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Tuesday, April 21, 2026

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,  
Speaker

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## THE SENATE

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

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

Prayers.

### SENATORS' STATEMENTS

#### CANADA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about a recent Senate delegation I had the honour of leading to Taiwan earlier this month. It was a privilege to be back in Taipei and to be accompanied this time by a group of our distinguished colleagues, all of whom were visiting for the first time. All of us who were on this trip agree that witnessing in real time the sheer scale of what the Taiwanese people have built in the shadow of tyranny was a powerful reminder of why this relationship must be a cornerstone of Canada's foreign policy.

It reinforced what I've been saying in this chamber for years: Taiwan is not only a partner; they are also an indispensable democratic anchor in the Indo-Pacific. I want to thank Vice President Hsiao and the various ministers we met during this trip.

Their hospitality was gracious, but their message was urgent. They are on the front lines of a struggle between freedom and tyranny, and they are standing all together. Today, we see a small island of 23 million people punching so far above its weight that it has surpassed the United Kingdom as the world's seventh-largest stock market.

It commands nearly 80% of the global foundry market. Every AI chip, every EV component and every advanced defence system we rely on starts there in Taiwan. They have managed to do all this, as I said earlier, under the constant shadow of the Chinese Communist Party's aggression. That is precisely why it poses such a profound threat to the regime. It is a living, breathing example that freedom and prosperity can exist and flourish without the suffocating grip of authoritarian control.

I want to once again reiterate in this chamber that Taiwan belongs to the Taiwanese people. They are not a province to be absorbed. They are a world-leading democracy that has earned its seat at every global table, and they deserve our unwavering respect on the world stage.

They are precisely the kind of partnership we should be prioritizing. While others remain focused on doing business with authoritarian regimes, Taiwan offers a different, more secure path.

In Taiwan, we have a partner — one that invests in our industries and offers the high-tech know-how built on trust and shared values.

Taiwan must matter more to Canada's future than any other partnership in the Indo-Pacific. The facts just don't lie: Our values demand it. Our partnership with Taiwan is inevitable. We

do not need permission from anyone to engage with a natural ally. Canada must prioritize its partnership with Taiwan unapologetically and fervently. Thank you, colleagues.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

#### AFRICAN CANADIAN SENATE GROUP

**Hon. Bernadette Clement:** Honourable senators, I rise today with gratitude, news and joy — but first, with gratitude.

Senator Rosemary Moodie is the founding chair of the African Canadian Senate Group, or ACSG. She served from the group's founding in 2020 until February 2026. It is no small feat to start something new, to build a community and help it flourish and to bring people together and make things happen. Thank you, Rosemary.

The African Canadian Senate Group regularly hosts a joyful Black History Month gala. It has travelled to hold its first-ever meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus in Washington, and it has advocated, connected with stakeholders and worked together.

Honourable senators, the ACSG consists of Senators Wanda Thomas Bernard, Amina Gerba, Rosemary Moodie, Mohamed Ravaliala, Sharon Burey, Tony Ince, Paulette Senior, Suze Youance and me. Our retired members are former senators Mobina Jaffer and Marie-Françoise Mégie.

You have seen — and you will see — that our members are not a monolith because African Canadians are not a monolith. Our stories are diverse, as is our intersectionality. Like all African Canadians, we are connected to the African continent in many different ways. There is no one path that brought us here to Canada.

Here in the Senate, we are members of the Independent Senators Group, the Canadian Senators Group and the Progressive Senate Group. We represent Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario. African-Canadian staff sit at our table. Together, we stand against anti-Black racism. We speak for communities that are too often underserved and unheard.

*[Translation]*

We're working together to make the Senate a more inclusive institution. We're giving a stronger voice to African-Canadians in the Senate, facilitating their direct participation in the parliamentary process and highlighting their intersectional experiences.

*[English]*

We stand for improvements to employment equity, gender equality, education, mental health, health and justice. We advocate for youth and members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Honourable senators, I am proud to stand alongside my ACSG colleagues as chair, working with Deputy Chair Bernard.

[*Translation*]

I'm optimistic about the work that the African Canadian Senate Group will accomplish together and the work that it will accomplish with the Senate.

[*English*]

I cannot tell you what this group means to me. When I took my oath in this chamber, alongside my godmother, Senator Bernard, I danced — briefly, very briefly, but joyfully.

When Senator Moodie invited me to join a group of people who look like me, I rejoiced. Today, I do so again. Thank you. *Nia:wen.*

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

#### VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Teri Price, co-founder of Greg's Wings Projects. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Kingston.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

#### NATIONAL SOIL CONSERVATION WEEK

**Hon. Robert Black:** Honourable senators, as you know, I am a bit of a soils advocate. That is why I'm happy to rise today to put a spotlight on National Soil Conservation Week, which takes place every year during the third full week of April and began just yesterday.

National Soil Conservation Week raises awareness about the vital role that soil plays in sustaining life, communities and ecosystems across this great country. It also calls on Canadians to take action in protecting and improving soil health so that we can work toward a more sustainable future for food production, clean air and water and biodiversity.

Honourable colleagues, you have heard it said before: Soil is the foundation of all life. To quote the Soil Conservation Council of Canada:

Soil is where you make your living. It sustains our rural communities. It grows our food. It even cleans our air and water and supports biodiversity. Whether you make your living as a farmer or enjoy the benefits soil brings to all Canadians, soils have an impact on you.

Yet a major challenge confronting our soils is Canadians' limited understanding of how essential it is to our livelihoods and well-being.

[ Senator Clement ]

This is why I am excited that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is collaborating and working with the Soil Conservation Council of Canada to develop the national agricultural soil health strategy, based on Bill S-230, which passed this august chamber just a few short weeks ago. This initiative will not only solidify the government's commitment to protecting the critical ground under our feet, but it also raises awareness of this vital issue, encouraging Canadians to get their hands dirty and learn about the importance of healthy soil.

• (1410)

Did you know that one gram of soil can harbour up to 10 billion organisms? That's more than the number of people living on this planet. Further, 95% of our food production relies on healthy soil, yet we are losing topsoil 10 to 40 times faster than it is formed. In fact, around the world, we are told that we are losing the equivalent to 30 football pitches of fertile soil every minute. This should keep us up at night.

If we don't look after our soil, it will lose its ability to support plant growth, become contaminated or erode away. We must take action now.

Honourable colleagues, I hope you'll join me in commemorating National Soil Conservation Week 2026 so that we can continue to raise awareness of the realities being faced by our soils and "advocate" for change to safeguard our social, economic, environmental and human health now and for generations to come.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

#### VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Terry LaBoucane, father of Senator LaBoucane-Benson, as well as Lee Ann Wozniak, her sister.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

#### CITIZENSHIP WEEK

**Hon. Danièle Henkel:** Honourable senators, last week we celebrated Citizenship Week in Canada, and this year, I really got an insider's experience. Yesterday, I had the privilege of giving a speech at a citizenship ceremony in Ottawa. Before me sat 92 people who were preparing to take the oath of citizenship, each with their own journey, story and reasons for choosing Canada. Among them were two people who are especially dear to me: my Director of Parliamentary Affairs, Dimitri, and his husband Thomas, who were accompanied by their twin girls, Adèle and Nina.

When one of your staffers says they have good news, you're never sure what to expect, but it is an excellent surprise to hear them say, "I'm becoming a Canadian."

Colleagues, if you've never attended a citizenship ceremony, let me describe to you what I witnessed there. I saw people from over 30 countries raising their right hand and taking a solemn oath. I saw screens displaying pictures of Canada's landscapes and the diversity of our people. I also heard strong and touching messages from representatives of Canada's First Nations and I heard "O Canada" sung with tears of joy in people's eyes and with voices thick with emotion.

[*English*]

When these individuals are recognized as Canadian citizens, something shifts in their eyes: a quiet pride; relief, sometimes; and a new, official sense of belonging.

For those of us who have lived through this journey of immigration, leaving one country to adopt another, this ceremony brings back deep memories.

Beyond the human values that define our country's reputation, being a Canadian citizen also means accepting responsibilities, respecting our laws, participating in our democratic life and contributing to our collective prosperity.

Colleagues, these ceremonies leave a mark. Let us preserve them.

For all these reasons, I extend the following invitation to you: Please attend a citizenship ceremony, even just once. You will not leave unchanged. Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

#### VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Krista Cassell and Dr. Sandi Ellsworth, Canadian Medical Association physician leaders. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Robison.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Monica Beltran and Francine Girard-Griffith, representatives from the Kidney Foundation of Canada. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Loffreda.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

#### NATIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE

**Hon. Tony Loffreda:** Honourable senators, you know how much I love numbers; however, the following number is not one I like. Kidney disease affects 1 in 10 Canadians. That's 10% of our population. Yet, it remains too often undiagnosed until it reaches its most serious stages.

As the eleventh leading cause of death in Canada and one of the costliest chronic conditions facing our health care system, it demands urgent and coordinated national attention.

As a long-time supporter of the Kidney Foundation of Canada, I rise today to highlight the foundation's most recent and powerful advocacy initiative: the introduction of its National Strategic Framework for Chronic Kidney Disease.

Launched just over a month ago, this comprehensive roadmap sets out a clear vision to transform kidney care in Canada from a system that is reactive and fragmented to one that is proactive and grounded in prevention, early detection and innovation.

The foundation's work reflects decades of unwavering commitment to patients, caregivers and researchers across this country. Their leadership in advancing awareness, funding critical research and advocating for better access to care has made a profound difference in the lives of millions of Canadians. We owe them our sincere recognition and gratitude, and I extend my thanks to our friends from the foundation who are in the gallery today. Thank you.

The framework identifies key priorities that deserve our attention: strengthening prevention and early intervention, ensuring equitable access to timely and competent care and advancing research and data to drive better outcomes. These are practical and achievable goals that can significantly improve health outcomes while reducing long-term costs to our system.

But, colleagues, a number I really like is \$141.6 million. That's the amount of money that the foundation has invested in its research program since 1964.

In 2024 alone, thanks to the generous support of its donors, the foundation invested nearly \$4 million in research and innovation, leveraged \$12.5 million from five funding partners and awarded over 100 research grants, which impacted the work of nearly 500 researchers.

Honourable senators, in that spirit, I invite you to join me in urging the government to carefully consider the foundation's proposal for a national framework on chronic kidney disease and to work in collaboration with stakeholders to advance its implementation.

Canadians living with or at risk of kidney disease deserve nothing less than a coordinated, forward-looking approach to their care. Now is the time to move from awareness to action. Thank you.

[Translation]

### IMPACTS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

**Hon. Rosa Galvez:** Honourable senators, today I want to draw your attention to a global call to action issued by the World Federation of Engineering Organizations, which represents over 30 million engineers worldwide.

The call to action urges AI companies to gear their advances toward achieving sustainable development goals. AI is no mere technological innovation. It's a lever of major transformational change, capable of reshaping our economies, our societies and our relationship to the planet.

[English]

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is not just another innovation; it is a force multiplier. AI can help close critical gaps in health systems, energy efficiency, renewable energy deployment, resilient infrastructure and sustainable food systems. Used wisely, it can strengthen our capacity to respond to interconnected crises, from climate change to biodiversity loss, to improve human health and safety.

• (1420)

Canada has recognized this reality. Last week, we launched a national initiative to build sovereign AI supercomputing capacity, acknowledging that computing power is now foundational to innovation, competitiveness and scientific leadership. Research, including work from the Stockholm Resilience Centre, shows that AI is already accelerating breakthroughs across disciplines and improving decision making in complex systems.

Yet, colleagues, we must be clear-eyed. AI also carries serious risks, like environmental costs, embedded bias, unequal access and growing threats to human security. In Alaska, during Arctic security discussions last week, concerns were raised about the rapid integration of AI into military operations, while governance frameworks lag behind. This gap is too dangerous.

Today, AI development is largely driven by private actors and guided by market incentives and voluntary commitments. While innovation is essential, voluntarism alone will not deliver the scale, the speed or the ethics required to ensure AI serves peace and human prosperity.

This is why the call is clear: We need public commitments from leading AI companies, alongside international mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability and measurable progress.

As parliamentarians, we have a duty to ensure that AI aligns with the public interest, protects human security and advances equitable and sustainable prosperity.

[Translation]

The question is not whether AI will transform the world, but whether we have the wisdom to lead that transformation.

[English]

Canada could be a leader by presenting a resolution to the UN General Assembly at its next session in September calling for AI companies to make a public pledge to supercharge efforts to accelerate and achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### STUDY ON ANTISEMITISM

SECOND REPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE DEPOSITED WITH CLERK DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Paulette Senior:** Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on September 25, 2025, the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on April 21, 2026, its second report entitled *Standing United Against Antisemitism: Protecting Communities and Strengthening Canadian Democracy* and I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

(On motion of Senator Senior, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

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

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## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### BILL RESPECTING CYBER SECURITY, AMENDING THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT AND MAKING CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO OTHER ACTS

#### SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

**Hon. John M. McNair** moved second reading of Bill C-8, An Act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak as the sponsor of Bill C-8, An Act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts.

This bill was initially introduced during the Forty-fourth Parliament as Bill C-26, back in June 2022. It was passed by the House of Commons and the Senate, with amendments, but died on the Order Paper before the House could consider the Senate's amendments when Parliament prorogued in December 2024.

The bill now returns to us with minor changes, which I will outline later on in my speech.

Colleagues, the Communications Security Establishment, or CSE, has said cybercrime is now the most prevalent and pervasive threat to Canadians and Canadian businesses, and, in particular, ransomware is a significant threat. CSE's Canadian Centre for Cyber Security states in the *National Cyber Threat Assessment 2025-2026* that:

Canada is confronting an expanding and complex cyber threat landscape with a growing cast of malicious and unpredictable state and non-state cyber threat actors, from cybercriminals to hacktivists, that are targeting our critical infrastructure and endangering our national security. . . .

They go on to say:

Canada's state adversaries are becoming more aggressive in cyberspace. . . . State-sponsored cyber threat actors are almost certainly attempting to cause disruptive effects, such as denying service, deleting or leaking data, and manipulating industrial control systems, to support military objectives and/or information campaigns. We assess that our adversaries very likely consider civilian critical infrastructure to be a legitimate target for cyber sabotage in the event of a military conflict.

Colleagues, Canada is becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberattacks.

The Cyber Centre states:

Canada has entered a new era of cyber vulnerability where cyber threats are ever-present, and Canadians will increasingly feel the impact of cyber incidents that have cascading and disruptive effects on their daily lives.

Advancements in communications and computing technologies have ushered in a world of ubiquitous connectivity for Canadians. In this environment, online platforms and digital technologies continue to shape and mediate Canadians' interactions with the physical world—the way we work, shop, travel, socialize, get informed, and access critical services. These systems record and process vast amounts of data about us . . . . These systems are also interconnected and fragile: cyber incidents, from cyber attacks to flawed software updates, can knock airlines, hospitals, banks, and retailers around the world offline.

Canadians must be prepared to deal with these threats in order to protect our people, our critical infrastructure and our economy, while ensuring that Canada remains secure, competitive and connected.

Bill C-8 looks to implement baseline cybersecurity-specific requirements to ensure that federally regulated critical infrastructure operators in Canada are resilient in the face of cyber-threats.

Senators, the threat is real, the threat is pervasive, and the threat is happening now. State and non-state actors are targeting internet-accessible devices to exploit basic vulnerabilities, such as insecure remote-access software or the use of default passwords. We know that they are likely attempting to disrupt vulnerable internet-connected operational technology systems within Canadian critical infrastructure when the opportunity arises. These disruptions may cause systems to malfunction, leading to damage or destruction of those systems and possible harm to public safety.

Let me turn to some recent examples. In April 2025, Nova Scotia Power was subject to a sophisticated ransomware attack that affected 280,000 customers. The data breach exposed personal information and resulted in an operational disruption to the utility's smart-meter communications systems.

In June 2025, WestJet was the target of a cyberattack that impacted its internal IT systems and restricted access for users of the WestJet application. While flight operations were not disrupted, the privacy breach exposed the sensitive personal information and travel-related data of 1.2 million passengers.

• (1430)

Only last month, Telus said that it was investigating a cybersecurity incident that saw 700 terabytes of data stolen from their systems. The hacking group ShinyHunters claimed responsibility for the attack. Although there was no evidence of disruption to customer connectivity or service, ShinyHunters said that the stolen data included information related to at least two dozen companies, including personally identifiable information, call data and recordings, background-check information and source code spanning multiple business divisions.

Thankfully, none of these examples caused harm to our public safety, but they do highlight the growing risks to our critical infrastructure.

Senators, to give you a sense of the magnitude of the threat, the Cyber Centre blocks an average of 6.6 billion potentially malicious actions each day, ranging from routine scans to sophisticated intrusion attempts. When just one of these malicious actions gets through their defences, it can lead to a cyberattack such as in the examples I mentioned or worse.

The financial costs are also staggering. It is estimated that cyber-incidents cost Canada's economy \$5 billion annually, with Canadian businesses paying an average of nearly \$7 million per data breach.

Colleagues, Bill C-8 consists of two distinct and complimentary legislative initiatives.

Part 1 introduces amendments to the Telecommunications Act to add security as a policy objective of the act and create new authorities that would be used to secure Canada's telecommunications systems against threats, including those posed by high-risk suppliers, in line with the government's May 2022 policy statement.

The authorities proposed under Part 1 of Bill C-8 will allow the government to strengthen Canada's telecommunications framework to respond to risks, whether they are from high-risk suppliers, cyber-threats or natural disasters and extreme weather events.

Specifically, Part 1 of Bill C-8 seeks to amend the Telecommunications Act by adding ". . . to promote the security of the Canadian telecommunications system" as a specific policy objective. An order-making power tied to that objective would be created for the Governor-in-Council and the Minister of Industry that could be used to compel action by Canadian telecommunications service providers, or TSPs, if necessary, to secure the Canadian telecommunications system against any threats, including those of interference, manipulation, disruption or degradation. Defining the scope in terms of the security of the telecom system rather than security issues, generally, is an important limiting factor. This means that authorities can only be used to direct TSPs to secure their networks; they cannot be used to advance general law enforcement or other security goals.

The legislation would require both the Governor-in-Council and the Minister of Industry to consult before making any orders and includes a series of factors that the Governor-in-Council and the Minister of Industry must consider, including the operational and financial impacts and the effects on the provision of telecommunications services in Canada.

The bill also grants new information-collection authorities with respect to TSPs to advance this objective. Once again, any collected information needs to be reasonably related to protecting the telecom system, specifically information and details on network equipment. An administrative monetary penalty scheme is also established to encourage compliance with orders and regulations.

If adopted by Parliament, these authorities will be a critical tool in our efforts to ensure Canada's networks are reliable, resilient and secure. These new provisions will also provide a clear and explicit legal authority to prohibit Canadian TSPs from using high-risk products and services, as the government committed to do in its 2022 policy statement.

With these new powers, the Governor-in-Council and the Minister of Industry would have the ability to take security-related measures, just as other federal regulators can do in their respective critical infrastructure sectors. These authorities can also be used to take action to manage risks from human errors or climate-based disruptions that can cause outages of critical telecommunications networks.

Colleagues, I want to be clear: In Part 1, the scope of the order-making powers is specific. The language in the bill states that order-making powers are meant to promote the security of the telecommunications system. The government's powers cannot be used for security issues more broadly, and they cannot be used to spy on Canadians.

Part 2 of the bill enacts the critical cyber systems protection act, or CCSPA. The purpose of this proposed legislation is to establish a cross-sectoral regulatory framework to strengthen baseline cybersecurity for services and systems that are vital to national security and public safety. This new act would require designated operators in the federally regulated finance, telecommunications, energy and transportation sectors to take specific actions to protect their critical cyber systems. Once designated, operators would be obligated to establish a cybersecurity program, mitigate supply-chain and third-party service or product risks, report cyber-incidents and comply with cybersecurity directions.

