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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

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

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I received a notice from the Government Representative in the Senate, 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 Marilou McPhedran.

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 MARILOU MCPHEDRAN, C.M.

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, today, on behalf of the Government Representative's Office, I would like to honour our colleague the Honourable Senator Marilou McPhedran.

Senator McPhedran's nomination in 2016, like others, reflected a new vision of the Red Chamber, in which new senators were not necessarily wearing a particular team's colours: a Senate with Indigenous leaders and gender parity, a Canadian Senate that looks and feels like our beloved country.

A person of distinction, Senator McPhedran, with roots in rural Manitoba, pursued the legal field, focusing on the promotion of human rights, medicine, education and governance domestically and internationally.

In preparing my remarks today, I sought the advice of someone who knows Senator McPhedran well. Former senator Frances Lankin shared this with me:

Marilou and I have been allies and on opposite sides of many issues over many, many years. What I can tell you is that she is a strong advocate, works tirelessly on so many issues and has made such an impact in the lives of women

here in Canada and around the world. She has steely strength and determination. It sure is easier to be on the same side as her than on a different side on any given issue.

I have experienced both sides, but I can tell you I have the greatest respect and gratefulness for the things that she has accomplished on behalf of other women.

I would add that I have always personally found Senator McPhedran to be truly reflective of the "three p's." Not the public-private partnerships of economic intent; rather, I have found her to be a person with passion and perseverance, and she has — and I say this with the greatest of respect — projects.

I would especially like to highlight Senator McPhedran's work with youth. Her first action as a senator was to bring youth from throughout the country to Ottawa to help shape her parliamentary work and form her priorities in the Senate.

A champion of young people, her initiatives include her youth advisory council, the Canadian Council of Young Feminists, as well as her efforts to expand voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds.

An appreciation for and an understanding of Indigenous People throughout Canada has been an underpinning of the senator's work. On her vote 16 act, Marilou was appreciative of the knowledge I shared with her about the number of self-governing First Nations in the Yukon that include a dedicated youth council and that have lowered the voting age in their own elections.

Not every First Nation in the Yukon has done this. Not all senators agree on lowering the voting age. All Canadians were reminded recently in this chamber that healthy, respectful discourse must remain the hallmark of our Canadian democracy.

Colleagues, we can all agree that Senator McPhedran has gifted the Senate and Canada with her passion, perseverance and teachings on matters of importance: her projects.

We learned from Elder McGregor the import of offering thanks four times as we come together from the four directions. As you follow a new direction, Marilou, may I offer you and your loved ones our sincere thanks as you continue your life journey.

Thank you. *Mahsi'cho. Meegwetch.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to our colleague and friend Senator Marilou McPhedran as she concludes her service in this chamber.

Marilou's retirement marks the closing of a remarkable chapter of public service, advocacy and principled engagement. Many Canadians know her from her co-leadership of the movement that helped secure stronger equality and protections in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, work for which she was appointed a member of the Order of Canada. They know her as a co-founder of organizations such as the Women's Legal Education & Action Fund, or LEAF, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women, or METRAC, and the Gerstein Crisis Centre — institutions that have helped shape the advancement of women's rights, access to justice and support for vulnerable Canadians for generations.

Others know her as a lawyer, scholar, educator and human rights advocate, whose work extended well beyond our borders. Through her teaching, research, international engagement and leadership in human rights institutions, she built a reputation as someone who believed that rights must be more than principles on paper; they must be lived realities.

Those accomplishments are significant. But, personally, what I have come to appreciate most during our many years together in this chamber is not only what Senator McPhedran has done but how she has done it. She has always approached public service with intellectual rigour and a genuine desire to advance what she believes to be in the public interest.

You always knew where she stood, you always knew where you stood, and you always knew what principles were guiding her.

Whether you agreed or disagreed with her — and, colleagues, I suspect that many of us experienced both over the years — you always knew you were engaging with someone who had done the work, thought deeply about the issues before her and arrived at her position in a principled and honest manner.

• (1410)

As I think all of us here can appreciate, public life can be demanding. It can test our resolve, our reputation and our sense of purpose. For those who choose to lead with conviction, those tests can be especially difficult. Acting on deeply held principles does not always lead to easy outcomes.

Senator McPhedran, I know that some of those tests have found their way to your doorstep in recent years, and I hope you'll allow me to say that I am genuinely pleased that you are able to leave this institution with the recent findings of the Senate Ethics Officer bringing a close to a matter that I know weighed heavily on you.

As you leave this place, I hope you do so knowing that many of us never doubted what lay behind your actions throughout your career, and that is a sincere desire to help people in need, a willingness to stand up for what is right and a commitment to act in good conscience.

Those qualities have defined your work for decades, and they are the qualities that I suspect many of us will remember most.

Honourable colleagues, we all know that for a long time Senator McPhedran tried to lower the voting age from 18 to 16. Imagine if she had spent half of that energy trying to increase the mandatory retirement age for senators; she might still be here in the fall, fighting to lower the voting age.

