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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, April 16, 2026

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

Prayers.

[*Translation*]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

CLARA DUGAS

Hon. Réjean Aucoin: Colleagues, I am filled with pride today as I rise to call attention to the outstanding feat accomplished by a talented Acadian from Nova Scotia. Clara Dugas won the people's choice award at the Combat des contes de la Francophonie, a storytelling competition organized by the Festival interculturel du conte de Montréal as part of Francophonie Month.

I'd like to thank the Société acadienne de Clare for supporting Clara's application to take part in this amazing event. Born in the community of Clare, where storytelling is central to identity, Clara has a knack for bringing the rich legacy of Acadian storytelling to life.

A family history steeped in culture has made her chosen path all the more inspiring. Her mother, storyteller and actor Marie-Marthe Dugas, was a driving force in her development. She passed on to Clara not only her love of stories, but also her respect for oral tradition. To this day, many of the stories that Clara shares on stage trace back to this precious legacy: tales of yore told by her mother, or stories from her own youth retold with a sensitive, authentic touch. Clara had a long and remarkable career in teaching.

A highly gifted educator, she was deeply respected by her peers and adored by her students. This background doubtlessly helped her refine her talent for communicating, captivating and sharing — essential tools for all great storytellers.

Storytelling is hard work. It relies solely on the power of words, rhythm and imagination. The storyteller has to be an author, a performer and a conduit for memories, all at once. Clara has mastered that art with remarkable sensitivity, enabling her to connect with her audience on a deeper level.

Through her passion, hard work and dedication, Clara has made a name for herself in the French-speaking world, bringing with her the richness of our Acadian culture. Her victory is not just her own. It belongs to an entire community that continues to keep the art of storytelling alive from generation to generation.

For Acadians, storytelling is much more than an art form. It is a way of life. For centuries, our stories have been passed down by word of mouth, around kitchen tables and at gatherings. These stories have helped us preserve our language, pass on our values and strengthen our identity, even in the most difficult moments of our history.

On behalf of the Senate of Canada, I want to sincerely congratulate Clara on this outstanding achievement. We wish her a very successful future filled with stories to tell, and we thank her for showcasing Acadia to the world with such heart and talent.

Thank you.

[*English*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Tatenda Okoi, Director of eHealth, and Leona Star, Director of Research, from the First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba. 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!

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECRETARIAT OF MANITOBA

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, they are also the guests of Senator McPhedran. I want to acknowledge the exemplary work of the staff and senior management team of the First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba, or FNHSSM, whose compassion, determination, expertise and integrity are central to advancing FNHSSM's mandate.

I bear witness and pay tribute to the brilliance, strength, professionalism and commitment of the staff — three of whom are in the gallery — who work at FNHSSM in partnership with 63 First Nations, 7 tribal councils and 3 provincial-territorial organizations in Manitoba.

FNHSSM continues to serve as a trusted organization supporting First Nations across Canada through culturally grounded programs, protecting First Nations' values and strengthening community-led approaches to health and wellness. FNHSSM's role as a regional health hub is grounded in unity and lived experience, while facing increasing pressures that include environmental emergencies, workforce challenges, funding limitations, jurisdictional complexities and evolving policy environments.

Their work remains grounded in First Nations' knowledge, inherent and treaty rights, and the responsibility to support First Nations in advancing health and social well-being through practical, realistic and culturally grounded approaches.

FNHSSM advances data sovereignty efforts through repatriation of health and social data to build a secure data repository to support First Nations with their data needs and steer First Nations wellness research in Manitoba.

The Regional Social Survey is a new survey focusing on the well-being of First Nations children and families living on-reserve and in northern communities. The questionnaire reflects the themes and areas of culture, language, child well-being, family well-being, parent-caregiver well-being, community well-being, economic well-being, early learning and education, food, child care and housing. FNHSSM delivers many other programs, but time won't permit me to mention them.

I thank the dedicated staff and management at FNHSSM — the research, advocacy and health partners and the nine Chiefs on the board of directors — for their work, their commitment to stable governance and their focus on improving long-term health outcomes for Manitoba First Nations people.

[Translation]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Nicole LeBlanc, pediatrician, professor, researcher and community leader. She is the guest of the Honourable Senators Boudreau and Forest.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

JEAN BRISSON

Hon. Éric Forest: Our guest is so important that it took an invitation from two senators to get him here.

Honourable senators, I am a few days late, but I would like to take a moment to mark the ninety-fifth birthday and outstanding career of Jean Brisson, a radio icon in eastern Quebec.

His unmistakable voice has accompanied generations of listeners and forged a unique bond between the airwaves and the hearts of the public.

• (1340)

Over the decades, Jean Brisson has become known for his authenticity, his curiosity and his deep respect for the people he has welcomed to the microphone.

Through powerful interviews, inspiring features and simple, heartfelt conversations, he has created a space where everyone feels heard. His ability to tell stories and ask thought-provoking questions is a testament not only to his immense talent but also to his unwavering passion for his craft.

Over the years, he has interviewed 12 Quebec premiers, 11 Canadian prime ministers and numerous other public figures. There is even a rumour that he spoke with the Queen when she was on her boat sailing off the coast of Rimouski. That's just a rumour, of course.

Today, with 70 years of experience in radio, the man dubbed “the liveliest host from Québec City to Gaspé” continues to brighten our Saturday mornings on CFYX FM. His career is truly inspiring. He embodies perseverance, longevity and a deep love of radio.

His legacy is immense. He has not only informed and entertained, but also inspired many professionals who have followed in his footsteps.

To borrow a phrase he made famous while hosting the Lutte Grand-Prix, we wish him many more wonderful years on the radio, “God willing.”

Thank you very much.

[English]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Stéphanie Roy, daughter of the Honourable Senator Kingston.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

LABRADOR WINTER GAMES

Hon. Judy A. White: Honourable senators, I rise today to share an important event from my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Every three years, the town of Happy Valley—Goose Bay hosts the Labrador Winter Games. It's a cultural and sporting event that brings together athletes and community members from all regions of Labrador.

The Labrador Winter Games began in 1983 as a way to celebrate the unique cultures and talents of the people of Labrador. The event blends traditional and modern sports, games and skills, all in the interests of bringing communities together and honouring the ways of life that have been practised in Labrador for generations. The games have become known for friendly competition, good sportsmanship and mutual respect, fondly referred to as the “Friendship Games.” Up to 17 athletes per community compete for individual prizes as well as the coveted Labrador Cup, which is awarded to the team that has the most overall points at the games.

The Labrador Winter Games features both indoor and outdoor events, from table tennis, darts and volleyball to dog team racing, snowshoe racing, target shooting and skiing. The keystone event is the Labrathon. This is a snowshoe race and survival contest, spanning 500 metres and four “tilt” stops. Contestants load toboggans with supplies and race along a course, with several mandatory stops to complete survivalist tasks. This includes lighting a fire, bringing snow to a boil, target shooting, setting a trap and cutting a fishing hole in ice. The competitor who successfully completes all of the “tilts” and makes it to the finish line the fastest wins. The event is a test of skill and mental

fortitude, as well as pays homage to the trappers who used all of these mechanisms for survival in the difficult winters of Labrador.

This year, records were broken in the seal kick category. Yes, this is a traditional Inuit sport that involves jumping and kicking a stuffed seal suspended in the air. Christopher Penney from Charlottetown took home the win after jumping an amazing 9.3 feet to kick the seal — just a little bit taller than I am.

Labrador City won the 2026 Labrador Cup for most overall points, which was awarded in a closing ceremony. The games truly are a time for everyone to come together and share in the joy of culture, heritage and sport.

Wela'liiq. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Edmond Wega, Canadian Executive Director at the African Development Bank. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Gerba.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

NEXTGEN ASSEMBLY OF LEADERS

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, our youth are our future, and that promise was on full display this week as I welcomed students from across Canada to the annual NextGEN Assembly of Leaders here in the Senate.

For the fourth consecutive year, I had the privilege of opening our doors to this initiative, organized by the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board, which brings together secondary school students to engage directly with parliamentarians, diplomats and public leaders.

This year, approximately 80 students from 11 schools across four provinces participated, both in person and virtually. Working in small groups alongside political leaders, they examined real legislative initiatives currently before Parliament or public policy issues impacting our nation.

In my group, we explored the question of limiting youth access to social media: an issue that continues to generate discussion here and abroad.

Students were introduced to their topics in the morning and, within just a few hours, conducted research, developed thoughtful proposals and presented their ideas to their assigned leader. The quality of their work was remarkable: insightful, balanced and solution-oriented.

[Senator White]

Since its launch in 2022, NextGEN has grown into a dynamic, hands-on learning experience. More than 600 students and over 25 political leaders have now taken part, including Senators McBean and Dasko, who joined us this year.

Beyond the numbers, what stands out is the impact. This initiative equips young people with essential skills needed to succeed in life — critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration and civic engagement — while fostering a deeper understanding of our democratic institutions and policy-making. Through NextGEN, we are empowering these talented young individuals to realize their full potential and become engaged global citizens and community leaders.

I would like to commend Daniel Johnson and the dedicated team of educators and volunteers whose vision and commitment make this event possible. They understand the value of connecting young people with decision makers during one of the most formative periods of their lives. For many, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility not only to lead but to listen, to ensure that the voices of Canada's next generation help shape the decisions we make today.

Honourable senators, I invite you to join me in congratulating the students who participated in this year's NextGEN Assembly of Leaders.

Colleagues, if there was ever any doubt, let me assure you: the future of our country is very bright.

Thank you.

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 Dennis Glen Patterson.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE LATE NANCY GARAPICK

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Honourable senators, last week, one of Canada's and Nova Scotia's greatest athletes passed away at her home in Langley, British Columbia. Nancy Garapick, a native of Halifax, was 64 years old.

Nova Scotia's greatest swimmer, Nancy was named Canada's youngest ever Female Athlete of the Year at age 14. She had previously established a world record at 13 years old in the 200-metre backstroke at the Eastern Canadian Swimming Championships in Brantford, Ontario. That same year, she won the 200-yard backstroke at the U.S. AAU Championships and silver and bronze in the 100-metre and 200-metre backstroke at the second World Aquatics Championships in Cali, Colombia. At the Montreal 1976 Olympic Games, she was a double bronze

medallist in the 100-metre and 200-metre backstroke. In 1977, Nancy won the 200-yard and 400-yard individual medley at the U.S. AAU National Short Course Championships.

