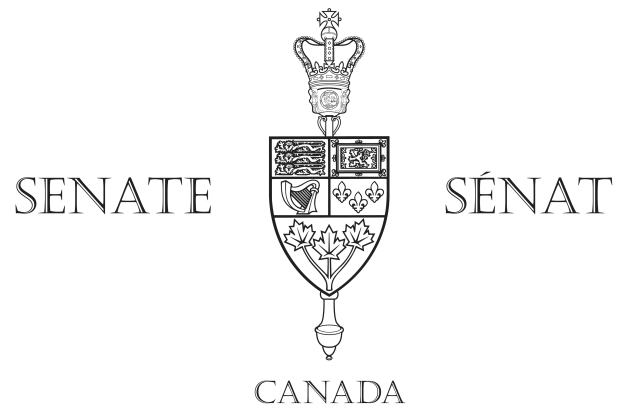




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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I received a notice from the Leader of the Opposition, who requests, pursuant to rule 4-3(1), that the time provided for the consideration of Senators' Statements be extended today for the purpose of paying tribute to the Honourable Donald H. Oliver, who passed away on September 17, 2025.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE LATE HONOURABLE DONALD H. OLIVER, C.M., K.C., O.N.S.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, today we rise with heavy hearts to honour the life and legacy of our former colleague the Honourable Don Oliver.

Many will remember him as the first Black man appointed to the Senate of Canada, named in 1990 by prime minister Brian Mulroney. That alone was historic, but anyone who knew Senator Oliver knows he was never content to simply be a symbol. He came here to do the work, and he did it with thoughtfulness, purpose and great strength.

Long before he came to Parliament Hill, Senator Oliver had already built a distinguished career as a lawyer, educator and community leader. He practised law for over 30 years in Nova Scotia, taught at Dalhousie Law School and served on countless boards in both the private and the non-profit sector. His legal acumen was matched only by his deep commitment to public service and to the place he came from.

That commitment is probably most visible in one of the lasting institutions he helped create, the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, which today serves as a permanent home for the stories, history and contributions of the Black Nova Scotian community. As it happens, on September 17 — the day we lost Senator Oliver — the centre marked its forty-second anniversary. It continues to do the important work he cared so deeply about by educating new generations and keeping those stories alive.

That same dedication shaped Senator Oliver's political life. Long before his appointment to this chamber, he played a key role in the Conservative movement, serving as director of legal affairs for six federal elections and helping to strengthen our national caucus behind the scenes. With this principled approach, he earned the respect of colleagues on all sides of this chamber.

When he entered this chamber, he brought with him all of that experience and a steady voice for Nova Scotia. Senator Oliver's presence here was marked by thoughtfulness and principle. He didn't speak to be heard; he spoke to move things forward. He saw the Senate as a place not just for sober second thought but for bold first steps, especially on issues that others were reluctant to confront.

Many of us will remember that he was, in fact, one of the early voices in Parliament to raise systemic racism as a serious public issue. He was passionate about closing the digital divide and about creating opportunities for under-represented Canadians in business and in public life. His work was not performative; it was grounded, persistent and years ahead of its time.

Above all, those of us who were lucky to have worked alongside him will remember the quiet dignity with which he carried himself and the decency and respect with which he treated those he came into contact with. Many of us viewed him not only as a colleague but as a mentor, someone who always had time for a word of encouragement, a moment of kindness and a quiet word of advice.

On behalf of the Senate Conservative caucus, we extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Linda, to his family and loved ones and to all those mourning his loss across our country.

Senator Donald Oliver opened doors, he raised standards, and he left this institution — and this country — better than he found it. Above all else, if there is one way I would describe Senator Oliver, it would be a genuine gentleman.

Thank you, colleagues.

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of the Independent Senators Group, with profound sadness and respect, to pay tribute to a truly extraordinary Atlantic person, Senator Don Oliver.

From his roots in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, in 1938 as a descendant of African-American slave refugees to his years as a lawyer, to his nomination as the first Black man to sit in the Senate in 1990, until his recent untimely passing, Senator Oliver's remarkable life was a bright beacon of the promise of the Canadian dream.

His life was full of great success and accomplishment — as a lawyer, a law professor, a senator, a chef and a civil rights activist. He was truly a man of many talents and a terrific sense of humour, I might add.

Speaking of his talents as a chef, I recall a time we were in London, U.K. Senator Oliver was explaining to me how he could craft a great dish with any ingredient, any ingredient at all. So, the next day I went shopping in London and came across something called powder keg mustard. I challenged him to create a great dish with the powder keg mustard and invite me to taste the results. Colleagues, I never got an invitation.

He was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada in 2019 and the Order of Nova Scotia in 2020.

As a fellow Atlantic Canadian and as a senator who spent many years as his colleague, I will truly miss him. We spent a lot of time together on the Finance Committee, and while we didn't always agree in politics, he was a man who had a profound respect for the Senate and the legislative process. He was a worthy debater, someone who had a deep wealth of knowledge and intelligence from which to pull. It was a pleasure and an inspiration for all of us to take part in debate with him.

We also both had the honour of presiding over this chamber as Speaker pro tempore, so I know he had a particularly unique perspective on the Senate.

On behalf of the Independent Senators Group, we extend our deepest sympathies to Senator Oliver's family and his wonderful wife, Linda.

It was a life well lived, a life devoted to the betterment of life for his fellow Canadians. He will not be forgotten in this chamber and throughout Canada and in all the lives he made better. Thank you.

Hon. Tony Ince: Honourable senators, it is my honour today to speak on behalf of the Canadian Senators Group. Thank you to my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to pay tribute to the Honourable Senator Donald Oliver.

In politics, in the political world, we tend to talk a lot about legacy, but a wise politician once told me that your own legacy is something you should never talk about; it is for others to determine after you are gone.

• (1410)

Don Oliver is gone. The moment I learned of his passing, a wave of profound sadness washed over me. In that instant, I knew my community and my country had lost a great leader. I took time to reflect and wondered how many Canadians know the impact Senator Oliver had on their lives.

True legacies are built piece by piece, day by day, infused with integrity and fuelled by perseverance. True legacies are constructed with a connection to the future, a deep desire to make life better for generations to come.

Senator Oliver has left behind a true legacy, one that stands comfortably among those who left the greatest and most influential impacts as Canadians.

Senator Oliver's legacy can be found in the lives of Black and other racialized Canadians who had doors open to better-paying jobs and fulfilling careers, because of his seminal work, a massive undertaking entitled *Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities*.

In 2005 Senator Oliver raised \$500,000 to fund this project. He also led the work of the Conference Board of Canada for this, the first-ever national study conducted in Canada, which definitively proved the business case for diversity.

But Senator Oliver was not one to rest on his laurels. He then spent nearly two decades sharing this message with business leaders and industry groups at luncheons, dinners, conferences and symposiums, wherever a podium was offered. In short, this quiet, thoughtful and humble man had a profound impact.

Senator Oliver's legacy can also be found in the Black Cultural Centre in Cherrybrook, Nova Scotia, where African Nova Scotians have gathered for the past 42 years to celebrate our culture and draw strength from our history. In Nova Scotia, that's 400 years of history! History that was suppressed to deny us the pride.