All joking aside, Senator McPhedran, you have been a principled senator. You have been a voice for those who, at various times, feel they have not had a voice in Parliament, and that is, ultimately, the role of all senators.

I will leave with this final thought. In this place, when we argue with colleagues, we consider them opponents. Very often, when we agree with colleagues, we consider them friends. In my particular case, I have done both. I have argued and been in agreement with Marilou, so that makes us true friends.

God bless you. All the best in your retirement to you and your family. Thank you for your service.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Rosemary Moodie: Honourable senators, today I rise on behalf of the Independent Senators Group to give tribute to Senator Marilou McPhedran.

In this chamber sit eminent Canadians who have shaped our country through their courage, their intellect and their unrelenting commitment to justice. I regard our colleague the Honourable Senator Marilou McPhedran as one of these Canadians.

In her journey before joining the Senate, her contributions to Canada were outstanding. Widely recognized for her foundational work on gender equality protections in the Canadian Constitution, specifically sections 15 and 28 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and for her work with the Ad Hoc Committee of Canadian Women on the Constitution, she was named a member of the Order of Canada in 1985.

She co-founded some of Canada's most respected institutions: the Women's Legal Education & Action Fund, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children and the Gerstein Crisis Centre.

She negotiated the Women's College Hospital's designation as a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre in Women's Health. She founded the International Women's Rights Project at York University and served as Chief Commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, championing feminist foreign policy and women's political leadership.

And through every role, institution and milestone, she showed up for the women who had no platform or protections.

She is a tireless, courageous and ceaseless advocate for Afghan women, raising her voice when much of the world looked away, and an outspoken advocate for justice for the Rohingya people.

On November 10, 2016, the Senate welcomed another remarkable Canadian when the late Honourable Murray Sinclair walked Senator McPhedran into the Senate and stood beside her as she took the oath of office.

During her time in this chamber, she never mistook comfort for purpose. She asked the hard questions, held firm positions and never shrank from the uncomfortable work that real advocacy demands.

She brought that same energy to nurturing the next generation, creating meaningful internship and leadership opportunities for young people, shaping future advocates and policy-makers who will carry her legacy forward.

Today, we are fortunate to have the voices of her children with us today:

We joined our first protests before starting kindergarten . . . we “attended” our first grassroots organizing meetings while playing with toys under the table.

Our mom has inspired us to live feminist values . . . by caring for the people and communities around us.

I close with the words of Senator Pate:

In July, Marilou will leave this place and resume her role as a multi-tasking feminist human rights lawyer and mom.

I have no doubt this is not the last we will hear from the Honourable Marilou McPhedran.

This is not goodbye . . . it is a celebration of all that you have accomplished . . . it is an expression of gratitude for your service, leadership and friendship . . . and for your unwavering commitment to making this world a better place.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to Senator Marilou McPhedran.

Senator McPhedran has spent decades building a legacy that reaches from Manitoba to Ottawa to the international stage. So rather than recount her long list of achievements, let me share with you three personal tributes from people who know her impact.

The Honourable Petra Bayr, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says:

For many of us, Marilou is not simply a parliamentarian. She is a force of conviction, a voice of courage, and a leader whose commitment to human rights has shaped debates far beyond Canada’s borders.

I have had the privilege of knowing Marilou since the days of the International Conference on Population and Development discussions in Ottawa almost a decade ago. From our very first encounters, I was struck by her unwavering dedication to gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the empowerment of women and girls. She has never treated these issues as niche

concerns. She has understood them for what they are: fundamental questions of human dignity, democracy, and justice.

Senator McPhedran’s impact as a “femtor” is best captured by one of her “femtees,” Counsellor Janine Cocker of the Embassy of Canada to the Netherlands, who says:

Senator McPhedran is truly 1 in a million — for what you have accomplished and most importantly for the way you have lived your life and shaped the lives of others along the way. As you retire, I find myself thinking less about the long list of titles, cases, and achievements, and more about the force of who you are: principled and fearless, and an undeniable force.

You have never been someone to sit quietly in the face of injustice. I witnessed it first hand. When something mattered, you leaned in, not away — even when sometimes the rest of us wanted you to run away! You challenged, you pushed, you persisted. And when it came to women’s rights, you were unyielding. You knew that progress does not happen politely — it happens because people like you refuse to accept injustice or inequality.

The Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, Honourable Anita Neville, shares that she has known Senator McPhedran for many years and:

there is much to say about this truly Renaissance woman. But the points that I would most like to make about her is that she is a loyal and devoted friend, who in my experience is always there for you.

Secondly, I have known Marilou in many instances to take on challenging and controversial issues. She is not afraid to speak truth to power. This has not always benefitted her well-being, but she has been adamant and forthright in what she believes to be right. Friendship with Marilou opens doors and windows to worlds we often know nothing about.

