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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, June 11, 2025

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

GENDER EQUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Hon. Paulette Senior: Honourable senators, I rise today on the unceded, unsundered territory of the great Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation.

As you know, Canada is hosting the G7 leaders' summit in Kananaskis, Alberta in the coming days.

In advance of the summit, I am pleased to draw your attention to the recommendations of the 2025 G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council, or GEAC. As vice-chair of the council, I have been working with my colleagues over the past several months on recommendations to ensure that G7 leaders take a broad and inclusive approach to gender equality.

Women are significantly under-represented in every sector that G7 leaders seek to promote this year, from artificial intelligence and quantum technologies to critical minerals, private capital mobilization for infrastructure and wildfire management, as well as in peace talks supported by G7 members.

To meet its commitments and achieve better outcomes for all, GEAC calls on G7 leaders to take action in a number of ways: protecting women and girls from AI-facilitated violence and harassment by promoting global standards, adopting legislation and enforcing human rights laws; in the area of critical minerals, investing in capacity building for government and other actors to deliver gender-responsive impact assessments and improve systems for prevention and response to gender-based violence; strengthening strategies to counter transnational repression, or TNR, through the inclusion of gender dimensions in the definition of TNR, highlighting that it affects people differently depending on their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Finally, I would like to focus on our recommendations related to wildfires, particularly as Canadians are once again witnessing the massive devastation and upheaval caused by wildfires in the lives of thousands of people.

GEAC urges G7 leaders to increase women's participation and leadership in all initiatives that help prevent, respond to and recover from wildfires, including by addressing the barriers to women's recruitment and career advancement as firefighters, such as gender stereotypes, equipment designed for men, gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment.

We also recommend learning from Indigenous forest-management practices and including Indigenous practitioners in wildfire discussions and efforts to support all stages of emergency management and facilitate the sharing of Indigenous and other best practices among G7 members.

Honourable colleagues, I encourage you to review GEAC's recommendations that call for meaningful action to advance gender equality and apply gender perspectives across this year's G7 priority areas.

It has been my honour to serve on the council this year under Canada's presidency. I look forward to continuing to push forward these recommendations to advance gender equality across the G7 and certainly in Canada.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

AKADI LUMINA INITIATIVE

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: Honourable senators, I rise today to talk about Akadi Lumina, a cultural initiative in Bouctouche, New Brunswick, that illustrates the power of storytelling, innovation and community collaboration.

Located in a wooded area near Pays de la Sagouine, Akadi Lumina is 1.5-kilometre night walk in Acadia's natural environment. As night falls, visitors walk along a path where they are immersed in Acadian history through light, poetry, video projections and music.

Through eight themed areas that capture various facets of Acadian life, visitors experience the legendary warmth of kitchen parties and the courage and resilience Acadians have shown in overcoming adversity. Akadi Lumina is more than a visual arts show. It's a journey filled with emotion and Acadian spirit that reflects our community's contribution to our national heritage.

Created by Montreal's renowned Moment Factory entertainment studio, in partnership with local artists, musicians and storytellers, this project is the eighteenth in the Lumina series and the first in Atlantic Canada.

Since it opened on August 3, 2023, Akadi Lumina has not only enriched the cultural landscape, but also boosted tourism in the region. During its first season, the initiative attracted more than 40,000 visitors. Such enthusiasm clearly demonstrates the project's potential as a sustainable economic driver and model for cultural tourism.

I myself have walked the Akadi Lumina path with my family. Never am I so proud as when I witness our culture and our region shining so brightly for all those who are connecting to and learning about them for the first time and for those who are deepening their knowledge.

This year, the journey includes a new high seas feature. Given how outstanding the rest of the experience is, I have no doubt it will be just as wonderful.

Honourable senators, Akadi Lumina remains a Kent County jewel and a showcase of Acadian history and culture. Please join me in congratulating Akadi Lumina on its success. If ever you're in the area, this unique experience is definitely worth your while.

Thank you.

[English]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Shannin Metatawabin, Chief Executive Officer of the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, accompanied by the board of directors. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator White.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL CAPITAL CORPORATIONS ASSOCIATION

Hon. Judy A. White: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about the critical role Indigenous entrepreneurship plays in advancing economic self-reliance and fostering economic reconciliation. In particular, I would like to highlight the outstanding work of the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, or NACCA.

For 40 years, NACCA has worked with a network of more than 50 Indigenous Financial Institutions, or IFIs, to support Indigenous entrepreneurship in Canada.

To date, this network has provided more than 53,000 loans totalling \$3.3 billion to businesses owned by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, with NACCA supporting the network by building IFI capacity and fostering Indigenous business development.

• (1410)

Among its many achievements, NACCA partnered with the federal government to launch the Indigenous Growth Fund, Canada's largest Indigenous social impact fund. This \$153-million fund improves access to capital for Indigenous financial institutions and Indigenous small- and medium-sized enterprises.

NACCA is also currently working with the federal government to deliver a \$9.5-million investment in Indigenous tourism. This program supports 11 projects in seven provinces and territories and represents another step forward in advancing economic reconciliation through the empowerment of diverse Indigenous tourism projects.

I would also like to recognize the Indigenous Women's Entrepreneur Program, or IWE, was launched in 2022 across 32 IFIs in Canada. Through this initiative, developed in partnership with Indigenous Services Canada, NACCA supports Indigenous women in starting and growing businesses by addressing systemic barriers and tailoring supports to their unique needs and lived experiences.

Last month, the NACCA Indigenous Prosperity Forum took place in the National Capital Region. The forum saw over 400 delegates in attendance, including Indigenous lenders, economic leaders and entrepreneurs with partners and policy-makers, all of them highlighting advances in Indigenous economic reconciliation and self-determination.

Having been in attendance myself, I can say with confidence that the forum was a resounding success. I left, inspired by the many Indigenous entrepreneurs, business leaders and change-makers whom I met.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to NACCA and its leadership. The work you do to drive economic opportunity and prosperity is vital to the well-being of Indigenous communities across the country.

Thank you. *We'lalin.*

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Kathryn Fournier. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Audette.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CONGRATULATIONS TO 2025 GRADUATES

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, every year at this time thousands of students cross the convocation stages of our country's universities and colleges.

The class of 2025 includes former Senate colleagues Dr. Sarah Marquis, Dada Muhobo and Jessica Knézy. It includes Senator Muggli's son, Ayden Draude, and my daughter Lindelwa Coyle.

Nova Scotia is a renowned centre of higher education with Acadia, Cape Breton University, Dalhousie, Mount Saint Vincent, NSCADU, Saint Mary's, St. Francis Xavier, Université Sainte-Anne, University of King's College, the Atlantic School of Theology and the Nova Scotia Community College, all graduating thousands of people from across our region, Canada and the world.

I was honoured to attend St. Francis Xavier University's convocation last month. Packed to the rafters with graduating students, professors, faculty, family and friends, the convocation hall was electric with excitement. We were elevated by the power of African-Nova Scotian drumming, the Mi'kmaq Honour Song, the orchestral music of the high-school band and the transcendence as Janet Becigneul sang the national anthem in French, English, Mi'kmaq and Gaelic.

Chancellor Mila Mulroney presided with grace. President Andrew Hakin told graduates that kindness is a superpower and urged them to live up to the university's mission of building a better society.

StFX honorary degree recipients Olympian Clara Hughes and polymath Peter Nicholson inspired and challenged the graduates and all who were present.

Clara Hughes described the wisdom she gained on the eve of the Vancouver Olympics from participating in a Squamish First Nation ceremony led by Elder Dennis Joseph. She learned that nothing is done alone, including a race. You have a circle of strength to draw on.

Dr. Peter Nicholson issued a timely call to arms entitled "Mobilizing in Defense of Truth," very apt given that the StFX motto is *Quaecumque Sunt Vera*: "Whatsoever things are true." He said:

The scientific temperament is under attack. Not just in the halls of power, but in the cultural air we breathe. Truth is what enables us to foresee, as best we can, the consequences of our actions both as individuals and as society.

We deny or ignore truth at our peril. Remember that the defence of truth is not an abstract pursuit. It is a moral and civic responsibility.

In science, in business, in government, and in everyday life, your ability to understand cause and effect, and to act on wisdom, depends on embracing truth and rejecting falsehood.

Honourable colleagues, please join me in congratulating Sarah, Dada, Jessica, Ayden, Lindi and all among us who have graduates in our families. May they and all the graduates be fervent and effective defenders of the truth.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Scarlett Audrey Nixon, Grade 8 student from Agincourt Road Public School in Ottawa. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Black.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Senator Coyle]

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, as many of you know, when I rise in this chamber it is usually to talk about agriculture, rural communities and the issues facing our country that affect them both.

However, I also enjoy rising to show my support for youth and leadership programs offered throughout Canada, like 4-H and Junior Farmers, among others.

Today I am honoured to rise to highlight once again the importance of youth development, whether it be through youth leadership programs, quality education, peer-to-peer networks or extracurricular activities.

Youth are our future, and it is our job to make sure they are equipped to lead our country after us. Whenever possible, I speak with our younger generations about the Senate of Canada, my road to the Senate and the importance of being active in their communities.

Whether organized through SENgage, requests sent directly to my office or during my travels, I speak as often as I can to classes and schools across this country, meeting youth of all ages.

Just this year, I've already had the pleasure of speaking with Grade 5 classes in Huntsville and post-secondary students at the University of Saskatchewan. I must say, I always enjoy these opportunities. Hearing their comments, questions and concerns helps me to better understand their issues and better represent them in this chamber.

Honourable colleagues, it is the youth of today who will be the leaders of tomorrow. And my friend Ms. Scarlett Nixon will indeed be a leader of tomorrow, right here in Ontario. At 13 years of age, youth like Scarlett are already volunteering their time organizing school functions, participating in extracurricular activities, helping and tutoring peers, in addition to working after-school jobs.

When I speak to our youth, I like to share a few lessons that I wish somebody had told me when I was younger. I start by saying, don't be afraid to dig in and get your hands dirty. Never say "no" to an opportunity, as you never know what you may learn from it. It's okay to make mistakes, because learning comes from those mistakes. And, finally, to quote 4-H Canada's motto: "Learn To Do By Doing."

As I wrap up, I encourage our younger generation who might watch this, those who are our future leaders, to take advantage of the many opportunities they might have and run with them. Take chances when you can and try new things.

As you navigate the ever-changing world we live in, know that parliamentarians, like me — and us — are working to support you as well. We are here to guide you, support you, mentor you and ensure that you're equipped with the best tools for success now and into the future.

I encourage them to reach out to their senators and their MPs if they have concerns that we should know about. Their voice is the voice of the future, and we need to hear from them.

Thank you to our youth, like Scarlett, for getting involved, taking chances and being a leader and a role model.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

PRIDE MONTH

Hon. Marnie McBean: Honourable senators, every June communities across Canada come together to celebrate Pride Month. It's a time to honour the diverse identities of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Despite our growing visibility — as Prime Minister Carney said yesterday at the Pride flag raising — the community is in a precarious position and is facing backlash around the world.

Recently, I was interviewed for a TV program, and during my introduction the host stumbled. She introduced me as a member of the “LGBTQ — argh! XYZ community!” She threw up her hands, in part exasperated and in part entertaining the audience, turned to me and said, “What is it anyway?”

That didn't feel great. She wasn't just tongue-tied; she blew it off.

• (1420)

She dismissed the gay community for a cheap laugh. She didn't do it with malice, but in that moment she just didn't consider me.

What is the right thing to say when addressing the gay community? I don't know. I'm gay. That doesn't make me an expert in all things gay. I'm not even an expert at being a lesbian. I know myself. I know my story.

What I do know is that it's not an alphabet soup of labels. Every letter in the acronym matters. I used to say simply LGBT. Now, I lead with the Indigenous 2S, for two-spirit, and I include the queer community: 2SLGBTQ. More fully, I say 2SLGBTQIA+.

What should you say? It depends a bit on the context, but the most important thing is to understand that each letter represents real people, real identities and real experiences.

As there are many people in the community, there are many explanations of each letter. As this is Pride Month, I encourage you to take it upon yourselves to dive in and do a bit of research.

Friends, how we lift each other up is important. Allyship isn't about getting every word perfect every time; it's about trying and showing up with respect.

Ah Ni Na. I first heard this Coast Salish word in a song during a ceremony where I was being gifted a drum for Team Canada. You hear it said when someone has fallen and needs to be lifted up. It means lifting up their spirit when you lift up their body. *Ah Ni Na.*

People are pushed down when others blow off the importance of using someone's chosen pronouns or expressing care when talking about a community: any community, not just the gay one.