The Honourable Senator Donald Oliver is now a treasured part of that history. It is incumbent upon Canadians, especially African Nova Scotians and Black Canadians, to ensure that his legacy is not forgotten. It is the least we can do to thank him for the wonderful legacy that he has left for us. Thank you.

Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard: Honourable senators, I acknowledge that we gather today on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin and Anishinaabe Peoples.

I rise today on behalf of the Progressive Senate Group to honour my friend and mentor the Honourable Senator Donald Oliver.

Senator Oliver made history in this chamber — as you've already heard — as the first Black man and the first African-Nova Scotian appointed to the Senate of Canada.

A trailblazer in human rights, his contributions to social justice and equality are profound and enduring. When I joined the Senate, a few years after his retirement, he graciously met with me to reflect on his journey. I was deeply moved by his wisdom and the timeless advice he shared. I carry his words with me every single day.

I've often spoken about the significance of Senator Oliver's work and proudly shared that I stand on his shoulders. One of the greatest lessons I learned from him is that when you are a "first," especially as an African-Nova Scotian entering spaces our ancestors were once excluded from, it is never by accident. We are here because of their sacrifices. And with that legacy comes a responsibility to continue the fight for equity and justice.

It was a pleasure to present him with the Senate of Canada's 150th commemorative medal. Many of you would have been here when he received that.

One of my fondest memories was a fireside chat we shared for Lincoln Alexander Day in January 2022. Like Lincoln Alexander, Senator Oliver believed deeply in the power of government to enact meaningful change for African-Canadians and others. He offered invaluable strategies for working across party lines on matters of equity and diversity.

His legacy lives on in the institutions he helped shape and in the lives he touched. A powerful example of this is his work with the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia to establish the Senator Don Oliver Black Voices Prize, a prize that supports emerging Black-Nova Scotian writers.

His mission was always very clear: simply to remove barriers. Senator Oliver's words and actions will continue to inspire generations. My heartfelt condolences and those of our senate group go out to his beloved wife, Linda, their daughter, Carolynn, son-in-law, Oliver, his sisters and all African-Nova Scotians — all Nova Scotians — all Canadians who knew and loved him. We will miss you, Senator Don Oliver. Thank you, *asante*.

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I stand today with a heavy heart to pay tribute to a former parliamentarian, a trusted colleague, a remarkable man: the Honourable Don H. Oliver.

In this chamber we always deal with policies, debates, words, but behind every bill and every question is a person who carries their own ideals, convictions and vision for a better Canada. Senator Oliver was one such person.

Some of you may remember him well, as I do, having had the opportunity to sit in this chamber with him. He was definitely a trailblazer. As the first Black Canadian man to be appointed to the Senate, he was very passionate about equality for Black Canadians, Indigenous Peoples and other racialized communities in Canada.

I had the opportunity to see Senator Oliver at work on an international level when we travelled together on an Inter-Parliamentary Union, or IPU, trip. We had a meeting every evening, and Senator Oliver would take the time to ask each delegate how their day had been, what they had worked on and how they felt. I realized then that Senator Oliver was a very inclusive man: to him everyone's opinion mattered. He made everyone feel valued. He was a leader.

He enjoyed international diplomacy, and on most evenings he would share with us many stories. We all learned from those stories, and I realized that he was valued at the IPU. I would see many countries come and ask his opinion. Those of us who worked with him knew that he was a very committed and determined man.

I have to share this story with you. We were in Ecuador at the time, and because Quito is the high-altitude capital, we were told to give our bodies time to adjust and to avoid strenuous exercise. Well, we were told three or four days. Do you think Senator Oliver listened? No.

At the start of the assembly, the President of Ecuador was delivering what turned out to be a one-and-a-half-hour speech. Senator Oliver, who was sitting in the front row, suddenly fainted. The president did not miss a beat, but we Canadians were all very concerned. They came to help him, take him and check him out. We found out he had been exercising that morning when he had been told not to. Senator Oliver showed determination and commitment to everything that he did.

• (1420)

To Senator Oliver's family, please know that this chamber will not forget. We are grateful for the time we were given to work with Senator Oliver. May his legacy and memory continue to inspire generations to come. It is truly an honour to have walked alongside him. Thank you.

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Honourable senators, last week our former Senate colleague, my fellow Conservative and Nova Scotian and my friend, Donald Oliver, passed away at the age of 86.

I could list Donnie's accomplishments, awards and honours, and there were many, but they are on the record for all to see. I prefer to talk about the man himself and the things that were truly important to him: his friends, his family, his faith and his food. Donnie was a certified cordon bleu chef.

Donnie was the quintessential Nova Scotian from a family with deep roots in the province. His father's family supported the Crown in the War of 1812 and migrated to Nova Scotia after that conflict. His mother's family were Loyalists and came north to Nova Scotia in 1783 after the American Revolution.

I have known Donnie for over half a century. I first met him in the winter of 1975 when I was a 19-year-old university student, and he was already a well-established lawyer in his mid-thirties. I was attending my first of now over 50 Conservative conventions in Halifax, and Donnie seemed to know everybody and everybody knew him.

Donnie was man of great faith. His parents and his extended family were devout Baptists. His late brother Reverend William Oliver was a pillar of the community, as the highly regarded and long-time pastor of the Baptist Church in Halifax.

His mother's family was a remarkable group of people that influenced him greatly. His mother's father, William Andrew White, was a Baptist minister from Baltimore who arrived in 1900. He was a long-time pastor of the Baptist Church that Donnie's brother later served, the first Black officer of the Canadian Army and a chaplain in the First World War. His aunt was the great contralto Portia White, the international star who was arguably Canada's greatest opera singer. I remember well his uncle Lorne White, a long-time teacher in the Halifax school system and a great singer in his own right who was a regular on "Singalong Jubilee," the musical show from Halifax that aired nationwide from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s.

Not long after Donnie retired in 2013, he was diagnosed with a rare and fatal heart disease and given six months to live. Through experimental treatments and sheer determination, he lived almost 12 years. He was always an iron fist in a velvet glove.

When I was sworn into the Senate in 2009, Donnie was the senator I got to walk me in. I said to Donnie before we entered, “What would our grandparents say if they could see us today?” Donnie said, “They would say Canada is a great country.”

On behalf of the Senate, his former colleagues and all of Nova Scotia, I want to pass along our sincere condolences to his wife Linda MacLellan, his daughter Carolyn and all of his extended family from the Oliver, White, James, Clarke, MacKenzie and MacLellan families. He will be buried this Saturday following a service at the Baptist Church that his brother and grandfather pastored for many decades.

In closing, I couldn’t help but think of a spiritual that his Uncle Lorne recorded in the 1960s:

I’m going to climb up Jacob’s ladder,
I’m going to climb up higher and higher,
I’m going to tell God how he served me.
All God’s children are going to sit together,
And I’m going to sit at the welcome table.

I know Donnie is at the welcome table. And if he is temporarily not in his seat, he is probably in the kitchen making sure the food is prepared just right. God rest his soul. May perpetual light shine upon him.

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, I rise in tribute to the late Donald Oliver who served Canadians with distinction in the Senate for 23 years.

In his 2021 autobiography entitled *A Matter of Equality*, Senator Oliver reflected on how his appointment empowered him to promote tolerance, diversity and inclusion in the public and private sectors. He built a strong business case for diversity long before it became widely accepted, and his efforts helped change the face of Canada’s workforce. I was honoured to host a fireside chat with him at the time of its release.