The legislation gives the government a new tool to compel a designated operator to take action, if necessary, to protect its critical cyber system from threats or vulnerabilities.

Similar to Part 1, the CCSPA requires the Governor-in-Council to consider a series of factors before issuing the cybersecurity direction. Those factors include the operational impacts on affected designated operators, the impact on the public safety of Canadians, the impact on the privacy of Canadians, the financial impacts on affected designated operators, the impact on the delivery of vital services and vital systems to consumers, and any other factor the Governor-in-Council considers to be relevant. Finally, the CCSPA provides existing industry regulators with the necessary powers to enforce the act and creates consequences for non-compliance.

Once the bill is implemented, designated operators would develop cybersecurity programs informed by current threat landscapes. Mandatory ongoing incident reporting to the Cyber Centre would be evaluated, including against classified intelligence, to enhance our understanding of evolving cyber-threats. The Cyber Centre would then offer expert advice and guidance, not only to designated operators but to all Canadians, enabling us to tailor our defences to the specific threats we face.

By improving the government's awareness of the cyber-threat landscape and leveraging the Cyber Centre's expertise, their advice and their guidance mandate, we essentially turn one organization's incident into another's prevention. In doing so, we strengthen cybersecurity across Canada, safeguard the privacy and security of information stored on these systems and mitigate the economic impact of cybercrime.

Simply put, this part of the bill provides the tools the government needs to take action to address a wide range of cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Currently, there are no legal requirements for industry to share information on cyber-incidents and no legal mechanism for the government to compel action in the face of known threats or vulnerabilities.

Colleagues, when it comes to national security, we can't rely on the goodwill of industry alone; we must enshrine a more robust cybersecurity framework into law.

Part 2 of Bill C-8 also serves as a model for our provincial, territorial and municipal partners to protect critical cyber infrastructure in sectors under their respective jurisdictions.

Colleagues, while the two parts of Bill C-8 are distinct, with one focused on strengthening our existing telecommunications regulatory framework and the other focused on creating a new framework supporting the security of critical cyber systems, taken together, they respond to the urgent need to ensure that the critical infrastructure Canadians rely upon every day remains secure, resilient and protected.

I want to briefly outline the ways in which Bill C-8 differs from its last iteration, Bill C-26. As I noted earlier, the text of Bill C-8 at the time of tabling in 2025 was virtually identical to the version of Bill C-26 that was passed by both the House and Senate but did not receive Royal Assent. It reflects prior parliamentary study and incorporates amendments made to strengthen the former Bill C-26.

• (1440)

In addition to amendments made to Bill C-26, a small number of administrative changes were made to the bill before it was reintroduced in 2025. Most substantively, provisions in Bill C-26 that would have amended the Canada Evidence Act to provide for judicial review issued under Bill C-26 have been removed entirely, as those have now been replaced by a single, uniform secure administrative review proceeding framework, known as SARP, which was established by Bill C-70, An Act respecting countering foreign interference.

The SARP regime is far more robust in terms of the guidance and powers it provides the courts when potentially injurious information is disclosed during a review. Examples include the ability to appoint a special counsel to represent the interests of parties unable to view the protected information, the ability for the judge to make any order necessary to ensure fairness during a proceeding and clear procedures for issuing certificates and administering notices.

All other changes have been technical fixes in the bill, ensuring that clause numbering, translations and some phrasing regarding scope and substance remain consistent as needed.

Bill C-8 underwent thorough study in the House of Commons at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. The House committee spent five meetings on clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-8 and made 37 amendments. Following the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security's study of the bill, several amendments were adopted in both parts, which broadly fit into two categories: the need for additional guardrails on order-making powers and further privacy protections.

Specifically, for Part 1, the government proactively proposed amendments to add a new extensive list of factors for the minister or Governor-in-Council, or GIC, to consider prior to making the contents of an order confidential, as well as an amendment clarifying that orders cannot be used to break encryption on private communications. A number of amendments effectively affirm or clarify what Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, or ISED, considers to already be the status quo reality of the bill. For example, orders made under Part 1 address threats that are technical in nature and not related to the effects of lawful expression.

Amendments have also clarified that the government must inform any person named in an order when the order is made, which is already required under the principles of administrative law. Amendments have also been made to ensure that the collection of information related to order making, the disclosure of information collected and the exchange of information among federal authorities are all reasonable in relation to the gravity of the threat that the orders seek to address.

The largest number of amendments adopted concern the collection, protection and sharing of information, with a particular focus on personal and de-identified information. Specifically, amendments were passed to automatically deem all personal and de-identified information collected to be confidential; establish stricter conditions for the disclosure of personal and de-identified information, compared with other confidential information, like corporate financial or operational information; establish that all personal and de-identified information collected must be disposed of once it is no longer needed for purposes related to order making, in line with existing requirements under the Privacy Act; and, finally, establish that when information is shared with another government, which must be done under a written agreement, MOU or a similar document, the information-sharing agreement must indicate that the information is to be disposed of once it is no longer needed for the purposes for which it was shared.

In response to feedback from stakeholders and parliamentarians, a number of amendments were also made to strengthen Part 2, the Critical Cyber Systems Protection Act, or CCSPA. Like Part 1, the bulk of the amendments largely fit into the categories of additional guardrails on order-making powers and further privacy protections. Other amendments also address regulatory duplication and personal liability concerns.

To provide assurances that the government's new powers will only be used for their intended purposes, the CCSPA now requires that the provisions of a cyber security direction, or CSD, must, in scope and substance, be reasonable in relation to the purpose of protecting a critical cyber system.

And, similar to Part 1, the bill now specifies that CSDs cannot be used to break encryption. The amendments also serve to further clarify the scope and use of order-making powers in Part 2.

In response to concerns raised by civil liberties associations and the Privacy Commissioner on privacy protections, the bill now includes a definition of personal information and clarifies that any personal information will be disposed of in accordance with the Privacy Act when it is no longer needed.

Further privacy protections include an amendment for greater certainty that the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, or PIPEDA, continues to apply. This is to ensure designated operators understand that the CCSPA does not relieve them of obligations found under PIPEDA, such as reporting data breaches.

It was also specified that the personal information protections found in the Communications Security Establishment Act remain in effect as a means of clarifying that the Communications Security Establishment, or CSE, is not receiving new powers or new abilities to access personal information as a result of the CCSPA.

To address concerns that industry stakeholders raised around regulatory duplication, an amendment was made that requires the GIC to harmonize, to the extent possible, with existing regulatory standards regimes. This amendment would also allow the GIC to determine which regimes are compliant with the requirements of the CCSPA.

A new provision was introduced that establishes that the CSE may develop guidance on third-party and supply chain risk mitigation, taking internationally recognized standards into account. This is not a new power per se as the CSE already does this for all of industry on an as-needed basis.

Another amendment focused on softening personal liability. Some stakeholders raised concerns that the CCSPA may deter individuals from taking on senior roles, such as chief security officers, due to personal liability risks. In response, the maximum

penalty amount for individuals under the administrative monetary penalty framework was reduced from \$1 million to \$500,000. In relation to this, the bill now makes it explicit that solicitor-client privilege continues to apply to information shared with the government.

Finally, an amendment was made that introduces a new requirement for the minister to conduct a review of the act five years after its implementation. After conducting the review, a report on its effectiveness must be tabled in both houses of Parliament.

Bill C-8, like Bill C-26, also maintains an obligation to notify the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, also known as NSIRA, within 90 days after a confidential order is made.

Further, annual reports to Parliament will need to include information such as the number of orders that were issued and an explanation of the necessity, reasonableness and utility of the orders. Taken together, these provisions provide the government with further clarity and fairness around the use of their new powers.

In short, colleagues, amendments to Part 1 of the bill brought to the House of Commons following the committee study enhance program clarity, strengthen safeguards on order-making powers, reinforce protections for personal information and encrypted communications and increase transparency through new reporting requirements.

Amendments to Part 2 collectively reinforce strong privacy protections, clarify oversight requirements, limit enforcement powers and introduce new accountability measures within the Critical Cyber Systems Protection Act.

The clear protections and guardrails set out in both parts of Bill C-8 in both its original and amended forms assure Canadians that the powers proposed under this bill will be used as they should be, that is to say, to support and ensure the security and resilience of our critical cyber systems and telecommunications networks.

• (1450)

Bill C-8 will not be a back door to the surveillance of communications, the repression of free expression or the unfounded use of order-making powers.

Colleagues, the amendments by the House of Commons were a collaborative effort by all parties, and I strongly believe they further strengthen the bill.

In particular, I am pleased to see that two of the three recommendations made by the Privacy Commissioner in his testimony to the committee were adopted.

I hope that we can move Bill C-8 forward to committee for proper study, as I believe it builds a strong foundation for securing Canada's critical infrastructure against fast-evolving cyber-threats.

In today's world, there is no shortage of bad actors who seek to exploit vulnerabilities in our cyber systems across our country.

Whether it is in our financial systems, telecommunications systems, energy sector, transportation sector or other critical infrastructure, we now live in a world where cyber-threats are commonplace even as they are also becoming larger and more complex than ever before.

Individuals, governments, businesses and critical infrastructure owners and operators all experience this new reality on a daily basis.

Successful cyberattacks have severe, lasting and far-reaching consequences for every entity that is impacted, but most of all, for the well-being of individuals whose lives are disrupted and whose data is compromised.

Bill C-8 brings a much-needed, consistent cross-sectoral approach to cybersecurity. It will allow the government and industry to do more to prevent debilitating attacks and to fight back more powerfully when they do occur.

Colleagues, I hope we can get this important bill across the finish line. It is critical legislation that is needed to protect our national security, economy and sovereignty.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator McNair, there are three senators rising for questions. Will you take a question?

**Senator McNair:** Certainly.

**Hon. Denise Batters:** Thank you. Senator McNair, I am going to be the critic for this bill again, and you are the sponsor again, so we're back to where we were a year and a half ago. The experience of Bill C-26 — the predecessor to Bill C-8 — showed us the danger of potentially passing legislation too quickly because, in the fall of 2024, the government was actually forced to amend its own bill at the last second because of an error in a coordinating amendment with the foreign interference legislation Bill C-70, a bill that the Liberal government also whistled through Parliament earlier that year. If that error hadn't been detected, it would have essentially gutted Bill C-26 altogether, deleting the major provisions meant to protect Canada's cybersecurity in critical federally regulated systems.

Soon after that major error was found, when I asked the government officials at the Senate National Security and Defence Committee what processes the government had put into place to ensure such a problem never happened again, they really had nothing to offer.

So I'm asking you now, Senator McNair, 18 months later, what processes has the Liberal government put into place to ensure that type of debacle does not happen again?

**Senator McNair:** Thank you for the question. I don't speak for the Liberal government today, but I can say that officials have reviewed the document carefully. I recall the examples that you cite and the "debacle," as you put it, but officials have assured me that they have reviewed the document, and there should not be any situation like that again.

**Senator Batters:** Thank you. Yes, as you are the government bill's sponsor, you are the one whom I need to ask these questions. Perhaps you could find out from the government what processes they have put into place on a government-wide basis to ensure that type of thing doesn't happen again.

Senator McNair, three important amendments were made by Conservative MPs at the House of Commons committee on Bill C-8, which would have required that judicial authorization before ministerial powers and ministerial orders be allowed in certain instances under this statute. The Liberal government decided to oppose those important amendments rather than agree to have those changes made to Bill C-8, so those amendments were actually ruled out of order by the Liberal committee chair. Then, when it was voted back into the bill at committee, they were taken out by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

The government still could have agreed to include those amendments in Bill C-8, but they didn't learn the lessons articulated by so many witnesses who testified at our Senate committee hearings on Bill C-26.

Senator McNair, I recall that you and I both were at almost all, or all, of the Senate committee meetings on Bill C-26 in the fall of 2024, and of almost all those witnesses, the only ones who didn't oppose those parts of the bill were the government. Every other witness whom I can recall strongly advocated for more oversight, which this type of judicial authorization would provide.

Why didn't the government agree to include those important amendments relating to those types of measures on judicial authorization in Bill C-8?

**Senator McNair:** Thank you for the question, Senator Batters. My recollection of the testimony on Bill C-26 doesn't mirror yours exactly as far as the numbers that you're talking about.

Be that as it may, my understanding is that the three amendments were ruled out of scope by the Speaker and were struck from the bill. The amendments, as I understand them, would have required judicial authorization before an order or direction could be made by the Governor-in-Council. The order-making powers under Bill C-8 rest with the Minister of Industry and the Governor-in-Council because the orders are based essentially on policy decisions that involve balancing public and private interests. Requiring Federal Court approval before an order is made places the court in a position of making a policy determination rather than reviewing legality. Other guardrails are present, and judicial oversight is still maintained, as the Federal Court can be asked to review an order after it has been made to ensure that the government stays within the limits prescribed in the legislation.

**Hon. Krista Ross:** Thank you, Senator McNair, for your work on this important bill, Bill C-8, and on its predecessor, Bill C-26. Nearly half of Canadian small businesses — 48% to 50% — identify regulation as a top concern. Evidence from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, or ISED, has also shown that, effectively, small businesses have double the regulatory burden intensity compared to businesses with over 100 employees.

Given that Bill C-8 introduces new compliance expectations and potential telecommunications orders, how is the government ensuring that these requirements are proportionate and do not place an outsized burden on small or early-stage Canadian companies? Was any formal analysis conducted on how the order-making powers in Bill C-8 might impact innovation, investment decisions or the scaling of Canadian companies?

**Senator McNair:** Thank you, Senator Ross, for the question. It's a good question, and I will raise it with officials at committee. However, what I can say is that, to my knowledge, the Department of Industry is used to working with small businesses. Obviously, the larger players in the telecommunications world have a certain level of systemic risk compared to a small provider that serves, for example, 500 or 750 customers or consumers. I believe that the department is very much aware of those challenges faced by small businesses, and I'm confident that the department will tailor their rules to match the skills of service providers of all sizes. However, I will raise it at committee with the officials.

**Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler:** Thank you, Senator McNair, for your speech. Part 2 of Bill C-8 enacts the critical cyber systems protection act to provide a framework for the protection of the critical cyber systems that are vital to national security.

I would argue, as would others, that health security is an important but often overlooked pillar of national security. Currently, at the Social Affairs, Science and Technology Committee, we are studying Bill S-5, which is the connected care for Canadians act, and that is an act to remove data blocking and to make electronic medical records and electronic health records connected and interoperable. At committee, we are hearing that a system of interconnected health records risks creating a larger target for cyberattacks and that, over the past few years, the health sector has been a frequent target of attacks. Labs, hospitals and health systems have been attacked, where they've been unable to use their systems or they have been held for ransom.

• (1500)

That larger interconnected health system creates harm and a larger target with a larger blast radius.

My question is this: Has health security been considered in the context of Bill C-8? Have there been any discussions on designating health information systems, such as electronic health records, as vital systems such that they would then fall under the cybersecurity protections in this act?

**Senator McNair:** Thank you for the question. I'm not aware of any discussions along that line of thought at this stage. There is hope that the provinces will use this act as a template. From the federal side, I'm sure they would be willing to enter into discussions, but I will raise it with officials and report back to you.

**Senator Osler:** If you could bring forward a discussion or at least raise this with officials, or even if it could be discussed at committee, it would be appreciated. I'm wondering if that's possible.

**Senator McNair:** It makes perfect sense to do so, and I'm willing to do that.

**Senator Batters:** Senator McNair, the government's GBA Plus document for Bill C-8 certainly has this in common with the government's Bill C-26 document. This two-page Gender-based Analysis Plus document only mentions "women and girls" once. All it says in the Bill C-8 document is this:

However, evidence suggests that women and girls are more susceptible to the criminal uses of advancements in artificial intelligence and to cybercrime, including cyber violence. . . .

Senator McNair, why doesn't the Liberal government actually prepare a meaningful Gender-based Analysis Plus document if they are going to use these documents?

**Senator McNair:** As I understand it, the GBA Plus is appended to a memorandum of cabinet and is not meant to be a public document. A summary of the analysis was prepared and provided to committee members — in the past, at least, and I suspect that's been done again this time. I will raise with officials the issue of why there aren't more references along the line you are suggesting.

**Senator Batters:** Yes, I've recently heard this discussion about it being subject to cabinet confidentiality. Frankly, having read these documents from this government for 10 years, I don't understand why they would contend it is a cabinet confidence because of any of these issues that I see in here, summary or otherwise.

Justice generally provides us with not just a summary but an actual Gender-based Analysis Plus document. Of course, without seeing the original document, I can't know if they mention women and girls many more times. All I see here is one reference, as a bit of an aside. If you could, please ask them why they contend it is subject to cabinet confidentiality. It doesn't seem to me to have anything that would be confidential in the least.

**Senator McNair:** Perhaps that question could also be raised at committee with officials.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

## THE SENATE

MOTION TO AFFECT WEDNESDAY SITTINGS UNTIL JUNE 30, 2026,  
AND AUTHORIZE COMMITTEES TO MEET DURING SITTINGS  
OF THE SENATE ADOPTED

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate)**, pursuant to notice of April 16, 2026, moved:

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.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

## NATIONAL THANADELTHUR DAY BILL

### THIRD READING—DEBATE

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum** moved third reading of Bill S-225, An Act to establish National Thanadelthur Day.

She said: Honourable senators, I want to acknowledge the Dene and Treaty 10 territories in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and the treaty gatherings we have had over these many years. I look forward to our gathering this year in July 2026. I give special acknowledgement to Lucy Antsanen for educating me. She brought the story of Thanadelthur to life for students in the classroom in Lac Brochet starting in 2000 and in Gods Lake classrooms when she was a vice-principal in 2010. Through this multi-year, current-day reconciliation between the Dene and Cree in Brochet and Lac Brochet, Bill S-225, An Act to establish National Thanadelthur Day, was born.

I want to thank the Library of Parliament, not only for all the help they give my office to provide the history of Thanadelthur but also for all the documents they have provided over these many years.

I also want to state that the term “Chipewyan” used in history books is offensive to the Dene, so I have changed that word to “Dene” throughout my speech.

Honourable senators, all countries in the world honour the people they perceive as making contributions to their home or their adopted country. They do this by naming buildings, institutions, mountains, rivers, cities, towns, streets, scholarships, statues, et cetera that carry the names of these individuals. In Canada, we have John A. Macdonald, Vancouver, Prince George, Regina, Fort Frontenac, Victoria, Prince Rupert, Queen Charlotte Islands, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Prince Albert, Strathcona Provincial Park, Lake Louise, Princess Street, St. Lawrence River, Alberta, St. Catharines, St. John’s, Hudson Bay, Mackenzie River, Simon Fraser and Rupert’s Land, to name a few. We have very few that bear the names or languages of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Even fewer still have their names recorded in history, in books and archives, yet they have been and continue to be instrumental in the building of what we now know as Canada.

• (1510)

In the majority of history telling in Canada, the individuals are identified simply as “Aboriginal man” or “Aboriginal woman.” Thanadelthur was a rare exception, even more so because she was a woman. These are some of the examples of having her name enshrined in history:

In the book *Dead Reckoning: The Untold Story of the Northwest Passage*, there is a chapter entitled, “What Thanadelthur Made Possible.”

A 2022 article from *The Northern Review* entitled “The Legend of Thanadelthur: Elders’ Oral History and Hudson’s Bay Company Journals” expanded this legend to include the perspective of the Dene:

In bringing together the reports from Dene oral historians, scholars, and other authors, this article outlines the remarkable events in Thanadelthur’s life in order to underscore her historical significance to our communities and Canada at large. . . .

