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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, October 30, 2025

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I received a notice from the Facilitator of the Independent Senators Group, who requests, pursuant to rule 4-3(1), that the time provided for the consideration of Senators' Statements be extended today for the purpose of paying tribute to the Honourable Senator Boniface.

Is it agreed that the time for tributes be extended into regular statements until the conclusion of the anticipated tributes?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: I remind senators that pursuant to our Rules, each senator will be allowed only three minutes, and they may speak only once.

These times do not include the time allotted to the response of the senator.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE GWEN BONIFACE, C.O.M., O.ONT.

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Honourable senators, she was renowned, had a distinguished career and outstanding achievements when, in November 2016, she agreed to continue her public service in the Senate of Canada.

For some, the name Gwen Boniface resonated as Madam Commissioner, the first woman to head the Ontario Provincial Police, having also served as Commissioner of the Law Commission of Canada. For others, she was Madam President, also the first woman to head the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, before serving globally as Deputy Executive Director of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. Others remembered her earlier in her career as a lawyer and a police officer.

In 2016, already distinguished for her 40 years of public service, Gwen Boniface could have retired quietly and enjoyed a much lighter schedule. Instead, she chose to continue serving in the upper house of Parliament. And here, too, she has distinguished herself by her accomplishments. And there are, indeed, many of them.

She chaired the National Security and Defence Committee and was Joint Chair of the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency. She jointly commissioned, with Senator Hartling and Senator Boyer, a report on intimate partner violence during the pandemic.

In 2019, she worked tirelessly to establish in Orillia a Truth and Reconciliation Roundtable that has met regularly since then with people from Simcoe County, the region where she lives.

She has championed a bill in the Senate on the opioid crisis and has worked to promote awareness of PTSD experienced by first responders and members of the Armed Forces.

She has impressed us with her extensive expertise, her keen understanding of domestic and international issues, her exemplary ethical standards and her pragmatism.

Although we understand her reasons for leaving, we are saddened by the announcement of her imminent departure. Her colleagues unanimously praise her competence, credibility, reliability and wisdom. She has earned the respect not only of her colleagues in the Senate but also of the many members of the House of Commons who have had the opportunity to know her and work with her.

On a more personal level, Gwen has always been discreet, never flaunting her private life. However, her attachment to her family is evident. Every year, at holiday time, she would send us beautiful holiday cards designed by her favourite artist, the oldest of her two grandsons. She, usually so humble, was then immensely proud. I remember, after telling her that these cards were the most beautiful I had ever received, her spontaneous reaction. Referring to her grandsons, Hudson and Grayson, she said, "They are a ray of sunshine in my life."

Honourable Senator Boniface — dear Gwen — on behalf of the members of the Independent Senators Group, I would like to express our gratitude for your solid contribution to our group and congratulate you on your immense contribution to public service, both in Canada and abroad. You will always be one of us. We wish you many more years of happiness with the sunshine of your life.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Iris G. Petten: Honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of the Government Representative's Office to bid a fond farewell to a dear colleague.

When I first joined the Senate, I was invited to a dinner to discuss policing in rural communities with several other senators. This included, of course, Senator Boniface. It didn't take me long to realize that I was in the presence of someone with vast knowledge and experience on the topic.

While walking home after dinner, we continued our conversation, and I realized we shared many similarities — not being afraid of hard work, strong family values and navigating life as women in what has often been considered a “man’s world.”

Speaking of family, just recently, Senator Boniface attended an Ontario Provincial Police event with her son, who is also a police officer. Her son gave his mother the best compliment a mom could receive, which was to tell her publicly how she shaped his life and career by his following in her footsteps.

At a dinner I hosted for Senator Boniface not long ago — and unbeknownst to her — I took the opportunity to do a little investigative work of my own. I asked her what her favourite part of being a senator was. Her answer? Chairing the National Security and Defence Committee, of course.

I also asked what she would miss most, and to no surprise for anyone who knows her well, she answered, “Community work.”

She notably initiated a Truth and Reconciliation Roundtable in the Williams Treaties territory with Indigenous and non-Indigenous members, which continues to grow and evolve through ongoing meetings with local Elders, youth leaders and many other living circles of community.

• (1340)

It would not be a proper tribute if I did not take a brief moment to recognize one of Senator Boniface’s enduring causes. Senator Boniface has been standing up for women and women’s rights in our chamber throughout her tenure. From her inquiry on intimate partner violence to statements marking 50 years of women in policing, she has been recognizing the legacy of the great women who came before her, while also carving a path for those who will follow her.

On behalf of the Government Representative’s Office, Senator Boniface, thank you for being a trailblazer and a visionary; for your calm, steady demeanour that anchored us during hard times; for your humility, kindness and moral courage.

I very much look forward to your visit next year in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will miss you dearly. Thank you.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to our dear colleague the Honourable Gwen Boniface as she retires from the Senate of Canada and begins the next chapter of her life.

Senator Boniface has had a distinguished career both before and during her time in the Senate of Canada. Prior to her appointment to the Senate, she broke significant ground in Canadian law enforcement. After joining the Ontario Provincial Police, or OPP, as a constable in 1977, she rose through the ranks to become the first woman to serve as Commissioner of the OPP in 1998.

She also dedicated her time to Indigenous policing reform and contract policing work in northern and western Ontario.

Following her tenure as OPP Commissioner, Senator Boniface expanded her work internationally for 10 years. Her knowledge and leadership have been valued by many in the law enforcement community across Canada and beyond.

In 2016 Senator Boniface was appointed to the Senate of Canada, where she brought her experience in policing, crime prevention and community engagement to her work as a senator. She has served diligently on several Senate standing committees, including as Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs.

Senator Boniface’s work in the Senate has mirrored her lifelong commitment to community safety and justice. She has been a steadfast advocate on issues such as human trafficking, domestic violence, the opioid crisis, national security and Indigenous reconciliation, including spearheading a community truth and reconciliation initiative in Orillia in 2019.

In discussions about tributes for Senator Boniface, it was clearly evident that senators on both sides of the chamber did not want this day to arrive. Senator Clement’s words capture the sentiments of many, “She is beloved,” and you are truly respected.

On behalf our Conservative Caucus, I would like to extend our best wishes to you, Senator Boniface, as you prepare to leave the Senate. Thank you for your decades of service to Canadians and enduring commitment to justice, equality and reconciliation.

Hon. Colin Deacon: Honourable senators, I don’t know about the rest of you, but my first weeks in the chamber were filled with bewilderment, expectation and a bit of fear. I also recall wondering why everyone ignored the Speaker when he was repeatedly telling us to stand. Nothing made sense.

Then I was blessed to sit beside Senator Gwen Boniface. Quite simply, Gwen makes you feel safe. She projects an extraordinary combination of warmth, kindness, calm, understanding, empathy and fun. However, “fluster” is not a word that anyone would ever associate with Gwen.

Looking back on Gwen’s career, I’m amazed by the challenges that she didn’t just accept but embraced. Think back 30 years to September 1995 and the rapid escalation of tensions surrounding the land dispute at Ipperwash Provincial Park on the edge of Lake Huron. Its genesis lay in the failure to return land first expropriated during World War II to the Stony Point Ojibway band.

At the height of tensions, an OPP sniper shot and killed an unarmed member of the Stony Point band, 38-year-old Dudley George. A decade later, the head of the Ipperwash Inquiry found that the Government of Ontario, Ottawa and the OPP bore all responsibility for events that led to his death.

But none of that clarity of the inquiry existed when Chief Superintendent Gwen Boniface was appointed as the new Commander of the Western Region of the OPP.

Gwen Boniface's efforts and actions set a new standard in understanding and healing, from the moment she was appointed until the *Ipperwash Inquiry Report* was issued.

As evidence, I offer that she had already implemented virtually every one of the inquiry report's recommendations by the time it was issued, and the fact that the Stony Point First Nation invited the OPP, led by then-superintendent Gwen Boniface, to break bread in their community that evening. I expect that was the most important police work of her career: finding the truth, searching for common understanding and building trust. Too often, these aren't the first skills we think of when we think of policing, but they are hallmarks of Gwen's career, regardless of where she worked or what she did.

There are stories like this from her time in Northern Ireland, at the United Nations and in Afghanistan. Senator Gwen Boniface defines the expression, "Still waters run deep."

Gwen, there are 98 members of this chamber who are anything but thrilled about your decision, but there are five people waiting in Orillia for you to get home.

We're thrilled for them, but on behalf of the Canadian Senators Group, we're pretty sad.

Hon. Judy A. White: Honourable senators, on behalf of the Progressive Senate Group today, I extend our well wishes and express a bit of sorrow to Senator Boniface, who has decided to exit this chamber early.

Senator Boniface is keenly aware of the meaning of community, having grown up in a rural farm north of Toronto. Her father was a councillor for the Georgina Shores Lake Simcoe. He himself knew a thing or two about community. His desk and name plate are in Senator Boniface's office to this day on the Hill, and it is a constant reminder to her of whom we represent.

Despite her small-town upbringing, big things awaited her. She began a career in policing, and we have all heard how she rose through the ranks to become the first female commissioner of the OPP. Clearly driven in her journey, she didn't stop there; she went on to pursue a law degree at Osgoode Hall and was subsequently called to the bar.

