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(HANSARD)

Thursday, November 19, 2026

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, November 19, 2026

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRENT UNIVERSITY SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I rise today to highlight some important work happening in the world of agriculture and agri-food research.

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of visiting Trent University in Peterborough and taking a tour of the Trent Farm Research Centre to hear about some of the great work that the students and faculty are doing in the world of sustainable agriculture.

During my visit, I had the pleasure of speaking to students and faculty about the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems program that is offered by Trent University. As a senator who has been advocating for sustainable agriculture and healthy soils, I'm sure, honourable colleagues, that you can understand why this piqued my interest.

This program challenges students to think critically about contemporary global food and agricultural systems, while also providing them with the tools they need to effect change. Graduates from this program will be better prepared to make positive changes to our agricultural and agri-food systems, and they'll be equipped with the knowledge and skills they'll need to advance conversations regarding sustainable food systems.

This degree focuses on the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions of agriculture and food, emphasizing the far-reaching impact that the agri-food industry has in our world.

In a world where we're losing prime agricultural lands to urbanization, industrial development and the potential of federal nation-building projects, it is imperative that we encourage young people to explore regenerative agriculture and sustainable farming to ensure that we can preserve the land we have for generations to come.

I commend Trent University for offering an opportunity to explore these fields. It helps students learn to think critically about the agriculture and agri-food sector, and it also sets up our country for long-term success by investing in the future of farming.

Farmers and ranchers across this country already understand what sustainable agriculture looks like. They've already invested time, energy and money into feeding future generations of Canadians. However, Trent University's Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems program reinforces the importance and impact of their efforts and their on-the-ground research. I'm excited to see some of the impactful discoveries that are sure to come from the graduates of this program.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

WORLD PANCREATIC CANCER DAY

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize World Pancreatic Cancer Day, observed on the third Thursday in November, which is Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month.

Pancreatic cancer remains one of the deadliest tumours in Canada. Despite being less common than many other cancers, it is the third leading cause of cancer death in our country. In 2026 alone, an estimated 6,500 Canadians will lose their lives to this disease, and the five-year survival rate remains at just 10%.

One of the greatest challenges is early detection. Symptoms such as abdominal or back pain, unexplained weight loss, fatigue and digestive changes can be vague and easily overlooked. Having spent more than 35 years as a family physician, I understand the challenges of identifying serious illnesses when their early symptoms are often subtle and non-specific. Unfortunately, many patients with pancreatic cancer are diagnosed at an advanced stage, when treatment options are limited.

Honourable senators, behind every diagnosis is a person, a family and a community affected by this devastating disease. I would like to acknowledge the profound grief of those who have lost loved ones to pancreatic cancer and honour the lasting impact on their lives.

Organizations such as Pancreatic Cancer North America are advancing vital research, raising awareness and supporting efforts to improve early detection and treatment. Craig's Cause Pancreatic Cancer Society is also making important contributions through patient and family support, health care education, advocacy and research. Together, their efforts underscore the urgent need for early detection, more effective treatments and sustained investment in research.

We have witnessed remarkable advances in the treatment of other cancers. We must bring that same determination and commitment to improving outcomes for those affected by pancreatic cancer.

On this World Pancreatic Cancer Day, I encourage Canadians to wear purple in solidarity with those affected, learn the warning signs and support continued research into earlier detection and better treatments.

Every advancement represents more than medical progress. It represents more lives saved and greater hope for patients and families.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Bukola Salami, Professor and Researcher at the University of Calgary, Founder of the African Child and Youth Migration Network and Founder and Lead of the Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Bernard.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard: Honourable senators, as we approach the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, I rise today to draw attention to two interconnected crises affecting Black communities in Canada.

The first is in my home province of Nova Scotia. Statistics Canada reports that Nova Scotia has had the highest average annual rate of police-reported human trafficking, more than three times the national average — and we know that many cases go unreported. Human trafficking devastates lives.

Wyndolyn Brown is an African Nova Scotian trafficking survivor who founded the Empowerment for Hope Society. As an advocate, Ms. Brown bravely shares her own journey of escaping trafficking and then healing from trafficking. She advocates for culturally responsive, trauma-informed support, particularly for Black women and girls. I commend her courage and commitment to supporting survivors and speaking out against exploitation.

Colleagues, the second crisis I bring to your attention is that, in the Greater Toronto Area, Black boys as young as 13 and 14 years old are going missing.

• (1340)

In 2024, as many as 151 of the 322 children reported missing to the Toronto Police Service were Black boys. Families are desperately searching for their sons, while criminal networks prey upon vulnerable youth with false promises of money, belonging and opportunity. These are children, yet their exploitation is most likely treated as criminality rather than victimization. I ask this: Why is their exploitation rendered invisible?

Colleagues, whether we are speaking about trafficking for sexual exploitation or forced criminal activity, we must confront the foundation of anti-Black racism that influences whether we listen to the cries of help from these boys' families. Our response to this crisis must be grounded in the lived experiences of survivors, prevention, culturally relevant support, family-centred intervention and — most importantly — healing.

These children deserve protection, not punishment. Survivors deserve more than survival. Behind every statistic is a person. Behind every missing child is a family searching for answers. Let us meet this moment with urgency, compassion and the action it demands.

Thank you, *asante*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Laura Robinson, head of the L.M. Montgomery Institute, and the heirs of Lucy Maud Montgomery, Kate Macdonald Butler, Blair Macdonald and Allison Hodge. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator MacAdam.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

FARM SERVICE CORPS

Hon. John M. McNair: Honourable senators, last week Canadians commemorated Remembrance Day across the country.

Today, I would like to pay tribute to a group of women who stepped up to help on the home front during the First and Second World Wars.

Food production was an essential part of the Canadian war effort. During the First World War, the federal government encouraged an increase in food production in response to international scarcity and high prices. Exports of wheat, cheese, meat, fish and other staples rose sharply. As a result, demands for farm labour also grew.

As we know well, many young men left the farm to enlist in the war effort. To keep production moving on the farms, the Ontario government developed the Farm Service Corps, which encouraged women to assist with harvesting and picking on the farm. Known as "the farmerettes," these women assisted in all aspects of farm work.

In 1918, for example, 2,400 women picked fruit in the Niagara region. They worked alone in the fields diligently, enduring hours of hard labour. Such work was essential in supplying Canada's allies with food and material needed to win the war. The farmerettes lived in dormitory-style accommodations, including tents, huts, army barracks and converted barns. They paid $4.50 for room and board every week and earned $0.25 an hour.

At the end of the Second World War, many of the men did not return to the farm, choosing instead to pursue education or trades through new government programs. This created additional opportunities for women to enter the workforce outside of the war effort.

Last year, the documentary entitled *We Lend a Hand: The Forgotten Story of Ontario Farmerettes* premiered. Director Colin Field interviewed 20 farmerettes from the Second World War, all of whom are now in their nineties. These remarkable women came to the program lacking prior farming experience and had to keep up with the challenging weather conditions and demanding production schedules. They worked hard to do their part for their country.

The film is a reminder that there are many ways to serve one's country. There have been many screenings across Canada, and in May 2027, it will be premiered at the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy, France.

Colleagues, let's take a moment to remember those who also served on the home front to help the war effort. Let us be thankful that they answered the call to serve — on Remembrance Day and every day.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

BUDGET—STUDY ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS GENERALLY—SIXTEENTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. David M. Arnot, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, presented the following report:

Thursday, November 19, 2026

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

SIXTEENTH REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Thursday, October 2, 2025, to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to legal and constitutional matters generally, respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

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,

DAVID M. ARNOT

Chair

(*For text of budget, see today's* Journals of the Senate*, Appendix A, p. 1355*.)

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

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

QUESTION PERIOD

NATURAL RESOURCES

ENERGY PROJECTS

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the government leader. I'm hoping you can clear up some confusion among Canadians and give this chamber some clarity.

We hear that the government intends to amend Bill C-69 again rather than repeal it once and for all, even though the courts have now found it unconstitutional for a third time.

For a decade now, we've had the old Liberal government suffocating the development of our natural resources in this country. There was some optimism that this new Liberal government would unleash our natural resource capability and start creating some real wealth.

Can we expect a clear strategy from this government for developing our resources, or will we get more smoke and mirrors? Will you finally repeal Bill C-69 once and for all?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The agenda of the government was clear with regard to creating growth in Canada. It's very clear from Budget 2026. The government is focused on delivering growth for Canadians by attracting investment, strengthening productivity and fostering relations to improve economic success. This is good for all sectors of our economy. The government is committed to that. I think we already have results on those issues. It's not a question of one bill or another. It's a question of having a government that knows exactly where it's going as far as growth and the well-being of Canadians are concerned. That's the government's commitment, and, honestly, the figures show that the government is delivering on those matters.

• (1350)

Senator Housakos: Government leader, on energy, we have a lot of memoranda of understanding, or MOUs, and we've had a lot of press conferences. But the reality of the matter is that we haven't seen much more. Canadians have heard a great deal over the last 18 months about us becoming an energy superpower, and everyone got hopeful. We heard the Prime Minister, on the night of the election, say, "Build, baby, build. We're going to start building our resources." When will the government stop talking about it, stop with the press conferences, deliver pipelines and liquefied natural gas centres and get the resource economy going again?

Senator Moreau: I guess you missed a few things in the last few months. On liquefied natural gas, or LNG, the government is reinforcing Canada's production and exploitation of energy to strengthen our domestic security, create further prosperity and support our allies through uncertainty. I answered a question from Senator Miville-Dechêne about that yesterday. The government has fast-tracked two important LNG projects. Your co-leader should be pleased to know that Phase 2 of the LNG Canada project in Kitimat, British Columbia, is going ahead, as is the one on Pearse Island, British Columbia.

PUBLIC SAFETY

WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT

Hon. David M. Wells: My question is for Senator Moreau. Prime Minister Carney recently announced that Canada will commit $560 million to a Brazil- and Norway-led initiative called the Tropical Forest Forever Facility to protect tropical rainforests. We heard testimony at the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources that the Jasper fire in Alberta in 2024 was a result of poor forest management as opposed to climate change, yet we're sending $560 million to a Brazil-Norway initiative for forest management in South America. Senator Moreau, wouldn't the $560 million that is being sent to South America be better used on Canadian forest management?

An Hon. Senator: Hear, hear.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): You have encouragement, senator, for your question.

When warmer weather arrives, the risk of wildfires rises. That's the reason the government is acting proactively on this very important issue, before conditions worsen, to ensure the right systems, partnerships and resources are in place, including increased aerial firefighting capacity, with Budget 2025 funding for the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre to lease additional firefighting aircraft; improved federal emergency coordination with new government operations; improved information sharing and emergency stockpiles and forecasts so provinces and territories can coordinate faster and respond more effectively; stronger evacuation planning for remote communities; and timely public alerts, with Budget 2025 funding the National Public Alerting System. We're acting here, and we're acting globally on the international front as well.

Senator D. M. Wells: Thank you, Senator Moreau, for the answer. Of course, Brazil and Norway aren't poor countries. They're well-resourced countries.

I sought a list of amounts over $100 million that Canada has sent abroad, and I got a long list back that included the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the African Development Bank and many other groups. Do you know if any country sends hundreds of millions of dollars to Canada?

Senator Moreau: I answered a question here a few months ago about whether Canada should increase the help it provides to other countries on many issues. Canada works with allies. With the current geopolitical situation, we better be able to rely on allies across the world because the world is changing a lot. That's what Canada's government is aware of.

HEALTH

ALS RESEARCH

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Senator Moreau, I recently met with representatives from ALS Quebec to discuss the urgent needs of Canadians living with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease. Nearly 4,000 Canadians live with this devastating terminal disease. There is no cure, and 80% of patients die within two to five years of diagnosis.

Canada has world-class ALS researchers and research infrastructure, yet chronic underinvestment is slowing progress. The ALS community is calling for a $50 million federal investment over five years in the Canadian Collaboration to Cure ALS, a coordinated national strategy to expand research, generate Canada-specific data and improve access to clinical trials. Will the government commit to this investment and give Canadians living with ALS renewed hope for better treatments and, ultimately, a cure?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Hopefully, one day there will be a cure. Unfortunately, that's not the situation with the current state of science.

The government is aware of the call from ALS Canada for further investment, and it's also committed to advancing research to improve outcomes for Canadians living with ALS and to help achieve a future free from this devastating disease.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research, CIHR, fund ALS research at eligible Canadian institutions, such as universities and hospitals, through its suite of competitive funding opportunities. Between 2020 and 2025, it invested approximately $33 million in 97 research grants and awards to better understand the cause and mechanism of ALS, explore new therapeutic avenues and improve care. The government is committed to continuing that.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer. Other countries, including the U.S. and the U.K., are making significant investments in ALS research. Canada risks falling behind, despite having the expertise and infrastructure to make a meaningful contribution. These initiatives are already operational and ready

to scale. Will the government work with the ALS community to establish a funded national strategy and ensure that Canadians are not left behind?

