SENATE SÉNAT

CANADA

DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION • 45th PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 154 • NUMBER 68

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

CONTENTS

(Daily index of proceedings appears at back of this issue).

Publications Centre: Publications@sen.parl.gc.ca

Published by the Senate
Available on the Internet: http://www.parl.gc.ca

THE SENATE

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

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

Prayers.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

SILENT TRIBUTE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, April 28 marks the National Day of Mourning, a solemn occasion dedicated to remembering and honouring workers who have lost their lives, been injured, or suffered illness as a result of work-related incidents.

I would ask that you all rise and join me in a minute of silence.

(*Honourable senators then stood in silent tribute.*)

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Baltej S. Dhillon: Honourable senators, I rise today to celebrate Sikh Heritage Month, a time to honour the profound contributions that Sikhs have made to Canada and to reflect on a faith whose values speak to the very best of who we are as a nation.

The Sikh community has been part of Canada's story for over a century. From the farmers and labourers who arrived on our shores in the early 1900s, often in the face of unjust and discriminatory laws, to the entrepreneurs, doctors, soldiers, artists and public servants in every province and territory today, Sikhs have helped build this country with resilience, grace and an unwavering commitment to service.

[*Translation*]

This morning, I had the privilege of hosting a Sikh Heritage Month celebration in the Senate along with MPs Sukh Dhaliwal, Dalwinder Gill, Heather McPherson and Elizabeth May. I thank them for their support and their heartfelt words.

[*English*]

I also extend my thanks to the ad hoc committee on the 1984 Sikh genocide and the Sikhs who attended this event from coast to coast to coast. Their partnership and attendance not only made the event possible but also very successful. We took time to reflect on a darker chapter. Forty-two years ago, thousands of Sikhs were killed in the anti-Sikh riots in India. That wound has not fully healed, yet it left behind a community that did not turn inward but continued, as it always has, to serve.

Colleagues, the values at the heart of Sikhism — *Seva*, selfless service; *Sarbat da Bhala*, the well-being of all; and the belief that every human being is equal in the eyes of the Divine — are values that speak to all Canadians. Sikhs have long defended that equality for others. Last year, in this chamber, I spoke about Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, the ninth Guru of the Sikh faith, who gave his life in the 17th century to defend the right of Kashmiri Pandits, people of a different faith, to practise their religion freely.

Closer to home, colleagues, you may recall the *Singh* decision, the 1985 Supreme Court of Canada ruling that the Charter applies to every person on Canadian soil, not only citizens. The case was brought by Satnam Singh, a Sikh man seeking asylum. His courage became the bedrock of refugee rights in this country.

As the month draws to a close, I encourage all Canadians, and all of you, colleagues, to learn about Sikh history, to attend a Vaisakhi celebration or to step inside a *gurdwara*. You will be welcomed and fed generously. That is the Sikh way.

As a Sikh and as a senator, I am proud to represent a community that has given so much to this country.

[*Editor's Note: Senator Dhillon spoke in Punjabi*.]

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

THE LATE JAMES "JIM" O'TOOLE

Hon. David M. Wells (Acting Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today with a heavy heart to mark the passing of James O'Toole, a firefighter, a leader and a tireless advocate for those who put their lives on the line to protect others. Jim was a friend, and Jim passed away this past weekend.

Jim served with the St. John's Regional Fire Department for more than two decades, rising to the rank of lieutenant. He was also a respected union leader, serving as president of IAFF Local 1075 and as a strong voice for firefighters across Newfoundland and Labrador and, indeed, across Canada. He was just 46 years old.

I had the privilege of working closely with Jim on Bill C-224, An Act to establish a national framework for the prevention and treatment of cancers linked to firefighting. It was referred to as the PFAS bill. We spoke a lot about PFAS, and, indeed, Jim suffered from suspected PFAS-related cancer. Together, we worked to make sure this legislation passed. That is part of Jim's legacy.

Jim was instrumental in advancing this work, as well as broader presumptive cancer coverage in Newfoundland and Labrador, ensuring that those diagnosed with occupational cancers would be supported without having to fight for recognition. He understood the risks firefighters face, not just in the moment of response, but in the long-term consequences of exposure. He turned that understanding into action, policy, law and protections that will benefit generations of firefighters to come.

What stood out about Jim was how he worked. He was steady, thoughtful and focused on solutions. He didn't seek the spotlight. He focused on outcomes, and he delivered. Even in the face of his own illness, Jim continued to advocate. He continued to show up. That kind of courage speaks volumes about the person he was. Even during his illness, he and the firefighters' union leadership had many visits to my office. But beyond his public service, Jim was first and foremost a family man.

He leaves behind his beloved wife, Crystal, and their two sons, Ryan, 17, and Gavin, 15. Jim was a dad who was heavily involved in Ryan's and Gavin's sports lives. It was how we started our conversation whenever he came to see me.

• (1410)

To Crystal, Ryan and Gavin, please know that Jim's impact reached far beyond what words can capture here today. His work made a difference. His legacy will endure, and he will not be forgotten. To his colleagues in the fire service, we share in your loss and recognize the void his passing leaves behind.

Honourable senators, Jim O'Toole lived a life of service to his community, his colleagues and his family.

May we honour that life by continuing the work he believed in and ensuring that those who protect us are themselves protected.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Lisa Thompson, Ontario Minister of Rural Affairs, and her colleagues. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Black.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Major-General David Abboud, Major-General Dominic Goulet and Commander (Retired) Ted Parkinson. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Patterson.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CANADIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

Hon. Rebecca Patterson: Honourable senators, today we recognize the professionals of Canada's military intelligence community.

Let me begin with a truth that is simple to state but also crucial to keep in mind: In today's world, the ability to understand information — to make sense of complexity and uncertainty — is essential to our national security.

As parliamentarians, we have an essential role to play in ensuring military intelligence remains strong and effective. Much of this work happens out of sight. It rarely makes headlines — we hope — but it is always there, shaping decisions, guiding operations and helping to keep Canadians safe.

[*Translation*]

Our defence and security do not rely solely on equipment. They rely on people, skilled and responsible professionals who turn raw intelligence data into clear and insightful analysis.

[*English*]

These are analysts, collectors and specialists working across every domain — land, sea, air, space and cyber — to protect Canadian Armed Forces operations by providing timely, actionable insight that informs decisions at tactical, operational and strategic levels.

[*Translation*]

Some of these professionals are deployed abroad. Others are here in the country. They all share the same objective: to help our leaders make better decisions, quickly and confidently.

[*English*]

They are part of a broader effort that reaches across government and connects us with trusted allies around the world. Together, they help Canada understand emerging threats, anticipate challenges and respond with clarity and purpose. Military intelligence is a quiet but essential part of that effort. It demands precision, adaptability and, above all, it demands good judgment.

[*Translation*]

Behind every system and every data set, there is a person, someone who asks the right questions, assesses the evidence and makes sense of what really matters.

[*English*]

Their work protects military lives. It strengthens our Armed Forces' ability to act, and it helps ensure that Canada is not reacting to events but staying ahead of them by identifying threats as they materialize.

This is not a single function or a narrow field. It is a broad, evolving enterprise — one that brings together different disciplines, works closely with partners and depends on constant learning and renewal.

[*Translation*]

The future of military intelligence will depend on ongoing support. We need to invest in the people, technology and partnerships needed to carry out this work.

[*English*]

And it will depend on the next generation choosing to step forward and take on this responsibility. For this, recruitment, retention and training must be prioritized because this work does matter. It matters to our security, our sovereignty and the decisions we make as a country and certainly as parliamentarians.

Today, on behalf of all of us, I want to say thank you to Canada's military intelligence professionals, Major-Generals Abboud and Goulet and their teams for their care, discipline and dedication to serving our country.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of students from International Students Overcoming War (ISOW) at Wilfrid Laurier University and their Faculty Advisor, Gavin Brockett. They are the guests of the Honourable Senators Boehm and Deacon (*Ontario*).

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

BLACK REPRESENTATION AND REPARATIONS

Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to the importance of Black representation and reparations.

I acknowledge that we stand on the traditional, unceded and unsurrendered territory of the Anishinaabeg Algonquin people, and I honour the 400-year history and labour of people of African descent on these lands.

I learned early in life that I had to work two to three times as hard just to be seen and to have my work appreciated. That work ethic has shaped my life for decades. Being sick over the past few months slowed me down in ways I did not expect, and it forced me to think differently about my life and my life's purpose. I am profoundly grateful to be back here in the Senate, my dear colleagues.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Bernard: I am supported by my family, friends, colleagues and especially Team Preston. My daughter Candace Roker; my grandsons, Damon and Gavin Roker; and my sister Candace Thomas are here with me in Ottawa this week, ensuring that I pace myself. Their love and steady presence have made this journey much easier.

Colleagues, in September 2023, Dalhousie University's School of Social Work welcomed its first Africentric Bachelor of Social Work Cohort, an act of reparations in recognition of past harms and the long-standing lack of Black representation in health and social services. This group of 36 African-Nova Scotian students represents a landmark shift in Canadian education. They work full-time, care for families and bridge academic theory with community practice.

The true measure of this program is found in the voices of the students themselves, two of whom will be working with me in my Senate role.

One student, Monica Njoku, told me:

> While others might be looking for ways to incorporate Africentrism into their learning and practice, for us, it is the baseline of our practice.

Her words remind us that representation is not an add-on; it is a world view that shapes how we serve.

Another student, Tineka Simmons, shared that this cohort allowed her:

> . . . for the first time, to see my community, culture, and lived experience reflected in the way social work is taught. It helped me understand the kind of social worker I want to become — one who leads with community, history, healing, and love.

Colleagues, this cohort will graduate in October, ready to make extraordinary contributions because Dalhousie had the courage to create this opportunity in the name of representation and reparations.

Honourable colleagues, Dalhousie University as an institution is proving that when we centre Black voices, everyone benefits. They are also demonstrating that reparations are not only about correcting the past, but they are about shaping a future where Black communities thrive.

Asante. Thank you.

• (1420)

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Daniel Salas, Executive Manager of Comprehensive Immunizations at the Pan American Health Organization. He is the guest of the Honourable Senators Kutcher, Ravalia and Boehm.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

WORLD IMMUNIZATION WEEK

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Wanda, welcome back.

Honourable senators, on behalf of Senators Ravalia, Boehm and me, I would like to remind us that this is Vaccination Week in the Americas, and the Pan American Health Organization is reminding us of the importance of ensuring that we are using our best available science and long-term population surveillance to protect people of all ages against preventable diseases.

The call to action for this week is "Your decision makes a difference. Immunization for all." And it does make a difference. From infancy to adolescence and into older age, our choice to vaccinate matters throughout a lifetime.

Many diseases prevalent in my childhood, causing death or infectious misery, are no longer the scourge that they once were. For example, we no longer have buildings full of iron lung machines. Why? It's because we have almost eliminated polio. I, like some of you, have a little scar on the outside of my left deltoid muscle to remind me of that wonderful reality.

Vaccines for other infectious diseases are being developed and deployed. For example, in locations where it is widely available, the HPV vaccine against cervical cancer has almost eliminated this often sexually transmitted disease. Sadly, ideological or religious opposition has promoted disinformation, slowing its acceptance in some places.

Indeed, disinformation against vaccines is driving decreased vaccination rates and eroding public trust. Pushed by a well-funded wellness industry that profits by selling "alternative" products and by anti-science ideologues, this anti-vaccine "infodemic" has resulted in a resurgence of preventable diseases, such as measles.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and other Trump-appointed sycophants are now amongst the leading proponents of anti-vaccine propaganda globally. In Canada, the "Maple MAGA" movement has taken to spreading anti-vaccine propaganda, sadly echoed by some political leaders.

This re-emergence of preventable infectious diseases is causing unnecessarily increased morbidity and mortality, creating stresses on our already overrun health care system.

We need to stop this "infodemic," and we need to do it now, not only to promote widespread use of the vaccines already available but also to have people ready to accept vaccines currently in development — for example, a universal antiviral vaccine to prevent the common cold, vaccines that can treat and prevent cancer and vaccines that can treat drug addiction and more.

As we enter a new phase of vaccine development and use, it is necessary to inoculate us all against the disinformation that exists. No, vaccines do not cause autism. They do not alter your DNA. They do not cause sudden death or contain microchips designed to have the government control you. And no, "natural" immunity is not better.

Political leaders have an important role to play in countering vaccine disinformation and promoting valid, scientifically based public health interventions.

This, my friends, includes us. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Peter Pate, a Canadian Air Force veteran and the father of the Honourable Senator Pate, as well as the immediate family of Tona Mills.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ALLIES ON THE STANDING SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, today I pay tribute to the allies on the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples. As you remember, I previously paid tribute to the First Nations, Métis and Inuit members of the Indigenous Peoples Committee. The Indigenous Peoples Committee is a hard-working committee that is credible, passionate, spiritual, ethical and responsible.

Choosing to be an ally is not easy. It takes a commitment to your learning, a commitment to spending time building relationships and a commitment to understanding the issues that need to be addressed. Being an ally requires compassion, and they are not immune to the pain of witnessing the inequities that First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples experience. They take their advocacy to committee meetings, schools and universities, penitentiaries and communities, as well as in the public forum, on the Senate floor and internationally to the United Nations as well as other countries.

Allies are more about action than words. In their hard work over many years, including before becoming senators, they have acted on the knowledge that First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples belong and have immeasurable value to Canada. Allies have supported some of the biggest changes in Canada, and it would have taken us longer to achieve those goals without your support. *Kinanâskomitinawow*.

Allies see a country that prides itself on defending human rights yet doesn't do it at home. We have allies in the Senate in the areas of over-incarceration; human rights violations; self-government, including identity; youth concerns; health inequities; systemic and institutional racism; and the list goes on. In the unique case of Canada, First Nations and Inuit faced and survived generations of legislated racism and segregation, so it is even more challenging.

But how do you maintain your energy and commitment? Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." An ally brings hope in the darkest days and is ready to act when asked. I have witnessed this personally.

I thank Senators McPhedran, Pate, Tannas, Sorensen and Clement for the inspiration you give us, and a special mention goes to Senator McPhedran and Senator Pate for all your years of advocacy for women's rights and for being my rocks.

Kinanâskomitinawow.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Margaret Stuart, Board Director, and Shannon Bell, Executive Vice President, of OpenText. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Hay.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

RULES, PROCEDURES AND THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT

THIRD REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette, Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, presented the following report:

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

The Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament has the honour to present its

THIRD REPORT

Your committee, which is authorized pursuant to rule 12-7(2)(a) to propose from time to time, on its own initiative, amendments to the Rules for consideration of the Senate, now presents its interim report entitled *Membership of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators*, including recommendations for amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

PIERRETTE RINGUETTE

Deputy Chair

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

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

• (1430)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-225, An Act to amend the Criminal Code.

(Bill read first time.)

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

(On motion of Senator Wells (*Newfoundland and Labrador*), bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.)

[*Translation*]

QUESTION PERIOD

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, I have raised the issue of business transfers and succession planning for SMEs before.

In Quebec alone, nearly 50,000 business owners will soon be selling or transferring their businesses, and that's not to mention the severity of the problem in the rest of Canada. Meanwhile, more businesses in Canada have closed than opened for six consecutive quarters. Our businesses are telling us that there are too many rules, too many taxes, too much red tape and not enough incentives to support them.

How has it come to this? Why didn't the government take action sooner to foster a more favourable climate for investment and entrepreneurship in order to avoid such a disaster?

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

Contrary to the premise of your question, the government did act quickly to support small businesses and attract investment.

To help small businesses, the government reduced what you called "red tape," in part by introducing new technology and new sandboxes. It improved access to financing through the Business Development Bank of Canada, which now offers up to $5 million in small business financing.

On the subject of investment, Senator Housakos, I've answered that question a number of times. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, Canada will be the second-easiest country in the G20 to start a business in over the next five years. I think the government is certainly doing its part to —

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

Senator Housakos: The government is obviously not reacting fast enough. We have known about this problem for a long time. It has been clearly documented by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, among others.

In its March 2026 report, the committee recommended strengthening solutions for the development of the next generation of entrepreneurs and implementing initiatives specifically aimed at business success and business transfers.

When will the Carney government act on this recommendation from the House —

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

Senator Moreau: The government is taking action on several fronts. Supporting businesses isn't just about a single measure. When the Prime Minister signs economic agreements around the world and proposes measures to help small and medium-sized businesses with AI, he is supporting businesses in general, helping to create jobs and strengthening the economy at the same time.

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, another well-known failure of the Carney government has been the deportation, or lack thereof, of IRGC-linked individuals in this country. Only one has been removed to date.

Now, we learn through reporting by Iran International that Mehdi Taj, a former IRGC member and the head of Iran's football federation, is set to arrive in Canada tomorrow for the 76th FIFA Congress. He is doing so on a temporary resident permit, despite being inadmissible under Canadian law and despite the IRGC being a listed terrorist entity in Canada.

Your government can't seem to show the IRGC the door, but it can find out a way to roll out the welcome mat and receive them.

Government leader, why is your government still unable or unwilling to enforce Canada's terrorism-related inadmissibility rules? What is the point of listing the IRGC if you are not serious about throwing them out of our country?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The government is very serious about the security of our borders and the implementation of immigration laws.

You know very well that I cannot comment on specific cases here in this chamber, but I am sure that all the security measures provided by our immigration laws are being implemented by the government. Additionally, security at our borders is assured by the unprecedented investments that the Government of Canada has made to improve security at the borders and through the adoption of Bill C-12, which we studied a few weeks ago.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, maybe the government should ask for its money back because, clearly, whatever security measures have been put in place are not working.

This is not an isolated lapse; it is a culmination of repeated warnings that have gone unheeded. This individual was barred entry to the United States for the same security conditions. Why is Canada overriding both our own designation of the IRGC as a

terrorist entity and the security judgment of our close friend and ally? When will the government get serious about dealing with these lapses in security?