In closing, Senator McPhedran’s lifetime of work reminds us that human rights are rights and not abstract ideals, and her legacy inspires others to lead with courage, empathy and conviction.

Marilou, on behalf of your friends in the Canadian Senators Group, we wish you all the best in your retirement from the Senate of Canada.

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Honourable senators, it is indeed my pleasure to deliver this tribute to Senator Marilou McPhedran on behalf of the Progressive Senate Group.

I have known and followed the work of Marilou McPhedran dating back to the early 1980s — always a leading feminist, intellectual and activist.

• (1420)

Surely, one of the most important campaigns in which she had a central role was entrenching women's equality in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Through a series of private lobbying, a national conference and public demonstrations, section 28 was added to the Charter before it went into effect.

Colleagues, in 1980-81, in Parliament, there was the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada, co-chaired by Senator Dan Hays and then-MP Serge Joyal, which held hearings and made recommendations on the Charter. Mr. Joyal was, of course, later a member of this house.

Long before she was a senator, she was very actively involved in the development of the Charter and then spent many years advancing equality in the voluntary and academic sectors. It is a nice follow-through that, many years later, she got to be in the Senate, monitoring time and time again that the bills put forward by the government received adequate Charter analyses.

So there is something of a milestone that another person so actively involved in the development of the historic and important Charter 45 years ago now leaves the Senate of Canada.

The other interesting confluence of events for this week and in this chamber is that as a young law student at Osgoode Hall, her teacher and mentor was none other than one Professor Louise Arbour. I want to quote from two of our mutual friends from two generations of her work. Magda Seydegart said:

Marilou McPhedran has always been an astute strategist and dedicated advocate for the full and lasting equality of women, youth and those who have historically — or currently — been marginalized. She acts on her commitments with full engagement, courage and honesty.

From the younger generation, Donneton Brown said this:

Senator McPhedran has been a tireless champion for youth through initiatives such as her youth advisory council, the Canadian Council of Young Feminists, as well as her efforts to expand the voting age to 16.

Personally, I want to thank you, Marilou, for mentoring me when I arrived at the Senate — especially when I was attending my first conference at the United Nations — and for encouraging me to address the issues that are important to me.

Your career has been governed by your principles, and in this house of independents, as a non-affiliated senator, you have been the ultimate independent senator in the best sense of the term. I salute you for what you have accomplished, and I wish you the best at this halfway point of your career as you launch other campaigns yet to come.

Hon. Paulette Senior: Honourable senators, I rise on this unceded and unsundered territory to pay tribute to our dear colleague Senator Marilou McPhedran.

As a fierce gender justice advocate, Senator McPhedran has devoted her life's work to strengthening human rights protections domestically and globally.

In 1980, when the Ad Hoc Committee of Canadian Women on the Constitution was convened, it was Senator McPhedran's legal counsel, leadership and dogged fierceness that ensured a successful campaign for stronger gender equality protections in the Canadian Constitution.

For this trailblazing accomplishment, our colleague was awarded the Order of Canada by Governor General Jeanne Sauvé in 1985, less than 10 years after being admitted to the bar.

The Honourable Maryam Monsef, former Minister for Women and Gender Equality, puts it this way:

Marilou is a force. She gets things done. Her work to ensure women are included in the Charter is but one of many ways she's fundamentally enhanced the status of Canadian women.

Her ongoing mentorship of young women and people at home and abroad in Afghanistan and other gender-oppressive regions has been unwavering.

Sasha Banka, a Grade 11 student, described her internship with Senator McPhedran's Virus of Inequality Symposium as "an unforgettable learning experience."

For as long as I have known her, Senator McPhedran has been an unwavering and unapologetic stalwart in the justice and equality sector. She has advocated for gender justice, along with disability rights, racial justice and Indigenous rights.

Michele Landsberg notes that Senator McPhedran's inclination to be radically inclusive goes back to the earliest days of her career as a lawyer in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During this time, she told Michele Landsberg about a young person who was involuntarily confined in an Ontario hospital for people with disabilities. He was fighting to leave the institution and live in a group home. While that struggle was eventually victorious, Senator McPhedran stayed completely behind the scenes advocating for him.

As Michele Landsberg stated:

That was Marilou: She did not fight these battles to win headlines about herself and was often working hard behind the scenes to mobilize others.

Over the years, I've known this to be true about Senator McPhedran. I've seen her strategic brilliance and altruism at work. The near closing of Women's College Hospital in Toronto is one such example. As the only hospital dedicated to women's health care research and advocacy in Canada, the possibility of Women's College Hospital closing was absolutely devastating. This was one of the few medical institutions dedicated to closing the gender gap in health research and care.

In response, Senator McPhedran — you won't be surprised — founded Friends of Women's College Hospital and led a grassroots campaign to prevent the hospital from being merged into another entity not once, but twice.

As with Justin Clark, she always put others in the foreground while she worked in the background. There may not be a plaque to commemorate these efforts, but today this world-renowned hospital stands as a space dedicated to women's health care research and advocacy.