Senator Moreau: You know that I cannot comment specifically on the development of a funded national strategy, but the number of clinical trials for ALS research in Canada has increased substantially, with 70 trials authorized since 2008. The increase in trials provides more access to patients and reflects stronger infrastructure, broader geographic reach and more frequent opportunities to test new therapies. The government is committed to continuing that.

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

FIREARMS CONTROL

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: Senator Moreau, last week, the City of Montreal unanimously adopted a motion calling on the government to ban assault weapons, including the SKS. As you know, this was the weapon that was used in the shooting that seriously injured a police officer and took the lives of SPVM officer Mohamed Lamine Benredouane and a civilian. Five months after this tragedy, this assault weapon remains legal, and the government has referred the matter to a committee announced in 2025, which has not really accomplished much to date. The SKS remains a legal, non-restricted firearm that is available for purchase in Canada, even though it is designed for warfare and it is the model that is most frequently used in mass shootings and attacks on police officers.

In the wake of such tragedies, don't you think we have the right to expect a clear answer? When does the government intend to make a decision regarding the SKS?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Oudar.

Incidents like Tumbler Ridge or the Montreal shooting should never happen in a country like Canada, nor anywhere else in the world, as the government is keenly aware.

The SKS is among the firearms currently being reviewed as part of the classification regime review.

The specific problem with this type of firearm is that certain Indigenous communities use it not as an assault weapon, but for hunting. The issue, therefore, is one of ensuring that we have the appropriate expertise with respect to this firearm. That is why the SKS has been referred to a technical advisory panel, which is examining its classification while taking into account police expertise, public safety considerations and the hunting practices specific to Indigenous communities.

Senator Oudar: The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence begin next week and will end with the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in memory of the 14 victims of the 1989 Polytechnique Montréal massacre. In making this decision on firearms control, what place does the government give to the victims and survivors of mass shootings, who continue to live with the trauma of these tragedies?

• (1400)

Senator Moreau: I would venture to say that the government gives them a very prominent place, given that one of the survivors of the Polytechnique shooting is now a member of the government and participates in the committee's work from time to time. I was with her earlier this week at the Operations Committee. The government is genuinely committed to this issue.

To come back to the main question, expert assessments are required in certain cases, particularly to ensure there is no conflict with traditional hunting practices, and the SKS semi-automatic rifle —

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

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Senator Moreau, in January 2025, many were delighted that the government had finally appointed the first Chief Advisor to Combat Human Trafficking, Jennifer Richardson.

She is a survivor of the crime herself. Within a short period of time, she held consultations with over 200 survivors. Unfortunately, she left her position barely a year later, for unknown reasons, and she still hasn't been replaced. This is concerning to many survivors. Will you be replacing her? Has the process begun?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question, Senator Miville-Dechêne. I see that your good humour remains intact despite my energetic response to one of your questions yesterday. I wanted to acknowledge that today because I think your question was entirely appropriate; my response may have been too forceful. I'll let you be the judge of that.

The government recognizes the importance of Ms. Richardson's contribution, including her work with survivors and Indigenous partners, which continues to inform its efforts. You're right, the position is currently vacant, but the government's commitment remains firm, with annual investments of $10.28 million to prevent human trafficking, protect victims and support survivors. That includes $2.5 million for the national crisis hotline.

I will raise the matter with Minister Anandasangaree and find out the status of the recruitment process for Ms. Richardson's eventual replacement.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Thank you. For now, the position is vacant.

To place this in context, the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking expired in 2024 and has not been renewed. Are we to conclude that the government is not seriously committed to tackling this scourge? Why the delay?

Senator Moreau: Just because the position is vacant does not mean that the government cannot make significant investments in this area. We take this issue very seriously. I don't know why Ms. Richardson left her position, but I will raise the question with the Minister of Public Safety. The minister also held consultations with survivors, Indigenous partners and front-line workers to determine the next steps. I believe that the government is committed —

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

[*English*]

TREASURY BOARD

BUSINESS INNOVATION AND GROWTH SUPPORT

Hon. Colin Deacon: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Moreau, in 2018, the government launched the Business Innovation and Growth Support, or BIGS, initiative in order to improve the evaluation of federal innovation and growth programs.

Using Statistics Canada data, the Treasury Board's latest analysis identified 172 innovation support programs across 19 departments and agencies. In 2022-23, these programs distributed about $5.9 billion. My office's independent research reached a similar conclusion.

We understand that the Treasury Board's capacity to support this annual analysis may have been discontinued as part of spending reallocations. Can the government provide an update on the status of the BIGS initiative and explain how it is using Statistics Canada data to improve coordination, effectiveness and accountability across these 172 programs?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. I cannot confirm the operational status of that specific Treasury Board team today. The government's commitment to evaluating program performance and improving accountability remains unchanged. The government recognizes that Canadians expect innovation spending to deliver measurable results, and the government has the responsibility to ensure taxpayer dollars are being used effectively.

I am told that Statistics Canada continues to collect data on business innovation and growth support. It can speak to who uses the data and how the data is used, but, unfortunately, I cannot comment further on this specifically.

Senator C. Deacon: If there is no single team analyzing the impact of this spending — across 19 departments and 172 programs — how will the government be sharing best practices and reallocating resources in order to maximize program effectiveness and return on investment?

Senator Moreau: Part of the answer would be in Budget 2026. The government will continue publishing the findings of its reviews, including on business innovation, so Canadians can see where investments are delivering results and where improvements are needed.

However, as I mentioned, Statistics Canada continues to collect data. At this time, I should confirm with you the teams in the Treasury Board and what they are doing with the data collection.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

PARKS CANADA

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Government leader, according to recent reports, Parks Canada has ended its search-and-rescue dog program, bringing to a close a vital service that assisted with wilderness rescues, avalanche response and the location of missing persons in our national parks.

Former handlers and park wardens warn that these highly trained dogs played a critical role in emergency response and visitor safety. As visitations continue to rise and extreme weather events become more frequent, placing greater demands on emergency response services, Canadians expect strong public safety and preparedness measures.

Senator Moreau, can you explain why your government chose to eliminate this program and what measures will be put in place to replace these specialized search-and-rescue capabilities?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question, Senator Ataullahjan. Yesterday, I answered a similar question — asked by Senator Aucoin — on the Parks Canada reduction program. My understanding is that this is not a situation where those restrictions will interfere with public safety in national parks.

To your specific question concerning the search-and-rescue dog program, I do not have specific data on that. My general answer would be that there is no question of the government reducing the safety of Canadians visiting our national parks.

Senator Ataullahjan: Thank you for your answer, Senator Moreau.

Former handlers have noted that the last search-and-rescue dog helped locate dozens of missing people during its service. With this program cancelled and concerns about staffing reductions in our national parks, how can Canadians be confident that visitor safety and emergency response capacity will not be undermined?

Senator Moreau: That is a legitimate question. The government has the obligation of ensuring the safety of Canadians visiting national parks. I will raise the question with the department to see whether the program has been cancelled or if there has been a change in the program. However, the safety of Canadians visiting national parks is very important to the government.

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUESTS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, during recent testimony before a committee in the other place, Canada's Information Commissioner raised serious concerns about your government's handling of access to information requests. Her office has received more than 5,000 complaints this year alone.

The commissioner also noted that federal institutions continue to struggle to meet their legal obligations, as well as that her office issued 63 orders last year compelling departments and agencies to release records.

Senator Moreau, we all know that transparency is essential to public trust and democratic accountability. Why is your government failing to uphold Canadians' right to access information?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Access to information is something for which I was responsible when I was in the Quebec government. It is very technical. The reason why the answers are sometimes not provided is because, technically, the questions being asked are not under the scope of the law.

I don't know each of the 5,000 files you are referring to, but sometimes we have to be careful when talking about access to information. The government has a duty to act and takes that duty very seriously. I have no reports or information indicating that the law wouldn't be followed by the government, as far as access to information is concerned.

• (1410)

Senator Martin: That's interesting insight and past experience, but more than 5,000 is actually very high.

Since 2015, Liberal governments have promised that federal records would be open by default. More recently, in his campaign, Prime Minister Carney pledged to improve public access to government records. Why, then, are complaints about access to information at a record high? When can Canadians expect meaningful reforms to restore transparency and accountability?

Senator Moreau: I don't think that we are talking here about the necessity for reform. There is a law concerning public access to documents or information in Canada and in many provinces. The fact is that those are very complex situations. Sometimes there are things that cannot be revealed because of their nature.

For such a technical situation, I would not put blame on the government because my understanding is that the government is following the law and the regulations concerning access to information.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Hon. Robert Black: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Moreau, your government recently announced the conclusion of free trade negotiations with the Philippines and with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN. These are welcome developments for Canadian agriculture, particularly as producers look to diversify their export markets. However, securing new trade agreements is only the first step.

Senator Moreau, how does your government intend to work with industry to support market development and address the non-tariff barriers that can prevent Canadian agricultural producers from fully benefiting from these new trade opportunities as well as non-tariff barriers that persist in already well-established markets like the European Union?

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

You are absolutely right that signing trade agreements is only the first step. There is more to do. The government's priority is ensuring Canadian farmers and producers can turn those agreements into real export opportunities. That's the meaning behind your question. That's why the government is working directly with industry to identify and remove non-tariff barriers, including through regulatory cooperation and technical negotiations with our trade representative abroad.

Canada is already seeing results in Indonesia, where government advocacy has helped secure additional market access for Canadian beef and pork producers ahead of our trade agreement entering into force on December 1 of this year. The government is also opening new opportunities across Southeast Asia, including through our negotiations with the Philippines and ASEAN, while continuing to address barriers in established markets like the European Union.

Senator Black: Given that non-tariff barriers have continued to create challenges for Canadian agricultural exporters, even in markets where trade agreements are already in place, can the government identify specific measures or targets it will establish to ensure that these new agreements translate into tangible market access for Canadian farmers and producers?

Senator Moreau: The government recognizes that tariff reduction alone will not guarantee market access; you're right. That's why the government's efforts continue well beyond the signing of agreements.

Through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, relevant agencies and our trade representative, the government is working with industry to resolve regulatory barriers, secure export approval

and address market access challenges. That's the case in Indonesia, where Canada has already expanded access for Canadian agri-food. The agreement has also established a dedicated dialogue to address food safety and other regulatory barriers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE SENATE

Hon. Toni Varone: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(k), I move:

> That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy be authorized to meet on Wednesday, November 25, 2026, for the purpose of its study of Bill S-7, An Act to modernize certain regulatory and administrative processes, as authorized by the Senate on November 18, 2026, even though the Senate may then be sitting, and that rule 12-18(1) be suspended in relation thereto.

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.)

COMMISSIONER FOR MODERN TREATY IMPLEMENTATION BILL

THIRD READING

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Arnot, seconded by the Honourable Senator MacAdam, for the third reading of Bill C-10, An Act respecting the Commissioner for Modern Treaty Implementation.

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak as the critic of Bill C-10, An Act respecting the Commissioner for Modern Treaty Implementation. As I speak, please remember that co-development of a bill needs to be implemented. Otherwise, it doesn't serve a purpose. And is it even an accomplished treaty?

We must commend the modern treaty partners for their perseverance, commitment and patience in fighting for the implementation of their treaties for over 20 years.

I will first speak to the grace and expectations of modern treaty partners. Then I will speak to the lack of implementation by the federal government. You will then note the difference in how First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples approach treaties and how the government does.

The following was in my second reading speech, but it bears repeating. The federal government and Indigenous modern treaty partners co-developed Bill C-10. As noted in my second reading speech, President Eva Clayton explained:

> The bill has now been introduced as Bill C-10. It is the same co-developed bill, which is why the Nisga'a Nation and others are not seeking any amendments — because [we] co-developed it. In other words, [we] support it as drafted.

On December 3, 2025, the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, or LCAC, provided my office with the following information:

> Bill C-10 was co-developed by the federal government and Indigenous modern treaty partners across Canada. It is more than just another government bill; it is our bill as well.

Colleagues, I repeat: It is more than just another government bill; it is our bill as well. To continue:

> Indigenous modern treaty partners have advocated for an independent oversight body for modern treaty implementation for more than 20 years. Put simply, the Indigenous modern treaty partners fully support Bill C-10 as drafted.
>
> The bill will improve Indigenous self-determination and autonomy. The full, effective and timely implementation can yield concrete socio-economic gains. A federal evaluation found that Indigenous people in self-governing communities will experience higher incomes, greater employment, better housing conditions and overall improved community well-being compared to those under the Indian Act system. Modern treaties are good for the economy and, therefore, good for all Canadians.
>
> Modern treaties are constitutionally protected agreements that form an essential part of the constitutional framework of Canada and represent a distinct expression of reconciliation. They clarify the land and resource rights, both of the Indigenous signatories and of the Crown, and are intended to improve the social, cultural, political and economic well-being of the Indigenous Peoples concerned.

