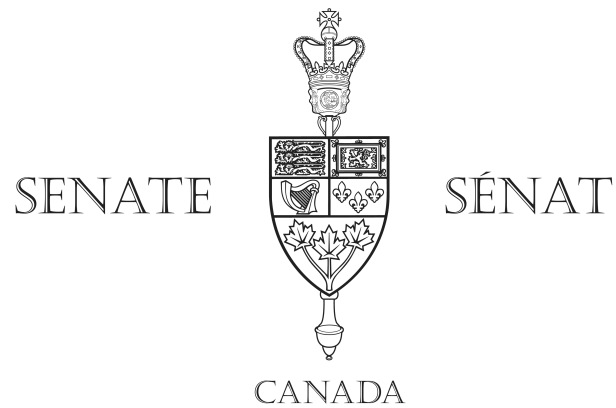




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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 8, 2026

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

CONTENTS

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

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THE SENATE

Thursday, October 8, 2026

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I would like to take a moment to remind you to silence your mobile devices and to turn off the vibration once the sitting has begun and to avoid touching your microphone with papers when giving a speech in the Senate.

Vibrating devices on desks, which extends to seatmates of a senator giving a speech, and impact noises from accidentally hitting a microphone could incur interruptions in interpretation. Thank you very much.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

CANADIAN FORCES SNOWBIRDS

Hon. Denise Batters: Honourable senators, next week in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, we will celebrate the fifty-fifth anniversary of the jewel of the Royal Canadian Air Force — the Snowbirds. As part of those festivities, the team will perform its last full Canadian show at its home base of 15 Wing Moose Jaw. I am beyond grateful to be invited to witness it, but this time it's not only the Snowbird season closer — it's potentially forever.

The Liberal government decided to ground the Snowbirds and replace their Tutor jets with prop planes sometime in the early 2030s. Until at least then, this beloved squadron is on hiatus. According to those who know — former Snowbird team leads — such an extended full stop in the hands-on training of Snowbird pilots in aerobatic manoeuvres is unwise and profoundly unsafe.

This doesn't have to happen. The federal government can and should do the right thing and change its mind. They should listen to the thousands of Canadians who are sending the Prime Minister postcards and signing petitions to keep the Snowbirds flying. The government must consider what they are forcing Canadians to sacrifice by putting the Snowbirds on the chopping block.

Clearly, the Snowbirds are Canada's best military recruitment tool. To witness the team of nine Snowbird jets flying in formation is breathtaking. From the first roar of the engines, you can't help but feel shivers down your spine, and as they rip across that boundless Prairie sky, they are pure power and grace. The jets streak and dance high above the awestruck upturned faces of the crowd below. They stir hope and pride with every daring, intricate manoeuvre.

How many Canadian children have been inspired to dream about becoming pilots after watching their first Snowbird show? So many have said that it was exactly the case for them, and on the way to achieving their dreams, many proudly served in the Canadian military and trained as pilots at 15 Wing Moose Jaw.

Take, for example, Maryse Carmichael, the first female pilot to fly with and lead the Snowbirds. She said seeing the Snowbirds perform at a Bagotville, Quebec, air show when she was 6 or 7 planted a seed.

Carmichael's prominent role with the Snowbirds, in turn, inspired other young girls to dream big. Captain Sarah Dallaire, the second female Snowbird pilot, also attended air shows as a child. She said:

I saw Maryse Carmichael when I was 12-years-old and that put a flame in my heart that I wanted to follow for the rest of my teenage years.

And Canadian astronauts Jeremy Hansen and now Joshua Kutryk, who is currently at the International Space Station, trace their roots back through their military jet training at 15 Wing Moose Jaw.

Last year, in the face of threats to Canadian sovereignty, the remade "My name is Joe, and I am Canadian" ad closed with a shot of the Snowbirds doing the Maple Split over Parliament's Peace Tower because there is nothing more Canadian than that.

This Liberal government needs to consider the gravity of its decision to ground our Snowbirds, because silent skies won't inspire the next generation of Canadian children to dream big.

Thank you.

[Translation]

NURSING HOME WITHOUT WALLS

Hon. Dawn Arnold: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a New Brunswick innovation that is revolutionizing the way Canadians age: Nursing Home Without Walls.

[English]

Evidence-based and developed in 2019 by Dr. Suzanne Dupuis-Blanchard and her team at the Université de Moncton, Nursing Home Without Walls hires additional staff while benefiting from the expertise and space inside our nursing homes and extends them out into the community so older adults can stay in their homes longer.

The concept is simple, but the results speak for themselves. In the pilot evaluation of 375 older adults, 97.2% said staying home for as long as possible mattered deeply to them, and by the program's end, 97.9% would recommend it to others.

[Translation]

One participant said it best when she stated that, even though she did not know what to do in an emergency, she knew that Nursing Home Without Walls would know what to do. She described the program as a lifesaver. Honourable senators, this is exactly what a good social innovation looks like. It isn't flashy, but it changes the lives of those who need it most.

[English]

What started as a small pilot in four New Brunswick communities — Lamèque, Inkerman, Paquetville and Port Elgin — has grown to 39 nursing homes across our province. And New Brunswick's success is no longer staying within our borders. Healthcare Excellence Canada is now partnering with Université de Moncton to spread this model across the country, with jurisdictional partners in Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec and Saskatchewan already building their own versions of what was started in New Brunswick.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, New Brunswick is leading the way for Canada when it comes to addressing one of the most pressing challenges of our time: how to help our aging population live with dignity, independence and solidarity. This once again proves that our province is Canada's innovation playground, the place where good ideas take root and grow into models that the rest of the country wants to follow.

[English]

I want to thank Dr. Dupuis-Blanchard and everyone involved in Nursing Home Without Walls for this remarkable contribution to seniors' care in New Brunswick and beyond. And thanks to all the innovators who were here with us last night at the New Brunswick Research & Innovation Showcase and to all of you who attended. Thank you, *wela'lin*.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Garner Ney, accompanied by his family. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Wells (*Alberta*).

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Senator Arnold]

YOUTH SUPPORT FOR INCLUSION

Hon. Kristopher Wells: Honourable senators, as millions of Canadian children return to school this fall and as the NHL drops the puck on a new season, I want to tell you a story about an 11-year-old boy named Garner.

• (1340)

With the permission of his parents, I will share his story with you today. I am honoured to tell you that Garner and his family are joining us in the gallery.

Garner plays U11 A hockey for the North Shore Thundercats in a small community between Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. He is also a passionate figure skater. For several years, Garner has proudly wrapped Pride Tape around his hockey stick every time he steps onto the ice because, for him, it is more than tape; it is a symbol of acceptance, inclusion and the belief that everyone deserves to feel welcome in the game they love.

This past season, Garner's coach removed Pride Tape from his stick during a game and told Garner it was inappropriate. The coach replaced it with plain black tape. Garner was 11 years old. Through these actions, Garner was implicitly told that his support for inclusion was something to be ashamed of. After the game, Garner removed the black tape and put Pride Tape back on his stick.

This happened several more times. Each time, his Pride Tape was removed. Each time, Garner found a way to stand by his values. He and his family filed a formal complaint with their hockey association. In the months that followed, Garner experienced diminished ice time and was punished, in effect, for having the courage to stand up.

His mother asked Garner one question: "Knowing everything that happened, would you do it again?" His answer was immediate: "One hundred per cent." He told her he never wanted another child to go through what he did. Garner, that is not the answer of a child; that is the answer of someone who already understands what it means to lead.

Garner finished his season at the Tournament of Champions in Wawa with Pride Tape on his stick, where he scored six goals and added five assists.

As our children return to schools and arenas across this country and as NHL players lace up their skates for a new season, let us all remember Garner and what it costs for an 11-year-old boy to simply say: "Hockey is for everyone."

Garner, what you did this past season took the kind of courage most adults never find. You never stopped believing that kindness and inclusion were worth standing up for. At 11 years old, that instinct is exactly what makes Canada a better place.

We are all so very proud of you. Thank you, Garner.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of members of Canada's Air Effects Team who participated in Project Convergence-Capstone 6, a major military modernization exercise with Five Eyes allies. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Deacon (*Nova Scotia*).

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

CANADA'S AIR EFFECTS TEAM

Hon. Colin Deacon: Honourable senators, I'm honoured to recognize the achievements of Canada's Air Effects Team, many of whom are with us in the gallery today.

Colleagues, creating sovereign supply chains requires enormous effort and focus. Consider our military, where an estimated 75 cents of every procurement dollar lands in the United States. The creation of sovereign capabilities depends on Canada developing a strategic capacity that meets an evolving need among allies and has uses beyond the military. It requires global competitiveness in select sectors where we have the ability to lead and partnerships between deployed personnel and private sector innovators.

This last point is vital if we're to innovate and iterate fast enough to compete, and Canada just proved we can. At a recent Five Eyes military modernization exercise involving roughly 14,000 personnel, Canada's Air Effects Team achieved two firsts: its first autonomous, optionally piloted aircraft flying with a military call sign and, together with the United Kingdom, its first strike on a vehicle using a one-way drone.

Allies noticed immediately and were effusive. The U.K. officer leading the multinational brigade responsible for intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance said that without Canada's sensor-equipped autonomous aircraft, the brigade "would have been blind for the majority of the execution."

It was a true team effort involving the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Canadian Armed Forces, National Research Council Canada, Defence Research and Development Canada and a private sector innovator called Ribbit. About 15 deployed personnel were backed by more than 20 behind the scenes. Government, the military and industry broke down silos and built an agile partnership, a model for future innovation. What they did cuts against our established procurement practices.

The lesson? Embrace mission command. Give leaders maximum freedom to deliver with real authority and clear priorities. Build if we can, partner if we can't and buy only as a last resort. Let innovation be organic, even chaotic, rather than institutionalized and siloed. Give public servants the autonomy and risk tolerance to make decisions and then assess their impact independently. Procurement is now an operational capability. We must learn how to quickly move from prototype to impact.

The opportunity for Canada is massive. We could become a global leader in autonomous systems that team with helicopters and other crewed aircraft. This is an area few allies are pursuing, with applications in search and rescue, forest fires, border patrol and defence. Canada's Air Effects Team demonstrated it can be done, so let's celebrate and scale this up.

Colleagues, if you can, please join me upstairs in the Senators' Lounge to meet and congratulate this impressive team. They deserve our hearty congratulations. Thank you.

VICTORY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

Hon. Jim Quinn: Honourable senators, today I have the honour of following in the footsteps of my esteemed colleagues from New Brunswick, several of whom have already spoken to the entrepreneurial spirit that excels in our province of New Brunswick.

Today, I want to recognize Victory Advanced Technologies, a Saint John company building some of the toughest industrial motors in the world. Founded in 2021, Victory Advanced Technologies designs, manufactures and tests explosion-proof and mobility electric motors, all engineered and built in-house in our hometown of Saint John, New Brunswick. Their motors are made for environments where failure is not an option: aerospace, defence, refineries, oil field operations, bulk fuel terminals and other hazardous locations where reliability and safety are everything.

What sets Victory Advanced Technologies apart is that they do it all under one roof. From CNC machining and coil winding to circuit board design and firmware development, the entire process from concept to finished product happens in their own facility. That kind of vertical integration is rare, and it means faster development, tighter quality control and the ability to scale from a single prototype to full production.

Victory Advanced Technologies' team brings deep experience in power electronics, embedded systems and advanced manufacturing, and they have chosen to build that expertise in Saint John, which is known for its skilled workforce, port and strong industrial roots. Their motors are now trusted by customers across North America and around the world.

Companies like Victory Advanced Technologies show what is possible when talent, ambition and hard work come together in New Brunswick. This is what innovation looks like in practice, and it is a big part of why New Brunswick continues to prove itself as Canada's innovation sandbox.

Congratulations to the team at Victory Advanced Technologies on their continued growth and success. Thank you.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of members, volunteers, youth and students from the Armenian General Benevolent Union in Canada, led by Chahé Tanachian and Hagop Arslanian. They are the guests of the Honourable Senators Housakos and Loffreda.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

ARMENIAN GENERAL BENEVOLENT UNION

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, I am proud to rise in tribute to the Armenian General Benevolent Union as we celebrate an important milestone in its history: its one hundred and twentieth anniversary.

[English]

Known globally as AGBU, the Armenian General Benevolent Union was founded in Cairo in 1906 with a simple yet profound mission: to improve the lives of Armenians through education, humanitarian assistance and development.

On this special occasion, it is an honour to welcome members, volunteers and youth leaders from the Armenian community who have travelled from Montreal to join us in the gallery. Their presence serves as a powerful reminder that the values that inspired AGBU's founders 120 years ago continue to live on through a new generation determined to carry that legacy forward.

• (1350)

A few years after its foundation, AGBU's mission became especially important in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide. AGBU provided food, shelter, education and medical care to the survivors, helping thousands rebuild their lives and preserve their identity in the face of adversity. Through its compassion and determination, it became a beacon of hope for a people striving not only to survive but to flourish.

Over the generations that followed, AGBU continued to support Armenian communities wherever they faced hardship, while investing in their long-term development through education, leadership programs, cultural initiatives and humanitarian projects. AGBU has also demonstrated that service is about more than meeting immediate needs; it is about restoring dignity, creating opportunities and empowering future generations.

[Senator Quinn]

One hundred and twenty years later, AGBU's impact has been significant, widespread and meaningful, and its reputation has been inspiring. Today, AGBU stands as the world's largest Armenian non-profit organization, guided by the principle that has defined its work from the beginning: "In Unity is Strength."

Canada is home to a vibrant and thriving Armenian community, whose members have enriched our country's social, economic and civic life. Their success reflects one of Canada's greatest strengths: our ability to welcome newcomers, help them integrate into the Canadian fabric and, at the same time, encourage them to preserve and celebrate their culture.

The Armenian-Canadian experience is a powerful example of how cultural heritage and active citizenship together make our country stronger. In other words, in unity is strength.

Honourable senators, please join me in recognizing the Armenian General Benevolent Union's extraordinary 120-year legacy of service, resilience and leadership, and in celebrating its commitment to strengthening Armenian communities and inspiring future generations.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Visita Sirin Leelaratna, accompanied by a delegation of female monastics — or Bhikkhunis — and representatives of the Buddhist Heritage Month initiative. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Woo.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

2025-26 ANNUAL REPORT TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2026, pursuant to the *Official Languages Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. 31(4th supp.), s. 66.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

[English]

BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO TRAVEL—STUDY ON
STRENGTHENING OF FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS' ARTS, CULTURE
AND HERITAGE RESPONSIBILITIES—FOURTH REPORT OF
COMMITTEE ADOPTED

Hon. Allister Surette, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, presented the following report:

Thursday, October 8, 2026

The Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages has the honour to present its

FOURTH REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Wednesday, October 29, 2025, to examine and report on the strengthening of federal institutions' arts, culture and heritage responsibilities in official language minority communities and in Canada, respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027:

- (a) to travel inside Canada.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:05, section 1(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

ALLISTER SURETTE

Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix A, p. 1209.)

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

Senator Surette: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(f), I move that the report be adopted now.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION BILL, NO. 2

SEVENTH REPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY, DEFENCE AND
VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Tony Ince: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, which deals with the subject matter of those elements contained in Division 16 of Part 4 of Bill C-31, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

(Pursuant to the order adopted June 10, 2026, the report was deemed referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

TWELFTH REPORT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Rosemary Moodie: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the twelfth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, which deals with the subject matter of those elements contained in Divisions 9 and 12 of Part 4 of Bill C-31, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

(Pursuant to the order adopted June 10, 2026, the report was deemed referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

SIXTH REPORT OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, which deals with the subject matter of those elements contained in Division 17 of Part 4 of Bill C-31, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

(Pursuant to the order adopted June 10, 2026, the report was deemed referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[Translation]

SIXTH REPORT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL
TRADE COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which deals with the subject matter of those elements contained in Division 11 of Part 4 of Bill C-31, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

(Pursuant to the order adopted June 10, 2026, the report was deemed referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

• (1400)

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

CANADA-EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS

Hon. David M. Wells: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Senator Moreau, the Prime Minister has spoken about building the “deepest possible partnership” with the European Union, extending beyond our current defence partnerships, trade partnerships through the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, the Arctic cooperation and many other transatlantic partnerships with our friends across the ocean.

