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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

THE HONOURABLE STAN KUTCHER

CONGRATULATIONS ON ORDER OF MERIT OF UKRAINE

Hon. Hassan Yussuff: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize my colleague and friend Stan Kutcher on receiving the Order of Merit of Ukraine, third class.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Yussuff: This is one of Ukraine's highest civilian honours. It is awarded to those who have made outstanding contributions to the Ukrainian state and people, whether in public service, international advocacy or humanitarian work. In Stan's case, it recognizes something we in this chamber have seen for years: a deep, personal and unwavering commitment to Ukraine.

Colleagues, this recognition could not be more deserved. Stan's advocacy has never been something he turns on and off. It has been steady, thoughtful and deeply rooted in who he is.

The son of Ukrainian immigrants, he has carried that heritage with pride, and he has used his voice in this chamber to ensure Canada stands firmly with Ukraine, especially since Russia's full-scale invasion.

He has worked closely with the Ukrainian-Canadian community, advocated for those displaced by war and pushed for Canada to do more, both in humanitarian support and in helping Ukraine defend itself.

But what truly sets Stan apart is simple: He doesn't just speak; he shows up.

He recently travelled, at his own expense, to Ukraine. He went to Kyiv, Lviv and even Bucha, working directly with professionals to strengthen mental health supports for young people, children and those living with the trauma of war. He listened, taught and brought back lessons that should inform all of us.

I have known Stan for a long time. He is thoughtful, persistent, and, yes, he can be just a little bit relentless when he believes that something matters. However, I must say that even I was surprised that his definition of "doing the work" includes spending time under air raid sirens and near drone strikes. That is commitment on a whole other level.

Colleagues, this honour recognizes not just what Stan has done but who he is.

Stan, as your friend, I am proud of you, and as your colleague, I am grateful for the example you set for all of us.

Thank you. All the best.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of His Majesty Djampou Tchatchouang Anick Julio, King of the Bangoua, Cameroon. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Gerba.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Geneviève Mottard, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Ordre des comptables professionnels agréés du Québec. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Henkel.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

GENEVIÈVE MOTTARD

Hon. Danièle Henkel: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable woman, Geneviève Mottard, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Quebec Order of Chartered Professional Accountants.

It all started with a revelation. As a student attending her first accounting class, something clicked. That very evening, on a paper napkin at the neighbourhood restaurant, she wrote herself a five-year plan that included the steps she would take and the exam she would pass. Her goal was to become a CPA, and that's exactly what she did.

[*English*]

In 2016, at just 41 years of age, she became the very first woman to hold this position. Today, she is at the helm of an institution that represents more than 42,000 members.

This achievement is especially meaningful in a field widely regarded as stern and male-dominated. In the face of these stereotypes, she has led by example. Despite resistance to change and the labels placed on women who step into leadership, she has always responded with rigour, humanity and vision.

Her leadership has transformed the profession, redefining the chartered professional accountant, or CPA, as not just a number cruncher but a genuine strategic partner — a “money psychologist” — capable of supporting businesses and individuals in a rapidly changing world shaped by artificial intelligence.

[*Translation*]

She is also a member of the board and executive committee of the Fédération internationale des experts-comptables francophones. Her commitments extend beyond Quebec’s borders.

Ten years after her appointment, she can look back on her achievements with well-deserved pride. She has turned public protection into a noble mission, pursued with a passion.

Ms. Mottard, on my own behalf, on behalf of the Senate, and on behalf of all the citizens of Quebec and Canada, I thank you. You’ve opened a door that remains wide open to any woman who wishes to walk through it.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

[*English*]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Preet Chandi, Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, retired British Army Officer and four-time Guinness World Record holder for her achievements in Antarctica. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Patterson.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1410)

CAPTAIN (RET'D) HARPREET CHANDI, MBE

Hon. Rebecca Patterson: Honourable senators, brace yourselves. Today I want to recognize someone who has made a habit of doing things most people would dismiss as impossible. I also believe that this person is an absolute rock star.

Retired British Army captain, physiotherapist and Member of the Order of the British Empire better known to many as “Polar Preet,” Harpreet Chandi has established a record that speaks for

itself. She has crossed Antarctica solo multiple times. She holds four Guinness World Records. Most recently, she completed a 40-day solo trek across the Canadian Arctic, one of the harshest environments on the planet. She even met a polar bear who was determined to find out what tasty snack was in that tent.

Oh, the stories that Polar Preet could tell, and she is not done yet. Her next goal is to ski solo and unsupported to the North Pole. If successful, she will become the first woman, first Sikh, first Punjabi and first South Asian ever to complete solo expeditions to both the South Pole and the North Pole. So, I think it is fitting we welcome her today, during Sikh Heritage Month in Canada.

Her future goal almost sounds fictional until you remember that she is out there preparing for it currently, and it is quite a regime. What stands out to me is not only the magnitude of her achievements and goals, but also the mindset required to do it. Real endurance is not showy. It is an everyday effort. It is relentlessly preparing and maintaining focus when no one is looking. It is maintaining discipline when motivation fades. It involves making the right choices even when circumstances worsen — and, oh my, have they — and then doing it all over again.

Polar Preet speaks very openly about representation. She speaks about how many women, especially from immigrant and minority communities, face barriers and are told that certain spaces are not for them.

Her response has not been a slogan. It has been action. Her goal is to show that those barriers can be broken. In doing so, she breaks the path for others, including Canadians, because those same barriers exist here.

