



DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION



45th PARLIAMENT



VOLUME 154



NUMBER 62

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

This issue contains the latest listing of Senators,
Officers of the Senate and the Ministry.

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Publications Centre: Publications@sen.parl.gc.ca

Published by the Senate
Available on the Internet: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

THE SENATE

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

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

Prayers.

[*Translation*]

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

BILINGUALISM OF SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Honourable senators, the Supreme Court of Canada celebrated an important milestone in 2025: its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary.

Established in 1875, the Supreme Court is Canada's final court of appeal and the only bilingual and bijural apex court in the world.

Today, I would like to draw attention to this historic anniversary for our democracy and, above all, acknowledge the important role that official languages play in this great institution.

Recently, the Supreme Court of Canada heard arguments in the case challenging Quebec's Act respecting the laicity of the State, or Bill 21. Aside from the major legal issues raised during those hearings, I want to commend the court for one very important thing.

The parties were able to present their arguments in the official language of their choice and, more importantly, they were immediately heard and understood by the judges in their own language without the need for interpretation services.

This milestone was achieved following the 2023 reform of the Official Languages Act, which now requires Supreme Court judges to understand the parties' language of choice, whether it be English, French or both, without assistance.

In other words, direct understanding without interpretation is no longer optional. It is a requirement.

That said, to ensure functional bilingualism among Supreme Court justices, it has to be baked into the appointment process. I therefore welcome the Prime Minister's recent initiative to fill the position Justice Sheilah L. Martin will retire from in May.

In the news release announcing the launch of the selection process, the Prime Minister directed the independent advisory board to recommend jurists who are "functionally bilingual" and representative of the diversity of our country.

This sends a clear message: Effective proficiency in French and English is not secondary; it is an integral aspect of legal excellence. These two requirements are not mutually exclusive; they go hand in hand.

I hope that this principle will extend beyond the Supreme Court and inspire all appointments to senior executive positions under federal jurisdiction. I hope that linguistic excellence will be fully, consistently and intentionally integrated into the highest echelons of management so that a strong, inclusive institutional culture that respects our official languages can emerge. Thank you for your attention.

[*English*]

TRAGEDY IN TUMBLER RIDGE, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to share with you the profound experience of visiting the community of Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, where I recently travelled on behalf of Speaker Gagné and the Senate of Canada. It was a bright day in the mountains that warmed my soul, and I wanted to carry the light back to this chamber with this statement.

I was welcomed by member of Parliament Bob Zimmer and his executive assistant, Heather McCracken, to his riding of Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies. With heavy hearts, we drove two hours from Fort St. John toward that beautiful town nestled at the foot of the Rockies — a place known for its majestic landscapes and the ancient footprints of the UNESCO Global Geopark and now also for the unspeakable day that befell Tumbler Ridge on February 10, 2026.

I arrived at the temporary constituency office of MP Bob Zimmer, who has become a true rock and anchor for his constituents. Bob worked in Tumbler Ridge as a teenager when the town was first built. Today, he serves it with an immeasurable level of genuine care that moved me so deeply. In that room, I sat with the families of the victims, and what happened in the hours that followed was a blessing on our heavy hearts that could not have been humanly imagined.

What I witnessed in that room was not just mourning but the truest reflection of grace, forgiveness and love. As I looked into the eyes of parents who have endured the unthinkable, they did not pull away. Instead, they opened their arms to me — a perfect stranger among family and friends of a tightly knit small community — and opened their hearts and stories of their beloved sons and daughters.

I was there to present the books of condolences and the tributes recorded in our Hansard. I told them then, and I say to you now: These are not merely documents. They are a permanent, official record that their loved ones' names are etched into the history of Canada. They are a symbol of a nation's embrace.

Let us read those names into the record once more:

Abel Mwansa Jr., 12 years old; Ezekiel Schofield, 13; Kylie May Smith, 12; Zoey Benoit, 12; Ticaria "Tiki" Lampert, 12; Shannda Aviugana-Durand, 39; Jennifer Jacobs, 39; and Emmett Jacobs, 11.

And let us hold survivors Maya Gebala and Paige Hoekstra in our daily thoughts and prayers as they walk the long road of recovery.

For everyone in Tumbler Ridge, there is much healing yet to do. We must remain alert and we must remain accountable. As the public inquiry moves forward, the calls from Mayor Darryl Krakowka and the people of Tumbler Ridge for better rural health care and mental health support must result in real, systemic change.

Honourable senators, let us use the power and resources we hold to ensure that “Tumbler Ridge Strong” is not just a phrase but a promise of our continued support.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Pauline Rochefort, member of Parliament; the Honourable Blaine McLeod, member of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan; and a group of distinguished veterans. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Klyne.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1410)

MILITARY HONOURS

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, for generations, Canadians in uniform have served this country with extraordinary courage, taking the ultimate risk to protect our freedom and democracy. It's essential for our country to properly recognize the acts of valour that our warriors demonstrate in their service and sacrifice. What does it say of a country that fails to do so?

In 1993, Canada created its highest honour, the Canadian Victoria Cross, to be awarded for the most conspicuous bravery. However, Canada has yet to award its highest honour.

One exceptional case of bravery during the war in Afghanistan is that of Ontario's Private Jess Larochelle. With his comrades killed or wounded and with him being severely injured, Private Larochelle single-handedly defended his post from between 20 to 40 Taliban attackers, saving the lives of fellow soldiers.

Another such case is that of Saskatchewan's Master Warrant Officer (Retired) William MacDonald, a hero of the Battle of the White School. With the Canadians heavily outnumbered, MacDonald crossed open ground and repeatedly braved a “hurricane of metal” to rescue wounded comrades.

[Senator Martin]

These and other examples force us to ask: What more could a soldier do for their country? This is why I and many others are calling on the government to establish an independent military honours review board.

I am also concerned about the possibility of historic oversights in awarding the Victoria Cross in past conflicts, where the facts may have justified that honour but may have been overlooked due to discrimination of some sort.

That is what occurred in the United States, with President Obama following up and awarding the Medal of Honor to 19 such individuals in 2014.

In Canada, momentum is growing for an independent review. Supporters include former Chief of the Defence Staff, General (Retired) Rick Hillier; Lieutenant-General (Retired) and former senator Roméo Dallaire; Major-General (Retired) Lewis MacKenzie; Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Ed Staniewski; the Honourable Erin O'Toole; and over 100 military associations, multiple cities and several Canadian brigade commanders who led battle groups in Afghanistan.

In December, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan unanimously passed a motion in support of this initiative. The Government of Ontario also supports it.

A House of Commons petition has over 16,000 signatures. It is sponsored by MP Pauline Rochefort and led by veterans, including the non-profit Valour in the Presence of the Enemy, founded by Corporal (Retired) Bruce Moncur. In March, this Senate adopted my motion supporting an independent review.

Senators, let's ensure our heroes in uniform have been properly recognized for their conspicuous bravery, and let's celebrate the very best of Canada.

Thank you. *Hiy kitatamihin.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Pierre-André Page, President of the National Council of the Swiss Confederation.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[English]

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Hon. Scott Tannas: Honourable senators, libraries have existed for over 4,000 years across the globe and have served as repositories for sacred writings, great literature, chronicles and the archives of empires, kingdoms and states. They have been guardians of knowledge throughout the ages.

I rise today to mark the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Library of Parliament. Let me correct myself: our Library of Parliament. It has been a partner to parliamentarians since its official establishment in 1876. It is both a historic building and a parliamentary institution staffed by dedicated professionals who support senators and members of Parliament in carrying out their responsibilities.

This year, we celebrate both the building and the people. The library is an architectural gem, being the only surviving part of Centre Block after the great fire of 1916. Its circular shape was designed by Toronto architects Fuller and Jones who put forward a neo-Gothic design inspired by the Reading Room of the British Museum in London and the Sainte-Geneviève Library in Paris. The first Parliamentary Librarian, Alpheus Todd, insisted that the design allow users to see the entirety of the library's collection at once and that it be housed in a separate building. This foresight ultimately helped save it from destruction.

Every day, the library's dedicated professionals provide senators and members of Parliament with non-partisan research, analysis and legislative support that allow us to do our work responsibly. In an era of instant information and increasing complexity, the value of trusted, impartial expertise cannot be overstated. The library's analysts, economists, legal experts and information specialists help ensure that debate in this chamber — and in the other place — is grounded in evidence, context and constitutional principle.

As we mark this historic milestone and as the newly minted Joint Chair of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament, I congratulate today's guardians of knowledge at the Library of Parliament for their service and dedication.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Courtney Howard and Victoria Hurth. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Galvez.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

PLANETARY HEALTH ROUNDTABLE

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, I rise today to draw your attention to planetary health — the inseparable relationship between ecosystems, economies and people.

Humanity has once again seen breathtaking images of Earth from Artemis II. From that vantage point, there are no borders, no divisions — only a small, fragile, luminous sphere suspended in the darkness.

That is our home. And it is finite.

Our health, our economy and our future depend entirely on the stability of this cosmic living system.

[Translation]

Professor Johan Rockström, internationally renowned for his work on global sustainability issues, says that the science could not be clearer. Planetary boundaries represent the safe limits within which humanity can prosper. Today, however, seven of the nine planetary boundaries have already been crossed.

[English]

This is not abstract, colleagues. The consequences are there. The multiple crises we face are not isolated. They are symptoms of a deeper structural problem: an economic system that exceeds the limits of the Earth while failing to value the natural systems that sustain it. We have become a society that wastes more than we produce.

Put simply, we are running a deficit against nature, and the interest is compounding.

Governance must operate within natural limits. This is not ideology; it reflects the laws of physics, biology and economic prudence.

[Translation]

The opportunity before us is clear: By instituting a well-being economy, Canada can align prosperity with resilience.

[English]

There is no strong economy on a weakened planet.

I invite you to join us tomorrow for the Planetary Health Roundtable on the Hill, sponsored by many of you, colleagues, and several MPs, and featuring Dr. Johan Rockström and distinguished experts Dr. Victoria Hurth, Dr. Nicole Redvers and Dr. Courtney Howard. We will explore how Canada can lead in this defining moment.

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 Professor Robert Delatolla from the University of Ottawa Department of Civil Engineering. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Anderson.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER

Hon. Margaret Dawn Anderson: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about drinking water safety in the Northwest Territories.

• (1420)

In November 2025, the Chief Environmental Health Officer advised residents of Hay River, Enterprise, Kátl'odeeche First Nation and Kakisa to take precautions when using their water. I was there during the boil-water advisory. I was told that if I showered, I should keep it brief and leave a window open. The temperature was below -20 degrees Celsius.

This warning was the impetus for a closer examination of water safety in the Northwest Territories, leading to alarming findings. I started learning about trihalomethanes, or THMs, a chemical byproduct formed when chlorine used to disinfect water reacts with natural organic matter. In Hay River, the average THM level over the past year exceeded the national guideline of 100 micrograms per litre. Additional advisories, including in Fort Liard, demonstrate that these are not isolated cases but part of a broader pattern of chemical exposure concerns.

Health Canada has also noted that monitoring data for THMs is available across provinces and territories, with the exception of the Northwest Territories. This raises critical questions: How do we assess safety where data is incomplete? How can safety be claimed where it's not consistently measured?

These concerns are reinforced by recent findings related to lead. Recently, testing performed in schools and public buildings across multiple Northwest Territories communities — including Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic, Behchokò and Fort Simpson — has identified elevated lead levels in those facilities, in some cases reaching up to 20 times Health Canada's maximum acceptable level, with Fort Liard and Sachs Harbour schools added to the list yesterday.

We're also seeing microbiological risks. In Ulukhaktok, the testing of untreated source water identified coliforms at 2 most probable number, or MPN, per 100 micrograms per litre. Health Canada's acceptable level requires non-detectable levels.

In Sachs Harbour, a boil-water advisory was issued in February 2026 after the community's water treatment system was unable to operate due to frozen intake and infrastructure failure.

Taken together, these findings span at least 12 of the 33 communities in the Northwest Territories, demonstrating that these issues are not isolated but widespread and recurring. Recently, the federal government announced \$20.1 million toward a new water treatment plant in Hay River. This investment is welcome and necessary, but it also underscores that these issues are not isolated but ongoing and systemic. In under-resourced systems, communities are not facing a single risk; they are navigating multiple overlapping risks at once.

In the Northwest Territories, the risks associated with drinking water cannot be separated from the broader realities of insufficient and outdated infrastructure. It points to something larger: a system under strain, where risks are not only present but increasingly difficult to detect, manage and prevent. In these conditions, the federal government must do more than acknowledge the problem; it must continue to address system gaps, ensure communities are informed and provide the resources needed to monitor, mitigate and, ultimately, eliminate these risks.

Thank you, *quyanainni, mahsi*.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Chloe Voss and Bev Ann Murray of Winnipeg, Manitoba. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator McPhedran.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

STUDY ON COPPER WIRE THEFT AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

THIRD REPORT OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Larry W. Smith: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, entitled *Stolen Signal: The Costly Consequences of Copper Theft in Canada*, and I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

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

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH

SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION SITES

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

Today marks 10 years since British Columbia first declared a public health emergency on toxic drug deaths. However, the situation has only worsened, with over 18,000 lives lost and more than 100 overdoses occurring every day across the province. Just before the break, I asked you about your government's plans regarding the future of supervised consumption sites in light of new evidence questioning their effectiveness. Your assurances of future commitments from the minister are not sufficient. British Columbians have been sounding the alarm for a decade, and they're still waiting for real results.

Senator Moreau, how can your government justify a decade of reckless experiments that failed to reduce overdose deaths and restore safety in our communities?

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

The British Columbia government has notified the federal government that it will not be seeking a renewal of decriminalization exemptions and will be exploring a different approach for addressing addiction. This government will continue to work closely with British Columbia, and all provincial and territorial partners, to support communities with responsive programs that protect public health and safety.

The government understands the devastating impacts the overdose crisis has had on families and communities in every corner of the country, and we are working with the provinces to bring every tool possible at our disposal to fight that unacceptable crisis.

Senator Martin: Yes, but if your government is unwilling to be decisive, Conservatives are here to help.

Will you and your government support MP Dan Mazier's Bill C-272, a bill to prohibit supervised drug consumption sites from operating near schools, daycares and playgrounds, and finally take concrete steps to protect children and families?

Senator Moreau: You probably know that I cannot commit the government to support a bill in the House of Commons.

I must underline that means not just coming down on drugs and prosecuting drug trafficking but making sure communities, Indigenous Peoples and community health organizations have the tools they need to more quickly connect more people to treatment and vital services. That's what we're committed to.

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

YOUNG CANADIANS

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Senator Moreau, a record 120,000 Canadians left this country for greener pastures in 2025. We're losing young, ambitious Canadians at an alarming rate. Of those Canadians, 55% are mid-career professionals in their peak earning years, with the data showing that doctors, engineers and scientists are leaving at double the rate of low-skilled workers.

Why do you think so many skilled Canadians are abandoning this country?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The government is committed to all Canadians, including young people specifically. We're investing in housing to make sure they can get affordable housing. We're working on job creation to keep those young people here in Canada and invest in our future.

• (1430)

There's a very strong commitment by the government in the last federal budget, and we will continue to work with young Canadians — all Canadians, but specifically young Canadians — to make sure that our future is safe and sound with them.

Senator MacDonald: I'm sure that comforts Canadians living in Galveston, Texas. Emigration from Canada has doubled under a decade of Liberal policies. Also, over the last decade, Canada has dropped from one of the world's happiest countries to twenty-fifth in the world. Only Malawi, with a poverty rate of over 70%, and Afghanistan have registered a bigger decline. Alarming, Canadians under 25 ranked seventy-first. Why are young Canadians so unhappy with life in Canada after a decade of this government?

Senator Moreau: My understanding is that young Canadians are not unhappy living here. I'm sure you have this in your own province: Every day there is testimony of young Canadians who are proud to be here. When they see what is happening everywhere around the world, all Canadians, including young Canadians, are quite happy with our country.

IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP AND REFUGEES

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Hon. Paula Simons: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

A few weeks ago, in the midst of our debates over Bill C-12, our colleague Senator McPhedran asked a question at the National Security Committee about the use of AI in the processing of immigration requests. She was told that AI is not used to make those decisions.

In the last few weeks, however, we have seen disturbing stories about AI hallucinations poisoning people's immigration applications. I wonder if you could clarify for us how AI is used in processing immigration applications and what guarantees we have that AI mistakes are not going to impede the applications of people who are otherwise qualified.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I reviewed that dossier quite recently, and it is my understanding that AI is not used to make any final decisions whatsoever concerning immigration. My understanding is that AI is used to sort the files themselves and help accelerate the process, but no decision making whatsoever concerning immigration is made by AI.

Senator Simons: I guess the problem, though, is whether the sorting is corrupted by AI hallucinations — AI making up lies about people. I hate to use the word “hallucination” because it implies that AI is thinking. In fact, AI is putting words together like a word salad. So it's garbage in, garbage out. If AI is triaging people, will it preclude them from having a human review their file to make sure there are no errors?

Senator Moreau: It's my understanding that they are not triaging people. It's used to help computerize the system. There is no decision whatsoever concerning immigration or asylum seekers that is deferred to AI. It always follows a due process with human intervention.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SPACE SECTOR

Hon. Tony Loffreda: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Like many Canadians, on Friday, I was glued to my screen as the astronauts from Artemis II, including Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen, re-entered the atmosphere, following a highly successful mission around the moon.

Inspired by this achievement, I consulted the latest departmental plan of the Canadian Space Agency, or CSA, to better understand our space program and how we are leveraging space to deliver services to Canadians. I noted that 37 services provided to Canadians rely on space-based data, and that over 100 Canadian space technologies have been adopted for use on Earth or reused in space.

Some continue to question why we invest so significantly in space. Considering these indicators, can you share how Canadians are benefiting from these investments?

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

As you correctly mentioned, investment in our space agency has a wide area of benefit to our day-to-day lives, in addition to being good for the Canadian economy. For example, recently, there have been efforts to adopt space technology to combat wildfires, which are expected to save between \$1 billion and \$5 billion in the next five years alone.

The benefits, however, go far beyond that. In 2018, the space sector produced revenue totalling \$5.7 billion and contributed \$2.5 billion to our GDP in health care, environmental and climate monitoring and job creation by supporting high-skilled jobs, an innovation-driven economy and domestic industrial capacity. It benefits our daily lives in areas like weather and anything that relates to day-to-day information, including the safety of Canadians.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer.

According to its plan, the Canadian Space Agency supports innovative SMEs by ensuring that Canada remains competitive in the fast-growing global space economy, while helping to launch the next generation of space entrepreneurs.

With an annual budget approaching \$1 billion, can you explain how the CSA is supporting SMEs through the development of Canadian-made space technologies for both civilian and defence purposes?

Senator Moreau: Thank you. The government supports SMEs through agencies with programs like the Space Technology Development Program, smartEarth and the Lunar Exploration Accelerator Program, which are positioning Canadian SMEs to participate in next-generation missions, ensuring they can scale and compete in the global supply chain, and Innovative Solution Canada for research and development. These programs are about more than just space. They are about building Canadian industrial capacity and supporting high-tech SMEs.

PUBLIC SAFETY

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Hon. Colin Deacon: Senator Moreau, the Correctional Service of Canada spends approximately \$2.6 billion annually on the current custody of federally incarcerated individuals. The average cost exceeds \$150,000 per inmate per year, rising to over half a million dollars annually for individuals held in isolation or segregation.

The Office of the Correctional Investigator repeatedly noted that Canada operates the most highly resourced, most expensive correctional system in the world with staff to inmate ratios of roughly one to one compared to one to three and a half in Europe. Yet, European systems achieve better outcomes with lower recidivism at significantly lower costs.

With this government's focus on addressing crime, is there a planned review of the structure and delivery of federal correctional services with a view to using examples of global best practices that will reduce costs to taxpayers while improving outcomes?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. I'm not aware of a specific plan, but I will certainly take your question and bring an answer back to you. I know there's a commitment by the government concerning the incarceration system here in Canada. I'm not aware of all the details, but I will get back to you as soon as I have more information.

Senator C. Deacon: Thanks, Senator Moreau. I appreciate that.

Canadians are already paying the highest incarceration costs. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, stated in 2019 that paying for the treatment of a person in a mental health hospital would cost less than keeping them in a prison in isolated conditions. I'm far from an expert, but the evidence suggests that what we have as a correctional system in Canada is more of a punishment system. Other models globally show very different approaches, so I'm hoping the government will consider a serious study on this issue.

Senator Moreau: The Canadian penal system is based on rehabilitation and not incarceration. That is my understanding.

I will get back to you with an answer. I'm not an expert either, but my understanding is that we're not seeking punishment. We're seeking to bring people who are actually in prison back into society. That's the Canadian system.

[Translation]

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

THE UNITED NATIONS

Hon. Amina Gerba: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Moreau, at a talk I gave recently at ESG UQAM, a student named Marie Mirlin asked me the following question:

As a Canadian parliamentarian of African descent, what is your position on Canada's abstention from the United Nations General Assembly vote on the resolution recognizing "the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialised chattel enslavement of Africans as the gravest crime against humanity," adopted on March 25?

Senator Moreau, can the government explain why Canada abstained from the vote on this resolution?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for this important question, Senator Gerba. Let me begin by reiterating that slavery and the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved persons were heinous injustices that

caused profound and lasting suffering. Canada honours the memory of the millions of victims and their descendants. Canada opposes slavery in all its forms.

• (1440)

The reason Canada abstained from the vote on that UN resolution was a matter of wording, given that the resolution established a hierarchy of crimes against humanity. Canada cannot support a resolution with language that creates a hierarchy of crimes against humanity, that suggests new reparation obligations or that runs counter to ongoing multilateral legal processes. It was essentially a question of how it was worded.

Senator Gerba: I understand that it was a wording issue. In fact, Benin changed its vote. The resolution draws attention to the over 12 million Africans who were enslaved and the millions more who perished on the transatlantic voyage. Does the Government of Canada intend to revisit its position and expressly recognize the enslavement of Africans as the gravest crime against humanity?

Senator Moreau: Canada joined with several like-minded partners and abstained, while acknowledging the seriousness of slavery and with respect for existing international legal processes. Our commitment to addressing the after-effects of slavery and supporting constructive dialogue on restorative justice remains firm. Canada would especially like to thank Ghana for its leadership and engagement in advancing dialogue on this important issue.

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Senator Moreau, a recent *Ottawa Citizen* report revealed that the government is cutting the rate of out-of-country allowances for members of the Canadian Armed Forces deployed abroad despite ongoing cost-of-living pressures. At a time when recruitment and retention are already strained, this decision risks further undermining morale amongst those serving Canada overseas.

Senator Moreau, how can the government justify clawing back essential financial support from our troops overseas?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): You're well aware that the government is spending an enormous amount to support our Canadian Armed Forces. For the specific question that you asked, I don't have the information so I will get back to you with an answer to that question.

There is no question that the government is behind the Canadian Armed Forces. I will bring the question to the minister and get back to you quite rapidly with an answer.

Senator MacDonald: Senator Moreau, this follows years of inadequate support, from equipment shortages to reports of soldiers paying out of pocket for basic gear.

Will the government commit to re-examining and reversing these allowance cuts to ensure that personnel abroad are properly supported?

Senator Moreau: I cannot commit the government to review any cuts because I don't have specific information.

For the equipment, we are investing in F-35s, submarines, icebreakers, Arctic mobility enhancement vehicles and CH-148 helicopters to make sure that our Canadian Armed Forces are well equipped.

We are 100% behind the Canadian Armed Forces. The government is committed to making sure that the Armed Forces are there to support Canadians.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, we've seen over the last little while Prime Minister Carney and Minister of Finance Champagne engage in attempts to diversify trade by going to China and trying to capitalize on that trade relationship.

We also recognize that China is one of the world's largest violators of human rights. We have seen how they trample on civil rights in Hong Kong. We see how they treat the Uighur Muslim minority in Xinjiang by putting them in concentration camps.

We see how they continue to encroach on the democracy and freedom of the democratic Republic of China, Taiwan.

What guarantees do we have by the Carney government that, in their attempt to diversify trade by dealing with mainland China, they are not going to compromise on fundamental human rights and fundamental democratic principles?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. It's an important issue, Senator Housakos. It gives me the opportunity to underline that the government remains committed to engaging with China in a manner that is consistent with Canadian values, interests and international obligations concerning every issue that you raised in your question.

No matter if there's commercial agreement with China, every single time the Canadian government will remain committed to engaging with China in a manner that is consistent with the values shared by Canadians in this land.

Senator Housakos: We've seen mainland China consistently breach international rules of law. We saw what we went through for a long period of time when the two Michaels were imprisoned unfairly and unjustly. We needed, of course, the United States to intervene and others to negotiate the release of the two Michaels.