Senator Moreau: Senator Housakos, unfortunately for your premise, the government is very serious about border security and the security of all Canadians, in general. We have made unprecedented investments to increase the number of RCMP officers and border officers.

As far as immigration law is concerned, since I cannot comment on individual cases, I can assure you that all security measures are taken very seriously.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

CANADIAN CORPS OF COMMISSIONAIRES

Hon. Bev Busson: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Moreau, why did the Government of Canada cancel the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires' right of first refusal for security contracts at federal buildings? This policy has long endured for over 80 years, ensuring meaningful employment opportunities for more than 2,000 veterans, and it has contributed to public safety across this country.

What consultation was undertaken with veterans' groups and stakeholders before making this decision, and how does the government intend to mitigate the loss of dignified, stable work for those who have served Canada?

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

Veterans today have diversified skills, education and interests. The right of first refusal that you were referring to has existed since 1945, and the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires aimed to have 60% of its workforce composed of veterans. However, since 2013, I have been told that the corps has not been able to meet this goal, as veterans pursue other opportunities.

• (1440)

That being said, the government is committed to recognizing the importance of commissionaires, but, unfortunately, they do not apply to those types of jobs anymore. Our veterans, unfortunately, are younger than they have been in the past, and they have other skills that lead them to occupy other functions.

Senator Busson: It has been brought to my attention, Senator Moreau, that there are still over 2,000 veterans who depend on this valuable work. At the same time, as these younger veterans move on in their lives and become middle-aged and older, they are sometimes forced into homelessness because their skills are no longer relevant.

Senator Moreau: First refusal is not the only way to obtain those contracts. The government is willing to offer contracts with commissionaires as long as they are able to do that kind of work. However, my understanding with the information I have is that, unfortunately, they are unable to do those jobs at this time.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMPETITION ACT

Hon. Farah Mohamed: Senator Moreau, the Competition Bureau's January 2026 report raises serious concerns that AI-driven pricing algorithms may facilitate anti-competitive conduct and unfair pricing for consumers. We are now seeing the emergence of both surveillance pricing, where companies use personal data to tailor prices to individuals, and algorithmic pricing, where AI systems adjust prices across entire markets in real time.

These systems can effectively coordinate price increases without any direct human communication or explicit agreement between competitors, creating what some experts call "collusion without communication," and exposing potential gaps in Canada's competition law.

With regulators in the U.S. already moving to address these practices, will the government amend the Competition Act to ensure that anti-competitive outcomes driven by AI systems can be investigated and addressed even where no explicit human agreement can be proven?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. In its January report, the Competition Bureau was clear: A lack of data transparency can harm consumers and competition, just as you mentioned in your question. The government is actively reviewing algorithmic pricing and potential responses, including through competition, finance and privacy policies.

The government has increased the power of the Competition Bureau because competition is the best way to ensure that Canadians have access to stable prices at the checkout.

Senator Mohamed: Thank you, Senator Moreau. My first question was about the "if." My supplemental question is about the "when."

Public concern is growing, and Canadians increasingly expect stronger protections in digital markets. Will the government recognize the urgency of this issue, and what concrete steps is it now taking to protect consumers in addition to those you just mentioned?

Senator Moreau: In addition to what I just mentioned, the government is also developing a National Food Security Strategy to strengthen domestic food production and improve access to affordable and nutritious food.

We know that food prices are a concern for consumers, and the government is working to address the issue on many fronts.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CANADA–U.S. ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Hon. Colin Deacon: Senator Moreau, last week, the Prime Minister appointed a new Advisory Committee on Canada-U.S. Economic Relations. This impressive roster of Canadians is drawn from a breadth of economic sectors but for one glaring omission: Canada's technology and digital economy.

This oversight raises serious questions about whether negotiators will be receiving the expertise and insights they need as Canada's sovereignty, trade and prosperity are increasingly undermined by cross-border data flows and digital services. Specifically, the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement's Chapter 19 on digital trade simply entrenched the dominance of U.S. tech companies. This contrasts sharply with our increasing focus on digital sovereignty.

Will the government explain why Canada's technology sector was excluded from this advisory body, and will it commit to adding technology leaders to ensure the committee reflects the realities of the modern economy?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you. Respectfully, I do not think that we will have to explain that because, yesterday, Minister LeBlanc chaired the inaugural meeting of the new Advisory Committee on Canada-U.S. Economic Relations, during which he announced the appointment of one additional member to the advisory committee, Mr. Eliot Pence, a Canadian entrepreneur and founder and CEO of Dominion Dynamics, a defence technology firm.

As we establish a new economic and security relationship with the United States, the Government of Canada has established a number of mechanisms to consult regularly with industry, labour, provincial and territorial governments, and elected officials from all parties.

High-tech is one of the concerns, and that is the reason why Minister LeBlanc announced this appointment just yesterday.

Senator C. Deacon: Thank you, Senator Moreau, for that. I did not notice that announcement. That is great news.

I would offer, not as a question, but as a statement, that in Ottawa, technology is not a forethought; it is an afterthought. We have to really be concerned about that at this time. I point to Senator Hay's great session this morning and the other work she has done. We need to give consideration to that. Thank you, sir.

Senator Moreau: I take your comments very seriously, and it seems that the government is taking them very seriously as well. My understanding is that Mr. Pence is a very reliable resource as far as technology is concerned.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND PROCUREMENT

CANADA POST

Hon. Marty Klyne: Senator Moreau, *Maclean's* has reported that for fentanyl importers, Canada Post is the preferred shipping method of choice.

In 2024, the Senate Legal Committee passed Senator Dalphond's Bill S-256, which proposed to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act. It would have allowed police to apply to a judge for a warrant to search for contraband like fentanyl in the mail. Police can already do this with couriers like FedEx.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and 70 First Nations supported the bill, which didn't reach a final vote. The government then ran on making this change, which it proposed in Bill C-2. However, the measure was removed with Bill C-12.

Will the government act to allow police to obtain warrants to search for fentanyl in the mail?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you. As you know, Bill C-2 is still in the other place. I look forward to having further discussion with you as soon as the bill reaches the Senate.

That being said, the government is aware of its constitutional duty and certainly intends to respect it. As to the search and seizure of individuals' mail, the government is taking time to be careful with Canadians' rights to ensure it has a balanced approach while combatting the drug trade and fentanyl imports, which are questions that have been raised by Bill C-2. The government is taking this very seriously.

As you know, I mentioned to Senator Housakos that we invested unprecedented amounts in border security. Bill C-2 addresses the specific situation concerning fentanyl, and we're looking forward to studying that bill more carefully.

Senator Klyne: Bill C-2 should be over at the other place, in the shop, up on the lifts and getting looked at.

It also proposed to allow Canada Post inspectors to open letters to search for contraband with grounds but without a warrant, as with parcels. Customs officers were given this power in 2017.

A Canada Post letter is defined as being up to half a kilo: enough fentanyl to kill over 200,000 people. Would the government reduce the size of a letter in the Letter Definition Regulations to at least expand the inspections?

Senator Moreau: Obviously, we agree that fentanyl is a very dangerous drug. You mentioned it in your supplementary question.

In Bill C-12, the government gave law enforcement the tools they had been asking for to disrupt organized crime networks and keep Canadians safe. At the same time, we still have Bill C-2 in the House of Commons. We will see what the discussion around that bill entails.

INDUSTRY

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, it has been three months since Prime Minister Mark Carney's speech at the World Economic Forum and now a full year that he has been Prime Minister, yet one of the most persistent barriers to Canada's productivity and economic success is interprovincial trade restrictions, which remain largely unaddressed.

Despite your government's claim in Davos that federal regulatory barriers have been removed, Canada still does not operate as a truly integrated market.

While your government enthusiastically pursues diversification and more liberalized trade with other nations in the world, which is a very good thing, right here in Canada, interprovincial trade is still fully tariffed and non-competitive.

At what point will the Prime Minister sit down with the premiers and tell them to become serious about this very serious issue?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The Prime Minister, just yesterday, said that he has already had 11 meetings with the premiers of all provinces and territories.

• (1450)

I vividly remember that when Minister LeBlanc was here, you or Senator Carignan asked a question concerning interprovincial barriers. As far as the federal government is concerned, the answer was that all federal barriers on commerce between provinces had been removed.

At this time, there are still issues with provincial jurisdiction, but as far as the federal government is concerned, not only did the Prime Minister make that commitment, but he acted to ensure that the commitment was implemented.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, the real problems right now are interprovincial trade barriers and tariffs. MOUs, press conferences, coming to the Senate, going to committees and making announcements are all wonderful, but Canadians deserve concrete results and action.

It is great that we are trying to diversify our international trading arrangements, but we have to get premiers to do more than just talk about it. Leadership has to come from Ottawa. According to the International Monetary Fund, a 7% GDP boost would happen if we eliminated interprovincial trade barriers tomorrow morning. What steps —

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

Senator Moreau: I'm happy that you see the importance of trade diversification because, last week, Senator Batters argued that the Prime Minister was travelling around the world for almost nothing, if I remember correctly. Now that you recognize that, I hope that Senator Batters will agree with you, Senator Housakos, in recognizing that trade diversification has a positive impact on the Canadian economy.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Government leader, a recent survey from Embark Student Corp. highlights an alarming reality: More than 25% of Canadian families cannot afford to finance their children's post-secondary education.

At a time when families are grappling with record household debt, a severe housing crisis and the worst food inflation in the G7, many simply cannot contribute enough to tools like RESPs or benefit fully from the Canada Education Savings Grant. Senator Moreau, families are doing their best, but they cannot carry this burden alone.

Why has your government failed to ensure that every Canadian child, regardless of income, has an accessible and affordable path to higher education?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Ataullahjan, thank you for the question, but I disagree with the premise of it.

The government knows that times are difficult, and that's why we are working on many fronts to make life affordable for Canadians. Whether it is affordability or food prices, whether it is, as I answered earlier, working on algorithmic pricing on groceries, whether it's on housing, the government, in the last budget — and I don't like reminding you that your Conservative colleagues in the other place voted against all of these measures — has been working on housing, affordability and improving the economy.

I understand that Senator Batters does not agree, but I don't see the day that she and I will agree on anything.

FINANCE

AFFORDABILITY FOR CANADIANS

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Government leader, more than a third of parents report relying on family support to fund their children's education. Clearly, your government is not doing enough.

What concrete measures will you take to deliver real relief so that grandparents are not forced to compromise their retirement to support their grandchildren's future?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): On affordability, we are talking about concrete measures. With Bill C-15, we're investing $57 billion into affordable child care. I think that $57 billion is concrete. With Bill C-20, we're investing $13 billion into new housing. With Bill C-26, we're funding provincial housing initiatives. We are working with families and all Canadians.

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

GENDER EQUALITY

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: I have a question for you, Senator Moreau, if I may, please.

I want to give thanks to the Indigenous women leaders for sounding the alarm that I am going to raise in this question and to Dr. Lorraine Greaves and Dr. Lindsay Tedds for crunching the numbers.

The Carney government is dismantling Canada's women's civil society, not through high-profile cuts but through the expiry of time-limited funding, a trajectory that, by 2027-28, according to the WAGE website, will put WAGE funding for women and gender equality below where the Harper government left it.

This week, the Minister of Women and Gender Equality announced funding for 394 organizations. What her press release said was, ". . . the largest Women and Gender Equality Canada announcement in history by number of organizations . . . ."

What is the strategy? How is this reconciliation? Why is the government —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, senator.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I've reiterated many times in this chamber that the government is committed not only to Indigenous women but to Indigenous reconciliation and to working together with Indigenous communities.

It's true all across issues that concern Indigenous communities. We are working on housing specifically for Indigenous communities. We are working on Jordan's Principle, where massive investments have been made by the government, as well as on other issues concerning drinking water and food security. We are trying to develop all of these measures in conjunction with the Indigenous communities themselves.

Senator McPhedran: Thank you, Senator Moreau, but the point here is that the timing out of money is actually going to cause organizations to shut down or greatly reduce operations.

Many of us here are members of the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, and we know that Action Canada, which gets funding to support the work we do as parliamentarians, has lost staff because of these time-expired grants.

This is a hidden strategy, and I would like you to please speak to it more openly.

Senator Moreau: I will speak to it as often as you ask the question or as often as I am dealing with those very important issues, but I remind you that the government has made very concrete actions to support the Indigenous communities. We know there is still a lot of work to do, but we're committed to doing it.

HEALTH

INVESTMENTS IN HEALTH CARE

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: This question is in reference to a statement that was made in *The Hill Times* by our own Senator Patterson. It is about the way in which human security is defined.

The health care system is key to Canada's national defence. Canada is not adequately prepared for large-scale emergencies or conflicts. Hospitals should be ready to expand capacity. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed serious gaps. For years now, Canadian health agencies have needed funding for hospital surge capacity and infrastructure.

Senator Moreau, does this majority government have a plan? Is there funding for surge capacity in crucial agencies and other gaps?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The government is working as a team to make sure that we can deal with any emergency that the country is facing. For example, at this time of the year, we are working hard on flooding across the country — in Manitoba, Ontario, everywhere. We are working on flood prevention and wildfire prevention as well.

The government is aware. We had Minister Anandasangaree here last week, if I recall correctly. I know that he is working hard to ensure that we are aware of every emergency that could occur in the country. COVID-19 was a big reminder that we always have to be ready.

• (1500)

Senator McPhedran: We learned a lot from COVID-19. Given that Canada still relies heavily on foreign sources for essential medical supplies, leaving us vulnerable to shortages in times of crisis, what is the government doing to strengthen domestic production and protect our health care supply chains?

Senator Moreau: This morning, I was with the Auditor General, and we were discussing what had been done with the bird flu and the vaccine stock. I know that she is working very closely with the government to make sure that those things are taken into consideration so that we have a sufficient stock of vaccines at the proper time if and when we need it.

[*Translation*]

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

JOINT COMMITTEES

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

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that a message has been received from the House of Commons which reads as follows:

Monday, April 27, 2026

EXTRACT, —

That, for the duration of the 45th Parliament:

(a) Standing Order 104(1) be amended by replacing the words "consist of 10 members" with the words "consist of 12 members";

(b) paragraph (a)(i) of the order adopted on June 5, 2025, be rescinded, and Standing Order 104(2) be amended by replacing the words "consist of 10 members" with the words "consist of 12 members" and by adding after the words "12 members" the following: "which shall be composed of seven members from the Liberal Party, four members from the Conservative Party and one member from the Bloc Québecois, except for the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which shall consist of 10 members and be composed of five members from the Liberal Party, four members from the Conservative Party and one member from the Bloc Québécois, and for which the lists of members are to be prepared, except as provided in section (1) of this standing order, shall be on:";

(c) for greater certainty, the membership of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament be increased by two members of the House of Commons from the government party and the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations be increased by one member of the House of Commons from the government party;

(d) the Clerk of the House be authorized to make any required editorial and consequential alterations to the Standing Orders, including to the marginal notes;

(e) paragraph (a) of the order adopted on November 20, 2025, be amended by replacing the words "11 members of the House of Commons, including five members of the House of Commons from the government party," with the words "12 members of the House of Commons, including six members of the House of Commons from the government party,";

(f) paragraph (b) of the order adopted on February 13, 2026, be amended by replacing the words "10 members of the House of Commons be members of the committee, including five members of the House of Commons from the governing party," with the words "12 members of the House of Commons be members of the committee, including seven members of the House of Commons from the governing party,";

(g) notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, the whip of the recognized party affected by the above changes to the composition of committees submit his membership changes to the Clerk of the House following the adoption of this order, and these changes be effective immediately; and

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

ATTEST

Eric Janse

Clerk of the House of Commons

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

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

[*English*]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BILL TO IMPLEMENT THE PROTOCOL ON THE ACCESSION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE COMPREHENSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE AGREEMENT FOR TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

THIRD READING

Hon. Iris G. Petten moved third reading of Bill C-13, An Act to implement the Protocol on the Accession of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise to speak at third reading as the sponsor of Bill C-13, An Act to implement the Protocol on the Accession of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. From here on out, I will refer to this agreement as the CPTPP. Quite the tongue twister, isn't it?

Colleagues, we have good news and bad news. The good news is that Mexico has now ratified the U.K.'s accession to the CPTPP, meaning the U.K. will be able to access CPTPP provisions with Mexico from June 22, 2026. Now for the bad news: Of the 11 countries that currently make up the CPTPP, Canada is the only member not to have implemented the U.K.'s accession protocol. So let's keep Bill C-13 moving.

To that point, I want to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to all honourable colleagues for their ongoing support in advancing this bill. Through constructive collaboration, sincere discussion and some lively second reading debate, we have demonstrated our care and commitment to one of the most important issues facing Canada today: our relationship with the world and our trading partners. This gratitude extends specifically to my honourable colleague Senator Housakos as the friendly critic of this bill.

I also wish to thank the members of our Foreign Affairs and International Trade Committee for their diligence in hearing from witnesses and appending an observation. Speaking of the witnesses who appeared on Bill C-13, including from the private sector, academia and civil society, thank you for taking the time to share your perspectives.

I would also like to thank Minister Sidhu and officials from Global Affairs Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Finance Canada, whose testimony, I believe, helped clarify the intention of the legislation and the benefits associated with the U.K.'s accession to the CPTPP.

Honourable senators, the U.K. is already one of Canada's closest economic partners. It is our third-largest trading partner and one of the largest investors in our economy. Since 2016, trade in goods and services between our two countries has increased by over 52%, reaching $61 billion in 2024.

This growth did not happen by accident. It reflects the stability created by strong trade agreements, first under the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, our agreement with the EU when the U.K. was part of the European Union, and later under the Canada-UK Trade Continuity Agreement, which ensured businesses could keep trading smoothly after the U.K. left the EU.

Bill C-13 builds on that success. With the U.K. joining the CPTPP, we strengthen the agreement as a central tool in Canada's trade diversification strategy. This matters, especially now, because it makes Canada more resilient. Relying too heavily on one region or market leaves us more exposed when things go wrong.