So, today, yes, we celebrate Polar Preet’s achievements, but we also recognize that she is leading by example. Role models like her matter because they make the distant feel attainable, especially for elite athletes.

We have similar role models right here in our chamber. Our colleagues Senator Marnie McBean’s and Senator Chantal Petitclerc’s Olympic and Paralympic journeys show Canadians what strong women of excellence and perseverance look like. There is power in their quiet resilience, courage without drama and ambition driven by effort, not selfishness.

While records can be broken and firsts can be surpassed, giving people something to believe in endures longer.

Therefore, I want to say thank you to Preet and to my colleagues for your example, your determination and for demonstrating what can be achieved when someone chooses to persevere.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Senator Henkel]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of a group from the Canada Games Council led by Kelly-Ann Paul. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Deacon (*Ontario*).

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CANADA GAMES COUNCIL

Hon. Marty Deacon: Honourable senators, today, on the heels of learning about the \$755-million amount to go to sport, I have the great honour of welcoming the staff of the Canada Games Council. They work diligently to ensure that all aspects of the Canada Games run optimally in every edition of Canada Games, hosted every two years, alternating from winter to summer, and hosted in your communities throughout the country.

Thank you, Jacob, Arun, Amelie, Hannah, Carly, Kali, Aaron, Katie, Peter, Nick, Adam, Grace, Karen, Kelly-Ann and, of course, your chair, Catriona Le May Doan, who is busy out West.

The Canada Games are the ultimate goal for many of our young athletes. To be picked as an athlete or a coach is a big deal. To wear your provincial or territorial uniform, to travel together as a team, to march into the opening or closing ceremony, and, if you find yourself at your best on the right day, to be on the podium as a young athlete, well, that is the ultimate.

Each games brings together nearly 2,000 athletes, including those with a physical or intellectual disability, for the largest amateur multi-sport event in this country. The energy and the support of families and the volunteers are amazing.

My first Canada Games, in P.E.I. in 1991, was a highlight. We took over the University of P.E.I., worked hard as a team and made many friendships that have lasted a lifetime. My team performed hard — always tough competition against Quebec and Alberta especially. Sixty per cent of those athletes were on my first Commonwealth Games and Olympic Games teams. It was an important part of the athlete and coach pathway and remains so today.

There are other senators in this chamber who have supported the Canada Games in their communities in some way. Our recently retired colleague Larry Smith served as the chairman of the Canada Games Council from 2001 to 2009. He was such a strong advocate for the possibility of sport and ensuring young Canadians had great opportunities in sport throughout Canada. I am sure our guests are sad to have missed his departing speech, but only by a day.

Senator Cuzner is a Canada Games honoured alumnus from Nova Scotia. That's right, the sport of hockey and the years, I will say, 1995 and 1999, in Grande Prairie and in Newfoundland and Labrador.

How about Senator MacAdam, whose granddaughter Addison was the youngest track and field competitor of the games in Newfoundland last summer; or Senator Petten, who supported the games' organizing committee this past summer; or Senator Ravalia, who has looked after athletes competing, as he is often called upon to look after us from time to time? I am sure there are many other volunteers — I'd love to know who they are — in this room and supporters that I have missed.

A big thank you to the Canada Games Council and to their leader, Kelly-Ann Paul, and for asking to take the time they did to come and learn about what we do. It wasn't a funding announcement. It was the desire to understand what goes on in this place.

We are very hopeful for the future of our young athletes and ensuring that all Canadians can strive towards this experience.

Thank you.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Jeannette Corbiere Lavell. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator McPhedran.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

AGSCAPE

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I rise today in the Senate Chamber to recognize an essential organization that is helping build up young people in the province of Ontario and safeguarding the future of Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry.

In 1991, AgScape, formerly known as Ontario Agri-Food Education, was founded to promote agriculture and food learning in the classroom. Responsible for bringing agriculture and food education to Ontario classrooms, AgScape works alongside Agriculture in the Classroom Canada to help ensure many young people in Canada have a fulsome and engaging agriculture and food education experience.

AgScape delivers a wide range of programs and services that promote agricultural education, deepen Canadians' relationship with where their food comes from and ignite students' interest in related careers.

Honourable colleagues, this year, AgScape is celebrating four key milestones: 35 years of empowering students and teachers, 15 years of the Teacher Ambassador Program, 10 years of the thinkAG Career Competitions program and 10 years of the AgScape brand. Together, these milestones highlight a legacy of impact and a continued commitment to inspiring the next generation of learners and leaders in agriculture.

I cannot overstate the impact that AgScape has had on the future of our province, our country and our agriculture and agri-food sector.

Canadians are disconnected from the realities of where their food comes from, and many organizations, farmers and “advocates” are working hard to bridge this gap. But as we all know, the best place to start is by educating our youth. Through AgScape’s programming and advocacy, agriculture and food education are inspiring young people throughout Ontario and helping them learn about the social, economic and environmental impacts of the food system.

The agriculture and agri-food sector is still facing labour shortages that are contributing to billions of dollars’ worth of lost revenue, resulting in less food production every year across this country.

Further, with the RBC Climate Action Institute estimating that 40% of Canadian farm operators will retire by 2030, we must commit to building up Canada’s agricultural workforce and encouraging young people to explore careers in these fields.

• (1420)

For 35 years, AgScape has helped expose young people to the diverse, dynamic and rewarding careers available in the agriculture and food industries, opening their eyes to opportunities that are innovative, impactful and essential to our everyday lives.