Furthermore, we've also seen mainland China engage in espionage at the expense of intellectual property in Canada.

What steps and guarantees has the Carney government taken to ensure that China no longer engages in intellectual espionage in Canada?

Senator Moreau: The government makes sure that security and international espionage within our land are closely monitored by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, and by our security forces. This applies to China, as it applies to any other country in the world.

Canadians can be reassured that the government is aware that it is a possibility. We are living in a more and more dangerous world. We're aware of that and are taking all appropriate measures.

FINANCE

TAX FAIRNESS

Hon. Kim Pate: Senator Moreau, today's Canadian Tax Observatory report, *Shelter vs. Tax Shelter*, highlights that the First Home Savings Account program benefits high-income Canadians such that poorer taxpayers are underwriting \$1.6 billion per year of housing purchases that their wealthier counterparts could have afforded without the subsidies.

A recent Vancouver income-support program demonstrated that cash transfers of as little as \$7,500 can help homeless Canadians find stable housing, while actually saving money for governments and, therefore, Canadians.

The Vancouver program data revealed that, if applied to that initiative, the same \$1.6 billion would have housed more than 200,000 Canadians — the majority of those experiencing homelessness — in ways that strengthen our communities and economies.

Why is the government instead prioritizing \$1.6 billion per year for housing supports for those who don't need them and in ways that do not address homelessness?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Your question compares two very different challenges as though they were part of the same policy choice.

The First Home Savings Account, FHSA, helps first-time buyers save for a down payment, while homelessness requires supportive housing, prevention and wraparound services. The government is investing directly in both of these areas.

For instance, according to Statistics Canada, 60% of contributors to the FHSA have an income of over \$60,000 and were from 25 to 34 years of age.

According to some of the latest available figures from the Canada Revenue Agency, CRA, the average balance for active FHSAs is below \$4,000. These are not rich Canadians; these are young Canadians struggling to get into the home ownership market, and that's why the government is trying to help them.

Senator Pate: Thank you for that.

New Statistics Canada data also shows that, in 2025, the gap in income and wealth for those with the most and least has grown.

Why does the federal government persist in promoting tax shelters, such as this initiative, that benefit the wealthy when we see a worsening of affordability for those at the other end of the spectrum?

Senator Moreau: The government is spending on homelessness efforts. The Reaching Home program is central to that effort, which supports local organizations to deliver vital services and has already helped nearly 112,000 Canadians find stable housing and provided prevention services for over 200,000 more.

The government is targeting many issues, including homelessness and making housing available to young Canadians.

• (1450)

FINANCE

FUEL TAX RELIEF

Hon. Jim Quinn: Senator Moreau, today Prime Minister Carney made an announcement that was, no doubt, welcome news for all Canadians. He announced that the Government of Canada will be temporarily reducing taxes on certain fuels to help make life more affordable for Canadians. Included in this announcement would be a reduction of taxes on aviation fuels, which would lower costs for Canadian air carriers. Most Canadian airlines have imposed a temporary fuel surcharge due to rising oil prices.

My question is this: Would the Government of Canada, via Transport Canada, speak to airlines to have them reduce an equivalent amount of tax savings on their fuel surcharge during this temporary tax relief so they will pass through savings to Canadian air passengers?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your question. You're underlining this morning's announcement by the government, which is an important one. Of course, the government expects that companies that benefit from the measure will not simply capture the entire difference and will transfer a portion of this reduction to consumers.

Now, since the announcement was made this morning, I don't think there has been a discussion between Transport Canada and the airlines, but I will certainly bring your suggestion to the attention of the transport minister to make sure those benefits go to Canadians directly and not only to corporations.

Senator Quinn: Thank you. Just for certainty, would the Government of Canada consider including a legislative requirement in any tax relief bill for airlines to reduce fuel surcharges equivalent to the tax reduction to avoid an airline benefiting from both the tax reduction and the fuel surcharge so that Canadian air travellers can indeed benefit from the savings?

Senator Moreau: You're aware, Senator Quinn, that I cannot comment on future legislative projects of the government, but let me tell you that the suspension of the federal fuel excise tax is also aimed at easing business for Canadian companies by reducing operating costs for truckers and businesses in the food, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors. With lower costs and greater stability, businesses can hire, build and export products abroad at the same time.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

DISABILITY BENEFITS

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Senator Moreau, Prime Minister Carney, flush with by-election victories yesterday, named affordability as a top priority. The fact is persons with disabilities are among the poorest of the poor. Many are relying on insufficient fixed or limited incomes that keep them trapped in poverty.

When resources are scarce, survival takes precedence over health. Skipping medication, delaying treatment or rationing doses become a coping mechanism, with seriously negative long-term consequences.

Statistics Canada just confirmed that the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and the gap widens day by day. Fact: The less than \$900 a year in Bill C-4 will not lessen this gap significantly.

Senator Moreau, does your government have a plan? What next steps will be taken to ensure disability income supports actually move Canadians out of poverty?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The short answer to the question "Do we have a plan?" is yes. The government has proposed Bill C-4, as you just mentioned. It's \$400 for a single person, more than \$500 for a couple and more than \$800 for a family with two children. We have Bill C-15, investing \$57 billion in affordable child care. We have Bill C-20, investing \$13 billion in new housing. We are taking care of Canadians, and I think that — when you were referring to yesterday's by-election — Canadians understand that.

Senator McPhedran: Senator Moreau, how will the government ensure that disability income supports are increased and regularly adjusted to cover rising living costs? Or is the Carney government comfortable with perpetuating this deep poverty of people with disabilities?

Senator Moreau: If the government were comfortable with what you are saying, it wouldn't act like it does, actually. We have investment in many sectors to make sure that affordability is there, to make sure that housing is there, to make sure that we take care of the poor and homeless, just as I mentioned to Senator Pate just a moment ago.

I know that you want to ask that kind of question, and you're allowed to do that. I understand that perfectly, but the government is committed to helping Canadians across the country.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-12(3), I would like to inform the Senate that as we proceed with Government Business, the Senate will address the items in the following order: second reading of Bill C-9, followed by second reading of Bill C-18, followed by second reading of Bill S-6, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

CRIMINAL CODE

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Kristopher Wells moved second reading of Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places).

He said: Honourable senators, I am pleased to introduce Bill C-9, the combatting hate act, a bill that would strengthen and enhance Canada's ability to address hate and intimidation in communities across the country.

My own experience with hate crimes spans more than 20 plus years: as a community member, researcher and target for hate as a visible member of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. Over these decades, I have helped to support the Edmonton Police Service's Hate Crimes Unit; engaged in new recruit training and restorative justice practices; and helped to develop and serve as the elected co-chair of the Edmonton Police Chief's Community Advisory Council, which was composed of representatives from the Jewish, Muslim, Asian, Black, Indigenous and 2SLGBTQI+ communities. All of our communities were united in standing against the scourge of hate with the belief that when hate targets one minority community, it targets us all.

Today, Bill C-9 has reached an important parliamentary milestone: second reading in the Senate. As we carefully consider this bill, I invite you to share your perspectives and experiences in support of a rigorous debate on whether the Criminal Code reforms proposed achieve their intended purpose. That is, does this legislation enhance protections for vulnerable communities and provide law enforcement and the criminal justice system with additional tools needed to respond to hate-motivated conduct?

Listening to diverse voices will be central to this task before us.

[Senator Moreau]

Debate in the other place on Bill C-9 has been strong and robust. We have heard varied and differing views and witnessed, at times, spirited exchanges, which included over 35 hours of debate and more than 30 witnesses, resulting in a series of amendments designed to clarify language and add important safeguards. These informative deliberations speak to the complexity and importance of the issues Bill C-9 seeks to address in this timely and critical piece of government legislation, which fulfills an important election promise made to Canadians.

Because of the complexity of the important matters that Bill C-9 seeks to address, it is critical that differing views are heard. Ideas around how to protect communities from hate while respecting Charter-protected rights and freedoms can and should be thoroughly debated. This exchange of views is crucial to ensuring that the proposed measures included in this bill are appropriately tailored to the significant harms posed by hate and intimidation to individuals, communities and Canadian society at large. It is precisely through this robust exchange of ideas, conducted with rigour and the utmost respect, that we can achieve the best results for all Canadians, including the most vulnerable among us.

As we consider this piece of legislation in the Senate, let us move forward with the shared conviction that there is no place for hate in Canada, that in protecting one's dignity and safety, we reinforce the very foundations of our democracy.

• (1500)

Let us be clear: Hate crimes present a real, growing and pressing public safety threat to communities across our country.

For context, recent Statistics Canada data on hate crimes paint a stark picture, with 4,777 incidents reported in 2023, marking a 32% rise from 2022, which had 3,612 incidents. This is the third consecutive sharp increase in four years, with the total number of hate crimes more than doubling — up over 145% — since 2019.

The three most targeted identifiable groups for hate crimes were based on religion, race or ethnicity and sexual orientation. There were 1,284 incidents based on religion, which was a 67% increase from 2022. The majority targeted the Jewish community, with 900 incidents, and the Muslim community, with 211 incidents. Race or ethnicity was involved in 2,377 incidents, a 6% increase from 2022. The most common groups targeted were the Black, Arab, West Asian and South Asian communities. Sexual orientation was involved in 860 incidents, up 69% from 2022. Over half these incidents specifically targeted gay and lesbian individuals.

Importantly, these numbers only tell part of the story. Hate crimes are consistently under-reported, with studies indicating that as many as four out of five victims never report their experiences to police. Researchers call this lack of reporting a dark figure, as under-reporting conceals the full extent of hate-motivated crimes in Canada. Moreover, statistics can never fully convey the true extent fear, anxiety and disruption hate crimes cause in people's daily lives. Hate crimes are often called "message crimes" because they not only target individuals but are intended to send a message of fear and terror into the hearts of entire communities.

Police-reported hate crimes can never fully capture the lived realities of individuals and communities who face these attacks first-hand. Behind every hate crime is a person, a family and a community that is profoundly affected. This includes individuals and communities who fear for their safety on public streets, in local neighbourhoods and even in the confines of their homes. No Canadian should have to live in fear, work in fear, love in fear or worry about where or when the next attack might occur.

Across Canada, evidence indicates how various minority groups are disproportionately targeted by hate crimes. We're seeing hate crimes directed at Indigenous Peoples, Black and other racialized communities, religious communities and 2SLGBTQI+ communities, among others.

I'd like to share a few recent examples that demonstrate the persistent and pernicious nature of hate in Canada. This past week, in the very heart of Toronto's historic 2SLGBTQI+ community, two men yelled homophobic slurs and assaulted a victim walking on the street in a community neighbourhood that should have been a refuge of inclusivity and safety. Last year, a bookstore was targeted with transphobic vandalism, including Nazi symbols and hateful messages calling for the extermination of 2SLGBTQI+ people, spreading profound fear throughout communities in Halifax. In another disturbing case last fall, an individual in Newmarket, Ontario, threatened to tamper with gas lines to ignite their Muslim neighbours' home and kill everyone inside, including children. That individual also planned to target a local mosque. Jewish communities also continue to be targeted by anti-Semitic and hateful acts, with multiple synagogues being shot at in the Toronto area last month.

These horrific attacks, which target groups simply because of whom they pray to, where they gather, who they are or whom they love, have no place in Canada.

These acts of hate create a sense of vulnerability that ripples far beyond the immediate victims, affecting entire communities' sense of security, well-being, societal participation and trust. We must take a stand against such acts, which challenge the very ideal of Canada as an inclusive, diverse, peaceful and democratic society.

Against this concerning rise in hate, there have been widespread calls from victims, communities and law enforcement for decisive action to counter hate and make communities safer across this country. Bill C-9 responds to these calls by providing new tools to counter hate and intimidation, including four new criminal offences, each targeting a specific area of growing concern.

First, the new intimidation and obstruction offences would make it a crime to intentionally intimidate people or interfere with or obstruct access to places of worship, schools, daycares, seniors' residences, cemeteries, sporting activities, community cultural centres or administrative spaces that are primarily used by identifiable groups. These are spaces that must remain publicly accessible and safe for community members.

In this regard, it is important to clearly emphasize that these new offences would not criminalize any form of lawful expression or peaceful assembly. These offences target willful and intentional criminal conduct directed at people trying to access these enumerated spaces when primarily used by identifiable groups.

Moreover, these new offences would not amount to bubble legislation — or “bubble zones,” as they're frequently called — established under provincial or municipal laws and designed to limit protest activity near certain specified locations. In contrast, these new intimidation and obstruction offences specifically address criminal conduct deliberately impeding access to religious, educational and cultural places primarily used by identifiable groups.

Similar legislation has already been passed protecting health care workers and people seeking safe access to health services, which is consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Similarly, these newly proposed offences do not apply where a person is peacefully protesting or communicating information, such as holding a sign, chanting, sharing information or conducting a peaceful demonstration.

Importantly, these new offences require willful intent to intimidate and provoke fear in order to impede access, meaning that they only apply to deliberate and harmful conduct, not peaceful presence, protest or expression. For example, an offence could potentially include someone blocking an entrance to a place of worship or Jewish school while holding a baseball bat and yelling slurs.

Another proposed addition to the Criminal Code under Bill C-9 includes a new hate propaganda offence, which would prohibit intentionally promoting hatred against an identifiable group by publicly displaying certain hate or terrorism symbols. This would include symbols principally used by or associated with listed terrorist entities under the Criminal Code, as well as the Nazi Hakenkreuz and Nazi SS bolts, or that nearly resemble these described symbols.

Importantly, this proposed offence applies only in very specific circumstances and does not ban symbols or criminalize the mere display of symbols. Rather, it targets the public display of symbols clearly identified with a terrorist entity or Nazi ideology for the express purpose of promoting hate.

To be clear, these symbols must be purposively displayed with the objective of promoting hate against an identifiable group. This is a high legal threshold. Importantly, this law does not apply based on how a symbol might be perceived. There must be clear intent to promote hatred.

The offence is carefully tailored to ensure that the public display of symbols for legitimate purposes, such as artistic, educational or journalistic purposes or when used in good faith to point out for purposes of removal of such a symbol, would not be captured by this offence.

• (1510)

This new offence also includes an important additional safeguard, which requires not only wilful intent to promote hatred but also the consent of the Attorney General before any charges may proceed.

To be clear, this means charges cannot be laid by police alone and must be reviewed and authorized at a higher level, which adds an additional layer of scrutiny, ensuring the careful application of the law.

Finally, a new stand-alone hate crime offence, as proposed in Bill C-9, would make it a crime to carry out illegal acts motivated by hatred based on specific grounds, such as race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

This new hybrid offence would more explicitly and consistently denounce all crimes motivated by hatred. For clarity, this new offence would not make actions that were previously legal suddenly illegal, nor would it apply to civil actions. Rather, it would target conduct that is already illegal under federal laws.

For example, to be found guilty of this new hate crime offence, an individual must commit an existing offence under the Criminal Code, such as mischief, uttering threats or assault, and that criminal conduct must be motivated by hatred against an identifiable group.

This offence would have an escalating penalty structure, which would provide higher penalties based on the seriousness of the underlying offence, such as hate-motivated assault with a weapon or murder. It would still be up to judges to impose a fit sentence that is proportionate to the seriousness of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender.

To sum up, by explicitly identifying hate-motivated conduct as a distinct offence, Bill C-9 proposes to do the following: First, it will help acknowledge the particular impact and harm done to victims and communities targeted by hate, as well as further denounce and deter hate-motivated criminal conduct in Canada by naming these offences for what they are — hate — and by providing enhanced sentencing based on the impact and gravity that hate has in Canadian society.

Second, this new offence will support more consistent enforcement and prosecution of hate-motivated acts and clearly signal that crimes rooted in hate are an attack on the fundamental equality and safety of everyone in Canada.

Alongside these new offences, Bill C-9 would add a standardized definition of “hatred” to the Criminal Code to clarify what conduct amounts to a hate crime or hate speech.

Based on the Supreme Court of Canada jurisprudence, “hatred” would refer to “. . . an emotion of an intense and extreme nature that is clearly associated with vilification and detestation”

For greater certainty, the bill would also make clear what is not hatred, namely acts that discredit, humiliate, hurt or offend. This added clarity would provide police and prosecutors with more guidance to help inform decisions on whether to lay or proceed with charges, helping to support more timely and meaningful responses for victims.

This hate crime definition will also assist with the standardization of enforcement, more robust data collection and a more accurate understanding of how police-reported hate crimes are impacting identified communities across Canada.

Next, I would also like to highlight two key amendments to the bill that were adopted at report stage in the other place, which may help to clarify some of the concerns that senators have, no doubt, read in their emails or heard in conversation.

First, as introduced in Parliament, the original bill proposed to repeal the requirement to obtain Attorney General consent before laying charges for three of the existing hate propaganda offences.

In response to consultations and concerns raised that repealing this requirement may increase vexatious and frivolous prosecutions, the bill was amended to maintain this requirement and extend its application to the new hate propaganda offence targeting the public display of certain hate and terrorism symbols.

As previously mentioned, Attorney General consent provides an important safeguard and an additional level of scrutiny before police can proceed with charges.

Second, the bill would repeal what is often referred to as the “good faith religious opinion defence,” which applies only to two hate propaganda offences. This defence applies to the Criminal Code offences of wilful promotion of hatred against an identifiable group and wilful promotion of anti-Semitism by condoning, denying or downplaying the Holocaust. These offences are carefully tailored and have high thresholds, as they target the intentional promotion of hatred.

The amendment to remove the “good faith religious opinion defence” was not in the original bill and has generated diverse views, with some stakeholders expressing concern about potential impacts on freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

To address these concerns, “for greater certainty” clauses were added to the bill to clarify what expression would be captured by the offences in question. The following clause states that nothing in hate propaganda provisions:

. . . shall be construed as prohibiting a person from communicating a statement on a matter of public interest, including an educational, religious, political or scientific statement made in the course of a discussion, publication or debate, if they do not wilfully promote hatred against an identifiable group by communicating the statement.

This “for greater certainty” clause was added following feedback from faith communities to make clear that religious expression, teaching or discussion are not captured by this new change.

To clarify, the expressions captured are statements communicated to intentionally promote hatred or anti-Semitism. Honest or good faith religious expression, debate or teaching would not meet this high standard, which clearly requires the deliberate intention to promote hatred or anti-Semitism.

Furthermore, the bill explicitly clarifies that a statement does not promote hatred because it merely “discredits, humiliates, hurts or offends.” This clearly reinforces that offensive or controversial speech alone does not meet this legal threshold.

The threshold for hate speech in Canada is and remains extremely high and requires the wilful intent to promote hatred. Freedom of religion and freedom of expression remain fully protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and courts continue to interpret and apply these protections.

Given some of the community concerns raised by this bill, I would like to repeat and emphasize the following clarifications: Bill C-9 does not criminalize any religious or faith-based teaching, practice or expression not motivated by the intentional and wilful promotion of hatred.

Bill C-9 does not ban or prevent any peaceful protest, lawful expression, information sharing or advocacy.

Bill C-9 does not create blanket protest restrictions or “bubble zones.”

Bill C-9 does not criminalize mere opinions, disagreements or criticism.

Honourable colleagues, I thank you for your attention, and I invite your careful consideration and support for this important legislation. I believe that Bill C-9 is the most consequential change to hate crime legislation in the past 50-plus years.

The modern realities and impact of hate have changed and continue to challenge the very foundations of our open and pluralistic society. Our laws need to be modernized to deal with the scourge of hate infiltrating our communities, some of which is propagated by foreign entities and nefarious actors in an attempt to sow division and weaken our inclusive democracy.

• (1520)

Bill C-9 comes at a time when our society and the values that underpin it are being harmed by hate in all its forms. When our neighbours hesitate before entering a place of worship or their children’s school out of fear, that is a major concern that we cannot overlook. When a person is targeted simply for who they are, whom they love or what they believe, we must loudly denounce this behaviour. When words are weaponized to incite hatred or violence, we must respond with swift and meaningful consequences.

Bill C-9 offers a path to confront these challenges in a careful and balanced way which aligns with and respects our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It lays the foundation for a safer, more

inclusive society. It does so by providing new and carefully tailored tools that target the most harmful and dangerous manifestations of hate, those which cross the line into criminal conduct and threaten the very sense of safety, security and equality that all people in Canada should freely experience.

These laudable values are not in conflict; they support each other. A society where people live in fear of being targeted because of their identity is not a society where rights and freedoms are truly meaningful.

As members of this upper chamber, let’s send a clear message that we are prioritizing the protection of victims and the safety of every community in Canada. Whatever form it takes, hate is incompatible with Canadian values and can never be tolerated.

We must take a clear and unwavering stance for all people in Canada, who expect meaningful action against the pervasive harms faced by victims and their communities. We must do so to uphold the very tenets of our diverse, multicultural and pluralistic society.

For these reasons, I urge you all to vigorously and constructively deliberate, debate and ultimately support the passage of this bill. Canadians are looking to and counting on us to help keep Canada safe and a place free from hate.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Wells, will you take a question?

Senator K. Wells: Absolutely.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Senator Wells, thank you for addressing so directly the massive number of emails that many of us are receiving that are focused on the denial of freedom of religion under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

My question is narrower than that broad concern. It is about the concerns we’re now receiving — perhaps more recently, certainly in my case — that focus on gender conversion therapy and the need somehow to link that to religious freedom and the need somehow to see that as something that should actually be promoted in Canada.

I wonder if you could address that and help us dispel any misunderstandings we might have on this issue.

Senator K. Wells: Thank you for the question. It’s an important clarification, absolutely.

As members of this chamber know, so-called conversion therapy practices have been banned or criminalized in Canada under another bill, which is one of the strongest and most robust pieces of legislation in the world. Bill C-9 has no relevance to that particular issue.

We know that freedom of expression and freedom of religion are foundational principles in Canadian society. They are some of the highest principles that we uphold under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This bill, Bill C-9, as you heard me underscore many times, is about the wilful, intentional promotion of hatred. It’s not about incidental conversations. It’s not about

reading passages from scripture or any kind of literature. It's about the intent to promote hatred and target specifically identified vulnerable communities.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): I think all my colleagues have been receiving phone calls and emails, and there are many concerns. My concern actually focuses on what happened at the committee stage in the House.

When the bill was first introduced, it did not propose repealing the long-standing religious text defence in section 319 of the Criminal Code, specifically sections 319(3)(b) and 319(3.1)(b), yet that amendment appeared only at committee stage in the other place without witness testimony or consultation with religious, cultural or legal experts before repealing this long-standing defence.

In terms of process and the fact that there are concerns expressed now that were not heard at committee, should we be concerned, and are you concerned, about what kind of message this sends to millions of Canadians of faith and others about how that approach that took place may affect trust in the government's commitment to both free expression and religious liberty?

It's quite concerning what happened in the House.

Senator K. Wells: Thank you for the question. I, too, have been receiving many of those emails.

I would say to Canadians that they can be assured that when this bill is referred to the Senate committee, where it lands, there will be that robust discussion and invitation to have witnesses who are in favour of, or against, that particular amendment so that we can hear all sides of the debate.

As we have heard from the minister, should there be good-faith amendments that come forward that strengthen the bill or address shortcomings of the bill, those will be considered by the government.

Senator Martin: The kind of robust and thorough work that we do at committee is absolutely important, especially regarding the Criminal Code, which affects all of us, as well as the unintended consequences of repealing something.

The government has continuously said that this bill is meant to protect Canadians from hate and harm, and we all agree that this must be done. Yet, the first substantive change it accepted was the removal of a good faith defence that allowed Canadians to express sincerely held religious beliefs without fear of persecution.

Why do you think the government is so determined to take good faith out of both the law and, in many ways, this national conversation on freedom of belief? I don't understand.

Senator K. Wells: Thank you for the question. I hope you will ask that question of the minister when they come to the committee. I certainly would not speak for the government on that point, other than to say that that has been a concern that we have heard from Canadians and one that, I hope, will be thoroughly studied and debated at committee.

[Senator Wells (Alberta)]

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michèle Audette: Will my colleague take a question in French?

Thank you very much for your speech, senator.

I have noticed that, often, when it comes to government bills that are sponsored here, people have a hard time accepting amendments or they have strong feelings about them, at the very least. That is something I have noticed in my five years here. Can you reassure me that, during the study of this bill, you will hear from First Nations, who are experiencing a lot of pressure from people or groups who completely deny the existence of our ancestors' graves and burial sites associated with residential schools?

The Government of Canada established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and ordered the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Some work has been done in this democracy, but there is still a lot of denial. Can you assure me that, if First Nations propose amendments, you will be open to adding elements that relate to our realities? The problem is that people don't believe us. Thank you.

[*English*]

Senator K. Wells: Thank you for the important question. Absolutely. I personally believe it's critically important that we hear from our Indigenous, First Nations and Métis communities on this bill in particular, because we know that there is often a distrust of law enforcement because of historical, systemic structural discrimination.