In her career, she won 17 Canadian national titles and 38 championship medals. At 12 years of age, she had set 12 national age group records, some of which lasted until the 21st century. In 1973, she was the youngest participant in the second Canada Summer Games in New Westminster. In 1982, representing Dalhousie University, she was a five-time gold medallist at the Canadian Interuniversity Swimming Championships in Sherbrooke, Quebec. She was inducted into the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame and the Nova Scotia Sports Hall of Fame, and in 2008 became a member of the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame.

• (1350)

However, it was the two bronze medals that she won at the Montreal Olympics that effected great and needed change in the world of sports. Already setting a new Olympic record in the backstroke during the preliminary heats, she ended up winning the bronze medals in both the 100- and 200-metre backstroke, finishing just behind the same two East German swimmers in both events.

These swimmers, like many athletes behind the Iron Curtain, unquestionably appeared to be benefitting from performance-enhancing drugs. Although Nancy never complained, the entire world knew she had been cheated of the gold medals that were rightly hers.

Fortunately, the Montreal Olympics served as a catalyst for the International Olympic Committee, or IOC, to seriously investigate the growing use of drugs in sports. The IOC later concluded that drug-enhanced performances were widespread at the Montreal Olympics. Unfortunately, the IOC did not strip the cheaters of their medals, but the world knew that Nancy deserved those gold medals.

What an incredibly gifted athlete she was.

On behalf of the Senate of Canada and all Nova Scotians, we offer our heartfelt condolences to her family and friends. God rest her soul, and may perpetual light shine upon her.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Canadian veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and in the Persian Gulf. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Yussuff.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NATIONAL THANADELTHUR DAY BILL

FOURTH REPORT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Michèle Audette, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, presented the following report:

Thursday, April 16, 2026

The Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples has the honour to present its

FOURTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-225, An Act to establish National Thanadelthur Day, has, in obedience to the order of reference of February 24, 2026, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

MICHÈLE AUDETTE

Chair

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

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

[*English*]

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AFFECT WEDNESDAY SITTINGS
UNTIL JUNE 30, 2026, AND AUTHORIZE COMMITTEES TO MEET
DURING SITTINGS 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, until June 30, 2026:

1. notwithstanding the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, Wednesday sittings continue beyond 4 p.m. if Government Business is not completed, and be adjourned at the later of the completion of Government Business or 4 p.m.;

2. notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph one of this order, the sittings not continue beyond the ordinary time of adjournment provided in the Rules; and
3. Senate committees scheduled to meet on Wednesdays be authorized to meet after 4 p.m. on Wednesdays, even though the Senate may then be sitting, with rule 12-18(1) being suspended in relation thereto.

WARTIME SERVICE RECOGNITION BILL

FIRST READING

Hon. Hassan Yussuff introduced Bill S-246, An Act respecting the recognition of wartime service.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

HUMAN RIGHTS

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF 2SLGBTQI+ YOUTH

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

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to examine and report on the health, safety and well-being of 2SLGBTQI+ youth in Canada;

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 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.

SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KOREAN WAR YEARS

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

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

I will call the attention of the Senate to the milestone seventy-fifth anniversary of the Korean War years, from June 25, 1950, until the signing of the armistice agreement

of July 27, 1953, the critical peacekeeping years that followed, and the profound legacy of Canadians who served in the "Land of the Morning Calm" that endures to this day.

QUESTION PERIOD

NATIONAL DEFENCE

CANADIAN FORCES PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Senator Moreau, a recent report from CBC News reveals that a Canadian soldier is now suing the federal government and the manufacturer of his Canadian Armed Forces-issued Sig Sauer P320 handgun after a misfiring incident that ended his career.

This marks the second such incident since the pistol's rollout and follows years of reported safety concerns about accidental discharges.

Senator Moreau, this raises serious questions about both the safety of our personnel and the integrity of this procurement process. Will the government recall this handgun from service, pending an investigation, to prevent further injuries?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question, senator.

• (1400)

I'm quite certain that the government will take the report very seriously. Unfortunately, our veterans are not here anymore, but we are taking very seriously the security of the Canadian Armed Forces members because those people are dedicated to the safety and security of our country.

I'm sure that we will be able to get back to you regarding the follow-up on that report.

Senator MacDonald: Senator Moreau, even more troubling, the Department of National Defence stated last year there had been no injuries during the rollout of this weapon. Why is the government telling Canadians there were no misfires when evidence clearly shows otherwise?

Senator Moreau: As you know, there is an inquiry occurring. I cannot comment on an ongoing inquiry, but it is certain that when such an important or dangerous fact is mentioned, we will look at it quite carefully to see what the facts are and then report on it once the inquiry is finished, as well as ensure that follow-up is properly made.

MILITARY PROCUREMENT

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, in recent days, senior executives from Canadian defence innovators, including Dominion Dynamics and Draganfly, have again called on your government to act with urgency in strengthening Canada's defence capability.

These companies are actively testing, deploying and delivering real-world solutions alongside our military. Yet despite repeated government commitments, they remain stalled in a procurement system defined by delay, opacity and excessive bureaucracy.

Senator Moreau, why does your government continue to make it so difficult for Canadian defence innovators to secure timely contracts with their own Armed Forces, especially at a time of growing security threats?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): You're well aware, Senator Martin, that the government is spending a tremendous amount of money and an unprecedented amount of money. As a matter of fact, we have already reached NATO's 2% of GDP target for spending. That is what we're doing with the military.

We have a procurement agency that ensures those procurements are taken into consideration and have a close link with entrepreneurs and industry that can provide equipment for military purposes.

It is a situation that the government is well aware of. We're spending a lot of money, and we are ensuring that Canadian entrepreneurs are able to fulfill the requirements of military equipment.

Senator Martin: Investment decisions are being delayed because your government is not delivering on promised defence procurement reforms. Can you tell Canadians when your Defence Industrial Strategy will actually be fully implemented so that capability — not bureaucracy — is what drives defence procurement?

Senator Moreau: Defence procurement has been reviewed by the government. That is the reason why we made an agency. Prior to the existence of that agency, it was spread among all departments of the government, which was not effective. Now with the agency, we are aiming to be more efficient and to make sure that Canadian enterprises and the Canadian economy benefit from that, as well as small businesses.

[Translation]

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

TRADE AGREEMENTS

Hon. Martine Hébert: My question is for the Government Representative. Senator, recently, the government has engaged in talks for a number of international agreements. It wants to increase or even double our non-U.S. exports. Signing an agreement is very nice. It's quite an achievement, but it has to lead to actual results. Supporting SMEs' export efforts is great,

but to really move the needle on exports, there has to be a strategy with high-potential partners. What is the government's strategy for ensuring that the agreements we sign produce concrete results?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): That's an excellent question, and that's why the government created Export Development Canada, EDC, which provides export financing and risk management for international transactions. EDC offers four different solutions. It provides trade credit insurance to protect companies from the risk of unpaid invoices. It offers guarantees to secure more capital from financial institutions so companies can undertake new investment activities. It offers direct loans for overseas operations to accelerate growth through financing solutions tailored to specific businesses. Lastly, it invests to access development capital to support corporate strategy.

One of its initiatives is the \$5-billion, two-year EDC Trade Impact Program.

Senator Hébert: Thank you. I understand all that. I think that one success factor might be to create a network among the various organizations involved. You mentioned Export Development Canada, but there are others that can provide support, like the Canadian Commercial Corporation or the Business Development Bank of Canada. Does the government intend to create some kind of network among these organizations to try to supercharge the export market?

Senator Moreau: Not only does it intend to do that, but major Canadian companies are already responding to this demand and paving the way for the network that the government wants to put in place. Furthermore, we can see that, following the Bank of Canada's advice, Canadian businesses have already started diversifying their markets and improving their supply chains. Incidentally, Canada is the only G7 country that has entered into trade agreements with all —

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

[English]

FINANCE

TAX FAIRNESS

Hon. Kim Pate: Senator Moreau, the temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax is expected to cost Canada — and thereby Canadian taxpayers — \$2.4 billion per year in foregone tax revenue. Economists have highlighted that this was not the only option. Olivier Gervais, a director at Scotiabank, notes that the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit GST tax credit would be “. . . another lever that would be relatively easy to use . . .” and he notes it would allow the government to take “. . . the extra money they're getting from higher oil prices and redistribute that . . .” more efficiently to the Canadians struggling most, not only with the cost of fuel but also the knock-on impacts on food costs.

Instead of a plan that would prioritize those most in need, why are low-income taxpayers now footing part of the bill every time Canadians use their cars?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax is a decision that the government made as a temporary measure. It is a responsible and targeted measure that will reduce operating costs for truckers and businesses. Therefore, it will go through the chain in the food, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors. It will indirectly benefit all sectors of the economy.

As far as the economy is concerned, the government has targeted affordability as the main criteria of intervention. That is the reason why there are many measures concerning household affordability and food security that have been put in place since Budget 2025.

Senator Pate: Thank you for that, Senator Moreau. As income inequality increases in Canada, it is driving increased homelessness, hunger and mental health crises. What steps is the government taking to implement its National Advisory Council on Poverty's priority recommendation for guaranteed livable basic income — something the Parliamentary Budget Officer suggests would cost as little per year as what the government has just spent on fuel excise tax relief?

Senator Moreau: In housing, the strategy and the new building projects in Canada are not only aimed at new owners but also homelessness. There are billions of dollars being invested by the government to ensure that there are resources for homeless persons. The government is also investing in every community that needs serious investment in housing, like Indigenous communities, as well.

• (1410)

The government is taking action in many fields to ensure that homeless persons are —

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Hon. Colin Deacon: Senator Moreau, last month I asked a question about a gap facing Canadian small- and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs, attempting to scale under Canada's Defence Industrial Strategy. This is similar to a question you heard earlier. I would like to follow up on what I asked previously.