Honourable colleagues, I hope you will join me in thanking AgScape for bringing the voice of agriculture to Ontario’s classrooms and making agricultural learning accessible, informative, engaging and fun.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SPRING ECONOMIC UPDATE 2026

DOCUMENT TABLED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the document entitled *Spring Economic Update 2026*.

[Senator Black]

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 2 p.m.

SPRING ECONOMIC UPDATE 2026

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the *Spring Economic Update 2026*, tabled in the House of Commons on April 28, 2026, by the Minister of Finance and National Revenue, the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P., and in the Senate on April 29, 2026.

QUESTION PERIOD

FINANCE

CANADA STRONG FUND

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, your government’s proposed sovereign wealth fund, or SWF, has left Canadians and, indeed, the markets more puzzled than reassured. After all, the fundamental premise of such a fund is simple: A country must first generate and sustain surplus wealth. Yet, the Liberal record over the past few years shows the contrary: They have fuelled inflation through costly policies that have left the country nearly \$1.3 trillion in the hole. If you don’t believe me, take the Scotiabank’s global economics report on the proposed sovereign wealth fund. They say, “Canada is not a net saver and therefore doesn’t satisfy the most basic criteria for having a SWF”

Senator Moreau, why should Canadians trust their life savings in Prime Minister Carney’s “sovereign debt fund” when even Bay Street is expressing serious doubts over its viability?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question, Senator Housakos. It gives me the opportunity to tell Canadians that the Canadian-owned sovereign wealth fund will bring the possibility for individuals to invest in it. The fund will not be limited to any specific sector, and it will be aimed at long-term investments.

We will get how it will be used and global best practices through consultations, and that is what the government is doing now. I'm quite certain, Senator Housakos, that this fund will be a success.

Senator Housakos: We all know, government leader, what wealth funds do and how they are managed, but they are wealth funds, not debt funds. Asset recycling does not change the reality that this fund is ultimately financed through additional debt. That is not a stable or credible foundation for attracting the private capital required to meet its objectives.

What, in practical terms, distinguishes the Prime Minister's proposed "sovereign debt fund" from numerous Liberal investment vehicles over the last decade that have delivered little beyond deeper deficits? What is the difference with this and everything else you've done in the past?

Senator Moreau: Yesterday, your question was about how to make investments come into government business. That's exactly what the fund is all about. We will allow individuals and corporations to invest private funds to help Canada be a strong economy, build major projects and invest in our economy to create jobs. That's what the fund is all about. I guess that answers yesterday's question and today's question, as well.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, you have a long and storied career in Montreal as an accomplished lawyer and a former cabinet minister, and you have worked in the business community in Montreal. Don't you agree that bringing down debt and cutting red tape are the most foundational ways to encourage private wealth and investments to come into Canada from various sources? Don't you agree that creating more debt, regulations and red tape are not necessarily the best vehicles to attract wealth?

I will repeat that every wealth fund in the world — Norway, Alberta — is based on the premise of surplus being invested in order to create that wealth. Is that the case with this wealth fund?

Senator Moreau: The best answer is that measures in the spring economic update bring \$37.5 billion into our economy over the next six years. The government is committed to making our economy strong, and that's exactly what the spring economic update shows. We are not only investing in our economy but creating affordability for all Canadians. We are investing in job creation, the health sector, the housing sector and sports. We had a question last week about how we invest in sports. That's exactly what we are doing with this update with unprecedented investment.

I thought the time was up. It is such a big update that one minute is not enough to answer and expose all the good things we are doing.

Senator Housakos: What the economic statement shows is that international oil prices are sky high, taxes on oil and gas in this country are sky high and the government has had a bonanza of revenue off the backs of hard-working Canadians because of these taxes and oil prices. That's basically the only thing the economic statement has shown.

Can you give us a simple answer: What country or wealth fund in the world do you know that is operating under a debt deficit situation, like the one that your government will be?

Senator Moreau: Your preamble was about how high oil and gas prices are in the world. Last week, your question was about why the government implemented a temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax. You have to be consistent. Last week, it was a bad idea; this week it's not enough. Yesterday, we were spending too much; today, we are not spending enough. You have to make up your mind, senator.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

TEAM CANADA STRONG

Hon. Mary Coyle: Senator Moreau, yesterday, Prime Minister Carney and Minister Champagne released the spring economic update. One of the key initiatives outlined in the update included the exciting new workforce strategy called Team Canada Strong, which will invest \$6 billion over five years to recruit, train and employ 80,000 to 100,000 new skilled trade workers between the ages of 15 and 30. This workforce investment is designed to help deliver planned major infrastructure projects and industrial investments, supporting Budget 2025's major projects, which include building a clean national electricity grid and the Wind West Atlantic Energy project, both designed to support economic growth while helping to achieve Canada's climate targets.

Senator Moreau, how will the Team Canada Strong national workforce strategy be implemented to support these and other projects designed to power both economic growth while significantly reducing our greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Coyle, for that important question. The direct answer is that we will use that workforce for infrastructure; light and heavy rail; electricity grid modernization, which is quite clean energy; and to implement renewable sources of energy and nuclear energy.

• (1430)

We will need trades workers, and that is exactly what those investments are aimed to do. The progress Canada has made on climate action was already achieved thanks to the hard work of trades workers. The government is ensuring with this program that they will have the skills, apprentices and certifications to continue to get the job done.