Personally, I also feel the impact of his legacy. My Director of Parliamentary Affairs, Éric Gagnon, got his first job on the Hill working for Senator Oliver nearly 20 years ago.

Senator Oliver was arguably one of the hardest working senators on the Hill, and Éric remembers him as tough but fair, kind and generous and always eager to turn every challenge into a teachable moment. Senator Oliver was also known for his contagious laugh, his sense of humour and his style.

Their relationship grew into a long-standing friendship, and they would speak regularly, even as recently as last month in what Éric describes as an emotional conversation, a farewell of sorts, filled with laughter, memories and gratitude. Senator Oliver was his mentor and an inspiration.

One story Éric shared speaks volumes about Senator Oliver’s influence. About 15 years ago, Senator Oliver casually introduced Éric to a new committee clerk. It was Senator Oliver’s first visible minority clerk as committee chair — a point he was proud to underline after years of calling out the Senate for the lack of diversity in its upper ranks.

Last year, Éric was thrilled to tell him that same individual, Shaila Anwar, had been appointed Clerk of the Senate. Senator Oliver was overjoyed. It was a moment of pride that underscored his lifelong fight for inclusion.

When Brian Mulroney chose him, he knew it was both a symbolic and substantive choice. He would be the first Black man appointed to the Senate, but as Mulroney said, “. . . Donnie Oliver would bring enlightened leadership and unrelenting commitment . . .” to the cause of equality.

Honourable colleagues, 35 years later, Don Oliver’s legacy is one of breaking down barriers to systemic racism, shattering the glass ceiling for minorities and, as he so ably put it, “. . . challenging the intellectual mindset of certain Whites by encouraging them to explore some uncomfortable truths.”

Diversity is just having a mix of people and cultures in society, as he would say, but inclusion — that’s what makes the mix actually work. Let us honour his legacy by living those words.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of the Government Representative’s Office to pay tribute to our former colleague the Honourable Senator Donald Oliver.

Senator Oliver was a trailblazer always championing justice, human rights and inclusivity. He has left an indelible mark on Canada through his extraordinary career in law, politics and public service.

A long-time activist for the Progressive Conservative Party, Senator Oliver was named to the Senate on the advice of former prime minister Brian Mulroney on September 7, 1990, making history as the first Black man appointed to the Senate. He made sure through his long years of service to advance and defend racial diversity in all orders and branches of the government.

Senator Oliver’s work extended well beyond this chamber. As a proud Nova Scotian and strong advocate for his community, Senator Oliver was critical in establishing the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, and he sat on a wide range of boards, including as the president and chairman of the Children’s Aid Society of Halifax.

In recognition of his service to Nova Scotia and Canada, Senator Oliver received numerous awards and honours, most notably the Order of Canada in 2019 and the Order of Nova Scotia in 2020.

I want to echo Senator Moodie’s remark from yesterday: We are strengthened by the example he left us.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, I did not know Senator Oliver personally, but I was extremely impressed by the outpouring of gratitude, his openness and the indelible mark he left on the senators who worked alongside him. Senator Oliver leaves behind a legacy marked by courage, pride and an uncompromising commitment to public service. His work enriched Parliament and the lives of countless Canadians, and it demonstrated, both within this chamber and beyond its walls, how to inspire others to build more just and inclusive societies.

• (1430)

On behalf of the Government Representative's Office, and from the bottom of my heart, I would like to offer my condolences to Senator Olivier's family and loved ones, as well as the countless people across Canada who were inspired by his life and are mourning the loss of this remarkable senator.

[English]

SILENT TRIBUTE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I would ask that you all rise and join me in a minute of silence.

(Honourable senators then stood in silent tribute.)

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

Hon. Tracy Muggli: Honourable senators, I wish I had had the opportunity to know Senator Oliver. You all gave beautiful tributes.

I stand today to honour the legendary Ken Dryden. We all know Ken Dryden the goalie, but many of us also knew Ken Dryden the thoughtful, intelligent and kind human being.

About six weeks following the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, my phone rang. It was Ken Dryden. Yes, I was shocked. How did Ken Dryden get my cell number? But that's a story for another day.

Ken would be travelling from Saskatoon to Yorkton, Saskatchewan, for a film festival, and he asked if I thought the community of Humboldt would be interested in a visit on his way through. He was so thoughtful that he did not want to be in the way of whatever the community was experiencing. Well, of course, they wanted to have a visit from the hockey great to their community, and they were over the moon.

Ken was so gracious with his time. He landed in Saskatoon and met with many of the first responders who were involved with the crash. He then went to two hospitals to visit four of the players and their families. He spent nearly four hours visiting them. He showed his true compassion, with his soft demeanour, listening and, of course, answering questions that were shyly asked about his greatest hockey moments.

He graciously left behind for the hospital rehab unit several autographed copies of his book *Game Change*, a book that includes the anatomy of concussions and post-concussion syndrome.

A few days before his visit, I asked Ken if he needed downtime in the evening, and he said, "Why? What's going on?" I told him I had a charity event for a youth organization called EGADZ. He replied that he would love to go. Well, the executive director of the organization nearly had a heart attack when I told him who I would be bringing to the event. Not only did he show up and support auction items with personalized signatures, but he also gave a speech. None of us knew he was quite so involved with a number of youth organizations, including the creation of the Ken Dryden Scholarship to support youth in the Canadian child welfare system. His speech was moving and completely on point.

We left the event, and everyone was elated to have spent time with Ken Dryden. Just when we thought the evening was over, Ken requested a trip to the nearest venue that sold milkshakes, his well-known vice. I did find him some gelato.

He then went on to the community of Humboldt and went to all four schools to meet students as well as community officials. True to form, he requested to see anything related to his personal hockey hero, Glenn Hall, including where he grew up and the dedication to Glenn Hall at a local park.

For those who may not be aware, Ken also demonstrated tremendous leadership on early childhood development and advocacy for national affordable daycare during his tenure as a member of Parliament and as the Minister of Social Development.

Ken Dryden will always be remembered as a giant in hockey but, more importantly, as a giant in heart. My condolences to his family and friends. May he rest in peace. Thank you.

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, I was delighted to host an international meeting on antimicrobial resistance at the Fairmont Château Laurier on Monday, September 22, with a diverse group of experts and representatives of the G7 health alliance.

Antimicrobial resistance, or AMR, is one of the most urgent global health threats of our time. Each year, resistant infections cause hundreds of thousands of deaths worldwide, and, without action, that number could rise dramatically. What makes AMR so dangerous is that it undermines the very foundation of modern medicine. Procedures like surgery, chemotherapy and organ transplants all depend on effective antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antihelminthics.

The drivers of AMR are well known: overuse and misuse of antimicrobials in both human health and agriculture, as well as insufficient investment in new treatments and diagnostics. This is not only a health crisis but also an economic, climate and security challenge, with the potential to push millions into poverty and overwhelm already strained health systems.

The good news, though, is that AMR is preventable. Stronger stewardship, innovations in drug and diagnostic development, improved surveillance and better infection prevention and control can save lives and reduce costs. But no country can solve this problem alone. Resistant pathogens cross borders freely.