Colleagues, from the time I arrived here, I've gained the sense that, overwhelmingly, you are allies. In statements and conversations, I've heard that you have family and dear friends who are members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Sharing like that matters. *Ah Ni Na.*

Being part of a minority, feeling vulnerable and alone, is isolating. Getting up and feeling strong isn't easy, but with the help of others it is easier.

If you're ever unsure about what to say to be inclusive, that's okay, and don't worry if you're just getting tongue-tied: No problem. Just be respectful. Take a moment to learn. Language matters, and everyone deserves to feel strong, safe and full of pride.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MAKING LIFE MORE AFFORDABLE FOR CANADIANS BILL

NOTICE OF MOTION TO RESOLVE INTO COMMITTEE OF
THE WHOLE TO CONSIDER SUBJECT MATTER OF BILL C-4

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, usual practice or previous order:

1. at 7 p.m. on June 17, 2025, the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on the subject matter of Bill C-4, An Act respecting certain affordability measures for Canadians and another measure, introduced in the House of Commons on June 5, 2025, in advance of the said bill coming before the Senate;
2. the Committee of the Whole receive the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P., Minister of Finance and National Revenue, accompanied by at most three officials;

3. the committee rise no later than 95 minutes after it begins;
4. the minister's introductory remarks be limited to a maximum of five minutes;
5. if, during the Committee of the Whole, a senator does not use the entire period of 10 minutes for debate provided under rule 12-31(3)(d), including the responses of the witnesses, that senator may yield the balance of time to another senator;
6. the provisions of rule 3-3(1) and any provision of the Rules or previous order relating to the ordinary time of adjournment be suspended until the Committee of the Whole has completed meeting that day;
7. if a standing vote was deferred to a time that would occur during the meeting of the Committee of the Whole, that vote be further deferred so that the bells only begin once the committee has completed its work; and
8. for greater certainty, all witnesses appear in person.

[English]

ONE CANADIAN ECONOMY BILL

NOTICE OF MOTION TO RESOLVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO CONSIDER SUBJECT MATTER OF BILL C-5 AND AFFECT ITS PROCEEDINGS

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, usual practice or previous order:

1. when the Senate sits on June 16, June 17 and June 18, 2025, it resolve itself into Committees of the Whole at the start of each sitting to consider the subject matter of Bill C-5, An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act, introduced in the House of Commons on June 6, 2025, in advance of that bill coming before the Senate;
2. each Committee of the Whole last a maximum of four hours, provided that the committee may suspend its meeting as it considers appropriate, with any such suspensions not being counted as part of the total time the committee may sit;
3. on June 16, 2025, the Committee of the Whole receive:
 - (a) the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P., Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, for a maximum of 65 minutes, who may make introductory remarks of a maximum of

5 minutes, with her appearance focused on Part 1 of the bill, and who may be accompanied by at most three officials; and

- (b) such other witnesses as may be determined according to the process established in this order;
4. on June 17, 2025, the Committee of the Whole receive:
 - (a) the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, P.C., M.P., President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy, and the Honourable Rebecca Alty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, for a maximum of 130 minutes, who may make introductory remarks of a maximum of 5 minutes each, with their appearance focused on Part 2 of the bill, with each minister accompanied by at most three officials; and
 - (b) such other witnesses as may be determined according to the process established in this order;
5. on June 18, 2025, the Committee of the Whole receive such witnesses as may be determined according to the process established in this order;
6. the majority of deputy leaders or deputy facilitators be authorized to invite witnesses on behalf of the Committees of the Whole, subject to the terms of this order;
7. if, during any of these Committees of the Whole, a senator does not use the entire period of 10 minutes for debate provided under rule 12-31(3)(d), including the responses of the witnesses, that senator may yield the balance of time to another senator;
8. the provisions of rule 3-3(1) and any provision of the Rules or previous order relating to the ordinary time of adjournment be suspended while these Committees of the Whole are meeting;
9. if a standing vote was deferred to a time that would occur during the meeting of any of these Committees of the Whole, that vote be further deferred so that the bells only begin once the committee has completed its work;
10. for greater certainty, witnesses at any of these Committees of the Whole appear in person;
11. if the Senate receives a message from the House of Commons with Bill C-5, that bill be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at second reading later that day, as the first item of Government Business if received before that point in the sitting, or, if received after that point in the sitting, as the

next item of business, and, in either case, the sitting not adjourn that day before the Senate has begun proceedings on the bill at second reading;

12. except as provided in point 14, once debate on second reading of the bill begins, that debate not be adjourned, with the Senate not adjourning until consideration of the bill at that stage is complete and continuing beyond the ordinary time of adjournment, if required, and with any standing vote requested in relation to any motion relating to second reading of the bill not being deferred;
13. except as provided in points 14 and 15, if the bill is adopted at second reading, it be placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate;
14. except as provided in point 15, at the end of debate at second reading, the Government Liaison be authorized to defer the standing vote on the main motion, if one is requested, to the next sitting of the Senate, at the start of the Orders of the Day, in which case, if the bill is still before the Senate after the vote, it be placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading later that same sitting;
15. during the sitting of June 27, 2025, if the bill is still on the Orders of the Day, for either that sitting or a future sitting:
 - (a) the sitting continue until proceedings on the bill are completed;
 - (b) proceedings on any item related to the bill not be adjourned;
 - (c) if the bill is only adopted at second reading that day, it be taken into consideration at third reading forthwith; and
 - (d) if the Senate has not concluded all proceedings on the bill by 5:15 p.m., the Speaker interrupt any proceedings then before the Senate in order to put all questions necessary to dispose of the bill at third reading without further debate, provided that:
 - (i) if the bill has not yet been moved for either second or third reading at that time, a senator be recognized solely to move second or third reading, as appropriate;
 - (ii) if the bill is on the Orders of the Day for a future sitting, it be brought forward at that time so that all questions can be put;
 - (iii) if any vote relating to the bill had been deferred so that it would normally take place after the time provided for the interruption of proceedings, that vote be

brought forward to 5:30 p.m. on June 27, 2025, after a 15-minute bell, with the bells to begin ringing at 5:15 p.m.; and

- (iv) if the Speaker interrupts proceedings then before the Senate pursuant to this subpoint in order to put all questions necessary to dispose of the bill without further debate, no further debate or amendment be permitted at any stage, and, if a standing vote is requested, the vote not be deferred and the bells ring once, and for only 15 minutes, without being rung again for subsequent votes necessary to dispose of the bill;
16. if the Senate does not sit on June 27, 2025, any provision in this order referring to that date be read as if referring to the next day thereafter that the Senate does sit;
17. for greater certainty, and except as otherwise provided, if at the time this order provides that something is to happen in relation to the bill, the bells are either ringing for another vote, such a vote is underway, or that time would conflict with the time specified for an event in a message from the Crown, the time provided for in this order be understood as if it were at the end of that other vote or the event;
18. no motion to refer the bill to committee be received; and
19. if this order is adopted after the time at which the Speaker would otherwise be required to interrupt proceedings on June 27, 2025, provisions that would have taken effect at that time be read as if that time were the time that falls immediately after the adoption of this order.

• (1430)

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO APPOINT JULIE WELLINGTON AS LAW CLERK AND PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL

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

That Julie Wellington be appointed Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel of the Senate, effective July 17, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Monday, June 16, 2025, at 2 p.m.

QUESTION PERIOD

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Senator Gold, Canadians across the country are embracing a renewed sense of national pride, with many choosing to display symbols of patriotism, like the Canadian flag, at home, in their communities and online. In that spirit, can the government confirm whether there are any policies or directives that prevent federal public servants or employees of Crown corporations from displaying modest patriotic symbols, such as a Canadian flag or a lapel pin, at their workplace?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and for underlining the pride and resolve that all of us feel in this country to stand together in the face of the very challenging times that we find ourselves in this world and, indeed, that the world is going through.

I am not aware of the specific policies in federal departments with regard to what can and cannot be worn. I will certainly make inquiries of the relevant minister or ministers so that I can be better acquainted with such matters.

Senator Housakos: Senator Gold, in times when our sovereignty is under attack, national unity and pride should be celebrated, I think, from the rooftops. It would be deeply unfortunate if government workplaces were an exception to that. Thank you for getting that answer because I think it is important that the Carney government commit to ensuring that patriotic expression in federal workplaces is respected and even encouraged by our government.

Senator Gold: You're very welcome.

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Senator Gold, for too long the Korean War had been called the forgotten war, but thanks to the efforts of the late Greg Thompson, former Minister of Veterans Affairs, in 2008, he was able to bring our veterans into the eligibility criteria to receive benefits alongside World War I and World War II veterans. In 2013, we enacted the Korean War Veterans Day Act.

The Korean War is forgotten no more, yet given the fact that the Korean War was Canada's third-bloodiest war and that this year is the start of the historic seventy-fifth anniversary of the Korean War, why was there no mention of the Korean War in the recent Speech from the Throne? Will the Prime Minister correct this serious omission and apologize to our veterans for forgetting them in the Throne Speech?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you. This government, this chamber and, I think, all Canadians are grateful to all of those who served, fought and sacrificed themselves in the wars that we fought to defend freedom and justice abroad. Indeed, this is not the forgotten war.

The Throne Speech sets out the government priorities for action looking forward. This was a Throne Speech of a new government, and I can assure this chamber that any omissions in that Throne Speech, whether in recognition of the honour of those who served and sacrificed themselves in the Korean War or many other things, did not reflect ignorance of or indifference to the heroic sacrifices that our fellow Canadians made.

Senator Martin: Honouring our veterans requires more than words, but those words are important. It demands meaningful action and a steadfast commitment. As the number of Korean War veterans continues to diminish with each passing year, it becomes even more urgent that we act now.

What concrete steps will the government take to ensure the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Korean War is properly recognized and the veterans' legacy is preserved through national commemorations, education and support for their well-being?

Senator Housakos: Hear, hear.

Senator Gold: Thank you, senator, for your question.

• (1440)

I will certainly raise this with the minister, and I will encourage the minister to work — as I expect that the ministers would — with members of the Korean diaspora community in our country. Also, I invite you to talk to me here if you would be willing to be of help in that matter.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Senator Gold, as we all know, this week, President Trump denied Ukraine 20,000 previously purchased ground-to-air defence missiles. This particularly brutal coercive act demonstrates the need for a different support for Ukraine by Canada and our allies. The European Sky Shield Initiative can provide innocent Ukrainian children with the protection they need.

What is Canada doing to promote this option with our allies, and is Canada going to take up a leadership role in Sky Shield?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and, again, for your advocacy and attention to this important issue.

I will repeat Canada's unwavering commitment to Ukraine and its defence against an unjust war. I will also repeat that the Prime Minister invited President Zelenskyy to the G7, and the government has been working with its counterparts in the G7 in an effort to strengthen our support and our allies' support for Ukraine.

I would also underline the heroic and innovative ways in which the Ukrainian people and government have responded to the aggression through a number of ways. This is an important issue, and it remains top of mind for the Government of Canada.

Senator Kutcher: Senator Gold, Canada previously contributed about \$120 million to the Danish model. Many other nations are also contributing to this highly successful approach. How much will Canada be donating in the next six months to this initiative?

If you don't have the answer now — and I don't expect you to have the answer now — would you ask the minister to answer that question for us, please, and can you also ask the minister to answer my question about Sky Shield?

Senator Gold: I will certainly raise it with the minister. As you understand, I cannot speculate on future funding.

I do note that just last week at the meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence, the Minister of National Defence announced that Canada is providing over \$35 million in military assistance to Ukraine, but I will certainly raise the issue.

JUSTICE

CANADA'S BLACK JUSTICE STRATEGY

Hon. Paulette Senior: Senator Gold, from the report entitled *A Roadmap for Transformative Change: Canada's Black Justice Strategy*, I quote the following:

... the criminal justice system will transform from one that punishes the poorest and most marginalized members of our society, and that carries a history of racism and oppression, to one that is fair and equitable and free from discrimination; in other words, a justice system that is truly just.

Senator Gold, I dare say that many of us in the Black and Indigenous communities have been waiting for much too long for this transformation. When will the funding for Canada's Black Justice Strategy be deployed to realize this transformation?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question.

The government is very aware that this country continues to be challenged by anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination against Black people in Canada throughout many of our institutions, and the government is committed to building a justice system for all through Canada's Black Justice Strategy, to which you paid reference.

Senator, I cannot speculate on future funding, but I do want to assure you and this chamber that the government is committed to continuing its work to implement Canada's Black Justice Strategy.

Strategy and funding alone will not effect a transformation, but it will be a necessary step in that important direction.

Senator Senior: Senator Gold, has the Minister of Justice been apprised of the existence of this road map and the urgency to begin the implementation? If not, will that be done soon?

