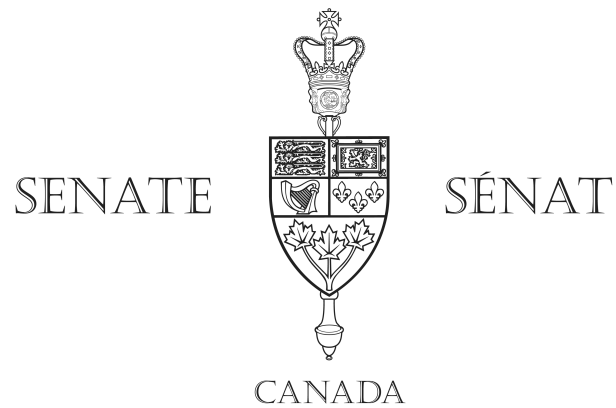




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Wednesday, November 26, 2025

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, November 26, 2025

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

Prayers.

[Translation]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

THE LATE ALBAN D'AMOURS, C.M., G.O.Q.

Hon. Clément Gignac: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a great economist and a pillar of Quebec's cooperative community, Alban D'Amours, the former CEO of Desjardins Group, who passed away recently.

After graduating from Université Laval with a degree in economics, Alban D'Amours went on to a brilliant career marked by a commitment to the common good and to cooperation. He made society more united in Quebec and beyond. In recognition of his public service and accomplishments, he was made a Grand Officer of the National Order of Quebec in 2008 and a member of the Order of Canada in 2012.

Alban D'Amours began his career as an economics professor at the University of Sherbrooke before becoming head of the department just a few years later. In 1980, he joined the Quebec public service, where he served as the deputy minister of revenue and the associate deputy minister of energy and resources.

In 1988, Mr. D'Amours joined Desjardins Group. That is where we first crossed paths, when he became my boss. He was the vice-president of research and planning, while I was working as a senior economist.

After serving in several different roles, Alban D'Amours became the president and CEO of Desjardins in 2000, a position he held for eight years.

According to the current president of Desjardins Group, Denis Dubois, Alban was a visionary, a humanitarian and a committed leader. Mr. D'Amours's time as president was impressive. By creating the current structure of the Fédération des caisses Desjardins du Québec, with assets now amounting to almost \$500 billion, he helped ensure the stability and survival of this major financial institution.

At the end of his term as president of Desjardins, Mr. D'Amours continued to serve the public interest when he agreed to chair a panel of experts examining the future of Quebec's retirement system from 2011 to 2013.

A few years later, Alban summarized this important chapter of his professional life in his book *Le coopératisme, un antidote aux dérives du capitalisme : réflexions ancrées dans mon parcours chez Desjardins*, a reflection on his personal journey with Desjardins and why he saw the cooperative system as an antidote to the extremes of capitalism.

As a father, he must have felt deep pride when his daughter Sophie became rector of Université Laval, his *alma mater*, in 2017. She is the first woman to ever hold that position.

In closing, I want to offer Mr. D'Amours's family and loved ones my sincere condolences. His contribution to the cooperative movement, and to Quebec and Canadian society, will be felt for generations to come.

On behalf of all senators, thank you, Mr. D'Amours.

[English]

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, today I am pleased to present Chapter 98 of "Telling Our Story."

You have heard me say on numerous occasions how special my home province is, but sometimes it is not what I or my Newfoundland and Labrador colleagues say that matters; it is much more important to hear what others have to say about us.

Many of you have had the privilege to visit our most easterly province, and I trust you have fond memories of doing so. To those of you who have not made a visit, I will continue to encourage you to do so.

Today, I want to pass on to you what others who have experienced the beauty and hospitality of Newfoundland and Labrador had to say about their time there.

Stacey Lastoe, a CNN senior editor from New York City, said that she enjoyed a pint in downtown St. John's with some of the nicest people she'd ever met. She went on to say, "Newfoundlanders are a happy, welcoming bunch, and I can't wait to go back."

Dr. Adrian Meyer and his wife, Inge, from Zürich, Switzerland, said that Newfoundland "... is unique, impressive and has the most lovable inhabitants." They continued, saying:

We were welcomed and received as if we had always been members of their community. Where else in the world does this happen?

They also said, "We have become Newfoundland and Labrador's passionate ambassadors in Switzerland."

Mahmaed AlTaani and his family moved to Newfoundland from Syria after surviving a crowded refugee camp in Jordan. He told a local paper a heartwarming story about how he and his family were welcomed in Newfoundland and about his children being warmly included and making new friends in the local school. They felt safe and secure.

Kathie Schairbaum Erwin and her husband from the United States were travelling throughout Newfoundland in a fifth wheel when her husband had a severe health issue and ended up in hospital for several months. She had this to say:

In the U.S.A., we have to remind ourselves to pay it forward, to be kind to others, et cetera. But here in Newfoundland, it's a natural part of the culture. It's as automatic as it is to breathe. The province is a special place that is hard to describe to our friends in the U.S.A.

The famous actor Robert Redford made the following comment:

Newfoundland: A landscape not commonly found, where green roofs are abundant and roads less travelled. A special place, with a feeling of new discovery. I've often heard it said by some, that the meaningful connection to a sense of place is lost so, "I'm heading for Newfoundland."

Gail Murray of Toronto fell in love with Newfoundland and summed it up after her visit by saying:

What stays with me as much as the rugged beauty of Newfoundland is the fortitude and resilience of a people who have honed their artistic talents, kept alive cherished traditions of those long-ago Irish settlers and learned to balance the new with the old and finding a way to live in an untamed land.

You may all recall the *Titan* tragedy from 2023, when the OceanGate semi-submersible was lost as it tried to journey to the site of the *Titanic*. International news media outlets from around the world descended on St. John's.

One of the world's most famous news anchors, Anderson Cooper of CNN, was one of those who arrived on our shores at the time.

As he was concluding several days of covering the story and was preparing to leave, he had this to say:

. . . I just want to thank the people of St. John's, who have welcomed us here and helped us in our work for the past few days and all week. I've travelled all over the world, but I've rarely ever met such kind and decent and concerned people as I have in just the last few days here in St. John's.

Colleagues, I could stand here all day and tell you more, but my time is limited, so once again I remind you that in Newfoundland and Labrador, there are no strangers, just friends you haven't met.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Thomas Lukaszuk, former deputy premier of Alberta. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Fridhandler.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

"FOREVER CANADIAN" PETITION

Hon. Daryl Fridhandler: Honourable senators, today I rise to speak about a compelling movement of Canadian unity in Alberta, initiated and led by Thomas Lukaszuk.

In the permitted 90 days, nearly half a million Albertans signed the "Forever Canadian" petition, a citizen initiative that affirms Alberta is proudly Canadian. That is a remarkable 40% more than the legislative requirement. The petition question proposed is simple, "Do you agree that Alberta should remain within Canada?"

This petition triggered a movement of over 10,000 volunteers and 6,500 registered canvassers — of which I was a proud one.