She's been at the forefront of many of these critical institutions for rights and justice, including the Canadian Women's Foundation, the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, et cetera, and many of these leaders appreciated her feminist advocacy that led to their establishment.

Senator, I'm thankful to have served in this auspicious place with you, and I look forward to seeing what you take on in the next iteration of your journey for justice and equality for all.

Hon. Bernadette Clement: Honourable senators, I rise today to give tribute to Senator McPhedran, but I'm also thinking about Senators Dasko, Busson and Al Zaibak. I'm in my feelings this week; it's hard to lose good colleagues.

You've heard about Senator McPhedran's terrific résumé, so I'm going to talk about how she makes me feel, because that's always what we remember most about others.

My first impression of Senator McPhedran was her describing herself as an old feminist warhorse. My reaction: "Yes, Queen." But also: "Wow, I need to get to know this woman more."

Since then, I've been endlessly impressed by how she stands up for herself, and especially for others, and she stays true to her values regardless of the pushback. Senator McPhedran is fierce. She's so focused on her work on equality and human rights and highly skilled as a lawyer, communicator and advocate. And it's been so important for me to witness that, especially here in this place.

I've seen my colleague act according to her values, championing the expansion of youth voting rights, hosting a symposium about inequality and speaking about the challenges of being a non-affiliated senator in an institution that is already quite challenging.

Senator McPhedran, I say your name every time I go into a high school class, and that happens pretty often. I tell students about the vote 16 act, and I encourage them to take over and debate the idea. These conversations have been some of my best as a senator: engaging with students as they debate the voting age and then watching that discussion flow to all sorts of fascinating, intelligent and unexpected places.

Thanks to Senator McPhedran, I've been able to better connect with young people, but also connect them with the work of the Senate and with Canada's political process, and that's a big deal. I am grateful.

[Senator Senior]

This week's speech by our new Governor General was really moving, and it made me think about Senator McPhedran. I didn't realize you were her student as well. Governor General Louise Arbour said:

Extreme polarization is dangerous—but so is extreme consensus.

It is through our differences, and our fundamental right to express them, that we will nourish critical thinking, creativity and innovation.

To listen and to watch Senator McPhedran is to witness someone unafraid of our differences. Leaning into discomfort is hard. I love that she is so brave. She says difficult things even if it makes us uncomfortable. She has reliably been that voice in this chamber. This nourishes critical thinking, leads to better debate and helps us in our work as senators, contributing to Canada's present and future.

• (1430)

Thank you, Senator McPhedran, for your tireless work, your kindness and your feminist leadership. As a Black woman, a lawyer and a senator, I have so appreciated getting to know you, and I will miss you in this place.

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 members of Senator McPhedran's family: Jon, Laura, Dee and Matthew.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

THE HONOURABLE MARILOU MCPHEDRAN, C.M.

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Thank you, dear colleagues, and thank you, Your Honour.

As a senator for Manitoba, I recognize that I live on Treaty 1 territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Anishinaabe, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples and the homeland of the Red River Métis Nation. I acknowledge that the Parliament of Canada is situated on unceded and unsurrendered Algonquin Anishinaabe territory.

Honourable senators, on Monday, we welcomed the thirty-first Governor General of Canada, Her Excellency Louise Arbour, to the Senate, and we were inspired by the words of our Poet Laureate, Chimwemwe Undi, who is originally from Manitoba. She said:

This way, easier to teach than travel, calls us to speak to echo the silenced, to listen first to understand certain only that our good fortune is luck, not reward a debt discharged with brief, erratic tender: life spent making this place mean something we are proud to signify.

[English]

A fun fact, shared already by Senator Cardozo, is that I was one of Louise Arbour's first students when she came to Osgoode. Less known is that she was only the second woman on the faculty in those early 1970s. Also, she was then in her first English-speaking position — and was unmistakably brilliant, even when she wasn't that comfortable with the language. That was long ago now.

I was a founding member of the women's caucus of students, formed in response to the blatant sexism blooming because the number of women law students leaped from less than 10% to over 30% over one summer; frankly, the patriarchy was in shock.

Such are the adventures that shape us. And here we are, in another bastion of patriarchy, where — as Senator Dasko reminded us yesterday in her excellent farewell speech — 55% of senators are now female, an achievement I doubt will last. However, I am grateful that my decade here has been this decade.

I have a few observations to share on this unique place and institutional culture. Allow me to begin with sincere gratitude laced with a fondness that did not come quickly. What a complex, multifaceted institution this is, created and protected by the Constitution of Canada in 1867 and with a decision-making architecture largely unchanged to this day. Yet it's exemplified positively by so many of the people here today: parliamentarians, former colleagues, students, interns, staff, friends and beloved family members who nudged me toward this place and have sustained me through many a moment of questioning if I should stay.

