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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, May 7, 2026

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I received a notice from the Facilitator of the Independent Senators Group, 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 Stan Kutcher. 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.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE STAN KUTCHER

Hon. Lucie Moncion: Honourable senators, on behalf of the Independent Senators Group, or ISG, I have the immense privilege to pay tribute to Senator Stan Kutcher. Today, we celebrate not only a remarkable career but also a man of profound humanity, gifted with the ability to connect with others and forge genuine bonds.

A renowned psychiatrist and professor, Senator Kutcher has brought essential rigour to legislative work. He has reminded us that understanding must precede judgment and that rigorous analysis is the prerequisite for informed decision making. He has consistently emphasized the need to overcome biases, question assumptions and rely on evidence.

An approachable and deeply compassionate colleague, Senator Kutcher combines intellectual rigour with a sense of humour, even when addressing the most complex issues. His ability to bridge the gap between knowledge and people has made him a highly respected voice in this chamber.

During his eight years in the Senate, he has consistently championed youth mental health and helped advance national discussions, particularly on suicide prevention and medical

assistance in dying. He has played a key role in the fight against misinformation, notably through his involvement with ScienceUpFirst.

He has also demonstrated his commitment to Ukraine, turning his family roots into concrete action and speaking out forcefully for the freedom and dignity of the Ukrainian people.

Senator Kutcher, we will continue to echo your enlightened and wise voice in our work. Your voice will also remind us that politics, at its best, is rooted in intellectual curiosity, compassion, the courage to do things differently and, of course, a touch of humour. In these times, your reflections on the importance of democracy and the essential role of an independent Senate will certainly continue to resonate in this chamber.

On behalf of your ISG family, please accept our deepest and most heartfelt thanks. Your dedication has touched us in ways that go far beyond your remarkable contributions to our institution. Each of us has been enriched by your presence, your generosity of spirit and your unwavering commitment.

You are one of those rare individuals whose kindness and integrity leave a lasting imprint not only on the places you serve but also on the people fortunate enough to know you and work alongside you.

We will miss you, dear Stan.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, in Stan Kutcher's office, there is a framed print that reads, "Calm seas never made a skilled sailor." Stan has navigated the sometimes raucous seas of the Senate for some time and has now set the course for home and family.

Today, on behalf of the Government Representative's Office, I would like to express our gratitude for the journey he has shared with us.

Shortly after he and I made our entrance to this chamber with Senators Moodie and Anderson, Stan's caring collegiality was immediately evident. He and former MP Ya'ara Saks produced the *Mental Health Handbook* just for us — well, and the other place, too — parliamentarians and, more importantly, for our staff as well.

Stan's legacy in Parliament is far more than this handbook. His mentorship and kind tutelage of young people, staff and younger parliamentarians will be forever appreciated by the staff as they continue their careers and by Canadians as we parliamentarians grow in our understanding that health is mental health.

A skilled sailor, Stan Kutcher's expertise and passion for mental health include an appreciation for our vast country. As we were waiting to enter this chamber for the first time, I shared with Stan that I was from the Yukon. I was already respectful of his incredible caring skills. He reminded me of a study from his

work at Dalhousie, published in the *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, entitled *Do National Frameworks Help in Local Policy Development? Lessons from Yukon about the Evergreen Child and Youth Mental Health Framework*.

Senator Kutcher, your work and your words continue to resonate throughout our country and in this chamber. May I remind our colleagues of your words in this chamber? You said:

. . . I see our country through the metaphor of a tapestry. Each unique thread is woven together with many other unique threads. Each thread strengthens others and, in turn, is strengthened by other threads. These threads hold us together instead of pulling us apart. These are the ties that bind us together.

Senator Kutcher, your thread in the chamber's red tapestry has been many colours, most especially blue and yellow. A tireless voice for Ukraine, we share your heartache. You have called upon us all to do more. We have heard you. Your voice for Ukraine continues to resonate.

Whether he is standing with Ukraine, addressing neglected tropical diseases, helping family members find peace in their loved ones' final moments or mentoring, Senator Kutcher has conducted himself with unwavering and unrelenting moral strength. Standing up every time duty called to remind this chamber and the country that we can and must hold ourselves to the highest moral and ethical rigour and that our actions can change the world for the better, Stan Kutcher did not despair and he did not pass the buck. Rather, he helped us all to be good sailors in these sometimes rough seas.

• (1340)

Now, Stan, as you find your way to shore with your family, on behalf of the Senate and all Canadians, we are grateful to you for your service and to your loved ones for loaning you to us.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute, on behalf of the Conservative caucus, to Senator Stanley Kutcher, a physician, a scholar and, above all, a champion for youth mental health.

Many people know Senator Kutcher for his distinguished career in psychiatry and for his advocacy on the mental health and dignity of young people. Some may know his affinity for the arts — something the two of us have in common. In this chamber, we also know him for his fierce advocacy for Ukraine and displaced Ukrainians. But what I will remember most about him is something quieter but no less extraordinary. I will remember his kindness and the way he listens, analyzes and responds in a calm, respectful way.

Senator Kutcher and I had a conversation earlier in the week. Like so many in this place, I found in him someone willing to listen fully before speaking. There was no rush and no attempt to dominate the conversation. Instead, I was met with patience, thoughtfulness and a genuine desire to help. Somehow, by the end of that conversation, he had put my mind at ease. That is a rare gift.

In a place as demanding as this chamber, where people often carry burdens quietly, Senator Kutcher has always been someone others can turn to. He responds to people with steadiness and compassion, often in ways that happen far from public view. That quiet generosity has touched more people than he likely realizes.

Colleagues, public service is not only measured by the speeches delivered or the policies advanced. Sometimes it is measured in the moments when one person helps another carry the weight of a difficult day. Senator Kutcher has done that for many of us.

A few years ago, after a trip to Pakistan, I brought home some traditional hats called the *pakol*. We give them to people whom we want to honour. I gave one of those hats to Senator Kutcher. Senator Kutcher, I honoured you then as I honour you now.

As you turn to another chapter in your life, I want you to know how much you are appreciated for your wisdom, your compassion and your calm strength. You will be missed.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Colin Deacon: Honourable senators, one Sunday afternoon during the 2011 federal election campaign, our doorbell rang. It was in the midst of an April shower. Others might call it a torrential downpour. Opening the door, I was marginally relieved to not find Jehovah's Witnesses but two completely sodden politicians: former senator Jim Cowan and the Liberal candidate for Halifax, Dr. Stan Kutcher. We've all experienced the sincerity of Stan's enthusiasm. Impressively, this day was no different. Jim, however, was not nearly as convincing. But enthusiasm only gets you so far in life. Stan lost that election by a narrow 26-point margin. Yet he remained undeterred, ultimately throwing his hat back into the political ring, but this time — smartly — as an unelected politician.

Stan arrived in this chamber as a world-renowned academic in the field of child and youth mental health. Well before ever meeting him, I was inspired by Stan's determination to find innovative ways to scale his knowledge. Understanding there would never be enough psychiatrists, he worked to bring effective treatment to the front lines through education in Nova Scotia's junior high schools, high schools and universities. Today, his work continues across Canada and in over 20 countries globally in K to 12 settings and post-secondary settings. Stan's practical and transformative approach to problems, together with his innovative mindset, introduces a type of thinking that's needed across the public service. Stan is a doer. When he sees a problem, he gets to work fixing it and doesn't wait for the red tape to be cleared.

Stan's voice brought candour, scientific grounding and humour to this chamber. Above all, his voice brought humanity. That was never more evident than during our exceptionally weighty debates on medical assistance in dying during the Forty-third Parliament. His thoughtful contributions to the Bill C-7 debate were measured and deeply informed by evidence and compassion.

Needless to say, I've been a big fan of Stan for a long time. Stan was appointed six months after me, and I quickly called to congratulate him. We decided to go to lunch a few days later, where Stan peppered me with questions about the Senate. Now, in my defence, trying to explain the logic underlying the Senate's culture to a psychiatrist is a very tall order. A few months later, I asked Stan if I had been any help. "None whatsoever," he said.

Stan, I never would have imagined that we both would have the responsibility of serving in the Senate. Together with my Canadian Senators Group colleagues, I want to thank you for your insight, kindness, friendship and humour over all these years. It has been the best medicine.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to our dear colleague Senator Kutcher on behalf of the Progressive Senate Group.

As you've already heard, Senator Kutcher has been widely recognized for his lifelong commitment to improving mental health care, advancing youth well-being and strengthening the public understanding of mental health. His impact is, indeed, profound. I want to share a quote from Dwayne Provo, Executive Advisor to the Vice-President of the Nova Scotia Community College.

He says:

Stan has a rare ability to make people feel comfortable and valued through his respect, patience and quiet determination. His work made mental health central to Nova Scotia's comprehensive school health program, strengthening support for students and our leadership.

That's from Dwayne Provo.

Now here is something from me: According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a wise man is defined as a person possessing great learning, judgment, discernment or wisdom. A wise man may be a sage adviser — a person with profound wisdom, often a trusted guide or a thoughtful person. Looking more closely at this definition, I see a photo of Senator Dr. Stan Kutcher.

You may ask: why? Well, let me tell you.

First, he made a very wise decision to marry a social worker, Jane, also known as Jan to rhyme with Stan. And she is here today.

Second, I believe he made a wise choice to accept the Order of Nova Scotia at the same time that I did. It was very moving indeed to accept that great honour alongside him, and my daughter still remembers the conversation they had on that day.

Third, colleagues, Senator Kutcher made a wise decision to ask me to co-host "The Pandemic of Racism" Facebook Live series that we held during COVID-19 in 2021. As we witnessed two crises unfolding at the same time — a global health emergency and the heightened visibility of the deeply rooted pandemic of

racism — we were called to action. He was called to action and invited me alongside. The disproportionate burden placed on Black and racialized Canadians was deeply concerning.

I could share many more stories, but, Senator Kutcher, I'm grateful to have served in this space with you, and I'm profoundly grateful for your wise counsel on so many issues, including the pandemic of racism. *Asante*. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I'm sorry to interrupt these tributes, but I would like to take a moment to advise you that at 1:55 p.m., a test of the Alert Ready emergency alerting system will take place.

The alarm may disrupt interpretation, so kindly turn off your cellphone or any device that is connected to a cellular network. You have to turn off your mobile devices and keep them away from microphones. It's not to put them on mute; you have to shut them off, please.

• (1350)

We will test this out.

TRIBUTES

THE HONOURABLE STAN KUTCHER

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize the remarkable service of our colleague and one of my dear friends, the Honourable Stan Kutcher, as he retires from this chamber.

Serving alongside him has been one of the great privileges of my time here. I have seen up close his blend of quiet humility, fierce integrity and unwavering commitment to doing what is right for Canadians, especially for young people and for those struggling in silence.

Before arriving here, Senator Kutcher built a world-class academic and clinical career, but what has always struck me is not the length of his CV; it is the way he treats every person in front of him. In caucus rooms, committee hearings and casual conversations in the corridor, he listens first, asks the hard questions gently and never lets any of us forget that behind every policy file is a human story. I have watched him offer support, without fanfare, to colleagues and staff who were going through difficult times simply because that is who he is.

In this chamber, his interventions have been models of what we should all aspire to: evidence-based, respectful and focused on solutions, not headlines. More than once, after a long day of hearings, I have gone to him for counsel and have left with clearer thinking and a steadier heart.

His friendship has made me a better senator and a better person.

Colleagues, Stan's story is also a Canadian story: The son of post-war Ukrainian refugees, he went on to earn a medical degree at McMaster, trained in Canada and abroad and returned home to serve as a physician, a globally respected researcher, a teacher and, ultimately, a parliamentarian.

He has shown unwavering support for Ukraine, speaking consistently for its sovereignty, democracy and the rights of those displaced and traumatized by Russia's aggression. He has worked closely with Ukrainian-Canadian communities and advocates, bringing their voices into this chamber and pressing Canada to match its words with concrete assistance.

Colleagues, as we mark his retirement, I hope he knows that he does not simply leave behind a legislative record; he leaves behind a community of friends and proteges who will carry his values forward.

To Jan and the family; to my bestie, Maisie; and to all those who love and respect him, I offer my deepest thanks.

I will miss the thought-provoking conversations, the dry humour, the infectious laughter and the way you could turn a room full of tensions into a room full of purpose. May your next chapter be filled with ongoing improvements in your health, joy and the same curiosity and kindness you have given to all of us.

And Stan, my friend, my brother, know that while you may be leaving this chamber, you will never leave our hearts.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sharon Burey: Honourable senators, it's with mixed emotions that I rise to pay tribute to a metaphorical giant — in spirit, in impact, in joy, in life — in the character and person of our dearest colleague the Honourable Senator Dr. Stan Kutcher.

I won't reiterate his accomplishments and numerous accolades but propose to simply share some personal anecdotes that speak to his character, honour and deep commitment to Canada and Canadians, especially in the areas of mental health and wellness.

It was Stan who sent me my first handwritten card, which will remain displayed in a place of prominence in my home. I'm not sure how it got there so quickly because it arrived within days of my appointment. He must have some magical connections to some higher authorities. Yes, his call was one of the first calls I received after my appointment. That warm welcome created a space for me to grow, and his constant support nurtured every initiative that I was bold enough to embark upon. I think of when

just the kernel of the idea of the mental health and substance use parity round table began to germinate. It was Stan who took the time to say, "Let's meet and discuss this."

The parable of the mustard seed reminds us that small ideas, when nurtured, can grow to have far-reaching and substantive impacts. My feet had, indeed, led me to the right place, and the path I was now on was filled with gems and not crumbs along the way.

Stan's work, presence and direction are on full display throughout the report, and it has begun to bear fruit. I've gone to international parliamentary conferences, and speakers and participants have read it. Locally and nationally, it has made an impact. A young woman who recently graduated from a university here in Ottawa shared with me that the report is now required reading.

Then, there was the time he handed me the baton on mental health by presenting me in my office with a unique, prestigious hand-crafted plate, signifying one's commitment to advancing the cause of mental health in Canada. It is the Paul Hansell Foundation ConvoPlate.

I could go on and on.

His joyful smile and wide arms call us into dialogue to work together, and I couldn't end this speech without talking about Stan's wit and his wicked sense of humour that, as we got to know each other and sharpened our responses and comebacks, had us in stitches.

Honourable Senator Dr. Stan Kutcher, to your wonderful wife, children, grandchildren and family, thank you. I wish you good health, joy and fulfillment in this new chapter.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Peter M. Boehm: Honourable senators, I, too, am pleased to pay tribute to our departing colleague, the Honourable Stan Kutcher.