Specifically, in response, the government pointed to the Regional Defence Investment Initiative, which provides grants and contributions to support SMEs. While that program may

[Senator Pate]

provide grants and contributions to help companies develop technology, it doesn't create a pathway to contracts that allow existing technologies to be deployed and scaled.

Today, the primary path to large procurement opportunities remains through major defence primes, often foreign-owned subsidiaries operating in Canada. Canada needs to become the first and best customer for Canadian innovators if we wish to become globally competitive. I see you nodding. I know that you agree with this intention.

Could the government explain what mechanisms it plans to introduce —

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

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Deacon. There is a link to Senator Martin's question.

The most important thing is that the government has grouped all the procurement concerning the military under one agency. For instance, I know very well that in Quebec there is a small business that is now making uniforms, not only parade uniforms but also tactical uniforms, because of the government's new approach.

A key part of the mandate of the agency is to better target procurement towards the strategic defence sector here at home, ensuring Canadian capabilities are a part of the solution from the outset. By centralizing major procurements and engaging industry earlier, the agency will ensure that Canadian SMEs can align their technology with military needs before contracts are even issued.

So, there will be a direct link between the SMEs —

[*Translation*]

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

FINANCE

BANKING FRAUD

Hon. Danièle Henkel: Senator Moreau, in 2025, fraudsters stole more than \$704 million from Canadians, but only 5% to 10 % of victims reported the fraud. In the U.K., banks are required to reimburse victims, unless the victim is proven to have acted with negligence, of course. As a result, claims have dropped by 15% in just a few months.

In Canada, Bill C-15 requires banks to draw up their own policies. This is clearly insufficient given the scale of the problem. Does the government intend to introduce specific legislation similar to the U.K. law that would require banks to reimburse victims unless there is proven negligence on the part of the consumer?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The government shares your concerns. In fact, I would draw your attention to the announcements made as part of Budget 2025, including the government's stated intention to create the Canadian Financial Crimes Agency and to develop a national anti-fraud strategy that would bring the entire government together to address this issue in a coordinated manner, not only through the Department of Finance, but also in collaboration with the Department of Justice, to ensure that the law or laws that will be implemented can address this problem and directly target bank fraud.

Senator Henkel: Senator Moreau, we know that, for the most part, every dollar stolen from a Canadian goes towards funding organized crime. In October 2025, the government promised to introduce a bill to create a new financial crime agency by spring 2026. That is now. Can you tell us when this bill will be introduced in Parliament?

Senator Moreau: It may be the spring of 2026, but it certainly doesn't feel like it out there. Nevertheless, Senator Henkel, I am pleased to inform you that the Department of Finance and the Department of Justice are working well together on this, and I have received confirmation that a bill will indeed be tabled before the end of spring 2026, which we hope will be as long as possible.

[English]

JUSTICE

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, an Ontario judge has warned that the Canadian justice system is at an inflection point, citing cases where vulnerable Canadians are left unprotected, while offenders, often with no legal status in Canada, receive lenient treatment and repeated chances. This comes amid a growing pattern of inconsistent sentencing, breached court orders and weak immigration enforcement that continue to undermine public confidence in the rule of law.

How can your government justify a system that so often appears to prioritize offenders over the safety and rights of law-abiding Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Well, Senator Martin, this is a very delicate matter. I believe quite strongly — and I hope that every lawyer in this chamber shares this idea — in the independence of the judiciary. When a sentence is given by a court of law, if we do not agree with the sentence, there are appeal mechanisms. There must be a total separation between politics and the judicial system. This is something that I intend to defend until I die, because that is how democracy should work.

Whenever a sentence or a judgment of a court is undermined by politics, the direct result is to undermine the confidence of the public in the justice system. That is why we should always stand strong behind the independence of the judiciary.

Senator Martin: I'm not undermining the judiciary, but what Canadians want is a justice system that is firm, fair and consistent. Yet, your government takes no accountability over its decade-long failure on immigration and has no plan to get the system under control. So, leader, Canadians are asking a simple question: Whose side are the justice and immigration systems on?

Senator Moreau: There is a difference between the independence of the judiciary and implementing strong laws. That is exactly what the government is committed to doing with Bill C-9, Bill C-14 and Bill C-16. I think that the government is in the right place in the political area and not interfering with court decisions.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CANADIAN BUSINESSES

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Canadians are losing faith, but I am going to another topic here, because this is also a big concern.

Data from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, or CFIB, shows that business closures have now outpaced new business starts for six consecutive quarters, reflecting a sustained decline in small business confidence. Business leaders consistently identify Canada's regulatory burden as a key driver of rising costs, delayed investment and weakened competitiveness. Canada continues to rank poorly among advanced economies on regulatory efficiency.

Senator Moreau, after years of Liberal policies that have added layers of regulation and complexity, small businesses, the backbone of our economy, are struggling to survive. How does your government respond to the CFIB's warning that Canada is now in an entrepreneurial drought?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): We stand behind our entrepreneurs in Canada. If you don't believe what the government is doing, let me tell you what the Economist Intelligence Unit thinks: Canada is the second-best country among the G20 for doing business. Let me tell you what the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor thinks: Canada ranks third with respect to the ease of starting a business.

I think that we're doing great to support our businesses in Canada, and we will continue to do that.

Senator Martin: Those statistics are very interesting because we're hearing the opposite at our Banking Committee, and I'm telling you that, from the CFIB's report, there is an issue of entrepreneurial drought. When will the government acknowledge this reality, agree that overregulation is a barrier to growth and bring forward concrete reforms to meaningfully reduce red tape? They are suffocating.

Senator Moreau: I previously answered Senator Hébert that, according to the Bank of Canada, Canadian businesses are already following what the government is arguing for by diversifying their markets.

• (1420)

Numerous efforts are undertaken by the government to help small businesses and all businesses in Canada to make sure that the economy grows and that we will be our own independent provider for all of the goods —

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Hon. Tony Loffreda: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. It is about small businesses once again.

We are doing a study on small businesses at the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy. Small- and medium-sized enterprises play such an important role in the economy as job creators. I like the scorecard you put forward — I have great faith in Canada — but I always say that it is not how well we are doing; it is how well we could be doing.

I have read some of the reports this year that we had this week with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. We need to inspire confidence in our entrepreneurs and incite our young people to start businesses.

I would like for you to elaborate. Given the critical role that SMEs play in job creation and economic growth, what concrete measures is the government taking? You spoke about reducing red tape, but what about improving access to capital? It is so important to help Canadians successfully start, acquire and grow businesses today.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Let me be clear: The government strongly believes that small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy. I can't be clearer than that.

The direct answer to your question is that, in order to reduce red tape, the government is introducing new regulatory sandboxes and access to capital as well as expanding the Business Development Bank of Canada's bank loan maximum for small- and medium-sized businesses to \$5 million. For starting a successful business, \$46.5 million is being provided to the SME Export Readiness Initiative to support entrepreneurs with limited exporting experience with international trade to build, scale and strategize effectively.

We're behind our entrepreneurs and small businesses, and we are making our Canadian economy grow rapidly.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that. I'm confident that we will continue doing that.

For Canadian businesses to prosper and remain in Canadian hands, the government must renew the capital gains tax exemption for employee ownership trusts. It is such an important program.

I know you can't answer this today, but with the spring economic statement set for April 28, can you confirm that the government is considering standing or making permanent this important tax incentive? I know you can't answer that, but since you spend 50% of your time with the government, I am certain you agree with —

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Senator Moreau: Thank you for asking a question you know I can't answer, but thank you for the question.

In Budget 2025, the government confirms that it has considered the tax exemption for sales to employee ownership trusts, and it intends to proceed with it as modified to take into account consultations and deliberations since its release. So, you have a good clue there as to where the government is aiming in the future.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

PHOENIX PAY SYSTEM

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Moreau, in late March, the Auditor General released a new audit on the Phoenix pay system. This was her fourth report on a multi-billion-dollar fiasco that caused employees major financial stress and serious pay problems, including delays, underpayments and sometimes no pay at all. This situation violates basic labour laws, including the right to receive payment for work performed.

According to Public Services and Procurement Canada's preliminary estimate, the new system, Dayforce, will cost over \$4.2 billion. That estimate doesn't include the significant costs involved in transitioning all the departments and agencies to the new system. What guarantees are there that history won't repeat itself and that the government isn't heading in the same direction it took 10 years ago?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Oudar, I was able to speak with the Auditor General directly the day before she released her report.

The government approached her preventively. It asked the Auditor General to immediately examine the new Dayforce platform to prevent a repetition of past mistakes made with Phoenix.

In her report, the Auditor General identified a few areas requiring immediate action, including clearing the entire backlog of outstanding pay transactions caused by Phoenix. She also recommended that the backlog be significantly reduced, by about 50%, before Dayforce is rolled out. This is exactly what the government is doing.

By working faster with the Auditor General in a preventive way, we are making sure that best practices are in place to ensure that Dayforce is a success, not a failure.

Senator Oudar: Okay.

One of the Auditor General's recurring findings was that Phoenix was rolled out without sufficient pilot testing, despite the many warnings. Can the government confirm that Dayforce will be rolled out as a rigorous pilot project and phased in one department at a time, before it's rolled out on a larger scale?

Senator Moreau: That's an excellent question and an excellent suggestion. I can confirm that the government is phasing in the Dayforce program one department at a time, as you are suggesting. The same approach is being taken with government agencies, based on their levels of readiness. In terms of readiness, the government is ensuring that it stays in communication with the officials responsible for implementing Dayforce at each agency and department.

[English]

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

CANADA-IRAN RELATIONS

Hon. Pamela Wallin: Government leader, the genuine evil of Iran's theocracy has been on brutal display since 1979. We have declared the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC, a terrorist entity because, among other things, they have killed 55 Canadians onboard Flight PS752. The regime has slaughtered and tortured thousands of their own people, raped and brutalized women, and hanged and executed young citizens who have spoken out.

Why on Earth would Canada sit silently in support of Iran's nomination to a UN committee on women's rights, human rights and the prevention of terror? They are global sponsors of terror and lack even a shred of humanity.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The Prime Minister has expressed his thoughts about the Iranian regime. I don't think the Canadian government is remaining silent on the issue. We all share the idea that the regime is one of terror that is suppressing the human rights of its own people. That is the position of the Government of Canada.

