



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

Thursday, December 11, 2025

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,  
Speaker

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## THE SENATE

Thursday, December 11, 2025

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

Prayers.

[*Translation*]

### ROYAL ASSENT

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

RIDEAU HALL

December 10, 2025

Madam Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2025, at 5:04 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ken MacKillop

*Secretary to the Governor General*

The Honourable  
The Speaker of the Senate  
Ottawa

Bill Assented to Wednesday, December 10, 2025:

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 C-17, Chapter 6, 2025*)

[*English*]

### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate, I ask:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or previous order, for today's sitting, Senator's Statements be extended by a maximum of three minutes.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

## SENATORS' STATEMENTS

### THE PEOPLE OF SWEIDA, SYRIA

**Hon. David M. Wells:** Honourable senators, I wish to bring to your attention the plight of the people of Sweida province of southern Syria. The people of Sweida are peace-loving and have lived in this region for centuries.

Today this community of people endure enormous suffering. Predominantly Druze, they are known for their deep connection to the land, their agrarian traditions and their long-standing reputation as a peaceful and self-reliant people. For generations, they've cultivated their farms, preserved their cultural heritage and raised their families in the quiet hills and plains of the Jabal al-Arab region.

Yet in recent years, this community has faced profound hardship and severe violations of human rights. Numerous reports, videos and testimonies show a pattern of abuses committed against civilians in Sweida by Syrian government forces and affiliated actors. These accounts speak of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, the destruction of family homes and cultural spaces and sexual violence against women — heinous acts that leave families shattered and entire communities traumatized. Regardless of politics or borders, such suffering demands the world's attention, compassion and action.

The people of Sweida have tried again and again to assert their dignity and seek peaceful solutions. Their demonstrations and local efforts have consistently emphasized non-violence and the protection of their community. Yet instead of dialogue, their efforts have been met with aggression. As economic collapse deepened across Syria, Sweida's families — comprised of farmers, teachers, shopkeepers and elders — found themselves simultaneously battling insecurity, threats and violence.

On November 13, 2025, just three weeks ago, in a hearing conducted by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom under the topic "Religious Freedom in Syria's Post-Assad Transition," the commission heard from witnesses who confirmed specific threats, including sectarian massacres of Druze and Alawite Muslims and attacks on Christians and other religious minorities, as well as an escalation of killings, kidnappings and forced disappearances — all under the rule of the new transitional authorities.

In this darkness, one reality stands out: the near-total absence of meaningful international protection. Among regional actors, Israel has been the only country that has provided humanitarian support, protection and safe passage to individuals and communities facing existential threat. Regardless of one's political perspective, the simple human truth is that when a vulnerable population is in danger, any act of protection matters.

Today, I ask you not to view the people of Sweida through the lens of geopolitics but through the lens of shared humanity. Their struggle is not an abstract conflict but the basic experience of a people who want nothing more than safety, dignity and the ability to live in peace.

In speaking of this today in the Senate of Canada, I call on all who can to raise their voices for people of Sweida. There must be accountability from all who perpetrate abuses. Above all, we must affirm that no community — least of all, one so committed to peace — should ever stand alone in its hour of need.

Thank you, colleagues.

### EXPRESSION OF GOOD WISHES FOR THE SEASON

**Hon. Yuen Pau Woo:** Honourable senators:

'Twas months before Christmas.  
When all through the House,  
Not an MP was sitting —

[*Translation*]

not even a mouse,

[*English*]

Not even a mouse.  
The writ had dropped; all legislation was stopped;  
But senators worked on, for our duties don't drop.  
We keep calm, keep steady, keep sober of mind —

[*Translation*]

The Upper House carries on

[*English*]

— even when others unwind.  
An election was coming, the polls shouted, “Pierre!”  
But Carney replied:

[*Translation*]

“Not so fast

[*English*]

— I'm the rightful heir.”  
“Elbows up!” he declared with partisan glee.

[*Translation*]

“Canada — never!

[*English*]

— the fifty-first state we shall be.”  
When voting was over, the Libs scraped a minority;  
Senators sighed deeply —

[*Translation*]

ah, what a life, what uncertainty.

[*English*]

The Forty-fifth launch with a bill to build Canada.  
Cutting red tape and administrative yadda yadda.  
Premiers lined up for more money from feds.  
With visions of megaprojects dancing in their heads.  
The PM said internal trade will grow,  
But I still can't buy B.C. wine at the LCBO.  
The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow  
Gave the lustre of midday to objects below.  
When out in the Rockies there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang from my seat to see what was the matter.  
Away to the chamber I flew like a flash

[*Translation*]

Looking for the bills

[*English*]

We still had to hash.  
When to my wondering eyes should appear.  
Yet another pipeline project to the coast. Oh, dear!  
With a PM determined to diversify.  
I knew he would travel far,

[*Translation*]

to look for allies

[*English*]

And court new friends in whom we rely —  
since

[*Translation*]

America, alas,

[*English*]

no longer stands by.  
More rapid than eagles Trump's tariffs then came.  
On steel, on lumber, on aluminum — the same.  
“Now Hegseth! Now Hoekstra! Now Bessent! Now Rubio!  
Make sure you know your

[*Translation*]

teachings from Monroe.

[*English*]

Will CUSMA survive this American caprice?

[*Translation*]

Will the agreement soon be resting in peace?

[English]

So, to Asia and Africa and Europe we'll go.  
And Latin America, too, for business to grow.  
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof,  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof;  
As I lifted my head and was turning around,  
Down the chimney a budget tumbled — about a year late in  
coming to ground.  
The government promised more capital spending;  
The PBO murmured:

• (1310)

[Translation]

“That’s what I call ‘creative accounting’.”

[English]

Can we still trust our fiscal anchors?  
No, I’m not talking about a ban on oil tankers.  
And Minister Champagne —

[Translation]

he sure is no St. Nick;

[English]

This budget has few gifts from which to pick.  
Spending on arms will rise up and up —  
\$12 billion more this year, for what, for what?  
There’s more money for dental care too;  
If you need a root canal, there’s money for you.  
We welcome new leaders across the chamber;  
We look to them to steer us from danger.  
An independent Senate we vow to defend.  
Not the House of Commons to pretend.  
And as we spring to our sleighs and give a quick whistle,

[Translation]

Before we fly away

[English]

— like the down of a thistle,  
We await the Speaker’s blessing ere she slips from our sight:  
“The Senate stands adjourned to 2026.”

[Translation]

Good night,

[English]

good night!”

## COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM

**Hon. Robert Black:** Honourable senators, I rise in the Senate today to highlight Communities in Bloom, a Canadian non-profit organization committed to fostering civic pride, environmental responsibility and the enrichment of cultural and natural landscapes in communities across Canada and internationally.

Since 1995, Communities in Bloom has worked with over 900 municipalities at the provincial, national and international levels to develop and maintain activities and programs focused on sustainability, green space enhancement and heritage conservation.

With the help of thousands of municipal staff and volunteers, Communities in Bloom is uplifting communities by building vibrant and welcome spaces for all to enjoy.

I’d like to recognize Peggy Head, Chair of the Communities in Bloom board of directors, their entire board and all municipal staff and volunteers who are dedicating their time and energy to enhancing the environment while fostering community pride.

I had the pleasure of attending the 31st Communities in Bloom Symposium in November, which brought together municipal leaders, park professionals, industry experts and volunteers from across the country and internationally to celebrate the incredible achievements of the network. It was quite a vibrant, engaging and inspiring event to be part of.

What began with the recognition of 29 municipalities has now blossomed into a nationwide event and movement, now engaging hundreds of communities across Canada and beyond.

In 2024, through their partnership with the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association, Communities in Bloom has advanced to support the education of Canadians on the importance of protecting our environment and fostering pride throughout Canada and around the world. I would also like to wish Communities in Bloom an overdue congratulations on receiving the Governor General of Canada’s Viceregal Patronage in 2024 in recognition of their exceptional contributions to society that support and promote Canadian values, diversity, inclusion and cultural knowledge.

Thank you to the Communities in Bloom staff, committees, volunteers and leaders throughout the country and beyond for their dedicated work that they do to make communities more beautiful, environmentally friendly and inviting.

I’d also like to take a moment to wish everyone in this august chamber and those across Ontario, in Canada and around the world a very merry Christmas and a safe new year with family and friends. From my family to yours, may the blessings of the season last all year long.

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 Jason Veltri, the Co-Founder of Rainbow Collective of Thunder Bay and Executive Coordinator for the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Wells (*Alberta*).

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

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

### THE CAPTIVE TREE

**Hon. Salma Atallahjan:** Honourable senators, I rise today inspired by Senator Manning, who never fails to share something remarkable about his province.

In that same spirit, I offer a story about one of the most bizarre and long-standing detentions in history. Today, I speak about the unjust arrest and detention of an inmate who has neither fled nor resisted, whose record is spotless and whose only known crime is being a tree.