FINANCE

CANADA STRONG FUND

Hon. Mary Coyle: Thank you, Senator Moreau. I am building on my colleague's earlier question but with a slightly different tack. In addition to the Team Canada Strong initiative, the Prime Minister also announced the Canada strong fund, which is Canada's first national sovereign wealth fund. It's a fund designed to invest in Canadian projects that will reinforce our country's sovereignty and economic resilience. The Canada strong fund will finance clean energy and critical minerals initiatives, among others.

Senator, has the government done any projections on the role that the Canada strong fund could play in the strategy to meet Canada's —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, senator.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): One of the advantages of the sovereign wealth fund is its flexibility, meaning it could definitely play a role in the strategy to meet Canada's emissions reduction targets.

The government is launching the first national sovereign wealth fund, which will invest in large, ambitious Canadian projects in energy infrastructure, mining, agriculture and technology alongside private investors and individual investors. It will increase the availability of funds to invest in those —

[Translation]

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

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

INTERNATIONAL MARKET ACCESS

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Senator Moreau, in yesterday's spring economic update, the government notes that Canadian exporters are beginning to adapt to shifting global trade dynamics, with early signs of diversification beyond the United States.

I have long argued that Canada is fortunate to have 15 free trade agreements outside of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, and we need to take greater advantage of this preferential access to markets across Europe, Asia and the Indo-Pacific. Could the government elaborate on how it is actively leveraging these agreements to help Canadian businesses scale into new markets?

More specifically, what concrete measures are being taken to connect Canadian firms — particularly small- and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs — with partners abroad, reduce barriers to entry and ensure that we meet our objective of doubling non-U.S. exports by 2035?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The government knows that trade agreements expand market access for Canadian businesses, enabling them to grow and prosper. The government wants to ensure that Canadian businesses harness the potential of these agreements to their fullest.

You will be particularly proud, senator, to know that we had the first trade mission to Italy in Europe, where the talent, competitiveness and capability of Canadian businesses were showcased to Italian partners. That is why Budget 2025 prioritized small businesses' readiness through specialized initiatives, including the new \$46.5-million SME Export Readiness Initiative and \$68.5 million to strengthen and boost the CanExport program.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer. As noted in yesterday's update, 65% of exporters want to enter new markets in the next two years. As these firms seek new export destinations, what additional supports — beyond financing and insurance — are being deployed to help businesses build on-the-ground relationships in these new markets? The imperative for action is now, and the government needs to support these businesses as we diversify our economy.

Senator Moreau: Thank you. There are many initiatives and trade commissioners around the world, notably in Italy, along with support from organizations like Export Development Canada and BDC, which will continue to be there to help businesses navigate new foreign markets.

Notably, the government is providing \$500 million to BDC to provide more commercial resources and insight to SMEs looking to export.

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

FRANCOPHONE MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Hon. Réjean Aucoin: Senator Moreau, child care services provide an educational foundation that is key to the vitality and survival of francophone communities, especially francophone minority communities. Some 93% of children who attend a French-language daycare go on to attend a French-language elementary school.

However, in 2021 and 2022, only 35% of children outside Quebec who were eligible for French-language instruction attended a French-language daycare. That is cause for great concern.

What is more, the Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act, which received Royal Assent in 2024, indicates that federal investments subject to an agreement entered into with a province must be guided by the commitments set out in the Official Languages Act.

In practical terms, what does the government intend to do to ensure respect for language rights and the vitality of francophone communities —

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

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I heard the beginning of your question, Senator Aucoin, and I agree that this is an important file. I know that the Speaker is very invested in the future of francophone minority communities in Canada. I thank you for the question.

The government has invested \$4.1 billion, which will play a direct role in protecting and promoting French and the vitality of official language minority communities. The government has also recently ratified new bilateral agreements with Alberta and British Columbia, which include investments of \$100 million and \$113 million respectively for French education in minority communities. The government wants to continue to protect access to daycares and affordable early childhood education in both official languages with a historic investment of \$57 billion to provide child care spaces for over 900,000 children.

Senator Aucoin: Thank you for your answer, Senator Moreau. I have no further questions.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

CITIZENSHIP ACT

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Senator Moreau, the passage of Bill C-3 last December led to significant changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Citizenship by descent, which applied only to the first generation born outside of Canada, now applies to the second, third and, theoretically, fourth and fifth generations born outside of Canada.

According to *The New York Times*, if everyone who is entitled to it takes advantage of the new rules, it would mean that millions of people who have a Canadian grandfather, grandmother or great-grandfather would be able to obtain Canadian citizenship. There has already been a 50% increase in the number of applications for Canadian citizenship made by Americans over the past year that have been accepted.

Can the government provide us with an estimate of the future number of new citizens over the coming years? Very few countries, with the exception of Portugal and Slovakia, have such generous policies in this area.

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

I would like to point out that the new citizenship program is not open to all generations without any restrictions. Individuals born or adopted abroad on or after December 15, 2025, who have a Canadian parent who was also born or adopted abroad must demonstrate that this parent has a substantial connection to Canada in order to qualify. A substantial connection is defined as a cumulative physical presence of three years in Canada, which somewhat restricts accessibility compared to the figures put forward by *The New York Times*.

However, the department estimates that the majority of cases involving people who lost their citizenship were resolved following legislative amendments enacted between 2009 and

2015, enabling approximately 20,000 people to acquire or regain their citizenship. The government and the department believe that there was neither a rush nor a sudden increase over a period —

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

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Considering that close to a million French Canadians emigrated to New England in the 19th century and even more so in the early 20th century, will the government be taking steps to raise awareness about this new policy in the states of New England, so that members of the Gagnon, Tremblay and Robichaud families, who started out as French Canadians and from one generation to the next became Franco-Americans and later Americans only, have the possibility of returning to the land of their ancestors should they so wish?

