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Thursday, April 23, 2026

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,  
Speaker

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## THE SENATE

Thursday, April 23, 2026

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

[English]

Prayers.

### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I received a notice from the Leader of the Opposition, who requests, pursuant to rule 4-3(1), that the time provided for the consideration of Senators' Statements be extended today for the purpose of paying tribute to the Honourable Senator Smith. Is it agreed that the time for tributes be extended into regular statements until the conclusion of the anticipated tributes?

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** I remind senators that, pursuant to our Rules, each senator will be allowed only three minutes, and they may speak only once.

These times do not include the time allotted to the response of the senator.

Senator Smith would later step into the world of media as the president and publisher of *The Montreal Gazette*, where he ensured that one of our city's most historic voices remained strong.

That is the lifetime of diverse experience that Senator Smith brought with him when he was summoned to this place in 2011.

During his time as leader of the Conservative caucus, Larry ran our team with a disciplined focus on the long-term integrity of the institution and a deep commitment to Canadian taxpayers. He mentored us to look past the immediate political skirmish and to remember our higher purpose as legislators.

For Larry, "teamwork" was never a cliché; it was a mechanical necessity for good governance at all times.

Now, just as it is in sports, in any long and storied career, there's usually a brief period where a star player tests the free agency market.

I have to tell you, Larry, watching you sit over there with the Canadian Senators Group, or CSG, was a bit like seeing a legendary —

**Senator Batters:** But he came back.

**Senator Housakos:** Of course, the fans got enthusiastic about the legend, but it was like watching a legendary Montreal Alouette wearing a Toronto Argonauts jersey, Guy Lafleur wearing a Nordiques jersey or Gretzky retiring with a Rangers jersey.

Larry, when you decided last June to rejoin your Senate Conservative family caucus, I don't think we could have been happier. We thank you for that. Having you back for this final stretch has truly been a privilege. Frankly, it was just good to have our powerful fullback back in the huddle where he belonged.

Larry, you have spent your life in the service of this institution that makes Quebec and Canada tick. You spent it in sport, business, the press and, of course, this Parliament.

I also want to point out, colleagues, that he has won four Grey Cups. You know, Senator Batters, that's almost as many Grey Cup rings as the Saskatchewan Argonauts as a franchise —

**Some Hon. Senators:** Argonauts?

**Senator Batters:** Saskatchewan Roughriders.

**Senator Housakos:** That's true, but he has still won as many as the Roughriders.

**Senator Batters:** Nope.

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## SENATORS' STATEMENTS

### TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE LARRY W. SMITH

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, it is a true honour to rise today to pay tribute to a giant of Quebec and our hometown of Montreal, a titan of the Canadian Football League and a dear friend and colleague Senator Larry Smith, as he retires from this chamber.

[Translation]

In Montreal, the name Larry Smith is synonymous with excellence. Some may be surprised to learn that he spent nearly 10 years as a professional football player for the Montreal Alouettes. He took the hits and made the plays that earned him the respect of a city that doesn't give it easily.

After his football career, he became the Commissioner of the Canadian Football League and then President of the Alouettes. It is safe to say that professional football in Montreal owes its survival in large part to him, a contribution that earned him a place in the Quebec Sports Hall of Fame.

**Senator Housakos:** You have been a mentor and a voice of reason to many in this place. We are all better off for your service to this country.

Larry, I want to wish you, Leesa and your beautiful family a healthy retirement, a lot of time on the golf course and a bit of time in Barbados. But I'm sure you will also be spending a lot of time continuing to mentor young people like you mentored me through the years and continue to be a champion for Montreal, Quebec and Canada.

God bless you. God bless your family. All the best.

**Senator Smith:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Honourable senators, rising to pay tribute to Senator Smith today has me feeling quite emotional.

After all, I see Senator Smith primarily as an idol of my youth. Born in Verchères, I was a football fan. Quebec remembers Larry Smith, the outstanding football player. Canada should remember him too, despite the success of other teams.

For Montrealers, Larry Smith has been more than a football player and much more than a senator. He has been an ambassador.

Larry Smith is a francophile. As a francophone, I admire that about you, Senator Smith. When I was a student, I listened to a lot of the interviews you so generously gave. Every time, you made an effort to speak to Quebecers in both English and French. To this day, whenever we meet, you kindly and respectfully make an effort to speak French. I must say that you have a very nice French accent indeed.

Senator Housakos said that you were a mentor to many young people. I wouldn't exactly call myself young, but you mentored me in tai-chi. You told me to stop trying to lift weights and to try tai-chi instead because it is better for flexibility. I think you were trying to get me to see that I am also starting to get older.

• (1340)

As I was preparing my notes for this tribute, I knew that people would no doubt talk about your outstanding athletic abilities. That is something that has made a strong impression on me too. However, I want to try to describe what you inspire in me when I see you. When I see you, Senator Smith, what I see is a gentleman. It is hard to define exactly what a gentleman is, but you recognize that rare quality immediately when you meet one. A gentleman is someone who is courteous to everyone. You are courteous to everyone you meet.

A gentleman also shows restraint in the use of power and influence. You are, without a doubt, a senator who has had enormous influence here as a result of the roles that you have played in the Senate. When you have held positions of influence, you have shown restraint in using that influence. A gentleman also respects others regardless of their status. In your eyes, there is no social hierarchy. You treat all Canadians the same way. That is extraordinary. Finally, and in my opinion most

importantly, a gentleman demonstrates moral elegance through their discretion and dignity. You are one of the most dignified men that I have had the honour to meet. I wish you a great retirement full of health and happiness with your family, friends and loved ones. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Lucie Moncion:** Honourable senators, Senator Smith knows that I, too, am a football fan. The only sport that I watch is Canadian football, and I have done so for a long time.

[*English*]

Honourable colleagues, I am speaking today on behalf of the Independent Senators Group, or ISG, to pay tribute to Senator Larry Smith. Let me begin with a simple truth: Elite-level sports never truly leave those who have played them. They may change fields, jerseys and strategies, but deep down they remain competitors, teammates and strategists — in short, players at heart. Senator Smith is one of those — a player at heart — and, may I say, a very good one.

[*Translation*]

Before coming to this chamber, he worked in many other fields, including the business world. He was the head of *The Gazette* and the Commissioner of the Canadian Football League. He also worked on a grassy 110-yard field, where every play demanded vision, quick reflexes and team spirit.

In a way, he simply brought that discipline here to the Senate of Canada. I am sure you will agree, colleagues, that, in its own way, the Senate sometimes resembles a football field. We have to know how to play the long game, anticipate impacts, protect the most vulnerable lines, listen to teammates and, most importantly, not lose sight of the end zone, which in this case is the common good.

That is exactly what Senator Smith has done throughout his career in the Senate. He also brought with him a remarkable ability to understand Canada in all of its complexity. That understanding enabled him to staunchly defend better living conditions for Canadians without losing his cool and without losing sight of the restraint and diplomacy needed to unite rather than divide.

However, we all have one burning question: Will Senator Smith actually retire? I have my doubts. Outstanding athletes never really quit the game. They just redirect their energy elsewhere, where it can make a difference.

[*English*]

He may no longer set foot in this unique institution known as the Canadian Senate, but he will undoubtedly continue to make his mark elsewhere, inspiring future generations to believe in their own journeys and to fully commit themselves to causes that transcend their own interests.

Senator Smith, on behalf of my colleagues at the ISG, I would like to express our gratitude for your dedication, your vision and your diplomacy and, above all, for the way you remind us that, in sports as in politics, what really matters is not just playing the game but playing it for others and for something greater than oneself.

Thank you, Larry.

**Hon. Scott Tannas:** Honourable senators, I am honoured to pay tribute to someone whose contributions to Canada truly are the stuff of legends: our colleague and friend Senator Larry Smith.

Even before he set foot in this chamber, Larry was already a household name as a Canadian Football Hall of Fame player and a sports executive. But Larry didn't stop at being a sports legend; he became a political legend as well. He has the distinction of being one of only a handful of senators in the 150-plus years of Canadian political history to have been named to the Senate not once but twice. I don't know what he was thinking. He had the chance to get out, and we pulled him back in.

He has been the Leader of the Opposition, the chair and deputy chair of numerous committees and a driving force behind thoughtful, rigorous parliamentary work. His leadership has shaped this chamber in ways that will endure long after his retirement. With his 5,561 days in the Senate, he has served this institution with dedication and distinction.

Not only has he been a rock star in politics and sports, but he once had plans to be an actual rock star. He and his band performed at Expo 67, proving that Larry's talents have always extended far beyond the gridiron, the boardroom and the Red Chamber.

Larry is a true gentleman — and, Larry, I hope you know we have all talked about what a gentleman you are — who displays kindness and congeniality to all senators.

I had the opportunity to work closely with him in this place, both when we were members of the Conservative caucus and later, briefly, as members of the Canadian Senators Group. In every setting, Larry has been a hard-working parliamentarian, unafraid to ask the difficult questions but always asked them respectfully.

During Question Period, he showed a competitive spirit but acted with grace and style. He was always looking for answers in the name of government accountability.

With Senator Smith being at home much more, I am sure that his wife, Leesa, will appreciate his new passion. Some of us have learned that Larry is also a legend at home, apparently as a devoted Dyson vacuum aficionado. Only Larry could bring the same enthusiasm to a household appliance and vacuuming that he brought to the gridiron.

To conclude, I have some parting good news for all colleagues here. Larry is listed as a professional speaker on topics ranging from coaching and generational issues to strategy, entertainment and sports. I checked the website, and his calendar appears to

have some openings in case we need to call him back for a pep talk. With any luck, the Senate friends and family discount would apply.

On behalf of your friends here in the Canadian Senators Group, Larry, we wish you a happy retirement filled with time for your family, your community in Montreal and Hudson and, of course, your Alouettes.

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

**Hon. Peter Harder:** Honourable senators, when I was in high school, Dalton Camp wrote a book called *Gentlemen, Players and Politicians*. I like the book, but I like the title even better. It provides a framework for a few comments on Senator Smith.

Others have referenced that he is a gentleman. I just want to underscore that. Who hasn't enjoyed his self-deprecatory humour and his ability to provide a warm smile in difficult times? He is a gentleman.

He is a player, in many senses of that word. People have talked about him being a football player, but he has also been a player in politics and a player in the media, and he continues to be an active participant in the game of life.

• (1350)

He is a politician. He is a recidivist Conservative. He ran for office and got the Senate back instead. I have the utmost respect for politicians, and, Larry, you're one of them.

I want to knit the three — gentleman, player and politician — into one anecdote.

Ten years ago, the new government was facing its first budget. Larry was chair of the Finance Committee. Nicole Eaton was the critic for the Conservatives for the budget. Nicole was a fantastic Speaker pro tempore, but she was quite partisan.

We were doing a clause-by-clause consideration of this first budget on an early morning. One of the — shall I say — non-Conservative senators felt it was a little early in the morning for them to attend. Remember, the Conservatives had a majority. We were doing clause by clause, and Senator Eaton moved that a clause be deleted. It passed. Of course, I was wondering, what the heck am I going to do now?

Well, the senator arrived, and we finished our clause by clause, and as we were about to rise, Senator Smith, as chair, said, "You know, I think we should revote that first vote we took." We revoted, and the clause was not defeated. So the bill passed and went on, and nobody really noticed. But we had a gentleman, a player and a politician ensure that the Senate did its work and that we passed that budget even with the integrity of the debate that we had at the moment.

I want to reflect on that because it really does speak to the character that Larry Smith is. He is partisan, he is a gentleman, and he is a real player.

Thank you so much.

### VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Leesa Smith, Senator Smith's wife; Wesley and Brad Smith, his sons; Farrah Smith, his daughter-in-law; and Madeleine Smith, his granddaughter. They are accompanied by other friends of Senator Smith.

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

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

### THE HONOURABLE LARRY W. SMITH

#### EXPRESSION OF THANKS

**Hon. Larry W. Smith:** Honourable senators, I rise today for the very last time in this very sacred chamber to reflect on my life and career.

Today can be described as the last and final ending of my career. The first ending happened in 1980, as I took my last hand-off of the football at the Olympic Stadium in Montreal. The second ending occurred when a group of American businessmen gave me 15 minutes to clear out of the office of the company they had just taken over.

For some people, their careers end once. I have seemingly collected them like Grey Cup rings. For those keeping count, I have four rings in total.

[*Translation*]

Most of all, I want to thank the leaders and my colleagues for their kind remarks.

I'm deeply moved and honoured to be recognized by such a prestigious peer group.

[*English*]

Born in the early 1950s and growing up in the 1960s, I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would live the life that I have lived. I had one passion at that time, which was music. Believe it or not, I was in a rock band, and as the senator outlined earlier, we played at Expo 67 two times as a backup for two excellent acts. I'm not sure what our act was like.

I had no interest in politics or professional sports at the time. I wanted to be like Mick Jagger. While that career path didn't come to fruition, I eventually became a senator. If you pause and think long enough, you will realize that they are two very similar

jobs. You spend a lot of time in a very large room trying to entertain and get the attention of people who would rather be somewhere else.

As I matured and realized that I was a mediocre musician, I needed to find a new passion in life. This led me to sports. I was always good at sports, whether it was playing ice hockey on the frozen streets of Baie-D'Urfé with my older brother Ron or playing football at school. I always had that innate athletic ability.