Much has been said about Senator Kutcher's personal qualities, his time as a senator, his previous illustrious career, his intellect, his sharp wit, his legacy and, most important, his lustrous hair. While I dispute none of it, I will give you what can only be described as the insider's perspective, that of his seatmate of 2,703 days.

Like all of us, I am often asked how I am enjoying the Senate. I have my stock response: "It is tough and challenging, but, fortunately, my seatmate is a psychiatrist."

During these past seven years, Stan has provided me with advice, consolation and humour. It is a good thing I wasn't lying down. Could you imagine the rate he would have charged me? I have tried to reciprocate, although I don't have a prescription pad. Our quips and banter have been compared to those of "The Muppets" characters Statler and Waldorf, the two critics of a certain age sitting in the balcony.

We have all been touched by Stan's relentless commitment to important issues, such as mis- and disinformation in public health, especially on vaccine use during the pandemic, medical assistance in dying and the war in Ukraine. His dedication to Ukraine, the country from which his parents came to Canada as World War II refugees, cannot be overstated. In particular, Stan distinguished himself by being Canada's only senator to visit Ukraine. It is fitting that his last regular Senator's Statement this week was again dedicated to the current and historic struggles and resilience of his people.

• (1400)

Positive, informal and gregarious, Stan was always — usually, anyway — friendly to everyone and generous with his time. He was also generous with gifts, especially socks. I have several pairs, including one with the lobsters of his beloved Nova Scotia and the latest pair that came with the advisory that the socks are “purposely mismatched.” I'm wearing them today and keep thinking that only a psychiatrist could give a gift like that. They are a metaphor for the two of us as a pair.

Stan has been selflessly helpful to many in this chamber, including myself. In *Don Quixote*, the great Spanish writer Cervantes wrote, “Great persons are able to do great kindnesses.”

Stan Kutcher is that type of great person. He is a confidant, a good and kind friend and a great Canadian. His work in the Senate has enriched us all, and he leaves a legacy of a legislator with purpose and drive.

Go happily into your retirement, my good friend, and enjoy quality time with Jan, your children and your grandchildren.

Thank you, Stan. You are unforgettable.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Donna Dasko: Honourable senators, I'm so happy and pleased to honour my friend and our colleague Senator Stan Kutcher.

I first met Stan soon after his appointment in late 2018, as we both sat right over there, where Senators Klyne and Henkel are sitting right now. Senator Boehm was his seatmate then as now. We became friends early in our Senate journey as we tried to make sense of this place.

To his deliberations in this chamber and in committees, Stan brought professional expertise and experience in Canada and worldwide. With his wide experience with people in their day-to-day lives, a sense of humour and deep empathy, he spent a lifetime putting these qualities together to improve lives.

To get the measure of Stan, look at his advocacy on medical assistance in dying, or MAID, and his forceful arguments that those suffering from mental illness are fully competent to make decisions on their own behalf and deserve equal treatment and their full constitutional rights.

[Senator Boehm]

Disinformation and misinformation are other themes in his work, as he strived to expose it in the health sciences, such as vaccine disinformation, and elsewhere, especially as we became aware of Russia's efforts to subvert democracy in this country and elsewhere through destructive campaigns.

Our friendship took another turn after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and our shared Ukrainian heritage formed the basis of a deeper bond. Stan characteristically got to work on initiatives to support Ukraine, working with the Ukrainian Canadian community and advocating for those displaced by war and for strategic defence initiatives. We proudly co-hosted moving and memorable commemoration events together.

Recently, he travelled to Ukraine at his own expense to learn and share his professional expertise with those suffering the trauma of war. He was awarded the Order of Merit of Ukraine, which is a recognition of great honour.

His bill, Bill S-210, An Act respecting Ukrainian Heritage Month, was another way to strengthen the Ukrainian community and Canadian resolve. “Our heritage is a celebration of who we are, what we aspire to be and the glue that binds us to each other,” he said in his speech last June. But, most importantly, he also said:

... I also take this time to acknowledge that I respect and want to learn more about your heritage — for in that mutual journey of discovery, we can hope to better understand each other and, by so doing, define and reach for a better common tomorrow.

Thank you, Stan. I will miss you very much. Godspeed to you on your next journey, and, yes, together, we will all reach for that better common tomorrow.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Senator Kutcher's wife, Jan Sheppard Kutcher; his daughter Leah and her partner, Nadia; and four of his nine grandchildren: Liam, Oliver, Ted and Casey. They are accompanied by other members of his family, the ambassadors of Ukraine and Taiwan, the Head of Mission of Japan and the President of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, as well as staff and friends.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE HONOURABLE STAN KUTCHER

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Stan Kutcher: Colleagues and friends, thank you for your kind words and the generosity of your remarks. This is my final speech in this place, and I'm having some emotional difficulties. But I also know I have unlimited time.

First, let me thank my wife, Jan, for putting up with me tacking on an additional eight years of demanding work before slowing down and, more importantly, putting up with me for over 50 married years. I am so grateful for your support. None of what I have done could have been possible without you. I know it hasn't been easy, and I really appreciate your forbearance.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Kutcher: I'd also like to thank my children, Dan, Matt and Leah — those who are here and those who could not be here — for putting up with my parenting. The fact that you all turned out well is a tribute to your mother.

I want to thank my children's partners. You know what? You have absolutely no control over the most important decision your children ever make in their lives. April, Martha and Nadia, you are all wonderful people and have brought so much to our family.

Grandkids — and there are nine: Liam, Ayrton, Avery, Oliver, Ted, Emilia, Ruby, Baz and Casey — you are all so awesome, and I'm looking forward to hanging out more with you and getting to know each of you better.

I also want to acknowledge so many of my sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law who came here today. Friends, these people are part of a large, extended family that is full of glue — we stick together.

Colleagues, when I told my family that I was going to Ottawa to be a senator, Liam, who was age 7 at the time, said, "Ottawa Senators? How come? You can hardly skate."

• (1410)

I also appreciate that I've had so many people to work with over the years who have been just amazing. First, on my staff, Amy has been the rock supporting all my Senate work.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Kutcher: Megan supported everything in our office while we were all going full tilt, and she did it from Halifax with two young kids — which is just unbelievable. Thank you so much.

And Ksenia helped me so much in all the work we've been able to do to support Ukraine.

I want to acknowledge some wonderful young staffers who started with me, then got fed up and moved on to bigger and better things: Lauren and Branavi, if you're here, thank you so much.

Colleagues, we all realize that none of the work we do could be done without our dedicated staff. Part of having young staff is that we're so glad when they grow up and move on to bigger and better things. It's just a privilege to have that happen.

Others are in attendance, including ambassadors and diplomats from Ukraine, Japan and Taiwan — places where I've had the privilege of working; as well as the president and representatives from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, without whom I could not have done any of the work that I have.

I also want to recognize the work that everybody does to keep this place operational: Shaila and her team; the Parliamentary Protective Service, or PPS; the Information Services Directorate, or ISD; the pages; and those who support and maintain our offices and our resource infrastructure and who provide for our nourishment and comfort. That is just amazing. Thanks to you all.

I'd like to make a short shout-out to all the colleagues here with whom I've had the privilege to work. Sometimes the work has not been easy, but it's always been stimulating. I especially want to acknowledge the friends I had the pleasure of meeting here. I can't say enough about you. I never thought when I came to this place that I would make some of the closest and dearest friends I ever have. I know that I will miss every single one of you. I want to thank you very much for your friendship and for all the glasses of wine we drank and the oysters we ate.

But you can't get through this place without friends. All of us have made friends here. I want to acknowledge that I've never been in another workplace — and this is a workplace — where one could make such dear friends. I will miss each and every one of you, and I will try my best to keep in touch with you all.

Some of you know that, for the past few years, I've been fighting tenacious respiratory and visual problems. Last year was my medical summer of hell. I've been left with sequelae that make it impossible for me to fulfill my obligations to this place. I've done my best. I've tried. Some of you have helped me try for a long time, but I just can't do it. This place deserves people like you, who give 100% every single day. That's what we're called to do, and I can't do it right now. I will have to let someone else who can do it — like all of you are doing it — take my place.

I was slow to come to that realization. However, as I've had a chance to reflect on how this chamber is evolving, I'd now like to share some of those thoughts with you.

Our Senate is now a democratic institution that is becoming more independent of party politics than it used to be. It will continue to show deference to the House without being an extension of it. This is being done without a road map. We're doing it from within. However, before I share my thoughts on that process, I want to say that it's amazing that a person like me could ever end up here.

I was a gawky kid with attention deficit disorder and a learning disability. I had refugee parents, and all they cared about was how I did at school. My love of country came from them. We have to remember that the people who are now on our shores, like the displaced Ukrainian population who are here, love this

country. Those of you who come from families like mine know how strong that love of country is because this country has given us and our families things that no other country could.

Somehow, I made it through school. From post-secondary education, I think by divine intervention, I got into medical school. Then I showed up here. At least I proved my Grade 4 teacher wrong. She wrote in my report card, and I paraphrase here, “Stanley will not amount to much. He can’t sit still. He can’t spell and is always disturbing his neighbours.”

That got me to thinking: Look at us. Look at yourselves. How did we get here? We all arrived here via completely different paths. We all came here from completely different directions. No two of us came the same way, and yet here we are. Fate thrust us upon each other.

When I look at this chamber, I see Canada in all its colours. When I listen to people speak, I hear Canada in many of its tongues. I experience Canada in all its messy, regional glory. And then I pinch myself. I think: Here we are. At full complement, there are 105 of us — out of a population of 40 million, more or less. We belong to what is arguably the most privileged group in this country. We get a say in what this country is and what it will become. How amazing is that?

We are not the government, but we have an independent role in governing. We are not the opposition, but we have an independent role in holding the government to account. We can influence, but we cannot direct. We’re becoming an independent institution that is a necessary part of the operation of our democracy while, at the same time, acting as a bulwark in the maintenance and protection of our democracy.

We were designed to protect Canada from the tyranny of the majority while, at the same time, providing a means of protecting the rights of all minorities. In our current historical context, I see that our role is to promote and protect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for all Canadians.

We are the Senate, but the Senate is more than us. It is the institution that makes us senators. We are here to serve the Senate, not to have the Senate serve us. We are here to serve all Canadians and not the interests of advocates, political parties, religious groups, businesses or any other groups or organizations. We are independent of political parties, and that is good because people can sometimes confuse what is best for their party with what is best for the country.

• (1420)

That necessary independence makes our work so difficult. How do we find our way? I thought about that for a long time, but I could not come up with a satisfactory answer to that question. So, instead, I’m suggesting we think about the three Cs that can provide us guideposts: These are compassion, curiosity and critical analysis.

[Senator Kutcher]

First is compassion. Let me quote Nelson Mandela here:

Our human compassion binds us the one to the other — not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.

If we do our work with compassion, we will listen very closely to those most impacted by the legislation and policy made by the government of the day. We will try to understand what the people who are most impacted are telling us, and we will not let our biases or prejudices cover our eyes or close our ears.

I have to say that we have not always done this as well as we should, and we need to ensure that in the future we do so. We need to ensure that the cacophony of some does not drown out the voices of others.

Second is curiosity. If we do our work with curiosity, we will want to know as much as we can about every issue that confronts us. We will come to our work with open minds, driven by wanting to know more, because it is curiosity that allows us to see beyond the horizon.

Third is critical analysis, which is a gift that began, historically, in the Enlightenment. It uses skepticism of authority, understands fallibility, encourages open debate and demands empirical testing. It holds our beliefs accountable to objective standards.

If we do our work with critical analysis, we can confidently say our work will be more likely to result in benefits than in harms. Using critical analysis will not help us find the truth, but it will protect us from never-ending error.

After all, that is what sober second thought is all about.

We must not be driven by opinion. Opinions are called opinions because they’re ideas that can be held in the absence of evidence. Everyone has a right to an opinion, but that doesn’t mean that their opinion is right. We need to avoid decision making based primarily on opinions, and we need to scrutinize everything we do through the best critical analysis.

Those are the three Cs.

Then there is one other thing. The work we do here is underpinned by the realization that we are all in this together. It is the diversity of our experiences, our differences, our similarities and each of our unique journeys that have brought us to this place, and it is this coming together, this crucible of who we have been and who we are, that makes this place what it is.

I see this chamber as a sacred place. It is a place where we — selected, not elected — gather together to serve the people of Canada. It is a place like no other.

Now, I’ve had the opportunity to be in some sacred places: Poon Hill, as the sun rose over the Himalayan mountains, the Waipi’o Valley in Hawaii, the Temple of Heaven in China, the Hill of Tara in Ireland, Angkor Wat in Cambodia and many more. While they were all different, they shared a common

characteristic: They were designated by generations preceding as places where order could be created from chaos, using the wisdom of tradition.

And this chamber is also such a place. We struggle to make order from chaos, and we do so within the context of our tradition. But we must remember that tradition, as some have noted, is not the worship of ashes, but the keeping of the flame. And the flame that we keep is the purpose of this place, and that is the protection of our democracy. That's why we're here.

We need to ensure that our democracy continues strong, that the perils that confound it can be overcome and that this experiment of governance which depends on the shared agreement that we will choose this instead of autocracy, kleptocracy or theocracy is the tradition that this place serves.

The Senate is becoming an independent democratic institution that both operates and protects our democracy. It does so in deference to the elected house, but it does not function as either an extension of the House or a pale imitation of it.

Friends, I am troubled by the state of the world that we live in, and in my most private moments, which usually occur around three o'clock in the morning, I grieve that my grandchildren and your grandchildren are inheriting from us a world full of wicked problems. Some of those are problems that we have not been able to solve. Some of those problems we have created for them.

I know that it was a globally disruptive technology — the printing press — that allowed for democracy as we know it to become the preferred system of governance that it is now. The printing press provided for the diffusion of knowledge from the control of the few to the participation of the many and thus helped lead to the creation of norms and structures in which those who governed were responsible to those who were governed by them — a system that, while not perfect, substituted the will of the people over the control of the ruler, a system in which transparency and accountability became actions and not just words.

Unfortunately, the next most disruptive technological force in the history of humankind — generative AI — has the potential to reverse that effect by homogenization of knowledge controlled by the few, allowing those who rule to dictate what those who are ruled learn and believe, making the words “transparency” and “accountability” only words again.

My friends, underlying this threat is the apparent increase in the loss of trust in our societies. In 2026, the Edelman Trust Barometer — and I know there are problems with that measure — reports that 7 out of every 10 people from 25 different nations, including in Canada, are hesitant or unwilling to trust those who have different values or backgrounds. Statistics Canada notes that fewer than 50% of Canadians have high trust in the federal government and that trust in government integrity is very low, about 25%. Distrust in our democratic institutions may become the default instinct.

