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(HANSARD)

Thursday, April 30, 2026

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,  
Speaker

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## THE SENATE

Thursday, April 30, 2026

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

Prayers.

### SENATORS' STATEMENTS

#### SPEECH AND HEARING MONTH

**Hon. Brian Francis:** Honourable senators, May is Speech and Hearing Month in Canada, an annual campaign dedicated to raising awareness about communication health and the dedicated professionals, including speech-language pathologists, audiologists and communication health assistants, who help prevent, assess and treat related disorders.

In Canada, there are millions of people who live with swallowing, speech, language and cognitive impairments that can range from mild to profound and can be temporary or permanent, making communication disorders a major public health and accessibility issue.

This year, the theme of Speech and Hearing Month is "Access Changes Everything." Early detection and intervention lead to stronger health outcomes, deeper social connections and greater opportunities to participate fully in school, work and society. That is why communication health is critical. Unfortunately, access to these services remains out of reach for many in Canada.

In Prince Edward Island, not only do we have the lowest rate of primary care access in Canada, but access to specialist services is limited. As a result, Islanders, particularly children and those with special needs, wait a long time for speech therapy and other services.

While these challenges exist in many parts of Canada, they are even more pronounced among Indigenous communities. For example, there is a higher prevalence of chronic ear infections among Inuit, First Nations and Métis children in Northern Canada, and limited access to care puts many of them at risk of permanent and preventable hearing loss.

Additionally, in early 2025, the federal government drastically narrowed the range of services eligible for funding under Jordan's Principle, including speech-language pathology and audiology, fuelling concerns that the needs of thousands of First Nations children are not being met.

Colleagues, this Speech and Hearing Month let us recognize that "Access Changes Everything." While communication health services are too often treated as an optional luxury, communication is a fundamental human right. We must work together to make timely, equitable and comprehensive access a reality for all in Canada.

*Wela'lin.* Thank you.

### SPORT IN CANADA

**Hon. Rodger Cuzner:** Honourable senators, I am excited to stand today — and far less surprised than yesterday, might I add — to celebrate Tuesday's investment of \$755 million to help grow and strengthen the Canadian sports system.

The interventions made by several colleagues during our recent Senate inquiry on physical activity and sport shared a common theme: Sport can have a measurable positive impact on the physical, mental and emotional health of Canadians. Although, as a lifelong Toronto Maple Leafs fan, I might say that sport can also be spiritually damaging.

Honourable senators, if we want to grow the number of Canadians taking part in sport, I believe the federal government has a role to play. Year-over-year statistics show an annual increase in participation rates of 2.5% to 3.5%, and I note that, even after the establishment of the Children's Fitness Tax Credit in 2007, there was no discernible jump. There was, however, one year when a significant spike was noted, and that was in 2003. Experts point to the fact that the year prior, in 2002, the Canadian women's hockey team won the Olympic gold medal in Salt Lake City.

Young girls from across the country were inspired by the play of Cassie Campbell, Hayley Wickenheiser and Jennifer Botterill, to name a few. The spunky Canadian squad defeated the host, Team USA, by a score of 3-2 and, in doing so, ignited a belief that young Canadian girls could now compete in a game at the international level that had long been thought of as being in the male domain.

Having these national role models seemed to motivate both young girls and their parents to make their way to rinks and engage in their new passion. This is probably nothing new. I am certain Senators Deacon, Petitcher and McBean impacted many young women during their days of competition.

Senators, the recent announcement of \$755 million over five years will drive local community infrastructure, support coaches and leadership development and provide support for high-performance athletes, yielding both opportunities and greater performance outcomes.

Organizations like the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee referred to Tuesday's announcement as a generational investment, one that provides an opportunity to rebuild a modern, aligned and well-supported system, ensuring that more resources flow directly to athletes from grassroots to high performance.

Colleagues, sport is a powerful force for building national pride, acting as a unifying element that transcends cultural, geographic and social boundaries to create a shared sense of identity.

Senators, I believe there could not be a better time to invest in sport, build the necessary infrastructure and support our athletes.

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 Brian Sauvé, President, and Jon Dale, Government Relations Advisor, of the National Police Federation. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Dhillon.

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

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

#### GEN(Z)AI

**Hon. Rosemary Moodie:** Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary group of young Canadians: participants of Gen(Z)AI, Canada's Youth Assembly on AI.

This morning, I had the honour of partnering with Mila, the Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute, one of Canada's three national artificial intelligence, or AI, hubs and a cornerstone of the country's AI ecosystem, along with the Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy to sponsor their national hybrid plenary. This event brought together 100 young Canadians in Ottawa to debate key issues, synthesize insights from previous forums, endorse policy recommendations and present their findings to policy-makers.

These young people, aged 17 to 23, convened across four regional forums in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Halifax to create policy recommendations about AI and online harms.

Through a rigorous citizens' assembly process that intertwined expert learning, structured deliberation and national digital engagement, they produced concrete, consensus-built recommendations on four key issues at the heart of Canada's digital future: AI chatbots, information integrity, data privacy and age assurance.

• (1340)

A few of their recommendations call for platforms to be held accountable for addictive and harmful design choices; for AI-generated content to be clearly labelled and misinformation to be actively monitored; and for plain language consent mechanisms backed by real legal consequences when companies mishandle sensitive data. They call for a standardized, anonymized age verification system that protects children without pushing them toward unmoderated spaces.

I extend my sincere congratulations to every participant of the Gen(Z)AI program. Across seven months, four cities and 100 young Canadians, you have produced something substantial: clear, evidence-based policy recommendations. I encourage all honourable senators to read their report, which can be found on the Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy website.

Colleagues, please help me in recognizing these bright young Canadians. 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 participants of Gen(Z)AI, Canada's Youth Assembly on Artificial Intelligence. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Moodie.

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

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

#### DISTINGUISHED VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

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

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

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

#### VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Frank Chen, Chairman of Diamond Aircraft Industries Inc., and other representatives of the company. They are the guests of the Honourable Senators Woo and Gignac.

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

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

[*Translation*]

#### THE LATE GÉRARD LÉVESQUE

**Hon. Lucie Moncion:** Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a prominent figure in the Franco-Ontarian community who passed away on April 13. Gérard Lévesque was a tenacious pioneer who worked tirelessly to advance language rights in this country. His life story is that of a man guided by deep conviction, an infinite love for the French language, and an unwavering sense of duty.

From a very young age, growing up in Ottawa's Lowertown, Mr. Lévesque was confronted with the difficulties of accessing a French-language education in a minority-language context. With no French-language high schools in Ontario, he had to cross the river to pursue his studies in French. After receiving a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Université Saint-Paul, he began his career as a journalist at *Le Droit* and served as secretary general of the Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, or ACFO for short.

Later, his desire to study law ran up against the same reality, as the University of Ottawa did not yet offer a common law program in French. He would have to wait until 1986 to earn his law degree, a testament to his perseverance that knew no bounds and no time limits.

As a lawyer, law professor, executive director of the Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario, deputy judge of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice and columnist, he made a tangible contribution to advancing language rights. Mr. Lévesque was an activist in the noblest sense of the word. He was a warm-hearted, gregarious man who had a knack for bringing people together. He was an indefatigable worker who also had a rare talent for inspiring others to follow his lead.

For example, he participated in the civil disobedience movement known as "C'est l'temps!" in 1975 when Franco-Ontarian activists boldly decided to challenge tickets issued in English only. They refused to pay them and even risked going to prison. Mr. Lévesque experienced that first-hand by spending a night behind bars. But it was not in vain. The movement served as a catalyst by creating a real space for dialogue on services in French and judicial bilingualism and by helping to change the way people thought about the Franco-Ontarian identity.

Honourable senators, whether in the streets, in the media, at the head of francophone organizations or before the courts, Mr. Lévesque championed the cause of the French language wherever it needed defending. With tireless dedication and remarkable perseverance, he helped to shape, defend and strengthen the French language's place in Ontario, turning struggles into lasting progress for an entire community.

His legacy will continue to inspire all those who are working toward a strong, vibrant and respected French community. I want to express my deepest condolences to his family, his wife, his children and grandchildren. May you find some comfort in the great respect, admiration and gratitude an entire community felt for him.

Thank you, Gérard Lévesque.

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

[English]

### VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Jean Augustine. 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!

[ Senator Moncion ]

### VIRUS OF INEQUALITY SYMPOSIUM

**Hon. Marilou McPhedran:** Honourable senators, I want to begin by thanking my colleagues in the Canadian Senators Group, particularly their leader, Senator Osler, for gifting me this time.

I also want to thank all the senators who joined us in the senators' lounge for the opening of the Virus of Inequality Symposium last evening. It was hard to keep track of the comings and goings, but we counted more than 30 of you. This symposium has been made possible by the support from Senators Petitclerc, Pate, Ataullahjan, Osler, Bernard, Senior, Henkel, Patterson, Clement, Mohamed and Moodie. I thank them from my heart.

Last evening, we honoured four "femtors," all now in their eighties and still active feminist leaders.

Thank you so much for the much-deserved standing ovation for the first Black woman member of Parliament in Canadian history.

When we think about Black History Month, which we speak to here, we need to thank Jean Augustine.