Senator Wallin: We sat silent at a vote at the UN when we had an option to challenge their nomination. We have dismantled an inquiry into support for the victims of Flight PS752. We have 25 regime operatives living in Canada. One has been expelled.

Why are we not deporting them, at the very least? Please don't argue international law or due process because they came here under false pretenses, and their presence is illegal.

Senator Moreau: The positions of the Canadian government regarding UN decisions are considered in careful consultation at diplomatic levels that I cannot discuss here.

I answered Senator Gerba's question concerning another UN resolution and, sometimes, they are related to the wording of the declaration and the negotiations that are going on, which I cannot discuss here at the moment.

[Translation]

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

[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 Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety, will take place on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 3:30 p.m.

[Translation]

FEDERAL LAW—CIVIL LAW HARMONIZATION ACT, NO. 4

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Clement, seconded by the Honourable Senator Dalphond, for the second reading of Bill S-6, A fourth Act to harmonize federal law with the civil law of Quebec and to amend certain Acts in order to ensure that each language version takes into account the common law and the civil law.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak at second reading of Bill S-6, the Federal Law—Civil Law Harmonization Act, No. 4.

• (1430)

Before I begin, I would like to thank Senator Clement for the “harmonization 101” lesson she gave during the second reading of this bill. I’m sure that the new senators who weren’t here during the last Parliament really appreciated it.

It also allows me to cut straight to the heart of the matter.

But for a few changes, this bill is essentially the same as Bill S-11, which we considered during the previous Parliament. That bill died on the Order Paper.

This bill is undeniably a technical and particularly voluminous bill. It contains 216 pages and 640 clauses, plus 160 pages of explanatory notes. Quite frankly, though, despite its length, this text will doubtless not stir up much passion in this Chamber.

However, its importance must not be underestimated, as it constitutes an essential step in the implementation and preservation of what we call Canadian bijuralism. Its purpose is not to alter the substance of the law, but rather to ensure the consistency, clarity and legal equivalence of federal legislative texts within the country’s two legal traditions: common law and civil law. Bill S-6 is part of an ongoing effort to give full expression to Canadian bijuralism.

Indeed, as the summary of the bill clearly states:

This enactment is the fourth in a series of enactments drafted in the course of the harmonization of federal statutes by the Department of Justice of Canada as a result of the coming into force of the Civil Code of Québec in 1994, which substantially changed the concepts, institutions and terminology of civil law. It amends 51 statutes, including the Acts governing financial institutions — the *Bank Act*, the *Cooperative Credit Associations Act*, the *Insurance Companies Act* and the *Trust and Loan Companies Act* — and other Acts including the *Access to Information Act*, the *Financial Administration Act*, the *Interpretation Act* and the *Official Languages Act*, in order to ensure that each language version takes into account the common law and the civil law.

Given the purpose and limited scope of this bill, I support it.

It’s also important to recognize that this bill was introduced following long-term efforts by government officials, preceded by an extensive consultation process. According to the information we received during the consideration of Bill S-11, more than 400 stakeholders were consulted.

I can’t anticipate the results of the work ahead, but I think that the technical nature of the proposed measures should enable both chambers to conduct an efficient study of this bill. Previous harmonization bills were passed easily following a thorough review, since they clarified terminology without impacting the substance of the law.

I therefore support Bill S-6 at second reading.

[Senator Carignan]

The Honourable Michel Bastarache, a former Supreme Court of Canada justice, said the following regarding bilingual drafting:

[F]ederal legislation must be drafted in the English and French languages and in a manner which is compatible with two legal systems. Canada is blessed with four different legal languages and federal legislation must not only be bilingual but bijural. Indeed, federal legislation must simultaneously address four different groups of persons

I recommend passing this bill.

I was the sponsor of Bill S-12 and Bill S-11, the third and fourth bills, which both died on the Order Paper, so I hope that this bill will not meet the same fate.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Clement, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Wells (*Alberta*), seconded by the Honourable Senator Cardozo, for the second reading of Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places).

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places).

There is no denying the need to fight hate in this country, be it anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia or “incel”-like misogyny. We have seen a recent rise in public racism in this country that takes my breath away, targeted at immigrants and refugees from East Asia and South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East. Political groups such as the Dominion Society are now openly calling for campaigns of “remigration.”

And then there is the enduring national shame of anti-Indigenous racism, Canada's original and perpetual sin, a hate that helps to drive the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women who are all too often the target of sexual violence because of their racial identity.

Believe me; I am keenly aware of just how much danger there is in a hateful, hate-filled Canada. A dear friend emailed me just the other day to let me know that her synagogue in Toronto had been sprayed by gunfire. In 2024, the synagogue at the end of my daughter's street in Vancouver was firebombed. For me, as a person of paternal Jewish descent, this isn't a hypothetical debate; it's a deeply personal one.

What is fuelling this wave of hate and hate crimes? Some of it can certainly be traced back to the social disruptions wrought on our world by the COVID-19 pandemic, which eroded our sense of community cohesion, fuelled suspicion of government and fuelled, in particular, anti-Asian scapegoating.

Some of it can probably be attributed to leakage from Donald Trump's America, where his twisted version of the Republican Party has shamelessly embraced race hate and hatred of immigrants, in particular, as a populist drum beat.

And, of course, the terrible wars in the Middle East are driving much of the upswing in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Canada and pitting Jewish and Muslim Canadians against one another at a time when, frankly, Canadian Muslims and Canadian Jews need to be standing together as allies against the rising tide of White supremacy.

Some of it, though, is specific to Canada and to this moment. Legislation and court decisions that have upheld treaty rights and the duty to consult with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities have fed into long-standing anti-Indigenous sentiment. The horrifying rise in homophobia and transphobia is, in part, a backlash against all the legal and legislative victories the queer and trans communities have won in this country over the past three decades. Transphobia, in particular, has also been weaponized in a dangerously cynical and calculated way by certain right-wing Canadian political strategists as a way to win votes in religious minority communities.

All these historical hates, meanwhile, are being supercharged with the most contemporary technologies. Where once upon a time hate-mongers had to stand on street corners, handing out flyers and yelling through megaphones, today, hate propaganda travels at lightning speed via Wi-Fi and fibre-optic cables, finding mass audiences instantaneously. Hate groups no longer have to meet in small groups in dank basements. Instead, haters of all flavours and varieties can find their fellow travellers online. Radicalization happens in real time. Lies, disinformation and conspiracy theories spread unchecked, far beyond the ability of our impoverished and disempowered news organizations to debunk them.

And, thus, we have before us Bill C-9, which seeks to protect temples, synagogues, mosques, gurdwaras, churches and other religious spaces and to ensure that community members have safe and unimpeded access to those places of worship, free from intimidation, be it online or in person.

The bill would offer similar protections not just to faith institutions but to cultural spaces, ranging from pride centres and Native Friendship Centres to cemeteries, religious schools and seniors' homes linked to faith and ethnic communities.

The bill would crack down on the use of archetypal Nazi insignia to instill hate and horror, and it attempts to include more modern symbols of hate in the same way.

As well, the bill would allow for far stiffer sentences for those convicted of crimes motivated by hatred. At the same time, it would allow a person who commits any offence under any act of Parliament for reasons of hatred to also be charged with a secondary criminal offence of a hate-motivated act.

I think we all understand the need to address the challenge of hate and hate-motivated crimes in our society, and I support the goals of Bill C-9. But as we prepare to send the bill to committee, I want to raise some questions and cautions, which grow from my experiences with past efforts to combat hate with criminal legislation and trials.

• (1440)

I came of age as a human being — and a journalist — in Alberta when it was in the grips of an anti-Semitic fever.

In 1988, as a young magazine reporter, I covered the case of a group of members of the Ku Klux Klan who tried to blow up Calgary's Jewish Community Centre and to kidnap and murder Calgary philanthropist and businessman Harold Milavsky.

Luckily, I was not assigned — perhaps for obvious reasons — to cover "Aryan Fest," which took place near Provost, Alberta, in the fall of 1990. The event was organized by several members of the Church of Jesus Christ Christian-Aryan Nations, led by White supremacist Terry Long. At that event, there was a cross burning and the display of a sign reading "KKK White Power" and, of course, a Nazi flag. Participants wore Nazi uniforms, shouted racist and anti-Semitic chants and displayed and discharged weapons.

Anti-Semitism is, of course, one of the oldest of hatreds. But what on earth triggered such an outbreak of grotesque nastiness in 1980s Alberta? Well, let's just say that the long, drawn-out prosecution and martyrdom of Alberta's most infamous Holocaust denier, Jim Keegstra, was, I have no doubt, a contributing factor.

Keegstra was a high school social studies teacher in the small central Alberta town of Eckville. For years, he taught his students that the Holocaust was a hoax, a con job pulled off by a cabal of Jews, the better to control the global economy. He taught this vicious lie, unchecked by any principal, any school trustee or any teacher colleague, until one heroic mother, Susan Maddox, sought to have Keegstra fired. Keegstra finally lost his job in 1982, the year I graduated from high school, which was not in Eckville. Two years later he lost his teaching licence.

Then, in 1984, the Crown charged Keegstra with the wilful promotion of hatred. That case, fought all the way to the Supreme Court twice — there and back again — finally concluded in 1996 with a conviction. What was Keegstra's sentence? No fine. No jail time. Just 200 hours of community service.

Far from silencing Keegstra, those 12 years of appeals and retrials gave him a bully pulpit to posture as a false defender of civil liberties and to amplify his conspiracy theories. He positively basked in national notoriety. Were it not for his prosecution, he likely would have remained unknown and unheard beyond Eckville and its environs.

Instead, in 1987, he was catapulted from being a village schoolteacher to the leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada. Meanwhile, Keegstra's own lawyer, a fellow Holocaust denier named Doug Christie, used the profile he gained while defending Keegstra to become the founder and leader of the Western Canada Concept party, Alberta's original separatist movement. And all the while Keegstra and Christie were gleefully making headlines and spreading their lies, anti-Semitic hate crimes in Alberta spiked.