Senator Moreau: I'd like to add to my main answer by saying that at the peak of the changes, the department was receiving about 2,400 requests a year, which is not a huge number.

To answer your supplementary question, the government made sure to proactively open lines of communication with people likely to be affected by the coming into force of Bill C-3. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is cooperating with its counterparts in Canada and abroad to ensure that people who could be eligible for the measures set out in Bill C-3 are contacted.

• (1440)

[English]

FINANCE

COST OF LIVING

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Government leader, the headlines surrounding your government's spring economic update point to a deficit that is lower than expected, and the government maintains that inflation is within target. However, the Dalhousie University Agri-Food Analytics Lab reports that one in three — that is, 34% of Canadian households — are now using financial coping strategies just to afford groceries. That speaks to a sustained pressure on food affordability that Canadians are feeling every day.

Can the leader explain why Canadians are being told that the inflation problem has been contained when families are clearly still facing acute pressure at the checkout counter? Beyond external factors, does the government accept any responsibility for domestic fiscal pressure?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Inflation has been stable for about two years now, and it's from 1.8% to 2.25%.

However, in the spring economic update, the government proposed to accelerate over \$7 billion of low-cost loans under the Apartment Construction Loan Program, to help builders move the construction of up to 16,500 new rental homes sooner and to extend the grace period of five years in order to repay home buyers' planned withdrawal from their registered retirement

saving plans. So there are many measures that are already being put into place with Budget 2025. The update increases those measures as far as housing and affordability are concerned. That is what we're working on.

Senator Ataullahjan: Leader, there is such a clear disconnect between the government's economic narrative and what families are experiencing in the grocery line. At what point will the government accept that inflation within target is not the same as affordability being under control? At what point will the government acknowledge that continuing a tax-and-spend approach risks adding to those cost measures?

Senator Moreau: Let me give you the exact number on inflation, Senator Ataullahjan. It was at 8.1% in June 2022, and in February of this year, it was at 1.8%. So don't tell us that we are not working on inflation. Now, it is at 2.4% in March despite the conflict with Iran, and most of that is solely energy-related. The difference is between 1.8% and 2.4%. So we're working quite hard on that.

AFFORDABILITY FOR CANADIANS

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, despite what you said earlier, everyone in this place knows I would never complain about a deficit coming in lower than expected. I am continually struck by how quickly Liberal governments find ways to spend any fiscal room they have.

Instead of applying the \$11.4-billion windfall to reduce debt or even capitalize the Prime Minister's proposed fund, your government has chosen to introduce new spending that risks worsening affordability. In fact, yesterday's fiscal update adds \$4.9 billion in new spending this year and over \$11 billion next year.

Senator Moreau, yesterday's deficit figures were driven by favourable external conditions, as I explained earlier. What happens when those conditions turn sour, and your government has already exhausted what little fiscal capacity Canada's taxpayers have left? What will you do then? Borrow some more?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): A minute ago, Senator Ataullahjan was asking about the important affordability measures mentioned in yesterday's announcement. This included \$42 million to enable factory-built housing, making home builders more efficient and innovative, accelerating over \$7 billion in low-cost loans to speed up the construction of up to 16,500 new rental homes, making it easier to access the Disability Tax Credit, extending support to eligible seasonal workers and a whole-of-government competition plan to ensure competition in order to prioritize through government policy. So there are a number of measures that you refuse to recognize but that Canadians want us to implement, and that is exactly what the government is delivering.

[Senator Moreau]

Senator Housakos: What we want is for your government to consider our ideas not only during or right before election campaigns but also in between them. It would be good. You might even become efficient. If you won't take it from me, listen to Scotiabank's head of capital markets economist. He says:

. . . the affordability messages provided by the government were curiously inconsistent as more spending incrementally complicates the aim of getting affordability under control . . .

It's very simple. Why won't you listen to the economists at Scotiabank if you don't want to listen to the Conservative opposition —

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

Senator Moreau: Your great idea was not to lower taxes for 22 million Canadians because, in the House of Commons, you voted against that measure. It was probably not to cut the consumer carbon tax because, in the House of Commons, you voted against that too. It also was not to protect Pharmacare, dental care and child care because if that was your idea, why did you vote against it in the other place when it lowered the requirement for accessing the Disability Tax Credit —

[Translation]

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

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

TEAM CANADA STRONG

Hon. Martine Hébert: Government Representative, on page 59 of the economic update, we can see the nation-building projects that are currently on the table. What is apparent is that there is quite a bit of variation from province to province. For example, in Quebec, there is the Contrecoeur terminal, while the projects in some of the other provinces involve mining. We all know that it takes people to build all that, and this isn't the first time this has come up. As a matter of fact, the budget includes an excellent measure to address the issue: \$6 billion to train 100,000 skilled workers.

That being said, given that workforce training is a provincial responsibility, can you guarantee that the government will work with the provinces when it comes to training these workers?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Absolutely. Your question allows me to put into context what I explain to Senator Housakos every day.

This isn't a single-pronged solution, but rather a package of measures. The federal government plans to work with the provinces on major infrastructure projects. The projects already on the table are spread over virtually every province in Canada.