The article also discusses how she:

. . . changed a way of life for her Dene people and the Cree by trading peacefully at the Hudson’s Bay Company.

It further elaborates that:

Thanadelthur’s role as a peacemaker impacted the lives of the Dene, Èdthën Eldeli —

— which translates into “caribou eaters people” —

— for over three hundred years. As stated by Bart Dzeylion, an Elder interviewed by Mary Ann Kkailther and cited in Niigaanwewidam and Cariou . . . “Thanadelthur is the reason we exist today” . . . She is esteemed by Dene people, and they credit her courage for their existence.

An article published in 2007 in *Manitoba History* was titled “Visioning Thanadelthur: Shaping a Canadian icon.”

An article entitled “[Dene], Cree and Inuit Relations West of Hudson Bay, 1714-1955” published in *Ethnohistory* in 1981 discusses the effects of Thanadelthur and the peace treaty in a wider context. The section entitled “The Period of Peacemaking by the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1715-1815” notes that:

The peace which Stewart and Thanadelther negotiated between this large body of [Dene], undoubtedly representing a number of regional bands, and the Cree, representing some of the bands near the coast, was relatively binding on those groups. The peace was, however, tenuous for some years and the agreement not binding (or enforceable) among the Cree of the western interior, many of whom had no direct contact with the Company and were not represented in the peace party. A formal state of peace, perhaps better described as peaceful co-existence, did not necessarily mean that amicable interpersonal relations were established, only that the state of war was reduced. . . .

As the article further states, “By the early 19th century peaceful coexistence or mutual toleration characterized the region.”

In the chapter entitled “A Priceless Prize of War: Thanadelthur,” in *100 Canadian Heroines: Famous and Forgotten Faces*, it states that the:

. . . important role played by Thanadelthur set a precedent, paving the way for other [Dene] women who followed her to have influential positions in trade relations.

Colleagues, Thanadelthur’s dramatic actions provided a framework for the incorporation of her story into popular culture. Artists including Franklin Ar buckle in the early 1950s painted their visions of Thanadelthur. Novels, including James Houston’s *Running West* from 1989, Rick Book’s *Blackships/Thanadelthur* and a comic book entitled *Tales from the Bay* have fictionalized her life.

For *Blackships/Thanadelthur*, a teacher’s guide was developed by Jane Huck in 2004 for Grades 4 to 6 in the N.W.T. One of the outcomes fulfilled was to identify days important to Canadians and people from the N.W.T.

I want to briefly go over the history again, which I provided in my other speeches.

The Hudson’s Bay Company, or HBC, governor James Knight wanted to establish trade with the Dene so as to expand business northward to Churchill River, into the traditional territory of the Dene. To succeed in this plan, Knight realized that he needed to end the Cree-Dene conflict.

In 1714, Thanadelthur sought refuge at York Factory, having escaped the Cree, who took her captive in a raid in Arviat, Nunavut. Realizing her potential, Knight recruited her as a guide and interpreter for HBC trader William Stuart (Stewart) and a contingent of Cree who left York Factory for Dene territory in 1715-16. Sickness, starvation and extreme cold plagued the group, who sought to establish lasting peace between the Dene and the Cree. When they could not go on, Thanadelthur completed the last leg of their journey on her own.

Later returning with emissaries, her diplomacy led to a peace agreement. The expedition’s success opened direct trade between the Dene and the Hudson’s Bay Company, resulting in the establishment of the Churchill River Trading Post in the summer of 1717. This marked the beginning of an association between the Dene and the Hudson’s Bay Company that would last for over two centuries.

Honourable senators, Thanadelthur’s energy and determination were to ensure *eghena*, a term used by Dene that means “to ensure healthy living, to provide sustenance and to live by the laws of the land.” As she was instrumental in creating ties between the Dene people and the Hudson’s Bay Company as well as in expanding the fur trade in today’s Churchill, Manitoba, region, Thanadelthur was key to the success of the Hudson’s Bay Company expansion in Northern Canada.

Thanadelthur was designated as a national historic person in 2000 and honoured with a Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada trilingual commemorative plaque “. . . for Thanadelthur (died 1717) National Historic Person: Dene, English, and French,” which was erected in Churchill, Manitoba.

Honourable senators, I want to quote some of the witnesses who provided evidence in the Standing Senate Committee of Indigenous Peoples.

Grand Chief Settee from Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, MKO, stated:

I’m very honoured to be here with my Dene relatives. There have been conflicts throughout our past, but today we stand here together in unity to support this history that has been left out of mainstream Canadian society.

Grand Chief Walter Wastesicoot, Sovereign Keewatin Yahthi Nations Grand Council, said:

Keewatin means north in the Inninu language —

— the Cree —

— and Yahthi means north in the Dene language. Hence, both peoples are represented in the Sky Nation Grand Council.

As part of our nation-building exercise, we’ve conducted archival and other research and confirmed that Thanadelthur paved the way for peace amongst our peoples. Almost 310 years of history is credited to her bravery, patience and passion for harmonious relations amongst our peoples.

We believe this achievement is worthy of the recognition being proposed at this time through Bill S-225, National Thanadelthur Day. Let's make February 5 of each year Thanadelthur Day. . . .

• (1520)

Lucy Antsanen, Dene Knowledge Keeper from Northlands Denesuline First Nation, said:

As an educator, I teach figures, such as Anne Frank, Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman and more. These are important stories, but we also have powerful stories here — stories of our own grandmothers and grandfathers whose contributions have not been equally recognized in our national narrative. We who have the privilege of obtaining a Western education have a responsibility to speak for those who no longer can.

Modest Antsanen, Band Councillor from Northlands Denesuline First Nation, said:

Young Indigenous women and girls are actively seeking positive, authentic representation as they move through the challenges of both modern and traditional worlds. Establishing National Thanadelthur Day honours a young First Nations girl and recognizes the important contributions of Indigenous women in Canadian history. This recognition will have positive impacts on the well-being of our young women and girls moving forward.

Passing this bill is a symbolic, yet important, step toward truth and reconciliation. This bill brings light to the histories of Indigenous figures who contributed to the building of Canada and fostered peaceful relationships.

Rosalie Emilie Tsannie-Burseth, educator, educational consultant, professor and historian from Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation, said:

A remarkable young woman, deeply devoted to her people, emerged from history to make a lasting impact on Canada, an achievement worthy of respect. Her dedication to brokering peace and her leadership during a famous expedition played an important role in Canada's prosperity. In recognition of her contributions, she is deserving of a Nobel Peace Prize and a national commemoration as Thanadelthur Day.

Florence Hamilton, founder and owner of Dene Routes, speaking as an individual, said:

For me, this is deeply personal. I did not grow up learning this story. It was only later, on my journey of reconnecting with my Dene identity, history and traditions that I came across the story of Thanadelthur. And when I did, I felt something I had been searching for — I felt pride. Pride in her strength. Pride in her courage. Pride in what she represents as a Dene woman.

And it made me reflect on something important. If our young people could grow up learning stories like this — stories that reflect who they are and where they come from — we could help build a strong sense of identity. We

could help them feel proud. And when young people feel proud of who they are, they become stronger in how they walk in the world.

The Dene have invited the Cree to meet in different communities, including Churchill, to support the Dene in the historical work they are doing. Due to conflicts that were ongoing from the 1950s to the 1970s, as a citizen of the Barren Lands First Nation in Brochet, I gave an apology to the Dene in 2009 to start the process of present-day healing and reconciliation.

Honourable senators, both nations have had the intention to live harmoniously together since 1716. Brochet now has the largest number of people of mixed Dene and Cree heritage in Canada.

We need to remember that the partnership was born in struggle and conflict and that the multi-culture it represents needs to be renewed with every generation. Bill S-225 is an important ongoing step in reforming the peace alliance between the Dene and the Crees and is therefore contributing to the greater good of Canada.

Honourable senators, I ask that you support the Dene and their commitment to recognition of their contribution to Canada by voting for Bill S-225.

*Kinanâskomitinawow.*

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator McCallum, will you take a question?

**Senator McCallum:** Yes, I will.

**Hon. Percy E. Downe:** I paid attention to your comments in your speech and was particularly intrigued by your reference to all those names across Canada.

As Canada evolves, all citizens have to see a reflection of themselves in the naming of our territories and buildings. I recently received an answer to a written question that I'm sure the majority of senators — women — will be interested in about the naming of federal government buildings. If you think about your own communities and provinces, most of the buildings are named after well-deserving former politicians, most of whom happen to be men. Very few are named after women. That diversity, a reflection of national institutions, is missing.

Our colleague Senator Brian Francis is trying to reverse a decision. When Confederation Bridge was constructed in Prince Edward Island, there was a committee headed by former premier Alex Campbell on what that bridge should be named. That committee recommended the original Indigenous name for Prince Edward Island, Epekwitk, but the Government of Canada picked the second name, Confederation. Senator Francis is working with others to try to get that original recommendation taken up by the Government of Canada. I'm sure Senator Francis would agree that it is taking much longer than he anticipated.

That is an indication of this push, but diversity is lacking, as you indicated, in the naming. Going forward, hopefully, we can change that.

I want to thank you for your comments. My question was more support regarding some of the concerns you raised. Thank you.

**Senator McCallum:** Thank you for that.

When we meet in July of this year, there will be 10 communities — some are Cree; some are Dene — for Treaty 10. When we meet this year, we will be speaking about what we will do on Thanadelthur Day.

In our committee meeting, we were looking at maybe giving out a medal but also getting young women's names so they could be given an award for what they have accomplished. I will talk to them about that, and then we can move forward.

Thank you for what you have said.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator McPhedran, it is almost 3:30.

If leave is granted, we could suspend for a couple of minutes and give the floor to Senator McPhedran after Question Period.

Is leave granted, honourable senators?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Is that okay, Senator McPhedran?

**Senator McPhedran:** Yes. Thank you very much.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** We will suspend until the minister takes his place.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

• (1530)

## BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, before proceeding to Question Period with the minister, I would like to remind you of the time limits the Senate established for questions and answers in the order of June 4, 2025.

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

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

[*Translation*]

## QUESTION PERIOD

(Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, to receive a Minister of the Crown, the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety, appeared before honourable senators during Question Period.)

## BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, today we have with us for Question Period the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety, to respond to questions concerning his ministerial responsibilities. On behalf of all senators, I welcome the minister.

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

[*English*]

## MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SAFETY

### ANTI-SEMITISM

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Minister, thank you for being with us here today.

This morning, minister, our Human Rights Committee released an important report on anti-Semitism and the alarming rise in hate and violence targeting Jewish Canadians across our great country. This report exposes serious gaps in coordination, enforcement, reporting and accountability.

Jewish Canadians are feeling unsafe, and many are even considering leaving the country. The government has failed to provide peace and good order to members of the Jewish community, minister. Daily, Jewish Canadians are facing harassment, intimidation, vandalism and violence; yet, your government's response remains too slow and too uneven.

Minister, Canadians are looking for leadership on this issue. The question is this: When will your government take decisive, meaningful action to combat anti-Semitism across Canada?

More importantly, can you commit right here and now that, after reading the report, which I hope you will do in an expeditious fashion, you will acquiesce to a meeting —

[*Translation*]

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

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator, for that very important question.

I have not read the report. However, I will say that my engagement with the Jewish community across Canada over the last 11 months has given me a great deal of understanding of the current realities faced by Jewish Canadians, which is a great deal of fear, a sense of intimidation and a sense that they are not safe in their own country.

My work has been to reassure Jewish communities, and Jewish Canadians across the board, that their safety and security is our first priority.

Bill C-9, which is now before the House, addresses the fundamental issues that the community has raised with me, Minister Fraser as well as Secretary of State Sahota. It reflects the need for protection at places of worship and gathering of Jewish communities, and for ensuring that symbols of hate are addressed in a way that will guarantee not just their safety and security but those of all minority groups.

In addition to that, you will recall that, about a month ago — in an unprecedented way — I released, as part of our Canada Community Security Program, \$10 million to Jewish community networks in both Montreal and Toronto, where they have been operating for the last couple of years. They are good models. They also have the capacity to expand. In the case of Montreal, the expectation is that they will be broadening their work to the Atlantic. In the case of Toronto, the Toronto Jewish Security Network will be expanding to Western Canada.

I believe that these are very important steps, but there is still more to do.

**Senator Housakos:** Minister, it's understandable that you haven't read the report. We understand that. We only published it this morning. We hope, though, that you will take the time to peruse it quite carefully.

We appreciate the fact that the government has put funding forward to organizations across the country. However, providing more funding for security is not the solution to the problem.

Bill C-9, of course, is now before Parliament. We are looking at that carefully as well.

What I'm looking for today is a commitment because we have a report of which we're very proud. Considerable work has been done. We believe it's a landmark report with concrete recommendations for how to tackle the problem, which, we believe, would be a helpful path forward if the government embraces them.

I would like a commitment that you will meet with Senator Senior, who is the chair of the committee, and with other members, to have a thorough discussion.

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** I absolutely look forward to meeting Senator Senior. I do meet her on occasion. She is a dear friend from the region I represent in Scarborough.

The issues that you highlighted are critically important. These are things on which, as legislators, we all need to work together. This should not be a divisive issue. The safety and security of every Canadian, particularly minority groups — in this case, Jewish Canadians — are of paramount importance to all of us. I look forward to working in collaboration.

#### CHIEF FIREARMS OFFICERS

**Hon. Dawn Anderson:** Minister, my question stems from Bill C-21, An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms).

On December 13, 2023, during third reading of the bill, I spoke to the concerns regarding the chief firearms officers, or CFOs, for the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, residing in Surrey, Edmonton and Winnipeg, respectively.

On December 5, 2023, the then-Minister of Public Safety Dominic LeBlanc wrote to the Premier of the Northwest Territories, stating his commitment to appoint resident CFOs in the territories.

On October 20, 2025, in the Senate National Security and Defence Committee, I questioned you on the appointment of the CFOs for each territory. On that date, you said, "I am going to commit to a timeline of January of 2026 to complete those appointments."

Can you please update us on the status of these resident CFO appointments?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator, for that question. Yes, I did commit to that timeline. Unfortunately, I do not have that information with me today. However, I will be able to share that with you within the next 24 hours.

**Senator Anderson:** During the same committee meeting, I queried the consultation that was to occur prior to the appointments of the resident CFOs.

Tricia Geddes, Deputy Minister, Public Safety Canada, said at your behest, "I'm very happy to provide you with a list of dates and names shortly." To date, I have yet to receive this list.

Minister, can you provide me a suitable timeline for when the information requested and promised will be provided?

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** Tricia Geddes is the Deputy Minister of Public Safety, and I will ensure that information is brought to your attention.

#### FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

**Hon. Yuen Pau Woo:** Minister, welcome to the Senate.

The government has correctly placed a lot of attention on foreign interference in recent years, focusing on state-sponsored foreign interference.

In fact, the Foreign Interference Commission looked at state-sponsored foreign interference but totally ignored non-state actors.

• (1540)

I wonder what your view is on the threat to Canada from non-state foreign interference, including media, private companies, foundations, charities, non-governmental organizations, political parties and tycoons.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator. When we look at foreign interference, it's in a holistic sense. Certainly, interference by foreign-state actors appears to be the primary source of many of the challenges that we have seen over the last number of years and that we continue to see in some cases.

I would say that regardless if it's individuals involved or due to other entities or organizations, oftentimes they are proxies of foreign states, so they are not independent of the foreign state they may be representing or whose position they may be espousing in Canada.

We have some mechanisms. The Investment Canada Act is an example of a tool that exists currently for foreign interference to ensure that those transactions that are subject to the Investment Canada Act go through national security screening before they're finalized. As you may be aware, Mr. Anton Boegman has been appointed as the commissioner, and we are finalizing the current regulations. He is already working, and his office will be operational very soon.

**Senator Woo:** It's not clear that some of the non-state actors are proxies. We're talking about foundations, corporations, tycoons and so on. I'm glad you mentioned the foreign influence transparency registry because that registry specifically excludes non-state actors from registration. Do you see that as a major lacuna in the legislation? Would you be willing to amend that problem?

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** Senator Woo, what I would like to see is the foreign influence transparency registry up and running, compliance being undertaken and the commissioner being able to educate and do his job. I think it's premature for us to discuss amendments, but certainly on an ongoing basis, we should continue to scrutinize and look at the work that the registrar and the registry are doing.

#### CANADA'S BLACK JUSTICE STRATEGY

**Hon. Bernadette Clement:** Welcome, Minister Anandasangaree. On February 3 of this year, I submitted a written question to the Department of Justice asking for an update on Canada's Black Justice Strategy. In their response on April 2, they outlined that Chapter 3.1 of the *2024 Fall Economic Statement* provided \$16.7 million over two years for Public Safety Canada to work with Black-led organizations to provide community reintegration and corrections programming.

Now that those two years have passed, I would like to know what has been done to meet those commitments.

[ Senator Woo ]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you. Those funds were for two portfolio agencies. One was for Correctional Service Canada. The other one was for the RCMP.

I entered this role about 11 months ago, and my sense of the Black Justice Strategy — at least at the implementation stage for both agencies — was that it's inadequate, in my opinion, and it lacked the kind of ambition that I expect in the Black Justice Strategy.

It's an area that I've been particularly interested in working on for many years, and in my parliamentary career, it's been one of my major focuses.

I did see a lack of ambition. I have asked for that to be reignited in a way that speaks to the moment.

We have challenges. When we look at Correctional Service Canada, for example, we have a disproportionate number of Black offenders within the system. When we look at the RCMP, we see that recruitment and retention are challenges. There is work to do in both areas. And there is work that I think requires greater certainty and greater ambition, and I'm very confident that the leadership is able to do that.

**Senator Clement:** Thank you for that answer. Lack of ambition — I like that in terms of saying we need to do more. I appreciate that.

The 2026 spring economic statement is set to be tabled next week. Given what you've just said and that you're now on the file, what future commitments will be made to Black Canadians to advance the Black Justice Strategy?

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** My primary objective will be to ensure that the initial investments are appropriately undertaken and that the programs reflect the need and the ambition that the communities that I represent are asking for.

In the broader sense, you're aware that our government has renewed the Black Entrepreneurship Program. There have been a number of renewals of sunset programs that impact all communities but particularly the Black youth population, for example, as part of the Building Safer Communities Fund, which is administered by us.

There have been a number of very important steps that we've taken. There is always more to do, but particularly on the —

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

#### CYBERSECURITY

**Hon. Mohammad Al Zaibak:** Minister Anandasangaree, thank you very much for appearing before us today and for your in-depth engagement on this important file.

Minister, due to the rapid technological developments, our society has never been more interconnected, but the same technologies we use to chat with our families, pay our bills or even keep the lights on are exploited by malicious actors daily.

Could you please outline what specific measures your department is taking to keep Canadians safe from cyber-threats, particularly in terms of securing critical infrastructure and services?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator. It is good to see you as always. I will be coming back to committee next week to discuss Bill C-8, which is now before this house. The previous iteration of Bill C-8 was studied and, in fact, passed by the Senate. Save for a minor technical error, it would have been law.

As we speak right now, we know there is a cyber-threat to one of our major insurance companies, which happened today. We know that other events are happening virtually on a daily basis that impact the critical infrastructure of Canadians as well as the security and personal information of all Canadians.

It is an area where we increasingly need to regulate, and at the very minimum, we need to ensure that there is proper disclosure of what happens. Far too often, companies are resistant to sharing information with the public, in part due to reputational risk, but right now the question is not a matter of if it will happen but when it will happen. When our critical infrastructure is impacted, we must have that information be shared, and Bill C-8 is a very important step in that direction.