At the heart of this effort is Thomas Lukaszuk, who I am honoured to welcome to the gallery today. Thomas immigrated to Canada from Poland in 1982. He is a former deputy premier of Alberta whose leadership and vision have helped channel Albertans' clear sentiment: We are Canadians.

The petition was submitted to Alberta's Chief Electoral Officer to be verified, and results will be published no later than January 6.

This petition is not a call for a referendum. It is a call for leadership.

• (1410)

As Mr. Lukaszuk said:

We're asking the premier to do the right thing and ask Alberta MLAs to vote on this issue and put separatist talks to bed once and for all.

This petition stands in stark contrast to the so-called Alberta Prosperity Project — a gross misnomer, if there ever was one — which seeks to trigger a referendum on a constitutional change for separation. The separatist's petition has not been cleared for signature and is now before the Alberta courts as potentially being unconstitutional.

Notably, the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, representing 16 First Nations in Alberta, has been granted intervenor status in the case and have issued a statement condemning the Alberta Prosperity Project initiative as reckless and ". . . a direct violation of the treaty relationship . . ."

To be clear, the Alberta separation conversation is not over yet. We still have a long way to go, but Mr. Lukaszuk along with the petition signatories and volunteers of the movement have taken a significant step in uniting Albertans, reminding us what it means to be part of the Canadian federation.

Premier Smith and her colleagues can do the right thing. Once signatures are verified, the "Forever Canadian" petition goes to a legislative committee for up to 60 days for their recommendation,

then to the Alberta legislature for the approval and acceptance of the proposal, ending the matter there, or the question is sent to a divisive, expensive campaign, the outcome of which is now clear.

I call on Premier Smith to address this matter, stand up now with the majority of Albertans, accelerate the “Forever Canadian” proposal through the committee and approve and accept the proposal in the legislature without pushing it forward to a referendum.

Stand up for Alberta as a proud member of the federation.
Stand up for Canada, Premier Smith.

Thank you, Thomas Lukaszuk.

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 Liane Roy, President, and Christelle Clérout, Deputy Director General, from the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Surette.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

LA FÉDÉRATION DES COMMUNAUTÉS FRANCOPHONES ET ACADIENNE DU CANADA

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Allister W. Surette: Honourable senators, I rise today to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, or FCFA. I would like to thank the president of the FCFA, Liane Roy, and its executive director, Alain Dupuis, as well as all those who preceded them and all the members of their team who have worked so tirelessly all these years to promote the FCFA and Canada’s francophone and Acadian communities.

The FCFA represents more than 2.8 million francophones living in nine provinces and three territories. Today, the FCFA is recognized for the leading role it plays in francophone immigration to Canada and for its many projects and strategic coordination initiatives, such as the leaders’ forum, a roundtable involving more than 50 francophone organizations from across the country.

Created in November 1975 as the Fédération des francophones hors Québec, a name it retained until 1991, the FCFA has played a central role in the development of francophone and Acadian communities since its early years. Among its many achievements, it made a decisive contribution to the inclusion of minority language education rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which was adopted in 1982.

The FCFA was also actively involved in the 1988 review of the Official Languages Act, which led to the adoption of Part VII, entitled Advancement of Equality of Status and Use of English and French.

More recently, it once again played a key role in the process of modernizing this act, which led to the passage of Bill C-13 in 2023.

In a brief published in 1979 entitled *Tout à gagner*, or “Everything to Gain,” the FCFA members stated that their energy and commitment to francophone communities stemmed from their convictions, their vision, the bonds of solidarity they had built between communities, and the victories they had secured. As we celebrate the FCFA’s fiftieth anniversary, it is clear that the organization’s convictions, vision, spirit of collaboration and solidarity and numerous victories continue to drive the FCFA’s passion even now.

Congratulations to the FCFA on its first 50 years of success, and here’s to 50 more.

Thank you.

[*English*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Hazel Robinson, mother of Senator Robinson and Member of the Order of Canada.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Julie Macfarlane, Andrea Massoud and Asbah Ahmad from Can’t Buy My Silence. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator McPhedran.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

WORLD AIDS DAY

Hon. René Cormier: I also want to take this opportunity to wish the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada a happy fiftieth anniversary.

Honourable senators, every year on December 1, we mark World AIDS Day. The theme of this year’s commemoration is “Overcoming disruption, transforming the AIDS response.” This is an opportunity to highlight the impact that international funding reductions are having on ordinary people, while highlighting the resilience of countries and communities that are mobilizing to protect the gains that have been made.

As we have said before in this chamber, over the last decade, despite numerous public health interventions, we have seen a significant and alarming rise in the rates of several sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections in our country and around the world. With regard to HIV, despite a 90% reduction in deaths since the mid-1990s, the infection is still being transmitted. This chronic disease disproportionately affects certain marginalized populations, such as men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, certain Indigenous and Black populations, and people incarcerated in federal penitentiaries.

[English]

Let us be clear, colleagues: HIV affects everyone regardless of socio-economic status or sexual orientation. No one is immune to this endemic disease. As a result of its chronic nature and associated comorbidities, HIV imposes a substantial financial burden on Canada's public health system. The Canadian AIDS Society estimates that the current economic loss associated with each newly diagnosed individual is \$1.3 million per person.

[Translation]

Thanks to the eight senators who spoke during the Senate inquiry on this topic, potential solutions have been identified, including ensuring that non-disclosure of HIV status is decriminalized. It is critical that we follow up on these recommendations and continue the work.

These solutions require a holistic approach that encompasses early detection, access to innovative treatments and the implementation of comprehensive prevention strategies. Canada must do more and do much better.

[English]

Colleagues, if you want to learn more about the situation of HIV and other sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections, or STBBIs, join us tomorrow, November 27, from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. at 1 Wellington Street, room 120. In partnership with the HIV Legal Network, we will be holding a hybrid roundtable with experts who will share their perspectives on these issues and examine the urgent measures needed to promote equitable, effective and rights-based public health responses. The Minister of Health, the Honourable Marjorie Michel, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, MP Patricia Lattanzio, will deliver opening remarks beginning at 8 a.m.

[Translation]

As Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Colleagues, we must continue to educate ourselves by remaining vigilant and informed. Above all, we must take action together now.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

[Senator Cormier]

[English]

CANADIAN MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENT ON THE SALE OF GOODS

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, I rise today as we approach another festive season to share a feel-good Canadian story of optimism, unity and opportunity — one that will impact our economy, especially our small- and medium-sized enterprises.

• (1420)

Last week, federal, provincial and territorial ministers signed the long-awaited Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement on the Sale of Goods, or CMRA. With Bill C-5, the CMRA is part of a broader strategy to modernize Canada's internal trade regime.

For too long, our entrepreneurs have faced unnecessary red tape, navigating multiple regulatory regimes and duplicating tests, certifications and paperwork just to sell a product across provincial borders. The CMRA changes that.

Under this agreement, a good lawfully sold in one jurisdiction may now be sold across Canada without further requirements unless explicitly listed as an exception.