Senator Gold: Thank you for your question. The government is very much aware of this matter and committed to implementing Canada's Black Justice Strategy.

Having said that, I shall raise your concerns and bring it to the minister's attention at the earliest opportunity.

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Krista Ross: Senator Gold, in the government's recently introduced Bill C-4 which is focused on affordability measures for Canadians, like tax cuts and home ownership, there is an unrelated section which would shield federal political parties from provincial privacy laws. Not only does it shield federal political parties from being beyond the scope of basically any privacy law in Canada, but it is also retroactive for 25 years. The text of this section was not included in the ways and means

motion, nor did the minister mention these changes to the Canada Elections Act when he spoke to this bill in the other place on Friday.

This is very concerning considering the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled against the federal parties by saying they are subject to the provincial privacy commissioners and their rulings in how they use Canadian data.

My question is not on whether this section may be important or not, but why was it tacked onto an unrelated bill that has an urgency to pass? Why can't it be studied on its own merit?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question.

As you know, if the motion for which I gave notice passes, we will all have the opportunity to ask both the minister and the officials that very question.

This is an important provision that is designed to build further trust in the democratic process. As I'm sure you and your colleagues have read the B.C. court decision and its admonitions to the government to make this happen quickly — though they did not give us a timetable — and if you will recall the debates in this chamber around this issue and a proposed amendment, it will go some distance in explaining why the government felt it was important to get this done at the reasonably earliest opportunity.

More will — and should — be discussed and elaborated upon when the minister is here.

Senator Ross: The last time that changes to privacy requirements in the Canada Elections Act went through were when they were tacked onto the budget implementation act in 2023. At that time, you said that the government would bring forward legislation to ensure a uniform approach, which resulted in Bill C-65 which died on the Order Paper. In fact, the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs also recommended a separate bill for this issue.

Why didn't the government reintroduce that legislation rather than tacking it onto other unrelated measures?

Senator Gold: Again, I encourage this question to be asked of the minister. I'll remind us of the circumstances in which we ended the last Parliament when simply nothing was able to pass through the House of Commons. I'll remind us, of course, of the calendar — of which I'm very aware — in which we find ourselves now and the priorities of this government to address the economic matters.

This will be before us in due course.

[Senator Ross]

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

MILITARY SPENDING

Hon. Danièle Henkel: Senator Gold, I am feeling emotional and grateful as I rise for the first time in this chamber to ask the government about an issue that is dear to me: the reservists in our Canadian Armed Forces. We too often forget that they are the ones who are mobilized during climate disasters. They are the ones who lent a hand in residences for vulnerable individuals when COVID hit our communities hard. It goes without saying that the announcement of a significant and much-needed increase in the national defence budget is excellent news. As Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel of the Régiment de Maisonneuve, a position I have held for several years now, I would like to know how much of the budget will actually go to the Reserve Force. What resources will be allocated, for example, to equipment, training and pay for reservists? Also, will this support be ongoing?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. I am flattered that your first question is for me. The government is well aware of the importance of the Reserve Force, whose role is to augment, sustain and support the Regular Force. Yesterday, this chamber authorized the National Finance Committee to study the Supplementary Estimates (A), 2025-26. One of the main items in the estimates is \$2.1 billion to allow the Minister of National Defence to accelerate the recruitment of new members for both the regular and reserve forces, augment the department's capacity to provide training, reinforce retention of existing members, and improve health services to members.

• (1450)

Senator Henkel: Senator Gold, thank you for your answer. As a businesswoman, however, I've learned that investing without measuring the results is a waste of time and money. In this case, it's the money of Canadians. Do you use an assessment strategy to measure actual results one, two or more years down the road and determine whether these funds were used efficiently and appropriately?

Senator Gold: The government is fully aware of the importance of performance-based assessment. During the parliamentary financial cycle, departmental results reports are prepared at the end of each fiscal year. These reports contain information on the resources used during the fiscal year and compare the results achieved against the expected results set out in the corresponding departmental plans.

[English]

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Senator Gold, last week, Prime Minister Carney stated that he would not impose a pipeline project on a province that opposes it, insisting there must be full

consensus among provinces before proceeding. But this is not just a political misstep; it's a constitutional contradiction. Paragraph 92(10)(c) of the Constitution Act clearly grants federal government jurisdiction over interprovincial infrastructure, including pipelines. This authority has been reaffirmed by both the B.C. Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Trans Mountain Pipeline* case. Even the Trudeau government previously upheld that jurisdiction by approving the TMX pipeline over British Columbia's objections.

Senator Gold, can you explain why the Prime Minister is now undermining this clear and settled constitutional authority? How can we build a functioning national economy or develop our natural resources if any single province is effectively handed a veto over projects of national importance?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. There is a difference between the powers that were set out in the Constitution Act, 1867, how the powers have evolved and been interpreted by the courts, and the reality of co-operative federalism in the 21st century. The provinces own their resources; the federal government has its areas of jurisdiction. There is no contradiction here, senator, with the greatest of respect.

This Prime Minister respects the sovereign jurisdiction of the provinces. He respects the rights — inherent rights, recognized rights — of Indigenous peoples. He recognizes the political fact that we need to work together out of respect for different governments exercising jurisdiction in their areas. Constitutional powers notwithstanding, this government is committed to working together with provinces, territories and Indigenous leaders for the betterment of all Canadians.

Senator MacDonald: We have to respect the federal authority in this country as well. Senator Gold, this concession arbitrarily hands provinces a power they do not constitutionally possess. It sets a dangerous precedent for national unity and economic development. To paraphrase Pierre Trudeau, it is not the role of the Prime Minister to be a "head waiter to the provinces."

Will this government reaffirm its constitutional authority over interprovincial projects and commit to leading with the national interest in mind instead of appeasing narrow provincial politics at the expense of Canada's future?

Senator Gold: With the greatest of respect, I just do not accept either the constitutional premise or the political premise of your question. This is not renouncing constitutional authority. It is exercising it in a respectful and responsible way.

FINANCE

DEPARTMENTAL PLANS

Hon. Elizabeth Marshall: My question is for Senator Gold, and it's on transparency and accountability.

The Main Estimates for 2025-26 have been referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance for study and were sent over on May 29. However, we need the 2025-26 Departmental Plans to assess how all the departments and

agencies are going to spend the money they're requesting. Those plans should have been tabled by now. And without those Departmental Plans, all we have are numbers on a page.

Senator Gold, can you tell us when the government will table the 2025-26 Departmental Plans so we can undertake the work which the Senate has assigned to us?

An Hon. Senator: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): I am not surprised, Senator Marshall, that you have asked me that question. It is a legitimate question, and I regret that I don't have an answer for you, but I certainly will, once again, raise this question and concern to the government at my first opportunity.

As Government Representative in the Senate and as a senator, I'm proud of the work that we do, and we often do it under certain constraints, but I will communicate that and hope that we receive an answer, a satisfactory one. I have every confidence that even if it's just numbers on the page, Senator Marshall, you'll dig deep and make sure that we understand what's at stake.

Senator Marshall: My supplementary question is this, Senator Gold: We've got incomplete data for the 2023-24 Departmental Results Reports — and I'd asked you a question on that before — and we have no Debt Management Report for 2023-24 — and I had asked you a question on that. That's for fiscal years. That's not the last fiscal year. That's the fiscal year before that.

There will be no budget, and we don't have a borrowing strategy for this year, but we know the government has to borrow significant amounts of money, so it is very difficult to review spending plans —

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Marshall, thank you for your question.

Senator Gold: Senator Marshall, I understand the question, even though not everyone might have heard it. The fact is this is a new government with an ambitious plan to address existential challenges to the way the world is operated and Canada's place in the world. Once again, I will communicate the concern to the minister, and I look forward to the study of this in this place.

INDIGENOUS SERVICES

INDIAN ACT

Hon. Pat Duncan: My question is also for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Gold, yesterday we saw the Auditor General's scathing report on registration under the Indian Act, including unacceptable long processing times and decision makers' lack of training and knowledge to properly consider applications. Respecting the Auditor General's findings, what will Indigenous Services Canada do to improve the services to rightful registrants in light of the anticipated passage of Bill S-2, and when will they do it?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question and for underlining the important work of the Auditor General and her recommendations. The government agrees with her recommendations. Registration services are absolutely foundational to First Nations individuals' access to a range of services and programs.

The audit is harsh, and it points to certain areas of improvement, but I am advised that important work is under way in many of the identified areas. Most notably, Indigenous Services Canada is transitioning from a paper-based application system to a modern digital format, which will reduce processing times, minimize errors and improve client service for the issuance of the secure status card. I'm advised that the government is committed to working in partnership with First Nations communities to make sure that registration services are delivered with integrity, respect and a strong focus on service to clients.

Senator Duncan: Senator Gold, in light of the silos that exist in government — on the one hand, we have the anticipated passage of Bill S-2 and an expected increase in eligible registrants, and, on the other hand, we have Canada's procurement strategy for Indigenous businesses that exists among some controversy — have these two silos had any communication about the impacts of Bill S-2?

Senator Gold: I'm not in a position to comment on what discussions might have taken place. However, I can assure this chamber that this government is focused on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the workings of government, and it remains committed to advancing the important work we still need to do with regard to our relationships with First Nations and Indigenous communities.

• (1500)

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

CONFLICT IN GAZA STRIP

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Senator Gold, I would like to take the opportunity to thank and congratulate you on your five years with the Government Representative Office, nine years as a senator and a lifetime of service to Canadians in your community and across the country.

I know my questions to you on Israel and Palestine may have caused you some discomfort, but I assure you that this is the last time you will have to answer a question from me on this topic. A few hours ago, more than 20 senators attended a briefing on the plight of children in Ukraine and in Gaza. We learned about Canada's outstanding leadership in protecting Ukrainian children and seeking justice for those who have been abducted by Russia. One of our colleagues asked about similar initiatives related to Palestinian children. No one could name even one initiative. Can you?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your comments. This government is very seized with the plight of innocent civilians in Gaza, as it is with that of all those who are caught up in wars they hold no

responsibility for. If I understand your question, I am not aware of initiatives for kidnapped Palestinian children, whether in Gaza or the West Bank. However, the government is seized with the plight of the kidnapped Israeli soldiers who are still living in darkness and fear in tunnels 615-odd days since the war began. This government will continue to press for an end to the war, the release of all hostages, a ceasefire and the expansion of humanitarian aid for all innocent civilians.

Senator Woo: We learned in the briefing that there are thousands of Palestinian children detained in Israeli prisons, and the 10 or so humanitarian organizations who attended today's briefing, led by Save the Children, agreed that there is an immense and profound gulf between the way Canada has responded to the crisis in Gaza and our own very worthy and necessary measures in Ukraine. What is the reason for this double standard, and how does Canada defend it from the perspective of international law?

Senator Gold: Canada's position on the conflict in the Middle East is consistent with international law, and the government is of the view that there is no double standard at work. The circumstances of each conflict, tragic as they are for all who are caught up in them, must be understood in their complexity and specificity.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: My question is for the Government Representative and regards the Canada Disability Benefit. First, however, let me add to the comments from yesterday and thank you, sir, for your dedication and service to this place — ensuring the efficiency of the Senate — and hence your service to Canada.

You will know that the process for applying for the Canada Disability Benefit is expensive and requires a form from a medical practitioner, and the government set aside funding for access for applicants. However, the process for accessing the money to file the forms is not functioning while the benefit is supposed to start flowing as early as next month. Can you impress upon the government the urgency of the matter of the applications for individual Canadians?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): The answer is yes. The government — and the Prime Minister — has been very clear that it is focused on ways of delivering programs as efficiently as possible. As colleagues would know, the Prime Minister has given all ministers the task of identifying how their specific ministries can contribute to the government's priorities. That includes ensuring that the dollars for operations are spent effectively and efficiently. I will certainly bring this up with the minister at the earliest convenience.

Senator Cardozo: Thank you, Senator Gold. If this benefit is not fully functional for all applicants by July — it seems it may not be — could you ask the government to provide the payments retroactively to July for those recipients who are not able to access the system in the following months?

Senator Gold: I will certainly add that to what I will bring to the minister's attention.