My passion for football was set in motion early in my high school days and continued into my university days at Bishop's University. It was a small Canadian school but one full of might and strength. This small university produced the first overall pick in the Canadian Football League, or CFL, draft of 1972.

If you have not dozed off yet, that first overall pick was me. The Montreal Alouettes selected me first, overall. To my surprise, I only found out about this historic moment in my life two full days after the draft. I recall being interviewed by an American sports journalist and was asked how I compared myself to the first overall pick in the NFL draft at the time. The only thing I could think of was how he was given a US\$100,000 signing bonus, while I received a measly \$1,000 in a stack of \$20 bills.

Subsequently, over the span of nine years, I did not miss one game. I often joke about being hit on the head one too many times during my career, and, well, as it turns out, playing over 160 consecutive games means you will get hit by very large people.

As in most professional sports, athletes always have retirement on their minds. I was no exception. After my retirement in the 1980s, I had to quickly figure out what I was going to do after sports. This came with fear, anxiety and a lot of stress, especially for the first overall pick and multiple Grey Cup champ.

[*Translation*]

My law degree from McGill University opened a lot of doors for me after my professional football career ended.

With the network of contacts that I'd gathered over the years, I moved to different jobs in different sectors of activity, often knowing nothing about the field I was about to enter. However, I had an insatiable appetite for success and a work ethic of steel.

My qualifications ultimately led me to become president of the frozen baked goods division of Ogilvie Flour Mills, Canada's largest flour mill. Flour and industrial baking were not the most prestigious of sectors, and I knew nothing about them. Once again, however, my drive to succeed motivated me to excel.

[*English*]

I was good at my job. I thought so anyway. I had it figured out after a career in professional sports.

In 1991, my company attempted to merge its operations with Maple Leaf Foods. I was in line for a top-level job. The federal Bureau of Competition Policy at the time reviewed the merger

and rejected it on the grounds that it would weaken competition in Canada. The deal fell through, and so did my hopes of a cushy new executive position.

Less than a year after that failed merger, American conglomerate Archer Daniels Midland bought Ogilvie Mills. When the new American owners took control, they walked into our Montreal office and gave our entire team exactly 15 minutes to vacate the building. To this day, I still remember one of the executives telling me:

Larry, you're a fine young man. You have a great future, but it ain't with us. You will be leaving today.

That's what you call positive reinforcement.

You might be wondering why I am telling you this story and how it is relevant. There is a man connected to this chapter of my career. His name is Howard Wetston. The Honourable Howard Wetston's distinguished career spanned decades, but the role most relevant to this story was his position as director of investigation and research at the federal Bureau of Competition Policy, which he held from 1989 to 1993. I think many of you may understand where this is going.

• (1400)

He was, to put it plainly, the man running the organization that changed the trajectory of my life completely. I say this without bitterness or resentment. Anyone who knows Howard Wetston will tell you he is a professional, through and through, and full of integrity, which always translated into his work.

Howard, if you happen to watch this, I offer you my sincere and long overdue thanks. You, in part, set in motion the entire chain of events that led me to become Commissioner of the Canadian Football League, President of the Montreal Alouettes, President and publisher of the *Montreal Gazette* and, ultimately, a senator who sat alongside you in this chamber.

I want you to imagine what it must have felt like for a young person in the early 1990s with a young family and painfully high mortgage rates who had just been let go from a well-paying job. I can tell you that it was not very fun. I did not have time to digest the news.

Whether by sheer luck or divine intervention, on the morning of my dismissal, I stumbled upon a copy of a Toronto-based newspaper. Flipping through the paper, my mind completely preoccupied, I noticed a large headline in the sports section: The Canadian Football League was looking to hire a new commissioner. I did not hesitate; I called the headhunter. I rattled off my résumé over the course of 10 minutes. He told me they were near the end of the process and already had potential candidates in mind. I urged him to reconsider. Within 24 hours, I was in front of the board of governors, outlining my plan to save the league. I was hired.

I was utterly ill-prepared for what was about to happen next. Within days of assuming the role of commissioner, I was inundated with phone calls from owners across the league, notifying me of their intention to sell their franchises or that they faced bankruptcy. I spent the next few weeks travelling across

the country, meeting owners, making pitches to sponsors and trying to convince everyone that the CFL was worth fighting for. I can assure you that it was no easy task.

I knew at the time that the league must take drastic action to save its future. Then came the idea that would define my tenure as commissioner and make me a deeply unpopular man in certain parts of the country. That idea was American expansion. I believed it was the logical step to take to keep the league alive. Franchise fees from new franchises would generate much-needed cash for Canadian teams. I knew this would be a controversial decision, but I did not fully anticipate the intensity of opposition from the public. It made sense: Fans feared that this distinctly Canadian sport would be dominated by American interests and become unrecognizable.

The opposition was so bad that, in 1992, a former sitting member of Parliament from Winnipeg, Lloyd Axworthy, introduced a private member's bill in the House of Commons to block the U.S. expansion.

I pushed ahead with conviction. Over the course of the next two years, we expanded the league to seven new cities, including Sacramento, Las Vegas, San Antonio, Shreveport, Memphis, Baltimore and Birmingham. I criss-crossed the United States, meeting with business owners, trying to sell them Canadian football was a league that should be saved and kept away from bankruptcy.

On one such occasion, I found myself in Birmingham, Alabama, meeting with Arthur Williams, a business tycoon from the American South. Arthur developed term life insurance. Just so you understand, he was worth \$2.2 billion at the time, which was a lot of money back then. He was a character. In his particularly Southern accent, he told me that he loved the CFL commissioner and agreed to buy the Birmingham franchise. He wrote a cheque for US\$3 million that afternoon.

I was on the next series of flights back to Toronto, racing the clock to cash the cheque and save the league from bankruptcy. I landed in Toronto with the future of the league in my briefcase, rushing to the bank before it closed.

That was what it was like keeping the CFL alive.

Many say that was a failure on my part. I could not disagree more.

While the CFL's expansion into the United States was short-lived, the fact remains that it helped the league through some of its darkest moments. The CFL would not be here today without those decisions. I am a firm believer in that, and I am proud to have been part of the process.

While my involvement with the CFL didn't fully end after my time as commissioner, I did pivot, as I had always done, into a different line of work, one that I knew nothing about in the early 2000s: I was named as President and publisher of the *Montreal Gazette*, an historic paper in Canada. It was during this time that my connection to the world of politics occurred.

[Translation]

One afternoon, a strapping young man named Leonidas Housakos walked into my office. He exuded a confidence and energy that I hadn't seen in a long time. By then, Leo had already made a name for himself as a leading organizer and influential figure in the Conservative Party of Canada. He was a force to be reckoned with in Quebec politics, with an inexhaustible network and an incredible talent for connecting with people. If you think I'm popular in Quebec, you can't imagine just how popular Senator Housakos is.

He was the one who sparked my passion for politics. Leo and I remained close over the years that followed, keeping in regular contact until 2010, when I received a call from the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, who invited me to serve in the Senate. Senator Housakos played a key role in convincing me to enter politics, and I am grateful to him for his advice and support. It is an honour for me to retire from political life under his leadership within the Conservative Senate caucus. Leo, thank you for all your advice over the years and for your friendship.

[English]

My first appointment to the Senate was short-lived. Within months, I decided to run for the federal Conservatives in the riding of Lac-Saint-Louis on the west end of Montreal. My ambition was in full force — or maybe I just missed being in the limelight, for better or worse. I, Larry Smith, multiple Grey Cup champion, running back, former commissioner of the CFL and successful businessman, placed third on election night — behind the Liberal incumbent, Francis Scarpaleggia, now the Speaker of the House of Commons; and the NDP candidate, who had actually been in the riding one time for a total of 15 minutes.

To say I was humbled would be an understatement.

Former Prime Minister Harper, after surveying the situation and reviewing his options, determined that the most logical thing to do after that election was to appoint me to the Senate again. Not many people in the history of this place can say they were appointed, departed voluntarily, stood for election, placed third and found themselves back in the Red Chamber in the span of a year. In fact, the only other person to do that is Senator Fabian Manning, although Fabian had more success running for office than I did. However, do you know the end of the story? Fabian got hit by a moose and was a month late getting here because his shoulder was broken.

My second appointment to this place was filled with a lot more humility. I came back humbled and ready to learn. Once more, I was in an entirely new world. I was new to Senate procedure and to the rhythms, customs and conventions of a sacred institution. I knew I had to learn quickly, and, to my advantage, I had great mentors and teachers. Former Senators Dagenais, Tkachuk and Mockler were just some of the people who helped me manoeuvre the inner workings of this great organization. I learned very rapidly that listening was often more important than speaking, especially for a newcomer. It was just like my early football days.

[ Senator Smith ]

There was one other person who showed me how this place really worked, and not in a merely technical sense. That person was the late Honourable Joseph Day, who always insisted on being called Joe. He was, by every measure of partisan politics, my opponent, a staunch Liberal and unapologetically partisan. Former Senator Day's career speaks for itself. He spent over a decade on the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, the majority of that time as chair. When I became deputy chair of the committee, I could have viewed Senator Day as my opposition and made his job as chair difficult. Instead, I chose to do something else: watch and learn from him.

Joe took me under his wing. He taught me how to navigate this place politically, but he also taught me to understand that this institution is so much greater than politics. Joe, a Liberal, shaped a Conservative into a better senator and person, and for that, I am grateful.

• (1410)

[Translation]

Shortly after I began my term in the Senate, I found myself, once again, at the centre of a storm. The Senate expenses scandal broke and made headlines in Quebec. We were in the spotlight every day, but not for the excellent work we were doing on behalf of Canadians. Along with Senator Elizabeth Marshall and Senator George Furey, I was asked to handle the Senate's response to the Auditor General's review.

[English]

We were chosen because our records were clean, and we each brought distinct backgrounds to the table. Senator Marshall, having spent almost a decade as the Auditor General of Newfoundland and Labrador, was our numbers person. Her attention to detail was unmatched, and I think we can all relate to that. Senator Furey was the seasoned, steady hand whose experience guided our work with balance. My role was to push back, review the requests and challenge the claims of the auditors.

The centre of our work was not only to maintain the reputation of this great institution but also to provide Canadians with as much transparency and accountability as possible. In addition to this, I was driven to defend the rights of colleagues who had done nothing wrong. They were honest senators whose characters were being unfairly tarnished. The title of "Honourable" is not a mere formality for me; it is a symbol of trust that is placed in all of us by Canadians when we are asked to serve in this place, and it must be defended.

I am proud of the work that the three of us did, and I am grateful to my former colleagues senator Elizabeth Marshall and senator George Furey for their exemplary leadership.

[Translation]

From 2017 to 2019, I had the honour of being elected leader of the Conservative Senate caucus and, consequently, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. My counterpart across the way was

Senator Peter Harder, the Trudeau government's representative in the Senate. He has had an exceptional career in the civil service, working under numerous prime ministers and ministers.

[English]

During those years, Senator Harder and I stood on opposite sides of some of the most consequential pieces of legislation to have come through this place in recent memory. These included the legalization of cannabis, the Impact Assessment Act and the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act. Bill after bill, these pieces of legislation tested not only the role of the Senate but also its relationship with the other place.

It is clear that Peter and I did not agree on much during that time, often engaging in tense exchanges in this chamber. We were opposed on processes, procedures, timelines and even the role of the new Senate at that time. Yet, every single conversation I had with Senator Harder, in public or in private, was conducted with respect. Every negotiation, no matter the magnitude, was handled with courtesy.

Senator Harder, you and I came to this place with very different political views, purposes and ideas about how this place should function, but you always demonstrated civility and respect toward me, and for that I am thankful.

In this spirit, I would like to leave you here today with some parting wisdom, at least in my mind, about how this place should function. I am reminded of my time with the Royal Canadian Hussars, one of North America's oldest cavalry regiments, where I was honoured to serve as both Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel and Honorary Colonel. The regiment's motto is "*Non Nobis Sed Patriae*," which translates to "Not for us but for our country."

We all come to this place from different walks of life but, in my view, with one purpose, which is to serve this great country and make life better for all Canadians. When I first came here, there were unwritten rules that were understood by all. You listened. Then you listened some more, and then, if you had been listening carefully, you started to understand why you were being asked to listen in the first place. You did not show up and immediately start performing.

This place has centuries of practice embedded in its procedures and conventions. You cannot learn it in a week or two or three. You have to sit in these very chairs and let this place teach you. The hard-working administration will teach you. Your colleagues in this place will teach you, and the proceedings themselves will teach you if you pay enough attention.

I came to this place as a Conservative and I leave as one, but never did my political affiliation or my allegiance to Prime Minister Harper supersede my personal responsibility to this institution and to this country. I was mentored by a Liberal. I negotiated with a government leader who had no caucus, and I sat on committees and worked collegially with senators with vastly different political views than my own.

I am not asking you to put aside your political beliefs or your allegiances to the people who helped you get to this place. I am simply asking you to put your allegiance to this institution and to the Canadians you serve above all.

Honourable senators, before I conclude, I would like to acknowledge and give thanks to the many great people in this place whom I have had the honour and privilege of knowing and working alongside over the years.