In my home province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan, stands a fully grown, century-old banyan tree that has been literally chained since 1898. The story goes that British officer James Squid, in a moment of what we might generously call “impaired judgment,” believed that the tree was advancing toward him. Instead of someone saying, “Sir, trees are famously stationary,” the order to arrest it was carried out. Chains were fastened around the tree, and there they remain to this day.

At first glance, this is undeniably comical. It is not often that one encounters a piece of history that reads like satire: a tree arrested for suspicious movement. One imagines it standing there, decade after decade, contemplating its life choices and wondering which branch gave the wrong impression.

But beneath the humour lies a valuable lesson: The captive tree symbolizes the human tendency to impose restraints on things that pose no real threat — sometimes out of fear, sometimes due to habit and sometimes because of misinterpretation.

The tree, rooted in its place, yet bound by chains, invites us to reflect on the systems, policies and assumptions we have inherited, those that may once have seemed justified but now persist merely because they have never been questioned.

Decades later, when local authorities proposed removing the chain, residents petitioned for it to remain. They wished to preserve the lesson of the captive tree as a living monument of the absurdities that arise when power goes unchecked.

Let this peculiar episode from history serve as a reminder that it is never too late to re-examine our choices, whether they are personal or institutional.

It is also a reminder that, even in the most serious halls of governance, we must occasionally allow ourselves to laugh. After all, if we cannot find humour in the idea of a tree doing life without parole, then parliamentary work has become far too grim.

Merry Christmas, everyone. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACADIAN REMEMBRANCE DAY

**Hon. René Cormier:** Honourable senators, since yesterday was International Human Rights Day and we are just a few days away from December 13, Acadian Remembrance Day, which commemorates the Acadian deportation, I would like to ask you whether you know that it was a New Brunswicker, John Peters Humphrey, who wrote the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948?

This universal declaration, which affirms the fundamental right of every individual to live in freedom and safety and to not be arbitrarily deprived of their home or homeland, stands in stark contrast to the tragedies and hardship that led to the creation of our country, the scars of which are still borne today.

The plight of the Acadian people, born in this North American territory and deported in the 18th century during the Great Upheaval, is a powerful example. By forcibly uprooting the Acadians, separating families, taking away their property and sending them off to different colonies, the British Crown of the time showed an utter disregard for human decency.

This tragedy, which is an integral part of our common history, shows what happens when a group of people is deprived of the legal and political guarantees protecting their dignity and freedom. Today, the declaration seeks to make these guarantees universal to prevent such historical injustices from happening again.

The universal declaration also emphasizes the right of every people to preserve its culture, language and identity. By explicitly seeking to dissolve a culturally distinct community, the Acadian deportation violated these fundamental principles. After the Acadians returned home, they had to fight to maintain their traditions, their French language and their social cohesion. That fight continues to this day. Colleagues, the contrast between this historical ordeal and the ideals of the declaration reminds us that recognizing human rights is not just an abstract ideal, but a concrete necessity to protect peoples from cultural erasure and oppression by ensuring their full recognition.

It is therefore surprising that, more than four centuries later, the Acadian people, the first French-speaking people to land on the Atlantic coast, still have no explicit place in our constitutional and legislative texts. Yes, they are an official minority language community, but they are still waiting for full cultural, political and legal recognition.

In light of all this, and given that the French language is so fragile in our country, it is my hope that the Acadian people will one day be fully recognized in Canada's democratic institutions.

• (1320)

[English]

Inspired by the remarkable work of New Brunswicker John Peters Humphrey and by the content of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I therefore invite all of us, honourable colleagues, to continue our work as legislators to ensure the full recognition of all peoples of our magnificent country.

In closing, allow me to extend my best wishes for the holiday season. May joy, health and serenity be at the heart of your celebrations so that we may continue to serve Canadians in full solidarity.

[Translation]

May this holiday season be a time to show your loved ones how much you care for them, and the most vulnerable members of our society how much you stand united with them. Happy holidays!

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

[English]

#### VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Indigenous actor and singer Tom Jackson. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator White.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

#### TOM JACKSON, C.C.

##### SANTA'S CRAZY SOX BOX

**Hon. Judy A. White:** Honourable senators, I'm thrilled to have Tom Jackson join us today at the Senate of Canada.

As you've already heard, Thomas Dale Jackson, Companion of the Order of Canada, is a famous Canadian actor and singer. He created and starred in an annual series of Christmas concerts called The Huron Carole, which ran for 18 years. He played Billy Twofeathers on "Shining Time Station" and Peter Kenidi on "North of 60." He also served as the chancellor of Trent University, and he currently stars in a Canadian-made series called "Sullivan's Crossing."

Yes, Tom is an icon in the entertainment industry, but if you ask him what he does, Tom's answer is simply, "I save lives."

Tom is the Senior Vice-President and Strategic Adviser for a First Nations-owned transportation corridor known as NeeStaNan, which means "All of Us" in Cree. The corridor aims to open a pathway from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario to the world by building crucial infrastructure — rail, ports and airports — connecting our communities to global markets and new opportunities. This company will generate billions annually for First Nations and for the Canadian economy. NeeStaNan saves lives through community development, education, employment and hope.

Today, though, I want to highlight one of his nearest and dearest projects called Santa's Crazy Sox Box. It is Tom's national campaign that collects socks, toques, scarves and other warm winter gear to give to those in need across the country. It should be noted that socks are the number one requested item by shelters throughout this country to keep feet warm and prevent serious health issues in the winter.

Tom started Santa's Crazy Sox Box on the set of "Sullivan's Crossing" four years ago, with hundreds of socks being brought in by everyone. Since then, the campaign has expanded, and it welcomes Canadians to get involved by grabbing a box, tape on the downloadable poster featuring Tom's face and start collecting. In Tom's own words:

A pair of socks is like a hug for your feet, a small act of love that can warm Canada up and save lives this winter.

I would like to thank Tom for this incredible initiative and congratulate him on the positive impact he's having on our communities and our country.

*Wela'lin.* Thank you.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

#### TILL HEYDE AND GÉRALD LAFRENIÈRE

##### CONGRATULATIONS ON RETIREMENT

**Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, I rise today as Deputy Leader of the Opposition and on behalf of my esteemed counterparts, Senator Patti LaBoucane-Benson, Senator Bernadette Clement, Senator Rebecca Patterson and Senator Judy White, as well as our entire scroll team to pay tribute to Till Heyde who has skilfully and faithfully guided our daily scroll —

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

**An Hon. Senator:** Speech!

**Senator Martin:** And he has been a tremendous wealth of knowledge to all of us and to this chamber.

After more than two decades with the Senate, today is Till's final sitting day before his retirement. He leaves behind a legacy that will be felt for many years to come. His knowledge of our Senate Rules, procedures and parliamentary history has guided countless decisions and helped shape the standards and traditions we rely on today.

He holds a deep respect for this institution and the foundation on which it was built. He is truly one of the keepers of the Rules in this chamber, a guardian of its processes, a protector of its traditions and an example of professionalism at its finest.

Honourable senators, as Till enters his well-earned retirement, we not only celebrate his years of service but also the tremendous impact he has had on each of us and on the institution he served with such dedication. Till, we wish you the very best as you embark on this next chapter of your life. We hope you enjoy some well-deserved rest and, as Senator LaBoucane-Benson said to me, more time with your lovable cat, Annalise.

Another important member of our Senate family, Gérald Lafrenière, is also retiring in the new year, so this is our last opportunity to thank him for over 30 years of combined service.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

**Senator Martin:** He retires after serving as the sixteenth Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments on an interim basis from December 2020 until May 2024, and as Deputy Clerk, Legislative Services of the Senate since May 6, 2024.

Gérald, thank you for your strategic counsel and dedication for over three decades.

Honourable senators, please join our entire scroll team in thanking Till Heyde and Gérald Lafrenière for their decades of dedicated service, and we congratulate them on their well-deserved retirements.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Mr. Heyde, Till, you will be missed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lafrenière, Gérald, you will be missed.

[*English*]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### STUDY ON CANADA'S INTERESTS AND ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA

FIRST REPORT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMITTEE DEPOSITED WITH CLERK DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Peter M. Boehm:** Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on October 7, 2025, the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on December 11, 2025, its first report entitled *Canada-Africa: Seizing a Strategic Opportunity* and I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

Happy holidays, everyone.

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

[*Translation*]

### STUDY ON VOICES OF YOUTH INDIGENOUS LEADERS EVENTS

SECOND REPORT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES COMMITTEE DEPOSITED WITH CLERK DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Michèle Audette:** Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that pursuant to the orders adopted by the Senate on October 7, 2025, the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on December 11, 2025, its second report entitled *Voices of Youth Indigenous Leaders 2024* 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 Audette, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

• (1330)

[*English*]

### BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION BILL, 2025, NO. 1

FIRST REPORT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT MATTER TABLED

**Hon. Robert Black:** Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, which deals with

the subject matter of those elements contained in Division 8 of Part 5 of Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

(Pursuant to the order adopted November 26, 2025, the report was deemed referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

### AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

#### BUDGET AND AUTHORIZATION TO TRAVEL—STUDY ON ROLE OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD SECTOR IN FOOD SECURITY—SECOND REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

**Hon. Robert Black**, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, presented the following report:

Thursday, December 11, 2025

The Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry has the honour to present its

#### SECOND REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Wednesday, October 22, 2025, to examine and report on the role of the agriculture and agri-food sector with regard to food security in Canada, respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, and requests, for the purpose of such study, that it be empowered:

- (a) to travel inside Canada.

