for me, it tips in favour of passing this legislation with the amendments as passed by committee and expressing this chamber's desire for a fair, quick, thorough and effective end to legislated discrimination under the Indian Act.

• (1550)

Colleagues, of course, I respect whatever your own conclusions are when you weigh those arguments and consider the evidence, but I do hope that we will collectively take this important step in remedying the blatant injustices we have heard about, which are causing great harm to Indigenous children, parents, communities and nations, and, frankly, our nation, Canada.

Colleagues, this moment is an historic one. It is critical for our relationships, reconciliation and justice, and, frankly, it is critical for human dignity.

Wela'liog, thank you.

Hon. Tony Ince: Senator Coyle, will you take a question?

Senator Coyle: I will.

Senator Ince: Thank you, Senator Coyle. You were very well spoken.

My question is to you and my colleagues: Isn't this simply about human rights?

Senator Coyle: Thank you to my fellow Nova Scotian for your question.

Of course, it is about human rights. I wouldn't say it's "simple," but it is about human rights. It's about a remedy that was put forward by a very thorough committee study and was also voted on yesterday by this chamber. It looks as though the will of this house is tipping the scales in the way they tipped for me, which was: Let's get this done, once and for all.

(On motion of Senator McCallum, debate adjourned.)

BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE
SENATE ON DECEMBER 9, 2025

Leave having been given to proceed to Motions, Order No. 70:

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette, for Senator Gignac, pursuant to notice of December 2, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy be authorized to meet on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, for the purpose of studying elements contained in Divisions 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 37, 39, 43 and 45 of Part 5 of Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, even though the Senate may then be sitting, and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

[Senator Coyle]

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Translation]

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING
OF THE SENATE ON DECEMBER 10, 2025

Leave having been given to proceed to Motions, Order No. 71:

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette, for Senator Gignac, pursuant to notice of December 2, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy be authorized to meet on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, for the purpose of studying elements contained in Divisions 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 37, 39, 43 and 45 of Part 5 of Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, even though the Senate may then be sitting, and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON HEART FAILURE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Martin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Batters, for the second reading of Bill S-204, An Act to establish a national framework on heart failure.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Honourable senators, I rise today as the friendly critic to speak on Bill S-204, An Act to establish a national framework for heart failure.

I would like to begin by recognizing Senator Martin for bringing this important bill forward.

Heart failure is a clinical syndrome with symptoms and signs caused by a structural or functional cardiac abnormality with objective evidence of pulmonary or systemic congestion. Heart failure impacts hundreds of thousands of Canadians, and this bill recognizes the need for better coordination, data and access to care.

Today I will focus on three main points: first, the intent and importance of this bill; second, the current state of health care in Canada; and third, a broader reflection on what Bill S-204 reveals about health policy.

At its heart, this bill is aspirational. It imagines what health care should look like for every Canadian, no matter where they live. It imagines health care where everyone has timely access to diagnosis, guideline-directed care and holistic, multidisciplinary supports.

The bill's intent is clear: to create a coordinated, evidence-informed national approach that improves outcomes for patients, families and caregivers. But as we discuss this bill, we should also reflect on why it is needed.

Each time we pass a framework bill for a specific condition, whether it is dementia, diabetes or eye care, we are reminded that our health care system is fragmented. People living with health conditions should not need siloed frameworks. They need consistent, coordinated care in a system that provides safe, high-quality health care.

The bill is important because, behind it, are people and families whose stories remind us of the human cost of unequal, inadequate and delayed access to care. In particular, I think of the patients and families in northern Manitoba who have to travel for hours to Winnipeg for specialized and complex cardiac care.

As a reminder, while I will refer to “Canada’s health care system” in my speech in this chamber, what we have, in fact, is not a national system, but 14 provincial, territorial and federal health insurance plans that cover defined, medically necessary services to patients at the point of care at no cost. Also, please remember that the administration and service delivery of health care falls primarily under provincial and territorial responsibility. This complexity, shared among multiple jurisdictions, should give you an idea of why we are seeing more framework bills for various health conditions.

Now to my second point: the current state of health care in Canada. This is important because Bill S-204 must be grounded in today’s realities. Canada is one of the highest health care spenders among countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, spending anywhere from 11.2% of GDP on health to 12.1%, depending on which source one uses, which is above the OECD average of 9.2%.

• (1600)

Global data confirms that access to primary care decreases health care costs —

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Osler, I’m sorry to interrupt.

(At 4 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, the Senate adjourned until 1:30 p.m., tomorrow.)

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