To my colleagues in the Conservative Senate caucus, thank you for welcoming me back with open arms and for your friendship. I am honoured to retire whilst a member of your group.

To Senator Scott Tannas and the entire Canadian Senators Group, thank you for accepting me into your ranks a few years ago. It has been a privilege to sit amongst such a distinguished group of individuals.

[Translation]

I would like to thank Her Honour the Speaker, Raymonde Gagné, who is an excellent ambassador for this institution, for her work in ensuring the smooth running of this house.

[English]

I would like to thank the Clerk of the Senate, Shaila Anwar, as well as the entire Senate Administration, who work tirelessly to support us in our work. I would like to thank the Usher of the Black Rod, Greg Peters, whose meticulous attention to detail ensures that protocols are seamless. And I would like to thank the entire Parliamentary Protective Service for their professionalism in protecting the Senate and its people.

I would also like to acknowledge my staff, Guylaine Tremblay and Jwan Azimi. They have demonstrated outstanding professionalism and support over the last seven years. I think we all benefit tremendously from the work that our staff do day in, day out, often behind the scenes and without recognition. Guylaine and Jwan are two outstanding individuals who have made it easy for me to carry out my work as a senator.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the people whose sacrifices have allowed me to live the life I have lived and pursue the many goals I have achieved in my life.

To my wife, Leesa, you have been a steady partner in my life. Through the good times and bad times, you stood by my side with full conviction. I cannot fully express my thanks and gratitude to you for all your years of patience and your countless sacrifices. I love you, Leesa.

To my children, Wesley, Ashley and Bradley, it was not easy growing up in a world where your father was always in the media spotlight, often for negative reasons. It was also not easy growing up without your father always being there. Just know that everything I did was for you and your future.

Wes, your musical talents are unmatched, and I am happy to live out my dream of being a musician through you. I was a shitty musician.

Ashley, you have become a better parent to Hunter and Drew — my two grandchildren down in Alabama — than I could ever have dreamed of being to you.

Brad, you are by far a much better-looking version of your father, and your talents in sport and entertainment have been exceptional, even when you accepted the rose — you know “The Bachelor.” It’s worn out and tired, but I have to do something.

To my brother Ron, your mentorship and your willingness to let a younger me tag along with you taught me the many invaluable lessons that I have carried throughout my life and career. I thank you for that.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my lifelong friend, Ron Perowne. Ron and I grew up together. We played hockey and football at Bishop’s, and we even got married to our spouses one day apart in December 1972. What a tax break we got! True story. I think, for me, it was about a hundred bucks. I couldn’t get away from Ron, even if I tried. He has been a wonderful friend and mentor since my childhood, and I am grateful to him.

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, thank you for allowing me to speak at such length this afternoon. I can assure you that none of my speeches in the Senate has ever been this long. I shall always be grateful to you, and I look forward to following the work of this great institution once I retire.

Thank you.

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

[*English*]

#### DISTINGUISHED VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of our former colleague the Honourable Brent Cotter.

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

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

#### BATTLE OF KAPYONG

##### SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of Senator Martin to commemorate the historic seventy-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong, which stands as a solemn and powerful reminder of courage, sacrifice and unwavering resolve in the face of overwhelming odds.

On April 22, 1951, 75 years ago, in the rugged hills of Kapyong during the Korean War, a small band of brave soldiers stood against overwhelming forces and refused to yield. The Battle of Kapyong was more than a military engagement; it was a defining moment of courage, sacrifice and unbreakable resolve.

[ Senator Smith ]

As Chinese forces surged south in a powerful offensive, the road to Seoul lay dangerously exposed. Had Kapyong fallen, the consequences could have been catastrophic.

In those critical days, Canadian soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, held the lines alongside their allies against a vastly larger enemy. Some recalled they were outnumbered 100 to 1. Wave after wave of enemy troops advanced through the valleys and up the hillsides. Through the night and under relentless attack, surrounded and cut off, the Canadians held their ground. Artillery was called in perilously close to their own positions. Ammunition ran low. The fighting was fierce, personal and unyielding, and yet they did not break. Against overwhelming odds, they stopped the advance and helped change the course of the Korean War.

For their extraordinary heroism and steadfast defence, the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, was awarded the United States Presidential Unit Citation, one of the highest honours that can be bestowed upon a military unit.

Today, as we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong, we do more than remember a battle; we honour a legacy forged in sacrifice, courage and an unshakeable sense of duty. On Friday, April 24, we will gather at the National War Memorial for a wreath-laying ceremony with our beloved veterans, dignitaries — including parliamentarians — and others, to mark the milestone anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong.

Our veterans show us that true courage is not the absence of fear but the unwavering determination to stand firm in spite of it, to place the well-being of others above one’s own and to carry the burden of defending peace, knowing its cost.

The torch they lit on the hills of Kapyong has been passed to us. Let us carry it with honour and with purpose, and let us ensure that the light of their sacrifice never fades. We will remember them always.

#### ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

**Hon. Marnie McBean:** Honourable senators, in March, I went to Yukon to watch the 2026 Arctic Winter Games. It was the twenty-eighth time they’d been held. Congratulations to all the people of Whitehorse, the Host Society, the International Committee and all the amazing volunteers for hosting such an incredible event.

Eight contingents make up the games: Team Alberta North, Team Kalaallit Nunaat — also known as Greenland — Team Nunavik-Quebec, Team Nunavut, Team Northwest Territories, Team Alaska, Team Sapmi and Team Yukon. Athletes compete in a wide variety of sporting events to demonstrate the strength of relationships within the circumpolar community.

When you look at the map from a true northern perspective and not with our flattened-out southern bias, you see how close these nations are to each other. These Arctic Winter Games are clearly a special opportunity for competitors, coaches and their supporters.

Here's a fun fact: Over the week, 2,000 athletes competed in 20 sports, and the city of Whitehorse served over 42,000 meals.

I was able to see hockey, badminton, futsal, the Arctic sports of Alaskan high kick and one-foot high kick, as well as the Dene sport of pole push. The quality of competition was fantastic, and the community was clearly abuzz as they cheered in the northern way — for everyone — with an emphasis on their home region, of course. The athletes were focused on winning but were also quick to help out and would even give tips for success to their peers.

Beyond the competition, the people of the North stood out, and our colleagues were part of it all. Senator Duncan greeted guests at the airport and hosted ambassadors in her home. Senator Karetak-Lindell, grandmother to three bronze-medal-winning hockey players, became a grandma to all of Team Nunavut. I saw Senator Anderson following athletes from the Northwest Territories. Senator Duncan closely followed badminton, of course, and met with defence officials from across the circumpolar nations.

To close the games, each contingent contributed to a cultural gala. Each unique performance, in varying dialects of Inuktitut, told a story through costume, music and dance that connected genuinely with the audience in a way that I hadn't experienced at sporting events in Canada before. It was truly special.

In the spirit that Canada and the Nordic countries had recently agreed, to defend Arctic sovereignty and deepen our economic ties, the Arctic Winter Games — and sport itself — were a perfect example of how cohesive the circumpolar nations can be.

Thank you, and congratulations to the Arctic Winter Games.

#### VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Alicia King, President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. She is the guest of the Honourable Senators Black and Coyle.

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

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

#### ARTWORK AND HERITAGE ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

**Hon. Robert Black:** Honourable senators, today I rise as a member of the Artwork and Heritage Advisory Working Group, under the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, to draw your attention to the work this group is doing here in the Senate.

Our members are Senators Ataullahjan, Cardozo, Cormier and Karetak-Lindell. One of the tasks the working group is overseeing is the display of artwork in committee rooms, working closely with the Senate curatorial staff on the selection of works. Part of this work is the Visual Voices program, a rotating exhibit of artwork with themes that highlight senators' work while also showcasing the work of artists from across this great country, including those represented in national collections.

In committee Room B45, here in the Senate of Canada Building, a new display brings together four artists whose works offer distinct yet complementary perspectives on transportation, collectively exploring movement, connection and infrastructure that shapes daily life.

These six pieces call attention to studies on the evolution and complexities of Canada's transportation infrastructure by the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications. I'm happy to share a little bit about these pieces with you.

On loan from the Government of Ontario's collection are two paintings by Serbian-Canadian painter Moma Markovich that feature both rural and urban road infrastructure. *Modern Intersection*, from 1967, depicts the dense layering of a major highway interchange; while *Snow Removal*, from 1960, shows a snow blower clearing a quiet road after a winter storm.

On loan from the collection of the Canada Council Art Bank are two drawings by Pudlo Pudlat, an Inuk artist from Nunavut, that depict transportation by air and sea in the North. The untitled works underscore issues of access, distance and seasonal constraints.

- (1430)

On loan from the Global Affairs Canada Diplomatic Art Collection, *Point Saint Charles Interactive*, 2003, is a mixed media collage by Métis-Acadian artist Eric Walker. It highlights the railway's central role in shaping Canada and its national identity, and it emphasizes the railway's importance as a main artery for shipping goods.

Finally, coming from the Senate's own Artwork and Heritage Collection, Eryn O'Neill's painting captures the transformation of the Chief William Commanda Bridge in her hometown of Ottawa. The municipality rehabilitated the former rail bridge and reopened it in 2023 as a pedestrian and cycling path, signalling a shift in values and urban priorities.

The displays were installed in February of this year and will be on display until early 2027.

Honourable colleagues, I encourage you to visit room B45 to look at the new Visual Voices display to admire these impactful pieces of Canadian art. Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

### VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Eileen Alma, Executive Director of Coady Institute at St. Francis Xavier University. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Coyle.

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

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

### NATIONAL TOURISM WEEK

**Hon. Karen Sorensen:** Honourable senators, I am happy to stand once again to celebrate National Tourism Week.

As Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Tourism Caucus, I'd like to thank everyone who made it out to the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's National Tourism Week reception last night. It was very well attended by senators, and I very much appreciate it.

I've also been heartened by the response to my Senate inquiry on the nation-building value of tourism. I'm grateful to all senators who have spoken to date for sharing the best of their regions and adding several destinations to my bucket list. Your speeches have illustrated the outstanding diversity of Canada's tourism offerings and how the tourism sector invigorates Canadian cities and sustains local communities. I know we have several other presentations on the docket, which I am really looking forward to hearing. I believe Senator Ross is speaking today. Thank you to those who still intend to speak.

As I often say, tourism is serious business. It's a nation-building industry — one that helps us tell our stories and promote our values — and it is a major economic driver that supports over 2 million Canadian jobs and contributes tens of billions of dollars to Canada's GDP. It's a sector that creates opportunities for people from all walks of life, including new Canadians and foreign workers who bring needed skills from around the world.

As I talk about tourism jobs, you're probably thinking of travel agents and tour guides; staff at hotels, airports, train stations and cruise lines; bus drivers, ride operators and outfitters; and not to mention staff at bars, restaurants, museums, concert halls and sports facilities. But the impact of tourism is much more widespread than even that.

Tourism generates economic activity at every level, from road-trippers dining at mom-and-pop restaurants, to wildlife enthusiasts hiring experienced local guides, to international conference attendees making business deals with Canadian firms.

To capitalize on Canada's potential as a destination, we need to invest in our assets and remove barriers that make it challenging to come here. We need to streamline our entry procedures and improve transportation networks. We need to increase hotel capacity to accommodate large international events and business conventions that help Canadian professionals access world markets. And we need to address the labour shortage that is profoundly impacting many sectors of the Canadian economy.

These are not niche concerns. The needs of the tourism industry are deeply linked with national priorities, such as investing in infrastructure, building homes and revitalizing our labour market. Conserving our environment, advancing reconciliation, maintaining an effective immigration system and growing our economy are also tourism industry priorities.

Expert stakeholders from the sector have ideas for how we can achieve these shared goals, and they are ready and willing to help. Tourism issues are Canadian issues, and investing in tourism is investing in Canada.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

[*Translation*]

### MONTREAL CANCER INSTITUTE

**Hon. Tony Loffreda:** Honourable senators, it is with deep admiration that I take the floor today to highlight the exceptional work of the Montreal Cancer Institute, a leading institution that has been instrumental in the fight against cancer for several decades.

The institute occupies a unique place within the health care ecosystem in Quebec and Canada. It drives innovation along the spectrum from basic research to clinical research to patient care, thereby accelerating the translation of scientific discoveries into real treatments.

[*English*]

Thanks to this commitment, advances in oncology now offer new hope to patients and their families. Hope in this context is not an abstract ideal but a driving force fuelling resilience, inspiring discovery and reminding every patient that tomorrow holds the promise of healing and renewed possibility.

These successes are also built on a remarkable model of philanthropy. Through its fundraising efforts and the support of dedicated donors, the institute transforms every contribution into direct investments in scientific research. This effort not only supports innovative projects but also trains the next generation of researchers and clinicians who will shape the future of medicine.

[*Translation*]

In this regard, I would like to highlight the Rapatriement des cerveaux program, a visionary initiative launched in 2007. This program attracts world-class researchers to Montreal by providing them with the resources they need to pursue their work here in Canada.

Since its inception, the program has helped bring back many experts and led to major scientific advances, while strengthening Montreal's position as a centre of excellence in oncology. By stemming the brain drain and stimulating innovation, this program has a direct and lasting impact on the quality of care provided to patients.

