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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 22, 2026

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, October 22, 2026

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, and October 15 marks Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day — a time to honour the lives that were hoped for, the lives that were lost and the love that remains.

For countless women and families, pregnancy begins with the quiet dream of a future yet to unfold. When a pregnancy ends in loss or an infant's life is cut tragically short, those dreams are interrupted, leaving behind a sorrow that words can seldom capture.

Whether through miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth or infant loss, each experience is deeply personal. Yet, too often, the pain is carried in silence, unseen or unacknowledged.

Throughout my 35 years practising family medicine, I had the privilege of supporting patients through both the hope and anticipation of pregnancy and the profound heartbreak of loss. Despite how common these experiences are, they too often remain surrounded by silence and stigma.

Across Canada, women and families continue to navigate these experiences without adequate support. Beyond physical recovery, many face emotional distress, isolation and the difficult task of returning to everyday life while coping with an often invisible loss.

Access to medical follow-up, mental health services and, importantly, bereavement counselling remains uneven, particularly in rural and remote communities.

We must move beyond awareness toward meaningful action. This means strengthening national data collection, advancing research into the physical and psychological impacts of pregnancy and infant loss and working across jurisdictions to ensure families have access to timely, compassionate and continuous care.

Honourable senators, grief does not allow for a timeline, nor does love end when a life is lost. Even the briefest of lives can leave an enduring imprint on the hearts of those who loved them.

To every woman and family who has experienced pregnancy or infant loss: Your experience matters. May you find comfort in knowing that you are seen, your loss is acknowledged and you do not have to carry it alone.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

WORLD OSTOMY DAY

Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard: Honourable senators, World Ostomy Day was October 3. For this World Ostomy Day statement, I want to begin with two simple words: Thank you. I want to thank the partners, families and friends who stand alongside people living with an ostomy.

I know from my own experience as a spouse what that support can mean. Acceptance, encouragement and unconditional love can make an enormous difference in helping someone move beyond stigma and isolation and embrace a full life living with an ostomy.

Today, I especially want to highlight Ostomy Canada Society's dedicated Spouses and Significant Others, or SASO, resource. SASO focuses on partners sharing responsibilities, emotional resilience, communication, support networks and advocacy, as well as celebrating milestones together. Thank you to the founders and members of SASO across Canada.

For the third year, I'm using World Ostomy Day to speak out and speak up for Canadians living with an ostomy. The messages I have received over the past three years remind me why speaking openly matters. People have thanked me for helping to break the silence and dispel the myths that still surround ostomies.

There is more work to do, including addressing what one person described as:

> . . . the material gap in the emotional and financial support of those affected by this medical necessity in their day-to-day lives.

For me, this advocacy is also deeply personal. My late husband, George Bernard, lived a full and vibrant life with an ostomy for almost 20 years, supported by people who loved and accepted him. I continue to advocate for greater understanding and support for people living with an ostomy in memory of his ability to live life fully with joy and gratitude.

So, today, I thank every spouse and significant other who walks this journey alongside someone they love, and I stand with every person living with an ostomy.

Together, let us Step Up for Ostomy, break the silence, reduce stigma and ensure that no one has to walk this journey alone.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Zita Somakoko, President and Founder of the Black-Manitobans Chamber of Commerce. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Gerba.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

HON. PAMELA WALLIN, O.C.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Honourable senators, it's my privilege, on behalf of the Canadian Senators Group, to pay tribute to our newly retired colleague the Honourable Pamela Wallin. She leaves behind a chamber made sharper and more focused by her presence. Before the Senate, Pamela spent decades telling Canadians about the world.

Born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, she brought her trademark Prairie pragmatism to national journalism. Her career moved quickly through radio, print and television news media. In 1982, she was the only female Canadian TV journalist to report from the Falkland Islands War. In 1985, she became the first woman in Canada to head a national television bureau. In 1992, she became the first woman in Canada to co-anchor a nightly news show.

Pamela Wallin shattered those glass ceilings, and for years we welcomed her into our living rooms, watching her cut through political noise to relentlessly pursue the truth. Her conversational yet laser-focused interviewing style invariably led to her leaning in and saying to the person she was interviewing, "Since you asked . . ." That phrase ultimately became the title of her bestselling 1998 autobiography.

When called on to serve as Canada's consul general in New York after 9/11, she accepted without hesitation. She brought poise and clarity to the international stage, serving as a steady anchor for Canada-U.S. relations at a time when the world needed stability.

• (1340)

In the Senate, Pamela was a powerhouse. Her legislative legacy includes her fierce, deeply personal advocacy for medical assistance in dying reform. Driven by memories of her own parents, she fought passionately for advance directives, wanting Canadians facing degenerative illnesses to retain their dignity and the right to choose their own path.

On October 6, 2026, she stood in this chamber to deliver her final speech. Her speech was on advance directives, and she did not mince words. She demanded an end to what she called the "perverse diagnosis lottery," where a person facing dementia is denied the right to choose their final path before losing the capacity to consent. Quoting Dylan Thomas, she urged us to not go gentle into this good fight for dignity in our final days.

Dearest Pamela, we in the Canadian Senators Group will miss your wit, your firm convictions and your unshakeable spirit. Though your seat may be empty, we know your voice will never be quiet. As you close this remarkable chapter, allow me to close in the words of a true broadcaster: "That's all for today. Thank you for having been with us, and bye for now."

THE LATE SIMOGET NIKATE'EN FRANCES SAMPSON

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, it is with deep sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Hereditary Chief Simoget Nikate'en Frances Sampson on October 12, 2026. The Gitxsan Nation has lost a respected leader, whose life was dedicated to her faith, her people, her hereditary responsibilities and the protection of her *laxyip*, or territory.

As a child, she was hospitalized at Miller Bay Hospital, where Nikate'en experienced an act of kindness from a nurse, which left a lasting impression on her. That experience helped inspire her to pursue a career in nursing services, where she could extend the same compassion and care to others.

Her unwavering faith in God guided her throughout her life and led her to serve her community as a Corps Sergeant-Major with the Salvation Army. Through her faith and service, she demonstrated a steadfast commitment to helping others and supporting those in need.

As a hereditary leader of the Gitxsan Nation, Simoget Nikate'en fulfilled her responsibilities to the best of her ability, having been groomed for this role from birth. Guided by Gitxsan *ayookw*, or law, and the responsibilities entrusted to her as Hereditary Chief, she helped guide her *wilp*, or house, in its decisions, actions and cultural practices. Her leadership was rooted in the teachings, laws, traditions and obligations passed down through generations.

Simoget Nikate'en also played an instrumental role as a translator during the historic *Delgamuukw* court case. Through this important contribution, she helped ensure that Gitxsan voices, Traditional Knowledge and Oral Traditions could be communicated within a legal process that would have lasting significance for Indigenous rights and title in Canada.

Simoget Nikate'en Frances Sampson leaves behind a legacy of faith, courage, responsibility and unwavering commitment to her people and her *laxyip*. Her contributions will be remembered with respect and gratitude by her *wilp*, the Gitxsan Nation and all those whose lives she touched. May her legacy continue to guide those lives she has touched.

Kinanâskomitin.

THE LATE STEPHEN JARISLOWSKY, C.C., O.C.

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a Canadian icon, Stephen Jarislowsky, a successful businessman and remarkable philanthropist, who passed away on October 8 at the age of 101.

Mr. Jarislowsky was known for his outstanding achievements as an entrepreneur and investor, as well as his many contributions to our economic prosperity. However, he may be best remembered and admired for his philanthropy and desire to make our country better.

I often say, “Integrity is non-negotiable.” It was a principle Mr. Jarislowsky shared. He believed deeply in ethics, once observing:

> Ethics are a good way of getting through life. And if you practise ethics, people will respect you, people will honour you, people will believe you and people will follow you.

I had the privilege of meeting him on many occasions. Our conversations often focused on the economy. He was never one to hold back his views. I fondly recall a discussion at an event celebrating Mark Carney’s appointment as Governor of the Bank of England, when we reflected on the 2008 financial crisis, the resilience of Canada’s economy and the stability of our banks and real estate markets. His insights reflected sound judgment, rigorous analysis and an impressive understanding of economic policy and global trends.

Colleagues, I would also like to share my memories of our last meeting on September 1 at his home, just days before his one hundred and first birthday. Senator Gignac also had the honour of joining us that day.

For the past year, I have advocated for a national longevity economy strategy because I believe Canada must better prepare its economy, its financial and health care systems, as well as our labour market for longer, healthier lives.

Given the work, focus and reputation of the Jarislowsky Foundation, I welcomed the opportunity to discuss this vision with him and his team. He was fully engaged in our discussion, and he obviously understood the need for a national strategy.

As expected, our conversation also turned to Canada’s economic future. He shared thoughtful perspectives on improving productivity and addressing the affordability crisis. Senator Gignac and I both feel fortunate to have had this unique opportunity with him just weeks before his passing.

Honourable senators, Canada owes a great deal to Stephen Jarislowsky. His generosity, integrity and commitment to our country leave a lasting legacy.

On behalf of Canadians, I thank him for his extraordinary contributions and for the example he set as a great Canadian and a kind human being.

ISLAMIC HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, a donation can tell us something about the person who gives it. It can also tell us something about the tradition that taught them to give.

During Islamic Heritage Month, I want to reflect on a principle at the heart of Islam: that a portion of one’s wealth carries an obligation to others. Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam, gives that principle practical force. For Muslims who meet its conditions, giving is a religious duty. It asks a person to consider what they owe to someone whose circumstances may be very different from their own.

There is a powerful understanding of society in that obligation. Our comfort at home does not lessen our responsibility to a neighbour in need. Those who cannot give financially can offer their time and effort in service, a gift of themselves whose worth cannot be measured in money.

That understanding deserves a place in how we speak about Islamic heritage. Heritage lives in the habits people teach their children. A child watching a parent set money aside for someone in need is learning what prosperity is for. A young volunteer helping prepare a meal is discovering that service requires effort and that another person’s dignity deserves care.

