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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, as many of you know, this month is Autism Acceptance Month, and families, researchers and leaders in the autistic community are once again here in our nation's capital to gather for the Canadian Autism Leadership Summit.

It was an honour to speak there this morning, to see familiar faces and to reiterate the responsibility we hold within and beyond this chamber. As I told the delegates, we have successfully shifted the national conversation from awareness to acceptance. That is a hard-won victory for dignity and human rights. We no longer view neurodiversity as a flaw to be fixed but as a fundamental part of the Canadian fabric.

However, as I said there, acceptance cannot be the final destination. Acceptance without agency or the tools for a self-determined life remains incomplete.

[*Translation*]

Many of us recall the moment three years ago when we voted for Bill S-203. It was a historic moment, a moment when Parliament spoke with one voice to create a national coordination framework that quite simply didn't exist before. However, we have to be clear on what remains to be accomplished.

[*English*]

The autistic community has done its part. They have drawn up the blueprints and mobilized with urgency. Now the government must do the same. Whether it is addressing evaporating support at age 18 or fixing the economic absurdity of a 67% unemployment rate amongst autistic adults, the time for talk has passed. We must be the ones to ask: Where is the implementation?

As senators, we are voices for those the system too often overlooks. I will continue to be the government's most enthusiastic partner when they match their promises with action. Until then, it falls to us to be the autistic community's partners in oversight, advocacy and accountability and to keep holding the government's feet to the fire until the promise of Bill S-203 reaches the front door of every family in this country: until the mother in Montreal no longer spends her nights fighting red tape just to get a basic assessment for her child; until the autistic adult in Calgary finally has a key to their own supportive housing unit; and until the young person in Halifax can transition out of high school, not onto a cliff of disappearing supports but rather a clear path for employment.

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, let's keep the discussion going. I'm inviting you to join me, Senator Boehm and our colleagues Mike Lake and Michael Coteau at the reception we're holding this evening. I hope to see many of you there.

[*English*]

Above all, I hope that at this time next year, we are no longer speaking about promises but about measurable, tangible results for autistic Canadians across this great country.

Thank you.

THE HONOURABLE PETER HARDER, P.C.

ARTWORK AND HERITAGE COLLECTION

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, I have a good news story to share. As chair of the Senate's Artwork and Heritage Advisory Working Group, I am especially pleased to tell you about a significant new addition to our collection: a bronze maquette of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, graciously gifted to the Senate by our colleague Senator Peter Harder.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Cardozo: I hope that long applause does not count toward my time.

This striking work, crafted by the acclaimed Ontario artist Ruth Abernethy, portrays Queen Elizabeth II seated on the monarch's throne in the Senate Chamber of Centre Block. It is an appropriate tribute to her enduring relationship with Canada and our Parliament.

Inspired by her 1977 Speech from the Throne, the maquette depicts the Queen holding a sprig of 13 maple leaves, symbolizing Canada's provinces and territories. It is one of two small-scale copies of the larger commemorative monument installed outside the Ontario legislature in 2023, which is some seven metres tall.

The sculpture also bears an inscription from her speech, in which she said, "I dedicate myself anew to the people and the nation I am proud to serve."

This gracious gift to the permanent Senate collection by Senator Harder is in memory of his late wife, Molly Seon. Let me say a few words about each of them.

Senator Harder has played a significant role in the history of the Senate of Canada, namely the important work as the Senate's first independent Government Representative and as a leader who skillfully guided us through the renewal of a modern, independent Senate from 2016 to 2020.

As the Usher of the Black Rod told me recently:

Molly was a monarchist through and through. She had great love and affection for Her Majesty the Queen and all things royal. She cherished her visit to Windsor Castle and the Royal Mews so much. Senator Harder's decision to honour Molly in this way to commemorate the King's Speech in May of last year is, indeed, so significant for generations to come.

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, this maquette is a valuable addition to the Senate's permanent collection of artwork and heritage pieces and a fitting complement to our cultural and historical heritage.

[*English*]

I invite you to take a moment to view and appreciate this exquisite work and to join the event hosted by Speaker Gagné at 4 p.m. to mark this donation.

From all of us, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Senator Harder for this extraordinary gift and for the spirit of his service to this institution.

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 Mahmoud Eboo, Representative of the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam and Aga Khan Development Network in Canada. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator Mohamed.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN

Hon. Farah Mohamed: Honourable senators, I rise today to reflect on His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan's recent visit to Canada as the fiftieth Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslim community at the invitation of the Prime Minister.

During the visit, Prime Minister Carney and the Aga Khan discussed investments by the Ismaili Imam designed to address the affordable housing crisis, collaboration abroad in sub-Saharan Africa and the Asia Pacific and building the workforce of the future.

While in Ottawa, His Highness was also hosted by Her Excellency Governor General Simon, a gesture that reflects the long and respectful relationship between Canada and the Ismaili Imam. It was especially meaningful that during a very hectic agenda, His Highness met with Senators and MPs at the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam to hear their perspectives and thoughts, and I thank everyone who attended. It was wonderful that former Senator Jaffer was also present.

[Senator Cardozo]

• (1410)

The Aga Khan took the opportunity to introduce Ambassador Lametti as the new representative of Canada to the Ismaili Imam.

In Laval, alongside Minister Champagne and Mayor Boyer, with shovel in hand, he "broke ground" on a new Ismaili Jamatkhana, an important milestone for our community in the province of Quebec.

Jamatkhanas serve as spaces for community engagement, centres of learning and dialogue, spaces for volunteerism and civic action, and places of worship for the Ismaili community.

Upon arrival in Toronto, His Highness was welcomed by the Honourable Edith Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

While in Toronto, His Highness marked the opening of Generations Toronto, an innovative project that combines affordable housing, long-term care and community services in an intergenerational model designed to strengthen dignity, connection and care for all ages and stages of life — from babies to seniors.

The occasion was marked alongside Minister Ali, Premier Ford and Mayor Chow, highlighting the broad support for this important initiative.

Generations Toronto follows Generations Calgary, which opened in 2019. Generations Vancouver is on the horizon, and, inshallah, similar models will follow across Canada.

Honourable senators, this visit invites us to reflect on the global work of the Aga Khan Development Network, or AKDN. Operating in more than 30 countries, AKDN works in education, health care, rural development, economic opportunity, cultural preservation and humanitarian assistance, improving the lives of millions of people every year in collaboration with governments.

At its core is a belief that pluralism, knowledge and opportunity are essential foundations for peaceful and prosperous societies.

Canada is proud to be both a partner in this work and a home to a vibrant Ismaili Muslim community of more than 120,000 Canadians.

Across our country, Ismaili Canadians contribute in countless ways through public service, business, philanthropy and volunteerism.

Honourable colleagues, at a time when the world can feel increasingly divided, visits such as this one remind us of the enduring power of partnership, pluralism and service.

My thanks to Dr. Eboo, representative of the delegation of the Ismaili Imam to Canada, Mr. Kassim-Lakha, president of the Ismaili Council of Canada, and MP Taleeb Noormohamed, along with their teams and the hundreds of volunteers, whose dedication ensured that the inaugural visit of His Highness the Aga Khan to Canada was a tremendous success. Thank you.

FOOD SECURITY

Hon. Dawn Anderson: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about food security in the North and, more specifically, about food quality and safety. Equal country should mean equal standards. However, I find myself before you, once again, to speak about another gap in the Northwest Territories.

In July 2025, I travelled to Ulukhaktok, an isolated Inuvialuit community of about 400 people, accessible primarily by air and annual sealift. One of the 124 communities under the Nutrition North Canada subsidy.

While there, I visited the local Northmart and purchased a food item. While preparing it, I noted that the colour was off, there was a stale odour and it tasted spoiled. Checking the package revealed that the best-before date was nearly two years ago. Additionally, during the community meeting, juice boxes provided that were six months past their best-before date — an item covered under Nutrition North. That is an all-too-common occurrence in many communities across the Northwest Territories.

A best-before date indicates when food is at its best quality, while an expiry date indicates when food is no longer safe and must not be bought, sold or consumed once it has passed. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or CFIA, regulates expiry dates, but best-before dates are treated as guidelines.

Herein lies the problem, because while it may be legal to sell food past its best-before date, we must ask this question: At what point does “legal” stop being acceptable?

Would this be tolerated in Ottawa? Would any grocery store in southern Canada leave products on shelves for years past their best-before date and still charge full price? The answer is no.

Yet, in northern communities, this is happening without any viable oversight. When access is limited, quality is not a preference; it is a necessity. In the North, people are, in many ways, captive consumers. There is often no second store, no alternative and no choice.

