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Tuesday, December 9, 2025

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

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

Prayers.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL FINANCE

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING
OF THE SENATE ON DECEMBER 9, 2025

Leave having been given to proceed to Motions, Order No. 73:

Hon. Claude Carignan, pursuant to notice of December 3, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to meet on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, for the purpose of examining 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, even though the Senate may then be sitting, and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I ask leave of the Senate that Senator Manning be allowed up to six minutes to make his statement today.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SENATORS

Hon. Hassan Yussuff: Honourable senators, we rarely have a chance to celebrate one another on this floor for truly exceptional accomplishments. Yes, we do recognize those who retire and those who pass away, but today I wish to draw our attention to a small group among us who hold the rare and distinguished honour of knighthood.

Upon preparing these remarks, I was pleasantly surprised to discover who among us carries such distinction. First, our own Speaker, Senator Raymonde Gagné, is the Knight of the Legion of Honour of France. Our Speaker pro tempore, René Cormier, is the Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters of France. Senator Petitclerc is a Knight of the Order of Quebec. Senator Gerba is also a Knight of the Order of Quebec. Senator Surette is a Knight of the Order of Academic Palms.

That which brings me to the newest knight among us. Several weeks ago, Senator Varone mentioned to me that he would be visiting Rome again in early December. I thought to myself, "What else is new?" He explained that he would be attending the Pope's annual "Concert with the Poor," which was first established in 2015 and held each Advent at the Papal Audience Hall in Vatican City. The hall seats around 7,000 people, with most of its places reserved for the poor, the vulnerable and the homeless — those who might not otherwise enjoy such an experience.

Each year, the Pope selects the performances. Past artists include Hans Zimmer, Ennio Morricone and cellist Tina Guo. This year, Pope Leo continued that tradition and chose our own Canadian Michael Bubl . Days later, Senator Varone received a call, asking, "Can you help?" In classic Varone fashion, he took it upon himself to secure Michael Bubl 's appearance. The rest, of course, is history.

However, there was more. Just before leaving for Rome, Senator Varone shared that he was being knighted on the recommendation of Pope Leo.

Sure enough, two days later, in a private audience at the Chapel of Saint Andrea Corsini — Rome's cathedral — Senator Varone was made Knight Officer of Merit of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George, one of the oldest orders of chivalry, tracing its origins back to AD 312.

Friends, thank you for indulging me as I congratulate the knights and dames among us. If I have missed any, please let me know.

I also want to congratulate my friend the Honourable *Cavaliere* Varone on his remarkable achievement and dedication to his faith.

Congratulations to all of you. We are grateful to have you as colleagues and proud to call you friends. Thank you very much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Hon. Tony Dean: Honourable senators, I recently met with members from the Canadian Labour Congress to discuss key issues facing workers across the country.

Janice Pitt, a personal support worker, or PSW, and member of the union, told me about the challenges faced by PSWs who serve vulnerable clients in their homes. Janice's hard work, compassion and dedication ease the burden faced by many vulnerable citizens, so Janice and her PSW colleagues deserve our support too.

PSWs play a valuable and central role in home care, community care and long-term care environments, supporting clients with essential daily activities, providing emotional companionship and ensuring the comfort and safety of those living with chronic illnesses, disabilities and age-related conditions.

There is a widespread shortage of PSW staff in virtually all care settings, placing enormous strain on those who remain, and compromising the quality of care, especially in rural and remote regions.

Pay disparities across sectors, especially between home and community care and institutional care, make the issues worse. Many PSWs work part time on temporary contracts with unpredictable work schedules, leaving them without secure income. Home care appointments can be cancelled at the last minute, leaving workers unpaid and requiring many workers to juggle multiple jobs or to seek work elsewhere.

Insufficient benefits, lack of workplace protections, access to paid sick leave, health insurance and retirement plans vary widely and, in some settings, are completely absent. The complexity of clients' needs are also increasing due to our aging population and the growing prevalence of multiple chronic conditions.

Several provinces are investing in strengthening and growing this workforce with financial supports to encourage workforce participation. Alberta has launched a bursary program, providing up to \$9,000 to individuals pursuing health care aide certification, helping new workers complete their training and enter the field. Ontario has implemented similar initiatives, investing money to expand PSW training.

The 2025 budget includes a new refundable tax credit available from 2026 to 2030 that will allow eligible PSWs to claim 5% of their qualifying earnings, up to a maximum of \$1,100 per year, which will automatically be applied through the tax system. Making this effective for the current 2025 tax year would help even more.

Janice told me that, in addition to fair wages and guaranteed hours, paid sick days would also make a positive difference.

• (1410)

Colleagues, please join me in pressing our provincial, territorial and federal governments to step up and do more to support PSWs and the vulnerable clients they care for day and night. Thank you.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Shabnam Inanloo Dailoo, Chair of the National Trust for Canada, and Dnyanesh Kamat, Senior Manager of Advocacy for the Canadian Museums Association. They are accompanied by a delegation of colleagues from both organizations. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Cardozo.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, first, let me salute the National Trust for Canada and the Canadian Museums Association. Their members are the people who keep Canada Canadian.

Colleagues, today I would like to draw your attention to the issue of unemployment among young Canadians. Youth unemployment is currently just over 14%, which is double the national average. Although Statistics Canada does not provide a precise numerical figure, a simple calculation suggests there are around 370,000 unemployed young people in Canada today, and the number is growing.

High youth unemployment is particularly pernicious because its negative effects can persist far into adulthood. Unemployment in those early years is associated with long-term lower wages, worse health and lower happiness and job satisfaction compared to counterparts. Persistent youth unemployment leaves young people with little hope and, in some cases, has provided fertile ground for radicalization.

We have a structural and societal problem we are not addressing sufficiently. Further, with technology developing fast, these young people are being left behind in technical education and, worse, will get left further behind as many entry-level and low-skilled jobs become automated.

The government has proposed some important measures in the recent budget to ameliorate the situation. This includes \$1.5 billion over the next two years for the Canada Summer Jobs program, the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy and the Student Work Placement Program. While this new money will help, and I support these expenditures, it remains very insufficient. For example, jobs under the Canada Summer Jobs program last between 8 and 16 weeks — probably mostly 8 weeks — while full-time students need 16 weeks, and other young people need 52 weeks of full-time employment.

The programs announced, in essence, provide employment for about 10% of unemployed youth, while 90% of unemployed young people are not being addressed in any of these programs. They can understandably feel that no one cares about their plight. And I'm not even talking about the large number of full-time students who badly need part-time work, which is increasingly hard to come by.

Also among unemployed youth are young people with various levels of education, from those who have not completed high school to those with postgraduate degrees. They all need our attention. We need to dream a lot bigger than what the federal and provincial governments have been thinking of in recent years and decades.

Colleagues, I want to invite you to engage in a dialogue in the new year about how governments, business, labour in urban and rural areas, on-reserve and off-reserve, can work together to address this growing crisis. Thank you.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Bernadette Arthur, Chief of Staff to former Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana, Elsie Addo Awadzi. She is the guest of the Honourable Senators Dhillon and Deacon (*Nova Scotia*).

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

MATTHEW BOSWELL

COMMISSIONER OF COMPETITION

Hon. Colin Deacon: Honourable senators, I know I can get on a bit of a roll when I'm speaking about robust competition, but don't think I haven't noticed when you quickly move away. Even now, just as I said the word "competition," I saw a few of you look down at your phones. But today I want you to stop and listen, if you could, because I've got a story that's stranger than fiction.

Canada's outgoing Commissioner of Competition, Matthew Boswell, is the actual hero in a celebrated new stage production in Toronto called *Rogers v. Rogers*. A public servant working in a long-ignored corner of government has become the star of the stage. Now, how did that happen?

Over seven years, Matt Boswell transformed the Competition Bureau into a law enforcement agency with digital-era tools and teeth. In no small part, this was thanks to the commissioner valiantly fighting anti-competitive mergers like Rogers' oligopoly-entrenching acquisition of Shaw in 2022. The merger was ultimately approved under Canada's old and completely outdated Competition Act, but that loss motivated generational changes to that law.

When Commissioner Boswell steps down from his role on December 17, his leadership will be marked by many achievements. I'd like to focus on just three.

First, the bureau prioritized speaking in clear, plain language. Competition policy impacts the daily lives of every Canadian, but complex jargon made it inaccessible to all but the rarified world of competition lawyers and economists.

Second, the bureau used its evidence-based independence and made tough calls, challenging mergers and conduct based on principle, not popularity. In advocacy, it meant giving ministers, senators and MPs clear advice and direct answers about the sorry state of Canada's competition laws and policies.

Lastly, he ensured that the bureau created the capacity to identify and respond to rapidly accelerating digital threats to competition, including how AI, algorithmic pricing and data portability impact both markets and consumers. It meant embracing AI tools to enhance detection and improve analysis and case processing. The bureau created the Digital Enforcement and Intelligence Branch, attracting technologists, data engineers and behavioural scientists so enforcement could keep pace with rapidly evolving markets.

The bureau's incredibly talented and dedicated team is a beacon of thought leadership in the economic policy changes that are crucial to improving innovation, productivity and prosperity in Canada.

I truly hope that the bureau becomes a model for modernizing Canada's public service. I wish he could be here today. Regardless, please join me in thanking Commissioner Matthew Boswell on his last day on the job for his exceptional leadership as Canada's top cop in competition. Thanks very much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Vera Yuzyk, daughter of former Senator Paul Yuzyk, and Nataliya Shevchenko, President of the Ukrainian National Federation Ottawa-Gatineau branch. They are accompanied by other members of a group from the Ukrainian National Federation of Canada. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Dasko.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE LATE JULIA MARY MANNING

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, today, I am pleased to present Chapter 100 of “Telling Our Story.”

Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the United States of America once said, “All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.” For many of us those words ring true each and every day.

With that thought in mind, combined with treasured memories and mixed emotions, I have the privilege to stand here today to tell you about the life of a very special lady, my mother, Julia Mary Manning.

On Easter Sunday morning, April 5, 1931, Julia Mary Careen was born in the small but, as she always would say, “the most beautiful community” of Point Lance, St. Mary’s Bay, in Newfoundland and Labrador. Her parents, Patrick and Margaret Careen, were delighted to welcome their second child, as Mom had an older sister, Mary Anne, and she was followed by a younger brother, Anthony.

As you can imagine, life in Newfoundland during the years of the Great Depression was a constant struggle. Life was very difficult, and things became progressively worse when Mom’s dad passed away at the tender age of 35. Mom was just 4 years old at the time.

On the advice of other family members and the local clergy, my mom and her sister were sent off to the Belvedere Orphanage in St. John’s, where Mom would spend the next 12 years. The orphanage was run by the Sisters of Mercy. My mom spoke well of her years growing up in the orphanage. She often told us stories about her time there, where schoolwork, chores and, as always, her prayers were part of each day. She credited her time there as having taught some valuable lessons that served her well throughout her life. She often reflected on how fortunate she was to have had her older sister at the orphanage with her.

• (1420)

Her dream from an early age was to be a nurse, but the \$80 application fee in the mid 1940s was a major impediment to Mom realizing that dream. Having been educated while at Belvedere, as a young 16-year-old, Mom set out for St. Brendan’s Island in Bonavista Bay, where she began her teaching career. Her remuneration at the time was \$75 a month, \$50 of which, she would send back home to help with the needs of her family. My grandmother remarried, and Mom had a stepbrother James, whom she showered with love and affection.