In Canada, Muslim charitable organizations and local congregations put these teachings to work. The public may see the assistance without knowing the conviction behind it. Islamic Heritage Month gives us an opportunity to appreciate both. It also invites us to look more closely at a faith we too often encounter through the urgency of the news. There is much to discover in the ordinary, deliberate practice of doing good and in the generations of people who have sustained it.

• (1350)

Honourable senators, a country’s character takes shape through what its people feel responsible for. To this shared work, Muslim Canadians bring a tradition that makes generosity an obligation and asks those with enough to remember those without.

This October, I would like to honour that inheritance and the Muslim Canadians whose generosity and service give it life. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

JUSTICE

CHARTER STATEMENT IN RELATION TO BILL C-38— DOCUMENT TABLED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a Charter Statement prepared by the Minister of Justice in relation to Bill C-38, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (extension of the federal fuel excise tax relief), pursuant to the *Department of Justice Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. J-2, sbs. 4.2(1).

CHIGNECTO ISTHMUS DYKELAND SYSTEM BILL

FOURTEENTH REPORT OF LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT MATTER TABLED

Hon. Denise Batters: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the fourteenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, which deals with the subject matter of Bill S-216, An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada, and I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

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

(Pursuant to the order adopted February 10, 2026, the report was deemed referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications.)

CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES DAY BILL

FIFTEENTH REPORT OF LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Denise Batters, Deputy Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, presented the following report:

Thursday, October 22, 2026

The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs has the honour to present its

FIFTEENTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-237, An Act respecting a Cities and Municipalities Day, has, in obedience to the order of reference of February 12, 2026, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

DENISE BATTERS

Deputy Chair

[*Translation*]

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

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

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, before we continue with our business, I would like to remind everyone of the importance of handling interpretation earpieces with care.

To help ensure the quality of our proceedings, the effective operation of interpretation services and a safe working environment for everyone participating in our proceedings, please avoid placing or handling earpieces near a microphone.

Please keep your earpiece on your ear or, if you are not using it, place it on the sticker provided for that purpose at your desk.

I would also like to take a moment to remind you to silence your mobile devices, 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.

I thank all honourable senators for their cooperation.

QUESTION PERIOD

FINANCE

COST OF LIVING

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Government leader, yesterday's HungerCount report by Food Banks Canada revealed yet another record-breaking year for food bank use under your government's watch.

The statistics are alarming: More than 2.3 million food bank visits were recorded, up 9% from last year and nearly 117% since 2019, and children now account for one third of all visits.

Senator Moreau, these numbers represent real Canadians whose incomes are being overwhelmed by the rising cost of housing, fuel and everyday essentials. Why are your government's policies failing to ease these pressures and reduce reliance on food banks across Canada?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Ataullahjan, for your question. It's a very important one. That's precisely the reason the government is acting directly and precisely to quickly support Canadians with respect to rising food prices through the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit with the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit Act. Also, with the National School Food Program, a family of four will receive $1,800 this year and $1,400 for the next four years. The second payment for that program was made on October 6.

The government is also building a more independent and affordable food system for all with the launch of the National Food Security Strategy, which will be backed by $3 billion in investment, including $1 billion to expand food terminals and $130 million for the Competition Bureau and the Competition Tribunal to investigate, prevent and combat anti-competitive business practices, so we're acting to ensure that food is available and affordable for all Canadians.

Senator Ataullahjan: Senator Moreau, a troubling consequence of this crisis is that as Canadians' disposable income shrinks, their ability to support food banks is shrinking as well. If your government cannot reverse the conditions driving the demand for food banks, what specific measures will it take to prevent declining donations from worsening the crisis?

Senator Moreau: The facts seem to contradict your premise. For a second consecutive month, grocery prices grew slower than overall inflation. The government is acting on affordability when it comes to groceries, vulnerable Canadians, children and the housing market to provide Canadians what they need. The fact is that the results are there.

PUBLIC SAFETY

REPEAT OFFENDERS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, recent reports from British Columbia have highlighted the anguish of the family of Arnold and Joanne De Jong, a couple in their seventies who were brutally murdered during a home invasion in 2022. After a court ruling delayed the sentencing of the three men convicted of their murders and opened the door for arguments for earlier parole eligibility, the family has voiced deep frustration that the justice system appears more focused on the rights of convicted offenders than on providing timely justice for victims and their loved ones.

Leader, what is the government's response to the De Jong family? What concrete measures is it taking to ensure that victims are not subjected to lengthy delays and repeated setbacks in their pursuit of justice?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The safety of all Canadians matters to the government. It is, obviously, a very sad situation that you're describing. It moved me just as it moved you. It has moved all members of the government, but the government is acting on these things. We're strengthening conditions for bail for violent crime, and we have tabled many bills to ensure that we're tougher on crime. That's the reality.

Some of those measures have even been backed by you here in the Senate when we have tabled bills. So we have to work together and not accuse each other on each side of this chamber of not caring for Canadians when they live through a horrible situation, like the couple you mentioned in your question.

• (1400)

I think it is a matter of dignity, and the government is there to help Canadians and to make them feel secure.

Senator Martin: I do agree that we must work together. There, in fact, is a Conservative bill, Bill C-293, the safe at home act, which would create a stand-alone offence for violent home invasion and strengthen bail and sentencing consequences.

Leader, will the government support this legislation and put victims ahead of violent repeat offenders? Would you support it when it comes to this chamber?

Senator Moreau: With all due respect, Senator Martin, the government is not waiting for the Conservatives to make suggestions. The government introduced over 80 changes to the Criminal Code that make bail laws stricter and sentencing laws tougher for repeat and violent offenders under the Bail and Sentencing Reform Act, Bill C-14, adopted here in the Senate as well. I think that we are doing a pretty good job.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CANADIAN BUSINESSES

Hon. Tony Loffreda: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. The Bank of Canada's latest Business Outlook Survey reports that some firms are reducing investment in Canada or shifting it abroad to limit their exposure to tariffs. Hiring intentions also remain soft.

The risk extends beyond lost sales today. Investment that leaves Canada can mean fewer jobs, weaker productivity and a smaller tax base for years to come.

What concrete steps is the government taking now to help Canadian businesses proceed with investments here, particularly small- and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs? How will the government measure whether those policies are keeping both investments and jobs in Canada?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Loffreda. This is a very important question, and I must tell you that the government shares your concern. That is why it has announced numerous supports and programs to ensure that businesses are able to continue to invest in Canada, grow their businesses here at home and create more jobs.

As a matter of fact, the government has introduced $7.5 billion of new agile measures to support Canadian SMEs, such as $1.5 billion in the Regional Tariff Response Initiative, $500 million in liquidity stream for working capital support and $2 billion in the new Canada Strong Diversification Fund to support shovel-ready projects. This builds on $25 billion in support that the government has implemented since it took office, such as the Productivity Mega Deduction, helping SMEs, increasing the Business Development Bank of Canada, or BDC, and adding $500 million to the BDC so it can provide SMEs with more commercial resources and insight.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer. As I always say, what you measure improves.

Will the government publish results by region and business size, including private investment supported and jobs created or retained so Parliament can assess whether small- and medium-sized businesses in Quebec and across Canada are truly benefiting?

Senator Moreau: Senator Loffreda, I cannot speak to the reporting for each support program that the government has launched at this time, but I will highlight that the Government of Canada introduced a $3.5-billion investment in Rapid Response Supports for Workers and Employers, including the new Workforce Retention and Retraining Program to help employers and workers in different regions respond to economic challenges and prepare for emerging opportunities. The government currently expects up to 66,000 workers to benefit from the Workforce Retention and Retraining Program —

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

HEALTH AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Hon. Paulette Senior: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. In 2019, Canada made a 10-year commitment to global health and rights to ensure that women, children and adolescents around the world have access to the quality health care and human rights needed to survive and thrive. Last year, the government cut $2.7 billion over four years from international assistance, specifically targeting global health programming within the budget.

I rise today to ask whether these cuts will continue or whether the government will honour its commitment to our world's women and children.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Senior. Canada's global health investment helps build stronger and more resilient health systems and improve access to essential health services for vulnerable populations. The government has been actively working through trusted partnerships to achieve results at scale, including recent commitments of $1.02 billion to the Global Fund, one of the world's leading partnerships to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. That being said, the government is reviewing its international assistance programming in the context of the broader foreign policy review in a rapidly changing global environment.

Canadians can rest assured, though, that this government remains committed to ensuring that Canada continues to be a strong global health partner and to making investments that save lives and strengthen health systems here and around the world.

Senator Senior: Thank you, Senator Moreau. The 10-year commitment provides $700 million each year to support sexual and reproductive health and rights, including HIV prevention, comprehensive sexuality education, family planning and contraceptives, safe and legal abortion and post-abortion care and preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence.

Senator Moreau, how will this government continue to protect and prioritize support for sexual and reproductive health and rights globally?

Senator Moreau: The short answer would be through sustained investment in strong Canadian and international partnerships. The government will continue working to ensure that women and girls have access to essential sexual and reproductive health services and greater control over the decisions that shape their lives. These investments improve health outcomes, expand educational and economic opportunities and demonstrably contribute to stronger and more resilient communities.

TRANSPORT

HIGH-SPEED RAIL

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: My question is for the Government Representative. As a senator from Ottawa, I'm very interested in the future of fast and efficient rail through Quebec and Ontario, which includes Ottawa. The Alto project is under consideration for high-speed rail; it is also high-cost and high-disruption. I understand from testimony at the Finance Committee that a final recommendation will go to the Minister of Transport later this year.

Senator Moreau, can you tell us if the Alto project is carved in stone, or is the government prepared to consider alternatives?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The government is committed to the Alto project because, in the view of the government, building the first high-speed rail network in Canada is a generational project that will stimulate our economy, create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs and deliver to Canadians a transportation system deserving of a major economy of the G7.

As I answered Senator MacDonald's question yesterday, the project will boost GDP by $35 billion annually, create 51,000 jobs and unlock enhanced productivity for generations of Canadians.

So, yes, this is a very important project, and the government is waiting for the last study from Alto to make the final decision.