After her retirement from the OPP, she decided to move her skills internationally to the Emerald Isle as Deputy Chief Inspector of the Garda Inspectorate. There she helped reform and modernize Ireland's National Police Service. She grew fond of that country and its people, and we suspect there will be a trip there in the near future.

After her time in Ireland, she served as the Transnational Crime Expert with the United Nations Police Division in New York. There she was tasked with addressing organized crime in conflict and post-conflict countries, all the while, acting as a member of the UN Counter-terrorism Integrated Task Force.

This then led her to the Senate where — as we've heard — she was the Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, merely a year after her appointment. She sponsored the impaired driving legislation — that's the sister legislation to the bill legalizing cannabis — and became the first senator ever to co-chair a joint committee studying the use of the Emergencies Act.

In the words of Senator Peter Harder:

Perhaps most importantly, you initiated your own project on reconciliation in your hometown of Orillia, bringing continued dialogue between residents, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. This has blossomed into a self-sustaining and ongoing project. You reached the pinnacle of your professions and travelled the globe, but you never forgot where you came from and the meaning of community. Your father would be proud.

Senator, we could talk for a long time and say a lot about your accomplishments, but instead, I want to say this: On behalf of all of us, thank you for your pragmatism, thank you for your level-headed demeanour and thank you for your commitment to public service. You will be dearly missed.

• (1350)

Now, may you go off to continue the best job of your illustrious career — as you have said on numerous occasions, "Being a grandma is my best rank yet." *Wela'lioq*. Thank you.

Hon. Tony Dean: Honourable senators, I join you today in celebrating and also lamenting Gwen Boniface's retirement from the Senate of Canada.

Gwen was sworn in on November 10, 2016, the same week as a number of her colleagues here today: me; Senator Marwah, now retired; Senator Pate; Senator Hartling, who is with us today; Senator Woo; and Senator Cormier. We all quickly became friends.

Senator Boniface has made a huge impact in this place. As Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, she became a role model for those who followed her, including me. Gwen also served with distinction on the Indigenous Peoples; Foreign Affairs and International Trade; Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament; and Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators committees in addition to her work in tackling human trafficking, ending domestic violence and helping to address the opioid crisis.

Senator Boniface was previously best known as Ontario's first female Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, or OPP. This is where I first met Gwen in my role as head of Ontario's public service. Gwen did her work there as she has done here: with deep professionalism, a spirit of problem solving and an acute understanding of the delicate relationships among the public service, the political level and one of Canada's largest and most significant law enforcement agencies.

Gwen also stands in the tradition of Canadians who have made significant contributions to governments and conflict resolution in other countries, making a hugely significant and positive impact in her work in Ireland following the Good Friday Agreement of April 10, 1998, which ended sectarian violence in Northern Ireland that stretched back to at least 1921, having also touched England and my hometown of Birmingham, which is also a connection between me and Gwen.

There was no guarantee of success, but Gwen played a pivotal role. As part of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate, Senator Boniface contributed to a review of the structure, roles and responsibilities of the Irish police. Gwen said that what she learned working in Ireland is that the history of policing is the history of a country — a philosophy that she was later able to translate into the Canadian context.

Senator Boniface led policing reforms that are widely viewed as among the more ambitious and delicate in the world, moving from a conflict- and paramilitary-influenced approach to policing to a modern civilian- and rights-based approach to policing in both the North and South of Ireland. Gwen has brought deep expertise, superb judgment and emotional intelligence to the Senate, most recently resulting in her appointment to the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency.

Gwen, you are going to be sorely missed here. You've been a superb model of how we can bring the best of our professional and personal biographies to bear in our important work in this place, especially in view of the modesty and the grace that you've demonstrated in this place and to all of us.

Thank you, Senator Boniface. We wish you well with whatever comes next.

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, beloved Gwen, today, we rise to recognize and celebrate your remarkable and service as you conclude your tenure in the Senate of Canada. Your career has always been defined by your integrity, dedication and lifelong commitment to public service and the safety of our communities.

Before joining this chamber, Senator Boniface broke significant ground as the first woman commissioner of the OPP. Her leadership in that organization redefined what inclusive, compassionate and community-based policing could look like. My colleagues have highlighted her many remarkable career accomplishments. She brought the same vision and sense of justice with her when she was appointed here in 2016.

In this chamber, Gwen, you've brought your practical experience directly into your legislative work. You have served with distinction on committees focused on national security, law enforcement, Indigenous affairs and justice. Your voice has always reflected balance, calling us to uphold both public safety and human rights. Whether examining complex criminal justice reforms, addressing the opioid crisis or advancing reconciliation, your contributions have been thoughtful, evidence-based and always deeply humane.

Beyond Senator Boniface's policy accomplishments, she has been a friend, a mentor and an inspiration to so many of us in this chamber and across the country. She embodies what it means to

serve with both strength and compassion. Her abilities to listen, to build consensus and to lead with humility are qualities that we would all do well to emulate. Add to that her mischievous sense of humour and that lovely twinkle in her eyes.

As she begins her next chapter, we thank her for her decades of service to Canadians and to the global community as a globally respected law enforcement authority, as a senator and particularly as a trailblazer for women in public life. Gwen, your legacy will continue to shape this institution and our country for years to come.

Honourable colleagues, please join me in extending our heartfelt gratitude and best wishes to Gwen for her well-earned and well-deserved retirement and for the time she will spend with her beloved family.

I will always cherish our special bond. I will miss you. My heart is heavy. Iris and I will be on the shore awaiting your landing on the Rock, I promise.

Hon. Bev Busson: Honourable senators, it is with both a deeply personal pleasure and a sincerely felt sadness that I have to rise today to speak about my outstanding colleague and my dear friend Gwen Boniface as she closes one remarkable chapter in her chronicle of public service.

Gwen's career has been defined by courage, integrity and trail-blazing leadership. Long before she joined us here in the Senate, she was already making history, becoming the first female Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police. Her leadership skills there earned her other prestigious roles in policing, as my colleagues have described. Beyond that, her reputation was international, modernizing the Irish national police force and guiding the United Nations in matters regarding transnational organized crime, all the while using the strength, fairness and compassion that we have all come to know and love about her. This reminds us that beyond every decision, policy and law that we consider, there are people counting on us to get it right.

For me personally, Gwen has been more than a colleague; she has been my mentor and, dare I say, my friend — and she walks the talk.

On the very day that I was appointed the first female inspector in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, I got a phone call from then-Inspector Boniface of the OPP. I didn't even know who that was. I remember her saying that she just wanted to reach out because when she was promoted, there were no women ahead of her to call, receive advice from or maybe just talk to. That is the kind of authentic leadership, kindness and generosity of spirit that she is renowned for. We have become lasting friends and confidants.

Both of us have tread a unique path, walking into rooms where women leaders have never stood. She was my sponsor in the Senate and, unknown to her, my role model. It has been both intimidating and inspiring to stand in her shadow.

Whether addressing Indigenous rights, public safety, organized crime issues or community well-being, she has spoken with the authenticity of someone who has seen both the best and the worst of humanity and still offers positive and constructive advice and counsel — often gently, but always firmly.

Gwen, as you retire from this place, know that your influence will not retire with you. You have helped shape a more modern and effective Senate. Your lifelong example will continue to inspire those of us who seek to make a difference in the lives of others through public service, both in and out of uniform.

• (1400)

On behalf of all of us who know you well, I wish you rest and laughter with your friends and family and, most importantly, years and years of joy with your cherished grandchildren. Enjoy your hard-earned retirement that has come from a life of devotion to making Canada a better place. You will be missed, but I will miss you the most. I am among those who will never forget your generosity. From one OG to another, thank you for your service and your friendship.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Garry Boniface, Senator Boniface's husband, Brett Boniface and Lisa Boniface, her son and daughter-in-law, as well as Grayson and Hudson, her grandsons. They are accompanied by her friends Mark Reber and Robin Jones as well as our former colleague Nancy Hartling.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE HONOURABLE GWEN BONIFACE, C.O.M., O.ONT.

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Gwen Boniface: Honourable senators, friends and my special guests, I want to begin by thanking the Speaker, whose competence and grace are always on display in this chamber. I want to thank our Clerk and her team and all of the staff who make this place operate so well.

I want to send a warm thank you to the Usher of the Black Rod. We actually belong to a two-person mutual admiration society. I was delighted the day I walked through the door and the Black Rod was here.

I want to thank the leaders for the work that you do to make the chamber work, and I extend a particular thank you to Senator Saint-Germain, the Facilitator of the Independent Senators Group. I want to thank all of my dear colleagues who have chosen to speak today.

Your words have been kind and generous. I'm deeply humbled and, I must admit, a little more emotional than I expected, so it is both a privilege and a challenge to find the right words for this moment, but let me try.

Let me begin by expressing my heartfelt thanks to the staff who have supported me throughout my nine years in the Senate. I have been incredibly fortunate to work with two very dedicated and capable people for my entire time in the Senate.

Cameron Ross came to my office with no background in this place, but you wouldn't have known it for long. By our second year together, Cam could find the exact words I needed before I even asked. It was as if he were living in my head, the poor fellow. Cam, thank you for your loyalty, your professionalism and your cool head under pressure. I wish you, Kristen and your beautiful new son, Sullivan — who was born just this past August — every joy as you begin this new chapter as a family. I know you will serve Senator Harder well.