That may be a community that is actually under-reporting hate crimes to police. So no matter what legislation we have that underpins this bill, moving forward, it is about training and working in partnership with communities. This is often a last resort when we get to the criminalization of hate crimes.

• (1530)

I firmly believe that no one is born with hate in their heart, that hate is a learned value; therefore, it also gives us hope that it can be unlearned. Bringing forward these considerations, I know, from our colleagues here, that everyone will take their responsibilities very diligently at committee to consider these important concerns. We know that there is a bill in the other place that is looking at residential school denialism as well. Thank you for the question.

Hon. Paulette Senior: Senator Wells, I applaud you for sponsoring this bill. I look forward to working with you on it.

At the briefing, I certainly had the opportunity to ask a few questions around some gaps that we see, particularly in terms of symbols of hate that are missing from the bill. I'm hoping, in the same spirit, in terms of reviewing and looking at amendments, that additional symbols, such as the noose, could be added as hate symbols.

My only concern is that that wasn't done at committee, that it's again coming to the Senate. Can you perhaps speak to the ability for that to happen at committee?

Senator K. Wells: Thank you for the question. It also gives me an opportunity to talk a little bit about why hate symbols are included in the legislation. Hate symbols are publicly visible to members of society and convey targeted messages in two directions: firstly, to the affected community, where the symbol serves as an instrument of intimidation and fear; and secondly, to those who identify with the hateful ideology for whom that symbol serves as a rallying point, reinforcing those shared beliefs and potentially galvanizing further harmful conduct.

That's one of the main reasons why hate symbols, as we've seen, are becoming increasingly used online, in public protests and communities.

The challenge here, as we've heard, is how we identify which symbols are included. The government has chosen to include those symbols that are part of identified terrorist organizations and the two Nazi symbols, the Hakenkreuz and the SS bolts, which are widely seen as hate symbols all around the world.

The question of the noose is a good one to bring forward. Certainly, when used in a particular context, it can exactly instill that fear and terror into an entire community.

My understanding is that this will be an important discussion at committee as to what kinds of symbols are included and what symbols are currently excluded. That should be discussed and debated. Thank you for that.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

CANADA-INDONESIA COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Clément Gignac moved second reading of Bill C-18, An Act to implement the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between Canada and Indonesia.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today as the sponsor of Bill C-18, An Act to implement the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between Canada and Indonesia. This agreement marks a historic turning point in Canada's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and is part of the current government's new trade diversification strategy.

The Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, or CEPA, comes at an opportune time for our country, our workers and our businesses. The world trading system is experiencing unprecedented upheavals. Protectionism is on the rise. Geopolitical tensions are reshaping supply chains and economic alliances. The pace of technological change is accelerating.

For too long, Canada's trade has been mainly concentrated in a single market. Our relationship with the United States remains essential, but given the current climate of uncertainty, there is no doubt that Canada must diversify its trade and strengthen its economic resilience.

We need to build new bridges to dynamic markets and strengthen our partnerships with countries that share our desire to promote predictable, open and rules-based trade.

Trade is fundamental to Canada's prosperity and resilience. It accounts for two thirds of our GDP, and one in five jobs in Canada is related to exports.

The current government has set an ambitious goal of doubling Canadian exports to non-U.S. markets over the next decade.

To achieve this goal of trade diversification, Canada must strengthen its ties with booming economies. The Indo-Pacific region is at the heart of this effort. The Indo-Pacific region is home to more than half of the world's population and accounts for nearly 60% of world GDP, making it a driver of global economic growth. Its influence will only grow, which is why Canada's economic engagement in this region is a strategic necessity.

It is in this context that I wish to speak to you about the Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Implementation Act, at a time when Canada needs to strengthen its ties with this region.

Indonesia stands out as one of the world's leading emerging economies in the Indo-Pacific region. With a population exceeding 280 million, it ranks fourth among the world's most populous countries, following China, India and the United States. I should also mention that Indonesia is the largest island nation in the world, as it is made up of more than 17,000 islands with a total area of over 1.9 million square kilometres. Java is the most populous island in the world and is home to over half the country's population. In 2025, Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, surpassed Tokyo to become the most populous city in the world, with 41 million residents, which is roughly equivalent to the entire population of Canada.

On the economic front, Indonesia is a member of the G20, with a GDP of close to \$2 trillion, making it the largest economy in Southeast Asia. The latest forecasts indicate that Indonesia is on track to become one of the world's five leading economies in the coming decades.

Indonesia's value as a key partner extends beyond its robust economic growth. It's an ambitious, unaligned, internationally influential nation. It plays a major role in the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, and among the countries of the global south. Indonesia is also a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, or APEC.

Within the last few years, Indonesia has applied for membership in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, as well as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP.

The relationship between Canada and Indonesia is based on the shared values of diversity, mutual respect and a commitment to inclusive, rules-based trade.

September 24, 2025, marked a turning point in relations between Canada and Indonesia when Indonesian President Subianto travelled to Ottawa to attend the signing of the Indonesia-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

It was the first official visit by an Indonesian president to Canada in 25 years.

Moreover, during that official visit, as co-chair of the Canada-ASEAN Interparliamentary Friendship Group, I had the privilege of co-chairing a round table here in Ottawa that was organized by the Canada-Indonesia Business Council, which brought together Canadian business people already involved in or keenly interested in Indonesia.

That visit underscores the importance of this agreement, which marks a significant milestone in bilateral relations between our countries, both economically and in political and strategic terms.

During his remarks, the Indonesian president spoke enthusiastically about the long-standing partnership between Canada and Indonesia. He described Canada as a responsible, mature, leading Western power that has always cared about the interests of developing nations. He highlighted Canada's contributions to poverty reduction, health, agriculture and fisheries, and he praised our long-standing cooperation on peacekeeping efforts. The Indonesian president emphasized that the Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement is a strategic agreement for Indonesia, reflecting years of hard work and mutual respect.

• (1540)

Honourable senators, the Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement is a very important milestone for Indonesia, as it is the most ambitious trade agreement Indonesia has ever signed and its first with a North American country. It demonstrates the trust Indonesia has in Canada as a reliable partner.

Our trade relations with Indonesia have grown steadily over the years. Bilateral trade in goods and services between our two countries reached approximately \$6.7 billion in 2024, including \$3.2 billion in exports and \$3.5 billion in imports. Statistics on bilateral trade with Indonesia are not yet available for 2025 for services, but they are available for goods. Canadian exports to Indonesia jumped by 29% last year to reach \$3 billion, resulting in Canada recording a trade surplus of roughly \$640 million.

Canada's top goods exports to Indonesia are cereals, fertilizers, wood pulp, oilseeds, and machinery, equipment and mechanical appliances. Canada's top goods imports from Indonesia, meanwhile, are electrical machinery and equipment, rubber, apparel, as well as precious metals and footwear. However, we know that the potential for growth is still enormous.

The Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement will help unlock this full potential. It provides Canadian exporters with preferential access to Indonesia's dynamic and rapidly growing market. Once it's fully implemented, the Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement is expected to increase trade by approximately \$1.5 billion, a 25% increase over the value of our current trade. This agreement will help build a more resilient, diversified and inclusive Canadian economy, while advancing our strategic interests in a region that is at the heart of global economic growth.

[English]

Colleagues, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, or CEPA, with Indonesia covers trade in goods and services, investment, labour, the environment and much more. It reflects Canada's values and priorities, and it delivers tangible benefits for Canadians.

Allow me to highlight some of the key commercial benefits of this agreement for Canadians.

Let me begin with trade in goods. One of the most significant economic gains lies in improved market access for Canadian goods. When the agreement is fully implemented, Indonesia will eliminate or reduce — or provide permanent duty-free treatment — on over 85% of tariff lines, compared to 45% as we speak, representing 97% of Canadian exports to Indonesia.

In practical terms, that means meaningful commercial opportunities for businesses of all sizes from coast to coast to coast. Let me provide a handful of examples.

It means that canola farmers from Alberta, Saskatchewan or Manitoba will no longer face 5% tariffs on canola seed, oil and meal when exporting to Indonesia. Blueberry and cranberry farmers from Nova Scotia, B.C., New Brunswick and P.E.I. will no longer have to deal with 5% tariffs on these goods.

Potato farmers from P.E.I. — I think my colleague will be happy to hear this — in fact, would see the 20% tariff on chipping potatoes and the 5% tariff on frozen French fries eliminated. They will also see Indonesia issue import licences automatically for potatoes, providing stability and certainty on their exports.

Beef and pork farmers from Alberta, Saskatchewan and other provinces will no longer face 5% tariffs on beef and pork or 30% tariffs on most prepared and preserved beef and pork.

“Cleantech” companies from B.C., Alberta, Quebec and across Canada will no longer have to deal with the current 5% tariffs on wind turbines, water filtration equipment and so on. Aerospace manufacturers from Quebec and Ontario will also see the current 5% tariff eliminated on some products.

Fishers from all Atlantic provinces, Quebec and other provinces will no longer have 5% tariffs on lobsters, salmon and so on.

Honourable colleagues, these are just a few examples of the tariff-related benefits that the Canada-Indonesia CEPA will deliver, and there are more of them.

What is clear from these examples is that the impact of this agreement is wide-reaching. All regions of Canada, from coast to coast, and all export-oriented industries will benefit from improved market access. This agreement ensures that Canadian exporters will face fewer barriers and lower costs when accessing one of the fastest-growing markets in the Indo-Pacific.

Beyond reducing tariffs, the CEPA will enhance market access for Canadian merchandise exporters by addressing non-tariff barriers through provisions on technical barriers to trade and sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

Provisions on technical barriers to trade take steps to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens and improve transparency.

Together, these tariff reductions and non-tariff commitments create a more predictable, transparent and accessible environment for Canadian businesses operating in Indonesia. By lowering costs at the border and reducing regulatory obstacles behind the border, the CEPA ensures that Canadian exporters are more competitive and are better positioned to succeed in one of the fastest-growing and dynamic markets.

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, when Canadians think of trade agreements, they often think of eliminating tariffs on goods. This is indeed a central element, but trade agreements are much more than that. They are comprehensive and rigorous frameworks that encompass every aspect of modern trade, from goods and services to investment and more. As you know, Canada’s economy is highly reliant on international trade. Indonesia is a priority market for exporters, and this agreement opens up new opportunities and leverages businesses’ existing investments.

Some of our major Canadian financial institutions are already well established there. For example, Manulife, a Canadian multinational insurance and financial services company headquartered in Toronto, has had a presence in Indonesia since 1996. Manulife Wealth and Asset Management is now the largest asset manager in Indonesia. In September, Manulife further expanded its presence by acquiring the country’s fifth-largest asset manager. This acquisition underscores the strategic importance of Indonesia’s financial sector for Canadian companies.

Indeed, Indonesia’s financial services sector is one of the fastest-growing in the Indo-Pacific region, fuelled by rising household incomes, rapid urbanization and the widespread

adoption of digital banking services. A tailored, stand-alone chapter on financial services was added to the Canada-Indonesia CEPA specifically to support companies such as Manulife.

This chapter guarantees essential protections and improves market access for Canadian financial service providers. It will improve access for banks, insurance companies and asset management companies through clearer commitments to fair competition and regulatory transparency.

Canadian companies will be able to offer financial products directly on the Indonesian market with greater certainty and confidence. Another of this agreement’s major advantages for financial service suppliers is the guarantee that benefits extended to established institutions will not be arbitrarily withdrawn.

This agreement between Canada and Indonesia contains a chapter on trade in services that is meant to improve transparency and predictability in a wide range of sectors.

• (1550)

Whether they are small start-ups or large corporations, Canadian service providers will benefit from commitments that simplify authorization and licensing procedures, enabling them to navigate the Indonesian regulatory environment. The Canada-Indonesia CEPA will also ensure non-discriminatory treatment by granting Canadian businesses the same rights and protections as their Indonesian counterparts.

This agreement contains a robust chapter on investment to further support Canadian businesses and investors. The last year for which we have statistics is 2024, when Indonesia was Canada’s third-largest destination for foreign direct investment in Southeast Asia. Canadian investment exceeded \$5 billion that year, a 56% increase over the previous decade. At the same time, Indonesian investment in Canada grew to nearly \$6 billion in 2024.

This chapter provides protections against expropriation without compensation, ensures non-discriminatory treatment and provides access to investor-state dispute settlement, an essential tool for legal certainty and investment stability. These protections reduce investment risks, make the business environment more predictable and encourage Canadian companies to expand their operations in Indonesia.

Allow me to highlight a few sectors that will benefit from the investment provisions of this agreement. First, there are new opportunities in the mining and energy sectors. Indonesia possesses some of the world’s largest mineral reserves. Canadian companies with expertise in mining, engineering services and mineral processing are well positioned to support Indonesia’s efforts in downstream processing and value-added industries, particularly in the areas of battery materials and green technologies. The Canada-Indonesia CEPA also provides a clear and predictable framework for Canadian mining and energy companies to invest and operate in Indonesia.

Colleagues, people often have to travel to do business abroad. This agreement facilitates the temporary admission of Canadian professionals by simplifying entry requirements and allowing executives and specialists to enter Indonesia for market expansion and investment activities.

This agreement aims to promote economic prosperity while safeguarding key social and environmental priorities. It includes labour and environmental commitments and ensures that trade supports people and the planet, rather than compromising them.

Regarding labour, the agreement requires Canada and Indonesia to uphold and protect internationally recognized labour rights in their respective domestic laws and to enforce these laws effectively. To promote fair competition, the agreement prohibits any weakening of labour codes to attract trade or investment. These commitments are supported by a dispute settlement mechanism, highlighting our determination to make trade beneficial for workers.

Regarding the environment, the CEPA includes exhaustive commitments that prevent any relaxing of environmental protections for trade purposes. It recognizes the critical connection between trade policies and climate change policies. It also addresses global environmental challenges, including plastic pollution, biodiversity loss and sustainable fisheries, forest and agriculture management. The agreement promotes responsible business conduct and provides for greater cooperation and consultation in addressing these environmental problems.

Lastly, the agreement recognizes the unique challenges that SMEs face in accessing international markets, and it commits Canada and Indonesia to working together to eliminate barriers, share information and foster cooperation. These combined efforts will ensure that more people in more communities and in our two nations reap the benefits of trade.

This agreement will deliver significant benefits as soon as it enters into force, but it is also designed to evolve over time to continue to meet the needs of Canadians in a rapidly changing global economy. Canada and Indonesia have also committed to reviewing the entire agreement within five years of its entry into force. This broader review will allow us to assess the overall effectiveness of the CEPA and deepen commitments over time, leading to further liberalization.

Canada will provide assistance to strengthen Indonesia's capacity to implement this agreement effectively. This support will focus on strengthening institutional and technical capacity to help Indonesia meet its commitments and unlock the full potential of the CEPA. By supporting Indonesia's implementation efforts, we are contributing to inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in that country. We are also creating a more stable and predictable environment there for Canadian businesses to prosper.

In closing, honourable senators, the Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement strikes me as a good agreement that has come along at the right time with

the right partner. This agreement will create new opportunities for Canadian businesses of all sizes, from major exporters to SMEs. It will support middle-class jobs across the country in the agricultural, manufacturing, clean technology and service sectors. It will strengthen our ties with one of the largest and most dynamic regions in the world. It will also foster inclusive and sustainable growth by protecting labour rights in Canada and abroad and promoting Canadian values.

That is why, honourable senators, as the sponsor of this bill, I humbly ask you to support it.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted to suspend until Committee of the Whole?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended.)

(The sitting of the Senate was resumed.)

• (1600)

[*English*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Pursuant to the order of March 26, 2026, I leave the chair for the Senate to resolve into a Committee of the Whole in order to receive the Honourable Evan Solomon, P.C., M.P., Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, to consider the subject of artificial intelligence. The Honourable Senator Cormier will chair the committee.

[*Translation*]

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

CONSIDERATION OF SUBJECT IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On the Order:

The Senate in Committee of the Whole in order to receive the Honourable Evan Solomon, P.C., M.P., Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, accompanied by at most two officials, to consider the subject of artificial intelligence.

(The sitting of the Senate was suspended and put into Committee of the Whole, the Honourable René Cormier in the chair.)

The Chair: Honourable senators, the Senate is resolved into a Committee of the Whole in order to receive the Honourable Evan Solomon, P.C., M.P., Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, to consider the subject of artificial intelligence.

Honourable senators, in a Committee of the Whole, senators shall address the chair but need not stand. Under the Rules, the speaking time is 10 minutes, including questions and answers, but, as ordered, if a senator does not use all of their time, the balance can be yielded to another senator.

I would now invite Minister Solomon to join us.

(Pursuant to the order of the Senate, the Honourable Evan Solomon was escorted to a seat in the Senate Chamber.)

[*English*]

The Chair: Minister, welcome to the Senate.

As I have informed my colleagues, the question-and-answer period will be divided into 10-minute blocks.

These blocks will be shared between two or three senators and will include the time for your responses.

I would ask you to make your opening remarks of at most five minutes.

I would like to apologize in advance should I need to interrupt you during your interventions.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Evan Solomon, P.C., M.P., Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation: Thank you all. It's truly a pleasure to be here. Mr. Chair, honourable senators, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today.

[*English*]

I appreciate the Senate's interest in this very important work. Artificial intelligence is evolving very rapidly, and Canadians are seeing it in their daily lives — as are you — sometimes with excitement and sometimes with concern.

[*Translation*]

Before we discuss risks and opportunities, we need to talk about the practical ways that AI can change people's lives.

[*English*]

As an example, last month, I was in Halifax and met Dr. Robert Chen, a pediatric cardiologist who told me up to 80% of newborns — and I have two kids of my own — are found to have heart murmurs. Families can wait up to 17 months to see a specialist, often carrying enormous anxiety even though most of these murmurs are harmless.

He thought he could help, and he thought AI could help. So, he formed an AI company and built an AI tool that could identify the most urgent cases of heart murmurs, potentially reducing the wait times, he says, from 17 months to 1 month, helping doctors focus care where it's needed most.

[*Translation*]

This is AI at its best: a practical, humane technology that truly makes people's lives better.

[*English*]

This is what AI should be about: solving real problems for real people and making sure the benefits are felt not just by a few but by everyone. "AI for all" is our guiding principle: AI to serve people and not the other way around.

[*Translation*]

Our core principle is "AI for all."

[*English*]

"AI for all" means this powerful, transformative technology will work for Canadians, no matter where they live and no matter their age, income or background. It must serve people responsibly, reliably and safely, and it must be sovereign. Canadians see real promise in AI for health care, business and public services.

We have to be open to opportunities and innovation, but we must be candid about real concerns — and there are real concerns about privacy, jobs and the health of our democracy. We must and will treat these seriously. Technology moves at the speed of innovation, but adoption moves at the speed of trust, and so do our citizens.

[*Translation*]

That's why our approach is similar.

There are three chapters.

[*English*]

"Protect," "empower" and "build" are the three chapters of our upcoming national AI strategy. First is "protect." AI will only succeed in Canada if people trust it's being developed and deployed responsibly. That means stronger privacy protections, actions on harmful "deepfakes" and online manipulation, protecting children and vulnerable communities and building real safety capacity here at home.

[*Translation*]

That's why we created the Canadian Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute: to get a better grasp of the risks and to put real guardrails in place.

[English]

Second is “empower.” Canadians don’t just want to be protected from AI; they want to benefit from it. They need and want the skills to use it. They want their children to be ready so there are jobs of the future. They want workers and businesses to have the tools to adapt and succeed.

[Translation]

That means investing in skills, digital literacy and opportunities for Canadian workers, youth and businesses.

[English]

It also means making sure AI reflects Canadian values, including with respect to inclusion, culture and Indigenous leadership.

[Translation]

We also have to respect our two national languages.

[English]

If people feel left behind, adoption will stall. If they feel empowered, it will grow — and our strategy will have a pillar on empowerment.

Third is “build.” Canada has extraordinary strengths in artificial intelligence. We have world-class researchers, innovative companies, clean energy, strong talent and the capacity to lead. Leadership, though — and we are leaders — is not a birthright. We need to fight for it, and that’s why we need to build. That means investing in Canadian infrastructure and sovereign compute. It means helping Canadian companies scale here at home and championing our champions. It means keeping more talent, more of our intellectual property and more value here in Canada.

[Translation]

Canadian AI must not be something invented here and developed elsewhere. It has to help build a stronger Canada right here at home.

[English]

Too often, we plant the seed and water and grow the plant, and then someone else harvests it. That will stop. Our plan will take that under consideration.

The Chair: Thank you, minister. We will now go to the questions and answers. The first question will be from Senator Carignan.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Minister, thank you for accepting the Senate’s invitation.

My question is about Anthropic’s Claude Mythos. It’s a next-generation AI tool that’s being used to identify vulnerabilities in cybersecurity systems. I know that you received critical information over the past few days about the capabilities of Claude Mythos.

• (1610)

So they’re keeping Mythos under wraps. Anthropic decided not to release it publicly and to create a group called Glasswing so that cybersecurity companies can use Mythos and identify their vulnerabilities themselves. I’d like you to comment on that, minister. Have you talked to Anthropic about including Canada and its agencies in Glasswing so we can test our own cybersecurity systems?

Mr. Solomon: Thank you for the question, senator.

[English]

It is a very good question, and I’m glad that you’ve asked it.

My team met with Anthropic last night. I met with senior leadership of Anthropic this morning. We had very productive discussions about a number of issues, senator, including Mythos and including Glasswing, but also about other issues that have been raised that I have promised the public I would speak about, as I spoke about with OpenAI — questions about safety, about protecting our children and consumers, about how they escalate and what their safety protocols are.

Senator, our number one goal is to make sure our citizens, our children and our institutions are safe. There are new developments almost every day. We are very much at the forefront, as you can see from my meeting with Anthropic. The conversations were very productive.

I cannot give you the details yet. I know you will ask for the details about whether we’re in. I can’t give you the details except to say that we are fully engaged in very productive conversations, as is the Canadian AI Safety Institute that we have.

We have the full measure of our systems that protect Canadian institutions that are engaged not only on this particular issue but on cybersecurity in general.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Well, there have been meetings. The chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve met with the big American banks to discuss concerns about Mythos. It is a national security issue. Do you plan to ensure that Canadian agencies and Canada will have access to Mythos as soon as possible so they can detect vulnerabilities in our security systems?

[English]

Mr. Solomon: Senator, you are asking the exact right question. We share a concern to make sure that Canada is at the very forefront of our safety and our institutions.

We have followed the situation with Mythos very closely, by the way, and with many other factors. Again, I point to the fact that I had a very productive meeting with the Anthropic leadership this morning.

My team is fully engaged. Our government, as a whole, is engaged in making sure that Canadian institutions are protected from any cybersecurity threat posed by AI, including the Canadian Cybersecurity Network, as you know, senator.

I will promise you, senator, that these are ongoing discussions. We will be very much at the forefront of making sure, through these productive discussions, that Canada, citizens and our institutions — banks and our very important institutions — will have the capacity to be protected from this kind of cyberthreat.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: Have you also included your colleagues from National Defence, Public Safety and Finance, given that these security issues certainly affect those departments as well, not just your department and your portfolio?

[English]

Mr. Solomon: Senator, you're asking exactly the right questions.

I can tell you that the Minister of National Defence and the agencies are engaged very closely in this. The Canadian Centre for Cyber Security and Minister McGuinty — we are working closely to make sure that we're tied in to understand the security risks and to mitigate them.

Senator, the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security — over this weekend, as we came to ground on this very pressing issue — published guidance for businesses on this that you can look at.

I know that the Bank of Canada met with major lenders on the cyber risks related to Mythos a number of days ago.

As you know, we have engaged the Canadian AI Safety Institute to look at safety protocols with OpenAI. That institute is also a mechanism to make sure on that side as well.

I assure you and I'm happy to tell you and the honourable members here in the chamber that we are engaged in this subject. I'm working with my colleagues closely and very urgently.

[Translation]

Senator Carignan: We're counting on you. You said that we are leaders in AI, that we have major research chairs, that we have some of the most important chairs right here in Canada. However, Canada is lagging behind when it comes to integrating AI into businesses and how businesses use it. This leads to a loss of productivity, first and foremost, and contributes to the brain drain, affecting both researchers and professionals in the business sector.

I was looking at the OECD figures to compare Canada with our neighbour to the south. The figures are in euros, but when it comes to research and development, the United States allocates 90 billion euros a year, while we allocate 2.5 billion euros. That is minimal compared to our investment, despite all our good intentions. What's the plan to ensure that AI is better integrated into our businesses, first of all, and secondly, to make sure we retain our top talent, who are being offered — I say this jokingly — hockey player salaries to go to the United States?

[English]

Mr. Solomon: Again, senator, first, thank you for the question.