Senator Cardozo: I would like to urge the government to consider something that is sometimes called high-efficiency rail, which means using the VIA Rail lines — in fact, buying VIA Rail lines so that they would have their own lines — and also ensuring that VIA Rail trains have preference over freight trains, ensuring more efficiency for a strong and improved VIA Rail system.

Would the government consider making VIA Rail a lot more reliable and high-speed instead?

Senator Moreau: Senator Cardozo, I take your last question as a suggestion, if I understand correctly, and I will certainly bring your message to the Minister of Transport, whom I meet with every Monday.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

LIVE HORSE EXPORTS

Hon. Charles S. Adler: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Moreau, this past spring, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or CFIA, stated it would review the Animal Justice report on live horse export to determine whether there is evidence of possible non-compliance with Canada's regulations when it comes to the export of live horses for slaughter in Japan.

For reference, this report found that in 18 different shipments from Winnipeg and Edmonton between September 2024 and September 2025 — these shipments all going to Japan — 9 Canadian horses died, 29 collapsed during the flights and more than 290 were injured or sick. The report also alleged that at least five shipments exceeded Canada's 28-hour limit for transporting horses without food, water or rest.

• (1410)

Has the CFIA —

The Hon. the Speaker: I'm sorry to interrupt, Senator Adler, but your time allowed is up.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): That is an important question. My understanding is the Animal Justice report gets their information from Japan, and there is not the same definition of what an injured or sick horse is. That brings us to the dead horses and those that collapsed, which were 38 out of 2,408, or 1.5% of the horses.

That being said, the government is taking note of the report and studying its recommendations. I cannot comment on any specific timeline for this report, but the Canadian Food Inspection Agency continues to investigate reports of unreported horses' deaths and serious injuries in horse shipments and will ensure that regulated parties are complying with the humane transport regulations in place here in Canada.

Senator Adler: The problem, senator, is that these horses are not inspected by the CFIA in Japan; they are inspected before they get on the flight. It is like some authoritarian regime telling the Red Cross that a prisoner was perfectly fine before they tortured them.

There is mounting evidence that some horses leave Canada healthy but arrive sick because of the torture of those crates and up to 28 hours in the cargo section. Many of them arrive at their destination sick, injured or dead . Does the government have a threshold of —

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Adler, you had 30 seconds for a supplementary.

Senator Moreau: I understand perfectly that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is inspecting horses when they get on board the plane.

As I mentioned, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is continuing to work with airlines and transportation to increase the number of direct flights used by exporters, leading to shorter transport times, and reviewing contingency plans in place. We are still studying those reports, and the government will act accordingly.

PUBLIC SAFETY

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Government leader, during a recent Inter-Parliamentary Union mission to Arusha, Tanzania, senators were once again informed they were not entitled to Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP, protection, despite travelling in a high-risk region.

I know our colleague Senator Ross raised this issue with you last June. At that time, you told this chamber that you would make inquiries and that the responsible minister ". . . obviously has to have a conversation with the RCMP to make sure that they understand the rules as we do."

Senator Moreau, has that conversation taken place? If so, why are senators still being told that RCMP protection applies only to members of the House of Commons?

Hon. Denise Batters: Hear, hear.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Like all engagements I take here in the Senate, I fulfill those engagements. That conversation took place. My understanding is that there is a different comprehension of the rules by the RCMP and by the government and the minister herself.

We are still continuing to work on it. In my own personal opinion, I think it would be wise for the RCMP to read the rules that are now in place differently. I think that members of this chamber should be entitled to have the same protection as members of the House of Commons.

That being said, I will again bring your question, as I did with the question of Senator Ross, to the attention of the government.

Senator Ataullahjan: Senator Moreau, this situation undermines Canada's credibility in parliamentary diplomacy. During our trip to Tanzania, a fellow senator and I were left stranded after a field visit because transportation was only available if we were accompanied by an MP. All we needed was to be picked up and taken to the hotel or the conference centre. Will your government commit to ensuring that senators receive appropriate security support while abroad, or are we not worth protecting, in your government's view?

Senator Moreau: I will certainly commit to bringing the question up once again with the government. I understand perfectly the situation you are describing, which is similar to the situation Senator Ross brought to my attention, and I think this needs to be addressed.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, as you know, this week is Small Business Week, spotlighting the hard-working small- and medium-sized businesses that make up 99.7% of employer businesses in Canada.

The Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy recently published a report titled *From Potential to Prosperity: The urgent case for greater investment in Canada's SMEs*. I had the great privilege of being part of that study. We called on 35 witnesses, and they made it very clear that business investment in Canada has collapsed from 14% of GDP in 2014 down to 11% in 2024. A more competitive tax framework is urgently needed to free up capital for hiring, training and equipment.

The government has taken small steps, but will it commit to going further to improve the small business tax break and fully implement the committee's recommendations?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I can repeat my answer to Senator Loffreda's question today. The government understands perfectly that small- and medium-sized businesses, or SMEs, are the backbone of the Canadian economy, and that's the reason why they're acting on many topics to help improve the economic situation of small- and medium-sized businesses.

I mentioned a $7.5 billion new, agile measure to support Canadian SMEs. This builds on the $7.5 billion, which builds on the $25 billion in support that the government has implemented since it took office.

I think that is a pretty clear commitment to help SMEs here in Canada. Of course, the government is committed to continuing to help businesses, because, obviously, they are the backbone of our economy.

Senator Martin: I appreciate some of those measures, but, obviously, the federal tax programs and application processes remain very complex for smaller firms to navigate. Will the government also commit to simplifying access, cutting red tape and delivering real tax relief, including the measures that you've mentioned, to really target what we can do for small businesses?

Senator Moreau: Well, generally speaking, we are working on red tape. Senator Petten is sponsoring Bill S-7, which the Senate will study. I don't know if I can tell you precisely if there are measures in there targeting small- and medium-sized businesses. It is obvious that the government is committed to helping businesses in Canada. Thank you for the suggestion.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

IMMIGRATION LEVELS

Hon. Farah Mohamed: Senator Moreau, in its October 8 analysis, the Bank of Canada wrote:

> In the coming years, fewer immigrants are expected to arrive, which will reduce demand for housing. This could lower pressure on housing costs. At the same time, less immigration will mean fewer workers and weaker demand for other goods and services. The economy won't grow as fast as a result.

During Bill C-12 debate, specifically in relation to changes to the immigration system, senators warned of potential unintended consequences due to some of the changes in the Canadian economy. Now it seems that the Bank of Canada is indicating those same concerns.

Did the government miscalculate, or is it prepared to accept structurally lower economic growth as a consequence of its rapid immigration reductions? Thank you.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. Canadians understand that immigration has always fuelled our growth and will continue to play an indispensable role in building Canada. The government is managing volumes responsibly and refocusing on attracting those Canada needs most, including health workers, home builders, researchers and high-skilled workers who sustain our public services and fuel Canada's prosperity. The government will continue to take a balanced approach to immigration.

Canada has an unprecedented opportunity right now to attract international talent. The new Talent Attraction Strategy of the government is going to recruit more than 1,000 highly qualified researchers and give them the resources they need to drive innovation here at home and build the economy of tomorrow.

Senator Mohamed: Thank you for that. I look forward to that strategy coming to life.

What specific economic indicators and timelines will the government use to determine whether its current immigration targets and its plan would potentially undermine the long-term economic growth of this country, and will it commit to revisiting those targets if the evidence warrants it?

• (1420)

Senator Moreau: Attracting and retaining high-value talent remain a critical priority and will help build Canada strong, and that's why the government is committed to working as far as immigration is concerned.

In 2026-27, the government is also granting permanent residence to an additional 33,000 skilled workers who are already working in rural and smaller communities. I had many questions from Senator Miville-Dechêne on those issues of need in remote areas —

[*Translation*]

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

CANADIAN HERITAGE

PROTECTION OF MINORS IN PORNOGRAPHIC INDUSTRY

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Senator Moreau, the Quebec Superior Court has just authorized a class action lawsuit against Aylo, the parent company of Pornhub. The judge wrote:

> So far, the allegations show that the people running these sites failed to ensure that the individuals depicted in the videos had duly consented to the dissemination of their intimate images and, furthermore, that these people were aware that a large number of non-consensual images, including child pornography material, had been posted.

I'm well aware that you are not authorized to comment on matters before the courts. However, I would remind you that no criminal charges have been brought against Pornhub in Canada in the five years since the massive scandal broke. Why is that?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Unfortunately, I can't provide a definitive answer to your question. What I can do is share some hypotheses.

The Superior Court must apply the rules of civil law when authorizing a class action. For criminal charges to be laid, Crown prosecutors must be satisfied that they have enough sufficiently robust evidence to prove the offender's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

If no criminal charges have been laid against Pornhub in Canada in the past five years, it is likely because the evidence submitted to the Crown prosecutors is not enough to justify prosecution.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: I am familiar with the differences between civil and criminal law, but it is interesting to see that the United States has brought legal action against Pornhub. I understand that our legal systems are different. However, we should have been able to file criminal charges, given how many allegations were made and how many victims came forward. All the more so, senator, since Pornhub is headquartered—

The Hon. the Speaker: I'm sorry, Senator Miville-Dechêne, but the allotted time is up. Thank you.

Senator Moreau: Far be it from me to lecture you on the law, but it is important to remember that, if victims have come forward to the police, and the police submitted their findings to the Crown prosecutors, then it is up to the prosecutors to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to file criminal charges. There can be no government or political interference in such matters.

The fact that Pornhub is headquartered in Montreal does not change anything from a criminal law perspective. When a criminal offence is committed in Canada, those who committed the crime, no matter where they are from —

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

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

MILITARY PROCUREMENT

Hon. Rebecca Patterson: Senator Moreau, I have a complete change of direction here. My question relates to government investment and procurement for the military and defence sectors.

Canada is at an inflection point. Security and military technological environments are evolving much faster than our traditional defence procurement cycle can keep up, and this is in order to procure what is needed to defend Canadians and protect sovereignty. Therefore, I applaud the standing up of the Defence Investment Agency.