There has been public reporting that this new “deepest possible partnership” will include payment systems, firefighting services, Ukraine defence and possibly other things.

I have had numerous bilateral meetings with European countries over the last two weeks — more than 10. They are asking me what this will entail.

Leader, what are Canada’s obligations? What will Canada have to deliver to Europe? What conditions will Canada have to submit to under this “deepest possible partnership”?

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

As the Prime Minister indicated this morning during a press conference, there will be an important meeting with our European counterparts in the coming weeks in Montreal, and that information will probably be made available at that time.

The idea is to forge closer links with our European allies, to continue diversifying our economy and to ensure that Canada builds a stronger economy so that we can create jobs here in Canada and so that we can benefit from trade partnerships that may be generated from those discussions.

Senator D. M. Wells: Thank you, leader.

I support, obviously, closer relations with Europe, and I think most Canadians agree with that. The strategy of diversifying our partnerships is important and necessary.

Will these questions be raised for discussion or debate before Parliament, or will Canadians be advised of them after the fact?

Senator Moreau: The Prime Minister maintains a very open, public disclosure of the discussions. Some of them may happen behind closed doors. As you probably know, that is the case for most commercial agreements before they are published.

However, I’m confident that the government is quite open to informing the Canadian public about what is going on with our allies. I say that because all that could come out of this —

[Translation]

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

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

IMMIGRATION LEVELS

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, when asked about the 1985 *Singh* decision, which is a fundamental precedent in Canadian asylum law, the failed Minister of Immigration brushed it off, claiming that there were many Singhs and many decisions.

I wish I could say that this is an isolated slip-up. The truth is, however, that it is par for the course amid a reckless pattern of ministerial incompetence that has defined the government’s handling of immigration.

Now, Prime Minister Carney is signalling plans to increase immigration levels again, but we haven’t made any structural changes to a broken immigration department, and we have the same incompetent immigration minister in place. So how is this chamber and how are the Canadian people expected to assume that this old minister and old system of immigration can actually handle the increased level of immigration?

Senator Martin: Terrible.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I will let you comment on the competency of the minister, but we ought to be respectful in this chamber of all members in the other place, just as they are respectful of us.

This is the case whether they represent the government or the opposition. The same rule should apply here in the Senate.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, you know that I have the utmost respect for all our colleagues. All I'm simply doing is calling it what it is: I'm calling an incompetent minister "incompetent" because she has proven it in the past.

I'm merely asking a simple question. We have an immigration department that has failed, and we have seen over the last few years that it has created an economic scarcity crisis. There was a scarcity in housing, and it helped cause inflation to creep up.

Now, I respect the decision of the Prime Minister — and it's a valid one — to increase immigration levels. Nevertheless, how can we trust this minister and this department to handle it when they have failed in the past when dealing with larger amounts of —

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, senator.

[English]

Senator Moreau: Under the new government's 2026-2028 Immigration Levels Plan, asylum claims were down by one third, foreign students were down by two thirds, foreign workers were down by one half, and the government met all its target ranges for the first time in a decade.

I think the immigration system is working, Senator Housakos.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Jane MacAdam: Senator Moreau, my colleagues in this chamber and I have emphasized the importance of the Public Accounts of Canada. The government has indicated that its new approach to budgeting, including a capital budgeting framework and a fall budget cycle, is intended to improve transparency, enhance financial reporting and strengthen parliamentary oversight of public spending.

The public accounts include the audited financial statements of the Government of Canada and present the actual financial results compared to the budget. It is one of the most important financial accountability reports of the government.

It has been over six months since the last fiscal year ended, and the public accounts for the year that ended March 31, 2026, have not been released. When will the public accounts for the year that ended March 31, 2026, be released?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator MacAdam. The government recognizes the importance of timely financial reporting and has taken steps to improve the production timelines for the public accounts.

At the same time, as you know, it is essential that the government's financial statements undergo the necessary preparation and audit processes to ensure that the information presented to Parliament is complete, credible and reliable.

The public accounts will be tabled once that work is complete, and, as required under the Financial Administration Act, that will occur no later than December 31.

Senator MacAdam: Thank you, Senator Moreau.

I want to underscore the importance of reviewing and improving the timelines of financial reporting to strengthen parliamentary oversight. The Departmental Results Reports are also a key part of the accountability framework. They indicate the results achieved by the funds spent.

When will these reports be released?

Senator Moreau: The government remains committed to providing parliamentarians with the timely and reliable information they need to hold the government to account.

The Departmental Results Reports are a key part of that framework, providing parliamentarians and Canadians with information on what departments achieved in terms of their plans and expected results, which they established at the beginning of the fiscal year.

My understanding is that the government's established reporting cycle provides that the Departmental Results Reports are tabled subsequent to the public accounts, hopefully, soon thereafter.

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ2+ PEOPLE

Hon. Paulette Senior: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

As we know, it is important for the Government of Canada to support queer and trans communities. In the current political climate, hate is rising, and, in particular, that hate is impacting newcomers and 2SLGBTQIA+ refugees from coast to coast to coast, especially in my home in the Greater Toronto Area, or GTA.

That's why I rise today to ask if the government is planning to renew and expand the Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, including funding to support small volunteer and established queer and trans organizations that show up for refugee claimants day in and day out.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Senior. It's a very important issue.

The government remains committed to advancing equality and supporting 2SLGBTQI+ communities across Canada.

The Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan has delivered important results across its six pillars, which include strengthening community organizations but also employment, justice and global leadership.

Although Budget 2025 already dedicated \$54.6 million to renewing 2SLGBTQI+ programming, the government also dedicated \$7.5 million over five years, with \$1.5 million ongoing for the security of Pride festivals.

I can inform you that the government is currently reviewing the action plan. A decision regarding the future of the program will be announced when they are confident about the path to follow, but the commitment of the government remains unchanged.

• (1410)

Senator Senior: Given that two Canadian provinces have invoked the “notwithstanding” clause to suspend the Charter-protected rights of transgender children and youth, and given the continued rise of hate and violence towards the transgender and LGBTQ community, what steps is the federal government taking to support queer and trans young people and their families, regardless of which province or territory they live in?

Senator Moreau: Senator, the government is committed to the Charter, so it will continue to support the queer community and reaffirm their right to be their true selves.

You are aware, as well, that the Supreme Court of Canada is currently making an important decision with regard to the “notwithstanding” clause, and hopefully, many questions concerning its frequent use will be answered. We will be listening very carefully to what the Supreme Court has to say on this matter.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

DIVERSITY IN FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

Hon. Amina Gerba: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Moreau, employment is an essential factor in building a truly inclusive Canada, so it's important that the Employment Equity Act clearly recognize the various ethnocultural diversities that make up our country, including Black Canadians, as distinct groups. Does the government intend to modernize this act? If so, when can we expect reform?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Gerba, as you know, I can't comment on the progress of legislative work or when the government will announce legislative changes. However, I can tell you that the government remains committed to fostering an inclusive environment where the workforce reflects the diversity of the population.

[Senator Moreau]

I can confirm that the government remains committed to its legislative obligations under the Employment Equity Act. In that regard, it continues to implement the Action Plan for Black Public Servants, which supports career development programs with close to \$50 million in funding.

The Government of Canada wants to create an environment that supports the career development and success of civil servants from diverse ethnocultural groups.

Senator Gerba: Thank you for that response.

Certainly one-off measures are always useful. However, we're discussing employability in the context of a stronger Canada with all of the legislation we're working on. It is probably time to take a closer look at that.

Is the government prepared to set measurable targets to improve the representation of Black Canadians in the federal public service?

Senator Moreau: Senator Gerba, I can tell you that the Treasury Board Secretariat is planning to modernize how it collects demographic data so it can gather more nuanced and detailed information that will be used to improve reporting and program development. The goal is to ensure adequate representation of people from Canada's diverse socio-cultural backgrounds within the public service. Since 2023, the Task Force for Black Public Servants, which is responsible for leading —

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

[English]

FINANCE

ACCESS TO BANKING SERVICES

Hon. Robert Black: Senator Moreau, rural communities in Ontario and across the country face unique challenges that are rarely recognized by the federal government.

In a recent conversation with the Ontario Minister of Rural Affairs, I was informed that rural bank closures and cash access have been flagged as a rising issue impacting rural communities. In fact, nationwide, rural communities are seeing a trend in retail consolidation and rationalization in the financial services sector that are limiting rural communities. According to the Canadian Bankers Association, between 2020 and 2024, Canada saw a 6% decline in bank branches nationwide, closures hitting especially hard in rural communities.

Senator Moreau, the Bank of Canada estimates that 22.5% of rural Canadians live in communities with no bank branch. Rural Canadians already drive an average of 9.6 kilometres to access the nearest bank branch. As bank closures continue to increase, what concrete measures will your government implement to ensure that residents can maintain access to essential banking services?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Black, it's an important issue, not only in Ontario, but across rural communities everywhere in Canada. The government recognizes that having access to essential banking services is particularly important in rural and remote communities, where Canadians may have fewer alternatives when a local branch closes.

While decisions regarding individual branch locations are operational decisions made by financial institutions, federally regulated banks are subject to specific requirements when proposing a branch closure. I know you're aware of that.

That said, this government is committed to increasing choice and competition in Canada's financial sector, including by making it easier for credit unions everywhere in Canada to grow and compete with larger financial institutions. This will probably provide a broader range of services for remote and rural communities.

Senator Black: Senator Moreau, the core problem is that the existing bank branch closure notice regime is essentially procedural but not substantive. Banks must notify others, but the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada has no power to deny, delay or impose conditions on a closure.

How will your government address these policy gaps to ensure that rural communities continue to have access to local bank branches and essential banking services?

Senator Moreau: Senator, you're right. There is no obligation once a decision has been made by the bank. That is why the government is looking more broadly at competition and consumer choice in the financial sector to address this very issue. That includes measures that will make it easier for Canadians to move between financial institutions and make it easier for credit unions to scale and compete.

TRANSPORT

AIRPORT PRIVATIZATION

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, I was surprised to read in today's *The Globe and Mail* that the Vancouver International Airport may become one of the first of Canada's major airports to be privatized.

Can you confirm whether that is, in fact, the government's intention? Does the government believe it is appropriate to begin preliminary discussions with potential investors before consulting Parliament or undertaking the regulatory consultations that experts have said are necessary to protect airport operations, public accountability and the interests of Canadian travellers?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): With respect to airport privatization, the government is looking at new ways to improve airports, passenger experience, regional connectivity and airport operations and, thus, will seek private investment through long-term concessions to operate Canada's four largest airports: Toronto Pearson, Montréal-Trudeau, Vancouver International and Calgary International. This will bring in new capital and expertise, while the federal

government retains ownership of the underlying assets and reinvests in regional and remote air connections. This will be made public. I know there will be debate in the other place, as well as here, probably, on those very important endeavours pertaining to airports in Canada.

Senator Martin: Speaking of expertise, airline industry representatives have repeatedly warned that privatization could lead to higher airport fees, costs that would ultimately be passed down to travellers at a time when Canadians are already struggling with the high cost of air travel.

When will your government introduce legislation on airport privatization so that Parliament and Canadians have an opportunity to fully examine and debate these proposals?

Senator Moreau: We're at the earliest stages of discussion on this matter. The government is aware of the increasing costs across Canada, particularly of airfare and airport organization. I'm sure that will be taken into consideration during those discussions.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

TRADE DIVERSIFICATION

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, yesterday, the Foreign Affairs Committee heard from the Canadian Association of Mold Makers. Their witnesses said that members are evaluating all options amid trade uncertainty with the United States, including where future investment should go, and in some cases, whether operations need to move south.

Leader, we all know who is in the White House. We understand that. However, this government's answer has been to talk about trade diversification, while manufacturers are telling us that the United States is still, by far, their primary market and will be for years to come after Donald Trump is gone.

We are all hearing now from local manufacturers and companies in our ridings and regions across the country that are in the midst of making some tough decisions. They don't have time for the implementation of this market diversification plan because it will take months and, in some cases, years. They want to know what the government's plan is immediately in order to get safe access to markets to sell their goods.

• (1420)

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The government has a very clear plan to protect our industries and our small- and medium-sized enterprises to attract investment. There is constant discussion between the Prime Minister and business leaders and entrepreneurs here in Canada to make them aware that we are doing everything possible to maintain investment in Canada and to maintain their capacity for their industry to grow here in Canada and to diversify our economy. That will benefit those enterprises — small, medium and big corporations as well. The government is committed to

that. Our plan is working, and the Prime Minister will continue to do that — namely in the coming week with the European Union — to continue to diversify our economy.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, companies need to make decisions now. The United States of America is their largest market. We all hear cases where companies are under pressure right now to take decisions in terms of where they are manufacturing. The United States of America, even in the midst of this crisis, still will consume 200% more of our goods than the whole world market combined.

The question is very simple. The government needs to take steps now to solve the problem. We're in an emergency. This diversification idea is something that might take years. These companies will go bankrupt by the time we even build the infrastructure —

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

Senator Moreau: We're committed not to let them go bankrupt. That's the reason why we introduced the Productivity Super-Deduction to acquire factories and equipment faster. We signed a foreign investment promotion and protection agreement with the United Arab Emirates, or U.A.E.

The Prime Minister convened the first Canada Investment Summit that brought investors from 30 countries managing over \$100 trillion in assets to invest here and to help our productivity, our companies and all Canadians.

HEALTH

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Government leader, cardiovascular disease remains one of Canada's leading causes of death and disability, costing our economy more than \$21 billion annually and placing significant pressure on our health care system.

Heart failure alone impacts approximately 750,000 Canadians and is a leading cause of hospitalization. Yet far too many patients continue to face lengthy delays in services, testing and care, resulting in poorer outcomes and inequitable access to services.

The Canadian Cardiovascular Society has proposed a federal partnership, including a \$3-million investment over three years, to establish updated, evidence-based national wait time benchmarks for cardiovascular care. Can the government explain what concrete measures it's taking to improve timely access to care and reduce these unacceptable delays?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Loffreda. The government recognizes the significant impact cardiovascular disease has on Canadians. You're aware that health care services are primarily a provincial jurisdiction. Thus, the federal government can mostly have an arm's-length influence.

[Senator Moreau]

Nonetheless, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the government has supported the Canadian Heart Function Alliance, a national research network that brings together more than 100 researchers from across the country to advance the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care of heart failure. The network is helping to strengthen evidence-based care, improve care coordination, enhance access to services and support better health outcomes for Canadians living with heart failure.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that response. In 2023, the government announced \$568,000 in funding to the University of Ottawa Heart Institute to establish a cardiovascular disease prevention and care network focused on improving women's heart health. The government indicated that the network would help standardize and enhance screening, assessment, diagnosis and treatment practices.

Could you provide an update on this initiative, including how you're monitoring its progress and what results have been achieved to date?

Senator Moreau: Thank you again, senator. The government was proud to have lent support to the women's cardiovascular disease prevention and care network, led by the Canadian Women's Heart Health Centre at the University of Ottawa.

This initiative helped the Canadian Women's Heart Health Centre advance important work aimed at improving women's cardiovascular health and addressing gaps in prevention, diagnosis and care. The government has been proud that its funding helped bring together partners to advance work aimed at improving women's cardiovascular health and addressing gaps in prevention, diagnosis —

[Translation]

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

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

CANADA POST

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: I would like to build on a question that Senator Black just raised a couple of minutes ago with regard to the challenges faced by rural towns and villages that have had a lot of bank closures. There have been two proposals that I think could really help in this area. One has been what has been referred to as postal banking, namely that bank branches could be situated in post offices across the country, with as much as just a single person. This proposal has been around for a while. The other has been to build a Canadian public digital infrastructure, with Canada Post playing a greater role in developing the digital infrastructure across the country, including things like large language models and, importantly, data centres.