We seem to be living in a time where our social contract is in danger of not just fraying but being ripped asunder, where respect and reason are being dethroned and where anger and rhetoric are being used to attack those institutions that provide

just governance for the many, seeking to replace them with those that promote control by the few. It's a time when some seek to avoid their civic responsibility to the many by twisting attempts to promote the public good of the many into sophistries on the fantasized personal liberty of a few.

• (1430)

This is a time for those of us who hold firm to the social contract that we call democracy, where the good of the many takes priority over control of the few, to stand up and be trusted. Democratic institutions need to change to build that trust. They must. This includes this chamber. It must evolve while concurrently preserving its tradition.

As this chamber evolves — and you will be doing the evolving — I would ask each and every one of you to take on the task of ensuring that the structure you are creating here is one that Canadians can trust. It is not going to be an easy task. There is no road map. There will be many bumps along the way. But if you let yourselves be guided by compassion, curiosity and critical analysis, I am certain that you will get this sacred place to where it needs to be. I have faith in each and every one of you.

I am only sorry that I cannot continue my journey with you. I want to thank you for the privilege of letting me walk with you as far as I was able to.

Goodbye and God bless.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS 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 and his wife, Elaine Gibson.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Saleem Ataullahjan, Senator Ataullahjan's husband, and their daughters, Anushka and Shaanzéh.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

MOTHER'S DAY

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I rise today on the occasion of Mother's Day, which will be celebrated on Sunday, May 10.

Before I became a mother, I was not particularly drawn to children. I was never the person who rushed across the room just because I saw a baby, so when I became a mother myself, I was completely unprepared for what I felt.

People speak about a mother's love as though it is something easily understood. I thought I understood it too. I did not. There is something profoundly unsettling, in the best way possible, about realizing that your heart no longer moves through the world alone. A part of you now exists outside your body. You carry that awareness constantly.

Within my culture, being a mother is highly revered. In my mother tongue, Pashto, *mor* is a word for "mother." But *mor* means more than being a mother. It is a term of endearment that shows deep respect, affection and emotional bonding. It is also a term used in poetry and songs to mean love and sacrifice.

As colleagues know, I am blessed to have two wonderful daughters, Anushka and Shaanzéh, who increasingly become more like friends as they grow up. We talk multiple times a day every day no matter which part of the world we are in.

I call my daughters *Da Zra Sara*. In Pashto, this translates to "the tip of my heart" or "the top of my heart," an affectionate term used for someone very dear, indicating they occupy the highest place in the speaker's heart.

This, colleagues, is what motherhood means to me. Not the picture-perfect version we often see represented in the media, but something quieter and more powerful. The way your entire sense of self shifts without permission. The way love settles so deeply into you that you cannot remember what life felt like before it existed.

Motherhood did not suddenly make me perfect or endlessly patient, but it changed the scale of my heart. It changed the way I understand devotion.

As Mother's Day approaches, I think this is worth honouring: not just the visible work that mothers do, but the invisible transformation that comes with loving someone so completely.

To all mothers in this chamber and those watching from home, Happy Mother's Day.

To my dear daughters, *Da Zra Sara*, thank you for making me understand a kind of love I never knew I was capable of feeling.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Katie Kiss, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner; and Nick Devereaux, Director, Social Justice Commission. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator LaBoucane-Benson.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

BEAR WITNESS DAY

Hon. Peter Harder: Honourable senators, I rise today alongside colleagues from across this chamber to raise awareness of Bear Witness Day. Sunday, May 10, marks the tenth anniversary of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's ruling ordering the Government of Canada to fully implement Jordan's Principle.

Jordan's Principle is named for Jordan River Anderson, a young boy from Norway House Cree Nation. Jordan was born with complex medical needs and spent his entire life in the hospital while governments argued over who should pay for his care. He died at the age of five without ever having had a chance to live in a loving home.

His story is a powerful reminder of the harm that occurs when the process is prioritized over a child's best interests.

Jordan's Principle is intended to ensure that First Nations children can access the services they need — whether health, education, social or cultural — without being denied, delayed or disrupted by jurisdictional disputes. At its core, it is a straightforward commitment: The child comes first.

In February, through the leadership of Senator Francis, this chamber recognized May 10 as Bear Witness Day, a national day of action honouring that commitment. The term "Bear Witness" reflects Jordan's love of teddy bears, which have become a symbol of solidarity.

But Bear Witness Day is not only about remembrance and symbolism. It is a call to act. It is meant to push for real change so that what happened to Jordan is never repeated.

Despite the promise of Jordan's Principle, First Nations children and families continue to face systemic barriers: jurisdictional complexity, uneven implementation and administrative delays.

Recent federal changes that narrowed eligibility, combined with a growing backlog, have only deepened these challenges. Once again, children are being made to wait, precisely what Jordan's Principle was meant to prevent.

Bear Witness Day asks us to confront this gap between commitment and reality. It calls on governments to assess whether their actions truly meet the needs of First Nations children. It reminds us, as legislators, to listen closely to First Nations leaders, families and advocates who continue to raise questions.

Recognizing May 10 is important, but it is not enough. Jordan's Principle is more than policy. It is a human rights obligation grounded in reconciliation and the dignity of every First Nations child.

Recognizing Bear Witness Day is an opportunity to honour Jordan and his family, support First Nations children and families across Canada, and reaffirm a principle that should unite us all: No child should suffer because the system has failed to act.

Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Jennifer Gerdts, Executive Director, and Beatrice Povolo, Director of Food Safety & Regulatory Affairs, from Food Allergy Canada. They are accompanied by the Hauver-Waitman Family — a local family living with food allergy. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Cardozo.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1440)

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES GENERALLY

SECOND REPORT OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. René Cormier: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the second report (interim) of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, entitled *Proposed Official Languages Administrative Monetary Penalties Regulations* and I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

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

[English]

AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT

EIGHTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the eighth report (interim) of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, entitled *Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight: Activities and Observations for Fiscal Year 2025-2026*.

NINTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Marty Klyne: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the ninth report (interim) of the Standing Committee on Audit and Oversight, entitled *Senate Expenditure Comparison and Trending Analysis* and I move that the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.

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

SPECIAL ECONOMIC MEASURES ACT

BILL TO AMEND—FIFTH 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, May 7, 2026

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

FIFTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-214, An Act to amend the Special Economic Measures Act (disposal of foreign state assets), has, in obedience to the order of reference of March 26, 2026, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

PETER M. BOEHM

Chair

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

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

PARLAMERICAS

BILATERAL MISSION, MARCH 2-6, 2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas concerning the Bilateral Mission, held in Mexico City and Monterrey, Mexico, from March 2 to 6, 2026.

GATHERING OF THE PARLAMERICAS PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY, SEPTEMBER 25-26, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas concerning the Seventeenth Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, held in Brasília, Brazil, from September 25 to 26, 2025.

[*Translation*]

CANADA-CHINA LEGISLATIVE ASSOCIATION

BILATERAL MEETING, DECEMBER 1-3, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Clément Gignac: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-China Legislative Association concerning the Twenty-fifth Bilateral Meeting, held in Ottawa, Ontario, and Vancouver, British Columbia, from December 1 to 3, 2025.

CO-CHAIRS' ANNUAL VISIT TO CHINA, MARCH 16-20, 2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Clément Gignac: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-China Legislative Association concerning the Co-Chairs' Annual Visit to China, held in Beijing, Hangzhou, Shanghai and Shenzhen, China, from March 16 to 20, 2026.

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, Question Period will begin at 3:55 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 4-12(3), I would like to inform the

Senate that as we proceed with Government Business, the Senate will address the items in the following order: Motion No. 71, followed by Motion No. 72, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

THE SENATE

MOTION TO REFER SUBJECT MATTER OF BILLS C-20, C-25 AND C-30 TO CERTAIN COMMITTEES ADOPTED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of May 6, 2026, moved:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, previous order or usual practice:

1. the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy be authorized to examine the subject matter of Bill C-20, An Act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes, introduced in the House of Commons on February 5, 2026, in advance of the said bill coming before the Senate, and that the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 4, 2026;
2. the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs be authorized to examine the subject matter of Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and to enact An Act to change the names of certain electoral districts, 2026, introduced in the House of Commons on March 26, 2026, in advance of the said bill coming before the Senate, and that the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 4, 2026;
3. the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine the subject matter of Bill C-30, An Act to implement certain provisions of the spring economic update tabled in Parliament on April 28, 2026, introduced in the House of Commons on April 29, 2026, in advance of the said bill coming before the Senate, and that the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 11, 2026;
4. each of the aforementioned committees be authorized to deposit its report with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting;
5. as the report from each of the aforementioned committees is tabled in the Senate, it be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting, provided that if a report is deposited with the Clerk, it be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting following the one on which the depositing is recorded in the *Journals of the Senate*; and

6. for the purposes of its study, each of the aforementioned committees be authorized to meet even though the Senate may then be sitting or adjourned, with the application of rules 12-18(1) and 12-18(2) being suspended in relation thereto.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Honourable senators, I want to speak very briefly on the government's omnibus motion to pre-study three bills. Pre-studies are a legitimate tool for managing the Senate's legislative workload efficiently, but they require disciplined and purposeful intent.

The question of whether to undertake a pre-study is not new to this chamber. We are revisiting a familiar issue. Let me draw on the wisdom of former senator Joan Fraser, whose work in this chamber was marked by a deep command of Senate rules and a strong respect for proper process. When debating a motion for a Senate pre-study, former Senator Fraser once described two general categories where a pre-study is an appropriate tool. As we consider this motion for three pre-studies, I think it would be helpful to reflect on those now.

The first category involves situations of urgent need and limited time for Senate review, most commonly budget implementation bills, which contain time-sensitive measures and typically arrive late in the sitting period or to address impending court deadlines.

The second category applies to large and complex bills that the Senate studies while the bill is under consideration in the other place to influence the study and improve the bill before it arrives in our chamber. The example that former Senator Fraser pointed to was the Anti-terrorism Act in 2001, when the Senate undertook a pre-study for the first time in eight years to recommend amendments before the House of Commons had completed its review of the bill.

More recently, we can think of Senate pre-studies on medical assistance in dying and the Official Languages Act as examples of this kind.

Pre-studies should be guided by clear principles. Without them, we risk normalizing their use simply to fast-track legislation that could otherwise follow the standard legislative process.

If the government intends to use the legitimate tool of pre-studies, this chamber should fully understand and be fully informed of why we are deviating from our usual legislative process. It should not become a perfunctory process, moved and agreed to without any words on the public record.

• (1450)

To that end, future motions for a Senate pre-study should be assessed for its purpose, in keeping with the guidance of our predecessors, such that these tools be reserved for the limited and necessary circumstances.

Honourable colleagues, we are operating in exceptional times when diplomatic, economic and social stresses compel us to act with urgency. It's these same stresses that compel us to act with

vigilance in protecting the rules and order that allow this chamber to fulfill its duty to represent regions, amplify minority voices and provide sober legislative review.

That is all I wish to say. I know we will have amendments to be discussed and other speeches, and I'm glad we're having that conversation today so that we can be better informed. Thank you.

Hon. Mary Robinson: Honourable senators, today I rise not as the Chair of the Senate's Agriculture and Forestry Committee but as a senator who recognizes agriculture holds the potential answers to many of our nation's challenges.

Divisions 7 and 8 of Bill C-30 modify the mandates of both the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or CFIA, and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, or PMRA, to include consideration of food security and economic security.

Yes, CFIA and PMRA are under Health Canada while being agriculture-related regulatory bodies. CFIA was moved to Health Canada in 2013. Before that, it had a direct reporting relationship with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Before PMRA was created in 1995, pesticide regulation was overseen by the Minister of Agriculture. The lion's share of the work both regulatory bodies deliver continues to be in agriculture.

The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, in the other place, released a report in December 2025 entitled *Unleashing the Potential of the Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector through Regulatory Reform*. Of the 26 recommendations, 12 dealt with CFIA and 8 with PMRA. Colleagues, I share this with you, as I believe it is important to understand the issues and challenges at stake.

After hearing 47 witnesses, the committee specifically recommended the two regulators ". . . ensure they consider the economy, food security and the cost of food in all their regulatory decisions . . ."

The House Agriculture and Agri-Food Committee is the sister committee of our Agriculture and Forestry Committee, meaning these divisions in Bill C-30 are within the mandate of our committee.

The Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry has spent much time familiarizing itself with the issue of food security and, within that, food sovereignty and economic security. In fact, our study is still ongoing and will be completed by the end of the year. CFIA and PMRA have been brought up a number of times during the committee's study.

Going back to the motion at hand, it is not an uncommon practice to divide budget bills in pre-study motions. Our own National Finance Committee just finished a study on the inclusion of non-financial matters in budget bills.

One of the recommendations was to formalize the use of pre-study motions for budget implementation acts, or BIAs, and to exercise our authority to divide these bills, in line with our current practices. We did it with Bill C-32, the Fall Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2022, and we did it with Bill C-69, the Budget Implementation Act, 2024, No. 1.

Whenever there have been legislative non-financial matters in budget bills, we have typically sent them to the relevant committees for pre-study. We've been doing it since 2014. It is not against precedent.

What is against precedent is choosing to not send legislative matters in a budget bill to a specialized committee for pre-study. Imagine if in this bill there were amendments to the Judges Act or to the Indian Act. Would we not be advocating for these measures to go to the Legal Committee or the Indigenous Peoples Committee for pre-study before the bill formally arrives to us in this chamber?

My point is that by not sending these divisions to the Agriculture Committee for pre-study, we are failing to leverage the expertise in this committee. Members of this committee have done the work to expand their knowledge, polish their expertise and deepen their connections to the industry. What a missed opportunity if we fail to capitalize on that when the moment commands.

Agriculture in Canada has long been a quiet economic giant. We now appear to have a government that is beginning to recognize the full potential of the sector by viewing it through an economic lens.

For years, the agriculture sector has said that agriculture policy is economic policy, and it is also science policy, national security policy, food security policy and social policy. The list does go on.

I would like to share with this chamber that last week I attended an industry event featuring a fireside chat between our Minister of Health and a representative from the agriculture sector. Minister Michel's remarks clearly resonated with the room, which was filled with key industry people. Our Minister of Health shared how surprised she was to learn that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency both fall within her portfolio.

To begin with, I cannot recall a Minister of Health being invited — or accepting an invitation — to address an agriculture industry audience, let alone speak so candidly and constructively with the sector.

Early in her remarks, the minister shared that she had been surprised to learn, after her appointment, about the CFIA and PMRA falling within her portfolio. She also conveyed a genuine sense of urgency about helping to unlock the future potential of Canadian agriculture. Her message was overwhelmingly positive, and it was met with a standing ovation. To me, that response demonstrated that industry has been waiting a long time for the opportunity to pivot from critic to partner.