During the summer months, Mom would travel home to Point Lance to spend time with her family and friends and help with parish activities, including the annual garden party. It was at one of those garden parties that she told me of her first contact with my dad, Walter.

At that stage in his life, Dad was driving a truck, hauling salt fish to the merchants in St. John’s.

At the garden party that Sunday afternoon, Mom was tasked with selling raffle tickets. She told me Dad would buy all the tickets that had been assigned to her so she could stay and talk to him a while longer. I have photos of my mom from when she was a young lady, and I can easily see why my dad was smitten with her.

They were married in 1951 and welcomed their first child, Mary, in 1952. Mom brought eight more children into the world for a total of six boys and three girls. The first decade or so of their married life was spent in Sept-Îles, Quebec, where Dad was a heavy equipment operator and Mom was tasked with taking care of the first four children in the family.

They moved back to the Cape Shore of Newfoundland in the early 1960s and opened a general store in February 1963 in my hometown of St. Bride’s, and that is where they would spend the rest of their days.

Mom was a teacher, devout Catholic, devoted wife and mother, au courant grandmother, exceptional friend, gracious hostess, superb cook, avid gardener, spirited community advocate and true pacifist.

Admittedly, as a child and later as a young adult, at times you may question the wisdom of your mom’s advice and guidance, but as you grow older, her words of wisdom are those you choose to live by.

From a very early age, Mom instilled in us the joy of reading and writing. She had such a beautiful and eloquent way with words. I am blessed to have many of her handwritten notes and cards full of sage advice that now guides me on my life’s journey.

Tidbits such as:

It was more than luck or biology that brought us together. We will need more than these to keep us together. Faith and forgiveness, kindness and co-operation, laughter and love — these will preserve the precious bonds between us.

Another one was:

Your family may be less than ideal, but they are your family.

Mom was not a big fan of politics and had plenty of advice on that front as well:

Everyone you will meet is carrying a load of something on their shoulders, so be kind and thoughtful especially for those less fortunate than you are.

One of my favourite bits of advice from her was:

Fabian, in politics, please stay on the high road as there is way too much traffic on the lower road.

Mom had a tremendous faith in God, and she had a saint you could pray to for every ache, pain or issue. Now, as she was trying to raise six sons who could be a little wild at times, I fully understand that she may have needed some help from the saints along the way.

Mom had a lifelong devotion to St. Anne, who represents maternal love, faith and the importance of generations. We had St. Anne's medals in our pockets, our bookbags and our vehicles. The faith with which she was blessed could move mountains, and she often told me that, when troubles and tribulations came her way, it was her unwavering faith in a higher power that sustained her.

The last few years of her life were wrought with ill health, but she never lost her beautiful smile or warm embrace. Her amazing strength and courage were an inspiration. Her loss has left an emptiness in our hearts that is immeasurable, but her life left a legacy of kindness, humility and love that will remain with us forever.

There is so much more I could say about my beautiful mom, but my time today is limited, so I will conclude with the chorus of an old and famous Irish ballad, entitled *A Mother's Love is a Blessing*:

A mother's love is a blessing, no matter where you roam.
Keep her while she's living, you'll miss her when she's gone.
Love her as in childhood, though feeble, old and grey,
For you'll never miss a mother's love 'til she's buried beneath the clay.

God rest her.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

STUDY ON AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

FIRST REPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE DEPOSITED
WITH CLERK DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. Paulette Senior: Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on September 25, 2025, the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on December 9, 2025, its first report, entitled *Nothing to Celebrate: The Crisis of Youth Aging Out of Care*, and I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

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

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

FIRST REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Scott Tannas, member of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament, presented the following report:

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

The Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament has the honour to present its

FIRST REPORT

Your committee recommends to the Senate that it be authorized to assist the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Commons in directing and controlling the Library of Parliament, and that it be authorized to make recommendations to the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Commons regarding the governance of the Library and the proper expenditure of moneys voted by Parliament for the purchase of documents or other articles to be deposited therein.

Your committee recommends:

- (a) that its quorum be fixed at six members, provided that each House is represented, and a member from a non-government party or recognized parliamentary group and a member from the government are present, whenever a vote, resolution or other decision is taken; and
- (b) that the joint chairs be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence published when a quorum is not present, provided that at least three members are present, including a member from a non-government party or recognized parliamentary group and a member from the government, provided that each House is represented.

Your committee further recommends to the Senate that it be empowered to sit during sittings and adjournments of the Senate.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* (Meeting No. 1) is tabled in the House of Commons.

Respectfully submitted,

SCOTT TANNAS

Joint Chair

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

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

[Translation]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH IN CANADA BILL

FIRST READING

Hon. Danièle Henkel introduced Bill S-243, An Act to establish a national framework for women's health in Canada.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

• (1430)

[English]

FINAL REPORT OF THE CANADIAN YOUTH CLIMATE ASSEMBLY

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the final report of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, Question Period will begin at 4 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

JUSTICE

STATUTES REPEAL ACT—MOTION TO RESOLVE THAT THE ACT AND THE PROVISIONS OF OTHER ACTS NOT BE REPEALED ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Duncan, seconded by the Honourable Senator Petten:

That, pursuant to section 3 of the *Statutes Repeal Act*, S.C. 2008, c. 20, the Senate resolve that the Act and the provisions of the other Acts listed below, which have not come into force in the period since their adoption, not be repealed:

1. *Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. 33 (2nd Supp):
-Part II;
2. *Contraventions Act*, S.C. 1992, c. 47:
-paragraph 8(1)(d), sections 9, 10 and 12 to 16, subsections 17(1) to (3), sections 18 and 19, subsection 21(1) and sections 22, 23, 25, 26, 28 to 38, 40, 41, 44 to 47, 50 to 53, 56, 57, 60 to 62, 84 (in respect of the following sections of the schedule: 2.1, 2.2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 7.1, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 16) and 85;
3. *Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Implementation Act*, S.C. 1998, c. 32;
4. *Public Sector Pension Investment Board Act*, S.C. 1999, c. 34:
-sections 155, 157, 158 and 160, subsections 161(1) and (4) and section 168;
5. *Yukon Act*, S.C. 2002, c. 7:
-sections 70 to 75 and 77, subsection 117(2), sections 167, 168, 210, 211, 221, 227, 233 and 283;
6. *An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*, S.C. 2003, c. 26:
-sections 4 and 5, subsection 13(3), section 21, subsections 26(1) to (3) and sections 30, 32, 34, 36 (with respect to section 81 of the *Canadian Forces Superannuation Act*), 42 and 43;
7. *Budget Implementation Act, 2009*, S.C. 2009, c. 2:
-section 394;
-sections 401 to 404;

8. *Payment Card Networks Act*, S.C. 2010, c. 12, s. 1834:
-sections 6 and 7;
9. *Financial System Review Act*, S.C. 2012, c. 5:
-sections 54 and 56 to 59;
10. *Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act*, S.C. 2012, c. 17:
-sections 70 to 77;
11. *Jobs, Growth and Long-term Prosperity Act*, S.C. 2012, c. 19:
-sections 459, 460, 462 and 463;
12. *Strengthening Military Justice in the Defence of Canada Act*, S.C. 2013, c. 24:
-sections 12, 13 and 46;
13. *Economic Action Plan 2013 Act, No. 1*, S.C. 2013, c. 33:
-subsection 228(2);
14. *Northwest Territories Devolution Act*, S.C. 2014, c. 2:
-section 47;
15. *Safeguarding Canada's Seas and Skies Act*, S.C. 2014, c. 29:
-section 28, subsection 29(1), sections 31, 33, 35, 37 to 39, subsection 40(1), sections 41 to 49, subsections 50(2) and (5), sections 52, 53, 55 and 56;
16. *Economic Action Plan 2014 Act, No. 2*, S.C. 2014, c. 39:
-sections 306, 308, subsection 309(1), section 311, subsection 313(2);
-sections 387 to 400;
17. *Tougher Penalties for Child Predators Act*, S.C. 2015, c. 23:
-section 32;
18. *Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act*, S.C. 2015, c. 27:
-sections 10, 15 and 35;
19. *Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act*, S.C. 2015, c. 29:
-section 2; and

20. *Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area Act*, S.C. 2015, c. 38:
-section 4.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

BUDGET 2025

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson, calling the attention of the Senate to the budget entitled *Canada Strong*, tabled in the House of Commons on November 4, 2025, by the Minister of Finance and National Revenue, the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P., and in the Senate on November 5, 2025.

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Government Inquiry No. 1., calling the attention of the Senate to the budget entitled *Canada Strong*, tabled in the House of Commons on November 4, 2025.

Budget 2025 ensures continuity and demonstrates clear efforts to modernize Canada's fiscal framework. This budget resonates strongly with promises of a "generational shift" and even claims "Climate action is not just a moral obligation—it's an economic necessity." Yet when we look at the details, the plan repeats old formulas while deferring the bold action that true nation building demands.

The government's new Capital Budgeting Framework gives the deficit a makeover, recasting almost every dollar as an investment. The plan promises to balance day-to-day spending with revenues by 2028-29 while nearly doubling capital expenditures from \$32.2 billion in 2024-25 to \$59.6 billion in 2029-30. By then, 100% of the deficit would be branded as investment spending.

But branding isn't proof. Unfortunately, Budget 2025 offers no metric of return, no measure of efficiency and no test of climate alignment to show whether these billions being spent are building resilience and adaptation or simply deepening debt. The intent to modernize fiscal planning is welcome, but transparency on the real return of these investments — economic, social and environmental — is essential for public trust.

Budget 2025 also presents \$25.2 billion in savings over four years through cuts to federal operating costs to reduce inefficiencies and automate processes. In the past, uniform cuts have rarely had desirable effects, and departments with smaller budgets have lost a far greater share of their operational capacity.

Environment and Climate Change Canada is expected to save \$1.1 billion over four years through automation and program wind-downs. In comparison, Natural Resources Canada must cut up to 15% over three years by ending initiatives such as the 2 Billion Trees program. Efficiency and modernization are laudable, but cutting capacity in key departments undermines the very outcomes modernization seeks to achieve.

According to Professor Mazzucato, a leading economist at University College London, efficiency comes not from blunt austerity but from strategic governance. Cuts should target activities that do not create public value — for example, duplicative administration, outdated subsidies and siloed program delivery. Governments must protect and strengthen mission-oriented capacities, such as science, regulation, public procurement and co-creation with communities and Indigenous Peoples. In short, we must trim the bureaucracy around delivery, not the expertise that drives innovation and long-term economic and social returns.

The government calls its climate competitiveness strategy a central pillar of the plan to make Canada the strongest economy in the G7 based on results, not objectives. By cutting environmental protection initiatives and programs, Canada keeps, unfortunately, falling short of what is needed to compete in a global economy already moving toward clean energy and clean technology.

This year, it is predicted that about US\$2.2 trillion will be invested in renewables, nuclear, electrical grids, battery storage, low-emission fuels, efficiencies and electrification, twice the amount expected to be invested in oil and gas.

According to the International Energy Agency's 2025 *World Energy Investment* report:

Investment trends are being shaped by the onset of the 'Age of Electricity' and the rapid rise in electricity demand for industry, cooling, electric mobility, data centres and artificial intelligence

Dear colleagues, the "Age of Electricity" is here. In 2025, China, several U.S. states and the European Union invested US \$627 billion, US\$400 billion and US\$386 billion respectively in clean energy. As leaders in the "Age of Electricity," these states and nations are positioning themselves as electrostates. At the same time, several petrostates, including Canada, are expanding fossil fuel production and refusing to leave the fossil fuel era. Global trackers even indicate that Canada's climate action appears to be stalling, rating it as "highly insufficient," and while costly extreme weather devastates communities, nothing in Budget 2025 shifts this metric.