I hold this eagle feather given to me by a Manitoba matriarch, Leslie Spillett, who handed it to me just before my swearing-in beside my sponsor, the late great Murray Sinclair, and said, "Keep this with you. You are going to need it."

Please join me on my journey of gratitude in looking back to how I came to be here. Before I go back to 2015, when my wise, strong adult children, Jon and David — David lives in Bangkok and can't be with us today — and our family friend Dr. Susan Bazilli convinced me to apply, after David had tea with the inimitable then-senator Nancy Ruth, who, together with former senator Janis Johnson, had been encouraging me to apply, I need to express gratitude to dear friends and guides. I will begin with the dynamic duo of our late beloved Stephen Lewis — I can cry and talk at the same time — and ever activist Michele Landsberg, who, when I sought their advice about coming to the Senate, told me I must. But then I said, "But you've both been asked to be senators, and you said no." And they said, "We're NDP. We

can't say yes to the Senate, but you have to go." Many a time over the years, I sat on their couch or in their garden and whined, and always they sustained me and sent me back here.

If I had not returned to Manitoba, I would not be here. Some of you may know that in 1981, when the Charter was being negotiated, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy — one of the finest and most innovative foreign ministers Canada has had — and I, as a spokeswoman for the Ad Hoc Committee of Canadian Women on the Constitution, did not agree on much. However, in 2008, when he was president of my alma mater, the University of Winnipeg, he took me to lunch. He looked across the table and said, "It's time to come home. We need you here." Within a few months, I had resigned as Chief Commissioner for the Human Rights Commission in Saskatchewan. I returned to my home province of Manitoba after about 40 years away to serve as the first dean (principal) of the Global College, to build a new human rights undergraduate program. What a gift he gave me.

Two of my best former students, Chelsea Caldwell and Matthew Parent, are here today.

Eight years later, I was honoured and, with many others, especially big-L Liberals, surprised that I was called to the Senate of Canada to become an independent senator for Manitoba under the unprecedented, arm's-length, community-driven selection process established by newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Please join me in welcoming in our gallery today a principal creator of the new selection process that brought many of us here when she was the Minister for Democratic Institutions, the Honourable Maryam Monsef.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

• (1440)

Senator McPhedran: When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called me to ask if I would agree to be appointed as, and to remain, an independent senator, I asked him, "Why me?" I recall he chuckled and said something like, "I hear you like to change things, and the Senate needs reform."

He then asked me, "And why are you interested in being a senator?" To which I replied:

It's in my application: My priority is to bring civil society, especially young, diverse leaders, to the Senate, and the Senate to them.

Indeed, with the first expenditure of my budget in January 2017, after I had a couple of months to try to figure this place out, I called upon former students and former research assistants, from different parts of the country by then, to come to Ottawa for the briefing that each of us receives as a new senator, during which we're told what we can do, what our budget is and the various parameters to which we need to pay attention. Those young people heard exactly what I heard. I then asked them to spend the next day and a half building my parliamentary agenda. I have pretty much continued that to this day.

I will note that Matthew Parent — who is with us today — and Katrina Leclerc — who subsequently came to work for me — were both in that consulting group. Katrina is a little busy today because, at the age of nearly 30, she's about to earn her PhD.

They said to me, “We recommend three things.” The first one came from mainly the francophones in the group. They said to me, “Francophone youth in this country were the very first to define the expansion of voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds as being crucial to our democracy, so you need to make that your priority.”

Another piece of advice they gave me was to have parties.

I said, “Have parties? In the Senate?”

They told me, “Well, the thing is, most people outside of the Senate do not know what you do and most people don't feel welcome, so figure out ways to bring them into the Senate to celebrate what civil society can do and already does.”

Indeed, you may have noticed that my amazing team and I have held a good many gatherings for senators on a whole range of issues, and these are always in partnership with civil society leaders.

As I was making my way here today, I was reminded that many of the people who serve in the Senate are remarkable in their kindness and courtesy, and we senators are blessed to go about our business in such a culture of service. As we make our way to this chamber, we often get on our very own shuttle bus, to warm greetings from drivers, such as Pierre, Patrick, Armand or Garry, and, when I started, the ever-friendly André Perrier.

All along the way, we are guarded by the officers of our protective service. As a senator under a death threat recently, I know how thorough and caring members of our force can be. We walk into our Senate cafeteria — although I do miss the Parliamentary Dining Room — to be greeted by Lou and her smiling, efficient team of Stephanie, Ella, Lucie, Katriana and Sandra.

Last week a class was meeting with me, and one young woman became very ill. My wonderful parliamentary affairs assistant, Donneton, stayed with her in the bathroom, while a crew of cleaners and a guard swept in to help. When a woman cleaner saw the situation, she left and quietly returned with a full set of clean clothes to allow our young guest to leave with dignity.