**Senator Al Zaibak:** Thank you for your answer, minister. As you mentioned, we have heard many claims and concerns about Bill C-8 and about this piece of legislation. Could you please further reassure Canadians by outlining how their civil liberties, privacy rights and the potential costs to industry will be protected?

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** Senator, on the first elements of the concerns, I can assure Canadians that this does not impact the civil liberties or privacy rights of Canadians.

With respect to costs to be borne by industry, part of doing business is being good citizens. Part of operating in a modern world is to ensure that they have the requisite level of security as well as the ability to report incidents in a timely manner. While I acknowledge there may be costs associated with some industry players, if they're not ready at this point, it is something that we encourage them to do.

#### RADICALIZATION

**Hon. Kristopher Wells:** Minister, it's good to see you as always. Recent reports have highlighted a concerning rise in online recruitment efforts targeting young people in Canada by violent extremist networks. Could you outline what specific measures your department is taking to address youth radicalization, particularly in terms of educating teachers and parents on how to better safeguard young people online and supporting vulnerable youth who are victimized in digital spaces?

• (1550)

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator.

I will start by saying that the radicalization of youth remains one of my top priorities and is an increasing concern in my portfolio, as it is for law enforcement. Just weeks ago, a young person in Manitoba and a young person in Nova Scotia were arrested due to concerns around the potential threat they would pose to their local schools and communities. It is an area that has very limited supports, but the supports that are available are quite unique: the Canada Centre, for example, which is a major anchor in providing support, and the Organization for the Prevention of Violence, which you hosted at the Senate a few weeks ago. In British Columbia, for example, Shift is an organization that we had engaged to do some work in Tumbler Ridge. In Ontario, we have Yorktown Family Services.

Those are all direct service providers that work on the de-radicalization of youth, and I believe they're quite effective. We need more of them, and we need more resources for them.

**Senator K. Wells:** Minister, you have spoken about some of the organizations that you're supporting through your ministry to do this important work. Can you talk about the relationships and the work you're doing with provinces directly, as well as school systems, to strengthen those partnerships to ensure early intervention and supports for at-risk youth before they are drawn into violent networks and come to the attention of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP, and intelligence services? I'm really looking at that early prevention.

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** The agencies I mentioned play a critical role in that coordination with the provinces, local school boards as well as localized communities where there have been previous incidents. Yorktown Family Services is a perfect example of that.

Beyond that, we know that upstream investments in overall crime prevention and interventions with youth are quite critical. Frankly, prior to starting a career, I worked with at-risk youth who were particularly involved in violence and who were susceptible to radicalization.

It is those types of investments. The Building Safer Communities Fund is one example of that.

#### FIREARM VIOLENCE

**Hon. Salma Atallahjan:** Welcome, minister.

Even a cursory scan of the news confirms that your government has been ignoring gun and gang violence for a decade. It's out of control in our communities. Just last night, two homes in Brampton were struck by gunfire in what appears to have been a targeted shooting. From Vancouver to Saint John and communities in between, Canadians are tired of waking up to the sound of gunshots and the sight of bullet holes in their neighbourhoods.

Minister, when will your government finally take the safety of Canadians seriously and act to get gun violence under control?

**Senator Batters:** Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you. The framing of that question is quite interesting, senator.

The safety and security of all Canadians are of paramount importance to every single official, whether in the Senate or in the House. To assert otherwise is disingenuous.

As part of the work we've been doing, there are a number of bills in front of the House. You have already passed Bill C-12, which gives us stronger measures at the border. We have Bill C-14 on bail and sentencing reform, which is in front of the House. We have Bill C-16 on victims' rights; again, that's here.

In addition to those, we have had about \$4 billion in investments toward RCMP and Canada Border Services Agency, CBSA, officers and also \$1.3 billion for increased border patrols and security.

We've taken a number of measures, and I believe that all of them, in culmination, will have significant impacts.

I will also point out that, in a city like Toronto, for example, the number of homicides is at an all-time low. In fact, year over year, it's down 50%, and that continues to be the trend with many violent offences.

There is still a lot more work to do, and I would readily acknowledge that.

#### COMBATTING ISLAMOPHOBIA

**Hon. Salma Atallahjan:** Minister, Islamophobia is a well-documented issue in Canada. Canada has the highest number of targeted killings of Muslims among G7 countries. Your government has been in power for over a decade; yet, you recently got rid of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia. What would you say to that?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Senator, work around hate and Islamophobia is, again, critically important. As a government, we have done a great deal over the years to address issues of Islamophobia, including support for the funding of infrastructure for the safety and security of Muslim Canadians.

I've been to many of the impacted communities, both in Quebec City as well as in London, and other places where killings have occurred within the Greater Toronto Area, GTA. The sense of safety and security for all Canadians is of the utmost importance, and we will continue with things like Bill C-9 to do the work to ensure the safety of Canadians.

#### CYBERSECURITY

**Hon. Claude Carignan:** Good afternoon, minister. Beyond Bill C-8 concerning cybersecurity, you have the authority to take concrete action through your role as Minister of Public Safety. My question concerns the Anthropic firm's Claude Mythos, a next-generation AI tool used to detect cybersecurity system weaknesses, and which has unequivocally been identified as a potential national security threat by the cybersecurity community.

Minister, have you had any discussions with Anthropic about including Canada and its agencies in the Glasswing project to test our own computer systems? If so, in what context? Can you clarify for us whether your department has assessed this project's strategic interest? Are any steps currently being taken to get Canada involved?

[*English*]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator.

Correctional Service Canada, CSC, for example, reports directly to the Minister of National Defence, and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, of course, reports to me. Both of our security intelligence agencies are constantly reviewing different emerging technologies, so I have no doubt that they're working on Anthropic as well.

I'm not directly involved with it right now, but in a broader sense around artificial intelligence and the work around cyber, there is work happening with the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation as well as our security apparatus to ensure that we can embed better and more advanced tools into the work that we're doing on a day-to-day basis.

The evolving threat levels by a range of new technologies are quite worrisome. We've had recent examples where they have had devastating impacts.

Part of the exercise for us as a government is to see how we ensure adherence to norms and to elements of reporting that will ensure that social media platforms, for example, are bringing information to law enforcement so that enforcement can take place.

[*Translation*]

**Senator Carignan:** Thank you. From a practical point of view, I think we need to spend some time talking about what's happening in the United States. The Federal Reserve chair called for a meeting with the big banks to address risks related to Claude Mythos. This is no mere technological debate; it's really about national infrastructure security. What specific actions are you yourself taking to ensure we have the right tools to deal with this threat? This is just as much a threat to infrastructure security as it is to the country's economic security.

[English]

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** Thank you, senator.

This is a very timely question.

• (1600)

There are a number of conversations taking place between the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, myself, the Minister of Canadian Identity and our national security apparatus on emerging technologies and how we address them, both from a regulatory perspective — what regulatory provisions and laws we need to have in place to hold some platforms accountable in case of gross error or gross negligence or negligence — and from the perspective of how we proactively protect Canadians. That's an area where we are continuously looking for answers. I can't say we have the answers right now, but we, like all governments, are working through the different types of technology that exist and —

[Translation]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

[English]

#### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR INMATES

**Hon. Kim Pate:** Welcome, minister. Thank you for your life's work in the area of human rights.

In 2024, a judge sentenced a person to a provincial hospital to avoid his isolation and consequent risks to his mental health and therefore to public safety.

Corrections receives funding to contract beds in provincial psychiatric hospitals. Despite tens of millions of dollars allocated since 2019, no additional bed spaces have resulted.

The Correctional Investigator and the Parliamentary Budget Officer have made the case for contracting external beds instead of continuing to sink billions into corrections-run initiatives that deliver less effective care and, therefore, hamper community safety. Instead, corrections is spending \$1.3 billion for a single 150-bed corrections-run health centre in New Brunswick.

Especially given current cuts, how do you plan to ensure transparency and accountability of corrections regarding the impact on mental health and rehabilitation of spending billions of dollars in-house rather than on those with proven experience —

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Thank you, senator.

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator. I want to acknowledge the work you do each and every day on improving our corrections.

Let me say at the outset we have a new Commissioner of the Correctional Service. I believe you have already met him. The commissioner has been mandated with a number of very important issues that he will need to review. This is one of the issues that he is undertaking. I will have more to say in the near future.

Having said that, there are some pressing needs, I think, within corrections that we need to address, including the issues around reductions on librarians as well as CEGEP issues, that I've asked the commissioner to review and come back to me on.

I will say that there is no clear, easy fix here. It depends on the province/territory where a centre is housed right now. In terms of the centre in Shédiac that you are referring to, it is progressing and does offer an alternate model. I would not fully discount that. I would say there is a great deal of thought that has gone into that process, and I do believe that it is a centre of excellence that will serve many inmates who may require those supports.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS OF INCARCERATED PERSONS

**Hon. Kim Pate:** Tomorrow marks the thirty-second anniversary of the violations of human and Charter rights at the Prison for Women in Kingston that led Justice Louise Arbour to call for increased accountability for corrections. Justice Arbour recommended judicial oversight of segregation and the ability for prisoners to return to court for remedies for correctional mismanagement.

The government's own data reveals that conditions of segregation persist in federal penitentiaries, a violation of Canadian and international law that creates and exacerbates disabling mental health issues.

What concrete steps are you taking to instruct Correctional Service Canada, or CSC, to implement these now three-decade-old recommendations of the Arbour inquiry?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** I will repeat what I said earlier with respect to the new commissioner. I do have a great deal of faith in the commissioner to undertake a number of important discussions and reforms.

The implementation of and adherence to international human rights law are critically important to me. In fact, one of the things that I would like to see — and I know it will require a longer path — is that Canada adheres to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, or OPCAT, an area that is essential to those who are in prisons. Of course, there is work to do before that can be fully adopted and implemented. I look forward to the work that needs to be done. I know there are no easy overnight solutions, but certainly, I think —

[Translation]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

## NATIONAL PUBLIC ALERTING SYSTEM

**Hon. Allister Surette:** Minister, my question is about the National Public Alerting System. Since 2019, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages has repeatedly raised the issue that there is currently no requirement to ensure that emergency alerts of equal quality in both official languages are broadcast simultaneously.

The office reiterated this concern as recently as January 28 of this year. As things stand, the federal directive on alerts only requires that bilingual alerts be broadcast “whenever possible and practical.”

In the 2025 federal budget, \$55.4 million was allocated over a four-year period to renew the National Public Alerting System.

Here is my question: As part of this renewal, will the government finally act on the recommendation of the office and create a clear requirement for emergency alerts of equal quality to be simultaneously broadcast in both official languages?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you for the question, senator.

[*English*]

I would say, on principle, I fully agree with you, senator. This matter, while it is public safety, is an issue that is in the purview of my colleague Minister Eleanor Olszewski. I will undertake to come back with a response from her, but it is outside of the scope of the work that I undertake on a regular basis. Thank you for that important question.

## MEMORIAL GRANT PROGRAM FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

**Hon. Scott Tannas:** Hello, minister. In 2018, the Government of Canada established a national grant program for first responders who die in the line of duty. The Memorial Grant Program for First Responders provides a tax-free grant of \$300,000 for family support. This amount has not increased since 2018. According to Statistics Canada, inflation has amounted to about 25% since the introduction of the initiative. Most other government programs like this are indexed to inflation, but this one is not.

Minister, will you commit to increasing the grant amount to make up for the reduced economic value that has occurred over time and fix this issue going forward, potentially with indexing?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, Senator Tannas. It is a very important question, and it’s an area of deep importance to our government. Similarly to the previous question, let me say that this is also a matter that is in the purview of Minister Olszewski, and I will make sure it is brought to her attention. It is not within my ministerial portfolio. Although it is part of Public Safety Canada, it is a shared ministry with Minister Olszewski, and I will be able to get her to respond to you.

**Senator Tannas:** Thank you. On behalf of your particular portfolio, would you recommend that she be doing what is suggested here?

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** As you are aware, senator, I don’t think you would want to speak for any of your colleagues, just as I don’t want to speak for any of mine. What I will do is ensure she knows that this has been brought up by you and how important it is for you and this house.

## FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

**Hon. Daryl Fridhandler:** Minister, as I raised last week in this chamber, credible evidence before an Alberta court has warned that the ongoing Alberta referendum campaigns, particularly the separatist questions, are vulnerable to foreign interference, including through organizations that openly seek support and close ties with the United States.

Elections Alberta has no specific foreign interference mandate or capacity to investigate foreign interference risks. However, Elections Canada controls illegal financial contributions by prohibited persons. As the responsible minister, what specific steps is your department taking to respond to foreign interference, actual or threatened, related to the October 19 nine plus referenda in Alberta, and which federal agencies are actively engaged or expected to be engaged in that work?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator, for that very important and timely question.

• (1610)

As this is a matter that is, again, part of provincial lawmaking abilities — and their process is undertaken by Elections Alberta — this is not an area where Elections Canada can be involved. The Foreign Influence Transparency Commissioner, Mr. Anton Boegman, as well as the office that is being set up, may be best positioned to identify any potential foreign interference in that regard. However, outside of that, Elections Canada will not have the mandate or the purview to do that work.

**Senator Fridhandler:** Thank you for that, Mr. Minister. I believe that foreign interference is actually outside the scope of the provincial legislation and falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Under the CSIS Act, you may authorize CSIS to enter into arrangements and cooperate with provinces to conduct threat assessments. Under the Foreign Interference and Security of Information Act, covert or deceptive efforts to influence a political process constitute a serious criminal offence.

Can you tell this chamber what powers you are currently exercising with respect to the nine-plus Alberta referendums? As well, when will the Transparency Commissioner’s registry be operational — though bad actors don’t usually register for illegal compliance?

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** Do you want me to answer that question, senator? I've said what I can on this issue. Canadian laws — and Canadian security laws — are important, and our law enforcement agencies will do their jobs when and if required.

[Translation]

#### BORDER SECURITY

**Hon. Claude Carignan:** Minister, on March 19, the *Journal de Montréal*'s investigative bureau reported on just how easy it is nowadays for Mexican cartels to smuggle methamphetamine into Canada by train.

The police are doing their job with the resources available to them. They are not the problem. The problem is the system, which always seems to be playing catch-up with criminal organizations without ever closing the real loopholes. Despite the billions of dollars invested, methamphetamine is getting into the country by train.

I have a simple question: Is your department aware of this report and, most importantly, what concrete measures will it take to address this obvious weakness at the border?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Senators, in the past 11 months, I believe I have visited every major port of entry on the water. I have been to many land and rail border crossings as well. Our National Targeting Centre, which is run by the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA, plays an integral role in identifying and highlighting those vulnerabilities.

Over the past 18 months, we've had unprecedented investment at the border. This includes the \$1.3-billion investment for the border program, where increased use of drones, increased scanning technologies — which, incidentally, can scan railcars — new Black Hawk helicopters and other tools have been deployed. We are hiring 1,000 new RCMP personnel and 1,000 new CBSA personnel.

In addition, Bill C-12 offers a number of very important new tools to law enforcement to increase border security, such as outbound searches of vehicles, including rail. So I take note of and am deeply seized with the matter in terms of ensuring that fentanyl and methamphetamine do not travel either north or south. It is a shared vision that we all —

[Translation]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

**Senator Carignan:** The problem is that the train goes by, and the drone sees the train but doesn't see the drugs. That's a problem.

Are you in talks with your American and Mexican counterparts to deal with this together rather than everyone working in isolation?

[English]

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** Absolutely. I've had bilateral discussions with both. In fact, as part of both the G7 and the Five Eyes, we have regular encounters with the U.S. Our departments have regularized discussions on a range of issues, including the border.

Senator, if I may, I will invite you, the next time I am in Quebec, to a border crossing, particularly on rail, because there are some things that may not be apparent. Of course, I always have a lot more to learn, and that may be one of the ways that we can ensure that we are doing all we can.

[Translation]

#### SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Hon. Claude Carignan:** It would be my pleasure, minister.

A recent report by the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications revealed that copper theft is no mere nuisance. It is a growing threat to public safety. Perpetrators are damaging critical infrastructure, which jeopardizes our communities. Essential services are being disrupted by organized criminals, and repeat offenders treat these crimes as low-risk, high-reward activities.

Minister, despite the scale of the problem and obvious ties to organized crime, there doesn't seem to be a cohesive national strategy to deal with it. The government considers copper theft to be a simple property crime, but it's actually an attack on infrastructure security.

When will you launch a national plan and stop considering this crime to be simple property theft?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator. This is an issue that I've heard about, particularly from telecommunication companies and others who have been deeply impacted by the work. In part, I think Bill C-14 and Bill C-8 will ensure some kind of compliance. Bill C-14, for example, is on sentencing and bail for repeat offenders. It is an area where, while this may be seen as a property theft matter, it still encapsulates the intent of Bill C-14 and an area that I know this house is working on.

We are looking to Bill C-14 as one of the primary drivers of ensuring that theft of all kinds, including copper theft, is addressed.

[Translation]

**Senator Carignan:** Practical issues and legislation to address copper theft aside, will you be proactive on this and institute a national plan that will actually protect our essential infrastructure?

[English]

FINANCIAL CRIMES

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** Senator, more work does need to go into ensuring our critical national infrastructure is protected. That is an area we will need to work on. My primary objective is to ensure that Bill C-8 becomes law and, from there, to work on other pieces of legislation.

Since we formed government in April of last year, I believe we have had nine bills that are directly linked to public safety and crime. We are working through them, and many of them are in the House right now. We look forward to continuing that work on areas where gaps exist, including the ones that you identified.

PUBLIC HEALTH DISINFORMATION

**Hon. Stan Kutcher:** Minister, thank you for being with us today. I would like to ask you about health disinformation, which is not only a threat to individual and public health but, when weaponized by malicious state actors such as Russia, a threat to our democracy. Can you share with us what you and your department and the Minister of Health and her department are doing to effectively address the infodemic we're facing to protect us from this?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, Senator Kutcher, and good to see you.

• (1620)

It is an area of increasing challenges, whether it is modern medicine or a range of areas where misinformation is overpowering truth and science, in many cases. It is an area that is primarily led by Minister Michel with respect to health matters. I talked about youth and the programs that we have for youth on deradicalization, but in respect of overall information, it is an area where we have a broader government approach, both from the Minister of Health as well as from the Minister of Artificial Intelligence. That work is ongoing. There is no particular bill currently before any house, but it is a matter of time before that comes to either one of our houses.

CRIME PREVENTION

**Hon. Stan Kutcher:** To change gears a little bit, often fuelled by U.S.A.-based organizations, fascist-style fight clubs, such as Second Sons Canada and various neo-Nazi groups, seem to be increasing in numbers and activities in Canada. They promote racial violence and attack democratic institutions. Can you share with us what specific measures are being taken now to address these fight clubs?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** We have listed a number of entities as terrorist entities within Canadian law. So 764 is one example. Maniac Murder Cult, or MMC, is another one, as well as Terrorgram Collective. These are ideologically motivated, violent extreme groups. These are actually social platforms. We have identified them as terrorist entities under the Criminal Code. It enables law enforcement to have greater authority to support local communities in countering issues and threats as they come up within, for example, schools, or their local environments.

**Hon. Tony Loffreda:** Minister, thank you for joining us.

Extortion is increasingly targeting small- and medium-sized businesses, or SMEs, often through organized criminal networks that rely on intimidation, digital platforms and anonymous payments. In February, the government announced a series of targeted measures to strengthen financial intelligence, enhance information sharing with banks and law enforcement, and deploy the expertise of the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, or FINTRAC, to support investigations. Small-business owners are asking for visible protection, clear reporting pathways and faster action on the ground.