When we come to the Senate entrance and we pass the statues of the Famous Five from the Persons Case, we need to thank Jean Augustine.

We need to acknowledge the willingness to basically change the rules because they were built on a model of exclusion and to be the one who could have the voice and the influence to change hearts and minds, because that's what we have to do to change rules.

Colleagues, many months ago, I decided such a symposium on the impact of the growing gaps in inequality across the world was a pretty good idea. But why did I name the symposium the "Virus of Inequality"? Well, first, I hope this title is thought-provoking.

Inequalities are systemic, structural and contagious, spreading through legal, social, health, education, economic and political systems, exacerbating harms in Canada and globally.

The metaphor acknowledges but is not limited to the COVID-19 pandemic, which starkly exposed how crises intensify and accelerate existing structural injustices.

The pandemic revealed collective vulnerability, the limits of deeply unequal economic systems, gaps in health and social care and the indispensable role of decisive governmental and parliamentary action, making transformative public policy possible and urgent to reduce inequalities.

Colleagues, we're the lawmakers who can make this kind of difference. I salute all of us who try to do so every single day in this chamber.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

• (1350)

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### STUDY ON IMPACTS OF RUSSIA'S DISINFORMATION

THIRD REPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY, DEFENCE AND  
VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE DEPOSITED WITH  
CLERK DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Hassan Yussuff:** Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on October 8, 2025, the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on April 30, 2026, its third report, entitled *Russia's Disinformation – Understanding the Challenge, Strengthening Canada's Response*, 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 Yussuff, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

### CANADA-INDONESIA COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION BILL

FOURTH REPORT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND  
INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMITTEE PRESENTED

**Hon. Peter M. Boehm,** Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, presented the following report:

Thursday, April 30, 2026

The Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade has the honour to present its

#### FOURTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill C-18, An Act to implement the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between Canada and Indonesia, has, in obedience to the order of reference of April 15, 2026, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment but with certain observations, which are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

PETER M. BOEHM

*Chair*

(*For text of observations, see today's Journals of the Senate, p. 887.*)

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

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

### CONNECTED CARE FOR CANADIANS BILL

SEVENTH REPORT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND  
TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE PRESENTED

**Hon. Rosemary Moodie:** Honourable senators, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, which deals with Bill S-5, An Act respecting the interoperability of health information technology and to prohibit data blocking by health information technology vendors.

(*For text of report, see today's Journals of the Senate, p. 888.*)

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

GRANTING OF TEMPORARY VISAS

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Senator Moreau, the facts are clear and very disturbing. Mehdi Taj was a commander in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC, a designated terrorist organization, which should make him inadmissible from entry into Canada. A temporary resident permit circumventing his inadmissibility to Canada was issued by your immigration minister. Luckily, our front-line officers, who seemed to have heard our exchange a couple of days ago, had more common sense at the border than your government in making sure to turn this terrorist away.

Why does the government go out of its way to welcome these terrorists into our country while Iranian Canadians live in fear of repression, with more than 700 IRGC officials still living and working in Canada? How can they have any trust in the government's ability to keep them safe and far away from transnational repression?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Senator Housakos, you know very well that I cannot comment on specific cases.

That being said, the government takes the security of Canadians very seriously. That includes who is invited here, the security of our border and the issuing of permits concerning temporary residents or people who are allowed to be welcomed

to Canada. Unfortunately, it's impossible for me to comment on any specific case, but I can reassure Canadians that their security and safety and the international values of Canada are respected by the government.

**Senator Housakos:** Senator Moreau, Canada has long been a place of refuge for people fleeing oppression and regimes of this nature. Canada should never be a place where friends of these regimes feel safe. Iranian Canadians and all Canadians are increasingly frustrated and demanding accountability.

It's strange, government leader, that you say you can't comment on this issue when, over the last 24 hours, we've had a number of cabinet ministers not only comment but also contradict themselves, so which is it?

**Senator Moreau:** You know very well that, for security purposes, I'm not able to comment on those issues, but I can reassure all Canadians that we are taking safety measures very seriously. I agree with the premise of your question. Terrorists should not be welcomed here in Canada.

**Senator Housakos:** Government leader, now you should do something about it. Yesterday, Minister Anand had this to say when pressed about IRGC commander Mehdi Taj being denied entry at the border:

. . . my understanding is that there is a revocation of the permission. It was unintentional, but I'll leave it to the minister to indicate.

A number of government officials are speaking about this. Your immigration minister doesn't talk to the media, and by now I think we all understand why. If I were the Prime Minister, I wouldn't want her talking to anybody.

Canadians deserve clarity, Senator Moreau. Maybe you can answer what exactly was unintentional. Was it the permission to allow the terrorist into our country, or was it unintentional to revoke his entry?

**Senator Moreau:** I will certainly not comment on Minister Anand's answer, but I'll repeat what I've already said. I cannot comment on specific cases. There are security measures related to your question. I will reiterate that terrorists are not welcome in Canada and that the Government of Canada takes the security of our borders seriously, as well as the inquiry of people requesting access to Canada.

**Senator Housakos:** Senator Moreau, two senior cabinet ministers from your own government said quite differently over the last 24 hours. We're just looking for clarity: What was unintentional? Was the minister's issuance of the visa to this terrorist unintentional? Was its revocation unintentional?

• (1400)

This is somebody the U.S. government would not allow into their country, but the Government of Canada thought it wise to embrace them, give them a visa and allow them access to Canada. We need clearer answers: How did this happen, and which part was not really intentional?

[ Senator Moreau ]

**Senator Moreau:** The answers were quite clear, even though you are obviously not accepting them. I cannot comment on those specific issues for security reasons.

I will reiterate once again that the Government of Canada is taking very seriously the fact that terrorists should not be welcome here in Canada. Our borders should be secure, and Canadians should feel safe with respect to these issues.

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

### MILITARY HOUSING

**Hon. Jane MacAdam:** My question is to the Government Representative in the Senate.

The Auditor General of Canada released a report in October 2025 entitled *Housing Canadian Armed Forces Members*. The report found that, overall, National Defence did not manage living accommodations in a manner that would meet its operational needs and be responsive to the needs of Canadian Armed Forces members.

The report noted, referring to our Armed Forces members:

It is important for their morale and well-being that they can access affordable housing in good condition with sufficient living space for their needs.

The Auditor General has stated that this issue is particularly important because the Canadian Armed Forces is planning to add additional members. The Department of National Defence accepted the recommendations and committed to making measurable improvements.

Can you provide an update on the actions taken by the department?

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

The government has accepted the Auditor General's recommendations and is taking concrete actions to better support Canadian Armed Forces members and their families. That's why the government launched a historic military housing expansion, with over \$3.7 billion to deliver approximately 7,500 new residential units nationwide. Phase one is already delivering over 8,000 new units in high-pressure markets, while phase two will modernize housing across 25 military locations to strengthen recruitment, retention and operational readiness.

**Senator MacAdam:** Thank you, Senator Moreau.

The Auditor General's report also found that National Defence did not have reliable data about its overall portfolio of quarters, including the number and types of spaces and their locations.

Can you provide an update on any improvements in this area regarding the reliability of data?

**Senator Moreau:** Yes, Senator MacAdam. The department recognizes that reliable housing data is essential to managing military accommodation effectively. The government is taking a more targeted and modernized approach to respond to housing needs in the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure military families can access appropriate accommodation in a more timely manner. This is part of a broader strategy the government is now putting in place.

[Translation]

## FINANCE

### TRADE TARIFFS

**Hon. Martine Hébert:** I'd like to go back to the economic update that the government tabled this week. It highlights a number of business assistance measures introduced following the tariff announcement to support the hardest-hit businesses, including businesses in the aluminum and steel sectors.

This week, business people expressed strong concerns about the U.S.'s new tariff calculation methodology, especially for aluminum and steel. Moving forward, a 25% surtax will now be applied to the price of products manufactured with steel and aluminum, rather than the 50% tariff on the metal components in the products. For example, tariffs on a semi-trailer worth \$50,000 previously amounted to about \$3,000 or \$4,000, but now they will now be \$12,500.

Will more steps be taken to support companies facing this new challenge?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** I had a look at the statement that Quebec company Canam released about the numbers you just mentioned in your question.

The Government of Canada believes that these tariffs are entirely unjustified. Unfortunately, I can't speculate about additional measures. However, it is clear to the Canadian government that these tariffs are unjustified. The government's intention is to support all businesses unjustly affected by the tariffs, including aluminum, softwood lumber and kitchen cabinets. Some businesses have even been forced to close because of these unjustified tariffs. The government still intends to help businesses.

[English]

## GLOBAL AFFAIRS

### CANADIAN COMMERCIAL CORPORATION

**Hon. Rebecca Patterson:** Senator Moreau, Canada has been steadfast in its support of Ukraine in the face of Russia's brutal war of aggression. The government has announced time and again that it supports donations of aid and military equipment to

Ukraine. Canadian companies have been contracted to refurbish and donate military equipment and aid to Ukraine by the Canadian Commercial Corporation, a Crown corporation. However, they face hurdles, delays and even cancellations of their contracts from CCC. Please note that I ascribe no ill intent on the part of the government and entities like the Crown corporation.