Colleagues, this is why international cooperation is essential. We need governments, researchers, industry and civil society to work together, aligning policies, sharing data and ensuring equitable access to life-saving tools.

My gratitude goes out to Senators Ataullahjan, Osler, Patterson, Greenwood and Duncan, along with MP Helena Jaczek, for their support. An evening reception at the French Embassy hosted by His Excellency Michel Miraillet wrapped up a very productive meeting. We were honoured to welcome the leader of the Bloc Québécois, Yves-François Blanchet. Sincere gratitude goes out to the ambassador and his team for their gracious and warm welcome. The reception was not only a generous gesture of hospitality but also a powerful signal of France's commitment to advancing global health.

Senators, if we collectively act now, we can slow the negative impacts of AMR in Canada and globally. If we wait, the outcomes will be dire. Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

WALK FOR PULMONARY FIBROSIS

Hon. Mary Robinson: Honourable senators, I rise today to highlight that on October 4, my home province of Prince Edward Island will host its first annual Walk for Pulmonary Fibrosis, called "Hope Breathes Here." Islanders and visitors will walk together to raise awareness, funds and hope for people living with pulmonary fibrosis, or PF.

PF is a progressive, irreversible lung disease that scars the lungs and robs individuals of their ability to breathe. Today, more than 30,000 Canadians live with pulmonary fibrosis. Yet, awareness remains low, and many patients face delays in diagnosis, treatment and care.

Senators, since 2009, the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation has been working tirelessly to bring awareness of this terminal disease to the attention of Canadians and to support those who are dealing with PF in their daily lives, whether they be patients, caregivers or loved ones. There are treatments that can slow the progress of the disease, but, as of today, there is no cure.

This year, the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation has hosted a number of walks across Canada — in Calgary, Edmonton, Markham, Kelowna, Montreal, Ottawa, Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Yarmouth — raising in total over \$150,000 and counting in research funding.

Our goal for the Charlottetown walk is \$20,000. I am proud to say we have already hit 85% of our goal.

Colleagues, before I conclude, on a personal note, my father, John Robinson, had pulmonary fibrosis. He was diagnosed in January 2019 and died on November 1, 2023, just prior to my appointment to this esteemed chamber.

• (1440)

My father's deterioration from pulmonary fibrosis led him to choose medical assistance in dying, or MAID. My family will be eternally grateful that this option exists in Canada.

My grandfather Eric Robinson died from pulmonary fibrosis in 1995. Sadly, MAID was not an option for him.

This walk in Charlottetown is in memory of my father, grandfather and others who have lost their lives to pulmonary fibrosis. It is also meant to bring hope to those living with pulmonary fibrosis.

I thank you for listening. I hope you will join me today in supporting this noble initiative.

Thank you, *meegwetch.*

[Translation]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Lynne Sylvestre, Joanne and Gary Lacoursière as well as my spouse, Daniel Beaudette.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

DECLARATION OF QUALIFICATION OF SENATORS

REPORT TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 15-6, I have the honour to table the report of the Clerk of the Senate of the list of the names of members of the Senate who have renewed their Declaration of Qualification.

[English]

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Wednesday, October 1, 2025, at 2 p.m.

HUMAN RIGHTS

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Paulette Senior: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to examine and report on aging out of foster care;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament as part of its study of such issues as may arise from time to time related to human rights generally be referred to the committee;

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

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY ANTISEMITISM AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH SESSION TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Paulette Senior: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to examine and report on antisemitism in Canada;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights during the First Session of the Forty-fourth

Parliament as part of its study of such issues as may arise from time to time related to human rights generally be referred to the committee;

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

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO HUMAN RIGHTS GENERALLY

Hon. Paulette Senior: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, in accordance with rule 12-7(16), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to human rights in general;

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

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than October 15, 2029, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES GENERALLY

Hon. Allister W. Surette: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, in accordance with rule 12-7(5), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to official languages generally; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than October 15, 2029, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY
MINORITY-LANGUAGE HEALTH SERVICES

Hon. Allister W. Surette: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages be authorized to examine and report on minority-language health services, including matters related to the following:

- (a) the inclusion of language clauses in federal health transfers;
- (b) population aging, including the ability to obtain health care, long-term care and home care in one's own language, which encompasses linguistic resources to support caregivers, the quality of life of seniors and disease prevention;
- (c) access to minority-language health services for vulnerable communities;
- (d) the shortage of health professionals in public and private facilities serving official language minority communities and the language skills of health care personnel in these facilities;
- (e) the needs of francophone post-secondary institutions outside Quebec and anglophone post-secondary institutions in Quebec respecting recruitment, training and support for future graduates in health-related fields;
- (f) telemedicine and the use of new technologies in the health sector, including the associated language challenges; and
- (g) the needs for research, evidence and solutions to foster access to health care in the language of one's choice;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages on this subject during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than March 31, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND
NATURAL RESOURCES

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COMMITTEE TO STUDY
ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES
AND CLIMATE CHANGE GENERALLY

Hon. Josée Verner: Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, in accordance with rule 12-7(14), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to energy, the environment, natural resources and climate change; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than October 15, 2029, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

• (1450)

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, Canadians are facing the worst housing crisis in a generation. Families can't afford their mortgages, and young people can't afford their rent, yet the very agency tasked with making housing affordable, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation — get this, colleagues — paid out over \$30 million in bonuses last year. Nearly every executive and manager got a payout, averaging \$43,000 each. At the same time, other Crown corporations like VIA Rail and the scandal-plagued Business Development Bank of Canada, or BDC, despite countless bailouts and losses, also handed out millions of dollars more. Why does the Liberal government insist on rewarding incompetence when it comes to taxpayer dollars?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I disagree with the preamble of the question, Senator Housakos, and I think that it is clear that the government is taking the housing situation in Canada very seriously. Far too many Canadians — particularly young Canadians — are struggling to find homes they can afford, so Canada's new government is stepping up with a bold new approach and unprecedented investment to increase the housing supply in Canada. Instead of rewarding incompetence, the Government of Canada is moving forward to make housing affordable for all Canadians.

Senator Housakos: Well, the record remains, though. It's the worst housing crisis in a generation, so clearly the government is failing.

Government leader, we've heard the stories from the Prime Minister about how he will take steps to ensure these inefficiencies and this waste will stop, but we haven't seen anything. Basically, the question is simple: Will you and the government commit to slashing these lavish bonuses for these individuals who are not delivering the merchandise? There is a budget coming on November 3 or 4, I believe. Can we get a government commitment that —

Senator Moreau: I am not someone who can make commitments for the government, as you well know. The budget will be tabled on November 4, and I reiterate that as far as housing is concerned, the new government has brought forward important new investments to ensure that all Canadians will be able to obtain an affordable house, especially young Canadians.

PUBLIC SAFETY

FIREARMS BUYBACK PROGRAM

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Leader, the Minister of Public Safety was caught on tape in a recording released by the Canadian Coalition for Firearm Rights. On it, the minister admits that the assault-style firearms buyback program is moving forward mainly because of electoral pressure in Quebec —

Senator Housakos: A shame. Wow.

Senator Martin: — and not because he truly believes in the policy. He even acknowledged that he would have done things differently.

How can the government justify such an expensive and controversial measure presented as essential to public safety when in reality, it is being advanced due to electoral calculations rather than to protect Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. I think that the minister has had the occasion to explain himself, and the Prime Minister reiterated his confidence in the minister.