Colleagues, the Senate prizes itself on the important work carried out at the committee level. It is troublesome that the motion before us limits our ability to conduct a pre-study of this legislation.

There are great benefits to having subject-matter experts examine issues within their area of expertise. I do not understand the hesitation to allow the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry pre-study Bill C-30 alongside the National Finance Committee, especially when this would take place within the government's established timelines.

I would like to conclude with the following quote:

We have to take the time and look at a specific issue from every angle: It's our constitutional duty to make sure a decision made by the other place is the best decision for Canada.

Senator Moreau, these were your words, in an article published on January 6, 2026. Your words precisely capture what I believe we should be doing in this chamber.

MOTION IN AMENDMENT NEGATIVED

Hon. Mary Robinson: Therefore, honourable senators, in amendment, I move:

That the motion be not now adopted, but that it be amended:

1. by replacing the words "subject matter of Bill C-30" with the words "subject matter of all of Bill C-30" in point 3;
2. by adding the following new points 4 and 5:
 - "4. the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry be authorized to examine the subject matter of Divisions 7 and 8 of Part 3 of Bill C-30, An Act to implement certain provisions of the spring economic update tabled in Parliament on April 28, 2026, introduced in the House of Commons on April 29, 2026, in advance of the said bill coming before the Senate, and that the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 4, 2026;
 5. the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to take any report tabled under point 4 of this order into consideration during its study of the subject matter of all of Bill C-30;" and
3. by renumbering current points 4, 5 and 6 as points 6, 7 and 8.

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I would first like to respond to the arguments put forward by Senator Osler and Senator Robinson regarding the proposed amendment. Unfortunately, the government cannot support that amendment, and I will explain why.

I will say a few words about Senator Osler's comments on pre-studies. If pre-studies were used to shorten consideration of the bills themselves, then I would certainly agree that they are a roundabout way for the government to limit debate.

Since Senator Robinson was kind enough to quote me, I will refer her to the speech that I gave here when I agreed to serve as Government Representative in the Senate. One of the commitments that I made was to make more frequent use of pre-studies. Why? When we combine pre-studies with the actual study of the bill, we do not reduce the substance of the debate. We actually increase the time given to senators to conduct a proper, in-depth study of the legislative proposals before them, particularly in the case of government bills.

We should therefore not see the increased use of pre-studies as a roundabout way of reducing the time allocated for debate. On the contrary, the goal is to allow for more time.

I can count on one hand the number of times I've heard senators in this chamber insist on taking more time to hold more in-depth debates or to enable senators to explore every single bill. Pre-study is a tool that, unfortunately, we don't use often enough, in my opinion.

We opted to do it in the main motion for three bills because these bills are making their way to the Senate toward the end of the session. This will enable us to get started on debates, discussions and studies before the bills are even introduced in the Senate. We can ask questions and meet with witnesses so we can do a thorough study within the time we have. We decide how to approach this. We can sit until June 23, and I believe all senators are prepared to do so, including on Mondays and Fridays if necessary. Pre-studies enable us to do this work when it suits all members of this chamber, in my view.

That's what I have to say about pre-studies.

In response to the remarks made by my colleague Senator Robinson, I would like to begin by commending Senator Robinson, Senator Lewis and Senator Black for their interest in issues related to agriculture. As I've had the opportunity to say on several occasions during Question Period while responding to some of Senator Black's questions, these issues are of particular interest to me, since I was born and raised on a farm myself. In fact, I wanted to tell Senator Robinson that my nephew, who took over the family farm, recently acquired a potato farm, so we might end up competing in that regard, too.

I think there's some confusion regarding the substance of the matter. Senator Robinson is presenting Bill C-30 as a budget bill. Bill C-30 is not a budget bill. The fact is that the government

introduced Bill C-31 in the House of Commons yesterday. The short title of that bill is "Budget 2025 Implementation Act, No. 2," and its purpose is to implement the measures in the *Spring Economic Update 2026*. Bill C-31 is a budget bill.

It is clearly common practice to split budget bills because they tend to be quite lengthy and we want to be able to draw on the expertise of all the senators who serve in committee.

Although Bill C-30 does contain provisions related to agriculture, it is not a particularly lengthy bill. It is only 42 pages long. If the government motion is adopted without amendment, it will be referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, which is chaired by Senator Carignan. This committee is fully capable of studying this issue and all of the subjects addressed in Bill C-30.

The National Finance Committee is not a closed committee. Any senator, regardless of who they are, can attend the meetings and participate in them. They can ask questions and participate in the debates held in that committee.

I suggested to Senator Robinson that she speak with Senator Carignan directly to ensure that the provisions of Bill C-30 relating to agriculture receive the committee's full attention. I even suggested to Senator Robinson and Senator Osler that we make every effort to convince Health Minister Marjorie Michel to take part in the debate. It shouldn't be too difficult. I don't want to speak for Minister Michel, but I know how eager and willing she is to help and I'm pretty sure she'd be willing to come and take part in the National Finance Committee debate on the agriculture-related provisions.

In fact, Senator Robinson is part of a group, the Canadian Senators Group, which currently has a vacant seat on the National Finance Committee. I am confident that the members of her group will have no objection to appointing her as a member of the National Finance Committee for the purposes of studying Bill C-30 and allowing her not only to participate, but also to vote on the provisions and any items that might be put to a vote.

Lastly, I know that Senator Robinson is a member of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. I submit to you, honourable colleagues, that the committee, pursuant to its order of reference, it is quite able to consider issues related to Bill C-30 and report back to the National Finance Committee, should it so wish, within the time allotted and suggested by Senator Robinson in her amendment.

For all of these reasons and in the interest of efficiency, I would simply say that the government has no hidden agenda and no intention of avoiding debate, on the contrary. Otherwise, it would not have proposed a pre-study of Bill C-30. As the Government Representative in the Senate, I cannot endorse the amendment proposed by Senator Robinson. I encourage senators to vote against this amendment.

• (1510)

[*English*]

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I intend to be brief. I don't want to reiterate many of the points that the government leader so ably put forward, but I'm a little bit perplexed. This is the most important thing for us when we get together at the leadership table: When it's all said and done, what we are is glorified air traffic controllers. We're essentially trying to control the traffic in this chamber and in committees to make sure that legislative work is done effectively.

More importantly — and this is coming from the leader of the official opposition — my preoccupation has always been that we have robust debate on issues and that we have the opportunity to conduct sober second thought in an effective way. We've had instances of very controversial legislation where the opposition has used the tools at our disposal to make sure we drag out the process as much as possible, but that's because the legislation is controversial and there are outcries from stakeholders and so on and so forth.

When we're looking at Bill C-20, Bill C-25 and Bill C-30, you won't get any more ordinary legislative business coming through this place. We're talking about the supply bill, economic statements and legislation here where people are not ripping their shirts in indignation because you're on one side of the legislation or the other.

As a result, when we get around the leadership table, I've seen a desire on the part of the government to say, "Let's take all the time that is required." Maybe on the calendar, it looks like two or three weeks spent on a particular piece of legislation is crunch time or a short period of time, but you have the opposition acquiescing and supporting motions on this floor that we could have easily blocked at any time, such as allowing committees to sit while the Senate is sitting and allowing motions to pass. And we've allowed committees to sit — even on bills that we're not necessarily thrilled about, like Bill C-9, and we're not thrilled at all by it — even while the Senate is not sitting.

The point I'm trying to make is you've seen there's a willingness on both sides of the government and the opposition to make sure we have enough hours. That's how you count proper, robust legislative review: the number of hours that every committee has on any piece of legislation. Again, on Bill C-20, Bill C-25 and Bill C-30, we've acquiesced in allowing for pre-studies to make sure the agenda flows in this place and that all senators have more than enough time in order to weigh in on issues.

Lastly, Senator Robinson, I echo the point of view of the government leader. This is not a budget bill. More importantly, regarding the elements you want to study, your committee is free at any given time to do a narrow study, a broad study or a wide study. If the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, in your opinion, has not had proper voicing or its place on this stage, it's certainly not the fault of any legislative process. It's for that committee to determine its proper agenda and what it wants to study and what it doesn't want to study. It doesn't require a pre-study or a bill of this nature to take something narrow or something vast in order to conduct a study.

Those are my thoughts. I think we need to spend a little more time at leadership meetings committing to time frames without having it spill over into the debates in this chamber. It has happened in the past, and it's happening now. I don't think it's a valuable use of this chamber's time. Thank you, colleagues.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Housakos, would you take a question?

Senator Housakos: Sure.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Thank you, Senator Housakos. I'll be brief in my question. I want to thank you for your speech. Part of the reason why I spoke to it is just to have this discussion so that senators can think about the question before us.

I agree with you: I think at leaders' meetings, we can spend more time, but this is a short debate on this, which I'm glad we as a chamber are having. I want to thank you for your speech.

The Hon. the Speaker: Was there a question, Senator Osler?

Senator Osler: Yes. Would you agree, Senator Housakos?

Senator Housakos: Senator Osler, you know that I'm always agreeable, but may I also suggest that these are some of the discussions that we air traffic controllers can take back to our respective groups in order to have those discussions in advance so that when we sit around the leadership table, we can actually take decisions on the part of those groups in terms of timelines, schedules and how we approach the legislative-making process.

We have all these meetings, not for posterity's sake or for the sake of navel-gazing. We have them in order to make maximum and valuable use of the time of all senators. That is my response to your question.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Clément Gignac: Honourable senators, I hadn't intended to speak, but I wasn't quick enough to signal my desire to ask Senator Moreau a question.

I'm fortunate to sit on the National Finance Committee, so I'll have an opportunity to examine the bills before or after their pre-studies. However, Senator Moreau, I would like to support my colleague, Senator Robinson. It is semantics to claim that Bill C-30 bears no relation to the budget. Bill C-30 is called An Act to implement certain provisions of the spring economic update tabled in Parliament on April 28, 2026. Among other things, it amends tax laws. Bill C-31 is called A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

I know that I won't win the legal battle with you, Senator Moreau, but between us, the budget updates contain tax provisions, just like the budget does. I just wanted to set the record straight. In my opinion, Senator Robinson had a good point.

I've said it publicly before and I don't need to repeat it here, but we need to be open to the idea of pre-studies. We need to be agile and efficient, and I think that pre-studies can help with that efficiency.

Often, it's easier to persuade the government to make amendments to its bill during a pre-study than it is after the government has already passed the bill and we have only about a week or a few days left before the summer recess. Normally, we have to propose amendments and send them to the other place, and then good luck getting any amendments through just a few days before the end of the session, particularly if the bill is related to the budget.

For all of these reasons, I share Senator Osler's concerns. Perhaps the government should not be overusing these pre-studies. However, in this case, when it comes to the three bills before us, I think it is a good idea and I intend to support the Government Representative.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Gignac, would you take a question?

Senator Gignac: I'll take a question.

Senator Housakos: My question is simple. Have we already voted on this year's budget?

Senator Gignac: Yes, we've adopted some provisions. Sometimes, in the two years following a budget, we study bills containing provisions that were in the budget a year or two earlier. We always see measures in subsequent bills, sometimes within three months, sometimes within two or three years. We've seen this before.

[English]

Hon. Mary Robinson: I have a question for Senator Moreau. Would you take a question?

The Hon. the Speaker: You would need to ask for leave to revert back to Senator Moreau to ask a question. Is leave granted, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

[Translation]

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

Senator Moreau: I would be happy to.

[English]

Senator Robinson: Senator Moreau, I wanted to pick up on a point you mentioned about efficiency. If we were to send Divisions 7 and 8 to the Agriculture and Forestry Committee to study, would you agree that it would work in tandem with the National Finance Committee and be not only efficient but would also allow us to really leverage the expertise that our esteemed colleagues have certainly invested the time in developing at the Agriculture and Forestry Committee?

• (1520)

It would offer an opportunity, in my opinion — and I'm wondering if you would agree — to not only facilitate debate and investigation specifically to the agriculture sector on its own as opposed to going to the National Finance Committee, but it would also facilitate an expeditious response to assist in returning the pre-study on Bill C-30 to the government as they have requested.

[Translation]

Senator Moreau: I'm happy to answer the question, just as I do every day. This is the only question I've been asked today, so I'm happy to give you an answer, Senator Robinson.

I would say that the answer to your question is in the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry's order of reference.

I'll read you part of it. The Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry is authorized "to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to agriculture and forestry" in accordance with rule 12-7(12).

It's not up to me to tell the committee how to do its job, but the standing committee does have the necessary authority, per its order of reference, to thoroughly examine any issue, particularly issues related to agriculture in Bill C-30.

In the interest of efficiency, the purpose of the order of reference is precisely to provide any given standing committee with the independence it needs to study an issue it deems to fall within its ambit.

I can anticipate your next question. In my view, it would be entirely legitimate for the standing committee to study the issues in Bill C-30 and report on them. It would also be very efficient.

[English]

Senator Robinson: Senator Moreau, would you take another question?

Senator Moreau: With pleasure.

[*English*]

Senator Robinson: Thank you. I'm so happy that you're so happy.

In the Senate, we have 18 committees, and each committee invests time and, certainly, resources — taxpayer resources — in developing expertise of the subject matter, which is outlined within their orders of reference. I understand committees are the masters of their own destinies; they can choose what they want to study. I do understand that.

However, I continue to be unclear as to the resistance when we have a pre-study bill that specifically has two out of eight clauses that are very specific to a committee on which we have fantastic expertise, as I mentioned in my speech, as well as a connection to industry, which would really allow us to get much more in depth within the pre-study.

I'm confused. Do you think we should maybe do away with the rest of the committees and just have the National Finance Committee deal with everything? At what point do we start sending our Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans bills to the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources? I don't understand why we're not using this expertise to the fullest extent.

[*Translation*]

Senator Moreau: On the contrary, Senator Robinson, you have two possible avenues for conducting a comprehensive study related to agriculture, including with regard to Bill C-30.

The first option would be to ask your group to designate you as a member of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, which will be studying Bill C-30 in its entirety, including the provisions related to agriculture. The second would be to suggest that the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, of which you are the chair, take up the agriculture-related provisions in Bill C-30 and report to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance. Nothing is being bypassed here.

