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CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, October 27, 2026

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

CONTENTS

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THE SENATE

Tuesday, October 27, 2026

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

Prayers.

[*Translation*]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

Hon. Victor Boudreau: Honourable senators, when the Canada Disability Benefit was created, its aim was to lift Canadians with disabilities out of poverty. More than three years after coming into force, the benefit is far from having achieved its objective. Currently, the maximum amount that any person can receive is $200 per month.

Living with a disability entails unavoidable costs. The current benefit doesn't cover the additional expenses borne by persons with disabilities. It doesn't even provide enough to meet the most basic needs of daily life.

[*English*]

Ability New Brunswick is a community-based non-profit organization in my province. They have been supporting and advocating for people living with disabilities since 1956. They have put forward two recommendations that could go a long way toward ensuring dignity, economic security and meaningful inclusion for people living with disabilities.

The first recommendation is straightforward: To lift those impacted by a disability out of poverty, the Government of Canada should raise the Canada Disability Benefit amount to a minimum of $2,400 per month. Combined with other provincial supports, this increase could have a meaningful impact by bringing recipients up to the official poverty line. Up to the official poverty line — let that sink in for a moment. A 1,100% increase to the current benefit would achieve nothing more than barely lifting recipients out of poverty.

[*Translation*]

Ability New Brunswick has a second recommendation: Ensure that more people can benefit from the Canada Disability Benefit. That's not as simple as it sounds. The application process is extremely complex and difficult. Ability New Brunswick wants the Government of Canada to make applying easier by allowing individuals who already receive provincial and territorial supports to qualify automatically for the federal benefit.

Honourable senators, in a country as wealthy and resource-rich as Canada, the status quo I described earlier is simply unacceptable. We can and must do better for people with disabilities.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Hon. Michèle Audette: Honourable senators, I thank the Anishinaabe people for welcoming me again today.

Today, I would like to talk to you about an Atikamekw boy named Maxime who was only six months old when he was taken alone to a hospital far from his community of Manawan in 1954. He died a few weeks later.

His parents, who do not speak English or French, did not learn of his death until two years later. For 72 years, his family did not know where he was laid to rest. For 72 years, an entire family was trying to find answers.

Thanks to the perseverance of his family and the work of Awacak and the Direction de soutien aux familles, baby Maxime has finally been found. DNA analyses have confirmed his identity.

[*English*]

Today, as I speak, he is finally returning home to Manawan, and this is an important moment of truth.

Of course, thanks to the tireless work of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and, of course, above all, to the courage and determination of the families who never stopped seeking answers, since 2020, the Quebec government has had legislation to help locate missing and murdered Indigenous children until 2031. It is Bill 79, which provides for searches for information pertaining to Indigenous children who went missing or died after being admitted to an institution.

[*Translation*]

This is an important reminder to never give up looking and, more importantly, to support families who are still searching for their loved ones.

In October 2025, the Quebec Superior Court issued a landmark decision based on Quebec Bill 79, which authorized the opening of a mass grave at the Saint-Charles Cemetery in Quebec City, right next door to us, and the exhumation of the plot where baby Maxime was buried. This is a deeply moving story.

[*English*]

But it also points out that 146 Innu, Atikamekw and Anishinaabe families are still waiting for answers regarding 251 children.

Approximately 500 access requests resulted in the retrieval of 96 medical records and 115 death records.

[*Translation*]

The truth is essential and so is remembering. Reconciliation involves meaningful action.

To Françoise Ruperthouse, Marie-Marthe Malek and all the other families, I want to say that I admire you. Don't give up.

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

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 members of the national council of the Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada, or FAAFC. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Aucoin.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

FÉDÉRATION DES AÎNÉES ET AÎNÉS FRANCOPHONES DU CANADA

Hon. Réjean Aucoin: Honourable senators, I'd like to begin by thanking members of the Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada, better known as the FAAFC, for being here today. I am especially pleased to welcome them to the Senate. Their presence reminds us of a simple truth: A community that cares about its seniors is a community that cares about its future.

The FAAFC is the national voice of francophone seniors living in minority communities across the country. It gathers together organizations from all regions of Canada and works tirelessly to promote active aging, address isolation, foster social inclusion and protect access to quality services in French.

Its role is also profoundly political in the best sense of the word. The FAAFC brings the concerns of francophone seniors to the attention of governments, including concerns related to health, long-term care, housing, financial security, access to services in French and civic engagement. It ensures that decisions affecting seniors take into account the realities facing francophone and Acadian minority communities. On many issues, the FAAFC has become an indispensable partner for public decision-makers.

• (1410)

As an Acadian, I can attest to the importance of this work.

I often think of my mother and the whole generation that came before us. Like many Acadians of her generation, she didn't always have access to the services, opportunities or recognition that we now take for granted. She nevertheless passed on something very precious to us: pride in our language, our culture and our identity.

It is thanks to people like her, and their contribution and vision, that our communities have been able to endure over the decades and continue to thrive. Our elders are the guardians of our communities' collective memory.

In fact, after meeting several members of the FAAFC this morning, I found myself wondering whether the word "senior" might need to be redefined. When I see your energy, your commitment and your activities calendar, I'm convinced that many of you could easily teach us here in this chamber a thing or two about vitality.

To everyone here today, thank you for your commitment and for everything you do to keep the Canadian francophonie alive.

On behalf of the Senate of Canada, thank you very much.

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 Major Sébastien Guay, member of the Royal Canadian Air Force and Staff Officer for the Chief of Programme, under the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff; Anne-Marie Béliveau, social worker and psychotherapist at the Centre Renaissance in Manitoba; as well as my spouse, Daniel Beaudette.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

DANIÈLE SAUVAGEAU, O.C.

Hon. Chantal Petitclerc: Honourable senators, last night, Danièle Sauvageau was inducted into the Quebec Sports Hall of Fame as a builder. That term is perfectly chosen. Danièle has not just racked up victories; she has opened doors, broken down barriers, and transformed women's sports in Canada.

[*English*]

Honourable senators, we all remember 2002, when Danièle led Canada's women's hockey team to an historic Olympic gold medal in Salt Lake City. That was a moment to remember.

But her greatest achievement goes far beyond that gold medal. She represents what happens when talent meets courage, vision and determination.

[*Translation*]

At a time when women still had to fight just to carve out a place for themselves in hockey, Danièle refused to bow to the limitations that were imposed on her. She established the women's hockey program for the Université de Montréal Carabins, helped create Centre 21.02, and today continues to advance women's professional hockey as the head of the Montréal Victoire.

[*English*]

She didn't just ask for a seat at the table. She decided that we needed a bigger table, and she made it happen. As a result of her leadership, generations of young girls can now dream bigger, aim higher and believe that they belong in hockey.

[*Translation*]

Believe me, I know full well just how extraordinary an Olympic medal is, but building a legacy that redefines the rules of the game for future generations is an even greater victory and that is precisely what Danièle Sauvageau has accomplished as a builder.

[*English*]

Danièle, you remind us that true champions don't just make history on the field of play; they make it possible for others to follow a passion and to become a part of that history.

[*Translation*]

Bravo, Danièle, on this unique and well-earned recognition.

Thank you.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

COMPETITION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—NINTH REPORT OF BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Clément Gignac, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy, presented the following report:

Tuesday, October 27, 2026

The Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy has the honour to present its

NINTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-239, An Act to amend the Competition Act, has, in obedience to the order of reference of June 9, 2026, examined the said bill and now reports the same with the following amendments:

1. *Clause 2, page 1*: Replace lines 9 to 12 with the following:

   "tion to improve the state of competition in the market or industry".

2. *Clause 2, page 1*: Add the following after line 14:

   "**(8.1)** A recommendation under subsection (8) must not propose the elimination or modification of any requirement, restriction or other measure established or administered under the *Food and Drugs Act* or any other Act administered by the Minister of Health, or any regulation, rule or order made under such an Act, if the requirement, restriction or other measure is intended to protect the health or safety of Canadians.".

3. *Clause 2, pages 1 and 2*:

   (a) on page 1, replace lines 22 and 23 with the following:

   "is delivered to the head of that institution. The Commissioner must publish the head's response on the Commissioner's website."; and

   (b) on page 2,

   (i) replace line 4 with the following:

   "port is delivered to the head of that institution. The Commissioner must publish the", and

   (ii) replace line 6 with the following:

   "to this effect — on the Commissioner's website.".

Respectfully submitted,

CLÉMENT GIGNAC

Chair

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

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

[*English*]

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

PARLIAMENTARY FORUM AT THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, JULY 22, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Parliamentary Forum at the

United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, held in New York, New York, United States of America, on July 22, 2025.

PARLIAMENTARY FORUM AT THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, JULY 14, 2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Parliamentary Forum at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, held in New York, New York, United States of America, on July 14, 2026.

ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS, APRIL 15-19, 2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the One Hundred and Fifty-second IPU Assembly and Related Meetings, held in Istanbul, Türkiye, from April 15 to 19, 2026.

[*Translation*]

BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY PROMOTING ECONOMIC FAIRNESS AND HOW FEDERAL APPROACHES CAN REDUCE THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY

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

> That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy be authorized to examine and report on promoting economic fairness for all Canadians, specifically, how federal approaches can reduce the underground economy in Canada by supporting participation in the formal economy, fostering fair competition for businesses, protecting workers and preserving federal revenues;
>
> That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate; and
>
> That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 30, 2027, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings until 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

• (1420)

[*English*]

QUESTION PERIOD

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

TRADE TARIFFS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, forestry is the backbone of many communities in British Columbia. This month, the United States finalized its latest review of duties on Canadian softwood lumber. Duties and tariffs came down from an average of 45% to 35%, but, for British Columbian producers, a 35% charge is hardly a relief. The industry says that the charges remain unjust as this dispute drags on.

Leader, the government has announced well over $1 billion in support, but there is still no agreement. What has that support achieved for B.C. workers, and when will the government deliver the one thing these communities have been asking for, which is a lasting softwood lumber deal?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Martin, you certainly know that in order to have a deal, it takes two to tango. At this moment, the Canadian government has made it quite clear that we are ready to resume discussions whenever our United States partner will take us seriously and will be able to make a deal.

The Prime Minister rightfully said that, instead of having a rapid deal, we prefer to have a good deal for Canadians, Canadian enterprises and Canadian communities as a whole. If it's with the next administration, so be it. We are dealing with a partner that is not willing to sit and discuss.

Senator Martin: With the previous Harper government, it was a priority. This is a long-standing dispute, and 35% is very crippling. The Prime Minister says that talks with Washington are gaining momentum, but producers and mill workers have heard that before. It's a very serious issue in B.C.

Will the government finally provide B.C. workers with a firm date for when this dispute will be resolved? We have been waiting for years.

Senator Moreau: The situation is very serious for all Canadians, and you are well aware that the United States has made a drastic shift in their relationship with allies and economic partners such as Canada. The Government of Canada is willing to negotiate in good faith with the United States in order to have a win-win agreement between the United States and Canada. In the meantime, the government is taking action to protect all enterprises in Canada and the Canadian economy as a whole.

FINANCE

AFFORDABILITY FOR CANADIANS

Hon. Jim Quinn: Government leader, earlier this year, STEP Canada submitted recommendations to the Department of Finance Canada related to several tax deductions that exist in the Income Tax Act that are not indexed to inflation, despite having been indexed to inflation when they were brought in.

There are dozens of tax deductions for business-related measures and disability, medical and child care expenses that are not indexed, so their real value erodes significantly over time. Many, if not most, benefits, credits and deductions are indexed during policy considerations because the relief becomes less and less valuable without it.

Since affordability is a concern with the ever-rising cost of living, has the government taken these suggestions into consideration, and can we expect to see consistency in our tax code in the coming years whereby all deductions will be indexed to recognize the utility they are meant to provide?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The government is taking recommendations that are brought forward as far as this issue is concerned very seriously.

As you probably know, Senator Quinn, I cannot make announcements for the Government of Canada on this issue. I am certain, though, that the Minister of Finance, who will be tabling a budget in the coming weeks, is listening to your question. Perhaps you will have your answer in the budget.