My question is this: What steps is the government taking to mitigate the bureaucratic delays and cancellations so that equipment can get to Ukraine in a timely fashion?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** As you know, Senator Patterson, the government's support for Ukraine has been steadfast and continues to evolve to meet the reality on the ground. I have indicated that many times.

I have no specific information regarding the Canadian Commercial Corporation, but I will raise the issue with the minister and provide what information I can, considering that Crown corporations must have the leeway to act at arm's length from political interference.

The government is aware that defence procurement is currently fragmented across several departments, which makes the process too slow and convoluted to meet the rapidly evolving needs of the military. That is why it is founding the Defence Investment Agency, which will be responsible for equipping our military and driving economic benefits for Canada. The Spring Economic Update proposed \$103.8 million over five years and an ongoing \$22 million for the agency.

**Senator Patterson:** Thank you, Senator Moreau, for looking into this matter. We understand the delicacy of working with a Crown corporation to obtain this information.

However, would you also be able to obtain and share with the Senate data about how many delays are occurring and their length, as well as whether any suppliers have seen their contracts cancelled by the CCC? Thank you.

**Senator Moreau:** Yes, I will certainly do that, Senator Patterson, but this is a good opportunity for me to highlight that, in yesterday's Spring Economic Update, the government proposed to provide \$2 billion to support Operation UNIFIER, the Canadian Armed Forces military training professionalization and capacity-building mission in support of Ukraine. Thank you.

[Translation]

## INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### CANADA'S INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

**Hon. Danièle Henkel:** Senator Moreau, the 2025 report on intellectual property in Canada is unequivocal. In an economy increasingly based on intangible assets, intellectual property is a key driver of competitiveness and value creation. However, the data show that 88% of patent applications filed in Canada are from non-residents, that Canadian companies file the vast

majority of their intellectual property patent applications abroad, and that only 12% of companies protect the intellectual property of their innovations.

Under the circumstances, why does the economic update contain no structural measures relating to intellectual property?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** I'm sure you'll have a supplementary question. I'll refer you to page 138 of the economic update tabled this week regarding supports for the intellectual property program.

The government recognizes the importance of intellectual property for our businesses and investors. Budget 2025 includes a number of measures to protect intellectual property. We have allocated \$84.4 million over four years, beginning in 2026-27, to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada to extend the ElevateIP program. We have also allocated \$22.5 million over three years, beginning in 2026-27, to renew support for Innovation Asset Collective's patent portfolio. Finally, we are providing \$75 million over three years to the National Research Council to extend the IP Assist Initiative.

• (1410)

**Senator Henkel:** Senator Moreau, in an economy where value increasingly rests on intangible assets, doesn't the total absence of an IP strategy in the economic statement amount to underestimating the impact on our economic sovereignty?

**Senator Moreau:** Thank you, Senator Henkel. I would like to draw your attention to page 138 in Annex 1 of yesterday's economic update, where it mentions CanExport, an intellectual property support program. This indicates the government's intention to not only extend its support for CanExport in the general budget tabled for 2026, but also to increase the funding allocated through the economic update tabled yesterday.

[*English*]

## TREASURY BOARD

### PRIVACY ACT

**Hon. Salma Atallahjan:** Government leader, according to a recent article in *The Hill Times*, the Treasury Board is seeking to modernize the Privacy Act in a troubling way. Among the proposed changes are the reuse and sharing of Canadians' personal information across federal institutions.

While modernization is important, stakeholders are increasingly concerned about the expansion of governmental access to sensitive data without clear and explicit consent, as well as any robust safeguards. Can you explain how your government intends to balance the Treasury Board's push for modernization with the fundamental rights of Canadians to privacy, security and control over their personal information?

[ Senator Henkel ]

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you, Senator Atallahjan, for the question. The government is taking the privacy of information of Canadians very seriously. That being said, I will not comment on *The Hill Times* article, and I cannot speculate on any project or bill that has not been tabled yet despite what is related in the article.

**Senator Atallahjan:** Senator Moreau, Canadians expect transparency and strict limits when it comes to their personal data. What specific safeguards will be put in place to ensure that expanded data-sharing powers do not lead to misuse and the erosion of trust in federal institutions responsible for protecting private information?

**Senator Moreau:** Yes, I understand that Canadians expect transparency. That being said, I cannot overlook the rules of our Parliament and talk about bills that have not yet been tabled. It would be against our rules, and you know that very well.

I reiterate that privacy of information concerning Canadians is taken very seriously by the government, and I thank you for your question.

## FINANCE

### AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Denise Batters:** Senator Moreau, your Liberal government tabled its Spring Economic Update on Tuesday. Members of the House of Commons received hard copies of this document in their offices. It is my understanding that members of the Senate Finance Committee received these booklets, but aside from those few, most senators did not: not even an email or a link from the Department of Finance; not a book; nothing. Your Liberal government has a stunning \$67-billion deficit, but you won't cough up the pocket change to supply senators with the information we require to thoroughly examine government spending.

Yesterday, your government deputy leader tabled the Spring Economic Update booklet in the Senate Chamber and launched a Senate inquiry into its contents, but how can we fully participate in that debate when you haven't even given us the information we need to hold this government accountable?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** I understand there will be a budget implementation act, or BIA, to implement the measures in the Spring Economic Update, and, therefore, senators will have an opportunity to fully study the update. If you want it today, I can provide you with an extra copy. I have one if you want it, and maybe you will be able to ask questions. It is a very nice update that brings into our economy an additional \$37.5 billion to respond to the needs of Canadians and strengthen our economy.

**Senator Batters:** Yes, when MPs get them, so should we.

Senator Moreau, this is not a new problem. You know the same thing actually happened last year. When the Liberal government tabled its budget last fall, one of our colleagues raised the issue of the missing booklets with you in Question Period. Given that, why didn't you, the Government Representative in the Senate, ensure that senators received copies this time around? Why does this Liberal government continue to treat senators like second-class parliamentarians?

**Senator Moreau:** It is certainly not the intention of the government, nor is it mine. I understand that the document is online, and you can consult it right now. Again, if you want to have a hard copy of the document, I reiterate my intention to send it to your office.

It is very important, and I like the fact that you want to study it because there are so many things in it about the economy, affordability, the environment and very good government decisions. It would be a good idea for you to take notice of those —

[Translation]

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

## IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP AND REFUGEES

### INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

**Hon. Allister Surette:** Senator Moreau, the Auditor General's report on the international student program reforms found that smaller provinces were disproportionately impacted by lower study permit approvals. Although reforms projected a decrease of 10% or less in the number of new study permits issued, all of the Atlantic provinces experienced an almost 60% decrease in approvals in 2024 compared with 2023. Even though the department provided allocation top-ups to some provinces, this did little to offset the impacts already experienced by the smaller provinces.

Senator Moreau, did the department consult the provinces and post-secondary institutions to better understand this imbalance and find a solution to it?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for your question. You are right. The impact was much greater than the projected decrease of 10% to 60%, but that is true for almost everywhere in Canada. There was a decrease of 75% in Ontario, 62% in Manitoba, 65% in British Columbia and Alberta, and 35% in Quebec.

Although the government always tries to work with the provinces when it comes to education, it accepted the Auditor General's recommendation to consult the provinces and territories regarding the number of study permits and to account for regional differences.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is currently working with provinces to support their effective usage of allocation spaces. This includes new talent attraction measures for graduate students.

You are absolutely right. The results fell far short of expectations.

**Senator Surette:** Senator Moreau, in 2025, the government implemented a pilot project for international students in francophone minority communities, with a target of 2,300 students in the first year. Only 780 students applied, but from what I understand, post-secondary institutions are better prepared to process new applications for the second year of the program, which is set to end this year. Is there any chance that this program will be renewed?

**Senator Moreau:** As you know, I can't confirm whether or not the government has decided to renew programs. However, as I told your colleague Senator Aucoin yesterday, the government thinks it is very important to encourage access to higher education for francophone communities, particularly francophone minority communities. Last October, in partnership with Nova Scotia, the government announced an investment of \$48 million to provide more French-as-a-first-language and French-as-a-second-language education from preschool through to post-secondary education.

## PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

### PHOENIX PAY SYSTEM

**Hon. Manuelle Oudar:** Senator Moreau, it will come as no surprise to you that I am rising again to speak to the Phoenix issue. As a past president of the CNESST and a labour lawyer, I am still outraged that some public servants had to work without being paid properly.

The Auditor General has examined this issue four times. In her latest observations on the consolidated financial statements, she noted that she was still finding mistakes in public servants' pay, and she indicated that Public Services and Procurement Canada has made very little progress in clearing its substantial backlog.

Is the government prepared to negotiate additional restitution for workers still struggling with the Phoenix fiasco, on top of the settlement that was already reached?

• (1420)

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for the question, Senator Oudar. You are very diligent, because you've expressed concerns about the Cúram software, which is set to replace Phoenix. That is a fair question. I spoke with the Auditor General. The important thing is to ensure that we are reducing the number of outstanding cases. In the case of Phoenix, these cases have been reduced considerably and they should all be dealt with before the new Cúram pay system is put in place to prevent the same problems from happening again with the new system.