When modern treaties are implemented well, Canada prospers. However, when modern treaties are neglected, Canada's credibility and integrity suffer. Bill C-10 will bring the necessary oversight and accountability within the federal system that has been missing for far too long.

• (1420)

Decades of unfruitful efforts to improve modern treaty implementation have demonstrated that the failures are not individual but structural. Federal public servants can only act within the mandates that they are given. Without political-level direction and accountability, even the best-intentioned public servants are left without the tools or authority to deliver results. The commissioner will ensure that parliamentarians and, through them, Canadians have the power to hold to account the highest levels of government, not just individual bureaucrats.

Over the years, the Auditor General has provided important reviews of various Indigenous issues, but performance audits of modern treaties have been few and far between. The Auditor General's broad mandate and scope limited to existing government programs also make that office ill-suited for the task. Modern treaties require continuous, comprehensive and specialized attention, which the commissioner will provide.

The commissioner will be an independent agent of Parliament, so there will not be another layer of bureaucracy; it will shine a light on performance rather than processes.

Fifty years after the first modern treaty was signed, implementation continues to fall short. Many Indigenous modern treaty partners continue to have no choice but to spend considerable resources and time forcing the federal government to honour commitments it made to them in their treaties. Governments of all stripes have tried to fix this issue internally, but while coordination between departments has improved, accountability has not. Modern treaty obligations remain unfulfilled, implementation uneven, results inconsistent, and trust fragile.

Importantly, implementation of treaties is and must remain a non-partisan issue. Modern treaties have been signed, and implementation challenges have persisted under both Conservative and Liberal governments. Systemic barriers, not ideology, are the cause of implementation issues. All political parties must remain committed to the full, effective and timely implementation of modern treaties, and each has a role to play in holding government accountable to the promises they made.

In the 2008 Senate special study entitled *Honouring the Spirit of Modern Treaties: Closing the Loopholes*, the "10 Fundamental Principles" of the Land Claims Agreement Coalition, or LCAC, are set out:

1. the history of nation-to-nation contact and interaction between the crown and the aboriginal peoples in Canada has created an enduring relationship between the crown and aboriginal peoples, one that is fundamentally predicated on the honour of the crown.

2. "[t]he doctrine of aboriginal rights exists, and is recognized and affirmed by s. 35 (1), because of one simple fact: when Europeans arrived in North America, aboriginal peoples *were already here*, living in communities on the land, and participating in distinctive cultures, as they had done for centuries."

3. "the historical roots of the principle of the honour of the crown suggest that it must be understood generously in order to reflect the underlying realities from which it stems. In all its dealings with aboriginal peoples, from the assertion of sovereignty to the resolution of claims and the implementation of treaties, the crown must act honourably. Nothing less is required if we are to achieve "the reconciliation of the pre-existence of aboriginal societies with the sovereignty of the crown."

4. relations between the crown and aboriginal peoples have been and will always be manifested in a wide variety of political and legal arrangements and instruments. No single political or legal arrangement or instrument can be said to comprehensively express the dimensions, in breadth, depth or time, of the ongoing and evolving relationship that connects the crown and an aboriginal people.

5. treaties and land claims agreements between the crown and aboriginal peoples are acknowledged to be "basic building blocks in the creation of our country . . . [t]reaties — both historical and modern — and the relationship they represent provide a basis for developing a strengthened and forward looking partnership with aboriginal people."

6. among the key political and legal instruments that affirm the relationship between the crown and aboriginal people are modern land claims agreements, and ancillary agreements such as implementation and self-government agreements that attach to or follow from land claims agreements.

7. modern land claims agreements, which give rise to treaty rights, are multifaceted, and the ongoing rights they affirm are, among other things, constitutional, statutory, contractual, fiduciary, and in keeping with the "living tree" principle of Canadian law, evolving and progressive in nature.

8. the negotiation and implementation of modern land claims agreements, and their ancillary agreements, engage the honour of the crown, and demand results and ongoing outcomes that are just. "where treaties remain to be concluded, the honour of the crown requires negotiations *leading to a just settlement of Aboriginal claims*."

9. the treaty rights arising from modern land claims agreements express the mutual desire of the crown and aboriginal peoples in canada to reconcile through sharing the lands, resources and natural wealth of this subcontinent in a

manner that is equitable and just — no longer so as to solely assimilate, take or extinguish the interest of the aboriginal people involved, but rather so as to implement mutual objectives that will ensure their socio-economic, political and cultural survival, well-being and development as peoples.

10. aboriginal and treaty rights are human rights, and they are not amenable to extinguishment as a matter of respect for canada's international human rights obligations. "the situation of the aboriginal peoples remains the most pressing human rights issue facing canadians. . . [t]he practice of extinguishing inherent aboriginal rights be abandoned as incompatible with article 1 of the [International] covenant [on civil and Political rights]."

In section D. of the report, which is entitled "The Implementation Phase," it states:

. . . any promise of a renewed relationship between the Crown and Aboriginal peoples lies not only in negotiating modern treaties, but also in their full and proper implementation. . . . the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development . . . 2003 Implementation Handbook states, in part, that:

Implementation is not a passing phase, but rather an enduring one, marking a new relationship among the parties — the federal government, the Aboriginal group and the provincial or territorial government involved.

Comprehensive land claims agreements reached after 1986 require the negotiation of implementation plans. These plans identify hundreds of implementation projects and activities in varying degrees of detail. Implementation plans are attached to final settlement agreements but are not part of them. . . . It is the view of the Department that, given the need for flexibility, implementation plans should act more as a guide. The 2003 departmental handbook states, in part, that:

The federal preference is that the implementation plan not be a legally binding document, but rather an operational and management tool that describes the parties' understanding as to how the obligations in the final agreement will be fulfilled.

• (1430)

And here is where we see that distinction between how First Nations understand treaties and how the government is planning to implement. I don't know what they're implementing.

Although they accompany final agreements, implementation plans do not receive constitutional protection under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

Under the title "Implementation Challenges: What the Committee Heard," the report states:

The testimony received by the Committee reveals a consensus on many of the major issues impeding the effective implementation of comprehensive land claims agreements. . . .

I. Restrictive Policy Approaches

. . . Representatives of the Land Claims Agreements Coalition told us that:

part of the frustration that coalition members find is that the Government of Canada is singularly concerned with merely fulfilling what it calls the obligations, the narrow, technically-defined legalistic obligations — what they have to do — and is not sufficiently concerned with . . . working to achieve the overall broad objectives of the entire agreement.

This view is supported by the findings of the Auditor General of Canada who, in successive reports, concluded that the federal government "seems focussed on fulfilling the letter of the land claim's implementation plans but not the spirit" and that it has not worked to "support the full intent of the land claims agreements.". . .

The report further reads:

Aboriginal signatories to treaty settlements do not view their Agreements with the Crown as fixed contracts, but rather as a means to establish ongoing political and legal relationships between the Crown and Aboriginal societies. . . .

These were the findings and conclusions of the committee:

. . . it is clear to this Committee that current federal policy and organizational structures are ill-suited to manage the implementation of modern treaties and the complex issues that arise from these agreements. Repeatedly, witnesses have indicated the major challenges relating to the implementation of modern treaties relate largely to the lack of overall government coordination of federal obligations and federal policies that undermine the commitments made in land claims agreements. Consequently, they suggest there must be a fundamental shift in the structures and policy approaches of the federal government if treaties are to be properly implemented. Otherwise, as Jim Aldridge remarked, the genuine and effective realization of treaties will likely remain "a mere platitude" to which federal officials "pay lip service before carrying on with business as usual." The Committee agrees.

I. The Need for a New Policy Approach on Implementation

The 1986 federal policy on comprehensive land claims deals only briefly with the issue of implementation. We reproduce it here in its entirety:

Final agreements must be accompanied by implementation plans. All elements of agreements related to land, title, quantum of resources (where applicable) and financial arrangements will be final. Provisions related to management and decision-making agencies will be subject to review from time to time, as agreed, and subject to legislative amendment where the parties agree that specific provisions are unworkable, obsolete or no longer desirable. The negotiation process will take account of the federal regulatory reform policy and the Citizen's Code of

> regulatory fairness, and the final agreements and implementation plans will provide for regulatory impact assessments.
>
> Apart from its remarkable brevity, the government's policy statement on implementation is more process than actual policy. It is of little surprise, then, the statement is effectively silent on goals and objectives respecting the implementation of modern treaties.
>
> . . . Of particular concern is that current government policy and practices do not reflect the renewed nation-to-nation relationship that treaties represent. . . .

The committee goes on to say:

> . . . experience suggests that attempts to address the implementation concerns of Aboriginal signatories through existing policies have not been successful. Current implementation practices, as we have discussed, appear largely to address the interests of government and minimize costs with the least disruption to existing processes. In our view, this leads to policies and practices that are out of step with the very nature of the issues they are supposed to resolve.
>
> In 2003 . . . There was consensus among signatory nations that a new land claims implementation policy was required; one that sets out "clear rules to oversee a government-wide approach to claims implementation and to resolve disputes between the parties in a manner that would provide accountability and monitoring of the parties' obligations to these important and historical agreements.". . .

And then I mention the 10 fundamental principles.

The report continues:

> Concepts such as the honour of the Crown, the government's fiduciary relationship to Aboriginal peoples and the constitutional affirmation and protection of Aboriginal and treaty rights deserve a more meaningful expression. . . .
>
> The Committee has carefully considered the Land Claims Agreements Coalition's proposed principles and points, and we conclude that as long as these fundamental issues are ignored or set aside, implementation problems will persist. . . .

The committee agreed with John Merritt, who told the committee:

> Modest administrative changes will not solve central political, policy and fiscal problems. For example, they will not change the situation identified by Deputy Minister Wernick back in February who told you he cannot compel anyone outside DIAND to implement land claims agreements.

The report further reads:

> . . . Committee members have expressed deep concern with the rigid and inflexible positions concerning the use of arbitration and the determination of implementation funding. We find these positions have led government to unilaterally define implementation practices in a restrictive manner, rendering arbitration provisions "toothless tigers." We do not feel that a single party to an agreement should have the unilateral discretion to effectively bar issues from being referred to arbitration. . . .

And:

> The Land Claims Agreements Coalition as well as the individual signatories to land claims agreements noted that institutional changes are required if their Agreements are to be properly implemented. . . .
>
> To address these implementation challenges, signatories indicated that an independent agency, outside the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, with the authority to review and oversee the implementation and the fulfilment of Canada's obligations under modern land claims agreements, was required. . . .
>
> In 1985, the report of the *Task Force to Review Comprehensive Claims Policy* recommended there be a Commissioner for Aboriginal Land Claims Agreements to monitor the effectiveness of implementation.

• (1440)

The 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated:

> . . . that because treaties are not self-implementing, there exists a need for institutional arrangements to "prevent the erosion of confidence in the foundations of the new relationship."

The committee continued, saying they were:

> . . . not persuaded that establishing an independent agency within the Office of the Auditor General of Canada to oversee the implementation of modern land claims agreements, should it be given a similar mandate, is the most appropriate model. We find it would duplicate, to a great extent, the role of the Auditor General. The Auditor General currently reports annually to Parliament on various matters concerning federal activities with respect to First Nations issues. These performance audits are invaluable in assisting parliamentarians examine government activities and hold it to account for its actions. We appreciate, however, that the focus of these audits is not solely on treaty implementation matters and that the Auditor General routinely examines a range of federal programs and services targeted to First Nations.

The committee also stated:

> . . . any independent body which would oversee matters respecting the implementation of modern treaties should be able to make the kinds of recommendations that fall outside the mandate of the Auditor General of Canada. The Auditor General looks primarily at administrative issues and whether federal programs are delivered in compliance with established policies, whether these are managed efficiently and if appropriate systems are in place to measure and report

> on program effectiveness. The Auditor General, however, does not comment on policy matters, nor does it recommend changes to legislation or the appropriate allocation of resources. Thus, by their very nature, performance audits can not cover the full scope of issues relating to the implementation of comprehensive land claims agreements.

They continued, saying:

> . . . the Committee is strongly convinced of the need for a neutral, independent body to monitor and oversee the implementation of comprehensive land claims agreements. We are aware that creating new structures is always a difficult task, but no less is required to ensure the persistent challenges regarding treaty implementation are properly addressed. Such a body, in our view, must have the authority to oversee all implementation matters, including financial matters, and make recommendations to the parties. . . .