Retaining talent is absolutely key. We are world leaders, I should say, in many aspects of AI, including in research. Just so we make sure that people appreciate, our three national AI institutes — Vector in Toronto, Mila in Montreal and Amii in Edmonton — are run by the three great godfathers of AI: Geoffrey Hinton, Yoshua Bengio and Rich Sutton. They, in turn, have attracted an enormous amount of ecosystem, and so have our CIFAR chairs, bringing world-leading PhD students, postdocs and innovators to Canada.

In terms of talent attraction, though, in our last budget, senator, we put \$1.7 billion in the budget over 13 years for the international talent attraction strategy to attract 1,000 of the world's top scientists, and their labs and students, to Canada. This is the largest talent attraction strategy in the G7. Four hundred million dollars of that goes to the Canada Foundation for Innovation to ensure that the chairs there have the equipment they need to conduct the research.

We're making sure in our national strategy that the students, once they exit, have a path to commercialization. This is why you've seen in our productivity super-deduction we have the lowest marginal effective tax rate right now, lower than in the United States, attracting capital. In our national strategy, senator, we will make sure that we have attraction for making sure that risk capital is available for our start-ups.

To keep our companies here, they need the fuel for innovation, and that's compute. That's why we launched the \$300-million AI Compute Access Fund so our small- and medium-sized enterprises have the compute capacity to stay here and grow here with Canadian companies.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, minister.

Senator Petitclerc: Thank you for being with us, minister.

[English]

Minister, last month, before representatives of OpenAI, you said, "... protect our children or the hammer comes down."

As you know, unlike the EU AI Act, which imposes specific obligations to protect children, AI platforms in Canada are not currently subject to comparable binding legal obligations to protect children.

• (1620)

My question is this: Within your responsibility, what concrete measures are we taking right now to reduce harm to children and youth, while, of course, still supporting Canada's AI development?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Solomon: Thank you, Senator Petitcherc. That's a great question.

[*English*]

We have three aspects to approaching harm in a whole-of-government approach. Justice Minister Sean Fraser has already put forward a tabled bill, which I hope gets passed, that will criminalize the non-consensual sharing of sexualized or "deepfake" imagery. We believe that is a form of violence — violence against women, violence against children — and we would like that bill passed in order to criminalize that. That is currently tabled legislation. That's the justice side.

On the Minister of AI side — my department — I'm in charge of updating the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, or PIPEDA, our 26-year-old privacy legislation. I will be putting forward legislation that will update our privacy legislation. I can't give you every detail that's in that, senator, but I will say three things very quickly. One, it will include protecting children and how their information is treated. We are looking very closely at things like transparency for automated decision systems. In other words, those AI and decision systems that may be used to provide a mortgage for someone or a job interview. Also, I'm looking very closely at things, senator, like the right to deletion so that people have the right to take things down. We're looking closely at that.

There will be my privacy legislation that will come down, and then there is the online harms element that will fall more or less under the Minister of Heritage and Culture Marc Miller. That will be looking at things like online bans. But with regard to that whole-of-government approach to protecting our children from online harms, if I may, I would just say to the senator's point about my remarks after OpenAI that, currently, the Canadian AI Safety Institute, as I've instructed them, is engaged with OpenAI to look closely at their systems and will report back to me so we can decide what type of regulation would be best suited.

Senator Mohamed: Minister, the latest data from Statistics Canada suggests that, while aggregate job losses from AI have not yet emerged, a more concerning pattern is taking shape. Employment growth among Canadians aged 15 to 29 is lagging significantly behind older cohorts.

[Senator Petitcherc]

As part of the government's 2025 Building Canada Strong consultation, young Canadians consistently identified the lack of entry-level jobs as their primary barrier to employment. Given that generative AI is now automating the junior task-based work that once served as the training ground for early careers, what specific steps — I underline, specific steps — are you taking in your AI strategy to preserve pathways into the workforce and prevent today's 13.8% youth unemployment rate from becoming a permanent feature of the economy?

Mr. Solomon: Thank you, senator. That is an excellent question. I am a father of two kids in their early 20s, and first-time job applications are literally what I talk about every day with them and their friend groups. So this is a poignant conversation. Let me say a couple of things.

Let's just get the context. We heard earlier from a senator about our adoption rates. Although Canada has great research, we lag in terms of adoption here. In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, Canada is one of the laggards. We are adopting AI — in other words, using AI — at only 12%, so it hasn't deeply penetrated the job force so that we can start genuinely seeing those macro impacts on jobs yet. Although, we believe, like you, that this is something we are deeply concerned about.

Let me also just outline very quickly that we have about 150,000 Canadians working right now in the pure AI sector alone. The digital innovation sector comprises 800,000 Canadians. It is the fastest-growing part of our economy. AI alone has 140,000 jobs. I will also say that Deloitte Canada and the Vector Institute have done a study on the impact of AI so far on our economy. They say that AI-related jobs have contributed \$82 billion to \$100 billion across Canada over the last five years alone, and AI is projected to add \$298 billion to our GDP and create 41,500 new jobs annually over the next decade.

On one side, you have predictions that this will create jobs, as most technologies have. That doesn't mean we should not make sure that we have training, and I will tell you that we are taking action with AI4ALL. As I say, one of our core pillars will be empowerment, and empowerment will be upskilling, job scaling and working with organizations across the country that are doing superb work.

For example, organizations that we're looking at working with are those like Mitacs that do apprenticeship programs and training for young people. So we are making sure that young people have the tools, the literacy and the skill set to enter the job market and create the job market. For those who want to start companies, we need to ensure that they have access to risk capital, and for those who need the skill set to use it in manufacturing and whatever part of the job. So that is a foundational question.

Senator Arnot: Thank you, minister. Upon reflecting on the tragedy in Tumbler Ridge, you stated that artificial intelligence is not theoretical, that it has real-world consequences and that this requires responsible governance. That principle is not in dispute. We are now seeing approaches that would permit organizations to define their own standards for collection, analysis and use of personal data in AI-driven decision making, even where those decisions affect individuals' economic opportunities and participation in society. That is not consistent with how privacy law operates elsewhere in Canada, where baseline standards are established in law and are enforceable.

Can you confirm whether the government's position is that AI governance in Canada will be grounded in clear, uniform and enforceable legal standards, or whether it will permit continued reliance on self-defined standards in certain sectors?

Mr. Solomon: Thank you for the question, senator. I want to say that I know I speak on everyone's behalf when we think about the families in Tumbler Ridge, the tragedy that happened there and the victims. We think about those families who are going through this every day.

As you know, in that specific case, as you referenced, within 48 hours, we summoned OpenAI to Ottawa. I spoke with their senior team. I was disappointed with their self-regulation that you talked about when they said, "We have our safety protocols." I then demanded a meeting with their CEO, Sam Altman, and got that as well. I made five important requests, including that the Canadian AI Safety Institute get a very close look at their safety protocols, because we have to understand what these technologies are doing. They are brand new.

Senator, these companies are going through 2.5 billion messages a day, and they're doing threat assessment through technology and human intelligence. So we demanded a number of things: one, that they make sure that they have Canadian mental health experts and Canadian legal experts if they're going to escalate; two, that they have direct contact with the RCMP. Their self-regulated system reported to the FBI, so they had to report directly to local law enforcement. They had to relook at their past year and reassess their flags. Finally, they have to open up the door to the Canadian AI Safety Institute to have a good assessment.

I will confirm to you that, no, we will not rely simply on self-regulation. We are looking closely at the standards that we will apply. But, as you know, we have to get good information to make good law, and I will be responding when I get the assessment of the Canadian AI Safety Institute. However, you're right, when we pass privacy legislation, we will be grounded in law.

Senator Burey: Minister, thank you for being here. There is an issue of trust in adopting AI: literacy generally and AI literacy specifically. So far, Canadians have been slow AI adopters, and we heard during our AI study that research dollars are meagre for both trust and AI literacy.

• (1630)

This recent headline in the *Toronto Star* captured my attention:

Our leap into an AI future will be a stumble, if we don't fix this one big problem in Canada.

It refers to literacy generally and AI literacy specifically.

Minister, how do you intend to close the widening literacy gap — as the government and employers rapidly embed AI into everyday decisions — without leaving many Canadians behind?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Solomon: Thank you for your excellent question, Senator Burey.

[*English*]

It goes, again, to what I was answering in response to Senator Mohamed as well. Skills training and literacy are absolutely key. We fund Amii, one of the national AI institutes, as an example. They currently offer a literacy course for students, and they are closing in on — don't quote me on the exact number — almost 800,000 Canadians whom they hope to reach this year on AI literacy. These are three-hour courses just to give basic AI literacy. There are others as well.

You started with safety and trust. There's skills training, but there's also trust. I should say that there's literacy for students and also for businesses. We have our voluntary code of conduct that 48 different organizations have signed onto, including big organizations such as IBM, TELUS and Cohere. Although it is a non-binding agreement regarding guardrails on safety, transparency, fairness and equity and oversight, we are outlining our policy that you will see in our national AI strategy, which will comply with our new privacy legislation. But, again, in our national AI strategy, you will see that AI literacy and skills training will be a core pillar.

Senator Burey: Thank you.

Senator Al Zaibak: Minister, thank you for appearing before us today and for your opening statement. I personally commend you for your dedication, devotion, in-depth engagement and command of this file.

Minister, could you tell us why you are drafting a new national AI strategy and why it is so important for Canada at this point? Also, given that you have talked numerous times about the importance of supporting Canadian companies in this domain, what has your government done to bolster our innovation and AI champions?

Mr. Solomon: Thank you. This is a critical moment. Senator, your question is exactly right about the need to renew our national AI strategy. Canada was the first country to have an AI strategy back in 2017, but we will be renewing it almost a year and a half sooner than originally predicted because things have changed. The world has changed, as the Prime Minister has outlined.

We have a geopolitical realignment at the same time as a technological realignment. Given the Prime Minister has called this a “hinge moment” — I’ve called it a “Gutenberg moment” — we need to renew our efforts to redouble our investment to champion Canadian champions, to educate our workforce with skills and to ensure we protect our consumers, our privacy, our data, our jobs and our government-sensitive data as well. Citizens are concerned about that. They are concerned about ensuring that we do not rely on the technology of other countries. As the Prime Minister said, we do not want to choose between hegemony and hyperscalers. We need technology that is safe and sovereign under Canadian law, free from the coercion of other countries. That is the kind of sovereignty of sensitive data that Canadians demand, and we’ll be building that.

This is why we formed our 28-member national AI Strategy Task Force. This is why we had 11,000 Canadians — more than any other engagement in Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada’s history of public engagement. We’ve published those for the public to see. There are over 11,000 comments — not little comments, but long comments. It’s a half-hour form. So it’s important that we renew the strategy.

In terms of championing our champions, we have national champions. You have now seen our government ensuring that we support our companies with what we see as the three Cs and the two Ts. Regarding the three Cs, this is what we heard from our task force: What do they need to thrive? They need compute, and that’s why we have the AI Compute Access Fund. They need customers. The government has to play a role on the procurement side, so that includes the “Buy Canadian” policy and the procurement, which is why we have the memorandum of understanding with Cohere and Coveo. They need access to capital. As we’ve already done in the last budget and further, you’ll see us making sure they have access to risk capital so that they can invest.

The two Ts are trust and talent, which we’ve spoken about here. Providing those will absolutely help create the sovereign AI that Canadians need and trust.

Senator Prosper: Minister, thank you for being here.

Indigenous Elders remind us that culture is in the language. I have been exploring a project with a group of national and transnational tech firms to potentially use AI for interpretation and translation between English and Mi’kmaq. I know that AI for language preservation is a topic that the National Chief has also raised with you.

Minister, I have two questions: How is your government approaching the issue of digital sovereignty, ensuring that Indigenous Peoples continue to maintain the rights to traditional and sacred knowledge that they feed into training modules such as language?

My second question is: My project would benefit greatly from recordings and archive material held across the country and around the world. How is your government working on digital repatriation to put this type of documentation and knowledge back into the hands of the people whom it was taken from before we add things like consent forms, IP protections and contracts?

Thank you.

Mr. Solomon: Senator, thank you for the excellent, vital and foundational question.

When I co-hosted the G7 with Minister Joly, we had Elder Kevin Deer of Kahnawake, and he said to me, “Minister, you’re into AI. So am I.” I said, “Great.” He said, “But you’re into artificial intelligence, and I’m into ancestral intelligence. You have to make sure that your artificial intelligence guards, upholds and protects our ancestral intelligence.”

It was such a powerful moment. I’ve spoken to Kevin many times since. In fact, I offered him tobacco so that I could borrow that phrase, and he accepted.

It’s vital. The ancestral intelligence of Indigenous Peoples will be a vital part of what we do. By the way, I made sure Elder Deer spoke to the entire G7 to say that.

Now let me get to what we will do. Language models are absolutely key. In fact, I spoke to Premier Wab Kinew again today. He was in town.

Premier Kinew is very seized with this. He has a program where he’s building a repository of Indigenous languages based on the Hansard from the Manitoba legislature, translating it — because they are huge databases — in order to make sure that AI can train on Indigenous languages. We need data sets. We have offered to support that.

I have met with the National Chief, whom I connected with again last night, and many Indigenous leaders about this very issue. We are seized with it. It will be a key component in our national strategy.

I will also say this: We have met with many Indigenous leaders about data centres. This is very important. Many nations are very involved in terms of the location of data centres, water usage and land rights. These issues are foundational to what we are doing, and our consultation continues to be very extensive on that.

Thank you, senator.

• (1640)

Senator Hay: I worry about sovereignty and governance a lot, and I know that we cannot sit on the sidelines, that a steady state will, in fact, not only abdicate our leadership but also put our sovereignty at risk.

As well, end-to-end sovereignty may not be viable for many countries, Canada possibly included. We know that data travels and often boomerangs outside Canada before it lands in Canada for storage.

We know that data is not necessarily under Canadian control when it sits on a foreign-owned cloud by a foreign-owned company, even on our soil. You've spoken about sovereignty, not solitude.

I believe you've signalled openness to U.S. companies on a hybrid, sovereign cloud; we likely have to do that.

What specific legal mechanisms, governance and infrastructure will ensure Canadian data is protected from foreign reach, such as instruments like the U.S. CLOUD Act?

Mr. Solomon: Senator Hay, first of all, thank you for the work you've done on AI education. It was a great pleasure and an honour to appear with you about that.

You're asking an incredibly important question. We hear about the CLOUD Act, the PATRIOT Act and about Canadians wanting to make sure their information is protected.

Let me just be as clear as I can with everybody here. Sensitive, important government data will be controlled under Canadian law in Canadian data centres, full stop. This is really important for sovereign data.

Data sovereignty is also not just about storing data here in Canada. It is not enough to have the data centre located here, because if it's stored in an American cloud, it could be subject to the CLOUD Act.

Let's be clear: The CLOUD Act is also subject to warrants. It is very specific but, nonetheless, subject to foreign law.

So I will say that we will make sure that in our strategy — and we are currently doing this — we build up not only our sovereign Canadian companies but also sovereign cloud.

Now, you mentioned hybrid. There are many levels of data that people will protect at different levels. Very sensitive data will require a fully Canadian sovereign cloud, and that will be for government choices.

For other levels of data, there may be different models, what's called "two-key security," where the data is inaccessible even if the CLOUD Act were invoked. If the two-key security is encrypted, the data would still not be available, but, at the same time, you might lose access to the tools to use that data.

The issue of sovereignty is very important for sensitive workloads, and we'll be working with that. Again, for the most sensitive government service data, I just want to say that our standard is clear: Canadian law, Canadian governance, hosted on Canadian-resident infrastructure, secured with strong technical protections.

Senator Mugli: Minister Solomon, tomorrow I will be speaking to 500 participants at the National Center for Trauma Informed Practices Conference with its executive director, Kevin Cameron.

Mr. Cameron, an Order of Canada recipient, was responsible for developing the Traumatic Event Systems Model following the Taber school shooting in 1999. There are now thousands of educators, mental health professionals and police officers trained to assess potential threats to use violence among youth in Canada.

Risk assessment of online behaviour has proven to be complex and difficult to detect before problematic behaviour occurs, and we already know the impact that AI chatbots are having on vulnerable youth.

Minister, what can I tell these 500 participants to give them hope that the government is addressing the online safety of youth and preventing the manipulation of youth through AI chatbots, including tools for professionals to assess such risk?

Mr. Solomon: First of all, thank you for the question. Again, safety underpins all the work we have done and will continue to do in the AI strategy. This is why we have the Canadian Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute, and we are taking these approaches very seriously.

First and foremost, we've already tabled, through the Minister of Justice, as I've said, legislation to criminalize the non-consensual sharing of deepfakes. This is really important. We hope that passes because that is a form of violence against very vulnerable communities.

In our upcoming renewal of the privacy legislation, as I said publicly when we tabled it, I'm interested in taking stronger measures. We're looking at things like the right to deletion that would allow people to take down deepfakes, or synthetic imagery that is harmful, with penalties.

In terms of online harms, again, I don't want to stray too far into the work of my colleague Marc Miller, but I'm very engaged with him on that. We are looking at practices that have occurred in places like Australia with social media bans under a certain age.

There are questions, senator, we have to come to ground on, which we are looking at closely, regarding age verification. How do we verify the age of children without giving the very information we're protecting to the people we're trying to protect them from? Age verification, which can be either biometrics or key data, is very important.

Now, there are some solutions we are looking at. They exist. We know about them. We're looking at them. But verification is a little more complicated than enforcing it. And what's the enforcement?

I don't know if I have time — I don't. It's a great question.

Senator Wilson: Minister, in Budget 2022, Canada launched a National Quantum Strategy, building on major investments it made in quantum research and technology development hubs through the Canada First Research Excellence Fund.

From this funding, UBC, Sherbrooke and Waterloo have built impressive co-labs and are now joined by Calgary in that endeavour. However, funding is now running out. The federal government has prioritized these technologies for economic growth and national sovereignty.

How does the government plan to ensure Canada maintains global research and talent development leadership in quantum technologies, which is required to continue to grow the quantum economy in Canada?

My second question: Vancouver, where I'm from, is home to a world-class AI research and innovation ecosystem. By any measure, Vancouver is one of Canada's global centres for excellence in AI research.

However, since its launch in 2017, the government's Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy has not adequately recognized or leveraged the strength of B.C.'s leading research universities, vibrant ecosystems of small- and medium-sized enterprises, SMEs, and major global companies. Will the minister's forthcoming AI strategy address that gap?

Mr. Solomon: Thank you, senator. Great questions.

Let me talk about quantum briefly, and then I'll talk about the marvellous ecosystem in British Columbia.

First of all, quantum is absolutely important. We have over 100 companies here in Canada. The United States Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, DARPA, program had a Quantum Benchmarking Initiative program to try to see if they could create a fault-tolerant quantum computer, which is very important because, if you can create one, you can break through forms of security. From a cryptography point of view, all your security can be broken with this type of computer, so it's very important.

They created a very lucrative challenge that some core Canadian companies were involved in. That's why in December we launched the Canadian Quantum Champions Program. Stage 1 of our program is more lucrative than their stages 1 and 2 combined.

They have a \$300 million offer to any company that hits their stage 3 and then another US\$300 million to move their headquarters to the United States. We have kept them here. Our four core companies are involved, and more will be involved in stage 1.

[Mr. Solomon]

Our goal is to make sure that we keep our quantum companies here for security, for intellectual property, IP. And our Canadian Quantum Champions Program is doing just that, rivalling the U.S. program. In fact, it's more lucrative in the early stages and will rival it as we roll out.

Any time a company accepts money, the goal is to make sure that their headquarters, IP and ownership stay in Canada to keep our IP here.

• (1650)

We also have the National Quantum Strategy to commercialize and develop quantum, with about \$360 million attached. We have done a lot on quantum in a very short period, and there is more to come in the national strategy.

With my remaining time, I will say we are deeply engaged with the ecosystem in B.C. We are deeply engaged with the government there to make sure that we capitalize on this remarkable ecosystem in physical AI, robotics, health care, life sciences and technology to ensure that we benefit from that —

The Chair: Thank you, minister. We will now proceed with the next block.

Senator Batters: Minister, when you were appointed as Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation a year ago, Prime Minister Carney did not give you a mandate letter specific to your brand new ministry. Instead, the PM only gave you and all of your cabinet colleagues the same general, vague two-and-a-half-page mandate letter. That was not really a businesslike approach from this government.

Without a specified mandate for your newly created cabinet portfolio, how can the Canadian public know what the Prime Minister expects you to achieve in this position? Your general mandate letter does say this:

Over the coming weeks, I will look to each of you to identify the key goals and measures of success on which to evaluate the results you will achieve for Canadians as a member of the Ministry.

Since you received that letter almost a year ago, what was your response to the PM? Please provide us with a copy of your response, as it should be available to Parliament and the Canadian public.

Mr. Solomon: Senator, thank you for the question. We're very proud that, first of all, the Prime Minister created the first Ministry of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, recognizing the importance of focusing on this issue and the impact it's going to have on our economy and our country.

The mandate letters were a reflection of the Prime Minister's approach, which he was very transparent about, and the key goals that we have as a government to build, empower and protect. We, as ministers, have responded to that.

You will see in our national strategy that part of my mandate is to renew that national strategy early. Senator, you have seen a number of strategies — including the Defence Industrial Strategy, an auto strategy and a nature strategy. Very soon, you will see a national AI strategy that will respond to core concerns — and not just concerns but, as I outlined in my opening remarks, the mandate to ensure we're building in Canada with sovereign AI, protecting Canadian citizens but making sure we take a leadership stake in the world.

You will see that with our national strategy and, of course, in renewing our legislation to finally, we hope, pass a renewal and update of our privacy laws.

Senator Batters: I would like to receive a copy of that response to the Prime Minister. I'm sure all parliamentarians would like to receive that as well. I'll move on, though.

There are only two vague mentions of artificial intelligence in that entire general mandate letter. One of those mentions says, "Government itself must become much more productive by deploying AI at scale . . ." What does the phrase "deploying AI at scale" mean? What are your government's projections for how many federal public servants will lose their jobs after they're replaced with AI?

Mr. Solomon: I appreciate the question. First, it is absolutely imperative as a government — and I know you share this concern, senator — to serve Canadians better. Our job is to serve Canadians better and to ensure we're doing so in as efficient a way as possible so money goes to Canadians, not to the operations of government. That is exactly why the Prime Minister not only appointed me but also appointed Joël Lightbound as the Minister of Government Transformation. It is exactly why he has talked about setting up an office of government transformation. It is exactly why we have made sure we have procurement policies to ensure we buy Canadian and buy Canadian technology. It is also exactly why I did an MOU, signed not only by me but by Joël Lightbound and the Treasury Board, to make sure that we are using strategic companies like Cohere or Coveo — and there will be others. This is to ensure we're using the best tools we have, according to Treasury Board regulations, in a safe, secure and reliable manner, while ensuring we're serving Canadians as efficiently as possible using Canadian technology and supporting Canadian innovation.

That's why you've seen things like CANChat, GCtranslate and other aspects where we are making sure that we're using the technology in a way that enhances service for all Canadians.

Senator Batters: If you don't have those projections to provide today, I'm sure your government does. I think federal public servants and Canadians deserve an answer about how many of them could potentially lose their jobs because of AI.

Also, I could not find a lot of information about what underpins your brand new ministry. It seems as if you do not have a deputy minister per se but instead an official who is associated with the Privy Council Office. You apparently receive some support from the Department of Industry. However, it appears that there are only a few bureaucrats directly associated with you. Meanwhile, it also appears you have about 17 staff in your ministerial office.

Minister, is it true that your ministerial office staff potentially outnumber by several times a very small bureaucracy that's actually assigned directly to you?

Mr. Solomon: Thank you. Senator, I am delighted to hear that you are expressing concern that there are too few bureaucrats working and that we're perhaps not using resources and technology to be more efficient.

We are working together closely. This ministry falls under Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, or ISED, as well as the Minister of Industry and the Minister of AI and Digital Innovation. We are served by a remarkable team of public servants who have given us full support. Here with me today is Mark Schaan, deputy minister. I assure you we have access to and full support from a remarkable group of hard-working, intelligent, innovative public servants who have given us nothing short of superb service. Also, the Clerk of the Privy Council, Michael Sabia, has deep experience in not only making sure that we are getting the best out of our public servants but also that the best public servants are doing the job of serving Canadians.

I also have confidence in my political staff, whom you mentioned and who are doing remarkable work. Again, I don't in any way want to disparage the work of public servants, who do a phenomenal job.

Also, you can do innovative, superb work and use innovative technology. Canadians expect the government to walk the walk — to use the tools that we're talking about to make sure they're efficient. Our public servants are open, willing and innovating using those same tools to serve Canadians better.

The Chair: Thank you, minister. The last three minutes of this block will go to Senator McCallum.

Senator McCallum: Thank you for being here. I have two questions.