Senator Quinn: On the child care deduction, specifically, one of the most costly endeavours in life is raising children, and the birth rate in this country is low. One of the most commonly cited reasons for not having children is the cost of living and the cost of raising them, coupled with other impacts, like ones on the careers of individuals who take maternity or paternity leave. An enhanced deduction for child care expenses, coupled with existing measures like the Canada child benefit, would further buttress support offered to families.

Would the government consider looking at indexing these deductions to support families raising the next generation?

Senator Moreau: I will repeat part of my previous answer. As far as child care and child poverty are concerned, the government is already acting. Every child deserves the best possible start in life, and every parent should know their child is cared for. Affordable child care is also essential to Canada's economy. The government invested $57 billion to provide affordable child care to more than 900,000 children, saving parents up to $16,200 annually per child. That means fewer pressures and more choices for parents.

We are already acting on that issue as well.

[*Translation*]

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

TRANS CANADA TRAIL

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Senator Moreau, the Trans Canada Trail comprises more than 30,000 kilometres of multi-use trails spanning every province and territory in the country.

Since its creation in 1992, the Trans Canada Trail has benefited from sustained support from the federal government. Federal investments serve as a powerful catalyst, helping to leverage private and philanthropic contributions while generating significant economic benefits across Canada. However, the current federal funding agreement, which earmarks $55 million over five years, is set to expire in 2027. Without renewed funding, the long-term sustainability of the trail could be at risk.

Senator Moreau, can you reassure the Trans Canada Trail organization that the federal government remains committed to maintaining its support for the next five years?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question, Senator Moncion. I will repeat a bit of what I was saying to Senator Quinn. Unfortunately, I can't comment on the government's future investments.

However, the government continues to invest in expanding and improving the Trans Canada Trail through project investments under the Active Transportation Fund. For example, it invested $1.3 million to expand the Trans Canada Trail between the town of Tecumseh, the city of Windsor and the municipality of Lakeshore, and it allocated $3.3 million to extend the trail to Ajax, Ontario.

The federal government has made a long-standing commitment to the Trans Canada Trail. I cannot speak to the future, but I expect that commitment to continue.

Senator Moncion: Given that the federal government places Canadian unity at the heart of its priorities, don't you agree that the Trans Canada Trail is a powerful symbol of that unity?

Senator Moreau: Once again, thank you for your question. In 2022, the government already recognized the trail as an important symbol fostering Canadian unity. Let's not forget that the trail connects Canada from coast to coast, passes through nearly 15,000 communities and is used by approximately 29 million Canadians in all four seasons.

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

CANADA POST

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Government leader, Canada Post's recent announcement of major operational changes is an important step toward modernizing a Crown corporation facing persistent financial challenges and growing competition in the parcel delivery market.

As Canadians increasingly turn to e-commerce, the postal service must adapt to remain relevant, competitive and financially sustainable. The urgency is clear: Canada Post reported a pre-tax loss of $482 million in the first half of 2026 alone. Its plans to modernize delivery, review its post office network and expand parcel services recognize that the status quo is no longer sustainable.

Can the government explain how it will support Canada Post during this transformation? How will you ensure these reforms deliver lasting financial sustainability and greater competitiveness? What accountability measures will the government implement to track progress?

• (1430)

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question, a very important one. The government is already supporting Canada Post by providing it with flexibility, stability and modernizing its network systems. Improvement shows, as the Crown corporation has reported a 32% smaller operating loss and a $120-million cost improvement. A labour agreement has also been ratified, in place through 2030.

Moreover, Canada Post is introducing weekend parcel delivery, which will make it more competitive with the private sector. Services are already under way in Ottawa and Montreal and will be launching in Toronto in late November, reaching more than 7 million households. The government is also seeking new leadership for Canada Post to bolster the Crown corporation and better serve Canadians in the 21st century.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer.

Modernization must also recognize the essential role that Canada Post plays in connecting rural, remote and Indigenous communities, as well as supporting small businesses across the country.

As the corporation implements these changes, what assurances can the government provide that reforms will not leave underserved Canadians behind and that SMEs can also expect improvements in service delivery, efficiency, reliability and affordability?

Senator Moreau: The government has instructed Canada Post to build a more effective network while protecting services that are a lifeline for local economies and provide critical access to life-saving medication and information. This effective network will undoubtedly include many rural and Indigenous communities, as you asked in your question.

On September 25, the government announced that it will lift the moratorium on rural post offices in place since 1994, which has not evolved in 30 years. Some areas that used to be rural will now be suburban or even urban but are still required to offer —

[*Translation*]

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

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

CANADA-EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Senator Moreau, the Canada-European Union summit is taking place this week in Montreal and discussions are expected to focus on Canada's status as an associate member of the European Union. Has the government consulted the provinces before entering into any new agreements related to this status? If so, can you provide us with some details about those consultations?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I would first like to provide a bit of background. The federal government is seeking to strengthen Canada's existing partnership with the European Union. As the Prime Minister has said, Canada and Europe share core values and are willing to cooperate to create prosperity and security for all. The summit, which will take place on Thursday and Friday in Montreal, will be an opportunity to lay the groundwork for a more comprehensive agreement between the European Union and Canada.

To answer your question more specifically, the federal government has committed to consulting the provinces and territories as negotiations progress. In fact, the federal government has invited all of the country's premiers to the summit dinner, which will bring together political and economic leaders to foster collaboration and ties between the various delegations and promote discussions between the provinces and the federal government.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: I understand from your response that the federal government has not yet consulted the provinces.

Quebec has been conducting its own international diplomacy in areas within its jurisdiction for some 60 years. However, there have occasionally been disputes between Quebec and Canada over international representation. What does the federal government intend to do to prevent such a situation from happening again?

Senator Moreau: The consultations have not yet begun because, for one thing, negotiations with the European Union have not begun either. We're still just in the early stages.

The government is practising what is known as cooperative federalism on this issue, as it does on all issues, and will continue to do so. Through its official representative to the European

Union, Mr. Wilkinson, the federal government is already working closely with Quebec's delegation in Brussels, precisely in the context of these discussions.

[*English*]

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

Hon. Colin Deacon: My question is for the Chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration. Senator Loffreda, in March 2022, the Senate unanimously adopted an Environmental and Sustainability Policy Statement that committed to reducing the Senate's carbon footprint to net zero by 2030. The Senate's net-zero ambition demonstrates leadership, helps us to understand what is required to achieve net zero and gives us the credibility to hold the government to account.

The Internal Economy Committee contracted experts to create an inventory of our emissions and a suite of proposals to achieve net zero. Some initiatives came at an extra cost, some at no cost, and others at cost savings. The final report was never released publicly, and the Senate has yet to take any action after four years. It's now 2026, almost 2027. Does the committee intend to fulfill the Senate's unanimous commitment to ourselves and Canadians?

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Thank you, Senator Deacon, for your question and for your leadership on this issue. Let me thank you for the report and to everyone who contributed to this important work.

As Chair of the Internal Economy Committee, I take that commitment seriously, alongside our responsibility to manage public funds prudently.

The emissions inventory published in 2023 provides a foundation for assessing our environmental footprint. Any further measures should be evaluated against their expected emission reductions, their costs, their potential savings and operational requirements.

I must nonetheless respect the confidentiality of in camera proceedings and cannot speak to those deliberations. The committee makes its decisions collectively. My approach is to encourage practical, measurable progress with environmental responsibility, fiscal discipline and accountability guiding our —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, senator.

Senator C. Deacon: Thanks very much. I didn't hear a yes or a no, but we have made a commitment.

We have seen the Quebec National Assembly agree to an option of purchasing carbon credits. We have options on the table that could reduce our costs, enabling funds to be freed up to purchase carbon credits. There have been 41 new senators since we made this commitment, who, I think, would be very interested in seeing progress on this issue. But perhaps we need to bring this issue back to this chamber. Maybe that's an opportunity for us.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for the question. As I said, the committee takes its decisions collectively. As the Internal Economy Committee, our role is to provide direction while balancing many institutional priorities and responsibilities. Our focus is ensuring that any future actions are grounded in current realities, affordability and responsible stewardship of public resources.

As is often the case with institutional initiatives of this scale, implementation requires careful assessment of costs, operational impacts, feasibility and priorities. Thank you for your question.

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

MILITARY PROCUREMENT

Hon. Richard Martel: Government leader, your government's Bill C-40 provides for new mechanisms to speed up military procurement. As you know, CFB Bagotville plays an important role in Canada's air defence. Our military personnel must be able to rely on modern equipment that is available and delivered in a timely manner. What specific changes will this bill bring about to speed up the delivery of the equipment our Armed Forces need? More importantly, when will we start to see results?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I hope we will see results as soon as this bill is passed. It will have to be studied in this chamber first, however.

Essentially, my understanding is that responsibility for military procurement was previously spread across several government organizations. Centralizing that process will make it possible to accelerate decision-making.

Senator Martel, you're well aware that the Government of Canada is currently making unprecedented investments, both to safeguard Canada's sovereignty and to ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces have equipment that meets the requirements of a modern 21st-century country, a member of the G7 and home to one of the most prosperous economies in the G7.

Senator Martel: You're talking about major investments and new equipment. However, to be fully operational, we also need to have sufficient military personnel, technicians and specialized personnel. How does your government intend to coordinate new military procurement with the recruitment and training of personnel needed to operate and maintain this equipment?

• (1440)

Senator Moreau: Essentially, the Government of Canada is in constant communication with senior Canadian Armed Forces leadership and closely monitors recruitment trends in terms of both numbers and quality. You're right: We need not only

equipment, but also the men and women who have the courage to use it under extremely difficult conditions. The Government of Canada is supporting the Canadian Armed Forces in this regard.

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

IMMIGRATION TO NEWFOUNDLAND

Hon. Fabian Manning: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Leader, there are some startling statistics in Newfoundland and Labrador. Over 25.2% of our population is 65 years or older compared to the Canadian average of 19.5%. The median age in our province at the present time is 47.8 years, and 4.9% of our population is aged 80 years and older.

While intergovernmental relations between Newfoundland and Labrador and Ottawa are in a very good place today, the issue of centralized federal immigration policies needs to be addressed sooner than later.

Our province is experiencing structural labour shortages in critical areas such as home building and health care. With several major projects on the table, namely, the Bay du Nord oil development project and the development of the Churchill River, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador would like to have expanded powers to independently nominate permanent residents.

Can the Leader of the Government advise the chamber today if this is something the federal government is interested in doing?

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

I understand that there has been an immigration agreement between Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador since 2022, in which the Government of Canada recognizes the goal of Newfoundland and Labrador to attract and retain immigrants, foster inclusion and full participation in society, and build diversity to support innovation and economic growth, as reflected in the provincial immigration strategy and the provincial policy of multiculturalism.

As I mentioned to Senator Miville-Dechêne, the government is practising a federalism of collaboration, and I'm sure there would be fruitful discussion, as far as immigration is concerned, with all provinces, including Newfoundland and Labrador, to see how things could be improved. My understanding is that the Prime Minister is open-minded about doing that at the federal level.

Senator Manning: Thank you, leader.

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is very unique in many ways. An immigration policy that works well in downtown Toronto or in the foothills of Alberta would most likely not be what our province needs. It can't be a one-size-fits-all approach.

Would the Leader of the Government seek an answer for me as soon as possible on our province's request to have more of a say about whom we can invite and welcome to live and work in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Senator Moreau: I certainly will, Senator Manning. As a matter of fact, immigration is a very delicate question, which every province has tried to craft to match their own circumstances. That has been the case in Quebec, Western Canada and the Maritimes. I will gladly bring your comment to the attention of the minister, and I will get back to you.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Krista Ross: Senator Moreau, I rise again to ask about the tabling of the public accounts.

In our exchange three weeks ago, you mentioned the legislated requirement within the Financial Administration Act requiring that public accounts be tabled on or before December 31, or within 15 sitting days thereafter. I can tell you that I am, in fact, aware of this.

However, that was not my question. I asked about the supposed commitment by the Treasury Board to table the public accounts by October 15 of every year. In fact, per the September 2024 report of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, entitled *Timely Financial Reporting: A Path Forward for the Public Accounts of Canada*, the government has already indicated that a regular October 15 tabling date can readily be achieved.

So, back to my original question: Is the targeted annual tabling date for the public accounts still October 15? If so, why have they been delayed?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I know you're well aware of the regulations and requirements. I didn't want to lecture you on that issue when answering your previous question, nor do I want to try to do that today.