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

Respectfully submitted,

ROBERT BLACK

*Chair*

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

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

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

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

### INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

#### THIRD REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

**Hon. Jim Quinn**, Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, presented the following report:

Thursday, December 11, 2025

The Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration has the honour to present its

#### THIRD REPORT

Your committee, which is authorized by the *Rules of the Senate* to consider financial and administrative matters and, pursuant to the *Senate Administration Rules*, to prepare estimates of the sum that will be required from Parliament for the services of the Senate, has approved the Senate Main Estimates for the fiscal year 2026-27 and recommends their adoption.

A summary of these Estimates is appended to this report. Your committee notes that the proposed total is \$141,409,806.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM QUINN

*Deputy Chair*

(*For text of report, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix B, p. 575.*)

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

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

#### FOURTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED

**Hon. Jim Quinn:** Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, entitled *Annual Report on Parliamentary Associations' Activities and Expenditures for 2024-25*.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### ADJOURNMENT

#### MOTION ADOPTED

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate)**, pursuant to notice of December 10, 2025, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 2 p.m.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*Translation*]

### EXPRESSION OF GOOD WISHES FOR THE SEASON

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Honourable senators, every year at this time, after months of debating, of referring matters to committee and of reworking clauses, the Senate reaches the solemn moment when it gets ready to adjourn for the holidays, just long enough for us to forget all our passwords.

[*English*]

We have spent months in the noble pursuit of sober second thought. “Sober” was the promise; “thought” is still under review. And in this chamber, the second thought is rarely the last thought. We move on to the third thought, the fourth thought and, eventually, the collector’s edition with bonus commentary, just in case we missed a comma the first time. Here, reflection isn’t a step; it’s a full-season special on the parliamentary channel, probably renewed year after year.

That, colleagues, is the rhythm of the Red Chamber: steady, contemplative and frequently pausing for additional contemplation just to be safe.

[*Translation*]

This routine, unique to this chamber, also includes a certain internal evolution. For example, the team of the Government Representative in the Senate has grown from three to five members, an evolution worthy of Darwin. After gaining two more women senators, we’ve moved on from surviving as a species to managing a legislative calendar.

Amid this growth and reinvention, our Conservative colleagues haven’t sat idly by. They’ve also demonstrated remarkable institutional creativity. We watched them recruit senators in order to maintain a certain official status, which apparently comes with extra funds.

• (1340)

This is a bold move that deserves to be applauded and perhaps even studied in committee. I must say, the idea of a caucus of independent Conservatives is a linguistic gem as rare as a press conference between an accountant and a poet, but much more cost-effective. Their approach perfectly combines political philosophy and fiscal management. It is living proof that fiscal discipline leads to everything, even recruitment between parliamentary groups.

This session has once again shown the exceptional value of the Senate. In this place, reflection is not a pause, but rather a method, and disagreement is a superior form of public interest. Whether on matters of justice, the environment, the economy or reconciliation, we have demonstrated that debate can be both passionate and courteous, which is, frankly, quite a feat in the political world.

Behind this rigour and passion is an entire team that supports our work with professionalism and patience. I would like to thank the pages, the messengers, the clerks — two of whom are unfortunately leaving us soon — the interpreters, the security staff and everyone else who helps us appear organized, sometimes even without our knowledge. You are the guardians of our parliamentary dignity, and I thank you for that.

Finally, I wish my colleagues in all parliamentary groups a restful and well-deserved break. When we come back, refreshed and ready to go, after perhaps enjoying some sunshine, spending time with family or finding our lost luggage, we will once again be able to practise the noble art of sober second thought, although there is no point giving lost luggage a second thought because once it’s gone, it’s gone for good.

On behalf of the entire team at the Government Representative Office, I extend to you our warmest wishes for a holiday season filled with joy and peace as we usher in a happy new year.

[*English*]

And as Senator Pupatello now knows, I cannot show you my speech, but I will pass it along.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, I rise on behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada, or CPC, caucus to wish everyone a merry Christmas and all the best for the new year.

Before I get into that, I also want to highlight, on behalf of our CPC caucus, to all independent senators particularly, how we appreciate you. We thank you, in particular, because since the beginning of this Forty-fifth Parliament in May, we’ve seen your change in tone. We have seen you be less partisan; we have seen a spirit of cooperation we have not seen before, and we particularly want to thank you for that.

Particularly, we in the CPC want to thank the Canadian Senators Group, or CSG, and the Progressive Senate Group, or PSG, for your generosity of reinforcing our troops here in this chamber. It means a lot to us. And in this time of holidays and

the spirit of Christmas, we call on the Independent Senators Group, the ISG, to show the same benevolence over the next few weeks.

To the government leader, Senator Moreau, do not say that I never do anything for you, because today we gave up on Question Period. That's your Christmas gift.

Colleagues, I also have some wishes. I've been writing vigorously to Santa over the last few weeks, and my hope for 2026 is for the government leader to start answering some of my questions. You never know. I've been writing to Santa now for almost a decade, but I keep getting the same results.

In all seriousness, Senator Moreau, I appreciate very much your congeniality and our cooperative work. We both have the interests of this institution at heart. Even though you don't answer my questions, and at times you probably don't like my questions, I look forward to the new year and continuing to work with you.

Senator Brian Francis, you are a gentleman. You help us continue to move the train forward and make this place constructive, cooperative and effective. We appreciate very much that spirit you bring to the table.

I have left last, of course, Senator Raymonde Saint-Germain, who last week gave her last intervention as the leader of the ISG. We are going to miss her. I think the ISG is going to miss her as well. I can tell you this institution is a better place because of the leadership she provided at the table, helping the trains run on time, helping us come to a consensus when, at various occasions, consensus seemed out of reach. I hope she's listening, wherever she is, to know full well we wish her all the best in the holiday season.

Senator Tannas, my good friend, former colleague — still a colleague — and always a fellow Conservative, in my mind, I would like to thank you for your many years of service in this institution, but particularly as Leader of the CSG. I know that leading any group is not easy, but you've done it always with class. You've come to the table and tried to find consensus with us. With me, it's always a little bit harder — I know that — but in the end we always put our differences aside for the betterment of this institution, and that's what counts.

I want to thank the Speaker for keeping this place civilized and keeping us in check at times when we need to be kept in check. I thank her for the dignity she brings to the chair at all times. Thank you very much, Your Honour.

And I know this holiday will be particularly special for you and your family, so enjoy the grandchild, who has a fantastic name, to boot: Leo. What a year for the Pope, for the Speaker and for the Leader of the Opposition.

A special thanks to the Senate Administration, the pages, our Parliamentary Protective Service, who keep us safe in this institution, and a special thanks to our Senate staff as well, who work so hard for us and are there for us all the time. A round of applause for all of them.

[*Translation*]

I have just two wishes for 2026: health for all Canadians and much success for our great country, one that everyone here is working hard to make the best country in the world.

[*English*]

We all have the same interest. It's the greatest country in the world. Merry Christmas, all the best.

**Hon. Bernadette Clement:** Honourable senators, as we say “Merry Christmas” and “Happy holidays” to one another, on behalf of the Independent Senators Group, I too want to show gratitude. It never ceases to amaze me all the intricate and important work that makes all of this function so beautifully.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank the Parliamentary Protective Service, which ensures our safety while also keeping an eye on our buildings, responding to emergencies and greeting us every morning and evening at the door. That is much appreciated. These people make sure that we can do our jobs safely and without worry.

[*English*]

I want to thank the senators' staff, who care for us, from organizing our calendars to preparing notes and speeches, to encouraging and sometimes demanding that we rest when we've gone too hard for too long.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank the members of the Senate Administration who coordinate everything, including human resources, parking spots, office furniture and pay stubs. This place would be in total chaos without the essential services that these people so diligently provide.

[*English*]

I want to thank the pages, who anticipate all our needs, from dropping off and picking up documents to hearing scratchy voices and delivering water and ensuring the chamber is ready for action.

[*Translation*]

Finally, thank you to all those who take care of everything else: setting up and tearing down, the kitchen, cleaning, repairs and coordination. All of this behind-the-scenes work is so well done that it often goes unnoticed.

Thank you to our dear Speaker, the Honourable Raymonde Gagné, who is always elegant and impressive.

[English]

I can't resist; I have to come back and thank two people who are at the heart of how this chamber functions properly, Till Heyde and Gérald Lafrenière. Today we say not only "Merry Christmas" but "Happy retirement."