Expanding the CPTPP — and bringing in a major economy like the U.K. — helps ensure that Canada's economic success does not depend on a single set of relationships. It gives our businesses more routes to market, more sources of inputs and more options when conditions change.

• (1510)

This is especially true for small- and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs. SMEs make up the vast majority of Canadian businesses and employ millions of Canadians. However, they often face the greatest challenges when looking to export, such as unfamiliar regulations, higher upfront costs and uncertainty about whether it is worth the risk.

Bill C-13 directly addresses these challenges. By bringing the U.K. into the CPTPP, Canadian small- and medium-sized enterprises gain access to a large, advanced economy under one familiar set of trade rules. This reduces complexity and lowers the cost of expanding beyond Canada's borders.

More specifically, for a small manufacturer, it can mean fewer customs surprises and more confidence to pursue a U.K. buyer. For a food exporter, it can mean clearer labelling and tariff rules. For a service-based business, it can mean knowing the rules before investing time and money.

This predictability is essential for SMEs, which often do not have the resources to absorb costly mistakes.

The U.K. economy places a strong emphasis on innovation, research and development and advanced services, areas where Canadian small- and medium-sized enterprises often excel.

There are also strong and practical opportunities in agriculture and agri-food, a sector where many exporters are small- or medium-sized businesses.

Canadian exporters already sell products such as pulses and grains, plant-based proteins, maple syrup and seafood to the U.K. Clear rules and reduced barriers help these products reach U.K. consumers more competitively and more consistently.

That matters to grain producers in the Prairies looking to secure long-term buyers, maple syrup producers in Ontario and Quebec expanding beyond North America and seafood processors in Atlantic Canada and British Columbia trying to maintain steady demand year-round.

We also heard from industry in the red meat sector, particularly from beef and pork producers, that there are still issues to be resolved when it comes to ensuring these exporters can fully benefit from this agreement. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the CPTPP continues to deliver significant benefits for the Canadian meat sector.

I trust that the government has heard the concerns raised by industry and will continue to work with the U.K. in an effort to find a solution, be it through our Foreign Service officers or through the U.K.-Canada Economic and Trade Working Group established by Prime Ministers Carney and Starmer with the goal of deepening Canada's existing trading relationship further, including to address existing market access barriers.

Beyond food, opportunities also exist in critical minerals, infrastructure and transportation, where Canadian expertise and resources are well positioned to contribute to an increasingly competitive global environment.

Honourable senators, this is where the CPTPP plays its most important role. By bringing the U.K. into the CPTPP, we create a single high-standard framework that allows Canadian businesses to operate across multiple markets under the same basic rules. This lowers costs, reduces regulatory complexity and makes international expansion more realistic, especially for smaller firms.

I believe that Minister Sidhu's comments during his appearance at our Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade provided Canada's SMEs with additional reassurance regarding the government's support in diversifying their trade into new markets, including through tools such as the Trade Commissioner Service and the newly created Strategic Exports Office.

Honourable senators, Bill C-13 represents more than just the U.K.'s accession, and there is a clear and practical reason to move forward without delay. Canada is a founding member of the CPTPP and a long-standing champion of its expansion. However, today, following Mexico's completion of its domestic ratification, Canada stands as the only CPTPP party that has not yet ratified the U.K.'s accession protocol.

Honourable colleagues, just last year, we had the honour and privilege of hosting His Majesty King Charles III in this very chamber when he visited Canada and opened the Forty-fifth Parliament. This timely show of support was a moment that resonated deeply with all of us in this chamber, and I know that, back home, many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians paid close attention to His Majesty's remarks.

During a recent visit to the U.K., I stood before the Newfoundland Gate across from Buckingham Palace in Green Park, one of the Royal Parks of London, England. Colleagues will remember that when Britain entered the First World War on August 4, 1914, Newfoundland, which was then a British dominion, was suddenly at war, too. Almost 1,000 young men signed up to join the newly created Newfoundland Regiment by late September. Many Newfoundlanders would fight and die for the British Empire. In this regard, the gate is a powerful symbol of who we are, where we come from and, of course, the ties that bind us.

Honourable colleagues, our good friends and international partners are waiting for us to pass this bill. Let's not keep them waiting too much longer. I hope you will all vote in favour of Bill C-13.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Senator Petten, I have a question, and I anticipate you know what my question is, given I have spoken about it numerous times. First, I support the bill, and I thank you for your leadership in shepherding it through the Senate.

There are 120,000 residents of Canada who are recipients of the U.K.'s state pensions. As you know, those pensions are not indexed, unlike the CPP, or Canada Pension Plan, which is indexed regardless of where in the world you live.

Given that the U.K. wanted and needed Canada's support and passage to join the CPTPP, why did we not use that leverage to insist that they index state pensions, as they do for many countries around the world? If you're a recipient of the state pension from the U.K. in the Philippines, Iceland or Türkiye, it's indexed. The list goes on. I see you're getting some advice, and I will sit down quickly before you get any more.

Senator Petten: Thank you, Senator Downe, for the question. I am not surprised that you asked it. I recall it's a question that has come up many times in this chamber.

Canada believes that the U.K. pensioners who live in Canada should be recognized for the contributions that they have made to our society and treated equally regardless of where they live. However, of course, with that being said, an international trade agreement is not the appropriate mechanism for advocating the issue of pension indexation with the U.K. government.

You mentioned some of the other countries that have already done this. Of course, the other issue is that many of the other Commonwealth countries, such as Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, are also faced with the same issue we have here in Canada. So there are some issues. We hope that this can be resolved and that they will continue in their pursuits on that.

• (1520)

Senator Downe: Thank you, Senator Petten, for that. You're absolutely right. Those other countries are trying to resolve it as well.

Canada has been working on this for at least 30 years — the first correspondence I saw was from then finance minister Flaherty under the Conservative government of Prime Minister Harper, who was trying to get it resolved — and every government since then has been advancing the case. As you know, as their State Pension is not indexed — the Canada Pension Plan, or CPP, is indexed, as I said earlier, regardless of where you live — those 120,000 residents in Canada have a declining benefit from their pension, a declining reimbursement. If they end up on Guaranteed Income Supplement, that's a cost that Canadian taxpayers have to pay, as opposed to the U.K. government.

I'm not sure why, during the one time in 30 years that we had leverage — the U.K. was asking for something, and they needed us to agree to it — we did not use that leverage to fix this issue. They have fixed it for other countries — you named some of them; I named some of them — like Portugal.

The reason I got involved in this issue is that a resident in Prince Edward Island contacted me. If they lived in Bangor, Maine, their pension would be indexed. Over those 10 years, they lost a significant amount of money. Why was it the thinking of the government that this was not the opportune time to fix this problem?

Senator Petten: Yes, I understand. I was at the committee, and I heard the witnesses. It was very compelling. Fortunately, this is a trade agreement that has many benefits and has been outstanding. It was just felt that this was not the place for that type of leveraging to take place for the other benefits that were coming from it.

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Honourable senators, I rise today at third reading to speak in support of Bill C-13, An Act to implement the Protocol on the Accession of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Colleagues, the relationship between Canada and the U.K. cannot be understated. We are deeply bonded historically, and we are strong partners and allies across the board. Despite our exceedingly close relationship, Canada has the unfortunate distinction of being the last Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP, member, following Mexico last week, to approve of the U.K. joining this agreement, as my colleague Senator Petten just mentioned.

In terms of trade, as of 2025, the U.K. was Canada's third-largest single-country trading partner for goods and services, with trade valued at $85 billion. Nearly 3,500 Canadian companies, 93% of which are small- and medium-sized enterprises, export goods to the U.K.

I fully support this bill and the U.K.'s accession to the CPTPP not just as a proponent of Canada's relationship with the U.K. but of free trade in general. However, I feel it is important to highlight a few issues that sometimes get overlooked in legislation such as this, since Parliament's role is limited when it comes to trade bills.

First, I wish to underline the study of this bill undertaken by the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which I proudly chair. There are often questions about the actual impact parliamentary committees can have on bills to implement treaties and trade agreements, falling, as they do, under the Royal Prerogative, but parliamentarians still must play their role in scrutinizing legislation.

That brings me to my first point, which is the committee's observation urging:

> . . . the government to ensure adequate resourcing of foreign service, trade commissioner service and locally engaged staff to support effective implementation of this and other free trade agreements.

This point, colleagues, is not specific to the trade file. Of course, as senators will recall, the committee undertook a generational study of Canada's foreign service, on which it released its report in 2023. The principle behind this observation was also evident in the committee's more recent report, released last December, on Canada's engagement with Africa.

Colleagues, as the government, past and present, expects government entities, such as the foreign service and Global Affairs Canada at large, to do more with less, we must keep in mind the impact of funding cuts on our ability and capacity to negotiate and implement free trade agreements.

As we have heard consistently for more than a year, Canada is in a precarious trade situation as we can no longer rely on our once friendly and predictable and mutually beneficial trading relationship with the United States. We have heard much about the importance of diversifying our trade relationships. Canada's new free trade agreement with Indonesia, Bill C-18, which is currently before a committee, is an example of this diversification. But between deals such as these and the upcoming and potentially volatile review of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, now is the time to bolster our trade capacity, not to gut it and hope for the best.

A second point the committee discussed regarding Bill C-13 was the amendment passed by the other place that will require a House of Commons committee to undertake a comprehensive review three years after the act's entry into force and at the end of every successive three-year period.

The utility of this amendment was discussed in public in our committee as a potential observation, but members decided against proceeding so as not to draw attention to what — and I speak for myself here — is an unnecessary provision given that any parliamentary committee with a relevant mandate in either house can decide to undertake such a review at any time.

While mandated reviews such as these are no doubt well intentioned, outlining them explicitly in the law is more trouble than it is worth when a mandate is not required for a review and when Canada wants to be seen as a reliable and predictable trading partner.

And on the subject of reliable partners, I would be remiss if I did not raise the long-standing struggle of British pensioners in Canada whose British pensions have not been indexed to inflation by successive British governments, as Senator Downe just mentioned in his question.

While not a trade issue specifically, the committee did hear from the Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners on April 15. As many of us have met with them individually over the years, I will not get too far into the details. Essentially, 40% of British pensioners who live outside the United Kingdom, including those in Canada, do not receive cost-of-living increases, while the other 60% do because they live in countries with which the U.K. has signed reciprocal social security agreements.

This is not normal, colleagues, and in fact, the U.K. is the only Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, country to pay its pensioners differently based on where they live. The U.K. implemented this "frozen pension" policy more than 70 years ago, and, to no avail, Canada has tried many times over many years to discuss a bilateral social security agreement with successive British governments. It is not a trade issue, colleagues, and it is not going to delay Canada's agreement to the U.K.'s accession to the CPTPP. It is, however, an unfortunate and discriminatory practice that punishes people who held up their end, by working hard and paying into their pensions, simply because they chose to live in one country over another.

I also wish to raise the concerns of the Canadian Meat Council, whose members process a near-total amount, 90%, of Canada's red meat. Part of the reason Canadian meat and food products in general are popular around the world is because they are safe and of high quality. However, stringent non-tariff barriers and sanitary and phytosanitary rules in the U.K. and the European Union mean that the U.K.'s accession to the CPTPP will not have a meaningful impact on the bottom line for our own beef and pork exporters.

As the committee heard on April 15 from Jorge Correa, Vice-President of Market Access and Technical Affairs at the Canadian Meat Council:

> For beef, there is a clear interest in high-quality Canadian product, but the U.K. market requires a consistent supply of hormone-free cattle, which remains the key constraint limiting opportunities for the companies otherwise ready and capable of supplying the market.

Without this issue being resolved, free trade agreements between Canada and the U.K. and Canada and the EU ". . . will not unlock the full potential of the U.K. or EU as premium markets for Canadian beef."

Mr. Correa continued:

> For pork, the priority is the removal of burdensome testing requirements, notably for *Trichinella*, which act as red tape and limit trade flows despite strong demand for Canadian fresh pork. Securing science-based recognition of Canada's controlled housing and on-farm food safety programs, and eliminating unnecessary, costly testing, could deliver a tangible improvement in pork exports to both the U.K. and the EU in the near term.

I raise these points about the challenges faced by the pensioners and our red meat exporters, colleagues, not to cause any doubt that this bill should pass and that the U.K. should accede to the CPTPP. It is to remind us all that, while free trade is, overall, a very good thing and a key element of national prosperity, there are still people — everyday Canadians, from British pensioners to meat processors and exporters — impacted by the numbers and the decisions.

• (1530)

Some organizations will enthusiastically fight for one free trade agreement and against another, but, as parliamentarians — and particularly senators — we must take the time to understand those varying positions.

With that, I do urge swift passage of this bill. Thank you.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to speak at the third reading of Bill C-13, An Act to implement the Protocol on the Accession of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

I would like to extend our gratitude to Senator Petten for being the sponsor of this bill and also to Senator Boehm and our colleagues at the Standing Senate Committee of Foreign Affairs and International Trade for their fine work. I would be remiss if we didn't thank our diplomatic corps at Global Affairs, about whom I have sometimes been known to be critical but who do outstanding work when it comes to negotiating these often very difficult trade agreements.

Colleagues, Conservatives approach Bill C-13 as firm supporters of free trade, but also as realists about its limits. That was the spirit in which I spoke at second reading, and it is the same spirit in which I rise again today.

During the committee's study of Bill C-13, witnesses drew a clear distinction between the CPTPP and a standalone bilateral agreement, namely, the force-multiplying effect that this partnership is intended to have on our economy.

With each additional member, the CPTPP expands the overall market size of the agreement and increases the number of supply chain pathways available to Canadian firms. In theory, this should act as a catalyst for exponential growth, particularly for Canada's small- and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs. However, the committee also heard from numerous witnesses that Canadian SMEs continue to struggle to fully benefit from the market access promised under the CPTPP. This remains a persistent and unresolved issue. Trade diversification is only meaningful if all Canadian businesses — small, medium and large — are actually able to trade seamlessly in these newly opened markets.

On the subject of trade diversification, colleagues, I want to emphasize, once again, that while it is necessary, it is not a substitute for our deeply integrated North American economy. Testimony before the committee reinforced the reality that Canada's prosperity still depends heavily on a stable and successful CUSMA agreement. I cannot underline that with more enthusiasm. We should not get carried away by political expediency. We need to focus on securing our place in the world's richest and biggest market while we continue to diversify.

The committee also heard legitimate and long-standing concerns from our beef and pork producers, who continue to be harmed by unresolved, non-tariff barriers restricting Canadian meat exports. Likewise, they heard from British pensioners living in Canada, who testified to the real hardships caused by the absence of a pension indexation agreement between Canada and the United Kingdom.

Senator Ravalia remembers our last foray into the Canada-U.K. visit. How many times did we bring this issue up? For some reason, there is a deep misunderstanding on the part of our British colleagues about the actual costs and effects.

Colleagues, let me be clear: The eventual passage of Bill C-13 must not be taken as an endorsement of the Carney government's inaction on these matters. It does not absolve the government of its failure to conclude a genuine bilateral agreement with the United Kingdom nearly a decade after Brexit.

When it comes to our commercial relationship with the U.K., our focus should remain squarely on the conclusion of a fair and comprehensive Canada-U.K. free trade agreement, one in which Canadian meat producers are not sacrificed for concessions in other sectors and one in which British pensioners in Canada are finally treated with respect and fairness.

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, the Conservatives are approaching Bill C-13 as firm supporters of free trade, but also as realists.

Let me be clear: The eventual passage of Bill C-13 must not be taken as an endorsement of the government's inaction on these matters. It does not absolve the government of its failure to conclude a genuine bilateral agreement with the United Kingdom nearly 10 years after Brexit.

When it comes to our commercial relationship with the U.K., our focus should remain squarely on the conclusion of a fair and comprehensive free trade agreement, in which Canadian meat producers are not sacrificed for concessions in other sectors and British pensioners in Canada are finally treated with fairness.

[*English*]

That said, delaying this bill would only further damage Canada's reputation abroad. Indeed, our delay in ratifying the United Kingdom's accession has already carried reputational costs.

Colleagues, Conservatives understand trade architecture. After all, we helped build much of it — from NAFTA to the roughly 39 free trade agreements concluded under Prime Minister Harper's government. We believe in multilateral trade with our democratic partners, without compromising our fundamental values. Properly done, such agreements strengthen our sovereignty, economy and social fabric.

For these reasons, we support the passage of Bill C-13. But let me be equally clear: Our support for this ratification is not the end of this conversation. We will continue to hold the government to account. Prime Minister Carney must intensify — not defer — efforts to eliminate unjustified, non-tariff barriers affecting Canada's meat sector.

The government must also strengthen its support for Canadian SMEs as it implements this protocol because the success of trade diversification — and the prosperity it promises — depends on ensuring that every Canadian business that wishes to access these markets is genuinely able to do so. Canada always welcomes competition with the best in the world, and we're open and ready to have our markets tested in competition as well. Thank you, colleagues.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.)

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

Hon. Denise Batters: Honourable senators, I rise to deliver a second reading speech on behalf of our colleague the Honourable Yonah Martin:

Honourable senators, at this critical time, I feel compelled to share my analyses and serious concerns that have also been raised by critics of Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places).

At its core, this bill responds to a reality that concerns us all. In my home province of British Columbia and across our country, we have seen a troubling rise in acts of hatred — vandalism, threats, intimidation and violence directed at individuals and communities because of who they are, what they believe or how they worship. These acts strike not only at their immediate victims but at the sense of safety, dignity and belonging that underpins our society. They leave lasting scars not only on individuals but on entire communities who begin to feel less secure in the country they call home.

Protecting Canadians from hatred and violence, especially in places of worship and cultural gatherings, is a responsibility we all share. Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, *gurdwaras* and community centres should be places of refuge, not fear. They are spaces where Canadians come together in faith, culture and community, and where bonds of trust and mutual support are formed. Measures that strengthen their protection deserve our serious and sincere support, and I believe there is broad agreement in this chamber on that point.