My understanding is that, actually, they are collecting all the information to ensure that everything will be made available as far as those documents are concerned and that it will be quite precise. I have no specific date to answer your question as to exactly when and whether it will be tabled on October 15. I have no information whatsoever concerning the exact date when those documents will be tabled.

As I mentioned earlier, when you asked the question a few weeks ago, it is obvious that the government will respect its legal obligation as far as those documents are concerned.

Senator Ross: I would remind you, Senator Moreau, that earlier tabling was one of the recommendations of both the Public Accounts Committee in the other place and the former PBO. Canada falls short under the International Monetary Fund, or IMF, fiscal reporting guidelines, which recommend that

governments publish their annual financial statements within six months of the close of the fiscal year, which, for us, would be September 30.

However, there is always a difference between when the public accounts are signed and when the government chooses to table them.

Has the Receiver General signed off on the financial statements? If so, when were they signed?

Senator Moreau: I don't have the answer to that question. As I mentioned, I'm aware of all that has been said concerning those documents, but I can only tell you that I don't have a date when those documents will be tabled. My understanding is that there is a commitment from the government to respect the legal requirement for the tabling of those documents.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CUTTING RED TAPE FOR ALL CANADIANS BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Iris G. Petten moved second reading of Bill S-7, An Act to modernize certain regulatory and administrative processes.

She said: Honourable senators, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill S-7, the cutting red tape for all Canadians act.

For some time, Canadians and businesses have been asking the government to cut red tape, simplify processes and make it easier to access services they rely on. This bill is the first iteration of a recurring bill to do just that. At its heart, Bill S-7 is about reducing unnecessary red tape and improving the efficiency and responsiveness of the federal regulatory system.

Red tape includes things like filling out the same forms repeatedly, waiting too long for approvals and using old systems because the rules haven't kept up with technology.

Cutting red tape doesn't only mean removing repetitive regulations but also making regulations smarter. These necessary changes will not come at the expense of protecting Canadians. They are about making regulations clearer and processes faster, which enables Canadians and businesses to get things done.

These changes will save time and money for businesses. As one of the backbones of Canada's economy and success, this ultimately benefits all Canadians.

Businesses create the goods and services that have made, and will continue to make, our country so prosperous. They invest in new ideas, create jobs across the country and ensure that Canadians can compete and succeed in a rapidly changing global economy.

When businesses have the confidence to invest and grow, the benefits are felt far beyond the factory floor, office or storefront. They are felt by workers, families and communities from coast to coast to coast.

• (1450)

In a rapidly changing global economy, we must ensure our regulatory system keeps pace with new technologies, business models and opportunities for growth.

We know that federal regulations are required to protect the health, safety, security and well-being of Canadians and the environment. Right now, many of these regulations are outdated or duplicative. A modern and effective regulatory system helps prioritize the health and wellness of Canadians and the environment while supporting innovation and growth to allow Canada to flourish.

Honourable senators, this bill is a key part of ensuring the federal regulatory system can meet the moment. Bill S-7 will enable Canada's regulatory system to reflect today's reality instead of yesterday's technology. It contains a series of important proposals that support progress across a wide range of areas.

It would reduce unnecessary barriers so Canadian businesses can be more productive and competitive; help Canadian products, services and innovations reach the market faster; make project reviews more efficient and predictable; deliver faster, more responsive regulatory services for Canadians and businesses; and strengthen Canada's competitiveness, allowing businesses across the country to thrive. These are all things businesses have been calling on the government to advance.

Bill S-7 identifies 31 amendments to existing legislation and their accompanying regulations that would reduce red tape for businesses, stakeholders and Canadians. These amendments will have important and tangible impacts.

One area where positive impacts are expected is regarding the use of digital tools to improve services. This legislation would support Canada's leadership in 5G smart devices and the next generation of digital tools by amending the Radiocommunication Act.

These changes would authorize the Minister of Industry to use automated decision making to speed up licensing and accelerate the pace at which wireless products can get to market. For example, low-risk wireless devices, like Bluetooth headsets, would be subject to a simpler registration process. This will help to facilitate the adoption of emerging wireless technologies and contribute to increased connectivity.

A second expected positive impact will be smarter and simpler reporting. Honourable senators, for years, the government has been hearing from stakeholders that reporting requirements can be burdensome. Bill S-7 would improve Transport Canada's ability to protect confidential business information under the Canada Transportation Act, eliminate unnecessary inspections under the Marine Transportation Security Act and use automated processes.

It would also remove duplicative reporting requirements under the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or CFIA, has been preparing and tabling reports that contain much of the same information. The amendment would allow the requirements to be met if the information has been tabled in each house of Parliament a single time.

A further impact of Bill S-7 will be in relation to opening up internal trade. To allow agricultural products to be more easily sold across Canada, the bill would eliminate more than 160 outdated marketing rules from the Agricultural Products Marketing Act and streamline the process for updating fees. This reduces administrative costs and delays and will save the government the equivalent of about six months of work.

More generally, the impact of Bill S-7 is to simplify processes while respecting governing principles and applicable laws. For example, Bill S-7 would amend the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation and Offshore Renewable Energy Management Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation and Offshore Renewable Energy Management Act in order to align the legislation with hazardous workplace product rules of the Hazardous Products Act.

Offshore energy operators, workers and regulators would benefit from clearer requirements, improved compliance and enhanced workplace health and safety protections.

Bill S-7 would also amend the Health of Animals Act to enable more flexible approaches to managing international waste, including new treatment technologies and approved third-party programs.

Businesses would benefit from more efficient and cost-effective waste management options. For example, airlines are currently required to dispose of waste in a designated landfill or incineration site. The changes to the Health of Animals Act would allow for the disposal of waste in environmentally responsible ways, including recycling and composting.

Honourable senators, these few examples demonstrate how targeted legislative changes can deliver meaningful and impactful results. They help reduce unnecessary barriers for businesses, improve outcomes for Canadians and support a regulatory system that is more responsive.

This legislation will advance the broader goal of ensuring that regulations protect the public interest while enabling growth, innovation and competitiveness.

Overall, the bill is expected to deliver significant costs and time savings, including at least $264 million for businesses and the government over 10 years.

These amendments are important, but what is equally important is that these amendments do not affect the strong health, safety and environmental safeguards that protect Canadians.

Canada has one of the strongest regulatory frameworks in the world. While this bill will amend legislation and its accompanying regulations, it will not alter or affect the strong safeguards we have in place.

In fact, the cutting red tape for all Canadians act introduces new measures to protect the environment, including new fines for polluters and more effective methods of conducting environmental inspections.

For example, amendments to the Environmental Violations Administrative Monetary Penalties Act would allow for a more proportionate and efficient approach to environmental enforcement.

They would enable administrative monetary penalties, AMPs, for the pollution prevention provisions under the Fisheries Act by increasing the maximum penalty amount for a violation and by extending certain limitation periods. These changes facilitate productivity and a level playing field by allowing industry to address environmental non-compliance in a manner that is quick, predictable and consistent.

The bill also amends the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms Examination Regulations and the Canadian Bill of Rights Examination Regulations to require that the Charter and Bill of Rights examinations required by those regulations must be conducted without delay.

All regulations are subject to the Cabinet Directive on Regulation, which requires all federal regulators to ". . . protect and advance the public interest." Public interest is defined to include ". . . the health, safety, security, social and economic well-being of Canadians, and the environment."

It is required for regulators to assess the social and economic impact of each regulatory proposal on diverse groups of Canadians. These analyses are made public as part of the regulation-making process. At all times, regulations must respect the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Honourable senators, this is not a one-time bill. The President of the Treasury Board launched a Red Tape Review that identified nearly 500 areas where red tape can be reduced. This is only the first iteration of a bill that is meant to be a recurring legislative mechanism to allow the federal government to address overly complicated, inconsistent or outdated requirements and keep the regulatory system up to date.

• (1500)

It prioritizes transparency to ensure the government continues to be accountable to Canadians and Canadian businesses.

This includes annual reporting on the measures put in place and the progress made in reducing the regulatory burden.

The bill also addresses challenges raised by businesses and Canadians through consultations and targeted regulatory reviews. Key stakeholders, including the Economic Strategy Tables and the Advisory Council on Economic Growth, have stressed that having such a recurring mechanism in place is critical to improving Canada's regulatory system.

By amending laws that are too inflexible, too specific or simply outdated, this bill is an important reminder of the need for ongoing regulatory review and legislation that stands the test of time.

The bill does that by helping to address irritants in regulatory processes experienced by businesses and Canadians and ensuring regulatory processes evolve in tandem with technology.

It is important to recognize that the bill before us today is not the only measure the government is undertaking to create a modernized regulatory system. While amendments to the 31 targeted pieces of legislation are required to update their respective regulations, this is not the case for all regulation improvements.

This bill is one part of the government's efforts to reduce unnecessary burden and ensure that regulations remain effective and efficient.

Existing efforts have been undertaken to make regulations work better for Canadians.

In 2024, regulators removed $10 million more in administrative burden on businesses than they added. They also took 38 more regulations off the books than they introduced for a net reduction of 276 regulations since the 2012-13 fiscal year.

In 2025, the government established the Red Tape Reduction Office. It works closely with all federal regulators to help reduce barriers to innovation, productivity and economic growth, while reducing costs for Canadians and businesses.

There is also the Centre for Regulatory Innovation, which works across government to help regulators and the regulatory system keep pace with technology. It has committed $1.7 million over three years to advance initiatives, such as streamlining approvals for new fertilizers and modernizing certification standards and technology in the use of aviation.

This will help departments identify practical ways to improve regulatory processes and support more timely decision making. It will also help ensure that Canada's regulatory framework keeps pace with new technologies to best serve Canadians.

From 2020 to 2025, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat provided $14.2 million to help modernize regulations through projects like drone pesticide studies and streamlined greenhouse gas reporting. In July 2025, the President of the Treasury Board launched a 60-day Red Tape Review.

To conduct the review, departments and agencies that have regulatory responsibilities examined regulations in their portfolios, including how they are administered, and proposed actions to eliminate red tape.

This included removing outdated regulations, reducing duplication with provincial rules and making it easier to access and deliver services.

Progress reports released in September 2025 identified nearly 500 initiatives to streamline services, cut duplication and reduce costs for Canadians and businesses. Some of the proposed initiatives include reducing red tape and making Canada's agriculture sector more economically resilient; a pilot on real-time payroll reporting to improve Employment Insurance administration; and providing access to new drugs more quickly.

Each of these initiatives may be modest on their own, but together, they can have a meaningful impact by reducing friction, improving efficiency and helping Canadians and businesses spend less time navigating administrative processes.

Through this work, over 120 red tape irritants have already been removed.

In December 2025, the government also launched horizontal red tape reviews to identify broader opportunities to reduce regulatory barriers and costs for Canadians and businesses.

These horizontal reviews will dig deeper with a targeted focus on themes that cut across multiple departments.

In addition, just last year, the government held the first Red Tape Reduction Summit, where businesses from across Canada identified regulatory challenges and opportunities to improve the system. These conversations provided valuable insights into where the government can make the greatest difference by reducing unnecessary burden while maintaining important protections.

For example, the proposed amendments to the Canada–Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation and Offshore Renewable Energy Management Act and the Canada–Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation and Offshore Renewable Energy Management Act were suggested after consultation with many relevant stakeholders, including offshore workers, labour unions, regulators, marine transfer service providers and many others.

Consultations not only included relevant stakeholders but also other levels of government. Federal and provincial ministers met for the first time in May of this year to strengthen collaboration and support a more coordinated approach to reducing red tape across the country.

They reaffirmed a common goal of making governments work faster and smarter for Canadians by simplifying requirements, leveraging digital services and updating policies and regulations.

These conversations reflect a growing recognition that many regulatory challenges cross jurisdictions and are best addressed through partnership and alignment.

The cutting red tape for all Canadians act is only part of the government's ongoing efforts to improve the federal regulatory system.

Honourable senators, while many of the measures contained in this bill are technical in nature, their impact is practical and far-reaching. Taken together, these proposals would help reduce unnecessary burden and improve efficiency. They would also ensure that Canada's regulatory framework can better respond to new technologies, evolving industries and changing economic realities. For businesses, that means greater certainty and fewer unnecessary barriers to innovation, investment and growth. For Canadians, it means more responsive government, stronger economic opportunities and a regulatory system that continues to protect health, safety, security and the environment while delivering results more effectively.