They continued:

> . . . The Committee believes that modern land claims agreements are fundamental to the renewed relationship between the Crown and Aboriginal peoples. The full and proper implementation of these Agreements is a matter of significant national interest, benefiting all Canadians. The settlement of these Agreements engenders a great deal of hope and optimism for a brighter future for Aboriginal Canadians. They also bring greater certainty and economic benefits to Canada as a whole. In light of the ongoing challenges in the implementation of these Agreements and the need for better institutional structures to deal with these challenges, the Committee recommends:
>
> That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the Lands Claims Agreements Coalition and its present and future members, take immediate steps to establish an independent body, through legislation, such as a Modern Treaty Commission, to oversee the implementation of comprehensive land claims agreements, including financial matters.
>
> That the mandate of the Commission be developed jointly with the Land Claims Agreements Coalition and its members.

They continued:

> . . . we conclude that whichever approach is ultimately adopted to ensure the effective coordination of federal treaty obligations within government, it must incorporate sufficient authority to secure the compliance of all government departments in meeting federal commitments under land claims agreements, including financial obligations. The Committee anticipates that this responsibility will ultimately be assumed by the Modern Treaty Commission. . . .

They continued, saying:

> Treaty-making and treaty implementation are not separate concepts. Both engage the honour of the Crown. The operative test, as John Merritt, pointed out must not be "what minimal investments can the government make to avoid being sued". Rather, the controlling question, in the Committee's view, and as stated by the Supreme Court of Canada must be "what is required to maintain the honour of the Crown and to effect reconciliation between the Crown and Aboriginal Peoples with respect to the interests at stake." We find the government's approach, rather than advancing the "interests at stake" uses its discretionary funding power to restrict them.

They continued:

> Signatory nations to comprehensive land claims agreements have every right to expect their treaties will be respected and the commitments made therein will be honoured. All Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, have the right to expect that when the Government of Canada makes solemn commitments, it will, in good faith, keep its promises.
>
> We find, however, that the continuing challenges related to the implementation of modern treaties have meant that the achievement these Agreements represent has often been overshadowed. Failure to fully implement modern treaties and to honour their spirit and intent is, as Justice Binnie remarked in *Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada*, "as destructive of the process of reconciliation as some of the larger and more explosive controversies." Clearly another approach to implementation is required. In the words of Tony Penikett:
>
> > These treaties, which are appended to the Constitution as expressions of section 35 rights, represent enormous nation-building achievements for Canada. However, failure to faithfully implement the provisions of these treaties as negotiated puts Canada at risk of generating new legends of broken promises for our country. This is not a trivial matter.

To that, the committee said, "We could not agree more."

When we look at the coalition and how it has fought to have their treaties implemented, it's taken 20 years — and many of them have given up 90% of their lands already and are still waiting to have their treaties implemented.

So, I ask that we support Bill C-10. Thank you.

[*Editor's Note: Senator McCallum spoke in an Indigenous language*.]

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.)

• (1450)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL SECURITY, DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTINGS AND ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of November 18, 2026, moved:

> That, for the purposes of its study of Bill C-22, An Act respecting lawful access, as authorized by the Senate on October 22, 2026, the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs be authorized to meet even though the Senate may then be sitting or adjourned, with the application of rules 12-18(1) and 12-18(2) being suspended in relation thereto.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*English*]

THE SENATE

SUBCOMMITTEES ON AGENDA AND PROCEDURE AUTHORIZED TO MEET REMOTELY

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of November 18, 2026, moved:

That:

1. the Senate recognize that Subcommittees on Agenda and Procedure of Senate committees have historically conducted business and made decisions by telephone, email and other electronic means, reflecting their longstanding informal and flexible practices, predating the temporary procedural measures adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic;

2. all Subcommittees on Agenda and Procedure be authorized to meet, deliberate and make decisions within the authority delegated to them by their respective committee, whether:

   (a) in person;

   (b) by telephone or teleconference;

   (c) by videoconference;

   (d) a combination of points 2(a), 2(b) and/or 2(c); or

   (e) by email or other digital or electronic means of communication approved for Senate business; and

3. nothing in this order authorize other subcommittees or Senate committees to meet other than in person, unless expressly authorized by the Senate in accordance with its Rules, usual practices and previous orders.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

COMPETITION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Klyne, seconded by the Honourable Senator White, for the third reading of Bill S-239, An Act to amend the Competition Act, as amended.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today at third reading of Bill S-239, An Act to amend the Competition Act, also known as the Canadian prosperity act.

I would like to start by thanking our colleague Senator Klyne for sponsoring this bill and for his commitment to a more open and integrated Canadian economy. I would also like to thank the members of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy, the witnesses who appeared and the officials from the Competition Bureau, who helped us understand how this bill would work in practice.

At second reading, I said that I supported the bill's intent, and I also raised several questions that I believed needed careful study.

Today, I would like to review how the bill has changed and how the committee examined those concerns.

Let me start with the goal. Barriers to trade within Canada are costly, even when Canadians cannot see them. They raise the prices families pay, limit where workers can use their skills and add costs for businesses that want to grow beyond their home province or territory. At a time when so many households are struggling with the cost of living and global trade has become less predictable, Canada cannot afford to keep its own domestic market divided.

Competition is one of the most effective tools we have to address these pressures. When businesses can enter new markets, consumers have more choice, prices come under downward pressure and companies have more reason to innovate. When

rules prevent that, everyone pays more. That is why it makes sense to give the Commissioner of Competition, supported by the expertise of the Competition Bureau, a clear way to recommend changes to governments and to require federal institutions to respond publicly.

Honourable senators, the committee adopted three amendments. The first amendment, moved by Senator Fridhandler, broadens the commissioner's recommendation power. As introduced, the bill limited recommendations for barriers to trade within Canada that unduly affect competition. As amended, the commissioner may make recommendations to improve the state of competition in the market or industry under inquiry or in a related market or industry in Canada.

This is a significant change. It means the response process would no longer be limited to one type of competition problem. That has some advantages. Unnecessary regulatory burdens do not always fit neatly into the category of an internal trade barrier, and Canadians benefit whenever governments are asked to examine rules that make markets less competitive.

However, I want to be clear that internal trade barriers must remain at the heart of this mechanism. At second reading, I urged that the focus remain on direct relief rather than expanded studies and on the sectors where barriers do the most harm, such as agriculture, energy, transportation and resource development. There are other sectors, but that's just to highlight some key sectors. A broader recommendation power must not dilute that focus. I expect the commissioner to use this tool where it can deliver the most tangible benefits for consumers, workers and businesses.

The second amendment, moved by Senator Varone, provides that recommendations under this new power must not propose eliminating or modifying requirements, restrictions or other measures established or administered under the Food and Drugs Act, other acts administered by the Minister of Health or regulations, rules or orders made under those acts where those measures are intended to protect the health or safety of Canadians.

No one in this chamber wants competition policy to come at the expense of public health and safety. This amendment provides that assurance explicitly. At the same time, we should be honest about how broad the wording is. It covers modification as well as elimination, and it contains no exception for changes that would maintain the same level of protection while reducing duplication or unnecessary costs.

I raise this because good regulation and good competition policies are not opposites. At second reading, I spoke about mutual recognition: If a product or service meets safety and quality requirements in one province or territory, it should generally be accepted in others without repeated approvals.

The committee heard a similar message from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Its representatives emphasized that businesses are not asking governments to lower standards but to recognize that different rules can achieve the same outcomes.

Protecting health and safety and removing needless duplication can and should go hand in hand. Within the limits established by this amendment and through other available avenues, governments should continue to pursue competition-friendly ways to achieve legitimate public objectives.

The third amendment, also moved by Senator Fridhandler, makes two practical improvements. First, the 120-day period now begins when the report is delivered to the head of the institution, not when it is published. Second, the commissioner must publish responses and notices when a provincial institution does not respond on the commissioner's website rather than on an unspecified public website.

• (1500)

These are sensible changes. Institutions will have a clear starting point for their response period, and Canadians will know where to find the record. I welcome all of these improvements to the bill's transparency.

Honourable senators, I welcome the committee's examination of the practical questions surrounding the bill, including its resource implications, the effectiveness of public accountability and the importance of cooperation among governments. These discussions helped clarify how the mechanism is intended to work. They also reinforced the need to distinguish between a useful tool for encouraging reform and a guarantee that reform will follow.

On resources, the sponsor's office advised the committee that its consultations indicated additional resources would not be required, explaining that the bureau already carries out public policy advocacy and could undertake this work within its existing resources. I welcome that assurance, while recognizing the importance of monitoring the practical demands on both the bureau and the federal institutions required to respond. Implementation should remain efficient and respectful of taxpayers.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business offered a helpful perspective on the bill's potential and its limits. It supported the additional transparency and accountability measures, while acknowledging that this legislation would not eliminate remaining internal trade barriers on its own.

That is an important distinction. Requiring governments to explain their decisions publicly can create pressure for change, but a response is not the same as removing a barrier. The value of this mechanism will ultimately depend on what governments do with the recommendations they receive.

The committee also considered the limits of voluntary provincial and territorial responses. That cooperative approach respects our federal system, and I believe it is the right one. However, as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business emphasized, many remaining internal trade barriers fall outside federal jurisdiction. Success will therefore depend on governments choosing to engage. I encourage them to treat the commissioner's recommendations as an opportunity to examine existing rules, explain their decisions and work together on practical improvements.

Finally, I welcome the committee's discussion of public reporting and ways to assess progress. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business supported greater reporting, while cautioning that separating this bill's effects from those of other internal trade reforms would be difficult. Even so, Canadians deserve to know whether recommendations are followed by action. I therefore encourage the commissioner and governments to track implementation and practical results over time. The test should not simply be how many reports are published or responses received but whether businesses face fewer obstacles, workers have greater opportunities and consumers benefit from stronger competition.

Honourable senators, despite some reservations, I believe that Bill S-239 is a constructive step forward. It draws on the expertise of the Competition Bureau to identify rules that hold back competition. It requires federal institutions to answer publicly. And it reinforces an important principle: Canada should be one economy, where goods, services and people can move freely from coast to coast to coast.

Removing these barriers is not only about economic efficiency. It is about lowering the cost of living, helping families keep more of what they earn, creating stable jobs and building a stronger fiscal foundation for our country through economic growth.

For these reasons, our Conservative caucus will support Bill S-239 at third reading. Again, I want to thank Senator Klyne for sponsoring this bill and the committee for doing a very good job on the improvements through the amendments that were made.

I hope that this bill will help turn good intentions into the concrete results Canadians deserve.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill, as amended, read third time and passed.)

CRIMINAL RECORDS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Pate, seconded by the Honourable Senator Moncion, for the second reading of Bill S-207, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate, I move to adjourn the debate for the balance of my time.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON FOOD ALLERGY BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Cardozo, seconded by the Honourable Senator Harder, P.C., for the second reading of Bill S-247, An Act to establish a national framework on food allergy.

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

(On motion of Senator Wells (*Newfoundland and Labrador*), debate adjourned.)

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE MONTH BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Housakos, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, for the second reading of Bill S-249, An Act respecting Christian Heritage Month.

Hon. Toni Varone: Honourable senators, I rise today in support of Bill S-249, An Act respecting Christian Heritage Month. I would like to thank Senator Housakos for moving this bill, but truth be told, colleagues, at the introduction of this bill, I was rather agnostic. I am a devout Catholic. I view my faith as a private matter, so the point of the bill was lost on me.

Then I began to understand that this bill is not about declaring one faith superior to another or asking Canadians to share a particular belief. It is about acknowledging an important part of our history and the many ways in which Christian communities and individuals have contributed to the country we share.

For generations, churches and faith-based organizations helped establish schools, hospitals, charities and community services. Christians have served their neighbours in cities, rural communities and remote regions, often alongside people of other faiths and people of no faith. Their efforts helped shape institutions and traditions that continue to serve Canadians today. A month of recognition would give us an opportunity to raise awareness about those contributions and the people behind them.

Canada has earmarked heritage months as a way to deepen understanding and celebrate the many communities that have helped build our country. Recognizing Christian heritage belongs within that broader story. It can affirm the place of Christian traditions in Canada's history while respecting the religious diversity that defines Canada today.

As a Catholic, I see this recognition not as a claim to privilege but as an invitation to reflection. Christian history in Canada is complex. It includes service, compassion, education and community building. It also includes painful chapters, particularly in the treatment of Indigenous Peoples, so painful that they have personally challenged my own faith.

Years ago, I had the opportunity to meet His Holiness Pope Francis. It was not a customary meeting to receive a blessing. I met him in his personal office at the Vatican alongside people of different faiths. I found the courage to tell him that I struggled to reconcile my faith with the harms inflicted on innocent Indigenous children in residential schools in Canada.

• (1510)

His response was profound. He told me that the teachings of our faith are infallible, but we humans are not. We make mistakes, and the way forward begins by acknowledging them. That recognition, he emphasized, must never erase those harms or simplify the past. Instead, it should make room to learn honestly: to honour what was good, confront what was wrong and better understand the responsibilities we carry into the future.

That is why Christian heritage month must be thoughtful and inclusive. It should encourage education, dialogue and respect, not division. It should recognize the diversity within Christianity itself and the many ways Christian communities have taken part in Canada's public life.