Since July, I have reached out to the North West Company, the CFIA and Indigenous Services Canada. This reflects a siloed system divided across three distinct areas — regulation, supply and enforcement — with no clear accountability.

In practice, this fragmentation ignores how isolation, cost, health and food quality intersect in the North. But let me be clear: ongoing dialogue cannot justify inaction.

To date, products past their best-before dates remain on the shelves in Ulukhaktok and many communities throughout Canada, and the Nutrition North Program is currently under review.

The investigation by the CFIA found and removed expired products in larger centres, but its mandate is limited to expiry dates, which leaves food quality largely unregulated, allowing products past best-before dates to remain on shelves.

This is not just about food; it is about equity, equality and dignity. Call to Action No. 19 under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or TRC, called on us to close the health gaps in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This includes something as basic as the quality of food available in our communities.

Equality should not depend on where you live or who you are. Canada has a responsibility to do better, and the North has every right to expect it.

Quyanainni, mahsi. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Shauna Sylvester, Founder and Lead Convenor, Urban Climate Leadership; and Bryan Flannigan, Executive Director, Building Decarbonization Alliance. They are the guests of the Honourable Senators Coyle and Woo.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE LATE STEPHEN LEWIS, C.C.

Hon. Mary Coyle: Honourable senators, I rise today with a heavy yet full heart to honour Stephen Lewis, my friend, my hero — a hero to many Canadians, to many worldwide — a man whose own enormous heart, selfless vision for humanity, brilliant mind, persuasive tongue, dogged commitment, extraordinary efforts and personal sacrifice moved mountains and moved millions to move mountains with him.

As a member of the board of the Stephen Lewis Foundation in its early days, I was able to work shoulder to shoulder with Stephen and his daughter Ilana as they built an effective organization dedicated to responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa. He went on to co-found AIDS-Free World.

Before these roles, Stephen led the Ontario NDP. He was part of the celebrated political panel of Lewis, Kierans and Camp on Peter Gzowski’s “Morningside” CBC Radio show.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appointed him Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations, and he played a leadership role in the fight against apartheid in South Africa.

Stephen served as the deputy executive director of UNICEF. He was a special adviser on African affairs to the UN Secretary-General. He was appointed by the Organization of African Unity, or OAU, to a panel investigating the Rwanda genocide.

Stephen served as UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, and from there he just kept going.

Prime Minister Carney called Stephen Lewis a pillar of compassionate leadership in Canadian democracy and a renowned global champion for human rights and multilateralism — important in today's world more than ever.

Idah Mukuka of Zambia, a friend and colleague of Stephen and me, told me recently, "I was lucky to have known Stephen Lewis, a man that not only saved our lives but gave us life empowerment."

Dwayne MacEachern, my friend in Judique, Cape Breton, said that Stephen's

. . . passionate oration resonated with common sense and human decency. He had an aptitude for bringing the plight of the human condition to the forefront of civil discourse.

Stephen Lewis passed away on the last day of March, having hung on by sheer will to witness his son, Avi, win the NDP leadership.

Honourable senators, please join me in expressing our condolences and gratitude to Stephen's wife, Michele Landsberg, and children, Ilana, Avi and Jenny.

Colleagues, as I told Globe journalist Erin Anderssen, Stephen had such faith in humanity, and the lesson he leaves us with in these difficult times is this: Be daring, step up, make something good happen and, most importantly, bring others along with you.

That is what Stephen did.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, from March 8 to 15, the circumpolar world turned its attention to Whitehorse. Over 2,000 young athletes, their supporters and cultural performers gathered in the Yukon's capital to compete, play and share a unique northern cultural experience at the Arctic Winter Games.

Contingents from Alaska, northern Alberta, Greenland, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik, for the first time, Labrador Inuit Nunatsiavut, and a contingent of Sami people from the Nordic countries, joined Yukoners competing in 20 sports and gala cultural performances. Special guests attending included the U.S. Ambassador to Canada with his wife,

Diane; the U.S. Consul General based in Vancouver; the MPs from Yukon and Nunavut; Canadian ministers; the ambassadors from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden; and the Head of Greenland Representation to the United States and Canada.

• (1420)

The gathering of young people from throughout the circumpolar world is more than an athletic and cultural showcase. It was "reconcili-action," symbolized by a lapel pin with the number "91." The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 91 calls upon officials and countries hosting international sporting events to ensure "Indigenous Peoples' territorial protocols are respected."

The Arctic Winter Games, AWG, forges friendships between nations that last a lifetime and builds young leaders for the future. I mentioned that the Head of Greenland Representation, Jacob Isboethsen, was present. Jacob competed in the Arctic Winter Games in 1998. One of the many highlights for me was exchanging a high-five at the fabulous opening ceremonies with the coach of the U18 Yukon boys hockey team. He competed with my son in the 2014 AWG in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Participation in these games builds leaders in the North who give back to the North. My favourite generational story of this year's games is that of Senator Nancy Karetak-Lindell's family. The first year that Nunavut was part of the games as Canada's third territory, Nancy's sons were on the hockey team. This year, the daughters of those sons, three of Nancy's four granddaughters, were playing on the girls hockey team. The boys were not medalists in Nunavut's first appearance more than 25 years ago. This year, the girls won the bronze medal.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Duncan: The games lay the foundation for friendships. Seeing Alaskan delegates laughing and exchanging pins with their Greenland counterparts fills one with hope for our shared circumpolar future. It was truly an honour to share with Senate colleagues — Senator Dawn Anderson, a champion of the Arctic Sports; Olympian Senator Marnie McBean; our active living champion, Senator Marty Deacon — and the three commissioners of the territories. Commissioner Eva Aariak from Nunavut competed in the Arctic Winter Games earlier. Her Excellency Mary Simon presented medals at the Arctic Sports, honouring the athletes in their own language, and closed the Arctic Winter Games in French, English and Inuktitut.

These games could not and would not occur without the commitment by governments and their support.

Seeing my time is short, on behalf of the Senate I would like to offer my warmest congratulations to the community and to everyone involved in the 2026 Arctic Winter Games.

Thank you. *Mahsi'cho.*

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Matthew Kutcher and Baz Kutcher, who are the son and grandson of the Honourable Senator Kutcher. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Kutcher.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

ROLE OF CANADIAN RANGERS IN NORTHERN CANADA

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, I give notice that, two days hence:

I will call the attention of the Senate to the Canadian Rangers and their role in Northern Canada, asserting Canada's sovereignty, providing for our national security, and strengthening community resilience as they are representative of peoples of the North and their knowledge of the land.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

JUSTICE

CHARTER STATEMENT IN RELATION TO BILL C-8—
DOCUMENT TABLED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a Charter Statement prepared by the Minister of Justice in relation to Bill C-8, An Act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts, pursuant to the *Department of Justice Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. J-2, sbs. 4.2(1).

CHARTER STATEMENT IN RELATION TO BILL C-9—
DOCUMENT TABLED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a Charter Statement prepared by the Minister of Justice in relation to Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places), pursuant to the *Department of Justice Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. J-2, sbs. 4.2(1).

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the Senate, I will move:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 2 p.m.

QUESTION PERIOD

FINANCE

COST OF LIVING

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, the ongoing food inflation crisis is set to worsen, as new reporting shows that fuel surcharges from suppliers are now driving up costs across the entire food supply chain. Conservatives have long warned that high fuel prices, made worse by your government's carbon tax, clean fuel standard and fuel excise taxes, would directly increase grocery bills. Yet, after years of inaction, your government is offering Canadians only limited and temporary relief that fails to address the full burden that families are facing.

Senator Moreau, Canadians need meaningful and immediate relief. When will your government finally remove all costly fuel taxes and lower prices for families?

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

Just yesterday, the government announced a temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax. This is a responsible and targeted measure that will reduce operating costs for truckers and businesses and, therefore, supply chains in the food, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors, enabling those businesses to confidently keep employees and build and export products.

The idea of taking care of Canadians and the affordability issue were the main topics of the Prime Minister's speech last weekend, and they are the main targets of the government, among many. It is not only one temporary measure; there were a lot of measures in the last budget.

Senator Martin: We would encourage the Prime Minister to take all of our ideas, which he has done quite often. However, why wait even longer to follow our advice? Conservatives have put forward a solution to give Canadians meaningful relief: eliminate the GST on gas and diesel and scrap the industrial carbon tax.

Will your government adopt those solutions, or will you continue with half measures that fall short for Canadians who are struggling with rising grocery and fuel prices?