You are very interested in safety and keeping our communities safe. I saw that in your question yesterday. Unfortunately, I was unable to answer your question, but I know that it's a topic that you want to bring back to and raise in this room, and you're totally right. And we — the government — agree that keeping communities safe starts with responsible action to keep guns out of our streets. What the government is doing over and above this is presenting a program. Yesterday, there was a pilot program presented in Nova Scotia, and I think that the government wants to move forward to ensure that our communities are safe and sound.

Senator Martin: Senator Moreau, during the previous parliamentary session, our former colleague Senator Plett was told that the Liberal government had already wasted

\$67.2 million on this failed buyback program. Now the Public Safety Minister says spending could reach \$742 million. How can the government justify spending nearly \$1 billion to target law-abiding licensed hunters and sports shooters when those funds could instead be used to support police forces and border security in the fight against illegal firearms?

Senator Moreau: The government has been clear that they stand beside hunters and those who have guns to shoot. At the same time, the main concern of the government is to keep our streets and communities safe, and I think from that perspective, you must have a strong program, and that's exactly what this is. It is to buy back firearms that are not needed by farmers or hunters and that only help criminals. I think —

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

Hon. Tony Loffreda: My question is for the Government Representative.

While Canadians' confidence in public institutions could be stronger, data shows that the police continue to enjoy the highest level of public trust, a testament to the vital work they do. By contrast, confidence in the federal Parliament ranks lowest among five measured institutions and has declined by five points in two years.

There is a new government with a new mandate in Ottawa, and the Carney government is committed to setting its own course distinct from that of its predecessor. In light of ongoing concerns related to program spending, ethics and governance from the previous mandate, how will this government demonstrate a renewed commitment to transparency and accountability and regain the public's confidence?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Loffreda, for the question. The new government has already shown that it is enacting bold change and is laser-focused on delivering for Canadians. The government is committed to increasing transparency and accountability. As a very recent example, the government announced the public registry of AI projects that will not only increase transparency with the public, but also reduce duplication of effort and promote greater collaboration and knowledge sharing across the government.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you. The 2025 Liberal campaign platform was notably silent on specific measures to restore Canadians' trust in our institutions and rebuild confidence in our democracy.

Senator Moreau, how will your office work with all senators in this chamber to ensure that Parliament functions effectively and delivers tangible results for Canadians, specifically in strengthening our economy and improving daily life?

Senator Moreau: Thank you for the question, senator. Yesterday, I went very far on my view of what my role is in the Senate, what my role is as Government Representative and how I wish to work with all senators in this chamber. I have already had

meetings with every one of you and every group in the Senate to let them know how open I am to working together. At the Senate, we must work together, and that is my commitment to this chamber.

NATURAL RESOURCES

EXPORT OF LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Thank you very much for your openness. My question is to Senator Moreau. Earlier this month, China and Russia announced an agreement on a new pipeline that will ship massive amounts of liquefied natural gas, or LNG, from Russia's Arctic to Shanghai, a deal that many experts are saying will cause major shifts in international LNG trade. With Europe moving away from its dependence on fossil fuels and with China's LNG imports having plunged by more than 20% according to the International Energy Agency, there is mounting evidence that the world is heading toward a massive excess supply of LNG, making any new Canadian LNG project a risky investment. Given the physical transition and market risk associated with new LNG infrastructure, can the government justify LNG projects on its major projects list?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): As you're well aware, Senator Galvez, Canadians voted to make Canada an energy superpower. This was the platform of the Prime Minister during the election campaign. We live in a democracy, and Canadians deserve to attain what they voted for.

• (1500)

As far as liquefied natural gas, or LNG, is concerned, Canada seeks to diversify trade relationships. The government has an opportunity to play a strategic role in the world's evolving energy mix, and that's the reason why LNG presents a significant opportunity for Canada to export a low-risk and low-carbon product to strengthen energy security with that ally.

[Translation]

Senator Galvez: Thank you for that answer.

[English]

New research by University College London has revealed that \$48 billion U.S. invested in LNG carriers could be written off due to significant oversupply. Add to that a volatile LNG market and aggressive U.S. trade tactics, Canada's LNG export market faces very high risk.

What is Canada's current exposure to LNG projects? How will it manage the high-cost risk of stranded assets?

Senator Moreau: I said yesterday that we live in no ordinary times, and everybody agreed with that.

As part of those changes, we know that as long as Russia continues its war in Ukraine, countries like Germany need a safe, trusted and reliable supplier of energy, and this is where Canada could stand beside its ally and make sure that — I would say — safer sources of energy are made available to our ally.

[Senator Moreau]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

MILLBROOK FIRST NATION

Hon. Paul (PJ) Prosper: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Senator Moreau, on December 20, 2024, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, or DFO, sent a draft letter of agreement to Millbrook First Nation, which designated Millbrook's fishery officers as enforcement officers under the Oceans Act and Species at Risk Act. That designation is required to ensure the safety and protection of Millbrook fishers offshore. However, to date, there has been no movement or response, despite several follow-up letters from the Chief.

Senator Moreau, will the government move forward with the designation?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I will certainly raise the question with the minister, Senator Prosper. My understanding is that DFO remains committed to the principle of its reconciliation strategy. This includes the renewal of programs and practices in a way that enhances relationships and partnerships with Indigenous Peoples.

I understand that DFO will continue to support Millbrook First Nation as it builds and maintains its fishery, monitoring and management capacity. Economic reconciliation remains a priority for DFO.

Senator Prosper: Thank you.

Senator Moreau, on May 6, 2024, a request for an unused conservation vessel sitting in the Truro regional office lot was made by a Millbrook fish and wildlife conservation officer. The regional office has signed off, but it seems to be stuck in Ottawa.

As frustration has been building, and several emails have gone unanswered, can you tell us if Millbrook will get the dignity of a response from DFO?

Senator Moreau: Yes, thank you for raising the question, senator.

I can assure you that the government is aware of the request, and I have been told that they will respond shortly.

[Translation]

FINANCE

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

Hon. Danièle Henkel: Senator Moreau, I'm pleased to have a question for you in your new role. Once again, congratulations and good luck.

As you may have noticed, I am sitting in your old seat. I hope it's not an ejection seat.

As we all know, the Bank of Canada has once again lowered its key interest rate by a quarter point. The government cited stagnant inflation, U.S. trade uncertainty and the risk of weaker domestic demand.

It also emphasized the significant decline in business investment. The rate cut will have a positive impact on business investment, although it will remain limited. What does the government plan to do to maximize this impact?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Madam Senator, I am happy to see someone as distinguished as yourself occupying my former seat. Please keep it warm.

I know you have a particular interest in small and medium-sized businesses. The government is well aware that SMEs are the backbone of the Canadian economy. As such, the government is very open to suggestions for improving their situation.

The government has taken measures to help SMEs, including allocating \$500 million to the Business Development Bank of Canada to provide resources and advice to help SMEs cope with the current tariffs. I am sure that the government will always be a committed partner for SMEs, given their importance in the Canadian economy.

Senator Henkel: The Canadian Federation of Independent Business is proposing returning some of the billions of dollars generated by the countertariffs to SMEs through a temporary reduction in the tax rate or a targeted direct rebate.