[Translation]

I studied law with Gerry's sister, Lise. I know he comes from a wonderful family and that his four daughters — Melanie, Annika, Gabrielle, and Katrina, now grown — are delighted to see him more often, as are his lovely wife, Danielle, and, of course, their beloved dog, Pogo.

With over 30 years of service, Gerry has been an adviser, a mentor, and, as Senator Martin said, a trusted leader whose strategic advice has influenced countless decisions and strengthened the institutional structure of the Senate. The strong relationships he has built within the Senate community continue to serve as a model of professionalism, integrity and collaboration. Thank you, Gerry.

• (1350)

[English]

Till has served numerous Speakers in his role: Speaker Kinsella, Speaker Nolin, Speaker Housakos, Speaker Furey and now Speaker Gagné. His fingerprints are on all of the major procedural documents and the *Rules of the Senate*. His dedication to answering questions or giving advice is always impressive. He is encyclopedic, able to instantly recall Speakers' rulings from 50 years ago. It's true.

Till was one of the first people whom I met here. I don't think he knew what hit him when he came into our office and Katie and I sprung our Labrador retriever energy on him. I was a new senator and eager to learn.

Even though we didn't understand anything that you said, the way that you spoke about this chamber gave words to the feelings of distinction, order and respect that now envelop me every day that I am here. And, Till, you'll be happy to know that I also now understand everything else you said in that meeting.

I have no doubt that you will benefit from some downtime with your sister Jill — yes, Jill and Till — and, of course, with your beautiful cat, Annalise. We know how dedicated you were to your late mom, Jane, who must have been so proud of her son's accomplishments and service to this country. Thank you, Till.

[Translation]

All Senate caucuses have undergone leadership changes, and I'd like to extend my warmest congratulations to all the new leaders. I'm particularly grateful to my outgoing colleagues from the Independent Senators Group on the facilitation team for their dedication. I also want to thank all those who ran in each election.

[ Senator Clement ]

I would also like to congratulate our new leadership team, Senators Lucie Moncion, Joan Kingston, Chantal Petitclerc and Pierre Dalphond. I look forward to working with this new team and with all groups to continue and strengthen the work of the independent Senate.

[English]

As we end this session, on behalf of the Independent Senators Group, I want to wish you all a peaceful break with time to reflect on the year behind us, to appreciate the people in our lives and to renew our commitment to a future built on kindness, love and hope. Let us carry that spirit into our work ahead. May our debates be thoughtful, our decisions wise and our service to Canadians unwavering. Thank you. *Nia:wen*. Merry Christmas.

**Hon. Scott Tannas:** Honourable senators, I want to join my colleagues in what I think will go down as "Expressions of Thanks and Good Wishes" in the Debates record.

I want to start by saying 2025 was a year of transformation. That would be an understatement, I think. You will recall that at this time last year, we were waiting for the start of Trump 2.0 and hoping that it would maybe have a little more discretion and stability than the first time. We were anticipating a federal election with a future prime minister Pierre Poilievre taking over the Government of Canada.

What we got instead was the resignation of prime minister Justin Trudeau and the return of the Liberal government under Prime Minister Carney. We also saw the start of a trade war with the United States and threats of annexation, plus a realignment of international relations.

This year, this building saw a visit from the King. That was an amazing day for everybody who was here. It's a day I will never ever forget, and I'm sure you all agree.

When he said in his speech, "The True North is indeed strong and free!" and this room erupted — Indigenous leaders, former prime ministers and all of us — the hair on my arms was standing when he said that. We couldn't help ourselves. We're not supposed to roar and stand, but we did. And he let us. It was a special day.

You know, FYI, he was not the first king to visit this building, nor the first king to even stand exactly where we are. In 1957, Elvis Presley arrived right here. This is the platform of the train station where we are right now.

We saw the Blue Jays and the excitement of them in the World Series. It has been an interesting year.

Here in the chamber, I think one of the things I want to mention, particularly today, is that this fall we've attempted — with the encouragement of new leadership — to try to attack Senate public bills in a different way. We've attempted — and so far we have been relatively successful — debating those bills in a timely fashion, both speaking for and against. We've resisted the temptation to delay because we don't like something, or jam it because we do and use the majority. I hope we can continue in that fashion with Senate public bills. They are an important part of what it is that we do here at the Senate of Canada.

I want to express my thanks to the following individuals, groups, et cetera:

First of all, I want to thank all the Canadian Senators Group members for allowing me to have this role. I cherish every one of you. Thank you very much.

I want to thank our staff. I especially want to thank the leaders of the various caucuses and groups. It has been a privilege to serve with all of you. Throughout my tenure, we've had good times and bad times, as well as tough times and funny and fun times, but we've always got through and we've tried to serve all of you and the people of Canada as best we could.

I want to acknowledge Senator Saint-Germain, who I hope is watching. We had a great time working together. And to all of the other leaders — Senator Housakos and Senator Francis — thank you. Senator Moreau, it's good to get to know you, sir.

There are so many people who make this place work, and every once in a while — and it's usually right about now — we think about the people who help us do our job, the people who make these buildings look so magnificent and the people who keep us safe.

We are so lucky to have these people here — it's 700-odd I believe, or maybe a little less like 450-plus — who help us.

I want to say congratulations to the newly elected Canadian Senators Group leadership team and to warn them, and all of you, that I'll be sitting back there like that guy on the Muppets: "That's not the way we did it when I ran things." But I'm looking forward to being a garden-variety senator here in the Senate of Canada.

Colleagues, I think I'm going to leave it there. When I first came here, I had a book. I had a book that was printed for me of all the senators who were here at that time and their biographies. I didn't speak for the first 60 days I was here. All I did was hold on to that book and listen, and when a new senator whom I hadn't heard before stood up, I looked them up in the book, and as they spoke, I read their biography. And after 60 days, I didn't want to speak. I was so humbled by the people who were here that my first speech was actually about all those people. I still get that feeling. I get it at committee when we are digging in on something and there is all this expertise. I get it here in the chamber.

• (1400)

I'm so honoured and so in awe that a guy from High River, Alberta, happens to be here to find himself with all of you extraordinary people. Thank you. I want to wish you all happy holidays, merry Christmas and a happy new year.

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Brian Francis:** Honourable senators, on behalf of the Progressive Senate Group, or PSG, I am pleased to join the other leaders today in sharing well wishes before we all return home for the holidays.

As has been noted, we have undergone several changes and will see several more by the time we return in 2026. This was the first time that Senators Moreau and Housakos provided season's greetings and the last time for Senator Tannas.

I wish to add my voice to the others thanking Senator Saint-Germain and Senator Tannas for their leadership over their respective terms. I look forward to welcoming their successors, Senator Moncion and Senator Osler, when our leaders' meetings resume.

Our sittings will look a little different in the new year, and I appreciate this opportunity to offer my thanks to both Gerry Lafrenière and Till Heyde for their dedicated years of service. The institutional memory that resides in both of these gentlemen will certainly be missed. I hope they both appreciate that the impacts they have had on the Senate will linger long after their departures.

Gerry and Till, you have both earned some well-deserved rest. Till, I have heard your favourite feline, Annalise, will be particularly grateful to have more of your attention.

As the year draws to a close, this is a worthwhile opportunity to take note of what we have accomplished so far and what we hope to achieve in the future.

I have been honoured to step into my current role as leader of the PSG and grateful to my colleagues for their support, not just of me but with respect to all the ways in which we support each other. We are a great team, and I am proud of all its members, both senators and staff.

I would also like to extend my thanks to all senators and staff. Collaboration is the best way for us to succeed, and I am so grateful for all the ways in which we have worked together on behalf of all Canadians.

Certainly, we are all here with the same purpose. Though we represent different regions and communities, we each do our best to ensure we find the right balance of advocating, listening and determining the best ways forward. We would not be capable of achieving any of this without the mostly behind-the-scenes support from those who work for the Senate administration. I don't dare try to name them all for fear of accidentally forgetting anyone, but I think it's safe to say we are all better off thanks to their diligent work.

Honourable senators, I don't wish to keep us here any later than necessary, but I do want to take this opportunity to wish you all a restful and restorative break. I look forward to seeing you all again in the new year. *Wela'lin*. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, on the eve of the winter break, I want to take a moment to extend my sincerest wishes and express my deepest gratitude to you.

First, I would like to commend each and every one of you, senators, for your commitment to serving our democracy. Your rigorous work, thoughtful debates and sense of duty contribute to the strength and credibility of our institution.

I would also like to extend my warmest thanks to our colleagues who serve in leadership and facilitation roles, whether they have just been elected or have served for some time, for their vision and cooperation.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my team, your teams, and all the staff of the Senate and Parliament of Canada.

[English]

Hundreds of diligent, talented and dedicated individuals work tirelessly to ensure that our chamber functions smoothly and that we may fulfill our constitutional mandates. Their expertise and professionalism are essential to everything we accomplish.

[Translation]

On that, I would like to highlight the retirement of Gérald Lafrenière — a young man from Manitoba, by the way — and Till Heyde, two pillars of our institution who between them have more than 49 years of experience in the Senate and 61 years of experience on Parliament Hill. That is very impressive.