More broadly, this bill reflects an important principle: Regulations should not remain unchanged simply because they have existed for a long time. They should evolve alongside the country they serve.

In the challenging times in which we find ourselves, making it easier for Canadian businesses to innovate, invest and trade is more important than ever.

• (1510)

By helping to modernize federal legislation and maintain a regulatory system that is both effective and efficient, this bill would help ensure that Canada remains competitive, innovative and well positioned for the future.

Thank you, honourable senators, in advance for your support of this important and timely bill.

Hon. Denise Batters: Will Senator Petten take a few questions?

Senator Petten: Yes.

Senator Batters: Thank you very much.

First of all, red tape reduction and efficiency are always good, but we need to know more details here. I am wondering about a few things. You mentioned in your speech — and I noted this also in a media report — that the Liberal government estimates that $264 million is projected to be saved from Bill S-7. How much of that will be from federal public service layoffs, and how many federal public servants' jobs will be cut due to this regulatory review? What departments will be affected in that, and how many federal public servants will be cut in each of those departments?

Senator Petten: Thank you for your question, Senator Batters. The efficiencies proposed in this bill are not aimed at cutting jobs.

Senator Batters: Well, there were a couple of points in your remarks when you were speaking about ". . . the use of digital tools to improve services" by the government, and you also mentioned at one point, in one example, it ". . . will save the government the equivalent of about six months of work." I would think that both of those probably mean that the federal public servants who would normally be doing those things might be cut.

Can you please look into that for us? That is an important part of knowing what this bill involves and an overall scope of it. Due to the provisions of Bill S-7, wouldn't fewer federal public servants be needed to grant approvals, carry out inspections and handle other regulatory work that is done by them currently but that would not be required to be done by them due to Bill S-7?

Senator Petten: Senator Batters, this bill is not looking at reducing the labour force. Of course, we will be studying this bill in committee, and when the appropriate people are there, if you would like to get more information on some of this stuff, I'm sure they will be readily available to help us in this study.

Senator Batters: I would like to get some answers from the government right now if possible. If you're saying that the $264 million in projected savings is not coming from federal public service jobs being cut, then how does the government calculate that they are going to save that $264 million from this act? What are the details of that substantial projected savings amount?

Senator Petten: What they're hoping to see as a result of some of these cuts is how they can help businesses grow, and a big portion of this bill, as well, is about small businesses. It is all about looking at how we can be more efficient than we are now and also helping more businesses thrive in our country.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michèle Audette: Would Senator Petten accept a question?

I understand. I read Bill C-7. There is no direct connection to Indigenous peoples. However, the bill refers to 31 laws.

In your deliberations and in the message you conveyed to the government, of course, did you consider whether certain committees, such as the Committee on Indigenous Peoples, will be given the opportunity to study the bill in order to make recommendations or raise concerns, given that it affects fisheries, natural resources and other areas?

Thank you.

[*English*]

Senator Petten: I don't know if it's been decided yet what committee this bill will go to, so I guess they will decide after looking at the issues. As I understand, there are no Indigenous issues that have been identified in this bill.

[*Translation*]

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

Senator Audette: Yes.

[*English*]

With Bill C-5, Bill C-39 and Bill S-7, there are positive or negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples, so I would be very surprised if there are none. If we want to be constructive, can the message be passed along that we make sure that we have Indigenous witnesses, no matter which position?

Thank you.

Senator Petten: Yes, I have your message, and I will pass that along. Thank you.

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Will Senator Petten take a question?

Senator Petten: Yes.

Senator Clement: Thank you.

I wanted to ask about Bill C-5, Bill C-39 and now Bill S-7. Some Canadians and some stakeholders, when they hear about cutting red tape, don't necessarily feel reassured by that language. You talked about consultations in your speech. What have those consultations revealed, and how is the government planning to respond to some of the concerns that have been raised?

Senator Petten: This bill was heavily influenced by stakeholders, and what they wanted in a bill was to reduce the burdens that they are experiencing in businesses. There has been extensive consultation with a number of organizations to come to this. Of course, we have to realize that this is just the beginning of a bill. We will be coming back, and there will probably be a lot more to come. They will be able to be involved in further iterations of this bill.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Other senators have asked questions that also reflect some of my concerns. I know that, in spirit, there are regulatory burdens, especially with small businesses, and we do need to modernize and be more efficient. I agree with that.

As Senator Audette points out, it is a big bill. It's 70 to 90 pages, depending on the print version you look at. I haven't looked at the details, but there are 31 separate acts bundled together affecting 11 federal departments and agencies. There are some sweeping powers for the minister. I have some questions related to that.

I do agree that there should be scrutiny for the specific sectors that will be impacted, so it will be interesting to see what we do regarding the study of this bill.

It's really such a cross-section, whether it's about Canada Border Services Agency exemptions, marine safety or fertilizer. I can see all the committees will be paying attention to what happens with Bill S-7.

My first question relates to the ministerial powers. The minister's sweeping unilateral authority to exempt entities and activities from federal statutes and regulations by order is one of the powers. How does the government justify giving cabinet ministers the power to bypass primary legislation without meaningful parliamentary oversight and approval? Ministers will be given these powers through this bill.

Senator Petten: There are a number, as you say, of pieces of legislation that are involved in this particular bill. Some of them were overhanging from previous legislative proposals, so it made sense to group them together.

Grouping them together for readiness was stakeholder feedback and the appetite to move forward at this time. The President of the Treasury Board has explained that, instead of individual departments, he is proposing a separate package of legislative changes. Some of them were only maybe a page in length. For some of them, it made more sense for the government to put this bill together. It was a more efficient way to deal with the proposals because of the concerns of them being outdated now. Some of it was just small things that needed to be done, and it made more sense for them to be done this way. So it was more efficient to be able to do it grouped together with a number of bills.

Senator Martin: Thank you for that explanation. In terms of the ministerial powers that will be given through this bill and the concerns about stakeholders who will be impacted in different sectors, the bill permits ministers to enact sweeping administrative adjustments and override standard regulatory steps under tight timelines. Again, it was based on consultation, but I read about some concerns from other critics about the consultation that will happen after the enactment of this bill. Are there guarantees to stakeholders that their objections won't be ignored through discretionary ministerial shortcuts? If ministers have these powers, will there be steps along the way where consultation will continue, especially with sectors being impacted by the changes?

• (1520)

Senator Petten: It is my understanding that they will be reviewed. There is a process in place. Of course, as I indicated earlier, this is the first iteration of this bill, and there will be recurring things. If something is not working, doesn't seem to be right or is not attaining the efficiency we are looking for, they will address it, even in a further bill that will be upcoming.

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

Senator Batters: Yes, I do.

Going back to the $264 million in projected savings, I'm wondering if you can provide us with examples of how the government will calculate that number. I'm assuming they didn't just pluck $264 million out of the air. I would like to know how they project that calculation can be arrived at.

Senator Petten: Senator Batters, this is a very extensive bill. It's very detailed. This is one of those questions that would be good to ask when we perform our committee review of this bill.

Senator Batters: Okay. I will move on to another question.

You mentioned in your speech what I believe you called the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms examination regulations. Another part included something else related to examination regulations. You said that this bill added the phrase "without delay." Did the government really need to add these words to indicate that they must do something without delay? I would think, generally, that should be assumed.

How bad were these delays that they had to add the words "without delay" to those two regulations?

Senator Petten: They are just reinforcing that no one will be taking anything for granted.

Senator Batters: I'm sorry, but I didn't hear your response.

Senator Petten: I said that, instead of making an assumption, they are reinforcing that this is the right thing to do.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

EXCISE TAX ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

Hon. Éric Forest moved second reading of Bill C-38, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (extension of the federal fuel excise tax relief).

He said: Honourable senators, it is a privilege for me to rise today to speak to Bill C-38, the Canadian Fuel Affordability Act.

Canadians are living in a rapidly changing world, a world that is more complex, more unstable and, for far too many of them, more expensive and unpredictable.

Today, I will present the bill before us and explain how it fits into the broader context of the measures that the government is taking to help Canadians cope with affordability challenges in a time of prolonged global uncertainty.

[*English*]

The cost of living remains a major concern for many Canadians, and the government has adopted measures to help them keep more of their hard-earned money.

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, Bill C-38 is an integral part of that effort. It will continue to provide much-needed relief at the pump.

To fully grasp the scope of this bill, it is important to consider the broader economic context in which it is set.

Global conflicts and ongoing supply disruptions in the Middle East are driving up fuel prices around the world. At the same time, the United States is imposing new tariffs on Canada.

These events only serve to increase the uncertainty faced by businesses, workers and families.

As we know, Canada is not immune to the disruptions occurring beyond our borders. These geopolitical factors have driven up the cost of basic necessities in many economies and, in Canada, they are adding to the financial burden on households.

Many of these pressures are beyond Parliament's control. Nevertheless, governments can take targeted measures to help households and businesses mitigate the negative impacts in a changing economic climate.

To help Canadians cope with rising fuel and transportation costs, in the spring of 2026, the government temporarily suspended the federal excise tax on leaded and unleaded gas, diesel fuel and jet fuel.

This measure temporarily reduced the federal excise tax rate on fuel to zero cents per litre.

The data show that this reduction quickly translated into savings at the pump, with gas prices dropping by 11 cents a litre on the first day of the suspension.

The fuel excise tax suspension was due to end on September 7, but ahead of this deadline, the government announced its plan to extend the suspension so that it could keep supporting Canadians.

If passed, Bill C-38 will extend the suspension of the federal excise tax on fuel until January 31, 2027.

After that, the regular rates will be discounted by 50% until March 31, 2027. This measure aims to lower daily spending by Canadians, including truckers and businesses active in the food, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors.

Honourable senators, the impact of fuel costs extend far beyond the money that Canadians spend to fill up their vehicle. Transportation costs are a critical factor in many sectors of the economy.

When fuel prices rise, the cost of shipping goods can also rise. These cost increases can affect the production and distribution of food, the construction sector, delivery services and the daily activities of businesses in communities across the country.

Canada is a vast and geographically diverse country. Cars remain the primary means of transportation available to many Canadians.

They use cars to get to work, run their small businesses, take their children to school and activities, go to the doctor and travel between communities.

For farmers, truckers, business owners and many other workers, fuel is not merely a discretionary expense. They simply cannot earn a living or provide their services without it.

The effects are felt most acutely in rural, remote and northern communities, where distances are greater, public transit options may be limited and the cost of transporting essential goods is much too high in the first place.

Lower fuel costs provide direct relief to drivers while helping businesses and supply chains that are essential to Canadian households.

It goes without saying that no single measure will solve all the affordability challenges Canadians are facing.

Nor is the government presenting Bill C-38 as a comprehensive solution to those pressures.

Rather, it is a temporary, targeted measure designed to provide relief in an area that affects households and businesses across the economy.

As I said, the proposed extension is part of the government's broader efforts to help Canadians keep more of their hard-earned income.

One of those measures is the income tax cut that the government gave 22 million Canadians by reducing the lowest marginal personal income tax rate from 15% to 14%, effective July 1, 2025.

This measure will provide tax savings of up to $420 for individuals and $840 for a dual-income family per year. Overall, the bulk of the tax relief goes to people with incomes in the two lowest tax brackets.

• (1530)

For households coping with the costs of housing, groceries, transportation and other essentials, this measure is designed to help them keep more of their income and better meet their day-to-day needs.

Another measure is the removal of the goods and services tax (GST) for first-time buyers of newly built homes valued at up to $1 million, along with a reduced GST rate for first-time buyers purchasing new homes valued between $1 million and $1.5 million. This tax relief could save eligible Canadians up to $50,000 and will help reduce one of the upfront costs faced by young people and families seeking to enter an increasingly challenging housing market.

On April 1, 2025, the government also eliminated the federal consumer carbon tax, providing direct savings to Canadians at the pump in most provinces and territories. On the same day, the government also removed the requirement for provinces and territories to implement a consumer carbon tax.

To provide additional support to more than 12 million Canadians, the federal government has introduced the new Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit. It provides a family of four up to $1,890 this year and approximately $1,400 annually for the next four years, and a single individual up to $950 this year and approximately $700 annually for the next four years.