On the contrary, the government is giving senators the opportunity, through pre-studies, to address all the issues covered in the bill, including agricultural issues, before it even reaches the Senate, and to revisit those issues once the bill is officially before the Senate for study and approval.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Senator Moreau]

HUMAN RIGHTS

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTINGS
AND ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of May 6, 2026, moved:

That, for the purposes of its study of Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places), as authorized by the Senate on April 30, 2026, the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights be authorized to meet even though the Senate may then be sitting or adjourned, with the application of rules 12-18(1) and 12-18(2) being suspended in relation thereto.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

CONNECTED CARE FOR CANADIANS BILL

THIRD READING—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Kingston, seconded by the Honourable Senator Petitclerc, for the third reading of Bill S-5, An Act respecting the interoperability of health information technology and to prohibit data blocking by health information technology vendors, as amended.

Hon. Colin Deacon: Honourable senators, I want to rise and speak in support of Bill S-5, the connected care for Canadians act.

First, I want to congratulate the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology for its excellent work in studying this bill and for the great speeches yesterday from Senators Kingston, Arnold and Muggli. I was really impressed in committee with the expert witnesses who were invited and felt their concerns were heard by the committee, which was reflected in the committee's report and work.

I'm not going to be 45 minutes; I will be a lot closer to 5 minutes, which I know you'll be glad to hear. I want to focus on some key messages from some of the witnesses.

First, I will discuss the risks associated with large, centralized databases of medical records. I'm not a cybersecurity expert, but I'm someone who champions the work of experts, and what I absolutely understand is that they are very much recommending this take place in secure, decentralized systems built on a

foundation of open, transparent and internationally recognized interoperable, consensus-based standards. From my standpoint, this is really important. It means putting less of this in regulation and more of the implementation of this bill into standards that stay modern, more agile and allow us to have an interoperable system within our federation and internationally.

An important group that I think will help the federal government in its work in this regard is the Digital Governance Council and the Digital Governance Standards Institute. It's a not-for-profit, accredited, digital standards organization that works to provide Canadians with confidence in the responsible design, architecture and management of digital technologies, and its members include Health Canada, Canada Health Infoway, the Canadian Institute for Health Information and most of our provinces and territories. I think it will play a very important role in laying the foundation for the next phase of this work in future bills, where we move beyond health technology vendors and start to include the use of information far more widely across our system.

Providing Canadians with access to their personal information will require the use of these technical standards. It's great that some actually even exist today. I will point to two that the Digital Governance Standards Institute has created and that have been certified by the Standards Council of Canada. The first is the national standard for digital trust and the delivery of health care services, and the second is the technical specification for digital credentials and digital trust services. You can see how both of those would align very much with what is needed in the implementation of this bill.

• (1530)

These consensus-based standards and specifications state minimum requirements for the exchange of health information between systems and provide the basis for implementing a user-centric, interoperable health network for the delivery of health care services. So it's fit for purpose. I say this because we need a system with the ability to interchange information to be up and running quickly. If you don't believe me, just listen to Senator Muggli's speech again from yesterday. She very passionately and energetically made the case, over and over again, in a way that, I think, will ring true to all of us.

The other thing these standards do is that they provide the technical requirements for testing criteria to support conformity assessments. It's not just about the management of setting up systems but also the ability to verify their appropriate use over time.

Yesterday, I was glad to see Senator Arnold quote Margot Burnell, who said, "Standards turn good intentions into working systems." This bill is an actionable step forward toward improving the efficiency and equality of health care in Canada.

I want to recognize the benefits of interoperable health data and the fact that we must move toward having access and the exchange of electronic health information. We must push it toward all individual and institutional providers of health care. An important observation made by the committee was that this is

a first step. We must take further steps. Obviously, that will involve the provinces and their health districts, but it's an important point we have to reach.

Bill S-5 will be implemented successfully, thanks to unambiguous definitions, agile processes and clear obligations grounded in desired outcomes. That requires the clarity that standards will bring to all of this.

The other thing I thought was important was the focus on recommendations for how this system should be designed. Pushing to a decentralized system will go a long way to helping, in the amendment that the committee made to the preamble, to make sure that First Nations' digital sovereignty is respected. It means that this system will give individuals control over their health data and the ability to share and control how their personal health information — to use the term in the bill — is utilized.

Finally, clause 9 of the bill, importantly, supports the use of consensus-based standards in terms of the implementation of the legislation. That's very important. Again, this isn't where we have to have specific regulations in place. We can use consensus-based standards to fast-track regulation development.

I'll conclude by saying that this is a consequential piece of legislation, and it is important for us to get this process started. It has real potential to meaningfully strengthen Canada's health care system for patients, providers and communities alike. I look forward to the swift passage of Bill S-5, and I thank Senator Kingston for her great work as well as the Social Affairs Committee for its great work.

Thank you, colleagues.

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, I would like to thank Senator Kingston for introducing Bill S-5, An Act respecting the interoperability of health information technology and to prohibit data blocking by health information technology vendors.

I am giving this speech on behalf of Ms. Leona Star, Director of Research, First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba; Dr. Stephanie Sinclair, Data Sovereignty Lead, First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba; and Ms. Tatenda Okoi, Director of eHealth, First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba, all of whom appeared before the Social Affairs Committee.

In their submission, they wrote:

Bill S-5 aims to advance interoperability and prohibit data blocking within Canada's health system. Bill S-5 presents a critical opportunity to address health inequities within Canada's health care system by linking datasets that reflect the gaps in the health care provided, as well as the opportunity to upscale interventions that support the well-being of our families and children. However, the collection, use and interpretation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit data must be led by the First Nations, Métis and Inuit themselves. As First Nations, we have the right to be counted, the right to be seen and the right to govern our own data and information according to our own world view.

Adherence to First Nations data sovereignty is a prerequisite to any data and information that Bill S-5 intends to collect or link to advance interoperability of health information.

First Nations data sovereignty is a prerequisite for all proposed Senate bills that impact First Nations directly or indirectly, as proposed laws cannot undermine the rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit People under section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. As nations, we have witnessed how colonialism has consistently hindered the ability of First Nations to be represented in datasets, as enumeration and data-collection efforts have primarily benefited governments and have upheld colonial systems that prioritize measuring illness and disease containment over assessing the well-being of First Nations.

Within Canada, First Nations' data has been weaponized, as the enumeration of First Nations people has been largely controlled by the government. Colonial enumeration supports and upholds the laws and interests of the states, while undermining the sovereignty of the First Nations. For example, the Indian status registry has been used to collect data on status Indians defined by the government and colonial policies upheld by the Indian Act. The definition of a status Indian has been used to undermine and overstep First Nations laws of kinship, *wahkohtowin*, a word that existed in precolonial times, where relatives are reminded of their responsibilities to one another based on their relationships and kinship ties.

As stated by Métis physician and researcher, Dr. J. Smylie:

There are two underlying roots to Canada's Indigenous health information challenges: the lack of relevant, consistent, and inclusive Indigenous identity indicators in core population health data sets; and the need for meaningful Indigenous leadership and participation in the governance and management of Indigenous health data.

The inability to collect nation-based identifiers for First Nations people within Western systems hinders First Nations' ability to assert data sovereignty, as the collected data is often utilized in a pan-Indigenous approach that aggregates nations under the term "Indigenous." This type of data collection and analysis effectively undermines the unique histories and ignores the jurisdictional challenges that each nation, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples, face in accessing equitable care.

The lack of nation-based identifiers within provincial administrative datasets hinders the ability to measure health inequities across Canada, as it limits health systems' capacity to deliver culturally appropriate care that addresses the needs and priorities of First Nations as they navigate existing Western health care systems.

• (1540)

The Canadian health care system relies on rigid procedures and administration to control, regulate, and organize patients, which often overlooks the unique needs of distinct

populations that require cultural accommodation and responsiveness to the cultural needs of the patients they are responsible for delivering equitable care to. In most cases, the application of Western systems and programs fails to effectively recognize and incorporate culturally safe solutions that address First Nations' identity, experience, and social needs. As a result, significant gaps are created, leading to poor health outcomes, inequitable care and representation of First Nations peoples in the healthcare system, and the inability of systems to see or address racial inequities in the system.

Data has been used to measure the marginalization and assimilation of First Nations people, creating a deficit narrative when they do not achieve colonial markers of successful assimilation. Walter and Carroll further support that "[b]ecause Indigenous Peoples are lagging behind, the narrative goes, the nation-state must adopt "special policies" to "rehabilitate" them"

Bill S-5 represents an opportunity to demonstrate how First Nations and the State of Canada can work together to support distinction-based data collection that adheres to First Nations data sovereignty and supports the well-being of children and families of today and the future generation that have yet to come.

Thank you. *Kinanâskomitinawow*.

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

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of May 6, 2026, moved:

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 26, 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.)

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON FOOD ALLERGY BILL

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Andrew Cardozo moved second reading of Bill S-247, An Act to establish a national framework on food allergy.

He said: Honourable senators, it is my privilege to introduce Bill S-247, An Act to establish a national framework on food allergy. I am especially pleased to introduce this bill in the month of May, which is Food Allergy Awareness Month.

I would like to begin by thanking Food Allergy Canada, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of Canadians with food allergies.

Along with Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia and Member of Parliament Ben Lobb, we hosted a round table in February to consider this issue. Other senators who participated were Senators White and Youance, and I would like to thank them very much for being part of this.

Food allergy is a serious, chronic condition. Around 7.5% of Canadians, some 3 million people, have a food allergy, including 600,000 children. Every year, 25,000 infants are diagnosed, and 40% of those with a food allergy are allergic to more than one food. These millions of Canadians are living with life-threatening health conditions.

[*Translation*]

Allergic reactions come in a variety of forms, and a mild reaction in the past is no guarantee that future reactions will stay that way.

[*English*]

You simply do not know. Having a food allergy means being perpetually vigilant.

Peanut allergies have had fairly good awareness, but try avoiding milk in a situation where it's not just a milk intolerance but a life-threatening allergy to milk. This is not just a food allergen, something unpleasant and that can be avoided. We're talking about an allergy, an abnormal reaction of the immune system. It can be life-threatening. You can unknowingly be exposed to something that can kill you, and to avoid it, you are somewhat at the mercy of the behaviour of people around you. Eating out can be a real challenge.

• (1550)

While food allergy has always existed, it used to be a fairly uncommon condition. In the industrialized world, the prevalence of food allergy started rising in the 1980s. This increase accelerated through the following decades. We still don't know for certain why, though there are a number of theories.

Epinephrine is the drug used to treat severe allergic reactions. It is significantly underutilized due to barriers such as cost, access to a device and a lack of education on how to use it. One issue is that we have been reliant on a single supplier. If that supply were to be cut off, millions of Canadians would be vulnerable.

We have developed promising new techniques that can help prevent food allergy and reduce severity in sufferers. I want to highlight that there has been a fundamental shift in how we approach this. It is no longer advised, as it was 20 years ago, that children avoid potentially allergenic foods. Parents are now told to get these foods into their children's diets at an early age. The groundbreaking 2015 Learning Early About Peanut Allergy, or LEAP, study found that introducing peanuts during infancy reduced the development of this allergy by 80%. Additionally, oral immunotherapy is being used to aid sufferers by introducing small amounts of an allergen at an early age.

I'm pleased to report that, in the past month, Health Canada has approved a new epinephrine nasal spray. This is wonderful news because of its ease of application and because it diversifies our supply of essential medications. Access to allergists, however, remains limited, particularly in rural and remote areas.

The bill now before you seeks to bring about leadership. It mandates the federal government to work with provincial and territorial health departments, Indigenous governing bodies, health care professionals and patient groups to develop this national framework. The framework should identify ways of reducing the incidence of food allergy and the risks to which people with food allergy are exposed. These may include improving diagnosis and care, expanding the use of new developments, improving access to allergists, et cetera.

As I try to conclude on time, I want to close by highlighting one thing: The number of Bill S-247 is extremely wonderful because food allergy is a 24-7 issue. It is kind of funny and nice — a member of our team discovered that today — but it's also really important. With a food allergy, you are allergic 24-7. You can't say, "I'll just take a pill and have a little bit of peanut butter." You can't say, "It's a birthday party. We'll look the other way." There is no room for error.

On the one hand, it requires 24-7 vigilance. On the other hand, it requires us to work 24-7 on a cure for this.

With that, I thank you, colleagues, for your indulgence.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

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

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, it is now 3:55 p.m. Before proceeding to Question Period with the minister, I would like to remind you of the time limits the Senate established for questions and answers in the order of June 4, 2025.

When the Senate receives a minister for Question Period, as is the case today, the length of a main question is limited to one minute, and the answer to one minute and 30 seconds. The supplementary question and answer are each limited to 45 seconds. In all these cases the reading clerk stands 10 seconds before the time expires.

I will now ask the minister to enter and take her seat.

[English]

QUESTION PERIOD

(Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on June 4, 2025, to receive a Minister of the Crown, the Honourable Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services, appeared before honourable senators during Question Period.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Honourable senators, today we have with us for Question Period the Honourable Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services, to respond to questions concerning her ministerial responsibilities. On behalf of all senators, I welcome the minister.

Minister, as I have noted to the Senate, a main question is limited to one minute and your response to one minute 30 seconds. The question and answer to a supplementary question are both limited to 45 seconds. The reading clerk stands 10 seconds before these times expire. I ask everyone to respect these times. Question Period will last 64 minutes.

MINISTRY OF INDIGENOUS SERVICES

ENTITLEMENT TO INDIAN REGISTRATION

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Welcome, Minister Gull-Masty.

This question is from the Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc., or SCO, representing 33 Anishinaabe and Dakota Nations, who have been clear that anything short of fully eliminating the second-generation cut-off perpetuates the very discrimination that Bill S-2 claims to fix. Will the minister commit today to a

public timeline for its full elimination and confirm what resources are being allocated to clear the registration backlog that is already leaving thousands of First Nations children waiting?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you for having me today. It's a pleasure to be here once again. It's really an honour to address the Senate and answer some of the questions being presented today.

I'm once again here to answer questions on Bill S-2. This has been an ongoing conversation across the country. I've heard many different questions in the realm of what Bill S-2 looks to do.

As I said during my last appearance before the committee, we have expedited the collaborative consultation process, asking communities not whether we should address the second-generation cut-off but how.

I'm always listening in all spaces, not just in that collaborative consultation process but to individuals who reach out to me. I have heard the spectrum of concerns from individuals, from those wishing to have a one-parent rule to those who are looking to ensure that self-determination is part of the conversation. This is something I really want to reiterate today: That self-determination component and ensuring that you have the authority not only to recognize but also to define how your citizenship comes into place. It is a critical part of this conversation that we continue to have.

I'm encouraged by some of the statements and proposals that I received, but I feel that it is the necessary work of our ministry —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you.

Senator McCallum: Co-development is your government's stated standard. Can the minister confirm whether SCO and its 33 nations have been formally engaged on the implementation framework for Bill S-2 and not simply briefed after decisions are made?