Senator Moreau: The way I look at the public service is that it's not that we own our ideas but that good ideas are for all Canadians. I think the Prime Minister is very open to measures that Canadians see as helpful.

Quite honestly, I think this government's commitment toward affordability, housing and food security is outstanding.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENTAL SPENDING

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Senator Moreau, yesterday, I asked you a question about the military. I received a three-page letter about two hours later. That has to be a world record in terms of a response to a question, so thank you very much, Senator Moreau.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator MacDonald: Senator, a recent internal audit by Global Affairs Canada, GAC, reveals a troubling pattern of financial and administrative mismanagement by Canada's missions abroad. The audit of GAC's real property assets, worth over \$3 billion, reveals that they are managed without even basic standards for document retention or centralized recording. Auditors found that, for 70% of sampled real property projects, the records were so poor that it was nearly impossible to determine where and how the funds were spent.

Leader, how can the government justify such a sloppy disregard for taxpayers' money?

• (1430)

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for your kind words. I can't say the same for your question, though. No, I don't have a specific answer to the question you are raising, senator, but maybe later today I will be able to answer that question — not as fast as I did yesterday, but nevertheless.

The Auditor General is there to underline whenever things are going inappropriately in government business. Most of the time, the answer is we accept the report of the Auditor General because we want to do what is best for Canadians. I will take your question and get back to you with an answer.

I don't know if those measures or the correction measures that were suggested by the Auditor General have been implemented. If it is so, I will tell you that. I will answer your question more specifically.

[Senator Martin]

Senator MacDonald: Yes. Well, as an example, in one case, Canada's embassy in Ethiopia deliberately bypassed Global Affairs Canada's approval process to build a \$145,000 party pavilion by falsifying invoices and hiding expenses inside its maintenance budgets.

How can Canadians have any confidence that the government is safeguarding public funds when this systemic negligence is allowed to continue?

Senator Moreau: I wouldn't say that systemic negligence is allowed. I think that sometimes mistakes are made, and mistakes are there to be corrected. The government is committed to Canadians to make sure that if such a thing — I don't know if the facts are straight, but if the facts are straight, I think that the government should act to make corrections, because it is not what Canadians deserve.

[Translation]

TREASURY BOARD

PUBLIC SERVANTS DISCLOSURE PROTECTION

Hon. Pierre J. Dalphond: Senator Moreau, as you may know, the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act is a subject of great interest to me. In November 2022, the government announced the creation of a task force to study possible amendments to the act, which has not been updated in almost 20 years. The goal is to strengthen protection and support for public servants who disclose serious wrongdoing. The task force began its work in January 2023 and, according to the Government of Canada website, it was supposed to submit its report by the end of 2024. Can you tell us whether the government did indeed receive that report?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question, Senator Dalphond. I was told that you have a special interest in this subject so I looked into it. I'm pleased to inform you that, not only did the task force submit its report, but the government also approved that report and it will be made public in the near future.

Senator Dalphond: That's good news, because my next question was to ask you when this report would be made public. I understand from your answer that that will happen soon. I thank the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Moreau: I'd like to add — since we're breaking speed records today on anticipated questions — that the report will be made public soon and I know that there's a lot of interest in what will happen next. I'll be pleased to keep you informed, Senator Dalphond.

[English]

TRANSPORT

PORT OF MONTREAL

Hon. Tony Loffreda: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

As a senator from Quebec, I welcome the long-awaited expansion of the Port of Montreal's Contrecoeur terminal, an important nation-building project that will increase capacity by approximately 60% and strengthen our supply chains. This expansion could not come at a better time.

Thanks in part to the leadership of the Major Projects Office, we learned last week that this multi-billion-dollar project is now supported by a \$1.16-billion federal loan through the Canada Infrastructure Bank and involves multiple public and private partners.

Given past cost increases and the scale of public investment, can the government outline what concrete oversight, cost-control measures and reporting mechanisms are in place to ensure the project remains on budget and is transparent and that accountability to Parliament and Canadians is maintained throughout its implementation?

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

As you mentioned, the federal financing announced last week is a loan through the Canada Infrastructure Bank to the Montreal Port Authority, alongside contributions from Transport Canada, for \$150 million; the Quebec government, for \$130 million; and private-sector partners.

Loans from the Canada Infrastructure Bank follow a formal multi-stage investment and risk-management process, with oversight by its management board, investment committee and its independent board of directors.

The project is also being delivered through a financing model which would require the loan to be repaid through autonomous revenues and contributions of the private sector as the terminal operator.

The Port of Montreal is continuing to work with experts at the Major Projects Office to ensure that the project advances in a very responsible way.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer.

Recent reports of senior management departures at the Montreal Port Authority, including the abrupt exit of its CEO, raise concerns about governance and continuity at a critical time for this project.

Given the magnitude and complexity of the Contrecoeur expansion, how is the government ensuring stable leadership, strong project management and proper oversight to mitigate the risks associated with these changes?

Senator Moreau: Such an important project, Senator Loffreda, is not dependent on any one individual among the port authority. The Montreal Port Authority has confirmed a board-led interim structure with senior management continuity, and the project itself has dedicated board-level oversight.

At the federal level, it remains subject to the Canada Infrastructure Bank's independent oversight, risk management and public reporting to Parliament, ensuring continuity and accountability through strong institutions.

CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES

Hon. Paul (PJ) Prosper: Senator Moreau, as we all know, Prime Minister Carney has prioritized building a stronger, more resilient and more diversified Canadian economy. I have spoken of the role Indigenous Peoples must play in achieving this. According to reports, the Prime Minister reinforced this sentiment at the convention last week.

How is your government investing in capacity development for Indigenous economic partnerships?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): As the government builds one Canadian economy, the government envisions Indigenous Peoples as key players in driving economic growth, both for their communities and for Canada as a whole.

By building capacity for Indigenous Peoples to determine and partner on major projects, the government is building on nearly \$2 billion in federal investment in Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs, putting money directly into communities across the country.

Moreover, the government signed historic agreements with the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association to put \$500 million for strengthening Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs.

Since 2015, the Canadian government has provided over \$420 million to support Indigenous businesses to build capacity and access capital through their network of over 50 Indigenous financial institutions.

Senator Prosper: Senator Moreau, since the passage of Bill C-5, I have heard a mix of communities eager to capitalize on opportunities around major projects, while also hearing a lot of concern around the lack of consultation.

How is the government ensuring that economic development for Indigenous economic participation is occurring in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? Thank you.

Senator Moreau: Bill C-5 established the Major Projects Office, which did not require any specific consultation.

It was clear that major projects would only proceed after meaningful consultation with rights holders. It is a legal and constitutional obligation. We had that discussion when we were working on Bill S-2, under section 35 of the Constitution, which the government takes very seriously.

TRANSPORT

HIGH-SPEED RAIL

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: My question is for the Government Representative, and it is regarding high-speed rail. I ask this as somebody who is from Ottawa and is very much in favour of high-speed rail that would come through Ottawa. But I am still concerned about the serious urban-rural divide that is developing among Canadians.

The rail, in the end, will be beneficial to big-city dwellers, whereas rural dwellers feel that they will be the ones who will pay the cost of the inconvenience. Many towns feel that they are being inadequately consulted or are not being consulted. Can I ask you to urge the government to ensure that they increase the consultation they are doing with rural communities along the route?

• (1440)

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The public consultations are already ongoing with Alto. There are a lot of benefits for all communities, either rural communities or urban communities. On the environmental benefit, it would reduce emissions equivalent to removing 100,000 cars from the roads, so it benefits every Canadian. There is strong support all over Canada, and 26,000 Canadians have participated in online consultations. The first phase of consultations has begun, and consultations will continue through Alto and the impact assessment process. The answer to your question is that there will be more consultations to come.

Senator Cardozo: Thank you, senator. Might I ask you to ensure that the government considers all the alternatives? So while they have high-speed rail in mind, they should also perhaps consider lower-speed rail that could use the current corridors, either the rail corridor or highway corridor, thus lowering the inconvenience to rural dwellers and farms across this route.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Moreau: I know you were present at the Finance Committee when the Alto representatives were there, and you already know that details of the precise alignment and timelines are still being developed and will be announced as the work progresses. It's probable that, through consultations, they may be

changed before the final alignment is decided. So I would ask all senators to be patient and to see after those consultations what the project will be before it is built.

HEALTH

CANCER

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, a recent report on the state of cancer in Canada in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* projects that nearly half of Canadians will face a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. This year alone, the report predicts over 254,000 new cases and 88,000 deaths. Although there has been some progress, concerning trends have been emerging: increased lung cancer among women, rising pancreatic cancer rates and persistently high cervical cancer rates.