The government has made Canada's National School Food Program permanent. It provides school meals benefiting up to 400,000 children each year. As a result, participating families with two children in school can save approximately $800 a year on groceries

What's more, the government has introduced automatic payments of federal benefits starting with the 2026 tax year to help up to 5.5 million low-income Canadians file their tax returns and receive the benefits to which they are entitled by the 2028 tax year.

Honourable senators, these measures differ in their design and in the groups they are intended to benefit. Some provide broad-based tax relief, while others are more specifically targeted to families, first-time homebuyers, or low-income Canadians. Together, they demonstrate the range of tools available to address affordability pressures.

Bill C-38 is the latest addition to this suite of measures. It is targeted in scope, providing a temporary reduction of a federal tax on fuel that is used by individuals, businesses and critical supply chains.

The proposed extension is part of the government's overall financial plan. The estimated financial cost of the extension will be approximately $2.9 billion, bringing the total estimated relief to $5.3 billion in 2026-27.

As honourable senators know, any measure aimed at supporting affordability must be considered in conjunction with its budgetary implications. Canadians expect governments to provide support when circumstances require it. They also expect public funds to be managed responsibly and transparently. The government states that Bill C-38 aims to balance these two priorities.

This legislation proposes special one-time relief to address specific economic circumstances. It does not propose a permanent change to the framework of the federal fuel excise tax in Canada. Rather, this legislation extends the full suspension of the tax until January 31, 2027, followed by a 50% reduction on regular rates until March 31, 2027.

The temporary nature of this measure is significant. It enables Parliament to fully understand both its duration and its estimated cost. It also recognizes the principle that temporary economic circumstances may warrant temporary policy responses.

Having examined this legislative measure and the reasons behind it, I believe that Bill C-38 offers a prudent and appropriate response to current cost-of-living pressures. This bill provides targeted, temporary relief, discloses costs transparently and takes current economic realities into account.

Honourable colleagues, to make life more affordable for Canadians, we must strengthen the Canadian economy. Affordability and economic growth go hand in hand. Immediate measures can help households cope with current costs, but any long-term improvement in the standard of living depends on increased productivity and investment, a strong labour market and competitive Canadian businesses.

To advance these priorities against a backdrop of growing global uncertainty, the government is building on Canada's strengths, attracting investment and accelerating the delivery of major projects. For example, the government has taken steps to fast-track major projects of national interest through the Major Projects Office. These projects will help Canada build more, act faster and trade more with our international partners. The government wants to act on a larger scale, but with the same sense of urgency and the same efficiency, through the Building Canada Act.

When it comes to projects and supply chains, the stated objective is simple: one project, one assessment, one year. Together, these measures aim to improve Canada's approach to investment. The objectives are to reduce the cost of investment, speed up construction, make more efficient use of public assets and make Canada more competitive through the tax system.

The government also plans to strengthen Canada's economic and national security by investing $500 billion in defence, expanding Canadian shipyards, growing our aerospace industry and enhancing our cybersecurity capabilities.

Over the past year, the government has signed more than 20 trade and security agreements across five continents. Canadian businesses now enjoy duty-free access to 1.5 billion consumers.

The government describes Canada as one of the world's best-connected economies. This access provides Canadian businesses with opportunities to win over clients from a vast range of international markets. This fall, Canada will be launching discussions with the European Union, the world's second-largest economy, to deepen and strengthen their security and economic partnership.

The 2026 Canada Investment Summit held in mid-September laid the foundations for substantial new investment and strategic partnerships, while accelerating ongoing agreements, resulting in nearly $500 billion in new investment commitments across the country. During the summit, the government also announced new measures to make Canada more competitive in attracting major investments.

[Senator Forest]

First of all, these measures include the new Productivity Mega Deduction, which allows businesses to immediately deduct a wider range of investments, including fibre-optic cables, mining assets, pipelines, railways, aircraft, manufacturing equipment and more. The government is also proposing to make immediate expensing a permanent feature so that businesses have the long-term certainty they need to make major investment decisions.

Thanks to the Productivity Mega Deduction, Canada's marginal effective tax rate on new investments will be the lowest among all the world's major economies and less than half that of the United States. Of course, these more long-term economic measures do not serve the same purpose as the temporary relief proposed in Bill C-38.

Investments in infrastructure, business capabilities, energy and productivity seek to strengthen the economy over time. Meanwhile, Bill C-38 seeks to address a more immediate concern, the impact of the high fuel and transportation costs that families and businesses are currently facing. These objectives are closely linked. Canadians need support to cope with the immediate pressures caused by these costs within an economy that can foster long-term growth, create well-paying jobs and generate the revenue needed to fund our public services.

In closing, the issue before us today is not to determine whether fuel costs are having an impact on Canadians. They are. The question is whether extending the temporary reduction in the fuel excise duty remains an appropriate and suitable measure to address these pressures.

• (1540)

Honourable senators, strengthening the Canadian economy is a long-term endeavour. The benefits of major investments, new infrastructure and expanded trade relations may take time to fully materialize. However, many Canadians are struggling with the pressures of the cost of living right now.

[*English*]

At this time of global uncertainty, Canadians are coming together to build a stronger, more independent, prosperous and affordable country — a country that benefits everyone.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-38 proposes a time-limited extension of the suspension of the federal excise tax on fuel, followed by a temporary reduction in the standard rates. The aim is to provide additional relief to households and businesses as broader efforts to strengthen the Canadian economy continue.

The bill proposes a targeted, temporary measure. It has a clearly defined fiscal cost, but it is intended to provide direct support during this period of persistent economic uncertainty. As senators, it is our responsibility to examine the proposed relief, its design and its budgetary impact.

[*English*]

This bill provides concrete relief, responding to current fuel and transportation costs while maintaining a clear deadline for the temporary tax reduction.

[*Translation*]

I encourage honourable senators to support the passage of Bill C-38 and the extension of the fuel excise tax relief for Canadians. Thank you, senators.

[*English*]

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

Senator Forest: Yes.

Senator Quinn: First, thank you very much for bringing this important bill forward and for the role you're playing in this process.

This initiative is filling a gap — if I can put it that way — in something that ended on September 8. In the ensuing days, there was confusion between the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, and the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA. The CRA said, "This is a proposal," and the CBSA said, "We're going to do this in January 2027."

My question comes back to this: This bill has to pass in order to be applied retroactively to September 8. So, in the interim period, were taxes collected, as per the law today? How was that dealt with by the officials with whom you work in terms of obeying the law and collecting taxes, and where do we go from here?

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Senator Forest: Thank you for that very relevant question. As I said in my speech, the proposed extension will have a cost and we will see tax savings estimated at approximately $2.9 billion. However, since the total cost is estimated at $5.3 billion, that means that we have already collected the difference between $2.9 billion and $5.3 billion.

[*English*]

Senator Quinn: For clarity, they didn't talk about any tax that may have been collected because of the confusion between the two departments. Were any taxes collected during this interim period?

[*Translation*]

Senator Forest: Thank you for the question. I was unaware of any confusion between the two departments.

Hon. Leo Housakos: Thank you, Senator Forest, for your speech. Clearly, the official opposition agrees completely with Bill C-38's objectives. It took a few years to persuade the government that reducing fuel costs was a good move.

At the same time, I think that the gas tax is unwarranted at the moment. As Canada faces a time of economic decline, Canadians are struggling with the higher cost of living, an issue directly affected by the cost of fuel.

Your government drew inspiration from the opposition's ideas and we agree completely: It's commendable. However, don't you think it would be better for the government to offer Canadians a reduced rate for more than a few months? Wouldn't it be better to extend the reduction to at least July 1, 2027, and possibly beyond, so that Canadians in need of relief can truly benefit in a more significant way than for only a few weeks or months?

Senator Forest: Thank you for that comment. I think it's valid. It's my understanding that this measure, which was in place from April to September, was very temporary. In Bill C-38, the government saw fit to extend it at 50% until March 31, 2027. That tells me the government will adapt as the situation evolves and as major events lead to outcomes entirely beyond our control. One such event is the U.S. midterm elections.

I believe that this temporary measure is already being extended in Bill C-38, so we'll see. Perhaps you'll influence future decisions.

Hon. Clément Gignac: Would Senator Forest take a question?

Senator Forest: Sure, if it's not too tough.

Senator Gignac: Thank you for your leadership and for sponsoring this bill.

I wasn't planning to speak, but I would strongly urge you not to support the opposition leader's proposal to extend this tax cut. Let's keep in mind that suspending this excise tax costs more than $5 billion.

Canada has about 16 million households. If the government were to target the neediest households, it could give them each $1,000 a year. People who don't have a car, who take public transit or who have electric cars don't benefit at all from this excise tax reduction.

In fact, studies have shown two things. First, it is not true that gas tax relief translates directly into more money in consumers' pockets. Just look at the oil companies' second-quarter profit margins to see that a portion of it helped line their pockets.

Second, the wealthiest households benefit the most from this tax suspension because they tend to own vehicles that consume more fuel.

That was the point of my remarks. We have to tell the government that it may be time to phase this out. Consumers are finding it difficult to believe the government's claims because gasoline and diesel prices are much higher now than they were when the tax suspension was introduced.

If we want to combat the rising cost of living, perhaps it's time to use public funds to give targeted support to low-income households.

The Hon. the Speaker: Was that a question, senator?

Senator Gignac: Could he pass my message on to the government? I think following the opposition leader's suggestion would be a bad idea.

Senator Forest: The question was more of a comment. Either way, Senator Gignac, I will pass on the message to the government.

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

Hon. Senators: Yes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

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

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

• (1550)

[*English*]

CAN'T BUY SILENCE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McPhedran, seconded by the Honourable Senator Pate, for the second reading of Bill S-232, An Act respecting non-disclosure agreements.

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

STUDY ON PRACTICE OF INCLUDING NON-FINANCIAL MATTERS IN BILLS IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS OF BUDGETS AND ECONOMIC STATEMENTS

FIFTH REPORT OF NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Forest, seconded by the Honourable Senator Ringuette, for the adoption of the fifth report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, entitled *Omnibus Budget Bills: A growing problem*, tabled in the Senate on March 24, 2026.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Honourable senators, I rise today to respond to a report that was tabled in this chamber in late spring. It was the omnibus budget bill. I had an opportunity to read that bill as a member of that committee when I first joined in this brief year that I've been part of this chamber.

Much has been said this year about the length and content of budget bills and the use of omnibus bills. All that has been said is negative.

When I arrived at the Finance Committee, the study on omnibus budget bills had already been completed. What the committee did at that point was review the report on budget implementation acts, or BIAs. It offered in the summary:

> It is regrettable that BIAs, once brief and focused on financial measures, have evolved into increasingly lengthy and complex bills that bundle diverse, and sometimes controversial, non-financial measures to expedite their passage, a practice that undermines Parliament's ability, and Canadians' opportunity, to give these measures the thorough examination they deserve.

[*Translation*]

I would argue that this isn't necessarily the case. I would like to offer a different perspective from the one set out in the report tabled in the chamber late last spring.

Broadly speaking, the report expressed a certain frustration with the growing size and complexity of budget implementation bills. These bills have expanded from just 24 pages in 1994 to more than 600 pages in 2024.

That's true. However, we should also ask ourselves what else has changed over the past 30 years.

The answer is simple: The world itself has become more complex. That reality is reflected in the actions of public authorities, not only at the federal level, but across all levels of government.

[*English*]

The Cabinet Room, Room 235 of the East Block in Parliament, was used for federal meetings in Canada for cabinets for over a century. Every prime minister, from Sir John A. Macdonald to Pierre Elliott Trudeau, held meetings in Room 235. The room is the size of a large dining room: five chairs on either side and a couple at the end.

Canada's first ministry had 13 members, including the prime minister. By 1987, prime minister Brian Mulroney appointed a record of 40 ministers, and a larger room had to be found in the Centre Block.

Today, the minister's cabinet lists 27 cabinet members with portfolios such as Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation; Emergency Management and Community Resilience; Housing and Infrastructure; and the Environment, Climate Change and

Nature. Additionally, there are 10 Secretaries of State, spanning sectors including Combatting Crime, Defence Procurement, Nature, Sport and Seniors, bringing the ministry to a total of 38 positions.