Finally, it's important to highlight the significance of these fundraising events, particularly the benefit concert to be held on May 1. This event, which is part of a tradition of generosity and commitment, contributes directly to research funding and, in particular, to the success of the Rapatriement des cerveaux program.

Honourable colleagues, as the honorary governor of this institute, I am proud to acknowledge its vital role. The Montreal Cancer Institute embodies the very best our country has to offer: scientific excellence, solidarity and life-saving innovations. Thank you.

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[English]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT

#### SEVENTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED

**Hon. Marty Klyne:** Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the seventh report (interim) of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, entitled *Risk-Based Internal Audit Plan Summary 2026–2029*.

#### BILL TO IMPLEMENT THE PROTOCOL ON THE ACCESSION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE COMPREHENSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE AGREEMENT FOR TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

#### THIRD REPORT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMITTEE PRESENTED

**Hon. Peter M. Boehm,** Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, presented the following report:

Thursday, April 23, 2026

The Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade has the honour to present its

#### THIRD REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill C-13, An Act to implement the Protocol on the Accession of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, has, in obedience to the order of

reference of March 26, 2026, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment but with certain observations, which are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

PETER M. BOEHM

*Chair*

(For text of observations, see today's Journals of the Senate, p. 819.)

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

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

• (1440)

### LIVING DONOR RECOGNITION MEDAL BILL

#### FIRST READING

**The Hon. the Speaker** informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-234, An Act respecting the establishment and award of a Living Donor Recognition Medal.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

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## QUESTION PERIOD

### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

#### TEMPORARY RESIDENT PERMITS

**Hon. Salma Ataullahjan:** Government leader, in 2026, we are seeing persistently high refusal rates for temporary resident or visitor visas, often on the basis that officers are not satisfied that applicants will leave Canada at the end of their stay, even in cases where applicants demonstrate strong family, financial and social ties to their home countries.

Given that the government has also publicly committed to reducing the number of temporary residents, can you clarify whether current refusal patterns are being driven by individual, merit-based assessments or by broader policy targets to limit entries? How does the department ensure consistency, transparency and fairness in decisions that remain discretionary and largely unappealable?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Transparency and due process are the main objectives of the review for temporary residents.

Now, we acknowledge that temporary residents contribute to Canada's social and economic fabric; the government will continue to accept them at a sustainable pace. As such, the government's target is to reduce the percentage of temporary residents to 5% over the next three years, representing a 19% reduction in the number of temporary residents. No matter who is considered, the review is always a review that proceeds through due process.

**Senator Ataullahjan:** Senator Moreau, I have repeatedly raised this due to the high number of people who contact our office asking for help.

High refusal rates across multiple streams are particularly concerning for countries like Pakistan, where stakeholders report disproportionately high rejection rates that exceed 60%. Applicants also face significant backlogs and delays, exceeding service standards.

Can you explain how Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, is addressing these backlogs and longer processing times, especially after the agency cut 20% of its staff?

**Senator Moreau:** The IRCC is processing all the demands they receive without any political intervention. That's the way it should be because it's an independent review body. That's the way a democratic country should act.

Now, I have no indication that there are specific ways of looking through files depending on the country of origin of applicants.

#### MEDIA AVAILABILITY OF MINISTER

**Hon. Michael L. MacDonald:** Senator Moreau, your immigration minister does not meet regularly with stakeholders, is reportedly reluctant to engage with the media and is said to avoid even caucus discussions on her portfolio. Yet, she found time to participate in a lengthy interview with a social media influencer who promotes immigration-related services with a "100% success guarantee" and monetized platforms tied to permanent residency pathways that have been widely criticized by her own government.

Senator Moreau, how do you justify your minister's cluelessness in this? Why did the minister choose to engage in formal policy communication through a monetized platform profiting from the back doors that have broken our immigration system?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** First, let me disagree with the proposition of your question. We're not supposed to give intention to a member of Parliament. I guess that's the issue with the way your question is formulated.

As part of her public duties, the minister regularly engages with a broad range of media and online platforms. The minister has not and will not endorse private immigration service providers, and she will continue to answer questions that are asked of her or to accept interviews from any kind of media.

**Senator MacDonald:** The Canadian Immigration Lawyers Association has raised serious concerns about this interview, particularly about the minister's inconsistent messaging. How can Canadians have confidence in the integrity of our immigration system when prospective policy directions are being previewed through social media influencers while the minister continues to sideline or ignore major immigration stakeholders with long-standing expertise and responsibility in this field?

**Senator Moreau:** It is my understanding that during the event to which you refer the minister participated in an interview that discussed immigration issues on broad terms. That is the duty of a minister.

It's not for us or any member of this chamber to give intention to a specific minister.

## GLOBAL AFFAIRS

### CANADA'S AFRICA STRATEGY

**Hon. Mary Coyle:** Senator Moreau, last week I met with CODE, a Canadian organization that works with partners across sub-Saharan Africa to promote literacy and advance girls' education. According to UNESCO, in sub-Saharan Africa, 16.7 million girls are out of school, and approximately 9.3 million of them will never enter a classroom. Half of adult women in sub-Saharan Africa cannot read or write.

CODE asked where the government stands when it comes to Africa and investments in literacy and girls' education. They wanted to know when the government will respond to the Senate report entitled *Canada-Africa: Seizing a Strategic Opportunity*, in which a key recommendation called on the government to prioritize education at all levels in Africa and to enhance knowledge about Africa in Canadian institutions.

When will the government respond to this Senate report? Will the government prioritize educational investments in Africa, especially for girls?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for the question, Senator Coyle. I can confirm that the government is aware of the report conducted and published by the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and the report specifically asked for a government response.

The study was conducted with depth and nuance, and the government wants to ensure it considers and responds to the recommendations with comparative weight.

With such work to be done, I cannot provide a more precise timeline, other than that, under the Senate Rules, a government response must be submitted within 150 days after report

adoption. It has only been 72 days since February 10, but it's the intention of the government to respond to the report within the time provided by our Rules.

**Senator Coyle:** Thank you. We look forward to that response.

CODE also highlighted the need for Canada to continue to invest in literacy in Africa in order to support broader economic climate and security objectives. Senator Moreau, does literacy fit into Canada's Africa Strategy? What are the key priorities of the government in implementing that strategy?

**Senator Moreau:** Thank you for that question. This recommendation from CODE definitely fits under Canada's Africa Strategy. More precisely, it would fall under its third strategic area, namely, supporting economic development, youth empowerment and climate adaptation.

• (1450)

Over the last five years, Canada has invested approximately \$4.5 billion in bilateral international assistance, and as recently as April 15, Canada announced that \$18 million would be provided to deliver safe, quality education —

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

## TRANSPORT

### PILOT LICENSING

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

Senator Moreau, for several years, I have been engaging with members of the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association, or COPA. Yesterday, I met with two of its senior representatives, who raised serious concerns regarding growing backlogs with Transport Canada's aviation medical certification system.

These delays are affecting students and recreational and commercial pilots alike, with real consequences for training, employment, tourism and our economy.

The industry is particularly concerned that these backlogs could worsen, given anticipated budgetary and human resources reductions at the department.

Can you provide assurance to COPA and its thousands of members that Transport Canada is taking concrete steps to reduce these backlogs and that any forthcoming reductions will not negatively affect processing times for pilot medical certifications?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you. To all Canadians it is important to underline that aviation and public safety are top priorities for Transport Canada.

Transport Canada is aware of the concerns surrounding backlogs and resource pressures. The department is actively managing staffing and workloads to maintain efficient and reliable processing.

The government recognizes that timely processing is critical. The government is working closely with airlines, the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association, unions and flight training units to identify and fast track priority cases, helping to protect jobs and keep the aviation system running smoothly.

Canadians can rest assured that the government will continue taking the necessary steps to improve service delivery while ensuring the highest standards of aviation safety.

**Senator Loffreda:** Thank you. Aviation safety is a priority. Unlike Canada, the United States adopted BasicMed in 2017 to streamline pilot medical certification.

My question is not about U.S. pilots, but about a made-in-Canada equivalent aligned with BasicMed. Industry tells me that Transport Canada's work has stalled on developing and implementing a similar approach. What is the current status? Will the government commit to advancing this option to reduce backlogs?

**Senator Moreau:** Yes. For now, the focus is on improving the current system, which includes modernization processes, reducing delays and strengthening services, all the while keeping safety as a top priority.

The department is aware of alternative approaches, such as BasicMed; however, Canada's system is grounded on international standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization and Canadian Aviation Regulations to ensure consistent and rigorous safety oversight.

## VETERANS AFFAIRS

### VETERANS IN LONG-TERM CARE

**Hon. Rebecca Patterson:** Senator Moreau, when Bill C-15 was before the Senate at third reading, I spoke about the 30-year retroactive coming-into-force date for the calculation used to determine the division of rates paid for long-term care and room and board that was divided between veterans and Veterans Affairs benefits.

Last week, the Deputy Veterans Ombud appeared at the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs. He said that the retroactivity of Bill C-15, as it relates to veterans, has "... worked to erode that sacred trust."

Senator Moreau, as promised, I wonder if you could you share any updates about when I, my fellow senators and veterans listening to this broadcast will receive a response. Thank you.

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for the follow-up, Senator Patterson.

I want to assure you that my office has raised the issue and transmitted the content of your letter with the office of the Minister of Veterans Affairs, including your third reading speech, which was remarkable and very heartfelt.

I am hopeful that the response will be provided to you no later than your requested deadline, the first week of June 2026. I am taking it upon myself to ensure that you will receive an answer before the date you requested. I don't have any specific date at this time, but I have every confidence that the minister's office will respond in due course. I will personally make sure that the response comes before June 1.

## INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DATA

**Hon. Katherine Hay:** Government leader, in February, the government closed its call for proposals on sovereign AI data centres — a critical step to how and where its data is stored, governed and assessed.

What constitutes sovereign infrastructure is essential, not only in terms of location, but in terms of ownership, control and legal jurisdiction.

Can you share how many of the proposals received are Canadian-controlled, end to end? What criteria is the government applying to ensure that data stored in these facilities remain under Canadian control?

How are risks related to foreign ownership and reach being assessed? Thank you.

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** I cannot comment on individual submissions for businesses or confidential matters that may be found in contractual procurement agreements.

However, I can assure you that the government takes threats targeting Canadians' data and the issue of foreign ownership very seriously. It was the entire goal of the Canadian Sovereign AI Compute Strategy.

I can also tell you that the criteria for data sovereignty relating to AI sovereign compute are Canadian located and Canadian governed systems that ensure that data residency, operation, control, decision-making authority and agency are present in Canada.

"Sovereign compute" means powerful Canadian-controlled data centres that provide AI capacity for researchers and businesses in Canada. "Sovereign cloud" means keeping sensitive information stored and managed under Canadian law and jurisdiction.

**Senator Hay:** Thank you for that. That's very heartening. I appreciate it.

Knowing that U.S. giants like Amazon Web Services, or AWS, currently, today, store enormous amounts of critical Canadian data on our soil, what is the government doing now, before it is able to stand up end-to-end Canadian data centres, to protect our data from legal frameworks like the U.S. CLOUD Act today?

**Senator Moreau:** The government is re-evaluating our relationship with the U.S. on many fronts and takes the security of Canadians' data very seriously, as exemplified by bills reinforcing Canadians' online security, such as Bills C-8, C-12 and C-22, which we will have the pleasure of studying in the very near future.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

### STATUTORY RELEASE

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Senator Moreau, Canadians were alarmed to learn that convicted ISIS recruiter Ashton Larmond is being released from prison despite continued extremist views. Even more troubling is that reports indicate he was involved in a violent incident with another inmate just last month.

Government leader, how can this government justify allowing the statutory release of a convicted terrorist recruiter who continues to exhibit violence and signs of radicalization? What does this say about the government's commitment to public safety?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** The Minister of Public Safety was here just a few days ago. He reiterated not only the government's intention but its commitment to ensure Canadians' safety and to protect Canadian sovereignty from terrorists or any foreign interference. I can only reiterate the government's commitment to do that.

In the specific case you cited, you know that there was no political intervention, since it's an independent board that decides whether, or when, somebody who has served his sentence should be released from incarceration.

**Senator Housakos:** Senator Moreau, the government is ultimately responsible for these situations. No kind words or commitments to try to solve the problem will address the statutory release problem we have in this country.

Given that cases like Mr. Larmond's are not isolated, why has this government failed to act to stop the automatic release of radicalized offenders, especially at a time when the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, is warning that ISIS is renewing its recruitment efforts right here in Canada?

• (1500)

**Senator Moreau:** Our democracy is governed by the rule of law. Whenever an independent board acts within its power, I think that the rule of law is respected. Now, I can only reiterate the strong commitment of this government to ensure that the law of this land will be respected at all times.

## ORGANIZED CRIME

**Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition):** Yes, but when laws, Senator Moreau, aren't working, we need to renew them. That's a basic principle of making legislation. Canadians are now routinely confronted with headlines about extortion shootings in their communities, yet the scale of this crisis appears to be far worse than previously acknowledged.