But Canada must rapidly modernize to remain capable of defending our territory, contribute meaningfully to NORAD and NATO and protect our sovereignty; this is a generations-long investment. The question we must ask ourselves is what integrated military combat ecosystem Canada needs to build today to remain operationally relevant for tomorrow.

My question is this: How do Canadians and members of the Canadian Armed Forces be assured that any new organization will balance the need to invest in modern military combat ecosystems that endure in the long term alongside the need to build in Canada and diversify markets?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. Yesterday, I was with the Royal Military College of Canada, and we were discussing those issues with the colonel in charge of the college. They were quite pleased with the fact that unprecedented investment will be made in the military by this government over the next year.

Now, I totally understand that investments that are made today will make improvements in the next few years. They know that, but they are building on it, and they are committed to ensuring that those investments will be completely integrated into the military.

Now, because of those important investments, the government is committed to working closely with the military to ensure that the equipment purchased will answer the needs of our Canadian Armed Forces to be better equipped in the future to ensure that our sovereignty is very well protected.

Senator Patterson: Thank you. That is a great segue into my next point. Given the massive shift in geopolitical alliances and increasing threats to Canada's sovereignty, the government should be asking themselves what future required capabilities we would need to delay or forgo by making the decisions today on the investment side. What types of accountability frameworks will the government be putting in place so that we do ensure these are true long-term safety investments?

Senator Moreau: In the coming weeks, we will be studying Bill C-40. I think your question could be raised during the study of that important piece of legislation.

I thank our colleague for accepting the sponsorship of this important bill. This is another step to underline the commitment of the government towards investment in our military.

[*Translation*]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

UKRAINIAN HERITAGE MONTH BILL

MESSAGE FROM COMMONS

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons returning Bill S-210, An Act respecting Ukrainian Heritage Month, and acquainting the Senate that they had passed this bill without amendment.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

LAWFUL ACCESS BILL, 2026

SECOND READING

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Dhillon, seconded by the Honourable Senator Varone, for the second reading of Bill C-22, An Act respecting lawful access.

Hon. Denise Batters: Honourable senators, I rise today as opposition critic to speak to the second reading of Bill C-22, An Act respecting lawful access. The bill seeks to modernize the framework of giving access to information and data in the context of criminal and national security investigations.

It consists of two parts. Part 1 addresses the investigative powers relating to subscriber information, computer data, location and transmission data, and exigent circumstances.

Part 2 enacts a new regime applying to electronic service providers, or ESPs, called the "Supporting Authorized Access to Information Act." This allows the cabinet to designate what are termed "core providers" and impose technical and operational obligations on them. These obligations are related to the extraction of and access to information, the installation and maintenance of equipment and the retention of certain metadata for a maximum period of time, originally a year, but now changed to six months through an amendment at a House of Commons committee.

An administrative monetary penalties regime will be applied for non-compliance: up to $50,000 for an individual and $250,000 for an entity, and up to $100,000 for an individual and $500,000 for an entity for a criminal conviction.

Many of the major details of the bill will be left to regulation, which is a significant cause for concern.

In this modern age of rapidly evolving technology, global interconnectivity and information explosion, it is crucial that law enforcement and security agencies have quick access to the data they require in an investigation or an urgent situation.

The counterbalance, of course, is the constitutional protection of the Charter and privacy rights of Canadians. Bill C-22 is at the intersection of these issues, and it is very delicate to determine the right balance for Parliament to legislate.

This is the seventh time governments have tried to propose a lawful access bill — three times under a Conservative government and now an additional four times under a Liberal government. The attempt immediately before this was with Bill C-2, the Carney Liberal government's first bill.

• (1430)

Bill C-2 required warrantless disclosure of information from any service provider in Canada in the absence of court oversight. Thankfully, the government was forced to back down from that iteration of the legislation, but Bill C-22 repackages a lot of what was in that bill.

Even with all the attempts at lawful access legislation, the Liberal government has still failed to strike the proper balance between ensuring security and protecting Canadians' privacy and Charter rights. It's not just me who feels that way. The official opposition in the House of Commons, legal experts and academics, civil liberties organizations, technology companies and cybersecurity experts all continue to express concerns even though the bill was amended in the House of Commons. There is little doubt that Canada's absence of proper lawful access

legislation makes Canada vulnerable. Even though the Liberal government has been in power for 11 years to this point, they still haven't accomplished this.

In its briefing material on the bill, the government notes: "Canada risks an increasing reputation of being a haven for criminal and threat actor communication activities."

But isn't that already the case? And much of the blame lies squarely at the feet of this Liberal government. The Carney government — and the Trudeau government that predated it — dismantled the regime of tough criminal legislation to create weak Liberal criminal laws and a culture of lax enforcement.

Further, the Liberal government has taken minimal and very late action on foreign interference, leaving Canadians vulnerable to predation by unsavoury transnational actors. This Liberal government has a very bad habit of only taking law enforcement's advice when it really wants to.

I certainly appreciate the need for Canada's national security and law enforcement organizations to have timely access to the information they need to keep Canadians safe, but we must tread carefully where the rights of Canadians are concerned. Further, Parliament must also be cautious not to inadvertently cause additional security vulnerabilities that could be exploited if they fell into the wrong hands.

As my Conservative MP colleague Chak Au stated during the House of Commons debate on this bill:

> The question is not whether we need lawful access; the question is how we implement it safely and without introducing new risks.

Given the Liberal government's track record, there is considerable reason to question whether it has the protection of Canadians' civil liberties as its foremost priority.

As Conservative MP Rob Moore said, ". . . at every opportunity this government has had to trample on the rights of law-abiding citizens, it has done so. . . ."

This is in keeping with the ever-growing list of flawed digital governance bills that this government has forced through Parliament. There was the controversial Bill C-11, the Online Streaming Act. That was the first time the Trudeau Liberal government invoked time allocation in the Senate, followed by time allocation again here on Bill C-18, the Online News Act.

The government pressed the Senate to force through Bill C-26, their cybersecurity bill, but it ultimately died on the Order Paper after its passage was delayed because of a significant drafting error of the government's own making.

In the next Parliament, Bill C-26 was essentially reintroduced as Bill C-8. While Conservative MPs' amendments improved the bill in the House of Commons, the Liberal government again pushed the Senate to pass the bill quickly and unamended by us.

Now the Liberal government has introduced this Bill C-22, and the pattern continues. Shockingly, the Carney government even cut short committee study time of this bill in the House of Commons.

Debates in the House of Commons, the Senate and committees are where parliamentarians ensure the concerns of all Canadians are aired. To stifle debate is to silence Canadians. An integral part of our role as senators is to represent the views of minorities and our regions in the legislative process. This Liberal government has made it clear they place no priority on that.

How many times have I called out the Senate government leader for his failure to give second or third reading speeches on government bills? Over the last several years, it is embarrassing how rarely they occur. In fact, after 15 months in the job, this Senate government leader has given none.

This Liberal government continues to dodge accountability and refuses to answer the questions of Canadians.

Furthermore, this puts all senators in a situation where we are unable to get important answers from the government on government bills, nor can we really get answers from asking the sponsors of the legislation, as government bill sponsors are often no longer from the government caucus.

This Liberal government does seem determined to dodge accountability wherever it can. Bill C-22 makes major amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada and raises significant concerns about the impact of lawful access on Canadians' Charter and privacy rights. It is natural that a bill like that would be sent to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for study, where it could receive the necessary scrutiny under a constitutional lens.

Both the sponsor of this legislation, Senator Dhillon, and I, the critic, are members of the Senate Legal Committee. In fact, we were just there this morning. Uncharacteristically, our committee isn't studying any Government Business right now, so we would even have the time to take on a large, complex bill like Bill C-22. The Senate Legal Committee is accustomed to handling bills of that nature. But when I raised with Senator Dhillon in this chamber the possibility of having Bill C-22 sent to our Legal Committee, he didn't voice his personal opinion about which committee should study the bill. He basically said, "We'll leave it for the leaders to determine."

The Liberal government is developing a habit of sending thorny legislation with questionable constitutionality to committees other than the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for study.

Recently, Bill C-26 and Bill C-8, both cybersecurity bills, were studied at the National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee, not the Legal Committee, for even part of their studies.

The government opted to send Bill C-9, the government's controversial hate crime legislation, to the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights rather than the Legal Committee.

All of these bills would have benefited greatly from the intense constitutional scrutiny of the Legal Committee, but apparently the Liberal government thought such scrutiny would be better avoided.

It shouldn't be left to the will of the government alone to make the determination about the best committee to study a government bill.

Another parliamentary tool this Liberal government employs to help insulate itself from proper scrutiny is the omnibus bill — particularly pairing an especially controversial or unpopular measure with a more palatable legislative initiative.

The Liberal government might think this is good politics, but it's very bad Parliament. We've recently seen them do this with the controversial labour component of Bill C-39. Shamefully, they have even also announced their intent to do this with assisted suicide legislation to be introduced this fall.

Bill C-22 is yet one more example. During study in the House of Commons, the official opposition Conservative caucus supported Part 1 of the bill while they fought hard against the more constitutionally questionable Part 2. They suggested splitting the bill to resolve this problem. 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. But the Liberal government refused, not only forcing the bill through the House of Commons quickly but even further truncating its study time at the House committee stage.

What could be less democratic? It does beg the question: What kind of study is the government now expecting from the Senate? A speedy rubber stamp? That would not be the sober second thought we are duty bound here to employ.

There are a few provisions of Bill C-22 that are improvements over the Liberal government's previous digital governance legislation. In Part 2 of Bill C-22, ministerial orders are subject to the approval of the Intelligence Commissioner, so it's before the fact. This is an improvement from the cybersecurity bill.

The Liberal government was forced to make several changes to Bill C-22 as the bill passed through committee study on the House of Commons side. Some of these also improved the legislation. One such amendment was the carve-out from data retention provisions. While the bill originally called for retention of information for a full year, it was amended in committee to only six months. While this shorter timeline is better, it still does not solve the considerable problems with widespread data retention.