Although some stakeholders wish it went further, I believe Canada is on the right track to "tear down these walls," as our Banking Committee urged a decade ago.

This reform is vital for small- and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs, which often lack the capacity to absorb unnecessary regulatory burdens. By lowering compliance costs and removing duplicative barriers, small businesses can now access a truly national market, scale smarter and reinvest in growth and innovation.

Our Banking Committee will soon examine how SMEs can access the capital they need to fully leverage this barrier-free interprovincial trade agreement so they can invest, scale and compete like never before.

At a time when trade tensions with the United States are real and pressing, this agreement marks an important step toward reducing our reliance on external markets, strengthening internal trade and building resilience. For consumers, the benefits are clear: more choices and better prices.

This agreement is long overdue. It is a perfect gift for our economy, arriving just in time for the holiday season. As Canadians shop in the coming weeks, let us commit to supporting our local makers, producers and sellers. By choosing Canadian, we can spark joy in our communities and affirm the value of our homegrown entrepreneurs.

Honourable Senators, the CMRA embodies a spirit of collaboration, nation building and shared prosperity. It's a win for business, for consumers and for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. I urge all of us to encourage our family, friends and neighbours to buy Canadian-made this Christmas, to invest in our collective future and strengthen our domestic economy.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY MISSION TO COSTA RICA,
OCTOBER 1-3, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) concerning the Parliamentary Diplomacy Mission to Costa Rica, held in San José, Costa Rica, from October 1 to 3, 2025.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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 Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at 2 p.m.

[Translation]

ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate) introduced Bill S-4, An Act to amend the Energy Efficiency Act.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

L'ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

MEETING OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE, APRIL 28-30, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) concerning the Meeting of the Political Committee, held in Dakar, Senegal, from April 28 to 30, 2025.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

FINANCE

COST OF LIVING

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, last week's *Fall 2025 Canadian Food Sentiment Index* shows a stark reality: Canadians are struggling to put food on the table. A significant number of Canadians are now skipping meals or borrowing money and dipping into savings just to eat.

Meanwhile, grocery prices continue to climb, and your government offers little to no relief other than empty rhetoric. Can you claim to support Canadian families when, month after month, report after report, Canadian families are increasingly worse off?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Martin. It's because the government is well aware of this situation that it has committed to improving our economy. Doing so — by increasing investment and creating jobs — automatically brings earnings to families and food to the table. The Government of Canada is committed to making Canada better for all Canadians.

The housing program will help homeless people. By creating wealth, creating growth and encouraging our economy to grow, the government is helping all Canadian families.

Senator Martin: Senator Moreau, we have a new Liberal government and a new Prime Minister but the same results. Canadians are worse off, so perhaps I can lend you a hand: Instead of adding decades of inflationary deficit spending, why not get rid of the Liberal industrial carbon tax, the Liberal food packaging tax and the Liberal fuel standard and finally deliver much-needed cost savings for Canadians?

Senator Moreau: I answered your colleague Senator Housakos yesterday by telling him that there was a general election last April and Canadians passed judgment on what has happened over the past 10 years. I think that's still a good answer today.

Let me cite some numbers: Inflation is down to 2.2%. Unemployment is down again. Job numbers are up. This is good for Canadians. This is good for Canadian families. This is good for everyone in Canada.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

FEMINIST INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, while it is welcome that your government is abandoning its empty, virtue-signalling, feminist foreign policy, Canada still has billions committed to projects under this banner, such as “gender-just rice” in Vietnam and promoting positive masculinities in Morocco. By the time these programs conclude in 2033, taxpayers will have spent \$1.73 billion. These projects prioritize ideology over results and often provide little tangible benefit to the countries involved.

Canadians are demanding fiscal responsibility, or at the very least aid that delivers measurable outcomes.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The fiscal responsibility is in the answer that the government has already given. It’s been elected on spending less and investing more, and that’s exactly what the government is doing with the budget that has been tabled.

The answer is there, and that’s what Canadians deserve. When we invest more in the economy and in infrastructure, we create jobs and growth. The number I just gave you is proof of that. Jobs are high and inflation is down, and I think that’s good for Canadians.

Senator Martin: Senator, now that the feminist foreign policy is being abandoned, will your government commit to reviewing all ongoing feminist foreign aid projects and redirect funds toward programs that deliver clear, accountable results for both Canadians and the countries receiving aid?

• (1430)

Senator Moreau: As far as the importance of the feminist movement is concerned, I answered your colleague Senator Miville-Dechéne yesterday that the government wants to put the rights of women everywhere at the front of its priorities. That’s exactly what the Prime Minister’s answer was all about. If you quoted him correctly, you will see that we are there for women. We want to ban violence against women, and we want to put women forward in our economy and everywhere in important positions in Canada.

FINANCE

STATE OF THE ECONOMY

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, after a decade of Liberal governments, Canada has become a net exporter of capital, with our net foreign direct investment position now approaching a \$1-trillion deficit, the worst in Canadian history. Budget 2025 attempts to respond with so-called productivity super-deduction and promises to attract investment by offering a competitive tax environment. But critics, including Fitch Ratings and the Parliamentary Budget Officer, warn that persistent deficits and accounting gimmicks are undermining our credibility, risking a weaker dollar and higher inflation and raising capital costs. How can your government claim to foster investment and productivity when its fiscal framework undermines the very economic stability that investors are looking for in order to have confidence in this economy?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The new government is focused on capitalizing investment across the economy to supercharge Canada’s productivity and competitiveness and make Canada the strongest economy in the G7. This ambitious plan will help unleash \$1 trillion in investment over five years for provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous communities and the private sector. These investments will be generated by unlocking opportunities through the mines, the roads and the housing built. The first two phases of nation-building projects referred to the Major Projects Office are expected to trigger \$150 billion in total capital investment. This is fiscal responsibility. This is the responsibility of the government, and it is taking it very seriously.

Senator Housakos: The only thing, government leader, you have supercharged is fiscal irresponsibility. You’re masters of it. Productivity is at the lowest level that Canada has seen in the studies of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, and it has been consistent. Productivity is down. Deficits are high. Even though you are spending less while investing more, you have set record deficits, weakening the Canadian dollar. The Canadian dollar being weak — what does it do? It makes it harder for Canadians to buy produce, to fill their cars, and it makes it harder for them to have a reasonable ability to serve their families and their children and to feed the economy and future generations —

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

Senator Moreau: Normally questions from opposition have inconsistency, inaccuracy and, generally, insult, as well. You are ticking all the boxes here, I think, Senator Housakos. The reality is that jobs are high and the economy is growing well. The government is investing. And if you’d like a figure — when you are referring to the deficit, the worst deficits are the deficits that have been made by Conservative —

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

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

FOREIGN AID

Hon. Mary Coyle: Senator Moreau, the first sentence in the foreword of the government's recently tabled budget states:

The world is changing, profoundly and in real time; we are no longer living in an era of calm, but of significant change. . . .