That is why the government has asked to work very closely with the Auditor General to carry out a review before the new pay system is implemented. I can't comment on a compensation program like the one you suggested in your question.

**Senator Oudar:** Senator Moreau, Phoenix payroll errors have had significant tax implications for public servants, including incorrect T4 slips, tax overpayments and CRA penalties. The 2020 settlement did not cover all of these tax issues. Is the government prepared to compensate public servants for these ongoing tax issues?

**Senator Moreau:** I will repeat what I said at the end of my answer to your main question. I can't comment on whether the government intends to provide additional compensation above what has already been authorized. The government is well aware that Phoenix was a fiasco, and I don't think it is an exaggeration to use that word. The government wants to ensure that the implementation of Cúram goes smoothly and that we don't have the same issues as we did with Phoenix.

[English]

## FINANCE

### SPRING ECONOMIC UPDATE 2026

**Hon. Andrew Cardozo:** My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. I want to ask about the *Spring Economic Update 2026*, focusing on issues about improving the lives of Canadians, which are issues that I and others have been raising.

In terms of youth unemployment, we certainly have a crisis of youth unemployment, which is twice that of general unemployment.

There are some measures in the update. Could you highlight what you think are the measures that would take effect as early as possible, and what would be the most effective of the various measures that were announced?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Is this for young people?

**Senator Cardozo:** Yes.

**Senator Moreau:** Yes, the government is proud of its commitment to launch Team Canada Strong, a program that will give young Canadians a direct, paid pathway into the work of building Canada. The aim is to recruit, train and hire 80,000 to 100,000 new Red Seal trades workers aligned to Canada's housing, infrastructure, resource development and defence needs by 2030-31.

Red Seal is a program that sets common standards for tradespeople across Canada. The Team Canada Strong program will start at job placement. Employers, including small- and medium-sized businesses, will receive up to \$10,000 per apprentice, and the apprentice will receive a weekly income top-up of up to \$400 per week for a total payment of up to \$16,000 per apprentice while they are attending mandatory in-class technical training.

**Senator Cardozo:** Thank you for that. I have one more issue I want to raise in terms of improving the lives of Canadians in the update, and that's the Disability Tax Credit. I would have liked to have seen the rate be increased.

Be that as it may, there has been an improvement in the process of applying for the Disability Tax Credit. Could you highlight what the change is there, please?

**Senator Moreau:** Yes, rapidly, the government is proposing that a qualified medical practitioner certify that a person has one of the identified conditions without having to provide additional information, which will make the issue simpler. The changes are expected to provide \$345 million over six years in additional tax relief to Canadians.

It is a very good measure.

## NATIONAL REVENUE

### CHARITIES DIRECTORATE

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Government leader, we are deeply troubled by reports that anti-Semitic organizations are attempting to misuse Canada's charitable framework to target Jewish Canadians, including efforts to strip 11 Jewish schools of their charitable status. These are institutions that have served families and provided education within communities for many years. Jewish Canadians have been looking for clarity and assurances from the government.

Can you confirm that the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, will apply the law fairly and reject these baseless accusations and complaints that are coming from anti-Semitic hate groups?

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

The CRA undertakes an independent process, free from political interference. You agree with that. The CRA does not select registered charities for audit based on factors such as faith or denomination. Nonetheless, the government outlined in the *Spring Economic Update 2026* that it will be reviewing the Charities Directorate to modernize it and make it more efficient. The CRA is mindful of the risk of bias, and the Charities Directorate has taken steps to reduce bias in decision making, including through formal tracking and review processes to ensure impartiality.

**Senator Housakos:** Thank you, government leader, for that answer.

Of course, the community is aware that the government is undertaking a review, and that's why they want to make sure that these baseless accusations that come from these hate groups do not seep into the political considerations that might invariably be taken under consideration.

I want to make sure that the current government does not allow diaspora politics and geopolitical conflicts in other parts of the world to influence these important decisions for the community.

Thank you for this consideration.

**Senator Moreau:** Yes, I totally agree with the premise of your question, which is more of an intervention than a question. I reiterate that anti-Semitism in any form whatsoever is totally unacceptable here in Canada.

• (1430)

Faced with that reality, Parliament cannot look away. Canadians must be able to practise their faith, send their children to school and attend their community spaces without fear of being intimidated or targeted.

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## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### CRIMINAL CODE

#### BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

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

**Hon. David M. Wells (Acting Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places).

Colleagues, Bill C-9 requires us to confront a grave issue: the rise of hatred and acts directed at persons or communities based on who they are. For several years now, we have witnessed a troubling rise in hate crimes in Canada. These are not merely numbers in a report or statistics compiled from one year to the next. They are Canadians being targeted because of their faith, their identity or their membership in a community.

As my colleague MP Larry Brock noted at second reading in the other place, the numbers are alarming: Since 2015, police-reported hate crimes in Canada have risen by 258%. Hate crimes targeting the Jewish community have surged by 416%, and those targeting South Asian Canadians have increased by nearly 380%. In 2024 alone, nearly 5,000 hate crimes were reported across the country — the highest number ever recorded.

Since October 7, 2023, the rise in anti-Semitism has become impossible to ignore. Synagogues have been targeted. For many Jewish families, insecurity is no longer a perception; it is a reality. Students have been harassed simply because they are Jewish — here in Canada in 2026.

We must also recall another reality that is spoken of far too little: the rise in anti-Christian acts. Many churches have been burned. Too many places of worship have been attacked or desecrated. Between May 2021 and December 2023, 33 Christian churches were burned across the country. In the vast majority of cases, those fires were deliberately set.

When a place of worship is attacked, it is not just walls that are being targeted. A message of fear is being sent by design to an entire community.

It is in that spirit that the government introduced Bill C-9. The bill would amend the Criminal Code and seek to intervene more broadly in the way our criminal law responds to certain forms of hatred.

More specifically, Bill C-9 operates on three fronts. First, it adds to the existing hate propaganda regime a new offence aimed at the public display of certain symbols where that display is used to willfully promote hatred against an identifiable group. This includes certain symbols associated with Nazism, but also symbols principally used by, or principally associated with, listed terrorist entities, as well as symbols that so nearly resemble them as to be confused with them. The bill also provides certain specific defences for this new provision, for example, where the display was for journalism, education, art or another legitimate purpose, not contrary to the public interest.

Second, the bill creates a new standalone hate crime offence. In practical terms, hatred would no longer simply be taken into account at sentencing, as current law already allows. Instead, the bill would create a distinct offence where a person commits an offence under the Criminal Code — or under any other act of Parliament — and that offence is motivated by hatred based on one of the listed grounds in the bill. It then establishes a separate penalty scheme for this new offence, with maximum penalties scaled according to the seriousness of the underlying offence.

Finally, the bill creates new offences dealing with intimidation and obstruction of access to certain places. It targets conduct intended to provoke fear in a person in order to prevent them from accessing a place of religious worship, an educational institution, a community or cultural space used by an identifiable group, a residence for seniors or a cemetery.

It also criminalizes intentionally obstructing or interfering with lawful access to those places, subject to certain limited exceptions. In other words, the bill seeks to strengthen the protection of places the government considers especially sensitive by creating new criminal tools to respond to conduct seen as intimidating or hostile.

In short, the bill does not merely adjust a few existing provisions. It proposes to expand criminal law on several fronts at once: with respect to symbols, offences motivated by hatred and access to certain religious, educational, cultural or community places.

It is precisely because this represents a significant expansion of criminal law that Parliament must proceed with caution. No one disputes the need to act. But acting does not mean legislating without restraint. In the other place, several witnesses raised serious concerns, and despite certain amendments, many of those concerns remain.

I think first of the new offences relating to intimidation and obstructing or interfering with access to certain places. Everyone agrees on the principle: A person should be able to enter a place of worship, a school or a community centre without being threatened. Where things become more complicated is in the wording.

Witnesses pointed out that expressions such as “provoke a state of fear,” “obstruct” or “interfere with access” may cast a very wide net. In criminal law, words matter. When they lack precision, we risk shifting the line between what should be punished and what still falls within peaceful protest, even when that protest is disruptive.

This is not a minor point. In a democracy, a protest may be loud, offensive or unpleasant. That does not automatically make it criminal.

However, another, more fundamental question must also be asked: Are these new offences truly necessary?

I would point out that, depending on the circumstances, conduct of this kind may already be prosecuted under existing Criminal Code offences, including intimidation, criminal harassment, uttering threats, causing a disturbance, or disturbing religious worship or certain meetings. In other words, the current law already contains several tools that can apply where people seek to intimidate, threaten or disrupt access to these places.

Witnesses also questioned the creation of a new standalone hate crime offence. Current law already allows hatred to be treated as an aggravating factor at sentencing. Bill C-9 goes further and chooses to make it a distinct offence, with its own logic and increased maximum penalties.

Once again, the question must be asked: Are we creating a tool that is truly necessary, or are we simply layering a new regime on top of one that already exists?

The Barreau du Québec, for its part, spoke of a duplication of the prosecutorial regime for hate crimes, noting that, for identical facts, an accused person could be prosecuted under two different approaches.