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

SECRETARIES OF STATE

Hon. Denise Batters: Senator Gold, when Prime Minister Carney named his cabinet, he touted it as smaller and more efficient. He named 28 ministers, and they all have departments, extra pay, cars and drivers. In addition, he named 10 secretaries of state. They all get extra pay too. However, recently, you couldn't tell me how much more they make, what they actually do or whether they have departments and cars and drivers, but the wheels on the gravy train just keep spinning. Now this Liberal prime minister has named one third of his backbench MPs as parliamentary secretaries, with extra pay of over \$20,000 each to boot. Even secretaries of state have parliamentary secretaries. Prime Minister Carney has officially become the Oprah Winfrey of prime ministers: You get a car, and you get a car. How much is this Liberal prime minister's giveaway fever costing Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Marc Gold (Government Representative in the Senate): That's a pretty good line, Senator Batters. I can always count on you to hold the government's feet to the fire. The parliamentary secretaries do an important job on behalf of the ministers they support. In many cases, they stand in for the ministers when they may be otherwise engaged, and they are an important part of making any government and cabinet work in the best interests of Canadians. I do not have the dollar figure that you have requested, but I can assure you that this government is organized to deliver an effective and efficient government to Canadians and will continue to work to that end.

Senator Batters: Senator Gold, Saskatchewan is the only province without a full cabinet minister. We have one lone secretary of state, and he does not sit at the cabinet table. So when the current Liberal government does not properly brief you to answer those questions, it is not fair to you, and it is not fair to the people of Saskatchewan who want answers. What are those secretaries of state? Do they have their own departments and budgets? What are their salaries? Do they get cars and drivers? Senator Gold, the time is ticking. We want answers now.

Senator Gold: Thank you. I will certainly ask those questions. I am not in a position to answer them now, but I imagine that those answers will be made public in due course. In the meantime, in the time that remains, I will certainly make inquiries.

The Hon. the Speaker: Colleagues, I have heard three phones ring during the first hour and 10 minutes. I wish to remind you to please check your phones and ensure that they are silenced.

[Translation]

Thank you very much. I hope that you can respect that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INDIAN ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Michèle Audette moved second reading of Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Indian Act (new registration entitlements).

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

She said: Honourable senators, the Anishinaabe people have been welcoming me since 2021. I asked them for permission to work on their land as a senator until I turn 75, if my health permits.

Many cultures coexist on this land, which is full of history, traditions and stories and which has witnessed many outreach efforts. I thank the Anishinaabe people.

Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Indian Act (new registration entitlements).

This is the first time that a bill has been introduced to amend the Indian Act. It is being sponsored by a minister from the Cree First Nation and by an Innu senator from Quebec. She and I are writing a page in history, and I hope that we will continue to work together for years to come. I hope that my daughters will hear about this positive development.

I will try to leave you time to ask questions. I apologize in advance if I don't. I hope you will also understand that I will not have answers to all of your questions. I hope that the ministers, departments and cabinet are listening carefully to our discussions.

• (1510)

Evidently, I stand before you with great determination, because this is more than a mere bill or document. It is the beginnings of a response, a response to decades of injustice that people, human beings, men and women, have experienced and continue to experience.

I would like to thank Kathryn, who is actually here with us today.

The purpose of this bill is to provide new entitlements to registration in the Indian Register in response to the challenge of certain provisions of the act under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in *Nicholas v. Canada*.

Those affected by enfranchisement took Canada to the Supreme Court of British Columbia. The *Nicholas* civil suit was filed in June 2021, and the plaintiffs, many of whom are descendants of people who were enfranchised by colonial policy, are patiently awaiting justice.

To these people, I say, “I hear you.”

To Kathryn and her entire family, I say, “I hear you. I understand your struggle. I understand.”

To my esteemed colleagues here in what I consider to be an important chamber, I must point out that, in this case, the Attorney General of Canada admitted a few days ago that the impugned law unjustifiably violates section 15(1) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

It’s rare to hear someone say that. Such a concession is exceptional, in my opinion.

The judge is currently examining the possibility of suspending the declaration of invalidity, which would give Parliament time to pass Bill S-2. This means that the court is waiting to see whether we, as lawmakers, will take action.

As you can see, passing this bill is not only symbolic, but also necessary. We must act now. Let’s not miss this opportunity to bring our laws into line with justice, equality and the Charter. Let’s make sure that the law no longer separates families or deprives them of their rightful identity. Let’s show those who have waited so long that their patience and perseverance have been worthwhile.

Bill S-2 is also an opportunity to correct the painful injustice brought to light by *Nicholas*.

Who is this bill for, and why is it being introduced now?

Let me explain why the bill should be passed. It includes a part about enfranchisement, which is very important to feminists. For my Innu mother, all of that was very painful, and the consequences are still being felt.

The part about enfranchisement would guarantee that people with a family history of enfranchisement are treated the same as people with no such history under the Indian Act.

The part about individual deregistration by request would allow people who want their name removed from the Indian Register to apply for deregistration.

What does that mean? We have to fight to register or re-register. If I fall in love with a member of the Navajo people in the United States, I can’t become a citizen in the eyes of his government because “dual membership” is not allowed, to use the jargon of the Indian Act.

As things stand, I can’t deregister from the Indian Act and apply to move down south with my family. This bill could allow that kind of deregistration and recognition in another nation. If we separate in the event of death or for some other reason and I move back to my own land, I would be re-registered automatically.

As for the part about losing membership in one’s natal band, it is a very paternalistic law. I am going to continue using jargon from the Indian Act. A woman who married an Indian from another band, reserve or community automatically had her status changed without her consent. She would be registered in her husband’s band. Today, that means this is also the case for all her children and descendants. Even in the event of death, divorce or separation, she still had to remain in that band.

Finally, this provision could allow women, children and descendants to return to their natal band, if they so choose.

Of course, there is another part about removing outdated and offensive language such as “mentally incompetent Indians.”

Obviously, I can’t stay silent.

[English]

I cannot say this is the perfect bill. I would like to say that to myself, first of all, but also to my mother and many people who I walk beside.

For too long, Indigenous women, First Nations women, fought. They went to court and challenged the court but with no money and no support. They even had to fight against their own brothers, fathers or people from their own nation. The sad part is when the Court Challenges Program was ended, it was very tough, very hard. I live with that frustration all the time.

We always have to wait for a court decision to make changes within the Indian Act. Why?

[Translation]

I’d like to talk to you about a section that Justice Masse included in her conclusion in *Descheneaux v. Canada*. This is from paragraph 235:

It does not, however, exempt Parliament from taking the appropriate measures to identify and settle all other discriminatory situations that may arise from the issue identified, whether they are based on sex or another prohibited ground, in accordance with its constitutional obligation to ensure that the laws respect the rights enshrined in the *Canadian Charter*.

That decision is from 2015, not 1860.

I come from an age-old nomadic Innu people. At one time, the roles of men and women were clear in our protocols, our laws, our rules, our codes and our ways of being. Our relationship with the land, our protocols and our laws were sacred. Then, overnight, a law was imposed on us without informed consent. Nobody asked me or my great-grandmother for our opinions. That law was the Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of Indian Tribes of 1857. We are big believers in tradition in this place. This act was harmful in terms of perpetuating a colonial tradition. Nothing was hidden, as we can see from the title of the act.

Later on, the objective of assimilation was quite overt. I have a quote from Duncan Campbell Scott, a senior Indian Affairs official, who, in 1920, clearly stated:

Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill.

As you can see, we are dealing with a colonial past that lives on in our policies and laws.

Bill S-2 builds on the work started by many people through Bill C-31, Bill C-3 and Bill S-2.

• (1520)

For those of us who remember the repatriation of the Constitution, that Constitution became an important tool for the women known as “Indian women” back then, because the Charter mentioned the right to equality. This is what prompted the federal government to introduce Bill C-31, which allowed my mother and thousands of other women to regain the Indian status they had lost when they married a Quebecer, a native of Thunder Bay or a “non-status Indian.”

Up until 1985, Canadian and Quebec women were also taken in and given Indian status. Once this act was passed, they weren’t told, “Sorry, you have to go.” Instead, it was considered an acquired right. It is still happening in 2025. It creates a complicated way of seeing things, but we understand it because we live with this reality, since a two-tiered system of status still exists because of sections 6(1) and 6(2), which stem from Bill C-31 from 1985.

[English]

It wasn’t there before 1985. Plus, before 1985, if I was giving birth, I wasn’t asked who the father of my children was. But since 1985, I am asked to say who the father is. What if it is a rape or incest, or the father died, or I’m in a violence situation, or I just don’t want to give the name? Well, Ottawa will presume that the dad is a non-status Indian. Then again, if I fall under section 6(2) — the cut-off generation — my baby will not be recognized.

You know I’m from Schefferville, up north — train, plane. The community will be allowed to refuse services to my children. But what if a woman here comes to the hospital, and the person who welcomes the woman says, “By the way, before I give you services, I need to know who the father of your children is”?

[Translation]

I don’t think that would be tolerated, but for us it is still happening.

We have to bear stories, injuries and scars like that every day. We also bear them because at the time, the federal government negotiated behind closed doors with the Chiefs, most of whom were men, and said, “We have no choice, we have to re-register those women and their children, but we’ll give you the opportunity to create your own membership code,” in the hope that it would be restrictive, of course. “But it’s the department

that will approve all this.” This created another form of discrimination: “Who is Indian and who is not? We’ll give you some power, but each person is limited to one band, or they’ll be added to the register in Ottawa.”

This is what spurred Sharon McIvor, a First Nations woman from British Columbia, into action. She challenged certain provisions of the Indian Act, contrasting the treatment of Indigenous women and Indigenous men. In 2007, the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled in her favour, finding that there was discrimination on the basis of sex.

In 1985, we had been told that the matter was settled. However, another party in that case decided to challenge the ruling, so she wound up before the Court of Appeal in 2009. As a little aside, I already had five children at the time. Getting back to the case before the courts, the Court of Appeal handed down a narrower decision, treating the discrimination as if it had begun in 1951, which was not the case at all. Later, in 2011, Bill C-3 was introduced as Canada’s response to the decision. Debates on Bill C-3 followed and, fortunately, this legislation was eventually passed.

Some of you know a bit about my personality and know that I was a little more militant back in my younger days. After reading the press release, I called Ottawa and asked a question.

[English]

“May I speak to my father in trust for all Indians?”

[Translation]

Then I called Canada’s Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, which used to be called the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The person said, “Who?”

[English]

I said, “I’m status Indian. May I speak to my father in trust for all Indians?”

[Translation]

I wanted them to understand that there had been a court ruling that was important to hundreds of women, girls and children like me, and I wanted to know what changes it would bring about for us. I had a long list of questions because a lot of women were part of the debate. However, the answer was too simple: “No, no, this won’t fix that. No, not section 6(2).” The answer to most of my questions was no. I said, “Okay, I’m coming over. I’m going to put on my walking shoes and march to Ottawa to speak out against the Indian Act.”

On May 4, 2010, I left Wendake with other women. We marched to go listen to the debates on this bill in the other place in June. There was a lot of pressure both inside and outside Parliament. I would actually like to thank the Honourable Chuck Strahl, who was the minister back then and is now undoubtedly surrounded by his ancestors and loved ones. It wasn’t easy. He

answered our calls every day and addressed our demands during our great march. Fortunately, the bill was passed, but again, it did too little despite the opportunity to make big changes.

Bill S-3 was introduced in 2019. We all remember how hard our colleague, the Honourable Lillian Eva Dyck, worked to advocate for this bill and push it as far as possible. This bill was also too restrained. At the same time, in 2025, the judge in *Descheneaux v. Canada (Attorney General)* also found that sections of the Indian Act were unconstitutional. They violated section 15 of the Canadian Charter, maintained sexist distinctions between the descendants of men and women who had lost their status, and perpetuated discrimination based on family lineage. Thank you, Mr. Descheneaux, Mr. Dubé and Ms. Yantha, for taking this case to the courts. It should never have come to that.

Then, in 2020, the Final Report to Parliament on the Review of S-3 recognized that inequities remained in the Indian Act. I thank my colleagues on the Aboriginal Peoples Committee who also presented, in this report, findings about how there are still inequities when it comes to registration and about how these inequities continue to harm First Nations women and their descendants.

In June 2025, 160 years later, I stand here before you in the hope that something will finally be done to resolve this long-standing discrimination against us. We are often told that we are equal, but in reality, our mothers, our sisters and their children continue to be treated differently. For me, that is not the definition of equality, but the definition of sex-based discrimination. Just because I am an Innu woman, the law, or section 6(1), will say that I am an Indian woman, but I continue to experience discrimination. All of us Indian women do.

The act has a direct impact on our status, but the first big shock came when we were cut off from our culture, our cultural identity, our relationship with the land, our ability to hear or speak our language, such as Innu-aimun. However, we were also prevented from participating in the democratic life of our nation, our community. I do not have that right. We do not have that right. Every time the government learns of a decision, it deals with it on a case-by-case basis. I have been hearing that for 30 years.

[English]

Well, you know, there are many cases, so we'll wait. We'll see.

[Translation]

As a result, with all of the legal tools in place, we could really change things. I come from a culture where words are truth and stories have the force of law. For me, storytelling is important here too.