According to the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, FINTRAC, extortion cases in Canada have surged sixfold in just the last four months of 2026. These figures don't even account for the accompanying wave of intimidation, violence and shootings tied to these criminal networks. Foreign criminal gangs are increasingly exploiting Canada's broken immigration and enforcement systems to extort millions of dollars out of small businesses while terrorizing law-abiding communities with gun violence.

Leader, at what point does the government admit that this is not an isolated crime? It's happening all over the country, including in our own city of Montreal — a systemic failure of immigration, justice and public safety.

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** The only part of your question I agree with is that when the laws need to be reviewed, it is the government's responsibility to review them. That is exactly what we're doing with Bill C-9, Bill C-14 and Bill C-16.

Concerning crime, the government is making an historic investment of \$1.7 billion over four years in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP, which will hire 1,000 new RCMP personnel to protect our communities. The government is taking public security and public safety very seriously. Not only is it a commitment, but it is a serious and unprecedented investment.

As far as the law is concerned, we are requested to study many bills in this very chamber that will strengthen the justice system here in Canada, and that's a commitment of the government.

**Senator Housakos:** Senator Moreau, you point to Bill C-14 and Bill C-16, but neither bill addresses statutory release.

Your government insists that a new financial crimes agency will address these growing threats. That's another talking point we've heard, but Canada already has multiple agencies tasked with combatting financial crime, including FINTRAC, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre and the Financial Crime Coordination Centre.

Why should Canadians believe that adding another layer of bureaucracy would make any difference in dealing with the crisis of extortion?

**Senator Moreau:** The government introduced over 80 changes to the Criminal Code to make bail laws stricter and sentencing laws tougher for repeat and violent offenders under the Bail and Sentencing Reform Act, Bill C-14. Serious and repeat offenders will receive detention as a default. Bail will no longer be the default.

Those are fundamental changes in our criminal justice system, and it's a part of the commitment of the government to have more —

[Translation]

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

[English]

## CANADIAN HERITAGE

## FUNDING FOR SPORTS

**Hon. Marty Deacon:** My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

A few days ago, the U.K. Parliament released a major report entitled *Game On: Community and school sport*. As a like-minded country across the pond, sport in the U.K. is seen as an investment. The report has extensive recommendations, including that the U.K. double public spending on sport and recreation to £7.8 billion, up from £3.8 billion. The evidence shows that the returns outweigh the costs, and like the recently released report of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission here in Canada, the U.K. insists that sport must be treated as a system, not silos and with fragmentation.

We've spoken to this often, but today I ask: given these two important reports, is our government prepared to join the U.K.'s lead, to double down and act with ambition and urgency in the realm of sport?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** I cannot comment for the government on this important question, but I will certainly raise it with the minister and provide you with the intention of the government as soon as I have a more specific answer to give you.

## GLOBAL AFFAIRS

## SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

**Hon. Donna Dasko:** My question is for Senator Moreau. Two days ago, with a new government elected in Hungary, the EU announced a go-ahead of its planned loan of €90 billion to Ukraine, backed by frozen Russian assets.

These are two pieces of positive news: a new government in Hungary and the go-ahead of the planned loan.

In a related development, recently this government passed the Budget Implementation Act, or BIA, Bill C-15, with provisions to provide for the seizing of profits gained from the frozen assets of sanctioned entities.

Senator Moreau, can you update this chamber on the government's timeline to implement regulations for these provisions?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** As you know, the Canadian government is unwavering in its support of Ukraine in defending its territorial integrity and freedom.

You were referring to the BIA to amend the Special Economic Measures Act to provide the profit from seized Russian assets to Ukraine. There are multiple departments that are involved, from Finance, which would receive the monetary sums, to Global Affairs Canada, which would oversee the transfer to Ukraine. It's a commitment of the government. I can, however, tell you that regulation related to the Special Economic Measures Act has been updated as recently as April 8 to continue tracking and sanctioning Russian assets. As part of the Group of Creditors of Ukraine, Canada has supported the suspension of debt service due by Ukraine until the end of February 2030.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

### MEMORIAL GRANT PROGRAM FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

**Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler:** Senator Moreau, Canadian representatives from the International Association of Fire Fighters were recently in Ottawa. They shared stories of Canada's first responders — firefighters, paramedics, police officers and more — who put their safety and lives on the line every day.

In 2018, the federal government established a national line-of-duty death benefit for the families of first responders who make the ultimate sacrifice while protecting their fellow Canadians.

The Memorial Grant for First Responders provides a one-time, tax-free grant to the surviving family in recognition of their loved one's service and sacrifice. While the cost of living has increased approximately 25% since 2018, the grant amount has remained fixed since it was established, meaning surviving families have substantially fewer resources.

Senator, will you ask the Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience to consider an immediate 25% increase to the grant to reflect the increased living costs since 2018?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** Thank you for the question. Before answering your question, I think it is important to recognize the heroic work that firefighters do in our communities and our forests across the country, along with other first responders.

The government expanded its access to correctional, parole and probation officers, and it continues to be available to families of paramedics and police officers. The government is certainly concerned with the well-being of the families of first responders. I will certainly raise your recommendation with the minister.

**Senator Osler:** Thank you, senator. First responders are also asking that the Memorial Grant for First Responders be adjusted for inflation moving forward so that surviving families do not see the value of this benefit erode over time.

Will you also ask the Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience to consider indexing the grant to match the consumer price index?

**Senator Moreau:** I will certainly bring that proposition to the minister as well. I want to reiterate that the government cares about the well-being of first responders in many ways. For example, \$15 million was recently invested to help establish Canada's first Post Traumatic Stress Injury Centre of Excellence for First Responders in Toronto to support first responders who have faced traumatic events through their service.

## GLOBAL AFFAIRS

### MEDICAL AND HUMANITARIAN PERSONNEL IN CONFLICT ZONES

**Hon. Tracy Muggli:** Senator Moreau, according to the World Health Organization, there were 1,348 attacks on health facilities in 2025, resulting in nearly 2,000 deaths. That is more than double the previous year.

Michael Lawson, from Médecins Sans Frontières, believes that there is an increasing willingness by some countries to deliberately strike medical infrastructure and humanitarian operations. This is a clear violation of international law. Canada has long been a champion in the promotion of peace and security. In fact, we co-sponsored United Nations Security Council Resolution 2286 in 2016 to strengthen protections for medical care in conflict zones.

• (1510)

May 3 is the 10-year anniversary of Resolution 2286.

With that in mind, could the government provide an update on work to advance and uphold protections for medical and humanitarian personnel in conflict zones, particularly amongst our traditional allies?

**Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate):** As you are aware, senator, I cannot speculate on whether the minister will make a statement, but I can certainly raise this upcoming date with her. The Canadian government has consistently called upon all states and parties, including its traditional allies, to respect international law and to take all measures to protect civilian casualties.

Canada co-sponsored Security Council Resolution 2286 in 2016, along with more than 80 other states, and its commitment to the protection of all medical personnel in armed conflicts and to facilitating safe and unimpeded passage for medical personnel and supplies is unwavering.

Canada advanced protections set out in the UN Security Council Resolution 2286 in three ways: by pressuring all parties to respect international humanitarian law, by supporting and funding the International Criminal Court and by funding trusted partners that deliver life-saving health care and protection services in conflict zones —

[Translation]

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

[English]

**Senator Muggli:** Senator Moreau, you may not be aware of whether the minister will make a statement, but I encourage you to please take forward a strong suggestion that we should be reaffirming Canada's commitment to the protection of medical and humanitarian personnel in conflict zones.

**Senator Moreau:** I will certainly do so, Senator Muggli. I do want to underline that as recently as April 15, Canada provided \$94 million for humanitarian and medical assistance to experienced and trusted partners in Sudan, South Sudan and Chad.

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## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### BILL RESPECTING CYBER SECURITY, AMENDING THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT AND MAKING CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO OTHER ACTS

#### SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McNair, seconded by the Honourable Senator Varone, for the second reading of Bill C-8, An Act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts.

**Hon. Denise Batters:** Honourable senators, I rise today as the opposition critic to speak to Bill C-8, the cybersecurity act, at second reading. This bill is quite similar to Bill C-26, which died on the Order Paper in the last Parliament when Liberal Prime Minister Trudeau decided to prorogue Parliament.

Bill C-8 is divided into two parts. The first consists of amendments to the Telecommunications Act which aim to protect Canada's telecommunications system from threats such as those related to supply chains, cybersecurity and natural disasters. This legislation gives the federal government the authority to make orders for this purpose, to ban high-risk suppliers and to levy administrative monetary penalties to promote compliance.

Part 2 of Bill C-8 creates the "Critical Cyber Systems Protection Act," or CCSPA, a regulatory regime to strengthen cybersecurity in four critical federally regulated sectors: finance, telecommunications, energy and transportation. This act gives the Governor-in-Council — the cabinet — the power to give directions to designated operators in these sectors for the purpose of protecting essential cyber systems. This bill also outlines important obligations for designated operators under this law,

namely, to establish a cybersecurity program; identify and mitigate supply chain or third-party risks to products or services; report cybersecurity incidents to the Communications Security Establishment, or CSE; and implement cybersecurity directions. Furthermore, this bill provides regulators new powers to create consequences for non-compliance, including administrative monetary penalties, as well as summary and indictable convictions.

It is thanks in large part to Conservative members of Parliament that Bill C-8 now includes amendments that have made this bill considerably better than when we reviewed it previously as Bill C-26.

Bill C-26 was a deeply flawed piece of legislation. If we, as the Conservative opposition in the Senate, had not insisted that Bill C-26 receive rigorous scrutiny at the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs in the fall of 2024, then Bill C-26 would be law today. Many of Bill C-26's worst flaws had not yet really come to light when Bill C-26 was studied and passed in the House of Commons.

This shows the importance of having strong opposition in both houses of Parliament. The opposition's role is to improve legislation by exposing and addressing its vulnerabilities and unintended consequences. This also illustrates the importance of an opposition caucus, the opposition senators, sitting in a weekly national caucus with MPs. By meeting with my national Conservative caucus colleagues every week, I was able to convey the serious shortcomings of Bill C-26 to our Conservative MPs.

I was the critic for Bill C-26. I gave long, detailed speeches critiquing Bill C-26 and its many flaws at second reading and third reading. I participated in lengthy National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee meetings on Bill C-26 in the fall of 2024, drawing out from many knowledgeable witnesses how flawed this bill was and what was needed to fix it.

These great committee witnesses essentially handed the Liberal government a "how-to" kit to fix this cybersecurity bill. Yet, the Liberal government failed to act on this, even though they had more than five months from the time the bill died on the Order Paper in early January 2025 until Bill C-8's introduction in mid-June. Instead, this Liberal government chose to introduce an almost entirely unchanged bill.

Despite the Carney government's desperate attempt at rebranding itself as "Canada's new government," it's apparent this was just more of the same old, same old.

Upon the government's introduction of Bill C-8, essentially the only material change that was made was the numbering change so that half the bill wasn't nullified by the government's foreign-registry Bill C-70, the Countering Foreign Interference Act, which the Liberal government had forced Parliament to pass in a matter of only a small number of days.

Why is it, honourable senators, that we bother to do committee study of legislation at all if many senators already have their minds decided before even hearing the first committee witness? During the study of Bill C-26 at the National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee, many — in fact, almost all — of the witnesses told us that major amendments to Bill C-26 were

needed. We like to pat ourselves on the back here in the Senate about how important and valuable our committee study is here, but the fact remains that if we ignore the evidence that emerges from that committee study, those many hours of debate and consideration are rendered meaningless.

This Liberal government loves to trumpet how improved their independent Senate's work is. And yet, many of the amendments brought forward by "independent senators" are actually technical amendments generated by the government, not from a high-functioning, independent Senate conducting meaningful reflection and work. Often, serious and well-founded amendments are rejected by a majority of the Liberal government-appointed senators toeing the government's line or, on the rare occasion an amendment passes the Senate, it is often quickly rejected by the Liberal government.

This was the case with Bill C-26. I proposed a very reasonable amendment during committee deliberations, reviewed by the federal Privacy Commissioner and supported by him and several other expert witnesses. My amendment proposed that the Privacy Commissioner should be alerted when a major cyber incident occurs. The Privacy Commissioner asked for this amendment because if he is not alerted about this, how can he know to investigate and inform Canadians?

But my amendment was not passed by the committee. In fact, the vote was not even close. And even though the government had months to consider this afterward, they also failed to include it in the original version of Bill C-8.

When I asked government officials why my amendment hadn't been included in the reintroduced Bill C-8, they told me it was because the House of Commons' committee amendments fixed this issue. But given that I had brought the problem to their attention during committee study on Bill C-26, why didn't the government fix it when they first introduced Bill C-8?

The government's own briefing deck confirms that Bill C-8, as introduced, was almost entirely unchanged from Bill C-26. It reads:

When Bill C-8 was introduced in parliament, it was nearly identical to former Bill C-26 with only minor changes for consistency.

When I asked the officials at my critic's briefing why, they said it was because Bill C-26 had initial widespread support in the House of Commons.

So, apparently, the government entirely ignored everything that transpired in the Senate on Bill C-26, including many weeks of intensive Senate committee study, hearing from dozens of expert witnesses, and my lengthy second and third reading speeches detailing serious flaws that were drawn out from those committee hearings.