Ms. Gull-Masty: I've had a few interesting conversations in various places. I've spoken to the Grand Chief of this region. He's asked some questions. They've been clear on what they are interested in doing in Manitoba. They are very favourable to one avenue.

As part of that conversation, I've also had the opportunity to raise my questions with them. There are clearly other communities that take a different position. Having that conversation on how you find the balance between the two positions that communities have taken is part of the work that we're reflecting. While I can't tell you off the top of my head the official list of everybody who has participated, I'm more than willing to provide you with details in a written format —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

• (1600)

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Minister, welcome to the Senate of Canada. As parliamentarians, we often speak with pride about Canada's contributions to improving maternal and infant health around the world. Yet here at home, many Indigenous communities continue to face unacceptable disparities in their health outcomes. Infant mortality rates in Indigenous communities remain significantly higher than the national average, and at the same time, inadequate access to prenatal care, emergency services and maternal health supports continues to place Indigenous mothers at greater risk. Minister, shouldn't we demonstrate the same commitment to improving maternal and infant health outcomes in Indigenous communities here in Canada as we do internationally? What concrete steps is your department taking in coordination with Health Canada to address these inequities?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you. I welcome that question. It's one that I think is part of a larger dialogue. I'm one of the women who gave birth within the health care system. I understand very personally what it means to face those barriers. In terms of what I envision for the future delivery of that service at Indigenous Services Canada, I want to concretely state that investing in the education space to ensure that service delivery is offered by First Nations to First Nations, preferably also in First Nations language, is an objective I have directed to my department to ensure we're moving forward with in this space. We've seen a significant investment this year in the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program of over \$750 million to ensure that with the current system in place, Indigenous people are able to receive the health care that they need. I do want to also state that I believe there is the need for further room for improvement in this space. It's my duty as a minister to ensure that I'm not trying to determine that in my own way but to also reflect the needs that people bring to me as part of their feedback in receiving the service. I've had the opportunity to speak with many health groups over the past couple of months to really refine in that space what it is that people are seeking. I'm a very strong believer and supporter in midwifery because I believe that women should be able to deliver their babies with their feet touching their traditional territories for the first time. I'm proud to come from a nation that offers that. I'm proud to see that many communities across the country are also offering —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

Senator Ataullahjan: Minister, a further concern is the lack of timely disaggregated data on maternal and infant health outcomes in Indigenous communities. Statistics Canada's latest published Indigenous infant mortality data only covers 2004 to 2016, and Indigenous-specific maternal health data remains limited. Will your government commit to improving the collection and publication of Indigenous maternal and infant health data so that policy-makers and communities can have a clear picture of these ongoing challenges?

Ms. Gull-Masty: I do believe it's imperative for us to really be able to ensure that we work with our partners in that data collection because while we shape policy at Indigenous Services Canada, we also have to be very open to the contributions that communities make to us in shaping that policy. I think it is imperative that we collect data, but I think it's also imperative that we create space for them to work with us in offering that service and redefining in that space as well. I believe that it is important for us to collect data, not just for ourselves but also to demonstrate how Indigenous communities are using data to shape the outcomes they seek to achieve.

ARCTIC ENERGY SECURITY

Hon. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: Thank you for being here. It's good to see you again. All of Nunavut's 25 fly-in communities still rely on isolated diesel generators in each community and seasonal fuel shipments to power homes, schools, health centres and critical infrastructure. Over 10 of these power plants are experiencing multiple power outages due to aging generators, many of which are over 50 years old. I know of at least six communities that are currently at risk of catastrophic failure.

Given this information, how can Canada say Arctic energy security is a priority when the territory of Nunavut remains dependent on diesel — some of which is purchased and imported from the U.S. — at a time when Canada is focused on self-sufficiency, Arctic sovereignty and clean energy infrastructure?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you. I welcome the question. I want to speak a little bit about what we're seeing in terms of trying to move things forward. I was very proud to see the Iqaluit hydroelectric project was one of the initiatives that was launched. I think this is the right step in the right direction: working with the community to ensure that they are not only able to drive the solution but also be part of the solution in an ongoing way.

In some of the parts of the questions that you have asked, they are under the purview of my colleague Minister Chartrand. I would welcome bringing this question to her attention because I think it is one of the initiatives that is incredibly important. Offering that stability to the community and offering that stability of having a service is something that is primordial in the work that we do, not only in Inuit communities but also in First Nations and Métis communities and other places where we're trying to serve Indigenous people. It's one of the things that offers them the capacity to feel safe at home and to feel that they have the ability to have their children safe in that space, and it is an initiative that I support. I think that there's a lot of work being done.

Energy is one of the components that cuts across multiple ministries. I'm encouraged in terms of what I'm seeing in the energy space from my other ministerial colleagues, but I'm more than willing to bring that question forward to them.

Senator Karetak-Lindell: Projects like Nukik Corporation's Kivalliq Hydro-Fibre Link would connect communities in Nunavut to Canadian-owned and operated hydroelectric and fibre

infrastructure, reduce diesel dependency, lower the risk of fuel delivery disruptions and replace fragile seasonal supply systems with permanent grid-based clean energy connections.

Will your department commit to exploring this opportunity with the relevant ministries to advance a long-term economic and environmental solution for both Nunavut and Canada by becoming full funding and infrastructure partners in projects like the Kivalliq Hydro-Fibre Link and other nation-building Arctic projects?

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, senator.

Ms. Gull-Masty: I think it's imperative that we work together and create that stability and support to ensure that our partners in the North see we're making substantive investments, and, yes, the Inuit hydro project is one area where the government has moved forward and taken a serious interest. Not only as a minister but also as an MP in my riding, I'm very encouraged by the work that's being done there. I'm not only looking at what they're trying to do with wind energy — because I think it's very progressive in this space — but also the work that's being carried out in solar as well. I think that with everything we're seeing occurring in the climate, we have to respond in ensuring that we diversify energy support to communities.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE SUPPORT

Hon. Mary Coyle: I extend a warm welcome to you, minister. As you know, this week is Emergency Preparedness Week. Yet yesterday, more than 600 members of the Red Earth Cree Nation in Saskatchewan were displaced due to increased risks of flooding. This week, the Auditor General also released a report warning that federal efforts to map parts of the country facing the highest risk of flooding are not on track to finish by the 2028 target date. Given this increasing risk that impacts many First Nations across the country, what is your department doing to ensure First Nations communities have emergency preparedness plans to deal with flood risks, and in the short term, how are you supporting the Red Earth Cree Nation and other First Nations communities dealing with flooding at this time?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you. This is probably one of the most challenging parts at Indigenous Services Canada because it's not only the Red Earth Cree Nation in the process of facing severe floods. We had a lot of work to do with the Peguis First Nation who almost endured a flood, as well as the community of Kashechewan who has been in a state of flooding and evacuation for a number of weeks. I really want to call attention to the support we're giving those communities. On emergency management, my colleague and I had a very intense learning experience last year, as we saw the increase in forest fires throughout the country. It really helped us this year to work together and collaborate and determine: What is that next step forward? One of the things that was very clear in that process is ensuring that in the jurisdiction of the federal-provincial space, we have that Indigenous voice and that First Nations community there.

[Senator Karetak-Lindell]

• (1610)

I do want to call attention to one of the historic successes this week that was in Prince Edward Island, where I had the opportunity to sign the first-ever trilateral agreement that has inclusivity of the Indigenous representation at the table. I'm very proud of that work. I'm proud of that community that they were able to do that. I encourage other premiers and provinces to look to this model. It is one that I hope we replicate. It is one that ensures that, in a time of urgency, you are providing a culturally appropriate and safe response.

It also allows for planning. It is cost-effective. We know that every dollar that we spend in prevention, you gain \$7 to \$10 of impact.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

Senator Coyle: That's very good to hear. Thank you for that.

You mentioned wildfires. According to the *International Journal of Wildland Fire*, over the last four decades, 42% of wildfire evacuations across Canada have been from Indigenous communities.

Given the significant disproportionate impact on Indigenous communities and with wildfire season already here, what is the department's plan to help mitigate wildfires and engage First Nations communities themselves in emergency preparedness planning to protect themselves from wildfires?

Ms. Gull-Masty: This past year, we saw over 50,000 individuals being evacuated. That means that we do need to have a collaborative, coordinated response.

The work that we do at ISC is to ensure that we're supporting communities with things like FireSmart and ensure we're going to get those prevention dollars to give them the tools they need to be able to respond. But the greatest impact in that space is having collaboration between the federal and provincial governments to ensure that we are working together and reflecting the reality of Indigenous communities who are, almost 100% of the time, on the front line when emergency situations are occurring.

Like I said, I welcome my colleagues at other levels to work with us. I'm very supportive in this space. This trilateral agreement —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

FIRST NATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Krista Ross: Minister, thank you for being with us today. I will be asking a question today on behalf of my colleague Senator Prosper:

Budget 2025 spoke to special purpose vehicles and committed to “. . . further enhance access to capital support for Indigenous groups seeking equity participation in economic and resource development projects.”

First Nations' involvement in major projects and infrastructure projects is key to economic reconciliation.

Enhanced access to capital can also be accomplished by the ability to monetize federal funding commitments in order to access upfront loans for critical infrastructure projects.

Minister, I understand your department is looking at a monetization pilot project. Will you be able to announce the details of that project within this fiscal year?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you. I welcome the question. First, I want to speak to what opportunity there is for development. If communities choose to move forward with development, we are here to support them in that space. That includes my ministerial colleagues.

Major projects are one of the vehicles pushing that progress forward, not only in investing for development for Indigenous communities, but also in ensuring that the contribution is felt within the Canadian economy. Indigenous Peoples contribute over \$12 billion in the development space to the GDP annually, and I think it could be even higher. I do believe that that statistic might be a little bit outdated.

This project that we're undertaking, once it is prepared — I also want to respect the senator's timeline, and I would be very happy to come back and provide additional information on what it is and what I foresee to be a success, because I think Indigenous Peoples are coming to the table in innovative ways, looking to ensure they're bringing things forward to their members.

I will always be a minister that is here to support them in that space, and I believe my other ministerial colleagues who also work within the space of economic and sustainable development are open to that as well.

Senator Ross: Thank you, minister.

Access to capital is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to building much-needed infrastructure in First Nations communities. Another is the capacity to plan, manage procurement and manage the life cycle of the project. The First Nations Infrastructure Institute, or FNII, was established in legislation two Parliaments ago, but it has not yet been fully stood up. When will your government appoint the board members and fully stand up the FNII?

Ms. Gull-Masty: Thank you. I want to speak to something that is really important. It might not perfectly answer your question, but I want to speak to something really important.

I had the opportunity this morning to have a housing and infrastructure session with the Assembly of First Nations, or AFN, and we spoke to this infrastructure gap, and while that gap exists — and I want to acknowledge that historically the reason why it exists is because of underfunding — I do see this as a space where there is opportunity for communities to take advantage of creating and generating wealth or revenue for their communities.

Building a home doesn't only mean getting a family into a house. It means generating employment. It means generating revenue for the community. It means ensuring that you're able to stand up an Indigenous business and have that business serve that community and many other places. So, innovating in that space and trying to respond to it —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

[*Translation*]

FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION

Hon. Michèle Audette: [*Editor's Note: Senator Audette spoke in Innu-aimun.*]

Minister, since 2019, First Nations have been working with your department to reach regional education agreements.

In Quebec, one agreement affecting 22 communities has already been signed with Indigenous Services Canada, while requests from the Tshakapesh Institute and Innu TakuaiKAN Uashat mak Mani-Utenam, or ITUM, remain unanswered, because your department's teams haven't received a mandate. That's creating a direct inequity between children in the same region.

Minister, why do Innu children in Quebec not have the same opportunities to achieve success as other First Nations and non-Indigenous children in the rest of Quebec? Why has the department decided to perpetuate inequities and stall agreements that are ready to be signed and implemented?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you for the question.

First, I want to set the record straight about the agreements that have been signed. To begin with, one of the groups is already in the third year of its agreement, which is nearing expiry. Two other groups are at the start of the engagement process and have begun discussing their agreement.

These groups are very strong and I appreciate their work. However, they are at different stages in the process of getting a response. I think education is an area in serious need of investment. Education is the engine that drives a nation forward, and it's one of my priorities. In fact, I'm very pleased to see in the economic update that the department has received \$600 million for education.

There remains more work to be done, of course, but with the community's support, I'll do everything in my power to provide it with high-quality service.

Senator Audette: That's what I like to hear, because we saw it in the announcement and we have high hopes for you.

Can we expect, minister, that Uashat mak Mani-Utenam and Tshakapesh will sign an action plan and an agreement with your department before the end of the fiscal year?

Ms. Gull-Masty: Over the past four weeks, I have been meeting with the Innu Nation on other issues, and ITUM and the Tshakapesh Institute attended those meetings.

I asked my regional advisor for Quebec to follow up, and the response was encouraging. I believe that the work that is being done by the ITUM and Tshakapesh communities is very important because it is based on culture. That is something that we need to protect as we work to deliver education services to the community.

We are nearing the end of the project, and I look forward to seeing what will happen in the future. I always encourage the nations by saying that we are here to deliver services and, to do that, we need to establish strong partnerships. ITUM and Tshakapesh —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

[*English*]

ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER

Hon. Margaret Dawn Anderson: Welcome, minister. For decades, Indigenous communities have been forced to live without reliable access to safe drinking water, despite repeated calls for action from the Government of Canada. The ongoing water crisis in First Nations communities has drawn international condemnation, with human rights bodies warning that Canada's failure to ensure safe water constitutes a violation of fundamental human rights.

Some First Nations communities, including Neskantaga First Nation, have lived under long-term drinking water advisories for more than three decades. In the Northwest Territories, multiple communities and schools continue to face serious water quality concerns, including elevated levels of trihalomethanes, coliform bacteria and lead. Yet, when you spoke to the Spring Economic Update, you told Indigenous Peoples to look beyond the sections specifically dedicated to them. You stated, "... there's some bigger conversations that I'm just kind of mulling and trying to go through." Why is the government still mulling solutions when the water problem is already clearly understood and long-standing?

• (1620)

Minister —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, senator.

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: First, I must correct that I was mulling over some of the recommendations that I received from people when I was travelling across the country, asking very important and legitimate questions on water.

I want to point out that 96% of long-term boil water advisories were lifted. The update that I received yesterday was that there are 39 remaining. I didn't, honestly, check today what the update was, but I want to speak a little to what a long-term boil water advisory is.

[Ms. Gull-Masty]

There are components of an advisory that are triggered at the community level, and it can be for different reasons. It could be because they are doing infrastructure work, and they must displace earth or displace part of their workspace. A long-term boil water advisory is called as a precautionary measure. It could be because they're doing repairs on the system, and a long-term boil water advisory is called during that time. There are places like Neskantaga where there are long-term, long-outstanding issues of everything that has occurred in the water space.