Is the government prepared to implement this sort of measure to amplify the effects of the lower interest rate and give SMEs the stability they need to invest and grow?

Senator Moreau: Senator, as you know, the government will be tabling a budget on November 4. We will see whether that budget contains specific measures for small businesses. However, the government has already taken additional measures, such as deferring GST remittances and corporate income tax payments from April 2 to June 30, 2025. The government has also waived interest on the GST, particularly on second-quarter tax installments that were required to be paid between April 2 and June 30, 2025.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

MODERNIZATION OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Hon. Claude Carignan: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Leader, in June 2023, the government passed Bill C-13 concerning the modernization of the Official Languages Act. Many of its basic provisions, however, were to come into force later, on a day to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council.

More specifically, I am referring to new section 37, which creates a parliamentary committee to permanently review the act's implementation, and section 54 on the enactment of An Act respecting the use of French in federally regulated private businesses in Quebec and in regions with a strong francophone presence. Since then, it has been radio silence, no sound, no picture. At the time, the government said these provisions would come into force within 18 months. In the meantime, 28 months have come and gone.

Leader, can you explain why your government is dragging its feet when it comes to implementing these new provisions of the act?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Carignan, if sound and picture are what you want, you will have them. Tomorrow, the minister responsible for this act will be in this very chamber for question period. That means you can ask this question again.

I am well aware of the delays involved in implementing and tabling the regulations. I'm told that the drafting process is substantially advanced and that the regulations will soon be tabled. Once again, tomorrow you will have an opportunity to raise the matter with the minister directly.

Senator Carignan: Thank you. We certainly don't need to worry not getting a picture if the minister is here. He's pretty good at that.

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada is going to be the first to come out publicly before Parliament to denounce the Carney government's lack of clarity on official languages and francophone issues. That organization is very concerned about how long it's taking the government to strengthen protections for the rights of francophone minority communities.

Leader, is promoting and protecting Canada's two official languages truly a priority for this government or, to paraphrase the Minister of Public Safety, is it merely a ploy to win votes?

Senator Moreau: As a francophone, I can tell you that I will be the first to step up and defend the issue of minority languages in Canada. Furthermore, I know the government takes this issue very seriously, particularly in light of the amendments to the Official Languages Act. Tomorrow you will have the opportunity not only to see that picture you were looking forward to, but also to hear reassurances from the minister himself during his appearance before the Senate.

[English]

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

SENATE APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Denise Batters: Senator Moreau, you're still a bit of an enigma in this place. You have been a senator for more than a year, but your ethics disclosure is still not posted on the Senate Ethics Officer's website. You were named Government

Representative in the Senate more than two months ago, but the Ethics Commissioner's public registry indicates your entry as still pending.

• (1510)

As the opposition, it is our job to demand transparency and accountability from the government. Perhaps you could let us know a little bit about you, starting with which individual or organization, if any, sponsored your Senate application.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. Of course, like everybody since the 2015 Senate reform, my application to the Senate was sponsored by private individuals, but, most importantly, by an independent and impartial review board that decided I was fit for the job — I'm quite proud of that — like every other senator who has been appointed since the reform of 2015.

Now, as far as the commissioner and my report are concerned, I am pleased to inform you that this morning I signed the letter received from the independent Ethics Commissioner, so my report will be public in the next few hours.

Senator Batters: I look forward to hearing who those private individuals were who sponsored you.

One thing that is on the public record is that you directly helped Prime Minister Carney in debate preparation during the election, a task usually done by a candidate's closest and most loyal advisers. Weeks later, that same candidate appointed you to the top spot in the Senate. Political campaign involvement is fine and certainly within your right, Senator Moreau, but how do you square that close Liberal Party involvement with the self-proclaimed non-partisan and independent office you lead?

Senator Moreau: I think the way I behave as a representative of the government in this house will let you know whether or not I am partisan or not.

As far as I'm concerned, the only way I was involved in federal politics was back in 1984 with the Progressive Conservative Party. I was very proud to be someone who supported the policies of former prime minister Brian Mulroney. The late involvement was to make sure that the candidate was —

CANADIAN HERITAGE

BROADCASTING ACT

Hon. Paula Simons: Senator Moreau, in 2023, this chamber adopted Bill C-11, which updated the Broadcasting Act, but we amended the bill with a specific interpretation clause in section 2 to protect the data privacy of Canadians. The amendment, proposed by Senator Miville-Dechéne, was suggested by Canada's Privacy Commissioner and accepted by the government of the day.

I was shocked last month to learn that those privacy provisions have been stripped out of the Broadcasting Act by accident, we're told, during debate in the other place over another bill, Bill C-13, which deals with official languages.

Can you please tell us what steps the government is taking to put those privacy protections voted on by this chamber back into the Broadcasting Act?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, as I suggested to Senator Carignan, the minister will be here tomorrow, and I hope you will raise this question with the minister himself.

The government has recently been made aware of what appears to be an inadvertent oversight in a coordinating amendment and is looking into it. I'm confident that the government will bring the appropriate measures to correct this error.

Once again, the minister will be here tomorrow, and I am sure that he will be pleased to answer the question and to reassure you on that matter.

Senator Simons: Thank you. I do hope I'll be able to ask him that question tomorrow, but I wanted to ask you, sir: It is a bit disquieting to realize that an important Senate amendment could be deleted in this way and that the deletion was only brought to light two years after the fact by Professor Michael Geist at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law.

Can you tell us what steps the government is taking to ensure that the Senate's work is not voided in this way in the future?

Senator Moreau: Thank you for the question. I think that it is one of my duties to make sure that what the Senate wishes is well understood by the government. This is 50% of my job. The other 50% is to represent the government here. Both tasks are equally important to me. I can reassure you that I will do everything I can to make sure that such an error won't happen again while I'm Government Representative.

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

MILITARY PROCUREMENT

Hon. Martine Hébert: My question is for the Leader of the Government. First, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment, Senator Moreau. I had the opportunity to work with you in a past professional life, and I am sure that you will do a great job.

My question follows up on something that you said in your speech yesterday about the importance of rebuilding the Canadian economy. I agree with you on that. We know that defence investments will be an important part of the government's strategy in that regard, but we also know that project approval times pose a significant challenge in this sector.

Does the government intend to implement mechanisms to expedite the decision-making process in this sector? Will such projects fall under Bill C-5? If not, will mechanisms be put in place to expedite the decision-making process? That will be crucial going forward if we want to succeed and get things done.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question and for your kind words.

My understanding is that Bill C-5 indicates that there will be a list of national projects. An initial list has been released, although it is evergreen and will change over time.

With regard to progress or investments in defence, I think the Prime Minister has been extremely clear in stating his intention to fulfill our NATO obligations and make rapid and massive investments in defence, which will also reassure our colleagues across the aisle, who are asking for broader protection, particularly in Canada's Far North.

Senator Hébert: Continuing on the subject of rebuilding the economy, as you know, in order to build infrastructure and boost production, we will need access to workers, and that means ensuring that our businesses also have access to the workers they need. Yesterday, you mentioned that the government has committed to ensuring that workers are available. Does the government currently have a strategy to ensure that businesses will have access to workers, given that the unemployment rate is very low in many regions?