C.D. Howe would be shaking his head. What are all these people doing there? In fact, I would argue every single one of them has an important role reflecting the country's needs today.

It was noted in this report that the size of the budget bill grew from 24 pages in 1994 to a whopping 600 pages in 2025. The report says, ". . . whereas recent bills routinely exceed 600 pages." It would actually be more correct to say that, in the last 30 years, five have been over 600 pages.

[*Translation*]

However, simply counting the number of pages is not an adequate way to measure the scope of initiatives contained in a bill. For example, a simple measure included in the last budget implementation act eliminated the underused housing tax. However, that change resulted in countless pages of consequential amendments to other statutes, as reference to that tax had to be removed from every legislative provision in which it had initially been included. A simple measure can therefore create many pages of amendments. The number of pages is not a reliable reflection of reality. One measure alone can produce a substantial number of pages.

[*English*]

For this report, the Finance Committee heard from three witnesses. One was Senator Tannas, from the group of leaders who proposed the study — nothing wrong with that, other than hearing an opposing view would help even out the report or, at a minimum, suggest why the government uses them; why we need them.

• (1600)

Another witness was a former clerk named Charles Robert who said:

> Meeting the "deadline" for passage of the BIAs while satisfying the obligation for sufficient examination of these unwieldy bills, particularly the non-financial provisions, will become more and more difficult and unsatisfactory.

So we know where he stands — again, no opposing view. In fact, each time he was asked to opine, he suggested, instead, that was up to the Senate to decide.

The third witness, Louise Pratt, was a senator from Australia. She explained, "We have quite strong constitutional powers and also our own standing order to prevent omnibus bills." Again, none of that is helpful since we don't have similar constitutional powers.

The real angst, in fact, that I have heard from fellow senators is questioning our ability for due diligence in a proper review of what comes before us. Are we taking sufficient time, regardless of the size or content, to properly scrutinize and give thorough examination? Given the comments at the National Finance Committee this morning from chairs of committees that studied parts of Bill C-31, the Budget 2025 implementation act, no. 2, it seems time isn't the issue. It's getting the witnesses whom they want in the scheduled time for their meetings.

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, I would argue that governing today requires a comprehensive set of measures acting together to achieve the objectives set out in the federal budget the government tables in the fall for the coming year.

Measures to address national housing needs, kick-start nation-building projects and investments, and strengthen Canada's supply chains are not limited to fiscal and budgetary policy. They also require what the committee report calls "non-financial" measures that must act in concert with fiscal and budgetary provisions to ensure the success of these initiatives.

[*English*]

To separate these non-financial measures out of its own bill or to suggest these measures each become their own separate piece of legislation would see far too many bills slowly work their way through Parliament, if at all. And I would argue it's a disservice to Canadians, as programs could not fully be realized until each separate piece of legislation receives Royal Assent, which could be months or years after the initial budget implementation act is passed.

Is separate legislation a realistic alternative? Bills can proceed concurrently, but Parliament still has limited chamber and committee capacity. Which measures would we choose to introduce? Which ones would wait? Despite the growth in the size of government, the complexity of issues, requirements for new laws or updating old laws — all have grown exponentially, but Parliament's sitting time remains relatively unchanged. We sit for roughly 26 weeks, just like the other place.

[*Translation*]

There's no doubt that the growing complexity of modern budget implementation bills, together with the broad range of issues they address, has made it more challenging to adhere to the traditional timetable of the budget cycle. However, the Senate, like the other place, has adapted its procedures to meet this challenge of ensuring these substantial bills continue to receive rigorous parliamentary scrutiny.

[*English*]

We frequently approve pre-study of budget implementation acts to allow for congruent study in both houses. The Senate will also parse out measures in the bill to ensure that a committee with certain subject-matter expertise is contributing to the scrutiny of the legislation in the best possible way. Bill C-31, the government's Budget 2025 implementation act, no. 2 — which is currently in pre-study — was examined by nine committees here, excluding the National Finance Committee, which has responsibility for the entirety of the bill.

Motions passed on this very floor allow committees to sit during chamber sessions to allow for more time. Committees can extend the number of meetings, at least to the extent that infrastructure allows, like enough staffing, translation, et cetera. We could sit additional weeks. The other place uses its constituency weeks as vital connections with the very people who put them in that place. We don't have the same restrictions as unelected senators. Committees could sit for longer, inviting more witnesses with each meeting. Because supply bills are, in fact, passed throughout the year, the government would not stop working if we chose to add more time to our calendar.

As described by Charles Robert, the former Clerk of the Senate and the House of Commons, where he appeared as a witness:

> . . . BIAs . . . are considered under a fixed calendar, a predetermined time allocation process with three distinct periods . . . December, March and June every year.
>
> Under this regime, BIAs are invariably adopted by both houses of Parliament before the extended winter and summer adjournments . . . with a tight deadline in the Senate, much to the frustration of many senators.

I would say maybe in ordinary times, but at least in our recent history, minority governments have been the order of the day. Every single one of the last four prime ministers has led a minority government for some part of their mandate — in these last 30 years.

It's the inability to stick to a time frame to have legislation finish committee work or agree to debate time in the other place, simply because the governing party does not control the committees, and certainly not the agenda in the House on any given day, during a minority Parliament. This only gives the Senate more grief, running us headlong into the weeks that we would otherwise not be sitting, and so, there's more pressure to finish quickly.

The omnibus report tabled a recommendation to separate financial from non-financial elements into at least two bills. I would argue: Who is to say, as Senator Marshall and Senator Loffreda did at that committee study, what is not financial? One could argue everything is financial. Moreover, it is for the House to decide what bill they write, table, debate, pass and ultimately send to the Senate. The report suggested that the Senate retains the right to divide a bill. The ruling over this practice is anything but clear in the few times that this was attempted.

[*Translation*]

The report's final recommendation involves asking the government to appoint the Government Representative in the Senate to cabinet. It suggests that this would in some way change the practice of omnibus legislation. The Government Representative in the Senate was part of cabinet until 2015 and the practice of omnibus bills has continued unchanged.

[*English*]

I don't know the point of that recommendation. Colleagues, "omnibus" does not mean less scrutiny. It's an obligation for us to find a better way. Governance will only become more complex — better scrutiny, not necessarily more bills. In my short time here as a senator, I watched this chamber — through pre-study of the budget bill — amend, change, enhance and correct the budget implementation act before it even landed as a bill in this chamber. These Sherlock Holmes even found corrections to the French translations that somehow slipped through the cracks.

[*Translation*]

Omnibus bills pose a challenge for Parliament. As I mentioned, everything has changed except time. Both the Senate and the House of Commons have adapted to the realities of governing in a minority or majority situation, and this will continue unabated.

[*English*]

Omnibus legislation should not be celebrated or used to hide unrelated measures, but neither should we pretend that modern government can operate as though every measure exists independently. Properly used, omnibus bills are a necessary tool of modern governing. And I ask again: Which of us will determine what issue falls by the wayside just because we don't have time and because it's not the other's priority?

Colleagues, this is the context that I wanted to add to a report that was studied before my time here. For those of us just beginning our Senate careers, we may see many omnibus bills. When I see them coming, I think Buckley's cough syrup: It tastes awful, but it works. Thank you, Your Honour.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Would Senator Pupatello take a question?

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Pupatello, you are almost out of time. Are you asking for five more minutes to answer questions?

Senator Pupatello: I would request some extra time. Thank you.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Housakos: Senator, thank you for your speech.

• (1610)

I've been here for a very long time. I have never heard anyone, over three successive governments, try to justify omnibus bills in the Senate of Canada. That probably warrants, in my case, entering the debate in the very near future with a long speech in this regard.

Over the past three decades, we've seen omnibus bills explode in size. I'm glad the Prime Minister has reduced the size of cabinet somewhat compared to the record from the 1980s, but maybe he can start reducing the size of omnibus bills as well to ensure that his level of competence is spread across the board.

What I most profoundly do not understand in your argument regards the lack of time of this institution. We have, as per section 18 of the Constitution, the same rights and privileges as the House of Commons. They are completely equal. You'll agree will that.

We have taken an unprecedented decision here not to interfere with the elected House on budget bills. However, you will have to agree that large elements of budget bills have been coming to this chamber with no expenditure element in them. How do you justify those bills being lumped in a budget, which we know we have an obligation to pass within a period of time when we get it in November? In the past, we used to get it in April or May, knowing we were in the crunch.

We've been back now since sometime in September. We will rise today very shortly.

Senator, you will agree that the Senate calendar here is Monday through Friday. How many times in a year do we sit on Mondays or Fridays? How many times in a year do we rise before four o'clock, before Government Business is finished, on Wednesdays?

Do you still want to back up the argument that we need to pack non-budget bills into an omnibus bill because this chamber has no time to deal with all these other bills?

Senator Pupatello: Thank you for the question, senator. I would say you're making my argument for me. The reality is that there is time. The committees have often said they need more time to study these very large omnibus bills. When we look at the schedule, opportunities exist to book more meetings and have more witnesses.

I've sat and watched all of us stand, approve and vote for extending that extra week, as we did in that third week of September. That entire week was just for committees. We can't have the committees say there isn't time.

When I ask the chairs of committees today what the issue is, really, they say it is that they couldn't get the witnesses they wanted in that time frame. That's a very different issue. That becomes a question of what control we have. While in the American system, they can compel people, under law, to appear at their committees, we don't have such a provision here.

At least 15 senators in this house have had experience in other legislatures where they know that it's elbows up all the time. If they want their measure to be enacted, they need to get their measure into the funnel. The only way to do that, when it's 40 cabinet ministers and not 15, is to jam them all into the few opportunities to get a bill into the House. That becomes the reality. The funnel is larger, but the hole that it shoots through is as small as it ever was because the time — the number of weeks — has not changed.

Unless we decide to change how we manage our studies — to do more by Zoom, hear witnesses by Zoom, add extra meeting times and all those things to give them the hours they want — the omnibus bill time complaint isn't the actual complaint. In my view, it's not a legitimate one. It is really about getting the people who have the information they need to appear and then making those reports in a timely fashion.

Senator Housakos: Senator Pupatello, thank you for making my point. All the committee work and all the pre-studies we've been doing since September are occurring because the purpose of this chamber is to do work. That's why we accepted performing pre-studies on Bill C-39 and Bill C-38. By the way, these bills are not part of an omnibus bill. They are stand-alone pieces of government legislation that came in at a certain time, and we are doing everything we can, in agreement with the government and the opposition, to expedite that work.

My point is that we have a lot of time to take on all the elements that don't belong in a budget bill, which we will get one more time next month, when the budget bill comes here. The government should prioritize and organize their legislative agenda, send it to us at the beginning of September — well in advance — with the competent stewardship of the government leader here and with all the groups. We could then dive into those pieces of legislation without having only three or four weeks at the end of November and the beginning of December to pass a slew of things that we don't want to pass but feel we must.

Would you agree with those remarks?

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: I'm sorry to interrupt.

Senator Pupatello, your five minutes have expired. Are you asking for five more minutes to answer Senator Housakos's question?

Senator Pupatello: Yes, if the chamber would allow.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Leave is granted.

Senator Pupatello: I would suggest that, because the bills originate in the House and not the Senate, the House has its reasons and its rationale, which regard that — as I have described — they have limited time in their chamber to address legislation, so they jam in everything they can at every chance they get.

The best example is probably from 2010, when former Prime Minister Harper tabled a budget that was 904 pages. It was the epitome of a large omnibus bill. However, he was in a minority government at the time. We all know that a budget vote in the House is actually a vote of confidence. They knew that all elements they wish to undertake as a government must be in a bill, if legislation is required, where they could assure its passage.

That rationale has nothing to do with us. It has everything to do with why they did it in that way. Our role is to accommodate how one would properly study something of that magnitude.

I read in a report that time is the issue. I'm suggesting that time isn't the issue. The issue is our ability to secure witnesses and hear them in a timely fashion. The committees need to take advantage of the time that's allowed to hear them, et cetera. But those are elements we don't control. At least 15 people here have been on the other side and understand that funnel, which keeps growing with the complexity of the world, still only allows for 26 weeks of legislative debate. That's not likely to change. That means we need to change how we do our business.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Will Senator Pupatello take another question?