First, there are still First Nations communities without access to reliable, secure internet services. How will the government ensure that First Nations, Métis and Inuit are not once again left behind? How will you support connectivity?

Keeping that in mind, how can Canada's AI strategy help promote data sovereignty with principles of OCAP, or ownership, control, access and possession, regarding health care data for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, regardless of where they live?

Mr. Solomon: These are profoundly important questions, senator. Thank you.

First, we've done extensive consultation with First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders and communities on these very questions.

You have asked a very profound question because before we can talk about AI, we have to talk about universal access and our promise as a government to provide universal broadband access to ensure that communities — wherever they are, as you say — have access. Our government has made a pledge to have 100% universal broadband access by 2028. We are seized with that because you need to have a first step.

• (1700)

In the meantime, we are also taking steps, as you know, to make sure we're advancing Indigenous-led projects, Indigenous-led AI, Indigenous-led data centres and Indigenous-led models that train on languages. You'll see in our upcoming AI strategy that it is a core point that we are making sure that we are advancing Indigenous-led technology projects.

You made a second point about safeguarding data. It's really important. There's a trust issue with data, and this is why sovereign Indigenous AI and sovereign AI in Canada are very important elements. It's because there's a trust factor regarding who holds the information. For standards and practices, as we discussed with leaders and Indigenous communities, it's important that we work to build those capacities. It is important and essential that we engage in the hard work that that will require. Thanks.

Senator Arnold: Minister Solomon, witnesses across multiple Senate committees consistently emphasized three converging risks: one, the erosion of human rights through algorithmic bias; two, the rapid deployment of AI systems in critical infrastructure and communications without clear safety standards; and three, the growing gap between innovation and public trust — all of which we've discussed. In that context, is the government actively considering treating certain AI systems and capabilities as public infrastructure, akin to transportation or telecommunications, which would reflect Canadian values and be subject to public oversight, shared standards and equitable access? If so, what could that approach look like in Canada?

[Senator McCallum]

Mr. Solomon: Thank you for the question. It's a profound one. There's a lot in there, senator. We've covered the online harms element. I don't want to repeat the fact that we will be taking strong measures on online harms and a comprehensive approach on the online harms side, the privacy legislation side and criminalizing "deepfakes" to build trust.

Our democratic institutions have to be protected. That's why we have Bill C-25, the strong and free elections act, to help maintain the Canada Elections Act, and that will, of course, amend, we hope, the Canada Elections Act to prohibit "deepfakes" from imitating electoral actors to mislead Canadians and limit foreign interference. So there's a protection side that will be important.

On the public good side, first of all, currently, our \$300-million AI Compute Access Fund subsidizes access to compute for SMEs, so we're trying to encourage that. Secondly, we are building an AI supercomputer that is funded so that our public, our researchers and others have access to public compute through our AI supercomputer. We have current systems that manage that, such as the Digital Research Alliance of Canada, or DRAC, our digital group.

So we have a request for proposal, or RFP, this year, and we will make our selection in terms of how we want to build this public compute, this so-called AI supercomputer, but that is about public access. That ensures public access. I won't get into the details in terms of why that is important in terms of the size of it, like the petaflops or the power of it, as it were, but it absolutely gives the public, our institutions and others public access to that frontier research. That's part of it.

There is another element that you're getting at that I don't have a lot of time to discuss, which is this: Should we have a public AI? We are looking at things like open systems that exist. We have to make sure those are safe. We have to understand who is building them and how they're built to make sure that we're not just giving free access to open large language models that are not safe, or that people's data is collected.

The Chair: Thank you, minister.

Senator Kingston: Welcome. We currently have Bill S-5 in the Senate. It has passed second reading, and it's on health care systems' interoperability and is called the connected care for Canadians act. Interoperability, as you know, enables AI to function in areas such as remote patient monitoring, disease prediction and clinical workflow optimization. The improved interoperability within Canada as a publicly funded health care system will provide a firmer foundation for large comprehensive data sets to support research and innovation in health care products and services. What opportunities do you see in Canada's health care economy, and how should they be encouraged by the government?

[Translation]

Mr. Solomon: Again, I apologize for only speaking English here. It's harder for me to speak in French, since the ideas are a bit more complex. I want to be as clear as possible, so I will speak in English, but I do understand French, so if you wish to speak to me in French, that's not a problem.

[English]

Health care data is the most important data we have. I want to be clear. Our public health care is a national treasure. It's one of the great institutions we've built, and we have to protect it, and in protecting it, we have to protect the sensitive health care information of our citizens. That data is extremely valuable, and it's extremely valuable for innovation to serve Canadians better, but how do you do it in a secure way?

First of all, we have to collect the provincial data and try to get some standards to make sure we have access to it all. There are many steps to that, and there is security involved there. The potential to serve Canadians better through access to health care data is important only if it's done reliably, safely, securely and transparently with Canadians. I've worked very closely with Minister Michel, the Minister of Health, who is working with provinces, territories and industry to modernize our health systems and strengthen it for Canadians.

There are countless remarkable health care innovations. I talked about Kardio Diagnostix at the beginning with Dr. Chen. There are many other innovative companies that are using Canadian-patented wearable nylons that measure heart rates and get diagnostics instantly. We've seen that patented in Canada. Making sure that is used carefully, reliably and safely will allow us to serve Canadians better and decrease wait times. Hospitals are experimenting with this, but our responsibility is to make sure that the data is used very carefully, and we're working closely with organizations like the Canadian Institute for Health Information, or CIHI, and others who know that data space, and I'll defer a bit to Minister Michel on how that can be done, but it's an absolutely vital point.

The Chair: Thank you, minister.

[Translation]

Senator Saint-Germain: Thank you, minister. This is very last minute.

In December, Canada and the European Union signed agreements to deepen their collaboration on artificial intelligence and digital trust services, particularly through the Canada-EU Digital Partnership Council. I would like to hear your perspective on how these exchanges with the European Union could influence Canada's approach to AI system standards, governance and oversight.

Mr. Solomon: Thank you again for another great question.

[English]

We created an alliance not only with the EU but also with a number of partners to create sovereign options so that we essentially have security and autonomy. Part of that will be through partnerships with trusted countries. This is not just with the EU. I've also signed a sovereign technology alliance with Germany, and we've worked extremely closely with the Germans on that. We've had deepening ties with the Norwegians, who were recently here, and we've also signed a technology initiative between India, Canada and Australia.

In general, for the framework, working closely with these countries is vital in a number of areas. First and foremost, we're making sure that we're sharing research. We've done mapping systems; we're doing what they call "ecosystem mapping" to see where we can work together on research and where our businesses can work together so they can co-invest. You're seeing those kinds of co-investments happening all the time. It's about how we can deepen ties to bolster our sovereign capabilities and increase trade.

• (1710)

The other area, though — and we haven't mentioned it yet — is safety. AI safety is critical not just on the legislative side, of which we are learning a lot from each other. The Europeans are concerned their safety might have overly constrained innovation, and they're talking about perhaps rolling it back a bit. We're talking to them carefully about their rules, like GDPR, and how they function.

There are also technical solutions. Our government has invested with Yoshua Bengio, our A.M. Turing Award winner and the most-cited scientist in the world, on his new frontier AI project called LawZero, which is an AI that is built to police AI systems as a form of technical safety. We have invested in and partnered with them as the Canadian government, and there is massive interest in Europe, in countries like Germany, Norway and others, and in Japan.

So, this is about trusted partners to work together — not only on regulatory solutions for safety and protection but also on technical solutions — as these technologies evolve. This is why Canada has been at the forefront of both.

Senator C. Deacon: Minister, welcome. Thank you for being with us.

Nearly 40% of the federal government's AI systems are developed by external vendors, and one in three of those systems possess the personal and private information of Canadians. However, only 19% of the vendors are Canadian, and close to 70% are American, with the large part of that being three hyperscaling companies. How will the federal government support and increase procurement from emerging Canadian AI companies operating on Canadian infrastructure in ways that are subjected to Canadian law?

Mr. Solomon: Senator Deacon, first, I want to thank you for the question and for your ongoing work in this space. You've done tremendous work. You and I have had many conversations, and I appreciate them. Many of the senators here have done tremendous work, and Senator Deacon has been right at the forefront of it.

You've identified the core problem, senator, which is that we have to move from reliance to resilience. For the last number of years, we have created systems with some of our partners, but we now recognize we have to have options. The reason that we have a "Buy Canadian" policy is not just to support our industry; we need to. It's not just to create a more robust industry here, but sovereign AI is a form of security and safety.

There are some core examples. One is the renovation of our procurement system, working closely with Minister Lightbound and Mr. Shafqat Ali at the Treasury Board to make sure that not just the supply side, where we give grants or money, but the demand side, which is quicker — you've done a lot of work on that — to make sure that the Canadian government procures, through sandboxes and other models, such that we can use Canadian solutions more quickly.

You've seen the MOU I've done with Cohere. You will see the results of that more specifically very soon as we procure from them, as well as from Coveo and others. By the way, our dual use in defence will also do that.

So, there's a procurement side that's key. Our AI Compute Access Fund is also something we're interested in continuing. It's \$300 million currently. It's not only to supply compute and support compute access for SMEs, but to make sure it's designed to support compute access when they use Canadian compute at a higher level, so it has a dual purpose there, senator.

Senator C. Deacon: Thanks very much for that.

The best resources that a business can get are not grants and investments; it's actually revenue. It's a procurement issue, and it's the best way we can help our companies to grow. I'm glad to hear that.

You have talked about the government's problem in the past regarding "sprinkling" funds across different opportunities, sectors and issues rather than really focusing. That's the toughest challenge I think we have with AI, because it's in every corner of our economy and society.

What strategy are you going to be putting in place such that you can focus the efforts in ways that you are using various tools, such as regulatory reform, incentives, procurement and investment, to really get some momentum built up in certain areas and then broaden out?

Mr. Solomon: Senator Deacon, that is a great question.

You referenced the sprinkler. Maybe for the benefit of the rest of the chamber, I've often said that, in government, we sprinkle money around versus building pools. As a kid, we had a sprinkler, and my neighbour had a pool. No one wanted to come over to our house on a hot day, because a sprinkler doesn't cool you off. Everyone wanted to play in the pool.

We would like to get people to come to our Canadian pool, and that means we need to build some pools. That means we should be unafraid to champion our champions, and we will be unafraid to champion our champions. Where we have competitive advantages, we will invest in them. You'll see that in this strategy. We will invest in our Canadian champions and strategic assets. Where we need to partner, we will partner, and when we need to buy — because we may not have all the assets in the entire stack — we will make sure what we're buying keeps Canadians safe.

Your point is to build the pools, so how are we doing that? Currently, we've got the AI Compute Challenge, the \$700-million fund that we're building. We also have our AI Compute Access Fund. However, I will tell you, senator, very explicitly that the build part — the pillar of build — will be investing in Canadian companies that have the capacity to be world leaders to create those unicorns, but we can't forget that 95% to 98% of our economy are SMEs. I was a small-business owner for 10 years, and we —

The Chair: Thank you, minister.

Senator Cuzner: Thank you very much, minister. It is great to see you.

Mr. Solomon: It is good to see you, sir.

Senator Cuzner: You mentioned that, even with all the positives, with social media and AI, there are still a number of real challenges and potential harms, especially for young people. I followed last weekend's Liberal convention. I guess old habits die hard. I saw two resolutions passed, the first calling for a ban on the use of AI chatbots for anybody under 16 years of age, and the second calling for a ban on social media for those under 16.

In the development of government regulations on platforms for safety and privacy features, as well as "deepfakes," you spoke about a "pragmatic balance." Could you share with us what you see as being a pragmatic balance, especially as it applies to children?

Mr. Solomon: First of all, senator, it is great to see you. I appreciate the work you're doing here and in every single chamber in the precinct.

Senator, protecting children is the core. I'm a father, so I say this personally and as a matter of our mandate as government officials: We have to make sure we protect all citizens, but we have to make sure our children are safe. We've seen horrific issues, like Tumbler Ridge. That's just one case — a tragic case. We know the harms of online behaviour; all of us have seen the impacts it has had on our children, such as loneliness and alienation. This is something I'm discussing very closely with my colleague Marc Miller. Online harms will fall more under his auspices, but we're talking about AI chatbots and transparency legislation. We will look at that and where that would fall. We're looking at things like bans.

When you're making bans, you have to be careful that you're not doing unanticipated harm to some communities. We've heard from rural communities and Indigenous communities that social media is very important because of isolation. I've heard this in my riding: The 2SLGBTQIA+ community is saying that people are physically bullied at school, and the only place they find a community of like-minded people has been online, and it has saved their lives. God forbid we take away an online community from a trans child like that who is bullied, and they go back to a physical environment where they're not comfortable, and there's self-harm there.

• (1720)

I will just say that we are taking these issues very seriously. There is a legitimate and widespread view that we have to make sure that we protect our children from social media harms, but how do we verify the age, how do we enforce and how do we make sure, by the way, especially when it comes to AI, what the scope of it is? Does it capture video games where you can chat? Does it make sure that our young people have access to technology so that when they're 16 or 17 — what happens to a generation who might never have been exposed to that? Are they behind kids in Singapore? We have to make sure that we find a right balance.

[Translation]

Senator Gerba: Minister, since the modernized Official Languages Act guarantees the substantive equality of French and English, what measures is the government implementing to ensure that the AI tools used within the federal government deliver equivalent quality in both languages, without disadvantaging francophones?

Mr. Solomon: This is a very important and critical issue for our country, for the minister and for AI technologies, since the government uses this technology. The Treasury Board has rules in place for this.

[English]

They ensure we always comply with the Official Languages Act, that we make sure we have full access for all Canadians who speak French, and we make sure that those systems are available equally in English.

This will also be reflected, again, in our national strategy, but this is not only a core value to our government; we strictly adhere to the Official Languages Act. It is essential; this is not deviating —

The Chair: Thank you, minister.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, the committee has been sitting for 75 minutes. In conformity with the order of the Senate, I am obliged to interrupt proceedings so that the committee can report to the Senate.

Minister, on behalf of all senators, thank you for joining us today.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Honourable senators, is it agreed that the committee rise and I report to the Senate that the witness has been heard?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the sitting of the Senate is resumed.

[English]

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Hon. René Cormier: Honourable senators, the Committee of the Whole, authorized by the Senate to receive the Honourable Evan Solomon, P.C., M.P., Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, to consider the subject of artificial intelligence, reports that it has heard from the said witness.

FEDERAL LAW—CIVIL LAW HARMONIZATION BILL, NO. 4

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

Hon. Bernadette Clement moved second reading of Bill S-6, A fourth Act to harmonize federal law with the civil law of Quebec and to amend certain Acts in order to ensure that each language version takes into account the common law and the civil law.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise to speak in support of Bill S-6, the federal law—civil law harmonization act, no. 4. I'm proud to sponsor this bill again, after having the honour of doing so in a previous session of Parliament.

Last time we studied this bill, you were all incredibly patient and, if I remember correctly, very enthralled by the mini course we took together on common law and civil law. Knowing we have many new senators amongst us since the Forty-fourth Parliament, I'll take this opportunity to again teach the course you didn't know you were signing up for today, Harmonization 101.

Officially, Canada is bilingual and bijural. We have codified French and English, common law and civil law, as the languages and legal systems of the country. We know, of course, there are many other languages and legal systems in place here: Indigenous ways of knowing and communicating. This bill doesn't deal with Indigenous laws, but it's important to me that they exist in this speech, in this space and in this conversation.

I was so lucky to meet with Professor John Borrows last December during a recent trip to Toronto. He is one of the world's leading scholars in Indigenous law. He's also kind and generous with his time. Professor Borrows teaches a course at the University of Toronto that addresses the intersection of Indigenous Peoples' laws with Canada's laws. He told me about the work happening across the country to ensure law students learn about Indigenous legal systems throughout their program. I'd love to be in those classrooms. I'd love for my next law degree to be in Indigenous law.

[*Translation*]

Although this bill does not directly address Indigenous law, pluralism is a priority. Government officials are working to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Pluralism is more complex than bijuralism, but, as I will explain later, complexity is always an asset.

I have reviewed the progress report on the implementation of this United Nations declaration. I was pleased to read that a dialogue session on legal pluralism had been organized. The goal was to explore innovative approaches for applying Indigenous rights to specific agencies. The work must therefore continue.

The goal of harmonization is to ensure that our laws are consistent with the two legal traditions that shape the daily lives of Canadians.

As the title suggests, this is the fourth bill introduced as part of the Department of Justice's harmonization initiative.

The harmonization initiative aims to ensure that, in the area of private law, federal laws adequately address four key audiences: French-speaking and English-speaking civil law practitioners, as well as English-speaking and French-speaking common law practitioners.

[*English*]

These audiences live in different legal traditions and use different legal vocabularies. Harmonization is about ensuring that civil law and common law concepts are properly reflected in both English and French and that federal statutes and regulations fit coherently with the provincial or territorial private law that applies to Canadians on matters like property, security, contracts and civil liability. Harmonization is a technical, non-controversial exercise that results in updated legal terminology while preserving the underlying legislative policy.

Folks, I am a total nerd about this stuff. I told you in my speech about Bill S-11, all the way back in December 2022, that I have a common law degree and a civil law degree from the University of Ottawa, and I take a lot of pride in that. We have incredible interns in our office every semester through the University of Ottawa's legislative development program, and these are incredibly bright law students who support me and my team. To be honest, I'm a little jealous of them. They're in the midst of their studies right now, and if I were getting my law degrees today, my experience would be so different. Law schools are getting more progressive and more inclusive, and, just as you'll hear later, our drafting is also becoming more inclusive.

[Senator Clement]

Honourable colleagues, there is a quiz, so I hope you're taking notes. Here are a few key dates you may want to remember. In 1774, the Quebec Act established and formalized the coexistence of civil law and common law traditions in Canada. That coexistence was later confirmed by the Constitution Act, 1867, which gave the provinces substantial residuary power in the areas of property and civil rights.

In 1994, the updated Civil Code of Quebec came into force, and the Department of Justice undertook the harmonization initiative.

[*Translation*]

What does that actually mean? What exactly is harmonization?

Federal authorities are reviewing hundreds of laws that deal with private law.

• (1730)

Harmonization acts were passed in 2001, 2004 and 2011. So far, 88 statutes have been harmonized. Bill S-6 is the next step in this long-term initiative.

[*English*]

So we won't be harmonizing statutes forever, colleagues. For several decades, federal laws have been co-drafted, which means they are drafted in English and French simultaneously — as I said, inclusive — but in the meantime, we need to harmonize.

Bill S-6 makes statutes clearer and easier to apply across the country. It amends 51 statutes in nine different departments. There are 640 harmonization proposals, the majority of which relate to legislation about financial institutions.

All of that adds up. Other than the officials, no one knows that more than me: Carrying around that brick of a bill has been no joke. Bill S-6 amends several other acts, including the Official Languages Act, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Interpretation Act and the Access to Information Act.

Bill S-6 is substantively the same as the former Bill S-11, which was introduced in October 2022. The Senate passed that bill without amendment after brief but rigorous study at the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. I'm enthusiastic — really — to nerd out about harmonization again at that committee. What's even nerdier than a nerd? A quantum nerd. I'm ready.

[*Translation*]

The committee's study will also be an opportunity to pay tribute to the outstanding officials who worked on this bill. They are true superstars, the most brilliant experts in the entire public service. Their work often goes unnoticed, but it is the product of many years spent drafting this bill. Harmonization is a highly technical process that demands tremendous precision on the part of Department of Justice professionals. Thank you, Mr. Allard. Their work is, quite simply, impressive.

[English]

In preparing the bill, officials consulted more than 400 stakeholders — including, among others, financial institutions, Canadian law societies, bar associations, law faculties, law professors and provincial and territorial ministers of justice — to seek their input on the proposals. Members of the public were also invited to comment on the proposed amendments.

I want to acknowledge that the consultations were done in 2017, so when the Senate passed this bill in 2022, it wasn't so long ago. Unfortunately, the bill died on the Order Paper. Since 2022, however, only minor changes have been made to this harmonization bill. Those changes reflect an evolution in Quebec's regime for the protection of vulnerable persons, specifically the elimination of the notion of curatorship and advisers in that province.

[Translation]

As a result of this change in Quebec, minor technical adjustments were made to 13 provisions in seven of the 51 statutes covered by Bill S-6. These technical amendments were made in consultation with the relevant federal departments. Honourable senators, please check your inboxes. The Office of the Government Representative in the Senate has released, in both official languages, a table comparing the previous Bill S-11 and the current Bill S-6.

I have had the opportunity to review the table, and I believe it will be useful to you as you study the bill. You will see many references to curators, and you will notice that certain sections have been removed because they are no longer relevant. I truly hope this bill passes this time, as it is the result of decades of work.

[English]

But I will be here again if you want me to do it again; however, that's not what we want.

[Translation]

Harmonization may seem like kind of a dry topic, but it has very practical consequences. For some of us — for me, anyway — it is a pretty cool topic. For example, some federal statutes used common law terminology in English and civil law terminology in French, which caused confusion for anglophone jurists who specialize in civil law. Here are some specific examples.

[English]

Harmonization includes replacing terms we don't use anymore or that are incompatible with a new private law concept. For example, English texts use the words “letting” and “hiring” when referring to leases. Those terms are not applicable in civil law anymore. We're replacing them with the term “lease,” which is the appropriate word in both civil law and common law.

Are you following me?

I will give you another example: Some federal statutes respecting contract law are missing the civil law term “mandatary.” The solution is to twin the words “agent” and “mandatary” in the English texts to provide fuller harmonization, translation and interpretation of the concept. This is the precision needed to make our bijural system work.

These are small textual changes with large practical consequences. They ensure that Canadians, businesses, legal professionals and judges can understand federal statutes in the language and legal concepts that are applicable. Harmonization is, first and foremost, an act of respect for our bijural systems.

[Translation]

Bill S-6 amends statutes that deal with matters of crucial importance to Canadians' everyday lives. By clarifying federal statutes and making them more consistent with provincial private law, Bill S-6 contributes to linguistic equality and accessibility. It enables Canadians to read and understand federal statutes in the official language of their choice by using terminology that is consistent with the concepts, rules and principles of their own provincial or territorial legal system.

By passing Bill S-6, Parliament will strengthen harmonization efforts in Canada and contribute to developing a body of legislation that respects legal traditions.

Now I'm going to talk about Cornwall.

[English]

I always have to talk about Cornwall. You know that.

[Translation]

I love talking about Cornwall, and I never miss an opportunity to talk about my community. You may wonder what Bill S-6 has to do with this resilient city on the banks of the St. Lawrence. What the two have in common is complexity.

[English]

Cornwall is a strong, resilient community because it's complicated. It balances francophones, anglophones and new Canadians; east end and west end; and urban and rural. Managing these differences is good exercise, and all that exercise makes us well muscled.

Bill S-6 is the same. Bijuralism is complicated. It is balancing two languages and legal systems across a massive country. Doing so is not perfect or simple, but our commitment to honouring both makes us a better country.

Going beyond bijuralism and bilingualism, including highlighting, promoting and valuing Indigenous laws and languages, makes us a better country, too. It's complicated work, and it makes us stronger and more resilient.

If we're going to sum all this up, let's do it in six points in honour of Bill S-6. First, this bill consolidates decades of harmonization work. Second, it respects and reflects both civil law and common law traditions in both official languages. Third, the bill improves our justice system by making federal statutes clearer, more coherent and accessible. Fourth, it is technical but necessary. Fifth, the bill modernizes key statutes. Sixth, it sets the stage for further work on regulations and future harmonization efforts.

In 2011, while speaking to Bill S-3, former senator David Angus told his colleagues that:

... all Canadians benefit from harmonization. Not only does harmonization enable Quebecers to identify more with federal legislation, but it also clarifies federal statutes, which become more respectful of institutions proper to the civil law or the common law. In addition, it makes the application of federal legislation more efficient, which should improve the overall effectiveness of the administration of justice in Canada.

It is now up to us to pass this harmonization bill and pursue a tradition following previous iterations that were passed in both chambers unanimously.

Thank you for your attention, honourable senators. There will not be a quiz as we wrap up "harmonization 101," just this: my request to you that we proceed with this bill out of respect for all the great work done by talented officials over many years so that nerdy lawyers like me across the country can continue to operate in the official language and legal tradition of their choosing.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

PROTECTING YOUNG PERSONS FROM EXPOSURE TO PORNOGRAPHY BILL

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechéne moved third reading of Bill S-209, An Act to restrict young persons' online access to pornographic material, as amended.

She said: Honourable senators, I move that the bill, as amended, be read the third time.

I rise to speak at the third reading of Bill S-209, An Act to restrict young persons' online access to pornographic material. This is the third time I have tried to get this bill passed in order to protect children. I will work tirelessly on their behalf and on behalf of Canadian parents who have been telling me for five years that this law is necessary.