The same question arises with respect to the offence dealing with the public display of certain symbols. No one here is seeking to trivialize hateful symbols or what they may represent. However, it has been argued that this provision risks being both redundant, given that the Criminal Code already contains offences such as public incitement of hatred, wilful promotion of hatred and wilful promotion of anti-Semitism, and is difficult to apply consistently. In an already-tense context, that risks shifting onto police and prosecutors the responsibility of drawing the line themselves between what falls within criminal law and what does not.

Honourable senators, here again, one must ask whether the problem truly lies in the absence of provisions in the Code, or rather in the use that is made of them. Mark Sandler, chair of the Alliance of Canadians Combatting Antisemitism, indicated that the real problem lies more in the underuse of existing legislative provisions than in the absence of legislative tools.

That is where the real question lies. Will this bill truly prevent what we have witnessed in recent months or years or will it mainly add another layer to the Criminal Code, while many of the necessary tools already exist but do not always appear to be used with the firmness required?

If, in reality, the problem lies less in the absence of legal provisions than in their application on the ground, then we must honestly ask whether making the Criminal Code heavier will, by itself, change what targeted communities are actually experiencing.

Colleagues, I now turn to the amendment adopted in the other place with respect to section 319 of the Criminal Code. That amendment removes from the provisions dealing with wilful promotion of hatred and wilful promotion of anti-Semitism the defence under which a person cannot be convicted if they, in good faith, expressed an opinion on a religious subject — or an opinion based on a religious text in which they believe — or attempted to establish such an opinion by argument.

In other words, this is not a mere drafting adjustment. It is the removal from the Criminal Code of a defence expressly provided by law for 56 years in a particularly sensitive area. That inevitably raises a question: How was a change of this nature introduced into the bill?

It was not included in the bill as originally introduced. It was not presented by the government from the outset as one of the central elements of Bill C-9. Rather, it appeared later during clause-by-clause consideration before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights by way of an amendment proposed by the Bloc Québécois. The government then chose to support that amendment and vote in favour of it, thereby removing from the Criminal Code a defence that is already provided by law.

The context in which this occurred also deserves emphasis. The government resorted to a programming motion to accelerate consideration of the bill, requiring the committee to put the remaining amendments to a vote without further debate and sharply limiting the time devoted to the subsequent stages in the House.

When a bill amends the Criminal Code and an amendment outside the original scope of the bill removes an existing legal protection, such compression of debate is troubling. That is where the discomfort lies. The opposition is fully entitled to demand answers. It is entitled to insist that the government clearly explain why this change is being proposed, what its possible effects will be and why it was introduced in this fashion in a bill that did not contain it at the outset.

This late-stage change has caused serious concern outside Parliament. Civil liberties organizations, legal experts and religious communities have spoken out. Many Canadians have asked why a protection that has been in place for more than half a century is being removed in this way.

This is not a marginal reaction. Canadians of different faiths and backgrounds — Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and others — have raised concerns about this amendment. Those concerns are legitimate. They deserve to be taken seriously. Above all, they deserve to be heard, because in a matter such as this, Parliament should never close itself off to the sincere concerns of those who will be directly affected by the changes it makes to the Criminal Code.

• (1440)

It must also be noted that a constitutional risk has been expressly raised by some witnesses. In *R. v. Keegstra*, the Supreme Court of Canada had to decide whether the offence of wilful promotion of hatred under subsection 319(2) infringed the freedom of expression guaranteed by the Charter and, if so, whether that infringement could be justified in a free and democratic society.

The court recognized that there was indeed an infringement of freedom of expression. The central issue then became justification.

On that point, the court was divided. Chief Justice Dickson, together with Justices Wilson, L'Heureux-Dubé and Gonthier, concluded that the provision could be upheld. The dissenting judges — La Forest, Sopinka and McLachlin — would have struck down section 319, finding that the infringement of freedom of expression could not be sufficiently justified.

Why does that matter here? Because the Supreme Court did not uphold section 319 in the abstract or in theory alone. It upheld it in the precise form it had at the time, that is, as part of a regime that already included the defences set out in subsection 319(3). Those defences therefore formed part of the legislative balance examined by the court. In other words, the constitutional validity of the provision was assessed in light of the existence of those protections. That is why removing paragraphs 319(3)(b) and 319(3.1)(b) today is not a minor amendment but a change that may weaken the constitutional foundation of the provision.

So, the issue is not merely whether this amendment is advisable as a matter of policy. The issue is also whether removing a defence that has existed in law for 56 years risks exposing section 319 more directly to a constitutional challenge based on freedom of expression, freedom of religion and freedom of conscience.

Colleagues, when an amendment removes from the Criminal Code a protection already provided by law, and when that change was not part of the bill as originally introduced, the very least that should be required is a thorough review of that decision, supported by genuine consultations, including targeted consultations with religious groups concerned, many of whom have already voiced their concerns. We have all heard them through the phone calls we receive and the messages in our inboxes.

That is precisely the task of the committee that will study this bill. It will be for that committee to examine the issues I have raised and to shed light on the real scope of this amendment, the risks it may carry and the broader legal and constitutional issues I have highlighted.

The Senate has a particular responsibility when a bill amends the Criminal Code. It must determine whether the text stands up, whether its scope is properly circumscribed and whether the proposed changes have been adequately justified.

Bill C-9 therefore raises serious questions. It touches on the security of communities but also on the balance of criminal law and the safeguards that must accompany it.

That is why its study in the Senate must be undertaken with the greatest rigour. We have a duty to examine this bill carefully, to assess the scope of its provisions and to ensure that the proposed changes are coherent and consistent with our fundamental legal principles.

Colleagues, in that spirit, this bill must now be studied.

Thank you.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Question.

**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 and bill read second time, on division.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Wells (*Alberta*), bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, on division.)

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate),** pursuant to notice of April 29, 2026, moved:

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.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Joan Kingston:** Honourable senators, I ask for leave of the Senate that the following orders be brought forward and called now: Other Business, Inquiries, No. 10 and No. 11.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

[*Translation*]

### VITAL ROLE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT

#### INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

**Hon. René Cormier:** Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator Marty Deacon's inquiry about 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.

Inspired by the highly entertaining speeches that some of our colleagues have given, I would like to share a few personal experiences that illustrate the power of physical activity and sport and the challenges they can present for some of us.

Ovid, the most famous of the Latin poets of antiquity, declared, "A horse never runs so fast as when it has other horses to catch up with and outpace."

No doubt inspired by this age-old wisdom, my mother never tired of telling me that, when I was born, I must have felt I was behind in life because I came out so quickly and was so eager to crawl, walk, run and jump before everyone else.

Although I would never compare myself to the swift horse of legendary New Brunswick jockey Ron Turcotte, it's true that the desire to catch up with and outpace my brothers was constantly on my mind.

I was born into a family where sport, especially hockey, was less a form of recreation than a national religion, complete with its own rituals, pilgrimages to the arena and the occasional overtime miracle. My three brothers, all of them extremely talented, were a source of pride to my family and the Acadian community of our province. Today, I want to pay tribute to Maurice, Paul and Gilles, three outstanding athletes, wonderful brothers and exceptional coaches to countless young people who wanted to play hockey.

• (1450)

[*English*]

As you can imagine, colleagues, my desire to join this very exclusive club of family heroes was stronger than my fear of failure. Thus, at the ripe old age of 10, I enthusiastically joined my town's peewee B team, convinced I'd find glory there, along with recognition and the same level of praise my brothers got from my dad when they came home after their games.

Blessed with a particularly sharp sense of smell, I must admit that cohabiting with my brothers' hockey bags already counted as mental training. Still, my burning desire to play and to win was stronger than those aromatic challenges.

[*Translation*]

As soon as my skates hit the ice, my coach and teammates recognized that I had one undeniable quality: I could skate fast, very fast. I whirled, spun and changed direction at an impressive speed. Some might say it was because of the oversized skates I had inherited from my brother — he wore a size 8; I wore a size 5 — or was it because of my boundless ambition to win a trophy? The mystery remains unsolved to this day and would no doubt warrant an independent inquiry.

Be that as it may, I got the nickname "Speedy Gonzales." This made me extremely happy because, as someone who already loved music, I sincerely believed it was the name of a successful Mexican singer, and I thought of myself as Pedro de Mexico, an international star.

I was clearly destined for a brilliant career, colleagues. However, the speed of my skating and my pirouettes on the ice soon backfired on me. Unlike my brothers, the concept of offside was completely unknown to me. Driven by unbridled enthusiasm and an excessive love of the puck, I was constantly crossing the blue line before anyone else. I kept interrupting the game, without understanding how or why, much to the chagrin of my coach and the dejected referees.

Barely a few weeks after I joined this fantastic team, the axe fell. I was let go, with no explanation, no trophy, not even a commemorative puck or snack bar voucher. Gone was my dream of catching up to and even surpassing my brothers. Gone was my dream of joining the future Ottawa Senators. I stepped away from our national sport with a twinge of sadness, my pride somewhat bruised.