Before senators reach the chamber, we have been supported by a bevy of skilled staff. I am delighted to be joined here by my former chief of staff of almost five years, the inimitable John Inca Anderson — lucky Senator Mohamed — and former intern, turned staff, turned brilliant lawyer and judicial clerk Stéphanie St Jacques. With them is my current young, bright team: Donneton Brown, who went from intern to staff; my dedicated executive assistant, Patrick Lafleur; and my communications manager, Jayden Paquet-Noiseux, who was a 16-year-old Quebec

high school student when we met and became a volunteer, then an intern and is now part-time staff while finishing his first degree at the University of Ottawa.

Speaking of the University of Ottawa, I would like to thank Josée Desmarais and her team for facilitating the process whereby every semester for the past eight years, law students — over 70 so far — receive academic credit for their work in my parliamentary learning lab of an office. That was another recommendation from the initial gathering of young people at the beginning of my term.

They really do work hard: they write drafts for Question Period — as Senator Moreau may notice, there are very good questions. They write speaking notes. They write briefing notes. They monitor the committees that I sit on. Interns James and Ellie are here, joined by recent interns Ola and Sasha. Ola has earned a law degree. Sasha is in Grade 11 and looking forward to the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights study on democratic inclusion and resilience. I thank all of you for that gift yesterday.

Senators arrive in the chamber, always greeted warmly by efficient, often effervescent pages. We are always greeted, except for today, by the Usher of the Black Rod, Mr. Greg Peters, and the amazing John Shand — another Manitoban — along with the resplendently robed table officers led by the first woman Clerk of the Senate, Shaila Anwar. And, of course, our President, our Speaker, also from Manitoba, is the Honourable Raymonde Gagné.

Truly, there is no other job in this country with the privilege, independence, security, amenities and resources — financial and human — that senators have.

So sometimes I ask myself, “Why are we so timid so often?”

I have a few more people to thank before I share more observations. David Taylor, who was a Senate chief page-cum-law student-cum-lawyer, working with the renowned parliamentarian from the House and the Senate, the Honourable Serge Joyal, who has provided me with advice from my first skirmish with the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, to reviewing the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators* to this day.

As I acknowledge the Honourable James O'Reilly, our new Senate Ethics Officer, who issued his report finding that I did not breach the code after two senators made a complaint against me 42 months ago for my attempts — many successful — to save Afghan women when Kabul fell to the Taliban in August 2021, and democratic forces were reduced to encircling the Karzai airport. I must thank, from my heart, the one and only Donald Bayne, who has represented me pro bono, with tenacity, wisdom, brilliance and generosity for the past year of these three and a half long, secretive years, funded in large part by friends, particularly my dear law school friend Candice Hanson.

Donald Bayne.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator McPhedran: I was a “fangirl” before I ever met you, and I’m a bigger “fangirl” now.

Thank you to the doyenne of women-centred psychiatry, the esteemed Dr. Gail Robinson, who saw the stress I was trying to manage and treated me. The day I told her I thought I couldn’t take it anymore, she told me, “I’ve known you a long time. That’s not who you are. You are not a quitter.”

Dr. Robinson, you couldn’t be here with us today, but your counselling, and the antidepressants, helped me get through this until I could speak today.

• (1450)

To the senators who stood up for me, including senators Peter Boehm, Frances Lankin, Leo Housakos and Rebecca Patterson, and who came with me to the House of Commons parliamentary inquiry into my efforts to save Afghan women — my sister-senators, Senators Audette, Moodie, Pate, Galvez, McCallum and Lankin — all I can say to you is that I will always treasure your support.

Thank you to my long-time colleague Asma Faizi of the Afghan Women’s Organization, who is with us today, and to Shaima Karimi, also with us today, who escaped from Afghanistan just before the bombing of the Kabul airport and is now in her master’s program at Carleton University.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator McPhedran: And to my sister-senator Mary Jane McCallum, *chi meegwetch*. We laugh when, from time to time, people mix us up — Manitoba; Mary Jane, Marilou; McCallum, McPhedran — because so often we have stood together, often quite alone, and, of course, because we look so much alike.

In her essential guide *Ally Is a Verb*, Rose LeMay, who is here with us today, notes:

The work for reconciliation, equity and safety for Indigenous People will have positive impacts for everybody. When one of us is at risk, we are all at risk.

When I returned to Manitoba, I asked my friend the Honourable Anita Neville — and I didn’t know that Senator Osler was going to quote her today — who the Indigenous women leaders in Winnipeg I needed to meet were. She led me to the Manitoba Matriarchs Diane Redsky, Sandra DeLaronde, Hilda Anderson-Pyrz and Celeste McKay, who have taught me so much.

I will tell one short anecdote that illustrates the power of these women. As you know, likely, we had a significant delegation from the European Union, all the ambassadors, come to Manitoba not long ago. In advance of that, the wonderful Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Margriet Vonno, who I’m honoured to say is a friend, was coming a day early. I said, “Why don’t we reach out and see if we can have lunch with some of the Manitoba Matriarchs?”