The new post-2030 carbon pricing trajectory and the "improved backstop" repackaged commitments. The critical minerals sovereignty fund, worth \$2 billion over five years, reprofiles existing Natural Resources Canada initiatives.

The much-touted carbon contracts are likely too small to transform markets while the suite of refundable tax credits is a mere extension of programs launched in 2022 and 2024. Most concerning to me, personally, is the extension of the carbon capture, utilization and storage, or CCUS, investment tax credit.

First, CCUS projects are generally focused on extracting more oil or gas and less on storing carbon dioxide underground, so carbon capture and storage is more likely to increase greenhouse gas emissions than to lower them. Second, carbon capture and storage has a long history of underdelivering and failing to reduce emissions, and this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. Notably, the first large-scale carbon capture and storage project intended for negative net emissions began operating in 1996. After almost 30 years, there should be more progress and higher levels of large-scale implementation for a technology that presents real promise. The CCUS investment tax credit is likely to be another inefficient fossil fuel subsidy.

Ultimately, the climate competitiveness strategy in Budget 2025 takes small steps toward climate preparedness but falls short of the scale that climate and economic emergencies demand. The \$40-million, two-year youth climate corps is welcome, of course, as are the \$257.6 million for four leased firefighting aircraft and the \$55.4 million for a new National Public Alerting System model.

• (1440)

These are very positive measures, but they're very modest when compared to the record-breaking wildfires, floods and insurance losses, which cost \$9.2 billion only last year.

Do we think Canada is so rich that we can continue wasting funds on inefficient subsidies and still expect to thrive in a global economy that is rapidly shifting toward low-carbon growth? The real question is whether Canada is keeping pace with the economic signals of competitiveness. Those signals are clear: Global investment trends now favour clean energy over fossil fuels; market competitiveness has shifted, with solar and wind now being the cheapest new electricity sources worldwide; policy direction in the EU, China and many U.S. states is driving capital into clean technologies; corporate shifts reflect the growing adoption of science-based targets and fossil-free portfolios; innovation in hydrogen, battery storage and circular models shows where future jobs will grow; the risk landscape is tightening as climate impacts strand high-carbon assets; and public demand overwhelmingly favours affordable clean energy and resilience.

Canadians needed clear signals of climate-aligned financial leadership in the budget, but few appeared. Under "Mobilising Capital for Transition to Net-Zero," the government reconfirmed its plan to develop a "made-in-Canada" taxonomy, with completion delayed to before the end of 2026. It also indicated its intention to explore the development of a sustainable bond framework.

However, key initiatives were missing: a green nation-building fund to advance renewable energy and adaptation with Indigenous partners and a framework to align the financial sector with Canada's legally binding climate commitments. Canada needs a clear framework to guide the financial sector in mitigating climate risks, redirecting capital toward resilience and decarbonization and reporting transparently on progress.

I advise you to read the news. Last week, the Bank of England did a major, big step in this direction.

When capital is diverted to assets that become stranded, growth is lost. Without climate-aligned financial flows, Canada faces a vicious cycle: inflation driven by climate shocks, rising indebtedness from bailouts and weak growth from stranded industries. We need a budget that funds clean growth and relies on a robust framework to shift finance toward low-carbon growth, fight inflation and secure long-term prosperity.

Other G7 economies are already integrating climate risk into regulation, creating taxonomies and redirecting investments toward clean growth. Without similar accountability, Canada risks becoming a "stranded-capital nation," reliant on devaluing fossil assets while others seize tomorrow's markets. Left unchecked, climate risk is inflation risk, debt risk and competitiveness risk.

Finally, in Budget 2025, the government announced its plans to update existing greenwashing provisions by removing the requirement for businesses to substantiate their environmental benefits claims based on internationally recognized methodology standards and repealing the ability of third parties to prosecute greenwashing claims directly before the Competition Tribunal. Currently, these provisions provide needed protections to consumers against false claims and require businesses to substantiate their claims based on international standards. The bottom line is that a business should not make any claim, green or otherwise, without sound evidence. Requiring claims to be substantiated based on international standards merely ensures that the evidence supporting a claim is sound. The growth of Canada's green market depends on effective greenwashing provisions.

Budget 2025 could have been the moment when fiscal discipline met climate ambition. Instead, it leans on past frameworks, future promises and cuts that weaken delivery. The tools exist to align dollars with duty and finance with the future. Every dollar invested in adaptation and resilience generates more than \$10 in benefits per decade.

Nation building must be rooted in innovation, economic competitiveness, energy independence and the mobilization of public and private financing for renewable and clean energy projects and community-led resilience building. This year, the seventh of nine planetary boundaries was breached for the first time. This means, dear colleagues, that the earth systems that support life and all economies are destabilizing.

A "Canada Strong" budget must deliver economic prosperity, security and healthy environments, all while addressing the multiple crises we so urgently need to tackle to ensure a sustainable future for all of us and future generations.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator LaBoucane-Benson, debate adjourned.)

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON HEART FAILURE BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Martin, seconded by the Honourable Senator Batters, for the second reading of Bill S-204, An Act to establish a national framework on heart failure.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Honourable senators, I rise today as the friendly critic to speak to Bill S-204, An Act to establish a national framework on heart failure. Last week, I only got a few minutes into my speech, and I should be able to do it all in the time I have allotted today.

I want to thank and recognize Senator Martin for bringing this bill forward.

Heart failure is the clinical syndrome with symptoms and signs caused by structural or functional cardiac abnormality with objective evidence of pulmonary or systemic congestion. Heart failure impacts hundreds of thousands of Canadians. This bill recognizes the need for better coordination, data and access to care.

Today, I will focus on three main points: first, the intent and importance of this bill; second, the current state of health care in Canada; and, third, a broad reflection on what Bill S-204 reveals about health policy.

At its heart, this bill is aspirational. It imagines what health care should look like for every Canadian no matter where they live. It imagines health care where everyone has timely access to diagnosis, guideline-directed care and holistic, multidisciplinary supports.

The bill's intent is clear: to create a coordinated evidence-informed national approach that improves outcomes for patients, families and caregivers.

As we discuss this bill, we should also reflect on why it is needed. Each time we pass a framework bill for a specific condition, whether it is dementia, diabetes or eye care, we are reminded that our health care system is fragmented. People living with health conditions should not need siloed frameworks. They need a consistent, coordinated system that provides safe, high-quality health care.

The bill is important because behind it are people and families whose stories remind us of the human cost of unequal, inadequate and delayed access to care. In particular, I think of the patients and families in northern Manitoba who have to travel for hours to Winnipeg for specialized and complex cardiac care.

• (1450)

As a reminder, while I will refer to “Canada’s health care system” in this speech, what we have, in fact, is not a national system, but 14 provincial, territorial and federal health insurance plans that cover defined, medically necessary services to patients at no cost at the point of care.

Also, please remember that the administration and service delivery of health care falls primarily under provincial and territorial responsibility. This complexity shared among multiple jurisdictions should give you an idea of why we are seeing more framework bills for various health conditions.

Now I move to my second point, the current state of health care in Canada, because Bill S-204 must be grounded in today’s realities.

Canada is one of the highest health care spenders among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, countries, spending 11.2% of GDP on health, above the OECD average of 9.2%.

Global data confirms that access to primary care decreases health care costs by emphasizing prevention, early detection and management of chronic diseases, which then leads to fewer hospital and emergency department visits. Countries with strong primary care systems consistently show lower overall health care costs compared to those with weaker systems. Yet millions of Canadians continue to struggle to access care.

Geography also shapes health outcomes. In 2019, Statistics Canada found that where you live can quite literally determine how long you live. Data showed that preventable and treatable mortality rates rise the further you live from an urban centre, regardless of sex or age. The disparities are linked to geographic barriers, limited access to health services, unmet care needs and the social and historical conditions that shape the health of many Indigenous and rural communities.

A more recent Ontario study on proximity to primary care reinforces these findings. The study found that people who live closer to primary care providers have higher rates of primary care use, lower rates of emergency department use and greater uptake of recommended cancer screening. In contrast, those who live further away from primary care providers face greater odds of having non-urgent emergency room visits, longer time periods without seeing a family physician and more missed cancer screenings.

[Senator Osler]

These findings highlight the importance of health care system reforms that improve access to care and provide care close to home.

These gaps affect everyone, but people living with chronic diseases, like heart failure, acutely feel the pain of the system’s shortcomings. Heart failure remains one of the leading causes of hospitalization in Canada. When access to care depends upon where you live, it is not just a systems issue but an equity issue.

Inequitable outcomes are not only shaped by geography. They also vary across demographic and ethnic groups. Many communities face higher rates of heart disease and worse outcomes because of differences in risk factors, social conditions and unequal access to prevention and treatment.

Data gaps exist if provinces and territories do not collect or report the same health data, particularly if disaggregated race-based, ethnicity-based and socio-economic data sets are incomplete or unavailable. Without standardized, comprehensive data, inequities can remain hidden, and the people most affected are left out of the policy response.

This brings me to a key point: While the bill has a strong focus on diagnosis and guideline-directed treatments, this focus risks underemphasizing prevention.

Heart failure prevention should be a core pillar of this framework because, too often, Canada’s health care system responds downstream rather than upstream.

As Senator Martin noted in her speech, 750,000 Canadians are living with heart failure, a condition that leads to frequent hospitalizations, high mortality and significant caregiver burden.

The economic impact to the health care system is significant. Between 2019-39, projections show heart failure-related hospitalization costs reaching \$19.5 billion.

Bill S-204 sets out a vision for what coordinated care for heart failure could look like across Canada, from early detection to treatment, management and long-term support.

The bill would require the Minister of Health, in collaboration with provinces, territories, Indigenous governing bodies, experts and patient groups, to develop a national framework that promotes early detection and accurate diagnosis of heart failure, strengthens patient and caregiver education and support, encourages guideline-directed therapy and multidisciplinary care, addresses existing disparities in care, closes the data gap, builds national health data infrastructure including a national heart failure registry and establishes national system-level performance indicators.

After Senator Martin's second reading speech, Senator Duncan asked about data collection by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, or CIHI. Indeed, CIHI collects data from the provinces and territories on heart failure, including data on hospitalizations, quality indicators, ambulatory care, long-term care and surveillance. In fact, data from CIHI is used by the Public Health Agency of Canada for the national surveillance of heart disease, including heart failure, through the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System.

Committee study of Bill S-204 could examine for gaps in data collection, diagnosis, treatment and performance indicators to ensure collaboration and not duplication.

The bill also calls for a national heart failure registry. A patient registry is a collection of standardized information about a group of patients who share a condition or experience. Currently, there is no consistent definition of what a patient registry is and what it is used for. Committee study could explore the purpose, mandate, funding and ownership of a national heart failure registry.

Ultimately, the success of any framework — especially in improving health and saving lives — depends on sustained federal-provincial-territorial collaboration, adequate funding and clear accountability mechanisms.

Now for my third and last point. I support this bill. Timely access to care matters. Multidisciplinary teams matter. But I also believe we should think more broadly about health policy in Canada.

This bill and other framework bills are well intentioned and can be powerful. They bring attention to important health conditions and to gaps that demand action.

Among others, we have framework legislation on dementia, diabetes, eye care and now, potentially, heart failure. Each framework adds value and helps people.