• (1530)

This bill also influenced the story of Kathryn Fournier, who is with us today. Her grandfather, Maurice Sanderson, also attended a residential school. The provisions of the Indian Act prevented him from purchasing land or a house and denied him the right to vote. These things would have required him to be enfranchised.

[Senator Audette]

In 1922, after suffering mistreatment and abuse in the residential schools, her grandfather came to an unusual and difficult decision. He chose to enfranchise his wife and children. I don't know whether he had their consent or not. These are the kinds of stories we hear.

With the introduction of Bill C-85, Kathryn and her mother tried to re-register. They found out that injustice was not a thing of the past. Her mother Edith, who is now in the spirit world, became a plaintiff in the constitutional challenge that led to the *Nicholas* decision. Today, her daughter is keeping up the fight, motivated to carry on and not lose hope, not only for herself, but also for her children and grandchildren. I would do it for my mother too. To be able to say who I am, and for my children to be able to say they are proud of that, is important to my identity. This amendment will not just allow me to register with my band or regain the right to register. It will allow me to reconnect with my heritage, my history, my language, my culture and my identity.

That story is similar to that of another plaintiff, Nadia S'Ahn N'Ahn Guu'as, from British Columbia, and her younger brother, who were repeatedly denied registration without fully understanding why. However, just recently, the Haida Nation passed a law recognizing Nadia and her daughter. Even the village of Old Massett, which is subject to the Indian Act, recognizes Nadia. Why can't this be done under the Indian Act? Bill S-2 could allow Nadia and her children to be recognized, rather than receiving a letter from the government saying that her application has been denied, that she can't be recognized, that she's not Indigenous and so on. Imagine the impact this situation has had on her and on others in the communities who tell us that they have been denied status again. It is troubling, but it is happening.

I hope this bill will be studied, debated in committee and eventually passed, so that we can restore dignity to all these people. I can't stand idly by. The situation is urgent. A case is currently pending in British Columbia. They are waiting to hear our position.

I commit to the following, as I always have done and will continue to do: Notwithstanding this bill, my promise to my children, and as a former commissioner, is to continue working towards self-determination so that our nations can decide who is a member with rights and responsibilities. I marched for my son in 2010 so that he would have the choice to register. I would say to him, "Amun, if we ever sign a self-government agreement, you'll be out of here. You won't be considered." Perhaps now you understand why it is important for many families to be registered. They have a right to be registered. This is one more step on a path that other women, men and two-spirit people walked long before me. I must continue to honour that. I hope you will walk with us.

The path has been and continues to be painful. It came about through resistance, but also through kindness, and through all the love we feel from our families. All we want is equality, no more, no less. We are entitled to that. This bill will correct injustices that should never have existed. This bill is a form of redress.

I came here when I was 27. I told myself that I would return one day, when I was old. I wanted to be a senator so I could change that law.

[English]

It is the first time that we will have a First Nation minister, Mandy Gull-Masty — she is Cree — who is sponsoring this bill and an Innu senator who is trying to sponsor this bill. And, yes, I think we know what we're talking about. And, yes, we know it doesn't go far enough, but, yes, we know it's urgent; we know that.

Two women with two different stories but with the same willingness of equity, equality and, of course, giving back what was taken away from us.

So we need courage to stand. I have that. Sometimes I don't, but I'm human. But I hope that we will do this change together. The debate is important and we need to hear the concerns, but I do support the bill the way it is. If we can make it better, of course, I'll be happy, but it's going to be a conversation that needs to happen.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Senator Audette, first of all, I want to congratulate you on the language you chose for your speech. You got your message across. I also want to congratulate you on the educational approach you took to help us gain a full understanding of the situation.

Will this bill solve the problem, or will certain things still need to be corrected?

Senator Audette: There are still a number of things left to resolve. The list gets repeated every time a legal decision is given. The briefs always repeat the same message. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recently published a report reaffirming that discrimination persists. This work is urgent. If you wish, I can write up a detailed memo for you outlining briefs you may wish to read.

• (1540)

Senator Moncion: I have a supplementary question about this part. When you say that a number of things about this bill are still unclear, do you mean things that can be amended, or would you rather we passed the bill as is and then worked on it further to make improvements over time?

Senator Audette: Since I am neither a legal expert nor a lawyer, I will tell you what my understanding is. I did not receive an official response, but the fact that the court in British Columbia agreed to put *Nicholas v. Canada (Attorney General)* on hold makes me think that if the person seized with the case refuses to grant an extension so that we can do our work as legislators, then only people in British Columbia will be able to re-register in their community of origin because the case was before a British Columbian court. As I understand it, although there are people across Canada who are affected by this case or

who are part of the claim, we will have to bring suit in each provincial court and start back at square one. That is costly and could harm many people.

Hon. Patrick Brazeau: Would the senator take another question?

I'd like to begin by congratulating you on your speech and on sponsoring this bill. I know exactly how important it is to do that when we're here and when we get an opportunity to do it.

My question is very simple, and you probably don't have the answer, but my goal is just to add a little context to this issue.

You mentioned changes that happened in 1985. That's when I got my status. For part of my life, I wasn't an Indian, then, all of a sudden, I became one. There were also changes in 2011, in 2018 and now. I was 10 years old in 1985, so I've been aware of this issue for 40 years. I'm still young, but I've been here for a long time.

I think all our colleagues need to know that the federal governments that introduced those bills didn't do it out of the goodness of their hearts. In 1985, First Nations members who spoke out against all of the discriminatory effects of the Indian Act were told to wait because solutions were on the way.

Between 1985 to 2011, we were left to wait. In 2011, the government responded that it was aware that discrimination still existed and that solutions would be put forward. Now it's 2025. When governments respond this way, it's often because they have lost a legal battle. If they lost a legal battle, it means they used taxpayer funds to fight against our rights.

Can we ask the department to tell us how much the federal government has spent since 1985 fighting Indian Act status issues?

Senator Audette: Yes, I'll ask that. I hope that they're listening to us and that they heard the question, because it's important. As you said, we don't know. We have been wondering about this for quite some time.

Thank you for the question.

Senator Brazeau: I have a follow-up question. As I said, I've been here for a long time, but you may have the answer to my question. In 2025, the Minister of Indigenous Affairs is still the one who decides who is and who is not an Indian in this country. Have you ever seen the definition or criteria that the Minister of Indigenous Affairs uses to make those decisions?

Senator Audette: This question was put to departmental representatives at meetings. I'm waiting to hear back about how things are done and how training is given. I was told that now, there are friendship centres, women's groups and Indigenous organizations across Canada that certified and trained, and their mandate is to help people fill out their registration applications. This implies that criteria exist. However, as I understand it, the registrars have a significant amount of discretion.

As I see it, these are legitimate questions that deserve answers, and they will have to provide the answers.

[English]

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): I have one question before I take the adjournment. Senator Audette, I was not at the technical briefing but my staff was. Based on his notes, there is one question I have regarding the consultations which have taken place. The officials were saying they were in the process of and that they reported receiving 60 distinct proposals from 80 Indigenous groups which are currently under review to inform a long-term legislative solution.

I just wondered, has there been enough? Is this ongoing? Should we be concerned about whether or not consultations broadly have taken place? And if they're being informed and still working on it, it seems a little bit backwards. I was curious about your satisfaction with the consultation process.

Senator Audette: I am not satisfied because I didn't read. When I raised my hand for this bill, I had a meeting with the official the next day. It was a good conversation, frank and honest. I was told that there is some briefing, position paper or documentation which is coming from grassroots organizations. I'm still waiting for the list of who they are and what their recommendations or suggestions are.

We did emphasize that maybe it's not the approach of what's the most popular being the approach, but to make sure that it does reflect or respond to the change that we need to have.

I didn't see the brief, the documents or the position paper. I hope I'll get it, and it's going to come. I'm here and I'm not going to give up.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

THE ESTIMATES, 2025-26

NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A)

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of June 10, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, if and when the committee is formed, be authorized to examine and report upon the expenditures set out in the Supplementary Estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026; and

That, for the purpose of this study, the committee have the power to meet, even though the Senate may then be sitting or adjourned, and that rules 12-18(1) and 12-18(2) be suspended in relation thereto.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Translation]

THE SENATE

MOTION TO AFFECT MEMBERSHIP OF NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE ADOPTED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of June 10, 2025, moved:

That, notwithstanding rule 12-2 and usual practice, and without constraining any future recommendation of the Committee of Selection as to committee membership or affecting any negotiations or discussions amongst the leaders and facilitators of the recognized parties and recognized parliamentary groups, the Honourable Senators Carignan, P.C., Dalphond, Forest, Galvez, Kingston, Loffreda, MacAdam, Marshall, Moreau, Pate, Ross and Smith be appointed to serve on the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance until the end of day on June 30, 2025, or until a report of the Committee of Selection recommending the senators to serve on the committee has been adopted by the Senate, whichever comes first.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1550)

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON SICKLE CELL DISEASE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Mégie, seconded by the Honourable Senator Petitclerc, for the second reading of Bill S-201, An Act respecting a national framework on sickle cell disease.

Hon. Amina Gerba: Honourable senators, I rise today to wholeheartedly support Bill S-201, which seeks to establish a national framework on sickle cell disease. As you know, I'm not a doctor, but I've seen the suffering, the silence and the injustice first-hand.

I thank Senator Mégie for her leadership and her long-standing commitment to champion this important topic. She has shed light on a reality that is far too often ignored. As she mentioned in her brilliant speech at second reading, this disease mainly affects racialized communities, such as Canadians of African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, South American, Indian or Mediterranean descent. However, it would be wrong to think that people of other origins are immune. In a world where populations

mix, relationships between people of different origins are increasingly common. As a result, the gene could very well be transmitted to other groups in our population. We must act now for the future of our all communities.

I first learned about this disease in Cameroon in 1984. My fiancé at the time — now my husband — and I had to get tested before we got married. The test was mandatory in Cameroon. That was when I first heard about sickle cell disease, or sickle cell anemia. Fortunately, neither of us carry the gene. However, I understood what this meant for other couples. They had to choose between love and fear, because if they chose to start a family, they ran the risk of passing an incurable disease on to their child. This disease used to condemn those afflicted to a life expectancy of less than 18 years, plunging families and doctors into a race against time.

I now know people in Quebec who are living with this disease.

Lisa, my hairdresser's daughter, suffers from a very severe form of the disease. She experiences intense episodes of pain and frequent hospitalizations that have forced her to put her studies on hold. At 35, she has virtually no social life and lives in the shadow of her illness. She is filled with self-doubt and lives in fear. The most difficult thing for her family is the cost of medical care. Medication and hospitalizations place a significant financial strain on them, further increasing the burden of her care.

Mario decided to fight. He is diligently getting his treatments. He studied at the best schools, is married and has two children. He adapted his life and transformed his pain into strength, into empathy.

Then we have Mamoudou Camara, director of the docufiction *Silent Suffering*, which I highly recommend. He takes us behind the scenes and shows us his parents' powerlessness in the face of their child's pain and the anxiety hanging over his head like a cloud.

Honourable senators, this bill is essential and contains measures that could directly support those who have the disease. As Senator Mégie explained, it would help to better inform health care professionals, create a registry and a national research network, offer universal newborn screening, promote blood donations and build up a supply of all blood types. It would help raise public awareness of this terrible disease.

It is not right that, still today, patients who arrive in crisis at our hospitals' emergency rooms are met with skepticism, judged and neglected. That is unacceptable in 2025 in Canada.

[English]

Dear colleagues, sickle cell disease is not rare. It's just invisible because it affects minority communities. By voting for Bill S-201, we will send a clear message that every life matters regardless of skin colour and regardless of origin.

[Translation]

By voting for Bill S-201, we are sending a clear message that every life matters, regardless of a person's skin colour or where they are from.

Honourable senators, we represent minorities as well as our regions and communities. We must lend support to issues that affect all of the communities in our society. Every life matters.

Bill S-201 must be sent back to committee for review quickly.

Thank you on behalf of Lisa, Mario, Mamoudou and all those who suffer in silence.

(On motion of Senator Ataullahjan, debate adjourned.)

• (1600)

[English]

ARAB HERITAGE MONTH BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Mohammad Al Zaibak moved second reading of Bill S-227, An Act respecting Arab Heritage Month.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise before you today with immense pride to begin the debate on Bill S-227, An Act respecting Arab Heritage Month, a Senate public bill that would establish the month of April in Canada as "Arab Heritage Month."

By doing so, I am resuming the process that began in the previous Parliament with Bill C-232, which was introduced by the Honourable David McGuinty in the House of Commons and passed the other place unanimously on March 8, 2023.

The bill was received in this chamber and was first sponsored by the Honourable Senator Gold. It was read the first time on March 9, 2023, and debated at second reading on March 22 and June 13, 2023, and on May 9, 2024.