I must also point to the fact that there is a lot of trauma because of the history around the relationship to water. I've had the opportunity to meet with the Neskantaga Chief and council on two occasions. We're looking to work with them on supporting them not only in their water space but also in the additional asks that they have that relate to water, because they're one of the communities that had concerns and considerations around their health clinic.

We are looking at water through a holistic lens at ISC. It is a space where we continue —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, Minister.

Senator Anderson: Minister, this week you stated, "... water is not just present in communities. Water is present throughout Canada." If that is the case, are other Canadians living under decades-long boil water advisories, as First Nations have, in some cases since the mid-1990s? Are their children attending schools with lead concerns or their families relying on boiled water for years at a time?

When you speak about harmonizing approaches across Canada, can you explain why Indigenous Peoples have been dealing with unsafe water for generations, often in proximity to resource development, including mines and industrial projects near their waters, yet still do not have the same guaranteed protections and outcomes as the rest of the country?

Ms. Gull-Masty: My comments earlier this week actually related to a national security strategy on water because the issue with water is not only occurring in Canada. In a global context, the UN, on a number of occasions, has issued concerns with regard to water, and has also issued reports about the state of water.

I am, first and foremost, trying to ensure there's a harmonized approach in looking at water. That means creating space for the Indigenous voice, for the provincial voice and for the federal voice to have a collaborative mechanism that is going to move forward the protection of water, the guarantee of water, the support and security of water.

I come from a riding, where, yes, I have one community that has a boil water advisory, and not even 100 kilometres away a municipality that —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

NON-INSURED HEALTH BENEFITS

Hon. Margaret Dawn Anderson: Minister, the Non-Insured Health Benefits program, or NIHB, is a federal responsibility, yet in the Northwest Territories, the territorial government is administering that program and has publicly stated there's a "significant shortfall."

In fiscal year 2024-25 alone, the Government of Northwest Territories was forced to absorb approximately \$13 million in cost overruns to ensure First Nations and Inuit patients could continue to access medically necessary care and travel.

Given that NIHB is a federally mandated program, can you explain why the territorial government is being required to subsidize it, and does this situation indicate that the federal government is not fully meeting its obligations to provide equitable health care access to Indigenous Peoples? Further, will you commit to fully funding NIHB in the Northwest Territories so the territorial system is no longer forced to absorb the deficits, and Indigenous Peoples are not put at risk by funding gaps in a program that is ultimately your government's responsibility?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: I had the opportunity to meet with leadership from the Northwest Territories, and we did have this conversation. This was a really important conversation because we spoke about the lack of service that is available in that region of Canada. It can be really challenging to see a dentist; it can be really challenging to see a doctor.

First and foremost, yes, I acknowledge that we offer the service in this space, but making sure that you're able to work and harmonize with your provincial colleagues in terms of service delivery is one of the things that speaks to how we are able to fund in that space.

I was encouraged by the openness that the minister had to assure us that she wants to work with us and identify what kind of approach we want to take, not only in delivering in the health care space but everything having to do with dental care, even in spaces that relate to Jordan's Principle. There are a number of health services that are eligible under this program.

There needs to be an approach of coordination, and I think that this is one of the strengths when you're engaging with your colleagues or your counterparts at the provincial level. When that openness is there, there's a more substantive pathway forward in pushing the programming that you're able to do.

We did announce \$765 million. I might have the number wrong, but it's over \$750 million for NIHB. This is a very substantive contribution in this space because we have work to do, but simultaneously trying to fund and look to solutions that will offer a better-quality service is —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

Senator Anderson: Minister, dental care for First Nations and Inuit is federally funded through NIHB, yet reporting has described the Northwest Territories as "a dentistry desert" where many Indigenous communities have no permanent dentist, rely on intermittent fly-in clinics and face months-long wait times or must leave their communities for basic care.

Given that untreated dental disease can lead to infections, hospitalization and impacts on nutrition, child development and overall health, and in a context where Indigenous Peoples already experience life expectancy gaps of nearly a decade, how can your government claim equitable access to health care, when even routine dental services are not consistently available where people live?

Ms. Gull-Masty: We will always ensure that we continue to offer the service when it is not available in the region.

It was \$794 million that we contributed to Non-Insured Health Benefits.

Yes, there is a dental desert in the North. Helping individuals ensure they're able to fly and travel to the nearest dentist is the space that we're in right now. At the same time, having the capacity to look in the education portfolio and encouraging our youth, those individuals who are going back to school, to consider taking up studies is one of the solutions we can look to, because there needs to be delivery of culturally safe care, hopefully by Indigenous dentists as well. That's my hope and dream. I think it's something that can come to fruition.

FUNDING FOR PROGRAMS

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Madam Minister, thank you for being here. I was in Timmins last month and had the honour of meeting with Mushkegowuk Council. I have two questions stemming from that meeting.

First, they have developed an ambitious plan to protect spaces where polar bears den and shoreline birds nest along the James Bay coast. The space would be co-managed with Parks Canada and funded through the Project Finance for Permanence, but agreement is needed with the Province of Ontario. How is Canada supporting Mushkegowuk Council to make sure this conservation area is successful?

Second, we know changes to Jordan's Principle funding have created a lot of uncertainty for families and communities. When I spoke with them, Mushkegowuk Council was concerned about funding for Camp Chikipak. This supports children and is, in fact, so popular that registration fills up in under an hour. Will ISC commit to more clarity on funding and more staffing to respond within its timelines?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: I want to acknowledge the exceptional work that Mushkegowuk have done in this space. I'm very familiar with this file. I had the opportunity to work with them in my capacity previously as a Grand Chief because we were simultaneously doing protection work on the other side of James Bay, and we wanted to make sure the work we undertook was harmonized. I really must speak to the testament of the work that they've done, because they really did push Canada.

I believe my colleague Minister Dabrusin at Environment and Climate Change Canada, or ECCC, is innovating in this space to ensure that we work with Indigenous communities to protect areas of conservation, both terrestrial and marine. I'm proud to see the work that they're doing because it is really traditional knowledge that is driving in that space.

I've had the opportunity to speak to the Chief and Grand Chief, but I believe that this is one of the areas where innovation and protection are also — we're always there to support the community, because Indigenous knowledge is going to be the thing that ensures that the harmonization of conservation is in place and is looking into the future on a very substantive timeline. I know many people here are aware that Seven Generations forward is the planning that Indigenous communities do.

With regard to your question on Jordan's Principle, I do want to call attention to the work that we've been doing on the operational bulletin —

• (1630)

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Hon. Bernadette Clement: My next question comes from conversations that Senator Arnot and I had with the Anishinabek Nation a few weeks ago. I'll raise two issues that they flagged with us.

First, it has been over 550 days since Kimberly Murray, Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, presented her final report to the Minister of Justice. What is the government doing to respond to her report?

Second, communities are really concerned about the preservation of Indian residential school records. Records connect families to their loved ones and help combat growing denialism. Shouldn't these records be preserved? Is the government exploring anonymizing the records to help preserve them?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you. In terms of your second question, this falls under the purview of my colleague Minister Alty. I am more than willing to bring this question forward to her. It is one that is very important and very sensitive. We do want to honour and acknowledge the work that was done by Special Interlocutor Murray because it is one that is very sensitive, and we want to ensure that we do no further harm in

this space because it is an area where not only was a lot of work done but we were able to work with Survivors in a way that they were able to bring forward information that should really shape how we move forward in acknowledging and realizing the impact of residential schools in Canada as a whole.

[*Translation*]

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: Good afternoon, minister. I am very pleased to see you here today. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples reminds Canada of its obligation to fully respect the economic, social and health rights of First Nations, particularly by supporting their ability to decide on, design and manage services that meet the needs of their communities. This responsibility must guide all decisions to support the self-determination of First Nations.

Can you tell the Senate what practical measures are currently being implemented to fulfill these commitments?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you for the question. I had an opportunity to talk to my colleagues, who made a presentation to the United Nations in New York not long ago. I myself had the opportunity to participate in that forum because it's important to not just take a position on these things, but to participate and advocate for our nation.

One of the things I said last week when the economic update came out is that we have to prove we can open the book and turn the page on everything affecting the lives of people in Indigenous communities. That's what my mandate is about. However, we know there are still Indigenous individuals living outside their communities. Aspects of the economic update impact everyone whether they live in their community or outside of it.

There's still a lot of work to do. It's hard to work on these issues because there's a legacy of service gaps. I have focused on collaborating with colleagues from the nations I work with to develop a strategy and make sure we have a clear process, not just a line-up —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

INDIGENOUS HEALTH

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: Thank you for your response. In your Action Plan 2023-2028, part VIII, which addresses the Non-Insured Health Benefits program, is directly aligned with Jordan's Principle, which we discussed earlier. This principle aims to continue collaborating with First Nations on the transfer of health programs, particularly in British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Saskatchewan, as well as in Quebec. Could you explain what the current status is regarding this measure, which falls under your department's purview?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you for your question. This is a big file. Clearly, there are significant health care needs under Jordan's Principle. I was pleased to announce \$1.5 billion in funding for one year, because the needs are so significant. As part of this process, we are also working to re-establish an operational bulletin that will be more aligned with the needs of the families submitting applications.

For example, there is a lot of paperwork and lengthy administrative processes, and families have to reapply every 12 months. I am currently working on a process to cut the red tape and ensure that families with highly complex medical needs receive consistent services.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Minister, thank you for being here today. I'm honoured to ask this question on behalf of my Canadian Senators Group colleague Senator Prosper:

On May 4, 2026, the Auditor General, or AG, released her report *New Fiscal Initiatives With First Nations*. The report found that Indigenous Services Canada, or ISC, "... did not assess whether the 10-year grants were helping to address the disparities and inequities between First Nations and other Canadians ..."

The AG went on to recommend that ISC should provide additional support to First Nations and grant recipients the ability "... to increase their administrative and financial capacity to prepare ..." the annual monitoring statements.

Minister, the First Nations Financial Management Board, or FMB, which has a proven track record of delivering on behalf of First Nations communities across the country, is tasked with assessing certain financial performance measures and producing monitoring reports.

Is your department going to provide increased long-term core funding to the FMB in line with the Auditor General's recommendations?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you. I want to welcome the Auditor General's work. It must be incredibly challenging to be in that role, especially for an extended period of time, to call attention and point to gaps that exist in the system.

We know that, for many decades, First Nations have faced underfunding. Then, there was a period of time when there was a lot of significantly increased funding. When you are able to fund in that space at that rate, yes, there are instances in the system where we were not able to have substantive reporting. We are continuing to work with communities to help them build that capacity — not only help them build that capacity, but help them build the network to access the resources that they need to be able to provide those documents, first and foremost.

One of the interesting things that I learned during this process is that there is an increased need for auditors. So I want to encourage individuals who are listening to please go into this field of work, especially if you are Indigenous. Clearly, this is support that is needed in any financial aspect.

We want to work with our colleagues, and we want to work with those organizations that are there to build capacity and support communities. We're always looking to enhance those relationships. We want communities to drive those whom they are asking us to help support and truly build that capacity, not only in the space of reporting, but also the capacity that is needed in undertaking projects — project management and infrastructure build. There is a lot of work to do in this space. I'm encouraged, and I'm happy to do it with them.

Senator Osler: Thank you, minister. I had to speed up, so I didn't read part of Senator Prosper's question. I'll now read what I wasn't able to read the first time:

The First Nations Financial Management Board is tasked with assessing certain financial performance measures and producing monitoring reports. They are so effective that the government has also tasked them with taking over third-party management. Yet, this increased responsibility hasn't come with the requisite core funding.

Minister, if you have anything more to add, I would appreciate it.

Ms. Gull-Masty: Thank you. When communities are having that difficulty or challenge, our objective is to support them in that space. It is our work to support them with the tools they need.

I'm always going to be open to communities when they identify whom they want to work with, be it with the First Nations Financial Management Board or others, because we have to give communities the right to choose in order to ensure that they're able to respond to the questions asked of them.

I am a big believer that accountability and transparency are part of the work, not only in reporting in dollars, but in ensuring that your members understand the financial decisions you have taken on their behalf to improve their quality of life in the community.

ENTITLEMENT TO INDIAN REGISTRATION

Hon. Marty Klyne: Minister, welcome. Many First Nations welcome Bill S-2 as a chance to end the second-generation cut-off on conveying Indian Act status. This could happen through the Senate amendment proposing a one-parent rule. You have said the government will consult further.

However, Whitecap Dakota Nation in Saskatchewan has proposed an interim opt-in model. This would allow First Nations to exercise their own authority to grant irrevocable 6(2) status to individuals, provided they have one 6(2) parent and sufficient connection to the community. The details are defined in a draft amendment sent to the Senate Indigenous Peoples Committee.

• (1640)

This opt-in model would address urgent, ongoing harms while addressing self-determination. Can you please confirm the government is aware of and will consider this option to end the second-generation cut-off?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: As I noted earlier, one of the first things I did when I became minister was expedite the collaborative consultation process, because I believe if we're going to address the conversation around status, one of the primary factors in that conversation is self-determination. When communities bring forward solutions they feel best apply to them, I will always be open to those recommendations.

Something I am challenged by in this space is that some of the recommendations brought forward through the amendments are one-solution approaches. While a one-parent rule may work for some communities, it clearly does not work for all of them.

I am open, listening and trying to ensure communities are able to determine for themselves not only their membership lists but what it means to have status for their nation. There are instances when we have seen communities suddenly wake up one day and have 700 more members because of registration — or 700 fewer members because of inefficiencies in registration.

This is why I believe the conversation around status has to speak to — we should not be in the business of registering people. It is not only discriminatory but racist. Something I wish to move forward on is empowering communities to be the ones who make determinations in that space.

Senator Klyne: Yes, I agree that you shouldn't be involved with that. There are a number of First Nations out there practising their self-determination and making decisions, and they know how to manage their numbers.

Minister, in 2023, I sponsored Bill C-45, a government bill regarding First Nations fiscal management. That bill proposed an opt-in fiscal framework, forcing nothing on individual First Nations. This meant that further consultation was not required, which was a strong point of the bill.

Minister, if an opt-in model worked for that bill, why not pursue an opt-in model with Bill S-2, providing an immediate path beyond the second-generation cut-off?

Ms. Gull-Masty: Thank you. The bill is being studied in committee by MPs. I'm listening and looking at different things being brought forward. I thought there was a lot of interesting testimony and statements in that space.