But taken together, disease-specific frameworks reveal a pattern: We are treating symptoms, not the cause. Each framework adds another layer of standards, reports and multi-jurisdictional coordination.

As we reflect on this bill, I'm reminded of the landmark 2002 Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology final report on the health care system in Canada, often called the Kirby report. That report called for renewed federal leadership in health, rooted in accountability, national coordination and measurable outcomes.

The report warned that our health care system, as then structured, was not fiscally sustainable and that continuing the status quo would lead to an eventual collapse of the public system.

It urged the federal government to align the provinces and territories around shared principles, transparent reporting and equitable access. It called for federal leadership, not micromanagement.

More than 20 years later, the message of the Kirby report still resonates. We are still grappling with many of the same challenges in access, information and health care coordination across the country, which is, in many ways, what Bill S-204 is working towards.

Honourable senators, I urge you to support Bill S-204 and send it to committee to further explore the goal of better health for Canadians.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

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

• (1500)

SPECIAL ECONOMIC MEASURES ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Dasko, seconded by the Honourable Senator Simons, for the second reading of Bill S-214, An Act to amend the Special Economic Measures Act (disposal of foreign state assets).

(On motion of Senator Dasko, debate adjourned.)

[Translation]

CHIGNECTO ISTHMUS DYKELAND SYSTEM BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE

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.

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill S-216, An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada, which was introduced in the Senate in May 2025 by the Honourable Senator Quinn.

[English]

We all agree that funding the isthmus is important. We agree that this needs to be done. The issues are not with that, but with the legal matter of defining the proper jurisdiction.

Bill S-273, this bill's predecessor, was introduced in the Senate in September 2023. After that, a question from the Governments of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia was sent to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal. Bill S-273 was then sent to the Transport and Communications Committee, which did a fantastic job. It received third reading in the Senate in June 2024 and was sent to the other place, where it never even received first reading.

Some would argue that we should just pass the bill again on that basis, but I would argue that the situation in 2024 and the situation now are different. Bill S-216 needs to be assessed based on the current context and knowledge rather than that of 2024.

What has changed? There are two different significant developments that, I would say, have changed the dynamics of this bill. First, in March of this year, the federal government and the provinces reached an agreement on funding the project: 50% federal and 25% for each province, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, plus extending cost overruns.

These funds were allocated to the project from the federal program called the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia submitted a joint application in early 2023. Since federal funding is involved, among federal legislation applicable are, among others, the duty to consult Indigenous communities and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

Meanwhile, in July 2023, the provinces sought to have the jurisdiction determined by the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal. The court released its decision in June 2025 and declined to make a ruling, basically saying that the provinces failed to provide an argument or specific infrastructure details that might allow them to assess the jurisdiction, let alone, to support federal jurisdiction, and that the reference was largely political.

However, when you read the decision and the factum that was part of this court case, they reveal important facts that we need to understand before this bill is sent to committee.

Clearly, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal identified the historical fact that the Province of Nova Scotia has been legislating the isthmus area for over 175 years, and the Province of New Brunswick, since early 1877. That predates the Confederation.

The decision notes that it is unclear how much the isthmus project is directly related to interprovincial communications, transportation, et cetera, insofar as the boundaries of the area in question are unclear, and there are clearly local roads, private property, farmland and other aspects that are part of it, all of which are currently under the constitutional jurisdictions of the provinces. I have proof of what was said to the courts right here.

Additionally, when you read the study submitted as evidence to the court by the Government of Nova Scotia, Figure 1.1 shows that the isthmus encompasses an entire region currently governed by many provincial statutes. It also identifies at least 19 acts that would require permits to do the work in the area — four federal, eight from Nova Scotia and seven from New Brunswick — notwithstanding the many provincial statutes that deal with the properties involved, i.e., agriculture, forestry, private land, wind farms and buildings, to name just a few. There's also a school in the area.

We also learned two important elements for our consideration. First, during the committee's study of Bill S-273, it was said that the fact that Parliament unilaterally declares the isthmus to be under executive federal jurisdiction is not a declaration that includes funding. It only means that the isthmus area, however it is defined, comes under federal legislation.

Considering that there is now a funding agreement in place for the project, we must ask, are we derailing this project with this bill? I have serious concerns.

The second element is that, if we pass this bill, we could potentially remove the provincial legislation dealing with an unidentified area. This bill could create an area in which there is a total void of provincial legislation and regulation.

I am certainly not convinced that Nova Scotia and New Brunswick would appreciate, at this juncture of the project, to be without jurisdiction in an undefined area. Making this claim of jurisdiction under these circumstances will have consequences that may be unforeseen, but could cause very real problems down the road.

• (1510)

We should not treat this bill as if nothing has changed. It has changed. The information on which we based our decision has evolved, and we should take that into account. It is our duty to assess this bill in the current context, not in the context of the bill we had in front of us in 2024.

We agree that this is a needed project, that this needs to be done, that the funding is important, although resolved. The issue is not with that, but we do need to assess this in terms of the legal and constitutional concerns that it brings up. It is not clear to me that we should be declaring this as federal jurisdiction. I am concerned about what this will mean for the provinces to legislate themselves and what it could mean for future jurisdiction claims in the area and elsewhere that need to be looked at.

As I noted above, the isthmus has vague boundaries. Every submission, even the study that was done, all look at different areas, so it is absolutely unclear. Once we accept federal jurisdiction over this area, what does it mean in relation to the other elements within those boundaries?

I would strongly suggest that if this bill moves forward, we send it to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee so that the committee can have a very serious look.

It may also be prudent — I would say very prudent — to ask the New Brunswick and the Nova Scotia governments beforehand if they agree to have no more jurisdiction in this area, not knowing when similar and, particularly, protective legislation can be enacted federally in relatively short term.

We have this entire area where the provincial jurisdictions would be null and void. Their statutes wouldn't apply anymore. There's no way that we can expect the federal government to turn around, in a relatively short time, to overtake that region. How would the people in that region react to that?

I honestly believe that with the unforeseen legal implications — and if we get the endorsement from the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia governments, then and only then should we send this bill to the Legal Committee for a fulsome debate on these very important aspects. Thank you.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Would the honourable senator take a question or two?

Senator Ringuette: Yes.

Senator Quinn: Thank you for your remarks, senator. I'm a mariner, and I'm very familiar with the Bay of Fundy and the area we're talking about. I've driven through there on many days when it was very foggy. I commend you for bringing that foggy to your speech because your speech has raised some unclear intonations.

In the last Parliament, you asked a question of Senator Gold about the Nova Scotia case. You were wondering, having had 21 years in at that point, if such an occurrence was happening where we were trying to bring a piece of legislation forward when there's a court case. Senator Gold talked about it not being our role to dictate to the courts. He said at that time that it was the government's position to wait for the courts to render a decision.

I would argue that the courts have made a decision. They've refused to answer the reference question. I'll talk about that in my speech, but they refused to answer the reference question put before them by the Nova Scotia government. The reason they did

that was they didn't want to influence any ensuing discussions that may occur in the Parliament of Canada. Do you think the Nova Scotia courts made a valid observation?

Senator Ringuette: Thank you for your question, Senator Quinn. I've read — as you can see — the Nova Scotia court's decision, and it relates to my concern.

At paragraph 39 of the decision, it says, "The inability to distinguish between valid schemes of provincial legislation and federal legislation is especially significant in this case. . . ." That is the point that I've made.

By the way, Senator Quinn, I didn't intervene on your first bill, because there was a political undercurrent, and, furthermore, it was evident that, on principle, I and, I believe, this chamber in general should not intervene in legislation if the specific issue is before the courts. It's a question of respect for the courts.

But that being said, in regard to my second point for the area in question, the court says —

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Ringuette, your time is up. Are you asking for more time?

Senator Ringuette: Yes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

[*English*]

Senator Ringuette: The court said:

Nova Scotia did not define what protective infrastructure it was referring to in the Question, but their submissions in March, both written and oral, focused on the dykes on the Bay of Fundy side of the Isthmus. In the May hearing, Nova Scotia resiled from that position and spoke about the application of the Question to other protective infrastructure.

It further says:

The boundaries of the Isthmus are not referred to in any parties' submissions —

— nobody knows what the boundaries are —

— It is approximately 21 kilometres wide and separates the waters of the Bay of Fundy from those of the Northumberland Strait. . . .

Then, again about the area, in paragraph 27, it says a map of the isthmus:

. . . shows the town of Amherst, Nova Scotia very close to dykes and the town of Sackville, New Brunswick within mere metres. In 2021, there were 3,047 private dwellings . . .

Then it goes on, again in regard to the area, because it's undefined, even in the study:

The Question also suffers from an imprecise description of the infrastructure that allegedly protects the inter-provincial transportation, trade and communication links across the Isthmus. . . .

. . . Nova Scotia resiled from that definition and said the Question could apply to other protective infrastructure. . . .

I can go on, on this issue, if you want me to and go through all the factums that I have here in regard to what was submitted in different areas.

• (1520)

Senator Quinn, I've heard what you were implying: Some people were working with Minister LeBlanc. I swear in this chamber that I've never spoken to Minister LeBlanc about this issue — and you can have that little smile if you want, but it's the reality. I'm making this argument because I have concerns for the citizens living in those areas, and I have concerns in regard to what will happen to them if we move forward without knowing the legal and unintended consequences of this bill.

I'm serious about this. I believe you have good connections with the Government of New Brunswick and the Government of Nova Scotia, and we're going on a break. Maybe it would be the opportune time, Senator Quinn, to have another conversation and see if those governments still want this legislation to move forward. That should be the first step that we undertake on this issue.

Thank you.

Senator Quinn: Will the senator take another question?

Senator Ringuette: Yes.

Senator Quinn: Thank you for that.

You're referring to the pieces — there are pieces of that court decision. The bottom line, as I understand it — and I'm not a lawyer — is that the question referred to the courts was dismissed by the court.

In terms of what you've said, you've talked about the things that were happening at the time of the bill. I can tell you that in the Province of Nova Scotia and the Province of New Brunswick, the governments of the day unanimously approved and all parties voted in favour of supporting this particular thing.

I have one other comment, and the question follows: This morning and over the last two Transport and Communications Committee meetings, we've been hearing about the high-speed

rail network. It is also embodied in the budget implementation act that the declaratory power would be used. That's an undefined corridor as well, which was one of the issues we talked about this morning.

I'm failing to see why the declaratory power could be a valid tool in this budget, which I assume you would support, but now I'm not sure you would because it's a declaratory power being used in an undefined area. In the case of the budget, do you see that the declaratory power is a valid tool?

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Ringuette, your time is up. Are you asking for more time?

Senator Ringuette: I would like to answer that question.

[*English*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted, honourable senators, for more time to answer this question?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Ringuette: Thank you for the question, Senator Quinn.

I guess we're talking about apples and oranges. It was a little bit like when the issue of the Champlain Bridge was brought into the previous discussions on this bill. The Champlain Bridge was already owned by the federal government, and I haven't seen the current budget bill — we're studying it at the Banking Committee — but the declaratory power only provides jurisdiction; it doesn't give automatic funding. I fail to see how your argument holds. It's proven that it doesn't bring any funds, but it does bring unforeseen consequences in regard to those two provinces. I don't think we should proceed unless the two provinces say the circumstances have changed and they still agree they want that power, or if they say the circumstances have changed and they don't want that power anymore.

We need to be clear on that. That's my wish for the citizens in those areas.

Thank you.