It is precisely because this objective is so important — because the stakes are so high — that we must examine Bill C-9 with care, clarity and a full appreciation of its consequences. When legislation touches both public safety and fundamental freedoms, it demands not only good intentions but careful drafting and thoughtful scrutiny.

This debate is not about whether we oppose hate — we all do — nor is it about whether those who incite violence or willfully promote hatred should be held accountable; they must be. The question before us is whether this bill, as currently drafted and amended, achieves its purpose while preserving the fundamental freedoms that define our constitutional democracy.

• (1540)

Honourable senators, when Bill C-9 was first introduced, it was presented as a focused and constructive effort to strengthen protections against hate-motivated crime and to safeguard access to religious and cultural spaces. Those objectives were widely supported, including by Conservatives in the other place, who signalled a willingness to work collaboratively to advance them in a timely and responsible manner.

However, in the final stages of committee study in the House of Commons, the bill was significantly altered. A last-minute amendment, introduced without public consultation, without expert testimony and without constitutional analysis, removed the long-standing good-faith religious expression defence found in paragraph 319(3)(b) of the Criminal Code. No witnesses were heard. No constitutional scholars were invited. No civil liberties organizations were consulted. No opportunities were given for careful, transparent consideration of the implications of this change.

For legislation that directly affects the scope of criminal liability and the protection of fundamental freedoms, this absence of process is deeply concerning.

This is not a minor amendment; it is a structural change to Canada's hate-propaganda framework, one that alters the balance that Parliament deliberately struck and that courts have relied upon for decades.

Honourable senators, at the heart of this issue is the balance between two fundamental commitments: protecting Canadians from hatred and safeguarding freedom of religion and freedom of expression. These are not competing values to be traded off lightly; they are coexisting principles that must be carefully reconciled in law.

I speak to this not only as a parliamentarian but as a person of Christian faith. My family came to Canada from Korea, seeking safety, freedom and opportunity. Canada welcomed us, and my parents taught me to cherish the freedoms that it offers: the freedom to worship, the freedom to speak openly and the freedom to live according to one's conscience. Those freedoms are not abstract; they are lived, and they are what allows individuals and communities of different backgrounds to flourish side by side, contributing to the rich pluralism that defines Canada.

Across this country, faith communities play a vital role in the fabric of our society. They operate food banks and shelters, support newcomers and refugees, provide youth programs and care for the most vulnerable among us. Their work flows not from obligation but from deeply held convictions about service, compassion and human dignity. They deserve a legal framework that respects both their contributions and their beliefs and that provides clarity about the boundaries within which they operate.

For more than 50 years, section 319 has reflected a careful and deliberate equilibrium. When Parliament enacted Canada's modern hate-propaganda laws in 1970, it did so with a clear understanding that combatting hatred must be balanced with protecting freedom of expression and freedom of religion. To achieve that balance, Parliament included explicit statutory defences: truth, good-faith religious expression and statements made on matters of public interest. These safeguards were foundational. They signalled Parliament's intent that the law be applied with precision, restraint and respect for fundamental freedoms, and they provided clear guidance to those responsible for interpreting and enforcing the law.

Removing one of those protections alters that balance. It narrows the safeguards that helped sustain the law's constitutional footing and replaces them with broader prohibitions and less certain interpretive guidance.

That change deserves careful study. It has not received it.

Honourable senators, by removing the good-faith religious expression defence, Bill C-9 introduces a greater degree of legal ambiguity. It leaves more to interpretation — by police officers deciding whether to investigate, by prosecutors determining whether to lay criminal charges and, ultimately, by judges tasked with interpreting the law — about where the line is drawn between lawful expression and criminal conduct.

Imagine a faith leader reading from a sacred text in a sermon, addressing morality, human dignity or social conduct. Imagine a teacher in a religious school explaining traditional teachings. Imagine a community volunteer sharing sincerely held beliefs during outreach. These are not acts of hate; they are expressions of conscience and belief, rooted in long-standing traditions and shared in good faith.

Yet, without a clear statutory defence, such expressions could be subject, at least initially, to scrutiny under hate-propaganda provisions. Even if no charges are ultimately laid or no conviction secured, the uncertainty itself has consequences. It shapes behaviours, influences what is said or left unsaid and gradually narrows the space for open and honest dialogue.

It is this "chilling effect" that many Canadians of faith are now expressing concerns about. In my home province of British Columbia and, indeed, across Canada, pastors, rabbis, imams, priests and lay leaders have written to my office asking a simple and reasonable question: "What can we say, and what can we not?" When individuals must second-guess whether their words, spoken in good faith, might expose them to legal risk, the space for open dialogue begins to narrow. A freedom that depends on uncertain interpretation is, in practice, a diminished freedom.

Proponents of the amendment argue that the Charter alone provides sufficient protection, but this overlooks the role that explicit statutory safeguards have played in guiding both enforcement and judicial interpretation. The Supreme Court did not assess these provisions in a vacuum; it relied upon the presence of clear defences as evidence that Parliament had struck a careful and constitutional balance.

Replacing a clear, court-tested defence with general interpretive language does not provide the same level of certainty, clarity or confidence. It shifts the burden from Parliament, where laws are meant to be carefully defined, to the courts, where meaning must be determined after the fact, often through lengthy and costly proceedings.

Honourable senators, this concern is part of a broader issue within Bill C-9. While the bill seeks to address real and serious harms, aspects of its drafting raise questions about it being overly broad and vague. Provisions relating to intimidation and obstruction, for example, may capture conduct that falls short of criminal wrongdoing, including lawful protest, peaceful assembly or legitimate dissent, depending upon how they are interpreted and applied in practice.

In areas touching upon fundamental freedoms, clarity is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Laws that are too broad or insufficiently precise risk uneven application and may lead to uncertainty for both citizens and those tasked with enforcement.

Our Criminal Code already contains provisions addressing threats, incitement, the promotion of hatred, the use of hate symbols and offences against places of worship. Hate motivation is already recognized as an aggravating factor at sentencing. When we legislate in this area, we must ensure that new measures are not only well intentioned but necessary, precise and workable. Otherwise, we risk expanding the reach of criminal law without providing clear guidance as to its limits, creating uncertainty not only for citizens but for those tasked with enforcing the law.

It is also worth noting that much of what is widely supported in this bill, strengthening protections for places of worship and reinforcing consequences for hate-motivated acts, could have been advanced independently and without controversy. Conservatives in the other place proposed splitting the bill to allow those measures to proceed expeditiously, while providing Parliament the time needed to study the more complex and consequential changes to section 319.

That proposal was not accepted, and that decision has contributed to the concerns we are now debating.

This chamber exists, in part, to provide sober second thought and to ensure that legislation is not only responsive but responsible and that it reflects both principle and prudence. Canadians are asking us to do precisely that.

Faith communities across this country have spoken with a rare and unified voice in calling for the restoration of the good-faith religious expression defence. Their concern is not rooted in opposition to combatting hate. On the contrary, many of these communities have themselves been the targets of hatred and violence. Their concern is that, in seeking to address one harm, we do not create another.

We should listen carefully when such diverse communities, with different beliefs and traditions, arrive at the same conclusion.

Honourable colleagues, I strongly believe that Bill C-9, in its current form, presents a contradiction: It seeks to protect communities from hatred and harm, yet it does so in a way that may leave those same communities less certain of their freedom to express and practise their beliefs.

Our Charter protects both equality and liberty. Our laws must reflect both — clearly, explicitly and without ambiguity.

This is not a call for obstruction; it is a call for deliberation, for careful study, for meaningful consultation and for the thoughtful consideration that legislation of this importance deserves.

I urge honourable senators and the committee to take the time to examine this legislation thoroughly. Let us hear from constitutional experts, from law enforcement, from civil liberties advocates and from the diverse communities who will live with the consequences of this law. Let us ensure that the measures we adopt are not only principled in intent but sound in design.

• (1550)

In confronting hatred, we must be firm. But we must also be careful. In seeking to protect Canadians, we must ensure that we do not erode the very freedoms that define our country.

Honourable senators, freedom of religion, freedom of conscience and freedom of expression are not abstract principles. They are lived realities that allow Canadians of all backgrounds to coexist in mutual respect, even in the presence of deep differences.

Let us ensure that in strengthening our response to hate, we do not weaken our very foundation.

I urge this chamber to approach Bill C-9 with the care, balance and constitutional attention it deserves. Thank you.

Honourable senators, I want to add my own brief remarks on Bill C-9, mostly about the committee study of this bill.

Clearly, the most appropriate committee to study Bill C-9 is the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. After all, the bill proposes to amend the Criminal Code of Canada and involves significant analyses of sections of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Both areas are exactly what the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is mandated to study every week.

Several members of the Legal Committee are lawyers — a majority, in fact. We always consider the wider social context of the bills we study and bring experts in to testify about that perspective.

The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee studies big, complex government bills all the time. In comparison, the last time the Human Rights Committee studied a government bill was in 2018, honourable senators — eight years ago.

The Liberal government may want this government bill — with its very complicated and thorny legal and constitutional issues — to avoid the rigorous legal and constitutional scrutiny our Legal Committee would provide it. However, just because the government prefers something doesn't mean we should yield to it, honourable senators. That choice is ours.

Sending Bill C-9 to a different committee than the Legal Committee would set a bad precedent, and I believe it could allow the government to avoid accountability. I hope you will consider this as this legislation moves forward.

Thank you.

Hon. Donna Dasko: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-9. I would like to thank the intervenors who have spoken so far on this bill. I also want to thank the bill's Senate sponsor, Senator Kristopher Wells, for his measured speech.

I agree with his calls for listening to diverse voices and for vigorous, constructive and deliberate debate. In our system, no freedoms or rights are absolute, and there is no hierarchy. Our task is to find an acceptable balance of constitutional values.

I also share the sense of urgency that is felt about the increase of hate incidents in Canada. We are all concerned about what is happening to our neighbours and in our broader communities. Undoubtedly, today's fraught geopolitical realities are affecting our domestic situation, but there are many other factors as well.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, in its brief to the House Committee on Justice and Human Rights, stated that "the most notable recent increases have involved hate crimes directed at Jewish and Muslim populations and their respective institutions."

Between them, the Minister of Justice and Senator Kristopher Wells noted the significance of the new measures for Jewish and Muslim Canadians, for Black and Asian Canadians and for 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians. We must have full regard for this, while also respecting that the new criminal law measures touch Canadians in many different settings.

The Minister of Justice signalled a broader perspective in his speech at second reading:

> If we wish to build a stronger Canada, we need to adopt a whole-of-society approach to this challenging issue. This will involve different levels of government, including provinces' investing in education that will ensure that people, from a young age, understand that hate is not acceptable in our communities. It will include investments in training law enforcement, prosecutors and judges to see hate and to call it out as such when they witness it in our courtrooms. Of course, part of the puzzle will involve changes to our criminal law to ensure that we punish bad actors and send a signal to ensure that hate does not continue to foment in our communities.

Colleagues, I do support the bill at second reading. I have specific concerns that I hope will be addressed by the Senate committee studying this bill.

First, Parliament has not undertaken a comprehensive review of hate crimes in Canada in the 56 years since the introduction of the hate-propaganda provisions of the Criminal Code. I recognize the excellent work of the Senate Human Rights Committee in their studies of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. I recommend that the committee consider how they might expand their research within a reasonable time frame and make recommendations from there. Just because we are studying a bill does not mean that we should stop studying this phenomenon. Instead, we must continue to study it intensively.

Second, I urge the committee to be vigorous and transparent in applying Canada's constitutional equality lens to evaluating Bill C-9. The record so far leaves me with questions about how the bill's provisions relate to equality rights guarantees and the historical and systemic discrimination addressed by the Charter.

We hear, in particular, with respect to this bill, about the Charter guarantees of fundamental freedoms, namely, freedom of conscience and religion and freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression. We hear about this, and it is important that we do, but we hear very little about section 15 or the other equality guarantees. In fact, the Charter Statement for this bill does not even mention equality rights and their relevance to Bill C-9 in terms of advancing or limiting such rights.

The Criminal Code's hate provisions, current and proposed, are intended to protect specific identifiable groups from hate that meets the criminal threshold. The current law, unchanged by Bill C-9, defines "identifiable group" to mean:

> . . . any section of the public distinguished by colour, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or mental or physical disability.

I agree that these groups deserve such protection. However, how does Bill C-9 address the experiences of these many "identifiable groups"?

I urge the Senate committee to hear from additional groups on Bill C-9, including Indigenous, Black and Asian communities.

I am also concerned, in particular, that we have heard very little on Bill C-9 about women. A 2025 article in the *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* entitled "Treating Male Violence against Women and Girls as Hate in Canada," by Myrna Dawson and Debra M. Haak, makes a number of points: Generally, crimes of male violence are neither reported as sex-motivated, nor treated as hate crimes. They are seldom prosecuted or sentenced under the hate crime provisions of the Criminal Code. And yet, a woman or girl is killed every other day in this country, a reality of "individual and systemic misogyny, coupled with racism," say the authors of this article. Let me quote them further:

> In our examples, we focused on lethal violence — femicide — to clearly demonstrate Canada's failure to identify and treat even these extreme crimes as sex-motivated hate crimes. As expected, when examining non-lethal violence, research shows that police-recorded hate crimes motivated by sex are also one of the smallest categories documented, a consistent pattern over time in Canada. . . . Research shows that victims of [male violence against women and girls] and [gender-based violence] share many characteristics with other, more recognized targets of hate crime such as those victimized because of race and/or religion.

Does Bill C-9 change the treatment of femicide? Does it improve protection against sex-motivated violence, for example, for Indigenous Peoples and for women and girls in all their diversity?

• (1600)

In this regard, I have an additional concern about Canada's lagging response to online hate, especially in respect of women and girls, as well as those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. Online hate may, in fact, be growing for all identifiable groups, but how does Bill C-9 address online hate? Online hate is a real phenomenon.

I ask you to consider the following: The internet hate speech provision was removed from the Canadian Human Rights Act in 2013. That bill promoted protecting freedom, but in the view of many, it was a victory for misogyny and other forms of hate. Since that time, the only remedies women have had for hate are to be found in the Criminal Code. Some 16 years later — an age in terms of digital development — we need to act on technology-facilitated gender-based violence and other forms of technology-facilitated hate.

Here is another point to consider: The federal-provincial-territorial National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, launched on November 9, 2022, says nothing about cyberbullying in respect of women.

Here is another point: Proposed federal legislation relating to online harms, which failed to address the full range of online sexual exploitation and sex- and gender-based violence experienced by Canadians, died on the Order Paper of the Forty-fourth Parliament. And so far, it has not been improved or reintroduced.

Colleagues, I strongly recommend that the committee note the urgent need for adequate measures on internet hate speech, online sexual exploitation and technology-facilitated sex- and gender-based violence. That is my second point.

Third, while I agree in principle with the new intimidation and obstruction offences, I hope that the committee will consider whether they may be overly broad and vague and risk criminalizing peaceful protests.

Fourth, I do feel that more clarity is needed on the removal of the good faith religious opinion defence. I note the many hundreds of messages we have received from Canadians of religious faith who are alarmed by this change, with some even calling for the repeal of the entire bill. In my reading of the bill, the threshold to establish incitement to hatred is very high, and the way I read it, an accused's rights to defend against charges are adequately protected, but I do believe that we have an obligation to better understand the concerns that have been expressed, which we just heard expressed by Senator Batters and Senator Martin.

To conclude, there is a sentence that I like, which came forward in 2025 from the Commissioner of the Public Inquiry Into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions:

> A healthy democracy is characterized by a vibrant and diverse range of voices and groups, engaged in a constant process of deliberation, discussion, negotiation and compromise. . . .

By virtue of our constitutional role, the Senate is a vital part of our democracy and a vital part of that constant process.

Colleagues, I very much look forward to the deliberations and recommendations of the Senate committee and of this chamber on Bill C-9.

Thank you.

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-9, the combatting hate act, to address a concern that many Canadians have brought to my attention.

In recent weeks, my office has been inundated, as I suspect yours were, with thousands of emails and hundreds of phone calls, personal conversations and meetings in the office, in community spaces and in places of worship, as well as letters from religious and civic organizations across this country.

They do not write or call to defend hate or to weaken protections against violence or intimidation. They merely ask one thing: Will their lawful, good faith expression of religious beliefs still be protected under this law?

I listened to the reports of these phone calls. I read as many of the emails and letters that we received as possible. I met with stakeholders, and I realized how much their question matters.

For decades, the Criminal Code has contained a clear answer in sections 319(3)(b) and 319(3.1)(b). It told Canadians in plain terms that expressing a sincerely held belief, grounded in doctrine, was not in itself a crime. That certainty is being removed by Bill C-9.

I also read what Senator Kris Wells said: The "for greater certainty" clauses were added to the bill to make clear that religious expression, teaching or discussion are not captured by this new change; honest or good faith religious expression, debate or teaching would not meet the high standard of the deliberate intention to promote hatred; and the threshold for hate speech in Canada is and remains extremely high and requires wilful intent to promote hatred.

I read it, and I understood Senator Wells offered an interpretative reassurance about the effect of the "for greater certainty" clauses, but the bill does not expressly say that good faith religious expression is protected as such. It is a more reassuring interpretation, but in Bill C-9's current form, I worry that these assurances are merely interpretive. We are asking individuals, in complaint-driven contexts, to rely on interpretation after the fact.

Let me remind honourable senators that interpretations may vary across jurisdictions. They may also evolve in time, and they do not guarantee that protected religious speech will not be subjected to preliminary investigations.

The Canadian Council of Imams put it concisely: It is the gap between interpretive assurance and enforceable statutory protection that increases the risk of a chilling effect on legitimate religious expression.