Clearly the government would be well advised to work with the provinces on workforce training. Yesterday's economic update outlines how we will fund enhanced training for the workers needed to complete major projects.

The government is taking a holistic view of things, rather than a siloed view. If we want to strengthen Canada's economy, taking a holistic view rather than fragmented one becomes especially important. Rather than pushing a single button, the government needs to push all the buttons.

Senator Hébert: Yes, I agree with you. Still, do you know whether the Major Projects Office plans to work with the Department of Employment and Social Development on the needs assessment in order to identify the types of workers required for various projects?

Does the government intend to share this information with the provinces so that the right workers are available at the right time?

Senator Moreau: I don't think that it's the role of the Major Projects Office to do that. It is up to the government to take on a coordinating role and work with the provincial governments to ensure that the training is adequate and that the workforce is available when a major project is ready to be implemented.

The role of the Major Projects Office is to select the training and implement it.

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

CANADIAN CORPS OF COMMISSIONAIRES

Hon. Bev Busson: Senator Moreau, yesterday, I asked you a question relating to the unilateral cancellation of the right of first refusal traditionally extended to our Corps of Commissionaires. I want to thank you for the answer, but I fear you missed the context, or I might not have been totally clear.

In the media, yesterday, it was reported that a company in line to inherit this contract, worth upwards of \$300 million, is the same company that holds Homeland Security ICE contracts, operating infamous detention centres in the United States and elsewhere. This company, also owned by a Canadian billionaire who lives in Dubai, has property in Mar-a-Lago and operates worldwide, has somehow replaced our Corps of Commissionaires, which is run by a non-profit organization with altruistic goals. This decision initiates the destruction of the stable and respectable jobs of thousands of our veterans. How can this be Canada Strong? Will you commit to contacting the relevant officials, including the Minister of Veterans Affairs and request —

• (1450)

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

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Yesterday, I think the question was slightly different than what you asked today. I'm not aware of the specific facts you are bringing to my attention today, but I will certainly raise the issue with the department. I think it is a very serious matter that you're discussing, and I'll do my best to bring you an adequate answer.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Busson, do you have a supplementary question?

Senator Busson: I will just say thank you. I may not have been clear in my question at the time. Thank you for that.

Canadians and veterans are watching, so can I hope that this will happen quickly?

Senator Moreau: I'll do my best. I have a world record for responding rapidly to Senator MacDonald. I'll try my best to do the same for you, Senator Busson.

NATIONAL REVENUE

CAPITAL GAINS DEFERRAL

Hon. Robert Black: Senator Moreau, when a farm is passed down from the owner to their child, the child can defer paying capital gains tax as long as they keep the property as a working farm. The capital gains deferral is intended to support the succession of family farms. However, changes put forth by your government in recent years on capital gains tax deferrals are for immediate family members only and do not include nieces, nephews or other extended family. This poses a significant financial burden for many and is impacting the number of farms being passed down. Canada is losing thousands of farms every year because of these outdated rules. There are few people with the interest, knowledge, work ethic and financial backing to take over a family farm.

Senator Moreau, amendments to the Income Tax Act are crucial to allow family farms to be passed down through generations to extended family members. How will your government reform agricultural tax policies to protect family-owned farms and support the intergenerational transfer of farms in Canada beyond immediate family members?

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

I know how important it was for my father to be able to transfer the farm to my two older brothers. Now the farm is owned by my nephew, but that happened through the direct line of succession, as his father owned the farm.

It is an important question. I will raise the issue of clarifying who is included as immediate family for tax purposes with the minister.

I want to remind you that in Budget 2025, the capital gains inclusion rate will remain at 50%. That is a decision of the government. The lifetime capital gains exemption now applies for up to \$1.25 million of eligible capital gains.

This matter is very serious, and I will bring it to the minister's attention.

Senator Black: Thank you for that answer.

In Canada, 98% of farms are family owned and operated, but the RBC Climate Action Institute found that up to 40% of farmers will be retiring by 2033. Succession planning for farmers is vital to ensuring farmers can continue to produce food, fibre and fuel for generations. However, Canada's current policy frameworks add further burdens to an already complex and challenging decision.

Senator Moreau, how is your government supporting family farms and planning for the future so we can ensure long-term stability in Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry?

Senator Moreau: In addition to the capital gains inclusion, the government worked to facilitate a rollover provision that allows an individual to transfer the title of an asset on a tax-deferred basis. It is also protecting a reserve provision that will allow proceeds from the sale of property to be claimed by the seller for up to five years to provide farmers fiscal room as they begin or take over agricultural enterprises.

[*Translation*]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

JOINT COMMITTEES

CHANGES TO AFFECT MEMBERSHIP FOR DURATION OF FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT—MESSAGE FROM COMMONS— MOTION ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the message from the House of Commons:

Monday, April 27, 2026

EXTRACT, —

That, for the duration of the 45th Parliament:

- (a) Standing Order 104(1) be amended by replacing the words “consist of 10 members” with the words “consist of 12 members”;
- (b) paragraph (a)(i) of the order adopted on June 5, 2025, be rescinded, and Standing Order 104(2) be amended by replacing the words “consist of 10 members” with the words “consist of 12 members” and by adding after the words “12 members” the following: “which shall be composed of seven members from the

Liberal Party, four members from the Conservative Party and one member from the Bloc Québécois, except for the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which shall consist of 10 members and be composed of five members from the Liberal Party, four members from the Conservative Party and one member from the Bloc Québécois, and for which the lists of members are to be prepared, except as provided in section (1) of this standing order, shall be on:”;