Gerry and Till, your exceptional dedication has left its mark on our collective work, but also on my tenure as speaker. I sincerely thank you.

[English]

We are deeply grateful for their wise counsel over the years and for their willingness to postpone their retirement — more than once, by the way — in order to continue supporting our work. We wish them both nothing but the very best in this new chapter of their lives.

[Translation]

To the Clerk, Shaila Anwar, to the Usher of the Black Rod, Greg Peters, and to your teams, to all the directorates, to our parliamentary partners and to our great team in the Senate, thank you for your cooperation and your unwavering dedication.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our Speaker pro tempore, the Honourable René Cormier, for his significant contribution to our institution over the past year.

[English]

Dear colleagues, as we prepare for a well-deserved winter break, I hope that you may find rest, joy and time for your loved ones. I know I will. Let us return renewed and ready to continue our shared work in the service of Canadians, guided by the values that define this chamber: reflection, collaboration and a commitment to the common good.

I wish you happy holidays and a new year filled with peace, health and happiness.

[ The Hon. the Speaker ]

[Translation]

I wish everyone a very happy holiday season and a new year filled with peace, health and happiness.

Thank you very much for your support. *Meegwetch.*

**Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

[English]

## GEORGINA'S LAW

### SECOND READING

Leave having been given to proceed to Other Business, Senate Public Bills, Second Reading, Order No. 25:

**Hon. Fabian Manning** moved second reading of Bill S-242, An Act respecting national action for the prevention of intimate partner violence.

He said: Honourable senators, I am pleased today to have the opportunity to speak to my private member's bill, Bill S-242, An Act respecting national action for the prevention of intimate partner violence.

Several of my colleagues in this chamber have said to me that I must be a very patient man, seeing that I introduced the first incarnation of this bill, Bill S-249, on April 24, 2018. Yes, you heard me correctly. I introduced the bill for the second time, again numbered Bill S-249, on June 9, 2022, and here we are today with a third opportunity for me to bring the bill to the floor of the Senate.

• (1410)

I can say with confidence that it is not only myself that has plenty of patience, it is a lady by the name of Georgina McGrath, whom I will tell you more about later, and thousands of other victims of intimate partner violence throughout Canada who have been supporting my efforts here in the Senate for the past eight years. They, and I, would like to see this piece of legislation become the law of the land.

I firmly hope that this third trip up to bat will produce a home run, and we will land at home plate sooner than later. In order to accomplish that goal, I am humbly asking for your continued support for what I am putting forward here today.

This legislative journey began on a January morning in 2017, when I received a call from Georgina McGrath of the community of Branch, located in St. Mary's Bay in Newfoundland and Labrador. She asked me if I would be able to meet with her to discuss what we, at that time, referred to as the issue of domestic violence.

A few days later, I sat down with Georgina for the first time, which would be the first of many meetings, telephone calls and other methods of correspondence throughout the next number of years.

During that first meeting, Georgina told me in intricate detail about her story of intimate partner violence, a story of years of continuous beatings from her partner at the time, a story of horrific physical, mental and emotional abuse, her several near-death experiences and the thought that the only way she could put an end to it all was by taking her own life.

To say I was shocked would be a major understatement. Since that initial meeting, Georgina's story has never left my mind. To this day, I still struggle to understand how one human being, who, in the vast majority of cases, is a man, could inflict such abuse, suffering and maltreatment on another human being, who, in the vast majority of cases, is a woman.

I was fortunate to grow up in a family with five brothers and two sisters, and, prior to my mom's passing in 2011, my parents were married for six months short of sixty years.

My father worshipped the ground my mother walked on. Therefore, I have great difficulty in understanding the horrendous actions perpetrated by these cowards. Believe you me, they are all cowards.

My sincere hope is that the passage of Bill S-242 would be another cog in the wheel to deal with the epidemic of intimate partner violence that is so prevalent throughout our Canadian society today. The time has come for us to step up as legislators and do our part.

Would Bill S-242 stop the abuse entirely?

Would Bill S-242 eliminate the scourge of intimate partner violence in Canada?

Would Bill S-242 abolish this epidemic?

Sadly, my friends, I believe we can all agree that we may not reach those lofty goals, but neither can we allow that to deter us from making a step forward and trying our best to make a difference.

The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu once said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." I honestly believe that one of those important steps would be the passage into law of Bill S-242.

The enactment of this bill would provide for the continuation of national action on the prevention of intimate partner violence.

The Minister of Women and Gender Equality would lead national action to prevent and address intimate partner violence. The minister would then engage annually with other federal ministers and provincial ministers responsible for the status of women and regularly meet with Indigenous partners, victims, survivors and stakeholders with respect to:

(a) the adequacy of current programs and strategies aimed at preventing intimate partner violence and at protecting and assisting victims of intimate partner violence;

(b) partnerships in the prevention of intimate partner violence and the protection of victims of intimate partner violence;

(c) the financial and other costs of action to prevent and address intimate partner violence; and

(d) any constitutional, legal or jurisdictional implications of action to prevent and address intimate partner violence.

While the entire bill is vital, a very important aspect of the bill is located in section 4, dealing with the reporting of progress on government's efforts to both the House of Commons and the Senate of Canada.

Section 4(1) states:

Within two years after this Act receives royal assent and every two years after that, the Minister must prepare a report setting out progress on action to prevent and address intimate partner violence and cause a copy of the report to be tabled in each House of Parliament.

This is followed in section 4(2) by the statement:

The Minister must post the report on the departmental website within 30 days after the day on which the report is tabled in both Houses of Parliament.

Regardless of which political party is in power in our country in the future, the passage of Bill S-242 would elicit a firm commitment from the federal government to present this biannual report.

The bill establishes a process of checks and balances whereby we would be able to question, debate, scrutinize and offer improvements, if necessary.

My bill is not asking for any singular response to this issue.

The legal advice I received a long time ago from the Library of Parliament was that bringing forward a piece of legislation asking for the development of national action would be the most productive process to implement at this time. That is why Bill S-242 is before you today.

Since I first introduced the bill in 2018, we have had three federal elections, and along with the COVID-19 pandemic, have witnessed the bill being put on the back burner many, many times.

Since 2017, I have met with over 180 victims of many different types of intimate partner violence, of which three were men, and the remainder were women.

I have been educated in more ways than time will allow me to explain to you in detail here today.

Intimate partner violence happens in many forms of relationships, including marriage, common law or dating relationships, regardless of the gender and sexual orientation of the partners, at any time during a relationship and even after it has ended.

Intimate partner violence can occur in both public and private places, as well as online and in many other ways. But they all deal with the issue of one person gaining control over another individual. Intimate partner violence is all about control.

During the last parliamentary session, my bill went before the Social Affairs Committee. They carried out a comprehensive study, heard from a variety of witnesses of intimate partner violence, including Georgina McGrath. Even though, at times, her appearance before the committee was difficult, her personal story left a lasting impression on all the members of the committee. It was a day of heart-wrenching testimony I will never forget.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Georgina and the members of the committee at that time for their work on the bill and their kindness and hospitality that they showed Georgina on that day.

Your reassurance and support gave Georgina the encouragement to continue advocating for victims. Two weeks ago, she spoke at a Unifor conference in St. John's. Last Thursday night, she gave a talk to a gathering at the Grace Sparkes House located in the town of Marystown in Newfoundland and Labrador, where they presented Georgina with the Spark of Change Award. This award is in recognition of her meaningful impact in supporting domestic violence awareness, prevention and survivor empowerment. I'm sure you'll all join me in congratulating her.

The Grace Sparkes House is a 10-bed, 24-hour emergency shelter offering free, confidential services to women and children who are fleeing family violence. Georgina is speaking out and advocating for those who, for many reasons, are not in a position to do so themselves. I know you will all join me in wishing her well as she continues to be a voice for the voiceless.

For those of you who may not be aware, the short title of this bill is presented as "This act may be cited as Georgina's Law," a fitting tribute, in my humble opinion, to a person who is definitely making a difference in our world as it relates to intimate partner violence.

During my last attempt to develop and present this bill, I worked very closely with the former Minister of Women and Gender Equality the Honourable Marci Ien and her very capable staff.

Minister Ien was very supportive of the bill. My clear hope is that the bill will receive the same support from the present minister when it arrives in the other place.

I was very pleased to hear the government's announcement on Tuesday concerning the introduction of a new bill called "An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to criminal and correctional matters (child protection, gender-based violence, delays and other measures)." Since the bill is 167 pages long, I have not had the opportunity to go through it fully, but I am confident I will have plenty to say about that later.

Colleagues, today I am asking for your support to expedite the bill here in the Senate Chamber and not send it back to committee for the second time.

The bill before you this afternoon is the actual amended bill that was passed by the committee in the last session and subsequently unanimously approved here in the chamber.