It was a small consolation, but the president of the parish skating club recognized the quality of my unintentional spins and invited me to sign up for figure skating lessons, which I did with little enthusiasm at first, but I was resigned to giving it a try. The very next week, I found myself on the ice, surrounded by young girls in tutus, the only boy in town doing arabesques to the strains of *Moon River*. Needless to say, the looks I got from my former hockey teammates left no doubt as to the judgment and nicknames of which I was now the prime target. It all reached its peak, colleagues, the day I walked into the arena wearing a pale grey jumpsuit and the only skates available in our house, which were my sister's white figure skates.

[English]

My dear male colleagues, I dare you to show up like that at your local arena. It takes a great deal of humility to face the stares, a solid dose of resilience to survive the comments and, ideally, a clearly marked emergency exit nearby.

[Translation]

But I took my courage in both hands — or rather, both skates — and I pushed through. Despite the taunts and my polyester outfit that was on fire, aesthetically speaking, I took up what would become my favourite sport. Seeing my rapid progress, my impressive jumps and my now intentional spins, my uncle, who had no children but clearly possessed a strong sense of justice, came by one day and gave me a proper pair of black men's skates.

Although this didn't solve all the challenges I faced in asserting my masculinity, this new pair of skates piqued the interest of my former teammates, who laughed as they wondered how I was going to handle skating with toe picks.

Well, colleagues, I got the last laugh. Through sheer determination and hard work, I got my sweet revenge a few months later. Our end-of-year show promised to be a memorable event. As the only boy on the program, I was bracing for the reactions of my former hockey teammates. In front of a packed arena, I took to the ice nervously, but alongside the most talented, tallest and, yes, prettiest of the female figure skaters.

We skated with majestic grace to the music from *Chariots of Fire*. Although this move did cause me some back pain, I lifted my partner up and carried her above my head using just one arm, proudly holding her aloft.

We skated across the rink in this position, to the applause of the crowd and the astonished stares of my former teammates. We were treated to a standing ovation, cheers, thunderous applause. Spurred on by the crowd's frenzied reaction, we finished our routine with a series of impressive jumps. The experts in this chamber may wish to know that we rounded off our performance with Axels, Lutzes, flips, loops, Salchows and toe loops. There was no doubt about it, colleagues: We were ready for the Ice Capades.

[English]

No more nicknames. No more nosy, judgmental stares. Completely stunned, my former buddies shuffled back home looking like scolded puppies. And the very next day, I found out they'd all signed up for gyms and started lifting weights. Apparently, I'd launched a full-blown fitness revolution without knowing it.

[Translation]

From that day forward, I haven't stopped moving, and I've never let anyone stop me from moving the way I want. Walking, jogging, aerobics and dancing are part of my everyday life, because I truly believe that movement is a celebration of life and because it brings me immense joy. It's the same kind of joy that

gets us out of bed every day to come work in this place. It's the same kind of joy we feel when we take a walk with our partner, family or friends around a beautiful bay or a historic site.

In a world where rapid mental processing and digital overload are an everyday reality, movement reconnects us with a basic truth: We were made to move. We think with our heads — at least I hope we do — but we live through our bodies.

From childhood, movement is our first language. Before words, we communicate through gestures, movements and postures. Over time, however, as we work sitting down, using screens, on Senate benches, trying to keep up with the frantic pace of daily life, we often lose that spontaneous connection to our profoundly dynamic nature.

Re-engaging with sports or physical activity is not about taking on another obligation. It's about regaining something essential: the sheer, fundamental joy of moving and feeling truly alive.

[English]

This intuitive connection between the body, movement and the meaning of life is nothing new. In fact, it sits at the very heart of traditions that have inspired us for a long time.

Watching my Indigenous brothers and sisters dance, I've always felt that, for them, dance is far more than just an art form; it is a living language, one that carries memory, values and ancestral teachings. Through movement, rhythm and song, every gesture tells a story, honours past generations and strengthens the bonds within their communities.

[Translation]

I'd be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to pay tribute to the women athletes in this chamber. I am referring, of course, to Senator McBean, Senator Marty Deacon and Senator Petitclerc. I'd like to express my particular admiration for Senator Petitclerc. Colleagues, I don't know whether you've ever walked around this city with her, but the strength, agility and speed with which our colleague moves and navigates obstacles are impressive and speak volumes about her qualities as an athlete and as a woman.

These women athletes are sources of inspiration for young girls and women in Canada today. When I think of my great-niece Jasmine, who plays hockey and is doing well, it might be easy to believe that the doors are now wide open and that the progress we've made is irreversible.

• (1500)

However, it's clear that a reversal, perhaps even a backlash, is under way in some provinces. Progress we thought was entrenched is now being called into question, sometimes openly, sometimes more insidiously.

One example of that is Alberta's Fairness and Safety in Sport Act. While it's framed as legislation to ensure fairness and safety, it actually creates a legal framework that authorizes — even requires — schools and sport organizations to make athletes provide proof of sex assigned at birth in order to compete in women's categories.

It establishes mechanisms for confirmation, challenges and verification that expose girls and women to questions about their body, their identity and their eligibility to participate in a sport. By shifting the burden of suspicion onto the athletes themselves, this legal framework turns sport, which should be about empowerment and confidence, into something that is more about surveillance and control.

The logical extension of my tribute to the leadership and courage of women in sport is a reminder that these practices violate privacy, erect new barriers to participation and impose profoundly disproportionate measures. They target trans women, but they ultimately affect all women by reinforcing restrictive standards of femininity and normalizing the idea that women must defend their bodies in order to participate in sport.

That is why I urge the federal government, in allocating new funding to the provinces for sport, to clearly link these funds to respect for Canadian values: inclusion, dignity, equality, and the right of every woman and girl to be able to participate in sport without fear, without humiliation and without having to prove who she is.

[English]

Let me conclude by saying this: Inspired by all these athletes, dancers and gymnasts, let us dare to move freely and embrace movement, honourable senators. There is not just one right way to move, but countless ways to inhabit one's body with joy, pride and freedom.

[Translation]

As for me, colleagues, I've finally made peace with our national sport. Yes, I admit it: Watching the excellent and highly inspiring series *Heated Rivalry* helped reconcile me to hockey. More importantly, though, I now understand that we don't always need to score more goals to win. Sometimes, we just need to stay in the game and keep skating, because being able to move our bodies in the company of others is the best trophy of all.

Thank you.

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

[English]

**Hon. Katherine Hay:** Honourable senators, I might bring it down a little bit, but you get me twice in one week. Whether that's good or bad, I leave that up to you.

Today I would like to speak to an inquiry that I have no doubt resonates with us all in one way, shape or form. I acknowledge and I'm so deeply grateful to Senators Marty Deacon, Marnie McBean and Chantal Petitclerc for their inquiry on the vital role of physical activity and sport. I'm extremely humbled to be sharing my experience in sport and being an athlete in an inquiry with these Olympic-level public servants. I thank them for their leadership here in the Senate and for their Herculean, heroic efforts in Olympic sports and sports across our great country. You inspired the nation time and time again, each of you, so thank you.

[ Senator Cormier ]

For me, where to begin? It's a tough one for me today. I will be a bit more personal, and I am not comfortable. Sport has been a part of my life — family life, community life, work life — through the darkest of times to many euphoric times and some of the more challenging times.

I would like to frame what I will speak about in advance so you know what is coming; you can make your judgment now. I promise not to speak too long, but chatty Kathy will probably rule.

Today I want to lean into leadership as a beginning. I would like to then jump into community and sport and share a story about a community that I will never ever forget. I would like to run full steam into the empowerment of sport and being an athlete myself, in my own little sort of way. Finally, I would like to cycle through the impact of sport on health and well-being. That's as funny as I am going to get. You got it with the other senator.

For leadership, I'm simply going to use quotes here. How about, "It's a team sport"? I overuse these four words all the time. The Senate is a team sport. Family is a team sport. Marathoning is a team sport. Team sport is how life is lived, whether you know it or not. When it is not a team sport, I think that's when it can be hard.

Here's another quote: "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." Thank you, African proverb, because that describes the epitome of team sport. I have this bracelet that I wear all the time — it is not a prop, it is just a bracelet. It is a gift from an amazing team where we worked together many years ago, and we chanted that proverb. On the inside it reads, "FAR TOGETHER."

"The hardest part is getting to the start line. Then trust in your training to get to the finish line." As a former marathoner, that was my mantra — in running and also in all the work I've had the privilege of doing in my lifetime. Trust in your training. Do the work to get to the start line. Do the due diligence to get to the start line. The race is to the start line. The rest is strategy and some added fuel and adjustment along the way.

Let's do some sports quotes, too. Pat Burns said, "You don't cry because it's over, you're happy because it happened" — unless you are a Leafs fan; then you are just crying. I know. "Hockey is a metaphor for life. You have to be willing to get knocked down and get back up." I say that's what bravery is: getting up.

Or how about a quote from the great Paralympic athlete Senator Petitclerc:

To me, this is the ultimate proof that if you have a strong commitment to your goals and dreams, if you wake up every day with a passion to do your job or your sport, everything is possible.

That's grit and determination that are in your hands.

How about we hear from Olympic athlete Senator McBean, and I love this one, short and to the point, about how hope is an attitude? Here is the quote: “It’s a good day to have a good day . . . .”