Lori McAlpine came into this place, and what a journey it has been. Lori, you've been my left arm, my right arm and everything in between. You've guided, managed and supported with such quiet strength. As you now chart your own new path, I wish you nothing but the best, wherever it leads.

Back home, Erin Dixon was the anchor for our work in the region. Erin led our truth and reconciliation round table, one of the proudest accomplishments of my time here. Erin, thank you for your leadership and your deep compassion.

Colleagues, I came to this chamber from humble beginnings. The values that shaped me came from my family, especially from two extraordinary women: my grandmothers. My paternal grandmother was a Barnardo child. Born into deep poverty in England, she was sent to Canada alone at the age of 14 after the death of her mother, who died giving birth to her younger brother, and while her father was sent to fight in World War I. She would not see that brother for 50 years.

My maternal grandmother lost her father the day she was born, and her mother passed away when she was 10. She was shuttled between families until she could stand on her own.

Both of them endured unimaginable hardships, and yet they both became strong, resilient women who gave more than they had ever received. Today, I want to take this moment to honour them.

Growing up, current events were an everyday discussion in our house. Our kitchen table was lively and opinionated, thanks in large part to my father, a loyal Progressive Conservative who was always interested in a great debate. His only rule was this: "You have two ears and one mouth; use them in that proportion."

My father was a farmer and, as mentioned, served as a municipal councillor for 23 years. He never lost an election; those were consecutive years. He had a Grade 8 education but was one of the smartest people I have ever known. He was respected, principled and known as the patriarch of our little farming community. When he passed, that's exactly how he was remembered.

My mother had eight children in 17 years. Our home was loud, raucous and occasionally chaotic but always full of life. My parents were married for 69 years and, together, they were a formidable team. There was no democracy in our household. I regret that my father didn't live to see me sworn into the Senate. That would have been quite the conversation. My mother, on the other hand, was never shy in reminding me of her views on the Senate. I hope I managed to shift her perspective just a little before she passed.

Serving in this place was never something I anticipated, but I am deeply honoured to have served. The chamber proceedings may have tested my patience on more than 1 occasion — maybe 10 occasions — but for me, the committees are where the most meaningful work is done. It was my pleasure to chair the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs and to co-chair the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency. Both were very challenging but good learning experiences.

I enjoyed all the committee work, and I am grateful for it, but I want to give a shout-out to Senator Peter Boehm and my colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Committee. The work was so meaningful, current and fit so closely with the decade of work I did before I entered the Senate. Thank you all.

Over the last nine years in this place, I have tried to remind senators of the sacrifices that police officers make, not only in risking their lives but also in terms of their mental health in serving our communities. I ask you with great respect to continue to remember those who have paid the ultimate price and to remember their families who are left behind.

In this place, I have tried to focus on issues such as intimate partner violence; organized crime, including human trafficking; mental health and addiction; and community resilience. I hope — in some way — I have contributed to the ongoing debate on these matters.

None of this work is possible without the people who walked beside you. I had the great privilege of being sponsored into this chamber by former senator Vern White. He texted me this morning. He is ill, so he is unable to be here.

Here today is Mayor Robin Jones, who was present when I was sworn in as well. More importantly, she was in my police recruit class back in 1977. There were 320 police recruits, and 14 of them were women. I became the Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, and Robin became the Chief of Police of Nishnawbe Aski Police Service in the North. Those aren't bad odds.

Mark Reber joins us today, as he did when I was sworn in. He is a Canadian colleague who served with me in Ireland and, previously, in Northern Ireland. I am deeply grateful to have them here.

• (1410)

Within these walls, I've found many friendships, and I want to thank you all. But first and foremost is my dear friend the

Honourable Nancy Hartling, who joins us today. Nancy and I are truly sisters from different mothers. Nancy and I were sworn in on the same day, by coincidence had offices across from each other and, ultimately, lived in the same building. It doesn't get better than that. Some may accuse us of eating our way around Ottawa during the last nine years, but we sure had a good time.

Senator Peter Harder was the first appointee as government leader in the Senate and a key architect of a changing Senate. Peter built strong relationships with the other leaders and was masterful in his negotiations and sense of compromise. Over time, he also became a great friend. I am delighted that Cam will now work for Peter and learn from a master and a friend.

Colleagues, I feel so fortunate to have found friends across all groups and caucuses in this chamber and from every corner of the country. Some friendships were new; others were renewed, like with Senator Busson. This journey is one that few can truly understand, and I'm grateful to have walked it with you.

Now, the most important thanks of all, to my family.

To my son, Brett, and his wife, Lisa, thanks for being more convinced than I was that I should be in the Senate. They are raising two wonderful boys. Many of you will know that Brett is a police officer. He spent the last few years working with people suffering from mental illness, addiction and homelessness. It is difficult work. When I am in the community, I am more often identified as Brett's mom than as a senator. I am so proud to take that title.

To Grayson and Hudson, my grandsons, my heart and soul, you have brought more joy into my life than I ever thought possible. These boys were thrilled to come to Ottawa to see the Senators. I am afraid it wasn't you that they were hoping for.

To my husband, Garry, ours has been an adventure of 49 years of marriage. From every corner of Ontario to Dublin, Ireland, to New York City, to Washington and finally back home, you've been there — every step, every turn, every leap of faith. Thank you for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself.

In closing, I recognize that my journey here has been far from my rural roots, but I hope I haven't lost what these roots so generously gave me. I hope that I have remained true to the values that were instilled in me and that I've honoured those who made this journey possible.

Dear colleagues, I wish all of you good health, meaningful debate and courage to meet the challenges ahead. I will be watching and cheering for each and every one of you from afar.

For the last time, thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CONFLICT IN SUDAN

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I too would like to lend my voice of appreciation and congratulations to Senator Boniface for her service to the Senate and to Canadians. Thank you.

Honourable senators, while much of the world is looking elsewhere, Sudan is drowning in blood. And that is not an exaggeration.

The Rapid Support Forces, Islamist militias tied to the Muslim Brotherhood, are butchering civilians, overwhelmingly Christians. They are executing families, burning villages and razing churches, and they are filming their killings for the world to see. The scale of these atrocities is such that satellite imagery literally shows streets soaked in blood.

Yet, you wouldn't know any of this if you relied on the usual moral authorities in the West: the activists, the academics, the editorial boards. The people who have spent the last two years accusing, for example, Israel of genocide loudly, relentlessly and baselessly have suddenly lost their voices. Even more shamefully, although unsurprisingly, the Canadian government can't even summon the courage to speak plainly.

Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand put out a statement this week expressing horror at the killings. Absent, of course, from her statement was a direct naming of the perpetrators. Instead, she called on "all parties" to uphold the law, as if there were any doubt as to who is carrying out these mass executions. Only after public pressure did Global Affairs Canada mention the Rapid Support Forces by name — silence when it's inconvenient, loud condemnation when it fits a political narrative.

This is not caution. It is ideology and political partisanship and calculation taking precedence over principle. It is cowardice and failure that provide moral cover for this Islamist terrorist group.

The victims in Sudan are being abandoned because their suffering is inconvenient. Because speaking truth would expose the left's hypocrisy. Because principle is sacrificed for political narratives and short-term gain. That is shameful. It is a stain on our conscience. It is a stain on our democracy.

We must all call it out and stand with the innocent men, women and children in Sudan who face terror and death every day. We will not remain silent, nor should we remain silent.

Thank you, colleagues.

THE LATE HONOURABLE KEN DRYDEN, P.C., O.C.

Hon. Rodger Cuzner: Honourable senators, it has been almost two months since the passing of Ken Dryden, and in light of the beautiful and poignant tributes paid to him in this chamber, I didn't feel the need to offer another reflection.

I know Ken would have appreciated the kindness of these tributes, although having lived such an accomplished life with a genuine sense of modesty, he'd do so with an awkward discomfort.

But having served seven years with Ken in the other place and having continued a friendship post-politics, I got a pretty good sense of what he meant to this country and what this country meant to him.

Now, make no mistake; the guy wasn't perfect. I could think of no one more capable of turning a sentence into a paragraph than Ken Dryden, who would then turn that paragraph into a bestselling book. But one of his many gifts was his undeniable ability to listen to Canadians, to understand their perspectives and to engage on issues they cared about deeply. His knack for capturing and articulating the core values of Canadians was profound.

Over the last number of years, we'd chat. After his obligatory torturing of me because of my lifelong affection for the Toronto Maple Leafs, the conversation would turn to politics and, most notably, the unravelling of democracy south of the border. He would express great concern about the diminishing trust in long-respected institutions, about the preponderance of mis- and disinformation and the reality of citizens choosing sides not based on policy but rather on identity. It troubled him that too often chippy sound bites and slogans replaced truthful dialogue.

He also believed that, as Canadians, we should not be smug or complacent, because he felt that the far-right voices would continue to chip away at what we here in Canada view as appropriate political discourse, thus compromising the tone and tenor of our debate.

I am certain he would have shared the wave of concern that rippled across the country with remarks made recently about the integrity and independence of the RCMP. He believed that Canadians expected their leaders to preserve and protect our institutions, not to tear them down.

Anybody who knew Ken knew he loved to take a shot or a jab at you. Typically, this happened near the end of a conversation. It would be something like, "Cuzner, I know you're not capable of doing that much, but at least do what you can do."