The Liberal government's first public consultations on this were in 2016. It has taken 10 years to even get this version of the bill, and its journey is not finished yet. Much of the detail governing this act will only be enacted through a series of regulations, and that will take two additional years once the bill has passed.

The process to get up-to-date cybersecurity legislation has been unbearably slow, and it is long overdue. After all that time and all that study, why did the government just reintroduce the same warmed-over legislation?

• (1520)

Even the government's own Gender-based Analysis Plus, or GBA Plus, for Bill C-8 is nearly the same as the Bill C-26 version, which we only received near the end of the legislative process last time. Again, this document is mostly meaningless. It is a "summary" of the GBA Plus analysis that the Liberal government provides to cabinet. Why can't the public and parliamentarians easily access the original documents? Claims of cabinet confidentiality about these documents are silly. There is really nothing confidential in them. It seems like just one more way for this Liberal government to shield itself from accountability.

Allow me to illustrate: The Bill C-26 and Bill C-8 GBA Plus documents are identical except for three paragraphs found in the former Bill C-26 document that are missing from the new Bill C-8 document. In their place is the word "redacted."

I thought you might like to know what those missing paragraphs actually say. And remember, these have been redacted because the government has deemed that we're not allowed to see it. Perhaps it's too dangerous. Perhaps it's too informative. Who knows?

It reads:

Through the prohibition of specific high-risk suppliers, it is possible that because these suppliers may have lower prices than their lower-risk competitors, some individuals or communities may experience delayed ability to participate in the benefits and opportunities that 5G telecommunications systems are anticipated to provide. Unequal experience of barriers to entry may be revealed along visibility lines as well as economic or geographic. The 2016 census indicates that of visible minorities in Canada, 20.8% are low income compared to 12.2% of the remainder of the population, including Indigenous peoples. It is possible that resulting regulations or orders may contribute to further raising that barrier.

The Government has taken and will continue to take steps to ensure these concerns are mitigated. For example, the proposed restrictions on high-risk suppliers for Fourth Generation (4G) and 5G networks announced in 2022 were designed to consider impacts on Internet access in rural markets with timelines that allow for replacement of equipment by 2027. This allows for predictability and changes in accordance with capital upgrade cycles.

Additionally, Orders to implement these restrictions will be subject to further consultation. Bill C-26 also specifically requires the government to account for the operational and financial impacts on TSPs, as well as the provision of services in Canada, including rural communities.

It's interesting that the part which seems to have been redacted from the Bill C-8 GBA Plus document is the only part that contains information about potential negative effects on Canadians. Isn't this what GBA Plus analysis is actually supposed to be for?

Just like its meaningless Bill C-26 GBA Plus predecessor, there is only one mention of "women and girls" in Bill C-8's Gender-based Analysis Plus document. Why does this government continue to prepare these documents if they're so useless? Perhaps they're hoping no one actually reads them to know how purely performative they are. It's a pretty sad state of affairs for a Liberal government that continues to laud its own ostensibly "feminist" credentials.

Also, like with Bill C-26, the leader of the Carney government in the Senate did not speak on Bill C-8, nor did any members of his Liberal government caucus or group or whatever. So yet again, senators were denied the opportunity to ask questions of the government about an important and complex bill. In fact, since becoming the Senate government leader, Senator Moreau has delivered exactly zero second reading or third reading speeches in the Senate Chamber. It's quite shocking, honourable senators.

The Senate's lines of accountability have almost all evaporated, except for those of us on the opposition Conservative benches. When an "independent" senator is the sponsor of a government bill, they can't — and don't — answer for the government. When Bill C-8's sponsor, Senator McNair, responded to my questions after his sponsor speech this week, he said, "I don't speak for the . . . government . . ." The ability to ask the government questions and get answers from someone who is actually accountable to the government is fundamental to debate in the Senate Chamber.

More significant resources are available to the leader of the Carney government in the Senate than are available to other senators. As government Senate leader, Senator Moreau receives a \$1.5-million annual budget to stickhandle the government's legislation through the upper chamber, including many staffers designated for this purpose. So why is he silent when it comes time to explain to senators what the government's legislative agenda is that they expect us to vote on? And why do Senator Moreau and his Government Representative's Office, or GRO, group largely refuse to explain government legislation for Canadians' benefit? It's frustrating and, frankly, it's detrimental to this institution and our democracy.

Of course, it is not completely unexpected, given that Senator Moreau's Liberal leader, Prime Minister Mark Carney, shows a similar lack of interest in accountability in the House of Commons. In fact, Canadians are lucky if we see our Liberal Prime Minister in Parliament at all lately in between his various international jet-setting adventures or just dropping the puck at a hockey game.

In over a year as Canada's Prime Minister, Mark Carney has made only one full speech in Parliament, which was 11 months ago following the Throne Speech. That is appalling.

Instead, the Liberal government tends to let its legislation linger, and when they do finally call legislation forward, they try to push it through Parliament at breakneck speed. And what's the utterly predictable result of this legislative mismanagement? Mistakes. Bill C-26 was a perfect example of that.

When Bill C-26 was nearing its final stage in clause-by-clause study at Senate committee, it was discovered that the government's previously passed foreign interference bill — Bill C-70 — would effectively gut the core of the second part of Bill C-26, rendering it meaningless. As a result, clauses and sections of Bill C-26 had to be renumbered to address the mistake, and therefore the bill had to be amended in the Senate and returned to the House of Commons for review — a problem entirely of the Liberal government's own making. As we know, former prime minister Justin Trudeau then prorogued Parliament when he announced his resignation, which left Bill C-26 dead on the Order Paper.

What processes have this Liberal government established to ensure major mistakes like the Bill C-70 and Bill C-26 debacle never happen again? I fear absolutely none.

After the mistake was discovered during Senate committee study, I asked Liberal government officials that same question. I got zero clarity from them. Meanwhile, the Senate committee chair, Senator Yussuff, suggested a different tack, saying:

. . . when we scrutinize the bill again in the future and officials appear before us, perhaps we can start by asking them the question, "Are there any mistakes in this bill of which we should be aware?"

This hardly inspires confidence that this Liberal government will avoid such mistakes in future.

Furthermore, neither the Privacy Commissioner nor the Intelligence Commissioner was consulted about Bill C-8 by this Carney Liberal government until after the bill was introduced despite the criticism I raised about this in my speech at third reading on Bill C-26 in December 2024. So neither of these two important officials were consulted by the Carney Liberal government to improve this legislation in the serious ways they had requested. Instead, the government left the bill nearly unchanged.

Thankfully, the House of Commons made many significant improvements to Bill C-8. Among them was a Conservative amendment explicitly excluding lawful expression, political debate and persuasion from consideration as threats under this law. Others added: privacy and necessity as mandatory factors for consideration in the making of an order, require consent before releasing personal information and, in some cases, prohibit disclosure of personal data entirely. Another Conservative amendment required that grounds for ministerial actions should be reasonable, relevant to the gravity of the threat and necessary. Yet another stipulates that the threshold for action should be raised from simply "threat" to "serious and systemic"

threat. Amendments also clarified rules around the deletion of information once it is no longer needed for the purposes of the act.

These House of Commons committee amendments strengthened Bill C-8, creating guidelines and consideration for orders made under this law and better protecting the rights and information of Canadians who are subject to it. This is a vast improvement over Bill C-26.

And despite all the important amendments made at the House of Commons committee, a government official told me at the critic's briefing that the Charter Statement indicating compliance has not been and does not need to be updated. So none of the important amendments made strengthening this bill have diminished its Charter compliance. In fact, these House of Commons amendments created stronger protections for rights and freedoms in Bill C-8, thereby likely increasing the bill's Charter compliance.

However, significant problems still remain in Bill C-8. Conservative MPs had proposed amendments which would have required judicial authorization before orders are made. Unfortunately, these amendments were ruled out of order by the Speaker of the House of Commons. While the other amendments outlining boundaries on ministerial power in Bill C-8 are helpful, requiring judicial authorization for orders would provide better protection to ensure that government power is used responsibly.

• (1530)

We have certainly heard concerns about this lack of oversight before. When we were studying its predecessor Bill C-26 at the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs during the last Parliament, federal Intelligence Commissioner Simon Noël testified about the possibility of warrantless searches under Bill C-26, saying:

In the present bill, there is no such warrant requirement — except for dwellings or *maison d'habitation*. They make that exception. Everything else, when they go into the office of one of the regulators, the regulator will be able to go in and get what he wants. Normally, that would go against the Charter.

I've read the Charter Statement by the minister, and I haven't seen anything in that statement that would give a justification under section 1 of the Charter. I haven't seen anything. It's a first in Canada where anyone can go and search. And the Supreme Court of Canada is very private about this information. In this case, it's totally absent.

When he testified at the House of Commons Security Committee six months ago, Commissioner Noël testified that Bill C-8 still lacks protection against warrantless searches, saying:

With regard to the warrantless search and seizure, it really triggers section 8 of the charter. It's evident for any judge. It stands out, more so when there are penalties provided for that in the act. That triggers more—and that's the Supreme Court saying that.

If you look at what you have in this bill now, you don't have anything.

Government officials maintain that Bill C-8 will allow orders to collect only technical information, not personal information, but the Information Commissioner testified that personal or sensitive information can still get caught during the handling of technical information under Bill C-8, saying:

I heard the bureaucrats tell you earlier this week that it's technical information. I agree that it's technical information, but I also know that if you want a positive result on an incident of such importance, they need to go into the content. I've seen it in every cyber-operation I've been involved in.

You're asking me if there are other types. . . . it's clear that warrantless search and seizure creates a problem. . . .

Later in the meeting, Commissioner Noël continued:

In my experience, in a very short answer, on at least 12 cyber-incidents in Canada, there was, at the end, intrusion into content to the point that these intrusions into content were reported to the appropriate bodies. . . .

That is my own experience, as a Canadian being in a very special position. I'm not saying that it's with all the technical information, but I'm saying, on an exceptional basis, content is shown.

There is, therefore, a need for increased oversight before the government conducts actions under this bill, not just review after orders have already been made and carried out. Without additional protection on the front end, the government can abuse its powers, and Canadians might only find out after the fact.

Unfortunately, I also still have concerns about the efficacy of the existing review provisions in Bill C-8. The bill contains a requirement to notify the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA, after orders have been made. However, these measures are inadequate. NSICOP has essentially been muzzled in recent years, as we saw during the foreign interference inquiry. NSIRA has been affected adversely in recent years by budget cuts, and even they have noted that budgetary constraints will prohibit them from doing all the work they should be. The Vice-Chair of NSIRA recently said his team will “. . . have to make difficult decisions” about the reviews it takes on. Of course, the members of NSIRA are appointed by Liberal Prime Minister Carney, and they answer to him, so there is a considerable lack of transparency with this process, as well.

Law Professor Matt Malone shares many of these concerns regarding Bill C-8. He says bluntly, “In my view, a lack of oversight combined with a far-from-robust review mechanism is a recipe for disaster.” Professor Malone is also concerned that this threatens to make our privacy and data standards incongruent with those in Europe. At a time when Canada is looking to increase partnerships with non-American nations, this is obviously worrying.

In an academic paper on the topic published in 2025, Professor Malone wrote:

The European Commission has the power to make so-called “adequacy” decisions — determinations that foreign jurisdictions “adequately” protect Europeans’ data when it flows out of the EU to other countries.

While it may sound dully technical, in the data economy, securing an “adequacy” decision from the EU is a vital prerequisite to a strong trading relationship.

He also said:

In the event the European Union were to find Canada’s privacy framework lacking, this could upend the foundation upon which cross-border data flows between the two blocs now occur. In turn, that could create enormous uncertainty for Canadian actors in the digital economy. . . .

If we get this bill wrong, honourable senators, it could have significant repercussions for Canada’s future.

The Liberal government has taken 10 years to get a cybersecurity bill passed through Parliament. Their legislation before now has simply been inadequate. There is no question that Canada is long overdue for strengthening the law to protect cybersecurity in our critical systems and industries, but we must also be sure that the legislation we pass will appropriately safeguard the rights, freedoms and privacy of Canadian citizens. While our colleagues in the House of Commons have made significant improvements in this regard through amendments, I look forward to rigorously studying Bill C-8 at committee to ensure this legislation has the proper oversight Canadians expect and deserve.

Thank you.

**Hon. Percy E. Downe:** Would Senator Batters take a question?

**Senator Batters:** Yes.

**Senator Downe:** Thank you for your entertaining and partisan speech. I always enjoy hearing a partisan speech. It has been a long time since I heard one in the Senate.

You did mention, however, that, in your opinion, Prime Minister Carney is jet-setting around the world. Do you share my view that the purpose of those trips is to expand Canadian trade to protect Canadian jobs and Canadians, given what is going on with our affairs with the United States?

**Senator Batters:** That doesn’t really have a lot to do with Bill C-8, but that is what he says he is doing. I look forward not only to some trips around that but also some to the United States to ensure that our relationship with our largest trading partner is also significantly helped.

**Senator Downe:** Senator Batters, you’re from Saskatchewan. You must be aware that, in March 2026, Prime Minister Carney went to India. On that trip, he signed agreements worth \$5.5 billion, including one for \$2.6 billion that directly benefits uranium suppliers from Saskatchewan. That’s a direct benefit to your province. Surely, you would support that jet-setting trip, would you not?