[Senator Clement]

The committee conducted an exhaustive review of the bill. We heard from 33 witnesses from here and abroad — from Europe and Australia — who came to discuss their child protection laws and to confirm, with supporting studies, the dangers of allowing minors to be exposed to pornography.

[*English*]

Noni Classen, from the renowned Canadian Centre for Child Protection, provided the committee with stark and explicit examples of the content children are exposed to online. She testified as follows:

There is evidence that exposure to pornography can cause harm to children, particularly when that material is violent, degrading or illegal.

In our experience, adult online pornography is often extreme, with more frequent depictions of violence, sadism, bondage and torture, and it often depicts individuals who are made to appear younger. For example and for clarity, in one video that is readily available, the following occurs: A naked female young adult is shown on her hands and knees while a male is penetrating her from behind. In the background, there are at least six other naked men visible, all of whom appear to be engaged in masturbation. The men take turns engaging in anal intercourse with the female, one after the other. The video includes close-ups of the female's face, where she is shown smiling at the camera. Toward the end of the video, the female is shown on her knees, performing fellatio on each of the men, in succession, who are lined up around the room.

I have a question for you, colleagues: Do you really want your children or grandchildren to be exposed to those scenes?

[*Translation*]

Maria Hernandez-Mora Ruiz del Castillo, the renowned French clinical psychologist who treats young adults who are addicted to pornography, told the committee that early exposure to porn is literally a form of sexual assault. She said, and I quote:

Children who are exposed to pornography suffer a traumatic intrusion into their innocent psychological world. They cannot understand the images, but they can integrate them into their psyche. The images act as a traumatic shock that causes confusion, shame, anxiety and even dissociation. This is not passing curiosity with no effect. It is a serious attack on children's psychic integrity and future mental health.

The clinician concludes that among children:

Pornography therefore shapes the circuits of desire, excitement and sex before strong emotional and educational frameworks are established.

The psychologist also emphasizes that violence is learned through pornography, since approximately 50% of mainstream pornography includes physical or verbal violence against women, who respond in a neutral or positive way.

Children therefore learn that violence can be associated with pleasure, that fear can coexist with arousal and that disgust can be desirable.

This leads to confusion and the normalization of violent practices, which can have tragic consequences. In France, one in two sexual assaults of a minor is committed by another minor.

Even more troubling, a recent study conducted in Finland showed that children exposed to pornography very early in life are more likely to seek out illegal child pornography content later on. The study by Protect the Children found that, by age 18, 57% of respondents had actively searched for child sexual abuse material online.

This compounding harm is compelling proof of why a law is needed. The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs also examined the mechanisms proposed by the bill. We adopted nine amendments that further strengthen and clarify Bill S-209. This successful team effort clearly shows the importance of sober second thought by Senate committees; in this case, it was a sober third review of this bill.

The first amendment, which is the simplest to explain, better clarifies the definition of what constitutes pornographic material, a concept of key importance in Bill S-209. The Criminal Code definition, which was frankly a little outdated and by some accounts too broad in scope, was set aside in favour of a more realistic, practical definition.

It now refers to material that shows the genital organs or anal region of a person engaged or depicted as engaged in explicit sexual activity and that is intended to cause sexual excitement. We're not talking about nude breasts being considered pornographic material or worrying that simple images of nudity will be targeted. I would remind you that, from the beginning, my bill has included an exception for pornographic material with a legitimate purpose related to science, medicine, education or the arts.

Another amendment adds a system of administrative monetary penalties and fines for pornography platforms that fail to comply with the law, that is, that fail to verify or estimate the age of their customers before giving them access to their site.

The government will define this system and the amount of the fines during the regulatory phase. This is in addition to a penalty that is already included in the bill, namely that the Federal Court would block access to offending sites in Canada. These penalties are similar to what is being done in other countries.

I took into account criticism about the potentially overly broad scope of Bill S-209 by proposing three amendments, which were adopted. A question arose: Does the bill target only pornography platforms, or does it also cover social media platforms, such as X, which distribute a lot of pornography consumed by minors?

Once again, we're giving the government some leeway at the regulatory stage to decide what's covered and what isn't. Under clause 12, the Governor in Council may exclude certain porn distributors, such as social media platforms, from the application of the act.

This amendment struck me as all the more relevant given that the government is due to present a new version of the online harms bill, which will have an impact on content unsuitable for children on social media. It therefore needs some leeway.

Lastly, we're now leaving it up to the government to decide when this bill comes into force, rather than prescribing a time frame of several years, because nothing is straightforward in internet legislation. Lord James Bethell, of the British House of Lords, told the committee that the U.K. spent two and a half years engaging with porn platforms and the web giants in order to refine the regulations.

[English]

Let us return to the wording of the bill and concerns that users' anonymity might not be respected during age verification or estimation. Privacy Commissioner Philippe Dufresne, who has been critical in the past, has, this time, expressed satisfaction with the amendments, which ensure stronger privacy protections in the latest version of the bill.

• (1750)

In particular, clause 12 has been strengthened to require the government to take into account a set of stricter criteria, including limiting the collection of personal information to what is strictly necessary and selecting a highly effective method for conducting age verification or age estimation. The methods will be chosen at the regulatory stage, as technology is evolving quickly.

The more time goes by, the more convinced I am that we need legislation to protect children from exposure to porn. What reinforces my conviction is that several countries and several U.S. states have taken decisive action, and there have been no reports of data breaches or privacy violations of porn users, contrary to the predictions of those opposed to any form of regulation.

Australia is leading the way: Three months after banning those under 16 from accessing social media, the Australian authorities have, since March 8, required internet users to prove they are 18 years old to access pornographic content, adult video games, sexually explicit chatbots or anything that encourages suicide or eating disorders. Offenders face fines of AU\$50 million.

The eSafety Commissioner of Australia appeared before our committee to describe what I would consider a real turning point. She stated that Australia:

. . . will require the search engines . . . to blur explicit violence, like the videos . . . but also pornography so that kids cannot come across this incidentally, accidentally and "in your face."

Our research has shown that almost 30% of Australian kids under the age of 13 — usually around the ages of 9 and 10 — are not deliberately seeking out pornography but come across this by using a simple search engine or playing games. And they describe this as being "accidental, unsolicited and in your face."

France, Germany and the United Kingdom have introduced legislation. Lord Bethell of the House of Lords reassured our committee:

We've heard libertarian arguments that age verification threatens privacy; in practice, it hasn't. The U.K. has adopted privacy-preserving age estimation technologies such as facial analysis and document checks, but it is shown that they do not store personal data. These systems are already being used in banking, gambling and alcohol sales. . . .

He continued, "The goal is not perfection, it's harm reduction."

He also said, "The U.K. example shows this is achievable."

Lastly, Lord Bethell said, "That's why I urge Canada to act now. Delay only prolongs the harms to children."

Things are also happening on the European Union side. Adult content platforms, such as Pornhub, Stripchat, XNXX and XVideos, have been charged with breaching European Union rules by letting children access pornographic content on their sites. It could lead to hefty fines, as much as 6% of their global annual turnover.

The tide is turning, and states are demanding accountability. Child protection is now at the forefront, and that is reassuring. But what is Canada doing? We are falling seriously behind, as there are still no concrete measures in place to protect Canadian children online.

Canadian Identity and Culture Minister Marc Miller is expected to introduce a new version of his online harms bill, as the previous version — Bill C-63 — died on the Order Paper. But Bill C-63 did not include any explicit requirement for porn sites to verify the age of their users. I hope the new version will be more comprehensive and precise because the psychological well-being of our children is at stake.

[*Translation*]

I saw a glimmer of hope earlier while listening to Minister Solomon. Believe it or not, he mentioned age verification. That is a major step forward, because in all the time I've spent advocating for the need to protect children, no Liberal minister has ever uttered the words "age verification" before. So who knows? Maybe we are going to make progress.

In conclusion, in the absence of assurances from the government, I will continue to support this bill and speak out loud and clear on this issue.

Colleagues, I urge you to support Bill S-209 at third reading so that it may be sent to the House of Commons.

Thank you.

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: Honourable senators, I rise today in support of Bill S-209.

First, I would like to commend Senator Miville-Dechéne on her leadership and perseverance.

[Senator Miville-Dechéne]

Bravo, senator.

[*English*]

I would also like to thank all the members of the Legal Committee: the chair, Senator Arnot; the deputy chair, Senator Batters; and all the members who participated in the work on Bill S-209, specifically Senators Clement, Dhillon, Pate, Prosper, Saint-Germain, Simons, Tannas and K. Wells. Thank you, colleagues.

Why am I speaking today to support Bill S-209? I would like to address the legal issues, not only from the perspective of international commitments to protect young people but also from the perspective of how the right to equality is conceived and understood through the concept of consent.

[*Translation*]

The scientific data and testimony we heard during our study show that exposure to pornographic content at too young an age leaves deep scars, shapes behaviour, distorts relationships and undermines the fundamental principles of our society.

The scientific data is clear and consistent. The average age of first exposure to pornography is around 11 years old, often before puberty. Data published in international studies on exposure to pornography indicate that 40% to 70% of adolescents report having been exposed to pornographic content unintentionally. According to a 2023 study by the French Regulatory Authority for Audiovisual and Digital Communication, 51% of boys aged 12 to 13 visit pornographic websites at least once a month.

We also heard from the Canadian Centre for Child Protection that research consistently links this exposure in young people to shame, anxiety, difficulty forming healthy relationships and, above all, a distorted understanding of consent. All this data leads me to the point I wish to address here today.

You are probably aware that I trained as a lawyer. Over the course of my career, I saw how easily a poor understanding of consent can lead to serious legal consequences, especially when assault and suffering are involved. Experts teach us that this understanding develops very early in life. That is why early exposure to pornography is such a serious concern.

The brain of a child or teen is extremely plastic and malleable. It assimilates the relationship models that it's exposed to and learns what relationships, mutual respect and informed consent mean.

Experts and clinicians explained to us that exposure to pornography places the child in an extremely potent learning situation, where focused attention, bodily activation and gratification combine to cement certain images in the child's long-term memory. Together, these three factors shape the circuits of the child's sexuality before he or she has time to develop a solid emotional and educational foundation.

Researchers call this a distorted relational model. The child absorbs patterns where domination substitutes for dialogue, where refusing is not an option, and where respect for the other person is non-existent. Once entrenched, these patterns shape the way the child views his or her own intimate or social relationships as they grow into adulthood. That inevitably has a bearing on the legal aspect of consent, because a person cannot consent freely if his or her entire understanding of relationships is built on a flawed foundation.

This chain of consequences is what makes this bill so important, and it's also what leads us to a broader aspect of the issue: gender equality. I would like to take a moment to address this aspect, because it also deserves our attention.

• (1800)

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection reminded us that this content increasingly depicts relationships of domination and scenes of violence against women. It normalizes degrading female submission and depicts behaviours that would constitute assault in real life. Far from portraying healthy sexuality based on mutual desire and equality between partners, this content instead shows young people a highly distorted model of human relationships. When a young person views these portrayals for years without any educational counterbalance, it shapes their perception of women and a woman's place in a relationship. It also shapes how they perceive consent in their own intimate and social relationships.

The report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health indicated that measures to promote sexual health should also address issues related to gender equality, gender-based violence and sexual consent. Bill S-209 directly supports that approach.

In light of this reality, Bill S-209 offers a thoughtful and balanced response. It is based on the simple principle that commercial online pornography distribution platforms have a responsibility toward young people. The bill makes it an offence for organizations — whose primary purpose is to offer this type of material for commercial purposes — to make it accessible to persons under the age of 18. By taking this approach, the bill does not criminalize young people and does not place an unrealistic burden on parents in today's digital environment. Rather, it recognizes that protecting children is a shared responsibility and that those who profit from this ecosystem must shoulder their share of that responsibility.

The bill has also been carefully designed to protect children without compromising legitimate access to information. Material with a legitimate purpose related to science, medicine, education or the arts is expressly excluded. The very definition of what is covered reflects this intent by significantly reducing the risk of overreach.

The enforcement mechanism reflects this same philosophy. It is progressive and proportionate, designed to give platforms time and opportunity to comply before any enforcement measures are taken. In particular, the inclusion of age estimation as a barrier offers significant technological flexibility, allowing platforms to

adapt their practices as technologies evolve. Bill S-209 thus demonstrates that it is possible to protect our children while respecting technological realities and fundamental rights.

This brings me to the question of proportionality in relation to the Charter and our international obligations.

This concern for balance naturally leads us to examine the issue of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Bill S-209 engages Charter section 2(b) on freedom of expression and section 8 on protection against unreasonable searches. The bill seeks not to ban legal content for adults, but to restrict minors' access to such content. This distinction is crucial. The amendments we adopted increase the measure's proportionality without imposing new restrictions on freedom of expression or on access to legal content.

As Professor Trudel noted, public health imperatives are ample justification for the guardrails the bill proposes to put in place.

This requirement of proportionality is actually part of a broader framework, specifically our international commitments. Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child more than 35 years ago. Article 19 of this convention requires states parties to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of violence, including sexual violence. UN General Comment No. 25 explicitly calls on states to implement robust age verification measures, while UN General Comment No. 20 calls for protections against all forms of digital violence.

I would like to remind everyone that the 2007 Senate report entitled *Children: The Silenced Citizens* urged Canada to take action. It is now 2026. Bill S-209 is a direct response to these obligations, which the National Council of Women of Canada has identified as a duty of care.

Honourable senators, Bill S-209 is a necessary, proportionate and long overdue measure. It is necessary because the scientific evidence is clear, and every day of inaction prolongs the consequences for an entire generation. It is proportionate because it targets commercial distributors, protects privacy, respects the Charter and is consistent with our international commitments. It is long overdue because Canadians are calling for it and our children deserve it.

Over the course of this study, we learned that early exposure to pornography creates distorted relationship models, misrepresents the concept of consent, threatens gender equality and causes lasting trauma. The science has spoken. The witnesses' testimony has spoken. It is time for us to speak too, through our vote.

By passing this bill, we'll be sending a clear signal that Canada is serious about protecting its children in the digital world. Canada recognizes that pornography platforms have a responsibility to society and Canada believes that gender equality starts in childhood.

[*English*]

I urge you to vote in favour of Bill S-209. This is not only for the children who are currently navigating the world without protection but also for the Canada we want to leave behind for the next generation. The time to act is now. Let's act together. Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain: Honourable senators, I am also rising today to speak to Bill S-209, the Protecting Young Persons from Exposure to Pornography Act.

First and foremost, I would like to recognize Senator Miville-Dechéne's perseverance and, since she spoke about determination, I would like to recognize that as well.

There can be no doubt as to the merits of this bill. Who would object to the laudable goal of protecting minors?

However, Bill S-209 remains complex and restrictive. That is why the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs studied it in depth.

I will not get into the details of every amendment adopted in committee since the bill's sponsor did so earlier.

However, I would like to explain the amendments that I myself proposed and talk about how I think they improve Bill S-209.

The first has to do with the date on which the law comes into force, which will now be fixed by order at a time chosen by the government. That may seem trivial, but it is actually very important because the government will now be able to ensure that users' privacy is respected and limit the risk of a breach to a level it deems acceptable for the public interest. The government can thus ensure that the regulations are rigorous and carefully prepared without the pressure of a deadline.

It is essential to reassure the public about the confidentiality, privacy and criminal harassment risks that could result from the implementation of Bill S-209. The amended bill provides that, before the bill comes into force, the government must be satisfied and must have access to reliable technology, to the extent possible, in order to fully meet the more stringent criteria set out in the bill.

To implement Bill S-209 effectively, the government needs to be assured that the pornography industry will comply with these measures, which it may consider restrictive. However, many witnesses testified that if Bill S-209 is passed and implemented, a lot of smaller organizations would simply disregard it. We have to avoid creating a two-tiered system where law-abiding businesses are governed by these measures, but violators are under no obligation to do the same.

To prevent this from happening, the committee added a system of monetary penalties to the bill in order to impose a financial burden on offending companies. This means that, in addition to the possibility of applying to the Federal Court for an order, a

strict system of penalties will take direct aim at the porn industry's wallet. I think that would serve as a strong deterrent and ensure that the act is effectively enforced.

• (1810)

In a note appended to their report, the committee members also called on the government to consider the responsibility of the pornography industry to fund measures to protect minors.

The evidence is clear: Pornography consumption has harmful and dangerous effects on the psychological and physical health of minors. As a provider of this service, the pornography industry should help cover the cost of the measures the government will implement to protect minors.

Pornography is a highly profitable industry, and I believe it is entirely reasonable that a portion of its revenue be used to protect the public interest, which is threatened by its commercial activities.

It is becoming increasingly clear that traditional approaches are not effective in reducing the harm caused by these industries. It is therefore imperative and necessary for the government to explore alternative solutions to shift the financial burden onto the providers of these services and, ultimately, onto their customers rather than Canadian taxpayers.

I would like to bring that point to the government's attention.

[*English*]

That said, in my opinion, there are still some aspects of Bill S-209 that may require improvement and deserve additional scrutiny.

The first area is privacy protection. We must not forget that pornography is a legal product that can be consumed by adults. If we implement this bill into law, the testimony has proven that leaks and cyberattacks will happen. It's not a matter of "if," but rather a matter of "when."

As a result, the private and sensitive data of lawful users could become compromised. While we have a duty to protect minors, we also have one to protect the privacy of users who will be required by law to present personal information.

There's also the remaining issue of the ability to circumvent this bill by the use of virtual private networks, better known as VPNs. We know this to be true because every country that has implemented such legislation has seen a drastic spike in the download of VPNs. Recent examples in the U.K. and Australia confirm what we have heard in testimony from credible sources, like the Privacy Commissioner of Canada.

There is also a more insidious risk — the one of giving credibility to a profoundly problematic industry. We must not give the false impression that as a consequence of this bill receiving Royal Assent, this industry has become safe, clean and respectable. These concerns have been a central part of the consideration by members of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

I believe we found the adequate balance between these more problematic issues and our duty to protect minors from the proven and long-lasting negative effects that pornography has on them.

Importantly, I would also note that in addressing minors' consumption of pornography, it remains essential to recognize that parental responsibility is still fundamental. This bill in no way substitutes for it.

It is crucial to ensure that the goals of Bill S-209 are achieved if this bill comes into force. Joining other like-minded countries in adopting age verification legislation for minors is a step in the right direction and an investment in our future. This is why I support this bill.

Hon. Paula Simons: Honourable senators — my friends — I rise today to speak to Bill S-209, An Act to restrict young persons' online access to pornographic material, otherwise known as the protecting young persons from exposure to pornography act.

And I say “my friends” because this bill has been the long-time project of one of my greatest friends in the Senate: Senator Miville-Dechéne. For years, she has worked tirelessly and passionately to try to craft a way to protect children, especially younger children, from exposure to pornography, particularly the kind of hardcore, violent and degrading pornography that has become all too common and all too accessible online. It's the kind of pornography that often demeans young women and gives young men a grotesquely distorted impression of what physical intimacy is all about.

She has shepherded this bill through multiple incarnations, only to see it die on the Order Paper because of elections and prorogations. And every time, the bill has come back better.

She has been open to listening to the concerns of critics. She has amended and rewritten the legislation, not just because of that criticism but because of the way technology has evolved and devolved over the years she has laboured on this file.

She has sought consensus, meeting with Liberal, Conservative, Bloc Québécois and New Democrat MPs.

She has given countless interviews in English and French, explaining the *raison d'être* behind the bill and trying to build national support for her initiative. She has been here before; she has brought variations of this bill to third reading twice before.

[*Translation*]

She has never given up. She has never lost hope — almost, but not quite, not really. Her courage and commitment have remained unwavering. I'm so proud of her and of everything she has invested in this legislative battle.

[*English*]

Yet, as we stand here on the brink of sending this bill to the other place one more time, I want to inject a moment of caution, and I want to find a little courage of my own.

Sometimes, as an Alberta senator in Ottawa, I feel something like a time traveller — or a visitor from another world — or some kind of demented prophet.

Every day, in my home province, I see what can happen when you start to slide down a slippery slope, whether the issue is immigration or medical assistance in dying or censorship. And I feel I have to tell you, yet again, a cautionary Alberta tale.

On April 2, the government of Danielle Smith made yet another extraordinary announcement, and believe me, right now it's hard to keep up. Her government introduced Bill 28, an omnibus bill that allows the province to insert itself into many traditional areas of municipal jurisdiction including, among many others, the running of public libraries.

Under the terms of Bill 28, the government intends to introduce regulations to ban access to so-called “explicit visual content” for children under the age of 16. And we're not just talking about pornography or erotica or even R-rated movies. Instead, the province seems focused on — if not obsessed with — graphic novels. And “graphic” in this sense does not mean sexually graphic; it means narrative works where stories are told through a blend of words and drawings. Many of the books that have most upset the Alberta government just happen to be queer coming-of-age stories — some memoirs, some works of creative fiction.

These are not publications intended to titillate. They are, by and large, critically acclaimed works of literature chosen and curated by professional librarians for their artistic quality and the importance of their political message.

Alberta's library regulations are not out yet. There is, as yet, no official list of banned books. But whatever the criteria, it seems the new rules will require municipal public libraries to remove “explicit” graphic works — be they books, films or video games — from library shelves and keep them separate and hidden, perhaps behind a counter or in a cupboard. Only those who can produce proof of age or parental consent will be allowed to look at such items or borrow them. This means that even if you are 16, 17, 21 or 25 years old, you will not be able to check out such books without the potential embarrassment of asking to see them and showing ID.

And whatever your age, you will not be able to run across them in the stacks. You won't be able to browse the shelves of your own public library to discover such works even exist. Instead, they'll be quarantined.

Bill 28 will create a new cadre of provincial library inspectors to enforce the regulations. The inspectors will be empowered to examine all public library properties, including books, DVDs and video games, and all library records to ensure that age restrictions are being followed.

The Edmonton Public Library tells me that more than 50% of its loans these days are digital ones made online. If and how the province intends to enforce its age restriction on digital or online loans is unclear.

Bill 28 will allow the province to investigate public complaints if certain members of the public do not like what they find in a library's collections.

What does this have to do with our work here at the Senate?

• (1820)

I have a lot of questions and concerns about Bill S-209, particularly regarding privacy issues, and I have raised those questions and concerns in committee. But as this bill heads to the other place, I want to raise a larger, more philosophical issue. Obviously, Bill S-209 doesn't deal with library loans. It doesn't deal with artistic graphic novels. I don't want to conflate those issues, but I do want to offer a warning.

I understand and even applaud the desire to protect Canadian children from exposure to the most disturbing, violent, misogynistic and exploitative forms of pornography — pornography that amounts to toxic misinformation and disinformation about the magic and beauty of human sexual intimacy. The problem is that we have no cultural, social or legal consensus on what is inappropriate for teens to see and when. And you don't have to slip very far down that slope before you end up in an Orwellian mirror universe of neo-puritan library inspectors and shadow book bans. Or, as we call it at home, Alberta.

Alberta, however, is not the only place where age verification debates are raging. Just this past weekend, at the federal Liberal Party convention in Montreal, party delegates voted to support resolutions calling for a ban on allowing those under 16 to use social media platforms and another ban on allowing those under 16 to use ChatGPT and other such large language model AIs.

Again, I understand the fears that drive such ideas. But proposed bans and prohibitions such as these — however popular and populist they might feel — amount to censorship, pure and simple. Worse, perhaps? They do nothing to give children and teens the media literacy and skills they need to navigate a digital world.

Ever since the Garden of Eden, moralists, from God on down, have assumed that if they could just protect us from the knowledge of good and evil, we could stay pure and innocent forever. But in our fallen world, what we really need to teach our youth is how to tell the lies from reality and how to protect themselves from those who want to delude or defraud them by selling false narratives about the world.

Pornography isn't just icky or sexually exploitative. The real moral problem with pornography is that it is a lie, a false and fraudulent fantasy that can corrupt our ability to form authentic

human relationships. If we don't want our children to be bamboozled or hoodwinked by the people who profit from selling these distorted narratives, we can't just tell them to close their eyes.

Whether Bill S-209 finally passes in the other place this time or whether its ideas eventually become incorporated into some larger online harms legislative regime, I hope we will not succumb to the lure of moral panic, nor try to legislate our way out of hard decisions about our parental responsibility to raise and educate our children in this world of never-ending online temptation and dehumanization, a world where isolated, lonely people, afraid to take the risk of real emotional intimacy, never learn how to make a loving human connection and use porn as a proxy instead.

If we want to raise sexually well-adjusted teens — teens who will grow up to have healthy relationships with their own bodies and with their future partners, teens who will grow up to appreciate real sex with real people — we cannot just ban and block and call it a day. Instead, we need to give parents, teachers, librarians, family physicians, public health nurses and sex educators of all kinds the support and resources they need to help young Canadians learn about sex and practise sex in joyful, honest, kind and, dare I say, delightful ways. If we want our teens to be truly protected from all the new, various and emerging online bogeymen out there, we can't just keep them in the dark. Instead, we have to be the light that shows them the way.