Honourable senators, a country can acknowledge its history without limiting its future. Recognizing Christian heritage does not diminish the contributions of other faiths or of the many communities that make this country their home. It can help us understand more fully how our shared society was formed and how we can continue to build it together.

I therefore support this bill as an opportunity for remembrance, learning and respectful conversation and as a recognition of the many Canadians whose Christian heritage has helped shape our common home.

This bill is not political, nor should it be a wedge instrument of our personal politics, so I urge all of you to support this bill, as it has the overwhelming merit to bypass committee and be approved here in the chamber. Thank you.

Meegwetch.

(On motion of Senator Black, debate adjourned.)

NATIONAL STRATEGY ON FLOOD AND DROUGHT FORECASTING BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Tracy Muggli moved second reading of Bill C-241, An Act to establish a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Bill C-241, An Act to establish a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting. This is the first bill I am sponsoring in the Senate of Canada, and I couldn't be more proud, as this legislation presents a great opportunity to help support Canadians and our economy through a better understanding of our changing environment.

Bill C-241, which was introduced by member of Parliament Tatiana Auguste in the other place, seeks to establish a national strategy for flood and drought forecasting. Tatiana, as you may recall, is the Liberal MP for Terrebonne. She introduced this legislation in the fall of 2025 and oversaw its movement to committee in the House before her election win was annulled by the Supreme Court.

Then she was forced to rerun for her seat in a by-election, which she won, before returning to expertly steer this legislation through third reading. She did all this in just over a year.

This legislation enjoyed significant support in the other place, with 303 MPs voting in favour, including members of the Liberals, the Conservative Party, the NDP and the Greens. I too am proud to stand in support of this bill. As floods, droughts and wildfires continue to dominate our headlines, I hope you too will support this worthy legislation.

Canada remains the only G7 country without a nationally coordinated system for flood forecasting. While it may come as a surprise to many, the most expensive natural disasters that Canada faces are floods. And as someone from Saskatchewan, we know all too well the harmful impacts drought has on the agriculture sector of the economy and those who work in agriculture.

Canada has some of the world's largest river systems and water reserves, and we also have some of the most respected hydrologists, water researchers and scientific institutions. I have brought up the work of Dr. John Pomeroy before in this chamber, and you will hear me quote him again today. Dr. Pomeroy is a world-renowned hydrologist, the Director of the Global Water Futures program and a professor at the University of Saskatchewan. He has played an integral role in the development of this bill.

While we have respected experts and institutions across Canada, forecasting of floods and droughts remains fragmented and carried out in silos by provinces, territories, municipalities and even regional conservation authorities. This approach addresses regionally specific challenges but makes it impossible to integrate data for weather forecasting and emergency management. It means inconsistent resource levels and some duplication of services, especially in our many transboundary rivers.

Those silos mean that forecasting, data collection and even the technology being employed change from one place to the next. It means slower adaptation to new technologies and best practices. And it results in a lack of coordination and an abundance of incompatibility across these many actors and federal agencies.

This legislation sets out to provide these many stakeholders with the information and tools they need to coordinate and communicate and, in turn, improve forecasting, better understand risks and minimize the impacts of flood and drought events.

An example of this is the Yukon Territory. For nearly a decade, Dr. John Pomeroy, alongside research assistants, has been helping with flood forecasting in the Yukon River and Porcupine River basins. During this process, initially supported by Global Water Futures and Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Yukon flood forecasting system was developed. However, a lack of financial resources and expiring operating grants from Yukon Environment and NSERC mean this is the last winter they will have the funds to hire researchers to do this work.

It should come as no surprise that provinces and jurisdictions with smaller populations don't have the resources and expertise to adequately forecast. But I think you'll agree that Canadians from coast to coast to coast deserve the chance to be prepared.

And with ongoing climate change, we have a lot to prepare for. We have seen the consequences of drought in the Prairies. The drought of 2001 and 2002 resulted in an estimated $3.6-billion decline in agricultural production nationally over those two years.

More recently, the 2021 drought across Western Canada saw total crop production fall by approximately 44% compared with the previous year. For producers experiencing drought, it means watching a year of crops die out and wondering how to keep a family farm financially viable.

The data envisioned in this legislation won't prevent drought, but it will help farmers make difficult decisions about what crops to plant and how to move forward by reducing uncertainty.

The effects of these disasters are widespread, and they create real human impacts. I've experienced that stress. Those formative experiences on a farm in Saskatchewan during the drought in 1988 are part of what drew me to sponsoring this bill. These are experiences that stay with people and cause lasting harm.

The Saskatchewan Farm Stress Line was established in 1992 to provide confidential support and crisis counselling to people in the agriculture sector. Reporting from the former executive director indicated that calls had increased by 500% between 2012 and 2020. In fact, the summer of 2021 saw record call volumes. That was also a year of intense drought in Saskatchewan.

When a producer loses a crop, the impact can extend well beyond that season. It affects financial security and mental health and puts their livelihood and connection to their culture in jeopardy.

Better forecasting means more time to make informed decisions. On the farm, that means taking the power back to make decisions about water management, crops suited for conditions and livestock management — preparation instead of crisis response.

This legislation deals with both flood and drought forecasting, and each brings with them an array of challenges.

In 2023, British Columbia experienced significant drought conditions in 80% of the province by mid-August. Water restrictions were introduced, emergency measures were taken, and these conditions led to a record wildfire season in the province. While drought has a particularly significant impact on agricultural production and rural communities, flooding presents another serious threat to communities across Canada.

• (1520)

In 2013, flooding in southern Alberta caused widespread devastation, particularly in Calgary and surrounding communities. Approximately 100,000 people were evacuated that year, mainly in Alberta, but downriver flooding also impacted folks in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Tragically, five people died.

More than 2,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces were deployed in southern Alberta. Flood forecasts and alerts for Canmore and High River were issued hours after evacuations had already begun. The financial cost in losses and reparations reached between $5 billion and $6 billion.

In 2019, flooding along the Ottawa River affected communities in Ontario and Quebec. Thousands of homes were flooded, and hundreds of people were displaced. We also saw flooding in New Brunswick along the Saint John River that year.

In 2021, British Columbia experienced devastating flooding that resulted in more than 18,000 people being evacuated. Major highways and economic supply chains were disrupted, with over 20,000 hectares of farmland damaged. More than 50 First Nations communities were affected. The federal government ultimately committed more than $1 billion in direct disaster recovery funding with total costs estimated at over $10 billion.

Just last week, British Columbia experienced another round of serious flooding. Heavy rainfall caused rivers in the Pemberton Valley to overflow, flooding properties and prompting evacuation orders and alerts.

Colleagues, if you were paying attention, you'll have noticed that since 2013, nearly every province across this country has been affected by severe flooding and drought, costing tens of billions of dollars. These examples demonstrate that flooding does not respect provincial boundaries. Rivers flow across jurisdictions, and the impacts of extreme weather can quickly spread from one community or region to another.

This underscores the importance of reliable information that can be shared widely and made available before a crisis.

Communities need to know what is coming and how much time they have to respond. That information can make the difference between an orderly evacuation and a dangerous emergency. It can help municipalities protect critical infrastructure and residents make decisions to protect their families and property.

The economic consequences of these events are also becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

Blair Feltmate, who leads the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo, has written about the growing financial consequences of extreme weather in Canada.

Between 1983 and 2008, catastrophic insured losses in Canada generally ranged between $250 million and $450 million annually. Since 2009, those losses have grown substantially. In 2024, insured catastrophic losses reached a record level of approximately $8.5 billion. That year alone included major flooding in Toronto and southern Ontario and significant flooding in Quebec, as well as the Jasper wildfire.

Mr. Feltmate has also pointed to the growing challenge of obtaining insurance coverage for basement flooding, with an estimated 1.5 million Canadian homeowners no longer able to obtain that coverage. This can also create challenges in acquiring a mortgage.

The cost of extreme weather is not borne by one level of government or one sector of the economy. It is borne by all of us. Knowing more about where risks may exist and how water systems are changing and sharing data and expertise are the keys to keeping up with a rapidly changing environment.

This is where I believe Bill C-241 can make an important contribution. This legislation requires the government to work with partners to assess existing capabilities and consider opportunities for improvement in the development of a national strategy. It also requires the strategy to be reported to Parliament within two years, with a further review of its effectiveness five years after the report to Parliament.

Colleagues, I want to address something that I think is important when discussing the role of the federal government in this area. A national strategy should not be about taking responsibility away from provinces, territories and Indigenous groups; nor should it be about creating another layer of bureaucracy or duplicating work that is already being done.

In fact, one of the concerns with our current approach is that duplication is already occurring because of the fragmented way in which forecasting services have developed.

The flooding from 2013 that I mentioned earlier started in the Rockies in British Columbia and affected all provinces east to Manitoba.

Where rivers cross provincial boundaries, jurisdictions are collecting similar information, developing separate models and maintaining separate forecasting systems. There are opportunities to improve how that information is shared and how resources are coordinated.

The federal government has an important role to play in bringing these efforts together, and Bill C-241 is the pathway to making that work a success.

When I spoke with the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency, they told me that, in a national strategy, the federal government is well suited to act as a coordinator and facilitator. They said that the goal should be to support the work already being done by provincial and territorial partners, to help make information more accessible and actionable and to avoid creating unnecessary administrative burdens.

They also said that practical opportunities to make better use of federal resources exist. For example, they suggested coordinated procurement of certain technologies to reduce costs.

Importantly, this work is focused on applied research. We need to fund research and share answers to practical questions to give decision makers information they can interpret and use. We also need to recognize that our ability to forecast and prepare for these events is becoming more important as climate changes. As I mentioned recently in the chamber when former Irish president Mary Robinson was here, the earth has now hit the tipping point of 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming from pre-industrial temperatures.

Canada is warming almost twice as fast as the global rate, and the Arctic is warming even faster.

John Pomeroy, who has played an important role in developing this legislation, recently spoke to *The Globe and Mail* about the rapid retreat of glaciers and the consequences for Canada's water systems.

He pointed to Peyto Glacier in the Canadian Rockies. It has retreated more than half a kilometre in just five years. As glaciers shrink and snowpacks decline, Canada faces growing risks to its water supply and water quality, along with changing conditions that can increase the likelihood of flooding, drought and wildfires.

These changes have significant economic, social and environmental consequences, particularly for communities that depend on reliable water sources.

Across Canada, we are experiencing more frequent and severe extreme weather events, and we need to be better prepared for the interconnected nature of these risks. I was reminded of this during many discussions on climate adaptation at COP 31, where adaptation is a key pillar of negotiation. We often talk about the need to respond to climate change, but we also need to talk about how we prepare for the impacts that are already being felt by communities across the country. Adaptation is now required. That means investing in better information, better planning and better coordination.

As MP Auguste mentioned in her second reading speech in the other place:

> This bill is not only a preventive measure, but it also protects human life, as well as our planet and future generations.

She continued, saying:

> . . . this bill will enable effective coordination between the provinces and territories, indigenous peoples and experts. This is about creating a table where everyone can sit down and work together for the good of our country.

That is what Bill C-241 can help lead to.

It also means recognizing the value of Canadian research and expertise. The University of Saskatchewan is a particularly good example of the kind of expertise we have right here at home. In the 2026 ShanghaiRanking of water resources disciplines, the University of Saskatchewan ranked first in Canada and among the top 10 institutions globally.

John Pomeroy has helped build an extensive network of water research and monitoring expertise through the Centre for Hydrology and the Global Water Futures Observatories. This work brings together researchers from universities across the country and provides an important foundation for understanding Canada's water systems.

These researchers have been asking for a nationally coordinated forecasting strategy for years. We should be proud of the fact that this level of expertise exists in Canada, but we should also be listening to it. This is also an opportunity to build on work already being done in other areas of climate preparedness.

For example, the Agriculture and Forestry Committee's *Canada on Fire* report from earlier this year recommended using the same data for flood and drought forecasting to improve wildfire hazard mapping.

• (1530)

There is a clear connection between that work and the goals of Bill C-241. Better information about drought conditions, water availability and flood risks can also contribute to our understanding of wildfire hazards and the changing risks facing communities.

Colleagues, this is not just a Canadian challenge.

At COP 31 in Türkiye this past week, Canada was taking part in discussions about financing and expanding climate risk and early warning systems, particularly in the least developed countries and small island developing states. I was very happy to see the government announce that it intends to contribute up to $10 million to an international initiative to strengthen climate risk forecasting and early warning systems.

The international Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems, or CREWS, initiative, launched at COP 21 in Paris, recognizes that early warning information can save lives and protect communities, particularly in places where the resources and infrastructure to respond to extreme weather are limited. It is important that Canada continues to support these international efforts, and we should also recognize that the need for better forecasting and preparedness exists here at home. The purpose of Bill C-241 is straightforward. It is about establishing a national strategy that brings together the expertise, information, stakeholders and resources needed to improve flood and drought forecasting in Canada. It is about giving communities more time to prepare and adapt, giving producers better information to make decisions, helping governments plan for future risks and reducing the economic and human costs of extreme weather.