Senator Moreau: The government's strategy, which involves boosting the economy through major investments, particularly in infrastructure, will enable us to meet with workers and offer them good, well-paying jobs, stimulate the Canadian economy through massive investments in infrastructure and rebuild the country. From what I understand, directives have been given so that through —

[English]

Hon. Rebecca Patterson: This question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Moreau, congratulations on your position.

I also note that today is September 24, the second day of our fall sitting, and the government had set the end of summer as the deadline to release the Department of National Defence review on the planned F-35 fighter jet purchase. Yet, in a statement to Ottawa on Monday, the minister said that the review was still ongoing.

I'll also note that despite this being a primarily U.S.-based purchase, the F-35 has at least US\$2 million of Canadian industry content should that be the aircraft that is selected.

Senator Moreau, Canada's current fleet of CF-18 Hornets sunsets in 2032, meaning that the government has to act fast to ensure that the RCAF has the tools it needs not only to defend Canada and North America but to meet challenges abroad.

When will the government release the review of the F-35 purchase and commit to purchasing the CF-18 replacement fighter fleet?

Senator Moreau: Thank you for the question. I have been informed that the government is actually continuing the review, and we will share further updates as they become available.

The government is committed to procuring what the air force needs, while ensuring economic benefits for Canadians. It's a link with the major investment that we need for our Armed Forces. This is a very important piece of equipment, and I'm confident that the review will be made available quite rapidly.

• (1520)

Senator Patterson: Thank you.

It has also been reported that the government may go with a mixed-fleet approach. Given that the Canadian Armed Forces faces an existing shortage of highly skilled personnel needed to fly and maintain aircraft of all types, a mixed fleet of fighter jets would exacerbate this issue.

Will the government commit to one aircraft variant of fighter jets, as it has done for submarines?

Senator Moreau: We will see as soon as the review is tabled. I'm quite sure the government is aware of the particular situation that two different aircraft would present as far as engineering, parts and availability, not to mention pilots themselves, are concerned.

So I will be glad to share the review as soon as it is available.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

MINISTERIAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to the order adopted June 4, 2025, I would like to inform the Senate that Question Period with the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, will take place on Thursday, September 25, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

RESTRUCTURING OF GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-12(3), I would like to inform the Senate that as we proceed with Government Business, the Senate will address the items in the following order: Motion No. 17, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

THE SENATE

MOTION TO CONSIDER THE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE AND UP TO FOUR SENATORS AS A RECOGNIZED PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CURRENT SESSION
ADOPTED

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of September 23, 2025, moved:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, previous order or usual practice, for the remainder of the current session, the Government Representative and up to four senators who agree to be designated as working with him or her for parliamentary purposes, and who are not member of a recognized party or another recognized parliamentary group, be considered, for all purposes, to be a recognized parliamentary group as defined in the Rules.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

MOTION TO CALL ON GOVERNMENT TO INVESTIGATE THE CREATION OF A SOVEREIGN, DOMESTIC VERIFIED TRAVELLERS PROGRAM—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Paula Simons, pursuant to notice of May 29, 2025, moved:

That the Senate call on the Government of Canada to investigate the creation of a sovereign, domestic Verified Travellers Program for Canadians.

She said: I hope you will all join me in supporting this modest but urgent motion. Please allow me to explain.

Anyone who uses Canadian airports is familiar with this scene: A very long line of passengers are waiting to go through airport security. Why is the line so slow? In part, it's because passengers going through screening have to stop to pull their laptops from their bags or briefcases, and then place them in their own special trays for inspection. Then they have to put the tiny bottles of shampoo and tiny tubes of toothpaste into tiny little plastic bags and place them on trays for inspection.

They must take off their hoodies, cardigans and suit jackets. If they are wearing boots that go ever so slightly above the ankle, they have to take them off and complete the screening process standing on the cold airport floor in their socks in the hopes they didn't absentmindedly put on a pair with holes. If they have a medical piece of equipment, such as a CPAP machine, then that needs to be pulled out and put into a separate tray, too.

Some of these measures may be essential; others may simply be security theatre, a holdover from the panic post 9/11. As good, polite Canadians, we line up and go through the ritual.

While passengers wait in the long lines, hopping about in their sock feet, they can't help but look over at the lucky verified travellers whisking their way through the short, swift verified traveller line where people can leave their computers in their cases, their toothpaste in their toiletry bags, their cardigans buttoned up and their boots on their feet.

Why do verified travellers receive this premium speedy treatment? It's because they have gone through a series of background security checks in advance. They are pre-screened to determine they are not terrorists, hijackers or other kinds of threats.

As you stand there in the slow line, you may be wondering, "How do I become a verified traveller? How do I get to be so special?"

There are, in fact, four classes of Canadians who get to use the "good line" at the airport. The first is serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces, including reservists. The second is RCMP members, as well as most members of provincial and local police forces. The third category is pilots, flight attendants and other air crew members in uniform, as well as any airport employees who carry a special Restricted Area Identity Card, or RAIC.

However, if you are not a soldier, police officer, pilot or passenger agent, there is still only one way for you, as a Canadian, to become a verified traveller: You can apply for a NEXUS card. NEXUS is a joint American-Canadian program that lets us cross more easily into the United States. It's ideal for people who do a lot of cross-border business or who work in both countries. Applicants have to go through a security background check and in-person interviews conducted by both the Canada Border Services Agency and U.S. Homeland Security.

Quite a few of us in this chamber have already jumped through the necessary hoops, paid the necessary fees and waited ages for American approval.

• (1530)

But it is not a simple process, especially now.

During the first Trump presidency, when COVID hit, the entire NEXUS system ground to a halt, creating wait times of years to obtain a card. Then the U.S. tightened its interview rules. Canadians used to be able to go to any major international airport, such as those in Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto and Halifax, to be interviewed by American border officials. You didn't need to fly to the United States; you could just come to the airport. That is no longer the case.

You can still go to a major international airport for a security check, but now you must buy a ticket and fly to a destination in the U.S. before you can be interviewed.

At a time when many Canadians are feeling leery or queasy about visiting Trump's America, or are simply boycotting it for political reasons, forcing someone to buy a ticket to the United States just so they can get NEXUS approval seems a bit unfair.

Your other option is to drive across the border to complete an interview. That isn't so hard, to be honest, if you live in Vancouver, Montreal or Ottawa, but it's a lot more complicated if you live somewhere like Edmonton, from which it takes six and a half hours to drive to the nearest border crossing, in Sweet Grass, Montana.

Travel logistics aside, getting an appointment for an interview isn't easy. When I spoke to the CBSA a few months ago, they acknowledged that there were more than 100,000 Canadians waiting for appointments at American border posts.

[Translation]

The process is even more complicated for francophones. Although all U.S. application forms are available in English, Spanish and French, it could be harder to arrange an interview in French with U.S. border agents, especially outside Quebec.

[English]

This is what the Canada Border Services Agency told my office about the possibility of pre-booking an interview with CBSA and Homeland Security officers who do speak French:

The option to select to do the interview in either of the two official languages is dependent on operational capacity and the availability of interviewing officers. There is no possibility to pre-select the language of your choice, officers will do their best to accommodate when possible.

Nor is that the only issue. For many Canadians, the very idea of submitting to vetting from Trump's Homeland Security apparatus — of providing the Trump regime with their fingerprints and retinal scans — is more than a little disquieting.