That is the same concern that the President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops highlighted in his letter to the Prime Minister, dated December 4, 2025, where he wrote:

> As legal experts have noted, the public's understanding of hate-speech and its legal implications are often far broader than what the *Criminal Code* captures. Eliminating a clear statutory safeguard will likely therefore have a chilling effect on religious expression, even if prosecutions remain unlikely in practice.

The sections in question have only been invoked as a defence a handful of times and never successfully. There is no evidence that this section is being misused, as it has been established by the courts since 1990 in *R. v. Keegstra* that this can only be invoked in rare circumstances, and it only has been. There has also never been one single successful defence using this clause. What these sections do successfully is, by their very existence, assure Canadians that they can express themselves freely.

Honourable senators, the biggest risk that we take by omitting front-line certainty and replacing it with interpretation after the fact is self-censorship in individuals.

Defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as:

> . . . the act or action of refraining from expressing something (such as a thought, point of view, or belief) that others could deem objectionable —

— self-censorship is a symptom of the decline of freedom of expression.

Without front-line certainty, we're telling Canadians that the courts will sort it out when faced with an ambiguous situation. But Canadians do not live their lives in courtrooms. They make decisions in real time about what they can safely say, teach or share, and when the boundary is unclear, people do not push it. They retreat from it.

That is the chilling effect, and it does not require bad actors. It only requires uncertainty.

• (1610)

Colleagues, it is not the role of the courts to establish law. It is our job as parliamentarians to set the law and communicate our intentions unambiguously. Removing paragraphs 319(3)(b) and 319(3.1)(b) outright communicates the wrong message to at least one of the identifiable groups that the law intends to protect.

One of the shortest phone calls that my staff received regarding Bill C-9 was from a woman who told them that she had fled her country due to fear of religious persecution and had chosen Canada to be her home because religious freedom is protected here. She questioned where she would go if Bill C-9 passes and religious freedom is restricted.

Canadians keep reaching out to us due to the uncertainty caused by the proposed removal of these clauses. That is why clear statutory language is needed: to reassure Canadians that their freedom of religious expression remains protected.

I hope that, in committee, we will have the opportunity to address this concern without weakening the bill's purpose.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, I want to speak to one point raised by our colleagues Senator Batters, Senator Martin, Senator Dasko and Senator Ataullahjan, and that is the matter of the removal of the good faith protection.

I ask the committee to consider this seriously and with an open mind. It was not there to begin with. It was added during the procedure in the House of Commons, and it may have been for procedural reasons or to garner enough votes for it to pass, but my concern is this: When we're discussing legislation dealing with and combatting hate, it is important, apart from getting it in the law and having enough votes to pass it, that we get a broad consensus in society that this is an important issue. I'm talking about going beyond just the letter of the law and promoting broad consensus and understanding.

I learned this concept from former justice Rosalie Abella many years ago, when she headed the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment. She said that passing employment equity was not just about the law and the policy that it was creating — sorry, I want to ensure that I am looking at my colleague who is the sponsor of the bill. We have had some of this discussion, and you may ask why I don't just talk to him —

Senator K. Wells: We are.

Senator Cardozo: What former Justice Abella said — and I'm paraphrasing here — is that when Parliament sets a law, it describes a societal value. In that case, we were talking about having equity in employment.

The same applies here. I am disturbed by the number of people of faith who are feeling, rightly or wrongly, that this bill is going to hinder their ability to be people of faith. It is not enough for me to have a debate with them and tell them they don't understand it and it is actually okay. It is not enough, in my view, to include, as the House did, clarifications at the end of the bill, in subclauses 11.1(1) and 11.1(2). If you are inserting clarifications to say something is not a problem, then why include it in the first place? That's my thought.

I leave it with the committee and ask you to please consider this point seriously and with an open mind. Think about how we not only legislate in this area but also build consensus broadly in society to the extent that the law would not be necessary in a world where enough people believed that hate was wrong.

If a lot of people don't like this bill that is combatting hate, we're not winning in terms of combatting hate. That's the point I want to leave the committee with. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Wells (*Newfoundland and Labrador*), debate adjourned.)

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

Hon. Kim Pate moved third reading of Bill S-205, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, as amended.

She said: Honourable senators, 32 years ago today, my life and work changed forever as a result of my visit to the ormer Prison for Women in Kingston as the first non-corrections-related person to gain access following the events that would give rise to the Arbour Commission.

In nearly 50 years of regularly going in and, most importantly, recognizing the significance of being able to walk out of prisons for young people, men and women, I have had the privilege and responsibility of bearing witness to some of the best and some of the worst ways that we treat one another.

Thank you to those of you who join us today in person and online.

Through nearly a decade in this chamber, I have been so very grateful to work alongside you, colleagues. I'm especially grateful to the 50 of you who have ventured into the prisons as well, for helping to breathe life into our commitment to represent the interests of those whose lives and experiences are more likely to be marginalized and ignored: people who have too often ended up in prison after being failed by every other system. These people live the reality of a dearth of economic, health, housing, educational and social supports and resources that leaves them teetering on the edge of or deeply sunk into poverty and, therefore, all the more likely to face criminalization and incarceration.

I know that each of us has chosen to be here, colleagues, because we believe in the work that this chamber can accomplish on behalf of all Canadians. Millions of Canadians — and the number is growing — live with entrenched uncertainty about their futures, as well as those of their loved ones, as indicators of institutions that do not work for them. If we are to credibly counter such realities, especially now, at a time when conspiracy theories, institutional distrust and political polarization run rampant, we must consider our role in acknowledging and responding to systemic injustice and inequality as not just a so-called minority issue but something that hurts us all.

Tona's law, Bill S-205, is the product of years of senators' collective work to uphold the human rights that protect those most marginalized.

• (1620)

I speak today as just one in a chorus — now missing our leading voice — calling on you to pass the human rights protections that Tona Mills, a survivor of more than a decade in isolating confinement, dedicated her life to advocating for so that no one else would experience what she endured.

Tona's law consists of two accountability measures recommended 30 years ago by the Honourable Justice Louise Arbour in her report, entitled *Commission of inquiry into certain events at the Prison for Women in Kingston*. They are court oversight of decisions to isolate prisoners and the ability for prisoners to return to court to seek a remedy in the event of correctional mismanagement of their sentences.

Tona's law also includes measures to expand and breathe life into existing alternatives to isolation in the form of placements in the community for Indigenous Peoples and others experiencing mass incarceration. At committee, additional provisions seeking to encourage the use of existing avenues for transfers to provincial and territorial hospitals were removed from the bill.

I thank Senator Tannas and Senator Simons for their leadership in stewarding those provisions.

Together, senators have spent years studying the measures included in Tona's law and have endorsed them three times: first as amendments to government legislation in 2019; second, as recommendations of a Human Rights Committee study in 2021; and third, in a previous iteration of this bill that was sent to the other place in 2024.

In December 2016, a month after my appointment, the Human Rights Committee received approval for a multi-year study of the human rights of federally sentenced persons. While some assume the study was my idea, in fact, the chair, Senator Jim Munson, laid the groundwork before I was even appointed. He focused, in particular, on the need to respond to the death of Ashley Smith in a segregation cell.

He was urged forward by colleagues, including Senator Joan Fraser, who rose in the Senate Chamber to note:

> This is the point where I always . . . say, "How much are you going to spend?" . . . For the first time I'm going to say that I hope you spend a lot. I hope you can assure us today that you will travel across this country and visit . . . many prisons and do hard investigation of what happens there.

On one such trip to the East Coast Forensic Hospital in the spring of 2018, committee members met with Tona Mills. The torturous isolation that Tona had experienced in federal prisons caused irreparable and lifelong health consequences, including isolation-induced schizophrenia. She implored us to end isolation for everyone, everywhere, a proposal that she joked we could call "Tona's law."

Other committees made visits to prisons. During the Indigenous Peoples Committee's 2018 travel for its study on nation-to-nation relationships, committee leadership, including Senators Tannas, Christmas and Dyck, visited the Saskatchewan Penitentiary to meet with men imprisoned there, the majority of whom were Indigenous.

In 2019, the Senate studied Bill C-83, the government's response to court decisions ruling that Canada's existing practices of segregation and solitary confinement in federal prisons were cruel, unusual and unconstitutional.

By the time the bill left the chamber, about a third of sitting senators had made visits to prisons. I remember Senator McCallum's regular visits to Stony Mountain Institution and her work, in particular, with Indigenous prisoners and staff seeking to build connections to community. I remember Senator Petitclerc patiently signing autographs in the Quebec Federal Training Centre for prisoners who knew her, first and foremost, as one of their sports heroes. I remember Senator Colin Deacon's question, which resonated long after we left the Nova Institution for Women: Why a system clearly based on presumptions of punishment is called "corrections."

Those with lived experience, as well as legal and human rights experts, warned the Senate that Bill C-83 would rename spaces of isolation as Structured Intervention Units, or SIUs, but would not prevent solitary confinement. To strengthen the bill, experts pointed us to the types of measures Tona talked about, including the unimplemented recommendations of the 1996 Arbour report.

In response to mass violations of women's human rights and a subsequent cover-up, Justice Arbour's recommendations sought to counter a culture that was punitive and oppressive for both prisoners and correctional staff. Her work was informed by the experience of women she met at the prison, including a woman who was not only isolated but was often shackled and strapped to her bed frame or floor. That was Tona. Tona's experiences made clear that the human rights abuses that gave rise to the commission of inquiry — uses of force, stripping, shackling and segregation — were not anomalous; they were systemic and ongoing.

In 2019, the Social Affairs Committee, and then the Senate as a whole, voted to amend Bill C-83, the government's proposed response to solitary confinement. Those Senate measures were not ultimately incorporated into government legislation. They were, however, reiterated and recommended by the Human Rights Committee in its 2021 final report, *Human Rights of Federally-Sentenced Persons*.

Senators' experiences with Bill C-83 also led colleagues to organize further visits to monitor implementation. Senator Klyne was instrumental in this. His office developed a survey tool to track and evaluate conditions. What senators saw following Bill C-83 aligned with the government's own data, indicating that solitary confinement persisted in federal prisons and persists today.

Our dear late colleague Senator Josée Forest-Niesing, who had championed the Senate's amendments during consideration of Bill C-83, planned to introduce a bill based on these measures. I became the sponsor because she was ill and continued after she passed away during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the meantime, Tona moved from the hospital to the community. New colleagues joined our work. We appreciate Senator Clement's frequent visits to Collins Bay Institution and other prisons, focusing on issues from anti-Black racism to voting rights.

In the last Parliament, around the time that we learned Tona was terminally ill with cancer, we passed the previous iteration of Tona's law and sent it to the other place. Unfortunately, they did not have time to consider it before the last election.

With the reintroduction of Bill S-205, Tona continued to work and advocate from her community in Halifax and Atlantic Canada. Not long before her death, she was overjoyed to meet Senator Francis and members of his family and community when we presented at a Mi'kmaq Confederacy conference in P.E.I. She was also overjoyed to spend time with Senator Bernard, whom she first met nearly a decade ago through the Human Rights Committee but who had visited her several times since then.

The last time I visited Tona, we talked about the next steps for the bill before you today, about her family, her friends and my children, Michael and Madison. We talked about the many who have called and written to her and to me about the need for these provisions. Tona talked about the many who worked in the prisons who reached out in support, especially those who called and apologized for not speaking up when they witnessed what was happening to her and to others.

We talked about the pressures good people experience when they work in oppressive environments to conform and turn away from even blatant abuse. We talked about the dichotomous experiences of love, care and compassion in places that also produced violence, inhumanity and brutal abuse. We talked about the importance of this bill to help good people do better and provide a means to call to account those who abuse power and privilege.

I often reflect on how different your life, mine or those of any of us would be if we had experienced what so many of the women in prisons have. It impacted me and my children. My son Michael met Tona for the first time at the Prison for Women when he was five years old. As part of a resource event, we brought in Kentucky Fried Chicken, and we took some to the women in segregation.

When Tona waved at him from behind a steel door, Michael instinctively reached for the handle and tried to open her cell. Tona started to cry and Michael's lips trembled as he asked me, "Mummy, why won't the door open?" Tona often recounted this to others, saying, "Even a little child knew that it wasn't right."

Tona's law would finally implement court oversight of decisions to isolate prisoners and judicial remedies that Justice Arbour recommended 30 years ago, which she explained as follows:

> I see no alternative to the current overuse of prolonged segregation but to recommend that it be placed under the control and supervision of the courts. . . .

• (1630)

For those who have not seen it, how can I capture the horror of caging rows of humans in little more than concrete closets for hours, days, weeks and even years on end? I can share what courts and clinicians have found as fact: After 48 hours, sensory deprivation and other irreversible harms can take root, and by day seven, brain activity can be permanently altered. As summarized by the Court of Appeal for Ontario, isolation is ". . . repeatedly . . . linked to appetite and sleep problems, anxiety, panic, rage, loss of control, depersonalization, paranoia, hallucinations, self-mutilation, increased rates of suicide and self-harm . . . ." More than 15 days in isolation is considered internationally as amounting to torture.

I don't know how to describe the sounds that haunt me: torment, despair, screams and cries that would cause prison staff to call me to come in, which were visits when I could not bring my children. Those were the sounds as I pleaded on my knees on a cement floor at a tiny slot or at the hinges of a door, trying to find some combination of words to stop the person on the other side — someone's loved one, child, sibling, parent or partner — from smashing their heads, slashing their bodies, tying ligatures around their necks, trying to gouge out their own eyes or otherwise mutilate themselves.

Our former colleague Senator André Pratte, arguing that senators should insist on the amendments that became the basis of Tona's law, observed the following:

> I'm not an expert on prison issues. . . . but I think we can easily imagine what being deprived not only of freedom, but of dignity, does to a human being. . . .
>
> . . . the wait is, of course, unbearable. There is just no way that a stable person can stay in these small cells for days and weeks without their mental health being affected. For mentally ill inmates the effects can be absolutely irreversible.

Senator Frances Lankin, our former colleague and a former correctional officer, highlighted travesties from the perspectives both of prisoners and staff:

> I have seen situations, and, in fact, I have a lasting moral injury from having observed and been a correctional officer in charge of a segregation unit for a period of time. I've seen situations that would be unthinkable for most of us to ever consider doing, but that people have done to get that human contact. . . .
>
> Ashley [Smith] was videotaped dying as correctional officers observed, but failed to intervene to remove the last ligature she tied around her neck. She had every right to believe that the staff had a duty of care and a duty to save her life.

She also said:

> Correctional officers were urged to write off the suffering that she experienced in segregation as attention-seeking behaviour.

Constitutional expert and former Senator Serge Joyal noted, in support of the same Senate amendments:

> The system by itself doesn't have the dynamics to police itself, to meet . . . the bare minimum to maintain human dignity.

This is why Tona's law would require prison authorities to seek the approval of a superior court to keep a person in isolation for more than 48 hours, the time at which the Court of Appeal for Ontario found that irreparable physical, psychological and neurological harms can begin. This time frame was supported by forensic mental health experts at committee. In addition, if correctional mismanagement has made a person's sentence more punitive, for example, due to extensive periods of time in isolation, that person can apply to the court that sentenced them for a reduced sentence or parole ineligibility period.

Currently, if abuse occurs before a sentence is issued, the Criminal Code permits judges to reduce the length of the sentence in response. However, what about abusive conditions of isolation that a judge could not foresee, such as those imposed post-sentence? As recommended by Justice Arbour, Tona's law would fill this gap. Finally, as recommended by the Office of the Correctional Investigator and the government's own advisory panel on Structured Intervention Units, or SIUs, Tona's law would ensure that practices of isolation that have flourished outside SIUs in recent years are equally subject to court oversight and safeguards.

When the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee voted in support of Tona's law, it did so on the strength of testimony in support of court oversight from witnesses, including the former chair of the minister's advisory panel on SIUs; the Assembly of First Nations; the BC First Nations Justice Council; the Canadian Bar Association; the Indigenous Bar Association; the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers; the Canadian Psychiatric Association; the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network; Disabled Women's Network of Canada; the Canadian Prison Law Association; the John Howard Society of Canada; the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies; forensic psychiatrist Dr. Maryana Kravtsenyuk; and legal experts Professor Sheila Wildeman, Professor Debra Parkes and Michael Spratt.

Asked about potential drains on scarce court resources, witnesses, including the former chair of the minister's advisory panel, urged us that courts and corrections would be able to handle the 48-hour reviews. Courts already accommodate 24-hour bail reviews for tens of thousands of people on remand, far more than the 1,000 to 2,000 people per year in SIUs.

Under current law, corrections already has to complete necessary documentation for the application, including risk assessments, compatibility assessments and case management, within 48 hours as a result of existing requirements to eliminate all other options before transfer to a SIU, a requirement to provide written reasons for the transfer within 48 hours and a mental health assessment within 24 hours of a transfer to a SIU.

Court oversight will also incentivize corrections to find alternatives to isolation more proactively, avoiding the need for hearings. By contrast, not a single witness appeared to suggest that non-judicial measures would provide sufficient accountability. Regarding existing internal reviews, even a prison guards' union representative, who raised concerns about the bill, conceded: "Probably it is not enough . . . ."

Law professor Debra Parkes urged the Senate to continue to insist on court oversight:

> . . . we don't say to the police, "We don't have court resources to prosecute" when there are violations of the law and "You shouldn't be laying charges because we don't have court capacity." In the prison context, if we have violations of the law, there needs to be a meaningful review and remedy for that.

By curtailing the documented health and safety harms of isolation, court oversight will enhance, not undermine, safety. Corrections itself did not identify any safety challenges associated with 48-hour court oversight, so long as ". . . we could hold those individuals in the SIU until we got the decision from the court . . . ." This is how we expect courts would proceed.

Tona's law can save resources as well as lives. As acknowledged by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, fewer people in SIUs will save hundreds of thousands of dollars per person per year.