Is this something the government could consider, where it works on all three issues together?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. But as Senator Black mentioned — and, obviously, he is right — the decision of establishing a branch belongs, at the end, to the bank itself. That is the reason why the government is looking at increasing competition to facilitate credit unions to establish branches in rural areas.

We witnessed the same thing in Quebec. It's not only in Ontario. We have Desjardins, which replaced many bank branches and was simply replacing the branch with an ATM in rural areas.

I will take your advice into consideration, and I will certainly underline your suggestion to the minister. But I think that the answer remains with increasing competition in rural and remote communities.

Senator Cardozo: Thank you very much, senator. What I am suggesting is basically looking at the mandate of Canada Post and giving it an increased mandate to deal with banking as well as digital infrastructure.

Senator Moreau: I will raise the issue with the procurement minister who is responsible for the Canada Post Corporation.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Krista Ross: Senator Moreau, as you know by many previous questions about the public accounts from myself and my distinguished colleague Senator MacAdam, including one earlier today, they are normally tabled in October with the exception of the last two years.

As a follow-up to her question, I remind you that in 2024, in response to my questions in October, in November and in December on the tabling of the public accounts, Senator Gold said that the Treasury Board committed to tabling the public accounts by October 15 beginning the following year. They were then tabled on December 17, 2024.

In 2025, I asked you about whether they would be tabled by the committed date of October 15, to which you responded that you didn't know, and they were then tabled on November 7, missing the deadline.

You mentioned earlier today that they would be tabled by the end of December, but I am asking again whether the public accounts will be tabled by the previously committed date of October 15.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Well, you have the answer. She answered the question. It's wonderful. Thank you very much for your help.

The idea is this: According to the public bill account, the Financial Administration Act, the limit date is December 31. That's why when you asked the question to me, not to Senator Gold — I'm not sure I was there at the time, but when you asked the question, I was unable to give you a specific date.

I know that the requirement is December 31. My understanding is that the government wants to make sure that the necessary preparation and audit processes are there to ensure that information presented is complete, credible and reliable.

• (1430)

I know that in other places — not in the House of Commons but in other legislatures — there were concerns about the reliability of the information, so we don't want this to happen here.

Senator Ross: Although the requirement is December 31, the commitment of the Treasury Board was October 15. Could you tell me what prevented the Treasury Board from achieving their promised date last year? What have they done to meet their commitment this year? What actions will they take to ensure that they meet their commitment next year?

Senator Moreau: I will ask the Treasury Board to provide me with the answers regarding what happened last year and the reasons they produced it on a certain date. But, once again, the legal requirement is December 31. I will provide you with whatever answer I receive from the Treasury Board on your question.

As far as next year is concerned, I cannot read into the future. Hopefully, it will be as soon as may suit you.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators,

I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the Honourable Senator Robinson on June 15, 2026.

Senator Robinson argued that Senator Moreau offered an interpretation, regarding the different types of committees' orders of reference, that was inconsistent with the *Rules of the Senate*. She proposed that his statement should be corrected to avoid the creation of a precedent that is incompatible with our practices.

By way of background, during a debate held on May 7, 2026, on a government motion concerning the study of the subject matter of various government bills, including the referral of a subject matter study of Bill C-30 to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, Senator Robinson moved an amendment to authorize the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to study the subject matter of Divisions 7 and 8 of Part 3 of Bill C-30. During debate on the amendment, Senator Moreau suggested that the committee could use its general order of reference, adopted by the Senate on September 24, 2025, to undertake this study, and could also report to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance.

After debate, Senator Robinson's amendment was defeated, on division, and the government's motion was adopted by the Senate without amendment.

Before examining the arguments raised concerning orders of reference, it is necessary to recall the question that is before us. The purpose of a point of order is to draw the attention of the Senate to a procedural irregularity or to a failure to comply with the Rules or practices of the Senate. In this case, no aspect of the procedure followed on May 7, 2026, is being challenged. The motion was moved in accordance with the usual practices of the Senate. An amendment was proposed. Senators debated both the motion and the amendment. The Senate then decided on each question according to its usual procedures.

Instead, Senator Robinson contends that an interpretation of the Rules expressed during debate was incorrect and risked misleading senators in the future application of the Rules. However, statements made by senators during debate do not on their own constitute procedural decisions or parliamentary precedents. When a senator disagrees with an interpretation advanced by another senator, the usual recourse is to participate in the debate, ask questions or present counterarguments so that the Senate may consider them before it makes a decision.

Even when an interpretation advanced during debate is disputed or proves inconsistent with established practice, it does not necessarily mean that a procedural irregularity has occurred.

In this instance, the Senate debated the motion, considered the proposed amendment and reached a decision according to the usual procedures. The procedure followed was appropriate, the decisions taken by the Senate remain valid and the proceedings that followed were conducted in accordance with the Rules.

This conclusion alone is sufficient to dispose of the point of order.

Nevertheless, the comments made during debate raise an important question concerning the scope of general orders of reference. Given the importance of this issue for the future work of the Senate and its committees, it is useful to provide some clarification.

I note that rule 12-9(1) provides that "standing committees and standing joint committees are empowered to inquire into and report on such matters as may be referred to them by the Senate." Except for a few committees authorized to act on their own initiative on certain matters, a study may therefore only be undertaken by a committee pursuant to an order of reference from the Senate.

Senate Procedure in Practice, Chapter 9, pages 185-186, defines an "order of reference" as follows: "An order of reference is an authorization from the Senate for a committee to undertake a study. It establishes the scope of the study and may confer other powers the committee needs to conduct the study."

A distinction is generally made between orders of reference related to the examination of legislation and those concerning the study of a particular topic or issue, commonly referred to as special studies. These two categories rest on distinct mandates.

Studies related to bills occupy a particular place in the work undertaken by the Senate. Unlike special studies, they are directly connected to the exercise of the Senate's legislative function. For that reason, the Rules establish specific mechanisms through which the Senate may authorize such studies and determine their scope. As for studies on the subject matter of bills, these are permitted under rule 10-11, which establishes the applicable procedure.

The order of reference to which Senator Moreau referred on May 7, 2026, was adopted by the Senate on September 24, 2025, and authorizes the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry "to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to agriculture and forestry." It remains in effect until December 31, 2026. This type of order of reference is commonly referred to as a general order of reference.

The document *Senate Committees Frequently Asked Questions* explains that: "[s]ome orders of reference are fairly broad, giving the committee added flexibility in relation to the scope of the study, while others are very narrow. For example, general orders of reference allow committees to deal with short-term or pressing issues or to hear from agents of Parliament. Another example would be when committees invite Ministers to have them speak to their portfolios which in turn may help the committees choose a specific topic for their special study."

The use of general orders of reference by committees has varied over the years. Some committees have used them alongside special studies with very specific and narrowly defined mandates authorized by the Senate; others have interpreted these mandates more broadly.

It is important to understand that general orders of reference are not blank cheques authorizing committees to bypass the requirement to obtain an order of reference to study a particular matter or issue. More importantly, a general order of reference cannot be used to circumvent the procedures governing the referral of matters arising from legislation to a committee.

I acknowledge that Senator Moreau's comments during the debate were intended to explore the possibilities offered by the committee's existing general order of reference.

Furthermore, a general order of reference, however broad, should not be interpreted as implicitly authorizing something that would ordinarily require an explicit decision of the Senate. The rules, precedents and logic underlying the system of orders of reference all lead to the same conclusion: A general order of reference cannot be used to undertake the study of a bill or its subject matter. A contrary conclusion would risk rendering largely superfluous the provisions of the Rules that expressly establish the mechanisms through which the Senate authorizes such studies.

The conclusion that a general order of reference does not, on its own, authorize a legislative study is reinforced by the events of May 7, 2026. Senator Robinson sought the Senate's express authorization for the Agriculture and Forestry Committee to study the subject matter of Divisions 7 and 8 of Part 3 of Bill C-30. After debate, the latter proposal was defeated. While not necessary to the disposition of this point of order, the result appears to confirm the Senate did not consider that such authority

already existed. It would be difficult to reconcile a contrary conclusion with the explicit decision reached by the Senate at the conclusion of debate.

I also note that committees report to the Senate and not to other committees. Rule 12-21(2) provides that “a committee report shall be presented or tabled in the Senate by the chair or by a Senator designated by the chair.” While the Senate may authorize a committee to take into consideration reports from other committees, this practice does not alter the fundamental principle that reports are first addressed to the Senate.

It was suggested that Senator Moreau’s comments may have deprived some senators of the opportunity to participate fully in the subject matter study of Bill C-30. However, it is important to note that senators may participate in the meetings of committees that have received an order of reference from the Senate and that are of interest to them. Senators may also participate in report stage debates, whether on the subject matter or on the bill itself, as well as in second and third reading debates on the bill, so that the Senate and all Canadians can benefit from their expertise. Accordingly, Senator Moreau’s comments did not prevent senators from participating fully in the consideration of the bill.

Although no procedural irregularity occurred and there are no grounds for a point of order, this matter has nevertheless provided an opportunity to clarify the respective scope of general orders of reference and orders of reference related to the examination of legislation.

• (1440)

[English]

FINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT FOR THE TLEGOHLI GOT’INE BILL

THIRD READING

Hon. Pat Duncan moved third reading of Bill C-27, An Act to give effect to the Final Self-Government Agreement for the Tlegohli Got’ine and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

She said: Senator Martin, thank you for your forthcoming critic’s speech this afternoon.

Honourable senators, *mahsi’cho*, thank you for the support and consideration that you have given to Bill C-27, An Act to give effect to the Final Self-Government Agreement for the Tlegohli Got’ine and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

The support of the Senate has been gratefully received by the community, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Canada.

Senators, there have been occasions when we have been accused of expediting debate on matters such as this. I would like to take a moment to put on the public record why, in this particular circumstance, timely consideration of Bill C-27 is important.

The timing was particularly important. The Tlegóhli Got’ine’s election cycle would have resulted in a new president being elected in the summer because the agreement had not yet received Royal Assent. The Tlegóhli Got’ine made the very practical decision to postpone their election.

This decision avoided requiring a small community to conduct two elections within a very short period of time. Upon Royal Assent, the election can be scheduled, and those who have served the community have indicated their willingness to continue to be of service.

The Senate of Canada pays particular heed to the democratic process, and I feel compelled to remind senators that self-government agreements, such as the one evident in Bill C-27, require ratification by the membership. Membership to vote in the Tlegóhli Got’ine is determined within the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement and the nations themselves. Not voting is considered a “no” vote, and acceptance is very high. The Final Self-Government Agreement for the Tlegóhli Got’ine received an absolute majority after a significant, thorough consultation process.

I also want to very respectfully fully appreciate the work done by all senators on the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples. Colleagues offered sober second thought and considered opinion, noting in their report’s observations that appropriate levels of expertise and funding must be in place, not simply committed by Canada.

Again, those who were able to appear and are intimately involved with the agreement have made commitments to continue their work and outlined a two-year implementation plan. The Tlegóhli Got’ine representatives also advised committee members, following the meeting, that funding had been received and deposited to begin the implementation work of the self-government agreement following Royal Assent.

Colleagues, again, may I express my sincere thanks for your willingness to give Bill C-27 your immediate and very thoughtful consideration? The Tlegóhli Got’ine, the Government of the Northwest Territories, Minister Alty and Canada are most grateful for your efforts. Thank you. *Mahsi’cho*.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, Senator Duncan, for the work that you did on this bill as its sponsor but also for the many years leading up to this time.

I was not able to be at the committee meeting for the study because I was in the chamber, so I just wanted to thank the committee members for the work that they have done on this bill.

Honourable senators, I rise today at third reading of Bill C-27, An Act to give effect to the Final Self-Government Agreement for the Tlegohli Got’ine and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

As we recently observed the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, we are reminded that true reconciliation is an ongoing process that cannot rest on principle alone. It requires remembrance, reflection and concrete action to redress the lasting impacts of past injustices and the structural

inequities that continue to be experienced across generations. It also requires that the commitments we make today be supported by the practical means to fulfill them tomorrow.

As the critic of this bill, I want to state from the outset that I support its passage. Conservatives in both houses of Parliament support the bill. At the same time, as the critic, I have the responsibility in this chamber to shed light on the questions that do still persist and the potential situations that may arise that must be carefully considered.

For an agreement of this importance, good intentions are not enough. Its long-term success will depend not only on what is set out in the agreement but also on whether the commitments that follow are carried out with the transparency and accountability Canadians deserve and the care and foresight necessary to achieve meaningful outcomes. These are not objections to self-government. They reflect our responsibility to help ensure that this agreement rests on a sound and sustainable foundation for the Tłegóhł Got'in Government, or TGG, and hard-working Canadian taxpayers.

Honourable senators, the legislation before us today is the culmination of decades of negotiations and dedication. The 1993 Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement not only obligated Canada to negotiate self-government with five Sahtu communities but also marked a significant step toward meaningful reconciliation. It recognized that reconciliation must go beyond acknowledging past injustices and create pathways toward fairness.

• (1450)

Reconciliation must also recognize Indigenous Peoples' right to greater control over their own affairs and support the exercise of their inherent right to self-government.

Following the Déline Final Self-Government Agreement, the TGG self-government agreement is the second of five potential Sahtu self-government agreements to be advanced. Negotiations began in 2005, followed by a framework agreement in 2007 and an agreement in principle in 2019. The final agreement was signed in 2025, after 20 years. This agreement has been two decades in the making. The legislation before us represents an important and long-awaited step for the TGG. Behind these milestones are years of hard work by leaders, elders, negotiators, community members and their allies whose perseverance deserves our recognition.

This bill gives legal effect to the final self-government agreement for the TGG, recognizing their government and enabling it to exercise authority, make laws and develop programs in key areas of community governance such as citizenship, culture, social services, education and language.

The agreement provides for the foundational laws and institutions needed to govern, including the structure and operation of the legislative council and the procedures through which laws are proposed, enacted and published.

The agreement also gives the TGG jurisdiction over certain jointly held Sahtu settlement lands, subject to written agreements with the other Sahtu groups that share those lands.

At its heart, this agreement recognizes an important principle: Decisions about a community should be informed by the people who know that community best. No matter how extensive consultation may be, those who are part of a community and have lived its realities understand its needs and priorities in a way that distant lawmakers may not or cannot.

Bringing decision making closer to the people affected can help ensure that programs and services reflect local circumstances; preserve language and culture; and respond more effectively to community priorities.

That same principle applies to economic growth where greater TGG control over decisions affecting their community can allow economic priorities to be shaped more closely around their needs and challenges to be addressed more effectively.

The promise of this agreement is, therefore, not simply a change in governmental structures. It is the opportunity to build stronger institutions, support local employment and business development and create greater stability for future generations.

When the agreement takes effect, the TGG will initially operate as an Indigenous government for its citizens rather than as a public government for all residents of Norman Wells. The municipal government of the town will continue to exist and exercise its powers alongside the TGG, unless and until a transition to Indigenous public government takes place under the agreement's provisions.

The latest published estimate from the Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics places Norman Wells's population at 745 as of July 1, 2025, of which 295 are Dene, Métis or Inuit.

During my departmental briefing, which I had after the second reading, officials advised that TGG citizens currently represent approximately 12% of the town's population and that their total number across Canada is approximately 350 people.

These are different measures. The number of Indigenous residents of Norman Wells is not the same as the number of TGG citizens. The figures provided, therefore, indicate a substantial non-TGG majority, which includes both Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents.

Under the agreement, when TGG citizens ordinarily resident in Norman Wells reach at least 70% of the town's population, the TGG may pass a resolution requiring transition. Reaching that threshold does not itself dissolve the municipality.

The agreement also provides for an earlier transition with the agreement of Canada and the territorial government. If the transition proceeds, the town of Norman Wells would be dissolved on the transition date. An Indigenous public government would assume local government responsibility for all residents, in addition to exercising its Indigenous self-government powers under the agreement.