• (1420)

The only changes to this bill are as follows: This version has the correct regal year for King Charles III, which changes each year on September 8; the number associated with the bill is now Bill S-242 whereas the previous number was Bill S-249; and, of course, the date of first introduction had to be changed as well. The rest is verbatim to the bill everyone in this chamber gave their unequivocal support to, which Georgina and I and thousands of victims of intimate partner violence are grateful for.

My wish is that Georgina and others do not have to press repeat on their horrible stories of intimate partner violence and that today this bill will once again receive unanimous support here in the chamber.

We all know of the scourge of intimate partner violence in this country. We all know that no one bill will solve the serious issue of intimate partner violence, but I hope you will agree with me that my bill, Bill S-242, will be a solid foundation to build upon. Honourable senators, let us remember this strength as we discuss Bill S-242.

Yesterday was the conclusion of the United Nations 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which began on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The purpose of this global campaign is to encourage dialogue and create action that will provide preventive solutions to end violence against women and girls.

Colleagues, yesterday was Human Rights Day. This day marks the anniversary of the United Nations' adoption of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on December 10, 1948. This document affirms the rights and dignity of all people and is a milestone in the history of human rights. It has been translated to over 500 languages, holding the Guinness World Record for the most translated document.

I believe that all of us here in the Senate of Canada have a golden opportunity to send a strong, clear and supportive message to victims of intimate partner violence throughout our country and, indeed, around the world, that we as senators stand with them as together we continue to battle the scourge of intimate partner violence in our society today.

We cannot forgo this opportunity. While those unfamiliar with power dynamics surrounding sexual and physical abuse may wonder why women do not simply leave these abusive partners, financial concerns prevent many from doing so. According to the Department of Justice, dealing with the aftermath of intimate partner violence in Canada costs this country approximately \$7.4 billion a year. Over 80% of the costs of intimate partner violence in Canada are borne by victims themselves in the form of medical attention, hospitalization, lost wages, missed school days, stolen or damaged property and pain and suffering. On any single day, 379 women and 215 children are turned away from shelters in this country.

There are many reasons why a woman does not get up and leave. Perhaps there is nowhere to go or no one to turn to for support and protection. Perhaps those who have been abused believe that, in some strange way, it is their fault. They are led to believe that they have provoked the abuse and that the stigma

related to the abuse may be too much for some people to deal with on their own. There is always the fear that it could happen again, that the law does not protect the innocent.

The statistics are staggering. Even if women don't die by violence, they often live in fear. A recent report by the World Health Organization states:

Intimate partner violence has been identified as a major global health concern, linked to intergenerational violence and detrimental physical, emotional and economic impacts on victims, witnesses and society as a whole.

I would like to bring the issue a little closer to home. The latest and very sobering statistics from the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability report that every 48 hours in Canada, a person is killed by their intimate partner. That is approximately 180 victims a year. With that said, since I first introduced this bill in April 2018, close to 1,500 victims, almost all of them women, have died by the hands of their intimate partner.

Anybody can be abused, no matter their background, identity or circumstance, but women, girls and gender-diverse people are at the highest risk of gender-based violence. Some are at an even higher risk due to the additional discrimination and barriers they face. This includes women with disabilities; Indigenous women; racialized women; trans and non-binary people as well as other 2SLGBTQ+ individuals; and women who are homeless or under-housed.

While gaining access to needed support and services is difficult wherever people are, it is exacerbated for those victims living in rural and remote regions of our country. In 2023, women and girls aged 12 to 24 had the highest rate of police-reported intimate partner violence. Physical assault is the most common form of intimate partner violence with a significant portion involving weapons. Strangulation is a hidden prediction of femicide.

Many victims know their abuser. Often, they live with the cowards. On a daily basis, many victims deal with depression and anxiety. In my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador, from 2022 to 2023, reports of incidents of intimate partner violence increased by a whopping 51% according to RCMP data. The RCMP believe that some of this increase in reporting is due to the fact that they have expanded what constitutes intimate partner violence.

It wasn't that long ago in this country that having a public discussion about mental health, gay marriage, assisted dying and many other important topics, including intimate partner violence, was taboo. They were discussions held behind closed doors between many people with closed minds. I'm a strong believer in the idea that education is our top priority, educating people, talking publicly and informing the victims of any type of intimate partner violence that there are services available to help them and support out there for those that need it. It may not be perfect, but we are building a network that victims will be able to access when needed. We must not be afraid to lend our voices to people like Georgina McGrath.

Honourable senators, we are an important cog in the wheel. We can stand up, make a difference and be a voice for the voiceless. With that in mind, on behalf of all intimate partner violence victims and their families, I respectfully ask for your support for Bill S-242.

In closing, let me once again recall the words of former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan:

Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And, it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace.

Honourable senators, the time has come. Thank you.

**Hon. Jim Quinn:** Honourable senators, I simply want to say thank you to Senator Manning for bringing this important bill forward to the Senate. I believe that you have hit all the themes, and I think it's especially appropriate given the time of year that we are in. I therefore hope the debate collapses so that we have the opportunity to vote on this bill today.

**Hon. Kim Pate:** Honourable senators, I speak today to Bill S-242. I want to begin by thanking you, Senator Manning, for your commitment to advancing this bill for the purpose of trying to address the longest-standing and ongoing pandemic in Canada, violence against women.

I also want to thank our sisters, friends, colleagues and too many billions of women whose experiences must directly inform our understanding of the urgent and persistent need to act. Our endless love, gratitude and respect go to too many women and girls, including Georgina McGrath, who have demonstrated their incredible courage and strength in sharing their experiences and insisting that we all shed light on the shamefully pervasive, yet too often hidden, terror visited and blamed on the women who are most victimized. These realities disproportionately lived by First Nations, Métis and Inuit women are the horrific backdrop to this legislation.

For decades, many of us have spoken about and worked on issues of violence against women and girls, and the obvious question is this: When will we actually commit to ending it?

On Saturday, we marked the thirty-sixth anniversary of the École Polytechnique massacre. I remember holding my then one-month-old infant son Michael on the first anniversary as I read news coverage of some of my friends being attacked for having the audacity to call the deaths of the 14 young engineering students femicides.

Most everyone called it the act of one rogue young man. Most women immediately recognized it as a horrific but logical extension of male-centric laws, policies and practices. As I hugged my son, I promised him I would do all I could to raise him as a kind, loving, compassionate and caring man who could hopefully withstand the inevitable social pressures to conform.

• (1430)

I am proud that my now 35-year-old, 6-foot 3-inch, former rugby and football player Michael is a kind, compassionate grandson who helps care for his 91-year-old grandfather, and is a young man who shares all he has with others, who sends gifts and travels across the country to visit those who have loved and mentored him — from our former colleague Mizhana Giizhik-iban, to Lee, who opened her home as one of the first shelters for women fleeing violence, to Tona, whom he first met in segregation at the Prison for Women when he went with me, often as Santa's elf.

Thirty-six years later, no one questions the nature of the December 6 attacks. We go to extraordinary efforts to demonstrate our knowledge and understanding. We wear ribbons. We attend events.

But let's remember a similar response just five years ago. Initially, many called the incidents that gave rise to the Mass Casualty Commission the acts of one rogue, evil man. Many women across the country knew differently, however, recognizing that the White man of relative privilege, whose abusive behaviour was condoned, facilitated and excused for years, was not as anomalous as we would like to think. In fact, most mass murderers were first known to have abused their power and to have engaged in, not one, but many, acts of intimate partner violence.

We must meaningfully address the realities and circumstances that contribute to the disturbingly unabated rates of violence against women and seemingly emboldened instances of sexual assault and femicide.

As you heard from Senator Manning, yesterday was international Human Rights Day. Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms entitles each of us to equality rights as well as to life, liberty and security of the person, although leaving growing numbers of people without adequate resources and safe shelter continues to undermine these rights for far too many. Any framework aimed at addressing violence against women must include mechanisms to ensure the government recognizes and upholds positive obligations to address poverty and homelessness. Calls for guaranteed livable income in Canada as a means of preventing violence and ensuring equality now span more than five decades, from the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women to the 1993 National Action Committee on the Status of Women's *99 Federal Steps to End Violence Against Women*, to the 2019 Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

As the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime concludes: "There's a whole science of crime prevention that would align well with the principles of guaranteed livable income . . ."

I am heartened to see governments beginning to consult about guaranteed livable income for women escaping violence. I know that for too many who stayed in abusive relationships or who fled violence only to be forced onto the streets, the possibility of some greater economic security provides some hope.

This holiday season, as we reflect on the year and reach out to those around us, I find myself revisiting current realities versus what could be — the lives that could be saved, the people who could be supported, the travesties that could be averted — if we ensured that everyone had food, shelter, health care and access to opportunities to choose what they need. I am haunted by what we will continue to risk if we persist in failing to dismantle the deep-rooted colonial and misogynistic inequalities that perpetrate and perpetuate violence against women.

We know that when we do not care or intervene to protect women and children from violence, we effectively deputize them. When the state does not respond and act when they call for help, we send the message that it is their responsibility to protect themselves from violence. This is exponentially true for poor, racialized — especially Indigenous and Black women — and disabled women. When they are not able to protect themselves, fault and shame too often is heaped upon them.