Finally, Tona's law would encourage, as a meaningful alternative to isolation, full use of community-based options for Indigenous Peoples and others allowed by sections 81 and 84 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, in line with the legislative intent of these provisions, and the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Government data confirms that half of men and nearly all women in SIUs are Indigenous. Prisoners who are Black, trans and experiencing disabling mental health issues are also overrepresented and in urgent need of connections to community.

Speaking in support of the measures that went on to become Tona's law, our dearly missed colleague Murray Sinclair-iban reminded us that, for too many Indigenous children and communities, residential schools were the beginnings of solitary confinement, forced removals and mass institutionalization now perpetrated by child welfare and prison systems. He told us:

> . . . during the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we toured as many of the residential schools that were still standing . . . . In every one of them, there was a small room, usually under a staircase, where the residents would be confined if they were not listening to what the teachers were telling them. In each of those little rooms, some of them only two or three feet tall, you could see scratch marks on the wall and sometimes even bloodstains . . . from where the students, as children, had tried to claw their way out or leave some kind of evidence of their being there.

• (1640)

Last year, I went to visit the "Mush Hole," which was the Mohawk Institute residential school located at Six Nations. I will carry with me for the rest of my life the sight of the under-stair isolation cupboard, shown to me by members of the Survivors' Secretariat, just as Senator Sinclair described.

Witnesses at the Legal Committee explained how prisons perpetuate these travesties. Paula Marshall of the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network said:

> Trauma . . . can look like anger. It can look like shutting down. It can look like mistrust. It can look like self-harm. Inside prison, those trauma responses are often treated as risk . . . .

Vice-Chief Joseph Tsannie of the Prince Albert Grand Council testified:

> . . . prison conditions, including isolation-like conditions, create crisis responses, they end up criminalizing trauma and treating institutional damage as proof that release is impossible.

This was Tona, her trauma criminalized and then exacerbated by institutional abuses.

My daughter Madison was an infant when she met Tona, one of a group of predominantly Indigenous women with mental health issues characterized as "dangerous" and isolated in the Springhill Institution, a prison for men in Nova Scotia. At a time when her own physical and mental health were rapidly deteriorating in segregation, and knowing that I was coming to meet with the women and work on a transfer for her while I was on holidays and therefore with an infant and an eight-year-old in tow, Tona's priority was to make gifts for my children.

It took years before Tona got before a judge, who then immediately recognized that what corrections called behavioural conduct and personality disorder issues were, in fact, unmet mental health needs. She was then sent to a forensic hospital.

Many more years passed, marked by all the springs when Tona played the Easter Bunny, speaking with my kids over the phone, fielding their questions with patience and creativity. In Grade 2, Madison announced to her class, with authority, that the Easter Bunny lives in a purple egg and, "She's a girl!"

All her life, Tona made friends wherever she went — one letter, one email, one joke, one act of care at a time. Over the past few years, as Madison graduated university and now law school, Tona was finally welcomed into the heart of a community.

Like so many others, Tona was haunted by memories of her torture. For years, I had nightmares every night, too. In community, Tona's caregivers were incredulous that she could ever have been described as dangerous. They experienced her as witty, kind, generous and patient, someone who embraced every opportunity to advocate for others.

Dr. Pamela Palmater provided the Legal Committee with an overview of how sections 81 and 84 came to be included in Canada's correctional legislation three decades ago as a means of redressing mass incarceration, upholding self-determination and moving people whom the colonial system classified as dangerous — people like Tona — out of prisons into their communities, where their needs can be adequately met.

All Indigenous organizations and experts appearing at committee emphasized that these options have been tightly controlled by corrections — they described it as "colonial gatekeeping" — underfunded and consequently underused. Indigenous witnesses highlighted that Tona's law would create presumptions in favour of transfers and release to community. It would shift decision-making power away from corrections, back to the Indigenous communities and Indigenous prisoners.

Most Indigenous witnesses also supported the bill's measures to allow non-Indigenous communities experiencing mass incarceration to benefit from similar community-based options, as recommended by the Senate Human Rights Committee in its study of federally sentenced persons.

Dr. Palmater highlighted that Tona's law properly reflects the legislative intention of sections 81 and 84 as ". . . primarily focused on reuniting Indigenous peoples with their communities, in line with Canada's legal and constitutional obligations . . ." while also having ". . . always included a reference to non-Indigenous prisoners being able to access section 81 and 84 options."

Kory Wilson, Chair of the BC First Nations Justice Council, noted that there is no finite pool of resources for which different communities would need to compete, as funding would come from the hundreds of thousands of dollars the federal government saves when a person is in the community instead of incarcerated.

Representatives of the Assembly of First Nations supported Tona's law as ". . . a chance to address systemic inequities" and reminded us what is at stake:

> The connection of family. The connection of culture. The connection to community. We're all seeking it. We all want it and we're all trying to do our best to be part of this. . . . We don't want our people to be isolated and basically dealing with crimes against humanity in a different way, where they're in institutions . . . .

Canada will need to reckon with its criminalization and incarceration of people in need of supports and services. Those who are living on the streets, in poverty, with mental health issues, trauma or addictions are all too often criminalized when they're in crisis, sometimes in the hopes of getting them treatment or supports. Instead, they are more likely to end up in isolation, including in prisons that may be called treatment centres and even healing lodges, but controlled by prison authorities instead of Indigenous communities and health professionals.

Witnesses were clear that corrections has the necessary resources to invest in community-based options and that doing so will save Canada money. What is needed, what we hope will be encouraged through Tona's law and court decisions like the *Warren* case — the appeal of which is being heard today, dealing with a decision to sentence an Indigenous man with disabling mental health and intellectual capacity issues to hospital instead of prison — is a push to encourage the use of these resources to meet human rights obligations, save costs and save lives.

Tona died on February 19, just weeks before the thirtieth anniversary of the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston, whose findings were shaped by the human rights abuses inflicted on Tona and others, and whose recommendations for judicial oversight of correctional decision making remain unimplemented.

Through too many harms and three decades of inaction on the part of Canada, Tona persisted. Tona's law aims to ensure that human and Charter rights matter no matter who you are or where you are, that there will be meaningful accountability and remedies if rights are violated and that there can be hope for brighter futures in the community. Tona's law consists of the safeguards that Tona wanted to extend to and wrap around those suffering today in the torturous cells she experienced.

I pray we will all work together to continue our collective efforts in support of those most marginalized, that we will pass Bill S-205 and answer Tona's dying wish — that her life would help move us toward ending the torture and abuse of solitary confinement, too late for her to benefit from but, hopefully, to help others.

I close with Tona's urgent refrain: "Please end segregation for everyone, everywhere." *Chi-meegwetch*. Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak in support of Bill S-205, An Act to Amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, known as "Tona's Law."

The purpose of Tona's law is to ensure oversight, remedies and alternatives to isolation in federal prisons. In my speech, I will speak specifically to the context of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-status women and men.

Colleagues, as I speak to this bill, I would like you to keep in mind the following: We look at the history of Tona and her life and the violent incidents she experienced as a young, innocent girl. Having violence in one's life stays with you for a lifetime. I can attest to that.

Eighty-five per cent of all women — and ninety-one per cent of Indigenous women alone — in federal prisons have histories of physical and/or sexual abuse. In other words, nearly all Indigenous women in prison were victimized before they were criminalized. The legal system left them under-protected and failed to respond adequately and efficiently to the violence they experienced, forcing them to protect themselves and those in their care. Where women do so — whether that means using force against an abuser, using substances to anaesthetize themselves, fleeing and ending up on the streets — that is all too often how victims and survivors end up not only charged and criminalized, but labelled as high-needs, high-risk and dangerous.

• (1650)

Tona was one of too many women who lived this reality — women who are not dangerous but who are trapped in security protocols and conditions of isolation that are incredibly dangerous, that cost the health and lives of too many and to which no one should be subjected.

How did she get a life sentence that placed her in institutions for 30 years? And how inhumane and cruel is it to place a fellow human being in isolation or solitary confinement for 11 of those years?

As you will remember, 80% of Indigenous inmates come from the foster care system. I wonder how many of us in this room would spend time in isolation as an exercise to understand the conditions.

On one of my visits to the Stony Mountain Institution in 2019, when I had been approached to work with the First Nations, Métis and Inuit employees to address racism within the penitentiary, I met with the inmates in medium security. The psychologist advised me at the time that 75% of the inmates did not belong there. They needed support for mental health issues that should have and could have been addressed outside the prison system, especially at the start of their lives in the prison system.

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, or CAEFS, states:

> In Canada, the mass incarceration of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people represents on of the most egregious human rights travesties our country faces. Indigenous women and gender diverse people make up over 50% of people in federal prisons designated for women—more than one in two federally sentenced women are Indigenous! This represents a . . . staggering disparity, considering Indigenous people make up less than 5% of the total population.
>
> In some regions, provincial and federal prisoner populations include between 75%-to 90%+ Indigenous people. This travesty reflects the deep systemic violence and racism that persists in Canadian institutions, and signals an urgent need for our collective action.

Senators, I urge you to think about the part you can play in collective action.

In his evidence, given to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs on February 28, 2024, Dr. Ivan Zinger, the Correctional Investigator of Canada, stated:

> In 1992 the role of my office was entrenched in legislation, and the Mulroney government enacted the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. That was . . . legislation, very progressive, which spoke to charter rights and administrative law principles, and it included two very progressive provisions—sections 81 and 84. Those sections enabled the Minister of Public Safety—which at that time was the Solicitor General—to enter into agreements with indigenous communities for the care, custody or supervision of indigenous incarcerated persons.

Dr. Zinger continued:

> In 2013, my office issued a special report on indigenous corrections. It found that Correctional Service Canada had moved away from implementing section 81 in the early 2000s, favouring instead investments inside penitentiaries, under its Pathways initiative. Today Correctional Service still operates four healing lodges; they have not been transferred to indigenous communities as originally planned. My office reported a significant funding disparity between CSC-operated healing lodges and section 81 healing lodges, basically 62 cents on the dollar.

He went on to testify:

> Over the last 20 years, Correctional Service has developed five distinct strategies on indigenous corrections. Unfortunately, and despite significant efforts and resources, my office has not observed any significant or measurable improvements on key correctional outcomes—which . . . Corrections has control over. If you compare indigenous versus non-indigenous prisoners, indigenous ones are

> overrepresented in maximum-security institutions. They're overrepresented in structured intervention units, which is the old regime of administrative segregation. They're more likely to be involved in use of force. They're more likely to self-injure. They're more likely to attempt suicide. They serve the higher proportion of their sentence, and the great majority are typically released at statutory release, which is at two-thirds of their sentence. They have a higher rate of parole suspension and revocation, and also a higher rate of recidivism.

When I visited the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan with Senator Pate in 2023, I learned that one of the women being released was left to find her way to Saskatoon — that is a long way — on her own, with no bus service. She was supposed to be in Saskatoon by 5 p.m. to see her parole officer. She couldn't reach the city in time, was considered a reoffender and had her parole suspended.

Dr. Zinger highlighted some of the findings in three initiatives:

> The first one is healing lodges. There are currently 10 healing lodges in federal corrections. Four are operated by Corrections and have a capacity of 250 beds, which is enough for about 4% of the indigenous in-custody population. Six of those healing lodges are operated under section 81 and are therefore community-based, but they have only 139 beds—a capacity to house only about 2% of the indigenous in-custody population. There are no healing lodges in Ontario, the Atlantic provinces or the north. . . . Corrections mentioned to us 10 years ago that it had increased funding to healing lodges run by indigenous communities, but it also increased funding to its own healing lodges, so the disparity has actually remained the same.

Let me quote from a news article by CBC on March 28, 2026, entitled "Man under house arrest sues over access to Indigenous ceremonies." In a lawsuit, the man alleged that:

> . . . his probation officer's decision to refuse his participation in ceremonies is unlawful and unreasonable, and violates his Charter right to freedom of religion.

As the article reads, "Amid a diagnosis of unspecified psychosis, as well as depression and substance use disorder . . .," the man has worked hard to maintain sobriety, yet ". . . he can't leave his apartment for nine months without permission from his probation officer." The article further states:

> . . . he asked to attend cultural activities — including cedar baths, pipe ceremonies and sweats — as part of his addictions treatment while facing lengthy waits for an available bed in long-term treatment.
>
> [He] alleges his supervisor denied the request, saying [he] could not do anything "fun" until he completed detox.
>
> He was denied again after finishing detox . . . .
>
> "I feel like I am being punished for trying to stay connected to my culture. Connecting with my heritage is one of the things that helps me stay away from drugs," [the man] said.

Senators, I offer you this insight into prevalent themes of racism, lack of understanding and racial profiling of culture by people who are in charge of the incarcerated and paroled, and the need for section 81.

• (1700)

As Senator Pate said, the Senate first voted in favour of the measures in Tona's law in 2019 as amendments that were proposed to government legislation: Bill C-83, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another Act in Canada. According to the Charter Statement by the Minister of Justice, Bill C-83 was aimed at amending the use of administrative segregation in federal penitentiaries. It introduced structured intervention units, or SIUs, which allow inmates to receive structured interventions and enhanced mental health care tailored to their needs. Bill C-83 sought to improve correctional outcomes by addressing the underlying causes of high-risk behaviour and reducing violent incidents in prisons. It also emphasized the importance of procedural fairness and the rights guaranteed by the Charter of Rights, ensuring that the conditions in SIUs promote rehabilitation.

The Charter Statement goes on to state:

> Section 7 of the Charter guarantees to everyone the right to life, liberty and security of the person, and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice. Because the transfer of an inmate to an SIU would impose additional constraints and conditions on the inmate, it would engage their residual right to liberty and potentially their right to security of the person. The provisions authorizing the confinement of inmates in an SIU must therefore respect the principles of fundamental justice, including procedural fairness. One notable aspect of procedural fairness in this context is that the decision-maker imposing the measure must have an appropriate degree of independence and impartiality.

All the above safeguards, which I just mentioned in the Charter Statement, were put in place to prevent abuse of segregation and guarantee health care, including mental health — section 7 of the Charter — as well as protection under section 15(1) of the Charter and elimination of disciplinary segregation under section 12 of the Charter. Despite all the above safeguards, Tona was to spend 11 years in segregation with irreparable and lifelong health consequences. So what is the purpose of a Charter Statement that is ignored?

In the absence of Senate amendments, Bill C-83 has allowed conditions of solitary confinement to continue and expand.

Today, we have another opportunity to send Tona's law to the other place and to take another step toward long recommended and long overdue measures to ensure oversight, remedies and alternatives. Sections 81 and 84 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act are underfunded and consequently underused —

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator McCallum, the time allowed has expired. Did you want a few minutes to finish your speech?

Senator McCallum: Yes, I would like a little bit more time, if I could.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator McCallum: Thank you to everyone.

If fully implemented in line with their legislative intent and adequate resourcing, they would provide options toward supporting Indigenous and non-Indigenous prisoners as they serve the custodial and parole portions of their sentences in their communities.

In the absence of such steps to decolonize and decarcerate, Indigenous women will remain Canada's fastest-growing prison population.

Honourable senators, let us work together to pass Bill S-205. Let us take this opportunity to uphold Charter and human rights obligations and bring about a more just criminal legal system in what will benefit all Canadians.

Kinanâskomitinawow.

Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill S-205, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, also known as Tona's law.

I wish to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on the unceded and unsurrendered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people. I believe that land acknowledgements need to be more than performative, and they are especially vital when discussing matters of justice and law, as it grounds our work in the reality of both historical and ongoing systemic inequities.

Today, I am really pleased to be here to add my voice to this debate. I will do so firmly and briefly. I want to thank Senator Pate for her persistence in bringing this bill forward again and especially for the speech today, which highlighted so many interventions that have taken place just over the last 10 years alone that speak to the need for this bill. I also extend my deep gratitude to all colleagues who have contributed to this debate at its various stages and the various iterations of the bill.

With over 45 years of social work experience — and I know I don't look that old — working with incarcerated people and supporting the families and communities of incarcerated people, I want to tell you that lived experience brings me to fully support this bill, full stop. I support this bill.

Tona's law is more than a legislative amendment; it is a response to the lived reality of those who have been most marginalized. Named in memory of the great Tona Mills — an Indigenous woman, a Sixties Scoop Survivor, a tireless advocate and a person who still found joy every day — this bill seeks to protect the most vulnerable people in our communities against one of the most heinous human rights violations in Canada: solitary confinement. Colleagues, I want this to sink in. I want you to think for a moment. We are talking about some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. They are people who Senator Pate and Senator McCallum have spoken about today in their speeches — people whose lives have been steered, directed and guided by the impact of systemic racism and colonialism. We are talking largely about Indigenous Peoples and Black people who deal with the daily struggles of racism, addiction, mental illness and intergenerational trauma that never goes away.

Tona's law is a step in the right direction for the type of change that I would like to see for my community. We need community-based options for African-Canadian communities because, quite frankly, isolation does not solve issues. In fact, as we have heard, it creates more of them. During the study conducted by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights on the human rights of federally sentenced persons, we repeatedly heard about the importance of community-based alternatives for prisoners. I will remind you, colleagues, Recommendation 46 of the report states:

> That the Correctional Service of Canada work with independent experts and civil society organizations involved in the —

— and note this —

> — rehabilitation and community integration of federally-sentenced Black persons and otherwise racialized persons to develop and fund correctional programming and integration opportunities as are available pursuant to sections 29, 81 and 84 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*.

• (1710)

As you have already heard today, our committee tabled 71 recommendations urging change in our criminal justice system. Through this bill — Tona's law — we have here an opportunity to make progress on some of these recommendations, including but not limited to Recommendation 33, which calls for eliminating the use of solitary confinement.

Honourable colleagues, the message I wish to convey here today is clear. Healing happens in connection and in community. Healing does not occur in isolation and certainly cannot occur in solitary confinement.

For the last visit I had with Tona last summer — following the visit with Senator Pate — I took her some homemade treats that she absolutely loved. Tona told me that she wanted to see this bill pass so that she could die in peace.