We cannot control the weather, and we cannot stop every flood or prevent every drought. But we can control how prepared we are. We can choose to be more proactive rather than reactive. We can make better use of the expertise and resources we already have, and we can choose to work together across jurisdictions to make sure that Canadians have useful information that they need before disaster strikes.

Colleagues, I encourage you to support sending Bill C-241 to committee for further study.

Thank you. *Marsee*. *Meegwetch*.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT

NINTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE POSTPONED

On Other Business, Reports of Committees, Other, Order No. 29:

> Consideration of the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, entitled *Senate Expenditure Comparison and Trending Analysis*, tabled in the Senate on May 7, 2026.

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15. Therefore, with leave of the Senate, I ask that consideration of this item be postponed until the next sitting of the Senate.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate postponed until the next sitting of the Senate.)

THE SENATE

MOTION THAT ALL COMMITTEES CONSIDER THE INFLUENCES AND IMPACTS OF TECHNOLOGY IN ANY STUDIES FOR THE REMAINDER OF CURRENT SESSION—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Deacon (*Nova Scotia*), seconded by the Honourable Senator Downe:
>
> That, for the remainder of the current session, all committees consider the influences and impacts of technology in any study, including the consideration of bills, the subject matter of bills, estimates and special studies, authorized by the Senate, including any such work already authorized but not yet completed.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate, I move the adjournment of the debate for the balance of my time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

MOTION TO URGE GOVERNMENT TO ESTABLISH A FEDERAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK THAT ENSURES PARITY BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CARE AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Burey, seconded by the Honourable Senator Black:
>
> That the Senate recognize:
>
> (a) that the World Health Organization and the Canadian Mental Health Association have identified mental health parity as a critical objective for an equitable health care system; and
>
> (b) the urgent need to address disparities in mental health care access and coverage; and
>
> That the Senate urge the Government of Canada to establish a federal legal framework that ensures mental health and addiction care are treated on an equal footing with physical health care.

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator Burey's motion on mental health parity.

First, a sincere thank you to Senator Burey for her hard work and perseverance when it comes to this issue and for being a voice for those in our community who feel overwhelmed, exhausted and powerless because of their mental health. These critical conversations are long overdue because of the stigma that's been placed on mental health. Mental health touches everyone — young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural. We must strive to do better as individuals, as communities and as Canadians.

As I so often do, I will focus my time on the mental health issues facing our agricultural community. Farmers and producers, agricultural workers and their families are not immune to mental health challenges. They face many of their own unique mental hardships as well. Farmers have a very demanding job. Extreme summer heat, weather uncertainty, gruelling hands-on tasks and long work hours are all part of a typical farming season. However, farmers persevere through these conditions, but that doesn't mean it doesn't affect them. The physical realities this industry faces can be overwhelming and put a toll on their health. Getting to the finish line at the end of the harvest is often a marathon and a challenge of mental resilience.

Farmers have tight deadlines to meet biological windows, weather conditions, contracts and deliveries. They are at the mercy of severe weather, which impacts production and their bottom line. Their entire livelihood can be at risk. And then there's the pressure and responsibility that farmers face as they strive to feed Canadians and the world despite increasing challenges to do so. We all know the saying: "The farmer has to be an optimist or he wouldn't still be a farmer."

Moreover, farmers predominantly live in rural communities where there is less access to mental health support. With the demands on farmers and producers, including long hours, they

are often too busy to make the long drive into town to reach important services, which makes it harder to find support when they need someone to talk to.

Unfortunately, some farmers turn to substances to cope. Alcohol, drugs, tobacco and other addictive medications become routine and can take a serious toll on their mental well-being.

A 2021 report by Michigan State University found that 74% of farmers are or have been impacted by opioid misuse, and 26% of farmers and farm workers have abused, been addicted to or taken an opioid without a prescription. Canadian research has shown that farming is one of the most stressful industries in our country.

In 2025, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture found that approximately 45% of farmers report high stress, 58% meet the classifications for anxiety and 68% are more susceptible than the general population to chronic stress. The realities of agricultural life and farm work, while rewarding and necessary, carry a significant toll.

Fortunately, there are organizations that have noticed this reality, and they are working hard to improve the situation for our farmers, producers and agricultural workers. Agriculture Wellness Ontario is one such example. This organization supports the mental health and well-being of Ontario's farming community, and they offer free counselling, tailored education and peer-based community support. Their team understands the realities of farm life because many of them have lived it themselves. Mental health professionals and advocates draw on their farm experiences to build a better, more supported agricultural community in this province.

Another terrific organization is Ag Care Connect. Their resources are free, accessible and anonymous, and they help support agricultural producers' mental well-being. They have practical tools that can help farmers recognize mental health pressures, prepare for the difficult farming seasons and learn how to support their own mental health and the well-being of those around them. Ag Care Connect even has support for the younger generations working in agriculture and living on the farm, with resources and educational material that can help them better understand the importance of their mental health.

There's also the Canadian Centre for Agricultural Wellbeing. This national organization conducts research, offers education and resources and develops evidence-based community-informed programming for the mental well-being challenges facing Canadian farmers and producers.

• (1540)

Among their initiatives is the National Farmer Crisis Line, 1-866-FARMS01, which operates 24-7, 365 days a year, to listen to and counsel farmers, producers and their families.

Farmers are just one community that is directly affected by the realities of mental health in Canada, but everyone experiences it in their own way: health care workers, engineers, teachers, athletes, students and seniors. The list goes on.

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, one in two Canadians have or have had a mental illness by the time they turn 40. That is an astonishing number of people who are affected by these challenges, each with their own unique set of circumstances.

This brings us back to Senator Burey's motion.

Colleagues, we must recognize the urgent need to act on the mental health challenges facing our community. Mental health is not a secondary issue; it is real and seriously impacts all of us.

Unfortunately, mental health does not yet have the footing it needs in our health care system or our communities. It often falls to a lesser tier than physical health because it does not manifest itself in the same ways. There aren't always obvious signs and symptoms to help diagnose a mental health condition. Mental troubles are often belittled by those who do not understand them.

The sooner we act on the disparities facing mental health care access and coverage, the sooner we can improve the lives of all Canadians and our agricultural community. We owe it to them to take action, but we cannot do it alone.

Senator Burey's motion asks us to call on the government to take the next steps toward a federal legal framework for mental health parity so that it is on the same footing as physical health care.

Colleagues, the lack of mental health parity is extremely evident in our rural and remote communities. Not only are services less prevalent in these communities, but any that do exist are often unable to take on new patients. They are understaffed and don't meet the needs of farmers and producers because of inflexible operating hours.

The federal government needs to stand up and ensure mental health parity now; otherwise, the health care system is forced to step in after it may already be too late. Mental and physical health are interconnected. Untreated mental health conditions can lead to physical health manifestations.

As Senator Burey so aptly noted, the costs associated with ignoring mental health care will only snowball. Federal leadership and coordination are key in the fight against mental health and addiction. It is not just a problem; it is a crisis, and it should be treated as equally important as physical health.

Before I conclude, I urge everyone to speak up and ask for help. Check in on your family, friends and neighbours. You are not alone.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Senator Black, will you take a question?

Senator Black: Yes, I will.

Senator Osler: I have two questions for you. In your speech, you talked about how hard farmers work and the stigma associated with seeking mental health care. That reminded me of a joke — or not a joke — in the medical community.

When a farmer, especially in harvest or seeding season, goes to the emergency department, we treat that as a serious emergency because farmers are so busy that they don't seek help. So my first question is whether you've heard that joke.

My second question is this: Do you think any of the items in Budget 2026, such as the farm succession changes and the Productivity Mega Deduction, could help relieve some of the stress on farmers and perhaps help them with their mental health?

Senator Black: Thank you for the question, Senator Osler.

I haven't heard that joke before; that's the answer to your first question.

With regard to your second question, those measures you spoke about in Budget 2026 will certainly reduce some anxiety for folks who are looking to transition properties and farming operations to the next generation. Both of those will help to reduce their stress, but they're only a small part of what needs to be done, as pointed out in Senator Burey's motion.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

NATION-BUILDING VALUE OF TOURISM

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Sorensen, calling the attention of the Senate to the nation-building value of tourism in Canada.

Hon. Victor Boudreau: Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this inquiry on the nation-building value of tourism.

I want to thank Senator Sorenson for launching this very worthwhile initiative. There have been times in our country's history when events that took place beyond our borders have sparked a surge of pride among Canadians and heightened their interest in their country.

For example, in the late 1960s, civil unrest in the United States and that country's controversial foreign policy contributed to a wave of nationalism here in Canada. As our country came of age on its one hundredth anniversary, there was a widespread feeling that our people and our regions rivalled anything that lay beyond our borders.

Something similar also happened a few generations earlier. Canada's outstanding contribution on the battlefields of Europe during the First World War coincided with the emergence of the Group of Seven here in Canada. Our country was less than 50 years old at the time and it was still trying to forge its own identity and get out from under the shadow of the United Kingdom and the United States. Through its art, the Group of Seven deliberately sought to create a uniquely Canadian mythology. To do so, its members focused on one of our nation's most defining features: our impressive landscapes.

More than a hundred years later, we once again find ourselves facing one of those defining moments. Faced with external threats to our economy and sovereignty, Canadians have rallied in recent years and turned their gaze inward.

As we know, this mobilization has, among other things, given rise to a vigorous movement in favour of buying Canadian products. Recently, many Canadians have also chosen not to travel to the United States.

Since then, just like the Group of Seven before us, we have deliberately set out to rediscover the wonders of our own country. Thus, in the summer of 2025, the era of the Canadian staycation was born.

I have been a member of this house for two and a half years now. As my colleagues have no doubt noticed, I'm never one to shy away from showcasing my home province and region. Senator Sorenson's inquiry gives me the opportunity to indulge this passion.

Hold on tight, my friends. You're about to hear all about the wonders of New Brunswick.

[*English*]

Let's start here: One of Canada's greatest strengths has always been its cultural diversity. The same is true of New Brunswick.

New Brunswick is home to a rich Wabanaki Confederacy history, including the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik and Passamaquoddy nations. In all corners of the province, it's possible to explore authentic First Nations cultural centres, outdoor tours, guided walks and annual celebrations.

From Metepenagiag Heritage Park and the Elsipogtog Cultural Centre, to the Mi'kmaq Art Experience and the many powwows that take place around the province, there are many opportunities across New Brunswick to immerse yourself in the beautiful cultural practices of our First Peoples.

Of course, New Brunswick is also known for its close ties to European settler cultures. In Saint John's ancient Uptown — and don't make the mistake of calling it "downtown" — you'll find the legacy of the Loyalists everywhere you turn.

In Miramichi, you'll experience that region's strong links to Ireland through its legendary Irish Festival. Please don't plan anything early the morning after.

[*Translation*]

All along our magnificent coastlines, as well as in the northwestern part of the province, you'll discover our deep Acadian and Brayon roots, particularly at the Acadian Historical Village, the Edmundston Arts Centre, the Théâtre populaire de l'Acadie and the Pays de la Sagouine, as well as during the unique festivities surrounding National Acadian Day, which takes place every year on August 15.

• (1550)

[*English*]

In recent years, immigration has altered the face of our province for the better. People from around the world have been choosing to establish their own cultural roots in New Brunswick. The next time you travel to the province, I urge you to visit one of our many farmers' markets to see just how culturally diverse our communities have become.

If big is what you're looking for when you travel, I have some good news for you. Many of you will already know the world's largest artificial lobster can be found in my hometown of Shediac. While we're on the subject of lobster, I'll take a moment to remind our neighbours in PEI, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador that Shediac is the lobster capital of the world and, thus, has the best real lobster in Atlantic Canada.

Beyond the giant lobster in Shediac, New Brunswick lays claim to many of the world's other oversized roadside attractions. You're probably already familiar with some of them: the big potato in Maugerville, the giant axe in Nackawic, the big silver fox in Salisbury and, of course, the world's highest tides along the Bay of Fundy.

However, I bet you're unaware of some of the following giant attractions.

Did you know that Bruce the Moose in Doaktown looks so realistic that he now wears a giant orange tarp in the autumn to avoid being shot at by hunters? Before you ask, yes, it has happened before.

There are other roadside giants, such as Albert the giant lumberjack in Boiestown, not to be confused with the giant lumberjack in Kedgwick; Sam the giant Atlantic salmon in Campbellton; the world's largest fiddle in Harvey, not to be confused with the world's largest fiddleheads in Plaster Rock; and the world's largest magnet in Moncton at — you guessed it — Magnetic Hill.