Senator Quinn: On debate.

The Hon. the Speaker: 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.

Hon. Bernadette Clement: I move the adjournment of the debate.

The Hon. the Speaker: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Clement, seconded by the Honourable Senator Petitclerc, that the debate be continued at the next sitting of the Senate.

Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say “yea.”

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

The Hon. the Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

The Hon. the Speaker: In my opinion the “yeas” have it.

And two honourable senators having risen:

The Hon. the Speaker: I see two senators rising. Is there agreement on the length of the bell?

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: If there’s no agreement on the length of the bell, it will be one hour.

Pursuant to the rule of June 4, the bells will be interrupted at 4 p.m. for Question Period, and the debate will be continued after Question Period.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

QUESTION PERIOD

(Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, to receive a Minister of the Crown, the Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, appeared before honourable senators during Question Period.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it is now 4 p.m. Before proceeding to Question Period with the minister, I would like to remind you of the time limits the Senate established for questions and answers in the order of June 4, 2025.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: When the Senate receives a minister for Question Period, as is the case today, the length of a main question is limited to one minute, and the answer to one minute and thirty seconds. The supplementary question and answer are each limited to 45 seconds. In all these cases the reading clerk stands 10 seconds before the time expires.

I will now ask the minister to enter and take her seat.

Honourable senators, today we have with us for Question Period the Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario to respond to questions concerning her ministerial responsibilities.

On behalf of all senators, I welcome the minister.

Minister, as I have noted to the Senate, a main question is limited to one minute and your response to one minute thirty seconds. The question and answer for a supplementary question are both limited to 45 seconds. The reading clerk stands 10 seconds before these times expire. I ask everyone to respect these times. Question Period will last 64 minutes.

[*English*]

MINISTRY OF JOBS AND FAMILIES

COST OF LIVING

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Minister, welcome to the Senate.

Minister, families across Canada are experiencing the worst affordability crisis in a generation. Despite the rosy picture painted by your government’s photo ops and the government leader’s constant claims here in the Senate, an average family of four is projected to face a \$1,000 increase in grocery costs next year. Food bank usage has reached a record high of 2.2 million visits per month, double what it was just six years ago. Affordable housing remains a distant dream for most Canadians, and household debt has climbed to a record 180%, the highest in the G7.

Minister, after a decade of Liberal government, why does life continue to become more expensive for Canadian families?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you, senators. First, let me say what a pleasure it is to be with all of you. Your Honour, thank you for the invitation to come to Question Period.

I would like to start by saying that this government has been very focused on supporting people who are struggling, whether it is ensuring that benefits like the Canada Child Benefit, Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, or GIS, are indexed to inflation or through innovative programs like the Canada Dental Care Plan that’s providing dental care treatment for some of the lowest-income Canadians across this country. Historically, it is also through early learning and child care, through which, in Ontario, families are saving an average of \$10,400 a year.

This government is focused on doing things for and with communities, families and provinces and territories that we know improve things for families.

I'm especially proud of the School Food Program, which supports provinces and territories to ensure that kids get a healthy meal at school. I was recently in a school called St. Edward in Nipigon, Ontario, in my riding, a very small community. It was obvious that teachers and volunteers there were very proud of the work they were doing to support their students, and the students themselves were so happy to gather around a meal and start their day with full bellies.

There are things we can control, Your Honour, and there are things we cannot. We are focused as a government —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Senator Housakos: Minister, no amount of photo ops and no amount of the litany of programs that you have in place to make things better will change the fact that Canadians are facing food insecurity, job insecurity and rising costs. At this point, there is a complete disbelief that the government is actually solving the problem. We are looking at the number of people going into food banks or who cannot buy a house. It has been getting worse every year over the past 10 years, not better.

When will your government acknowledge the strain Canadians are facing and change its methodology so we can get a different result?

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you. Although Conservative colleagues in the House of Commons continually report food bank statistics, they also fail to report one of the main drivers of the increasing crisis of food affordability is climate change. In fact, report after report talks about climate change deeply impacting the cost of groceries — whether it is beef, vegetables or fruit — both imports and food grown here in Canada.

Although there are things we cannot control about the price of food, what we can control is supporting families who are struggling. That is why we continue to focus on things that help families, including early learning and child care, which Kendra in Saskatchewan said allowed their family to send both their young children to daycare, enabling parents to grow their small business —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, minister.

CHILD CARE LEGISLATION

Hon. Rose-May Poirier: Minister, thank you for being here. My question is on the Auditor General's report on daycare. While costs have gone down unevenly across Canada, the Auditor General still highlighted the increased difficulty for families around accessing child care in 2023 compared to 2020. It also highlighted that by next March, the government will probably not meet its goal of increasing the number of regulated spaces by 250,000 over the five years. Also disappointing is the lack of reporting on your government for the \$35 billion spent.

Minister, with spaces still lacking and reporting to the public on national progress more than four years behind, how can Parliament and Canadians have confidence that the \$35 billion has been well spent?

[Ms. Hajdu]

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you, Your Honour. I have quote after quote from families talking about the incredible savings that they are seeing as parents with their children in affordable child care. I can certainly read those to you.

However, I will instead say that Minister Calandra and I were recently together, signing the extension to Ontario's child care agreement. This provides Ontario with another \$695 million to create 86,000 spaces by 2026. What was interesting was Minister Calandra agreed with the Auditor General, saying that our negotiations had been quite fierce and they were prepared to up their game in terms of providing the data that the federal government needs to assess these programs that are national in nature.

You will all appreciate that provincial governments have control over their data systems. This is a collaboration with the provinces and territories. There are many spaces where this is equally frustrating for federal ministers.

I was the Minister of Health. It was difficult to get health data during COVID. I have been the Minister of Labour — and I am again — and I can tell you that it can be challenging to get data regarding outcomes from money that we have spent on skills training. I think all parties are heeding the Auditor General's request in the space of early learning and child care. We will continue to do that work with our provincial counterparts.

Senator Poirier: Minister, a *Calgary Herald* headline in September read, "Shortage of daycare spaces in downtown Calgary poses challenges for working parents." A headline in the *Winnipeg Free Press* in August read, "Manitoba well short of spaces promised under national daycare program." And an *INsauga* headline from October read, "Parents scramble to find after-school care . . ." Last month, *The Telegram* reported that there aren't enough child care spaces in Atlantic Canada. From coast to coast to coast, there is one clear message: We need more spaces.

Minister, after spending \$35 billion and still lacking spaces, what do you say to the thousands of parents who are still on wait-lists and cannot afford a daycare spot?

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you.

• (1610)

What I say to parents is that we commit to continuing to grow those spots. Not only have we invested in the operation costs of child care, but we have also supported provinces and territories with the infrastructure costs of physically creating new spots. Finally, some provinces are limited in terms of being able to open up those spots because they do not have enough trained early learning and child care experts to be able to staff those spots. We have also supported provinces in recruiting and training early learning and child care experts so they can be there, ready and waiting for those children.

It is encouraging to hear you speak favourably about child care. I will share that with our colleagues in the House of Commons, particularly the Conservative members of Parliament.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Farah Mohamed: Minister, we know that federal programs like the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy provide valuable short-term job opportunities. However, the data remains worrying. The number of youth not in employment, education or training, otherwise known as NEET, is increasing, and youth unemployment remains structurally high.

Simultaneously, businesses across the country are reporting a severe skills mismatch and are struggling to fill hundreds of thousands of critical high-paying jobs in trades, technology and health care. This suggests that simply increasing short-term placements is not building the career foundations that young Canadians or businesses need or want.

Minister, beyond the successful but temporary Canada Summer Jobs model, what national, long-term economic strategy will your department implement to address the country's high-demand sectors while ensuring that young Canadians are not just getting a job but getting a sustainable career pathway across every region of Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you for that question. Your Honour, it is incredibly relevant that the senator speaks about data.

Yet again, the challenge is that provincial data does not match up with federal data, and we continue to experience data gaps, which is why the Prime Minister's announcement during part of a tariff announcement was to create sector alliances. "Sector alliances" is somewhat of a boring name, I would say, for an exciting concept. What it does is to bring provinces and territories together with trainers, unions, colleges and universities, and, indeed, stakeholder representation from a variety of sectors to understand better what the needs are going to be for that sector and to better align training and opportunities for young people with what the sector is demanding.

This is something that both employers and unions have been calling for, for a long time. Right now, we are in the process of designing those sectors. I am excited to let you know that there will be a sector alliance in the care economy, in reference to the previous question, which is so important, because often care is the limiter for many other people's ambitions in a variety of different occupations.

Senator Mohamed: Minister, I will take "boring" if it means progress. To that point, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, and International Labour Organization, or ILO, both identified public outcome dashboards as a gold standard for program accountability. With that in mind, will your government establish a Canadian national outcomes framework and a public dashboard that track labour market metrics so that Canadians can clearly see whether federal

youth employment programs and investments are building real long-term career pathways rather than pathways to short-term paycheques?

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you, Your Honour. That is an excellent question and idea. I would say that there are spaces where we are able to track investments, for example, through labour market transfer agreements and workforce development agreements that provide about \$3 billion a year to provinces and territories for skills training. We have agreements with provinces and territories to be able to track earnings and earning outcomes through social insurance number data. Obviously, it's very important to understand how those transfers result in better skills for Canadians.

To the point you are making regarding investments directly from the federal government, I agree that we can do a better job to ensure that the roughly \$1.2 billion in this budget, for example, that will be focused on youth-specific skills opportunities and training —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, minister.

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

Hon. David Arnot: Minister, in June 2025, you said that the Canada Disability Benefit, or CDB, would raise incomes and restore dignity. Yet, at least one province has announced a reduction mechanism tied to the CDB. It's functionally a clawback. Advocates also emphasize that grants to organizations, while welcome, do not increase the monthly incomes of disabled Canadians.

Minister, can you tell disabled Canadians that you recognize the need for federal-provincial arrangements, co-developed with disabled Canadians that ensure every person keeps every dollar of the CDB, supported by transparent province-to-province reporting of net income gained? Minister, my Senate colleagues and I are ready to help on these issues.

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you, Your Honour.

I'm happy to hear about the advocacy for people with disabilities, one of the most marginalized groups of individuals in our country. In fact, one million people with disabilities are skilled and ready to work, yet still struggle to find meaningful employment in this country, which is such a loss not only for them and their families but also for the many companies that could benefit from their expertise.

You rightly point out that the federal government does contribute to the provincial efforts to ensure that people with disabilities have opportunities to join the workforce. We work with partners to do this, by the way. The federal government supports a number of exemplary agencies around the country that do this work.

You also spoke about the Canada Disability Benefit. That was never meant to replace the disability benefits that are available in various provinces and territories. It was meant to be a supplement. It is disappointing. I know which province you are speaking about, which is, in a way, clawing back that disability benefit. It is difficult to track because of the way it is being conducted. But we have heard that complaint. We have raised this with the province. We will continue to be very vocal about ensuring that any benefit is not clawed back from social assistance.

The last thing that I will say is that you often hear Conservative members of Parliament in the other place talk about the costs of living and how hard people are finding it to make ends meet. I will note that a number of food bank reports and poverty reports indicate that one of the challenges is that social assistance rates, including the —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, minister.

EMPLOYMENT GAP

Hon. David Arnot: Minister, you said in 2025 that Canada cannot afford to waste the talent of disabled workers, yet the disability employment gap remains at 16%, and advocates note that federal programs often do not reach workers directly.