Of course, her office got into it, and I got a memo from the office saying, “Please just tell us where the ambassador needs to be, and she will pay for this lunch.” I wrote back and said, “Oh, no, that’s not how it works with the Manitoba Matriarchs. We will go where we are told to go. They will take care of it all in their own way, and we will both behave.” It went incredibly well. We had an entirely Indigenous meal at the amazing Bistro on Notre Dame, and I think it’s fair to say it was one of the highlights for the ambassador of her time in Manitoba.

Before my life was so enriched by the Manitoba Matriarchs, I had been long inspired by the consummate ally Shelagh Day, co-founder of the Feminist Alliance for International Action, or FAFIA. She worked with brilliant Indigenous women, like lawyer and litigation trailblazer Sharon Donna McIvor, who described the long-term litigation strategy developed with allied lawyers, like LEAF co-founder and brilliant litigator Mary Eberts, in her journal article “Aboriginal Women Unmasked: Using Equality Litigation to Advance Women’s Rights” like this:

At first glance, the cases may appear to be about civil and political rights, but, in fact, they all involve issues of social and economic inequality. These issues are inseparable for Aboriginal women, and Aboriginal women’s lives make evident the need for interpretations of Aboriginal women’s sex equality rights that recognize the indivisibility of civil and political rights and social and economic rights.

As I get closer to my observations, I want to turn to a book that was given to me last week in the lobby of the Château Laurier, which is entitled *A People’s Senate for Canada*. It’s written by Helen Forsey, who is the daughter of the legendary senator Eugene Forsey.

This is something he had to say about reform in 1978:

A reform many of us are rather keen on is, on appointment, every senator should sever completely his ties with any political party at least for senatorial purposes.

Once we are in here, we should regard ourselves as independents. There should be no party whips, and on every bill, we should vote exactly as we see fit. Not on the basis of what the whip tells us. This is what I —

— Eugene Forsey —

— have done all along. No whip has ever come near me. If he did, he would get a flea in his ear, I can tell you.

I also want to reference someone who is very often referenced. That is our late and fairly short-term colleague Ian Shugart, whom I had met many times over the years in various of his high-level positions in the federal government. But in his address to us, he said:

Honourable senators, whether it is what we say to or about each other, or how we learn again to listen and dialogue with others who don’t share our outlook, or how we guard the health of our institutions — we need to relearn the virtue of restraint.

Now that word — “restraint” — has become very popular in this chamber, and it’s been interpreted in many different ways.

Senator Shugart went on to say:

Canada is a big, diverse country — geographically, socially, culturally, economically and philosophically. For each of us, for parties and for institutions, restraint may begin with acknowledging that our point of view — legitimate as it is — is not the only point of view.

And from this, I want to give one of my observations. For me, there is a considerable distance between the restraint that has been defined here by a number of senators as being one of not speaking and not acting, even when we see things in legislation or policy that concern us greatly. For me, there is a pathway, and it doesn’t start with that inaction. There are many steps along the way before a decision to take no action or to say nothing or do nothing is made.

I want to acknowledge that there are times when that is surely appropriate, but there’s another kind of restraint, and that is the restraint to not look away, to not be silent. It is restraint so that we do not succumb to a kind of timid approach to being senators.

The history of this institution is specifically based on the writings of John Stuart Mill. In 1864, at the Quebec Conference, several of the founding Fathers of Confederation directly quoted John Stuart Mill from his treatise *On Liberty*, and it’s nice to remember that he was the parliamentarian in Great Britain who proposed that women should get the vote. He, of course, was voted down — it was 1867 — but it was nevertheless his initiative.

And it’s nice to know that the Fathers of Confederation were so influenced by someone who was so far ahead of his time in terms of understanding what equality does to increase the viability of a democracy and to strengthen by far the most necessary asset for a democracy — people, human beings.

I want to briefly speak about the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, or CIBA, as one of the areas where I hope you will pay some more attention.

When I congratulated Senator Loffreda on becoming chair of the committee, he said something like, “Well, I hope I can make a positive difference.” I said, “Senator, you probably won’t change CIBA, but CIBA will change you.”

And by that, I am not casting aspersions on individual people here. I want to talk about the architecture of self-governance in the Senate of Canada. I want to acknowledge that we work within a closed system — a completely closed system — of decision making that, for the most part, is in secret. There is no appeal if the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, or CIBA, decides, in secret or sometimes in public, to punish. There are no limits to what CIBA can decide to do to an individual senator.

• (1500)

There are two examples that I want to bring to you today because they are unfinished business for this place, and most of you here don’t know about them.

In my case, largely due to the generosity of Donald Bayne, costs in defending me as a result of the complaints made by two senators that I was overreaching as a senator in helping Afghan women escape were in the range of \$100,000 over 42 months. Much of that, Mr. Bayne chose not to bill because he said it was too unjust, and he was not going to walk away.