I haven't even mentioned the world's largest dancing blueberries in Pennfield, the world's largest Yogi Bear in Woodstock or, perhaps most impressive of all, the world's largest pond hockey tournament in Plaster Rock. Seriously, have a look at the aerial photos of that one; it is truly amazing.

I have lived in New Brunswick my whole life and still experience moments of awe when travelling around the province. The natural beauty of New Brunswick — and the diversity of that beauty — can be breathtaking. There are the magnificent views along the Fundy Trail Parkway; the pristine beaches along the Northumberland Strait, with the warmest saltwater swimming north of Virginia; the iconic giant flowerpots at Hopewell Rocks; the ecologically sensitive dunes near Bouctouche; the world's most famous salmon runs in Miramichi and Restigouch; the lighthouse at the tip of Miscou Island; and the dramatic views from the top of Sugarloaf Mountain near Campbellton. In all my years, I have never tired of visiting these places.

Because New Brunswick is small, it has learned to punch above its weight in many ways. I still marvel at the tens of thousands who descended on Magnetic Hill outside Moncton for a series of outdoor summer concerts a few years ago, featuring some of the world's biggest musical acts: the Rolling Stones, the Eagles, Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, Bon Jovi, AC/DC — twice — Bruce Springsteen, U2, Nickelback and many others. I attended all but one. I'll let you figure out which one I missed.

[*Translation*]

Arts and culture have always played an important part in the New Brunswick experience. For a province whose population is three-quarters the size of Ottawa's, we have exceeded expectations in that regard, as well. Even today, if you visit New Brunswick, you can enjoy some of the country's greatest and most innovative performances in some of the country's most intimate venues.

Measha Brueggergosman, Edith Butler, Matt Andersen, Roch Voisine, David Myles, Lisa LeBlanc and Les Hay Babies all made their debuts in New Brunswick. Whenever they finish a world tour, you can catch them back home, performing on stage at the Capitol Theatre or the Aberdeen Centre in Moncton, the Imperial Theatre in Saint John, the Playhouse in Fredericton or the Caraquet Cultural Centre.

Speaking of arts and culture, if you've ever visited New Brunswick at the right time of year, you may have had the chance to experience one of our renowned festivals, like the Harvest Music Festival in Fredericton, the Festival acadien de Caraquet, the Shediac Lobster Festival, the Area 506 Festival in Saint John, the Frye Festival in Moncton or the Festival Royal in Edmundston.

In New Brunswick, unique experiences await around every corner. For example, in 2015, Serena Ryder gave what was described as the "quietest concert ever." Organized by the CBC, this concert was held on the ocean floor during low tide in the Bay of Fundy. Concert-goers were each handed a pair of headphones and were able to listen to several hours of amazing music before the tide came back in.

Speaking of the CBC, in recent years, it has teamed up with Maestro Fresh Wes — yes, another New Brunswicker — to host the television show "Race Against the Tide," where contestants have to quickly build large, complex sand sculptures before the Bay of Fundy's massive tides come in and wash away their work.

Of course, that is only a taste of what New Brunswick has to offer. With over eight million visitors a year, New Brunswick's tourism sector generates $2.5 billion in spending annually. The sector is a major economic driver in New Brunswick, as it is in many other provinces and territories, yet tourism cannot be reduced to a mere GDP contribution. It allows us to export the best of what we have to offer, without needing to export anything physical. In a country that sometimes seems too big to stay united, tourism brings us closer together. Tourism is how we discover our unique cultures, values and natural wonders.

Whether we face threats from outside or not, we must continue to support and develop our country's tourism sectors. They unquestionably make a huge contribution — I'm sure you catch my meaning — to the fabric of our nation.

I hope to see you all next year in New Brunswick. I promise you won't regret it. Thank you, *meegwetch*.

[*English*]

Hon. Marty Klyne: I wonder if Senator Boudreau would answer a question?

Senator Boudreau: Yes, I would.

Senator Klyne: How tall is that moose?

Senator Boudreau: I've never measured it, but I want to say it's close to eight feet tall.

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, when people think about tourism in Canada, certain destinations tend to come to mind: the Rocky Mountains, Niagara Falls, the coastlines of the Maritimes, the historic streets of Quebec City — and then there's Saskatchewan.

I recognize Saskatchewan may not always be the first destination that springs to mind when Canadians are planning their next great adventure. For some, the first image that comes to mind is a long, straight highway and a great deal of sky; indeed, it's dubbed "the Land of the Living Skies." It is a flat land where you can see your dog running away for five days.

While we can certainly fulfill that image, we also have dinosaurs, bison — known as buffalo — world-class fishing, some of the darkest skies in the country, Indigenous cultural experiences, onion-domed Ukrainian churches, underground tunnels with Chicago mob connections, giant roadside attractions — I'll come around to that — and even a lighthouse. Yes, there is a lighthouse in a landlocked province. We may not have an ocean, but we can boast our fields of grain with rolling, wavelike ripples across crops of wheat, barley and rye.

When I was president of the 2003 Grey Cup, our theme was "Flat-Out in Saskatchewan," and it was recognized as the best CFL Grey Cup party ever. I can assure you, when it comes to tourism, Saskatchewan is anything but flat; we party flat-out.

Tourism is one of the ways we can tell Canada's story. It's about more than destinations. It's about connecting people to places, history, culture and one another, and in Saskatchewan, those connections are particularly rich.

Let me start with the landscape. We have spent a long time trying to convince people there's more to Saskatchewan than a flat horizon. We have nearly 100,000 lakes and rivers, forests, wetlands, grasslands, sand dunes, rolling hills and dramatic badlands. We have northern boreal wilderness and wide-open southern prairie, the Saskatchewan River Delta, one of the largest inland freshwater deltas in North America — don't let Trump know about it — and the Cypress Hills, with their elevated landscapes, tall trees and distinct ecosystems.

• (1600)

We have landscapes that can make you feel very small in a nice way. Prince Albert National Park offers a million-acre gateway to the northern wilderness, where visitors can hike, paddle, camp, swim and encounter free-roaming bison. You don't want to encounter them too close; they're a little wild.

Grasslands National Park showcases some of Canada's most remarkable preserved prairie landscapes, with plains bison, prairie dogs and dark skies. Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park offers forests, grasslands, hiking, fishing and stargazing in a designated Dark-Sky Preserve.

Our dark skies are becoming an attraction in their own right. Astrotourism and glamping offer visitors something increasingly rare: an opportunity to step away from the noise and light of everyday life, experience the night sky and catch a glimpse of the northern lights.

For those who prefer their adventures closer to the water, Saskatchewan is a remarkable fishing destination. Our lakes and rivers are home to 68 fish species, including walleye, northern pike, lake trout, Arctic grayling and rainbow trout. Visitors can enjoy everything from a day on the water close to a city to a remote northern fishing lodge reached by air. There are even world record-sized fish to be found. Several fishing lakes are within a half-hour's drive of Regina. Stop by my place. I'll give you something to drink.

Our natural assets are only one part of the story. Saskatchewan's cultural heritage is another tremendous source of tourism value.

One of the most extraordinary examples is Wanuskewin Heritage Park just outside Saskatoon. For millennia, this site has been a gathering place for Indigenous Peoples of the Northern Plains. Archaeological discoveries offer evidence of thousands of years of human history, including stone tools, pottery fragments and other artifacts. Visitors can explore trails, learn about Indigenous cultures and traditions and observe bison reintroduced as part of a managed herd.

Saskatchewan is home to 74 distinct Indigenous cultures and is the traditional homeland of the Métis people. There are enormous opportunities for Indigenous communities to share their spirituality, connection to the land, stories and traditions with visitors. European, Asian and German visitors, for example, are drawn to Indigenous archaeological exhibits, traditional dance and storytelling demonstrations.

This is tourism at its best, not simply bringing people somewhere but helping them understand something they might otherwise never have encountered.

Our cultural diversity is also reflected in the communities that have shaped Saskatchewan. For instance, in east-central Saskatchewan, an area affectionately known as the "perogy belt," Ukrainian heritage is visible in the onion domes of the historic churches, local restaurants and traditions that thrive in communities such as Yorkton, Canora and Melville. In the perogy belt, cultural immersion is taken seriously, particularly when it involves a second helping.

The Métis Nation celebrates its culture and history with Back to Batoche Days. Batoche is best known as the site of the Battle of Batoche in 1885, the decisive battle of the North-West Resistance in Saskatchewan. Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont defended the village against Canadian militia and regular forces.

Across the province, festivals celebrate everything from jazz and theatre to arts and culture. Saskatoon's Jazz Festival brings hundreds of artists each summer, while its Fringe Festival showcases theatre from around the world.

In Regina, Mosaic — A Festival of Cultures has celebrated cultural diversity for more than 50 years, inviting visitors to travel the world through its vibrant pavilions and collect passport stamps in a special festival pass. Regina is also home to the opera, symphony and Canada's only permanent professional theatre-in-the-round.

Regina has plenty to offer beyond the arts. Set within Wascana Park, one of North America's largest urban parks, the Saskatchewan Legislative Building is a destination in its own right. The big dig, which reshaped Wascana Lake and the surrounding parkland and put 22.5 feet of good soil on Todd Lewis's farm, helped create the beautiful landscape and recreational space that residents and visitors enjoy today.

Regina is also known as the home of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP. Every cadet since 1885 has been trained in Regina at the RCMP Depot Division, a renowned elite police academy. The RCMP Heritage Centre is soon to become a national museum, where visitors can continue to explore the history of the force, including visiting the non-denominational chapel at the RCMP Depot Division, Regina's oldest building, dating to 1883.

Of course, Saskatchewan is also home to attractions that are difficult to categorize but impossible to forget. There is a giant moose in Moose Jaw. At 10 metres tall, Mac the Moose is apparently the world's largest moose statue. In Saskatchewan, when we decide to celebrate a moose, we don't do it modestly.

Visitors can also explore Moose Jaw's underground tunnels, with connections to Chicago mobsters and Prohibition bootlegging. The tours bring visitors into the world of 1920s and 1930s bootlegging, complete with characters, stories and encounters with the law. It is an opportunity to relive history without, hopefully, being arrested on your way out.

There is the Crooked Bush near Hafford, Saskatchewan — I have to say that I don't where that is — where aspen trees twist and corkscrew in ways that have puzzled scientists. UFOs have been ruled out, although I suspect that won't stop people from asking.

Finally, there is that lighthouse in Cochin. Visitors can climb 153 steps to enjoy the view over the surrounding lakes and prairie landscape.

These attractions may be quirky, but they do make an important point: Every community has something worth sharing. Sometimes it just takes a little imagination to turn that something into a reason to visit.

Agriculture, of course, is central to Saskatchewan's identity, and, increasingly, it is becoming an important part of our tourism story. I'll take a quick walk with you, and you can imagine Todd Lewis walking with us.

The Canadian Western Agribition is an annual agricultural trade show and Canada's largest livestock exhibition, held each November at the REAL District in Regina. It attracts over 150,000 visitors yearly.

Regina also hosts Canada's Farm Show, a major agricultural trade event showcasing dryland farming equipment, agricultural technology, education and international trade. It attracts more than 20,000 visitors annually, with attendance reaching over 40,000 in peak years.

Agriculture in Saskatchewan is not just about trade shows and industry; it is also an opportunity for visitors to experience rural life first-hand. The Field to Fork Agritourism Corridor, developed through Destination Canada's Tourism Corridor Strategy Program, brings together communities, farming towns, Indigenous communities and rural producers across Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Through the corridor, visitors can enjoy farm-to-table dining, agricultural festivals, wineries, homesteads and local food producers. These experiences connect visitors with the people and places behind the food we grow, while creating additional income for farms and small businesses.

Tourism benefits do not have to be concentrated in our largest cities or most famous destinations. They can support local entrepreneurs, encourage investment and help sustain the vitality of rural Canada, while celebrating the distinct character of individual communities.

Saskatchewan has also received national recognition. At the 2025 Canadian Tourism Awards, four Saskatchewan businesses and attractions received top honours: Dakota Dunes Resort received the Tourism Employer of the Year Award; Wanuskewin Heritage Park, the Indigenous Tourism Award; Ag in Motion, the Business Event of the Year Award; and Field to Shield, the Culinary Tourism Experience Award. These awards reflect the diversity of our tourism sector, from Indigenous and culinary tourism to business events and outdoor recreation.

We are also working to attract international visitors. A daily direct flight between Regina and Denver has been very good and has been working for us. Tourism Saskatchewan is targeting visitors interested in the experiences we do particularly well,

such as birding — you can let the Honourable Diane Griffin know about that — angling and hunting, astrotourism and glamping, wildlife photography and Indigenous tourism.

• (1610)

As I said, tourism does more than support economies and preserve heritage. It brings Canadians closer together. In a country as vast as ours, it allows people to experience communities, cultures and landscapes they might not have otherwise encountered. Those connections strengthen our sense of belonging and remind us that our national identity is enriched by the distinct histories and cultures of our regions.