The landmark legal precedent in the Keegstra case established the constitutionality of Canada's hate speech legislation. The Keegstra ruling, indeed, provides the legal foundation for Bill C-9.

But the experience of covering Keegstra's legal battles left me forever dubious about the practical wisdom and unintended consequences of criminally prosecuting hate-mongers.

At least Keegstra's hate was crystal clear. There was plenty of evidence of what he had taught in his classes over many years, plenty of evidence that he'd carefully endeavoured to brainwash impressionable schoolchildren with his beliefs and plenty of evidence that he stood by his opinions to the bitter end.

Prosecuting speech that's even a bit more subtle, prosecuting speech that's ambiguous gets trickier.

As someone who spent 30 years as a journalist, as someone who has spent my life fighting for freedom of expression, I have deep concerns about the wisdom of attempting to regulate, much less criminalize, political speech, even when I might find it vile and reprehensible.

Let's take the symbol of the Hakenkreuz, the Nazis' appropriation and perversion of the sacred swastika symbol. For more than 100 years, the Nazi Hakenkreuz has been a powerful, frightening symbol of hate and violence. When used today by neo-Nazi and White supremacist groups, that is exactly what it still is. But because it is such a potent political icon, the hooked cross has also been deployed by protest groups to make provocative political points — as a proxy to accuse various contemporary governments of behaving “like” Nazis or “like” fascists.

Does Bill C-9 have enough safeguards to protect protestors, from the left or the right, who might want to use the Hakenkreuz, not necessarily to intimidate Jews but to make a powerful political point about a regime or a policy they don't like? I'm not sure that it does.

This leads to the larger question of which symbols we ought to ban. I think the meaning of the Nazi Hakenkreuz is clearly, almost universally, understood.

Other political iconography, though, gets tricky. Since there is no government list of official hate groups in Canada, Bill C-9 uses, instead, the pre-existing list of terrorist and extremist groups to build its list of banned symbols. But that list is a poor proxy.

Some of those groups — the Proud Boys, the Atomwaffen Division, the Maniac Murder Cult and even Boko Haram — are clearly hate groups. But others on the list, such as the Sinaloa cartel or the Bishnoi Gang, are organized crime groups. They may do hateful, horrible things, but they aren't hate groups with well-known, well-recognized hate iconography.

And then what do we do with symbols that have complicated meanings? Hamas is a listed terrorist group, and one of its main symbols is an inverted red triangle, borrowed from the Palestinian flag. But that red triangle is no longer just a symbol of Hamas. Some peaceful pro-Palestinian protestors have adopted it, too. So if someone shows up at an anti-Israeli rally with an upside-down red triangle banner or sign, might they be liable to prosecution? And if not prosecution, might law enforcement be encouraged by these new provisions to react more restrictively, perhaps inappropriately or unconstitutionally?

There are a number of Sikh extremist groups on Canada's terrorist list, including the Babbar Khalsa and the International Sikh Youth Federation. Is there a possibility that Khalistani flags or Sikh flags, not a symbol of hate, could end up being labelled unfairly as hate symbols?

At the same time, there are other hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan and Diagonal, that are not on the terrorist list, which means that well-known KKK emblems, such as a burning cross, a white hood, or a noose — long-established icons of evil and intimidation and symbols often clearly deployed to threaten and intimidate — are not included or considered as hate symbols under this bill's new provisions.

Another issue with the legislation is its degree of subjectivity. In several areas, these new provisions would apply when an accused's actions are “motivated by hatred” or when there is “intent to provoke a state of fear.” But it's not always easy as a police officer to deduce someone's motivation or intention, and provoking a state of fear is yet another subjective test. What if you provoke fear in someone when that is not your intent?

And then come the perhaps unintended consequences. A provision of the bill makes it an offence to obstruct or interfere intentionally with another's lawful access to a house of worship, a cultural community centre, a religious school or a senior's home affiliated with a faith or cultural group. But what if teachers in a Catholic school division go on strike and picket outside a school? What if striking health care aides want to picket

the church-affiliated seniors' home where they work? Might they be captured — however unintentionally — by the provisions of Bill C-9?

These are all issues that I hope will be addressed during committee study of the bill.

Now, I want to turn to the issue that has alarmed many Canadians of faith across the country. The original version of Bill C-9 left intact long-standing defences in the Criminal Code. Those defences state that no person shall be convicted of the wilful promotion of hatred or the wilful promotion of anti-Semitism:

. . . if, in good faith, the person expressed or attempted to establish by an argument an opinion on a religious subject or an opinion based on a belief in a religious text.

The bill was amended at committee in the other place to remove those historic defences.

Our Charter of Rights and Freedoms clearly protects not just freedom of expression but also freedom of religion. Any government legislation that could trespass on those rights deserves our keenest critique.

Yet I must say this: For thousands of years, organized religion has been the excuse and the vehicle for some of the worst acts of hatred and persecution the world has ever endured. Whether we're talking about Christian martyrs in the Roman Colosseum, Muslim victims of the Christian Crusades, Jewish victims of the Spanish Inquisition, Protestant victims of Catholic persecution, Catholic victims of Protestant persecution, Indigenous children in residential schools, religion has been the goad and the excuse for hateful acts of all kinds.

Here we are, in the 21st century, in the world where we see Taliban Muslims attacking Afghan Sikhs; Buddhist persecution of Muslims in Myanmar; Hindu, Sikh and Muslim internecine tension and violence in India and abroad; Jewish-Muslim violence in the Middle East; Muslim-Christian tension in Nigeria.

I could sadly go on.

In the words of the great 17th-century philosopher Blaise Pascal, "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction."

Or, to quote the original in French, from Pascal's *Les Pensées*:

[*Translation*]

Jamais on ne fait le mal si pleinement et si gaiement, que quand on le fait par un faux principe de conscience.

[*English*]

Let's not be coy. The thing that most people out there seem most worried about is that Bill C-9 will prevent them from being publicly homophobic and transphobic. I'll be blunt. I will defend, with my last breath, your freedom of religion and conscience, your right to be homophobic and transphobic, if you think that's what your faith teaches you and demands. For that matter, I'll defend your right to be anti-Semitic if that's what you think your

scripture teaches you. But if you, in Canada, are preaching hatred and advocating violence against an identifiable group on the basis of your religion, I'm not convinced that your protestations of sincerely held faith ought to offer some kind of elevated protection from the law.

• (1450)

The truth is that hate laws of any kind must strike a difficult balance. We don't want legislation that infringes unfairly or unduly on freedom of expression, freedom of association or freedom of religion. We need to protect the right of free political speech, the right of peaceful public protest and picketing and the right of faith groups to worship as they believe right. But we need the right tools to fight crimes of intimidation, crimes of violence and crimes that diminish the safety of all Canadians as well.

Whichever committee or committees end up studying Bill C-9 will not have an easy time of it. I hope they will be able to hear from a broad cross-section of witnesses, not just those who strongly support or denounce the bill but from many experts and civil society groups in the middle who might support the bill's ends but are also ambivalent about the means.

Bill C-9 proposes changes that may deeply affect how all Canadians can exercise their core democratic rights, which are so fundamental that they were recognized in our law and our political traditions long before the Charter was enacted. What's more, the bill would make substantial changes to what the Supreme Court of Canada has recognized: that our current criminal offences against the promotion of hatred represent a delicate constitutional balance.

The goals of Bill C-9 are noble. The means demand careful scrutiny. This isn't a bill that should be held up for frivolous or partisan reasons. It deserves our sharp and timely attention. At the same time, this isn't a bill that ought to be rushed. If there were ever a time, place or case for sober second thought, Bill C-9 presents it.

Thank you. *Hiy hiy*.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of April 15, 2026, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*English*]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, for the second reading of Bill S-223, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act.

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15 and Senator Prosper wishes to speak to it. Therefore, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 4-14(3), I move the adjournment of the debate in the name of Senator Prosper for the balance of his time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, for the second reading of Bill S-224, An Act to amend the Director of Public Prosecutions Act.

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I note that this item is also at day 15 and Senator Prosper wishes to speak to it also. Therefore, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 4-14(3), I move the adjournment of the debate in the name of Senator Prosper for the balance of his time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

NATIONAL DIFFUSE INTRINSIC PONTINE GLIOMA AWARENESS DAY BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) moved second reading of Bill S-244, An Act respecting National Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma Awareness Day.

She said: Honourable senators, I am deeply honoured to rise today as the sponsor of Bill S-244, An Act respecting National Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma Awareness Day. This enactment seeks to designate May 17 of each year as Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma Awareness Day, a day more commonly known to a community of grieving but resilient families as DIPG Awareness Day.

Before I begin, I wish to acknowledge member of Parliament Joël Godin, my colleague in the House of Commons. His tireless advocacy on behalf of the families in his riding and across Canada has been the heartbeat of this legislative journey.

Diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, or DIPG, is not just a medical term. It is the leading cause of brain tumour deaths in children in Canada. It most often strikes children between the ages of 5 to 7 but can occur in younger children and teenagers.

Diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma is an aggressive, inoperable tumour that embeds itself in the pons, the part of the brainstem that controls vital life functions. It is uniquely cruel because of its locked-in nature. As the tumour grows, it gradually shuts down a child's ability to walk, to use their arms, to swallow and eventually to breathe. Yet throughout the physical decline, the child's cognitive function remains intact. They are fully aware. They are trapped inside bodies that are failing them while their minds remain as bright and observant as ever.

I recently met with three mothers who lived through this nightmare. Their stories are not just testimonies. They are a call to the conscience of this chamber. Florence was 5 years old. Her mother, Stéphanie, described the wall of silence she hit upon diagnosis. In Canada, she was told that there was nothing to be done. As a francophone, Stéphanie faced the double burden of navigating a complex medical landscape while paying out of pocket for translation services just to seek out clinical trials in the United States.

• (1500)

She spent her daughter's final months, not just being a mother, but acting as a fundraiser, a translator and a researcher, desperate to find a crack of light in a dark room.

Trinity was five and a half years old. Her mother, Tammy, recalled the devastating irony of Trinity's first week of kindergarten. What should have been a week of new backpacks and excitement turned into a hospital visit for "odd symptoms." The diagnosis was a death sentence, delivered in a whisper: "Go home and make memories."