Minister, can you share with us how these measures will translate into practical, accessible support for SMEs, especially those facing repeat or credible threats? What steps are being taken to ensure police have the resources, coordination and intelligence needed to disrupt extortion networks that are increasingly more sophisticated before businesses are forced to pay or shut down?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator. There are extortion pockets in four different parts of the country, and they are unique in their own composition and nature. Between Surrey, or the Lower Mainland, and the Peel Region, as well as the Edmonton area, extortion is targeting members of the South Asian community. A number of measures have been taken there, including lead support by the RCMP, along with the integration of the Canada Border Services Agency into the work of the local police of the jurisdiction, and additional tools by way of FINTRAC to trace the money scenario that Minister Champagne outlined.

In Quebec, a slightly different version of extortion is taking place. The police of that jurisdiction have been leading the work, but from a federal perspective, we have provided additional tools by introducing FINTRAC into the equation. It is an area where FINTRAC has typically not been outwardly involved, but it is a very important additional tool that we are able to use.

In all three or four different areas of jurisdiction with extortion as a significant issue, we are seeing an initial — and I say it reluctantly — downward trend —

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

**Senator Loffreda:** Thank you for that answer. Since 2019, the government has invested close to \$379 million in combatting financial crime, and more money was announced in Budget 2025, including for the creation of the new financial crimes agency to strengthen Canada's response to money laundering and organized crime.

Can you clarify what model this new agency will have, how it will interact with FINTRAC and law enforcement and when legislation will be introduced to formally establish the agency and provide it with the necessary authorities?

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** I will boldly say, wait. In the next few weeks, you will hear more about all the questions you are posing on this issue. At this point, it would be inappropriate for me to comment, as a lot of work has been done, and we're very confident that, in the coming weeks, you will potentially have legislation or a road map in terms of how the financial crimes agency will be established.

**Senator Loffreda:** Thank you.

#### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

**Hon. Todd Lewis:** Good afternoon, minister. Contract policing by the RCMP is provided through Police Service Agreements, or PSAs, which are negotiated between the federal government, provinces and municipalities. The current agreements expire on March 31, 2032. In much of rural Canada, the RCMP is the police force. In Saskatchewan, the RCMP is responsible for over 99% of the total area and 45% of the total population of the province.

Municipal and provincial governments need to plan decades into the future. When will the federal government announce what is next for the RCMP?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Senator, thank you for that quite important question. I've already outlined the road map to our provincial and territorial partners. We had a federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Kananaskis in October of last year. I met with my public safety counterparts as well as the ministers of justice, and it was clearly iterated there that we are ready to negotiate the contract renewal. Renewals are not automatic, as you are aware. Renewals will require a discussion of the core terms.

We've done a great deal of work on the back end in terms of preparation for those discussions. Over the coming months, we will be at the point where discussions will commence.

**Senator Lewis:** Thank you for that.

[Translation]

#### ORGANIZED CRIME

**Hon. Michèle Audette:** *Kuei*, minister.

In my community of Uashat mak Mani-Utenam, and in many First Nations communities, homes are being burned down and young people are dying because of their ties to organized crime or street gangs. For nearly 30 or 40 years, police services in our communities has been chronically underfunded and under-resourced, which directly jeopardizes public safety. The Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls called for adequate services. Despite this, these services tend to be treated as pilot projects or temporary programs, rather than essential services.

My first question is this: How long does the government plan to maintain this precarious approach when it comes to Indigenous communities?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you for your question, senator.

[English]

We have done a fair amount of work in the last 11 months to ensure that First Nations policing is a critical component of the work that we do. As you are aware, currently, we have a cost-sharing formula with the provinces as part of the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program, or FNIPP. In Quebec, for example, in your community, that is one of the programs that we have, including additional funding for infrastructure, which, I believe, is now being built out in many communities across Canada.

Policing as an essential service has been demanded by many communities. As I talk to the National Chief and others, it is a central ask.

• (1630)

I would say that for me, the funding is quite important because we cannot have it as a national essential service when we have different provinces with different positions at the table. What I am seeking is broader funding that will speak to the needs of every province and territory, and then from there, we'll work toward legislation. I know legislation is something that people have asked for. I'm hesitant to do that without ensuring that provinces are on board from the outset —

[Translation]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

**Senator Audette:** I can understand that some provinces are hesitant about legislation, but we believe it is important. I would like us to work on a bill to ensure that police services are essential, regardless of the status of the community, that is, whether it has a modern treaty, a self-government agreement or, as in the case of my community, neither of these.

I think your government has some momentum at the moment that will likely continue for a few months or years, and I hope to see a bill on this.

[English]

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** Senator, I look forward to working with you, and thank you for your wishes. I think there was a wish in there somewhere. Certainly, there is a fair amount of work to do on Indigenous policing overall.

I want to highlight that Senator Francis and I were at a meeting a couple of months ago where we talked about the other elements of policing that are challenging communities as well, and it continues to be one of the areas where I know we need to do more work.

As part of the contract renewal, I'm hoping we can iron out some of these issues where Indigenous policing is a component of that renewal, as well as the areas where we can progress in provinces where there is a much better partnership.

[*Translation*]

#### BUDGET CUTBACKS

**Hon. Claude Carignan:** Minister, budget cuts totalling more than \$66 million over three years are planned in Public Safety Canada's 2026-27 Departmental Plan, specifically \$15.3 million in 2026-27, \$20.4 million in 2027-28, and \$30.6 million in 2028-29, in addition to a reduction of approximately 377 full-time equivalents. These cuts are justified by a reduction in day-to-day operational expenses. However, unlike the CBSA or RCMP, which are operational agencies under your responsibility, the primary value of your department lies not in its operational functions, but rather in its governance, strategic analysis and whole-of-government coordination of the public safety portfolio.

Your department therefore plays a central role. How can the government justify cuts of this magnitude, and what analyses does it rely on to claim that reducing this strategic capacity will not weaken the department—

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Thank you, Senator Carignan.

[*English*]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Safety:** Thank you, senator. As we were going through the Comprehensive Expenditure Review process during the late summer and the fall, the critical thing that we had in mind, especially for the portfolio agencies, was that front-line services to Canadians not be impacted. We have close to 72,000 front-line people that work in the RCMP, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and Correctional Service Canada, and we wanted to ensure that those particular positions were not implicated.

But you're quite correct with respect to Public Safety Canada. They are having to do essentially the same amount of work with fewer resources, which is across the board in many different departments, and I would say it's the vast majority of departments within government. It is part of the government transformation that is taking place right now.

I'm confident that this will not have any adverse impact on the safety and security of Canadians. And that was of paramount consideration for us as we went through the Comprehensive Expenditure Review.

[*Translation*]

**Senator Carignan:** The departmental plan justifies the increased use of technology and AI to perform certain tasks. Minister, which functions do you intend to automate without losing capacity? What AI tools have been deployed to date to replace human expertise?

[ Mr. Anandasangaree ]

[*English*]

**Mr. Anandasangaree:** I would say at this point, we have not deployed AI tools that will replace human capacity. Copilot is something that I believe is now being used, but I cannot be certain. Apart from that, I do not believe that AI tools have been deployed in replacing human capacity.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, the time for Question Period has expired. I am certain that you will join me in thanking Minister Anandasangaree.

Thank you, minister, for joining us today.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** We will now resume the proceedings that were interrupted at the beginning of Question Period.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### NATIONAL THANADELTHUR DAY BILL

#### THIRD READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, for the third reading of Bill S-225, An Act to establish National Thanadelthur Day.

**Hon. Marilou McPhedran:** Honourable senators, it's my pleasure to rise today to speak in support of Bill S-225, An Act to establish National Thanadelthur Day. You have heard a great deal from Senator McCallum about this very important bill, and I want to thank Senator Martin for asking me to be the critic of this bill.

I come from Treaty 1 territory, which is also the homeland of the Métis Nation, and it's an opportunity for all of us today to think about the significance of having this bill and having the example of Thanadelthur, because she is an example of the tireless leadership and the resolute quality of Indigenous women who both nurture as mothers and protect as warriors.

I think of contemporary Thanadelthurs who — despite obstacles, hardship and opposition — are similarly leading restorative peace and reconciliation efforts in our own time. They are Indigenous activists, like the late Mary Two-Axe Earley; Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, whom we will be honouring here in the Senate next week; Cindy Blackstock; Pam Palmater; Leslie Spillet; Autumn Peltier; Diane Redsky; and our former Senate colleagues the Honourable Sandra Lovelace Nicholas and the Honourable Lillian Dyck.

In this place, we are blessed with Indigenous women leaders who were all esteemed trailblazers before they agreed to be named to this chamber: Senators Dawn Anderson, Michèle Audette, Nancy Karetak-Lindell, Mary Jane McCallum, Yvonne Boyer, Margo Greenwood and Judy White.

I think of Inuit leaders like Rosemarie Kuptana; the artist Daphne Odjig; Manitoba's own Jackie Traverse; and my family's beloved friend, the legendary filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, who is now 93 and working on her fifty-fourth film.

Indigenous women and girls play a key role in preserving their communities. They often act as agents of peace, leading movements that eventually bring the warring parties to the table. They seek to speak truth to power, including within their own communities. They address the root causes of a conflict and increase community engagement, just as Thanadelthur did hundreds of years ago.

When I go home to Manitoba, I'm honoured to receive guidance from three of Winnipeg's most effective leaders — Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Sandra DeLaronde and Diane Redsky — often to discuss international advocacy in multilateral processes. Last year, they led the largest ever delegation of Indigenous women to the United Nations in Geneva to participate in the review of Canada under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Colleagues, we all know a critic is not required to speak to a bill before it comes to a vote. Knowing my support, Senator Martin gave me this opportunity, and Senator McCallum asked me to speak briefly today to confirm my support. I stand with her to ask all of you to join us in honouring Thanadelthur. With our votes in support of this bill, we honour all the Indigenous women leaders and peacemakers who are crucial to progress in families, communities and nations.

• (1640)

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.)

## CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SIXTH REPORT OF LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Arnot, seconded by the Honourable Senator Clement, for the adoption of the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs (*Bill S-205, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, with amendments*), presented in the Senate on March 24, 2026.

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

**Some Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**An Hon. Senator:** On division.

(Motion agreed to, on division, and report adopted.)

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

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

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE DAY BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Moreau, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Dalphond, for the second reading of Bill S-219, An Act to establish Judicial Independence Day.

**Hon. Judy A. White:** Honourable senators, I rise today in support of Bill S-219, an Act to establish Judicial Independence Day.

Before turning to the substance of the bill, I would like to begin by offering my sincere thanks to Senator Moreau. This initiative is very much the result of his leadership and his deep respect for the role of an independent judiciary in our democracy. He was the original sponsor of this bill and brought it forward with conviction and care.

While Senator Moreau is no longer able to continue in that role, he has entrusted me with the sponsorship of this bill. I am grateful for his confidence and honoured to carry this forward. It is the first bill I'm sponsoring.

This bill gives us an opportunity to reaffirm Canada's commitment to the separation of powers, the principles of our Constitution and the paramountcy of justice and human rights. In this era of geopolitical tension, democratic backsliding around the world and rising threats to the rule of law, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to Canadian values. Bill S-219 is a chance for us to do just that.

I will begin by sharing the significance of January 11, the day that is designated as the proposed judicial independence day by this bill. I will provide an overview of the importance of establishing this day, and then I will turn to how this bill supports sustaining public trust in institutions in the Canadian context, as well as underscores our commitment to human rights.

Finally, I will conclude with a Two-Eyed Seeing analysis of judicial independence, grounded in the Western notion of being clear-eyed and Indigenous teachings about relational accountability.

This bill will declare January 11 as judicial independence day every year in Canada. This date was chosen not because it's my birthday — and it is — but because it is the anniversary of the 1000 Robes March.

The 1000 Robes March happened on January 11, 2020, in Poland, when thousands of judges from Poland and across Europe marched throughout the streets of Warsaw in their robes, peacefully showing the government that they would not stand for political interference in the judiciary. They were protesting a series of attacks that had been made against the independence of Polish courts and judges. Specifically, this included the establishment of disciplinary proceedings against judges who opposed the political party that was in power. It also suggested a “muzzle law,” which prohibited judges from publicly questioning appointments made by the government.

As Senator Moreau pointed out in his second reading speech:

Bill S-219 is . . . a show of support for the call that was put out, a gesture of remembrance for this event and an act of solidarity.

It is an expression of Canada's commitment to the rule of law today and for future generations, even and especially in the face of ever-changing political realities. It gives us an annual reminder of the judges who stood up for democracy and the separation of powers when their institutions were under threat.

There are international calls for UN Member States to establish judicial independence day. The International Association of Judges, the Global Judicial Integrity Network Advisory Board and the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers have all supported its adoption.

Senator Moreau shared in his speech that, with the adoption of Bill S-219, Canada will be the first democratic country in the world to answer this call.

In Canada, our judiciary is stable, strong and well protected. The Supreme Court of Canada has defined judicial independence as:

. . . the nature of the relationship between a court and others. This relationship must be marked by a form of intellectual separation that allows the judge to render decisions based solely on the requirements of the law and justice.

Protection of this separation is referenced in the preamble to the Constitution Act, 1867. It is also enshrined for criminal trials in section 11(d) of the Charter and, for superior courts, in sections 96 to 100 of the Constitution Act, 1867.

In practice, this means ensuring that there is no executive control over the courts, judges and/or jurists. It means upholding democracy by preventing the abuse of power and maintaining our system of checks and balances.

[ Senator White ]

According to the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, specific examples of judicial independence in practice include:

. . . [fair] procedure and qualifications for the appointment of judges, the guarantees relating to their security of tenure . . .

. . . the conditions governing promotion, transfer, suspension and cessation of their functions, and the actual independence of the judiciary from political interference by the executive branch and legislature.

A legal system that is truly independent strengthens democracy, increases public trust and is a sign of responsible governance. The strength of our democracy actually rests on an unwavering commitment to the rule of law, which is best executed by courts that are insulated from public influence or interference, where judges are empowered to act impartially and those judges are appointed through transparent, merit-based processes.

In his renowned speech to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Prime Minister Mark Carney emphasized these values on a global stage, including Canada's commitment to upholding human rights. In the turbulence of modern geopolitics, it is crucial for us to reinforce our commitment to maintaining trust in democratic institutions and the peace, order and good governance that our Constitution compels us to uphold.

Prime Minister Carney shared at the forum that Canada has, “. . . the values to which many others aspire.” Also, “Canada is a pluralistic society that works. Our public square is loud, diverse and free.”

Colleagues, by now you may be asking: if our judiciary is strong and our society works, why do we need to declare an annual day for judicial independence? I will offer two reasons.

First, it is a show of solidarity with independent courts all around the world. From our privileged position of a strong democracy, Canada can be an example. We can show that we stand with democratic institutions everywhere.

• (1650)

Bill S-219 comes at a time of “polycrisis,” as many countries face democratic backsliding and threats to their institutions, not just in Poland but in Hungary, India, Ecuador, the Philippines and the United States. On almost every continent everywhere in the world, there are threats to democracy through corruption, executive overreach and injustice in the judiciary. By adopting Bill S-219, Canada will be a trailblazing nation which stands tall in our values, especially as democratic institutions around the world come under threat.

My second reason for this day is that an annual day recognizing the importance of the judiciary will be an ongoing reminder of our commitment to a predictable, independent and transparent legal system here at home.

The Swedish Judges Association, which also operates in a country where judicial independence is well assured, supports judicial independence day. They say it's because it is:

. . . a recurring reminder that the basic principles of the rule of law cannot be taken for granted, but require attention, knowledge, and a shared sense of responsibility – even in countries where the position of courts is currently strong.

Bill S-219 will ensure that, each year, we are compelled to check on the state of our democracy and we reaffirm our commitment to the rule of law. It designates an annual moment for acknowledging our collective responsibility to uphold a judiciary that operates in the interest of justice and the Constitution and, most importantly, unimpeded by political influence.

Colleagues, democracy is an active process that requires frequent recommitment to our values and a reassessment of the strength of our institutions. Let's give ourselves a reminder of this by establishing judicial independence day.

I want to discuss how the principle of being clear-eyed and the Indigenous notion of two-eyed seeing can offer insights on the value of judicial independence.

Canada's executive has twice now invoked the importance of being clear-eyed. In the Speech from the Throne, His Majesty King Charles III, in this very chamber, presented this principle in relation to the unprecedented domestic and global challenges Canada is facing. More recently, Prime Minister Carney evoked the same principle in Davos, urging pragmatism grounded in evidence and reality amid shifting geopolitical power. In both instances, being clear-eyed means resisting complacency, confronting uncomfortable truths and acknowledging that democratic institutions, however strong, are never self-sustaining. It means direct acknowledgement of challenges, complexities and/or contradictions we may face in national and international governance.

This approach aligns with my Mi'kmaq teaching of two-eyed seeing. Two-eyed seeing, as espoused by Elder Dr. Albert Marshall, of Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, is a way of understanding that invites us to see, with one eye, the strengths of Western constitutional traditions, and, with the other eye, the strengths of Indigenous knowledge.

With one eye, we see the Western constitutional tradition: the rule of law, the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary as a structural safeguard. This eye sees the text of our Constitution and the Western legal arguments that protect our independent courts from executive or political interference. It emphasizes impartiality, predictability and legality.

With the other eye, we see my Mi'kmaq teachings, grounded in relationship and responsibility. This perspective understands authority not as command but as trust. It emphasizes balance, relational accountability, humility in leadership and the responsibility to act with future generations in mind. Justice, through this lens, is not abstract. It is lived, relational and measured by whether decisions preserve harmony and dignity of

peoples. We consider the value of justice through the lens of community and upholding the obligations we have to one another.

When we use both eyes together, we see more clearly, more wisely and more completely. Together, this perspective illuminates a shared truth: Justice must be independent, principled and protected. The rule of law is not merely a legal doctrine; it is a covenant between the state and its people. It ensures that power is constrained, that rights are protected and that justice is accessible to all.

In my Mi'kmaq traditions, we find a parallel understanding — that authority must be exercised with respect, that decisions must honour the community and that fairness is a sacred responsibility.

Colleagues, at the head of both traditions stands the same principle: independence of judgment. Judicial independence is not a privilege of judges; it is a safeguard for society, a protection owed to all of us. It ensures that every person, regardless of status or influence, stands equal before the law. It ensures that governments act within constitutional boundaries. It ensures that justice is not shaped by political winds but grounded in enduring principles.

For this independence to be real, it must be protected not only through the constitutional text and legal doctrine, but through vigilance, culture and collective responsibility. That is why I feel Bill S-219 matters.

By establishing judicial independence day, we create a shared annual moment of reflection. It is a show of support for the resistance that European judges showed on January 11, 2020. We remind ourselves that democracy requires care, that institutions require stewardship and that the independence of our courts, like the freedom they protect, cannot be taken for granted. We affirm both Western commitments to human rights and constitutionalism, and my Mi'kmaq values of balance, relational accountability and respect for generations yet to come.

Now more than ever, let us be clear-eyed. Let us stand together, using both eyes, to protect the independence of judgment upon which justice, democracy and public trust depend. Let us establish judicial independence day.

*Wela'lioq.* Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Housakos, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

## VOTE 16 BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING NEGATIVED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McPhedran, seconded by the Honourable Senator Sorensen, for the second reading of Bill S-222, An Act to

amend the Canada Elections Act and the Regulation Adapting the Canada Elections Act for the Purposes of a Referendum.

**Hon. Claude Carignan:** Honourable senators, I rise to speak to Bill S-222, which was introduced by our colleague Senator McPhedran and which seeks to lower the voting age to 16 for federal elections and referendums. As we have seen throughout the debate, there are strong opinions on this proposal. I thank all senators who participated in this discussion.