Our Conservative opposition MPs tried valiantly to amend Bill C-22 at the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. They did manage to pass amendments that limited regulation-making powers only to activities specified in the bill and restricted certain listed activities — for example, installation and maintenance — to core providers, disallowing access to electronic service providers' systems.

Other Conservative amendments were similar to amendments passed by the committee, including explicit protection for end-to-end encryption; clarification that ministerial orders do not need to be complied with to the extent that they would cause a systemic vulnerability; and requiring the minister to share the ministerial order and relevant information to the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA, within 30 days of the Intelligence Commissioner's approval.

A Conservative amendment would likewise have shortened the data retention provisions of the bill to six months, as did the government amendment that passed.

Some significant Conservative amendments were not adopted by the committee. One Conservative amendment proposed restricting cross-border data sharing with foreign governments with a history of human rights or international humanitarian law violations or war crimes. Another would have required the government to pay the cost for core providers fulfilling regulations. Others would have mandated warrants for entry into any place and called on the minister to table an annual report regarding the use of powers in the bill. These amendments were defeated by the committee.

• (1440)

Many stakeholders have expressed continued concerns regarding Bill C-22, even after it was amended in the House of Commons. Several technology companies penned an open letter to the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Industry in late September, outlining their outstanding concerns with the legislation. Their letter reads, in part:

> Bill C-22 puts our companies at risk. It could force businesses to create new compliance and data-retention systems, collect sensitive information they do not otherwise need, weaken protections around customers' financial and personal data, and respond to sweeping government orders with limited transparency or oversight. Some firms have already said they will leave Canada if this bill passes as-is.

When I raised such an eventuality about companies like Signal with government officials in my critic's briefing, they dismissed the concern, saying they didn't take such threats seriously. They said similar threats had been made in other countries with comparable legislation and the companies had not followed through. It sounds like a gamble with Canadian technology investment in Canada, but it is a risk the Liberal government seems willing to take.

Today, a news article stated that Swiss tech-privacy company Proton, with 100 million customers, says it is no longer exploring establishing North American headquarters in Canada. If Bill-22 passes in its current form, Proton says expansion here would be impossible.

Several experts have concerns about how the bill will weaken encryption, ultimately making all users more susceptible to attack. They are not assuaged by amendments passed on the bill in the House of Commons. In an op-ed, Kate Robertson of Citizen Lab described the amendment on encryption, saying:

> . . . it wasn't even a fig leaf: the public safety minister publicly admitted as much this summer when he stated that the bill does, in fact, still permit the government to compromise encryption in what he describes as "extenuating" situations.
>
> Ultimately, proposals to compromise encryption and force the stockpiling of metadata are divorced from the reality of today's threat and economic landscape. . . .

In their open letter to the Liberal government ministers, technology companies raised the concern that:

> A backdoor for law enforcement is a backdoor for everyone. Once built, it would permanently expand the attack surface for criminal actors and foreign adversaries. . . .

Further, they also warned that retaining metadata for six months — including information not needed for business purposes — would create ". . . high-value cybersecurity 'honeypot' targets for hackers."

Global non-profit organization Chayn wrote of the dangers of weakening encryption of metadata under Bill C-22 and the profound impact that could have on vulnerable communities:

> Metadata is any data that does not contain the content of a conversation but make no mistake it can tell an important story about a person: with metadata, you can find out who speaks to whom, how often and for how long, and where they are located at any given time. Taking again the example of a woman seeking to communicate with a shelter or an abortion provider, it is easy to see how such information — when placed in the wrong hands can be used for harm, even when the person or state intercepting the information does not have access to the content. The more metadata is collected and the longer it is stored the greater the risk of misuse, unauthorized access, and mass surveillance will be. Without robust safeguards, oversight, and strict limits, this measure will erode trust in digital services and put vulnerable groups at risk.

The article went on to describe the potential impact on refugee populations as well:

> Many refugees have chosen Canada to rebuild their lives, a country they saw as a safe haven for human rights. International organisations and activist groups operate from Canada for this very reason. If encryption is no longer accessible, those very people who sought refuge in Canada will be again at the mercy of the government they escaped, as hostile regimes will find ways to access the communications of those who oppose them from abroad.

Of course, this is also of particular concern where the Canadian government recently created a "security arrangement" with the repressive Chinese regime, an agreement whose details have not been made public. China has a history of pursuing its internal dissidents abroad, surveilling and harassing them inside the borders of other countries, including Canada. It is alarming to see that a Conservative amendment to prohibit the transfer of cross-border data to such regimes was voted down by the Liberal-dominated House of Commons National Security Committee.

Legal experts have expressed misgivings about Bill C-22 as well, stating that certain provisions of the bill seem to skate on thin ice, constitutionally speaking. Law professor Michael Geist wrote:

> Bill C-22 sets the standard at reasonable grounds to suspect, rather than the current reasonable grounds to believe. The Spencer and Bykovets decisions establish a high informational privacy interest in subscriber data. Yet, the Charter Statement nevertheless asserts that the subscriber information sought does not, by itself, constitute particularly sensitive information. That sentence is difficult to reconcile with both Supreme Court jurisprudence and the technical reality of what subscriber information may reveal. Setting the bar lower invites further Charter litigation, placing the provision on shaky legal ground.

The retention of personal metadata also remains a concern, even though amendments during the House committee study changed the retention period from one year to six months. I would fully expect that, though that retention period is lower, it could continue to be successfully challenged as breaching Canadians' Charter rights, and I look forward to hearing more about this from expert witnesses at committee.

Many legal experts have expressed concerns about Bill C-22's disproportionate interference with fundamental privacy rights. Several prominent law scholars and lawyers signed an open letter to the minister during the House of Commons study of the bill. Among other things, these experts expressed concern that the Privacy Commissioner has no formal role in the oversight process in Bill C-22. In fact, he was not even consulted on the creation of the data retention scheme added into Bill C-22. While there is some oversight by the Intelligence Commissioner regarding ministerial orders, a significant gap still exists for the protection of Canadians' privacy rights. It is troubling that, when the Liberal members of the House of Commons committee truncated the hearings on Bill C-22, they also prevented the Privacy Commissioner from returning as a witness to explain the privacy implications of proposed amendments during clause-by-clause deliberations.

The same legal experts expressed their concern that ". . . Bill C-22 introduces mandatory metadata retention without the constitutional basis to support it. . . ." One of the most significant concerns with Bill C-22 is the huge number of details that will be determined by regulation. As my Conservative MP colleague Leslyn Lewis said in her second reading speech:

"The system of access would be largely created not by Parliament, but by ministers behind closed doors."

Professor of technology law Michael Geist outlined in a recent article the many details that will be left to regulations to be decided by cabinet under the bill. They include who is covered, what they must build, what they must install, what they must keep, what counts as protection, what encryption means and what it costs.

This is very wide-ranging and highly concerning.

When I asked government officials about the time frame for implementing regulations at my critic's briefing, I received a surprising answer. They said the first phase of regulations would probably take 18 months to two years after the bill receives Royal Assent, and then it would go on from there. As for the rest of the regulations, I asked if it would take five years. They replied that they didn't know for sure, but that five years seemed likely. It's so far into the future that they can't even say.

As Professor Michael Geist writes, the major regulatory delays of this bill could pose significant problems. A parliamentary review is to be conducted three years after Royal Assent, but if the cabinet waits for regulations before bringing Part 2 into force, that review may not happen until seven to eight years after Royal Assent, even though some elements of the bill may already have been in effect for many years.

On the other hand, if the government brings Part 2 into force early, the parliamentary review could occur before the regulations that give the law its substance even exist. This is absurd.

Of course, that's assuming the parliamentary review even occurs in the first place. Many reviews that are promised in legislation never happen. For example, Bill C-59 from 2019 was a bill aimed at strengthening and modernizing the national security landscape. The legislation contained a provision to have a review of the legislation within four years. However, three years past that due date, we are still waiting.

• (1450)

Similarly, the bill that created the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, was passed as Bill C-22 in 2017. It was mandated to have a parliamentary review after five years — in 2022. Here we are, four years later, with no review in sight. So, just because a review is mandated in legislation is no guarantee that it will occur. It may be that this Liberal government prefers it that way.

To be sure, this Carney Liberal government finds any excuse it can to avoid transparency. One such example — and we see it again with Bill C-22 — is the Liberal government's failure to publish a public Gender-based Analysis Plus, or GBA Plus, document for this bill, even though this legislation was first introduced almost 18 months ago.

Justice Minister Sean Fraser assured me last year in this chamber that the cabinet does still consider these GBA Plus analyses of legislation along with every government bill at the cabinet table, but apparently, these documents are no longer made public.

Weeks ago, when I received my critic's briefing for this legislation, I asked representatives of the government leader's office, the ministers' offices and departmental officials to get me a copy of the GBA Plus document as soon as possible. I was assured that I would have it shortly.

When Senator Dhillon, the bill's sponsor, delivered his speech on Bill C-22 two weeks ago, I also asked him to get it to me. I still don't have this document. This bill was introduced in the House of Commons a year and a half ago. What is the holdup?

If that gender-based analysis were public, Canadians would be able to judge for themselves the possible impacts this bill might have on vulnerable populations. At least we would know that the government had considered the matter during the legislative process. The GBA Plus analysis could — and should — also address the impact this legislation might have on rural and remote communities, as opposed to larger urban centres.

This Liberal government introduced this GBA Plus process because they contended that it was important. Yet this government acts as if it's "anything but."

Further, there is limited transparency in Bill C-22 itself. Much of the language used in the bill is vague and meaningless. Certain pivotal terms, like "core providers," remain either undefined in the legislation or will be defined through regulations that will likely come into effect only years in the future.

Even where there seems to be a slight nod towards transparency — for example, an unredacted version of a report must be given to the security review agencies NSIRA and NSICOP — those bodies are confidential, both report to the Prime Minister, and its members are appointed by the Prime Minister. The process is neither transparent nor independent.

In his second reading speech, Senator Dhillon, the sponsor of Bill C-22, indicated an openness by the government to consider amendments from the Senate. He said as follows:

> Where it is meaningful and does not take away from the intent and spirit of this bill, I think amendments are welcome.