Isabelle was only three and a half years old. Her mother, Jackie, remembers an Easter egg hunt where Isabelle began to limp. From a joyful hunt for eggs to the halls of SickKids in Toronto, the transition was instantaneous and brutal.

Jackie pointed out a fact that should haunt every researcher and policy-maker: American astronaut Neil Armstrong's daughter died of DIPG in 1962. The prognosis and standard of care offered to Isabelle in 2021, 60 years later, were virtually identical.

Honourable senators, we live in an era of unprecedented medical advancement. We have mapped the human genome and sent rovers to Mars. Yet, for a child diagnosed with DIPG today, the medical advice remains fundamentally the same as it was during the space race: radiation to buy a little time and then palliative care. Go home and make memories.

As Dr. Mark Souweidane, a world-renowned pediatric neurosurgeon and researcher, has stated:

DIPG is the “Mount Everest” of pediatric oncology. For too long, we have accepted that it is unbeatable. But the reality is that the lack of progress is not due to a lack of will — it is due to a lack of resources and a lack of eyes on the problem.

Awareness is the fuel for research. For decades, DIPG remained in the shadows because it is “rare.” But for the families of the children I am about to name, it is not rare. It is 100% of their reality.

One of the mothers who lives in a rural town in Newfoundland, only 10 minutes from her home, met another mother who suffered the same fate with a child who was diagnosed and died of DIPG. Only 10 minutes from each other.

Critics sometimes argue that awareness days are merely symbolic. But I disagree, and I know our chamber disagrees. In the world of rare diseases, visibility is a form of survival.

Coordination through a national day allows hospitals to sync their data. When families are aware of trials, enrolment increases, providing the “n” — the sample size — that researchers desperately need to find a breakthrough.

A designated day provides a hook for national fundraising, which fills the gap where public funding often falls short for rare pediatric cancers.

May 17 is already recognized internationally. By aligning with the world, Canada joins a global network. We ensure that a discovery in Lyon or London reaches a bedside in Laval or Lethbridge faster.

I wish to read into the record once again — because I did table this bill in the last Parliament — the names of the children who inspired this bill. These are not statistics. They are the dearly departed children and grandchildren of Canadians who are watching and listening to this debate in the Senate. I ask that these names be forever etched into the Hansard of the Forty-fifth Parliament: Adaura Cayford. Alexandra Brodeur. Alicia Jolicœur Vella. Claire Sommer. Ellie Bonnett. Florence Gagné. Gabriel Rey. Gordie White. Isaac Dupré. Isabelle Borkowski. James Lavoie. Jordana Fiorini. Jordyn Chan. Julia De Luca. Justin Brouwer. Kara MacLellan. Karter Bourgeault. Kayge Fowler. Maika Lefebvre. Marie-Ange Forest. Matthew Isaak. Mia Bordeleau. Myah Windrim. Naomi Nevesely. Nathan Froese. Neil Ashamock. Nelina MacPherson. Noah Mercier. Olivia Hirsch. Ronan Smyth. Ronny Betterley. Sarah Kim-Bouchard. Théo Daigle. Trinity Ellsworth. Tyler Palmowski. Victoria-Rose Bilodeau. Willow Lanto.

I know there are more names to add because several years have passed since this list was compiled.

Honourable senators, we often talk about the “future of our country.” For the 37 children I just named, and those I did not name, that future was stolen. It was stolen by a monster that hides in the brainstem, and it was stolen by 60 years of collective silence.

We cannot bring these children back. We cannot undo the trauma of the mothers, fathers and grandparents who watched their children's lights go out one function at a time. But we can decide that their suffering will not be in vain.

When we eventually vote on Bill S-244, we are not just voting for a date on a calendar. We are voting to end the “go home and make memories” era of Canadian medicine. We are voting to tell every parent currently sitting in a pediatric oncology ward that their child's life is worth more than a shrug of the shoulders and a 60-year-old protocol.

I ask all honourable senators for your support of this important bill so that every May 17, the buildings of this country glow with the gold and grey of brain cancer awareness. Let it be a day on which we admit that, while DIPG is currently unbeatable, it is not — and must never be — acceptable.

The mothers of Florence, Trinity and Isabelle did the impossible: They loved their children through the unimaginable. Now it is time for us to do the possible. Let us give this community the recognition they have earned in blood, sweat and tears.

Let May 17 be the day we stop making memories and start making history.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

• (1510)

STUDY ON OCEAN CARBON SEQUESTRATION

FIRST REPORT OF FISHERIES AND OCEANS COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the first report of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, entitled *Carbon Removal, From Air to Sea: Canada, a leader in restoring ocean ecosystems and fighting climate change*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on February 5, 2026.

Hon. Fabian Manning moved:

That the first report of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, entitled *Carbon Removal, From Air to Sea: Canada, a leader in restoring ocean ecosystems and fighting climate change*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on Thursday, February 5, 2026, be adopted and that, pursuant to rule 12-23(1), the Senate request a complete and detailed response from the government, with the Minister of Fisheries being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report, in consultation with the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature and the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT

FIFTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the fifth report (interim) of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, entitled *Amendment to the Senate Administrative Rules*, presented in the Senate on March 25, 2026.

Hon. Marty Klyne moved the adoption of the report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

SIXTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the sixth report (interim) of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, entitled *Amendment to the Rules of the Senate*, presented in the Senate on March 25, 2026.

Hon. Marty Klyne moved the adoption of the report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

[Translation]

VITAL ROLE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Deacon (*Ontario*), calling the attention of the Senate to the vital role that physical activity and sport play in enhancing our well-being, strengthening our communities and shaping the fabric of the Canadian experience.

Hon. Réjean Aucoin: Colleagues, I thank Senator Marty Deacon for drawing the Senate's attention to a matter as important as the vital role that physical activity and sport play in our well-being and in the lives of our communities.

Today, I want to share a perspective from my region, Cape Breton and Nova Scotia.

In rural areas like ours, physical activity is part of everyday life. It is not limited to competitions or major sports events. It is part of our culture, our routines and our community.

Social life in our small communities often revolves around arenas, baseball diamonds and school gymnasiums. They're the places where families gather, where volunteers give generously of their time and where young people learn important values like teamwork, perseverance and respect.

I vividly remember spending time at the arena and the gym when I was in school and later when I took my daughters to badminton or volleyball. These are the places where parents and locals gather to cheer on their kids, where neighbours share news and where the entire community comes together.

I also have many memories of winters spent on frozen ponds playing pick-up hockey for hours, often until someone reminded us it was time to go home to a hearty meal: *fricot*, *chiard*, meat pie or a stew.

These experiences may seem simple, but they are profoundly formative. From a young age, they instill in us a love of physical activity, the joy of being active as well as the importance of friendship and connecting with others. These activities build character and help forge friendships that often last a lifetime.

Nova Scotia has produced many athletes who have been phenomenally successful on the national and international stage.

Everyone has heard of Cole Harbour's own Sidney Crosby, who is a three-time Stanley Cup champion and a double Olympic gold medallist with the Canadian team. His historic overtime goal at the 2010 Olympic Games remains one of the most memorable moments in Canadian sport.

Then there is Nathan MacKinnon and Brad Marchand from Halifax, whose talent and determination rank them among the best hockey players in the world today.

Nova Scotia's contribution to Olympic sport doesn't stop at hockey. Colleen Jones of Halifax, who passed away recently, won the Women's World Curling Championship in 2001 and 2004 and was a six-time Canadian champion.

I am also thinking of Mark de Jonge, also from Halifax, who won a bronze medal in sprint kayaking at the 2012 Summer Olympics.

We can also be proud of Ellie Black, an exceptional gymnast from Halifax, who has represented Canada at several Olympic Games.

Did you know that Nova Scotia founded the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes and that goalie Frank Cook became its star player? The league lasted from 1895 to 1935.

The Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes was the first and only all-Black hockey league in Canada. It existed at a time of widespread discrimination. It played a key role in the evolution of hockey and in the fight for equality. For every athlete at this level, there are thousands of other Canadians who practise a sport or remain physically active simply for fun or for staying fit.

In my region of Cape Breton, physical activity is also deeply connected to our natural environment.

I live along the Cabot Trail, a panoramic route known around the world for the beauty of its landscapes, but also as a great destination for road cycling or running. Cycling the 300-kilometre Cabot Trail always gives the many enthusiasts who tackle it each year an incredible sense of accomplishment.

The Cabot Trail Relay Race, held every May, takes place over 24 hours and in 17 stages. Seventy teams from Nova Scotia, Canada, the United States and around the world take part in this event.

This year is the thirty-sixth edition of the race. Nothing can stop these brave runners, not total darkness, rain, hail, snow or the 9- to 14-degree slopes of the North, South, French and MacKenzie Mountains.

Personally, I can say that physical activity has always been part of my life.

I cycle and cross-country ski regularly, and I swim in the waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which is just a five-minute walk from my home. Over the Easter break, I skied across the Cape Breton Highlands plateau for 10 consecutive days, sometimes in the company of my brothers and my friends Juris Lazovskis and Eric Atkinson, who is a former classmate of Senator Moreau. Last Thursday, to round out the season, we spent 15 hours crossing the backcountry plateau of Cape Breton Highlands National Park.

When I was young, in my village and in my family, physical activity was in our blood. Were sport, physical activity and the great outdoors good for our health? We didn't care. What we cared about was what we were going to play, with whom and where — that and what we were going to have for dinner, of course.

• (1520)

In the 10 houses located on a half-kilometre stretch along Caveaux Road, where I lived, there were about 70 kids, all of them bursting with energy and testosterone. There were 10 kids at John Joe's place, 9 at Louis's place, 12 at Pierre's place, 10 at Patsy's place, 7 at my Uncle Paul Émile's place, and last of all, 10 at our place: nine boys and one girl.

Every day in summer and after school in the fall and spring, we would play baseball, field hockey and football. We would go to the beach and up to the mountains too. In winter, we'd play hockey and go sledding. We'd spend hours building snow forts and then having snowball fights, something that kids today aren't allowed to do. Even though sport was part of my life, my asthma stopped me from keeping up with my brothers at times, but I didn't give up.