In my opinion, this debate essentially raises three important questions. First, in principle, is it a good idea to extend the right to vote to young people aged 16 and 17? Second, do these young people have the civic maturity required to fully participate in the democratic process? Third, is it appropriate for the Senate, an unelected chamber, to initiate this reform without a clear mandate from voters?

To start, I will be frank. I am personally in favour of lowering the voting age to 16. Young people today are exposed to public debate very early on. They are interested in major issues, such as the environment, education, the public debt, access to housing and health care. They are aware that political decisions will have a direct impact on their future, which, unfortunately, is much longer than mine.

In a democracy like ours, we have every reason to ask whether we should encourage civic involvement at a younger age. In fact, a number of arguments support such a reform. It could promote civic involvement from a young age, help boost voter turnout over the long term, and create a more meaningful connection between civic education and a practical democratic experience.

It also deserves mentioning that many young people, by age 16, have jobs, pay taxes, drive cars and are already taking on major responsibilities. As Senator Senior said, what democratic principle justifies saying no to an entire segment of the population that is somehow old enough to pay taxes, but not old enough to have its say?

In addition, how many federal political parties allow young people to join as members and vote in a leadership race starting at age 16? The answer is none, and that is because the parties admit members starting at age 14. Members of the Liberal Party of Canada, the Conservative Party of Canada, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois can vote for their leader, the future Prime Minister, at the age of 14, but they cannot vote for their local MP. That doesn't make any sense. In short, this idea deserves to be examined very carefully. It is not just an issue of substance, but of legitimacy.

• (1700)

Honourable senators, even when an idea is interesting, the legislative vehicle and the parliamentary process must still be appropriate. In this case, I think we need to exercise caution. The right to vote is a fundamental part of our democracy. Changing the voting age means changing the very rules that determine who will choose the members of the House of Commons, an elected chamber. However, the House of Commons has voted on similar proposals on numerous occasions over the past several years.

As my colleague Senator Housakos said, since 2000, the Senate has introduced more than 20 bills seeking to amend the Canada Elections Act. In the vast majority of cases, they did not move forward or they were rejected. Several similar bills were also unsuccessfully introduced in the House of Commons. The message that is being sent by elected representatives is clear: They believe that this type of reform must come from them. They did not have a mandate from the electorate to make such a change.

Let's now move on to the issue of parliamentary deference, honourable senators. The Senate is a vital institution. Our duty is to improve laws, ask tough questions and sometimes even amend bills. However, another important convention we follow is parliamentary deference to the House of Commons in matters involving major changes to democratic functioning. The Senate can play a useful and at times even a decisive role. However, it must also remain aware of its institutional limits when a debate strikes at the heart of the elected chamber's democratic choice.

Honourable senators, I repeat, the minimum voting age issue is important. It deserves serious consideration and study. In my opinion, Bill S-222 is not the right way to achieve this reform. I believe that the Senate would be wise to refer this question to a committee for detailed study and to gather input from experts, young people, constitutional experts and Elections Canada representatives. Such a study could lead to a clear, solid recommendation and, ideally, to legislation supported by the House of Commons. Better still, this initiative could be introduced in follow-up to the election platform of a party elected to the House of Commons, where its democratic legitimacy would be unassailable.

Honourable senators, I'm somewhat sad to say that I will be voting against Bill S-222. However, I will wholeheartedly support any effort to further explore this issue through a committee study.

Thank you.

**Hon. Pierre J. Dalfond:** I, too, will be speaking to Bill S-222.

I did not consult Senator Carignan before rising to speak, so we'll probably overlap in our messaging.

Unlike him, I will not take a position on the substance of the bill, that is, whether the minimum voting age should be 17, 16 or even 15. In my view, that is not the issue.

[English]

I rise today not to share my opinion on whether this legislation that has been proposed is good but to express concerns about such a bill being introduced by an unelected senator.

In 2024, I rose to speak on this exact issue during debate on Bill S-201, the former iteration of the bill before us today. I ask this chamber today, as I did then, whether the Senate, as an unelected chamber, is the appropriate forum for this political question. Today, I still answer in the negative.

[Translation]

I will begin by recalling the role of the Senate under our Constitution, as summarized by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2014 in the *Reference re Senate Reform*, citing paragraphs 57, 58, and 59 of that decision:

As this Court wrote in the *Upper House Reference*, “[i]n creating the Senate in the manner provided in the Act, it is clear that the intention was to make the Senate a thoroughly independent body which could canvass dispassionately the measures of the House of Commons”: p. 77 (emphasis added). The framers sought to endow the Senate with independence from the electoral process to which members of the House of Commons were subject, in order to remove Senators from a partisan political arena that required unremitting consideration of short-term political objectives.

Correlatively, the choice of executive appointment for Senators was also intended to ensure that the Senate would be a *complementary* legislative body, rather than a perennial rival of the House of Commons in the legislative process. Appointed Senators would not have a popular mandate — they would not have the expectations and legitimacy that stem from popular election. This would ensure that they would confine themselves to their role as a body mainly conducting legislative review, rather than as a coequal of the House of Commons. As John A. Macdonald put it during the Parliamentary debates regarding Confederation, “[t]here is . . . a greater danger of an irreconcilable difference of opinion between the two branches of the legislature, if the upper be elective, than if it holds its commission from the Crown”: *1865 Debates*, February 6, 1865, at p. 37. An appointed Senate would be a body “calmly considering the legislation initiated by the popular branch, and preventing any hasty or ill considered legislation which may come from that body, but it will never set itself in opposition against the deliberate and understood wishes of the people”: *ibid.*, at p. 36 (emphasis added).

The appointed status of Senators, with its attendant assumption that appointment would prevent Senators from overstepping their role as a complementary legislative body, shapes the architecture of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. It explains why the framers did not deem it necessary to textually specify how the powers of the Senate relate to those of the House of Commons or how to resolve a deadlock between the two chambers. Indeed, on its face the *Constitution Act, 1867* grants as much legislative power to the Senate as to the House of Commons, with the exception that the House of Commons has the exclusive power to originate appropriation and tax bills (s. 53). As Professor Smith aptly summarizes:

[The framers’] original answer to the clash that would inevitably occur between elected chambers was to make the Senate appointed. This assured that a government enjoying the confidence of the House of Commons would normally be able to have its legislation adopted by Parliament, but gave the Senate the ability to act as a check in those rare instances when it was absolutely necessary.

[English]

As I said in 2024:

In a democracy . . . It’s up to the elected people to decide who should be the unelected people and how to select these unelected people. For me, the issue —

— of who can vote in a federal election —

— belongs squarely and solely with the House of Commons. It’s up to them —

— the elected ones —

— to initiate this type of important reform. . . .

— regarding the voting age.

In earlier debates on this bill, in support of the opposing view, Senator McPhedran told us that nothing in parliamentary rules, conventions or precedents prevents us from introducing a bill on this topic. Yet, the reference to the Supreme Court seems to be more nuanced and probably not supportive of this kind of bill.

• (1710)

She stated that, in the Senate, 15 bills were introduced that were attempting to amend the Canada Elections Act in the past 20 years. She noted that one of those bills received Royal Assent — only one.

I have recently looked into these bills. Yes, since 2004, there have been 15 bills introduced in the Senate that proposed to amend the Canada Elections Act, not counting the one we have before us today. Of these 15 bills, 4 were government bills, and 11 were senators’ bills. Of the 4 government bills, only one made it to Royal Assent. This bill was introduced during the pandemic to allow justices of the peace to issue judicial warrants remotely, with the use of the internet. For that purpose, the Canada Elections Act was amended to say that this warrant could be obtained electronically. That was the sole amendment to the Canada Elections Act that was done by this chamber — it was to authorize a judge to issue a judicial warrant, pursuant to the Canada Elections Act. There was nothing of substance about who should vote.

Of the 11 remaining bills, 3 are previous iterations of the bill before us. All were sponsored by Senator McPhedran, for which I must recognize her dedication. Then, of the eight remaining bills, three were duplicates of each other, and they were about pre-election expenses. At least one was proposing to amend the legislation not in relation to elections but to amend an annex that was referring to the Canada Elections Act in the National Capital Act. There was not really anything very substantial about elections.

Thus, it cannot be said that senators in the past have attempted substantive amendments to the Canada Elections Act, and, even so, none made it to third reading.

As Senator Tannas pointed out in the debates on Bill S-201, the track record of voting-age expansion bills introduced in the House of Commons does not provide much hope for the passage

of the bill before us. The House has introduced such legislation nine times, through both introductions and reintroductions. In all of those attempts, the bill only once made it to second reading in the last Parliament, under Bill C-210. It was handily defeated at second reading by a vote of 77 in favour and 246 against. That was in 2022, not 20 years ago.

The House of Commons has not resurrected this bill since then. The result of the vote at second reading for Bill C-210 is evidence of the general Liberal and Conservative objection to the scope and principle of the bill before us, while most support for the bill came from the unanimous vote of the Bloc, the NDP and the Green Party. While the NDP and the Green Party support expanding the voting age to 16, they have not recently presented bills in the other place to change the situation. Even the NDP has not introduced such a bill.

Speaking of the NDP, I will quote Senator Housakos, who spoke in November about this bill. He said:

Then 10 years later, in 2018, during the study of Bill C-76, which aimed to comprehensively reform the Canada Elections Act, NDP MP Daniel Blaikie criticized the government's choice to assign to the Senate, rather than the House of Commons, the responsibility for making certain amendments to the bill. He then reminded the House:

Why is it that we have to depend on an undemocratic house to get changes to our democratic instruments here in Canada?

Furthermore, I want to point out that there is no data referred to by the sponsor of the bill or all those in support showing that there is compelling support for that measure in Canada. The only data referred to in previous speeches was mentioned by Senator McCallum, and she referred to opinion polls conducted in the U.K., where some amendments were done, including in Scotland. She said:

Opinion polling done in the U.K. suggested the public is unsupportive. In June 2024, polling showed that 47% of the public is opposed to lowering the voting age, whereas 28% supported it. Only 10% of those over the age of 75 supported the change, but 49% of those aged 18 to 26 supported it.

She then quoted another poll:

A poll of 500 16- and 17-year-olds showed young people were split. The poll found that 49% didn't think the voting age should be lowered to 16, while 51% said it should. Polling in Scotland before the change of voting age for devolved elections showed two thirds opposed to votes at 16. . . .

We don't have that about Canada, as I said, but, certainly, I don't see compelling reasons to pass that bill and to hear things that the House of Commons is deaf to.

In such a context, I invite all of us to show restraint and to remain committed to our role as a complementary chamber and not as a rival of the House of Commons for issues rejected by the elected members. Accordingly, I will vote "no" to this bill at

[ Senator Dalphond ]

second reading — not because I am opposed to the good intent of Senator McPhedran but because I think it is important to define our role and our functions. This is not only for that bill but for all bills that are coming to this chamber from the government or for bills that we are introducing, sometimes, to substitute ourselves for elected officials.

Thank you very much for your attention.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Mary Jane McCallum:** Will Senator Dalphond take a question?

**Senator Dalphond:** Yes, Senator McCallum.

[*Translation*]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator Dalphond, do you need more time? Do you want me to ask your colleagues if they agree to give you more time?

**Senator Dalphond:** Yes.

[*English*]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Colleagues, is leave granted?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**Senator McCallum:** Senator Dalphond, I entered that information so this chamber would get all sides of the argument. I wasn't prepared to hide one side, but you do know that the country did go ahead and lower the voting age.

**Senator Dalphond:** Yes, I said that it was in your speech. In support of this bill, you referred to this data. My point is to say that we don't even have similar data for Canada. But if I look at the data, I can hardly say that it is a compelling reason to vote at 16 or 17.

And I will go further: If the House proposed tomorrow that the voting age be lowered to 17, would we amend the bill to say it should be 16?

**Hon. Donna Dasko:** Is there time for a question?

[*Translation*]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator Dalphond, would you take another question?

[*English*]

**Senator Dalphond:** Of course.

**Senator Dasko:** Senator Dalphond, would you agree that in a democracy many institutions should play a role in maintaining and strengthening the democracy that we have, for example, the independent media, the courts, civil society, the House of Commons and the Senate?

• (1720)

Wouldn't you agree that we all have a significant role to play in strengthening and maintaining our democracy? Thank you.

**Senator Dalphond:** That is an excellent question. I know you sponsored that bill about gender and candidates at elections. You wanted to amend the Canada Elections Act accordingly.

I certainly believe this chamber has a role to play in reviewing legislation, including Elections Act amendments that are done by the House of Commons, deciding who should vote, who should contribute to political campaigns, what kinds of limits we should have, et cetera.

I also believe that, as suggested by my colleague Senator Carignan, the Senate could have a study on that issue and make a report that would be available to all Canadians, including members of the House of Commons, who could decide to act upon this report.

However, instead of debating this issue here, adducing evidence before the Senate and then producing a report, we're trying to force the issue by amending the Canada Elections Act. This crosses a line that we should not cross.

That's when I say that this is not our role, and we are doing ourselves a disservice by crossing that line. We crossed the line previously in other bills that we debated in this place, and if we cross the line too often, we are going to make the point that, maybe, we don't understand our role. There are ways to ensure that we better understand our role, or perhaps Canadians should reconsider the whole notion of having a Senate.

**Senator Dasko:** Will the senator take another question?

**Senator Dalphond:** Yes.

**Senator Dasko:** Thank you. As a member of the Senate, I have observed that senators don't necessarily defer to the House when it comes to matters of the Canada Elections Act. I point to the 15 bills that Senator McPhedran has noted. To me, that is evidence that we don't defer to them. That is an extraordinary number of bills that we have taken on and put forward here in the Senate. Senators are quite happy to be strongly involved.

Let me give another example and ask if you recall, as I do, when we both came into the Senate — the very same day, Senator Dalphond, we were sworn in together — and the very first bill that you and I worked on was the Elections Act in 2018. I recall incredible enthusiasm on the part of senators to engage in that bill. I recall no reluctance whatsoever to pull back and say, we can't do this or we can't do that.

I also recall amendments to the elections bill put forward, in fact, by former senator Linda Frum, a Conservative. I offer this as evidence that we, in this chamber, want to participate and don't believe that we have to step back when it comes to dealing with these kinds of issues that are truly at the heart of our democracy.

That bill in 2018 touched the heart of our electoral system because we were talking about eligibility to vote and many other —

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Do you have a question, Senator Dasko?

**Senator Dalphond:** Of those bills, only one made it. It was a bill by the government. All the other bills were —

[*Translation*]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator Dalphond, have you finished answering the question? Your time has expired.

[*English*]

**Hon. Farah Mohamed:** Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in support of Bill S-222, which proposes to extend the federal voting age from 18 to 16.

Debate at second reading is meant to centre on the principle of a bill. The principle here is inclusion, plain and simple.

First, I acknowledge the tireless work of Senator McPhedran on this issue. Whether one agrees or not, her persistence, grounded in research and conviction, has ensured that this question remains before us and that young Canadians are not excluded from a conversation that directly shapes their future.

At its core, this debate asks a simple question: Who do we trust to take part in our democracy? Democracy has never been static; it expands or it stagnates. Our history is one of widening inclusion. At key moments, Parliament has chosen to extend the vote beyond property, gender and race.

In 1970, we lowered the voting age from 21 to 18, enfranchising more than two million Canadians. At the time, critics warned it was too much, too soon. History proved otherwise.

Again and again, exclusion has been defended in the language of caution, arguments that rarely withstand scrutiny over time. We should not repeat that mistake here.

Today, we face a similar moment, but with clearer evidence. Canadians aged 16 and 17 are not a marginal group. They are a significant cohort entirely excluded from federal decision making despite having to live the longest with the consequences of our decisions.

Extending the franchise is not simply administrative. It is principled. Those who will have to live the longest with the outcomes of our decisions should have a voice in shaping them. Those outcomes are real.

Young Canadians are entering a labour market transformed by automation, navigating a housing crisis where prices far outpace incomes and inheriting climate challenges that will define the coming decades. They are not passive observers. They are engaged. They are organizing, advocating and speaking directly and clearly about the defining issues of our time. Yet, a paradox remains: Those with the greatest stake in the future have the least formal influence over it.

Some ask whether 16-year-olds are ready to vote. It is a fair question, but it must be answered with evidence, not assumptions. That evidence is clear. By age 16, individuals demonstrate decision-making capacity comparable to adults, particularly in reflective contexts like voting. Real-world experience supports this.

In Austria — and my colleague talked about international comparisons — where the voting age was expanded two decades ago, turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds has matched or exceeded that of older, first-time voters.

In Scotland's 2014 referendum, turnout among this group was estimated at approximately 75%. These are not signs of immaturity. They are signs of engagement.

Another concern is about civic knowledge. This is a concern, in my opinion, that is misplaced. Our system has never made the right to vote conditional on knowledge. We don't test for knowledge. We do not test for civic literacy at 18, nor do we do that at 81. Gaps in political understanding exist in all age groups.

If anything, 16- and 17-year-olds are better positioned than many others. They are actively studying civics in structured environments where engagement can be supported. If preparedness is the concern, the answer is not exclusion. It is participation when learning is most active.

Others raise concerns about influence. However, influence is universal. It exists across all demographics, through families, communities and media. We do not, and should not, disqualify voters on the basis of influence.

What we do know is that when young people vote, they strengthen democratic culture by increasing discussion within families and communities.

We must also confront a practical reality. Turnout among Canadians aged 18 to 20 is significantly lower than among older voters. This is not because they are not engaged; it is because we introduce voting at a moment of enormous disruption in their lives. Think about it. They are coming out of school. They are looking for a job. They are looking for a home. They are transitioning into a new phase of life, and we're saying, "Here you go; here's a big responsibility."

At 16, the opposite is true. Young people are still in stable environments where civic habits can form: school, family and community. Those habits matter because individuals who vote in their first eligible election are far more likely to continue to be engaged voters throughout their lives. If we care about participation at 30, we must act at 16.

There is also a question about fairness. This is super important. Sixteen-year-olds work; they pay taxes and contribute to our economy. In many cases, they can consent to medical treatment and take on significant responsibilities. We accept their contributions, yet we deny them a voice.

Some argue that voting should align with the age of the majority. Canadian law has never relied on a single threshold. Rights and responsibilities are introduced at different stages. Voting is not a proxy for full legal adulthood. It is a democratic right that has evolved over time.

What our current system does is simple: It sets a line at 18, without testing knowledge, capacity or engagement. Once that line is crossed, the right is universal.

We do not exclude older Canadians because of declining capacity or others because of a lack of civic knowledge. Yet we hold younger Canadians to a higher standard. That is not a principled distinction. It is a double standard.

• (1730)

In *Frank v. Canada*, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that the right to vote is fundamental. The burden, therefore, is not on young Canadians to prove they deserve the right to vote. It is on us to justify denying the right to vote. That justification does not hold because when we speak of "readiness," we are often speaking less about capacity and more about comfort — our comfort — with who gets to participate and with what they might prioritize. But democracy is not designed to preserve our comfort. It is designed to reflect our citizens.

There is also the broader demographic reality. Canada is aging, and older Canadians vote at higher rates. That is their right, but a healthy democracy requires balance. Expanding the electorate will not diminish any voice. It would simply include those currently absent.

We should also consider trust. When people are excluded from formal decision making, trust erodes. Expanding the voting age will not solve that entirely, but it is a meaningful step toward a more inclusive and responsive system.

Some ask this question: If 16, why not younger? But our laws already draw distinctions. At 16, Canadians work, pay taxes, consent to medical care and begin driving. These are meaningful thresholds that reflect recognized responsibility. In other words, equating a 16-year-old with a child is not a serious argument but rather a convenient one.