Minister, can you tell disabled Canadians that your department recognizes the scale of the employment gap and is prepared to explore measurable national targets co-created by disabled workers and produce transparent annual reporting on outcomes achieved?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Your Honour, I think we have a theme emerging for this Question Period, which is the unavailability of data across our federation and how the challenges of data sharing, or the lack thereof, are inhibiting our ability in terms of planning for the next steps.

Yes, we will continually work with provinces and territories to ensure that whatever happens federally, we will support either provinces and territories directly or we will support individuals and organizations to achieve employment. This will be subject to conversations and negotiations pertaining to tracking and data. Canadians deserve to know the outcomes for the money that the government is spending on a variety of different programs and initiatives.

IMMIGRATION LEVELS

Hon. Mary Robinson: Prime Minister Carney has set a goal to more than double exports outside U.S. markets over the next decade, meaning that exports to other countries will need to grow to \$132 billion annually by 2035. In 2024 our agriculture and agri-food exports exceeded \$100 billion, a first in our country's

history. Where agriculture continually shows massive potential to be one of Canada's strongest economic assets, we have policies preventing its success. The tightening of immigration levels threatens agriculture's critical labour supply. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program are both in your portfolio. Minister, how are you ensuring that the lowering of immigration levels does not negatively impact the supply of labour in our agriculture and agri-food sector?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you, Your Honour.

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program is a difficult program for any government and any minister to balance. No changes have been made to the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program in terms of volume of individuals working within our agricultural sector. The changes that our government has made in the recent months have been to the low-wage stream of temporary foreign workers in various Canadian communities, and it is attached to things like unemployment rates that are present or absent in a particular region, very strict scrutiny of the employer and their activities to recruit Canadian workers, and other measures that allow for the department to determine whether there is a labour gap in that particular employer.

LABOUR SHORTAGE

Hon. Mary Robinson: Agri-food, which is the primary production and food processing, continues to cite chronic and critical labour shortages as a top risk and a major constraint on both growth and global competitiveness. In 2022, this labour shortage resulted in a missed opportunity of \$3.5 billion in sales in the sector. While temporary foreign workers represent less than 1% of our total workforce, they are essential to agri-food.

• (1620)

Considering our ambitious economic goals, do you agree it is in the clear interests of today's government to protect this source of labour?

Ms. Hajdu: I would agree that it is important we protect the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program but also the workers who come to Canada and work within that program. That is why the federal government not only supports agri-food, farming and industrial farming with access to this program but also ensures that we support many advocacy groups that work with workers to ensure their rights and their safety are protected. I think all Canadians expect us to do that.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Hon. Katherine Hay: Minister Hajdu, good to see you again. You likely know where I am going to head with my question.

The job market is tough for young people. I believe there is a 14% unemployment rate. A recent study by Mental Health Research Canada and GreenShield found that 82% of young people feel stressed about their career future, and 30% say it is harming their mental health. It's even more alarming for First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Black, African, Caribbean and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. This is a crisis that the current system is failing.

Can you share how your department is supporting young people across Canada to enter and sustain themselves in the workforce and also address their mental health pressures?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you very much.

I would like to take a moment to thank this particular senator for her work and allyship during the global pandemic. We had many moments where we convened to talk about how we could support young people during that very difficult time, and I will never forget her kindness.

The senator is right to point out the connection between purpose and mental health. I have thought a lot about this in my life and in my career. In fact, in my career prior to politics, I spent a lot of time with young people, Indigenous people and excluded people. Purpose and connection to community were some of the things that could help young people begin to heal, oftentimes, from very traumatic situations in their lives.

That's why the federal government continues to invest beyond the labour market transfers to provinces and territories, in particular for the successful first experiences of young people, including those who are considered NEET — not in employment, education or training.

We do this through a number of different measures. We have the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, where we work with astounding organizations across the country, perhaps even the Kids Help Phone line, which work with young people to ensure they get quality work experience. We also provide direct work experience through Canada Summer Jobs. I'm very excited to launch the Canada Service Corps this year, which will address young people wanting work in climate-related fields.

Senator Hay: Minister, Canada's Employment Equity Act Review Task Force's 2023 report, *A Transformative Framework to Achieve and Sustain Employment Equity*, proposed long-overdue reform, including adding Black people and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals as designated groups, updating terms like "visible minorities" to "racialized people," and "Aboriginal Peoples" to "Indigenous Peoples."

Senator Bernard and I have a question on behalf of the equity-deserving groups who are waiting for action from the government: When can Canadians expect these changes to the Employment Equity Act?

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you very much. I wish to note that Senator Moreau has raised this on behalf of a number of senators who have asked about an update on the Employment Equity Act.

I believe this is a very important act, especially as we see attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion coming from, in particular, conservative voices, not just in other countries but in our country as well. The rights of people who have won those rights, many times in fierce battles, are being undermined and threatened, and it's having real-life impact for people all across our communities.

I have asked for the department to provide me an update on the What We Heard report, in which, apparently, there were consultations undertaken last year. As soon as I hear —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, minister.

REVIEW OF LEGISLATION

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Welcome, minister.

Canada committed to completing the review of Bill C-92 by January 2025, yet no process has started. Southern First Nations are also without a regional agreement structure, leaving them excluded from major decisions on the final settlement agreement.

Why has the federal government missed its own deadline? When will Bill C-92 review and regional agreement structure processes formally begin?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you very much. I know this is deeply important to this senator and many others in this place. I can't comment on the timeline — it is not under my current portfolio — but I will take the senator's question back to the appropriate minister.

COMMUNITY CRISES

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Minister, Southern First Nations are experiencing a state of emergency — overdoses, violence, youth at risk, suicide — with no fully funded treatment centres in the region. Communities are running checkpoints and crisis responses without stable federal funding.

What immediate federal actions will you take to fund First Nations-led treatment and crisis-response infrastructure in southern Manitoba?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you. As the senator will know, in my previous role as Minister of Indigenous Services Canada, I fully worked with the department to ensure that solutions to community crises were self-determined and were supported by the community. That work is continuing under Minister Mandy Gull-Masty. I, of course, will serve as an ally to her in her work to advocate for sufficiency of funding.

I will say that the best solutions to community crises are the ones that are developed by communities themselves.

FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: As per the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, or MKO, Resolution 2025-11-02, the MKO Chiefs in General Assembly declared their support for the National Children's Chiefs Commission, or NCCC, in developing a plan to permanently end Canada's discrimination in First Nations Child and Family Services in response to the August 2025 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's Ruling 80, which orders the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society to work with the NCCC and First Nations leadership.

Has Canada collaborated with the NCCC in developing a plan on long-term reform of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society? Furthermore, Canada has appealed the 2025 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's Ruling 80.

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Again, this falls under the purview of my colleague Minister Mandy Gull-Masty. Although I am very aware of much of the work that has happened over the last three and a half years, it would be inappropriate for me to respond on her behalf.

Senator McCallum: As per the MKO Resolution 2025-11-11, the Province of Manitoba is continuing to misappropriate children's special allowance, or CSA, funds from First Nations children in care. Will Canada work with the MKO so that the Province of Manitoba ends its practice of misappropriating CSA funds, a federal benefit for First Nations children in care?

Ms. Hajdu: Again, this is work that my colleague is conducting on behalf of Indigenous Services Canada. I will say this, though: Some of the most profound moments in my career have been when I was signing child welfare agreements with communities to restore their rightful care and control over their children and families. I will always carry those moments with me.

[Senator McCallum]

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Hon. Rosemary Moodie: Welcome back to the Senate, Minister Hajdu.

Earlier this year, UNICEF Canada published their Report Card 19, which reported on the well-being of Canadian children compared to other wealthy countries. In the report, Canada ranks nineteenth out of 36 peer countries on the overall status of children. Progress for children in Canada has stalled since 2018. We are now ranking close to the bottom of our peer countries when it comes to adolescent suicide, child mortality and acquiring skills.

Minister, what is the Government of Canada's current strategy to support children and youth in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you very much, Senator Moodie. Thank you for your advocacy on behalf of children and youth. It's always a pleasure to see you.

• (1630)

Your Honour, we have focused tremendously on children and youth over the last number of years, including through the Canada Child Benefit, which is estimated to have lifted well over 400,000 children out of poverty. Other social programs that were launched over the past few years have also helped families, including the national Canadian Dental Care Plan, which helped many families in my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North; I hear that on a regular basis from families and individuals who have had their teeth looked at, sometimes for the first time.

The National School Food Program is another recent federal addition that supports provinces and territories regarding those healthy starts. The Early Learning and Child Care Plan, which is so linked to early learning development — it is well established that the ages 0 to 3 years are so essential to the development of healthy brains and bodies — is an immense improvement over no early learning and child care program.

Finally, Your Honour, this is a joint effort with provinces and territories. As you know, they have a lot of control over the outcomes for young Canadians through the way that they design their school boards and their own supports for families and, as we talked about, their supports for low-income families in particular.

Senator Moodie: Minister, the issue is that these policies and programs work independently of each other, and not all of them are advancing at the same pace, nor is the progress of these programs even being tracked. We also know that governments, provinces, territories, municipalities and Indigenous governments are all doing good work, but it is clear that there is no coordination amongst them.

Why is the Government of Canada without a national strategy for children and youth at this time?

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you very much, Your Honour. I know that this is something the senator is passionate about and working on. I have raised this with my colleague Anna Gainey, the Secretary of State for Children and Youth, and we'll continue to be focused on what I talked about earlier, which is how we better coordinate as a federation with provinces and territories to track what we're doing and the outcomes of our spending.

As I said as I reached the end of an earlier question, this is a particular priority of the Prime Minister as well. There is a very clear directive across ministerial portfolios that we must be able to better measure how we are spending the available resources of the Government of Canada and how our work is either complementing or not —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, minister.

[Translation]

SUPPORT FOR CANADIAN ARTISTS

Hon. René Cormier: Good afternoon, minister. Access to Employment Insurance remains a pillar of Canada's social safety net. Your government has taken temporary measures to maintain that safety net and help Canadian workers by eliminating the one-week waiting period. However, it is difficult for independent professional artists to qualify for this program, given its criteria. Many artists are calling for a program for self-employed workers in the arts, similar to the one for fishers.

Minister, are you prepared to work with this sector to adapt the Employment Insurance system to the reality of artistic work? If so, how do you intend to do that?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you for that excellent question.

[English]

There's an opportunity, and you have identified it. Your Honour, the senator has pointed out a great opportunity for Canada as we strengthen Employment Insurance, or EI, in a temporary way to respond to tariffs and review the entire EI system. In fact, the Prime Minister has asked us to look at the modernization of social safety nets like EI to ensure that people are not falling through the cracks, and I look forward to this continued work with the senator regarding particular communities left out of EI coverage.

It is a complex program. There are voluntary opportunities to participate in EI. Not everybody participates in EI, and the rules are very confusing for individual Canadians, especially young Canadians who are just starting their careers. I look forward to our collaboration.

Senator Cormier: Thank you, minister. In addition to adapting Employment Insurance, there are other potential avenues to improve the socio-economic situation of artists. For instance, Ireland launched a pilot, the Basic Income for the Arts,

in 2022, which is set to become permanent in 2026. Is your government ready and willing to examine and potentially follow suit on these different ways of improving the situation of artists?

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you very much, Your Honour. There are a number of different supports for artists across the federal family that contribute to the stability of our cultural sector. I'm not well positioned to speak about my newly appointed colleague, Minister Miller, but that is something that I know he speaks on very clearly, and I'm very excited to continue that work with him.