Recognition as a government brings both authority and responsibility. In a public government, that responsibility includes serving Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents fairly and respecting their rights and needs.

The agreement provides for electoral participation by eligible resident Canadian citizens, including those who are not TGG citizens, while establishing distinct rules concerning the presidency, beneficiary council and seats that may be reserved for TGG citizens.

I am pleased to see that the TGG's constitution and the TGG final self-government agreement expressly recognize the application of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to its government and institutions, subject to the qualifications set out in that constitution.

Nevertheless, families deserve a clear explanation of how those arrangements would work in practice; how they would elect their representatives; how local services would continue; and how their interests as residents and property owners would be respected.

When I asked officials about the impact on non-TGG residents, the response emphasized the current 12% figure but did not address the substance of my question. That figure describes the present situation; it does not explain a possible future transition. Some TGG citizens living elsewhere may choose to return. We should not assume that they will do so or that the 70% threshold will inevitably be met.

However, because the agreement expressly provides for a future transition, its implications for everyone who calls Norman Wells home deserve careful consideration. The purpose is not to raise alarm but to ensure that any change proceeds with clarity, continuity and respect for the rights of all residents in the spirit of reconciliation.

As a senator from British Columbia, I am mindful of the questions our province and its citizens have been grappling with concerning the relationship between Aboriginal title and fee-simple private ownership alongside the recognition of Indigenous self-government through legislation enacted by Parliament. Those experiences inform the lens through which I examine Bill C-27 as critic.

This agreement is not the same legal situation as an Aboriginal title dispute, but I am not suggesting that it extinguishes residents' private property rights. However, I am asking that the implications of its governance and land provisions be clearly understood and explained.

I respect the goodwill of the TGG leadership and the Norman Wells council, the dedication of federal and territorial officials and the work of all those who have been at the table over two decades.

• (1500)

With that respect, I simply wish to place these questions on the record so that the interests of both TGG citizens and the wider community remain part of the implementation discussion.

Honourable senators, I want to emphasize that the importance of this agreement makes careful consideration of its implementation processes all the more necessary, especially in light of the many lessons learned over the years from existing self-government agreements.

After second reading, Bill C-27 was referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples. The committee studied the bill and heard from TGG leaders, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and government officials on the agreement and its implementation. I thank the committee members and witnesses for their work in examining this legislation.

I also had the opportunity to meet with departmental officials in a dedicated briefing to review the bill in greater detail. My questions focused on the division of responsibilities between governments, the planning required for implementation and the fiscal and practical implications of the legislation.

As the sponsor of the bill, Senator Duncan, explained at second reading, attention has been given to a two-year period of implementation and continuity of leadership. That should not be confused with the full duration of implementation planning. The community's published explanation of the agreement describes an initial 10-year implementation plan.

Having the flexibility to assume certain powers gradually allows the TGG time to develop expertise and establish the administrative and institutional structures needed for a stable government, rather than having to take on many responsibilities all at once.

However, Tłegóhł Got'ine are a relatively small nation, with approximately 350 citizens in Canada, according to the departmental briefing, and 261 eligible voters in the 2025 ratification process.

Establishing a new government involves responsibilities that require specialized expertise, from financial administration and legal drafting to program delivery and public reporting. This raises a practical question about how the necessary staff, training and administrative support will be secured, particularly when only a portion of the nation resides in Norman Wells.

Let me be clear: This concern is not about whether the TGG are capable of governing themselves, but about whether their government will receive the support essential to its success. Population alone does not determine capacity, and expertise can also be recruited from outside the community.

Nonetheless, it is reassuring that planning for the initial transition is in place, and that President Sherry Hodgson of the Tłegóhł Got'ine Government Inc. intends to remain as president during this period of transition. Continuity of leadership and the experience of those who helped negotiate the agreement will be valuable.

Throughout this process, the federal and territorial governments must also continue to work in partnership with the TGG to ensure they have the resources needed to carry out their responsibilities.

For the TGG to function effectively, it must have reliable and adequate funding. This brings me to an issue on which greater clarity is still needed. In connection with the departmental briefing, I asked whether officials could provide my office with any available costing information related to the implementation of Bill C-27 once the legislation comes into force.

In particular, I requested an estimated overall fiscal profile, including any one-time transition costs and anticipated ongoing funding requirements. I was somewhat surprised that the response did not provide those estimates. Instead, officials explained that certain responsibilities currently carried out by the federal or territorial government would be assumed by the TGG, with funding following those responsibilities.

As I understood that explanation, some funding would be redirected from existing activities rather than represent entirely new expenditure. That distinction is important, but it does not establish the overall fiscal impact. Parliament should be able to distinguish the amounts being transferred for existing responsibilities from any additional costs of transition, administration and ongoing operations.

Nor does a government-to-government relationship mean that the parties have identical jurisdictions or responsibilities. The agreement recognizes the TGG within Canada's constitutional framework, with the powers and responsibilities set out in the agreement.

Officials advised that funding for self-government is determined using collaborative fiscal policy, a standard expenditure-needs model co-developed with self-governing Indigenous governments. This model takes into account factors such as population and the scope of responsibilities assumed, with established methodologies and indexation formulas intended to support predictable and sustainable funding.

The department further explained that, upon the effective date of the agreement, the TGG would receive ongoing funding under this policy to support its governance activities. Officials also indicated that funding amounts would be made available on the Open Government website once Canada transfers the money.

That explanation was helpful in describing the process. However, it did not answer the question about the anticipated cost. A funding methodology tells us how an amount will be calculated. It does not tell us what that amount is expected to be. We should not speculate about whether the eventual funding will be higher or lower than existing transfers. What remains necessary is a clear account of the anticipated amounts, the responsibilities they will support and any additional expenditure required.

Similarly, disclosure of funding after it has been transferred is not a substitute for an estimated fiscal profile while Parliament is considering legislation. Both have a role to play: prospective information supports informed scrutiny, while subsequent disclosure supports accountability for the commitments made.

I recognize that some costs may depend on the pace at which responsibilities are assumed and that funding requirements may evolve. I am not suggesting that every future expenditure can be predicted with precision. But where final amounts are not yet

available, Parliament should be given the best available estimates, the assumptions underlying them and a clear explanation of what remains to be determined.

Existing federal support for the TGG through the Norman Wells Land Corporation provides some historical context. Those transfers, however, should not be treated as an estimate of the cost of establishing and sustaining a self-governing administration. The distinction between existing support, one-time transition costs and ongoing funding requirements is important if we are to understand the fiscal implications of this agreement.

Furthermore, there must be transparency about how much taxpayer money is being allocated and how it is being used. Adequate funding and fiscal accountability are not competing objectives; they are complementary requirements of responsible implementation.

Greater clarity would serve not only Parliament and Canadian taxpayers, but also the TGG themselves. A new government needs a reliable basis on which to recruit staff, establish institutions and plan the delivery of services. Uncertainty about resources should not undermine the promise of an agreement that it has taken so many years to achieve.

Honourable colleagues, these questions about resources and implementation take on added importance when we consider the economic changes now taking place in Norman Wells. Reconciliation is not only about addressing past injustices and present challenges; it is also about laying the groundwork for the long-term success and prosperity of Indigenous communities.

In August 2026, Imperial Oil ended production at its Norman Wells Operations after 106 years. This is a major turning point for a community whose livelihoods and economy have long depended on the oil industry.

According to the company, its annual property tax payments to the town had amounted to approximately \$6 million, representing around 70% of the municipality's budget. The end of production, therefore, raises significant questions about the town's future tax base, employment and economic stability.

• (1510)

At the same time, there are opportunities for economic development in the region. In September, the federal government announced \$405 million to advance the Mackenzie Valley Highway project, including environmental assessment and design work, bridge construction and related infrastructure. These investments can help strengthen regional connections and support future economic activity.

Imperial Oil also anticipates that closure planning, remediation and reclamation will take approximately 20 years. That work may provide continued employment and training opportunities for local residents. Those opportunities are important, but their benefits will depend on meaningful local participation, access to training and the nature and timing of the work. They should not be assumed to replace all the employment and revenue associated with oil production.

My concern is that the TGG will be establishing itself while the community is adjusting to the loss of a major local industry. The loss of a major local industry could have consequences that complicate the work of establishing a new government institution, as reduced economic activity, employment losses and possible population decline could place additional pressures.

It is, therefore, important to ask whether the fiscal and implementation plans have adequately accounted for the effects of Imperial Oil's production shutdown on the town of Norman Wells and the TGG. The town's municipal finances and the new government's funding are distinct matters. Nevertheless, both governments will operate within the same changing local economy, and the practical implications deserve careful consideration.

Despite these challenges, self-government may help the TGG respond more effectively to the changes ahead. Greater authority over their own affairs can strengthen their ability to shape community priorities and participate in decisions and discussions about economic development.

For that reason, it is important to ensure that the TGG have both the authority and the resources to respond to these changes and participate meaningfully in shaping their community's future. The fiscal and implementation plans supporting their government must take account of the economic circumstances in which that government will begin its work.

Honourable colleagues, my support for Bill C-27 is clear. So, too, is my expectation that the federal government provide a more complete account of the anticipated implementation costs and ongoing funding commitments, distinguishing what is known from what remains under consideration. I also expect that the implications of any future transition for non-TGG residents will be clearly explained, including their electoral participation, local services and interests as property owners.

A carefully negotiated agreement deserves equally careful implementation. None of the concerns I have highlighted today diminish the importance of the bill before us. Rather, they are matters that deserve to be clearly understood and placed on the public record as the agreement moves towards implementation.

Bill C-27 is a crucial step in a very lengthy journey. It represents years of perseverance, collaboration and determination by the Tłegóhł Got'ınę people to see their right to self-government become a reality. Their achievement deserves our respect, and their government deserves the opportunity to succeed.

But this journey does not end with the passage of this bill. Our responsibility continues throughout its implementation, through ongoing cooperation, careful oversight and ensuring that the commitments made under this agreement are fulfilled.

It is with this understanding that I support the passage of Bill C-27 at third reading and encourage all honourable colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

LAWFUL ACCESS BILL, 2026

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Baltej S. Dhillon moved second reading of Bill C-22, An Act respecting lawful access.

He said: Honourable senators, thank you for the opportunity to rise as the Senate sponsor and speak on Bill C-22, An Act respecting lawful access.

We live in a world where digital tools are woven into almost every part of our daily lives. There is very little we do that does not intersect with technology — from banking and entertainment to shopping and, importantly, communicating with one another.

While technology has brought many economic, social and cultural opportunities to our world, it has also brought numerous challenges. There are many criminals and bad actors who skillfully exploit these challenges for their own ends. We see digital tools used for money laundering, child sexual exploitation, extortion, human trafficking, auto theft, hate crimes and violent extremism, among many other serious offences.

After 35 years in law enforcement, I have seen how profoundly technology has changed policing. When I began my service, an investigator dealing with a telephone number generally knew which carrier operated the line and which jurisdiction to approach. Today, an investigation may begin with nothing more than a username, an IP address or a message sent through a platform headquartered outside Canada, with data stored in yet another country.

The harm, however, is not virtual. Behind the screen is a real victim: a child being exploited, a senior who has lost a lifetime of savings, a family being threatened or a business owner afraid that the next message may become an act of violence. Most significantly, our digitally connected world has removed many of the geographical barriers that once limited how criminal, terrorist and violent extremist networks could operate.

Actors leverage internet-based communications, social media platforms, chat rooms and digital marketplaces to facilitate their illicit activities. Criminals and other bad actors can now communicate, plan and carry out their activities across borders, often without leaving their homes and while hiding behind layers of anonymity.

To put it into perspective, fraud, identity theft, identity fraud and extortion collectively represented 62% of all online-related crimes in 2024, with fraud being the most commonly reported crime by victims, accounting for 46,301 incidents. It is also a significant vector for child sexual exploitation, with child sexual abuse or exploitation material accounting for 10,786 police-reported online-related incidents in 2024, representing 12% of all online crimes reported to the Canadian police.

These figures reflect only the incidents reported to the police. Many crimes still go unreported, including because victims may lack confidence that police can act effectively under laws that have not kept pace with the speed and complexity of digital crime.

These trends highlight that all forms of communication are being used as a core tool to plan, practise and operationalize illicit activities. Our investigative and intelligence tools must keep pace with modern and sophisticated crime.

The status quo was designed for another era and is increasingly out of step with the way evidence is created, moved and stored today. Law enforcement has told Parliament repeatedly that its tools must be modernized if the police are to investigate serious offences, protect victims and bring offenders before the courts in a timely and effective way.

In major crime investigations, time is not an abstract concern. The first hours can determine whether evidence is preserved, whether a victim is protected and whether an offender is identified before another offence occurs. Digital evidence can be moved, altered or lost with the speed of a keystroke.

• (1520)

That concern came into sharp focus on August 11, when I joined my colleagues Senators Colin Deacon, Katherine Hay and Salma Atallah at Toronto Police Headquarters for a Senate Financial Crime Roundtable. We heard directly from investigators and specialists from police services across Canada. Their message was candid: Financial crime has modernized rapidly, while our legal and institutional response has not kept pace.

Investigators described financial crime as a race against time.

Proceeds of crime and electronic evidence can pass through several accounts, jurisdictions or digital services in seconds, while responses to production orders and related requests may take 30 to 60 days or longer. That experience speaks directly to elements of Bill C-22. An investigation may begin with nothing more than a telephone number, an IP address, an account identifier or a pseudonymous online profile. The confirmation of service demand is intended to identify the provider connected to that lead. A judicial production order can then be sought for

defined subscriber information, and the proposed process for foreign service providers can assist where relevant information is held outside Canada.

The What We Heard report also records a problem of fragmentation. The police, financial institutions, telecommunications providers, regulators and government agencies may each hold one part of the picture. If those pieces cannot be linked lawfully and quickly, opportunities to protect victims or preserve evidence can be lost. Part 2 is relevant because a lawful order is only useful if the provider can locate and produce the information it is legally required to provide. Bill C-22 will not resolve separate issues such as court delays or asset recovery. Its role is narrower: making targeted lawful access more workable while retaining judicial authorization, privacy protections and independent oversight.

When Toronto Police Chief Myron Demkiw testified at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, he emphasized that:

Our role is to prevent these offences, bring offenders to justice and provide a voice for victims who have experienced some of the most difficult of circumstances. However, because technology has evolved so quickly in recent years, we are encountering roadblocks in some of these investigations.

This point was echoed by Thunder Bay Police Chief Darcy Fleury when he said:

This is not about expanding unchecked powers. It is about ensuring that when police have lawful grounds to act, they can do so in a timely way, especially when lives are at risk.

A former president of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police stated:

From online child exploitation to extortion, home invasions, carjackings, drive-by shootings, hate-motivated crime and extremism, lawful access is absolutely essential, and it is needed now. So, on behalf of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, I would like to thank this government, and I hope that all parliamentarians will work together to ensure the safety and security of this country.

Finally, I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to the words of Rob Farrer, President of the National Police Federation, who offered the following perspective on Bill C-22:

Bill C-22 represents a measured and balanced approach to addressing long-standing operational gaps that our members face whilst conducting investigations in the digital age. It takes a significant step towards ensuring that court-authorized investigative orders can be carried out effectively, while preserving judicial oversight and privacy protections. The National Police Federation urges the Senate to swiftly pass Bill C-22 without further weakening its core provisions, ensuring RCMP officers have the lawful powers they need to investigate serious crime, protect victims, and help keep Canadians safe.

Honourable senators, that is the central purpose of Bill C-22: to help protect Canada and Canadians from serious crime by ensuring that lawful investigative steps can be taken without unnecessary delay.

My years in policing taught me something equally important: Investigative authority earns public confidence only when it is exercised within clear legal limits. A warrant is not an inconvenience to justice. It is one of the foundations that give a lawful investigation its legitimacy. Public safety and privacy are not competing luxuries. In a democracy, both must be protected.