**Senator Batters:** Again, that does not really have anything to do with Bill C-8, but that’s fine.

Certainly, yes, Saskatchewan has important trading relationships around the world, but we also have a very important trading relationship with the United States. Therefore, I would like to know what Prime Minister Carney is actually doing with the United States because, right now, as one of my colleagues in the House of Commons said the other day, we know more about what Mexico and the United States are talking about than Canada.

**Senator Downe:** Would you not agree, though, with Premier of Saskatchewan Scott Moe, who was present for the signing in India? He described the deal as a significant boost for the province’s uranium sector, which is the sole producer of uranium in Canada. Maybe it’s different in your province, but every trade deal that happens in Prince Edward Island benefits Prince Edward Island, benefits the workers and economy of P.E.I.

Don’t you agree that this was a significant deal that Prime Minister Carney was able to sign?

**Senator Batters:** I’m not sure if it’s resulted in more than an MOU at this point, so we’ll wait to see some actual details. Obviously, uranium is an extremely important product for Saskatchewan, as are potash and energy. Unfortunately, the Liberal government over the past 10 years has put so many terrible anti-energy laws into place, like Bill C-69, Bill C-48 — I could go on and on. The industrial carbon tax continues — we want to make sure, in Saskatchewan, that all these things are helped, including our very important agricultural industry.

**Senator Downe:** Senator Batters, you would be pleased: I was listening very carefully to your speech. Another part of an aside was that Prime Minister Carney is out dropping pucks at hockey games. I'm sure you recall when former Prime Minister Harper got into some trouble for taking the government jet with his family members to go to a hockey game, but that was in the United States, not in Canada. I don't think Prime Minister Carney has dropped a puck outside Canada. Would you urge him to go to the United States to do that?

**Senator Batters:** I believe that Prime Minister Carney actually did just make a trip to Boston to see one of his kids. Regarding the puck-dropping that he just performed, he skipped Question Period to do that. I certainly think that Prime Minister Harper never did that.

• (1540)

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

**Hon. Senators:** Question.

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

**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 pro tempore:** Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the third time?

(On motion of Senator McNair, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs.)

#### ADJOURNMENT

#### MOTION ADOPTED

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate),** pursuant to notice of April 22, 2026, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at 2 p.m.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

#### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Joan Kingston:** Honourable senators, I ask for leave of the Senate that Order No. 18 under the rubric Senate Public Bills – Second Reading and Inquiries No. 1 and No. 8 under the rubric Other Business be brought forward and called now.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

**The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore:** Leave is granted.

#### WARTIME SERVICE RECOGNITION BILL

##### SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

**Hon. Hassan Yussuff** moved second reading of Bill S-246, An Act respecting the recognition of wartime service.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak at second reading of the wartime service recognition act.

At its core, this bill addresses a simple but profound question: How do we, as a country, recognize the service and sacrifice of those who served in uniform and were sent into harm's way?

For many Canadians, the answer seems obvious. When we think of conflicts like the Persian Gulf or Afghanistan, we think of war. We think of those who served in uniform, operating in dangerous conditions, facing real risks and, in some cases, making the ultimate sacrifice.

But here is the reality: Canada has not formally designated wartime service since the Korean War. That gap between what Canadians believe and what our system recognizes is what this bill seeks to address.

This is not about rewriting history. It is not about assigning labels after the fact. And, to be clear, this bill does not create new or affect any existing benefits or pensions in any way. It does not amend the Veterans Well-being Act or the Pension Act. It is not about compensation; it is about recognition. It is about ensuring that when those in uniform are sent into combat or combat-like conditions, their service is assessed based on what they actually faced, not what the mission was called at the time. As one veteran put it, "We didn't need someone to declare it a war for it to feel like one."

Honourable senators, recognition does matter. This is not an abstract issue. It is about the men and women in uniform whom we ask to serve. It is about those who lived through these experiences and who continue to live with them.

As Afghanistan veteran Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Dean Tremblay said, “We were at war. We were engaged . . . daily . . . against a determined and armed enemy,” and dependent on trust in one another, the chain of command and Canada itself.

That trust matters, and recognition is part of that trust.

This bill is grounded in a simple principle: Recognition should reflect what those in uniform were sent to do, what they faced, not what the missions were called. This is the principle before us today.

Colleagues, the gap that this bill addresses did not emerge overnight. It reflects how the nature of conflict has changed and how our systems have not kept pace.

Since the Korean War, Canada has participated in numerous operations that involved real risk, real danger and real sacrifice. In Afghanistan alone, 158 Canadian Armed Forces members lost their lives. Thousands more returned home with physical and psychological injuries.

In the Persian Gulf, Canadian forces were engaged in combat operations, enforcing sanctions, conducting air missions and operating in environments where the threat to life was real and constant. Yet, despite these realities, our system has not formally recognized this service as wartime service.

This has created inconsistency. It has created confusion. Most importantly, it has created a gap between lived experience and official recognition. That is the gap this bill seeks to close.

One Persian Gulf War veteran, Warrant Officer (Retired) Mike McGlennon, described the moment he realized the gap between what he lived and what the system recognized. He recalled a conversation years later with a fellow veteran: “We went to war, right?” “Yes, of course.” “Well, according to the government, we have never been to war.” He described that moment as feeling “. . . like I had just been punched in the face.”

Honourable senators, this is what a lack of recognition feels like.

Mr. McGlennon went on to describe what many veterans experience as a result: a loss of pride, a sense of disconnect, even what clinicians now understand as moral injury.

This bill is about preventing that. Persian Gulf veterans have been clear that what they experienced was war in every meaningful sense. Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada said the following about this bill: “This framework addresses historical oversights and ensures veterans’ service is recognized with the dignity, consistency and accuracy it deserves.”

This bill is deliberately focused and deliberately disciplined. It does not create new or affect any existing benefits, pensions or compensation. It does not amend the Veterans Well-being Act or the Pension Act. Those are important questions, but they are not the question before us, colleagues.

• (1550)

The question before us is simple: Does Canada recognize wartime service based on what those in uniform were sent to do and what they faced?

This bill ensures that question is answered clearly, consistently and transparently. The bill does not attempt to declare specific missions as wartime service. Instead, it establishes a national framework, one that is structured, principled and grounded in evidence. At its heart, this bill says something very simple: Recognition should be based on what those in uniform actually faced.

The objective criteria in the bill focus on the conditions of service and include: exposure to hostile or life-threatening environments; the nature, scale, duration and intensity of operations; exposure to conditions capable of causing physical or psychological injury; and the presence of armed conflict.

As Afghanistan veteran Colonel (Retired) Mark Gasparotto noted in reflecting on military service:

Unlimited liability means the legal requirement for CAF members to accept that . . . they may have to risk their lives . . . to achieve success in the military missions assigned by the Government of Canada.

Honourable senators, if we ask those in uniform to accept that level of responsibility, we must ensure that their service is recognized based on the reality of what they actually faced.

The bill’s four criteria are not arbitrary. They reflect, in part, the findings of the Standing House of Commons Committee on Veterans Affairs, which emphasized that recognition must be based on what those in uniform experienced, not how missions were labelled. They draw from how our allies, like Australia, assess service: based on risk, conditions and exposure to harm.

But let me be clear: This bill does not import another country’s system. It takes inspiration from best practices and adapts them to the Canadian context. Importantly, these criteria are not the final word. They are a floor. The bill requires the government to develop the full framework through mandatory consultation with veterans, the Canadian Armed Forces, Veterans Affairs, military experts and historians and other stakeholders, including those who served alongside or in support of Canadian Armed Forces operations.

This includes, in a respectful and appropriate way, acknowledging that others — such as members of the RCMP — have, in some cases, served in support of Canadian military operations. The bill does not predetermine outcomes, but it ensures those voices are heard in the development of the framework. This is how we get it right: by grounding decisions in lived experience, informed expertise and open consultation.

The bill also establishes clear timelines. Within one year, the government must develop and table the framework. Within 180 days after that, it must review all Canadian Armed Forces operations since July 27, 1953. Going forward, operations must be assessed within a defined period. These timelines matter. They ensure this work is not delayed or deferred. For every day we wait, another veteran dies, and of course, their service is not acknowledged.

This work will not sit on a shelf.

Equally important is transparency. The bill requires that recommendations be made public, along with a clear explanation of how the criteria were applied. It requires the creation of a consolidated, publicly accessible list of all operations reviewed and their status. This is about accountability. Decisions will no longer happen behind closed doors. They will be public, explained and accounted for.

Honourable senators, this approach reflects a broader principle: that recognition should not depend on discretion alone. It should follow from a clear, consistent and transparent process.

Some may ask why this matters. It matters because recognition is not symbolic in the abstract. It is personal. It speaks to whether those who served feel that their country understands what they were asked to do.

In Afghanistan, 158 Canadian Armed Forces members lost their lives. Thousands more returned home with injuries, both visible and invisible. But beyond the numbers is the lived reality.

As Afghanistan veteran Mark Gasparotto put it:

We knew what we were in. We were fighting a determined enemy. This was not theoretical risk. This was daily reality.

Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) Tremblay reflected not just on the battlefield, but on the lasting impact:

That trust extended beyond the battlefield to our families, who carried the burden of uncertainty, separation and long-term consequences long after deployments ended.

Honourable senators, this bill is about ensuring the reality of Canadian Armed Forces members is recognized. This bill does not seek to reopen old debates, assign blame or dictate outcomes. What it does is create a fair and structured way to assess service, one that reflects the realities of modern conflict.

It also aligns with commitments already made. In their 2025 election platform, the government committed to expanding recognition of service by reviewing the designation of certain missions, including in the Persian Gulf, to ensure that veterans' sacrifices in conflict zones are properly recognized.

This bill gives effect to that commitment in a way that is transparent, accountable and grounded in principle. It does so while respecting the roles of government. The Minister of National Defence assesses and makes recommendations. Cabinet makes final decisions. What changes is not who decides but how those decisions are made.

Colleagues, let me conclude. At its heart, this bill is about fairness and respect for veterans and those who served in uniform. It is about ensuring that those who served in comparable conditions are recognized in a comparable way. It is about closing a gap that has existed for decades, quietly but meaningfully, for those who lived it. It is also about who we are as a country and our commitment to those who serve.

We often speak, rightly, of Canadian values: service, sacrifice and responsibility. We take pride in the men and women who wear the uniform, who represent Canada abroad and who accept risks on our behalf. But pride must be matched by recognition. When we send those in uniform into dangerous and uncertain environments, we carry a responsibility not only to support them while they serve but also to recognize that service fully and honestly when they return. This bill is one step toward meeting that responsibility.

Let me be clear: This bill does not create new benefits or pensions. It is about recognition and recognition alone. It also does not claim to answer every question. It does not attempt to settle every debate. But it does establish a path forward grounded in fairness, transparency and respect. It is a path that says: We will look at what you face when we send you on a mission, listen to your experience and ensure that recognition reflects that reality.

Honourable senators, we ask Canadians in uniform to accept unlimited liability, to go where they are sent, to face risks most of us will never know and to do so in service of this great country of ours. In return, we owe them something fundamental: recognition that reflects the reality of their service.

Colleagues, this is not about how service was labelled. It is about whether we are prepared to recognize it for what it was — and to do so fairly, consistently and without hesitation. That is the standard this bill sets, and it is one we should meet.

Thank you.

**Hon. Peter Harder (The Hon. the Acting Speaker):** Senator Yussuff, will you take a question?

• (1600)

**Senator Yussuff:** Yes.

**Hon. Rodger Cuzner:** Thank you very much.

Would you share with your Senate colleagues who would initially be advocating for this bill in the early stages here, and whether anybody would oppose the idea of a bill such as this one?

**Senator Yussuff:** Thank you.

The veterans who came to talk to me about this were Persian Gulf veterans. Before they came to see me in my office, they spent eight years advocating for the government to recognize their service and do the appropriate thing.

As they were telling me their stories, I was scratching my head out of disbelief about what I was hearing, but, more importantly, about why it seemed so complicated. Since the Korean War, I believe we have sent many of our Armed Forces members into battle on behalf of our nation. It seems very logical to me that when they come home, we should recognize them for their contribution on behalf of our nation and do so in a way that respects the reality of our values as a country. Despite their best advocacy, that has not happened.

It was on their behalf that we drafted this bill. They were very clear about one thing: While they were advocating for themselves — they have an organization called the Persian Gulf Veterans of Canada — they wanted to ensure that all those who had served before them, and those who will serve after them, are equally recognized. They said:

Senator, if you could draft a bill to reflect that reality, not only would you be serving us, but you would be serving all veterans who are relying on the good service of parliamentarians to do the right thing.

(On motion of Senator Carignan, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

#### NEED FOR SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

**Hon. René Cormier:** Honourable senators, on this World Book and Copyright Day, I rise to speak to Senator Moodie's inquiry on the safe and productive development and use of artificial intelligence in Canada.

First, I want to thank Senator Moodie for initiating this inquiry, which today touches on all aspects of human activity to a degree and at speeds which we are now beginning to grasp. In fact, given the exponential pace of AI's evolution, I fear that

some information in my speech could be out of date by the time I finish. This should give you some idea of the urgency of addressing this question.