Tona had been forced to navigate her deepest traumas and mounting health crises in a vacuum of silence, denied the community support we know is essential for connection and healing. Tona was determined to see this through so that no one else would suffer as she had ever again.

So, while Tona did not live to see this day, she is still fighting, through you, Senator Pate, and for all of us who speak to this bill. She is still fighting for this change.

Honourable senators, I ask you to pass this bill in her memory. Let's make Tona's law her legacy.

Thank you. *Asante*.

Hon. David M. Wells (Acting Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of Senator Carignan at third reading of Bill S-205. Senator Carignan had intended to speak to this bill himself but has asked me to deliver his remarks in his place. These are his words. I now turn to his comments on this bill, entitled, "Providing Alternatives to Isolation and Ensuring Oversight and Remedies in the Correctional System Act (Tona's Law)":

> At this stage, we are no longer debating the principle of the bill or its general intent. Many of you find those intentions commendable, and I can understand why. But that is not the question before us today.
>
> At third reading, our role is no longer to assess intent, but to fully assume our legislative responsibility with respect to the text before us. We must examine the bill in its final form and ask whether it rests on solid legal foundations, whether it is workable in practice, and whether it fits coherently within the existing legislative framework.
>
> In my view, the answer is no.
>
> As I indicated at second reading, I cannot support this bill, even after the amendments adopted by the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.
>
> Let me be clear: I recognize the work of the committee. The amendments adopted corrected a specific issue I had raised, namely the requirement to transfer any person convicted or transferred to a penitentiary who is suffering from disabling mental disorders to a hospital — an obligation whose feasibility raised serious concerns. The committee heard that argument during testimony and acted accordingly.
>
> That said, the fact that this issue was corrected does not mean that the fundamental concerns have disappeared. In my view, they remain very much present.
>
> I followed closely the committee's work and the testimony heard. One conclusion was repeated again and again: The current regime of Structured Intervention Units, or SIUs, is not functioning as provided for in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.
>
> I want to be very precise here. What is not working are not vague policy directions or mere administrative practices. These are clear legal obligations set out in the act itself. I am referring, for example, to meaningful human contact, the ability to participate in programs, and the right to receive services that respond to an inmate's specific needs, as set out in paragraph 32(1)(b) of the act.
>
> However, testimony demonstrated a persistent gap between the legal standard and reality — between what the law requires and what is actually happening in institutions.
>
> That, for me, is the starting point. And that is precisely where I part ways with Bill S-205.
>
> Rather than ensuring that existing law is properly applied, the proposed response to the problem is to layer on new mechanisms, new remedies and additional obligations.
>
> In other words, more law is added where existing law is already not being consistently applied.
>
> From a legal perspective, this approach concerns me.
>
> I would now like to focus on two specific provisions of the bill that illustrate these concerns well: sections 5 and 11.
>
> I will begin with section 5.
>
> This section provides that the continued placement of a person in a Structured Intervention Unit beyond 48 hours must be authorized by a superior court, upon application by the Correctional Service of Canada.
>
> In practical terms, this introduces judicial authorization into an area that is fundamentally correctional administration. Placement — or continued placement — of an inmate in an SIU is an administrative decision made under authority granted by the act.
>
> At first glance, I acknowledge, the idea may appear appealing. An independent review by a superior court may seem reassuring. But when this mechanism is examined more closely, both legally and practically, significant difficulties arise.
>
> First, it imposes additional jurisdiction on superior courts in a context where, as we all know, courts are already dealing with significant delays, complex dockets and limited resources.
>
> Second, and perhaps more fundamentally, it judicializes decisions that are, by their very nature, operational. These are decisions made in specific contexts, sometimes urgent, and based on assessments of immediate risk.
>
> Our administrative law is based precisely on the idea that specialized decision makers are best placed to make these types of decisions, and that courts exercise review after the fact, with the restraint appropriate to their institutional role.
>
> Here, we do the exact opposite.
>
> After 48 hours, decision-making authority is transferred to superior courts, in situations where rapid decisions are required, based on very concrete considerations of safety — the safety of the inmate, of other inmates and of correctional staff.

Finally, the bill raises a very practical issue on which it is entirely silent: What happens if judicial authorization is simply not obtained within the prescribed time frame?

The text does not say.

In law, this kind of silence is problematic. In reality, it will not be the courts dealing with this uncertainty but correctional services, in a context where every decision may have direct consequences for the safety of all.

This is not trivial.

I now turn to section 11.

This section allows a person who has been convicted, or subject to a period of parole ineligibility, to apply to the sentencing court for a reduction of their sentence where they allege there has been an injustice in the administration of that sentence.

Once again, the objective may appear laudable. But from a legal standpoint, I see real problems.

This provision conflicts with a fundamental principle of our justice system: the finality of judgments. This principle is essential. It ensures legal stability, predictability of decisions and coherence of the system.

Of course, this principle has exceptions. But those exceptions are carefully limited — appeals, judicial review and certain extraordinary remedies.

Section 11 adds something else. In effect, it creates an additional remedy that does not clearly fit within the existing legal architecture. It becomes a mechanism operating in parallel with those already in place.

And let us remember: Remedies already exist to challenge unlawful deprivation of liberty. Habeas corpus is a well-known example, rooted in the common law and enshrined in paragraph 10(c) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Supreme Court recently reaffirmed the importance of this remedy in *Dorsey v. Canada (Attorney General)*. The court stated:

> Despite its antiquity, *habeas corpus* remains the strongest tool for prisoners in ensuring that a deprivation of their residual liberty is not unlawful . . . .

• (1720)

In this context, it is fair to ask what clause 11 truly adds. In my view, it does not fill a demonstrated legal gap. Rather, it introduces real risks of overlap, inconsistency and procedural multiplication.

More broadly, Bill S-205 intervenes in an already complex ecosystem. It touches the balance between correctional administration, judicial jurisdiction and the protection of the fundamental rights of incarcerated persons. To alter this balance is to intervene directly in the day-to-day functioning of the correctional system with very concrete effects that we must fully acknowledge.

What I take from the testimony heard in committee is that the main problem with the current system is not the absence of legal standards. The standards exist. They are clear. The problem lies elsewhere: in the gap between the law as written and the law as applied.

In this context, adding new obligations and new remedies does not guarantee improvement. On the contrary, it risks further burdening an already strained system and making its operation more complex.

Honourable senators, at third reading, the questions before us are demanding but unavoidable: Does this text rest on solid legal foundations? Is it workable in practice? Does it fit coherently within the existing framework?

For my part, I am not convinced. Bill S-205, in its current form, contains too many uncertainties, too many risks of overlap and an implementation that appears unnecessarily complex. For all of these reasons, I cannot support it, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to and bill, as amended, read third time and passed, on division.)

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE POSTPONED

On Other Business, Senate Public Bills, Second Reading, Order No. 15:

> Second reading of Bill S-240, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (declaration of exception pursuant to subsection 33(1) of the Charter for mandatory minimum sentences for child sexual abuse and exploitation material offences).

Hon. David M. Wells (Acting Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15. Therefore, with leave of the Senate, on behalf of the Honourable Senator Housakos, 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.)

STUDY ON ANTISEMITISM

SECOND REPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the second report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, entitled *Standing United Against Antisemitism: Protecting Communities and Strengthening Canadian Democracy*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on April 21, 2026.

Hon. Paulette Senior moved:

> That the second report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, entitled *Standing United Against Antisemitism: Protecting Communities and Strengthening Canadian Democracy,* deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, be adopted and that, pursuant to rule 12-23(1), the Senate request a complete and detailed response from the government, with the Minister of Justice being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report, in consultation with the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture.

She said: Honourable senators, as Chair of the Senate Committee on Human Rights, I am proud to take a few moments to highlight the release of our report, entitled *Standing United Against Antisemitism: Protecting Communities and Strengthening Canadian Democracy*.

Anti-Semitism is a growing problem in Canada. Although the Jewish community is just 1% of Canada's population, it has been the number one target for hate crimes since 2023. The Jewish community has also been the target of 70% of religiously motivated hate crimes in the same time frame. It is against this backdrop that our committee launched a study of anti-Semitism in Canada.

We heard many troubling stories and statistics about the rise of anti-Semitism in Canada. Some young Jewish students have opted to conceal their identities to avoid name-calling and bullying; some working adults have said that they have felt a need to conceal synagogue affiliations or associations with Israel; and, most alarmingly, places of worship, community centres and schools have been threatened and even damaged by gunfire, arson and vandalism.

It is unacceptable to me and to our committee that a community of people should live in fear just because of who they are or what they believe in. The recommendations in our report outline steps the federal government should take to reclaim our country from those who sow fear and division.

I encourage all honourable senators to read the full report on the committee's webpage and to support our call for much-needed change.

The committee also sincerely thanks all witnesses who appeared or submitted written briefs as part of this study. Their insights were invaluable to our understanding of this issue and played a key role in shaping the report's recommendations. We couldn't have done it without them.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Will you take a question?

Senator Senior: Yes, I will.

Senator Woo: Let me start by thanking and congratulating you and the committee for this important work and for reminding us that one of the oldest forms of prejudice based on race and religion continues to persist in this country. The harms of anti-Semitism and the fears of our Jewish brothers and sisters are real, and we must do everything we can to prevent ". . . discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews . . . ."

I have cited a definition of anti-Semitism based on what is called the Jerusalem Declaration because it is very precise about what anti-Semitism is, but there is confusion, I think, in this country as to what constitutes anti-Semitism.

• (1730)

I'd like you to tell us what the committee learned about whether certain acts constitute anti-Semitism. For example, is it anti-Semitic to criticize Israel for acts of genocide, apartheid, war crimes and crimes against humanity in its prosecution of war against Palestinians in Gaza and in the West Bank?

Senator Senior: Thank you for the question, senator. I think it illustrates some of the challenges we had in our committee deliberations.

We heard several definitions of anti-Semitism in our committee. We realized that these definitions differ and were the cause of some division. Because our work was focused on identifying issues of anti-Semitism in Canada, we refrained from choosing what definition to go by. Instead, we decided to focus on the core issue of addressing what we heard from countless witnesses in terms of their experiences of anti-Semitism in Canada, whether that be at their work, in their communities, in their synagogues, at academic institutions, et cetera.

Senator Woo: Thank you for the answer.

I am not really interested in definitions, but I'm interested in knowing if it is anti-Semitic for me to quote the UN and dozens of human rights organizations that say Israel is committing genocide, is an apartheid state and is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

These are important questions. I want to get some insight from you and the committee because there are Canadians who are saying these things in good faith in an attempt to try to stop the horror in Gaza and the West Bank. Are they being anti-Semitic?

Senator Senior: Senator, thank you for your question.

You are asking me about the work of the committee, and I want to respond by saying that is not the work that the committee focused on. It is not for me to determine whether you are being anti-Semitic, senator. The work was based on looking at experiences of anti-Semitism. That is not a question that we examined. Thank you.

Senator Woo: The public is listening to this debate on a question as straightforward as mine, asking about documented and supported accusations of Israel's war crimes, genocide and apartheid in Palestine, and this chamber cannot say clearly that these accusations are not anti-Semitic. Can you imagine the chill that puts on those who want to advocate for Palestinians? It appears that we are saying in this chamber that we don't know whether we are able to say that there is a genocide taking place. It would seem that this committee is unwilling to deal with the issue and is now leaving us with the ambiguity that those kinds of statements may well be anti-Semitic.

I am going to try one more time to see if you can give us any guidance. There are individuals — Canadians in universities, students, faculty, teachers, people working in unions, doctors and lawyers — who have been persecuted, who have lost their jobs and who have been reprimanded because they have made claims about Israel that were said to be and held up as anti-Semitic. What can we tell these people — that they are anti-Semites?

Senator Senior: Senator Woo, I don't have a different response for you. I think that I have answered the question as well as I can in the context of the report that the committee completed. Thank you.

Senator Woo: Let me take a slightly different tack, then.

Do you feel that a vague definition of anti-Semitism, such as the one that the committee put a lot of emphasis on — the so-called International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, or IHRA, definition, which is very elastic and can be used to weaponize accusations of anti-Semitism against people who are critical of Israel — may cause more harm to the fight against anti-Semitism than benefit?

Senator Senior: This is the last question I will take on this matter.

As I explained in my response earlier, we did not take a position on any definition, including the IHRA definition. We heard several definitions and noted them in the report very clearly. We thought that focusing on one definition over others would actually distract from the experiences of Jewish Canadians. That is the direction that we took in our report. Thank you.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

VITAL ROLE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Honourable senators, I am pleased to stand today to speak to the inquiry about the importance of physical activity and the vital role that it plays. I likely would not have selected this particular scheduling of the subject matter, given recent topics in the house this afternoon, but I feel, nonetheless, it is very important to talk about physical activity and its importance. Let me say why sports matter.

I was delighted that senators came forward with this inquiry because it makes us step back and think about it. Maybe at this age, sports are behind me, but probably not. I decided to think about why sports matter.

I have always considered myself sporty. Growing up a tomboy and living with perennially scraped knees, I was either a roughhouser or very clumsy. What I do know is, had it not been for sports, I probably wouldn't have graduated from high school. I wasn't a bad student, but the real reason I jumped up in the morning, thoroughly energized for school, was sports: a morning practice, an afternoon game or a lunchtime intramural session.

[*Translation*]

Our coaches wouldn't accept students with failing grades. You couldn't skip class, and if you were caught smoking in the pit, that was it, you were benched.

[*English*]

No smoking in the pit.

For those who played sports in grade school and high school, some of their favourite teachers were guaranteed to be coaches. We remember their names, their behaviours and their sayings. Mrs. McGuffin would yell from the sidelines, "Sandra, keep your elbows down." Let's just say getting fouled out of a basketball game happened more than once, so I really needed that reminder.

Years later, I had a chance to meet Professor Marge Holman from the University of Windsor. She was doing fascinating research on the importance of coaching. The jumping-off platform involved studies that for decades tracked kids who did and did not participate in organized sports. You might not be surprised by the results but might be surprised that we don't take advantage of them.

[*Translation*]

Over the course of a study that was published in 2015, Geneviève Piché and her team tracked children from kindergarten to grade four. The study found that physical activity in general is associated with better academic performance, including better grades, as well as better concentration, increased attention span and better classroom behaviour.

[*English*]

Project Play from the Aspen Institute summarized their findings on young people in organized sport: In early childhood and adolescence, only 1 in 10 is likely to be obese. Their test scores are up to 40% higher, and they have lower rates of smoking, drug use, pregnancy and risky sex. In adulthood, it's the following: higher annual lifetime earnings, a more productive working life and a greater likelihood of attending college.

• (1740)

A 2018 study found a higher percentage of high school athletes achieving A grades. A business network study in 2014 found that out of 400 female corporate executives, 94% played sports. Studies indicate that team sports provide stronger benefits for executive function, fostering teamwork, respect and emotional regulation. Children build greater resilience. Team sports help teach adolescents accountability, dedication and trust.

My grade school coach, Mr. Seminuik, used to do a drill that we really hated. You had to turn around, with your teammates behind you, and then you had to fall backwards with your arms outstretched. Your teammates were supposed to catch you. Most of the time, they did. Just like on the court, your teammates count on you doing your part.

This is a great life lesson. If you're on the volleyball court and the ball is headed your way, you shout, "I've got it" or "Mine." The rest of the team steps back, and you have to get it. The team is counting on you.

At the time of my encounter with Professor Marge Holman, I was the Minister of Community and Social Services for Ontario and had responsibility for women's issues. We were in the midst of a multi-ministry overhaul of how our government dealt with domestic violence. While most of the government deals with the aftermath — the justice system and the shelter system — we rarely get into the details of or fund prevention.

[*Translation*]

Professor Holman knew that quality coaching encouraged young women to participate in organized sports and left an indelible mark on their lives. The most important aspects of coaching are self-esteem, self-confidence and a positive body image. Being thin doesn't matter, but being strong does.

[*English*]

That was really important for young women.

Female athletes are less likely to suffer from loneliness and self-esteem issues when compared to their non-athlete peers. What is the link to domestic violence? What's the effect of low self-esteem for women? It's entering into relationships for the wrong reasons and remaining in poor relationships for those reasons, and so often, it escalates into violence. It is much harder to keep strong, confident women with high self-esteem in horrible relationships.

Marge Holman knew that coaches need to understand the role they play in mentoring, team building and building self-confidence in these young girls. Needless to say, we funded her work, which culminated in a Toronto conference that brought coaches together from far and wide.

[*Translation*]

It should be noted that none of these studies addressed whether winning or even playing well was necessary. What mattered was contributing to the team, being dedicated and wanting to do their very best, even if it sometimes involved getting benched for committing too many fouls.

[*English*]

It's kind of like I was.

What are other benefits? You cannot be on your phone while you are playing a team sport. You cannot be endlessly or mindlessly scrolling while playing sports. Likewise, you have to look at your teammates in the eye and actually be aware of your surroundings. No headphones are allowed.

What are other interesting benefits? The socio-economic status of kids doesn't matter when you are playing on a team nor does it matter the culture or colour of your teammate. It is a great unifier — something that our society could use right now.

[*Translation*]

Our current school system has a shortage of coaches. Some schools no longer offer the same level of extracurricular activities that I was used to. The other day, here in the Senate, I met with a group of parents of French immersion students. The coaching shortage is affecting the traditional public and Catholic school systems, but it's even worse for school boards offering French immersion and French-as-a-first-language programs.

[*English*]

What do I wish for? I wish for an active program that encourages people to get into coaching, an education system that allows coaches in if the school doesn't have teachers who are prepared to do this extracurricular activity, boards that offer a program allowing teachers to keep coaching even after they retire, school boards that hire teachers who commit to coaching first and school boards that offer training to teach teachers how to coach in order to get these fantastic results I've listed today.