Thank you. *Hiy hiy.*

(On motion of Senator Housakos, for Senator Martin, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

VOTE 16 BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McPhedran, seconded by the Honourable Senator Sorensen, for the second reading of Bill S-222, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Regulation Adapting the Canada Elections Act for the Purposes of a Referendum.

Hon. Victor Boudreau: Honourable senators, today it is my privilege to rise at second reading to support Bill S-222, the vote 16 act.

I'm proud to say that my province, New Brunswick, has been the scene of some of the most ambitious and exciting initiatives to promote this policy. This bill actually brings back memories for me.

[English]

I recently came across an editorial written in 2016 by a younger man, coincidentally also named Victor Boudreau. It opened with the following:

Every time we can make our democracy more inclusive, either by giving more people a voice or making it easier to express their voice, we have served our democracy well. Throughout Canada's history, changes to accomplish this have happened over and over.

At the time I wrote this article, I was a New Brunswick cabinet minister. One of my responsibilities was to oversee considerations on democratic and electoral reform. An independent, non-partisan commission was given a mandate to help create a more effective legislature and to identify ways to improve participation in the democratic process.

The commission sought a broad range of perspectives to ensure that discussions about electoral reform were informed by the insights of New Brunswickers from a diverse range of fields, including academics, stakeholder groups and individuals, as well as provincial, national and international experts.

I will quote from the commission's report:

The commission have been reminded that young New Brunswickers are becoming increasingly more involved in their communities and in the issues that matter and are of importance to them. Through the public school curriculum, media information and online activities, they are proving themselves to be better prepared for the responsibilities involved in obtaining the right to vote.

Later, it states:

During its meetings, the commission was encouraged by the level of maturity and intelligence displayed by the young New Brunswickers with whom it met.

Further down, the report says:

The commission heard loud and clear the pleas to continue the journey of removing barriers for those who are fighting for their right to vote. The commission believes New Brunswick has an opportunity to be a nationwide leader on this topic. By lowering the voting age to 16, New Brunswick would signal to these individuals that their voices and their opinions matter. The commission believes this is important if New Brunswickers want to encourage greater involvement and participation among youth.

The commission, therefore, formally recommended lowering the voting age to 16 across the province.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, our government lost the election in 2018 before we could move on to the next stages of the reform. However, the extensive work of this commission and the testimony of the young people it heard from are still part of the public record.

As senators consider this bill today, this work serves as a reminder that the arguments in favour of Vote16 have already been carefully examined and already have strong support here in Canada.

Here is another example of the leading role played by young people in my province: The Fédération des jeunes francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick, or the FJFNB, has been advocating for this cause for over 10 years. In March, 32 people signed the FJFNB's open letter calling on the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick to extend voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds. The supporters included many student representatives, as well as representatives from three francophone school districts, the Société nationale de l'Acadie, the Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick, the Fédération étudiante du Campus universitaire de Moncton, the Association francophone des parents du Nouveau-Brunswick and the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française.

Here is an excerpt from their letter:

Lowering the voting age to 16 presents an opportunity to strengthen our democracy by enabling a new generation of citizens to actively participate in the decisions that shape their future. By the age of 16, young people are already engaged citizens who are active in their communities and directly affected by public policies on education, health, transportation, the environment, employment and many other issues. Many young people are already actively participating in the province's economy through employment.

Several democracies around the world have already successfully implemented this measure, proving that lowering the voting age promotes long-term civic engagement. It only makes sense that young people should have a say in the issues that affect their daily lives and their collective future.

• (1830)

This letter is a testament to the civic determination of our young people. I think that even those of us who are not yet convinced by this policy can still recognize their passion and commitment.

To respond to an objection that has previously been raised in this chamber, denying young people the right to vote does not actually protect them from the stress, pressure or cynicism of politics. In fact, it only limits their ability to influence political decisions that may affect their lives, including those that have negative consequences. This exclusion can lead to a sense of powerlessness and disconnection that often persists even after they finally gain the right to vote at the age of 18.

[English]

Vote16 advocates Erika de Torres and Aleksi Toivainen, in *The Hill Times* article entitled “An aging democracy needs youth voices,” published on February 16, 2026, wrote the following regarding this bill:

It would have been easier to understand such objections to this policy 20, or even 10 years ago, when the evidence on young people’s civic maturity was not quite so conclusive. But now, 17 countries have enacted this change in elections for at least one level of government, and the stereotypes no longer hold.

The most comprehensive studies on this matter, conducted in Austria, Belgium and Germany, have found that 16- and 17-year-olds match adults in their ability to evaluate their voting decisions. They’re ready.

Even here in Canada, at least 20 First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations, as well as the governments of British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and the Yukon, have election codes or legislation enshrining a minimum voting age of 16. People aged 16 and 17 years of age have been able to vote in official participatory budgeting projects in Dieppe, Montreal, Hamilton, Toronto, Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Halifax and Vancouver. Through these projects, young people are able to have visible influence over real public dollars and achieve tangible improvements in their communities that they can point to and take pride in.

In other words, voting at 16 is not a hypothetical reform in Canada; it is a practice already tested and trusted across several jurisdictions and communities.

[Translation]

Young people under the age of 18 are already invited to vote by the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the Green Party and the NDP, all of which accept voting members aged 14 and up. If our political parties think that 16-year-olds are capable of choosing their leaders, then these young people should be considered equally capable of voting in our elections. It is not right to deprive a group of citizens of that fundamental right when we know that they are capable of voting.

Policies work better when decision-makers involve those who are most directly affected by the consequences. When young people can’t or don’t vote, it’s easier to ignore their voices, even when it comes to decisions that will shape their future.

If we want strong, stable policies on issues affecting young people, then youth participation must go hand in hand with real accountability in the political process. We need measures that have been proven to increase voter turnout.

Honourable senators, this bill represents a unique opportunity to revitalize our democracy and support our country’s young people. For these reasons, I will be supporting the bill and I encourage you to do the same.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

[Senator Boudreau]

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Michèle Audette: Thank you very much. You mentioned that members of political parties can vote from the age of 14. Are we talking about federal or provincial political parties?

Senator Boudreau: I’m not sure whether, across all parties, this applies at the provincial or federal level. In the Liberal Party of Canada, young people are allowed to get involved in the party and vote at policy conferences and conventions from the age of 14. I’m fairly certain that the same applies to the other political parties, not only at the provincial level, but also at the federal level.

[English]

Hon. Denise Batters: Senator Boudreau, first of all, it’s not all provinces; I know that the Saskatchewan Party, I believe, just changed their age, increasing it to 18 for party voting.

My question is about the Liberal Party convention that just happened this past weekend. They had a resolution that passed, I think quite handily, and with at least some MP support, that provided for a social media ban on children who are under the age of 16. Wouldn’t it seem to be potentially going the other way on this if kids can’t even have a social media account, yet we’re expecting that, the very day that they turn 16, they would be able to vote in a federal election? However, as I said, they wouldn’t be allowed, potentially, if such a resolution goes forward with this government — and they’ve shown some willingness that it could — to provide a social media ban.

Senator Boudreau: Thank you for the question. I didn’t mention the Saskatchewan Party in my remarks. I talked about the parties that I was aware of that allowed youth to vote at 14. I, myself, became involved with a political party at the age of 17 and started voting back then.

I find it somewhat interesting, but we’ve been talking about children under 16 all afternoon. We talked about it when we talked about a social media ban, cellphone bans, AI earlier, pornography just before this bill — all under the age of 16. Then, obviously, at 16, that means something happens, and people become more responsible, older and more aware. This is a personal opinion, and we’re all entitled to our personal opinions, but I believe that youth who are 16 and 17 years old have the capacity to be informed, become informed, get involved and vote.

As I said, many political parties allow it at an age as young as 14. This bill refers to 16- and 17-year-olds, and I think it’s time for Canada to lead by example and allow these young adults to have a greater say. We always say that we either don’t hear from them or they say that politicians aren’t listening to them. Politicians aren’t listening to them because they’re not voting.

I’m a former politician, so I can say this: We tend to listen to those who vote, and 16- and 17-year-olds aren’t given that right. If we give them that right to vote, politicians will start listening to them, and decisions will start happening.

Senator Batters: Thank you.

I gave a speech a few months ago, I believe, on this bill, and I spoke about how, although I was an extremely politically engaged and interested teenager, I waited until I was 18 and had gone to university to take out my first party membership in the party I joined, which was the federal Progressive Conservative Party of Canada during the free-trade election.

My point was — and I described it in my speech — that it's a bit of a scale to build up that cognition. What I was trying to illustrate and ask your impression about was that, right now, there is no age limit — or perhaps the social media companies themselves put an age limit — but if the government puts a social media ban at the age of 16, if that actually applies, doesn't that mean that the scale the federal government seems to indicate is an appropriate one is the one where you start doing this, and then, over time, your cognition and that sort of thing increases? So while you might be able to have a social media account at, potentially, the age of 16, if that's what it's actually changed to, does it make sense to say that, on the same day, you would then be absolutely ready to engage in voting on one of the most important decisions that you will potentially make in that time frame?

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Boudreau, your speaking time is up. Would you like more time to answer the question?

Senator Boudreau: Yes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

[*English*]

Senator Boudreau: Again, I thank the senator for her question, but I respectfully disagree with her point of view on this.

I understand the point that if — and there's a big "if" there. This was a resolution passed at the Liberal Party convention. It doesn't mean it will become law or the government will follow through with it.

However, there are other ways for youth to get involved and form opinions. Again, I started in student politics at the high school level, in Grade 9. That led to partisan politics, community involvement, being active in my community and becoming a member of the Lions Club and later the Rotary Club. There are different ways for youth to get involved and to be able to form an opinion.

I'm repeating myself, but if parties are already allowing 14-, 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds to get involved and to vote for the leader of the party, who may then go on to become Prime Minister, why not let them vote in the next step of the process?

I firmly believe our youth are ready to take on this responsibility. They want this responsibility. I think it would help engage them more in politics. I think it will force governments to listen to them more as well because they will have a say in upcoming elections.

(On motion of Senator Osler, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

NEED FOR SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Moodie, calling the attention of the Senate to the need for the safe and productive development and use of artificial intelligence in Canada.

(On motion of Senator Cormier, debate adjourned.)

VITAL ROLE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Deacon (*Ontario*), calling the attention of the Senate to the vital role that physical activity and sport play in enhancing our well-being, strengthening our communities and shaping the fabric of the Canadian experience.

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Honourable senators, allow me first to thank Senators Deacon, McBean and Petitclerc, who initiated this inquiry into the vital role of physical activity and sport in our well-being and our communities' well-being.

I would also like to acknowledge all the honourable senators who spoke before me. Your remarks have each, in their own way, highlighted just how multi-faceted a subject sport is, whether we approach it through lessons in resilience, the power of teamwork, or the management of emotions such as fear and doubt, or whether we view it as a gathering place or a rich field of experience and reflection.

Colleagues, hearing your stories allows us to discover a different side of you and what has shaped you, and to understand some of your deepest values.

[*English*]

Colleagues, I don't have a high-level athletic career to boast about today, but sports have always been a part of my life. It is from this very personal perspective that I'd like to contribute to the discussion of sport and physical activity as a way of life rooted in stability, continuity and the daily act of movement that shapes both body and mind.

Unlike a vision that sometimes focuses on performance as the goal, mine is rooted in a holistic approach. For me, physical activity is part of the natural needs of human beings: moving, breathing, pushing oneself a little and, above all, carving out space for oneself.

Sport has never been a chore or something I had to achieve. Above all, it was a way to have fun. As a child, playing outside meant moving about, running, making things up and becoming out of breath without even realizing it. It was a natural way to be active intertwined with freedom and enjoyment. That connection to movement has never left me.

As a teenager, physical activity took on a new form when I decided to make it a regular part of my daily routine. During my four years at high school, in addition to walking to school, I would run five kilometres every morning at 7 a.m. The running circuit had been set up in the school hallways — yes, we were allowed to run in the hallways — which allowed us to run, rain or shine, before teachers and other students arrived.

[*Translation*]

Around the age of 16, I discovered downhill skiing. My friends and I would go to Camp Fortune, a ski resort in the Outaouais region. We would spend our weekends and all our school holidays skiing. The most memorable winters of my teen years were spent on ski hills. I still practise this sport today with enthusiasm and joy.

As an adult, movement became an essential common thread. Skating, running, swimming and road cycling are all activities that were never obligations but rather guideposts.

[*English*]

When I was pregnant, I swam five days a week. For over 20 years, I cycled to work on a road bike from April through to December. I took up running again when I became a CEO. Today, I try to walk almost every day. I walk three to five kilometres per day while listening to podcasts.

This lifestyle has shaped me. It has taught me perseverance and hard work. Performance is not an end but one step among many on a personal journey. It has also inspired me to pass this legacy on to my children.

In this regard, I would like to echo the insightful remarks of our colleague Senator Kutcher, who reminded us that it is up to us to take fundamental responsibility for our own health; no one can look after our bodies for us. I fully share this conviction. As a mother, this struck a deep chord with me, namely, how essential it is to pass on to our children not only the joy of movement but also the deep understanding that sport and physical activity are intrinsically linked to health and true well-being — that they are not a burden but a true gift we give ourselves. That is how sport became part of our family lifestyle, and it remains an integral part of it today. Passing on this culture of movement has meant allowing each family member to pursue their own path in physical activity while sharing precious moments together as a family.

[Senator Moncion]

• (1850)

My kids ski, snowboard, skate, play hockey, run, bike and go for walks in the woods. It is at the heart of this family lifestyle that sport also reveals its full educational and formative potential. Behind every physical activity lies much more than simple movement. One learns about effort, at times defeat and often resilience, as well as concentration, perseverance and courage.

My wish has always been for my children to take these lessons to heart and use them as resources that will guide them throughout their lives. I see that this guiding principle has become a part of their lives and is now taking shape in the lives of my grandchildren.

[*Translation*]

Let's not forget that it is through our connection with nature that these lessons relating to sports and physical activity take shape and grow.

I would like to mention that I have gone on trips with some of my children. So far, I have been to the Azores and I went hiking there. Every day, we walked 15 kilometres. We discovered the Azores in a different way. I am thinking of taking another trip to the Dolomites to once again go hiking in the mountains, and I am also looking to do the same thing around Mont Blanc so that I can visit Switzerland, Italy and France. If anyone here is interested in hiking, let me know and we can organize a trip to go hiking in the Alps for a week or 10 days. I am inviting you along if you are interested. You will have to pay your own way, but we can go together.

In Canada, we are extremely lucky to live in a country where the seasons encourage us to get out and move in whatever way we choose. We can go skiing and skating in winter, running as soon as the sidewalks are clear, cycling in the spring, swimming in our lakes in the summer and hiking when the leaves start changing colour. In its own way, this seasonal cycle shows us how diverse physical activity can be. It constantly gives us opportunities to get moving and rediscover our surroundings.

In closing, while I just extolled the benefits of physical activity throughout the seasons, I would still like to give a nod to shoulder season, which seems to drag on a bit too long every year. When winter refuses to let go, it's the perfect time to put on your hiking boots and take advantage of the lengthening days to gradually get moving again.

I hope you rediscover the natural joy of being active outdoors in the mild spring weather, not out of a sense of duty or obligation, but simply for the joy and sense of well-being it brings.

Thank you for your attention.

(On motion of Senator Osler, debate adjourned.)

[English]

**FINAL REPORT OF THE CANADIAN
YOUTH CLIMATE ASSEMBLY**

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Coyle, calling the attention of the Senate to the final report of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly.

Hon. Tracy Muggli: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak on the inquiry into the Final Report of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly. I want to sincerely thank Senator Coyle for launching this important inquiry.

Many of you may remember gathering in these chambers on a Sunday last September with 33 young Canadians from across the country, crafting practical recommendations for federal climate policy. They called on Parliament to act pragmatically to develop solutions on the issues that they identified to benefit Canada's climate and economy of the future.

Since that time, I have had the opportunity to speak with Tari and Mohammad — two of the participants from Saskatchewan — about their experience. What stood out was not only their appreciation for being a part of the process but also the seriousness with which they approached the responsibility of representing their generation's future.

I want to start by highlighting one of the themes of the assembly that hits home as a resident of Saskatchewan. The assembly urged governments to bolster community resilience against climate impacts that we know are already occurring and to better prepare for climate risks like wildfires, flooding and other extreme weather events.

I want to note that these youth clearly appreciate the human dimension of climate impacts and the need to expand mental health supports for Canadians experiencing climate-related distress and trauma, which we see all too often following flooding and fires and in the agricultural sector when climate negatively impacts production.

The student assembly also called for the acceleration of a clean energy transition moving toward renewable energy production while tying any remaining support for fossil fuels to emissions targets; to strengthen climate accountability with strong standards and mechanisms to track climate progress and show measurable results and clear reporting on progress; and to elevate youth and Indigenous voices with meaningful, ongoing engagement in climate decision making and respect for Indigenous leadership in land stewardship.

When I spoke with the representatives from Saskatchewan who participated in the assembly, one message came through very clearly: They understand the realities of Canada's economy, and they understand that provinces like Saskatchewan play a vital role as resource producers.

They were clear that transitioning toward renewable energy and new technologies should not mean people losing their livelihoods or communities being left behind. Rather, a focus on new technologies for energy production and resource extraction that can support new, well-paying jobs in a future-focused economy to strengthen Canada's long-term economic resilience should be prioritized. The choice doesn't have to be the environment or the economy; it must be both.

This brings me to the importance of connecting these themes to Saskatchewan, which occupies a unique position in Canada's climate and economic landscape. Our province is anchored in agriculture, energy production and mining. These sectors are central to our economy and identity, but they are also directly affected by changing climate conditions.

Farmers across the province are already experiencing shifts in precipitation patterns that affect crops and growing seasons. Wildfire smoke from across Western Canada has increasingly affected air quality in our communities, and rural municipalities face ongoing challenges related to extreme weather events and being able to access markets.

For Saskatchewan youth, these challenges directly impact their future. They affect the farms, towns and families that shape daily life in our province. The assembly's emphasis on resilience, therefore, resonates strongly. Preparing communities for climate risks through improved infrastructure, stronger emergency planning or community adaptation strategies is a practical step that benefits everyone.

I would like to recognize, as an example, the efforts of the City of Saskatoon in developing its Flood Control Strategy. This initiative identified nine of the most flood-prone areas in the city and supports infrastructure improvements designed to improve drainage and redirect water away from homes that have experienced persistent flooding in the past.

Continuing with the municipal theme, the Senators for Climate Solutions recently heard from former mayor of Montreal Valérie Plante and the similar work that Montreal has undertaken to adapt city infrastructure to better hold high volumes of water and redirect it from flooding people's homes and businesses.

These projects demonstrate how practical investments in climate resilience can directly protect livelihoods, pocketbooks and mental health. These are practical solutions that have real benefits for residents.

The assembly's recommendations on clean energy also connect to Saskatchewan's economic future. Tari and Mohammad did not frame the discussion as a choice between energy jobs and environmental responsibility. Instead, they spoke about economic diversification and developing new opportunities in traditional resource-intensive industries through improved technologies that can make advancements to reduce emissions in oil, gas, mining and agriculture. In other words, the transition they envision is well planned and focused on creating opportunities for the next generation.

As an example, I had the chance to learn more about the McIlvenna Bay project from some of Foran Mining's team, which you may remember as one of the major projects from the first round of announcements. This includes their goal of becoming Canada's first net-zero copper mine, using things like hydroelectricity, electric vehicles and a state-of-the-art tailings storage facility and paste backfill operation that will reduce their carbon footprint and greatly reduce environmental impact. Agriculture, in particular, was also highlighted as an area where Saskatchewan can contribute positively to climate solutions. Tari, who comes from —

• (1900)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, it is now seven o'clock. Pursuant to rule 3-3(1), I am obliged to leave the chair until eight o'clock, when we will resume, unless it is your wish, honourable senators, to not see the clock.

Is it agreed to not see the clock?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Muggli: Tari, who comes from a farming background, was clear in mentioning existing practices being used in Saskatchewan, such as crop rotation, improved soil management and reduced chemical inputs, which strengthen soil health, increase resilience to changing weather conditions and support long-term farm sustainability.

Practices being developed and used in Saskatchewan place our province as a leader, not only in Canada but globally, in sustainable farming practices that result in lower carbon footprints in the production of crops, which has been backed by a study from the Global Institute for Food Security at the University of Saskatchewan. These are approaches that many farmers in Saskatchewan already implement, and they demonstrate how environmental stewardship and agricultural productivity can work hand in hand.

The call from the youth assembly for stronger accountability also reflects something we often hear from young Canadians: They want clarity, and they want to know that governments are setting realistic targets and following through on commitments.

When I mentioned some of the studies the Agriculture Committee has undertaken, such as our now-infamous soil study — thanks to Senator Black and the Agriculture Committee — the soon-to-be-released wildfire study and the current food security study, Mohammad was surprised and grateful to know that some of their priorities are actively being explored.

This, however, demonstrates a clear issue: If the younger generations who view climate action as a priority are unaware of the work the federal government is doing, how would the general population know about it? How can they participate or contribute toward what other areas of focus may be needed? Canada needs to develop more efficient ways to reach the public and engage with our interested stakeholders.

[Senator Muggli]

Mohammad emphasized that people need clear and understandable information about climate initiatives, data and progress that's being made, whether they are farmers looking at new agricultural practices, communities considering adaptation strategies or students wanting to understand energy policy. Making data and information available and engagement accessible allows more Canadians to participate in developing and implementing solutions.

Colleagues, the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly reminds us that climate action must be both ambitious and grounded in practicality. The young Canadians who participated in this process are not simply calling for change; they are actively offering ideas and want to contribute to the implementation of policies that will shape the country they will inherit.

Importantly, youth from Saskatchewan share that perspective. For our province, responding to these ideas means continuing to invest in resilient communities, supporting sustainable agricultural and resource strategies and ensuring that engagement around climate policy includes voices from across our regions, both rural and urban. The message from Saskatchewan youth is clear: Climate action is not about choosing between the environment and the economy; it is about building a future where both thrive together.

Thank you, *meegwetch, marsee*.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak to Senator Coyle's inquiry calling our attention to the report of the Canadian Youth Climate Assembly.

In September, the other members of the Senators for Climate Solutions group and I met with 33 young Canadians to discuss how Parliament can work together with Canadians to advance climate change solutions.

These 33 young Canadians were part of an organized citizens' assembly and had been selected by lottery from over 700 citizens who care deeply about the environment and our future.

The question before the assembly was as follows: What do young Canadians want Parliament to do to meet Canada's climate commitments in a way that reflects their values and priorities?

The report is available on the assembly's website at www.climacan25.ca. I invite, encourage and even urge each and every one of you to read it. This is a very important report and, as senators, we have a duty to take the time to listen to Canadians, particularly those who will be the stewards of our country after us.

I had the honour of taking part in this initiative and listening to these wonderful young people during their stay here in Ottawa. With all due respect to my colleagues and their dedication, we do not represent the younger generation. We need only look in the mirror each morning to see that.

That is why assemblies such as this one provide us with an important opportunity to listen to these young people and amplify their voices. This is particularly important when it comes to issues that will have long-term repercussions for our country, long after we retire from this chamber — issues related to climate change, such as those highlighted in this report.

As legislators, both in the Senate and in the House of Commons, we must listen to young people on these issues, as they are the ones who will have to live with the consequences of the choices we make today.

[*English*]

I wish to just take a moment to highlight some of the important aspects of this report. One quote that stood out to me was this:

Our current systems are at the root of our problems, and harmful choices have eroded young people's trust in government.

I guess it kind of ties to Senator Boudreau's speech earlier.

I think that this is key. For decades, governments have not been taking real, concrete action on climate change. We have doubled down on systems that worsen the problem. We have ignored the pleas of the next generation to do something now and not pass the buck on to them. That, as they reasonably note, has eroded their confidence in Parliament.

So, let's listen to them, act for them and rebuild the younger generation's confidence in a government that acts on their behalf.

They ask of us to work in collaboration; to think beyond the government of the day and election cycles; to consider how systems impact each other; and to work pragmatically, without partisanship and with the principle of equity.

I want to highlight some of their recommendations here. Prepare for climate risks, including coordinating all levels of government for emergency response. Is that not just a normal thing we should be doing? Collaborate with agriculture to ensure well-being and resilient food systems. Invest in incentive programs to promote retrofits and sustainable technology. Reduce emissions in the oil and gas sector, including reviewing regulations to reduce subsidies and to tie those subsidies to greenhouse gas targets. Encourage connecting east-west and north-south energy grids. I think that's currently in the air.