Senator Moreau, this scenario makes one thing clear: Your government needs to act with urgency. What concrete actions is your government taking to address these worrying trends?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Minister of Health Marjorie Michel was here for Question Period a few weeks ago, and she answered the questions that were asked at that time. You may think otherwise, but it is not the case. Senator Martin, she told senators that she is working with every health minister in the provinces and territories to make sure that there is proper funding and that the research follows to meet the needs of Canadians in all areas of health, especially cancer.

The government is well aware that there is an issue concerning cancer across Canada and, I would say, all across the world, unfortunately.

Senator Martin: I think the key is access to treatment or screening. There are gaps in screening, and there are many risk factors that are still insufficiently addressed. Will your government commit to expanding access to early detection and prevention programs so that fewer Canadians face a cancer diagnosis?

Senator Moreau: A cancer diagnosis is a tragedy for everybody. The government is committed to working with the provinces and other governments, because the provinces and territories are the ones who provide services where health is concerned, and to properly fund the provinces to make sure that they are able to detect the earliest stage of cancer.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Senator Moreau, I have just returned from two weeks in Ukraine, primarily in Kyiv. Everywhere I went, people voiced thanks for Canadian support. There, I also had first-hand experience of the frequent air attack alerts, night and day, and I saw the impact of those attacks.

There is concern that the current Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List, or PURL, program that Canada has supported may not continue given U.S. involvement in Iran. What else besides contributions to PURL is Canada doing to help close the skies over Ukraine now and thus stop the killing of innocent civilians?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you very much for your question. As you know, I cannot speculate on future government funding. However, government support for Ukraine has been steadfast and continues to evolve to meet the reality on the ground. Canada is focused on what will save Ukrainians' lives. That means strengthening Ukraine's air defence through military support, which in Canada's case includes investment totalling \$4.5 billion, specifically supporting their air defence system drones and counter-drone technologies. The government is working with our allies to ensure Ukraine has the layered capability needed to intercept missiles and drones and protect civilian infrastructure.

At the same time, Canada continues to train Ukrainian forces, in which we have trained over 46,000, so these systems can be deployed effectively. The Canadian approach is targeted, coordinated and focused on real impact to save —

[Translation]

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

[English]

Senator Kutcher: Thank you for that. Over and over, I heard the same request; that is, to please provide long-range missiles so that they can strike targets in Russia and in six months the war would be over. We don't have those. The U.K. and France are minimally involved, but Germany has Taurus missiles that can do the job. Is Canada negotiating with Germany to assist in that?

Senator Moreau: I cannot speak to specific diplomatic discussions. Canada and its allies remain in ongoing coordination to assess the most effective path forward based on operational needs and available capabilities. Canada remains ready to support coordination efforts and ensure Ukraine continues to receive meaningful and timely assistance.

CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

FIRST NATIONS FISCAL MANAGEMENT ACT

Hon. Scott Tannas: Senator Moreau, I wanted to dig a little deeper into Senator Prosper's line of questioning. I have a lot of respect for the institutions under the First Nations Fiscal Management Act. They do a lot to advance economic development and participation, and I think that their past contributions have been invaluable. I fully recognize that we are in a time of austerity, but supporting these institutions would continue to deliver a real return on investment. Is the government looking at long-term, stable funding commitments around operational supports for these key institutions?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Tannas, you know that I cannot comment on future government funding, although in the 19 years since the First Nations Fiscal Management Act, or FNFMA, came into force, thanks to the leadership and advocacy of First Nations across Canada, it has grown into a successful legislative regime, providing tools supporting First Nations fiscal management in taxation and pooled borrowing. The FNFMA has produced impressive results: 357 First Nations are included in the act, 146 First Nations collect their own property taxes with annual revenue over \$99 million and 225 First Nations have achieved First Nations Financial Management Board certification.

These successes are why Budget 2025 proposed to amend the First Nations Fiscal Management Act to further enhance First Nations and Indigenous group access to capital for equity participation.

Senator Tannas: Thank you. I agree. I remember us rushing in 2023 to amend the FNFMA to stand up the First Nations Infrastructure Institute. That's important, since we are looking, obviously, at building a lot of infrastructure in the next few years. Is that institution now fully stood up? Do they have a board? Do they have the funding they need?

• (1450)

Senator Moreau: Yes, my understanding is the First Nations Fiscal Management Act has become one of the most successful Indigenous-led economic frameworks in the country. More than 350 First Nations now participate, with strong uptake in taxation, financial certification and access to capital. Through this framework, First Nations have accessed over \$4 billion in financing and are generating their own-source revenues, strengthening long-term fiscal independence.

PUBLIC SAFETY

FOREIGN INFLUENCE TRANSPARENCY COMMISSIONER

Hon. Daryl Fridhandler: Senator Moreau, in an affidavit filed before an Alberta court, former Prime Minister's Office security adviser Wesley Wark warned that the Alberta Prosperity Project's expressed policy of seeking support from and close ties with the United States must be regarded as an open door to U.S. political influence and potential interference. During last week's First Nations application challenging the constitutionality of the Alberta separatist petition, Court of King's Bench of Alberta Justice Leonard questioned the province's lawyer on what concrete steps, if any, the province is taking to investigate or counter foreign interference risks. Given Elections Alberta has no dedicated operations or capacity to investigate foreign interference, can the Government of Canada assure this chamber that the federal Foreign Influence Transparency Commissioner will be operational and be responding to those risks with respect to the many Alberta referenda?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The commissioner was here at the Committee of the Whole upon his appointment. He directly answered a question where he said he thinks that he has the budget needed to ensure that he is able to implement the mandate he has, and I am confident that he will very closely monitor the situation concerning any interference in Canada's sovereignty.

Senator Fridhandler: Let me follow up on the commissioner's comments. During questioning in the Senate, when asked when his office would be operational, Commissioner Boegman responded, "That's not a question that I have a clear answer to."

Does the government believe his office will be ready in time to protect Canadians from a foreign interference threat given the commissioner's office status? Or perhaps there are other security-focused agencies, such as the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the RCMP, who will lead in addressing foreign interference? Albertans and Canadians deserve to be reassured that their federal government is working to protect the integrity of their democratic processes from outside forces —

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, senator.

Senator Moreau: The government is committed to ensuring that the commissioner will have the means to ensure that he is able to fulfill the mandate he is given by the law.

FINANCE

COST OF LIVING

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, a recent survey by insolvency consulting firm MNP shows that 49% of Canadians are within \$200 or less of not making ends meet, and 29% already cannot cover their monthly bills. At the same time, insolvency has climbed to levels not seen since the 2008 financial crisis. Statistics Canada recently reported that the wealth gap is at the highest level we have seen since 2005. With persistently high inflation and stagnant wage growth squeezing households, Canadians are simply not getting ahead. Instead, they are restructuring debt just to keep their noses afloat. The question is: Why? Why are Canadians on the brink of insolvency?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The government is adopting many measures to make life more affordable, and you — not you specifically but your colleagues in the House — voted against every measure that the government was trying to put in place to help Canadians have more affordability and to lower food prices.

As far as inflation, for almost two years now, inflation has remained within the Bank of Canada's target. Inflation fell to 1.8% in February, and interest rates are stabilizing at 2.25%. As far as housing is concerned, household disposable income is rising, according to the Bank of Canada, and the housing markets are easing in Toronto and Vancouver, which were the highest markets —

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

Senator Housakos: Senator Moreau, you and your government have to stop perpetuating the myth about my colleagues on the other side — or my colleagues on this side — constantly voting against the government. We supported Bill C-4 and Bill C-5 and other measures. The only one we have not supported is the budget, which bankrupts Canadians and future generations of Canadians. This is not the economic resilience promised by your government. It is financial distress being masked by temporary and insufficient fixes. What will your government do to stop hard-working Canadians from falling deeper into debt just to survive?

Senator Moreau: Let me tell you what is not propaganda. You are voting against lowering taxes for 22 million Canadians, cutting the consumer carbon tax, protecting pharmacare, dental care and child care, lowering the requirements to access the Disability Tax Credit, providing immediate relief on groceries and investing in housing projects across the country. That's what you are voting against. It is not a myth. It is reality. And it is quite sad, honestly.

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-18, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

CANADA-INDONESIA COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gignac, seconded by the Honourable Senator Aucoin, for the second reading of Bill C-18, An Act to implement the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between Canada and Indonesia.

Hon. Yuen Pau Woo: Honourable senators, I would like to add my voice to the debate on Bill C-18.