I certainly hope that the Liberal government agrees with their government bill sponsor and, if so, that we can move this bill into the proper Senate committee where it can get the careful scrutiny it deserves.

The Senate should not be used as a rubber stamp. As senators, we should get to make substantial, meaningful amendments that the government accepts, just as the House of Commons does on this and other bills. I look forward to the opportunity to do so and to make this legislation far better for Canadians.

Thank you.

Hon. Baltej S. Dhillon: Thank you, Senator Batters, for your fulsome analysis of the bill.

I will not be able to clearly address all of those issues. That's why this will go to committee, and we'll talk about many of the questions you have raised.

However, I do want to speak about what you raised with respect to one of the companies that has 100 million users and was in the news today, Proton, which has stated that it is no longer exploring setting up a North American headquarters in Canada.

Let me read you a quote from their website from 2013 when the U.K. was considering this bill:

> As it stands, the online safety bill is one of the most concerning pieces of legislation to come out of the West in years. It would open the door to mass surveillance of the type and scale that Edward Snowden exposed in 2013. The British government would essentially be outlawing private conversations of any kind online, which is an affront to human rights and will likely put Britons in more danger, not less.

That was in 2013. They still have servers in the U.K. They still continue to do business there. This bill — as you said — has been with the government now for a year and a half.

Do you know why they would not have taken advantage of that time to actually come to the government and share their concerns with them, rather than speaking to this issue now?

Senator Batters: I have no idea why they didn't go to the government. Maybe they tried to go to the government and received no response from them. I don't know. I saw this news article today reporting that yet another company was not only threatening to leave Canada but actually threatening not to establish their headquarters here in the first place.

Also, regarding the U.K., we'll look into this further in committee. I am certainly interested in hearing from this company and others that are making these kinds of — yes — threats. That's legitimate, though; it's their business.

I would note that, in the U.K., they don't have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms as Canada does. That's a significant difference between the two jurisdictions, which must always be taken into account when we're considering legislation.

Senator Dhillon: Thank you, Senator Batters. I agree. I think there's ample room for us to consider all of the concerns, but they need to be brought forward. I think you agree that they need to be brought forward, shared and not just — I will use these terms, although they may be inappropriate — "grandstanding" and "threatening" in the public forum.

To your point, I absolutely agree. The citizens of Canada are better protected because of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As a result, many of the legislative pieces in the U.K. have much greater breadth and requirements than this particular legislation. Wouldn't you agree?

Senator Batters: Actually, I feel like this Liberal government has not upheld the Charter of Rights and Freedoms properly in regard to many bills, especially these types of digital governance bills. That will be the subject of many court cases over the next couple of years brought by many Canadians, some of these companies, et cetera.

We need to adhere strongly to both Charter and privacy rights. That's why we also need to involve people like the Privacy Commissioner when we're actually putting these bills forward, and not just hope that it's going to be good enough.

It's not good enough. Canadians need to have their rights properly protected. That's what we're here to ensure. That's also why I think this bill should go to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Hon. Paula Simons: Yesterday, in your questions to Senator Henkel, you raised an issue you didn't touch on quite as much in your speech today: the designation of electronic service providers and core providers.

One of the things I find troubling about this bill, personally, is that "core providers" are not defined. It tells you where to go to look for the definition, and then the page is blank. We're also told that any electronic service provider can be designated as the core provider, and, in some cases, that may be done by a secret government order.

I wondered if you could tell us what the concerns are with respect to the fact that we don't know who the core providers might be, and we don't know on what basis and using what rubric another electronic service provider, a smaller provider, might find themselves upgraded to the status of core provider.

Senator Batters: Yes. Well, my speech was 25 minutes long. I tried to present a fair bit of detail about a number of areas. There is much to criticize about this bill.

I was also asking Senator Deacon about this when he gave his speech about the blank three pages, indicating that all of these things would be left to regulations.

Of course, when you have definitions like that, we're basically, in some ways, passing an empty shell of this bill. We're taking something that could have a dramatic effect, which we don't know about without actually having details about all those different things I listed, yet, we're expected to pass that now. We are being told, "Trust us. The cabinet will come up with something good." However, we won't know for several years. It might not even be this government, frankly, that comes up with those regulations. It might be a different government that maybe a number of senators in this chamber won't be all that happy with.

• (1500)

That's something that people need to think about as they are considering this, and Canadians need to know that. When you have the cabinet doing something, that means that it is done behind closed doors, in secret, before the fact. These types of things should be what Parliament legislates, to have these debates in public, to have potential amendments to them. There are no amendments to regulations.

Senator Simons: Would Senator Batters take another question?

Senator Batters: Yes.

Senator Simons: I should preface this by saying that I very much agree that this bill should be going for study to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, where I am also a member. I regret that it does not seem to be headed in that direction.

I had a meeting this afternoon with law professors from the University of Calgary who have been doing a comparative analysis of other Five Eyes partners and the way they have structured their own lawful access bills. I was intrigued by something I learned in that meeting. According to these professors, the United States doesn't have any similar metadata retention rules and that, in fact, for metadata retention, they require a warrant and a particular target of the investigation as opposed to the outlines we are given in Bill C-22, where metadata on every single Canadian would be retained for six months. I wondered if you could comment on what problems you might see with us being out of step with our Five Eyes partners.

Senator Batters: That's very interesting and a very good point, and I look forward to exploring that more at committee. I think it is important, especially to be in line with our Five Eyes partners, particularly the United States, which has such significant concerns in terms of national security and much experience with this. Even though they do not have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the United States, they are not maintaining this metadata retention, as Canada is proposing to do with the federal government in this bill. I look forward to hearing more about that because perhaps that could be a matter of a proper amendment that comes to committee.

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Would you take another question?

Senator Batters: Yes.

Senator Dalphond: Thank you. You said the U.K. doesn't have a charter of rights, which is true if we exclude the Magna Carta. That being said, are you aware that the U.K. has signed the European Convention on Human Rights and integrated it into U.K. domestic law?

Senator Batters: I look forward to hearing more about that and all the different international components of this bill to ensure that Canada is actually signing on to a regime that actually will afford well with different international partners around the world and isn't just an outlier, especially on some of these important issues.

Senator Dalphond: Yes. Are you aware that Article 8 of the European Convention protects private life and that decisions from the U.K. courts can be appealed to the Strasbourg court?

Senator Batters: Again, I look forward to hearing about all of these different international conventions and the specific terms of it when we study it at committee. I'm sure that the international component will be an important part of what we study.

Senator Dalphond: Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time, on division.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Dhillon, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, on division.)

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Acting Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of October 21, 2026, moved:

> That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Wallin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Quinn, for the second reading of Bill S-231, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I move that further debate be adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate for the balance of my time.

(On motion of Senator Black, debate adjourned.)

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

STUDY ON THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK OF PART VII OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

THIRD REPORT OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the third report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, entitled *Making Substantive Equality a Reality: Towards Comprehensive, Robust and Ambitious Part VII Regulations*, tabled in the Senate on June 16, 2026.

Hon. Allister Surette moved:

> That the third report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, entitled *Making Substantive Equality a Reality: Towards Comprehensive, Robust and Ambitious Part VII Regulations*, tabled in the Senate on June 16, 2026, be adopted and that, pursuant to rule 12-23(1), the Senate request a complete and detailed response from the government, with the President of the Treasury Board being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report, in consultation with the Minister responsible for Official Languages.

He said: Honourable senators, on June 16, the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages tabled in the Senate a report entitled *Making Substantive Equality a Reality: Towards Comprehensive, Robust and Ambitious Part VII Regulations*. In this report, the committee makes 17 recommendations for improving the draft regulations under Part VII entitled "Regulations for Advancing the Equality of Status and Use of English and French."

[*English*]

I rise today to speak to this report in hopes of sharing with you what the committee has heard during the study of these draft regulations and to suggest to you how your committee has proposed to improve them.

However, in order to speak about the testimony heard in the committee and the recommendations found in our report, I should first say a few words about the objectives of these draft regulations and, more generally, about the objectives of Part VII of the Official Languages Act.

Part VII of the Official Languages Act was adopted in 1988 in order to enact the new constitutional framework brought forth by the repatriation and the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982.

[*Translation*]

More specifically, Part VII implements subsection 16(3) of the Charter, which states that Parliament may take any measure it deems appropriate to "advance the equality of status or use of English and French."

Like other obligations set out in the Official Languages Act, the Part VII obligations stem directly from the constitutional framework. That is why the act is considered quasi-constitutional: It gives effect to the rights enshrined in the Constitution.

More specifically, Part VII recognizes that the federal government has a responsibility not only to promote Canada's two official languages and linguistic duality, but also to take positive measures to enhance the vitality and support the development of official language minority communities across the country. Indeed, it was under this part of the act that the first Action Plan for Official Languages was introduced in 2003.

Evidently, Part VII is particularly important to official language minority communities. It lies at the very heart of their relationship with the federal government.

New provisions were added to Part VII when the Official Languages Act was modernized in 2023. They included new clarifications regarding the taking of positive measures, more extensive commitments to protecting and promoting French, and a commitment to advancing opportunities for learning in the minority language, in various forms and throughout one's life.

These substantial changes require an equally substantial regulatory framework to guide the actions of federal institutions in achieving substantive equality.

[*English*]

The draft regulations that were tabled in the Senate on December 10, 2025, specify when federal institutions should consider the adoption of positive measures as part of a program, policy or initiative. The draft regulations then go on to detail that such considerations should be based on analysis and consultations with stakeholders, the procedures of which are also defined in the draft regulations. Finally, there are also provisions

that advise federal institutions that they should consider proposing linguistic clauses when negotiating federal-provincial-territorial agreements.

Official language communities across the country have been waiting for these regulations for a long time.

Despite the long wait, witnesses were unanimous: In their current form, the draft regulations do not clarify the process by which federal institutions are meant to develop and adopt positive measures that will have a concrete and measurable impact. In other words, dear colleagues, the draft regulations miss the mark.