What does that mean? When communities bring forward solutions that apply to them, I am very open to them. I'm willing to work with them to bring forward a solution that fits them. It is not one-size-fits-all. It will be one that aligns with ensuring they are fully empowered with the self-determination to recognize their citizens.

The Indian Act is not something that should be tinkered with. It has already been amended over 150 times. We have not found the solution in that process; therefore, I truly believe we should do away with —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Minister, the latest Auditor General report on your department confirms what many Canadians have come to expect from the Liberal government: that the announcement is the policy. The report found that although the federal government has provided more than \$6.5 billion in long-term funding to First Nations since 2016, your government failed to properly implement, monitor or assess whether these investments improved outcomes in Indigenous communities. It also found that key commitments related to accountability and governance reform remain unfinished.

Minister, how can your government claim meaningful progress while the AG report confirms your department falls short in transforming the fiscal relationship with First Nations?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you. I believe at that time, in 2016, there was a push regarding the First Nations Financial Transparency Act. It was decided upon and rejected by Indigenous People in this country because of the manner in which it was determined, developed and essentially brought down without their inclusion.

During 2016-26, a lot of work was done in this space. We've worked closely with our partners to ensure that we're trying to achieve the outcomes they set. One of the things I have been tasked with as minister is ensuring we are able to work with communities to define outcomes.

While I welcome the work the Auditor General has done, I think we have to be more substantive in analyzing the impact of outcomes through language that is reflective of the decisions and direction First Nations seek to set for themselves.

This is part of the reconciliation work we have to do. It's not only about measuring things through standard accounting practice, which sometimes does not take into consideration important factors, such as previous harm or trauma caused by racial and discriminatory legislation and loss of culture, language and identity because of previous practices. I believe these are things First Nations communities want us to measure as part of the work we're doing.

I will always be here to ensure it is clearly understood by community that accountability and transparency are important to me. We must ensure we build capacity in this space to also deliver the mechanism —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

Senator Ataullahjan: Minister, the Auditor General also found the government failed to establish a proper mutual accountability framework with First Nations and did not consistently monitor whether funding recipients remained eligible. Will the government commit to implementing clear performance measures and transparent reporting so both Parliament and Indigenous communities can properly assess results?

Ms. Gull-Masty: Thank you. Yes, communities should be able to have every tool available to them to ensure they're reporting to their members the decisions they take and the fiscal impacts those decisions have to improve the quality of life in the community and the services they offer their members.

I will always be in a space to build that capacity with them through mechanisms delivered not only through consultation but progressively looking at other terms of measurement in this space that fall outside of standard accounting guidelines, because this is important.

I said previously we have to measure the impact government policies have had on the loss of culture, language and identity in many different spaces. That is an outcome they seek to ensure they are monitoring, and they are looking to achieve enhanced outcomes.

FUNDING AND SERVICES

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Minister, what we've heard today in the Senate is what Indigenous communities have been hearing for a long time: consultation, talk, reflection, but not a lot of action.

In the wake of your government's recycled investment announcements for Indigenous communities in the spring fiscal update, you have suggested Indigenous People should look beyond specific sections of the government's economic statement.

Your office has also said that a table of zeros is nothing for Indigenous communities to be concerned about. How in the world do you justify a communication approach that appears to dismiss and obscure rather than clearly identify dedicated investments for Indigenous priorities?

Why would the Indigenous community have confidence in the sincerity of this government when all they see is zeros next to their priority line items on budgets and fiscal statements?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: The question suggests that we should only offer Indigenous Peoples services identified within budgets that pertain to them within Indigenous Services Canada; I have an issue with that. I know the capacity of Indigenous People to perform and participate in other spaces is very real.

Team Canada and the Red Seal work require that we get Canadians ready to build and support the Canadian economy. That means there is also space for Indigenous People in the trades. This is one of the areas where I intend to work very

closely with my colleagues to ensure there is a pathway available not only for Indigenous People but for Indigenous women to be visible in this space. That doesn't mean ensuring they are only within the domain of ISC.

I also want to speak to the historic investments in the area of sports we saw within this budget. Some of the most profound athletes of Indigenous ancestry perform and represent Canada not only within this country but internationally.

So, when I say to look beyond the section of ISC, that things are available to you there, that is what I'm speaking to. You don't only come to the Minister of Indigenous Services for service as a member of the Indigenous community; you go to every ministry and cabinet. Every ministry everywhere has a component of Indigenous services within it. That even includes Immigration because of the discussions around the Jay Treaty.

So while it might not be clear —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

Senator Housakos: Minister, with all due respect, that's not good enough. The Indigenous community has been marginalized for decades. Obviously, we think every single ministry should be preoccupied with First Nations People, but particularly Indigenous Services Canada.

We've seen the Auditor General point to a lack of thorough implementation of billions of dollars of grants, and now your government appears to dismiss concerns around insufficient investments in Indigenous communities with rhetoric.

When can Canadians expect meaningful investment when it comes to Indigenous communities rather than just announcements and navel-gazing?

• (1650)

Minister, Indigenous communities have seen that now for decades, and nothing ever materializes. After so many years, we're still talking about not providing drinking water to First Nations people.

Ms. Gull-Masty: Once again, your statement seems to indicate that Indigenous people can only receive service from Indigenous Services Canada, or ISC, where we fund over \$30 billion in service and program delivery across the country in sometimes the most remote and isolated places.

While you may call our initiatives navel-gazing, I would say that the \$1.5 billion investment into Jordan's Principle is not navel-gazing. The \$600 million we funded in education is not navel-gazing. The \$794 million in the Non-Insured Health Benefits program is not navel-gazing. I can go on and on because there are a number of initiatives that we offer to individuals seeking services, and every one of my ministerial colleagues supports this space as well.

INCOME SUPPORT

Hon. Kim Pate: Welcome, minister. It's great to have you here.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or TRC, highlight the role of economic injustice and inequality in the victimization and criminalization of Indigenous women and girls.

Government bills that will disproportionately criminalize those most marginalized, including Indigenous survivors of violence against women, are moving quickly through Parliament. In addition, there is an indication that there are some income supports that are supposed to be provided, one overseen by ISC and the other by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, or CIRNAC.

What concrete steps are you taking to ensure that the income and other supports for those most marginalized are necessary to prevent those criminal law bills from exacerbating the overrepresentation of Indigenous women and girls in federal prisons?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you. This is really important work that we have to look at from a multi-faceted approach. Supporting in the space of prevention is the work that we do here at ISC, ensuring that we're able to support children at a very early age when they're facing huge barriers and when their household is facing social issues. Supporting them through the school system, building that capacity so they feel happy, safe and secure and keeping them connected to community and their culture is all of the work within the space that we do for prevention. There is not one pathway forward.

In terms of everything that we're seeing with murdered and missing Indigenous women, the things that are pushing forward in that space, this is really under the purview of my colleague Minister Alty, but I am here to support her in that space, along with my colleague Minister Valdez. I do feel, while there is a great challenge and issue with the level of safety in these spaces, it is not enough to just speak to that; we must do more to empower that we change that system. There has to be systemic change within the approach that we take.

There is so much more work to do. There have been decades and decades of trauma and complexity. I'm encouraged that we're on the right path forward. Is this work we're going to complete in 12 months? I don't think so. This is long-standing, and we have to commit to it in a sustainable way with stability for outcomes and pushing things forward.

ENTITLEMENT TO INDIAN REGISTRATION

Hon. Kim Pate: Thank you for talking about the importance of the links to the community and the supports in the community.

This morning, when I was at the House committee, I noticed that there was much discussion about what's going to happen with Bill S-2.

Can you confirm that your community actually has a one-parent rule that assists those individuals in your community to be able to be part of the community and enjoy the very services and supports that you just discussed?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Actually, I can't because my nation has chosen to undertake a number of criteria. We do have the link to what your lineage is. You have to demonstrate that you have a connection to the community. We also have a residency rule that requires members to be acknowledged by their community. It is not a perfect model, but it is the one that my nation chose to undertake.

I want to be clear that with Bill S-2, I do think that one of the initiatives that we have to speak to across the country is the distinctive nature of each First Nation and their relationship to their members. We have to show respect in this space. We need to look forward and move beyond what status speaks to. Yes, status is something that offers you access to services. Being First Nations is defined by your relationship to your community, to your territory, to your language, to —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

INDIGENOUS BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Welcome, minister. Officials from your department recently appeared before our National Finance Committee, and during that meeting I asked about the Indigenous Business Directory. As I noted at the time, this appears to be a strong and impactful initiative, and the results reported in your departmental plan are encouraging.

However, we learned earlier this year that over \$285 million in federal government contracts for Indigenous businesses were awarded over a five-year period to companies that have since been removed from the directory. According to media reports, nearly 2,000 companies have been removed. These findings are concerning.

Can you speak to us about the work being done in your department to further strengthen the directory, particularly with respect to maintaining its integrity and credibility?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you. I welcome the question. The Indigenous Business Directory was created to, first and foremost, create access. There is a percentage for that access. That percentage is actually a baseline. It is the minimum that we should be undertaking as a government to provide access to First Nations businesses.

I've had many conversations this year. I'm encouraged by the things that I've heard, the many offers of advice and the reports that are being submitted to me to do some reforms in this space. I do acknowledge that there was an undertaking to launch an initiative. The parameters of clarity for who should be part of that initiative need to be redefined, and part of that work has to be in collaboration with First Nations because they are the ones who are able to ensure that we are bringing the right individuals into that space to work with them and for them and that have a connection to them.

I really believe in that. I really believe that the work we have to do has to be in collaboration, supported through feedback and has to be supported through a mechanism that allows us to ensure that those individuals who have the opportunity to go into the business directory are there for the right reasons and purposes.

I was happy to see the outcome where many individuals were removed, and we are doing further work in this space because every opportunity that is created has to rightfully be allocated to First Nations companies.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that response. As a strong supporter of the government's commitment to award at least 5% of the total value of their contracts to Indigenous businesses each year, I welcome your department's commitment to undertake compliance audits of registered businesses and enhance verification processes.

Could you speak to how these measures are being implemented, what challenges you have encountered and how you are ensuring the directory remains a trusted and reliable tool for supporting Indigenous economic participation?

Ms. Gull-Masty: Thank you. The work that's being done internally is really important, but I also want to speak about the work that's being done externally. We have a very immense and strong network of Indigenous businesses across the country. Many of them have reached out to me when they saw the undertakings in the business directory and have offered advice. Ensuring we work together moving forward is my first initiative.

Working in this space, I really want to speak to the 5%. We can do so much more. When I speak to the business directory or people ask me questions about the business directory, that 5% represents a baseline for the opportunity that's available. We should do everything to build up the business directory so that it has —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, minister.

INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES

Hon. Robert Black: Minister, I'm pleased to ask this question on behalf of our colleague the Honourable PJ Prosper.

On March 26, the Procurement Ombud called for a stronger Indigenous procurement policy. The report found that Indigenous Services Canada and other departments failed to implement a cohesive, centralized procurement policy; that Indigenous businesses had no recourse to challenge the award of set-aside contracts; that there was limited verification of Indigenous business status; and that "misleading . . . methodology related to the 5% Indigenous procurement target, overstating the actual economic benefit flowing to Indigenous businesses."

The Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers, known as CANDO, has partnered with other Indigenous-led organizations to propose a First Nations Procurement Authority. They are asking for support for a national economic development officer, or EDO, procurement hub, which seeks core funding to coordinate and scale Indigenous content.

Minister, will your department support the First Nations Procurement Authority and —

• (1700)

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Thank you, Senator Black.

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Thank you. I welcome the question. It gives me an opportunity to finish my response to the previous senator's question.

The 5% procurement target was set, and it has resulted in billions of dollars of impacts in Indigenous communities. Indigenous businesses are a crucial part of what we're doing in this country because they do contribute to the GDP. That is one thing I want to emphasize and stress. Not only are we ensuring that we're doing the work to stand up this business directory in a way that is going to have enhanced integrity, but we're also doing internal work at Indigenous Services Canada to offer additional staff training and more comprehensive intake requirements.

We are also doing a full review of the business directory. We want to ensure those who participate in this space are the rightful participants who have access to this opportunity. It's critical. I'm here to ensure that my commitments are to work with any mechanism or tool that wants to offer support in this space, such as the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers, or Cando, as well as the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, or NACCA. There are many strong Indigenous organizations in this country that can support in this space.

INDIGENOUS BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Hon. Robert Black: Thank you, minister. Staying with procurement, I note this question from Senator Prosper:

Indigenous Services Canada, or ISC, maintains the Indigenous Business Directory. According to the ISC website, this directory is used by the federal government and private sector to identify Indigenous businesses for procurement opportunities. However, Senator Prosper understands there have been several issues with the veracity of Indigeneity claims for businesses listed. It is not as thorough as the vetting done by other bodies that maintain similar lists.

Minister, why does ISC continue to use its own list as opposed to using lists maintained by reputable organizations, such as NACCA?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty, P.C., M.P., Minister of Indigenous Services: Yes, there have been challenges in this space, but there have also been some successes. Earlier, I was able to have the opportunity to recognize the validity of the Red River Métis as part of this organization. As I said, I've had the opportunity to reach out to many of the organizations — which you have spoken about — that maintain lists and that have been willing to help and have offered assistance for us to collaborate

and work together. I think that's the spirit of ensuring that you're delivering the services you need to deliver for First Nations: by working together and collaborating. I'm very open to that.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the time for Question Period has expired. I am certain that you will want to join me in thanking Minister Gull-Masty for joining us today.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, we will now resume the proceedings that were interrupted at the beginning of Question Period.

[English]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STUDY ON IMPACTS OF RUSSIA'S DISINFORMATION

THIRD REPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY, DEFENCE AND
VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the third report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, entitled *Russia's Disinformation – Understanding the Challenge, Strengthening Canada's Response*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on April 30, 2026.

Hon. Marty Deacon moved:

That the third report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, entitled *Russia's Disinformation – Understanding the Challenge, Strengthening Canada's Response*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on Thursday April 30, 2026, be adopted and that, pursuant to rule 12-23(1), the Senate request a complete and detailed response from the government, with the Minister of Public Safety being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report, in consultation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

THE SENATE

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

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Deacon (*Nova Scotia*), seconded by the Honourable Senator Downe:

That, for the remainder of the current session, all committees consider the influences and impacts of technology in any study, including the consideration of bills, the subject matter of bills, estimates and special studies, authorized by the Senate, including any such work already authorized but not yet completed.

Hon. David M. Wells (Acting Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I note that this item is at day 15 and Senator Martin still wishes to speak to it. Therefore, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 4-14(3), I move the adjournment of the debate in the name of Senator Martin for the balance of her time.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate adjourned.)

(At 5:06 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, May 26, 2026, at 2 p.m.)

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