Senator Gignac has done an excellent job of describing the agreement and explaining why it is important for the Canadian and Indonesian economies.

As trade agreements go, this one is relatively uncomplicated. And as with all such agreements, success will be determined by how businesses in Canada and Indonesia respond. If the bill passes — as I hope it does — that will be the easy part. The hard work will be in convincing entrepreneurs and business leaders to seek out the opportunities that this deal opens for our two countries. But this agreement is not just about trade. It is about how Canada positions itself in a world that is no longer organized around a single centre of power.

Insofar as Canada is seeking to diversify its economic relationships beyond the United States, Indonesia and the countries of Southeast Asia are priority markets. Prime Minister Carney has talked about a new foreign policy approach based on variable geometry. In practical terms, this means working with different partners on different issues — trade here, security there and climate elsewhere — without assuming alignment across all domains. By any measure, Indonesia is a major variable in a foreign policy based on variable geometry. Let me tell you why.

For over a millennium, the powers in and around modern-day Indonesia have shaped the region and influenced global trade. Between the 7th and 13th centuries, the Sumatra-based Srivijaya empire was the dominant force in Southeast Asia and was an important bridge for the transmission of Buddhism between India and East Asia. It was replaced by the mostly Hindu Majapahit empire, which was based in Java.

Majapahit rule was over by the 16th century, soon to be replaced by Portuguese overlords who were interested in the so-called Spice Islands of Maluku. They were eclipsed by the Dutch in the 17th century who, through the Dutch East India Company, monopolized the global spice trade for nearly 200 years.

The spice trade was, in many ways, the first example of economic globalization, and a nascent Indonesia was at the centre of it. Indonesia's strategic importance in the world economy has continued to this day. This is not a new story. It is a return to Indonesia's historic centrality. It is the fourth-largest country in the world by population and the largest majority Muslim nation.

As you have already learned from Senator Gignac, Indonesia consists of about 17,000 islands — 7,000 of which are inhabited. Most Canadians who have been to Indonesia have probably visited only two of those islands: Java and Bali.

• (1500)

From east to west, Indonesia spans a distance of about 5,000 kilometres, about the same as the distance from Boundary Peak 186 in the Yukon to Cape Spear in Newfoundland. Indonesia is strategically located on the southern edge of continental Asia and borders both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. More importantly, it is one of two countries that control the narrow body of water connecting the two oceans: the Strait of Malacca. If you thought a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz was problematic for the world economy, imagine a blockade of the Strait of Malacca, which is important not only for the passage of oil and gas but also container and bulk cargo vessels.

Since attaining independence in 1945, Indonesia has been an influential player in international affairs, and under President Prabowo Subianto, it appears the country is poised to play an even more important role in the years ahead. Here are just a few examples.

Indonesia hosted the Asian-African Conference of non-aligned states in 1955, more popularly known as the Bandung Conference. Bandung was Indonesia's declaration that newly independent states could shape world politics on their own terms, not as clients of great powers but as collective actors. Indonesia and the other countries at Bandung were ahead of their time, but they correctly captured the sentiment of countries in what is now called the Global South in the early years of decolonization.

This sentiment has intensified in recent years and has seen expression in international fora, such as BRICS and the G20. Indeed, Indonesia became a full member of BRICS in 2025 and is the only permanent Southeast Asian member of the G20. Senator Gignac has already pointed out that Indonesia is also seeking membership in the OECD — variable geometry, indeed.

Indonesia is a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN. That was back in 1965 when ASEAN was still a Cold War grouping with only five members who were mostly concerned about the spread of Communism from the war in Vietnam. Today, ASEAN consists of 11 members, including Vietnam, and is one of the most durable and effective subregional groupings in the world.

While ASEAN operates by consensus, Indonesia is seen by many as the unofficial leader of the group, with the ASEAN Secretariat located in Jakarta. Canada recognizes what is called “ASEAN centrality” in its Indo-Pacific Strategy, which is an acknowledgement of Southeast Asia's importance in the changing world order. For Canada, this is not simply a market; it is a gateway into one of the most consequential regions of the 21st century.

In his Davos speech, Mr. Carney admitted to the double standards of the old world order and the emergence of a more multipolar world order that necessitates a more independent foreign policy for Canada and greater diversity in our international economic relations.

The countries of ASEAN, and Indonesia in particular, have long been aware of geopolitics, superpower competition and the importance of strategic autonomy. As we embark on our own path toward greater foreign policy independence, we could learn a thing or two from Indonesia, which has championed balance and agency in its foreign relations. Some scholars describe Indonesia's international relations as “promiscuous,” which is not a word I would use officially for our own foreign policy strategy, but the idea of hedging our bets across different partners is correct. Indonesia and other ASEAN countries are often called “swing states” in the international order, and it behooves us to find opportunities to “swing” with those countries on issues that matter to them and to us.

If Canada wants to be relevant in Southeast Asia, it must take ASEAN seriously, not just rhetorically but operationally.

Indonesia is an active contributor to global governance reform and should be seen as a vital partner, not only in bilateral and multilateral settings but also in the reform and renewal of the multilateral system, including the UN system; the World Trade Organization, or WTO; and international financial institutions.

At the UN, Indonesia is an advocate for Security Council reform and greater recognition of a more multipolar world. In the WTO, Indonesia chairs the Group of 33, or G33, which focuses on smallholder agricultural producers in developing countries and is actively trying to revive the Appellate Body. Indonesia has also called for an increase in the voting power and representation of developing countries in decision-making processes at both the IMF and the World Bank to reflect contemporary economic realities.

We may not align with Indonesia on all these issues, but to ignore their influence on the evolving architecture of global governance would be a grave mistake.

Indonesia is a leading contributor to UN peacekeeping missions, with over 2,700 peacekeepers deployed across various missions around the world, compared to Canada, which has none. Three Indonesian peacekeepers were recently killed in southern Lebanon while on active duty. There is a tendency in Canada to rely on legacy narratives, such as our historic role in UN peacekeeping, but we could learn some lessons from Indonesia about matching rhetoric with action.

At its core, honourable colleagues, the Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement is less about tariffs and more about building trust between the two countries. It is also a pathway to strengthening bilateral relations across other domains. In that sense, the agreement is a signal for Canadians to pay more attention to Indonesia and vice versa. Whether it is through research partnerships, student mobility, tourism or cultural exchanges, we need more Indonesia, and Indonesia needs more Canada.

That is why I am pleased to inform you that Senator Gignac and I will, with your support, reactivate a Canada-Indonesia parliamentary friendship group. There have been a few Indonesian parliamentary delegations to Canada in recent years, and there is interest on the part of Indonesian parliamentarians in more regular contact with Canadian counterparts. You will be interested to know that the Indonesian parliament, known as the People's Consultative Assembly, consists of two chambers: The House of Representatives holds primary legislative power while the Regional Representative Council acts as an advisory upper house focused on regional issues. Does that sound familiar? Stay tuned for an invitation to be charter members of this parliamentary friendship group.

[Senator Woo]

Honourable colleagues, this agreement will not only boost trade and investment between Canada and Indonesia but also demonstrate Canada's commitment to the region. This agreement is not just a trade deal; it is a signal that Canada is prepared to show up in the world as it is, not as it once was. I support sending this bill to committee as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today as the critic of Bill C-18, An Act to implement the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between Canada and Indonesia, to speak in support of both the bill and the agreement.

Colleagues, Conservatives have long been champions of free trade in this country. From former Prime Minister Mulroney's landmark establishment of NAFTA in the 1980s to former Prime Minister Harper's numerous trade agreements, we have consistently recognized that international trade is a fundamental driver of productivity and prosperity in both good times and bad.

Under former Prime Minister Harper's leadership, Canada led like-minded nations in strengthening its commercial presence in Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia. We signed a free-trade agreement with South Korea and played a leading role in negotiating the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP, for example. I also recall contributing to a consequential 2015 study by the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, then chaired by former Conservative senator Raynell Andreychuk, which highlighted the importance of deepening engagement with Indonesia as a pillar of Canada's strategy in Southeast Asia.

It should, therefore, come as no surprise that I approach Bill C-18 as a friendly critic. The bill reflects Canada's domestic ratification process for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, or CEPA, signed between Canada and Indonesia in September 2025. Under this agreement, Indonesia will eliminate approximately 85.5% of tariff lines, covering about 97% of Canada's current exports to that country. Canada, in turn, will eliminate duties on 90.5% of its tariff lines, covering roughly 92% of existing imports from Indonesia, while continuing to protect supply-managed sectors. This broad tariff reduction will open up a welcome new market for Canadian meat producers and our wider agri-food sector, among other sectors.