Senators, my statement today is doing what I can do to honour Ken Dryden by speaking against salacious and egregious discourse and to encourage each and every one of us to do the same.

Ken Dryden loved this country, and this country loved him right back. He was an iconic Canadian, a great man and a good friend.

• (1420)

THE LATE JACK TROAKE

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, today I'm pleased to present Chapter 95 of "Telling Our Story."

The American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

I truly believe that Captain Jack Troake of the Town of Twillingate, Newfoundland, not only left a trail but also a tremendous and proud legacy.

Captain Jack was born into a seafaring family and spent the better part of his life as a fisherman. He was a strong and passionate advocate for those who make their living from the sea, especially those who were involved in the sealing industry.

Historians, mariners, reporters and folklorists sought him out for his knowledge and storytelling. He always made himself available to the media, especially to defend the seal hunt, whether that was at home in Newfoundland and Labrador, throughout Canada or on the global stage.

Many journalists from around the world were welcomed into the home of Jack and his wife, Florence, offered something to eat and a place to sleep even if they were opposed to the seal hunt. Jack believed they needed to understand what the industry meant to the fabric of our communities, and it was always better for others to see and hear it first-hand. On many occasions, people left Newfoundland with a different point of view than the one they had when they arrived. Many believe that Captain Jack, on his own account, accomplished more for the industry than all the politicians of the past 30-plus years combined.

Captain Jack was the type of man who did not mince his words or actions. The Troake family was of English descent. When the British government caved in to the anti-sealing propaganda, it bothered him to no end. He was so upset that for days, he flew the Union Jack upside down to express his displeasure.

People trusted and respected Jack, and he would use any means available to fight for fair and honest treatment when he saw an injustice to his home province and its people. He loved to visit local schools and talk about Newfoundland and Labrador's culture and heritage in the fishing industry. Even in the classroom, he would defend and promote the seal hunt. His love and compassion for our way of life was very evident whenever you were in his company.

Captain Jack was also a founding member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Branch of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Canadian Sealers Association and the Northeast Coast Sealers Co-op. He received numerous awards during his lifetime, including being admitted into the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame in 2010.

Our colleague Senator Ravalia served as a physician in Twillingate for many years and was a very close friend of Captain Jack. Senator Ravalia presented Captain Jack with the Senate of Canada's 150th Anniversary Medal in 2017. Upon Captain Jack's passing, Senator Ravalia had this to say:

Today we mourn the loss of an icon. Captain Jack Troake imparted worldly lessons to all those who shared his wisdom, insights and mischievous sense of humour. Thank you for the kindness that you showed my family and I.

Captain Jack and his family suffered a terrible personal tragedy in 2000 when he lost his son Garry in a boating mishap that also claimed the life of Roger Blake. The life of a fisherman is not for the faint-hearted.

Captain Jack made his final voyage on June 4 of this year when he passed away at the health centre in Twillingate at the age of 88.

He leaves to mourn his wife of almost 71 years, Florence; his son Hardy and his wife, Sharon; his grandchildren; great-grandchildren; and numerous other family and friends.

Even though Captain Jack Troake's voice may now be silent, his incredible and proud legacy lives on. May he rest in peace.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

COMPETITION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

Hon. Marty Klyne introduced Bill S-239, An Act to amend the Competition Act.

(Bill read first time.)

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

(On motion of Senator Klyne, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.)

QUESTION PERIOD

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

Hon. Colin Deacon: My question is for the Chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration.

Senator Moncion, three and a half years ago, on March 29, 2022, the Senate unanimously adopted a motion committing us to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. This commitment demonstrated global leadership and provided us with both an opportunity to learn as legislators through our actions and with the credibility to hold government to account.

The Senate contracted an external expert to benchmark emissions resulting from our activities, totalling 3,557 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2022-23. The contractor also provided a methodology to accurately measure our emissions going forward.

Accurate carbon emission measurements are increasingly incorporated into private and public sector accounting, domestically and abroad, using IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards, among others.

Is the Internal Economy Committee considering integrating emissions disclosures into the Senate's accounting processes?

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Thank you, senator, for the question and for providing the question ahead of time.

Our financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards. As indicated in our external auditor's report, our financial statements present a true and fair view and comply with the relevant standards. I also take note of the importance placed on monitoring greenhouse gas emissions and the standard views in other similar institutions.

We will continue to ensure that we apply the best practices in preparing our financial statements in accordance with current standards.

Senator C. Deacon: Thank you, Senator Moncion.

Digital tools enable the cost-effective completion of carbon emission accounting, and there are companies that comply with international standards that are primarily running their software off of existing financial data.

In the two years since our Advisory Working Group on Environment and Sustainability presented our report to the Internal Economy Committee, has the committee discussed this matter?

I ask that because there is no update on IntraSen over that period.

Senator Moncion: Thank you, senator.

The answer is no, we haven't discussed it, but — and this is a comment that I will make for all senators — when you have issues such as this, please write to the committee. Write to me as chair and to Pascale Legault as clerk to ask that the item be discussed or be brought to a Senate meeting. We will take it under advisement, and we will prepare the necessary documents to really be able to look into issues that are important to senators.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of October 29, 2025, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, November 4, 2025, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1430)

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Dasko, seconded by the Honourable Senator Forest, for the second reading of Bill S-213, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (demographic information).

Hon. Donna Dasko: Honourable senators, I rise to speak as the sponsor of Bill S-213, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (demographic information). Bill S-213 is identical to Bill S-283 from the last Parliament, which I spoke to on March 19, 2024.

Bill S-213 has a simple principle: It is time that Canadians have ready access to more and better demographic information on who is running for federal office and on what federal political parties are doing to achieve a House of Commons that better reflects this country's diversity.

Bill S-213 addresses Canada's long-standing and continuing failure to elect more women and citizens from other under-represented groups. The measures proposed are based on recommendations made by established entities that report directly to Parliament. They are research based and draw upon Canada's Constitution and upon rights-based laws and policies put in place to increase diversity in other federal institutions.

As Canada's Chief Electoral Officer has observed:

Many groups are under-represented in the House of Commons and the reasons for this are complex. There can be little doubt about the value of working toward a Parliament that reflects the true diversity of Canadian society; but that work must start with high-quality information . . .

This is exactly the basis of this bill.

Bill S-213 amends the Canada Elections Act by adding two measures. First, the Chief Electoral Officer will collect and report to the House of Commons demographic information about electoral participants who are nomination contestants, candidates and leadership contestants. The Chief Electoral Officer has asked for this mandate.

Second, major political parties will report on what they are doing to increase diversity in the selection of candidates, including targets and timetables with respect to women, but going beyond women to other diverse communities.

Let me explain why I am undertaking this bill.

Colleagues, getting more women elected to public office has been a vital personal goal for me for over three decades. I have been an activist in this area for a very long time, and since I was appointed to the Senate, I have been motivated to find a way for Parliament to address the poor representation of women and other under-represented groups.

I am also motivated to improve our democratic institutions in these troubling times, when the world is facing threats not seen since the Second World War. Building a Parliament that better reflects the voices of all Canadians will improve our decision making and outcomes and build trust in our democratic institutions.

Time is of the essence. Our progress in addressing historic representation gaps has been slow, to say the least, and the recent federal election shows that progress is vulnerable.

The subject matter here is entirely appropriate for a Senate public bill. I have said before and will say again firmly that I believe that the Senate not only has the right but also the responsibility to deliberate and to show leadership on all aspects of our democracy and our democratic institutions. We cannot leave this work to others.

This bill will strengthen our democracy by increasing the transparency of our Parliament and political parties for the benefit of all Canadians.

Let me start with the results of the April 2025 election. When it comes to diversity, the results were disappointing, to say the least. In this past election, 104 women were elected, filling 30.3% of the seats in the House of Commons, compared to 30.5% in 2021. Yes, this is a drop, though you might conclude that this drop in representation is not that serious.

But consider this: In the 18 federal elections held since 1968, the percentage of women increased in every one except those of 2006 and now 2025. In only 2 out of 18 elections has the percentage of women gone down, and this most recent election is one of them. This is hardly a distinction for us to be proud of. Definitely not.

Still, even the progress we've had has been slow. In the 10 federal elections held from 1997 to 2025, women have moved from 20.6% to 30.3% of Parliament. That is about one percentage point every election. That progress is very slow.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union ranks the percentage of women in national parliaments around the world since 1997 and is the most reliable source for this data. In 1997, at the inception of those rankings, Canada was twenty-first in the world. We are now seventieth in the world in terms of percentage of women in our Parliament. This is another unfortunate distinction for this country.

Also regarding the 2025 election, Canada's two largest political parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, currently fill 90% of the seats in the House of Commons. Both parties nominated significantly fewer women as candidates in 2025, despite the clear and long runway leading to the election. Library of Parliament data indicates that 35.6% of the candidates for the Liberal Party were women, down from 43.6% in the 2021 federal election. In 2025, 22.9% of candidates for the Conservative Party were women, down from 33.8% in the 2021 election. Overall, there were 627 women candidates, down from 763 in 2021.