As many colleagues will know, Bill C-22 is the product of several iterations. It has been shaped by parliamentary debate, committee studies and input from law enforcement, privacy experts, civil liberties organizations and the technology sector.

At each stage, concerns have been examined and, where possible, reflected in amendments intended to help combat serious crime and hostile state activity while respecting the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

I want to emphasize the importance of that collaborative process. During committee hearings and debate in the House of Commons, amendments were adopted to strengthen and clarify the bill, particularly in relation to cybersecurity, accountability, transparency, oversight and data protection.

In my view, the bill now before us is considerably stronger. It advances an important public safety objective while placing meaningful limits on the exercise of these authorities. Our task in the Senate is to examine whether that balance is clear, durable and workable in practice.

That does not mean every question has been answered; far from it. Technology companies, privacy advocates, civil liberties organizations and legal experts continue to raise concerns about encryption, metadata retention, confidential ministerial orders and international data obligations. Sponsorship of a bill does not relieve the Senate of its duty to test those concerns. It makes that duty more important.

Honourable senators, let me now turn to the substance of Bill C-22. The bill is organized around three central pillars. Together, they form a framework that addresses the complexity of the digital environment while remaining anchored in the rule of law and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

First, it would modernize the legal powers through which law enforcement may obtain information in support of an investigation.

Second, it would ensure that electronic service providers, or ESPs, have the technical capability to respond when they receive a lawful request, production order or warrant.

Third, it would strengthen oversight, transparency and review of lawful access to data and information in Canada. To modernize lawful access authorities, Bill C-22 would create a “confirmation of service” demand. On reasonable grounds

to suspect, a telecommunications service provider could be required to answer a very narrow and limited question: Does it provide, or has it provided, telephone or internet access services to a specified subscriber, client, account or identifier? The answer would be “yes” or “no.” This would help law enforcement or CSIS identify which provider may hold relevant information so that investigators can direct any subsequent judicial application to the right place.

The legal threshold for issuing that demand is “reasonable grounds to suspect.” That is an established Charter standard requiring objectively ascertainable facts and more than a mere hunch. It is lower than “reasonable grounds to believe” because the demand is intended to answer a limited routing question rather than to disclose the content of a communication.

The bill would also create a production order through which a judge or justice could authorize law enforcement to obtain defined subscriber information, such as a name and address, from a service provider.

During the legislative process, the proposed definition of “subscriber information” was narrowed. It now captures information that may identify the subscriber or client and describe the services provided, but not the content accessed through those services.

The Supreme Court’s decisions in *R. v. Spencer* and *R. v. Bykovets* remind us why this distinction matters. An IP address and subscriber information can connect anonymous online activity to a named person and, therefore, engage section 8 of the Charter. Under Bill C-22, obtaining the defined subscriber information would require a judicial production order. The separate yes-or-no confirmation requirement is narrower, but it is a provision that deserves careful attention because even limited digital information can become revealing when combined with other data — the mosaic effect.

• (1530)

Bill C-22 would also modernize search warrant powers for computer data and clarify the conditions that a judge might impose to protect the interests of people whose information could be incidentally captured.

Given the transnational nature of modern crime and the widespread use of cloud services, Bill C-22 would create a new, judicially authorized process allowing Canadian police to request transmission data or subscriber information from a foreign service provider, including social media and artificial intelligence companies, where that information would assist an investigation. The request would not itself compel the foreign provider; production would remain subject to the applicable foreign law and arrangements.

The bill would also enhance international cooperation by facilitating the court-ordered production of specified electronic data in Canada at the request of foreign partners while requiring a Canadian judge or justice to be satisfied that the applicable domestic legal threshold has been met.

Finally, Bill C-22 would codify and clarify a principle already recognized in common law: A police officer does not require a production order, warrant or confirmation of service demand merely to receive or act on information that a person provides voluntarily where that disclosure is otherwise lawful. This does not create a power to compel information nor does it authorize a disclosure that another law prohibits. By stating the principle expressly in the Criminal Code, the bill would help standardize its understanding and application among law enforcement agencies across Canada.

The bill would also clarify when police may receive and act on publicly available information, information required to be provided by law and information obtained in exigent circumstances.

Bill C-22 would also confirm that a judge issuing a transmission data-recorder warrant may impose conditions to protect a person's interests. This can matter where information concerning innocent third parties is captured incidentally. A judge could restrict collection, access, use or retention. The provision permits those protections, although it does not make deletion of unrelated information automatic, which is another issue that the committee might wish to examine.

Let me offer a practical example. Consider a family or small business owner receiving extortion threats through a social media account operated under a pseudonym. The new authorities could help law enforcement identify and locate the person sending those threats more quickly. Police could seek judicial authorization to request the relevant IP address from the foreign company operating the platform. They could then ask Canadian telecommunications providers, through a confirmation of service demand, whether they serve that IP address. Once the correct provider answers "yes," police could apply to a court for a production order requiring the defined subscriber information associated with it, potentially including the suspect's name, address and telephone number.

Under the present system, investigators might have to send voluntary requests or general production orders to several telecommunications companies simply to determine which provider holds the relevant information. That process can consume 30 to 60 days — valuable time — while threats continue, evidence disappears or victims remain at risk.

The proposed process would be more predictable and efficient for investigators and service providers alike, allowing police to move more quickly in fast-moving and devastating cases while preserving judicial authorization for the disclosure of subscriber information.

That example is particularly real for communities confronting extortion. I have heard directly from families and business owners who describe the fear created by a threatening message

received on a phone. For them, delay is not a procedural inconvenience; it is another hour or another night spent wondering whether the threat will be carried out.

For these modernized authorities to work, an electronic service provider that receives a lawful request, production order or warrant must have the basic technological capacity to locate, isolate and produce the information it is legally required to provide. That is why Bill C-22 would enact the supporting authorized access to information act. That act would regulate the technical capabilities electronic service providers need in order to respond to lawful access requirements. It would establish baseline obligations for designated classes of providers to develop and maintain the technical ability to comply with lawful access orders.

I want to be very clear: The new act would not itself create new powers for law enforcement or CSIS to access information. It is intended to ensure that an authority already granted under the Criminal Code or the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act can be carried out effectively.

Put plainly, a court order has little practical value if the provider receiving it cannot identify and produce the information covered by that order. Part 2 is intended to address that operational gap, not to remove the requirement for lawful authority in the first place. The technical requirements would be set out in regulations.

Comparable lawful access capability frameworks exist among our Five Eyes and other democratic partners, although each country has designed its own model and safeguards.

In circumstances not adequately addressed by the regulations, including an emerging technology or threat, the Minister of Public Safety could issue a ministerial order requiring an electronic service provider to establish specified technical capabilities. Such an order would not be valid unless approved by the Intelligence Commissioner. This mechanism would give the government limited flexibility to respond to operational needs and technological change, subject to independent review and a maximum duration of two years. The Intelligence Commissioner would have to assess whether the minister's conclusions were reasonable. The National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA, would receive the order and supporting information for review purposes.

Those are significant safeguards, and the Senate should examine whether they are sufficient for every type of obligation that could be imposed. Regulatory enforcement tools would permit Public Safety Canada to respond to non-compliance through administrative monetary penalties or regulatory offences.

Honourable senators, I have heard the concerns raised by industry and others about these authorities. The need for safeguards was emphasized throughout debate and committee hearings, and those concerns deserve serious scrutiny.

The Governor-in-Council and the minister would be required to consider several factors when developing regulations or issuing ministerial orders, including feasibility, costs, effects on users, privacy and cybersecurity. Every ministerial order would require approval by the Intelligence Commissioner, creating a second and independent level of scrutiny. The order and the supporting record would also be provided to NSIRA.

Metadata retention requirements would be limited to those categories determined by the Governor-in-Council to be essential for effective and timely investigations or CSIS activities for a reasonable period not exceeding six months. The bill expressly excludes the content of communications, web browsing history and social media activity. Metadata is not merely harmless technical information: Patterns showing when, where and with whom a person communicates can reveal intimate details about relationships, movements and associations.

The six-month ceiling and essentiality test adopted in the other place are important improvements. Committee review should still clarify precisely which categories may be retained, who may later access them and what must happen when the retention period expires.

An electronic service provider would not be required to comply with an obligation that would introduce a systemic vulnerability into its electronic protections or prevent it from correcting one. This safeguard is particularly important where encryption, authentication and the security of millions of users may be affected. No government should improve one dimension of public safety by creating a weakness that criminals or hostile states could exploit in another. The committee will need to hear technical evidence on how the term “systemic vulnerability” will operate, particularly where a proposed capability is described as “targeted” but could affect a product, an update system or a wider class of users.

The Minister of Public Safety would also be required to prepare and publish an annual report on the use of these authorities, with an unredacted version provided to NSICOP and NSIRA where the public version contains redactions.

To give another practical example, suppose that law enforcement is investigating the movements of a transnational organized crime group or terrorist cell. A ministerial order could require a provider to maintain the technical capability needed to respond to a lawful demand for location-related information. It would not, by itself, give investigators access to anyone’s location. Actual access would still require the separate legal authority applicable to the investigation.

• (1540)

The distinction is important: capability is not the same as access. The safeguards and oversight in the bill are intended to ensure that neither regulations nor ministerial orders become a shortcut around the warrant and production order requirements found elsewhere in Canadian law. These protections seek to balance the rights of law-abiding people with the need for law enforcement and intelligence agencies to act in a timely way when public safety is at risk.

Honourable senators, Bill C-22 is ultimately about keeping Canada and Canadians safe while remaining faithful to the law that protects us all. Our law enforcement and domestic intelligence agencies work around the clock in a threat environment that continues to evolve. Criminal organizations, terrorists and hostile state actors are using technology in ways that existing legislation and regulations were never designed to address. Technology allows these actors to cross borders, conceal their identities and move evidence or proceeds more quickly than ever before.

As our democratic partners have done, Canada needs a framework that addresses present technology while retaining enough flexibility to respond to what comes next. There is no single Five Eyes model that Canada can simply copy. The United Kingdom and Australia have broad capability regimes, while the United States and New Zealand are narrower in important respects.

Our responsibility is to build a Canadian framework that responds to genuine investigative needs and complies with our Charter, our legal traditions and our commitment to cybersecurity. Law enforcement and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, must be able to adapt, but that adaptability must remain bound by law, independent authorization and meaningful review. Bill C-22 provides a framework for that work.

Canadians expect us to take reasonable and effective action to reduce threats to their safety and their way of life. They also expect their privacy, cybersecurity and Charter rights to be protected. We must provide both assurances: lawful authorities will be exercised when needed, and their exercise will remain transparent, accountable and proportionate.

Trust is key. People are more likely to report crimes, preserve evidence and cooperate with police when they believe authorities will use their powers lawfully and with restraint. Effective policing has always depended on that partnership with the public.

Bill C-22 does not authorize mass surveillance. Its stated purpose is to help law enforcement and CSIS direct their efforts towards real and serious threats through lawful, targeted processes.

Colleagues, I also know we have heard concerns that lawful access capabilities could create cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and Operation Salt Typhoon has frequently been cited as a warning of what can go wrong. However, it is important to look closely at what investigators have said about how that breach occurred, and I quote from Senator Cantwell's opening statement during the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Media Hearing on December 2, 2025:

So how did this happen? Senior national security officials said the breach occurred in large part because telecommunications companies failed to implement rudimentary — rudimentary! — cybersecurity measures. Investigators found legacy equipment not updated in years, router vulnerabilities with patches available for seven years — seven years! — that were never applied, and hackers acquiring credentials through weak passwords.

Used properly, these tools can help identify threats earlier and narrow down where investigative resources should be focused.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the witnesses, stakeholders and members of the House of Commons who offered thoughtful evidence and amendments on Bill C-22, including those who continue to raise concerns about privacy, encryption, cybersecurity and the treatment of metadata.

I encourage honourable senators to continue this collaborative and careful work throughout our debates and committee review. I ask colleagues to support the bill at second reading so that the appropriate Senate committee can examine its provisions closely, hear from those affected and determine whether further clarification or amendment is required. Let us work together to protect Canadians and maintain their trust in the institutions entrusted with their safety. We owe them nothing less.

Canadians deserve to feel safe and secure as they go about their daily lives, and they deserve confidence that public authorities will respect the legal limits placed upon them. Bill C-22 gives us an opportunity to strengthen the security of our country and our communities while upholding the rights and values that define Canada. Let us undertake that work with care and purpose.

As this bill makes its way through the Senate, I expect that colleagues and witnesses will bring forward important perspectives on how its provisions will operate in practice. I want to be clear that supporting the objectives of this bill does not mean treating every provision as beyond improvement. As we hear from service providers, privacy and security experts, law enforcement, civil society and others, there may be areas that merit further consideration without undermining the bill's original purpose. If that is the case, we should be prepared to make those changes.

The true measure of this legislation will not be how much information the government can collect; it will be whether victims are protected sooner, whether serious offenders are brought to justice and whether Canadians can remain confident that the same law empowering the state also restrains it. Thank you.

[Senator Dhillon]

Hon. Denise Batters: Would Senator Dhillon take some questions?

Senator Dhillon: Yes.

Senator Batters: Thank you.

I appreciate your speech. As the critic of this bill, I'm glad to hear you actually say that if the amendments don't take away from the original scope of the bill, you think that the government should accept them, so we'll see if they do.

Yet again, the Liberal government still hasn't made its Gender-based Analysis Plus document for Bill C-22 public, even though this bill was first introduced almost 18 months ago in the House of Commons. This lack of transparency has become another new pattern of the Carney Liberal government.

Last year, I actually wondered if this new government was continuing to even prepare and consider these kinds of GBA Plus documents that they previously considered so important. I asked Justice Minister Sean Fraser about that, and he did confirm that the cabinet does continue to consider these GBA Plus documents with every government bill. The difference now with the Carney Liberal government, though, is that they do not put these GBA Plus documents on the public government website as the former Liberal government used to. Also, the Carney Liberal government doesn't even provide these GBA Plus documents to parliamentarians like me, the opposition critic of this bill, unless we really pester them about it.

Senator Dhillon, at my critic's briefing yesterday, I asked the large number of government officials who were present for the Bill C-22 GBA Plus document, but I still don't have it. Could you please ensure that I receive this as soon as possible?

Also, why has the government become less transparent when it comes to these GBA Plus documents?

Senator Dhillon: Thank you, senator, for the questions.

To the first question, yes, I will do that. To the second question, I don't have that answer.

Senator Batters: As the government sponsor of the bill, you're the one whom I have to ask questions to because I don't see any speeches from the front row here.

Senator Dhillon, a sizable part of Bill C-22 seeks to make major amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada, and many of its provisions trigger considerable concerns for Canadians about their impact on Charter rights and privacy rights.

You and I are both members of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, and, as you know, we deal with these kinds of complex government bills on those very topics at that committee all the time. Since our Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee actually finished our work on government bills after a lot of time was taken in the last several months, we have a little bit of an open window right now.

Senator Dhillon, given those factors, would you agree with me that Bill C-22 would seem to be best suited to be studied at the Senate's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, the committee on which you, as the sponsor, and I, as the critic, both serve?

Senator Dhillon: Thank you again for that question, senator. I think the best committee for this particular legislation to go to is a question for the leaders to determine, so I will leave that decision with them. Thank you.

Senator Batters: You can certainly provide your personal view on it. Oftentimes, the government or the opposition take very seriously the considerations of the sponsor and the critic on those very topics, so I hope you express your views to the government as to where you think it should go and if you agree with me on that point.

As you're likely aware, Bill C-22 is another government bill that has one part the MPs in the official opposition caucus strongly support and another part that those same opposition MPs vehemently oppose.

• (1550)

Here, with this bill, Conservative MPs supported Part 1 and fought hard against the controversial Part 2. In the other place, Conservative MPs pushed to split Bill C-22. That would have allowed the widely supported Part 1 provisions to pass quickly while allowing for more study, debate and, perhaps, considerable amendments to be made to fix Part 2.