• (1510)

The agreement also includes a robust investor-state dispute settlement, or ISDS, mechanism, which will help protect Canadian investors operating in Indonesia. This provides greater certainty and confidence for Canadian businesses in what remains a higher-risk market. A strong ISDS framework was a key demand from stakeholders during consultations, and it has long been a priority for Conservatives in negotiating trade agreements with emerging markets, such as Indonesia. We are, therefore, satisfied to see this item in the agreement.

Colleagues, Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country, with a young population of approximately 275 million people. It is one of the fastest-growing economies globally, with an expanding middle class and increasing disposable income. It is Canada's third-largest trading partner in Southeast Asia and our eighteenth-largest export market overall.

On paper, it is an ideal market for Canadian expansion and a logical component of the government's trade diversification strategy.

Yet, despite this potential and the market access gains secured through this agreement, Global Affairs Canada estimates that the impact of the Canada-Indonesia CEPA on our economy will be negligible: an increase of \$328 million in GDP, or just 0.012%.

Colleagues, as Conservatives, we support efforts to expand and diversify trade with democratic partners. Such efforts strengthen both our economic resilience and the rules-based trade system that has long benefited Canada. However, we should not pretend, as this government sometimes does, that agreements of this scale can meaningfully replace the United States as our primary trading partner. We always look to expand, but we need to remain pragmatic.

As you know, approximately 75% of Canadian exports go to the United States, representing nearly a quarter of our GDP. When imports are included, between 35% and 40% of our economy is directly tied to our trade relationship with the U.S. Our trade with the State of Michigan alone, Canada's top U.S. export destination, is roughly 12 times larger than our entire trade relationship with Indonesia. To match the GDP impact of our trade relationship with the United States, Canada would need to conclude more than 107 agreements comparable to this one.

Let me remind you, colleagues, that this is a comprehensive agreement with one of the world's largest and fastest-growing economies, and yet its economic impact remains limited.

Colleagues, we cannot pretend that agreements of this scale are a viable substitute for our deeply integrated trade relationship with our neighbour to the south, and we should never allow short-term political considerations to cloud our economic interests.

The good news, colleagues, is that, with the change in the last few days in the composition of the House of Commons, I suspect Prime Minister Carney will become more pragmatic and less political when dealing with the United States.

Trade diversification is important, but it cannot come at the expense of our primary partnership. A successful review of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, must remain our top trade priority.

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, as Conservatives, we support efforts to expand and diversify trade with democratic partners. While it's true that this is a comprehensive agreement with one of the largest economies in the world, its impact is limited. We certainly can't pretend that agreements of this scale can replace our trade relationship with our American neighbour. Our trade with Michigan alone is roughly 12 times greater than our total trade with Indonesia. To match the impact of our trade with the United States, Canada would have to conclude 107 more agreements like this one.

Trade diversification is important, but a successful review of CUSMA must remain our top trade priority. This is important enough to justify explaining everything in English and in French. It's crucial that we keep trying to reach an agreement with our friends, the United States.

[*English*]

That said, I commend the government for expanding Canada's trade footprint, and I encourage continued urgency in negotiating and ratifying additional agreements in the months and the years ahead.

To conclude, we support the passage of Bill C-18. See, Senator Moreau? We don't oppose everything; we do support the smart things this government does. I look forward to this bill's further study at the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Thank you.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Gignac, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.)

**PROTECTING YOUNG PERSONS FROM
EXPOSURE TO PORNOGRAPHY BILL**

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Miville-Dechéne, seconded by the Honourable Senator Francis, for the third reading of Bill S-209, An Act to restrict young persons' online access to pornographic material, as amended.

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

Honourable senators, I rise today as the critic for Bill S-209, An Act to restrict young persons' online access to pornographic material. I speak today both as the official critic and as a supporter of this legislation because the objective at the heart of this bill — protecting children — deserves our full support and calls for concrete action.

We are talking about a reality that worries parents, educators and a growing number of Canadians: the early and unwanted exposure of young people to online pornography and, more broadly, the ease with which explicitly sexual content now circulates without effective safeguards. If we choose to do nothing, we send a troubling message: that the state is powerless in the face of a digital transformation that directly affects children. As Lord James Bethell, a member of the United Kingdom's House of Lords who took part in working on children's online safety in the U.K., stated:

If not this bill you're considering, then what? Senator Miville-Dechéne's bill is thoughtful and proportionate. If Parliament chooses not to adopt it, I urge you to offer an alternative, because doing nothing is no longer defensible. The evidence of harm is overwhelming. The tools to act are available. The public, especially parents, are demanding change, and the tsunami of AI-enabled porn aimed at our children is absolutely terrifying.

• (1520)

I share that view. Doing nothing is no longer defensible.

That said, I want to be very clear: Supporting this bill does not mean ignoring its risks. That is precisely where the work of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs has been so valuable.

The committee conducted a serious and thorough review. It heard from witnesses with very different perspectives: academic experts, privacy organizations, legal practitioners, government officials, industry representatives and technical stakeholders. That diversity of viewpoints highlighted three broad concerns: the protection of privacy and data minimization, the scope of the bill to ensure it is not overly broad and the risk of overblocking, that is, measures that could capture lawful content or services that are not the intended target.

These concerns are legitimate. During its study, several witnesses pointed to concrete safeguards that should be built into the bill. Privacy Commissioner of Canada Philippe Dufresne, for

example, noted that his two core recommendations on an earlier iteration of the bill — narrowing the scope and strengthening privacy criteria — were reflected in Bill S-209 as introduced and studied by the committee. He said:

I support this bill. During my appearance in May 2024 before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security regarding a previous iteration of the bill, I provided two primary recommendations: one, to limit the scope of application of the bill; and, two, to make certain enhancements to the criteria for prescribed age-verification and age-estimation methods to ensure that privacy is protected.

I am very pleased to see that they have been incorporated in Bill S-209. The bill now stipulates that the Governor-in-Council must “ensure,” rather than “consider,” the criteria in question, which I believe is an important improvement. The added requirement to limit the collection of personal information to that which is strictly necessary for the age verification or estimation has also enhanced the bill from a privacy perspective.

We also heard important warnings about data being entrusted to third parties. Criminal defence lawyer Brian Hurley put it this way:

I come to this from the perspective of a defence lawyer who has been working in Alberta for 32 years, doing nothing but criminal defence, and I want to indicate that I am concerned about any law that interferes with access to a lawful product or form of expression and puts private data of citizens acting lawfully in the hands of third parties.

Even from the government side, we were reminded that challenges remain.

That is precisely why I want to emphasize a central point: The committee did its job. Thank you. Clause-by-clause study was not a formality. It was an opportunity for a largely consensual effort to better frame the bill and make it more targeted. Through amendments, the committee addressed several blind spots that were fuelling criticism and concern.

First, the scope was better defined. The definition of the targeted content was narrowed to ensure the regime applies to pornography in the strict sense — explicit representations intended to provoke sexual excitement — and not, indirectly, to mainstream cultural or artistic works that may include nudity without being pornographic. In other words, the committee reduced the risk of unintended consequences and brought the text back to its true purpose.

Second, the committee better protected internet intermediaries without undermining the bill's objective. By clarifying the exemption for internet service providers, it reduced the risk that the bill would unnecessarily capture actors who are not, in practice, commercial distributors of pornography but who may incidentally facilitate access to content.

Third — and this is a major point — the committee reduced the risks related to overblocking and proportionality. Serious concerns had been raised that a blocking or takedown mechanism

could lead to excessive consequences, including impacts on lawful content that should not be captured. The committee therefore removed the provision that, in the initial version, explicitly opened the door to orders that could result in the removal or blocking of non-pornographic content simply because it was located in the same place as the targeted content. In other words, it eliminated a mechanism that could, in practice, lead to overly broad measures and, therefore, to the overblocking of lawful content. With this change, courts retain the authority to order measures necessary to protect young people but without the law itself encouraging or normalizing the idea that content outside pornography could be affected.

Fourth, privacy protection was strengthened more clearly. The committee tightened the principle of data minimization. Personal information collected for the purposes of age verification or age estimation must be used only for that purpose and not for other uses.

I also want to acknowledge the importance of a measure brought forward by the bill's sponsor: coming into force by order-in-council. In a field where technology evolves rapidly, where regulations will need to specify methods and where public confidence will depend on concrete safeguards, a flexible coming-into-force provision gives the government the necessary space to ensure that mechanisms, guidelines and privacy protections are truly ready, rather than forcing a rushed implementation.