Canada has been known around the world as a leader, standing up for human rights, peace, good governance and shared prosperity and for ensuring verifiable results. Within that same budget, it was announced that there would be a \$2.7-billion cut to foreign aid over the next four years. Cooperation Canada responded by saying Canada is retreating at exactly the wrong time.

Senator Moreau, could you explain why these cuts have been made and if the government plans to work with its valued Canadian civil society partners to ensure they can continue to do their life-saving and democracy-reinforcing work?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator, you underline correctly that Canada has been a leader as far as foreign aid is concerned, but the government must make responsible choices in very difficult times when cutting spending. In the case of the budget proposing a reduction in development funding, it is where Canada's contribution has grown disproportionately relative to other similar economies, and that's where the cuts have been made. It was a difficult decision but a responsible decision. The government, once again, was elected on two important principles: spend less and invest more. When we spend less, when we are reducing our commitment where it was disproportionately high, we are making responsible choices.

These are difficult times. You underlined that, and I agree with you.

Senator Coyle: That's when we lose our leadership position, I'm afraid. Also, I think it is against what was promised during the election campaign.

When asked at the G20 summit in South Africa — and you've just referred to this — whether the government still has a feminist foreign policy, the Prime Minister responded, “. . . we have that aspect to our foreign policy, but I wouldn't describe our foreign policy as feminist foreign policy.”

During these 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, it is concerning to hear this, combined with the cuts I mentioned earlier. Senator Moreau, why is the Prime Minister saying Canada is shifting away —

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

Senator Moreau: Actions are as important as words in that perspective, Senator Coyle. As I mentioned yesterday, Minister Anand outlined in her address to the United Nations this fall that Canada's foreign policy will be guided by three principles:

defence and security, economic sovereignty and our values. Feminism is a core value of the government, and it is an important part of its foreign policy.

[Translation]

NATIONAL REVENUE

INCOME TAX RETURNS

Hon. Suze Younce: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. A *Hill Times* article from November 21, 2025, reported that budget 2025 said the federal government would amend the Income Tax Act to grant the Canada Revenue Agency the authority to file tax returns for low-income Canadians, so they can receive their benefits automatically. The measure will apply to the 2025 and later tax years. How does the government intend to ensure that this provision will actually be included in the budget implementation bill and that it will not remain merely a budget promise?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Younce, I am confident that this is not just a promise, but that action will be taken. I check every year, and it is common for items in the budget's legislative measures annex to not be included in the budget implementation bill. This is a legal technicality. There are several reasons for it, but the fact that the government included automatic tax filing for low-income Canadians in Budget 2025 shows its firm commitment to achieving that goal. The government has assured me that it wants to meet the goal that it set for itself.

Senator Younce: Thank you. Despite the creation of the Canada Post MyMoney Account to help “Canadians take more control of their financial future,” how many Canadians do not have a savings account into which their benefits can be automatically deposited? What specific actions will the government take to help the most vulnerable?

Senator Moreau: Thank you for the follow-up question. According to the Canadian Bankers Association, over 99% of adult Canadians have a bank account. With regard to the government's plan to introduce automatic tax filing, from what I understand and the information that I have, this work is in progress.

[English]

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Hon. Rebecca Patterson: Senator Moreau, a number of my colleagues and I attended the Halifax International Security Forum this past weekend. It is a premier event that involves people from the full spectrum of civil society to security, defence industry and through the political spectrum. And, yes, it included representatives from the United States and from Ukraine.

The plenary sessions focused on the state of democracy and what it will take to protect democracy against the relentless attacks on our freedoms and the international rules-based order. And, yes, we focused on the state of democracy in the U.S. and the perils faced by Ukraine. To the cries of “shame,” our U.S. colleagues, who were also shocked, broke the news of the U.S. 28-point Ukrainian capitulation — sorry — “peace plan.” The Coalition of the Willing and the EU have come together to help propose a just and lasting peace for and with Ukraine. Senator Moreau, what is Canada’s position in terms supporting Ukraine through this Ukrainian peace plan process?

• (1440)

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): That is a very important question, senator. Canada and its allies are united in their desire for the just and lasting peace deserved by the people of Ukraine. The government’s priority is to ensure that security guarantees are in place and that Ukraine is at the table — and not on the table. Russia’s stalling tactics have shown time and time again that Ukraine is the only party serious about peace. Therefore, the government has been clear that Ukraine must be in the strongest possible position before, during and after any ceasefire. The government must ramp up the pressure on Russia’s economy and its defence industry until Putin is ready to make peace. The government is developing measures to use the full value of Russia and mobilize sovereign assets so that Ukraine has the resources it needs.

Senator Patterson: Senator Moreau, Minister McGuinty was also at the forum, and I was very pleased to hear that Canada is moving beyond the symbolic pledges to both our NATO commitments and Ukraine, particularly given the intense bombardment that Ukraine currently faces. Senator Moreau, when will the government turn our defence commitments into action, especially in support of Ukraine, who so desperately needs our support now and well into the future?

Senator Moreau: Thank you for the question. At the G7 Summit, the Prime Minister announced \$2 billion in new military support to aid Ukraine in its time of need. I have here the Government of Canada’s list of military donations to Ukraine and the current status of the donations. I will be happy to provide you with a copy of the full list, which is accurate as of yesterday, on how Canadian money is being spent on military aid to Ukraine.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

RECOGNITION OF EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS OF IMMIGRANTS

Hon. Danièle Henkel: Senator Moreau, the new budget acknowledges the troubling fact that more than half of newcomers with a bachelor’s degree or higher are overqualified for their jobs. In other words, we’re attracting talent but not utilizing it. This is a significant waste of human and economic potential.

[Senator Patterson]

The government is allocating \$97 million over five years to improve the recognition of foreign credentials, but it hasn’t outlined any objectives, timelines or indicators. There is nothing to compel the provinces to deliver concrete results. Meanwhile, the share of economic immigrants will increase from 59% to 64%. Why not link federal transfers to measurable results on credential recognition? Otherwise, we will continue to attract talent only to lose it.

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

With regard to transfers, the federal government has always preferred to take a collaborative approach with the provinces, rather than a coercive one. The same goes for labour, skilled jobs and jobs held by immigrants who want to work in Canada. The Parliament of Canada has limited jurisdiction over jobs in provincially regulated sectors.

As you mentioned, the Government of Canada has established a fund to work with the provinces and territories to recognize credentials in a fairer, faster and more transparent way. With the passage of Bill C-5, the first bill to get Royal Assent since the election, the government has already begun working to establish a national mutual recognition system under which goods, services or workers that meet federal requirements —

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

Senator Henkel: Thank you, Senator Moreau.

The recognition of foreign credentials is being treated as a simple integration issue when it’s really a structural barrier to growth. Is the government prepared to make the recognition of foreign credentials an economic indicator in its own right, just like the employment rate or productivity, so we can finally measure whether Canada is making full use of people’s skills?

Senator Moreau: I’m just going to finish my previous answer.