Senator Pupatello: Yes.

Senator Osler: Honourable senators, I will be brief.

I haven't been here as long as Senator Housakos, but I was here during the last Parliament when we had discussions about omnibus bills and non-fiscal measures being included in BIAs. The committee, in its executive summary, says ". . . that the government should facilitate more effective parliamentary scrutiny by presenting two separate bills . . . ." which means separating the two.

In your speech, I was interested to hear you use the phrase "properly used," saying that when omnibus bills are properly used, they are a modern tool.

I'm interested to hear your opinion. What would proper use be? How would you justify an omnibus bill that contains fiscal and non-fiscal measures and does not separate the two? Is that proper use?

Senator Pupatello: In November 2025, the budget was tabled by Minister Champagne. That large book, which we could all read when we received our copy, contained a number of elements. Some were financial; some were non-financial. The "Buy Canada" policy, as you will recall, was a huge piece. The new procurement in Defence was a huge piece.

There isn't necessarily legislation attached to each idea, but sometimes there is legislation required to implement the ideas that are also non-financial but are still tied to the budget document tabled in November 2025. That's why you see these things falling out into Bill C-15, Bill C-30 and Bill C-31.

We will continue to see that because the original notions were all part of the budget in November 2025, financial and non-financial. That was the document of which we all received a copy. For example, today we heard from the Chair of the Transport Committee. They were not studying a large part but a significant item regarding passenger rights. It was a function complemented in November 2025, finally falling out with whatever legislation was required as part of this bill.

The government will sit back and say, "We want to pass this quickly. The public demands it. How will we get this through quickly?" They will put it into an omnibus bill so that it is taken care of, as opposed to waiting for its own separate bill, whenever they might get to it. That's the point.

They are tied up with their time constraints in the House, and we suffer the consequences.

• (1620)

I will say that when I asked the chair of that committee if they needed more time, they did not need more time. They needed certain witnesses to appear, which they weren't able to secure. That is not a time issue. Thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Pupatello, you have 13 seconds, and there are two senators who want to ask questions. Are you asking for five more minutes to answer those questions?

Senator Pupatello: Sure, thank you.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: No.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Leave is not granted.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

STUDY ON COPPER WIRE THEFT AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

THIRD REPORT OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE—DEBATE POSTPONED

On Other Business, Reports of Committees, Other, Order No. 24:

> Consideration of the third report of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, entitled *Stolen Signal: The Costly Consequences of Copper Theft in Canada*, tabled in the Senate on April 14, 2026.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): I move the adjournment of debate for the balance of my time.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate postponed until the next sitting of the Senate.)

NATION-BUILDING VALUE OF TOURISM

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Inquiry No. 8, tabled by Senator Sorensen, regarding the nation-building value of tourism, which she launched last November.

Thank you, Senator Sorensen, for raising such an important inquiry in our august chamber.

Tourism is an economic driver for Canada, as many of my colleagues have so aptly stated during their speeches to this inquiry.

Colleagues, as a sixth-generation — that is 192 years — resident of Fergus, Ontario, a small town north of Guelph, I can say that one of the most anticipated festivals hosted by my local community is the Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games, also known as the ". . . best of Scotland… without the airfare."

The festival, having just wrapped up its eighty-first annual event this past summer, is a three-day event celebrating all things Scottish, with world-renowned, world-class talent and entertainment from around the world.

Included in the festivities are heavy events competitions, pipe band competitions, highland dancers, whisky tasting, Celtic musicians and international vendors. The Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games brings together folks from all over Ontario and, in fact, from around the world to celebrate the rich tapestry, history and culture of Scotland right here in Ontario.

The Fergus Scottish Festival is a prime example of festivals that provide immense value to tourism in the local communities in which they are hosted.

In fact, I'm happy to share that earlier this year, in May 2026, the Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games won the Cultural, Arts, Tourism Impact Award from the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce, during its twenty-sixth annual Awards of Excellence, for putting the community on the map and driving economic growth and awareness in Centre Wellington.

While tourism is a key economic driver for our country, it's also a great way to engage and build community, to embrace our differences and to learn about different cultures and their rich histories.

During the festivities, you will see many proud Scots, including myself, wearing kilts, participating in weekend events, but, further, this festival is known in the area as being inclusive and welcoming to all.

Another great example of the nation-building value of tourism I'd like to touch on is reflected in the agri-tourism sector.

Think about the last time your family went apple picking, attended a fall fair, visited a winery or visited a farmers' market with your children or grandchildren. All of these activities support the agri-tourism market, a sector that offers the opportunity for Canadians to get up close and personal with where their food comes from and support the agriculture and agri-food industry. It helps to increase awareness of modern agriculture and food production, strengthening trust in Canada's food systems and showcasing the skills, innovation and careers that support the sector.

This senator contributes to the agri-tourism industry in Ontario in October each year. My happy place last weekend and at least one weekend each October in the past has been at Knox's Pumpkin Farm near Clarington. My job is transporting hundreds of families and individuals of all ages by tractor and wagon to and from the pumpkin patch. Last weekend, thousands of smiling faces came to the farm.

Agritourism Ontario's 2026 Economic Growth Study estimates that in Ontario alone, agri-tourism contributes $633 million in economic output each and every year, generates $313 million in GDP and provides 8,734 jobs across this province.

Agri-tourism also helps diversify farm income through activities such as farm stays, educational experiences, direct sales, events, festivals and recreational activities. It also strengthens our rural economies by keeping tourism spending within communities and creating connections between consumers and Canadian agriculture.

With Canada's tourism economy thriving, farms and rural businesses are well positioned to capture this momentum and use it to showcase the richness of Canada's agriculture tapestry.

As many of my honourable colleagues mentioned in their interventions, I recommend that you check out some of these agri-tourism activities in your area and help support Canada's tourism industry.

I'd be happy to show you around the Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games should you be in the area next August or in years to come, and I'd also be happy to drive you to the pumpkin patch.

I would also like to mention events such as Breakfast on the Farm hosted by Farm & Food Care Ontario. These events take place across Ontario from spring to fall, where participants get to experience life on the farm, see first-hand various types of equipment and techniques being used to innovate and even get a fresh farm breakfast sandwich, all while learning about where their food comes from.

I am sure Farm & Food Care Ontario would welcome the opportunity to host any of you at a future Breakfast on the Farm. In fact, I'll make sure you're invited.

This is another excellent example of how agri-tourism is growing, innovating and bridging the rural-urban divide. Supporting tourism in Canada preserves our cultural heritage, passing stories on to visitors from far and wide.

Finally, the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions and — provincially, here in Ontario — the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies are great examples of umbrella organizations supporting fairs and exhibitions here in Ontario and across the country.

In fact, just a few weeks ago, my local Fergus Fall Fair celebrated the one hundred and eighty-ninth edition of the fair. A weekend of events drew a record-breaking crowd of 23,000 people who attended over the three days.

Whether you are attending a fall fair in your community, the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto, the Calgary Stampede or the Pacific National Exhibition, you are enriching the local and regional community, supporting the tourism industry, sharing local stories and history and putting money back into the hands of the communities whose volunteers work so very hard to bring those events to your doorsteps.

Thank you again, Senator Sorensen, for encouraging us all to reflect on the social and economic impacts of tourism and reminding us to take the time to appreciate the many tourist opportunities in our own backyards that honour our provinces' and our communities' heritage.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

• (1630)

(On motion of Senator White, 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. Joan Kingston: Honourable senators, I rise today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation to speak on Inquiry No. 11, launched by our colleague Senator Coyle, drawing the Senate's attention to the final report of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly.

I thank Senator Coyle for her steadfast leadership, and I thank the colleagues who have already spoken so thoughtfully on this inquiry.

[*Translation*]

Last September, this chamber bore witness to a remarkable event. Thirty-three young Canadians, aged 18 to 25, selected by lottery from among nearly 700 applicants and representing all regions of the country, took their seats here. They presented 23 recommendations to parliamentarians. They had earned that right.

Over the course of three online sessions and five days in Ottawa, they deliberated for 35 hours on a single question: What do young Canadians want Parliament to do to fulfill Canada's climate commitments in a way that reflects their values and priorities?

[*English*]

It was the first national citizens' assembly on climate change in Canada and the first anywhere in the world designed specifically for young adults.

[*Translation*]

Senator Coyle reminded us that citizens' assemblies are beneficial to democracy and produce well-considered recommendations. They strengthen the bond of trust between citizens and their representatives and reinforce democracy.

[*English*]

Colleagues, others have spoken eloquently about the assembly's recommendations on energy, climate accountability and Indigenous leadership.

I would like to draw your attention to a thread that runs quietly through the entire report and addresses issues that have long concerned me.

As a registered nurse, I have spent much of my career working with young families and communities. That experience brought me face-to-face with people who, too often, fall through the cracks of our systems, as well as with the consequences when those systems fail to meet people where they are.

Nurses listen for what people share beneath their words and think holistically about how the social determinants of health impact populations.

[*Translation*]

A year ago, when I listened to them as we sat together in this chamber and when I read this report, what I heard behind those cautious and pragmatic recommendations was a generation telling us, calmly and clearly, that the climate crisis is making them sick.

[*English*]

The assembly's members spoke openly about eco-anxiety, grief and emotional distress. I vividly recall the young woman from Saskatchewan, standing in this chamber and describing the traumatic experience of being on her family farm and watching as wildfires burned toward her home.

[*Translation*]

Among the assembly's 23 recommendations, starting with those concerning climate risk preparedness, is recommendation 4, which is a call to strengthen mental health support services for Canadians experiencing climate-induced trauma, distress and duress.

I would like to highlight this recommendation today because it is supported by a substantial body of evidence.

[*English*]

In 2021, *The Lancet Planetary Health* published the largest study ever conducted globally of climate anxiety among young people, including 10,000 young people, aged 16 to 25, across 10 countries. Of those, 59% were very or extremely worried about climate change, 84% were at least moderately worried about it, three-quarters said they thought that ". . . the future is frightening . . ." and more than half reported feeling sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless and guilty.

Canada is no exception. A national survey of 1,000 young Canadians aged 16 to 25, published in 2023 by researchers Lindsay Galway and Ellen Field of Lakehead University, found that roughly 8 in 10 reported that climate change affects their overall mental health; about 4 in 10 said their feelings about climate change negatively affect their daily functioning.

Most striking to me — as someone who has spent a career in the caring professions — 64% said the Canadian government was not doing enough to prevent a climate catastrophe and 48% said they felt betrayed. Researchers have a term for the harm caused when institutions fail the people who depend on them. They call it "moral injury."

[*Translation*]

As Senator Hay has told you, anxiety and depression are among the leading reasons young people reach out to Kids Help Phone and Jeunesse, J'écoute. Climate change and eco-anxiety are increasingly recognized as factors contributing to young people's anxiety and concerns about the future.

[*English*]

Climate anxiety in a 22-year-old is not a pathology, not irrational and not fragility. It is a proportionate response to a real and well-documented threat. The mind is doing exactly what it is designed to do when it perceives danger.

But anxiety that persists over years without relief or a sense of agency becomes a health problem. It disrupts sleep, concentration, relationships and hope. It arrives in emergency rooms and community clinics looking like many other things.

Any triage nurse will tell you that you treat both the trauma and its cause. This points to a two-part response. The first part is care.

[*Translation*]

Our health care systems, particularly the primary care and community-based mental health services that young people can readily access, including in rural communities such as those in my home province of New Brunswick, need professionals who are trained to recognize and respond to climate-related distress.

The assembly is calling on Parliament to support this approach, and I believe we should answer that call.

[*English*]

However, the second part matters more. The most effective treatment for climate anxiety is credible climate action. The research is consistent on this point: What corrodes young people's mental health is not only the changing climate itself but the perception that the adults responsible — that's us — are not responding.

Conversely, meaningful action and meaningful inclusion of youth in that action are protective. The members of this assembly are themselves proof of this.

[*Translation*]

As noted by our colleagues who were present, these young people didn't arrive in a state of despair. They came here with 23 concrete and well-thought-out recommendations. They didn't ask that we solve the problems for them, but that we make room for them at the tables where decisions are made, and that we then take action.