It was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. Then it was reported without amendment to the Senate in both official languages on October 24, 2024.

Third-reading debate of the bill commenced on November 7 and continued on November 26, 2024, when it was adjourned before the Senate rose for the Christmas break. It then died on the Order Paper upon Parliament's prorogation and subsequent dissolution earlier this year.

The bill is an acknowledgment of the contributions made by Arab Canadians to our great country.

Thank you to the Honourable David McGuinty, MP for Ottawa South, the original sponsor of this bill, and to all of his honourable colleagues who supported its passage in the House of Commons.

Thank you to the Honourable Senator Marc Gold, former senator Jane Cordy and Senator Marty Klyne for their respective sponsorship of that bill.

Many thanks also to the Honourable Senator Salma Ataullahjan, the critic of that bill, and to Senator Wanda Bernard, former senator Ratna Omidvar and Senator Yuen Pau Woo, who have all thoughtfully engaged in that process.

Thank you to all of you for bringing Bill C-232 to the finish line of the previous Parliament. We were so close.

This bill, now Bill S-227, when passed, would be an historic achievement for three reasons: first, because it recognizes contributions that have shaped and enhanced Canada's social fabric; second, because it aligns us with a global movement recognizing Arab contributions; and third, because it helps deepen Canadians' understanding of the value Arab Canadians bring to our shared identity.

However, before any of that, it is necessary to know whom we are speaking about when we talk about Arabs and Arab Canadians.

Honourable senators, from an historical and religious traditions' perspective, Arabs are a Semitic people. They are the descendants of the patriarch Abraham through his first son, Ishmael. As such, Arabs share linguistic, ancestral and historical connections with other Semitic groups in the Middle East and Africa. This includes, of course, ancient peoples such as the Akkadians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Ancient Hebrews, Arameans and others, as well as modern peoples and languages such as Arabic speakers, Hebrew speakers, Amharic speakers, Tigrinya speakers and others.

For me, including Arabs in the Semitic family is not just semantics; it underscores our shared humanity. It reminds us that the people of the Middle East are metaphorically — if not literally — cousins.

I know that using the term "Semitic" to apply to Arabs may have fallen slightly out of the contemporary vocabulary in some Western societies, but I feel that doing so helps us counter harmful stereotypes and emphasizes our shared human heritage.

The term "Arab" is incredibly broad. It includes anyone who lives in, or hails from, the Arab world, whose first language or mother tongue is Arabic, and who has a deep sense of belonging to a shared Arab culture, heritage and history.

Honourable colleagues, the Arab world represents a massive geographical area that extends from the Arabian Gulf through North Africa to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, spanning 22 Arab states. It is a region diverse in physical geography, climate and natural resources, but its inhabitants share cultural traditions and the Arabic language.

With a population of over 450 million people, the Arab world is religiously diverse as well. Contrary to what many Canadians may think, not all Arabs are Muslim nor are all Muslims Arabs. For instance, the Muslim world population is almost 2 billion

people, and only less than 20% of whom are Muslim Arabs. Here in Canada there are about 2 million Muslim Canadians, and only half a million of whom are Arabs.

Today Canada is home to a vibrant and diverse Arab-Canadian community of about 1.1 million people, including the half million I mentioned, who identify as Arab Muslims and who follow several schools of thought.

The remaining majority identify as Arab Christians of various denominations, Arab Jews, followers of ancient religions that preceded monotheism or others who don't identify with any religion at all.

In other words, my fellow senators, many Arab Canadians are religiously, ethnically and geographically very diverse and can be different from each other in many aspects.

Arab Canadians, however, share a common pride in the Arab civilization and in its historical contributions to the world, in particular, to Western societies through discovering and adding to the earlier great Greek civilization.

• (1610)

For a brief illustration, I would refer you to the words of Rom Landau, who wrote in his 1972 book *The Arab Heritage of Western Civilization* that "... while Europe was ignorant of the Greek legacy ..." — during the Dark Ages — "... the Arabs discovered it." The Arabs translated and extended Greek scholarship and conveyed it to Europe during the Renaissance.

Landau points out that:

... the Arabs did far more than mere translation. They also commented upon, and explained the Greeks, and gradually erected ... an intellectual edifice of their own.

More importantly, honourable senators, what Arab Canadians have in common, as well, is a deep desire to make a profound and positive difference to our country through their contributions to business, arts, medicine, technology, education, sports and other aspects of Canadian society, including politics.

And that brings me back to this bill and to the first reason it is so important: Because it recognizes contributions by Arab Canadians that have enhanced our social fabric.

Honourable senators, Arab Canadians have been an essential part of Canada's story for over 140 years. Syrian immigrants, mainly from what is present-day Lebanon, were the first Arab group to come to Canada. Their first known arrival was in the early 1880s. These immigrants were of both Christian and Islamic faiths. While they were not highly educated, they were entrepreneurial. After a short period of peddling in the countryside and labouring in factories, many started small retail businesses. In fact, by the first half of the 20th century, there was hardly a town in Nova Scotia that did not have a Syrian or Lebanese Arab operating a clothing, furniture or grocery store.

The first recorded Arab immigrant to Canada was Ibrahim Abou Nader — many of our colleagues and honourable MPs spoke about him — a Syrian Maronite Christian from present-day Lebanon who arrived in Montreal in 1882. He came at a time

when immigration from the Ottoman Empire was rare, and he was a pioneer. Initially working as a peddler, walking from village to village with a pack on his back, Abou Nader quickly became known for his integrity, hard work and entrepreneurial spirit. Over time, he established a successful import business and helped lay the foundation for what would become a growing Canadian Arab community in Montreal and beyond.

Among other early Arab immigrants was Bedouin Ferran, also known as Peter Baker. “Baker” is the English translation of the Arabic word *ferran*. He arrived in 1910 and slowly made his way to the Northwest Territories, where he worked as a fur trader, wrote books and eventually became one of the first Arab Muslims to be elected in Canada, representing a mostly Indigenous riding in the Northwest Territories.

There was also King Ganam, who was born in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, in 1914 to Syrian parents. Ganam became one of the most famous fiddlers and composers of his era. He was one of the original inductees to the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame in 1989.

Honourable senators, from those earliest days to today, Arab Canadians have distinguished themselves in many fields and disciplines.

In business, the story of Salim Rassy, later known as Rossy, stands out. Salim was a Syrian-Lebanese immigrant who in 1910 founded a small general store on Saint-Laurent Boulevard in Montreal, Quebec. That small “all-dollar store” was the precursor to the now-renowned Dollarama chain of stores, and today his legacy endures in one of Canada’s largest retail enterprises.

In art and music, we probably all know the songs of Paul Anka, songs like “My Way,” “Put Your Head on My Shoulder,” “Diana” or “Puppy Love.” But we may not know that this talented singer-songwriter is of Syrian descent. And don’t worry; I won’t sing any of those songs.

In politics, our P.E.I. colleagues, the honourable Senators Robinson, Downe, Francis and MacAdam, would remember the late Joe Ghiz, the first premier of Prince Edward Island of non-European descent, who exemplified leadership and dedication to public service.

Some of you, my fellow senators, might have worked with the late honourable senator Pierre De Bané. Born in Haifa, Palestine, he was the first Palestinian and the first person of Middle Eastern descent to be elected to the House of Commons of Canada in Matane, Quebec. In 1978, then-prime minister Pierre Trudeau appointed De Bané to the Canadian cabinet as the Minister of Supply and Services, and later he was named to the Senate in 1984. I knew Senator De Bané. He passed away in 2019. He was a prominent, effective and respectful senator.

Arab Canadians are community builders as well. Here, we should acknowledge Hilwie Hamdon, of Lebanese heritage, who spearheaded the creation of Canada’s first mosque in Edmonton, Alberta, which is a landmark of interfaith co-operation and community building.

It is thanks to those early pioneers that future generations of Canadian Arabs found a foothold in Canada and began contributing to every aspect of our national life.

Join me, my honourable colleagues, in further appreciation of early immigrant stories of Arabs in Canada and their contributions, and turn to the early research of Baha Abu-Laban titled *An Olive Branch on the Family Tree: The Arabs in Canada*, which gives a glimpse of what it might have been like for those young, adventurous Arabs who came with only their wits and perseverance and who became important contributors to Canadian society.

Arab heritage month will provide us with the opportunity to celebrate their contributions and the contributions of many other Arab Canadians to our country — Arab Canadians like Dr. Mohamed Lachemi, a distinguished engineer and the President of Toronto Metropolitan University who has led transformative advancements in sustainable construction. His journey from a remote Algerian village to becoming a leader in Canadian education highlights the contributions of Arab Canadians to progress and innovation.

• (1620)

There are Arab Canadians like Dr. Hoda ElMaraghy, an Egyptian-Canadian professor from Windsor, Ontario, who, in 1994, was the first woman to serve as dean of engineering at a Canadian university, and might I add that she is also the first Canadian woman to obtain a PhD in mechanical engineering.

There are Arab Canadians like Dr. Mamdouh Shoukri, former President and Vice-Chancellor of York University.

There are Arab-Canadian entrepreneurs, developers and philanthropists from Western Canada — Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia — like Joe Houssian, Mohammed Faris, Nabih Faris and their families.

Other incredible Arab-Canadian achievers like Hussain Ali Assaf, Habeeb Salloum, Hanny Hassan, Rola Dagher, Jad Shimaly, Bessma Momani, Nazem Kadri, Egyptian-Canadian actor Mena Massoud, Somali-Canadian singer K’naan and many others will be celebrated during Arab heritage month.

These, my fellow senators, are just a few examples of how Arab Canadians have made contributions to Canada from coast to coast.

Recognizing these contributions is the first reason that this bill is so important. The second reason is that by formally designating April as Arab heritage month, Canada joins a growing number of leading nations, including the United States, who made the same kind of commitment several years ago. By joining other global leaders who have embraced diversity and inclusion, Canada continues to cement its leadership on the world stage as a progressive and caring country. By celebrating Arab heritage month, we send a powerful message that Canada will always value and respect all its citizens and their heritage.

Here we do not punish difference, we embrace it because we know that learning about each other, speaking with each other and welcoming each other into our homes is how we make strangers into neighbours, neighbours into friends and friends into family, as we should, because our country and the world are changing so very rapidly.

That brings me to the third reason this bill is so significant: Because it deepens our shared understanding of the contributions Arab Canadians have already made and will make.

Honourable senators, I have mentioned the past contributions, but I believe the future contributions of Arab Canadians will be no less significant. After all, Arab Canadians are one of the youngest and fastest growing groups in this country. More than half of the Arab community is under the age of 35, 42% are under the age of 24 and a full 26% are younger than 15. Young Arab Canadians are making a massive contribution to our economy, culture and innovation, shaping what it means to be both Arab and Canadian, which is why I believe that their energy and creativity will be essential to Canada's future.

Arab heritage month also gives us a chance to reflect on global challenges and opportunities. It allows us to draw connections between Canada and the broader Arab world, which is a region where Canada shares historical, economic and cultural ties and mutual interests.

By recognizing the achievements of Arab Canadians, we can make these bonds even stronger and create mutual respect and understanding in global affairs. It is my hope and belief that this will also lead to increased trade, investments and partnerships in an ever-changing world.

By letting people know about Arab-Canadian achievements, all of us — Arab and non-Arab alike — are also reaffirming our commitment to building a future that is even more inclusive, fair and equal.

I must also add that as a proud, Syrian-born Arab Canadian, this moment holds profound significance for me. For decades, the rich culture and history of Arabs have often been overlooked or misunderstood. To see Arab heritage formally celebrated in this way is both personally moving and collectively inspiring.

It helps Arab Canadians to see themselves woven into the Canadian fabric, and I think it will also inspire the immense potential of Arab Canadians to contribute even more to the Canada of tomorrow.

Honourable colleagues, this recognition is especially touching for me against the backdrop of recent news from my homeland. The courage of Syrians, who have resisted an oppressive regime and suffered the wrath of conflicting geopolitical agendas, inspires hope for a brighter future. Their resilience mirrors the spirit of Arab Canadians who have overcome challenges to thrive and contribute meaningfully to our beloved Canada.

The recognition of Arab heritage month affirms my belief that Canada — my adopted home — and Syria — my birthplace — can both aspire to a future grounded in freedom, dignity and shared humanity.

[Senator Al Zaibak]

Likewise, I hope that Arab heritage month will promote a better understanding of the new set of challenges faced by the Arab community here at home as well as foster a better understanding of the continued suffering of the people in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Libya, Sudan and Yemen and their aspirations for justice, freedom, dignity and prosperity and to live in peace and harmony with their neighbours.