With that, I would like to thank the bill's sponsor, Senator Miville-Dechéne, for her perseverance, her tireless work and for keeping this issue front and centre.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Martin: She is a champion, a Canadian champion and, perhaps, a world champion. We can debate the means, but the objective of protecting young people should never be a source of division.

I also thank committee colleagues from all sides of the chamber who contributed to improving the text of the bill. This work was not done in isolation. It was done by listening, testing arguments and taking seriously the concerns raised.

In the end, I believe we now have before us a bill that, while recognizing that perfect enforcement does not exist, offers a stronger and more proportionate framework.

That is why, honourable senators, I support Bill S-209, as amended, and encourage the Senate to adopt it without delay. The message we must send today is simple: When it comes to protecting children in the digital space, inaction is not an option.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

• (1530)

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE DAY BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Moreau, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Dalphond, for the second reading of Bill S-219, An Act to establish Judicial Independence Day.

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): With leave of the Senate, I would like to adjourn the debate for the balance of my time.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

NATIONAL CAPITAL ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Galvez, seconded by the Honourable Senator Pate, for the second reading of Bill S-229, An Act to amend the National Capital Act (Gatineau Park).

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to speak at second reading of Bill S-229, An Act to amend the National Capital Act (Gatineau Park). I want to acknowledge our colleague the Honourable Senator Rosa Galvez for sponsoring this legislation and bringing attention to the stewardship of Gatineau Park. My purpose today is to carefully examine this bill and to consider whether its approach balances conservation, public access, fiscal responsibility and jurisdictional clarity in a practical and sustainable way.

Although Bill S-229 is a new bill in this Parliament, similar legislation has been introduced on multiple occasions in previous parliaments. Between 2005 and 2013 alone, at least 13 private members' bills in the House of Commons and public bills in the Senate aimed at providing statutory protection for Gatineau Park were brought forward, most of which died on the Order Paper following adjournments or prorogations due to elections. More recently, Senator Galvez introduced Bill S-289 in the last Parliament, which reached second reading before meeting the same fate upon prorogation.

These repeated attempts have highlighted some important considerations regarding the bill's provisions and potential implications that deserve our careful attention today and during the study of this bill at committee.

Honourable senators, allow me to share my perspective from the outset. As a senator proudly representing British Columbia, a province blessed with its own vast array of natural landscapes, from the rugged peaks of the Rockies to the ancient rainforests of the coast, I approach this matter with a deep appreciation for the importance of well-managed natural spaces.

Gatineau Park, with its forests, hills and wildlife, is a valued green space for residents and visitors alike. Spanning roughly 36,000 hectares and drawing millions of visitors annually, specifically, more than 2.6 million visits each year, according to a National Capital Commission visitor and economic impact study from 2017, 90% of them by local residents, it is an important recreational and ecological asset to the National Capital Region. Its stewardship has long been the responsibility of the National Capital Commission, or NCC, which has managed the park for 85 years since the Federal District Commission took charge in 1938 with a proven track record of success without elaborate statutory protections.

To put that track record into perspective, the NCC and its predecessors have quietly and effectively acquired lands, established conservation zones, conducted ongoing species monitoring for more than 100 at-risk species, maintained trails and infrastructure while minimizing environmental impact and welcoming millions of families, skiers, hikers and nature lovers every year.

The park has thrived under this flexible, balanced model that respects both ecological health and public enjoyment. The existing National Capital Act, the regularly updated NCC Master Plan — reviewed approximately every 10 years — and day-to-day operational policies already deliver strong stewardship.

The question before us is whether the statutory changes proposed in Bill S-229 provide meaningful improvements or whether they introduce additional complexity without clear justification.

Bill S-229 seeks to “enshrine” Gatineau Park within federal legislation, meticulously defining its boundaries in a newly minted Schedule 2, and dedicating it ostensibly to all Canadians, including the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation, for their collective benefit, education and enjoyment.

Again, the park has been under federal stewardship since 1938 without these elaborate statutory protections.

This leads me to my first question: Why is this legislation necessary? Early bills from 2005 to 2014, such as Senate Bill S-204 and Bill S-210, focused only on boundaries and basic protections. Despite these repeated attempts, the NCC has continued to manage the park successfully for decades without

statutory overreach. Recent versions added explicit ties to international biodiversity frameworks and associated conservation targets, mandatory 10-year master plan reviews and enhanced regulatory powers. The NCC's existing master plan and operational policies already deliver strong stewardship. No evidence of systemic failure suggests that this new federal legislation is necessary.

The preamble invokes commendable goals, such as preserving ecological integrity, forging connections to Indigenous heritage in alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and honouring our commitments under international biodiversity frameworks. Senator Galvez has even called this bill “low-hanging fruit” for Canada's biodiversity conservation targets. However, at just 0.0036% of Canada's land mass, it offers negligible numerical gain while allowing a claim of progress on already-protected federal land.

While international biodiversity frameworks represent a significant global effort to address biodiversity loss, their implementation has prompted thoughtful discussion in Canada and elsewhere about the challenges of translating ambitious global targets into practical, locally responsive action. Observers have pointed to the difficulties of harmonizing one-size-fits-all metrics with sustainable development needs, the risk that numerical goals may sometimes prioritize symbolic reporting over on-the-ground results and the potential for top-down international commitments to limit the flexibility that has allowed proven domestic stewardship models to succeed.

In practice, countries pursuing strict conservation targets have sometimes faced unintended consequences: reduced local economic activity, conflicts with existing land users and administrative burdens that divert resources from actual habitat protection. These aspirations must be weighed carefully against the practical challenges of balancing robust conservation with public access, recreational use and community engagement.

The park is home to 100 species at risk, from the wood turtle to the butternut tree, and while safeguarding them is essential, we should carefully assess whether the current management tools are truly inadequate and if the proposed act achieves this balance without introducing undue complexity. This includes rigid statutory priorities for ecological integrity, exhaustive consultation requirements, expanded regulatory powers and mandatory detailed master plans that could create bureaucratic delays and divert resources from practical on-the-ground conservation.

• (1540)

A closer look at the provisions highlights some potential complexities and additional requirements that should give all legislators pause. For instance, the directive to elevate ecological integrity as the NCC's paramount priority in park management might seem benign, even virtuous, on the surface. In practice, however, it could risk unintended litigation and decision-making challenges where natural processes and biodiversity could override all other considerations, regardless of cost or common sense.

This points to a second critique: the potential for increased litigation and decision-making challenges. We have already seen this pattern in other Canadian national parks where ecological integrity was statutorily elevated. For example, in Jasper National Park's Maligne Lake area, a proposed modest commercial development for up to 15 overnight commercial tent cabins by Maligne Tours was challenged in Federal Court after environmental advocacy groups argued it violated the statutory requirement to prioritize ecological integrity as the first consideration. The litigation resulted in prolonged delays, increased costs and uncertainty that ultimately contributed to the project not proceeding, limiting potential public access and local benefits.

The rigid prohibition on reducing the park's size in the bill, save for rare title disputes under subclause 10.03(2), the reversion subclause that returns misused lands automatically and the enlargement powers via simple Governor-in-Council orders could risk protracted legal battles and administrative gridlock. Every trail adjustment, parking expansion or event permit could become a potential dispute and, perhaps, a court case.

Adding the new subsection 20(1)(1.1) regulatory powers only compounds this risk. The exact wording of the proposed subsection 20(1)(1.1) is as follows:

. . . The Governor in Council may also make regulations respecting

(a) the restriction or prohibition of activities in and the control of the use of Gatineau Park resources and facilities;

(b) the determination of fees, rates, rents and other charges for the use of Gatineau Park resources, facilities and services and the issuance and amendment of permits, licences and other authorizing instruments; and

(c) the management of ecological integrity of Gatineau Park.

However, the bill also includes additional provisions that add further layers. It mandates a master plan to be developed within 10 years, encompassing a sweeping ". . . long-term ecological vision . . ." detailed objectives, zoning schemes and an array of performance indicators, all of which must be tabled in Parliament and subjected to decennial reviews.

Far from representing streamlined governance, these provisions could impose an administrative burden that risks diverting resources from tangible conservation to procedural formalities. Imagine the machinery required: endless drafts, revisions, stakeholder wrangling and repeated parliamentary tabling.

While meaningful consultation is necessary, questions remain about whether sufficient engagement took place with all affected parties, particularly residents and private landowners within or adjacent to the park, prior to the drafting of this legislation. Although Bill S-229 now mandates national, regional and local

public participation — along with targeted consultations with the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation and adjacent municipalities, such as Chelsea, Pontiac and La Pêche — these provisions do little to remedy earlier gaps and the lack of consultations.