And then in August, a new problem came to light. Due to the Trump government's policies against trans people, new NEXUS cards cannot use an "X" to mark someone's gender. They can only use either "F" for female or "M" for male, and that letter must now match the gender a person was assigned at birth.

Those currently using a NEXUS card marked with an "X" can continue to use it for now, but when that card expires, they can only get a renewal if they revert to using the letter that marked their former gender. For trans, Two-Spirit, gender-fluid or gender non-binary Canadians, that may mean a NEXUS card is simply out of reach.

Canadian courts have affirmed that gender identity is a protected ground in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and yet, in order to conform to American bigotry, Canada's only verified traveller program now actively discriminates against any Canadian who doesn't fit into the neat gender binary. That, to my mind, amounts to a Charter violation.

And yet we have no option. It doesn't matter if you're a cabinet minister, diplomat, senator, lieutenant governor, Supreme Court justice, archbishop or just a very frequent flyer. This isn't just an issue for business executives or political elites. If you fly a lot — whether that's to visit your aged parents, your new grandkids, your long-distance lover or your favourite holiday spot — and want to go through the express line, you need Donald Trump's say-so. It makes no sense, especially since the vast majority of people who apply for NEXUS cards are Canadians and many of them, frankly, want to use their card to fly more easily within Canada.

The Canadians Border Services Agency briefed my office about the matter this summer. We heard that Canadian applications for NEXUS cards started dropping noticeably last November, right after Trump's second election. It's hard to imagine seeing that trend reversing any time soon, and that's a problem for Canadian airports. Without enough verified travellers in the queue, airports can't dedicate the staff to keep the verified traveller lanes open.

Already, Ottawa's airport only opens its verified line during limited peak hours. The Canadian Airports Council has been lobbying for years for a made-in-Canada domestic verified traveller card, and now the council warns that if we don't have enough verified travellers, the fast lanes may close and security wait times will increase for everyone.

Why do we still rely on a country which has threatened our sovereignty to investigate our citizens and collect and retain their private and biometric information just so that we can transit through Canadian airports?

It's not just gender-queer Canadians who are at risk of exclusion. What if the Trump government just doesn't like your politics, your social media posts, your religion or your skin tone? Why have we surrendered to another country complete authority to determine which Canadians can be trusted to travel within our own borders?

Maybe you don't think you need a NEXUS card. Canadians have, after all, dramatically reduced their travel to the United States since Trump's annexation threats. But if you want to fly from Edmonton to St. John's and leave your boots on, you must show a NEXUS card.

[Translation]

If you want to fly from Montreal to Paris without taking your toothpaste out, you need a NEXUS card. Is that really necessary? Why?

[English]

The CBSA already carries out its own parallel background checks in order to issue NEXUS cards, so I must ask this question: What is preventing Canada from issuing its own domestic trusted traveller cards to Canadian frequent flyers who have no plans to visit the United States and simply wish to fly domestically or overseas with less fuss and bother?

Since the CBSA is already doing the background checks and interviews in both official languages, surely it couldn't be so hard to stand up a sovereign, domestic verified travellers program for Canadians, both francophone and anglophone, that doesn't require Uncle Sam's blessing.

I have spoken with both the CBSA and Transport Canada to ask them those very questions. To be honest, the problem seems to be simply one of bureaucratic, legalistic logistics — figuring out how to transfer the necessary data from one department to the other.

Of course, as unelected senators, we cannot compel the government to spend money on a new, made-in-Canada trusted traveller program. But I think we are well within our rights to ask that the government investigate the practicality and viability of setting up such a program, not to mention the national security and Charter risks in failing to do so.

It is well past time for us to repatriate control of our airport screening systems and stop contracting out our national security assessments to an increasingly unpredictable and unreliable foreign power.

It may cost a bit more, but it will be worth every penny for us to reclaim our national sovereignty, to ensure that every trusted Canadian has the equal right and equal opportunity to access a card and to ensure that our airports run as smoothly and efficiently as possible, to the benefit of Canadian travellers and the Canadian economy.

[Translation]

Honourable colleagues, I hope I can inspire some of you to address this issue and I hope that we can then put this motion to a vote.

[English]

Let's tell the government that we want something better and fairer: a made-in-Canada verified traveller program that respects our language rights, our civil rights and our national sovereignty.

Thank you, *hiy hiy*.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING
TO AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Hon. Robert Black, pursuant to notice of September 23, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, in accordance with rule 12-7(12), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to agriculture and forestry; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY GROWING ISSUE OF
WILDFIRES AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST
SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Robert Black, pursuant to notice of September 23, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry be authorized to examine and report on the growing issue of wildfires in Canada and the consequential effects that wildfires have on forestry and agriculture industries, as well as rural and Indigenous communities, throughout the country;

That, in particular, the committee should examine:

- (a) the current status of wildfires in Canada;
- (b) the impact of wildfires on forestry, agriculture, water systems, air quality, food security and biosecurity;
- (c) the possible federal measures that are in place, or should be in place, to adequately monitor and organize a response to wildfires;
- (d) the potential areas of improvement of these federal measures for addressing wildfires; and
- (e) international best practices as they relate to responding to wildfires;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee on this subject during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament be referred to the committee;

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 25, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report; and

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

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1540)

STUDY ON THE STATUS OF SOIL HEALTH—COMMITTEE
AUTHORIZED TO STUDY GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO
THIRTEENTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED DURING FIRST
SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT AND REFER PAPERS
AND EVIDENCE FROM PREVIOUS SESSION TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Robert Black, pursuant to notice of September 23, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry be authorized to examine and report on the government response, dated November 5, 2024, to the thirteenth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, entitled *Critical Ground: Why Soil is Essential to Canada's Economic, Environmental, Human, and Social Health*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 6, 2024, during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee on this subject during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament be referred to the committee; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT

MOTION TO REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE SINCE BEGINNING OF
SECOND SESSION OF FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT AND BY
SUBSEQUENT INTERSESSIONAL AUTHORITIES
TO COMMITTEE ADOPTED

Hon. Marty Klyne, pursuant to notice of September 23, 2025, moved:

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight since the beginning of the Second Session of the Forty-third Parliament and by subsequent intersessional authorities be referred to the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY LOCAL SERVICES
PROVIDED BY CBC/RADIO-CANADA AND REFER PAPERS
AND EVIDENCE FOR FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH
PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Larry W. Smith, pursuant to notice of September 23, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications be authorized to examine and report on the local services provided by the CBC/Radio-Canada;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament as part of its study of issues related to transport and communications generally be referred to the committee;

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 26, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report; and

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

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY COPPER WIRE THEFT AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY, AND REFER PAPERS AND EVIDENCE FROM FIRST SESSION OF FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT TO CURRENT SESSION

Hon. Larry W. Smith, pursuant to notice of September 23, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications be authorized to examine and report on copper wire theft and its impacts on the telecommunications industry;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament as part of its study of issues related to transport and communications generally be referred to the committee;

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 26, 2026, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report; and

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

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS GENERALLY

Hon. Larry W. Smith, pursuant to notice of September 23, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, in accordance with rule 12-7(8), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to transport and communications generally; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than October 15, 2029.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(At 3:43 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.)

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