• (1910)

Take measures to incentivize sustainable jobs and to protect vulnerable Canadians from the coast as we transition to renewable energy. Encourage the government to prioritize sustainable low-emission goods and services in procurement. Ensure inclusion and equality for Indigenous people and youth in decision making. Shouldn't that be part of our objective?

I think there is a lot to chew on in this report, and it humbles me to see our youth taking the lead in driving such an important issue when we have, unfortunately, tended not to do so.

I want to thank Senator Coyle for her leadership in this inquiry and for bringing this assembly and report to us. It was a challenging endeavour, but she accomplished it. I also want to thank the young Canadians and the participants, those who were involved in other ways, and all Canadians who continue to pressure us to take action on climate change.

Again, please, all of you, read the report. I look forward to all of us doing what we can to take the voices of these youth and transform their views into action for their future. Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Clement, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO STUDY ANY MATTERS
RELATED TO THE DUTY TO CONSULT AND
ACCOMMODATE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Hon. Michèle Audette, pursuant to notice of December 4, 2025, moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, in accordance with rule 12-7(15), be authorized to examine and report on any matters related to the duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous Peoples, which flows from the honour of the Crown derived from section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, focusing on:

- (a) the needs of Indigenous Nations, specifically First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples who seek to make the duty to consult more responsive to their community needs;
- (b) the identification of promising practices and ways to develop positive working relationships; and
- (c) the exploration of standards to improve federal policies and practices;

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than December 15, 2027, and that the committee retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report; and

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

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

(At 7:14 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 2 p.m.)

THE SPEAKER

The Honourable Raymonde Gagné

THE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE IN THE SENATE

The Honourable Pierre Moreau

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

The Honourable Leo Housakos

FACILITATOR OF THE INDEPENDENT SENATORS GROUP

The Honourable Lucie Moncion

THE LEADER OF THE CANADIAN SENATORS GROUP

The Honourable Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler

THE LEADER OF THE PROGRESSIVE SENATE GROUP

The Honourable Brian Francis

OFFICERS OF THE SENATE

CLERK OF THE SENATE AND CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENTS

Shaila Anwar

LAW CLERK AND PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL

Julie Wellington

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD

J. Greg Peters

THE MINISTRY

(In order of precedence)

(April 1, 2026)

The Right Hon. Mark Carney	Prime Minister
The Hon. Shafqat Ali	President of the Treasury Board
The Hon. Rebecca Alty	Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
The Hon. Anita Anand	Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Hon. Gary Anandasangaree	Minister of Public Safety
The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne	Minister of Finance and National Revenue
The Hon. Rebecca Chartrand	Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs
	Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
The Hon. Julie Dabrusin	Minister of Environment and Climate Change
The Hon. Lena Metlege Diab	Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
The Hon. Sean Fraser	Minister of Justice
	Attorney General of Canada
	Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
The Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty	Minister of Indigenous Services
The Hon. Patty Hajdu	Minister of Jobs and Families
	Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario
The Hon. Tim Hodgson	Minister of Energy and Natural Resources
The Hon. Mélanie Joly	Minister of Industry
	Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions
The Hon. Dominic LeBlanc	Minister of Internal Trade
	President of the King's Privy Council for Canada
	Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy
The Hon. Joël Lightbound	Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement
The Hon. Heath MacDonald	Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
The Hon. Steven MacKinnon	Minister of Transport
	Leader of the Government in the House of Commons
The Hon. David J. McGuinty	Minister of National Defence
The Hon. Jill McKnight	Minister of Veterans Affairs
	Associate Minister of National Defence
The Hon. Marjorie Michel	Minister of Health
The Hon. Marc Miller	Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture
	Minister responsible for Official Languages
The Hon. Eleanor Olszewski	Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience
	Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada
The Hon. Gregor Robertson	Minister of Housing and Infrastructure
	Minister Responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada
The Hon. Maninder Sidhu	Minister of International Trade
The Hon. Evan Solomon	Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation
	Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario
The Hon. Joanne Thompson	Minister of Fisheries
The Hon. Rechie Valdez	Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism)
	Minister of Women and Gender Equality
The Hon. Buckley Belanger	Secretary of State (Rural Development)
The Hon. Stephen Fuhr	Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)
The Hon. Anna Gainey	Secretary of State (Children and Youth)
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The Hon. Nathalie Provost	Secretary of State (Nature)
The Hon. Ruby Sahota	Secretary of State (Combating Crime)
The Hon. Randeep Sarai	Secretary of State (International Development)
The Hon. Adam van Koeverden	Secretary of State (Sport)
The Hon. John Zerucelli	Secretary of State (Labour)

SENATORS OF CANADA

ACCORDING TO SENIORITY

(April 1, 2026)

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
Pierrette Ringuette	New Brunswick	Edmundston, N.B.
Percy E. Downe	Charlottetown	Charlottetown, P.E.I.
Michael L. MacDonald	Cape Breton	Dartmouth, N.S.
Pamela Wallin	Saskatchewan	Wadena, Sask.
Yonah Martin	British Columbia	Vancouver, B.C.
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Rose-May Poirier	New Brunswick—Saint-Louis-de-Kent	Saint-Louis-de-Kent, N.B.
Salma Ataullahjan	Ontario (Toronto)	Toronto, Ont.
Fabian Manning	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. Bride's, Nfld. & Lab.
Larry W. Smith	Saurel	Hudson, Que.
Josée Verner, P.C.	Montarville	Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures, Que.
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Denise Batters	Saskatchewan	Regina, Sask.
Scott Tannas	Alberta	High River, Alta.
Peter Harder, P.C.	Ottawa	Manotick, Ont.
Raymonde Gagné, <i>Speaker</i>	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.
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Kim Pate	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.
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Lucie Moncion	Ontario	North Bay, Ont.
Marilou McPhedran	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.
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Raymonde Saint-Germain	De la Vallière	Quebec City, Que.
Rosa Galvez	Bedford	Lévis, Que.
Mary Coyle	Nova Scotia	Antigonish, N.S.
Mary Jane McCallum	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.
Robert Black	Ontario	Centre Wellington, Ont.
Marty Deacon	Waterloo Region	Waterloo, Ont.
Yvonne Boyer	Ontario	Merrickville-Wolford, Ont.
Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia	Newfoundland and Labrador	Twillingate, Nfld. & Lab.
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Donna Dasko	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Colin Deacon	Nova Scotia	Halifax, N.S.
Julie Miville-Dechéne	Inkerman	Mont-Royal, Que.
Bev Busson	British Columbia	North Okanagan Region, B.C.
Marty Kline	Saskatchewan	White City, Sask.
Patti LaBoucane-Benson	Alberta	Spruce Grove, Alta.
Paula Simons	Alberta	Edmonton, Alta.
Peter M. Boehm	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.
Brian Francis	Prince Edward Island	Rocky Point, P.E.I.
Dawn Anderson	Northwest Territories	Yellowknife, N.W.T.
Pat Duncan	Yukon	Whitehorse, Yukon
Rosemary Moodie	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.

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Hassan Yussuff	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Bernadette Clement	Ontario	Cornwall, Ont.
Jim Quinn	New Brunswick	Saint John, N.B.
Karen Sorensen	Alberta	Banff, Alta.
Amina Gerba	Rigaud	Blainville, Que.
Clément Gignac	Kennebec	Lac Saint-Joseph, Que.
Michèle Audette	De Salaberry	Quebec City, Que.
David M. Arnot	Saskatchewan	Saskatoon, Sask.
Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.
Margo Greenwood	British Columbia	Vernon, B.C.
Sharon Burey	Ontario	Windsor, Ont.
Andrew Cardozo	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.
Rebecca Patterson	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.
Iris G. Petten	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's, Nfld. & Lab.
Jane MacAdam	Prince Edward Island	West St. Peters, P.E.I.
Judy A. White	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. George's, Nfld. & Lab.
Paul (PJ) Prosper	Nova Scotia	Hants County, N.S.
Joan Kingston	New Brunswick	New Maryland, N.B.
John M. McNair	New Brunswick	Grand-Bouctouche, N.B.
Réjean Aucoin	Nova Scotia	Cape Breton, N.S.
Krista Ross	New Brunswick	Fredericton, N.B.
Rodger Cuzner	Nova Scotia	Cape Breton, N.S.
Marnie McBean	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Toni Varone	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Paulette Senior	Ontario	Pickering, Ont.
Mary Robinson	Prince Edward Island	Charlottetown, P.E.I.
Mohammad Al Zaibak	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Manuelle Oudar	La Salle	Quebec City, Que.
Victor Boudreau	New Brunswick	Shediac, N.B.
Charles S. Adler	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.
Tracy Muggli	Saskatchewan	Saskatoon, Sask.
Daryl S. Fridhandler	Alberta	Calgary, Alta.
Kristopher Wells	Alberta	St. Albert, Alta.
Pierre Moreau	The Laurentides	Saint-Lambert, Que.
Suze Youance	Lauzon	Blainville, Que.
Allister Surette	Nova Scotia	Halifax, N.S.
Nancy Karetak-Lindell	Nunavut	Arviat, Nunavut
Baltej S. Dhillon	British Columbia	Surrey, B.C.
Martine Hébert	Victoria	Montreal, Que.
Todd Lewis	Saskatchewan	Lajord No. 128, Sask.
Danièle Henkel	Alma	Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Que.
Duncan Renwick Wilson	British Columbia	Vancouver, B.C.
Dawn Arnold	New Brunswick	Moncton, N.B.
Katherine Hay	Ontario	Mississauga, Ont.
Tony Ince	Nova Scotia	Dartmouth, N.S.
Farah Mohamed	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.
Sandra Pupatello	Ontario	Windsor, Ont.

SENATORS OF CANADA

ALPHABETICAL LIST

(April 1, 2026)

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address	Political Affiliation
The Honourable			
Adler, Charles S.	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	Canadian Senators Group
Al Zaibak, Mohammad	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Canadian Senators Group
Anderson, Dawn	Northwest Territories	Yellowknife, N.W.T.	Conservative Party of Canada
Arnold, Dawn	New Brunswick	Moncton, N.B.	Independent Senators Group
Arnot, David M.	Saskatchewan	Saskatoon, Sask.	Independent Senators Group
Ataullahjan, Salma	Ontario (Toronto)	Toronto, Ont.	Conservative Party of Canada
Aucoin, Réjean	Nova Scotia	Cape Breton, N.S.	Canadian Senators Group
Audette, Michèle	De Salaberry	Quebec City, Que.	Progressive Senate Group
Batters, Denise	Saskatchewan	Regina, Sask.	Conservative Party of Canada
Bernard, Wanda Thomas	Nova Scotia (East Preston)	East Preston, N.S.	Progressive Senate Group
Black, Robert	Ontario	Centre Wellington, Ont.	Canadian Senators Group
Boehm, Peter M.	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Boudreau, Victor	New Brunswick	Shediac, N.B.	Independent Senators Group
Boyer, Yvonne	Ontario	Merrickville-Wolford, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Brazeau, Patrick	Repentigny	Maniwaki, Que.	Non-affiliated
Burey, Sharon	Ontario	Windsor, Ont.	Canadian Senators Group
Busson, Bev	British Columbia	North Okanagan Region, B.C.	Independent Senators Group
Cardozo, Andrew	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.	Progressive Senate Group
Carignan, Claude, P.C.	Mille Isles	Saint-Eustache, Que.	Conservative Party of Canada
Clement, Bernadette	Ontario	Cornwall, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Cormier, René	New Brunswick	Caraquet, N.B.	Independent Senators Group
Coyle, Mary	Nova Scotia	Antigonish, N.S.	Independent Senators Group
Cuzner, Rodger	Nova Scotia	Cape Breton, N.S.	Progressive Senate Group
Dalphond, Pierre J.	De Lorimier	Montreal, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Dasko, Donna	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Deacon, Colin	Nova Scotia	Halifax, N.S.	Canadian Senators Group
Deacon, Marty	Waterloo Region	Waterloo, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Dean, Tony	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Dhillon, Baltej S.	British Columbia	Surrey, B.C.	Independent Senators Group
Downe, Percy E.	Charlottetown	Charlottetown, P.E.I.	Canadian Senators Group
Duncan, Pat	Yukon	Whitehorse, Yukon	Government Representative's Office
Forest, Éric	Gulf	Rimouski, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Francis, Brian	Prince Edward Island	Rocky Point, P.E.I.	Progressive Senate Group
Fridhandler, Daryl S.	Alberta	Calgary, Alta.	Progressive Senate Group
Gagné, Raymonde, <i>Speaker</i>	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	Non-affiliated
Galvez, Rosa	Bedford	Lévis, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Gerba, Amina	Rigaud	Blainville, Que.	Progressive Senate Group
Gignac, Clément	Kennebec	Lac Saint-Joseph, Que.	Canadian Senators Group
Greenwood, Margo	British Columbia	Vernon, B.C.	Independent Senators Group
Harder, Peter, P.C.	Ottawa	Manotick, Ont.	Progressive Senate Group
Hay, Katherine	Ontario	Mississauga, Ont.	Progressive Senate Group
Hébert, Martine	Victoria	Montreal, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Henkel, Danièle	Alma	Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Que.	Progressive Senate Group
Housakos, Leo	Wellington	Laval, Que.	Conservative Party of Canada
Ince, Tony	Nova Scotia	Dartmouth, N.S.	Canadian Senators Group
Karetak-Lindell, Nancy	Nunavut	Arviat, Nunavut	Independent Senators Group
Kingston, Joan	New Brunswick	New Maryland, N.B.	Independent Senators Group
Klyne, Marty	Saskatchewan	White City, Sask.	Progressive Senate Group
Kutcher, Stan	Nova Scotia	Halifax, N.S.	Independent Senators Group

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address	Political Affiliation
LaBoucane-Benson, Patti	Alberta	Spruce Grove, Alta.	Government Representative's Office
Lewis, Todd	Saskatchewan	Lajord No. 128, Sask.	Canadian Senators Group
Loffreda, Tony	Shawinegan	Montreal, Que.	Independent Senators Group
MacAdam, Jane	Prince Edward Island	West St. Peters, P.E.I.	Independent Senators Group
MacDonald, Michael L.	Cape Breton	Dartmouth, N.S.	Conservative Party of Canada
Manning, Fabian	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. Bride's, Nfld. & Lab.	Conservative Party of Canada
Martin, Yonah	British Columbia	Vancouver, B.C.	Conservative Party of Canada
McBean, Marnie	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
McCallum, Mary Jane	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	Conservative Party of Canada
McNair, John M.	New Brunswick	Grand-Bouctouche, N.B.	Independent Senators Group
McPhedran, Marilou	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	Non-affiliated
Miville-Dechéne, Julie	Inkerman	Mont-Royal, Que.	Progressive Senate Group
Mohamed, Farah	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Moncion, Lucie	Ontario	North Bay, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Moodie, Rosemary	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Moreau, Pierre	The Laurentides	Saint-Lambert, Que.	Government Representative's Office
Muggli, Tracy	Saskatchewan	Saskatoon, Sask.	Progressive Senate Group
Osler, Flordeliz (Gigi)	Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	Canadian Senators Group
Oudar, Manuelle	La Salle	Quebec City, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Pate, Kim	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Patterson, Rebecca	Ontario	Ottawa, Ont.	Canadian Senators Group
Petitclerc, Chantal	Grandville	Montreal, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Petten, Iris G.	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's, Nfld. & Lab.	Government Representative's Office
Poirier, Rose-May	New Brunswick—Saint-Louis-de-Kent	Saint-Louis-de-Kent, N.B.	Conservative Party of Canada
Prosper, Paul (PJ)	Nova Scotia	Hants County, N.S.	Canadian Senators Group
Pupatello, Sandra	Ontario	Windsor, Ont.	Government Representative's Office
Quinn, Jim	New Brunswick	Saint John, N.B.	Canadian Senators Group
Ravalia, Mohamed-Iqbal	Newfoundland and Labrador	Twillingate, Nfld. & Lab.	Independent Senators Group
Renwick Wilson, Duncan	British Columbia	Vancouver, B.C.	Progressive Senate Group
Ringuette, Pierrette	New Brunswick	Edmundston, N.B.	Independent Senators Group
Robinson, Mary	Prince Edward Island	Charlottetown, P.E.I.	Canadian Senators Group
Ross, Krista	New Brunswick	Fredericton, N.B.	Canadian Senators Group
Saint-Germain, Raymonde	De la Vallière	Quebec City, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Senior, Paulette	Ontario	Pickering, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Simons, Paula	Alberta	Edmonton, Alta.	Independent Senators Group
Smith, Larry W.	Saurel	Hudson, Que.	Conservative Party of Canada
Sorensen, Karen	Alberta	Banff, Alta.	Progressive Senate Group
Surette, Allister	Nova Scotia	Halifax, N.S.	Independent Senators Group
Tannas, Scott	Alberta	High River, Alta.	Canadian Senators Group
Varone, Toni	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group
Verner, José, P.C.	Montarville	Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures, Que.	Canadian Senators Group
Wallin, Pamela	Saskatchewan	Wadena, Sask.	Canadian Senators Group
Wells, David M.	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. John's, Nfld. & Lab.	Conservative Party of Canada
Wells, Kristopher	Alberta	St. Albert, Alta.	Progressive Senate Group
White, Judy A.	Newfoundland and Labrador	St. George's, Nfld. & Lab.	Progressive Senate Group
Woo, Yuen Pau	British Columbia	North Vancouver, B.C.	Independent Senators Group
Youance, Suze	Lauzon	Blainville, Que.	Independent Senators Group
Yussuff, Hassan	Ontario	Toronto, Ont.	Independent Senators Group

SENATORS OF CANADA
BY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY

(April 1, 2026)

ONTARIO—24

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1	Salma Ataullahjan.....Ontario (Toronto).....	Toronto
2	Peter Harder, P.C. ....Ottawa.....	Manotick
3	Kim Pate .....Ontario.....	Ottawa
4	Tony Dean .....Ontario.....	Toronto
5	Lucie Moncion.....Ontario.....	North Bay
6	Robert Black .....Ontario.....	Centre Wellington
7	Marty Deacon .....Waterloo Region.....	Waterloo
8	Yvonne Boyer.....Ontario.....	Merrickville-Wolford
9	Donna Dasko .....Ontario.....	Toronto
10	Peter M. Boehm .....Ontario.....	Ottawa
11	Rosemary Moodie.....Ontario.....	Toronto
12	Hassan Yussuff .....Ontario.....	Toronto
13	Bernadette Clement.....Ontario.....	Cornwall
14	Sharon Burey .....Ontario.....	Windsor
15	Andrew Cardozo.....Ontario.....	Ottawa
16	Rebecca Patterson.....Ontario.....	Ottawa
17	Marnie McBean .....Ontario.....	Toronto
18	Toni Varone .....Ontario.....	Toronto
19	Paulette Senior.....Ontario.....	Pickering
20	Mohammad Al Zaibak.....Ontario.....	Toronto
21	Katherine Hay.....Ontario.....	Mississauga
22	Farah Mohamed.....Ontario.....	Toronto
23	Sandra Pupatello.....Ontario.....	Windsor
24	.....

SENATORS BY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY

QUEBEC—24

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1	Patrick Brazeau	Repentigny Maniwaki
2	Leo Housakos	Wellington..... Laval
3	Claude Carignan, P.C.....	Mille Isles..... Saint-Eustache
4	Larry W. Smith	Saurel Hudson
5	Josée Verner, P.C.....	Montarville..... Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures
6	Chantal Petitclerc	Grandville..... Montreal
7	Éric Forest.....	Gulf Rimouski
8	Raymonde Saint-Germain.....	De la Vallière Quebec City
9	Rosa Galvez	Bedford..... Lévis
10	Pierre J. Dalphond.....	De Lorimier..... Montreal
11	Julie Miville-Dechéne.....	Inkerman Mont-Royal
12	Tony Loffreda.....	Shawinigan Montreal
13	Amina Gerba.....	Rigaud Blainville
14	Clément Gignac	Kennebec..... Lac Saint-Joseph
15	Michèle Audette.....	De Salaberry..... Quebec City
16	Manuelle Oudar	La Salle Quebec City
17	Pierre Moreau	The Laurentides..... Saint-Lambert
18	Suze Youance	Lauzon..... Blainville
19	Martine Hébert.....	Victoria..... Montreal
20	Danièle Henkel	Alma..... Dollard-des-Ormeaux
21	.....	.....
22	.....	.....
23	.....	.....
24	.....	.....

SENATORS BY PROVINCE—MARITIME DIVISION

NOVA SCOTIA—10

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address	
The Honourable			
1	Michael L. MacDonald	Cape Breton..... Dartmouth	
2	Wanda Thomas Bernard	Nova Scotia (East Preston)..... East Preston	
3	Mary Coyle	Nova Scotia	Antigonish
4	Colin Deacon	Nova Scotia	Halifax
5	Stan Kutcher	Nova Scotia	Halifax
6	Paul (PJ) Prosper.....	Nova Scotia	Hants County
7	Réjean Aucoin.....	Nova Scotia	Cape Breton
8	Rodger Cuzner	Nova Scotia	Cape Breton
9	Allister Surette	Nova Scotia	Halifax
10	Tony Ince	Nova Scotia	Dartmouth

NEW BRUNSWICK—10

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address	
The Honourable			
1	Pierrette Ringuette	New Brunswick.....	Edmundston
2	Rose-May Poirier.....	New Brunswick—Saint-Louis-de-Kent	Saint-Louis-de-Kent
3	René Cormier.....	New Brunswick.....	Caraquet
4	Jim Quinn.....	New Brunswick.....	Saint John
5	Joan Kingston	New Brunswick.....	New Maryland
6	John M. McNair	New Brunswick.....	Grand-Bouctouche
7	Krista Ross.....	New Brunswick.....	Fredericton
8	Victor Boudreau.....	New Brunswick.....	Shediac
9	Dawn Arnold	New Brunswick.....	Moncton
10	.....	.....	.....

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND—4

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address	
The Honourable			
1	Percy E. Downe	Charlottetown.....	Charlottetown
2	Brian Francis.....	Prince Edward Island	Rocky Point
3	Jane MacAdam	Prince Edward Island	West St. Peters
4	Mary Robinson	Prince Edward Island	Charlottetown

SENATORS BY PROVINCE—WESTERN DIVISION

MANITOBA—6

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1	Raymonde Gagné, <i>Speaker</i>	Manitoba Winnipeg
2	Marilou McPhedran	Manitoba Winnipeg
3	Mary Jane McCallum.....	Manitoba Winnipeg
4	Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler.....	Manitoba Winnipeg
5	Charles S. Adler.....	Manitoba Winnipeg
6	.....	.....

BRITISH COLUMBIA—6

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1	Yonah Martin.....	British Columbia Vancouver
2	Yuen Pau Woo.....	British Columbia North Vancouver
3	Bev Busson	British Columbia North Okanagan Region
4	Margo Greenwood	British Columbia Vernon
5	Baltej S. Dhillon	British Columbia Surrey
6	Duncan Renwick Wilson	British Columbia Vancouver

SASKATCHEWAN—6

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1	Pamela Wallin.....	Saskatchewan Wadena
2	Denise Batters	Saskatchewan Regina
3	Marty Klyne.....	Saskatchewan White City
4	David M. Arnot.....	Saskatchewan Saskatoon
5	Tracy Muggli	Saskatchewan Saskatoon
6	Todd Lewis	Saskatchewan Lajord No. 128

ALBERTA—6

Senator	Designation	Post Office Address
The Honourable		
1	Scott Tannas.....	Alberta..... High River
2	Patti LaBoucane-Benson.....	Alberta..... Spruce Grove
3	Paula Simons	Alberta..... Edmonton
4	Karen Sorensen	Alberta..... Banff
5	Daryl S. Fridhandler	Alberta..... Calgary
6	Kristopher Wells	Alberta..... St. Albert

SENATORS BY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR—6

Senator

Designation

Post Office Address

The Honourable

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Fabian Manning | Newfoundland and Labrador | St. Bride's |
| 2 | David M. Wells | Newfoundland and Labrador | St. John's |
| 3 | Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia..... | Newfoundland and Labrador | Twillingate |
| 4 | Iris G. Petten | Newfoundland and Labrador | St. John's |
| 5 | Judy A. White | Newfoundland and Labrador | St. George's |
| 6 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
-

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES—1

Senator

Designation

Post Office Address

The Honourable

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Dawn Anderson | Northwest Territories | Yellowknife |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
-

NUNAVUT—1

Senator

Designation

Post Office Address

The Honourable

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---------------|--------|
| 1 | Nancy Karetak-Lindell..... | Nunavut | Arviat |
|---|----------------------------|---------------|--------|
-

YUKON—1

Senator

Designation

Post Office Address

The Honourable

- | | | | |
|---|------------------|-------------|------------|
| 1 | Pat Duncan | Yukon | Whitehorse |
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