[*English*]

This meaning-focused coping is a strategy that transforms anxiety and distress into a sense of purpose and can enhance mental well-being. Researchers whose work focuses on socio-ecological resilience and was published in 2024 by Cambridge University Press are examining how constructive hope is a positive mindset that combines optimism with the belief in working on meaningful goals and can help improve mental health.

They found that activism programs where young people feel they are contributing to solving a problem can foster these types of positive feelings.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Research shows that hope is not about sitting passively and waiting for something to happen. It is action-oriented and involves taking steps to achieve a specific goal. Such constructive hope can help reduce the symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Other related research sends a message to us as parliamentarians. It shows that perceived inaction on the part of political leaders is linked to feelings of eco-anxiety, distress and betrayal amongst young people.

[*English*]

So what should we do? We can create initiatives to ensure that young people's voices are heard in climate policy discussions to help mitigate feelings of powerlessness among young people.

Thanks to the efforts of our colleague Senator Coyle, the Senate and its members have continued to engage with members of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly.

As someone who has worked in environmental policy and who has had the privilege of serving as Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, I was particularly interested in hearing directly from these young Canadians about the environmental future they will inherit.

[*Translation*]

In early June, our committee had the opportunity to review the assembly's final report and hear its recommendations on how we can address the climate challenges we face.

[*English*]

Colleagues, when a patient tells you where it hurts and what they need, you do not simply file the chart away. A generation has told us, through the first democratic exercise of its kind ever undertaken in this country, where it hurts and what it needs. I invite each of you to read their report, to seek out the assembly members from your own regions and to treat their recommendations as what they are: a considered prescription from the generation that will live longest with our choices.

[*Translation*]

To the 33 members of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly, I say thank you. You've done your part rigorously and gracefully. The task of restoring hope to your generation now rests where it should be, that is, with us.

[*English*]

Thank you. *Wela'lin*.

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

VITAL ROLE OF IMMIGRANTS

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

Hon. Dawn Arnold: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator Loffreda's inquiry into immigration and, more specifically, immigration in Atlantic Canada. I have a simple proposition to make: Atlantic Canada needs its own specific approach to immigration.

It's not because we're cut off from the rest of Canada, but because our economic and demographic realities are different. Our immigration policies have to reflect that.

From coast to coast to coast, we all know that a one-size-fits-all approach to our shared future doesn't work. Our regional differences strengthen our federation, and public policy must take them into account

In Atlantic Canada, we have an aging population, smaller job markets, a rural population and employers who truly struggle to find the labour and skills they need.

At the same time, the Maritime provinces offer valuable opportunities in energy, health and the biosciences, in natural resources, aerospace and defence, but also in oceans and technology, or our traditional fields of activity in territorial industries like agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Realizing that potential requires workers.

[*English*]

We also know that it is estimated that Atlantic Canada will need 441,000 people over the next 10 years to fill jobs left vacant by retirements and an ageing population and to fuel economic growth.

It is in that context that the Atlantic Economic Panel was initiated by Minister Sean Fraser in November 2025. Its goal was to identify the barriers holding our region back and develop bold, practical recommendations to improve productivity, attract investment and create long-term prosperity.

Importantly, while the federal government initiated the panel, it was led by seven Atlantic-Canadian business leaders and operated independently of the government in developing its analysis and recommendations. Its message is clear: We need to think bigger, work together and act as one economic region.

An absolutely critical part — some might even say, the most important — is attracting talent. The chapter called "Win the Competition for Talent" speaks directly to immigration. It sets out an ambitious vision for Atlantic Canada.

I would like to highlight three priorities put forward by the panel. First, we need a one-Atlantic workforce strategy and a made-in-Atlantic-Canada immigration agreement.

The panel recommends bringing all four provinces together on immigration, education, skills training, housing and workforce planning, and giving the region a greater role in attracting, selecting, welcoming and retaining the people we need.

This makes sense. Our labour markets are interconnected, our challenges are shared, and our opportunities are often too large for any one province to pursue alone.

We have already seen the value of a regional approach through the original Atlantic immigration pilot. Launched in 2017, the pilot brought together employers, the four provinces, the federal government and settlement organizations. It helped employers address labour shortages and supported newcomers in establishing their lives in Atlantic Canada.

The pilot became the permanent Atlantic Immigration Program in 2022, but I believe we should renew the ambition of the original pilot, building on what worked, addressing what could be improved and giving Atlantic Canada a stronger voice in shaping its immigration future.

The panel specifically recommends using the Atlantic Immigration Program as the main tool for recruiting international talent. We should act on that recommendation.

[*Translation*]

Second, we need clear objectives and we need to assess whether we're achieving them. The expert panel has set ambitious goals for 2035: to maintain annual population growth of 1.8% through immigration, increased labour force participation and attracting Canadians from across the country.

First, we must retain at least 80% of newcomers to Atlantic Canada after five years. Today, we're retaining just over 50%.

Second, we must achieve one of the highest labour force participation rates in Canada.

These objectives recognize that immigration isn't just about the number of people who are arriving in Canada. It is about building a workforce and developing a population that is capable of supporting our communities and ensuring our economic future.

• (1650)

[*English*]

Third, we must connect attracting people with helping them succeed.

The panel's recommendations extend well beyond immigration selection. It calls for international student enrollment to return to sustainable levels — approximately 20,000 university students and 5,000 college students for the region — aligned with the capacity and priorities of the institutions themselves.

It calls for better recognition and transferability of credentials, certifications and relevant work experience so that newcomers can contribute at the level of their skills. It calls for more future-ready skills through lifelong learning, apprenticeships and post-secondary education.

It recognizes that our workforce must be equipped for a changing economy, including by helping workers use digital tools and artificial intelligence with confidence. The goal is for Atlantic Canada to exceed the national average in AI adoption.

These recommendations are all interconnected. We cannot attract talent without offering opportunities. We cannot retain people without housing and essential services. We cannot build the workforce of the future without investing in education, training and the recognition of skills.

As a former mayor who saw unprecedented immigration to our community during my mandates, I know that welcoming newcomers is only the beginning. People stay when they can find meaningful work, secure a home, support their families and feel connected to their communities. This requires federal, provincial and municipal governments to work together, alongside employers, educational institutions and settlement organizations.

I have seen first-hand the extraordinary contributions newcomers have made to our community. I have seen how our hospitals and care facilities have been strengthened by their compassion and dedication, how local businesses have grown because of their skills and expertise, and how our community has become more vibrant, innovative and welcoming because of the new perspectives, cultures and ideas they bring.

Beyond the statistics and economic arguments, however, it is the people and their stories that stay with me.

It is the Nigerian mother who told me how she and her husband brought their three daughters to Moncton to escape the terrifying fear of being stabbed in their beds. Today, she is an accountant at a local firm that desperately needed qualified CPAs while her husband drives a city bus, filling another essential role that has been difficult to staff.

It is the two nurses from the Philippines who came here seeking safety from persecution. Both worked hard to have their professional credentials recognized, and today, they work long shifts caring for patients in our hospitals. They are giving back to the community that welcomed them while experiencing the pride and security of owning their first home.

It is the Korean and Brazilian RCMP officers who have completed their training and are now serving and protecting our community, helping to ensure those who keep us safe better reflect the diversity of the people they serve.

It is the Colombian and Venezuelan families whose warmth and generosity spill over into community-wide barbecues in Centennial Park, bringing neighbours together through food, music, laughter and friendship.

It is the Syrian teenager who arrived in Moncton speaking no French, attended École L'Odyssée, went on to earn an undergraduate degree at the Université de Moncton, and is now studying medicine. Just imagine the determination behind that journey, and the lives this young person will one day touch.

Yes, it is also the countless newcomers from around the world whose contributions may be less visible but are no less essential. They are the people who have helped keep our fish-processing plants operating, pruned our apple trees and helped homegrown businesses, like Mrs. Dunster's Donuts, expand into new markets.

[*Translation*]

These aren't just stories about immigration. They are stories of courage, resilience, hard work, a sense of belonging and the future of our community. These newcomers chose to make Moncton their home. In doing so, they've helped to make it a better place to live for all of us. Welcoming newcomers doesn't diminish our community. On the contrary, newcomers enrich our community.

Honourable senators, the Atlantic Economic Panel has presented us with a clear set of objectives: a coordinated regional labour strategy, an immigration agreement developed in Atlantic Canada, sustainable pathways for international students, better skills recognition and a much greater focus on immigrant retention. We've already demonstrated, through the Atlantic immigration pilot, that an approach tailored to regional realities can work. Now is the time to build on this experience with renewed ambition, clear objectives and the partnerships needed to achieve them.

To build a city is to build a nation. When newcomers succeed in Moncton, in rural New Brunswick and in communities across Atlantic Canada, we strengthen our entire country.

Thank you. *Wela'lioq*.

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

(*At 4:57 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.*)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, October 27, 2026

PAGE

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

Canada Disability Benefit
Hon. Victor Boudreau 3041

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Hon. Michèle Audette 3041

Visitors in the Gallery
The Hon. the Speaker 3042

Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada
Hon. Réjean Aucoin 3042

Visitors in the Gallery
The Hon. the Speaker 3042

Danièle Sauvageau, O.C.
Hon. Chantal Petitclerc 3042

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Competition Act (Bill S-239)
Bill to Amend—Ninth Report of Banking, Commerce and the Economy Committee Presented
Hon. Clément Gignac 3043

Inter-Parliamentary Union
Parliamentary Forum at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, July 22, 2025—Report Tabled
Hon. Salma Ataullahjan 3043
Parliamentary Forum at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, July 14, 2026—Report Tabled
Hon. Salma Ataullahjan 3044
Assembly and Related Meetings, April 15-19, 2026—Report Tabled
Hon. Salma Ataullahjan 3044

Banking, Commerce and the Economy
Notice of Motion to Authorize Committee to Study Promoting Economic Fairness and How Federal Approaches Can Reduce the Underground Economy
Hon. Clément Gignac 3044

QUESTION PERIOD

International Trade
Trade Tariffs
Hon. Yonah Martin 3044
Hon. Pierre Moreau 3044

PAGE

Finance
Affordability for Canadians
Hon. Jim Quinn 3045
Hon. Pierre Moreau 3045

Environment and Climate Change
Trans Canada Trail
Hon. Lucie Moncion 3045
Hon. Pierre Moreau 3045

Public Services and Procurement
Canada Post
Hon. Tony Loffreda 3046
Hon. Pierre Moreau 3046

Global Affairs
Canada-European Union Relations
Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne 3046
Hon. Pierre Moreau 3046

Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration
Business of the Committee
Hon. Colin Deacon 3047
Hon. Tony Loffreda 3047

Public Services and Procurement
Military Procurement
Hon. Richard Martel 3047
Hon. Pierre Moreau 3047

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Immigration to Newfoundland
Hon. Fabian Manning 3048
Hon. Pierre Moreau 3048

Public Services and Procurement
Public Accounts
Hon. Krista Ross 3048
Hon. Pierre Moreau 3048

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Cutting Red Tape for All Canadians Bill (Bill S-7)
Second Reading—Debate Adjourned
Hon. Iris G. Petten 3049
Hon. Denise Batters 3052
Hon. Michèle Audette 3052
Hon. Bernadette Clement 3053
Hon. Yonah Martin 3053

Excise Tax Act (Bill C-38)
Bill to Amend—Second Reading
Hon. Éric Forest 3054
Hon. Jim Quinn 3057
Hon. Leo Housakos 3057
Hon. Clément Gignac 3057

CONTENTS

Tuesday, October 27, 2026

PAGE

Can't Buy Silence Bill (Bill S-232)
Second Reading—Debate Continued 3058

Study on Practice of Including Non-financial Matters in Bills Implementing Provisions of Budgets and Economic Statements
Fifth Report of National Finance Committee—Debate Continued
Hon. Sandra Pupatello 3058
Hon. Leo Housakos 3060
Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler 3062

Study on Copper Wire Theft and Its Impacts on the Telecommunications Industry
Third Report of Transport and Communications Committee—Debate Postponed
Hon. Yonah Martin 3062

PAGE

Nation-Building Value of Tourism
Inquiry—Debate Continued
Hon. Robert Black 3063

Final Report of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly
Inquiry—Debate Continued
Hon. Joan Kingston 3064

Vital Role of Immigrants
Inquiry—Debate Continued
Hon. Dawn Arnold 3066