I was talking about a national mutual recognition system where goods, services or workers that meet the requirements of the federal government, one province or one territory would be considered compliant with the requirements of them all. It would be a streamlining initiative of sorts.

As for your supplementary question, I have no specific information as to whether any new economic indicators would be introduced. If they are, or if I receive relevant information on the matter, I would be happy to share it with you.

[English]

FINANCE

COST OF LIVING

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, I can assure you that the opposition does not intend to be insulting or inaccurate, but it is insulting to the intelligence of Canadians and this institution when the government gives wholly inaccurate answers to basic questions.

Yes, all you have to do, colleagues, is google “Canadian prime ministers who have added the most amount of debt to Canada,” and lo and behold, three names pop up: Justin Trudeau — the champion — Louis St-Laurent and, of course, Pierre Elliott Trudeau. What do they all have in common, government leader? I’ll let you answer that.

In the case of Justin Trudeau, in a decade, he increased per-person debt in Canada by 35.3%. You have to recognize that there is a problem when you’re running deficits and debts to that degree. You weaken the Canadian dollar and you weaken the strength of the economy. Yes, I do relish the days when the Canadian dollar was even stronger than the American dollar. Do you remember those days? And tell me why.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): You spend your time — and you have on many occasions during Question Period — trying to describe the last 10 years as a nightmare for Canada. Do you think it was? That’s what Senator Batters said it was. Well, you know what? Canadians disagree with you, and they gave you a very strong message during the last general election. You should take your time and try to understand the message that has been sent to you instead of trying to describe things that Canadians do not believe. That is my humble suggestion.

Senator Housakos: I have plenty of questions, government leader. I can tell you that it is nice to fall back to that snapshot of a general election, but don’t forget that 41.3% of Canadians voted against your agenda. There are a growing number of Canadians in soup kitchen lines who can’t feed their children. Those are the people we are concerned about. We’re concerned about those Canadians who are having a hard time making ends meet. I am glad you are concerned about the 48% who voted for your government. What about those who are suffering in this country and are waiting for some reprieve?

Senator Moreau: Thank you. The government is the government for all Canadians, and that’s the reason we take responsible action. Responsible action is investing in infrastructure, creating a situation in which the economy will grow and creating jobs. Jobs are up. Inflation is down. That is good news. Why are you not able to recognize that good things are happening in this country instead of trying to portray the country as a nightmare?

PUBLIC SAFETY

FOREIGN INFLUENCE TRANSPARENCY REGISTRY

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Good afternoon, Senator Moreau. In June 2024, we passed Bill C-70, An Act respecting countering foreign interference, which included a provision for the creation of the Foreign Influence Transparency Registry. We haven’t had the transparency yet. I wonder if you can give us an update on where that stands and, in particular, whether there have been consultations for input on the design of the registry, particularly from individuals who fear they may be unfairly swept up by the registry because of its very broad definition of “arrangements” with a foreign entity. Thank you.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Foreign interference and transnational repression are serious threats facing Canadians and Canadian institutions. The government is committed to keeping Canadians safe. This includes moving forward with implementing the Foreign Influence Transparency Registry. To your question, I understand that this is expected to be launched by the end of the year. That’s the information I have. The government will give national security agencies more tools to combat modern threats and remain vigilant against foreign interference to protect our security and our democracy.

Senator Woo: The end of the year is coming soon. I note that the legislation requires consultations with the leaders of all the recognized groups in the Senate before the commissioner can be appointed. Maybe you can tell us if you have been consulted.

• (1450)

More to the point, can you give us some assurance that the nominated commissioner will appear before the Senate in a Committee of the Whole so that we can also engage with this person on the suitability of his or her appointment?

Senator Moreau: As far as this commitment is required, I will have to check with the government. As soon as I have the answer — and I’m sure there is an answer to that question — I will get back to you.

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

SERVICES FOR LINGUISTIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Hon. Réjean Aucoin: Senator Moreau, the Community Action Program for Children, or CAPC, is a federal program with an annual budget of \$54 million that provides essential support to vulnerable children across the country. It funds 380 projects serving over 191,000 children and parents every year.

However, a very specific situation is causing concern in Nova Scotia, which is home to an Acadian and francophone community. The issue is that no francophone organization has managed to access this program in 30 years. The Public Health Agency of Canada refuses to send the Centre d’appui à la petite enfance de la Nouvelle-Écosse an application form, citing an administrative requirement that has gone unchanged since the program was launched. Despite the decision rendered in 2013, this situation persists.

What is the federal government doing to correct this situation?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for giving me the opportunity to highlight the fiftieth anniversary of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. It’s a good time to ask that question. You were kind enough to bring it to my attention, and you were right to mention how important the Community Action Program for Children is. The federal government agrees, which is why it has continued funding it for the last 30 years.

On the specific question related to Nova Scotia, I tried to get information on this particular case. Unfortunately, I haven't received any yet.

I would like to reiterate the importance I place on the French language. I talked about this in my maiden speech here in the Senate. I will definitely look into this and get back to you with the information. It's hard to understand why it would be impossible for existing federal funds to go toward a given province. I will certainly convey your concern and get back to you on this, Senator Aucoin.

Senator Aucoin: Given that the government recognizes the importance of the Community Action Program for Children, could it clarify what concrete measures will be implemented and within what time frame? You answered part of my question, but I would like to hear your thoughts on this.

Senator Moreau: I fully share your concern over the fact that an available federal program is not reaching one of Canada's provinces. I'll get that information. Whether the reason is valid or not, I can assure you that I'll get back to you with that information.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

CANADA'S AFRICA STRATEGY

Hon. Amina Gerba: Leader, in March of this year, Canada announced a new Africa strategy. At the recent G20 summit in South Africa, however, the Prime Minister said that Africa wasn't one of Canada's first priorities.

Senator Moreau, at a time when all G7 partners are investing heavily in Africa and the major powers are jockeying for access to the African continent, can you explain why there's such a disconnect between the strategy launched by the Government of Canada a few months ago and the Prime Minister's worrisome statement in South Africa?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Gerba, as you know, since you have a particular interest in this issue, Canada and the African nations have a very long history of collaboration in advancing shared priorities.

Over the past five years, Canada has invested nearly \$5 billion to support development on the African continent.

During his visit to South Africa, the Prime Minister announced the opening of FinDev Canada's new office in Cape Town. This office will give Canadian businesses access to new opportunities across the continent. Diplomatic and economic relations between Canada and African countries will lead to greater economic cooperation and partnerships in peace and prosperity. I have the government's assurance that its investments in the African continent and, more specifically, the Prime Minister's recent visit to South Africa confirm Canada's interest in Africa.

Senator Gerba: Senator Moreau, I understand the announcements, but the Prime Minister missed a chance to talk with his African counterparts on African soil. Are we to

understand that Africa isn't going to become a priority again once Canada launches a fresh bid for a seat on the Security Council?

Senator Moreau: Frankly, I fail to see how the two things are connected. Canada isn't a member of the Security Council. Nevertheless, I told you that Canada's investments in Africa over the last five years amount to \$5 billion. Diplomatic and economic relations between Canada and a continent as important as Africa would never be used as bargaining chips to advance political aspirations involving the United Nations.