[*Translation*]

We received many briefs and heard from various witnesses, including organizations representing official language minority communities, organizations that promote linguistic duality, academic experts, legal experts and representatives of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, and they all expressed disappointment with the regulations, which they described as incomplete, vague and modest compared to the ambitions of the modernized act.

Many witnesses pointed out the need to define key concepts needed to interpret the obligations set out in the act, such as "vitality" and "strong institutions." Many organizations also pointed out that the regulations are too vague when it comes to how federal institutions must consult with official language minority communities. They are concerned that, without a clear definition of what constitutes a dialogue or consultation activity, they will not be heard in a timely manner when policies, programs and initiatives that affect them are being developed.

Finally, experts and researchers testified that the regulations should require greater use of evidence-based findings and the development of performance indicators. Without these tools, it is difficult to see how federal institutions will be able to demonstrate that the positive measures they are taking are producing beneficial effects, as required under the modernized act.

As one witness with a legal background told the committee:

> If these regulations are adopted in their current form, there's every reason to fear that history will repeat itself in the same cycle: ambitious legislative reform is undertaken, the executive branch takes a minimalist approach to implementation, institutions do not take action and communities get frustrated.

That is why, in order to break this cycle, the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages drew on the thoughtful suggestions and concrete proposals put forward by the witnesses to present 17 recommendations, which, if implemented, will provide the draft regulations with the necessary tools to achieve the objectives of substantive equality set out in Part VII.

Developed as drafting instructions, these recommendations are intended to provide the government with the right tools to quickly revise the text of the draft regulations. Our recommendations address all aspects of the draft regulations and even certain elements of the act itself, in order to resolve issues arising directly from the legislative framework.

One of the committee's recommendations is to amend the regulations to include the duty of federal institutions to develop an action plan for implementing their obligations, which must include performance indicators.

• (1520)

The committee recommends that the regulations specify the steps for including language clauses in agreements entered into with the provincial and territorial governments. The committee recommends that the regulations insist on a more systematic collection of data and that its analyses take this data into account.

The committee recommends that the regulations set out clear criteria for meaningful consultations and include mechanisms for evaluating how federal institutions have taken these consultations into account when making decisions on positive measures.

The committee also made recommendations concerning the definition of a key concept or the inclusion of a purpose clause, so that the scope of these regulations can be properly interpreted, the harmonization of the mandatory review of the Official Languages Act and its various regulations, and the obligation to develop and apply an official languages lens to all decisions made by federal institutions.

Taken together, these 17 recommendations will ensure that the revised draft regulations not only meet the expectations of the minority communities at the centre of the Part VII commitments, but also embody the ideal of substantive equality. Thank you.

Hon. René Cormier: Honourable colleagues, 22 years ago, our former colleague, the Honourable Jean-Robert Gauthier, a leader in the official languages community, said:

> . . . without regulations, an act or a section of an act is about as useful as a watchdog without teeth. . . . What we need are clear and precise directives to know how to implement the act. . . . [S]ection 41 is the very heart of the Official Languages Act. It states that the government is committed to enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada, and supporting and assisting their development. . . . Section 41 . . . contains no provision for regulations. The power to make regulations would enable the government to specify the extent of the obligations on federal institutions regarding community development.

Colleagues, it is with these statements in mind that I rise today to speak to the third report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages on the regulatory framework of Part VII of the Official Languages Act, one of the most important tools proposed since the act was modernized in 2023.

[*English*]

I might raise some of the same concerns that my colleague Senator Surette did, but we are used to having to repeat those concerns to ensure the government listens.

[*Translation*]

The draft regulations for advancing the equality of status and use of English and French, which have been anticipated for decades and were tabled in this chamber last December, are supposed to clarify federal institutions' obligations under Part VII of the Official Languages Act. This is a critical part of the act that requires the federal government to take measures to enhance the vitality of official language minority communities, among other things. Unfortunately, the draft regulations clearly fall short of expectations.

I would like to thank Senator Surette, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, for tabling this ambitious report. Its 17 recommendations should help the federal government adopt comprehensive and robust regulations that fully reflect the principle of substantive equality.

More than 48 witnesses, 19 briefs and a number of supplementary submissions made a significant contribution to this study. I would like to thank the witnesses who appeared and those who provided briefs. We heard a range of important perspectives, particularly from academia, the legal sector and civil society. It is largely thanks to the thoroughness and quality of their contributions that this report and its 17 recommendations are so germane.

[*English*]

Colleagues, since the late 20th century, the Official Languages Act has shaped our national identity. With its quasi-constitutional status, this legislation contributes to making Canada a strong, prosperous and united country as all Canadians benefit from its provisions.

It is notably thanks to this act that under certain conditions, you can receive services in either of the two official languages from a federal institution, work within such an institution in the official language of your choice or even use either of these languages in Federal Court.

As mentioned, Part VII of the act, which sets out an explicit commitment for the federal government to enhance the vitality of these communities and to promote English and French in Canadian society, is essential to official language minority communities, or OLMCs.

In the words of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages:

> . . . the purpose of Part VII of the Act is to advance substantive equality — that is, the continuous and sustained advancement of official language minority communities (OLMCs) in relation to the majority official language population, and to promote the official languages spoken by these communities. In other words, Part VII of the Act exists to counter pressures on OLMC members to assimilate into the majority language and community. . . .

[*Translation*]

In other words, members of OLMCs rely on and benefit from this legislative tool to support their development. Consider, for example, the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028, a federal strategy that provides for foundational investments in official languages, ranging from francophone immigration to education and culture. These are concrete examples of measures taken under Part VII.

Despite its benefits, after undergoing a major overhaul in 2023 with the passage of Bill C-13, An Act for the Substantive Equality of Canada's Official Languages, Part VII requires a robust regulatory framework to ensure that federal institutions fully understand their obligations and implement the act consistently. Legal experts say so, Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages affirms it, and civil society is calling for it. To ensure that it shapes our OLMCs' future and the country's linguistic duality in a lasting way, this regulatory framework must be revised to reflect the ambitious vision of the modernized act.

In 2023, during the Senate's debates on Bill C-13, which I had the honour of sponsoring, I stated that the reform of the official languages regime would begin with Royal Assent, but that it would not fully take shape until regulations, including Part VII regulations, were made.

With the OLMCs across Canada in mind, we expected, and still expect, regulations that would clarify the manner in which positive measures are to be taken by federal institutions.

Unfortunately, this Official Languages Committee report is unequivocal: The draft Part VII regulations proposed by the Treasury Board Secretariat are vague, lack clarity, give little consideration to achieving concrete results, and raise concerns about the prospect of further legal disputes.

It's important to keep in mind that the Official Languages Committee has special expertise in the implementation of the Official Languages Act and its regulations, so its third report deserves the federal government's full attention and careful consideration.

[*English*]

As we recall, colleagues, between 2017 and 2019, this committee produced five exhaustive reports about the modernization of the act. It consulted five segments of the Canadian population — namely, youth, OLMCs, stakeholders who have witnessed the evolution of the act, the justice sector and federal institutions. During that study, the Official Languages Committee heard from more than 300 witnesses, including through 195 public hearings, 89 informal meetings and 19 round tables.

• (1530)

In its final report, the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages affirmed the importance of adopting clear regulations to give effect to Part VII, to ensure that all federal institutions consistently take positive measures, while not limiting the scope of the act.

Here we are, colleagues, almost seven years later, and this committee essentially recommends the same thing.

We should also note that between 2022-23 the Official Languages Committee held many meetings and heard from more than 50 witnesses during its study and pre-study of Bill C-13, which modernized the act. In its report on the subject matter of the bill, the committee indicated that " . . . expectations regarding regulations are high, as the understanding of many of the provisions of Bill C-13 depends on them."

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, the draft Part VII regulations represent an important milestone in the modernization of our federal language regime. For the minority language communities that have fought hard over the years, secured victories on official languages issues and continue to embody the vision of the Official Languages Act from coast to coast to coast, we must seize this opportunity to ensure that this instrument fully lives up to their expectations.

The observations and recommendations set out in this third report underscore the importance of adopting clear regulations that advance the substantive equality of our two official languages, and it is imperative that the federal government follow suit and act on them.

As Federal Court Justice Denis Gascon has pointed out, without clear regulations, OLMCs may not fully benefit from Part VII. I would add that this would be bad for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Colleagues, notwithstanding the federal government's obligations regarding official languages, I would be remiss if I did not mention the importance of ensuring the full recognition and necessary support for the revitalization, protection and promotion of our Indigenous languages, languages that have been present in these lands for millennia and constitute an integral part of our social and cultural fabric, languages that are at the very heart of our national identity and that we must protect, promote and celebrate.

Colleagues, let's embrace our country's linguistic richness and diversity with vision and determination. Let's hope that the Government of Canada will take these recommendations very seriously. Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

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

Hon. Margo Greenwood: First of all, I would like to thank the committee for all the work that's obviously been done. Thank you for your comments, Senator Cormier, about Indigenous languages.

Maybe you would like to speak a bit more about this. In your deliberations throughout all of this process around official languages, were Indigenous languages discussed? If so, how do we move forward with their recognition and bring them into their rightful place, if you will, in this country? You spoke to that. You might want to elaborate, please.

Senator Cormier: Thank you, Senator Greenwood. If you agree, I will answer in French. It is easier for me, as language is so important for all of us.

[*Translation*]

Of course, the matter of Indigenous languages is on our minds whenever we work on the issue of official languages. During the study of the Part VII regulations, the committee members also recognized the importance of acknowledging Indigenous languages in this country. I know that for a fact, because Senator Greenwood and I talked a lot about it. We also have an Indigenous Languages Act and a Commissioner of Indigenous Languages.

I think that, as part of the overall approach to the importance of languages in Canada and the importance of both recognizing and fully implementing official languages in Canada, the Government of Canada and Canadians must take steps to revitalize, strengthen and protect Indigenous languages.

We have a responsibility, as Canadians, to listen to Indigenous communities, consider their language-related demands and ensure that the Indigenous Languages Act makes it possible to revitalize those languages.