Saskatchewan may not always be the first place people think of when planning a Canadian vacation, but perhaps that is part of our opportunity. You can spend the morning learning about thousands of years of Indigenous history, the afternoon exploring landscapes shaped by glaciers and the evening taking in spectacular northern lights. You can also spend a few days fishing and enjoying shore lunches with your guides on the shore. Honourable senators, I invite you to come and see for yourselves.

Thank you. *Hiy kitatamihin*.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Tracy Muggli: Would the honourable senator take a question?

Senator Klyne: Yes, I would.

Senator Muggli: Senator Klyne, is it true that there are two Nordic spas — something I care deeply about — under development, one of which will open soon at the Whitecap Dakota Nation, home of the world-class golf course and casino?

Senator Klyne: Yes.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Would the senator take another question?

Senator Klyne: Sure.

Senator Quinn: Thank you, Senator Klyne, for such an entertaining and revealing speech about Saskatchewan. I want to note that your moose may be bigger than my colleague from New Brunswick's moose, but did you know that we have the most famous moose head in Canada, made by our fifth-largest brewery, which is privately owned, and it is called Moosehead beer?

Senator Klyne: Touché.

(On motion of Senator Muggli, debate adjourned.)

[Senator Klyne]

[*Translation*]

ROYAL ASSENT

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

RIDEAU HALL

November 19, 2026

Madam Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that Mr. Ryan McAdam, Deputy of the Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 19th day of November, 2026, at 3:32 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Eduardo Rivas

Manager, Office of the Secretary to the Governor General

The Honourable
The Speaker of the Senate
Ottawa

Bills Assented to Thursday, November 19, 2026:

An Act respecting the establishment and award of a Living Donor Recognition Medal (*Bill C-234, Chapter 26, 2026*)

An Act respecting the Commissioner for Modern Treaty Implementation (*Bill C-10, Chapter 27, 2026*)

[*English*]

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Leave having been given to revert to Government Business, Motions, Order No. 100:

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of November 18, 2026, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, November 24, 2026, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

ROLE OF CANADIAN RANGERS IN NORTHERN CANADA

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Duncan, calling the attention of the Senate to the Canadian Rangers and their role in Northern Canada, asserting Canada's sovereignty, providing for our national security, and strengthening community resilience as they are representative of the peoples of the North and their knowledge of the land.

Hon. Tracy Muggli: Honourable senators, I move, on behalf of Honourable Senator White, that further debate be adjourned until the next sitting of the Senate for the balance of her time.

(On motion of Senator Muggli, for Senator White, debate adjourned.)

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN MAJOR CANADIAN AIRPORTS

Hon. David M. Wells, pursuant to notice of November 17, 2026, moved:

> That the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications be authorized to examine and report on private investment in major Canadian airports;
>
> That, in particular, the committee examine:
>
> (a) issues pertaining to the current ownership and governance model of major Canadian airports;
>
> (b) issues pertaining to the partial or total privatization of major Canadian airports, including:
>
> (i) the impacts on infrastructure, passengers, neighbouring communities, airport employees, air carriers and service providers (NAV CANADA, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, restaurants, hotels, etc.);
>
> (ii) the impacts on the development of airport lands;
>
> (iii) the impacts on Canada's aviation network as a whole;
>
> (iv) the access and risk to potentially sensitive data, information and electronic systems under such an ownership model; and
>
> (v) the regulatory framework to be established and the issue of balancing the interests of investors and users; and
>
> (c) other ownership and governance models of major airports abroad;
>
> That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate; and
>
> That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 30, 2027, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY THE LOSS AND CONVERSION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

Hon. John M. McNair, for Senator Robinson, pursuant to notice of November 18, 2026, moved:

> That the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry be authorized to examine and report on the ongoing loss of agricultural land and its permanent conversion to non-agricultural uses in Canada, with a view to identifying measures that support the long-term prosperity of agricultural producers and safeguard Canada's capacity to produce agricultural and agri-food products;
>
> That, in particular, the committee examine:
>
> (a) the status and extent of agricultural land in Canada;
>
> (b) factors that influence the loss and conversion of agricultural land, including federally owned and regulated land;
>
> (c) federal measures currently in place to address the loss and conversion of agricultural land;
>
> (d) potential improvements to federal measures to support continued agricultural land use; and
>
> (e) how other countries protect land for agricultural use;
>
> That the committee be permitted, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate; and
>
> That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 31, 2027, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MUSLIM CANADIANS

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan rose pursuant to notice of May 5, 2026:

> That she will call the attention of the Senate to the contributions of Muslim Canadians to Canada.

She said: Honourable senators, I have brought forward this inquiry because the part Muslim Canadians have played in building this country deserves a fuller telling in this chamber.

(On motion of Senator Ataullahjan, debate adjourned.)

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ATLANTIC CANADIANS

INQUIRY—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Iris G. Petten rose pursuant to notice of November 5, 2026:

> That she will call the attention of the Senate to the vital contributions of Atlantic Canadians.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise today to initiate an inquiry into the vital contributions of Atlantic Canadians to Canada's prosperity, security and future.

When I was thinking about the formation of the All-Atlantic Senators' Group, my goal was for colleagues from the Atlantic region to share concerns, interests and a commitment to ensuring that our region is heard. We recognized that a collective voice could carry further than any one of us speaking alone, and we agreed that our work should do more than identify the challenges facing Atlantic Canada. It should also draw attention to the enormous contributions Atlantic Canadians make from coast to coast to coast.

When people think of Atlantic Canada, they may picture small towns with schooners and paper mills, rugged coastlines, fresh seafood — we got a good indication of that today — and welcoming communities. As a Newfoundlander and Labradorian, I can tell you that those images are familiar, and they are accurate. But they only tell part of the story.

• (1620)

Atlantic Canada is home to more than 2.6 million people, or approximately 6.5% of Canada's population. Our communities contribute to national defence, energy security, research, technology, tourism, food production and, importantly, Canada's relationship with the ocean.

That relationship is not new. Long before Confederation, Atlantic communities were building industries around the sea: fishing, shipbuilding, timber, trade and navigation. Those traditional industries have changed and diversified. Today, they include aquaculture, ocean technology, offshore energy, marine research and advanced shipbuilding. The opportunity before us is to recognize these ocean activities not as separate pieces but as part of a connected and growing economy — in reality a blue economy.

A blue economy is an approach to creating good jobs and lasting prosperity while protecting the health of the ocean on which those jobs and communities depend. It asks us to measure success not only by what we take from the ocean or by the value of what we sell, but also by whether ecosystems remain healthy, whether coastal communities share in the benefits and whether future generations inherit an ocean that can continue to sustain them.

This principle is worth keeping in mind as we look at the contributions Atlantic Canada is already making.

Tourism is one important example. Atlantic Canada's coastlines, landscapes and cultural heritage attract visitors from across the country and around the world. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador estimates that the province's tourism industry generated more than $1.4 billion in total revenue in 2025, highlighting tourism's significant contribution to the provincial economy. From the Bay of Fundy and the Cabot Trail to Cavendish Beach and Gros Morne National Park, Atlantic communities offer world-class experiences that are distinctive and deeply connected to place.

Atlantic Canada also makes a significant contribution to Canada's national defence and security sector. The region accounts for 18% of total Canadian defence industry employment. Atlantic Canada is home to approximately 200 aerospace and defence firms and organizations, employing more than 9,500 people directly.

These companies operate across a range of specialized areas, including naval shipbuilding and design, aerospace and naval maintenance, repair and overhaul, sonar and acoustics systems, training and simulation, autonomous systems, ground vehicle solutions, and cybersecurity. Our geography has always mattered to Canada's security. The Atlantic is a vital connection to our NATO allies and to the wider world.

Our contribution to Canada's commitment to being an energy superpower is equally important. Atlantic Canada has significant experience in renewable energy and is well positioned to help Canada respond to changing energy needs. Prince Edward Island has developed substantial wind capacity; Nova Scotia has more than 300 onshore wind turbines; New Brunswick is advancing work on small modular reactor technologies; and Newfoundland and Labrador has four producing oilfields and major expertise in renewable energy and fuel production.

We are also seeing what can be achieved when provinces work together in pursuit of a shared economic future. The Churchill Falls agreement between Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec, with the support of the federal government, represents an important opportunity to turn Labrador's tremendous clean

energy potential into lasting benefits for both provinces and for Canada. By upgrading and expanding Churchill Falls, advancing the development of Gull Island and strengthening transmission connections through Quebec to other markets, this partnership can help meet the growing demand for clean electricity, support industry and create thousands of jobs. The federal government estimates that the projects covered by the agreement could support 23,000 construction jobs and contribute $31 billion to Canada's GDP through the early 2040s.

Atlantic Canadians are at the forefront of technologies and projects that drive economic growth, but development must be planned and executed carefully. Fisheries, shipping, conservation, tourism and energy projects all use the ocean. Atlantic Canadians understand the need for clear rules, good science and meaningful engagement with coastal and Indigenous communities so that new activity is compatible with healthy ecosystems and existing livelihoods.

It would be impossible to talk about the livelihoods of Atlantic Canadians without mentioning one of our region's most important industries: seafood. I know it's shocking coming from me. But in all seriousness, the seafood industry is a significant driver of Atlantic Canada's economy. In 2024, fishing and fish processing accounted for $2.9 billion in economic output, representing 2.4% of the region's total economy. Nearly half of all aquaculture production in Canada comes from Atlantic Canada.

I'd also like to take a moment to highlight some of the businesses and individuals from Newfoundland and Labrador whose success and contributions benefit all of Canada. We need only look at Fortis Inc. to see how a company with its roots in Newfoundland and Labrador can make a significant contribution to the Canadian economy. What began with the St. John's Electric Light Company in 1885 has grown into one of North America's leading utility businesses, with operations in five Canadian provinces. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, Fortis helps power homes, businesses and industries. It is a powerful example of how Atlantic Canadian enterprise does not stop at our provincial borders. Fortis creates value, supports communities and contributes to the economic strength of the country as a whole.

PAL Group of Companies, headquartered in St. John's, has grown from its Newfoundland roots into a major aviation and aerospace group. It has operations in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. Its work includes aerospace and defence services, aircraft maintenance, regional air travel, cargo and medical transport.

Finally, I want to highlight Gregory Roberts, who was born and raised on Triton Island, off Newfoundland's northeast coast, and who acquired Mary Brown's Chicken in 2007 and led its expansion from a Newfoundland-based brand into a coast-to-coast Canadian business. Today, Mary Brown's has nearly 300 locations across Canada, including in Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and all the Atlantic provinces. Roberts has also founded other businesses and investments, with Memorial University reporting that his ventures employ more than 6,000 people.

These examples demonstrate the strength of Canadian federalism in action. Atlantic Canada is not on the periphery of our national economy; it is an active partner in building it. Our experience shows that when people, businesses and provinces are connected across regional boundaries, the whole federation benefits.

Honourable senators, when I think of Atlantic Canada, I think of community, resilience, innovation and generosity. I think of people whose livelihoods and identities are tied to the water — fishers, workers, researchers, entrepreneurs, Indigenous leaders, small-business owners and families in coastal communities. I think of the responsibility we share to ensure that these communities can prosper and that the ocean remains healthy for those who come after us.

For me, these are not abstract concepts; they are personal. I come from Port de Grave, Newfoundland and Labrador, a community shaped by the sea. I know that the ocean is part of our history, economy and sense of who we are. That is true for communities across the Atlantic region, as well as for coastal, Indigenous and Northern communities from the Atlantic, to the Pacific, to the Arctic.

• (1630)

My hometown of Port de Grave will celebrate its history and economy on Friday, December 11, 2026, with the annual Christmas Boat Lighting, when approximately 60 fishing boats are lit with thousands of lights until Old Christmas Day in January. All are welcome, and there will be carol singing, hot chocolate and a visit from Santa Claus. There will even be mummers, a Christmas tradition that some honourable colleagues might remember from our recent "Shed Party" on the Hill.

Through this inquiry, I hope to demonstrate what Atlantic Canadians contribute to our country and how we intend to build on those strengths. Our region has much to offer Canada: not only resources, industries and expertise, but also our long history and practical experience in living and working with the ocean. If we connect that experience with innovation, sound governance and a commitment to stewardship, Atlantic Canada can help lead the way toward a blue economy that creates lasting prosperity while leaving our oceans healthier.

I hope to hear from all of my Atlantic colleagues, and from any other colleagues, who wish to highlight the outstanding contributions of Atlantic Canadians.

Thank you.

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Senator Petten, will you take a question?

Senator Petten: Yes.

Senator Ataullahjan: Did you know that Mary Brown's has reached Pakistan? They have five locations and are doing really well, with plans to expand. One of my friends in Pakistan started a franchise.

Senator Petten: Senator Ataullahjan, it has gone around the world with its famous chicken and is being received very well. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

(*At 4:33 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, November 24, 2026, at 2 p.m.*)

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