I can confirm that Canada's Africa Strategy is being implemented in accordance with the priorities announced by the government and the Prime Minister.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION BILL, NO. 1

CERTAIN COMMITTEES AUTHORIZED TO STUDY SUBJECT MATTER

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of November 25, 2025, moved:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, previous order or usual practice:

1. in accordance with rule 10-11(1), the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine the subject matter of all of Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, introduced in the House of Commons on November 18, 2025, in advance of the said bill coming before the Senate;
2. in addition, the following committees be separately authorized to examine the subject matter of the following elements contained in Bill C-15:
 - (a) the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry: those elements contained in Division 8 of Part 5;
 - (b) the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy: those elements contained in Divisions 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 37, 39, 43 and 45 of Part 5;
 - (c) the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources: those elements contained in Divisions 32, 40, 41 and 42 of Part 5;

- (d) the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans: those elements contained in Division 33 of Part 5;
 - (e) the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade: those elements contained in Divisions 18 and 27 of Part 5;
 - (f) the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples: Part 4 and those elements contained in Division 35 of Part 5;
 - (g) the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs: those elements contained in Divisions 30 and 31 of Part 5;
 - (h) the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs: those elements contained in Divisions 19, 20 and 21 of Part 5;
 - (i) the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology: those elements contained in Divisions 25, 36 and 44 of Part 5; and
 - (j) the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications: those elements contained in Divisions 1, 2, 24, 28 and 29 of Part 5;
3. each of the committees listed in point 2 that are authorized to examine the subject matter of particular elements of Bill C-15:
 - (a) submit its final report to the Senate no later than February 13, 2026; and
 - (b) be authorized to deposit its report with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting;
 4. as the reports from the various committees authorized to examine the subject matter of particular elements of Bill C-15 are tabled in the Senate, they be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting, provided that if a report is deposited with the Clerk, it be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting following the one on which the depositing is recorded in the *Journals of the Senate*;
 5. the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to take any reports tabled under point 3 into consideration during its study of the subject matter of all of Bill C-15; and
 6. the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to deposit its report with the Clerk if the Senate is not then sitting.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

CHIGNECTO ISTHMUS DYKELAND SYSTEM BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Quinn, do you wish to speak?

Hon. Jim Quinn: On debate.

The Hon. the Speaker: Before you begin, I wish to inform the Senate that if the Honourable Senator Quinn speaks now, his speech will have the effect of closing the debate on the motion for second reading of this bill.

Are there any other senators who wish to speak on debate?

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Honourable senators, I want to advise that we have a speaker, so I will move the adjournment of the debate.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned, on division.)

• (1500)

HELLENIC HERITAGE MONTH BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Loffreda, seconded by the Honourable Senator Coyle, for the second reading of Bill S-220, An Act to designate the month of March as Hellenic Heritage Month.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today filled with pride as a Canadian, as the child of Greek immigrants and as someone raised in the vibrant Greek community of Montreal to speak in full support of Senator Loffreda's Bill S-220, An Act to designate the month of March as Hellenic Heritage Month.

Before I continue, allow me to say thank you at the outset to Senator Loffreda for sponsoring this bill, being its fierce champion across multiple Parliaments and never giving up on its passage.

I know that this commitment comes from Senator Loffreda's deep respect for and friendship with the Hellenic community, not only in Montreal but across Canada. Senator Loffreda has worked tirelessly for years to ensure that their contributions are recognized on the national level. For that I am truly grateful and so is the community. We've adopted Senator Loffreda as one of our own.

I wish to share with you an experience I had today, colleagues. I googled "Greek-Canadian politicians." To my shock and surprise, it isn't the Honourable Leo Housakos who pops up as the first prominent Canadian politician; it is Tony Loffreda. It goes to show how much he loves the community.

Last week, in Montreal, I had a meeting with leaders of the Italian community. They first said to me that they did not understand — that Tony is one of theirs, yet he spends more time with the Greek community than he does with the Italian community.

I told them that I understood clearly what was going on. There are two kinds of people in the world: those who are Greek and those who want to be Greek. I explained that Senator Loffreda falls into the latter category.

Colleagues, beyond the recognition that this bill would bring to Hellenes across Canada, it is an invitation for all Canadians to reflect on a tradition that stretches back over three millennia.

Hellenism is more than just a culture: It is a world view and a commitment to human dignity, the pursuit of knowledge and the belief that free individuals, acting together, can shape the destiny of their society. It is the soil from which democracy, philosophy, theatre, medicine, mathematics, political science and so much more first grew.

Hellenism, I always say, has no borders. It has no ethnicity. It is a general spirit that people either embrace or do not.

It was in Athens that the idea of democracy, the radical notion that power belongs not to the king but to the people, was born.

"Democracy" comes from a Greek word, "Demokratia," which basically means "power to the people." It was in the Agora that citizens debated, criticized, questioned and held their leaders to account, which is a lot of what the opposition does here in this very place. I invite you all to go to the Agora in Athens and walk amongst the stones where the first senate existed thousands of years ago.

It was in the minds of thinkers like Socrates that the spirit of inquiry took shape, the belief that truth can only be found when we challenge assumptions, question power and engage one another in honest dialogue.

The teachings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle did not remain confined to antiquity. Their ideas shaped the Renaissance, inspired the Enlightenment and influenced the very foundation of modern democratic societies, including our own here in Canada. Their voices still echo today in our courts and classrooms and in chambers like this one.

But Hellenism is not only a story of abstract ideas; it is long and well-documented story of courage and sacrifice in defence of freedom.

We remember the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae, who placed themselves in the narrow pass to resist tyranny; or the Athenians at Marathon, whose victory over a vast empire safeguarded the young flame of democracy; or even Salamis, where a small fleet of Greeks fighting for their homeland defeated a mighty navy and turned the tide of history.

As the centuries passed, the Greek struggle for freedom continued. For 400 years, under the Ottoman occupation, the Greek language, faith and identity were suppressed. Many schools were banned, yet the Greek community, people, priests and teachers risked their lives to teach children in church basements and candlelit corners. It was through those clandestine gatherings that the Greek language, the Orthodox faith and the dream of liberation were preserved.

In 1821, this dream reached its fruition with the War of Greek Independence, whose call, "freedom or death," inspired philhellenes across Europe and even North America. The modern Greek state was born from this unbreakable commitment to identity, culture and faith, a triumph that is celebrated by Hellenes across the world on Greek Independence Day every March, which makes it the most fitting month to recognize Canadian Hellenes, as we aim to do with this bill. Colleagues, March is right around the corner.

Moving on to the 20th century, during the Second World War, Greece again stood as a beacon of courage when, on October 28, 1940 — known today as Oxi Day — the Greek people responded to the ultimatum from Mussolini's fascist Italy with a single word: "no." No to occupation. No to tyranny. No to surrender. Their resistance became the first Allied victory in Europe and inspired the world. It is where Winston Churchill said, "Heroes fight like Greeks and not Greeks as heroes."