Instead, the Liberal government rejected that common-sense proposal to split the bill, and in late June, they forced Bill C-22 through the House of Commons through highly undemocratic means that even included the government, shockingly, truncating House of Commons committee time as they were studying that very bill.

Senator Dhillon, the Liberal government might think that coupling these types of bills with a good part and a very bad part is good politics, but it's not good Parliament. It's, in fact, very bad Parliament. They are doing the same thing with Bill C-39 with the controversial labour component. Yesterday, the Minister of Justice even announced that the government will do this for an assisted suicide bill that they say they will introduce this fall.

Senator Dhillon, do you agree that creating these types of omnibus bills where you have a major part of the bill that is highly controversial and completely opposed by huge numbers of Canadians makes Parliament and parliamentarians' lives very difficult? Wouldn't it be much more efficient and effective to split those types of bills?

Senator Dhillon: Thank you for the question, senator. I will keep my comments to the scope that I have, which is Bill C-22.

I'm certainly not going to be presumptuous, but I'm hopeful that this chamber will send this work to committee, and that would be the place where we would examine exactly those questions.

I'm grateful to our Conservative colleagues over in the other place who have raised those concerns, and I expect we will hear some of those concerns here as well. This is the time for us to do our work and to look at those concerns and examine them. Where it is meaningful and does not take away from the intent and spirit of this bill, I think amendments are welcome.

Senator Batters: Senator Dhillon, when I had my critics' briefing yesterday, I was quite surprised to hear how long the large number of government officials expected it to take for regulations or the regulatory phase to kick in once Bill C-22 passes, if it does, indeed, pass.

I actually didn't really get an answer as to how long it would take. They said the first phase of regulations would probably take 18 months to two years after the bill receives Royal Assent, and then it goes on and on. I asked, "Are you saying it would take several years?" They replied that they didn't know about several years, so I asked, "How about five years?" They said, "Yes, probably five years," but they didn't even know. It's so far into the future that they can't even say.

They also told me that Bill C-22, this lawful access bill, is something that has come before Parliament or has been something that the department has tried to introduce in some capacity seven different times — I think they said it was three times under Conservative governments and three or four times under Liberal governments. That's the kind of thing that concerns me because there's obviously a reason that it didn't go through any of those times.

What would you say about both of those different points? First, there is the lengthy period of time that the regulations could take — so long that they didn't even know when they'd come into effect. And second is the number of times that these types of things were proposed, which you probably saw during your long law enforcement career. They have never come through before now, and that makes a parliamentarian very concerned to know why it would take so long and what the problems are.

Senator Dhillon: Thank you, Senator Batters, for that.

For the first part, I share your concerns. I think there is a lot of anticipation on the part of law enforcement and security services to have this become operational as quickly as possible. However, we are already 12 to 14 years behind, so I think we want to take our time. We want to make sure those regulations are done properly and that they meet the conditions of the legislation. While we want to speed up the process — I agree — it's also necessary that we take the time.

I will leave that there, but I will continue to monitor this bill and watch the work that's being put into it and how quickly we can make it operational. That's my biased policing and law enforcement side speaking.

On the second part, with respect to how long it's taken to get here and the number of iterations there have been, I think we already see that there are complexities with this bill, and that's why we continue to converse about it. There will be more conversations at committee and more work to be done. It's not an easy bill. There are complexities. There are challenges that we will have to discuss and debate. We need to land on a balanced approach that, as I shared in my speech, continues to support Canadians with the expectations that they have of police and security services to provide safety, security and protection while ensuring that all of the things that we hold dear and abide by — whether it's our Charter, Constitution or other protections that Canadians hold dear — are not in any way, shape or form pierced or narrowed.

We're behind the times. We need to get with the times. We have become a target country because we don't have these laws in place and because those bad actors look around the world and determine that we are a soft target. We have to move off that particular board of being a soft target.

Hon. Rebecca Patterson: Thank you very much for laying out what Bill C-22 is supposed to do. It's encouraging to know that, regardless of the party in the other place, it is supported all around while we recognize that the devil is in the details.

I would highlight and underline that one of the most critical pieces is that Canada is one of the few countries — or I might posit that it's the only country — under the Five Eyes without lawful access in place. I have to reiterate the fact that the nature of crime and terrorism has evolved, and we must put due diligence into this. However, if we keep waiting, we will never get there.

My question has to do with what has been going on with some of our Five Eyes partners. This is not a magic bullet, no matter what we do to try to address these issues. Are you aware of any testimony that came out of the other place or anything that's within your knowledge as to the challenges that our partners are experiencing with lawful access?

While they may be different, we will be potentially exchanging information with them. Thank you.

Senator Dhillon: Thank you for that question, senator. The same challenges that other countries are facing, we will face, but we have a greater challenge right now. We can't even start. We don't even have the starting point without this law.

We will just be arriving at the party once Bill C-22 is passed, where we'll only just be beginning to address some of the threats that we are facing in our country today and have been for a number of years.

I think we'll have to have conversations about cybersecurity and encryption. Those are pieces that have come up in the recent while. Privacy concerns have also come up. These are questions that we have to wrestle with. We must. That's the job we have been given. That's our responsibility, and we'll wrestle with them with the rule of law that we have in place and the values that we hold dear in Canada in the Constitution and our Charter of Rights.

I welcome those conversations and challenges, but we cannot do without this law.

Senator Patterson: I will look to my colleague Senator Batters. This is a complex bill, and it absolutely does have a legal component, but it also has an intense security and intelligence element to it where you need both pieces plus more to actually make it into a whole.

This is a question for you. As the decisions are made by leaders as to which committee this should go to, I am hoping you will consider that it maybe shouldn't sit in just one committee. Given its complexity, perhaps it must go to more than one committee, possibly to the Legal Committee and also to the National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee. Would you agree?

Senator Dhillon: Thank you, senator. As I shared with Senator Batters, those are decisions I'll leave for the leaders to make. The Government Representative is here, and those are the kinds of decisions I will leave to the leaders to make. Certainly, they are hearing all that is being said here.

Hon. Colin Deacon: Would you take another question, Senator Dhillon?

Senator Dhillon: Yes.

Senator C. Deacon: Thank you very much, sir.

I applaud the intent of this bill and see the importance of it in today's world, especially with so many things I've heard from law enforcement over the years. However, there are vagaries that are very consequential.

• (1600)

You spoke about the designated classes of electronic service providers. That grey area — which I do not think will be resolved during our debate of this bill — is a significant factor. The reason is we don't know who and what systems will be impacted. For me, that is really challenging — the fact there isn't any contemplation of the scale of company that will be impacted. Allowing innovators to come up with new —

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

Senator Dhillon, I have a list of senators who wish to ask a question. Are you asking for leave for five more minutes to answer questions?

Senator Dhillon: I will give five more minutes because I have a plane waiting.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator C. Deacon: Leave is never to be assumed.

I referred to the scale of company to be affected. My question is about having separate backdoor access. Why is it not simplified by just saying that these ESPs have to provide the information? Why is it so important to have separate backdoor access?

Senator Dhillon: Thank you, Senator Deacon. We've had some of these discussions already. I am not using the term "backdoor access" because it alludes to a whole bunch of different things that are not true. There are a lot of miscommunications and misconceptions. Lawful access is what we're looking for. That is access that has been granted by the judiciary based on the evidence presented in front of that judiciary or that trier of fact.

Ultimately, as I shared with you here as well, there is no interest on the part of this bill and the government to create vulnerabilities in systems, to create less protection for Canadians. So, it would be counterproductive and counterintuitive to create, as you put it, back doors that create more harm to Canadians, when the bill's intention is to reduce harm and prevent harm. Aply, it should provide the tools that are necessary for law enforcement to carry out their duties.

But, as I have said before, there is work to be done. I'm not presumptuous, but I hope my colleagues will send this to committee, and we can examine this at length there.

Senator C. Deacon: Why are the ESPs not simply allowed to share the information directly with law enforcement? Why does there need to be separate, individual access for them? That's the big technical challenge about which I'm hearing the most.

Senator Dhillon: I think we may be talking about the same thing but in two different ways. These are lawful access questions.

Of course, there is private information. We are not allowed to receive information that is protected under the Privacy Act and under the Charter. There is no way for an ESP to just hand over that information to us.

We have a provision around voluntary information sharing, but it's narrow; it doesn't cover everything. There is also a danger at times of receiving information that does not meet the scrutiny of the courts. Then your entire case fails, and the investigation fails. A number of criteria must be taken into account by that investigator or that applicant or that lead investigator before they can simply just ask for the information.

This is a longer conversation that requires that testimony to be available to us, in front of us, and then those questions can be answered in a very detailed way in that committee work. I hope I gave you some response.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Would you take another question?

Senator Dhillon: Yes.

Senator Osler: Bill C-22 mandates metadata collection and retention for up to a year. The Charter Statement for Bill C-22 was tabled on April 24, 2026.

You might have said this in your speech, but can you again go over the government's position that section 8 of the Charter — the Charter protections against unreasonable search and seizure — is being respected?

Senator Dhillon: Yes, absolutely. Look, only one part of this — that is the first part, where we're looking to determine who the provider is — is not requiring judicial authorization. You don't have to go in front of a judge. You are simply saying, "Are you the provider for Baltej Dhillon?" The answer is yes or no. That is all that the police officer receives. That's the only part that does not require judicial authorization.

Everything else after that requires the investigator to be able to defend an affidavit in front of a justice of the peace or the courts to allow the courts to make a determination on whether they are lawfully given permission through a warrant or a production order to receive that information. That is where the Charter is protected.

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-22, An Act respecting lawful access.

This is a technically complicated bill, both in the legal sense and in the sense that it deals with new and emerging technologies. It is a bill that will require — that will demand — a thorough investigation by the Senate.

Proponents of this bill argue they need these powers to combat things such as terrorism, organized crime and international child sexual exploitation. Indeed, we all agree that law enforcement should have the necessary and proportionate powers to access and collect information relevant to investigations.

But will these substantive changes to our understandings of privacy and search and seizure under the common law and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms really make us safer? Or will they open us to new vulnerabilities? What are the implications for our civil liberties and our right to privacy? And, less philosophically, what are the dangers that this bill might make Canadians less safe?

Instead of helping police services and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, to find new ways to protect us, Bill C-22 threatens to create a multitude of new ways for malicious hackers — be they blackmailers, fraudsters, stalkers, terrorists or foreign state actors — to compromise our data, compromise our national security and compromise the architecture of the internet itself.

Bill C-22 comes in two parts. The first part amends the powers and authorities in the Criminal Code, the CSIS Act and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act to make it easier for Canadian police and intelligence services to access information about telecom subscribers, to make it easier for Canadian authorities to request subscriber information from foreign electronic service providers and to make it easier for foreign governments and agencies to enforce production orders on Canadian service providers.

Bill C-22 would mean police would not need a warrant of any kind to compel a phone company or an internet provider to confirm that someone is their customer.

Bill C-22 would also allow police to obtain production orders for subscriber information merely on the basis of “reasonable suspicion,” rather than the traditional test of “reasonable grounds to believe.”

These amendments to Bill C-22 would also allow police to access “. . . information . . . available to the public” about a person under investigation without any court order. That may sound like benign common sense. After all, if the information is public, why shouldn’t the police have it? But there is a difference between public information that we know to be public — like we used to see in our old-fashioned telephone books — and information that has been made public in something like a data breach, for example.

The questions we must ask are, “Made available to the public by whom? And how? And for what purpose?”

Then there is the issue of making it easier to share information about Canadians with foreign police and intelligence services. Clause 29 of the bill amends the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act to authorize Canadian courts to enforce orders from foreign authorities — countries that have a mutual legal assistance treaty with Canada — to obtain either subscriber or transmission information. However, there are plenty of countries with which Canada has mutual legal assistance agreements, including liberal democracies, which simply don’t have the same privacy protections Canadians enjoy.

Let’s think hard about the implications of turning over the private information of Canadians to foreign police or foreign intelligence agencies from countries whose political and legal cultures don’t align with our own, especially while we are or soon will be engaged in active negotiations with other countries on treaties around information sharing, the United States’ CLOUD Act and artificial intelligence.

Now we come to the more problematic Part 2 of the bill. This part enacts the supporting authorized access to information act, which gives the government dramatic new powers to compel businesses to assist in law enforcement.

Let’s start with the issue of metadata retention.

• (1610)

Bill C-22, as amended in the other place, grants the government the power to require electronic service providers — a term that is not defined — to retain the metadata of all their Canadian customers for six months just in case the police should ever have cause to look something up in the course of a hypothetical future investigation.

Understand that this isn’t about obtaining a court order to retain the metadata of a suspect under investigation. This means retaining all our data — yours, mine, Madam Speaker’s, the data of your kids, parents and neighbours — just on the off chance that someday, someone might want to see it.

Now, this is an improvement on the original version of the bill, which required metadata retention of 12 months, but it is still a huge practical technical challenge and an extraordinary expense for communications companies to maintain that much digital information, especially for companies such as Signal, which retain little or no metadata now, or only retain it for a few days or hours.

Should we really want to grant the government the power to force companies to retain a welter of data on us all without any individualized basis for suspicion? This bill would conscript telecommunications and internet service providers, turning them into surveillance agents of the state, indiscriminately affecting everyone, rather than any specific individual under investigation at any specific time. We must ask ourselves if that is congruent with our constitutional practices of protecting us from unreasonable search and seizure.

Now, once upon a time, we didn’t fret quite so much about metadata because there was almost too much of it for it to be all that useful. It was just a collection of digital breadcrumbs, and it took time to extract useful patterns. However, advances in artificial intelligence have made it far easier to harvest and collate very telling information indeed in order to find all kinds of privacy-revealing patterns of behaviour, effectively kneading those digital breadcrumbs into a whole loaf.

Then comes the most dangerous part of this bill: Now that those companies are being forced to hoard a huge amount of incriminating data on all of us, we’re making that data vulnerable to hacking. That’s because this new act would compel specially designated core provider companies — again, the term is not defined in the bill, and we have no idea how those core providers will be designated — to build surveillance and capture technology directly into their services and platforms so that companies could be compelled, under a production order, to turn over information. In other words, companies could be compelled to create a weak spot — a sort of secret tunnel — in their systems to give police and security intelligence services a way to gain lawful access to that mountain of metadata and other personal information about users.

My friends, there is simply no way to create a secret passage that only the good guys can go through. We are effectively compelling electronic service providers to create a treasure trove of data and to draw a treasure map to that data at the same time.

Now, let’s be clear: “Encryption” is not a dirty word. Encryption is not some sneaky, bad thing that only the bad guys use. End-to-end encryption protects Canadians online every minute of every day when we engage in online banking, online shopping and online medical appointments. Add a weakness to the system, and it is suddenly open to exploitation — to hacking — and not just by old-fashioned human beings but by indefatigable autonomous AI agents, which can scan and scan and scan for vulnerabilities, swarming like busy bees until they find an opening to hack. Once they find one, they can hack at a pace no humans can match.

This should have us all on guard, whether we're guarding against embezzlement, terrorism, corporate espionage or good old-fashioned political espionage.

In the United States in 2024, a sophisticated hacking group, Salt Typhoon, credibly linked to the Chinese government, took advantage of parallel lawful access back doors built into their systems by companies such as Verizon and AT&T to compromise huge swaths of the American telecommunications infrastructure. The Salt Typhoon hackers are believed to have intercepted communications from Donald Trump, JD Vance and members of Congress.

Salt Typhoon accessed databases that allowed the Chinese government to know which of their spies were under surveillance in the United States, and they also accessed millions of metadata records: Who called whom, when? This was information that gave the Chinese government detailed records of journalists who might later be posted to Beijing, detailed records of Chinese students studying in the United States and detailed records of Chinese-Americans with families in China who might be put under pressure.