- (c) for greater certainty, the membership of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament be increased by two members of the House of Commons from the government party and the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations be increased by one member of the House of Commons from the government party;
- (d) the Clerk of the House be authorized to make any required editorial and consequential alterations to the Standing Orders, including to the marginal notes;
- (e) paragraph (a) of the order adopted on November 20, 2025, be amended by replacing the words “11 members of the House of Commons, including five members of the House of Commons from the government party,” with the words “12 members of the House of Commons, including six members of the House of Commons from the government party.”;
- (f) paragraph (b) of the order adopted on February 13, 2026, be amended by replacing the words “10 members of the House of Commons be members of the committee, including five members of the House of Commons from the governing party,” with the words “12 members of the House of Commons be members of the committee, including seven members of the House of Commons from the governing party.”;
- (g) notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, the whip of the recognized party affected by the above changes to the composition of committees submit his membership changes to the Clerk of the House following the adoption of this order, and these changes be effective immediately; and

that a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours that this House has adopted this order, and inviting Their Honours to concur in the changes made under paragraphs (e) and (f) of this order.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate) moved:

That, in relation to the message from the House of Commons of April 27, 2026, the Senate agree to paragraphs (e) and (f); and

That a message be sent to the House of Commons to acquaint that house accordingly.

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.)

COMPETITION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

Leave having been given to proceed to Other Business, Senate Public Bills, Second Reading, Order No. 14:

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Klyne, seconded by the Honourable Senator Audette, for the second reading of Bill S-239, An Act to amend the Competition Act.

Hon. Duncan Wilson: Honourable senators, I rise today in support of Bill S-239, An Act to amend the Competition Act.

Senator Klyne clearly explained the various technical aspects of this bill. I will not go back over all those details, but I think it is important to reiterate the broader aspects of the bill.

The Commissioner of Competition's independent role consists mainly of leading the Competition Bureau in the areas of law enforcement and international cooperation. However, it is the bureau's promotional function that Bill S-239 seeks to expand. To that end, the bill enables the commissioner to make recommendations regarding federal or provincial trade barriers that have an undue impact on competition. Such barriers may include existing rules, laws or regulations that create administrative burdens and thus hinder open and competitive domestic trade.

Honourable senators, I want to point out that Senator Klyne's bill is based on recommendations that have already been made and work that has already been done in this regard. In 2022, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada published a report entitled *The Future of Competition Policy in Canada*, which indicates that the lack of significant input from affected entities was a shortcoming in Canada's competition policy.

• (1500)

The bill addresses this issue by requiring the government to respond within 120 days of the commissioner issuing a recommendation.

[English]

Of extra relevance for us here, much of the groundwork for this bill was laid by a 2021 report of the Senate Prosperity Action Group. This report, on which a number of our current colleagues worked, noted how “. . . major economic policy initiatives such as addressing interprovincial trade barriers . . . led to economic and social costs.” They recommended interprovincial trade barriers be removed “. . . to boost economic growth, improve productivity and competitiveness.”

The action group also recommended that:

. . . regulatory reform be a top priority of all governments across Canada in order to alleviate business uncertainty, improve transparency . . .

Colleagues, this bill has also been endorsed by two former Commissioners of Competition. Lawson Hunter, commissioner from 1981 to 1985, said:

As the global trading system becomes more protectionist, it will be critical that domestic competition remains or becomes vigorously competitive. . . . The Competition Bureau should play a larger, more visible role in ensuring that both governments and the private sector do not artificially restrict competition.

Additionally, Sheridan Scott, commissioner from 2004 to 2009, said:

This bill will provide the Competition Bureau with important new tools for encouraging competition for the benefit of Canadian consumers and businesses. . . . Removing unnecessary impediments to a robust Canadian economy is essential at this critical time.

Colleagues, each of us knows the profound and unprecedented challenges our country is facing. While typical trade relations seem almost upside down, the government has been working to diversify our international trade and global positioning.

According to the Library of Parliament, as of March 2026, Canada had so far initiated, signed or materially advanced 39 distinct international trade and security agreements under Prime Minister Carney. Eliminating internal regulatory burdens is not a partisan issue but represents common ground for all.

For the government, this approach aligns with their core mandate. Last year's Speech from the Throne stated:

The Government's overarching goal — its core mission — is to build the strongest economy in the G7. That starts with creating one Canadian economy out of thirteen. Internal barriers to trade and labour mobility cost Canada as much as \$200 billion each year. . . .

By tackling this issue and tearing down those walls — to borrow the words from our Prime Minister — we can give ourselves more than any foreign nation can ever take away.

This goal is also championed by the Leader of the Official Opposition. A press release covering MP Pierre Poilievre's "Canada First" Plan reads:

Trade barriers between Canadian provinces are more costly than trade barriers between Canada and other nations. The result is that we now trade more with the rest of the world than we do with ourselves

Free trade in Canada . . . will help start bringing home more business, and make Canada less dependent on forces and countries outside of our control. . . .

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, in his speech, Senator Klyne clearly illustrated how this bill can improve domestic trade and competition when he bemoaned, with some frustration, the barriers to interprovincial trade surrounding the sale of alcohol. This is an excellent example of a sector where the commissioner could make recommendations aimed at better harmonizing interprovincial rules regarding direct cross-border sales to consumers.