Today, we're in an environment that makes it very popular for Canadians to keep our elbows up. I want to thank Ms. McGuffin for teaching me many years ago when it was important to keep them down, on and off the basketball court.

Senators Deacon, McBean and Petitclerc, thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk about the importance of sport. It's important in many ways that we may not have thought of before. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Batters, debate adjourned.)

FINAL REPORT OF THE CANADIAN YOUTH CLIMATE ASSEMBLY

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

Hon. Jane MacAdam: Honourable senators, today I rise in the Senate of Canada on the unceded lands of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation to speak to Inquiry No. 11, launched by Senator Coyle, my colleague and steadfast champion of Senators for Climate Solutions. My sincerest gratitude to Senator Coyle for calling attention to the final report of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly.

I had the privilege of being in this Senate Chamber when the members of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly presented their final report and recommendations to parliamentarians. This was a first for Canada, made even more compelling and impactful due to the fact that it was youth-driven. I want to thank all the participants for their dedication and hard work throughout the entire process and for their thoughtful proposals that reflect and bring into focus the values and priorities of their generation.

Colleagues, in their report, the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly highlighted that Canada has not met any of our climate commitments to date. It would be very easy to lose hope in such tumultuous times, but we cannot lose hope. Current data implores us to act now. We have the expertise available to inform our decisions and actions, and we have educated and engaged young people to bolster our resolve.

The report from the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly is a timely reminder of the existential threat of climate change and the need for action.

I think back to 10 years ago. The Paris Agreement had just been widely adopted, and there was a heightened desire across Canada to set a clear direction toward meeting our obligations. At the time, I was the Auditor General of Prince Edward Island. I was collaborating with provincial auditors general and the Auditor General of Canada to examine Canada's response to climate change. A key source of leadership and coordination for our work at the time was the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development within the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. The expertise and resources that were provided were invaluable.

A key finding of our audit was that most governments were not adequately assessing climate risks, were not on track to meet their commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and were not adequately prepared for the impacts of a changing climate.

Looking at the issue of climate change through provincial, territorial and federal lenses helped advance the conversation around our shared responsibilities. It also elevated the significance of the issue through public reporting and recommendations to hold governments accountable to take action.

Climate change was and continues to be a significant issue for Canadians and for future generations. Colleagues, now more than 10 years later, it is this future generation that has had to take up the torch. They are boldly driving change and urging us to take deliberate action as well.

Prince Edward Island delegates Kessiena and Ajit stated that they joined the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly to collaborate on meaningful, practical climate solutions. Indeed, all participants hope their recommendations will be an impetus for change that will lead to positive results.

• (1750)

With representatives from across the country, the assembly reinforces the message that addressing climate change is a collective responsibility. Colleagues, these young Canadians are counting on us.

Senator Coyle mentioned in her speech on the report that ". . . citizens' assemblies are healthy for democracy, and they produce well-considered recommendations." Indeed, the assembly's recommendations are thoughtful, pragmatic and call for concrete, measurable and impactful action.

In one recommendation, the assembly asks parliamentarians to increase public awareness of Canada's existing Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. Key points include making the office more visible and improving public engagement, which will help hold the government to account on climate action and build trust with Canadians.

I would like to reaffirm my commitment to raising awareness of Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. I have drawn on the commissioner's reports for many years, including to inform questions at our Standing Senate Committee on National Finance. The commissioner's reports contribute to the suite of resources I continue to build in order to stay informed.

In the spirit of this commitment, I want to briefly provide an overview of the role of the commissioner.

On behalf of the Auditor General, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development provides objective and independent analysis and recommendations on the federal government's efforts to protect the environment and foster sustainable development.

Mr. Jerry DeMarco has served as the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development since 2021.

As highlighted by the Youth Climate Assembly, climate change is not just about the environment; it is connected to every aspect of our lives.

The depth and breadth of the commissioner's reports reinforce that climate change permeates every sector of our society, impacting our health, economy, infrastructure and future well-being. The commissioner's reports help to keep that perspective at the forefront of our minds.

A few weeks ago, the commissioner appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources. Every year since 2023, the office has examined the federal government's progress in implementing the measures in its 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan, which was the first plan under the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act.

The commissioner's message echoes key concerns raised by the Youth Climate Assembly. To quote the commissioner:

> The stakes are growing higher every year. The window to meet the 2030 target, along with the longer-term target of net-zero emissions by 2050, is rapidly closing. The federal government must pick up the pace in implementing effective measures.

Upcoming reports of the commissioner will include how federal assets, services and activities are being protected against climate change; flood mapping; the avian influenza response; and phasing out thermal coal. That's just to name a few. Parliamentarians can attend briefings on the commissioner's reports and ask questions to the commissioner and subject-matter experts. Information is further disseminated through news conferences for the media and the public.

Colleagues, in closing, I invite you to read the outstanding report produced by the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly and encourage you to connect with the authors of the report from your respective regions. I also strongly urge you to affirm or reaffirm your engagement with the reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

We have access to reliable, objective and timely information to stay informed, act and hold the government to account. As Mr. DeMarco emphasized, we, as parliamentarians, ". . . are an important part of the accountability ecosystem." Let's challenge ourselves to ask the tough questions. Canada's youth are looking to us to work together to deliver results and secure the future they were promised. Thank you.

Hon. Katherine Hay: Honourable senators, I am not sure if I'm the last speaker tonight. I'm between you and your committee or dinner. I am going to start with just four words: kindness, leadership, courage and hope. That is what I want to talk about today.

With kindness, leadership and hope — throw in some of that courage and grit — the needle will move. Change will begin, and action will happen. That is for sure.

Let us start with kindness. That is a beautiful place to start. Let's start with Senator Mary Coyle. It is indisputable that she is one of the kindest of humans. Today, I want to acknowledge Senator Mary Coyle, an extraordinary leader who shines a light on critically important world issues as a top-tier public servant. That is what matters to her, I believe.

She is relentless in her quest to move that proverbial needle that I spoke about — steeped in values — for the people of Canada from coast to coast to coast.

It may have been — and I'm stretching the facts a little bit here — almost exactly one year ago today, more or less, that I was a newly minted senator, not yet sworn in. I think you know where I am going to go, senator. I remember it clearly. I was wandering the awe-inspiring halls of East Block. I was a little lost, no doubt, and that was not just on how to get to my temporary office, which was in the actual basement of East Block beside the boiler — Senator Ince will know this intimately because we shared that office.

I was thinking, "So here I am. Do I even belong? Where do I even begin?"

Perhaps it was not miraculous, but I kind of like to think it was. Out walks Senator Coyle from her office, and her kindness extended into an invitation to meet: my first real, in-person meeting with a senator as a senator about Senate business. I am not going to channel my inner Sally Field here, if you know what I mean, but that meeting did two things for me: I started to see how I belonged, and I saw where to begin as a member of the Senators for Climate Solutions. I will be forever grateful for that day of inspiration.

From her kindness comes the leadership I spoke about: strong, thoughtful, inclusive, wide-ranging and relevant. Your leadership and your work matter, senator, a lot. Your inquiry matters a lot. Climate change is very real. You don't have far to look to see it and be impacted by it.

In fact, I'm going to look back to an April 24 article, just a few days ago, in *The Globe and Mail*:

> Under the midnight sun on July 14, 2024, Kevin Arey was at Shingle Point — a summer coastal camp for Inuvialuit families on the Yukon coast of the Beaufort Sea — when he was stopped in his tracks. There, in the ocean, was a beaver.
>
> Mr. Arey is an Imaryuk Monitor, whose job is to protect fish, wildlife and traditional land use in the . . . westernmost region of Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland in Canada.

> Growing up, he had never seen a beaver on these lands and waterways, and certainly never in saltwater. Now, he says, "They're everywhere — every square inch of the Delta."
>
> New research confirms . . . Driven by climate change, North America's most famous rodent is moving into the Far North, with cascading consequences for waterways, wildlife and a way of life.

Leadership is required.

I look around this chamber. It is staggering how leadership flows from every seat, from each one of you — years of leadership and unique experiences — yet we all have a common goal. Regardless of where we sit in the chamber, or why, that common thread is public service, working on behalf of the people of Canada. You all know it. You show it. You live it. I see it. I feel it. I respect it. I don't want to discount it in any way, shape or form. Yet, that is exactly what I expect from senators in the Senate of Canada: leadership.

• (1800)

Not to discount it in any way at all, yet, it is the obvious place to look for leadership: the Senate of Canada. Sometimes, though, it is the not-so-obvious place where I have found something a little bit more. Sometimes, the boat needs to be rocked or the needle needs to move in a different direction. Folks in the Maritimes know — from coast to coast to coast — that if the needle moves one degree or the ship moves one degree, the direction changes.

What I am asking us to do is to engage in untethered, innovative thinking, unencumbered by protocol, filled with bravery and grit. Voices that are, perhaps, quieter than ours, but that are maybe more fiercely determined because they see a future that is theirs to shape but is not in their hands.

There is youth leadership from all the communities we serve: extraordinary leadership, brave and fierce. Those are the leaders of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly. Many people describe young people as our future leaders, always with warmth, caring and kindness, of course.

Sometimes, my friends, it is a bit performative: acknowledging our future leaders, our young people and the future leaders of our communities and our country. I categorically and absolutely disagree with that. I disagree. They are absolutely not our future leaders. They are leading today, both where it is obvious and where it is not. Young people in Canada are showing extraordinary leadership today.

I had the privilege of working alongside young people several years ago and have continued to do so for many years since. With youth leading the way, the digital e-mental health space was literally reshaped, and it was not rocket science. It was simply good, common business sense.

I looked around a board table at Kids Help Phone, or KHP — and I am still plugging the only 24-7 e-mental health digital solution for young people in Canada — in 2017 and wondered how this table of mostly bankers and lawyers from Toronto or some of the big business hubs across the country were going to lead with clarity "on behalf of young people."

It was an "aha moment." They should not lead "on behalf of young people." What they should be doing is leading "alongside and with young people."

Quite simply, here is where it is not rocket science: We changed our bylaws — that's quite simple — to require an ex officio voting member on the board of directors and on every single standing committee of that board to have a member from our national youth council. If not, the board would be out of compliance, which is a really big governance deal.

At the same time, since we did that — opening up the bylaws — we did the same thing for the Indigenous Advisory Council and our Black Advisory Council. Onto the board as ex officio voting members, and note that 50% of all of those councils are youth from coast to coast to coast.

What happened as a result of that? Youth co-created every single service program. Youth shifted the strategic direction of a national organization. They showed up at these lofty governance tables, prepared and ready to serve. They used their voices with courage.

Can you imagine being in your first year of university and sitting around a table, like us? That was pretty intimidating, and yet they did it. They unlocked, in fact, the potential of KHP, including its new brand and its foray into innovation. The reason why we moved into artificial intelligence, or AI, was because of the youth. Then a global pandemic shut the world down. That was pre-pandemic, and KHP has accelerated 250% since then in every part of the business: from the front lines through to funding. That would not have happened without the youth leaders at every decision-making table.

Youth are the epitome of leadership then and today. I tell that story because it should not be hard to be inclusive, inviting those that we serve to the decision-making tables. That should not be hard. Also, colleagues, it is a good business decision.

Our job as adult business leaders is not to applaud the leadership from our own seats, warmly congratulate young people or feel proud of them and then move on. Our job is to bring those leaders of today to the table, hear them, see them and ensure that they are at the table to help shape decisions that will define the future for us all.

That is why I feel so much urgency and enormous respect for the work of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly. This incredible group of leaders sat right here in this chamber last fall in our decision-making seats. I love that symbolism. It was a "wow moment" for me.

You may or may not have heard me say, "Know who you are, and you'll know where you should go." These young people who were sitting in this chamber knew who they were and exactly where the heck they, and we, should go with regard to climate. They sure did. The Canadian Youth Climate Assembly matters. It moves the needle, and I love how they laid it out.

Their voice was clear, and their message to parliamentarians was clear: Don't just talk about climate change; be accountable to actionable change. The future depends on it.

The report that they produced is trailblazing, and it must be considered. The report speaks openly about eco-anxiety, grief, frustration and emotional distress linked to climate change. It reflects a generation that is carrying real emotional weight as they consider what the future may hold. This matters deeply.

Data tells the story — and you know I had to go to data — on the impact of climate change to youth and their well-being. A couple of years ago, for the first time, climate or environmental anxiety made it into the top 10 reasons why young people were reaching out to KHP, and it moved to the sixth-most significant reason.

I want to give you the magnitude of the numbers: 4.5 million interactions a year. That's a significant number. That's not a great top 10 list to be on. By the way, when young people reached out about climate anxiety, they were also most likely to talk about hopelessness.

Now, let's move on to hope — my favourite. Kindness, leadership, courage and hope, because I am filled with hope.

I was in this chamber with the leaders of the Youth Climate Change Assembly. They were not, "Woe is me." They had strong ideas. They were not, "Do something for me." Not at all. They felt a great deal of worry and concern, for sure, with even a bit of an edge of hopelessness. Yet, they were energized, and they showed up fully with real solutions and strategies. It is in that report.

They were not passing the buck over to the adults or passing it up to people like us. They asked us to own it — just like they owned it — as leaders in this chamber, and that is what gives me so much hope: that kindness, courage, hope and leadership. You don't have to look far for it. You just have to look to the young people today. That is obvious.

I thank you, Senator Coyle, and all of the Senators for Climate Solutions, for the work you have done because it matters. I thank the young people who sat in this chamber. Their leadership is obvious.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

VITAL ROLE OF IMMIGRANTS

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

Hon. Amina Gerba: Honourable senators, I am speaking today from the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg in response to Senator Loffreda's inquiry about the importance of immigration.

I would like to thank Senator Loffreda for this timely inquiry that is deeply rooted in this country's present. It prompts us to re-examine a truth too often ignored in public debate. His words remind us that immigration is not just one of many public policies. It lies at the very heart of the Canadian identity and the vision we all share.

[*English*]

Immigration is not a footnote to our national story. It is a central chapter. It is the foundation of who we are and who we are still becoming.

[*Translation*]

I would like to comment as both a senator and a first-generation immigrant. I was born in a tiny village in Cameroon, and I arrived in Canada exactly 40 years ago, accompanying my husband, who was then a Canadian International Development Agency scholar.

I came here driven by the desire to build a better life for our family. Like so many other Canadians, we had to start from scratch. We had to understand our new environment, learn the rules and prove ourselves day after day.

Nothing was given to us. We built everything ourselves, but this country offered us something essential: a real opportunity to grow, to dare, to build.

[*English*]

Canada did not guarantee success. What it offered to us was far more powerful: a fair chance to build, to contribute and to belong.

[*Translation*]

My journey was nothing unusual. It's part of a collective history shared by millions of people who chose, before me and with me, to build a future for themselves here and contribute all they had to offer to this country.

Honourable senators, as I mentioned during the second reading of Bill S-215, with the exception of Indigenous Peoples, who have lived on these lands since time immemorial, we all share practically the same immigration story. This shared reality deserves to be recognized, accepted and handed down. Canada was built and is still being built by women and men who came here from other countries, filled with courage, resilience and hope.

At a time when insular and divisive discourse is gaining ground around the world, we have a responsibility as parliamentarians to clearly reiterate that immigration is an asset to Canada when combined with accommodation, integration and recognition policies that live up to our values.

[*English*]

Inclusion is not naive. Inclusion is not weakness. Inclusion is nation-building, and, in today's world, it is a strategic strength.

[*Translation*]

Recognizing the importance of immigration does not mean denying the challenges it may present. On the contrary, it involves choosing to respond to these challenges lucidly, responsibly and compassionately, without ever forgetting what immigration has helped to build and what it continues to contribute to our country.

Economically speaking, the facts are clear: Immigration supports our growth, addresses sector-specific labour shortages and drives innovation. Demographically speaking, immigration has become essential given our aging population. Socially speaking, immigration enriches our communities by bringing diversity, creativity and an openness to the world.

Senator Loffreda rightly pointed out some examples of outstanding entrepreneurs. These stories show that immigrants are not just participants in our economy. They are helping to build it.

We often celebrate great Canadian icons without always remembering that they came here through immigration. Take Michaëlle Jean, who came to Canada as a refugee from Haiti and went on to become Governor General. She is the perfect example of how our institutions can recognize the highest level of commitment, talent and service. Another example is Dany Laferrière, who also came from Haiti and became one of Canada's greatest writers and a member of the Académie française. His work has put Canadian literature on the map.

Consider the very foundations of the knowledge economy. Canada is now a world leader in AI thanks to researchers like Geoffrey Hinton, an immigrant and Nobel laureate, and Yoshua Bengio, a Turing Award winner who comes from an immigrant family. The work of both of these men has shaped modern AI.

Another person who comes to mind is Abdoulaye Baniré Diallo, a professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal who is originally from West Africa and whose work in bioinformatics and AI directly contributes to the advancement of scientific research, responsible innovation and discussions on the governance of AI in Canada and around the world.

Economically speaking, there are entrepreneurs like German-born Tobias Lütke who are building world-class companies in Canada. His company Shopify supports millions of small businesses internationally.

We recognize these women and men as great Canadians, and rightly so, but their stories also remind us of a fundamental truth: Immigration is at the heart of Canada's success.

[*English*]

Immigration does not weaken Canada's success. It strengthens Canada. It helps Canada grow and ensures its long-term sustainability.

[*Translation*]

By supporting Senator Loffreda's inquiry, we are sending a clear message that Canada thrives because it welcomes people, because it integrates them and because it believes in the contributions made by those who choose to build their future here.

[*English*]

By supporting this inquiry, we affirm a simple truth: In Canada, your origins do not define your destiny. Everyone has a place, a voice and the opportunity to leave a lasting mark on our shared country and history.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, it's now up to us to live up to this promise and to ensure that it remains a reality for those who choose Canada. Thank you for your attention.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

(*At 6:21 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.*)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

CONTENTS

Tuesday, April 28, 2026