We heard Senator McBean and Senator Petitclerc talk about their determination, their achievements and the importance of staying active. Your discipline and exploits are remarkable.

In contrast, I want to tell you about some ordinary people, though as it turns out, they're not so ordinary after all. I've already told you about "One Gear Dan," who cycled the Cabot Trail in a single gear, about my friends Brooks, LeBlanc and Sullivan, who cycled it in a single day, and about Lee Fraser, who regularly guides snowshoe groups across the Cape Breton Highlands plateau.

Today, many of the people my age, or even younger, are no longer with us, including four of my brothers. However, of the 70 neighbours I knew when I was young, most of those who stayed active are still with us today.

In my first year of university, I joined the reserves and completed my military service. I went skydiving day and night, and I rode in helicopters and tanks. What a wonderful adventure; the discipline I gained still guides me today.

Let me tell you about Johnny, who once caught two foxes in a mad race. At the age of 14, he discovered that if he stood on the balls of his feet, he could set off running whenever he wanted. He has not walked since. He is now 84 years old, always stands ramrod straight and has regaled me with many stories of his exploits. He's proud of his feats.

In my province, and in my region of Cape Breton, we see the positive effects of staying active every day. Unfortunately, we often see the opposite — the negative effects on people who are not physically active. That is why it's important that, as a country, we continue to promote access to sport and physical activity for all Canadians.

By investing in physical activity, we are investing in the health of Canadians, in the well-being of our youth, and in the strength of our communities.

In closing, I would like to highlight the recent release of the final report from the Future of Sport in Canada Commission. This commission was established by the Government of Canada to review the Canadian sport system and make recommendations on concrete and effective actions with respect to improving safe sport and the sport system in Canada. The final report sets out its key findings, calls to action, and proposed next steps to foster meaningful and lasting change. All we can do now is hope that the Government of Canada acts swiftly to transform sport.

Honourable senators, even the last runner in a race is ahead of those who aren't running. You have to keep moving if you don't want to get rusty.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

Hon. Kristopher Wells: Honourable senators, today I rise filled with pride and gratitude as we continue to celebrate the remarkable achievements of Team Canada on the world stage. Our Canadian athletes have once again demonstrated to the world what dedication, perseverance and teamwork truly look like. Whether on the ice or down the slopes, they have represented Canada with great humility, excellence and integrity.

I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to each and every member of Team Canada. You have inspired a nation, and you have made Canada proud.

The Olympic Games remind us of something powerful — that sport, at its very best, brings humanity together. The Olympic spirit is rooted in friendship, respect and excellence. It transcends language, politics, borders and identity. For those brief but unforgettable weeks just a short time ago, the world gathered not in division but in celebration of human potential. We cheered not only for victory but also for courage, determination and resilience.

That love of the game, that deep belief in sport as a unifying force, runs deep within Canadian identity. In towns and cities across this country, hockey rinks, football fields, swimming pools, basketball courts, lacrosse fields and community gyms are more than places of competition. They are places where young people learn teamwork, discipline and belonging. They are spaces where friendships are forged and confidence is built. Sport teaches us how to win with humility and how to lose with grace. It teaches us to lift one another up and to keep going even when the odds feel overwhelming.

[Senator Aucoin]

For many Canadians, sport is where they first discover their strengths. It is where they experience the pride of pulling on a team jersey, the responsibility of supporting teammates and the exhilaration of pushing beyond perceived limits. It is where we build lifelong memories and defining traits of our character. Sport shapes individuals, and, in doing so, it shapes our country. Just look at our Prime Minister.

We also know that competition and rivalry are part of what makes sport so compelling. The powerful collection of Canadian novels on which the television show “Heated Rivalry” is based upon reminds us of this fact. Set within the fictional world of professional hockey, the story explores an intense on-ice rivalry that evolves into something far more personal, illustrating the complexity, pressure and passion that define competitive sports.

What makes “Heated Rivalry” so culturally significant is not only its portrayal of elite competition but also its recognition that identity, including sexual identity, exists within these high-performance spaces. As an iconic Canadian work, it challenges traditional narratives about who belongs in hockey and reminds us that, even in the most heated rivalries, athletes are human beings deserving of respect, dignity and authenticity.

But as much as sport unites us, it can also expose where we still have work to do.

Sport has not always been welcoming to everyone. For too many Canadians, particularly 2SLGBTQI+ athletes, and especially transgender and non-binary athletes, sport has too often been a place of exclusion rather than belonging. For some, stepping into a locker room has been an act of courage. For others, joining a team has meant bracing for rejection rather than embracing opportunity.

When a young person steps onto the field or the ice, they should feel the thrill of the game, not fear whether they will be accepted. They should be thinking about the next play, the next goal and the next lap, not about whether they are safe or seen.

This issue is not abstract for me. Long before I had the honour of serving in this chamber, I was working in classrooms and communities, advocating for safer and more inclusive sporting environments. I listened to young people who loved their sport deeply yet questioned whether their sport loved them back. I heard stories of isolation, silence and also of incredible courage.

That work led to the creation of Pride Tape, a simple idea with a powerful message. Pride Tape began as a roll of hockey tape designed in rainbow colours, something that players could wrap around their hockey sticks to signal that 2SLGBTQI+ athletes are welcome in the game. It was not about politics. It was about belonging. It was about creating a visible sign that says, clearly and simply, “You are safe here. You are respected here. You belong here.”

When the Edmonton Oilers became the first NHL team to use Pride Tape, it sent a powerful message not only to fans in the arena but also to countless young people watching at home. It told them that hockey belongs to them, too. That small strip of rainbow tape became a symbol of inclusion, hope and possibility.

• (1530)

Since that debut back in 2016, Pride Tape has been featured in more than 60 countries and has been used in multiple sports, including hockey, curling, bobsledding, lacrosse, baseball, tennis, dodge ball and so many other sports and activities. But the tape itself is only a symbol. The real goal has always been cultural change to foster sporting environments where respect is non-negotiable and inclusion is the norm — a culture where diversity is seen not as a challenge to be managed but as a strength to be embraced.

Today, one of the most urgent conversations in sport concerns transgender athletes. These are young people who love sport. They train hard. They show up early for practice. They commit to their teammates. They dream of competition and belonging just like any other athlete. They deserve policies grounded in evidence, fairness, compassion and human rights, not fear, misinformation and political ideology.

We know from research that inclusive sporting environments improve mental health outcomes, reduce isolation and increase participation. We also know that exclusion can have serious and lasting harm. When young people are pushed out of sport, they lose not only the physical benefits of participation but also the social connections and sense of purpose that sport provides.

Inclusivity is not the weakening of sport; it is the strengthening. When every athlete feels safe and respected, performance improves, team cohesion improves and the love of the game grows deeper. Sport thrives when it reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.

As legislators and leaders, we have a responsibility to foster respectful dialogue and support evidence-based policies. We must ensure that our national sporting institutions uphold fairness while also honouring the dignity and rights of all Canadians. We must send a clear message that discrimination has no place in Canadian sport, just as it has no place in Canadian society.

When a transgender girl laces up her skates, when a non-binary athlete steps onto a basketball court and when a gay teenager joins a hockey team, they should feel exactly what our Olympic athletes feel: pride, excitement and possibility. They should feel that their country stands behind them, not in judgment but in unqualified support.

The measure of our country is not just the medals we win. It is the values we uphold. It is whether we create safe spaces where every young person can thrive. It is whether we are willing to ensure that sport remains a place of opportunity, joy and belonging for all.

Let us be a country where the love of the game truly belongs to everyone. Let us ensure that when young Canadians see Team Canada standing on the Olympic podium, they see a future where they too can participate fully and authentically as their true selves. Let us build a sport culture that reflects the very best of Canada — fairness, respect, compassion and courage.

Sport has the power to unite us. It reminds us that we are strongest not when we exclude but when we play together as one team.

The incredible cultural phenomenon of “Heated Rivalry” has taken the world by storm. Why? Because ultimately it is a human story. It is not just about sport but about the importance of authenticity, belonging and love. These are truly Canadian values that should not only be emphasized in sport but throughout all of our society.

Please join me in once again congratulating our Team Canada athletes and sport enthusiasts everywhere. May your determination and excellence continue to inspire us, not only in competition but also, more importantly, in our shared commitment to fairness, respect and inclusion in all aspects of sport and society.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, I want to begin by thanking Senator Marty Deacon, Senator McBean and Senator Petitclerc for bringing forward this inquiry. It is an important inquiry, and it’s one that I suspect resonates with many of us, not just as legislators but as participants, parents, coaches and fans. I also want to say that my contribution in the world of sport and fitness pales in comparison to my colleagues who brought forward this inquiry. I’m a little sheepish in speaking about any of my activities or experiences. I did mention that to our honourable colleague when I considered doing this.

In these halls, colleagues, sport and physical activity are often discussed in policy terms: health outcomes, economic benefits and participation rates. All of those matter. But at its core, sport is something much more human. It is where we learn discipline, resilience and teamwork. You also learn — or should learn — how to lose with grace and also how to win with grace.

I can say that from personal experience. In 1981, I had the privilege of participating in the Canada Summer Games held in Thunder Bay. I was a rugby player. Rugby teaches you a few things very quickly: how to take a hit, how to get back up and how much you rely on the people beside you. You learn that no one gets very far on their own. And for colleagues who may not know, rugby has some unwritten rules — these rules apply to life as well. When you take someone down and the play ends, you help them back up. At the end of the game, the victors are clapped off the field and they, in turn, clap the vanquished off the field. In the case of playing back in Newfoundland and Labrador, you would probably share a pint. The game is competitive, but there is a strong emphasis on camaraderie.

Those lessons stay with you, and like many Canadians, I never left sport behind. I still play hockey every week. I’m still involved in rugby, I hike a lot and I train regularly. I’m convinced that while an active lifestyle doesn’t reverse the signs of aging, I know that it slows it down.

I have also taken those lessons into a very different arena: high-altitude mountaineering.

When people think of Newfoundland and Labrador, they don’t usually think of high-altitude anything. We live pretty much at sea level. Over the years, I have climbed in the Andes, the Himalayas, the Alps, the Rockies and the Russian Caucasus, and I have been fortunate enough to summit the highest peaks on three continents. Colleagues, there is nothing quite like it.