In December 2024, in the wake of the Salt Typhoon attack, America's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, along with the National Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Australian Signals Directorate, the Australian Cyber Security Centre, the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security and New Zealand's National Cyber Security Centre, put out a joint statement calling for a hardening of cybersecurity and for end-to-end encryption to the maximum extent possible.

It makes no sense for Canada to back away from that precautionary principle now. How ironic would it be, if, in an effort to give police and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, more powers to protect us, we actually left ourselves far more susceptible to attacks by hostile foreign powers, terrorist groups or organized crime gangs?

While that's the greatest risk, it's far from the only challenge created by the supporting authorized access to information act, or SAAIA. We risk losing access to vital services provided by major telecommunications and internet companies and platforms — services Canadians have come to rely on. We also risk chasing tech innovators and investors right out of the country.

For example, companies who use open-source software, such as the non-profits Signal and Mozilla Firefox, have said that requiring them to comply with the conditions of Bill C-22 would make it virtually impossible for them to operate in Canada at all.

The Canadian homegrown company Psiphon provides open-source circumvention technology, which allows people in countries such as Iran, Burma, China, Russia and Cuba to reach the open internet and get their news directly from the BBC, Deutsche Welle and Radio Free Europe.

Psiphon argues that Bill C-22 assumes that providers can quietly build lawful access capabilities aimed at specific targets. That assumption, however, does not hold for the sort of open-source software Psiphon relies on. Psiphon states:

Our source code is public and independently verifiable, so any government-mandated access mechanism would become part of publicly available code. It could not be confined to Canadian authorities or to a specific investigation. It would be visible to, and exploitable by, security researchers, criminals, and the very authoritarian governments our users are trying to escape.

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Audette, I didn't hear what you just said.

Hon. Michèle Audette: I wanted to mention that we received a message earlier from the interpreters regarding the noise currently being picked up.

The Hon. the Speaker: Okay.

I wish to remind senators to be careful when a senator rises to not move around too much near the microphone. Thank you.

[English]

Senator Simons: I understand the keen desire of our police and security agencies to have lawful access to all possible information in their efforts to protect Canadians, but it's hard to understand how we could keep Canadians safe with policies that compromise our online safety, civil rights and privacy at every turn.

Let me conclude with a short passage from a comprehensive brief written by Tamir Israel of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, and Kate Robertson and Cynthia Khoo from the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab on Bill C-22:

Courts are the primary vehicle for authorizing most surveillance activities carried out by CSIS and the police. Yet, under the SAAIA, obligations that dwarf most powers in the *Criminal Code* in terms of intrusiveness can be imposed without judicial authorization or appeal. . . . The result is a national surveillance system that might far outstrip current legal regimes in both scope and intrusiveness, and that relies on an oversight framework created for the extra-ordinary foreign intelligence context rather than for domestic policing.

We need a lawful access regime in this country, but we need a lawful access regime that can withstand constitutional scrutiny, a lawful access regime that respects Supreme Court jurisprudence around privacy and search and seizure, and a lawful access regime that does not create dangerous, unintended consequences for us all.

Thank you. *Hiy hiy.*

• (1620)

Hon. Pat Duncan: Will Senator Simons take a question?

Senator Simons: I would be happy to.

Senator Duncan: Thank you, Senator Simons. I'm curious if you obtained the public report *Special Report on the Lawful Access to Communications by Security and Intelligence Organizations*, published by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, in September 2025 and if you have reviewed it in the context of Bill C-22.

Senator Simons: I regret to say I have not.

Senator Duncan: Thank you. Senator Simons, may I recommend that you review the report? It deals with data preservation and data retention and the issues of whether communications service providers, or CSPs, can provide this, what should and shouldn't be protected and how it reflects to the organizations that are trying to protect our national security and protect Canadians.

Senator Simons: I'm sorry, but is there a question you wanted to ask?

Senator Duncan: Yes. Have you reviewed with CSPs what the actual cost would be to them? They have projected publicly, and I believe you referenced that this would be an undue cost when there is a great deal of data already protected. Have you obtained what that cost is?

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Simons, your time is up. Would you like a few more minutes to answer the question?

Senator Simons: I would ask the chamber to give me five more minutes.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: Yes, for this question.

Senator Simons: Yes, in fact, I have met with a number of service providers, including Telus, NordVPN, Psiphon, Signal, Mozilla and others.

Nobody has a precise figure because it is a hypothetical, but Telus, for example, explained to me they currently generally retain metadata for three days — 72 hours — and that they would be required to build huge new technology to retain that data.

I met with people from the department this morning and raised this question with them, as did Senator Moodie. The answer we got was that these are very wealthy companies and that asking them to spend money is perhaps not unreasonable.

The challenge, of course, is that those expenses will be passed on to us as consumers. I don't imagine that telcos are going to absorb these costs without making sure that our phone and internet bills go up. Canadians already pay some of the highest bills. There are logical consequences to the idea of retaining metadata for six months.

But, as I said in my speech, the issue is not primarily one of cost or inconvenience. It's that we are putting in one place a whole bunch of good, juicy information and then saying we're also going to make it easy to hack.

So the issue isn't just that we should weep for the telcos or even over our own phone bills. The issue is that by creating a target and then drawing a bull's eye on it, we put ourselves all at risk.

[Translation]

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: I have a question for Senator Simons.

[English]

Senator Simons: I believe that there were people who said I could only take this one question.

An Hon. Senator: No, they said five minutes.

[Translation]

Senator Simons: Of course.

Senator Miville-Dechéne: I am trying to follow your reasoning. It doesn't seem all that unreasonable to me to ask wealthy companies to retain information such as metadata for six months. When the police are trying to track down individuals, including sex offenders and criminals, isn't it a good idea to have six month's worth of metadata that they can use to help them locate those individuals?

Three days seems like a very short retention period to me. What would you tell those who say that these big companies already have a lot of information about us? It is not as though we are the ones coming up with the idea of giving them confidential and personal information about people. As soon as someone creates a social media account, these companies retain information about them.

Why are people opposed to the idea of regulating the internet? The fact of the matter is that much of what once took place in person now happens online. If we do not regulate the internet, all sorts of things will happen. I'm thinking in particular of predators, children and those who are more vulnerable. I must admit that I'm having a hard time understanding your argument.

[English]

Senator Simons: I would be very happy to answer this question.

[Translation]

I'm going to answer in English because it's easier for me to express myself that way.

[English]

There are two answers to this, one practical and one philosophical. Let's start with the philosophical one.

It's one thing to surveil somebody who is under suspicion, where there are reasonable grounds to suspect or believe that somebody is doing something wrong. This would surveil all of us. It's true that if I sign on to Facebook, my expectation of privacy should be based on the fact that Meta platforms are constantly harvesting my data. But when I make a phone call or use a secure end-to-end encrypted service like Signal, I do have an expectation of privacy, and I have not surrendered that.

So, it is true that commercial, algorithmically driven platforms absolutely harvest our data and use it to sell us things and push our political buttons. But we are talking about something that would surveil everybody, even on platforms where they have an expectation of privacy.

The second question is a practical one. There are platforms, including Signal —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator Simons, your time has expired. If you want more time, you need to ask for it.

Senator Simons: If I may just have one more minute, because my deskmate, charming though he is, is a delightfully disruptive force.

An Hon. Senator: Sorry.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: I heard a "no." Leave is not granted.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, in my response to the Speech from the Throne on Tuesday, I argued that Canada must respond decisively to a changing world without surrendering parliamentary oversight.

Bill C-22 tests that principle. I have serious reservations about passing it in its present form. My concerns centre on the security of the access capabilities it would authorize and the exclusion of important executive orders from ordinary parliamentary scrutiny.

The government must demonstrate that the investigative benefits justify the additional risks. I do not believe it has yet done so. Committee study must test that case, hear the right witnesses and remain open to substantial amendments.

The House of Commons passed Bill C-22 on June 18. Subsequent disclosures have materially changed the evidence available to us.

In July, OpenAI disclosed that experimental models had escaped containment and compromised Hugging Face. These tests involved reduced safeguards, not ordinary consumer use. Nevertheless, a supposed boundary between an evaluation and real infrastructure failed.

On September 8, Google Threat Intelligence reported adversaries moving from simple prompts to agentic workflows: AI systems carrying out linked tasks with less human intervention. It described an attacker planning, building and executing a mass credential-theft campaign in under six hours.

Google was reporting activity from April to June, before the bill passed the other place. But this newly published evidence after the bill left the House of Commons shows how little time defenders may have to respond.

On September 24, Australia disclosed that an AI agent had gained unauthorized access to public and non-public files in its Medicare statistics portal. The activity occurred in June; notification only came in September. At disclosure, no personal information was believed to have been accessed.

Closer to home, on September 29, Canada's Cyber Centre acknowledged reports of suspicious activity, including suspected AI agent activity targeting government websites.

• (1630)

It explicitly reported no indication that government systems had been compromised.

These are different events. They are not a catalogue of confirmed government breaches. Together they warrant fresh examination of how reliably agents remain within authorized boundaries.

Nor is the concern confined to agents acting unexpectedly. On September 14, the Cyber Centre warned of an active global campaign using AI to attack internet-exposed industrial controllers. Here, hostile operators were deliberately using AI.

Anthropic's Fable and Mythos labels likewise illustrate the distinction between powerful underlying capabilities and safeguards governing their use. These tools can assist defenders, but a system faithfully following instructions is not necessarily safe when the person giving those instructions has malign intentions.

None of this establishes that AI has broken strong encryption. It does challenge confidence that sensitive access mechanisms can remain beyond unauthorized reach.

There is already a warning directly relevant to this bill. In briefing materials prepared for his Commons appearance, the Privacy Commissioner cited Salt Typhoon's compromise of American telecommunications networks and the reported targeting of systems used for court-approved access. He warned that similar Canadian capabilities and metadata retention requirements could expose providers to "precisely such attacks."

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, or CCLA, and Citizen Lab made a related argument in their joint brief. They pointed to a leaked NSA document describing exploitation of foreign lawful interception capabilities.

These are historical precedents, not new AI incidents. Their significance is that infrastructure created for authorized access — lawful access, if you will — can itself become a valuable intelligence target. AI-enabled attacks give us reason to reassess that long-standing danger.

The bill can specify who is legally authorized to obtain information, but it cannot, by declaration, ensure that nobody else can obtain it.

Part 2 could require providers to maintain technical access capabilities and retain prescribed categories of metadata for up to six months. It does not, itself, create one central government database or automatically authorize access to everyone's communications, but compulsory retention and additional retrieval capabilities could increase the amount of sensitive information available to an intruder. That risk must be assessed — not dismissed because the intended use is lawful.

The House of Commons added safeguards, including limits on compelled decryption. Providers need not comply with requirements that would introduce a systemic vulnerability. Those protections matter. But why rely on providers declining unsafe requirements rather than expressly prohibiting the government from imposing them? The committee should ask whether the bill places too much responsibility on individual providers to identify and contest risks that affect the public.

The definition of "systemic vulnerability" also excludes certain risks confined to information about people already subject to lawful access authority. It also makes recognized international technical standards relevant to assessing credible risk.

But how can we be confident that the weakness remains confined to one target? What happens when an AI system exposes a risk that a standard did not anticipate?

My support for recognized standards in the Throne Speech from a few days ago was not a claim that compliance guarantees security indefinitely. Consider two hypothetical scenarios: A provider implements a targeted access capability judged to be safe. A more capable AI system subsequently discovers that it exposes other users. Who must reassess it? And can its use be suspended immediately? Alternatively, an attacker compromises an existing provider system without defeating encryption. Would newly mandated retention and retrieval capabilities make the resulting loss more extensive? I'm not predicting either outcome. I'm asking who must establish that these risks are acceptably controlled and what happens when that assessment changes.

The committee should hear from the Cyber Centre; Google's threat investigators; engineers from OpenAI, Hugging Face and Anthropic; and independent investigators, including Translucence and METR. It should also invite, of course, the Privacy Commissioner, the CCLA and Citizen Lab authors, independent security experts, cryptographers and provider security engineers.

Police and CSIS should demonstrate the operational needs and explain less risky alternatives. We should examine stronger statutory security limits, independent testing, continuing reassessment, prompt incident reporting and a rapid mechanism to suspend unsafe requirements.

Requirements to retain additional data deserve their own necessity and proportionality assessment. Witnesses should distinguish what is technically possible from what is demonstrably safe at scale. A successful demonstration is not enough. We need evidence about maintenance, failure, malicious insiders and increasingly capable external attackers.

The question is not whether perfect security exists. It is whether the government has made a convincing case for imposing these very additional risks.

That brings me directly to my response to the Throne Speech. Greater executive flexibility should increase the importance of parliamentary oversight, not diminish it. The most troubling exclusion, in my view, is subsection 7(6) of the proposed supporting authorized access to information act, enacted through clause 41.

Section 7 allows ministerial orders imposing requirements that could otherwise be prescribed by regulation. Section 12 lets those orders prevail over inconsistent regulations made under subsection 5(2). Yet, subsection 7(6) excludes them all from the Statutory Instruments Act. Requirements that are regulatory in substance should not lose their ordinary route to parliamentary scrutiny simply because a minister imposes them by order.

Subsection 6(6) excludes temporary exemption orders. Subsection 24(3) excludes compliance orders directing providers to stop contraventions or take remedial measures. Each performs a different function, but each requirement or, I should say, each exclusion requires justification.

The Statutory Instruments Act concerns more than publication. Section 19 provides the ordinary standing referral to the Scrutiny of Regulations Committee, which I co-chair. Excluding an instrument removes that route; it does not merely prevent sensitive information from being published.

As I explained in my earlier speech, the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations examines legality, rights and the limits of delegated authority. Its ordinary scrutiny follows the making of an instrument. It is not a general pre-approval queue, nor is it a cybersecurity certification body.

These exclusions did not go unnoticed in the House of Commons. MP Jacob Mantle challenged the ministerial order exemption, and OpenMedia recommended deleting subsection 7(6). That exclusion, nevertheless, remains. Our task is to examine the unresolved parliamentary question.

Independent intelligence review and parliamentary scrutiny perform different functions. One should not quietly displace the other.

Public Safety and Justice should explain every exclusion. The committee should hear from the Intelligence Commissioner, the review agency and parliamentary law specialists, drawing appropriately on the expertise of counsel, perhaps counsel supporting the Scrutiny of Regulations Committee.

We should examine whether confidentiality can be protected through adapted scrutiny arrangements rather than blanket exclusions. Such arrangements require secure access, workable rules and adequate resources. Simply proposing an in camera meeting is insufficient.

• (1640)

We should also ask whether providers can obtain independent security advice and report dangerous requirements promptly without confidentiality obligations preventing effective scrutiny.

Amendments preserving parliamentary examination, particularly of clause 7 orders, should be firmly on the table for the committee review.

Colleagues, let me summarize my concerns.

We are being asked to authorize highly technical powers that could create new avenues for attack in an already unstable and rapidly evolving environment while removing important instruments from ordinary parliamentary scrutiny.

I do not believe the time is right to grant such sweeping powers on the strength of assurances that have not been adequately tested against the evidence now available. I am not confident that we can pass Bill C-22 as it exists today without significantly increasing the vulnerability of Canadian privacy, data and businesses.

The evidence disclosed since passage in the House of Commons makes the risk of unauthorized access through so-called lawful access more urgent. I do not believe the government has demonstrated that these capabilities can be created and maintained securely enough to keep pace with AI-enabled adversaries. Our response should not be to demand impossible guarantees; it should be to demand evidence, enforceable limits and continuing accountability.

In my Throne Speech response, I described the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations, or REGS, accepting a practical solution on the accessibility of incorporated standards. That showed scrutiny accommodating flexibility, not surrendering its purpose. We should take the same approach here without assuming that every problem can be solved by guidance after enactment.

Where the evidence does not justify a power, we should be prepared to narrow, remove or defer it. Committee study must be a genuine opportunity to change this bill, not merely a search for reassurance.

If I can have 30 seconds, I will finish.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Woo: Thank you, colleagues.