In conclusion, honourable colleagues, Arab heritage month is more than a celebration; it is a testament to the values that define Canada — inclusion, diversity, fairness and unity.

My fellow senators, let us embrace this opportunity to honour the contributions of Arab Canadians and to recommit ourselves to building a society where every culture is celebrated and every one of us has the chance to thrive.

Honourable colleagues, I respectfully urge you all to support this bill not only as a gesture of recognition but as a practical step towards building a more inclusive and unified Canada. By voting in support of Bill S-227, an act respecting Arab heritage month, we truly acknowledge that Arab Canadians are an olive branch of the Canadian family tree. Let us come together to ensure that Arab heritage month becomes a permanent fixture in our national calendar.

Thank you. *Meegwetch. Shukran.*

(On motion of Senator Ataullahjan, debate adjourned.)

• (1630)

[Translation]

GORE MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

PRIVATE BILL—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Loffreda, seconded by the Honourable Senator MacAdam, for the second reading of Bill S-1001, An Act to authorize Gore Mutual Insurance Company to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of the Province of Quebec.

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in support of Bill S-1001, An Act to authorize Gore Mutual Insurance Company to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of the Province of Quebec. My speech will be very brief.

First of all, I would like to thank the sponsor of the bill, Senator Loffreda, for his explanations concerning the merits of his bill, which seeks to obtain Parliament's approval for a merger between Gore Mutual, which is federally incorporated, and Beneva, which is incorporated in Quebec.

As my colleague pointed out, the merger will bring together two mutual insurance powerhouses with deep roots in their communities. It will foster innovation and sustainability in Canada's financial services sector.

[English]

Having served as the president of Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada for several years, I recognize and believe in the importance of supporting and strengthening structures that reinvest in communities. Mutual insurance has been deeply established in this country for over 100 years. It plays a key role in the country's insurance sector. What sets this model apart is the way in which it works: The people who are insured are also the owners of the insurance company. This structure fosters a common interest that benefits both the members and the organization.

In this respect, mutuals stand out from foreign or public insurers, as Senator Loffreda made clear in his speech at second reading. It is particularly important that Canada's insurance sector remains strong, especially in an uncertain economic and diplomatic context and in the face of the challenges posed by climate change for which our communities must be well prepared.

[Translation]

Bill S-1001 reassures me about the direction these mutuals are taking. I would like to take a brief look back in time to show the extreme consequences that follow when a mutual company weakens to the point of demutualization. In the fall of 2021, the Economical Mutual Insurance Company demutualized.

A handful of individuals who had not helped create the fund or build its wealth over the past 100 years and more got rich for no good reason. I think that was unjust and unfair to a large number of Canadians.

Furthermore, the decision to convert to a stock company owned by a small group of shareholders gave them an immediate and disproportionate financial advantage.

The 700-odd shareholders received half a million dollars simply for being shareholders. They had not built anything up for the company over the many years of its existence.

They divvied up billions of dollars amongst themselves that should have been returned to the communities. At the time, I was incensed, and I wrote several times to the Minister of Finance to ask him to stop the demutualization from going through. Unfortunately, it went forward anyway. I think this was blatantly unfair to all Canadians who had purchased insurance policies from Economical.

The transition to a model where wealth is redistributed to a small number of individuals, in an endless quest for profit, saddens me. This is probably the biggest problem in our society today. People always want more money. When will it be too much? This is all the more regrettable given that the entity's initial objective, which was to serve communities and ensure a fair distribution of wealth, was deeply laudable. This is what mutual companies and cooperatives are all about.

In light of the principles of fairness, it would have been preferable, in my view, for the Minister of Finance to reject demutualization in this particular case, in accordance with her discretionary powers under the Insurance Companies Act and the Mutual Property and Casualty Insurance Company with Non-mutual Policyholders Conversion Regulations.

Quebec legislation favours a strong cooperative and mutual sector. Laws in Quebec have long regulated this sector.

It is only natural that the federal company Gore Mutual should seek to be governed by the laws of the province of Quebec, rather than continue to fall under the Insurance Companies Act. The steps taken in this case are reassuring, as they demonstrate a willingness to seize a business opportunity to strengthen and the company and preserve its viability, thereby mitigating the risk of it suffering a fate comparable to that of Economical.

We also know that the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions issued a notice of no objection about this merger and that the Insurance Bureau of Canada considers the merger to be beneficial to consumers.

Considering all these benefits and the support from the appropriate organizations for the merger of Gore Mutual Insurance Company and Beneva, the Senate should support this business decision to strengthen the company's position by referring the bill to committee as soon as possible.

I invite you to support this legislative proposal to strengthen a business model that is beneficial to the communities and works in a sector that is essential to them, namely, insurance.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[English]

THE SENATE

MOTION TO CONDEMN ALL RUSSIAN ATTACKS ON AND INTERFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN ADOPTED

Hon. Stan Kutcher, pursuant to notice of June 10, 2025, moved:

That the Senate of Canada hereby condemns all Russian attacks on and interference in the lives of Ukrainian children and calls for all states that are part of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children to substantially increase their efforts to protect Ukrainian children against Russian aggression and to increase their efforts to return, repatriate and rehabilitate Ukrainian children stolen by Russia.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

NEED FOR SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Rosemary Moodie rose pursuant to notice of May 28, 2025:

That she will call the attention of the Senate to the need for the safe and productive development and use of artificial intelligence in Canada.

She said: Honourable senators, artificial intelligence, or AI, is one of the most transformative technologies in our history. From improving health care, to driving innovation in industries like education, culture and defence, to offering us new possibilities in scientific research, national security and many other spaces, AI has the potential to change the way we live, work and interact. AI has already begun to reshape many aspects of our society through automation and advanced problem solving. Wherever you look, you can't help but notice the impact of AI. However, as AI is increasingly integrated into our lives, we must confront its potential risks. It is not a tool we can control with ease. If left unchecked, AI could cause significant harm to individual communities and society at large.

• (1640)

For example, Geoffrey Hinton, the “Godfather of AI,” has warned that we are entering an era when machines may surpass human intelligence. He describes AI as an accidental creation born from human failure and highlights serious concerns, such as fake news and bias in hiring practices and policing. These are just a few examples of the risks that we as policy-makers must consider.

AI is not inherently good or evil; it is a tool. Its impact on society will be shaped by how we choose to regulate, develop and use it. That is why it is critical that we act now. We are already behind with respect to fully understanding and governing this rapidly evolving technology.

Colleagues, this inquiry marks an essential step in ensuring that we as leaders are proactive in confronting the challenges that AI presents while also embracing its vast and valuable potential. We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes made with social media, where unchecked growth and a lack of safeguards led to unintended consequences for our democracy, culture and public health.

As senators, we have a duty to protect Canadians from these risks while also steering AI development toward outcomes that serve the public good. This is not only a national priority but a global responsibility, and Canada can and must have a strong voice in shaping the future of AI governance.

In my remarks this evening, I will begin by discussing the *International AI Safety Report*, recent developments in Canada's AI sector and then the ways in which AI is being considered globally, looking more specifically at the outcomes of the Paris Artificial Intelligence Action Summit.

One of the key publications to guide us through this evolving landscape is the *International AI Safety Report* led by Yoshua Bengio, a leading global figure in AI research here in Canada. This report serves as a critical resource for understanding the global risks associated with AI, including cyber-threats, misinformation, labour market disruptions and the potential weaponization of AI.

The authors of the report noted, “Policymakers face the challenge of creating flexible regulatory environments that are robust to technological change over time.” They continued, saying, “Constructive scientific and public discussion will be essential for societies and policymakers to make the right choices.”

This sentiment underlines the importance of ongoing dialogue and flexible regulation to ensure that AI develops in a way that maximizes its benefit while minimizing its risks.

The report also warns of the danger of AI development becoming concentrated in a few countries, like the United States and China, which could lead to a global imbalance in AI leadership. It emphasizes the urgent need for international collaboration and comprehensive risk assessments to ensure that AI does not outpace our ability to regulate it.

As we consider Canada's role in AI development, the *International AI Safety Report* offers us an essential framework that we can consider when thinking about how to govern AI. It encourages us to take a global perspective on AI safety while addressing domestic priorities.

Let me highlight some of the recent progress we have made here in Canada. In November of 2024, Canada made a significant move by launching the Canadian Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute. The institute will receive an initial budget of \$50 million over five years as part of a \$2.4-billion investment, announced in the 2024 federal budget, that includes the proposed artificial intelligence and data act and the Voluntary Code of Conduct on the Responsible Development and Management of Advanced Generative AI Systems.

In April of 2024, former prime minister Justin Trudeau announced an investment of \$2.4 billion to develop Canada's AI sector. This includes the Canadian Sovereign AI Compute Strategy, which provides \$700 million to build and expand data centres, \$300 million to support AI computing costs for small- and medium-sized businesses and \$1 billion to enhance high-performance computing for academic researchers.

More recently, in March of 2025, the President of the Treasury Board unveiled Canada's first-ever artificial intelligence strategy for the federal public service. This strategy, to be updated every two years, aims to improve government operations and services by ensuring that AI is used safely, ethically and responsibly. It includes goals such as creating an AI centre of expertise, ensuring AI systems security, fostering talent development and promoting transparency and accountability.

Of course, Prime Minister Carney recently appointed the Honourable Evan Solomon as our first minister responsible for artificial intelligence and digital innovation. Yesterday, Minister Solomon gave his first public remarks at the Canada 2020 conference, where he indicated the pillars of Canada's AI industrial strategy: first, scaling up AI; second, AI adoption throughout industries; third, increased trust in AI through regulation to protect data and privacy; and, finally, fourth, AI sovereignty for Canada's defence and security. I look forward to learning about the specifics of the Carney government's plan regarding AI as it unfolds.

Colleagues, with so much momentum in this space, we as senators have a responsibility to carefully examine proposed strategies and investments. We must ask whether they truly serve the interests of all Canadians and thoughtfully consider their long-term implications. This gives us the opportunity to ask the right questions and consider the path forward.

Understanding AI in Canada requires us to consider the broader global context. The world is evolving rapidly, and many countries are pushing ahead with AI initiatives. In February of 2025, France and India hosted the Paris Artificial Intelligence Action Summit, where leaders, experts and researchers discussed the future of AI. The summit focused on five key themes: public interest in AI, the future of work, innovation, trust and global governance. However, one critical area received only limited attention: AI governance.

At the summit, U.S. Vice President Vance raised concerns that excessive regulation could stifle innovation, arguing that democratic nations might fall behind authoritarian countries that have fewer restrictions. This is a crucial debate that highlights the global divide and nuance in this area. Some advocates for strong regulation to safeguard society prioritize economic interests over governance. But many fall in the middle, wanting to benefit from the prosperity that could come with AI in a way that aligns with our democratic values, such as human rights, inclusivity and the rule of law.

• (1650)

Despite these differences, 62 countries, including Canada, signed the AI Action Summit Statement on Inclusive and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence for People and the Planet. This commitment to ensuring AI is developed responsibly reflects our shared responsibility to tackle the challenges that AI presents. But the United States and the United Kingdom chose not to sign, citing concerns over restrictive language and governance frameworks. This divergence underscores that even amongst countries that are normally allies, there may be differences when it comes to AI.

At the same time, in January of this year, U.S. President Trump announced a \$500-billion investment in private sector AI infrastructure led by companies like OpenAI, Oracle and SoftBank. The European Commission also pledged over €200 billion to AI and digital innovation. French President Emmanuel Macron announced plans to invest €109 billion in AI, including new data centres.

These rapid global investments show just how urgent it is to address AI's growing prominence and the need for coordinated global efforts to regulate it. Without coordinated domestic and global standards and cooperation, we risk allowing global markets to drive AI development unchecked, potentially at the expense of the public good. This underscores the importance of having critical discussions here in Canada about how we are going to continue to prioritize regulation, transparency and human rights within AI development while remaining a key player in the global AI race.

Given these global developments, this inquiry is a critical opportunity for us to assess the implications of AI on our future here in Canada. If we are to remain a leader in the global AI race, we must focus on regulation, transparency and human rights. If we are to maximize the benefits of AI in Canada, we must be on the front foot so that we can determine and create our own AI ecosystem — not one that's flooded with products and technology that we can't control, but one where we set standards and norms to ensure technologies are safe, accurate and high quality and come from countries with democratic values. AI's growth must be steered with careful consideration, and we must not allow market forces or government priorities to drive its development unchecked. The reality is that the decisions we make today will shape the future of AI for generations.