And then there is Olympic chef de mission Senator Deacon:

Failure is not a weakness but a process. Failure is feedback. The goal is to fail in practice, learn what happened, fix it and show up better the next day. . . .

“There is a lot of remarkableness in the unremarkable.” My dad used to say that all the time, and then he would say, “Just look for it.” Too bad he didn’t say, “Just do it.” We could have coined that phrase.

Here is the thing about sports quotes: They’re all about courage, grit, team, humility and seeing beyond yourself.

Okay, so now I have pumped myself up with some encouraging quotes. I’ve given myself some confidence. I will move to the personal side of sports and me. I’ve said 14 times I’m not comfortable. However, it’s a good day to have a good day, and I’m going to jump into community and sports.

My dad was transferred from Winnipeg — Blue Bombers all the way — to a small town. Sorry, folks from Saskatchewan and Hamilton, but I moved to a small town outside of Hamilton called Dunnville. I always hated that name, but I lived there. We settled there for a quite few years.

As a side note on politics and team sport, my dad ran to be a candidate for the Haldimand—Norfolk riding, a Conservative candidate, and I was a self-appointed brand and marketing manager. I was 10. I had an excellent chant and song in my marketing strategy — remarkable, really — thanks to Aerosmith. You may remember the song; I changed the words a little bit. It was: “Walk this way, vote Jack Hay.” And he lost.

Now I want to introduce you to my brother John Douglas Hay, a kind, shy, not-so-great student, my older brother. I was bossy; he was patient. We went everywhere together. We lived in the country, so our bikes were everything to us. The cornfield was an amazing place for hide-and-seek.

• (1510)

When John started high school, he was not very big, tall or confident — he was an even-keeled kind of kid and plodded along — but he was fast. I was faster, but he was pretty fast. He was humble, so me talking about him here? Not good.

In Grade 9, he tried out for the high school football team, the Dunnville Panthers. It is a big deal in Dunnville. It’s not exactly “Friday Night Lights” but a big deal. He almost made the cut.

Then something happened between Grades 9 and 10. John had a growth spurt. If any of you met my son at my swearing-in, John got that tall and big in a year, and he was still pretty fast.

School was not easy for John. He kept pushing forward. He had a great work ethic — he had that in spades — so he made his way through.

He tried out again, and he made the cut. John was a running back, number 11, third string. John was still shy, a quiet teen. Sport gave him something that unlocked so much. It gave him a community. It gave him permission to take risks. It gave him confidence. In that, the no-so-great student found something in school that he was really great at: computer science in those very early days of the computer. Hold on to that thought for later. Perhaps that is why I love the down-and-out, underdog sports stories. We lived it.

The Panthers were average: win some, lose more. The coaches, a high school football coach and two community members — Dan Dulmage, a former Ti-Cat and dentist, and, yes, Jack Hay — never gave up. I offered to do the marketing for the team. The reply was a polite, hard no.

John was never a star, not a popular jock. He was a workhorse player. He did catch a few in the end zone. In Grade 13, yes, the underdog Dunnville Panthers beat their nemesis, the Cayuga Wildcats, for the championship. This was something. My brother was on a championship team with my dad as the sidekick coach. There was even a parade.

John tried out for the Ti-Cats summer camp that summer. He didn’t make it but, as you can imagine, John didn’t fuss about that kind of stuff. He always dusted off and kept trying to get into the next play.

Sport had done something for him that shaped him so well: He belonged to this community, and he had confidence. He got accepted into Western University, one of the first computer science programs ever there, and he absolutely thrived.

In the second year, he was well beyond what was being taught in the class, and he was already working in research design labs. He made the varsity football team, the Western Mustangs, third string.

At the end of the second year, on May 23, John died in a car crash on his way back to work from having lunch with his girlfriend. A family devastated, a community shocked and a community that rallied around them. That is why I wanted to tell this story.

I rarely ever talk about this, not publicly, anyway. Here is what I will never forget. As my brother’s funeral was ending, and it was that heart-wrenching moment when we all had to leave and follow John out. I remember that being so hard and terrifying, thinking, “He can’t go, not alone.”

The community of sport took care of that. Every single one of his Dunnville Panther teammates from Grade 10, with their jackets on, came up the centre and both aisles of the church. All of them walked in front and walked us out. He wasn't alone.

His footprints through his short life on and off the field mattered. His footprints remain. I have never, ever forgotten how a community of sport unlocked all of my brother's potential, and I have never forgotten how that community of sport was there for him until the very end.

On a side note, many years later, I was at Western University for a meeting a couple of years after the Pan Am Games in 2001. They built this amazing sports stadium. I was wandering about.

For their campaign, they sold bricks for \$2,001 for the year. I thought that was smart. It had finished. It was a few years after that. I asked if I could buy one and put my brother's name on a brick in this stadium where, theoretically, he had played. They couldn't. Everything was complete. They didn't know where the bricks were.

Here is the thing about the community of sport. A few months later, out of the blue — I totally forgot — the Western University team called to say that they had figured out how to get a brick and that they could do it. Did I want it? I said, "Yes, I want it."

My mom, sister and I figured out what we wanted on the brick, and now my brother's name lives there. Here is the fun fact. Remember, he was an early adopter of the world of computer science. Remember, the campaign was already closed. John had died 20-plus years before then. There would have been no way for this to have been orchestrated, none. It is just serendipitous. It is how things happen.

When we went to see it, there was "John Douglas Hay," his brick, with two pretty large bricks on each side: one was Microsoft and the other one was IBM. I smile when I think of that.

Now I am going to go fast, because that took up a lot of time, but thank you for letting me share my brother with you.

I am going to jump into empowerment. I always use sports as my adrenaline rush. I like goals. I like start lines. I like finish lines. I didn't know what I was thinking back then — maybe it was my brother — but I decided to run a marathon. My first was Chicago.

I was at the start line, with all my chants. The hardest part is getting to the start line. Trust in your training: I used many words of profanity as I chanted that until the 35-kilometre mark. Then I knew I would make it. I had seven kilometres to go. I could run seven kilometres. That's the empowerment of sport.

In Chicago, the last 500 metres are lined with stadium seating. There are hundreds of people in the stands. I remember turning that corner into that last 500 metres and hearing so much insane cheering, crazy cheering.

I literally looked around and wondered: Who are they cheering for? Who is back here with the slow pack, at the back of the pack? Then it hit me. They were cheering for me, an athlete among thousands. That is the empowerment you get within a community. That is what I say sport is.

Finally and briefly — I am looking at my time — I want to cycle into impact and well-being.

There is no question that any and all sport — from walking to cycling to running to gardening — plays a vital role in one's well-being. That is a one-to-one ratio. It's indisputable. My running and tennis — I long gave up basketball — were anchors to my well-being in life, for hard days, good days and challenging days. It also ended up saving my life.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Senator Hay, I will have to interrupt. Would you like more time?

**Senator Hay:** Yes, please. I would ask for leave.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**Senator Hay:** Thank you, colleagues.

I was training again to do the work and to get to that start line. I got a bib for Berlin. I knew how to train. My body knew what to do. I had run at least 100 half-marathons, 10 full ones, Dublin being my tenth. That city knows how to party when they do marathons.

I thought, "Maybe I'm working too hard. Maybe my shoes need to be replaced." The days were cold. Something was off. I wasn't right. I used to leave my home in Mississauga and run to Union Station and take the train back. That was training. Now I was struggling to get my groove going. I even had to take the train back from Long Branch. Those of you in Toronto know that's only two or three stops from my home.

I couldn't go further. That's when I decided to get checked, to go to the doctor, get a blood test or something. Nothing much came of it. I was now starting to not even run seven kilometres, which was always my marker in a race, if you remember.

After another couple of trips to the doctor and a few more tests, my marathoning days were definitely over. To be honest, at that moment, I went, "All right. I'm done with that. Thank you." But my health journey began.

Had I not been training, I may have not noticed that things were not right. I may have not made it, actually, to the fall of that year, according to my doctors.

• (1520)

Training for a marathon probably did not save my life — my doctors did that — but I always wondered, “If not for sport.”

Now I run a much more normal distance. My long runs are — you guessed it — seven kilometres or so. My chronic health issue is now part of my life, and that’s totally okay because I know intimately the vital role that physical activity and sport will have on my well-being today and hopefully long into my future.

When someone asks if being appointed to the Senate is a lifetime appointment, I always say, “I sure hope not.”

Thank you for indulging me in my journey with sport. I thank Senators McBean, Deacon and Petitclerc for your leadership and kindness. I’ve never really shared much of this with anybody outside my tribe. My advice to all of you is to get out there, get moving, lean into something, run, walk, jump, cycle or garden. I guarantee you will find community. You will feel better. You will thrive. It will impact your life. Thank you, *chi-meegwetch*.

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

**Hon. Kim Pate:** Honourable senators, now for something a little different.

Thank you, Senators Hay and Cormier, for their very touching and heartfelt speeches. I also want to begin by expressing my gratitude to Senators Petitclerc, McBean and Deacon for launching this inquiry on the role of sport and physical activity in our lives and communities, and for inviting and challenging us all to answer the question: How have sport and activity shaped you and your Canadian experience?