Jerome H. Black and Andrew Griffith undertook an analysis of candidate diversity in this past election in their piece entitled "The diversity of candidates and MPs stalled for some groups in this election," published in *Policy Options* in May of this year. They found that the number of candidates from visible minorities increased slightly in 2025 over 2021. The majority of these candidates were men, who constituted 65%, while women constituted 35% of all visible minorities elected. The number of Indigenous candidates declined in 2025 over 2021. There was a significant decline in LGBTQ candidates and MPs elected.

Unfortunately, the authors were not able to comment on candidates with disabilities due to a lack of data.

A comparison of the percentage of candidates from this study to census data shows that representation still falls well short for Indigenous, racial minority and LGBTQ Canadians.

I draw your attention to a welcome new resource, entitled *Black on the Ballot: Black Canadians in Electoral Politics*, published in January 2025, which includes a dataset on the 74 Black Canadians who have run for the House of Commons between 1968 — when Lincoln Alexander was first elected — and 2021. Of the 74, 32 were men and 42 were women. Out of the 20 elected, 12 were men and 8 were women — 60% and 40% respectively.

Colleagues, we have had decades of effort and earnest, though only somewhat effective, voluntary measures undertaken by political parties and civil society to move the dial on improving representation in the House of Commons. But we cannot deny the evidence that we are stalled compared to the legitimate expectations of Canadians and compared to much of the rest of the world.

We are also stalled compared to what we have achieved in other parts of our society and democratic system. Think of the progress in the last 50 years regarding the Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Crown in Canada. Think of the representation here in the Senate, the judiciary, the executive, public administration and public services and federally regulated industries. The progress made there has been greater.

• (1440)

The results we have for Parliament do not reflect our aspirations, our values, our approach to equality and anti-discrimination or the view of ourselves that we present on the world stage. These results are, in my opinion — and I hope yours as well — indefensible.

Now, let me turn to the provisions of Bill S-213. To be clear, the bill does not prescribe structural changes to Canada's electoral system. It does not tell parties or electoral participants what to do, nor does it place any restriction on the freedom of a party to choose candidate selection procedures or candidates who, it thinks, will best represent its interests. The bill does not say, "Do this." The bill actually says, "Tell Canadians what you are choosing to do."

The bill is based on four sources: first, recommendations from Canada's Chief Electoral Officer calling for Elections Canada to collect high-quality demographic data about electoral participants; second, recommendations from the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women in its April 2019 report — which I will call "the committee" or "the committee report" — also calling for improved demographic data and improving the representation of diverse women in electoral politics; third, extensive federal experience in employment equity based on the reporting of action plans to promote diversity in the workplace and for corporate boards and management; and fourth, decades of domestic and international research on women in politics.

Unfortunately, there has not been a lot of research conducted with respect to other aspects of diversity.

Section 1 of the bill creates a floor for the two reporting requirements on diversity. At minimum, reporting must be done for the designated groups defined in section 3 of the Employment Equity Act. These groups are women, Aboriginal Peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities. That's what that act defines.

Further, the bill gives scope to both the Chief Electoral Officer and political parties to add other grounds as they see fit. Data collection does not have to be limited to these groups.

As you may recall, the federal minister of Employment and Social Development Canada confirmed in December 2023 that the federal government intended to amend the Employment Equity Act to add two groups: Black people and 2SLGBTQI+ people.

Further, it would update three of the other groups: Indigenous Peoples, racialized people and would align persons with disabilities with the Accessible Canada Act. This commitment on the part of the government was reaffirmed in Canada's last federal budget of April 2024, and I urge the federal government to honour this commitment that they have made at least twice.

I've been assured by legislative counsel that any amendments made to the definition of "designated groups" will flow through to the provisions of this bill when those become law.

Sections 4 and 5 of this bill authorize data collection and reporting by the Chief Electoral Officer of demographic information about electoral participants. As I have mentioned, both the Chief Electoral Officer and the committee have recommended this. The Chief Electoral Officer is required to provide a self-identification, which is a voluntary and confidential questionnaire, to all electoral participants currently covered by the Canada Elections Act, and this includes candidates in section 67, nomination contestants in section 476 and leadership contestants in section 478.

This demographic information must include — as I mentioned — at minimum, the designated groups under the Employment Equity Act, and the data formats must support disaggregation and intersectional analysis.

The Chief Electoral Officer must publish a report setting out the anonymized data within 90 days after the return of the writ following a general election, and the Speaker must submit such reports to the House of Commons.

I also note that the report *Black on the Ballot* calls for the collection of racially disaggregated data on candidacies and office holding in Canadian politics.

Section 3 of the bill requires disclosure by major federal political parties of their action plans on diversity. The bill implements significant portions of recommendations 8 and 9 from the committee report, but it expands the scope of these recommendations beyond diverse female candidates to cover all employment equity groups.

It is important to note what this House of Commons committee called for in 2019. It called for public reporting by registered parties on their efforts to recruit more female candidates from diverse backgrounds. It called for registered parties to "... set goals and publicly report on their efforts to nominate more female candidates ...". It also called for search committees for candidates in federal general elections and by-elections.

In the bill, diversity action plans must be reported by those registered political parties whose candidates for the most recent general election received at least 2% of the number of valid votes cast or at least 5% of the valid votes cast in the electoral district in which the registered party endorsed a candidate. This threshold for reporting comes directly from the Canada Elections Act, section 444.

Currently, out of 16 registered political parties, the 5 parties represented in the Forty-fifth Parliament meet this threshold.

According to the bill, the Chief Electoral Officer is given power to ensure that the parties meet their reporting obligations.

Bill S-213 requires that these parties who meet the threshold must make public on their internet websites:

... any rules in use by the registered party or any of its electoral district associations relating to the selection of candidates ...

To a greater or lesser degree, the five parties in the House of Commons already do this.

By the way, the current Chief Electoral Officer made this same recommendation in 2024 to the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference, which that inquiry adopted.

The bill's measures on diversity reporting for parties are modelled on comparable federal initiatives which apply to public sector employment, federal contractors and federally regulated private sector corporations. Specifically, reporting requirements for political parties are modelled on the Disclosure Relating to Diversity regulations under section 172.1 of the Canada Business Corporations Act.

Since 2020, “distributing corporations”—generally, companies incorporated under that act which offer their shares to the public—must annually report on what they are doing to increase diversity on their boards and senior management teams with respect to the groups under the Employment Equity Act as well as any other groups the companies choose to include.

These federal rules draw on provincial securities rules, which require reporting on women by TSX-listed companies, and these rules have been in place since December 2014.

You may have heard these federal and provincial regimes described as “comply or explain.” Companies have the option to state how they are complying with the required disclosure or to explain why they are choosing not to comply. Companies design the policies, plans and timetables that suit them best, and shareholders hold them accountable as they see fit.

• (1450)

Colleagues, I have drawn upon this corporate disclosure regime because it is an excellent template for reporting on diversity, and I draw upon it because it is working. The January 22, 2024, editorial in *The Globe and Mail* said of this “comply or explain” approach:

It's a basic first step: Quantifying where you're at is key. Disclosure rules have helped propel progress.

The representation of women on boards of TSX-listed companies passed the 30% mark for the first time this year, and 2025 has also seen some improvements in the representation of visible minorities, persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples.

Corporate diversity disclosure is working in another important way as well. “Comply or explain” has changed the conversation. It has moved the dial. It has turned up the heat on the lack of diversity in boardrooms and C-suites. It has raised the bar for what is considered acceptable performance so that there is no going back; there is only going forward. That is precisely what we need to happen with diversity in candidate selection.

This public report card is becoming even more important. Early indications from 2025 filings are that President Trump's executive orders targeting diversity, equity and inclusion programs in the public and private sectors may be having a chilling effect on diversity disclosure in Canada, by public companies here and on actual results here. Access to quality information will help us in this country to meet this challenge, just as we are meeting other challenges coming from the United States and globally.

Based on the particular model that is now well established in Canada, under Bill S-213, political parties that meet the threshold will have to publish information on their internet sites about any programs they have in place designed to achieve greater diversity in the selection of candidates, including but not limited to the designated groups and including the use of formal search committees and written policies on the identification and nomination of persons in each designated group as candidates.

These provisions recognize that there is unlikely to be a “one-size-fits-all” measure for under-represented groups. What will work for one group will not necessarily work for another. Bill S-213 respects the need for flexibility.

Parties may decide not to undertake any of these initiatives, and if so, they must state their reasons for opting out—that's where we get the term “comply or explain”—and indicate whether they have a timeline for complying.

Colleagues, I would like to turn to the final provisions in section 3 of the bill, also based on this model, which speak directly to the situation of women in federal electoral politics as revealed in the research. The bill requires reporting on three mechanisms: any rules for filling vacant seats where the party is the incumbent; any rules for access to “winnable” ridings; any voluntary targets they have for women to be nominated by a specific date; and the cumulative progress that has been achieved.

The use of targets is not new for federal political parties. What is new is making sure that Canadians have access to the information about any targets that are in place.

I will now ask that you step back with me for a few minutes from the detail of the bill, to understand the “big picture” on the undeniable and persistent gender gap in our House of Commons. Let's be guided by fact and by research, not by myths and not by deflections from responsibility.