Honourable senators, I could go on. These stories are not merely tales confined to history books or even distant memories for Greek Canadians. They are the stories our parents and grandparents carried with them when they came to this country. They are the stories that shaped their values: love for freedom, respect for democracy, devotion to education and hard work and the courage to persevere against all odds and be civilly responsible as Canadians and for this new homeland they all embraced.

When Greek immigrants first reached our shores as early as the early 19th century — some even before then — they brought those values with them. As they grew in number in the early 20th century onward, they built institutions that would ensure the next generation never lost connection with their heritage. That is the beauty of Canada, where my ethnicity can be Greek, my nation can be Quebec and my country can be Canada without dichotomy.

In 1906, my home city of Montreal saw the opening of its first Greek Orthodox church, which became a spiritual and cultural anchor for this growing community.

Not long after came the first Greek-language schools, which persist in their mission in different Canadian cities today — dedicated to ensuring that young Hellenes grew up fluent not only in the two official languages of this great country but in the history, traditions and philosophical ideals of our ancestors.

Today, Greek schools, churches, newspapers and community organizations across Canada continue this mission. They teach Hellenic culture not as a relic of the past but as a living philosophy that continues to thrive in the democratic spirit of our country. Over the years, this incredible network has been the backdrop of many success stories.

The 500,000-strong Hellenes of Greek descent in this country have contributed in everyday life, in politics, academia and medicine and as TV personalities and athletes. This includes the first Greek who entered this wonderful country, who discovered the Juan de Fuca Strait in 1592 in British Columbia. Juan de Fuca is Ioannis Fokas, an explorer commissioned by the Spanish king to explore and one of the first to discover the great western part of our wonderful country.

Mike Lazaridis, the inventor of the smartphone — something we take for granted today — is the founder of BlackBerry; Paul Kefalas is the former CEO of Asea Brown Boveri Inc., or ABB.

You cannot walk into many restaurants across Canada without seeing traces of Hellenic culture, of course. In Montreal, we say that one in every two restaurants you walk into probably has a Greek manager or owner.

• (1510)

Foodtastic is one of the largest restaurant operators in the country. The Mammass brothers, who are good friends, operate Milestones, Second Cup, Quesada, Carlos & Pepe's, La Belle & La Bœuf and more. I could go on and on about the impact of the Greek community in the food industry.

When it comes to science and medicine, there is Dr. Apostolos Papageorgiou, one of the world-famous and renowned neonatologists who was the Chief of Neonatology at the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal.

Alex Anthopoulos is an executive in Major League Baseball and has worked for the Los Angeles Dodgers, the Boston Red Sox and was the great general manager of the Toronto Blue Jays for a number of years. There are TV personalities like George Stroumbouloupoulos and Vassy Kapelos, as well as the greatest radio host in Montreal, Elias Makos, who has had Senator Loffreda on that show very often, clashing over ideas.

Of course, the best pollster in the country — sorry, Senator Dasko; I have to give that honour, by obligation, to Nik Nanos, at least in this speech.

There are great Canadian athletes. You'll be pleased to know that Alexandre Despatie is of Greek origin, as is José Théodore, one of the great goaltenders who was a goalie for the Montreal Canadiens, and Nick Kypreos, who is very well known on "Hockey Night in Canada."

Of course, our involvement in politics, as well, and our responsibility for our community are great. We have ministers like Alberta Minister of Education and Childcare Demetrios Nicolaides. We've had a former finance minister in Nova Scotia — I think, Mr. MacDonald — Labi Kousoulis. Of course, he's with the wrong party, but, nonetheless, he's a great Greek Nova Scotian. And, of course, we've had our Montreal Christos Sirros, who was a Liberal Minister of Natural Resources in the Quebec government.

In this great institution, despite the fact that Senator Loffreda is the first to pop up when you google "Greek politicians" — I hate to break it to everybody. I was talking to one of my staffers today, and I made a list of first senators of Hellenic origin, and she looked at me and said, "Well, that's you." I said, "No, I'm not even the second. I'm not even the third." I'm proud to say there were great senators of Hellenic origin way before me who came along. I pay tribute today to Philippe Deane Gigantès, who was appointed in the 1970s by Prime Minister Trudeau; Dr. Staff Barootes, whom I had the honour and privilege of meeting, from Saskatchewan, who was appointed by Brian Mulroney; and, of course, Pana Merchant, appointed by prime minister Jean Chrétien, with whom I had the distinct privilege of working for many, many years in this chamber.

On the elected side, we currently have some great Hellenes representing all political parties: Costas Menegakis, Emmanuella Lambropoulos, Annie Koutrakis, Peter Fragiskatos, and there might be others that I might not even know of.

So the contributions of the community have been in all walks of life and all sectors. At the end of the day, we are all so proud to say that, through generations and generations, we're really Canadians of Greek descent and not Greeks who happen to be Canadians. That's very important. That was really the ultimate achievement of my parents' generation, who came here to this country as immigrants: seeing their children take their rightful places. It's important not to have "hyphenated" Canadians in this country. We are all Canadians; we just happen to come from different backgrounds but with very similar experiences.

So, honourable senators, designating March as Hellenic heritage month would allow us to recognize this extraordinary legacy. It provides an opportunity for Canadians of all backgrounds to learn about the contributions of Greece and Hellenism to the world civilization and about the contributions of Greek Canadians to the social, cultural and economic fabric of our nation.

For me personally and for so many of us, this bill is a tribute to our parents and grandparents who crossed oceans with little more than hope and determination. They built restaurants, businesses, community centres and schools named after philosophers who lived 2,500 years before them. They embraced Canada wholeheartedly while preserving the traditions of their homeland and have made Canada all the richer in doing so.

Honourable colleagues, I'll conclude by saying that Hellenic heritage is not simply about celebrating the past; it is about renewing our commitment to the values that bind us as Canadians — democracy, freedom, justice, rule of law and human dignity, which I believe is fundamentally the identity of this country — and we have an opportunity to do just that with

this bill. That's why I will be lending my wholehearted support to this bill. I urge this chamber to do the same and to expedite its passage without further delay.

Given that the Senate has passed many similar heritage month bills without the need for committee study, I strongly believe that there is no reason to send this bill for further review, especially given its contents being straightforward, meaningful and well supported by the community. These types of bills have often been treated as a matter of respect and recognition because they reflect a widely accepted truth that it's important to celebrate the contributions of the communities that make up the fabric of this nation.

I believe Canadians of Greek descent have waited long enough for this acknowledgment. Their achievements in this country are well documented. We have a chance to thank them properly with this bill, and I ask for your support in making this a reality without further delay.

Thank you, colleagues, for listening.

Hon. Denise Batters: Will Senator Housakos take a question?

Senator Housakos: As long as you're nice.

Senator Batters: I'm very nice.