High-altitude mountaineering is not glamorous. It is cold and windy. You're carrying massive loads of gear — food and water, sleeping gear, stove and fuel, crampons, axes and ropes. And if you're operating at altitudes where the oxygen is less than 40% of the oxygen at sea level, you are also carrying oxygen. And you question why you're doing this as your hobby. During every climb on the way up, I say to myself, "This is my last climb." And after summiting — if I'm fortunate — and coming down, I start planning the next one.

That's generally the trajectory of doing hard things: I love the planning, hate the doing and love the result. That becomes fuel for the next one.

But it also teaches you something powerful: It teaches you preparation and resilience, and above all, it teaches you humility because the mountain doesn't care who you are. There is no scoreboard, no crowd and no second period if you don't do well in the first. You respect the environment of the climb because everything conspires against you.

I once spent 17 days on a mountain — Aconcagua in the Argentine Andes — with a climber from Lebanon. Climb high, sleep low — that's the remedy for altitude sickness because if you get altitude sickness, the only recourse is to descend and end the climb. My Lebanese friend ended his climb 300 vertical metres from the summit of Aconcagua, which is the highest peak outside of the Himalayas. It is a 6,961-metre mountain. That's seven kilometres high. The last 300 metres is a near-vertical rock and ice climb that takes about three hours. In fact, we had two Argentinian guides who turned back hours before. One had severe headaches — a clear sign of altitude sickness — while the other was throwing up blood, which is even worse. There were three of us left to summit on our own. My Lebanese friend and tentmate had to turn back because he was out of water, and he was showing signs of dehydration, but we still had summiting and returning to high camp in front of us. There was no choice for him.

In many ways, the lessons of preparation are not different from what sport teaches us at every level: planning, preparation, teamwork and execution. It is truly just like life.

Whether it is rugby, hockey, climbing or walking, sport keeps us engaged. It keeps us connected. It keeps us grounded.

Our three colleagues' inquiry rightly points to the broader benefits of sport in our society.

• (1540)

We know that physical activity improves health outcomes. We know it reduces strain on our health care system. We know it builds stronger communities. And, of course, it builds a lifetime of friendships.

But I would suggest there is another layer to this. Sport is one of the few spaces left in our society where people come together across differences — many differences — such as age,

background and politics. None of it matters when you are on the field, on the ice or on the mountain. You are simply part of a team or part of a shared challenge. That is something we should not take for granted.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that access to sport is not equal, and it's not what it once was. Costs are rising. Time is scarce. Equipment can be expensive. For too many families, participation is becoming a challenge rather than a given. And the curse of electronics is ever present and something that we didn't have to consider when we — well, most of us — were young.

If we believe, as I think we all do, that sport is essential to the fabric of Canadian life, then we must think seriously about how we maintain and expand access, because the value of sport is not just in producing the next Olympian. It is in producing healthier, more resilient, more connected citizens and happier people.

There is something else worth saying. In a country as vast and diverse as Canada, sport has always been a unifying force. Whether it is hockey on a frozen pond, rugby on a muddy field or even climbing a mountain half a world away, these are the experiences that shape us. They don't make headlines. They do not require legislation. But they matter. So as we reflect on this inquiry, I would encourage us to keep that broader perspective in mind.

Yes, we should consider policy. Yes, we should consider investment. But we should also recognize the intangible value of sport: the life lessons it teaches, the communities it builds and the role it plays in shaping who we are.

One of the things I've come to appreciate over the years is that sport has a way of staying with you, even as everything else changes. You may not move as fast, you may take a little longer to recover, and your teammates may get noticeably younger every year, but the feeling never really leaves.

That sense of stepping onto the ice — which, as I said, I do every week — or onto a field or setting out toward a summit, not knowing exactly how it will go but knowing it will challenge you and knowing it will be worth it, that is something special.

It is something we should do everything we can to preserve, not just for ourselves but for the generations coming behind us. Because long after the scores are forgotten and the games are over, it is the experiences, the friendships, the lessons and the moments that stay with us. In many ways, they help shape the people we become and the ones we raise.

Thank you, colleagues.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

VITAL ROLE OF IMMIGRANTS

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Loffreda, calling the attention of the Senate to the vital role that immigrants have played — and continue to play — in shaping Canada's economic growth, cultural richness and social fabric.

Hon. Victor Boudreau: Honourable senators, I am pleased to speak to Senator Loffreda's inquiry into the vital role that immigrants have played — and continue to play — in shaping Canada's economic growth, cultural richness and social fabric.

I grew up in a Canada that, on the whole, was proud of its history of multiculturalism that included Ukrainians settling in the West, Vietnamese people fleeing the war and, more recently, Syrians arriving in the country. We often cite these examples as proof of Canada's empathetic nature. In a world that is shrinking before our very eyes, we used to tell ourselves that Canada was a model of internationalism and a refuge for those seeking to escape tyranny and oppression.

Since Canada adopted its official multiculturalism policy in the early 1970s, the policy has been hailed by many as a response to the American tradition of cultural assimilation, which came to be known as the melting pot.

Here in Canada, we prided ourselves on our more humane approach. We used the term "cultural mosaic" to describe our more progressive approach to integrating newcomers and respecting their diverse cultures and traditions.

Of course, the reality on the ground has often been quite different. We have often failed to live up to these noble ideals. For example, our country used to have a formal policy explicitly aimed at restricting Black immigration. During the Second World War, we sadly detained and interned Japanese Canadians. And in the 1930s and 1940s, Canada had one of the worst records in the world when it came to accepting Jews fleeing the Holocaust.

When times are good and resources aren't stretched, it's easy to support the idea of immigration. However, as history has shown us, when times are tough, people feel threatened and look for someone to blame for their problems.

I'm sure we've all heard this type of irrational and often hateful speech that is done to create scapegoats.

When the economy experiences a downturn or access to resources and services, like housing and health care, becomes difficult, there are always people who will blame immigrants for job losses, high costs or long wait times.

Even when the evidence suggests otherwise, they stick to this easy but utterly false explanation.

Lately, it seems like the scapegoating has gotten worse. It makes me wonder what happened to the national consensus we thought we'd reached on immigration.

[English]

To be sure, there are deep-rooted human explanations for this. To some extent, we are all fearful and wary of "The Other," with a capital T and capital O. Even at the best of times, we shy away from things and people we don't understand. At the worst of times, though, our reactions to "otherness" can turn toxic.

But for a country like ours, with decades of experience in attracting and welcoming newcomers, there must be more to it than just these basic and ugly human impulses. I firmly believe that there are also institutional reasons for this shift in the attitudes of Canadians. It begins, I think, with the unintentional mismanagement of the immigration system in recent years.

The history of immigration policy in this country is complicated. We tend to believe that an equity- or rights-based approach to immigration has been the driving force of our policy forever. But, in truth, until the late 1970s and 1980s, Canada's doors were mostly closed to non-European newcomers. That changed officially in 1976, and a few years later, the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms further informed our approach and attitudes to immigration. In the decades since, we've had many debates over issues like accommodation, Canadian identity and equity.

In recent years, this conversation has become more heated and divisive. Many factors are at play here. For example, a sustained push by private industry for inexpensive labour led to a massive increase in temporary foreign workers. Around the same time, post-secondary institutions sought to make up for declining enrolment and lost revenue through a sharp increase in international students.

These weren't the only stresses on the system, but policy-makers of all political stripes — with good intentions, I believe — responded to these demands from business and turned a blind eye to what was happening at colleges and universities.

The real mistake, though, was not pausing long enough to think about how our economy and public services could absorb such a large and rapid influx. A recent study showed that the rate at which Canada welcomed newcomers in 2023 was unsustainable. This was the peak of our response to the labour and student enrolment issues I just mentioned.

If left unchecked, this opening of the floodgates would have resulted in Canada's population reaching 452 million people by the end of this century. On the other hand, if Canada moved to the other extreme and stopped accepting immigrants altogether, our population would fall to just over 12 million by 2100, less than a third of our current size.

In an opinion piece in *The Globe and Mail* from March, Campbell Clark put it this way:

. . . the lesson of the recent past is not that immigration is bad. It is that wild swings in immigration policy are bad. . . .

I think there's a deep truth here. Our immigration policy has become too reactive and too disjointed. It lacks vision and focus and suffers from poor long-term planning.

[*Translation*]

Canada needs immigrants: it's a reality that can't be denied. When immigration is managed properly, everyone wins — both existing Canadians and the newcomers we take in.

• (1550)

Canada should take advantage of this time of uncertainty to thoroughly analyze its policy and the underlying mechanisms. The government should also seriously reflect on the negative impact that the recent political flip-flopping has had on how Canadians view immigration. The government should make every effort to restore their trust.

Before I wrap up, I'd like to add one final thought. I come from Atlantic Canada, where things are often experienced differently than in other parts of the country, especially compared to some of Canada's larger urban centres. In a vast country with countless internal differences, Canada should never take a one-size-fits-all approach to policies.

As the federal government reconsiders its approach to immigration, I would like it to remember that the needs of a province like New Brunswick might be very different from the needs of larger provinces. For example, the seasonal nature of some of New Brunswick's industries means that our labour needs often differ from those of other regions of Canada. The same applies to our ability to properly house and support newcomers. However, what sets us apart the most may be our linguistic make-up.

According to Statistics Canada, the proportion of francophones and French speakers in New Brunswick has been declining in recent years. A more tailored approach to immigration would enable us to address these specific needs. By adopting a mosaic approach to multiculturalism, as opposed to the famous melting pot, Canada has chosen to celebrate the distinct cultures and differences of newcomers.

We should adopt this same philosophy in our approach to immigration reform, respecting the unique needs and capacities of each region of Canada.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

NATIONAL SECURITY, DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO EXTEND DATE OF FINAL REPORT
ON STUDY OF IMPACTS OF RUSSIA'S DISINFORMATION

Hon. Hassan Yussuff, pursuant to notice of March 24, 2026, moved:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Wednesday, October 8, 2025, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs in relation to its study on the impacts of Russia's disinformation on Canada be extended from April 30, 2026, to June 30, 2026.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(*At 3:54 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 2 p.m.*)

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