During this inquiry, a number of our colleagues have discussed issues such as security, innovation, regulation, rights and sovereignty. Others have taken positions in favour of AI culture, and I thank them for that. With this in mind, I want to share my thoughts, which I am sure will gain from further study in the months to come.

Vaclav Havel, Czech playwright, essayist and statesman, wrote that culture is the conscience of the nation. If that is true, and I believe it is, then the technological revolution transforming culture deserves the full attention of the Senate of Canada and proactive intervention by the Canadian state.

Recognizing that AI is already transforming our relationship with culture, language and creativity — in other words, our relationship with human expression — the fundamental question is this: What becomes of a society and its cultural sovereignty when technological advancements tend to shape its memory, its narratives, its aesthetics, its linguistic diversity and its collective imagination?

AI does not merely affect our jobs and markets. It influences what we see, hear, read and create, and ultimately, what we pass on to others. The debate around AI goes far beyond technical and commercial considerations. It is cultural, democratic and profoundly human.

Yes, it is also economic.

[*English*]

Colleagues, let us remember that Canadian culture contributes more than \$65 billion to our GDP and supports nearly 700,000 jobs. It generates more employment output per dollar than several sectors often regarded as foundational, including oil and gas, manufacturing and agriculture. We should never lose sight of that.

Artificial intelligence generates immense economic value; yet, much of that value is drawn from generations of human creation: books, songs, films, images, archives, catalogues, columns and creative expertise. In other words, a portion of AI's new wealth is built upon an older and deeper wealth created by artists, authors, performers, designers and cultural workers. Yet, in too many instances, that value is being captured without clear consent, fair compensation or meaningful transparency. Honourable colleagues, that is what is truly at stake here.

[*Translation*]

When we trivialize the extraction of cultural value in the long term, we undermine creation itself, and a country that weakens its creators impoverishes itself far beyond what any balance sheet will show. Such a country jeopardizes its ability to imagine, its ability to innovate and, eventually, its cultural sovereignty. When used as a tool, AI can clearly support human creativity, but when used as a substitute, it calls into question the place of humans in the creative process.

In reference to a bill on the use of cultural content by AI providers, my friend, French senator Catherine Morin-Desailly, said, and I quote:

By making no demands and accepting a lack of transparency, culture is engineering its own extinction by AI.

Senators, her statement is an important wake-up call because we are not talking about sudden extinction, but a gradual, almost imperceptible disappearance as the symbolic value of human creation gets lost in a flood of standardized content.

Can we really say that a work generated without human intent has the same cultural value as one born from the imagination of an artist or creator? If the answer is no, then, sooner or later, we need to ask ourselves another even more troubling question: Does our legal framework adequately protect and recognize the status and place of artists in our society and in an ecosystem dominated by AI? I have my doubts.

The culture that inspires, entertains and defines us is built on the work of creators. Their work belongs to them. It's protected by laws and governed by a licensing market that regulates its use.

Artificial intelligence is now upsetting this balance. AI systems are trained on massive quantities of data, including protected works such as books, images, music and films. Unlike occasional human use, this constitutes industrial, systematic and often invisible exploitation that, for many creators, amounts to plundering. In the majority of cases, creators are neither consulted, nor remunerated, nor informed.

Furthermore, as advocated by the Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the CDCE, and the recent report by Heritage Canada entitled "Impacts of Artificial Intelligence on the Creative Industries," Canada's future AI strategy must uphold three fundamental principles: authorization, remuneration and transparency.

Authorization, because a creator must be able to choose whether their work can be used to train an AI. This choice lies at the very heart of intellectual property. Without choice, it's no longer sharing or innovation; it's appropriation. Plundering artists' works without consent is an exploitative practice that has no place in a society governed by the rule of law.

Remuneration is the second principle, because if a work helps create value, even indirectly, its author must benefit from it. AI must not become a mechanism that captures cultural wealth without ever redistributing it.

The third and final principle is transparency, because without transparency, there can be neither trust nor accountability. Creators need to know whether their works are being used, how they are being used and under what conditions

• (1610)

Honourable senators, addressing these issues is all the more urgent as new problems are emerging. AI technologies now make it possible to generate deepfakes, that is, to imitate an artist's style and reproduce a voice or image with unsettling realism. This goes beyond a mere economic issue. This is a matter of

moral rights, specifically the right to the work's integrity and the right to the artist's identity. When AI imitates a style, reproduces a voice or misappropriates an image without consent, it severs the fundamental link between a person and what represents them.

[English]

Until recently, the meeting place between an artwork and its audience relied on institutions such as bookstores, concert halls, radio stations and broadcasters. Today, that encounter often depends on a line of code. It is no longer publishers, cultural programmers, critics or arts organizations only that guide public attention towards artworks. It is also recommendation systems designed to maximize clicks, screen time and retention.

So the question we must ask is this: Who now decides what deserves to be seen, heard or read?

As UNESCO observed in its 2018 report entitled *Culture, Platforms and Machines*, when the circulation of cultural works is essentially in the hands of a few dominant platforms, and when their algorithms reward uniformity, the diversity of cultural expression begins to erode. The capacity to discover unfamiliar works slowly disappears. And a culture that cannot be found is a culture at risk. In the age of artificial intelligence, the very existence of a work increasingly depends on its discoverability.

[Translation]

This diversity is also reflected in language. In that respect, AI offers some exciting possibilities. It can write, translate, make recommendations and summarize, but in which language?

Australian researchers estimate that over 90% of AI training is based on English-language data, specifically American English data. When a single language and culture dominate the data, they also dominate the responses, references and nuances.

The risk to the French language and its variants in Canada is clear: The language will remain present on the surface but will be absent at a deeper level. French will become a language of translation rather than a language of creation.

How can we ensure that the French language, in all of its diversity, is genuinely represented on AI platforms? That can be done by investing in high-quality corpora, supporting AI research in French, including francophone minority communities and Quebec in consultation and data training processes and leveraging the government's purchasing power to demand truly effective French-language tools.

AI can either serve as a tool for linguistic vitality, both for the French language and Indigenous languages, or it can become a force for assimilation. That choice is ours to make as a society.

[English]

As artificial intelligence advances, not all participants enter this new era on equal footing. Large institutions have legal teams, innovation budgets and access to technical expertise. Independent artists, small publishers, regional professional theatre companies and community museums have far fewer resources.

The risk is, therefore, twofold: A technological divide can quickly become a cultural divide. If only the best-financed can create, produce and be visible through AI, then the next generation of talent may disappear before it is ever seen or heard.

[*Translation*]

The government's role and responsibility in this regard are clear: ensure a plurality of voices in AI. This requires robust support programs for small organizations, affordable access to tools and training, shared resources in terms of data and expertise, and targeted support for independent creators and under-represented communities.

It also means that, when negotiating licences with major platforms, AI must be developed, trained and operated in a way that preserves, represents and strengthens cultural diversity without imposing a single cultural norm or unduly exploiting shared heritage. There must also be transparent mechanisms for oversight, correction and value-sharing.

Honourable senators, Canada is a recognized leader in AI. Our researchers, universities and companies are helping to advance this field, and that is something our country can be proud of.

Now that AI exists and is advancing at breakneck speed, the real question is this: What role will we play in governing it? If we do not make our own rules, we will import the rules of others. If we do not defend our languages, our markets and our creators, other priorities will take their place.

Canada has a unique strength: It knows how to balance innovation, diversity, bilingualism, cultural pluralism and the rule of law. We must therefore fully incorporate culture, official languages and Indigenous languages into any future Canadian strategy addressing artificial intelligence, not on the sidelines, but at the centre of things.

Canada does not have to choose between technological leadership and cultural leadership. In the 21st century, the two are inextricably linked.

Let's preserve cultural diversity and also profit from the untold opportunities that AI has to offer.

During the National Summit on Artificial Intelligence and Culture held in Banff, which I had the pleasure of attending last month, three verbs took centre stage: build, empower and protect. Building trustworthy innovation, empowering creative talent and protecting what binds us together: our languages, our creations and our collective imagination.

Properly managed, AI can expand access to creation, enhance the capacity of our creators, supercharge our use of knowledge and advance knowledge.

French writer, politician and intellectual André Malraux said that "Art is the shortest distance between two people." Let's ensure that AI serves rather than replaces this path. Let's follow the example of the Haudenosaunee people, who teach us to think seven generations ahead before we act.

In response to AI, this wisdom has never been more timely. The choice is ours. Let's make sure that it's a choice worthy of future generations.

Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

## NATION-BUILDING VALUE OF TOURISM

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

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

**Hon. Krista Ross:** Honourable senators, I rise today at the end of National Tourism Week to speak to Senator Sorensen's inquiry calling the attention of the Senate to the nation-building value of tourism in Canada.

Recently, Senator Sorensen hosted members of Parliament and senators in the Parliamentary Tourism Caucus, where we heard from the President and CEO of Destination Canada. She told us tourism contributes \$130 billion annually to the Canadian economy. Tourism includes 265,800 businesses in 5,000 communities, and one in 10 jobs in Canada rely on tourism.

Her speech in November touched on the impact of tourism from coast to coast to coast, in large cities and rural towns, from cultural festivals to local attractions. She asked us here in this chamber to highlight what tourism means in our communities — the landmarks, the businesses and regional cultures.

As you're aware, I hail from New Brunswick, in Atlantic Canada. You may be thinking, "What's in New Brunswick? Why would I go there?" Well, I'm going to tell you.

Tourism isn't just about skiing in the mountains of the West or going to large events like the Calgary Stampede. It isn't just visiting large urban centres like Toronto or Montreal. In smaller provinces, tourism is often focused on local activities and outdoor experiences.

Visitors choose New Brunswick for outdoor adventure, activities like snowmobiling, hunting, fishing and, increasingly, mountain biking, hiking, wellness and cultural experiences.

We have a proud and vibrant Acadian community — from the North Shore and Acadian Peninsula to the Southeast region, whose history dates back hundreds of years. Many museums and historic sites bring the Acadians' history to life, while restaurants, music, arts and other attractions provide a distinctively modern connection to the past. Tourists visit the Acadian Historical Village, Le Pays de la Sagouine, the annual Festival acadien de Caraquet and so many more places and events.

• (1620)

There is the Bay of Fundy where tides can rise an unbelievable 16 metres, with 160 billion tonnes of sea water going in and out of the bay twice a day. One of the best-known sites, Hopewell Rocks Provincial Park, lets you walk on the sea floor around giant sea stack monoliths.

From the lava spires on Grand Manan Island to the rocky shoreline of the Fundy Footpath and the sandy beaches of the Northumberland Strait, New Brunswick has beautiful coasts to explore outdoors. You can hike the Maritimes' highest peak. You can swim in Canada's warmest salt water. You can downhill ski in the Appalachian Mountains. It's all in New Brunswick.

There are also more than 15 First Nations communities — including the Mi'kmaq and the Wolastoqiyik — that have called the province home for thousands of years. In fact, New Brunswick has more Indigenous-named landmarks, rivers and towns than any other Atlantic province. There are so many Indigenous cultural festivals throughout the year, including in my hometown of Fredericton, where I always enjoy attending the Sitansisk (St. Mary's First Nation) annual powwow in June.

Fredericton is known as a historic riverside city boasting a vibrant arts scene. It is the craft brewing capital of Atlantic Canada. It has 120 kilometres of walking trails, the world-renowned Beaverbrook Art Gallery and our annual Harvest Music Festival which, incidentally, takes place this year from September 15 to 20, and the lineup this year features acts like the Barenaked Ladies, Graham Nash, The Beaches, Sloan, Drive-By Truckers and many more great acts.

There is our Historic Garrison District, complete with Changing of the Guard ceremonies daily in the summer months. And just a few steps away, there is Kings Landing, an exceptional 19th-century living history museum. All this provides not only a beautiful place to live but also a wonderful place to visit. Colleagues, any time you would like to visit, just let me know.

Bringing it around to the economic impact, according to our provincial tourism strategy, in 2024, tourism contributed \$2.5 billion to the New Brunswick economy and supported nearly 30,000 jobs across the province. It boosts exports, fuels small business growth and brings energy to our regions and communities. More than 90% of New Brunswickers say tourism supports the provincial economy, and we take pride in showing off our home province.

Ultimately, tourism is about people, and New Brunswickers help make our province a place worth visiting. Every friendly welcome, every local recommendation and every moment of shared pride shapes how visitors experience our province. When we are proud to share where we come from, that pride becomes part of the story that visitors take with them.

Thank you. *Wela'lin.*

(On motion of Senator White, debate adjourned.)

#### BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

**Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate):** Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-13(2), I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

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

**Hon. Senators:** Agreed.

(At 4:23 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at 2 p.m.)

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<b>Bill Respecting Cyber Security, Amending the Telecommunications Act and Making Consequential Amendments to Other Acts (Bill C-8)</b>		Hon. Hassan Yussuff . . . . .	2164
Second Reading		Hon. Peter Harder . . . . .	2166
Hon. Denise Batters . . . . .	2159	Hon. Rodger Cuzner. . . . .	2167
Hon. Percy E. Downe . . . . .	2163		
Referred to Committee . . . . .	2164	<b>Need for Safe and Productive Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence</b>	
<b>Adjournment</b>		Inquiry—Debate Continued	
Motion Adopted		Hon. René Cormier . . . . .	2167
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