For me, that answer begins on the running and bike trails, in the pool and at the hockey rink, but it leads me somewhere else — big surprise: behind prison walls.

Both inside and outside prison, sport is a proven means of improving physical and mental health, providing an outlet for managing energy and aggression, reducing substance abuse and coping with challenges. It is also a tool for fostering communication, trust, respect and collaboration, all of which are essential to successful community integration and prevention of crime.

International standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules, emphasize that sports in prisons are not a privilege but a fundamental part of rehabilitation and community integration. Those who have visited prisons have heard prisoners and staff lament how opportunities for sports and physical activities have been severely curtailed over the years. As a result of tough-on-

crime policies, prisoners experience more isolation and unit confinement, and have less access to programs and recreation. Yards that used to be filled with prisoners lifting weights, working out, jogging, playing ball, soccer, baseball or other games are now dust bowls or are overgrown with weeds.

Data from Correctional Service Canada itself reveals the consequences: increased rates of self-injury, the use of force, and conflict with both prisoners and staff. One example is the yard at Collins Bay Institution, a federal prison in Kingston. As a number of you have seen first-hand, part of the yard has now been converted into a new building, and the rest sits empty. That empty yard is emblematic of one of the most devastating cuts to prisoners’ contributions to sports.

Each summer, for more than 30 years, it used to come alive through the Exceptional People’s Olympiad. This was no ordinary event. It was built quite literally by the men inside. Most of the prison population spent months planning and preparing: from laying a running track and repairing the grounds to coordinating with community volunteers. Men served as electricians, sign painters and silkscreen printers. Then, for two days, they became hosts: serving food, acting as team captains, running games and clinics, and partnering with each athlete to support, mentor and be their friend.

Like the men who hosted and worked tirelessly to organize the event, many of the athletes themselves were subject to institutionalization because of their intellectual disabilities.

Through sport, the Exceptional People’s Olympiad brought joy to its participants, celebrating their capacities and abilities. The event also acknowledged the challenges the athletes faced — experiences of stigma, marginalization, isolation and institutionalization — and gave rise to many lifelong positive bonds with the prisoners for whom these realities were all too familiar as well.

One of the recidivist athletes enthusiastically declared, “I look forward to this more than birthdays and Christmas.” The efforts of the men at Collins Bay were recognized by the founder of the Special Olympics movement, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, and in 1979, the founder of the Special Olympics in Canada, Frank Hayden, attended the Olympiad.

Many staff from those days describe longstanding and wide-ranging positive impacts for the prisoners, the Special Olympians, the staff and the community. As one prisoner organizer put it:

This was done so those less fortunate than ourselves could enjoy . . . enthusiastic athletic competition in a climate of fun, joy and camaraderie with those who care what happens to them.

However, the Olympiad ended, not because it wasn’t working, but because of a ministerial directive to the Correctional Service of Canada, an instruction to stop “positive stories” about prisoners, including highlights of their volunteer, educational, rehabilitation and community contributions and achievements.

In risk-averse prison settings, prisoners can easily become characterized as callous and cruel when they don't help others, and conniving and manipulative when they do. Responses to crime are too often rooted in fear, driven by rhetoric that divides and dehumanizes rather than by evidence showing that supporting and including people makes us all safer. Experiences like the Exceptional People's Olympiad remind us that there is another path: one toward healing, integration and a collective building up of communities.

Colleagues, we come back to our Olympian colleagues' question: How has sport shaped us? Within my first days in this place, a chamber that calls on each of us to work together each day to advance that well-being of all Canadians, my partner, Pam, sat in the gallery and observed that you can often tell, when you hear senators talk, who among them have played team sports. Food for thought.

Literally and metaphorically, let's challenge and encourage ourselves to revisit what we have learned as we walk, run, wheel, bike, row, skate or ski forward together. Let us carry these lessons with us toward a more active, healthy and hopeful shared community.

Since Senator Cuzner raised it earlier and reminded us of the fabulous inspirational women hockey players, I want to add that tonight is the first Professional Women's Hockey League, or PWHL, playoff hockey game. At seven o'clock, I hope you will all join me in cheering on the Ottawa Charge. Go, Charge, go!

Thank you, *meegwetch*, and my apologies to the ears of the translators.

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

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

## FINAL REPORT OF THE CANADIAN YOUTH CLIMATE ASSEMBLY

### INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Coyle, calling the attention of the Senate to the final report of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly.

**Hon. Andrew Cardozo:** Honourable senators, I want to thank the other senators who have spoken today — Senators Wells, Hay, Cormier and Pate. You really make this a very special place. Thank you for sharing those speeches with us. I feel like I am a fifth leg in a four-person relay race, but I will do my best to take you to the finish line.

The Canadian Youth Climate Assembly held in September 2025 was a landmark event. It brought 33 engaged young Canadians from across the country to Parliament, showing how the independent Senate can cultivate new ideas and civic engagement.

[ Senator Pate ]

• (1530)

To those articulate young people who attended and contributed, thank you for your energy, your vision and your passion.

[*Translation*]

I also want to thank Senator Mary Coyle not only for raising this crucial inquiry regarding the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly and its final report, but also for her visionary leadership as co-chair of Senators for Climate Solutions. Senator Coyle, your ability to bring the energy and voices of the next generation to the heart of our parliamentary process is of the utmost importance.

[*English*]

I also want to recognize Senator Kutcher and Senator Quinn, who previously served as co-chairs, and Senator Muggli, who has stepped into the role of co-leadership in that group.

In reflecting on the assembly's report and the task ahead of us, I will make three points.

First, we must be honest about the scale of the climate challenge. Even if global emissions stopped today, we may still be looking at a planet 1.5 °C warmer than the pre-industrial average — the Paris target — and emissions are not going to stop today. The choices we make now can substantially alter the outcome, but whatever we do, young Canadians will be living on a planet much warmer than humanity has been used to.

Some warming is now “baked in,” to coin a term. Our challenge is the degree to which we can reduce the impact, limit the damage and adapt to our environment. Every fraction of a degree counts in this battle.

Second, the youth assembly concluded that we must commit to the level of investment required to meet this challenge. To do this, we may need to spend around 5% of our GDP each year; that's approximately \$125 billion in today's money. We need to do this consistently for each year we fail to sufficiently reduce emissions; the path ahead will become steeper.

The government has admitted we will miss our 2030 and 2035 emissions reduction targets; this is not good. There is much more to be done, but, fortunately, what we need to do is still within our capabilities.

Third, the assembly noted we must view this transition not as a burden but as a historic opportunity. As we spend money on transitioning from a high-carbon to a low-carbon economy, building clean power, electrification, public transport, retrofitting and other infrastructure adaptations for a sustainable future, we should do so with an eye to tackling the problems simultaneously.

One of the recommendations of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly was to “. . . incentivize the creation of sustainable, decent jobs . . .,” including “. . . dedicated initiatives aimed at young people . . .”

Colleagues, you may recall I have been raising the crisis of youth unemployment in recent months. The youth unemployment rate has consistently been twice that of the average national unemployment rate. The unemployment rate for those under 25 currently stands at around 13%. We have an opportunity to create well-paid, high-quality jobs for young people that will give them important skills and experience to build lifelong careers.

I commend the government for announcing the Youth Climate Corps in Budget 2025 last fall. This is exactly the kind of innovative thinking required to meet the moment. In effect, it responds to the recommendation of the Youth Climate Assembly report, but it is a proposal that could be more ambitious.

Budget 2025 proposed spending \$20 million a year this year and next on this program. According to my back-of-the-envelope calculations, that will support around 500 full-time equivalent jobs per year. It's not nothing, but it's not very much. It is not close to the scale we need to either reduce youth unemployment or mitigate climate change.

There are more than 400,000 under-25s currently looking for work. And there are nearly 1 million under-29s who are not in education, employment or training. This is untapped potential for our society and for our economy. We could be training these young people to do all sorts of useful things, certainly to mitigate the crisis of climate change.

A recent report on unemployment by The King's Trust — headed until a year ago by our colleague Senator Farah Mohamed — titled *Failure to Launch* estimated that reducing youth unemployment could raise Canada's GDP by \$18.5 billion by 2034, and this is probably a conservative estimate.

What we need to spend on reducing emissions and limiting the degree of impact of climate change is not a burden. It is well established that, at the very least, it is cheaper to act than it would be to continue emitting greenhouse gases without limit. One can only wonder what the unemployment rate will be if some of the more dire predictions about climate change come to pass.

[*Translation*]

What we are talking about here are investments in the future of our country, our planet and our young people. We can choose not only to leave them a livable Canada, but also to do so in a way that provides them with opportunities and skills that stimulate our economy, create wealth, and build the workforce of tomorrow.

[*English*]

The Youth Climate Assembly helped remind us that climate change represents a major challenge for the policy-makers of today. It need not be all doom and gloom. There are opportunities here to transform our economy. We should take those up with the enthusiasm the assembly had. We need to follow their leadership, youth leadership. After all, it will be their planet a lot longer than it is ours. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Kingston, 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 pro tempore:** Is leave granted, honourable senators?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(At 3:37 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 2 p.m.)

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