In the *International AI Safety Report*, Yoshua Bengio, one of the leading figures in Canadian AI research, stated, "AI does not happen to us; choices made by people determine its future." This quote encapsulates the urgency and the responsibility we have as policy-makers. Speaking about responsibility, Yoshua Bengio just recently launched a new non-profit called LawZero, which aims to bring together world-class AI researchers to develop technical solutions for safe-by-design AI systems. Efforts like this highlight that we must make intentional, informed decisions that prioritize public safety and societal benefits.

While the future of AI is uncertain, one thing is clear: Its trajectory will be shaped by the choices we make. We have the power to steer this technology toward progress while mitigating its risks. It is important to remember that trust and safety will drive productivity —

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Moodie, I'm sorry to interrupt, but your time is over. Thank you.

Senator Moodie: Thank you.

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, I rise to speak to Senator Moodie's inquiry on a matter of urgency: the regulation of artificial intelligence in Canada.

At the outset, I note that the Oxford philosopher Nick Bostrom has argued that given the potential power of advanced computers to run simulations, our reality is very likely a simulation. With that in mind, you might want to take my speech today with a grain of salt, but we'll wait until the finish, because maybe not.

Colleagues, we stand on the cusp of a profound transformation. Artificial intelligence, or AI, is a change on the scale of the Industrial Revolution, nuclear energy or the advent of language itself. AI is not just another emerging technology; it is a force multiplier — a general-purpose capability evolving faster than our institutions, laws and imagination.

Today, I'll speak to you about four aspects of this subject. First, I will outline the far-reaching implications of AI and the potential regulation for our democracy and society. Second, I'll explore containment — technical, normative and legal — as a framework for governance. Third, I'll survey global approaches, from the EU to the U.S. and China, before turning to Canada's efforts through Bill C-27 and the artificial intelligence and data act. Finally, I'll offer concrete proposals for strengthening our approach so that AI remains a tool that serves the public interest, not one that undermines it.

First, there are the social implications of AI and the potential regulation. Some argue that regulation stifles innovation. In the context of AI, however, what we want is innovation accompanied by robust risk management. This is where potential regulation comes in. A strong regulatory framework can attract investment, foster innovation and bolster public confidence. This is why potential regulation must address civil rights, including the rights to privacy, free speech and transparency, as well as concerns around safety and accountability.

The stakes could not be higher. AI is no longer on the margins. It's reshaping how we work, learn, communicate and govern. In its most advanced forms, AI won't merely assist us, but it will replace, optimize, predict and sometimes outpace us. From

finance to health care to defence and justice, AI's reach is expanding rapidly. Its growing power brings opportunities but also serious risks to our society.

Colleagues, this is not alarmism. The modern democratic state once promised us security, prosperity and democratic rights. AI now threatens to topple those pillars.

How about security? Imagine a world where autonomous drones and other weapons controlled by algorithms wage wars — machines out-thinking machines in conflicts we can't even comprehend. Where is human accountability? Where does it stop? At the same time, without advanced AI, our country and our allies would be vulnerable to the advanced AI capabilities of potential adversaries.

As for our prosperity, AI-driven systems could come to dominate — and even manipulate — financial markets. A small number of firms may end up controlling the machines that influence your mortgage, pension or employment. Technology has already displaced many forms of physical labour, and now even the domains of human thought, creativity and artistic expression are at risk. In a society whose social contract has long balanced the rewards of free enterprise with the protections of a social safety net, what new challenges will AI pose to this fragile balance?

AI could also undermine social justice. A 2019 study in the journal *Science* found that AI in U.S. health care was far less likely to recommend care for Black patients than White patients with similar conditions — not due to malice but because it mirrored past discrimination baked into the data. This isn't conscious bias; it's structural harm, and it's invisible until it becomes systemic.

As for democratic rights, algorithmically curated content and social media manipulation threaten to undermine their meaningful exercise. Generative AI systems, like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Llama, Grok and Copilot, are embedded in our browsers, messengers and productivity tools. These tools don't just generate text — they shape influence. They direct information flows, frame debates and set emotional tones. With minor tweaks, bad actors can weaponize them, cheaply flooding public spaces with misinformation, "deepfakes" and propaganda. In a world where artificial intelligence, or AI, may undermine the development of critical thinking skills in young people, this is all the more dangerous.

• (1700)

Although one danger is that AI could become malevolent, a pressing concern is that it is indifferent. It doesn't care. It optimizes. It reflects the world as it is, not as it should be. Without deliberate choices about the values and limits we encode, AI will default to the logic of profit, power and prediction.

There is another danger — subtler still — that the machines will misunderstand. Humans are walking contradictions. We are nothing if not inconsistent. We want both adventure and safety, privacy and convenience. We lie. We change our minds. We change our moods. We exaggerate. We regret. How can machines understand us when we contain multitudes?

Yet, we are poised to hand over not just our tasks but our judgments — even our ethics — to machines. How will machines balance the rights of individuals with the greater good, a dilemma that humans continue to debate in many contexts?

This is not just a technical issue. It is a political challenge, a moral test, a crisis of good governance.

So how should we respond?

This brings me to my second point: containment, not as suppression, but stewardship. Not through fear, but through responsibility. “Containment” means democratic control over the tools we create. It rests on three principles.

First, technical containment, referring to what happens in a lab or a R&D facility. In the context of AI, this includes using air-gapped systems, secure sandboxes, controlled simulations, emergency shut-off mechanisms and robust built-in safety and security protocols. These tools help ensure a system’s safety, integrity and freedom from compromise, and allow it to be shut down if necessary.

Second, normative containment, a culture among developers and institutions that values ethics over velocity. Power without reflection is dangerous.

Third, legal containment, regulation that crosses borders, laws ensuring transparency, civil rights, liability, oversight, integrity, values and ethics, transparency and sustainability as well.

Let me be clear, regulation alone is not enough. A summit or a Silicon Valley press release is no substitute for binding rules. We must bring together government, industry, academia and civil society to co-create a Canadian vision of AI rooted in that integrity, values and ethics, transparency and sustainability, not to mention fairness, inclusion and peace.

We must proactively act before we’re forced to react, before the next discriminatory algorithm, job loss or erosion of trust.

To my third point, globally, governments are taking divergent approaches.

The European Union adopted a comprehensive Artificial Intelligence Act — a tiered, risk-based system with clear obligations for high-risk systems and enforceable transparency rules for generative AI.

The U.S. is taking a sectoral, market-led approach, encouraging cooperation, but with uneven results.

China — once a leader in regulation and an outlier in practice. On paper, China looks proactive, regulating social media, banning crypto and publishing AI ethics guidelines. Its draft rules for large language models — LLMs — go further than the West’s. But in reality, civilian AI is tightly controlled while military and surveillance AI operate with few limits. AI there is not just a tool; it is state power. That is the future we must avoid.

To close, where then does Canada stand?

Our most significant step was Bill C-27, the digital charter implementation act, which included the artificial intelligence and data act, or AIDA. AIDA proposed risk-based oversight for high-impact systems, including generative models. But AIDA didn’t pass before Parliament dissolved. Canada now lacks binding legal safeguards, leaving a critical governance gap.

In response, the government introduced a Voluntary Code of Practice for generative AI developers. It encourages fairness, transparency and accountability, but is non-binding and unenforceable. It is no substitute for legislation.

More recently, Canada appointed its first Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, announced by Prime Minister Carney on May 13, 2025. The Honourable Evan Solomon’s appointment signals growing recognition of AI’s importance, but the minister’s mandate is still undefined. According to a May 17 CBC report, the Prime Minister’s Office referred inquiries to the Liberal Party’s platform, Canada Strong, where AI is mainly tied to economic growth and public service reform. Worthy goals, but leaving many questions unanswered.

Contrast that with the EU’s AI Act which requires developers to disclose copyrighted training data, prevent illegal content generation and comply with General Data Protection and Regulation-level privacy rules. Canada’s approach via AIDA and the voluntary code remains vague and toothless. The gap is especially clear in one critical area: privacy.

Privacy needs urgent attention. AI is transforming how data is collected, inferred and used. In Quebec, a 2022 ruling found AI-generated dropout predictions counted as personal information even when based on anonymized data. The Privacy Commissioner has called for mandatory privacy impact assessments for high-risk AI systems. This chamber should support that call.

We must ensure that AI serves people, not the other way around. That means enforceable standards for defining and regulating generative AI; mandatory privacy safeguards and impact assessments; public disclosure rules for high-risk applications; and independent oversight with enforcement power.

It also means broad and inclusive consultation with technologists, ethicists, labour leaders, Indigenous communities and Canadians.

Honourable senators, AI governance is a global challenge, but our response must be distinctly Canadian, rooted in dignity, equality, transparency and the rule of law.

AI is not just a tool. It changes how we make decisions, assign accountability and define human agency. We must meet this moment with clarity and resolve.

If we delay, we risk falling behind, letting digital systems evolve faster than our laws, leaving Canadians exposed to discrimination, misinformation and privacy violations.

Let us commit to making Canadian innovation a force not only for economic development but for justice and well-being.

In short, as science fiction becomes reality, let us remember the lesson of *The Terminator* franchise. In the words of John Connor, “There’s no fate but what we make for ourselves.”

Thank you, *hiy kitatamihin*.

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Thank you to you and Senator Moodie for this and to Senator Moodie for launching this incredibly important inquiry. I hope others speak to it.

One question for thought: AI development comes from two distinctly different categories. One is state-driven, such as in China, which is defined as upholding socialist principles — whatever that means — and the other is private industry-driven. As I understand it, it would be unlikely that one country could create legislation and rules that would govern an industry which is driven by private companies or by a state.

Has there been discussion or do you know about any discussion for creating a global agency that might have some of this regulatory capacity, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency? Would that be something that Canada should think about doing with like-minded states?

Senator Klyne: I think that’s the kind of window you need to be talking about. I fully agree with what you are looking at. We need to explore that. When you are pulling together those people for that summit or that pinnacle moment, you need to have the right people there.

I have a lot of faith in Canada’s abilities within this realm. We just need to get them together, but give them a reason why so that they are engaged, committed and they see what happens if they fail. Then we talk about the “hows.”

• (1710)

I know our Prime Minister likes to talk about how and not so much why. I like to spend time talking about why so that people get engaged, committed and so they know what they are fighting for. But I think — exactly as you said — it is a good place to start.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

[Senator Klyne]

[Translation]

GORE MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

PRIVATE BILL—SECOND READING

Leave having been given to revert to Other Business, Private Bills, Second Reading, Order No. 1:

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Loffreda, seconded by the Honourable Senator MacAdam, for the second reading of Bill S-1001, An Act to authorize Gore Mutual Insurance Company to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of the Province of Quebec.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Honourable senators, thank you for your consent. When you gave it, you probably didn’t realize that I’m planning to speak for 45 minutes. That’s a joke, of course. I will be brief.

I am pleased to speak today at second reading of Bill S-1001, introduced by our colleague Senator Loffreda. I thank him for agreeing to sponsor this bill, which is of paramount importance to Gore Mutual and Beneva.

My remarks will be brief, as our colleague has already explained the nature of a Senate private bill, the purpose of this bill, the history of the two companies, their proposed merger and the need to pass this bill quickly in order to proceed with the merger.

As you know, private bills have become rather rare in this chamber and in the other place. However, this type of bill is still useful and relevant in very specific cases. In 2016, I had the opportunity to be the opposition critic for Bill S-1001, An Act to authorize La Capitale Financial Security Insurance Company to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of the Province of Quebec. Senator Dawson was the sponsor at the time, but, when he fell ill, I agreed to wear both hats and serve as both opposition critic and sponsor at third reading of the bill. I’m very proud of that because I made history. Evidently, I’m no stranger to this type of bill.

Bill S-1001 is a good example of the need to proceed by way of a private bill. Since Gore Mutual is incorporated under the Insurance Companies Act, there is no legislative provision allowing it to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of Quebec.

I'd like to digress briefly to mention that it would be appropriate to look into the legislative loopholes that, for example, leave companies such as Gore Mutual and Beneva dependent on a private bill to achieve their ends. I just wanted to say that in passing.

In my view, the passage of this bill is a mere formality. We should be able to reach third reading in the Senate in a timely manner, in line with the interests of these two companies, which are very important to Canadians.

As Senator Loffreda pointed out, there is no controversy around this merger. On the contrary, this project has received considerable support from major players in the industry. If there is an issue, it has to do with timing, since the proposed merger between Gore Mutual and Beneva requires several steps to be taken over time, and Bill S-1001 is just one of them.

It is therefore with great pleasure and in a spirit of cooperation that I support Senator Loffreda's efforts to ensure that Bill S-1001 is passed without delay. With that in mind, I urge you, honourable senators, to vote in favour of this bill at second reading so that it can be referred to committee without delay and studied as soon as possible.

Thank you.

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.)

[English]

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Loffreda, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy.)

(At 5:16 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.)

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