Finally, what would this mean for provincial, territorial and municipal elections? We do not yet know. In fact, many provinces, territories and municipalities have already begun this discussion, so we're kind of late to the table. That is all the more reason to send this to committee.

My colleagues Senator Carignan and Senator Dalphond asked some important questions, so let's tackle them.

Is this a legitimate place for us to move this issue? It is legitimate for the Senate to weigh in, to catalyze and not command, knowing that the other place can assert its primacy. It's especially important that this chamber nudges on issues of public interest. Sending this to committee will allow expert evidence before the bill moves forward.

It is precisely because we do not face re-election — this is another reason — that the Senate can move this issue forward as an “honest broker.”

Last, why don't we just prime the pump, as they say, and introduce, debate and study this with expert advice? Then we can send it over to the House of Commons, which will have the final say.

In terms of polling and other types of data, that's where committee review comes in. That will provide the opportunity to answer some of those unanswered questions.

Honourable senators, we are not being asked to speculate but to investigate. That is precisely why we should take the next step and send Bill S-222 to committee. The Senate has the constitutional right to move this type of bill, so the principle before us is simple: Those who are governed should have a voice in their government. It is not that 16- and 17-year-olds are asking for special treatment. They're asking to be included in the system that already shapes their lives. They're already contributing to our economy, our communities and our public discourse. The question is not whether they are ready for democracy; it is whether our democracy is ready for them.

If we believe in inclusion, in evidence and in the long-term strength of our institutions, then the choice is clear. I hope you will join me in choosing a stronger, more representative democracy and send this to committee.

With that, colleagues, I call the question.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator Batters, do you have a question?

**Hon. Denise Batters:** I do.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator Mohamed, will you take a question?

**Senator Mohamed:** I'm sure your question will be an important one. However, after eight years of debate in this chamber —

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator Mohamed, are you not taking any questions?

**Senator Mohamed:** I will defer them to committee. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Lucie Moncion:** I will be brief.

I want to come back to the comments that Senator Carignan and Senator Dalphond made about the deference that we should show the House of Commons when it comes to the Canada Elections Act or changes such as these. I heard and agree with all of the comments made by various colleagues about the legitimacy of young people between the ages of 16 and 18.

What I am seeing and what I have experienced here in the Senate, particularly when it comes to Senate public bills, is that such bills are not always the right vehicle for advancing senators' initiatives. Often these bills end up in committee and die there. They go no further than that.

After eight years of trying, perhaps we should look into other alternatives. That could mean a study in committee. The committee could send its report to the House of Commons, where it could serve as a guide should the House wish to use the arguments set out therein to amend the Canada Elections Act. In my opinion, such a change should come from the House of Commons, not the Senate. I don't think we can send a Senate public bill to the House of Commons and expect it to pass, especially when it deals with such topics.

My message is perhaps twofold. I think it's important, when introducing Senate private bills, to reflect on the purpose and the objective we want to achieve, and to see whether, instead of using a private bill, there might be other ways to push our initiatives forward, without using up the time that committees require to study bills that might not go anywhere.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** I wish to inform the Senate that if the Honourable Senator McPhedran speaks now, her speech will have the effect of closing the debate on the motion for second reading of this bill.

**Hon. Marilou McPhedran:** Honourable senators, section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms says:

Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein.

Each time a bill to expand the right to vote to include 16- and 17-year-old citizens has come to a vote, support has increased. As parliamentarians, we know progress is incremental.

If this bill were to reach the other place, we would be giving them the final say.

Colleagues, Canada has become an old country. We have many more older people than younger people, and the estimated total number of 16- and 17-year-old citizens in this country is under 1 million — not enough to disrupt but certainly an investment, and enough to become more engaged, more contributing citizens who will strengthen our democracy.

I will not speak long, but I will very much speak from my heart. I thank every one of you, who — over eight-plus years, in many cases — have taken the time to think about this, to research this and to speak. I very much respect the perspectives with which I do not agree. However, I hope that I will be able to at least wave from afar as I time out of this place and know that senators have decided, as Senator Mohamed reminded us, that there is an important question here — and to do what the Senate does best: to study this question and, in doing so, receive the question today, go to committee, report back to this house and allow us to take it further should we choose.

• (1740)

In many ways, this is a very long distance that I've travelled, having placed the engagement of youth as a top priority since the moment I became a senator. However, it is a very short step in many ways toward actually changing the law. By sending this to committee, we are not changing the law. By sending this to committee, we are allowing experts and young people to come, to meet and to discuss face to face with senators.

Any one of us who has ever been to a school and raised this issue knows this is not a matter of unanimous position among young people in this country, but it is an issue that is increasingly becoming of interest as people become increasingly concerned about our democracy. In that spirit, I ask that we please call the question.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Are senators ready for the question?

**Hon. Senators:** Question.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** It was moved by the Honourable Senator McPhedran, seconded by the Honourable Senator Sorensen, that this bill be read a second time.

Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**Some Hon. Senators:** No.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say “yea.”

**Some Hon. Senators:** Yea.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

**Some Hon. Senators:** Nay.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** In my opinion the “nays” have it.

*And two honourable senators having risen:*

**The Hon. the Speaker:** I see two senators rising.

Is there an agreement on the length of the bell?

**An Hon. Senator:** Fifteen minutes.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** The vote will take place at 5:56 p.m.

Call in the senators.

• (1750)

Motion negatived on the following division:

#### YEAS

#### THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Al Zaibak	McBean
Arnold	McCallum
Audette	McPhedran
Black	Miville-Dechêne
Boehm	Mohamed
Burey	Muggli
Busson	Osler
Cardozo	Pate
Clement	Petitclerc
Cormier	Ravalia
Coyle	Ross
Dasko	Senior
Galvez	Sorensen
Gerba	Wilson
Hay	Woo
Henkel	Yussuff—33
Ince	

#### NAYS

#### THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Anderson	MacDonald
Ataullahjan	Manning
Batters	Martin
Carignan	McNair
Cuzner	Moncion
Dalphond	Moreau
Francis	Petten
Fridhandler	Pupatello
Gignac	Quinn
Harder	Robinson
Housakos	Saint-Germain
Kingston	Smith
Klyne	Surette
Kutcher	Tannas
LaBoucane-Benson	Varone
Lewis	Verner
Loffreda	Wallin
MacAdam	White—36

ABSTENTIONS  
THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Duncan	Simons
Hébert	Youance—5
Ringette	

• (1800)

ENACTING CLIMATE COMMITMENTS BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Galvez, seconded by the Honourable Senator Pate, for the second reading of Bill S-238, An Act to enact the Climate-Aligned Finance Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

**Hon. Michael L. MacDonald:** Honourable senators, I rise today to speak as the critic of Bill S-238, An Act to enact the Climate-Aligned Finance Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

Bill S-238 is an ambitious piece of legislation for a Senate public bill.

At the outset, it is important to note that Bill S-238 represents a continuation and refinement of earlier legislative efforts in previous Parliaments. I served as the critic of the previous iteration of this bill, where it stalled at the committee stage.

While some drafting changes have been made, the central architecture of the bill remains substantially similar, and therefore many concerns remain relevant today. I will not spend a lot of time summarizing Bill S-238 because its author and sponsor, Senator Galvez, has already done so, but I will reiterate and build upon some legitimate concerns.

Before turning to those concerns, it is worth briefly recalling what the bill seeks to do. Bill S-238 sets out to achieve two broad objectives: First, it seeks to align the activities of federal financial institutions and other federally regulated entities with the superseding economic and public interest matter of achieving climate commitments. Second, it aims to make timely and meaningful progress toward safeguarding the stability of both the financial and climate systems.

In other words, this bill attempts to protect our financial institutions from risks posed by climate change and to protect our climate from risks posed by our financial institutions.

This framing matters because it rests on a key premise. The question is not whether they exist, but how they are managed and by whom.

Financial institutions play a crucial role in providing funding and capital to industries that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, such as the continuation and expansion of fossil fuel projects, new oil and gas exploration and high-emission transportation. If left unchecked, these investments could prolong our reliance on carbon-intensive energy sources, further exacerbating climate change.

Conversely, if our financial institutions demonstrate a lack of support for the low-carbon transition, capital will be diverted away from low-carbon or renewable energy projects. Insufficient investment in clean technologies and sustainable infrastructure would hinder the transition to a low-carbon economy and delay emissions reduction efforts.

Colleagues, there are more risks we could talk about, but suffice it to say that the risks are real. It is against this backdrop that Bill S-238 proposes to act.

At the centre of the bill is a new alignment duty placed on directors and officers. This alignment duty raises an important question regarding fiduciary responsibility. Directors and officers of financial institutions are traditionally required to act in the best financial interests of their organizations and beneficiaries. Expanding this duty to include alignment with evolving climate commitments introduces uncertainty about how competing obligations are to be balanced in practice.

This creates a fundamental ambiguity: When financial performance and policy alignment diverge, which obligation prevails?

Colleagues, this brings me to the central concern with the bill. I said at the outset that this is an ambitious piece of legislation for a Senate public bill. Senators, the problem is that, in my view, it is too ambitious. I do not quarrel with the objectives of ensuring that our financial institutions are protected from risks posed by climate change and that our climate is protected from risks posed by our financial institutions. But I do believe this is the wrong way to proceed.

There are numerous reasons why I believe this, but allow me to briefly share the most important with you.

First, the regulatory work this bill contemplates is already under way. The Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, or OSFI, and the Bank of Canada are already acting in this space. Following the release of their climate scenario analysis pilot, OSFI launched a public consultation on draft guidelines for climate risk management in May 2022. Those consultations led to the release of the finalized guideline on climate risk management.

This guideline sets out OSFI's expectations for the management of climate-related risks by federally regulated financial institutions, and it was informed by one of the most extensive consultations in OSFI's history, receiving over 4,300 submissions from a wide range of respondents.

• (1810)

The guideline implements three expected outcomes for federally regulated financial institutions: they must understand and mitigate potential impacts of climate-related risks to their business model and strategy; they must have appropriate governance and risk management practices to manage identified climate-related risks; and they must remain financially resilient through severe, yet plausible, climate-risk scenarios and operationally resilient through disruption due to climate-related disasters.

The Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, or OSFI, has now implemented climate risk management expectations and continues refining its supervisory framework through iterative guidance as practices and standards evolve. In other words, the regulatory machinery contemplated in this bill is no longer theoretical; it is already in operation.

The impact of this guideline effectively addresses the second objective of this bill. Much of the work envisioned by Bill S-238 is already under way through supervisory guidance, consultation and regulatory evolution. The question before us is not whether action is occurring but whether sweeping statutory intervention is necessary at this stage.

I do understand, however, that while this work by OSFI addresses the risks that climate change poses to our financial institutions, it does not address the need to protect our climate from risks posed by our financial institutions.

That brings me to my second point, which is that action on that front is also already under way. In 2021, 43 founding members established the Net-Zero Banking Alliance under the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative. Today, the alliance continues to include over 100 financial institutions worldwide, including Canada's largest banks: the Royal Bank of Canada, the Toronto-Dominion Bank, the Bank of Nova Scotia, the Bank of Montreal, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and the National Bank of Canada. These institutions have committed to setting emissions targets, developing transition plans and reporting on progress over time.

Taken together, this reinforces a broader point. What Bill S-238 seeks to do is already taking place through a combination of regulatory guidance, market innovation and voluntary initiatives. Canada's major financial institutions are already integrating climate considerations into their decision-making frameworks.

This makes the scope of the bill all the more important. Bill S-238 would not only implement the climate-aligned finance act but would also amend the Bank of Canada Act, the Export Development Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Act, the Public

Sector Pension Investment Board Act, the Business Development Bank of Canada Act, the Canada Infrastructure Bank Act and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act. It affects a lot of acts.

Legislation of this breadth would ordinarily be introduced as a government bill, supported by detailed fiscal analysis, regulatory impact assessment and comprehensive consultation. Proceeding through a Senate public bill risks bypassing all of those traditional safeguards.

This is not a criticism of the sponsor's intentions, which I believe are sincere. Rather, it is a concern about the appropriate role of the Senate in initiating legislation of this scope and nature. In my view, this is overreach for a Senate public bill.

There is also, colleagues, a significant practical consequence to consider. We must also consider Canada's position in a globally competitive financial environment. Capital is mobile. Imposing statutory alignment requirements risks reducing access to financing for key Canadian industries, increasing costs and shifting investment outside of Canada, at a time when capital flight is already a growing concern.

I must add this. We heard this week from the Royal Bank of Canada that in the past decade over \$1 trillion has left the country, so this is a real concern. We must, therefore, be cautious about adopting frameworks that, however well intentioned, could inadvertently discourage investment in Canada or restrict financing availability for Canadian industries undergoing transition.

That said, I do not dismiss the broader purpose behind this bill. As I noted in my previous speech, quoting Senator Harder from his article *Complementarity: The Constitutional Role of the Senate of Canada*, this does not mean the bill has no purpose.

The exercise of soft power through initiating Senate public bills, and the subsequent discourse on the topic, is an appropriate role for this legislation, so, in my view, Bill S-238 serves a purpose. But influence is not the same as implementation.

That brings us back to the central question before this chamber. Honourable senators, the question before us is not whether climate risk matters. It does. We know it does. The question is whether this bill is the right tool.

Bill S-238 introduces legal uncertainty, duplicates work already under way and attempts sweeping reform through a Senate public bill ill-suited to its scale. If change of this magnitude is warranted, it must come from the government with full analysis and accountability. For these reasons, I urge careful scrutiny and caution as this legislation proceeds through this chamber.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

## NATION-BUILDING VALUE OF TOURISM

### INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Sorensen, calling the attention of the Senate to the nation-building value of tourism in Canada.

**Hon. Mary Coyle:** Honourable senators, I rise today on the unceded lands of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation to speak to Senator Sorensen's inquiry on the nation-building value of tourism.

The focus of my contribution to this inquiry will be — you guessed it — my province of Nova Scotia, also known as Canada's ocean playground and Mi'kma'ki. Because Senator Sorensen challenged us in her launch of this inquiry to look into the whole tourism ecosystem, I have decided to focus on Nova Scotia's very important arts and culture sector. The many rich and diverse arts and culture offerings of Nova Scotia are a significant draw for local, national and international tourists and important contributors to our local, provincial and national economy.

Colleagues, Nova Scotia is well known for its natural beauty and iconic historical sites: the warmest waters north of the Carolinas along the Northumberland Strait; Kejimikujik National Park, where I love backcountry canoeing; Cape Breton Highlands National Park, where the views of the ocean from the cliff edge Skyline Trail are breathtaking, as is the occasional encounter with a moose; the majestic Peggy's Cove lighthouse perched on a uniquely beautiful and equally dangerous rock formation on Nova Scotia's storied South Shore; the world heritage site at Joggins Fossil Cliffs; the exhilaration of tidal bore rafting on the Shubenacadie River, experiencing the Bay of Fundy's highest tides in the world.

Or just come to Antigonish, and I will take you on my three-weddings tour to the sites of my three daughters' weddings: first, Mount Cameron with the view out to the estuary leading into Antigonish Harbour; second, StFX's Crystal Cliffs seaside property and beach on St. George's Bay, where Hollywood movie stars honeymooned; and third, Cape George Lighthouse, situated with a stunning view across St. George's Bay, with lobster, crab and tuna fishing boats and the occasional dolphin or whale, and across to the highlands of Cape Breton.

• (1820)

I've been fortunate to have visits from Senator Anderson, Senator Sorensen, Senator Marty Deacon, Senator Greenwood, Senator Kutcher and, of course, my neighbour from across the bay, Senator Prosper.

For iconic historical sites, we have many, including Fortress of Louisbourg; the Halifax Citadel; Port-Royal; the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre in Birchtown; Grand-Pré, the famous Acadian national historical site; and many others. Nova Scotia is a province of natural and historic splendour.

Connected to and often inspired by the majesty of our natural environment and the richness and diversity of our histories, Nova Scotia has an abundance of outstanding artists, arts and culture institutions and attractions in our cities and scattered throughout our rural landscapes.

Mi'kmaw Nations in Nova Scotia share their culture and arts at *mawiomis* — traditional gatherings and powwows.

With such magnificent natural beauty and rich histories, our visual artists create and share their art with the world. While Nova Scotia visual artists like Maud Lewis, Alex Colville and Mi'kmaw artist Alan Syliboy may be household names to many of you, I can assure you that visitors to our province will be impressed with the abundance of diverse artistic talent they encounter in Nova Scotia and the many opportunities available to view, learn about, be inspired by and purchase art in its many forms. In a recent article about Nova Scotia entitled "The Small Province With a Surprisingly Big Creative Soul," the author wrote, "This tiny province is PACKED with artists."

In my small town of Antigonish, we have more artists than I could count. Some are graduates of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University. For decades, we had Lyghtesome Gallery and the Red Sky Gallery. We are fortunate to still have the Down to Earth Art Gallery in our town. The StFX Art Gallery, located in the Brian Mulroney Institute of Government building, is a remarkable resource for the campus, community and visitors alike. The beautiful and poignant work of Senator Prosper's partner, the visual artist Antoinette Karuna, was featured in a recent show at the StFX gallery.

Even everyone's favourite local hangout, The Tall and Small Café on Main Street, hosts regular art shows. My granddaughter Maia, the artist featured on my annual holiday cards to you, had a show there when she was still in high school. She made \$800 at that show.

Pete Norman's famous graffiti art can be found under bridges and other interesting locations throughout town and county. Our local library, the People's Place, is resplendent with its permanent art collection and regular temporary exhibitions. The Sisters of St. Martha's new home at Parkland features a beautiful painting honouring the sisters entitled *Journey*, by Antigonish artist Anna Syprek. That masterpiece is also a draw for visitors.

The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax and many other private galleries throughout the province are wonderful places for visitors to view and purchase art. The Halifax airport features the art of Mi'kmaw artist Loretta Gould on all exterior windows in the check-in area of departures. Her work can also be seen, along with that of many other Indigenous artists, at the Friends United gallery in Cape Breton. The airport's international arrivals area is dazzling with the works of Mi'kmaw artist Alan Syliboy. Inspired by Mi'kmaw rock drawing, he has his own studio gallery in Millbrook.

Nova Scotia is also known for its gifted writers, public readings and writers' festivals. Most people will associate Nova Scotia with writers such as Kate Beaton, Alistair MacLeod, Sheree Fitch, Daniel MacIvor, Linden MacIntyre, Lesley Choyce, Sheldon Currie, Leo McKay Jr., Sue Goyette, Elliot Page, Newfoundland transplant Donna Morrissey — yes, we claim her now — and *The New York Times* bestselling author of books that inspired “Heated Rivalry,” Rachel Reid. Nova Scotia is also rich in poets, from our native son George Elliott Clarke to Griffin Poetry Prize winner Anne Simpson of Antigonish, to spoken word poet El Jones.

Visitors and locals alike are drawn to book-reading events and literary festivals, such as the Cabot Trail Writers Festival, Booktoberfest in Halifax and Read by the Sea in River John.

Speaking of festivals, summer is the time when Nova Scotia's communities come alive with our professional theatre offerings. I join my fellow Nova Scotians and our visitors each summer, hitting the theatre trail. From the Ross Creek's Two Planks and a Passion outdoor theatre near Wolfville to Ship's Company Theatre in Parrsboro, to Theatre Baddeck, to Shakespeare by the Sea in Point Pleasant Park in Halifax, to the Chester Playhouse, to the Fringe Festival, to Festival Antigonish at the Bauer Theatre. That's a stone's throw from my home. High-calibre summer theatre is in full bloom and a major attraction for tourists to our province.

Of course, we are fortunate to have many other theatre groups and venues that operate throughout the year. I look forward to taking my granddaughter Violetta to Halifax's top-in-class Neptune Theatre to see *Come From Away* in June.