Consultations occurred primarily after the bill was tabled. Private landowners, such as longtime Meech Lake resident Christopher Frank, have publicly expressed frustration that generations of families who have stewarded these lands were not meaningfully engaged. Local media, including *The Low Down to Hull and Back*, have highlighted concerns that the process was proponent-driven and came too late to address core property rights issues.

Moreover, the detailed boundary delineations in Schedule 2 could inadvertently affect the approximately 296 remaining private holdings, leaving landowners uncertain about the future of their properties and what recourse they may have if affected by park policies or expansions.

As a senator from British Columbia, I have seen the real-world complexities that can arise through legislation such as Bill S-229. With the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg Nation having filed an Aboriginal title claim in late 2025 that explicitly includes portions of Gatineau Park, Bill S-229's enhanced Indigenous provisions risk duplicating or complicating ongoing Quebec-Algonquin negotiations and could inadvertently fuel overlapping claims or litigation that slows practical decision making for years.

The bill's emphasis on Indigenous collaboration is commendable in principle, but it must not duplicate or undermine ongoing negotiations between Quebec and the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation.

Another consideration is the importance of respecting jurisdictional boundaries and the principles of federalism. Gatineau Park lies entirely within the province of Quebec, where constitutional authority over land use planning, natural resource management and property rights primarily resides with the provincial government. While the federal government has a legitimate long-standing role in the National Capital Region through the NCC, Bill S-229's detailed statutory interventions, including fixed boundaries in Schedule 2, prohibitions on land disposition, mandatory consultation frameworks and expanded regulatory powers, raise important questions about potential federal encroachment into areas traditionally managed through cooperation with provincial and municipal authorities. Municipalities such as Chelsea have had long-standing disputes with the NCC over payments in lieu of taxes for park lands, highlighting tensions in federal-municipal relations.

It is unclear to what extent the Government of Quebec was formally consulted or provided input during the development of this legislation beyond local municipalities. Proper coordination with Quebec is essential to avoid duplicative regulatory burdens or conflicts with provincial environmental and land-use policies.

Senators should examine whether this bill appropriately balances federal stewardship with respect for provincial jurisdiction.

Furthermore, as someone who values public access and inclusivity in natural spaces, I am attentive to how the bill may affect visitor experience. Gatineau Park is an important space for residents and visitors, providing opportunities for outdoor recreation, community gatherings and family engagement. While protecting ecological integrity is important, the bill should ensure that management practices remain flexible and responsive so that the park continues to serve both conservation and public enjoyment objectives.

At committee, when this bill is carefully studied, I urge senators to consider amendments to ensure the park remains inclusive rather than becoming less accessible to the many Canadians who cherish it and the many visitors who may be visiting the iconic park long into the future.

Honourable senators, I recognize the importance of Gatineau Park, its ecological significance and its cultural value.

• (1550)

The National Capital Commission and its predecessors have quietly and effectively managed this cherished park for more than 85 years, acquiring lands, establishing conservation zones, monitoring over 100 at-risk species, maintaining trails while minimizing environmental impact and welcoming millions of people every year under a flexible, balanced model supported by the existing National Capital Act and the regularly updated master plan.

We must, therefore, ask whether introducing additional statutory complexity is truly necessary when the existing framework has been serving and continues to serve Canadians well.

I hope to have given you some questions and food for thought in my initial examination of Bill S-229 at second reading. During committee study at the Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, I ask all honourable senators to carefully examine the bill thoroughly and hear from key stakeholders who will be most impacted by this legislation were it to become an act of Parliament.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time, on division.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator Galvez, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources.)

CAN'T BUY SILENCE BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McPhedran, seconded by the Honourable Senator Pate, for the second reading of Bill S-232, An Act respecting non-disclosure agreements.

Hon. Rosemary Moodie: Honourable senators, I will try to get through as much as I can before four o'clock strikes. I rise today at second reading of Bill S-232, An Act respecting non-disclosure agreements.

In general, non-disclosure agreements have the broadest definition as being legally binding contracts that establish a confidential relationship between parties to protect sensitive information from public disclosure.

The original purpose was related to protecting trade secrets and client confidentiality, but over time, that purpose has significantly changed, and they have become a clause in contractual agreements that require a victim to agree to protect the identity and actions of a perpetrator as well as the responsibility of organizations or employers in exchange for their confidentiality, which is so important to survivors.

The use has increased and crept into the management of sexual misconduct, discrimination cases, employment contracts, workplace investigations, settlement agreements and letters of severance. They have become part of a power imbalance between victims and their perpetrators or employers and baked into our legal system and workplace complaint system. And they are not providing safety for victims against discrimination and sexual misconduct.

The Canadian arm of Can't Buy My Silence has studied this in great detail. Their data shows that 33% of those experiencing discrimination or harassment in their workplace decide not to make a formal complaint because they anticipate that if they do, they will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement, or NDA, and they do not want to do so because NDAs are routinely forced on victims after their report of abuse or discrimination — a reflection of the anxiety of employers and institutions about protecting their own reputation.

There were four studies that show that one in three workers will sign an NDA during their working lives, and the vast majority of these are for sexual harassment, sexual assault and discrimination. This translates into tens of thousands of Canadians being bound by an NDA, with numbers growing weekly. The consequences are wide and broad.

Covering up an identity and the circumstances of wrongdoing eventually undermines workplace morale. It risks other employees, and it means that a wrongdoer can be passed to another employer without knowledge of their past conduct — a phenomenon described as “pass the trash.” “Pass the trash” happens across universities, churches, workplaces and, yes, government agencies and departments.

Research shows that the human impact of NDAs, which can last forever, typically prohibits signers from speaking about their experience with family, friends and therapists. It also means that they cannot warn others. In particular, 55% of those who have signed an NDA leave their workplace, whereas only 22% of the harassers have to leave, and these harassers can be secretly passed along to a new employer without knowing their history. In many cases, victims must continue to keep silent for the rest of their lives. The data shows that 93% of NDA signers report mental health consequences, including guilt about not warning others, regret about signing the NDA and total loss of faith in justice.

Increasingly, this has become a default position. Many lawyers estimate that they are using up to 95% of agreements. NDAs are being used to settle cases of sexual misconduct, for example, and victims are frequently told, “Everyone signs these,” and they must sign in order to get a settlement.

This, in fact, is not correct. The 2022 Ontario Superior Court of Justice decision in *Bouzanis v. Greenwood et al.* made it clear that NDAs are not required for settlement and that the signer must understand and voluntarily agree.

A constant theme among the stories of NDA signers is that they did not understand what they were agreeing to and signed in order to get a traumatic experience behind them, and it was usually under pressure. What is more, if a victim leaves their workplace after their experience, they cannot explain why they left, they cannot seek time off to recover, and, in fact, they are stuck moving to a new place with a big question hanging over their heads as to why they left their previous workplace.

NDAs are used in our federal government more than you think. They are used by departments and federally funded agencies. They are used to prevent an employee from speaking about a complaint in any situation where it casts the employer in a bad light, such as cases of discrimination, sexual misconduct and harassment. Where the wrongdoer can hide their historical behaviour, the “pass the trash” phenomenon occurs.

It affects equity-seeking groups as well. There is substantial data that a disproportionate number of individuals in these groups are affected. Four times more women than men sign NDAs, probably because of their use in pregnancy discrimination or sexual harassment. NDAs are frequently used to cover up racial, anti-Indigenous, disability and pregnancy discrimination, and they are especially used in highly precarious and low-paying employment sectors. In fact, they are used at the far ends of the work experience: Young workers and older workers are affected more.

It affects our children. In particular, 98% of civil abuse cases and assault cases settle before trial, and pretrial or mediated settlement regularly include an NDA. Some victims — minor children in some cases — do not have the capacity to sign NDAs. Their parents are pressured to do this, and when they reach the age of consent — the age of majority — they must sign this NDA. These are bizarre practices that have become part of our lives. Sometimes the stories are never disclosed, and the child must continue to bear this burden in silence.

NDAs are particularly prevalent in youth sports. Youth athletes are especially vulnerable to NDAs, regularly being used to hide abuse or harassment by authority figures, such as coaches. The evidence heard by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage of the abuse of young people and the constant requirement for them to sign NDAs led to the committee’s major recommendation to stop the use of NDAs by national sport organizations.

• (1600)

Schools, whose secondary —

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Moodie, I’m sorry. I have to interrupt.

(At 4 p.m., pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, the Senate adjourned until 1:30 p.m., tomorrow.)

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