Women are now the majority in this chamber. We know the drill. We were raised to be careful about what we wear, where we go, whom we're with. Worse yet, when we are attacked, we face interrogations such as "Are you sure you didn't lead them on?" "Why did you wear that?" "Were you drinking?" "Why did you stay?" "Surely you could have escaped if you had really wanted to." "Did you fight?"

We hear it from parents and teachers, colleagues and employers, police, prosecutors, judges and jailers, even those who are supposed to be supporting and defending us. Perversely, some of the greatest condemnations can come from those with platforms, power and the ability to change things.

As the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls laid out so clearly, it is too often those failed by other systems who are most directly deputized to protect themselves by state inaction on their behalf, yet, when they do act to protect themselves or others in their care, state inertia melts into near-immediate action and reaction, and the full weight of the criminal law is often brought to bear.

The Indigenous women whose stories I share today have too often been failed by everyone in the criminal legal system, even their own lawyers. They start as victims, but their experiences as victims and survivors are systematically overshadowed as Canada's failure to protect and support them gets recast as their own fault, and state actors work to criminalize them.

Indeed, as the technical briefing on Bill C-16 revealed this week, that this proposed legislative response to violence against women and intimate partner violence will not alleviate these concerns. It relies on the same criminal law-based responses that have not protected women in the past and, horrifically, will further entrench current inequalities, inequities and injustices.

Carol Daniels died of cancer in 2022 without ever seeing justice. She was a First Nations survivor of childhood sexual abuse and had carried what happened with her for years without ever speaking about it. No one protected her.

She was a teenager with nowhere to go, when a young woman invited her to join her partying. Carol soon realized the woman was in fact procuring her for sexual exploitation by a man whose home was full of videos and photos of young Indigenous women whom he had raped and assaulted, and there was a video camera set up in front of his bed. Carol said some of the women looked like they were dead.

Fearing she would be next, Carol decided to flee. When the two — the man and the woman — tried to stop her, Carol grabbed a knife from the kitchen and fought to escape. The woman was wounded and later bled to death, and the man called the police.

Carol was charged. She did not disclose to lawyers that she was acting in self-defence. She was ashamed of the childhood trauma that she had experienced and blamed herself for being in that situation in the first place. She felt “naive” for being ensnared by someone looking to yet again prey upon her.

Her lawyers failed to inquire and consequently failed to adequately defend her or to contextualize how Carol’s experiences of racism, sexism and violence affected her actions in trying to defend herself and other young women from further predation.

Carol was convicted of second-degree murder. She was sentenced to a mandatory minimum penalty of life imprisonment with no parole eligibility for 10 years. Her lawyers appealed, but again did not raise the question of whether Carol should have even been considered criminally responsible for trying to escape her predators. Instead, counsel focused only on whether being transferred across the country to the Prison for Women in Kingston — at the time, the only federal prison for women and the site of suicides of six Indigenous women — would violate her Charter rights. As a result, in addition to her wrongful conviction, Carol was sent, at the outset, to serve her sentence in solitary confinement in the Saskatchewan Penitentiary for men.

Carol spent nearly three decades in federal prison. By the time she was released on parole, she did not have long to live. She remained under constant surveillance by parole officers in her final months, her every action scrutinized and at risk of being used to justify throwing her back in prison.

I have worked and walked with so many survivors trying to find the pathways, supports and connections they need in order to integrate into and contribute to their communities.

• (1440)

I have watched Canada instead waste hundreds of thousands of dollars per person per year on cages, cells and isolation for victims of violence whom we failed to support. It didn’t have to be this way. So much could have been different for Carol and so many others.

Tona’s story is well known in this chamber. One year ago yesterday, on International Human Rights Day, we voted to pass “Tona’s Law” and sent it to the other place. The bill is currently being studied again by the Legal Committee and will hopefully soon be returned to the House in this new Parliament. Meanwhile, Tona continues to advocate tirelessly for these measures, despite her terminal cancer diagnosis and her current state in palliative care.

As she continues on borrowed time but in ever more progressive decline, her hope is to ensure, before she dies, that not a single human being will ever again suffer the types of abuses and isolation that she did in prison.

How did Tona ever end up labelled as dangerous? How did a young survivor of the Sixties Scoop, forced to break into buildings to escape sexual abuse, end up alone in a segregation cell, chained to the floor of the Prison for Women in Kingston? How did police, when Tona was found sheltering in a school to hide from abuse, end up charging her with breaking and entering instead of offering support and protection to a victim of assault?

What would they have done if they were her, a teenager who had gone in search of her birth parents and ended up with no resources, no one to turn to for help and nowhere to go? What would you have done? What would I have done?

How did prison staff not realize the impact of strip searches on a survivor of abuse? What other approaches did they try before responding to her resistance with ever harsher and more cruel solitary confinement, until the harms became irreparable — isolation-induced schizophrenia? How did they come to minimize, in her records, the abuse and the violence that she lived, calling it a “sexual relationship” with her birth father rather than the incestuous rape that it was? How can we call what happened to Tona anything but layers of injustices and miscarriages of justice?

The conditions that she experienced in prison have cost Tona her health, and they will cost her, her life. In the meantime, she keeps going, seeking, through “Tona’s Law,” to uphold the rights of others and to ensure that they have access to the community and health supports that she was denied and that would have and could have made all the difference for her.

S.P., a woman we often referred to as just “S,” has demonstrated the life-changing impact of such community-based supports. S was a survivor of physical, sexual and psychological abuse — first for a decade at residential school and then by her husband. She was also once Canada’s longest-serving woman prisoner. The legal system not only failed to protect her but also obscured her victimization. She was sent to prison as an accessory to her husband’s drug dealing without any inquiry into the abuse she experienced and the impact of this violence on her actions.

While in prison on a shorter sentence, S pleaded guilty to the murder of a prisoner whom she considered a sister. Everyone at the Prison for Women, staff and prisoners alike, were clear that the woman had died by suicide. Yet no one, including S's own lawyer and a judge, prevented S from pleading guilty. She was sentenced to life in prison.

S pleaded guilty years after her friend's death and long after the inquest and all investigations had ceased. The judge in her case appeared to acknowledge she would never have been charged had she not come forward and claimed responsibility. The plea was linked to her intense feelings of personal responsibility for her friend and was accepted by the judge despite glaring inconsistencies in her so-called confession. The legal system not only appeared unconcerned with the true circumstances of how an Indigenous woman died in a federal prison; it did not hesitate to inflict lifelong punishment, without evidence, on another Indigenous woman.

Three decades later, writing the *Naslund* decision about another woman with a history of abuse who pleaded guilty to homicide despite having a defence, Justice Sheila Greckol of the Court of Appeal of Alberta reminded us how very little has changed when she said:

. . . a woman subjected to . . . years of egregious abuse may be accustomed to seeing herself as worthy only of harsh punishment. That does not mean the justice system should follow suit.

For S, this baseless conviction was entered into her record and subsequently used by the prison system to label her as "violent" and justify segregation and other harsh conditions. As a result of this label, S had limited opportunities to work toward release and build community ties. She served not only 10 years of mandatory parole ineligibility but also a further nearly three decades of prison time.

By 2020, S's health had deteriorated after decades in prison, including significant amounts of time in solitary confinement. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, authorities were eager to move her somewhere where she could receive long-term care, yet they characterized her as such a significant risk that not a single institutional or community setting would agree to house her.

I cannot describe how devastating and enraging it was to watch another woman, whom I had spent decades walking alongside, losing touch with reality and physically deteriorating.

After years of legal and administrative battles, S was finally released to the only people who wanted her — her sister and nieces and nephews. Within months, surrounded by love, care and support, S's health — physical and mental — miraculously transformed. Corrections and community staff alike marvelled, and one officer said to me recently, "Whenever I see her now in the community, she is smiling and happy. We hardly ever saw her smile inside."

I visited and had dinner with S recently. Five years on, S is thriving in the community and contributing to her family.

I couldn't help but imagine what it could have meant if she had had access to such supports from the start. It is a travesty that S had to wait so long. It is worse yet to see how re-characterizing women like S as violent, instead of as survivors of violence, has all too often helped excuse and ignore the ways that Canada is leaving behind those most in need of support.

L.N., known as "L," was once called the "most dangerous woman in Canada." In reality, she is a First Nations woman, another member of the stolen generation. By the time she was 12, L had been raped and prostituted. When she anaesthetized herself to those realities by drinking, child welfare authorities intervened. When she resisted state intervention, police were called.

L was punished over and over for responses to the violence to which she was subjected first outside and then within prisons and other institutions. She was charged with assaulting child care workers and police when she tried to stop those who stripped and restrained her. When she — correctly, as it turned out — identified a prison psychologist as a sexual predator, she ended up barred from treatment and then segregated for allegedly threatening him by making those allegations.