I will close by saying that, several years ago, I had the privilege of visiting the Inuit homeland and talking to the people there about the challenges associated with the coexistence of official languages and Inuktut.

This land personifies the major challenges facing Canada. The Government of Canada must keep working to ensure that Indigenous languages are revitalized. That's the best answer I can give you, senator. We have to acknowledge that a tremendous amount of work remains to be done and that the important thing is to make sure official languages are not pitted against Indigenous languages, or vice versa. Canada is rich in languages, and we have a duty to support their development and enhance their vitality. 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 report adopted.)

[*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. Peter Harder: Honourable senators, I rise to participate in the inquiry commenced by our colleague Senator Sorensen on the nation-building value of tourism. I do this later in the day when I know you're anxious to begin your own weekend tourism. I would like to speak about my home area, the Niagara Peninsula, because it ought to be referenced in any commentary on tourism in Canada. Of course, you all know Niagara Falls.

One thing that has surprised me over the years is the lack of geographic comprehension as to where Niagara Falls is. You might remember, in the 2000 campaign, the then Leader of the Opposition had a campaign event in front of the falls, and he said that they were terrific falls that fell from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie, going exactly in the opposite direction.

The Niagara Peninsula, of course, is a peninsula. To the south is Lake Erie, to the north is Lake Ontario and to the east is the Niagara River. You travel east to go to the United States. It is a territory that was very much a part of the defining events of our country.

The American Revolution led to a significant exodus of the United Empire Loyalists, first to the Niagara Peninsula and then to what was called Berlin, which is now Waterloo-Kitchener. The War of 1812 had battles fought on the soil of the Niagara Peninsula. Brock's Monument and Fort George, which was the bastion of support, are there, and we have the trail that Laura Secord walked with her cow in front of her to pass through the American enemy lines to alert the British that were protecting our country. So we have a keen sense of where it is but not always an understanding of what is all around there.

You've all been to Niagara-on-the-Lake, I'm sure, and some of you have been to the Shaw Festival. You've been to the falls and taken the Maid of the Mist, perhaps, and participated in various tours and the like.

• (1540)

I want to tell you that this region welcomes more than 13 million visitors each year, generating almost $4 billion in visitor spending and contributing about $1.4 billion in GDP — 6.5% of the region's economy is tourism. It sustains nearly 4,400 tourism-related businesses and 36,000 jobs. Tourism isn't just a visitor economy. It's a driver of jobs, small businesses, agricultural sustainability and rural prosperity.

As important as the eastern end of Niagara is — the anchors being Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake — I want you to stop short of getting there and go off the Queen Elizabeth Way a little earlier. Take Christie Street in Grimsby or Ontario Street in Beamsville or, best yet, Victoria Avenue in Vineland. Go through the rural areas of my home community, which is Lincoln.

The Town of Lincoln is only some 50 years old as a town, but it's amongst the oldest settlements certainly in Upper Canada, which includes the little hamlets of Vineland, where I grew up, and Jordan which is famous for its revived tourism sector, which I'll get to. It has the Town of Beamsville. It's got the little hamlet of Campden. It came together as a result of the amalgamation some 52 years ago into the Town of Lincoln. Why Lincoln? Because it's actually the residual name of the County of Lincoln, which was the historic county on the northern half of the Niagara Peninsula.

The Town of Lincoln has also been rebranded in some fashion as a tourist destination for what they call the Niagara Benchlands, with benchlands being the distinct stepped architecture of the landscape. As you drive around the peninsula, you have the escarpment on your south side and a series of ledges, which host increasingly tender fruits and wine. The benchlands have the largest concentration of craft beverage producers in Canada, which includes breweries, cideries, distilleries and, of course, wineries.

The Town of Lincoln, with some 23,000 people spread over this territory between Grimsby and St. Catharines, has over 50 individual wine labels, most of them family-related businesses. Their wines are both regionally and internationally known. There are award-winning wines, like Hidden Bench Estate Winery, Westcott Vineyards and Vineland Estates Winery — three of my favourite wines. I would invite you to go to the restaurant at Vineland Estates up on the bench. On a clear day, sip a glass of wine and look across the lake to Toronto and say, "Aren't you glad you're not in that traffic?"

These wines are not the same as those in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area, which are further east. Wines from this microclimate are influenced by ancient limestone and glacial drift, giving them their signature minerality and complexity, which are perfect for Rieslings, Cabernet Francs, Chardonnays and icewines.

After a long day of sampling wines from across the region, a dinner at Restaurant Pearl Morissette may be in order — assuming you have a reservation. This exquisite fine dining experience is internationally recognized with two Michelin Stars, one of only two restaurants in all of Canada with this distinction. Moreover, it also has a Michelin Green Star, a relatively new designation for restaurants recognized with a Michelin Star and that are also at the forefront of sustainability and eco-friendly gastronomy. Restaurant Pearl Morissette is the only restaurant in the country holding both two Michelin Stars and a Michelin Green Star.

According to the *Michelin Guide*, a two-star designation means excellent cooking that is "worth a detour." So take that detour off the Queen Elizabeth Way.

Tourism and hospitality support more than 1,700 jobs in the Niagara Benchlands with employment driven by these craft beverage producers and restaurants but also in the sectors of accommodation, agri-tourism, cultural and visitor and outdoor experiences, with the Bruce Trail being one.

Tourism is a key driver of rural prosperity in the Town of Lincoln, with visitor spending supporting local businesses, farms, wineries and local producers. Tourism helps to preserve local agricultural heritage and protect the rural landscapes that define my community.

As I alluded, in order to understand the nation building of tourism, we must also understand a bit of our history and where we come from. Through the Lincoln Museum & Cultural Centre in the village of Jordan, the stories of Lincoln's cultural, social and agricultural heritage are preserved through exhibitions, educational programs and world-class archives in its basement. The Lincoln Museum & Cultural Centre acts as a heritage hub for the Town of Lincoln and offers intimate tours of the Fry House and the Jordan Schoolhouse.

The Fry House is a two-storey log dwelling built around 1815 by two German-speaking Mennonite settlers from Pennsylvania. It was a family home until 1892. In later years, the house was used as a chicken coop and a playhouse. Originally situated in Vineland, the house was carefully moved in 1959 to its current location on the Lincoln Museum & Cultural Centre property. The Fry House is a rare surviving example of the Pennsylvania Dutch traditional architecture in Canada.

The Jordan Schoolhouse is a one-room school that served the children of Jordan for almost 90 years. Inside, students would learn moral instruction, hands-on skills and, of course, the three Rs. As many as 60 children, ranging from ages 6 to 16, would be taught by a single teacher in one room, putting even Ontario class sizes of today to shame. The school was closed in 1948 and subsequently purchased and returned to the community, where it was opened as Jordan's first museum. The schoolhouse was later restored to reflect a classroom circa 1908.

Beyond Jordan, the Town of Lincoln is home to a collection of historic villages and hamlets, to which I already referred. I know that Senator Black visited the area last weekend. It was all the news in the town. He participated there in the unveiling of a statue to honour the Farmerettes, which reflects its agricultural roots. The Beamsville high school is where I went to high school, and the community remains rich in culture and heritage, having benefited from major waves of immigration over the years.

I'd also like to point out that Lincoln celebrates and honours the history of the Attawandaron — or the Neutral Nation — the first known inhabitants of the land. Developed in collaboration with Indigenous partners, Sho'aríshon Park — which was recently opened — features permanent and evolving public art, a rain garden with native species, interpretive elements and gathering spaces that foster learning, reflection and connection to the area's Indigenous heritage. The community is keen on celebrating its Indigenous history. Oral histories and archaeological evidence suggest Indigenous presence in the Niagara Region for at least 13,000 years. The name of one Neutral group, the Onguiaahra, is believed to be part of the origin of the word "Niagara."

Through its museums, parks, heritage properties and cultural programming, the wonderful Town of Lincoln celebrates the stories of all its peoples. Agriculture and communities have defined the Niagara Benchlands for generations. Nation building isn't just a modern philosophy; it's what humans have always done. In Niagara and in the Town of Lincoln, our nation-building past has helped create a stepping stone for nation building now, which will help future generations create more steps into the future.

The value of tourism should not be understated for all the Niagara Region. Tourism is where Canadians learn about their home, their history and how to preserve their country in all of its glories and regional dimensions.

I encourage Canadians to learn more about all the regions of Canada. Surely, when you're thinking of going to Niagara Falls next, get off the road at Christie Street, Ontario Street or, best yet, Vineland and Victoria Avenue. Thank you, colleagues.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

• (1550)

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Would the senator take a question?

Senator Harder: Absolutely.

Senator Boehm: Thank you very much, and thank you for that interesting statement, Senator Harder. I am asking you whether there's any truth to Beamsville originally being Boehmsville, in the best of senatorial spelling, founded by Jacob Boehme — Beam — who was a cousin of James — Jim — Beam, the Kentucky distiller whose product we no longer drink. Is this true?

Senator Harder: Thank you, Senator Boehm. It is true, and these Beams were much quicker at integrating and recording their name change to reflect an easier read than yours.

(On motion of Senator Muggli, debate adjourned.)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO EXTEND DATE OF FINAL REPORT ON STUDY OF THE COMMERCIAL FISHERIES LICENSING REGIME ON THE PACIFIC COAST

Hon. Fabian Manning, pursuant to notice of October 21, 2026, moved:

> That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in relation to its study on the commercial fisheries licensing regime on Canada's Pacific Coast be extended from December 31, 2026, to April 30, 2027.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO EXTEND DATE OF FINAL REPORT ON STUDY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF COMMERCIAL INSHORE FISHERIES IN ATLANTIC CANADA AND QUEBEC

Hon. Fabian Manning, pursuant to notice of October 21, 2026, moved:

> That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in relation to its study on the independence of commercial inshore fisheries in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, and the policies and legislative tools used by the Government of Canada to preserve it, such as the Owner-Operator Policy, be extended from December 31, 2026, to April 30, 2027.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(*At 3:53 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at 2 p.m.*)

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