Visitors and those enjoying “staycations” will find Nova Scotia's dance offerings to be very enjoyable, whether it is Halifax Dance's performance of *The Nutcracker* with Mermaid Theatre and Symphony Nova Scotia at the Rebecca Cohn theatre, the many highland dancing performances and competitions throughout the province or spending an evening dancing square sets at the West Mabou Hall or down the road at the Red Shoe Pub or at Pipers Pub when it reopens in Antigonish. There is sure to be something to please dance enthusiasts in Nova Scotia.

When we dance, there must be music, and visitors to Nova Scotia who love music are in for a feast for their ears and their spirits. When our family moved to Nova Scotia 29 years ago, I was thrilled to attend the Antigonish Highland Games and take in the power and beauty of the Scottish bagpipes and drums. I'm a huge jazz fan, so I was thrilled to know that StFX had a world-class jazz studies department with top musicians on faculty who would play and perform locally. I volunteered for the newly created Stan Rogers Folk Festival in Canso. Senator Manning's son Mark is a regular there and also at the highly successful Celtic Colours International Festival in Cape Breton.

Sarah McLachlan hails from Nova Scotia, as does the rock band The Trews from Antigonish. Of course, all Canadians know Springhill's songbird, Grammy and JUNO Award winner Anne

Murray. Joel Plaskett; Classified; Sloan; Four the Moment; Holly Cole; Neon Dreams; Natalie MacMaster; Anna Ludlow; Mary Beth Carty; Ashley MacIsaac; Ian Sherwood; Emma Stevens, who sings Paul McCartney's “Blackbird” in the Mi'kmaw language; and JUNO-Award-winning fiddler Morgan Toney of Wagmatcook First Nation all bring musical acclaim to Nova Scotia.

Everyone is welcome to Nova Scotia to catch an evening concert with Symphony Nova Scotia; attend Michael Steinitz's Antigonish Performing Arts series; go down to the Halifax waterfront to take in the Jazz Festival; catch Heather Rankin, Ian McKinnon and Rawlins Cross, or the recent JUNO Award nominee Heather MacIsaac in concert. Or you can head up to Cheticamp to listen to some live tunes at the Doryman with Senator Aucoin.

Colleagues, music can transport us in beautiful and profound ways.

I was very fortunate to have joined Senate colleagues, ambassadors and invited guests yesterday for The Lyre's Dream musical event here in this chamber, which had been planned, executed and hosted by our colleague Senator Housakos and his team. It was absolutely magical, and the music was transcendent.

Our Speaker pro tempore, Senator Cormier, said in his opening remarks:

[*Translation*]

Since ancient times, music has accompanied humanity like a light in the darkness. In ancient Greece, the lyre was not merely an instrument. It symbolized harmony among people, between words and the heart, and between peoples and peace. Its melodious strings served as a reminder that beauty can unite what discord seeks to divide.

[*English*]

And as the cords vibrate, they remembered that beauty can unite that which discord sought to divide. For the ancient Greeks, we are told, music was not merely entertainment; it was philosophy, identity and a companion to the soul.

• (1830)

Andrea Boyd, Artistic Director of Festival Antigonish, our local professional summer theatre, said in a recent speech:

The arts are not a luxury — they are a powerful force for health, connection and resilience across our communities. Research shows that engaging in music, theatre, dance and visual arts strengthens social bonds and fosters empathy and inclusion across diverse populations.

She goes on to say:

Arts, culture and heritage are not merely feel-good experiences: They are core economic drivers. . . .

She continues, saying:

Nationally, Canada's arts and culture sector contributed \$131 billion to Canada's GDP in 2024.

National data compiled by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce shows that every dollar invested in the arts generates approximately \$29 in economic activity. People who purchase tickets to the theatre go to restaurants, stay in hotels and shop in local stores.

The arts are how we tell our stories to each other and to the world. Nova Scotia is renowned on the world stage for its unique culture and vibrant communities.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2023, the Nova Scotia arts sector brought over \$2 billion in GDP and was responsible for the gross economic output of \$3.5 billion. The arts sector accounts for more than 16,000 jobs, employing more people in Nova Scotia than farming, fishing and forestry combined.

Honourable senators, arts and culture tourism has nation-building power and impact. Arts and culture are significant contributors to our household, local, provincial and national economies. They build and sustain communities. Arts and culture unite us and, most importantly, they feed our souls and remind us of our humanity.

Honourable senators, what could be more important than that? Thank you.

**Hon. Scott Tannas:** Honourable senators, I'm delighted to speak to Inquiry No. 8, calling the attention of this chamber to the nation-building value of tourism in Canada. I thank Senator Sorensen for inviting us to consider tourism from this perspective — as an instrument of nation building. I agree wholeheartedly with that premise.

Tourism is often discussed in terms of numbers: contributions to GDP, employment statistics and visitor counts. It is, without question, a significant economic driver. It supports hundreds of thousands of jobs, sustains small businesses in every region and contributes billions to our national economy. In Alberta alone, more than 28,000 businesses are involved in tourism, employing close to 160,000 people.

But tourism is more than economics. It has a deeper and more enduring value.

At its core, tourism is an act of connection. Everyone who lives in this country shares in its geography, culture and history. That shared experience helps shape our understanding of what it means to be Canadian. Building a nation such as ours is not a

haphazard enterprise. It requires curiosity, openness and a willingness to engage with one another. It calls for an adventurous spirit and a desire to explore. Tourism creates the conditions for precisely that.

For many Canadians, a vacation is not simply a time for rest and relaxation, though we all welcome that. It is also an opportunity to encounter something new, to experience something different and to broaden our perspective.

Today, colleagues, I would like to highlight two dimensions of tourism that vividly illustrate this nation-building potential: agricultural tourism and visits to Canada's film and television locations. These are areas where we already excel but where, in my view, we can do even more.

Let's start with agricultural tourism.

As Senator Black has often reminded this chamber, agriculture is one of Canada's most vital industries. It sustains our population, anchors rural economies and shapes the landscapes that define our country. Yet for many Canadians — particularly those in urban centres — agriculture can seem distant and abstract.

Agritourism serves as a bridge between these realities.

Across the country, producers are opening their farms, ranches, orchards and vineyards to visitors. In doing so, they are not only educating Canadians about where their food comes from but also fostering a closer connection between producers and consumers. Canadians can meet the people who grow their food and gain a deeper appreciation for their work.

For farmers, agritourism offers a valuable opportunity to diversify income and add value to their operations. It helps sustain family farms and encourages innovation and resilience. For visitors, it provides insight into farming practices, access to fresh and local food and a chance to experience rural life, traditions and local culture. In doing so, it helps preserve and celebrate regional heritage.

Studies have shown that agritourism contributes to local job creation, supports small businesses in their development, strengthens municipal tax bases and drives economic activity in rural and underserved communities. In short, it benefits both urban and rural Canadians economically, socially and culturally.

Colleagues, the second dimension I wish to highlight is the growing appeal of visiting Canada's film and television locations.

Canada has long been a global leader in film and television production. Our cities, landscapes and communities have served as the backdrop for countless stories seen around the world. Increasingly, these productions are doing more than entertaining — they are inspiring travel.

Visitors are drawn to the places they have seen on the screen. They want to stand where their favourite scenes were filmed, experience those landscapes first-hand and connect fiction with reality. This phenomenon — often referred to as screen tourism — has become a powerful driver of visitation.

Let me give you a few examples.

The television series “Heartland,” filmed in and around High River, Alberta — my community — is now in its nineteenth season and remains the longest-running one-hour drama in Canadian television history. It is also translated into dozens of languages and shown throughout the world. Over the years, visitors have travelled to High River to see familiar locations, take photos and experience a place they have come to know through the screen.

Our town is one where downtown-area business has shrunk, and there are a number of beautiful old buildings that are empty. Some genius many years ago decided we should turn one of the streets into a film set and always have it available. The first anchor on that street is a building that is made up and called Maggie’s Diner, Tack and Feed Store, which is the place where everybody goes in “Heartland” to have those deep, earnest conversations that the young women all had about horses, love and their parents, et cetera.

I drive up and down that street all the time, and I can’t tell you how many times I see a mom and a daughter — or a grandma, a mom and a daughter — peering in the window of Maggie’s Diner, Tack and Feed Store, which is empty other than lights, a few prop tables and so on.

I’ve met people on the street as I’m walking, and I’ll ask them where they’re from. They’re from Holland, Germany and all across Canada and the United States. It’s really remarkable. It is stunning how much business our little town gets from people who come and stay to visit places from “Heartland.”

Another example can be found through Travel Alberta, which offers an itinerary entitled, “The Last of Us Filming Locations: An Alberta Road Trip.” This seven-day journey takes visitors from Edmonton to Calgary, Fort Macleod, Lethbridge, Waterton and then Canmore, showcasing locations featured in the series “The Last of Us.” It is a compelling illustration of how storytelling can translate into real-world exploration.

The town of Vulcan, Alberta, offers one of the most imaginative examples of screen tourism. Internationally recognized as the official Star Trek capital of Canada, Vulcan has embraced its connection to the iconic franchise. From the themed attractions to the annual VulCON convention, the community has created a unique destination that attracts visitors from around the world. As the town’s website humorously notes for its location: “. . . Vulcan, third planet from the sun, North American Continent, Country of Canada, Province of Alberta . . .”

• (1840)

Although not in Alberta, two more notable screen tourism locations in Canada are Molly’s Reach restaurant in Gibsons Landing from “The Beachcombers,” as well as Cavendish, Prince Edward Island, for both the screen and the book fans of *Anne of Green Gables*.

Molly’s Reach is the location of a cafe in Gibsons Landing, British Columbia. It is where Nick rented an office for his salvage company. The restaurant was the focal point for the show’s drama. Today, fans still visit Molly’s Reach, and it is listed as the most prominent landmark in Gibsons Landing.

*Anne of Green Gables* enthusiasts, including many international fans, flow into the province to visit places like Green Gables Heritage Place in Cavendish to take walks along the same road as the character.

Honourable senators, screen tourism supports local economies, benefiting accommodations, restaurants and small businesses, while fostering pride within communities whose landscapes and stories are shared on the global stage. It also strengthens Canada’s reputation as a creative and dynamic nation. Moreover, it creates shared experiences. Whether one is a devoted fan or a casual viewer, there is a sense of connection in being able to say, “I have been there.”

By supporting agricultural tourism, we reconnect with the land and with one another. By embracing screen tourism, we share our stories with the world and invite others to experience them first-hand. And by recognizing tourism as a nation-building force, we strengthen the bonds that unite us as a country.

Thank you, Senator Sorensen, for initiating this inquiry.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

## 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. Mohammad Al Zaibak:** Honourable senators, when Senator McBean called me earlier this year to ask whether I would speak to this inquiry, my first instinct was hesitation. What sport story could I possibly tell while standing in this chamber in the company of national champions and Olympic gold medallists? I was never an athlete. In fact, the closest I came to competitive sport in my school years was a swimming contest that ended with me nearly drowning in cold water from a sudden muscle cramp and then being rescued mercifully by my peers.

Upon reflection, I realized that sport is woven deeply into my life, not through podiums but through something quieter and more lasting. It is woven into my family, my community and our beloved Canada.

I moved to Canada with my wife, Najla, and our young family in 1988. We were newcomers, still learning this country's rhythms, its seasons and its language of belonging. What we did not yet know was that sport would become one of the most powerful embodiments of that language.

I asked each of my three children to share a memory with me. What came back moved me deeply. And from a dear friend, I received a story that spans four generations of Canadian belonging. I am honoured to share them with you today.

I have come to believe that in Canada, sport is not merely recreation. It is one of the quiet mechanisms by which this country makes good on its promise to the child who just arrived and to the great-grandchild of the one who came before.

Let me begin with a moment so small in scale yet so large in memory that I return to it often.

Our daughter Leen was in kindergarten — five years old, small, determined and dressed for the occasion — when her school organized an ice-skating performance at a local community arena. It was a collection of very young children doing their earnest best to stay upright and in formation on a sheet of ice. Leen was not yet an experienced skater. None of them were.

At one point, the choreographer called on her and the spotlight found her. She struggled — adorably and visibly — to coordinate her movements with her peers. She wobbled, she recovered and she wobbled again. The audience erupted, not in mockery but in the warmest possible laughter and applause, willing this tiny girl forward with their unconditional cheering.

What Leen learned that day was not a skating technique. She learned about trying in public, about the grace of imperfection and about a community that shows up, not just for the polished performance but for the honest one.

Years later, as a coxswain for her high school rowing team on Lake Ontario, Leen learned something else entirely: Leadership is not authority but responsibility — how to guide, encourage and push a group of athletes to their very best even when conditions are difficult and morale is low.

She described to me the feeling of the boat when every oar was perfectly in sync: "Effortless," she said. "Almost weightless. Like a duck gliding across still water." The greatest feeling in sport, she told me, comes when individual effort dissolves into something larger than yourself.

She carried both lessons forward. Today, Leen is the co-founder of a successful international NGO, a mother of two and an influential presence in every room she enters.

At age 15, our son Omar was part of a high school rowing team that competed in the Mother's Day High School Regatta. The day was windy and relentless. Their coach offered an unconventional piece of advice: "Lift your oars faster after each stroke and let the wind carry you forward." They were not the strongest crew on the water, but that strategy helped them win the silver medal.

It was Omar's first real lesson that in sport — as in life — raw strength is not always the deciding factor. Sometimes it is knowing how to read your conditions and how to use them.

He has carried that lesson into a career in engineering, technology and artificial intelligence, and it has served him just as well off the water as on it.

There is one more family memory I must share, and this one belongs not only to us but to the entire country.

- (1850)

On February 21, 2002, in Salt Lake City, the Canadian women's ice hockey team was up against the United States in the Olympic gold medal game. We watched as a family with an intensity I have rarely felt in a living room. Canada and the United States were navigating genuine political tension at that time — sound familiar? — and this game carried the weight of national identity.

When that final buzzer sounded, we went outside, and so did everyone else. The streets filled. Strangers embraced strangers. We were newcomers in the grand historical sense, from different parts of the world, different cultures and backgrounds, and, yet, in that moment, there was no distance between us and the celebration. We were in it. We were of it. We belonged. Sport, at its highest pitch, does not merely entertain a nation. It reminds a nation of itself.

I want to close with the story of my dear friend Dany Assaf — a prominent lawyer, community leader and proud Canadian — because it captures something no single generation can fully contain. Dany loves hockey. Born in Edmonton to a Muslim Arab Canadian family with roots in Lebanon, he grew up in the 1970s, looking up at a big, blue prairie sky above a clean sheet of outdoor ice. To him, it was almost spiritual. A clean sheet of ice, he still says, reminds him of the unlimited opportunity that is Canada.

His father, Mohamed, who never played but deeply loved the game, enrolled him at the age of four and volunteered to manage the local rink. Those post-game drives home were when a father taught his son about teamwork, humility, resilience and respect. Waiting at home was his mother with a cup of hot chocolate in hand.

There is yet a deeper history here: Dany's great-grandfather helped build Canada's first mosque in Edmonton in 1938, the Al Rashid Mosque, now a heritage building in Fort Edmonton Park. It looks, incidentally, like a mosque and a Ukrainian Orthodox church at the same time because the contractor was a Ukrainian Canadian, and no one had ever built a mosque in Canada before. That is Canada in miniature.

Fast forward to 2012, nearly 85 years after his great-grandfather arrived in Canada. Dany and his wife, Lisa, watched proudly as their son, Mohamad, carried the Canadian flag at midfield during the opening ceremonies of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Grey Cup, representing Canadian youth from across the country. It was a packed stadium. The Prime Minister was in attendance and shook hands with Dany's son.

A family whose ancestor helped build Canada's first mosque, a family who endured misguided prejudice in the wake of 9/11, watched their son walk onto that field carrying the Maple Leaf — not as a footnote, not as a symbol of division, but as a representative of Canada. Dany told me that, in that moment, he felt overwhelming humility and gratitude. He thought of his great-grandfather, of those prairie rinks, of his father flooding outdoor ice on cold winter nights and of his mother's hot chocolate.

He thought about how this country, imperfect though it may be, had made space for his family, not just to live here, but to belong. There are times when that promise seems harder to hold on to. That is when we look to forces, like sport, that bind us together rather than pull us apart.

"Nearly 160 years into Confederation," Dany writes, "we have collected ample evidence that Canada works for us all." His family's arc is proof, not because everything was easy, but because opportunity and belonging ultimately prevailed.

He tells these stories in his book, *Say Please and Thank You & Stand in Line: One man's story of what makes Canada special, and how to keep it that way*.

Dany continues that work alongside our colleague Senator McBean on the board of Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, working every day to share the stories of sport that inspire, unite and represent the very best of us.

Honourable colleagues, the stories I have shared today are not exceptional. Across this country, in community rinks and school gyms, and on neighbourhood fields, sport is quietly doing this work every single day, building confidence, forging belonging and changing trajectories. But that work depends on access. Too many Canadian children, because of cost, geography or circumstances, never get their moment on the ice, never find their boat and never discover what they are made of. The evidence is clear: Financial barriers are rising and participation is declining in precisely the communities where sport's transformative power is needed most.

This inquiry is, therefore, an opportunity and, I would argue, an obligation for governments, sports organizations and communities to act together to fund grassroots sport, to open our facilities seven days a week and to ensure that no child in this country is priced out of the experience that has shaped so many of us in this chamber.

[ Senator Al Zaibak ]

As our Indigenous communities have long understood, movement is medicine. I have seen its power in a small girl who wobbled on the ice but won the whole room anyway; in a young woman guiding a rowing eight across Lake Ontario in the silence of early morning; in a son who learned that strategy outweighs strength; and in a father from Alberta who watched his son carry the Canadian flag and, in that moment, remembered a great-grandfather —

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator Al Zaibak, your time has expired. Would you like more time to finish your speech? If so, you will need to request leave for more time.

**Senator Al Zaibak:** Yes, I would like to request leave for more time, please.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Leave is granted.

**Senator Al Zaibak:** Thank you so much.

In that moment, he remembered a great-grandfather who had been told, "You are welcome here. We are glad you came."

Honourable senators, sport gave our family a team to cheer for before we fully knew the language. It gave us somewhere to belong before we had the words to say so. For a newcomer family and for so many families who have made this country their home, that is not a small gift. That is everything.

As we look to this year — the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse and the FIFA World Cup in Vancouver and Toronto — these events will produce champions and records. However, they will also produce something more lasting: the experience of a country recognizing itself and of the world seeing Canada not only as a host but as a home and as a beacon for humanity.

To every athlete, at every level, pay it forward. Make space for every child. Remind them that, with practice, passion and patience, the seemingly impossible can truly become possible.

• (1900)

Like the eternal Olympic flame, may Canadians' love of sport always burn brightly.

Thank you, *meegwetch, shukran*.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Batters, debate adjourned.)

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, it is now seven o'clock, and, pursuant to rule 3-3(1), I am obliged to leave the chair until eight o'clock, when we will resume, unless it is your wish to not see the clock.

Is it agreed to not see the clock?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

[*Translation*]

### ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DESJARDINS GROUP

#### INQUIRY WITHDRAWN

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Moncion, calling the attention of the Senate to the one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary of the Desjardins Group.

**Hon. Lucie Moncion:** I ask for leave to withdraw item number 14 from the Orders of the Day.

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

**Hon Senators:** Agreed.

(Inquiry withdrawn.)

[*English*]

### HUMAN RIGHTS

#### COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF 2SLGBTQI+ YOUTH

**Hon. Paulette Senior,** pursuant to notice of April 16, 2026, moved:

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.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(*At 7:03 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.*)

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