Barely an adult, at 21 years old, she ended up labelled a "dangerous offender" based on things she said, rather than anything that she did. It took six and a half years to overturn that designation. In 2026, at age 53, it will be 27 years since she was finally released from prison. Ten years in custody, many years of solitary confinement, 20 shock treatments, countless suicide attempts and hundreds of incidents of self-injury have left their irreparable physical and psychological scars. Yet, L has survived. She has spent a quarter of a century volunteering in her community, providing young people with the support, mentorship and advocacy necessary to prevent repeated and horrific violence at the hands of individuals and the state.

I share these few stories not because they are outliers or exceptions but rather to underscore these women's shared lived realities. Nearly all — at least 9 in 10 — women in federal prisons are victims and survivors of physical and sexual abuse.

Past tough-on-crime approaches have not kept women safe. Worse yet, they have punished and criminalized those most in need of support. As the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls clearly revealed, the same issues and circumstances that give rise to Indigenous women and girls being victimized, disappeared, murdered and homeless also render them more likely to be criminalized and imprisoned.

The government has stated its commitment to addressing intimate partner violence. Bill S-242 is important because it provides the opportunity for strategies that move beyond simplistic, criminal law-based responses to violence against women and the possibility for meaningful measures to uphold substantive equality and redress the root causes of misogyny, racism and colonial violence.

• (1450)

Last week, I was honoured and humbled to vote along with you, honourable colleagues, in support of one such step. As highlighted by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Senate's amended version of Bill S-2 can help to redress the long-standing Charter violations that have put First Nations women and children at particular risk of violence by forcibly separating them from their communities of support.

There are many more such steps before us to unravel the layers of systemic inequalities underlying violence against women, particularly Indigenous, Black, gender-diverse and disabled women. I hope and trust that we will have the courage to take them together.

At a time when it seems that misogyny has been emboldened in nearly every public space, I want to highlight the importance of the men in this chamber, the other place and beyond using their platforms and privilege to step up, redouble efforts and model the behaviour needed from our leaders and role models in order to uphold equality for all.

Let us be clear: Perpetrators of intimate partner violence and abuse against women are not social outliers; rather, they are examples of an all-too-frequent outcome of the patriarchal and misogynistic social norms and structures in which we are raised — structures that focus on exerting privilege and authorizing dominance over women, both of which enable abuse without consequence.

When I think about how, through the framework for government accountability provided by Bill S-242, Canada might effectively redress violence against women, I recall a day several decades ago. I volunteered with women's groups and youth escaping violence, while my paid work was with the John Howard Society.

Given my work with victimized women and children, I had some preconceived notions and biases against those who perpetrated such violence. I decided I must face my biases and undertook to work with men in prison convicted of abuse. I wanted to understand who they were and why men committed violence. I knew too many who acted with impunity and virtual immunity.

Working with those who were convicted confirmed that they were primarily men marginalized by poverty, race, disability and also too often because of their own previous experiences of violence. That didn't excuse their behaviour, but Canada's system was and is holding to account those easiest to "catch" and call out, while failing to change the systemic inequalities that underlie women's victimization and too often cover and condone violence inflicted by those who are more powerful and privileged.

Many of the men I met in prisons were doing incredible work toward taking responsibility, contributing positively to community and facing realities such as the fact that they may have been victimized but that in no way excused their own behaviour in their victimization of others.

I left the work that I was doing with them, however, because the men working in the prisons as well as co-workers reinforced rather than challenged the very discriminatory, racist and sexist attitudes toward women. It was not just demoralizing; it was debilitating. It meant men doing the work to address their behaviours were now at heightened risk of being victimized themselves, both by other prisoners and those tasked with controlling their care and custody.

I'm still haunted by the response of one man to our efforts to assist him and others to take responsibility, to learn and to grow. One day, he asked me where and how, if not in the existing prison system, I would ensure that he was held accountable and rehabilitated and, for that matter, what I'd do with the other men. I said that while they might not experience it as freedom — and I was prepared to live with my own hypocrisy — I thought if we could assign 10 to 20 good men to live with them and model caring, kind, compassionate, women-positive and equity-promoting behaviour, then I would be prepared to live with that until such time as those men might vouch for their behaviour and then they might be free. His response: "Where would you find those guys, Kim?"

My hope for this bill is that it will help us to meaningfully answer him, Georgina, Tona and so many others.

Thank you, Senator Manning. Thank you, Georgina. Thank you to all whom I have had the privilege of knowing and who have informed my thinking, my knowledge and my nightmares.

*Meegwetch.* Thank you.

**Hon. Marilou McPhedran:** Your Honour, may I ask for the indulgence of the chamber, please? When Senator Quinn stood, I was standing. When Senator Pate stood, I was standing, trying to ask a question of Senator Manning. I wonder if I might please do that with your permission.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**Senator McPhedran:** Thank you, Your Honour and colleagues.

To you, Senator Manning and to Georgina McGrath and her family, thank you for the tireless efforts since 2018 to bring this bill to a final vote, which I hope will happen very soon.

My question is based on your speech, and I want to create a bit of an introduction to the question. Your speech today powerfully reminded us that the pandemic that the world has failed to stop is, in fact, violence against women, and it is the virus of inequality at the source of the infection.

I think you know that the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, or LEAF — of which I'm proud to have been a co-founder some 40 years ago — published a report in October 2024 entitled *What It Takes: Establishing a Gender-Based Violence Accountability Mechanism in Canada*.

Governments are accountable in ending gender-based violence in Canada. The LEAF report, authored by Dr. Amanda Dale, examines the pandemic that no government has been able to stop: gender-based violence. LEAF and Dr. Dale provide evidence of the need for a federal accountability mechanism. To establish such a federal accountability mechanism, they recommend that parliamentarians create a gender-based violence commissioner who would have the independence, powers and persuasive role necessary to create systemic change, both in government and in community and our country.

Senator Manning, I'm sure you recall the recommendation of the Mass Casualty Commission, created to examine the April 18 and 19, 2020, murder spree in Nova Scotia. For such a commissioner, in its final report was a strong recommendation of the commission.

This commissioner would work alongside grassroots and marginalized communities that are essential in crafting and implementing effective solutions to end gender-based violence.

Senator Manning, would you agree that a federal gender-based violence commissioner would be an effective way to implement the kind of systemic change that your bill addresses?

**Senator Manning:** Thank you, Senator McPhedran. I'm very familiar with the Mass Casualty Commission, plus LEAF and the recommendation of a commissioner.

As I said in my speech, I don't think there is any one thing we can do here in Parliament that will address intimate partner violence. It's a combination of many things. It's a combination of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. It's a combination of public debate and public discussion. Certainly, I believe that a commissioner would be a great asset in dealing with gender-based violence in this country.

It's one of these issues, I believe, senator, that has to be addressed as a collective. Everybody has to come together regardless of political stripe. This is not a political issue. This is an issue that affects mostly women and girls, but it also affects society as a whole.

When I talk about the cost, it's \$7.4 billion approximately in cost to the country. These are the kinds of things that we need to look at.

But all of that aside, our priority from day one should be the protection — in any way, shape or form — of women and girls.

• (1500)

Last year, a woman came up to me in a grocery store in Newfoundland. She never told me her name, but she tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Thank you, Senator Manning, for all the work you're doing regarding intimate partner violence." I said, "I'm working with others." She replied, "Yes, and together, we will beat this."

[ Senator McPhedran ]

I believe in a commissioner as well as any other opportunity that we have to build a collective from the foundation to address the concerns we have. That's why the second part of Bill S-242 calls on the government to do a biannual report. That will give us an opportunity to stand here in the Senate and for our counterparts to stand in the House of Commons and ask the minister and government — of whatever political stripe they may be at the time — where they stand and what they are doing with respect to intimate partner violence.

I truly believe that it's only by coming together and addressing this as a collective that we can address the concerns of the women and girls in this country.

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

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

## THE SENATE

### NOTICE OF MOTION TO CALL UPON THE GOVERNMENT TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT MILITARY HONOURS REVIEW BOARD

Leave having been given to revert to Motions, Order No. 79:

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, on behalf of the Honourable Senator Klyne, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, he will move:

That the Senate call upon the Government of Canada to establish an Independent Military Honours Review Board to review veterans' cases where evidence suggests Victoria Cross criteria are met.

## 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 this sitting be suspended to await the receipt of messages from the House of Commons, with bells to ring for 15 minutes before the sitting resumes, either to receive a message from the House of Commons followed by adjournment or to adjourn.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Is leave granted, honourable senators? *[Translation]*

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

• (1620)

**MAKING LIFE MORE AFFORDABLE  
FOR CANADIANS BILL**

FIRST READING

**The Hon. the Speaker** informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-4, An Act respecting certain affordability measures for Canadians and another measure.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

**STRENGTHENING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION  
SYSTEM AND BORDERS BILL**

FIRST READING

**The Hon. the Speaker** informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-12, An Act respecting certain measures relating to the security of Canada's borders and the integrity of the Canadian immigration system and respecting other related security measures.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

*(At 4:23 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 2 p.m.)*

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