First point, voters are not responsible for the gender gap. Research shows that there is no voter bias of any consequence against women. Canadians vote for parties. If a party you favour is running a female candidate, you will vote for that party, whether that candidate be a man or a woman. A controlled study of more than 21,000 candidates who have run for the House of Commons since 1921 shows that female election candidates receive just as many votes as their male counterparts when you control for the conditions. That's the first point.

As my second point, women are not responsible for the gender gap. Abacus Data undertook a national survey in January 2022 on behalf of Equal Voice. I will quote from two key findings.

An equal number of women and men, 5% in each case, say, “I am definitely interested in running for public office at some point in the future.” So this is the potential pool of candidates among Canadians, and this potential pool is the same among women as it is among men.

However, when it comes to public office candidacy, men are twice as likely as women to have been asked to run, and 14% of Canadian men say they have been approached or asked to run as a political candidate. Only 7% of women say they have been approached. That’s double the number of men than women who have been approached to run. This is the nub of the issue.

Further, Canadian research also establishes that parties tend to favour men for seats where the parties think that they have an electoral advantage, seats where the party is the incumbent and seats they consider to be “winnable.” Parties are more likely to place women in seats where they are less competitive. The *Black on the Ballot* report also suggests that Black candidates are placed in seats where the parties they represent are less competitive.

The point is that the candidate selection processes of political parties are the main factor responsible for the gender gap.

The road to the House of Commons is overwhelmingly through political parties that are the gatekeepers to the other place. The Samara Centre for Democracy concluded in a 2019 study that:

More than 99% of the Members of Parliament . . . elected to Canada’s Parliament over the last 30 years were elected as representatives of a political party. . . .

They are the gatekeepers to Parliament.

This same study highlights that candidate selection has shifted from contested nominations at the electoral district level to management by the national campaigns. That study found that 83% of nominations have just a single candidate or are the direct result of appointment without any competitive process at all.

Extensive international research shows that diverse representation can only be improved by implementing focused intentional measures. Data collected by UN Women tells us that 93 countries have chosen to implement legislated gender quotas. Most of those countries are doing better than this one.

Bill S-213 does not impose quotas, not even voluntary quotas. Instead, this bill draws on expert evidence heard by the standing committee when they heard testimony that improving

transparency in the candidate processes used by the major parties is the minimum next step to improve representation results. This step that I’m taking is, according to experts, the minimum that we would undertake.

We must not lose sight of the fact that Canada’s major political parties receive significant public benefits, including reimbursement of election expenses by taxpayers, the ability to issue tax receipts to donors, to access to voter lists and others. They are getting benefits from taxpayers.

• (1500)

With benefits come responsibilities, to which I would add the more focused and deliberate approach to diversity that Bill S-213 lays out.

Annual reporting via the internet of diversity policies and practices will not be onerous. Our major political parties are modern. They are sophisticated organizations with expert staffs. They have accessible websites.

Clause 6 of the bill provides that the bill comes into force two years after Royal Assent, which is a generous implementation period.

Colleagues, to conclude, Bill S-213 is a reasonable next step in addressing Canada’s long-standing failure to elect more women and individuals from historically under-represented groups in the House of Commons. It places reasonable reporting responsibilities on political parties, ones we are already placing on other institutions in this country. We have a great deal of experience with these arrangements.

Through this bill, we will gain access to important demographic data we are now lacking, especially with regard to Indigenous Peoples, those with disabilities, members of visible minorities and other under-represented groups. We are going to have the data we don’t have now.

We can also expect to move the dial, to help create a Parliament that better reflects Canadian society in the best interests of our democracy.

I hope you agree this bill is deserving of committee study and input from Canadians as a next step in the process.

Colleagues, I welcome your questions and support for this bill at second reading. Thank you.

Hon. Denise Batters: Will Senator Dasko take some questions? I have many.

Senator Dasko: Yes, I will take questions.

Senator Batters: I am the critic for this bill. In looking through the bill, there are a number of questions I have.

You mentioned all five parties in the House of Commons are included. The definition you have in proposed section 446.1 says this would apply:

... to registered parties whose candidates for the most recent general election received at that election at least 2% of the number of valid votes cast, or at least 5% of the number of valid votes cast in the electoral districts in which the registered party endorsed a candidate.

Does that include the Green Party for this past election?

Senator Dasko: I can't say for sure whether it covers the Green Party at this point. I have to go back and look at the data.

This provision is already in the Canada Elections Act. It serves as a threshold for parties to claim election expenses and other benefits. It exists in the act and will apply to those parties. I'm not sure if the Green Party passes that threshold. I'd have to check on that.

Senator Batters: For individual candidates, the Green Party wouldn't even come close on that. The threshold is 10% for individual MP candidates.

The next question is there are certain parts of your bill that have different phrases used. Sometimes it's "demographic information"; sometimes it's "diversity"; sometimes it's "designated groups." And some sections of the bill don't use consistent definitions for that.

For example, the part where it is talking about the self-identification questionnaire, which is supposed to be completed by everyone who is running as an MP candidate — but also by people who are running for nominations, which could be many thousands of people — what is to be included in it? Your bill doesn't specify anything about what actual demographic information is to be included in this self-identification questionnaire. It uses three different, confusing definitions in the same section.

Senator Dasko: I think the bill is clear. The information that's to be included are measures in the questionnaire of the designated groups. That is what needs to be included. There can be other information included in a questionnaire, but this is the basis of the information that must be included.

Those are the four designated groups; there would be questions relating to each of those. That would be the basis of the questionnaire, maybe other measures as well. I hope, if this comes to pass, that it will be possible to add other information to the questionnaire, in addition to what's required.

It's pretty clear when you have a requirement to include this kind of information in a questionnaire.

Senator Batters: It actually isn't. If you look at the proposed section 535.1(1), it deals with three different phrases in the same part and doesn't really specify that.

The next question I have is this: In section 535.1(3), it says, "Any demographic information collected must include variables relevant to each designated group." What does "variables relevant" mean?

Senator Dasko: "Variables" refers to data points. That's what the bill is requiring. Variables are different measures.

Education could be a variable. There could be other variables that might be added. The point is to make it clear we have a basis for the questionnaire, but there might be other variables added. That would be up to the discretion of the Chief Electoral Officer when putting together this questionnaire. That's what a variable is. It could be these and other measures.

Senator Batters: In addition to asking people about their age, gender, visible minority status, all of those kinds of things, they would also potentially be asked about income and education level? Is that what is envisioned by your bill? It doesn't say any of those things in here.

Senator Dasko: The bill makes clear there are questions which are the basis of the questionnaire. It also provides the ability to add other questions that measure demographic variables. This is up to the discretion of the Chief Electoral Officer when he's putting this questionnaire together. He may get representations from groups, for example the LGBT community, to have that question on the survey. It creates a minimum of questions but provides for the opportunity to add other questions.

Certainly, questions about education level, in addition to the four groups, could be added. You mentioned age. Age is actually automatically collected because candidates have to verify that they are of voting age to be a candidate. That's already part of the basics. Other measures can be added. This is specifically what was intended.

As I said in my comments, there are going to be changes. There are expected to be changes to the Employment Equity Act that would include more groups in the basic designation. If those changes by the government come into effect, they will automatically flow through to this bill.

Senator Batters: Thank you. Another area I have questions on is the proposed section 535.11(1) where, in compiling his report about all of this demographic information he is getting from these thousands of candidates, the Chief Electoral Officer would only have 90 days after an election to provide that report with all of that done. That's very quick.

I think that is a considerably shorter time frame than the Chief Electoral Officer would have to get MP candidates, people who ran in the election and spent a lot of money — often \$100,000 for each candidate — and have that significant amount of money returned to them. Wouldn't that be something you would potentially need to give the Chief Electoral Officer a longer time to actually compile?

• (1510)

Senator Dasko: Thank you for the question. We thought it was a reasonable time period, and I think it's quite doable to submit a report in that time frame.

Senator Batters: The other thing that I'm wondering about is this: The Chief Electoral Officer has many serious obligations during and following — often immediately following — our elections. Canadians recently saw Elections Canada experience major challenges during the election this past spring, including foreign interference concerns and sometimes even the basics. For example, the Elections Canada website was down for hours on election day, despite the fact that on the vast majority of Elections Canada advertisements, they encouraged voters to go to their website for voting information, candidate information, ID information and all of these things. Then, they often provided no additional contact information. When election day came, all of these people were going to the website only to discover it had crashed for hours and they didn't have access to it.

Before taking on new responsibilities with onerous time frames that are proposed in your bill, shouldn't Elections Canada really ensure they have the basics and the most important factors handled for Canadians?

Senator Dasko: Thank you for the question.

I most certainly agree with you that running elections these days is a more difficult and complicated process. With foreign interference and other issues of that nature, it is very challenging to run our elections, along with the pressures that come from the media, the public and citizens.

I think we should absolutely ensure, as parliamentarians, that Elections Canada has the resources it needs to deal with these new and very challenging issues. I agree with you; these are absolutely new issues, and we need to make sure that the agency can deal with them in a way that builds confidence among Canadians in our electoral system.

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

Senator Dasko: Yes.

Senator Housakos: Thank you, senator. Over the last decade, the Trudeau government's experiment of an independent Senate was one thing, but seeing someone who has embraced the independent Senate with such enthusiasm now table a bill of this nature is really perplexing. Many of the appointments that were made by the Liberal government over the last decade were fantastic women who were quite partisan at some point in their lives — they were former candidates, donors and Liberal Party organizers, or they were involved in the recruitment process and some of them ran for office and served in office.