Having a vibrant arts and culture community across Canada is important not just for people's outcomes and incomes, but also for the sovereignty of Canada. We are a very strong, very proud country, and our artists tell our story as no one else can.

NATIONAL SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

Hon. Mary Robinson: Minister, within Bill C-15, the Budget 2025 Implementation Act, are provisions that help develop the National School Food Program. While the minister responsible remains to be determined following the bill's passing, it's likely your department will be identified to play a role in the shaping of this program.

If this is the case, do you envision a partnership with other ministries in the oversight and implementation of this national program, and what other departments do you see yours working alongside?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you very much, Your Honour. We're very excited that the National School Food Program will be made permanent, and the senator is right — it largely falls under the umbrella of Employment and Social Development Canada. However, we do have a Secretary of State for Children and Youth who will be working very closely with us, and we will be working with the Minister of Agriculture as well, as a component of the National School Food Program is intended to use local Canadian and Canadian-produced foods as much as possible. I look forward to that continued work.

This is shared work with provinces, territories, school boards and other food delivery agents, but it is an exciting development for Canadian families.

Senator Robinson: I appreciate that you foresee a partnership with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food on the rollout of the program and that you recognize the importance of having a voice at the table that can speak to the complexities of our agri-food system and ensure the rollout of policies in relation to the program remain practical and reflective of our current food supply chain challenges and opportunities. Thank you, minister.

Ms. Hajdu: Your Honour, I would say that if you want to understand the complexity of the food chain, you should be the Minister of Health during a global pandemic responsible for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. I learned more than I ever thought I would about our complex food chain here in Canada. I certainly am also a huge supporter of local food access, and I

support local growers and our own local food system, which, by the way, is under threat as a result of people aging out of, for example, being able to continue their abattoir businesses, which our local farmers rely on so significantly to produce their local meat. This is a complex issue, and I am thrilled to speak with you about it at length at some other point. Thank you.

UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Welcome, minister. I want to come back to the issue of youth unemployment, which my colleague Senator Hay raised. By my calculation, 14% of youth unemployment is about 350,000 people. The employment programs set up by your government and mentioned in the budget cover about 10% of that and, by and large, are temporary. We really need to look at that other 90% of youth who are looking for full-time employment, and we should think boldly and think big. I want to convene a round table of a number of the people concerned — including governments, economists, the private sector and other stakeholders — early in the new year. Could I work with you? Would you be prepared to participate in a round table with a number of key stakeholders, to think big about how we can deal with this and get the private sector involved in a big way?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you, Your Honour. The senator raises an important point about youth employment and youth skills development, which is that the private sector does play a very important role in ensuring youth have that quality first experience and ongoing skills training. It's partly why we so strongly support paid work skill experiences. Through a variety of partners and in a variety of sectors, young people get paid experiences with potential employers to further their studies and to become more firmly attached to their sector.

• (1640)

It's also why we work very closely with provinces and territories through the labour market development agreements and the workforce development agreements to ensure that provinces and territories have what they need in order to support young people to get into, for example, the skilled trades. In my family, I have a skilled trades worker, and, in fact, the provincial system assisted him in reaching the very first step toward his Red Seal crane operator apprenticeship completion.

This work must be done in collaboration, which is why I think the senator's question is so important. I will be convening a summit of provincial ministers to talk about youth unemployment and outcomes that we can agree to. Senator, I would be happy to speak with you about your plan and to work very closely with you on convening the major players, including corporations.

Senator Cardozo: Thank you for that, minister, and I do look forward to working on that.

Can I ask you about the other part of youth employment which has been happening through sectoral initiatives, such as sector councils, that your department has funded over the years? What is the plan on that where you would work with industry sectors to identify the human resources needs of the economy?

[Ms. Hajdu]

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you very much.

That is one of the Prime Minister's announcements on tariff supports that, unfortunately, was missed in some of the news coverage. The announcement was to support the launch of sectoral alliances that allow for exactly what you are describing: collaborative work between large corporations, small corporations, sector employers, provinces, territories, the federal government and training institutions, including unions, to ensure we have the right skills training being offered to young people so that young people have an idea, and to ensure schools and training institutes are offering a better match for the skills that will be required by a sector.

I anticipate that each sectoral alliance will also start with a strong commitment to sharing data and making that data transparent and nationally available.

STATE OF THE ECONOMY

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Hello, minister.

Since 2015, Canadians have witnessed historic federal deficits and debt, a weakened dollar and declining investor confidence. The consequences are clear: Under your Liberal government, over half a trillion dollars in investment has left Canada for the United States. And this year alone, an additional \$40 billion in net investment has departed. These losses mean fewer jobs, less innovation, lower productivity and declining living standards for families.

Minister, how can Canadians have confidence in your government's economic management when global investors appear to have so little?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: I would say that Canadians demonstrated confidence six months ago when they elected our government yet again. That is three elections in a row which have demonstrated that Canadians have confidence in a leader who chooses to unify, pull people together and work through difficult times.

All countries have faced some extraordinarily difficult changes, whether it's as a result of the pandemic as well as the challenging economic landscape after the pandemic, global trade instability or the impacts of tariffs.

Canadians know what is happening, and they know this government has their back in the good times and the bad.

Senator Martin: It's \$40 billion lost this year alone, so Canada's real GDP per capita is projected to decline for the third consecutive year, while job creation remains fragile and low-wage part-time work accounts for the majority of new positions. Meanwhile, young Canadians still face the toughest labour market conditions in over a decade. This is not the future they were promised, minister.

When will your government move beyond the empty promises and photo ops and instead begin delivering meaningful results for Canadians?

Ms. Hajdu: Although it is a very difficult time for many Canadians who are experiencing job threats and losses as a result of unjust tariff actions from our largest trading partner, we are also seeing some promising signs in the economy. In fact, we've seen a net gain of jobs for the third month in a row, and we've seen wages climbing for the third month in a row.

Although there are warning signs, there are many areas we must stay focused on: We must support workers disrupted by trade. We must support critical industries, like our steel industry. We must continue to ensure that young people have every opportunity to gain those experiences and those first jobs. We will continue on a path that invests in Canadians and that sells our country to the world.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Minister, last week on TV, you stated there was full transparency regarding Algoma Steel's planned layoffs, despite your government's nearly \$500-million financing agreement with the company. But the truth is that your government never told Canadians that you knew about these impending job losses. We only found out because Algoma Steel's CEO disclosed it publicly.

Minister, if transparency were truly your intent, why were Canadians not informed that your government approved this loan while being aware that significant layoffs were coming? Is this, again, the fault of climate change?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: When our steel industry is under threat, it's a threat to our sovereignty. This government knows that without a strong steel sector, we cannot build up our military. We can't build the infrastructure we need if we are reliant on foreign steel to do that building. This is something that Conservative members of Parliament in the other place fail to recognize. This is ensuring that we save critical industries that are essential to the future of Canada. This is a Canadian company, and 1,700 jobs have been saved at Algoma Steel. Algoma Steel is looking at new products and, in fact, has new customers lined up. That's good news, not just for Algoma Steel and the corporation but also for Canada and for the workers of Sault Ste. Marie who will be there to create those products with that company.

I'm proud of the work we're doing to save the steel industry, and we'll continue to do that work.

Senator Housakos: Minister, you can save the partisan talking points for the other place. This place likes to deal with facts.

Minister, your government has committed enormous sums to major corporations, with troubling results. I'll share some with you: \$15.5 billion to Stellantis, which was followed by 3,000 layoffs; \$500 million to Algoma Steel, which was followed by 1,000 layoffs; and \$1.34 billion to Northvolt, only for the company to enter bankruptcy.

Why does your government insist on spending taxpayer dollars on risky corporate handouts when these decisions are repeatedly leading to lost jobs and significant losses to taxpayers?

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you for the question.

I would say that we continue to bet on Canada. We're betting on Canadian companies, and we're betting on Canadian workers. We're ensuring that Canadians have what they need to get through this difficult time. Make no mistake, Canada will emerge stronger from this, and it will be because they have a Liberal government and a Prime Minister focused on ensuring that we protect Canadian companies and workers to deliver the goods and the infrastructure that we need.

NATIONAL CAREGIVING STRATEGY

Hon. Kim Pate: Thank you, minister, for joining us and for all the work you do.

Budget 2024 as well as the Liberal platform for Election 2025 committed to the development of a national caregiving strategy. The federal government also committed to converting the largely unused non-refundable Canada caregiver credit into a refundable credit in 2021.

These commitments were absent from Budget 2025 despite an urgent need for action.

The financial, social and emotional tolls borne by one in four Canadians who are caregivers have cost Canada some \$1.5 billion each year in lost productivity. And 80% of paid care providers have considered leaving the sector due to low wages and poor working and living conditions.

Could you please provide an update on the status of the work on the national caregiving strategy and a specific timeline for the completion of this work?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you very much.

I will say it was a very moving moment to stand with the members of SEIU Healthcare, one of the largest unions that organized personal support workers twice in the last several months. Once was on Labour Day when many people think workers are taking the day off to march — and many are — but personal support workers don't get that day off. They are there caring for our elders and people who need 24-hour care. On that day, we announced the launch of a retirement savings plan that SEIU Healthcare will coordinate with their members. It is a \$25-million investment that the union will utilize to help personal support workers save for their retirement, which is something that many people had been advocating for a very long time to see.

The second time I stood with SEIU Healthcare was for an announcement around the budget where we announced a tax credit for personal support workers, again advocated by SEIU Healthcare which very successfully made the argument that these low-wage earners are really the backbone of our Canadian economy. It's why I've decided to strike a care sector alliance — because I believe Canada deserves more than a strategy. I do think the strategy is important, and we will do that work together, but I would also like to bring together all of the players to talk about how we stabilize the sector on which all of us rely and on which all of us will rely even more as we age. Personal support workers and people who provide care to children are truly the backbone of our —

• (1650)

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Senator Pate: In the absence of measures to ensure adequate wages for paid care providers and supports for those unable to balance care work with paid employment, what new approaches, including income supports, will you be exploring in order to ensure that Canadians whom we rely upon to carry out unpaid and underpaid care work are not abandoned to poverty and — as we saw horrifically during the pandemic, in particular — to homelessness?

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you very much for that question. That is part of the mandate that I hope the care sector alliance will take on. I believe we have chronically underpaid people who provide care in Canadian society. The senator and I have spoken often about this. Often, the most vulnerable workers in our society are the people who provide care to our loved ones and to ourselves as we get older and older. That is why I've added a sectoral alliance, which is the care economy, to ensure we bring partners together.

Finally, I'll say it's hard to stabilize industries without providing adequate care. Good employers know this; they pay their employees decent wages. The challenge is that the sector is deeply underfunded.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE AGREEMENTS

Hon. Paulette Senior: Welcome, minister. It's good to see you here. I will follow up on the child care question. I have long held the view that we need to make Canada's national child care system one that truly creates universal and accessible child care, prioritizing the most vulnerable families.

It was encouraging last week to learn of the one-year extension to the Canada–Ontario Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement until March 2027.

Minister, can you tell us the status of agreements with other provinces and territories? Can you explain why we aren't seeing multi-year renewals instead of one-year renewals, like what was announced in Ontario?

[Ms. Hajdu]

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you very much, Your Honour. I thank the senator for her advocacy for early learning and child care. It must seem like a long road, but there is a federal program now that supports families across the country.

This is a historic initial investment of \$27 billion over five years. The senator is right; we are in the process of renegotiating with three provinces. We have one-year extensions now with two. One province, Saskatchewan, has signed on for an additional five years.