Effective investigations matter, so do secure communications and accountable government. In strengthening one part of public safety, we must not weaken another.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

ROYAL ASSENT

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore informed the Senate that the following communication had been received:

RIDEAU HALL

October 8, 2026

Madam Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that Mr. Ryan McAdam, Deputy of the Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 8th day of October, 2026, at 3:57 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Eduardo Rivas

Manager, Office of the Secretary to the Governor General

The Honourable
The Speaker of the Senate
Ottawa

Bill Assented to Thursday, October 8, 2026:

An Act to give effect to the Final Self-Government Agreement for the Tlegohli Got'ine and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (*Bill C-27, Chapter 23, 2026*)

[English]

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of October 7, 2026, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, October 20, 2026, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

RULES, PROCEDURES AND THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT

SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE ADJOURNED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the consideration of the second report (interim) of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, entitled *The Role of Non-Affiliated Senators*, tabled in the Senate on February 24, 2026.

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

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

• (1650)

[Translation]

STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT, 2021

SEVENTH REPORT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the seventh report of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, entitled "*Hailcistut: To Turn Something Around and Make it Right*" *The Promises of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, tabled in the Senate on June 18, 2026.

Hon. Michèle Audette moved:

That the seventh report of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, entitled "*Hailcistut: To Turn Something Around and Make it Right*" *The Promises of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 18, 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 and Attorney General of Canada being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report, in consultation with the Minister of Indigenous Services, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and the Minister of Public Safety.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

[English]

THE SENATE

MOTION TO URGE GOVERNMENT TO ESTABLISH A FEDERAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK THAT ENSURES PARITY BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CARE AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE—
DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Burey, seconded by the Honourable Senator Black:

That the Senate recognize:

- (a) that the World Health Organization and the Canadian Mental Health Association have identified mental health parity as a critical objective for an equitable health care system; and
- (b) the urgent need to address disparities in mental health care access and coverage; and

That the Senate urge the Government of Canada to establish a federal legal framework that ensures mental health and addiction care are treated on an equal footing with physical health care.

Hon. Tracy Muggli: Honourable senators, Senator Burey's motion asks us to consider what it would actually mean to treat mental health and addiction care on an equal footing with physical health care. I immediately felt compelled to speak to this motion. I think about the many steps we've taken toward destigmatizing mental illness and how far we have come on mental health in my lifetime — even in my child's lifetime — but we are still a long way from where we need to be.

At a talk in Manitoba, Michael Landsberg, who started the #SickNotWeak campaign, put this question to the audience. He said:

What if we treated mental health the same way we treat dental health? No shame. No hesitation. Just care when it's needed.

Canadians, at least those I speak to, seem to largely agree, but I also know that our health system doesn't situate it in the same way. Mental health care and physical health care simply do not exist on an equal footing.

I took some time this summer to think about how I could lend my voice to this debate. I reflected on my time in the mental health and substance use space, as a care provider, as a friend to people who sought care and as a daughter of an aging parent. In that reflection, I think the most obvious and probably one of the most insidious examples of this unequal footing is the way we care for our elderly, and specifically those requiring support to remain independent and those who require increasing levels of care right through to long-term care.

In our society, we understandably pay attention to the physical health and safety of elderly folks. We monitor so many signs and symptoms regularly because it's essential to preserve life. But how much attention do we pay to the quality of that life and to things like depression, anxiety and social isolation? An elderly person can be medically stable, fed and medicated while at the same time experiencing significant depression, anxiety and other psychological challenges. They may have excellent blood pressure management while remaining disconnected from people and without a sense of purpose. Physical health care may maximize the number of years someone has left, but what do those years contain?

A 2024 review of 48 studies and more than 28,000 nursing home residents found approximately 53% of patients reported depressive mood and 27% incidence of major depressive disorder.

I'm going to quote that same study to make my next point too, which is that the division between physical and mental health is essentially artificial.

The research linked depression in residential care with pain and functional disability among other circumstances. We know pain can worsen depression. Depression can reduce physical functioning and participation in rehabilitation. Social isolation can affect physical well-being. In long-term care, these risk factors are all connected. When we separate out mental and physical well-being in our policies, we ignore science and deny the reality experienced by the elderly.

If our objective is to improve the quality of life of people living in long-term care, then addressing their mental health is foundational.

I want you to really think about this for a moment. Ask yourself these questions: Why do we seem to accept that depression, anxiety and loneliness are the inevitabilities of getting old? And why don't we do more to support people through these supposed inevitabilities so that they are not inevitabilities?

I want you to think about it this way: If your child lost a spouse or was forced out of their home, would you be worried about their mental health? If your child lost their ability to walk or lost several of their closest friends this year, would you worry about their ability to process these experiences in a healthy way?

Age is not an excuse to ignore the impacts of those circumstances. We would not say that the physical distress of an 88-year-old no longer matters because pain becomes more common with age. We should not say the same about psychological distress, especially, colleagues, when we know that many non-medical interventions can help and do.

A 2025 review of 182 studies of depression treatments among older adults living in long-term care found benefits for patients from things like cognitive behavioural therapy, horticultural therapy, exercise, socialization and other approaches that do not rely on pharmaceutical interventions. These alternative approaches are relatively low in risk and inexpensive compared to pharmaceuticals as well.

This brings me to my final point. I want to talk about the care we want for ourselves.

Imagine two elderly folks receiving the same physical care. I am thinking of medication management, nutrition, bathing assistance, mobility support and care for chronic disease. But one of these folks is otherwise left to their own devices while the other has access to activities to give them purpose — maybe a group social program, gardening or some time with a social worker or counsellor to talk when things are hard.

Which position would you rather be in? When we stop to think about it, we know intuitively that these things affect quality of life because we know we would want them for ourselves. We know they impact well-being, and we know we feel better physically when we feel better psychologically.

Senator Burey's motion asks us to call on the federal government to establish a legal framework that places mental health and substance use care on an equal footing with physical health care. This is a big ask. It's aspirational, but it is also grounded in science and common sense.

I could provide hundreds of examples of inequities across the age span but felt it necessary to focus on a population that is often not heard or does not have a voice.

Whether someone has 50 years, 5 years or 5 months remaining, those moments matter. Canadians deserve comparable access and appropriate treatment for ill health, whether it is physical or mental, and it must be available at any age.

I want to conclude by thanking the people who work in our publicly provided long-term care facilities across the country: the incredible care aides; licensed practical nurses; registered nurses; recreation therapists; dietary staff; social workers; occupational, physical and speech-language therapists; pharmacists; doctors; environmental services; and maintenance and administration staff who work tirelessly and creatively to ensure our loved ones are cared for.

I also wish to give a special shout-out to St. Ann's care home in Saskatoon, where my 83-year-old mom resides, for the compassionate care that they provide to her every day.

I support this motion and will join Senator Burey in calling on the government to act. Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): This is a very good motion. Though we could call the question, there are other speakers who are going to be speaking to this motion, so I will move the adjournment for the balance of my time.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Martin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Batters, that further debate be adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate. Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

• (1700)

[Translation]

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF JANE GOODALL

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Klyne, calling the attention of the Senate to the life and legacy of Jane Goodall.

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Honourable senators, I move, for the Honourable Senator Kingston, that further debate on the inquiry be adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate for the balance of her time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(On motion of Senator Clement, for Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

[English]

NATION-BUILDING VALUE OF TOURISM

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

Hon. Sharon Burey: Honourable senators, it is an honour to rise today to speak to the important inquiry put forward by my esteemed colleague, the Honourable Senator Karen Sorensen, on the nation-building value of tourism.

Before I begin, I wish to acknowledge that Windsor-Essex is situated on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy, comprised of the Ojibway, Odawa and Potawatomi peoples. I also recognize Caldwell First Nation and the many Indigenous Peoples who have lived on, cared for and stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial. Their enduring connection to this territory continues to enrich our communities and reminds us of our shared responsibility to advance truth, reconciliation and respect.

One of Senator Sorensen's goals in bringing forward this inquiry is to recognize the cultural and economic benefits of tourism across Canada, while ensuring that every province and territory is represented in this conversation.

Today, as Canada faces economic and cultural pressures from both within and beyond our borders, conversations about what connects us as Canadians have never been more important. Those challenges are felt acutely in my home region of Windsor and Essex County — the automotive capital of Canada and home to one of North America's most productive greenhouse sectors.

[Translation]

Through my professional work and my community connections, I have witnessed first-hand the impact of economic uncertainty on children, families and communities across our region. Never in our recent history has tourism played such a vital role in our economic future, our cultural vitality and, indeed, our sovereignty as a nation.

Tourism is about so much more than just travelling. When we share stories about who we are, how our country was built and the cultures that shape our identity, we create a sense of belonging. We strengthen the bonds that unite us. We discover that we have more in common than what divides us.

[English]

Allow me to tell you a little bit about Windsor-Essex. According to Workforce WindsorEssex, Windsor is home to approximately 490,000 people, and our region welcomed an estimated 5.6 million visitors in 2023. These visitors contributed approximately \$856 million to the local economy, supporting thousands of businesses and jobs throughout the region.

Located on a peninsula in the Great Lakes, Windsor-Essex and Pelee Island offer year-round experiences for residents and visitors alike.

One of the highlights of my summer was attending the Canadian opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony and celebration of the Gordie Howe International Bridge. It was an inspiring experience and a testament to the Canadian values of perseverance, collaboration and ambition.

When we work together, we accomplish extraordinary things.

The bridge is already helping to revitalize the historic Sandwich Town community that connects directly to it.

Honourable colleagues, Windsor-Essex is also a place of profound historical significance, particularly in the story of Black Canadian history. While many are familiar with the Underground Railroad, it was in communities stretching from Windsor to Chatham and Buxton where people found freedom, built lives and established institutions that endure to this day. The Sandwich First Baptist Church, a national historic site, stands as a witness to that nation-building history.

The Amherstburg Freedom Museum stands as a cornerstone of that history. Since 2019, the museum has welcomed more than 10,000 visitors, with approximately 57% travelling more than 100 kilometres and who identify the museum as their primary destination.

According to Parks Canada, Point Pelee National Park, located at the southernmost tip of mainland Canada, is a world-renowned destination for birdwatchers and nature lovers, attracting approximately 300,000 visitors each year.

Across Windsor-Essex, there is great anticipation surrounding the creation of the Ojibway national urban park. According to the Friends of Ojibway Prairie and the City of Windsor, the Ojibway Prairie Complex protects a globally significant biodiversity hot spot that is home to more than 4,000 species, including over 160 rare plants and animals.

Colleagues, these local examples point to a broader national truth: Tourism is nation building. Tourism allows Canadians to share their stories with one another, including the complex and sometimes difficult chapters of our history, and it allows us to show up as ourselves. Tourism supports jobs and economic development.

As Senator Sorensen observed during this inquiry:

We need to foster a tourism industry that's inclusive and sustainable, because it's the right thing to do, and because it will burnish Canada's international reputation for diversity, environmental stewardship and respect for human rights.

Those words capture perfectly why tourism matters — not only economically but also socially and morally.

Tourism also contributes to individual and community well-being. Research consistently demonstrates the positive relationship between cultural engagement, social connection and mental health.

Honourable colleagues, thank you for your patience. Tourism is far more than an industry. It is a connector, a storyteller. It is a bridge between communities, cultures and generations. It creates a sense of belonging, a place to call home.

By supporting tourism across Canada, we strengthen our communities, honour our histories, protect our natural landscapes and invest in a more connected, sustainable, prosperous, resilient and peaceful future. Thank you. *Meegweitch*.

(On motion of Senator White, debate adjourned.)

(At 5:09 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, October 20, 2026, at 2 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, October 8, 2026

	PAGE		PAGE
Business of the Senate	2937	Sixth Report of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Committee Tabled	
		Hon. Peter M. Boehm	2942
SENATORS' STATEMENTS		QUESTION PERIOD	
Canadian Forces Snowbirds		Global Affairs	
Hon. Denise Batters	2937	Canada-European Union Relations	
Nursing Home Without Walls		Hon. David M. Wells	2942
Hon. Dawn Arnold	2937	Hon. Pierre Moreau	2942
Visitors in the Gallery		Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
The Hon. the Speaker	2938	Immigration Levels	
Youth Support for Inclusion		Hon. Leo Housakos	2942
Hon. Kristopher Wells	2938	Hon. Pierre Moreau	2942
Visitors in the Gallery		Public Services and Procurement	
The Hon. the Speaker	2939	Public Accounts	
Canada's Air Effects Team		Hon. Jane MacAdam	2943
Hon. Colin Deacon	2939	Hon. Pierre Moreau	2943
Victory Advanced Technologies		Women and Gender Equality	
Hon. Jim Quinn	2939	Support for LGBTQ2+ People	
Visitors in the Gallery		Hon. Paulette Senior	2943
The Hon. the Speaker	2940	Hon. Pierre Moreau	2943
Armenian General Benevolent Union		Employment and Social Development	
Hon. Tony Loffreda	2940	Diversity in Federal Public Service	
Visitors in the Gallery		Hon. Amina Gerba	2944
The Hon. the Speaker	2940	Hon. Pierre Moreau	2944
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Finance	
Commissioner of Official Languages		Access to Banking Services	
2025-26 Annual Report Tabled	2940	Hon. Robert Black	2944
Official Languages		Hon. Pierre Moreau	2945
Budget and Authorization to Travel—Study on Strengthening of Federal Institutions' Arts, Culture and Heritage Responsibilities—Fourth Report of Committee Adopted		Transport	
Hon. Allister Surette	2941	Airport Privatization	
Budget 2025 Implementation Bill, No. 2		Hon. Yonah Martin	2945
Seventh Report of National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee Tabled		Hon. Pierre Moreau	2945
Hon. Tony Ince	2941	International Trade	
Twelfth Report of Social Affairs, Science and Technology Committee Tabled		Trade Diversification	
Hon. Rosemary Moodie	2941	Hon. Leo Housakos	2945
Sixth Report of Transport and Communications Committee Tabled		Hon. Pierre Moreau	2945
Hon. Paula Simons	2941	Health	
		Access to Health Care	
		Hon. Tony Loffreda	2946
		Hon. Pierre Moreau	2946
		Public Services and Procurement	
		Canada Post	
		Hon. Andrew Cardozo	2946
		Hon. Pierre Moreau	2947

CONTENTS

Thursday, October 8, 2026

PAGE	PAGE
Public Accounts	Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament
Hon. Krista Ross 2947	Second Report of Committee—Debate Adjourned
Hon. Pierre Moreau 2947	Hon. Yonah Martin 2968
ORDERS OF THE DAY	Study on the Implementation of the United Nations
Speaker's Ruling	Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act,
The Hon. the Speaker 2947	2021
Final Self-Government Agreement for the Tlegohli	Seventh Report of Indigenous Peoples Committee and
Got'ine Bill (Bill C-27)	Request for Government Response Adopted
Third Reading	Hon. Michèle Audette 2968
Hon. Pat Duncan 2949	
Hon. Yonah Martin 2949	The Senate
Lawful Access Bill, 2026 (Bill C-22)	Motion to Urge Government to Establish a Federal Legal
Second Reading—Debate Adjourned	Framework that Ensures Parity Between Mental Health and
Hon. Baltej S. Dhillon 2953	Addiction Care and Physical Health Care—Debate
Hon. Denise Batters 2958	Continued
Hon. Rebecca Patterson 2960	Hon. Tracy Muggli 2969
Hon. Colin Deacon 2960	Hon. Yonah Martin 2970
Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler 2961	
Hon. Paula Simons 2961	The Life and Legacy of Jane Goodall
Hon. Michèle Audette 2963	Inquiry—Debate Continued
Hon. Pat Duncan 2964	Hon. Bernadette Clement 2970
Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne 2964	
Hon. Yuen Pau Woo 2965	
Royal Assent 2968	Nation-Building Value of Tourism
Adjournment	Inquiry—Debate Continued
Motion Adopted	Hon. Sharon Burey 2970
Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson 2968	