Doesn't what we're doing here in the Senate defeat the purpose of your bill, where one of the conditions to accept the nomination to sit here is to extract yourself from the partisan political process? As you appropriately pointed out in your speech, it is the party process where you make sure you get more of this, less of that and all the rest of it.

Senator Dasko: Thank you for the question, senator. If I understand your question, as I said in my remarks, I would say that I think the Senate has a very important role to play in ensuring that our democracy is strong and that it maintains the trust of Canadians.

The House of Commons is a partisan chamber, and we can't ignore that chamber when we're talking about our democracy because it is the gatekeeper to Parliament, and Parliament is the heart of our democracy.

We, in this chamber, have to participate. I believe it's our responsibility to be active when it comes to maintaining, building and strengthening our democracy. I see this bill as a really important way to do that. We have a significant role to play, whether we're partisan or not. I agree with you that there are many wonderful partisan people, and I know them as well as you do, but we're talking about strengthening our democracy and our House of Commons.

I have identified a deficit that I think is very important, and I've proposed a way that I think we can deal with it — a way that is practical and reasonable and a way that other federal institutions have dealt with it, according to legislation and regulation. I think we can look at these models. They are very good models for us to adopt and embrace when it comes to the House of Commons, but I think we need to do more. I think being seventieth in the world for representation of women is not good enough.

All of the parties have to do better. That is what this bill is hopefully prompting with respect to the experience that we've had and the evidence from experts. Quotas work, but I wasn't prepared to come forward with that initiative. I think what I've put forward is a very reasonable approach, and we can look forward to positive changes.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Dasko, your time for debate has expired. Are you asking for more time? There are a couple of other senators who would like to ask questions.

Senator Dasko: If senators would like more time, I would be happy to ask for more. Thank you.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Housakos: If I heard correctly — and I don't want to put words in your mouth — I think you recognize we need to do more. By actually asking parliamentarians to disengage from the partisan political process, we're not achieving what you're trying to achieve with this bill, but I guess that is a debate we can explore at another time.

Do you agree that Elections Canada has one mandate: to make sure we have free and fair elections? That's their mandate. Their mandate is not to design outcome. The moment you have legislation in a democracy that dictates outcome to Elections Canada, you're going down a very slippery slope. You will agree that the only chamber in the Westminster model where outcome is in the hands of someone far more powerful than the electorate is this chamber. That's why it is a chamber that is probably the most diverse in the Westminster system, which is good. One of the good outcomes of a non-elected, appointed body like we have is it's super diverse. If anything, people will tell you it's disproportionately diverse based on the population, and that is part of the balance that we serve here.

Surely, you would agree that when you start engaging in trying to define factors such as colour, religion or language in the other place, all of a sudden the purity of a fair and open electoral process is being dictated by somebody, and I think that is a very slippery slope.

Senator Dasko: Thank you for the question, senator. There are no outcomes specified in this bill. This bill involves a process where parties are reporting. It's a reporting mechanism, and that is what they are doing. There's no outcome and no percentage. No action is required except to report on what they're doing. That should be clear, and I'm sorry if it wasn't absolutely clear in my comments.

Second, the Chief Electoral Officer has asked for this mandate. He asked for it in reports following the 2019 and 2021 federal elections. He has said to me that he is receiving a lot of requests for information about exactly this phenomenon: the diversity of candidates. People are calling Elections Canada and saying, "We want to know more. Why can't you provide this information?"

He has said very specifically that he does not currently have a mandate to collect this data. He cannot collect it without a legislative basis for it, and that is what this bill does. It provides him with what he has been asking for. You can see it in the recommendations of his reports after the 2019 and 2021 elections. It's an activity and a process that he would undertake, and it would be part of the mandate that, again, he has asked for. Thank you.

• (1520)

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Senator Dasko, will you take a question?

Hon. Donna Dasko: Yes.

Senator Ataullahjan: There is a term I keep hearing, "visible minorities." What does that mean?

Senator Dasko: Honestly senator, I'm not sure exactly how to answer that. The government has said that they will redefine these terminologies. They are not going to use "visible minorities" anymore. They are going to use "racialized groups" and "Blacks." So that is their proposal to amend the Employment Equity Act to include more groups.

One might conclude from that the term "visible minorities" is not precise enough. They have been getting representations from communities to change the terminology. So maybe that is where it's coming from.

Hon. David M. Wells: I have a point of order. When additional time was granted to Senator Dasko, which is normal procedure, normally it's defined: five minutes, exhaustion of the list, three more questions or something like that. That wasn't given; it was an open-ended granting when you asked the chamber. That is a privilege granted to leaders on unlimited time debates but typically not a bill sponsor upon their second reading speech.

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you for the question. If time has not been defined, we usually give five minutes. Those five minutes are almost over, so if you're asking for either an extra question or more time, it would be another five minutes.

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: I am recognized as the next in line, so I think the time would include me.

The Hon. the Speaker: I have called upon Senator Ataullahjan for a supplementary question. As I mentioned, I think there are 16 seconds left.

Senator Dasko, are you asking for more time to answer more questions?

Senator Dasko: I will take one more question.

The Hon. the Speaker: That would be a supplementary question from Senator Ataullahjan. Are you asking for five more minutes, Senator Dasko?

Senator Dasko: Yes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Ataullahjan: Senator Dasko, with respect to "visible minorities," I stopped using that term a very long time ago because on some level I find it a bit offensive. I think to describe, I guess, some of your colleagues also as "racialized people" would be using a kinder term. Would you agree?

Senator Dasko: Yes, I do agree with you. I've just gone back to the changes that are proposed by the government. The term will be "racialized people." That is the term proposed in the changes to the Employment Equity Act. That would mean the first terminology would not be used.

Senator Cardozo: Thank you, Senator Dasko. Would you take a question from me? Maybe we have established that. Thank you.

It is an interesting bill you have put forward, which I support very much. The timing is interesting, because if you think of it, before 1929, women could not be appointed to this place, and that only changed in 1929; in 1930, the first woman was appointed. A century later, we are in a place where the majority of senators are women.

I want to ask about the tenor of the times and how you anticipate this decision will go. I see — and you alluded to this — considerable opposition to diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, in the United States. Some of that is certainly spilling over the border.

Do you anticipate that kind of opposition — to anything to do with diversity, equity and inclusion — to be part of this debate you are launching?

Senator Dasko: Thank you for the question. I do think that we are going to see the influence of those developments in the U.S. in this country. I think we may even be starting to see it now.

But I also feel that we are resilient and that as Canadians, we will have the strength to continue to value diversity and the progress we've made.

I think we will be able to find our way through this to the other side. I'm trying to be optimistic about the outcome in terms of how these issues are unfolding.

Let's put it this way: I'm trying to remain optimistic, and I think we have a good basis for continuing along the lines that we have. This bill is one effort to do so, so I'm trying to remain optimistic about it.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Senator Dasko, would you take another question?

Senator Dasko: Yes.

Senator Martin: From our point of view, when we go to the national caucus, the results from the most recent election resulted in quite a diverse group of candidates from across Canada. I know that as a party, we definitely uphold the merit system; may the best candidates put themselves forward. Then the electorate makes that decision.

When we start dictating certain variables you talk about and having these systems where we're making concessions or trying to force outcomes, I'm worried that there's also the danger of tokenism where people are not accredited for the work they have done based on merit. I worry about moving away from a merit-based system. I see the change in diversity on the Hill from the last election, whether it's staffers or bureaucrats or parliamentarians.

So I'm trying to understand the need for your bill, which seems to move away from a truly merit-based system and an election system that is fair and democratic.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Dasko, there is very little time left. Are you asking for more time to answer that question?

Senator Dasko: I probably shouldn't ask for more time.

The Hon. the Speaker: Are you asking for more time to answer that question?

Senator Dasko: Yes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Dasko: Thank you for the question. First, I cited numbers that show there was a significant decrease in the number of women nominated for your party as well as the Liberal Party. That is not, in my view, a positive development.

This bill speaks to what has been very slow progress in achieving diversity in our House of Commons. The reporting measures in place that apply to many other federal institutions are reasonable ones.

If you feel that you've made great progress with respect to diversity, then you should be happy to do the reporting that's required as part of the bill. I think you would appreciate that. You can tell the Chief Electoral Officer. You can tell Canadians because this is a report to Canadians. You can tell Canadians about what you have put in place to achieve results. That would be part of your reporting process, and you would want to tout what you've done. So I think you would want to view this with some optimism and consider this to be a positive development. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

• (1530)

CHIGNECTO ISTHMUS DYKELAND SYSTEM BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Quinn, seconded by the Honourable Senator Osler, for the second reading of Bill S-216, An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada.

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Honourable senators, as the supporting critic for Bill S-216, I would like to provide a brief response to the assertion of my friend and colleague Senator McNair that the bill is now unnecessary and ill-advised. I don't believe that to be the case.

The Nova Scotia Court of Appeal decision in no way impacts the Senate from proceeding with Bill S-216. In fact, the reasons the court gave in declining to answer the reference question highlight why it is important for the Senate to send this bill to the House of Commons to ensure that the elected body can have a fulsome discussion and debate on whether the Chignecto Isthmus dykeland system is for the general advantage of Canada.