The question is the sufficiency of money. The question is the targeted outcomes, and the question is around better data sharing. For the two provinces that are in a one-year extension condition, there are more conversations to be had over the next several months.

Rest assured, I believe that all provinces and territories want to sustain an early learning and child care program. I believe all provinces and territories understand how it benefits the parents, as well as the children in care. We will work very closely with the advisory committee to ensure that we do this in the right way to protect early learning and child care and to expand access to all parents.

Senator Senior: Minister, there's no question that we need well-paid child care staff doing this critical work, with the right infrastructure and significant funding to match the need. Can you tell us what is being done to invest in a well-paid, trained early learning and child care workforce?

Ms. Hajdu: I would say the work we've done with provinces and territories has also addressed pay, although pay does still remain in the care and control of provinces and territories. But we have provided provinces and territories extra support to increase wages and, in some cases, to provide access to pensions for the very first time for these care workers.

It is important, and I will reiterate that we consider the care economy as a foundational pillar of all of the other sectors in the Canadian economy. Without good-quality care, parents can't get to work. They can't contribute to their fullest extent. It's my determination that we will continue this work with provinces and territories, and we will respect this profession.

[*Translation*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne: Minister, Canada's reputation for reliability has been undermined by a record number of labour disputes at ports on the west coast and in Montreal in recent years. Some people think that the decision by Canadian fertilizer production giant Nutrien to move its export terminal to Washington State instead of Vancouver is related to overly frequent shutdowns at our ports.

Does your government intend to follow up on the recent report by the Ready and Rogers Industrial Inquiry Commission on labour relations, which recommended amending the Labour Code to allow for the appointment of a special mediator?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you very much, Your Honour, and thank you to the senator for a very good question.

Look, there's no question that labour stability is essential in this country. There's no question that many people are worried about labour stability, and there's no question that unions have the right to strike in our Constitution. That is the difficult job of a labour minister to get that balance right, to make sure that we're protecting people's fundamental rights to bargain collectively and fairly and to ensure that there is industrial peace.

I can tell you, as this is my second time around as the labour minister, this is one of the most challenging pieces of work to do. We will continue to work with unions and workers and federally regulated employers to make sure we have a path forward. Recently, I announced a tripartite table where the Government of Canada will sit in the same room with collective bargaining agents and unions and federal corporations so that we can have a clearer path forward without as much labour disruption.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Is it not urgent to find solutions to keep the parties at the negotiating table by preventing them from giving notice of a strike or lockout while the mediator is at work, a mediator who could give their opinion on the terms of a fair and reasonable comprehensive settlement?

I'm asking you a more specific question: What do you think of the mediator option?

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you very much. We have a federal mediation service with mediators available. I never rule out any good idea. I would like to examine more of what that specific mediator would do in addition to the federal mediation service. Some large organizations have their own appointed mediators that the union and the corporation both agree are useful in a variety of different disputes before it gets to an actual work stoppage.

I would also point out that 97% of agreements in this country are arrived at without a work stoppage. That is truly the success of the federal mediation service. Of course, in very protracted disputes or very elevated disputes, we do have the Canadian Industrial Relations Board, who very often will weigh in, in a variety of different ways, including —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, Madam Minister.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Hon. Mary Robinson: Minister, Budget 2025 proposes a refundable personal support workers tax credit, 5% of eligible earnings up to \$1,100 annually. This is a welcome measure to support a vital, often low-wage workforce facing critical

shortages. However, as currently drafted in the budget implementation act, eligibility is restricted to personal support workers, or PSWs, employed by an “. . . eligible health care establishment . . .”

This definition unintentionally excludes a critical segment of the workforce — PSWs hired directly by people with disabilities and their families through self-managed or family-managed support arrangements. Effectively, as drafted now, the provision in the bill would exclude almost 90% of the families in Prince Edward Island. Is this something on your government's radar?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you very much, Your Honour. I was so proud to stand with SEIU Healthcare just a few weeks ago as we announced this tax credit. There was very vigorous activity by the union that represents the most underpaid workers in our sector. It was an important gain, an important acknowledgment for personal support workers that we see them. In fact, one personal support worker who was at the announcement, a woman named Kelly, said, “I have never felt seen by my government before today.” It was extremely moving.

We must continue to value the work of personal support workers. In the space of accredited personal support workers, there are many folks across this country who are toiling away, even today, whose names we don't know, whose stories we don't know and whose history we don't know, so we'll continue to ensure that we value this profession. We will look at all sectors of the personal support worker industry with an eye to making sure that people feel recognized and supported.

• (1700)

Senator Robinson: Thank you, minister. I want to highlight that, coming from a rural place in Canada, it's difficult to hire people any other way than directly. This unintended consequence is very unfortunate for rural Canadians, and I hope that you are able to look further into that and address this unintentional consequence.

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you, Your Honour. I take the Senator's comments seriously and will take them back to the department.

STELLANTIS FUNDING AGREEMENT

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Minister, after six weeks of fighting with parliamentarians from all parties over their rights and privileges, your government finally provided MPs with an unredacted copy of its funding agreement with Stellantis, yet you still refuse to make it publicly available for all Canadians. If your government really believes that this deal served Canadians' interests, why has it fought so hard to keep its details hidden from the public?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you, Your Honour. I cannot speak to that contract or that piece of work. That is under the purview of my colleague the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

Senator Martin: I will add that this seems to be part of a troubling pattern. Your government did not disclose its prior knowledge of Algoma Steel's planned layoffs before approving a \$500-million financing agreement. Then they tried to hide the contract with Stellantis that cost Canadians 3,000 jobs. Now your government seeks to grant cabinet ministers broad powers to exempt companies from federal laws in the name of innovation and economic growth. I question, again, the confidence that Canadians should have in your government.

Senator Housakos: Doesn't this go through cabinet?

Senator Martin: Yes, doesn't it go through cabinet?

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you, Your Honour. I would imagine senators know that what goes through cabinet is subject to cabinet confidence in this place. I suspect that all senators know that.

I will say this, though: Canadians do have confidence. In fact, they elected us just a few months ago. We sit on the side of the government, and that is because Canadians have extraordinary confidence in the experience of our Prime Minister, and they know that this government will be there for them in good times and bad.

Week after week, in the other place, we field questions about all the ways that Conservatives would cut the very programs that senators in this room today are speaking about with great pride and encouragement to do more. In fact, that is what Canadians think. Canadians think that we should have a robust early learning and child care system, that Canadians who are struggling should not go without supports and that we should make sure that children in schools are fed.

[*Translation*]

PROTECTION OF WORKERS

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: Thank you for joining us this afternoon, minister.

Canada's unions are calling for a worker-first approach, especially in light of tariffs and tariff threats affecting key sectors like steel, aluminum and manufacturing, and in a context of profound job market transformation.

They want to see measures adopted that will protect job stability and promote proper working conditions, while ensuring that processing sector workers can transition to new skilled and stable jobs. How would you respond to them about this transition and their re-skilling?

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P., Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario: Thank you for the question. We have several support measures in place for employees who are experiencing difficulties due to the tariffs.

[*English*]

For example, through the transformation of Employment Insurance, the Prime Minister directed our department and me to immediately ensure that: (a) any workers in tariff-threatened industries would not be subject to holdbacks from their first week of EI; (b) they would be able to obtain Employment Insurance immediately; and (c) long-tenured workers would receive an extra 20 weeks of Employment Insurance so that they would have time to be able to adjust to their new realities. On top of that, we are supporting provinces and territories with additional transfers for skills training.

For example, in the case of high layoffs in a plant like Algoma, Stellantis or any other place where there are large numbers of people suddenly unemployed, the provinces have the new fiscal capacity to be able to stand up re-skilling centres, retraining centres and job-seeking centres very quickly.

We know it is not ideal when a person is faced with sudden unemployment. Many times we hear from the opposition in the other place that workers don't want EI. I would agree. If anyone has ever been on EI in this room — I certainly have — it is not a very secure time. However, I will tell you this: It is certainly better than nothing. Workers who are experiencing unemployment rely on —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, minister.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: I am hoping you can continue speaking to us about Employment Insurance.

To help the job market weather economic shocks, workers are calling on the government to modernize Employment Insurance and review eligibility criteria so that no one falls through the cracks during the next economic downturn. What public commitment can you make to that end today?

[*English*]

Ms. Hajdu: Thank you, Your Honour. I believe this is the time to review EI. The Prime Minister agrees that this temporary measure we have put into place in terms of tariffs is just one suite of emergency measures to address the extraordinary circumstances we find ourselves in.

As our labour market evolves, and as we see new forms of employment, including forms of employment that we have often had a hard time tracking and accounting for, like gig employment, we need a focus on a modernized EI that meets our needs. I look forward to doing that work with my colleagues.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the time for Question Period has expired.

I am certain that you will want to join me in thanking Minister Hajdu for joining us today. Thank you so much.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

The Hon. the Speaker: We will now resume the proceedings that were interrupted at the start of Question Period. The bells will ring for 26 minutes, so the vote will be at 5:32 p.m.

Call in the senators.

Dasko	Oudar
Dean	Pate
Dhillon	Petitclerc
Duncan	Petten
Forest	Pupatello
Francis	Ravalia
Fridhandler	Ringuette
Galvez	Senior
Greenwood	Simons
Harder	Smith
Hay	Surette
Hébert	Varone
Housakos	Wells (<i>Alberta</i>)
Kingston	White
Klyne	Wilson
LaBoucane-Benson	Youance
Loffreda	Yussuff—59
MacAdam	

• (1730)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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: Honourable senators, the question is as follows: It was moved by the Honourable Senator Clement, seconded by the Honourable Senator Petitclerc:

That Bill S-216, An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada, be adjourned until the next sitting.

Motion agreed to on the following division:

YEAS THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Anderson	Manning
Arnold	Marshall
Arnot	Martin
Ataullahjan	McBean
Audette	McCallum
Boudreau	McNair
Busson	Miville-Dechêne
Cardozo	Mohamed
Carignan	Moncion
Clement	Moodie
Cormier	Moreau
Coyle	Muggli

Aucoin	McPhedran
Batters	Osler
Black	Patterson
Burey	Poirier
Deacon (<i>Nova Scotia</i>)	Quinn
Downe	Robinson
Gignac	Ross
Ince	Tannas
Lewis	Wallin—18

NAYS THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

ABSTENTIONS THE HONOURABLE SENATORS

Nil

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I ask for leave of the Senate that the sitting be suspended to await the receipt of messages from the House of Commons, with the bells to ring for 15 minutes before the sitting resumes, either to receive a message from the House of Commons or to adjourn.

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

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

• (1840)

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Your Honour, I'm not sure when the appropriate time is, but I really do need to put this on the record. I sit here as an unaffiliated senator. This morning, the Rules Committee, as part of its study, heard from Senator Moreau, and some proposals were made to try and make it more inclusive and fair for an unaffiliated senator in this place.

• (1740)

I want to put on the record my objection. I was prepared and very keen to speak on Bill S-218 today, and I was not advised that a deal had been made by the leaders. As a result, at the moment that the representatives were going to walk down the aisle, I was told this was the case and that I would not be able to speak because of the deal the leaders made.

Nobody had the courtesy to tell me that. It feels like an override of my privilege as a senator, and I want to register my objection and my disappointment.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 3, 2025-26

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-17, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

(Bill read first time.)

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: 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 at the next sitting of the Senate.)

(At 6:44 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.)

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