Senator Housakos, given that you are of 100% Greek ancestry — and I believe both of your parents came to Canada from Greece — you have a lot of experience with many aspects of Greek heritage. I'm sure you, throughout your entire life, have partaken in many of those aspects, so I would like you to just briefly tell us about a few of your very favourite aspects of Greek heritage. The bill we are talking about is to establish a Hellenic heritage month, so whether that be a few of your favourite Greek foods or your favourite cultural traditions, I would like to hear a little bit more about them.

Senator Housakos: I will share one that many Canadians of Hellenic background would appreciate and probably connect to.

Language culture is fundamental, not only to my Quebec background but to my Hellenic background. Both my parents immigrated here — my mom in 1957, and my dad in 1959 — and it was very customary to send a young offspring of Greek parents to Saturday school, and that starts at a very young age. In the Greek communities across Canada, those of us who went through that experience, we keep saying that it's probably the thing we appreciate the least, because there are better things to do on Saturday mornings.

I fell in love — besides my culture — with hockey at a very young age, and Saturday mornings were the best time to get to the park and play some hockey, our national sport. I was stuck being dragged to Greek school on Saturday mornings, at nine o'clock in the morning, and they would run forever — until 12:30 in the afternoon.

[Senator Housakos]

So I know you guys will find this hard to believe because I'm as straight as can be and very conservative, but I had to find a way to get out of my Greek school responsibility. So I behaved a little bit mischievously to the point where the principal and the teacher called my mother in and said, "Take this guy away." It got so bad that they never wanted to see me again.

My mother didn't find it funny. I got to play hockey after that. Now, you're going to say, "Boy, your mom really loved you." Wherever she is watching, God bless her, because she let me get away with it. She let me get away with not going to Greek school. She let me play hockey, and, somehow, even though I didn't do any Greek studies, and my wife went all the way to Grade 9 — and she'll agree to this — my Greek is more fluent than hers. That's why I always say that, at the end of the day, what you're born is not taught in school alone; it comes from your heart.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, I would like to thank Senator Housakos for his eloquent comments. We debate many issues, but we agree on this bill. Thank you for this and for your compliments.

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

(On motion of Senator Loffreda, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology.)

• (1520)

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan moved second reading of Bill S-235, An Act respecting the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking.

(On motion of Senator Ataullahjan, debate adjourned.)

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. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, I'm delighted to respond today to Senator Sorensen's inquiry calling the attention of the Senate to the nation-building value of tourism in Canada.

Thank you, Senator Sorensen, for your unwavering advocacy of this vibrant industry.

Colleagues, tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador is a foundational contributor to both the economy and the vibrant culture of our province. The sector annually generates over \$1.1 billion for the local economy and provides livelihoods for more than 20,000 residents, touching every corner from city centres to remote outposts and coastal towns.

This activity supports small businesses, strengthens communities and fuels job creation, making tourism a true engine of nation building and regional prosperity.

Newfoundland and Labrador captivates visitors with its rugged natural beauty, dramatic coastlines and warm, welcoming communities. From soaring cliffs and iceberg-studded waters to vibrant music and cultural traditions, the province offers an experience unlike anywhere else in Canada.

It is a place of spectacular natural beauty, encompassing majestic national parks such as Gros Morne, which features geological wonders like the Tablelands and striking fjords, providing breathtaking views and fascinating landscapes. Coastlines framed by lighthouses, wild Atlantic shores and the phenomenon of Iceberg Alley all highlight the province's unique oceanic charm. Outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy world-class hiking, whale watching and encounters with diverse wildlife.

The cultural scene thrives with concerts, lively festivals and historic European settlements. St. John's, the capital, is known for its colourful houses, vibrant arts and rich maritime history. Local communities embrace visitors with genuine hospitality, celebrating traditional songs, stories and a resilient spirit rooted in centuries of history.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are renowned for their friendliness, openness, altruism and humour. Tourists often remark on the trust and camaraderie found in every town, from being greeted like family at a bed and breakfast to participating in community events or learning about local folklore. This welcoming atmosphere turns every visit into a memorable, authentic experience.

The blend of untouched wilderness, a storied past and a thriving cultural life invites visitors to truly find themselves amidst this magical experience.

Labrador offers travellers a remarkable blend of pristine wilderness, dramatic landscapes and a vibrant Indigenous heritage that deeply enriches the tourism experience. Visitors can hike through the Torngat Mountains National Park, a spiritual and historic area with breathtaking fjords, polar bears and geological wonders, all while learning about the Inuit history and the park's significance in Indigenous culture. The name "Torngat" is derived from an Inuktitut word meaning "place of spirits."

Many tourism initiatives in Labrador feature the voices and custodianship of Indigenous communities. The Inuit and Innu share their traditions with visitors, offering guided journeys, cultural storytelling and opportunities to learn about sustainable living and stewardship of the land. Experiencing Inuit cuisine, visiting artist co-operatives and joining the interpretive sessions on traditional crafts are ways to connect with the living culture of Labrador today.

Travel highlights in Labrador include Battle Harbour, which is a historic fishing village restored to showcase regional culture and local history, and Red Bay, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that reveals the legacy of both Indigenous Peoples and Basque peoples in the area. Boat tours, wilderness treks and learning about ancient practices are central to a Labrador adventure.

Exploring Labrador through an Indigenous lens transforms a visit into a meaningful journey of discovery, cultural exchange and awe-inspiring natural beauty.

Colleagues, federal and provincial investments have targeted infrastructure and attractions, helping private and community-based operators across my province to expand and adapt to new opportunities. Initiatives through programs like the Tourism Growth Program and Innovative Communities Fund have enabled continued sector growth and resilience.

Tourism supports preservation of our rich histories and encourages the perpetuation of unique customs and artistic practices. Tourism's reach extends beyond economics; it is instrumental in making Newfoundland and Labrador a destination of choice, elevating our place on the national stage and affirming our distinct regional contribution to Canada.

Small tourism businesses, which comprise roughly 80% of the sector, foster entrepreneurship and welcome new Canadians, contributing to diversity and long-term community growth.

Sustainable tourism initiatives are helping protect our natural heritage and ensure future generations can continue to enjoy our landscapes, waterways and wildlife.

The tourism sector in Newfoundland and Labrador exemplifies nation building through its power to connect people, sustain communities and promote the best of our province to the country and the world.

Let me close with a poem — author unknown — highlighting our colourful town names:

In Plum Point where the sea winds sing,
Witless Bay makes the gulls all king.
Dildo stands with a wink and a grin,
While Spread Eagle's tales let the laughter begin.
Come By Chance, where the oddities charm,
Heart's Delight, Heart's Content and Heart's Desire heal all harm.

Blow Me Down creates with a whimsical nod,
Seldom-Come-By, where the wild things plod.
And Too Good Arm waves from the shore,
A place with names like this, could one ask for more?
In Newfoundland's realm, quirky joys never tire,
Each name is a chuckle, a touch of satire.

• (1530)

Thank you, colleagues. Please visit. *Meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

(At 3:31 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.)

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