The Nova Scotia reference question was the Nova Scotia government asking the court to make a determination of whether the specific infrastructure or works that protect interprovincial transportation, trade and communications links across the Chignecto Isthmus dykeland system fall under a federal or provincial head of power. Let me read the reference:

Is the infrastructure which protects the interprovincial transportation, trade and communication links across the Chignecto Isthmus within the exclusive Legislative Authority of the Parliament of Canada?

Former government representative and constitutional scholar Senator Marc Gold said:

There are three subsections to section 92(10). Senator Quinn was correct to point out — as I did as well — that the case before the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal has to do with the first clause, subsection (a), which deals with transportation and communications undertakings that link provinces. The Government of Nova Scotia is asking the court to say that this falls within that definition.

Senator Gold continues by noting that the use of the declaratory power is a completely separate matter:

Subsection 92(10)(c) is a separate matter, and regardless of whether it links provinces and regardless of whether it's an undertaking — which means the assembly of activities around a physical thing — things can be declared for the general advantage of Canada.

For the benefit of the chamber, I will read the entirety of section 92(10)(c):

Such Works as, although wholly situate within the Province, are before or after their Execution declared by the Parliament of Canada to be for the general Advantage of Canada or for the Advantage of Two or more of the Provinces.

Senators, the key wording here is “. . . declared by the Parliament of Canada . . .” — not the government, not the courts. This is a political and policy decision by parliamentarians alone in the Senate and in the House of Commons.

I mean this with the utmost respect to Senator McNair, but his quotations of the Court of Appeal decision add some unintentional confusion. Chiefly, Senator McNair did not mention that the reference question related to a different part of the Constitution of Canada and does not affect, in any way, the bill before us today.

I repeat: The court is speaking about whether to assign jurisdiction to either a provincial or federal head of power, and in the end, the court declined to answer the question. They did so on the basis that it is a policy decision best left for politicians. That is what a political purpose means.

Colleagues, the Supreme Court of Canada respects Parliament's use of the declaratory power. In the 1925 case *Luscar Collieries Ltd. v. McDonald*, Justice Mignault of the Supreme Court of Canada said the following about the declaratory power:

Parliament is the sole judge of the advisability of making this declaration as a matter of policy which it alone can decide.

Again, colleagues, I want to underscore it is only Parliament — not the government or the courts — that can decide whether or not to invoke the declaratory power.

This principle that the courts respect the exclusive role of Parliament was again confirmed in 1993 in *Ontario Hydro v. Ontario (Labour Relations Board)*, when the Supreme Court of Canada again refused to constrain Parliament's ability to use the declaratory power:

. . . the courts, including this Court, have never shown any disposition to so limit its operation, and a wide variety of works — railways, bridges, telephone facilities, grain elevators, feed mills, atomic energy and munition factories — have been held to have been validly declared to be for the general advantage of Canada. I note that neither the Chief Justice nor Iacobucci J. have any doubt about this.

Respectfully, the assertion by my friend from New Brunswick that invoking the declaratory power would “. . . essentially send a signal that Parliament disagrees with the decision of the court . . .” and would somehow impact upon the reputation of the judiciary has no basis in law. It is not the view of the Supreme Court of Canada, it has no relationship to this bill, and importantly, it does not align with the government's own views as stated by Senator Gold in relation to the use of the declaratory power:

The point I'm making here is not that it's inappropriate in any constitutional way for us. It's that it would be better in the eyes of the government to wait for the court to rule on that fundamental question . . .

Senators, the courts never ruled on the fundamental question of jurisdiction under a separate part of the Constitution. There is no disagreement. This bill proposes that Parliament use a power conferred to it in the Constitution, conferred by the Fathers of Confederation. The courts respect that the use of this power is for Parliament alone to decide. There is no longer any need to wait. It would have been helpful to know if the court found jurisdiction under another part of the Constitution, but it isn't imperative that they do so.

I end by quoting, yet again, Senator Gold: “. . . the declaratory power is a legitimate exercise of the Constitution.”

When I adjourned the debate last week on this bill, I said that we should respect the court's decision. I stand by that statement, but in no way will proceeding with this bill be in direct conflict with a court ruling.

We have an obligation as senators to represent and protect the interests of our provinces at the federal level. So this is not an issue that applies narrowly just to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The approach by the federal government to this particular issue should be of concern to all honourable senators.

Colleagues, we should follow the tried-and-true due process in regard to this matter. Let us vote to examine this bill at second reading so we can perform and respect our constitutional role of regional representation.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

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

Hon. John M. McNair: Yes. Would Senator MacDonald entertain a question?

Senator MacDonald: Of course.

Senator McNair: Thank you. Senator MacDonald, I appreciate the legal brief that was presented today. I am not disputing the things you're saying to the point, but once again, if the question of financing the remediation of the dyke on the isthmus is settled, which it is — 50% from the federal government and 25% from each of the provinces — as well as agreeing to the same formula funding for any cost overruns, why is it necessary to proceed with the declaratory power?

Senator MacDonald: It is because the issue remains in regard to the issue of the declaratory power. Yes, it's fine that they've come to this agreement to get some funding put in place, but this issue is for Parliament to decide. This is only one issue; there could be other issues down the road. So we have to keep ourselves open to the opportunity and responsibility to use the declaratory power without any reference to the courts.

I believe it's our responsibility as senators to ensure that respect for the declaratory power is maintained.

Senator McNair: Once again, though, I fail to follow the train of thought as to why it is necessary to exercise the declaratory power. There is nothing that's requiring that. The funding is settled. The parties would be much better off starting the work and remediating the dykes.

• (1540)

Senator MacDonald: Again, this does not affect the funding. If we stick to our guns on this — and I think we should in this chamber — there is nothing to prevent the governments from going ahead and doing this work. These are two completely separate matters. The federal and provincial governments are free to start this work right now, without any reference to the court or Parliament.

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

Senator McNair: I do.

You mentioned that it's not about funding. We've heard that many times in this debate, including from Senator Quinn during his second reading speech. However, to quote from the decision:

... Both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, in the DMAF Application, assert constitutional responsibility for payment of the cost of the work is 100% federal. ...

If the declaration is exercised, the province will come back and request 100% funding on this when it's already settled by the parties. Why would we go down that route?

Senator MacDonald: As a Nova Scotian — and, I would think, as your being somebody from New Brunswick — if we believe that the federal government should be providing 100% of

the funding. And I want us to go back after the funding; that doesn't bother me in the least. We've seen this declaratory power used. We saw it used in providing the funding for the Champlain Bridge in Montreal. That was a municipal bridge, and the previous Conservative government, when it was asked to fund this bridge, said they would put the money up. We put up almost \$5 billion under the assumption that the bridge would be tolled and that the money would be paid back to the federal treasury. Then a new government came in, threw out that arrangement and said, "We're going to pay for the bridge ourselves."

If the federal government can pay for a municipal bridge in Montreal, it can pay for this particular need at the New Brunswick-Nova Scotia border.

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

Senator McNair: I have one more, Your Honour.

I hate it when the example of the Champlain Bridge is used as a justification for continuing the process, thinking that each province is going to find things that should be federal undertakings and looking for 100% funding. In this day and age, I think everyone has to pay their share, and I think that's what New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have agreed to do with the federal government to deal with the issue. I don't understand the rationale and justification for having to continue to push for 100% funding being with the federal government.

I guess that's a comment more than a question.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator, did you want him to agree with your comment?

Senator MacDonald: I think my position on this is fairly clear. I believe the federal government should agree to pay 100% of it. It has to be done. There shouldn't be any delay. We want it to get done, and the money will be put in place, so let's get it done.

However, it doesn't change the principle, as far as I'm concerned. If we can get to the point where the federal government will agree to pay it all, I think both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia would be better off.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

CAN'T BUY SILENCE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE POSTPONED

On Other Business, Senate Public Bills, Second Reading, Order No. 21:

Second reading of Bill S-232, An Act respecting non-disclosure agreements.

Hon. Kim Pate: Honourable senators, I ask for leave to postpone this item to the next sitting of the Senate.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

NEED FOR SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

INQUIRY—DEBATE POSTPONED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Moodie, calling the attention of the Senate to the need for the safe and productive development and use of artificial intelligence in Canada.

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15. Therefore, with leave of the Senate, I ask that consideration of this item be postponed until the next sitting of the Senate.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

Hon. Larry W. Smith, pursuant to notice of October 28, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications be authorized to examine and report on the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence (AI) in the information and communication technology sector, such as:

- (a) the application of AI in content creation, distribution and processing in this sector;
- (b) the implications of AI for Canada's copyright and intellectual property framework, including questions of authorship, ownership, enforcement, and the balance between innovation and the protection of creators' rights; and

- (c) the rise of AI-generated disinformation, misinformation and deepfakes, and their potential impact on public trust and media integrity;

That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate, if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2027, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Translation]

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

MOTION TO AFFECT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP ADOPTED

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain, pursuant to notice of October 29, 2025, moved:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or previous order, the Honourable Senator Dean take the place of the Honourable Senator Boniface as one of the members of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, effective October 30, 2025.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(At 3:49 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, November 4, 2025, at 2 p.m.)

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