Examples abound in other sectors, such as agriculture and food, where regulations vary greatly from one province to another, particularly regarding packaging, labelling and health and safety requirements. These variations hinder the movement of goods and result in additional compliance costs for producers and manufacturers. This reduces overall competitiveness. These are sectors where the bill would allow the commissioner to make recommendations to better harmonize regulations and, in so doing, alleviate this burden.

[*English*]

While Bill S-239 requires the federal government to respond within 120 days of the commissioner issuing a recommendation, the rules of federalism mean we cannot compel provinces and territories to do the same. However, the simple act of publicly issuing a recommendation will shine a light on problem areas, driving greater accountability into the process of breaking down these interprovincial trade barriers.

This is particularly important, as many of these barriers are sticky and require serious commitment, determination and stick-to-it-iveness to eliminate. There is a reason to be optimistic that they would also act on the commissioner's new recommendation-making power.

The *First Ministers' statement on eliminating internal trade barriers in Canada*, issued by the premiers in March 2025, reads:

. . . Canada's First Ministers recognize this is a pivotal moment for Canada to take bold and united action. We must increase our economic resilience, reduce dependence on one market, and strengthen our domestic economy for the benefit of Canadian workers and businesses now and in the future. One key step is to make it easier for Canadians to do business with each other from coast to coast to coast.

[Senator Wilson]

Colleagues, although there is strong support across the board for reducing our internal red tape, we must create the mechanisms that will keep this momentum going once the spotlight on this issue inevitably fades. This bill will help to ensure that focus is maintained into the future.

As such, I ask that you join me in supporting Bill S-239, which is a logical output of previous Senate work on this file. Canada is facing an unprecedented moment where business is anything but usual. As Prime Minister Carney has said, "We are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition."

Anything we can do to make Canada more competitive and more integrated is a step we cannot afford to miss. Let's protect Canada by unlocking it for Canadians.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Would Senator Wilson take a question?

Senator Wilson: Yes, absolutely.

Senator Ringuette: I'll try to turn my comment into a question.

First of all, you gave an excellent speech on the subject. Second, you're an anglophone from British Columbia, and yet you delivered half of your speech in French. I commend you, as you're becoming a role model for anglophones in this chamber. I'm sure that all francophones, myself included, are grateful to you.

Since I'm supposed to ask a question, how do you find the wisdom and confidence to express yourself so well in French?

The Hon. the Speaker: Was the question related to the subject before us? I don't think it was, so it is out of order. I would have liked to hear the answer, but the question in this case was out of order.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Senator Wilson, congratulations on the quality of your French. Unfortunately, I can't congratulate you on the quality of the content of your speech, about which I have a few questions for you.

[*English*]

Your French was outstanding. The content was a little bit less impressive. You talked about ". . . bold and united . . ." as being what we need as a nation. Premiers declared that. That wasn't your word. You were quoting them at first ministers' conferences that we have had. In the heat of the moment, the Prime Minister talked about the urgency of reducing interprovincial trade barriers, with premiers signing memoranda of understanding and press conferences. We are very good at putting on a public relations show regardless of the level of government or political party.

• (1510)

Don't you find that this initiative will add regulatory burden and more work to an already overworked Competition Bureau? They argue that they are under-resourced to carry out the regular mandate they have been given for a number of years. Is it reasonable to add a supplemental project — and that is what this is — without any binding authority to bring any results to the end of the table other than what I see with this bill, where it's naming and shaming provinces that do not acquiesce to what every politician and every Canadian across the country is calling for?

Don't you feel that the pressure on the Competition Bureau is unwarranted? Don't you also feel it will add budgetary costs? In order for them to engage in this role, we are really stretching the elastic of their mandate. The government will have to provide fiscal resources to get all of this done.

Senator Wilson: Thank you for the question, Senator Housakos. That is precisely why I am supporting this bill at second reading in order to send it to committee for further study to understand some of those exact issues.

First of all, as I noted in my remarks, this bill is being supported by two former heads of the Competition Bureau who would be very familiar with the resourcing challenges of the Competition Bureau. Notwithstanding that, they still think this bill is a good idea and should move forward. That endorsement is enough for me to say we should send it to committee.

Things get done when you shine a light on them. It's not that we want to shame provinces. I think the provinces are quite willing to do it. We all have our little areas that we want to protect, and there will be sensitivities between provinces. This is a healthy way of surfacing those differences. There may be other ideas that come up at committee. I look forward to hearing them. I hope the Senate will send this bill to committee, and I look forward to hearing what the committee has to say on that.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Batters has a question. Senator Wilson, would you accept another question?

Senator Wilson: Yes, I would.

The Hon. the Speaker: Would you like more time to answer the question?

Senator Wilson: I would need more than 20 seconds, yes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Hon. Denise Batters: Thank you, Senator Wilson. Following up on Senator Housakos' question, if this does indeed require resources — regardless if it might be okay with the former heads of the Competition Bureau — given this is a private senator's bill calling on the government to expend resources, is it appropriate? Is it out of order? Would a Royal Recommendation be needed for this bill to proceed?

Senator Wilson: Thank you for the question, Senator Batters. I would suggest it is a question of prioritization. It is not necessarily a question of added resources. There may be things that the Competition Bureau is focused on right now that it could step back from in order to turn its attention to this. Again, it is important for the committee to study this in order to give it due scrutiny and understand whether these impacts would occur and whether that is a consideration we need to take into account.

(On motion of Senator Housakos, debate adjourned.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-13(2), I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(At 3:17 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.)

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