I’m sure there are many cases I don’t know about, but there are two that I do. One, with his permission, is my dear colleague Senator Brazeau. The other, who is not here with us any longer, is retired senator Mike Duffy. I don’t know all of the details, but I do know quite a bit about the outcomes.

In my respectful opinion, there are injustices that remain as a result of how these two senators were treated. There was financial punishment that cost Senator Brazeau what he estimates to be about half a million dollars, and I know, from corresponding with Senator Duffy, that we’re talking about well over \$1 million. For years, these senators were not paid one cent of their salaries, and they had no appeal mechanism available to them. There are no standards for decision making when this kind of punishment is being meted out.

I’m greatly concerned about the way in which the architecture of the self-governance of this chamber results in emotion-based decision making. We’re human. That’s what happens when we don’t set up guardrails and don’t have standards, accountability or transparency as a result of being so secretive all the time.

I invite you to think about this because there is a bottom line here for every single senator. If you actually look at the degree to which the power of self-governance can destroy a senator’s life, one needs to understand that, basically, we have no Charter rights inside this bubble of self-governance. If you happen to be on the receiving end of the punishment, you have nowhere to go to make an appeal. Nowhere. There is no right of appeal.

With regard to Senator Shugart’s comment and his exhortation around restraint, which has become so popular in this chamber, let me suggest to you that, often, when you think about the equality of senators, it is, in my opinion, largely a sham. I say that because of my experience of being the one who gets to eat the crumbs when the rest of you get to eat the cookies because you are in groups and I’m not, and neither is Senator Brazeau. However, what if we were to choose, as a standard, fairness? What if we were to choose, as a standard in our decision making, transparency and accountability? If we can’t get outside this bubble, there is no court that can touch this place. De facto, we have no Charter rights as senators inside of self-governance, but what if we were to choose to apply standards of fairness?

In one of my CIBA skirmishes early on in my career here, I mentioned the rules of natural justice. A number of senators just burst out laughing. One of them said to me, “Don’t you realize that we don’t have that here? That doesn’t apply here.” Honestly, I had not realized that. I came in arguing my appeal entirely on the rules of natural justice and was basically laughed out of the place. I lost the appeal.

Please, give some consideration to the idea that this place would not be harmed if decisions were made on principles of fairness and the rules of natural justice. This place would be strengthened if there were true equality among senators to bring

our best, to participate at our best and not to be punished when, in the end, all of the allegations are proven to be untrue, as was the case with Senator Duffy after his trial. Read Justice Vaillancourt's 308-page decision. Senator Duffy was completely exonerated on all 31 charges, yet he is being punished to this day with the results of what was done here in this chamber.

I will leave it to those who want to speak more with Senator Brazeau about his experience, but it seems to me to be a very rough calculation — “rough,” as in, tough and unfair — to go from a \$140 discrepancy found by all of the investigators involved to a cost of almost half a million dollars to family, health and all of the things that we need in order to function well as senators and human beings.

Let me thank you for your time. I know you didn't really have a choice, but thank you for listening. I hope that you will give this some thought.

As an old feminist warhorse, I bid you adieu. Thank you, *meegwetch*.

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 Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer for British Columbia; Kerry Gibson, Vice President of ZephyCare; and Rear-Admiral Christopher Robinson. They are the guests of the Honourable Senators Senior and McPhedran.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Peter Wong, Senator Moodie's husband.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE LATE CONSTABLE TARUN BALI

Hon. Bev Busson: Honourable senators, I was hoping that I would never again have the occasion to do another tribute to a fallen police officer.

Sadly, Ontario Provincial Police Officer Constable Tarun Bali was killed in the line of duty yesterday afternoon at approximately 12:30 p.m. A two-and-a-half-year veteran of the Ontario Provincial Police, or OPP, Constable Bali was assigned to the Dufferin Detachment and was serving on deployment with the James Bay Detachment in northern Ontario.

Tragically, he leaves behind a wife who is expecting their first child. The family includes his parents, brother and sister, who are travelling today to escort his body back home to Brampton.

Constable Bali's death is a reminder of the inherent dangers faced daily by our police officers and the extraordinary commitment demonstrated by the men and women who carry the badge. They leave their homes not knowing what challenges and dangers await them; yet they continue to stand between danger and the communities they serve and protect. It is a responsibility they eagerly accept with courage, humility and a profound sense of duty.

OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique confirmed that the suspect faces charges of first-degree murder, along with other serious criminal offences. Although the investigation is in the early stages, we know that officers attempted to apprehend a suspect who had escaped from a hospital during a mental health assessment. He allegedly struck Constable Bali with a motor vehicle and fled the scene.

• (1510)

Constable Bali, a well-liked and respected officer, was described by his friends and colleagues as a stand-up, stellar person.

Expressing sorrow, Commissioner Carrique of the OPP noted that Constable Bali had dreamed of being a police officer since he was a small child.

This is every police officer and family member's recurring worst nightmare. It's another reminder of the dangers that police officers face every day as they stand between good and evil.

As Canadians, we must never forget that behind every badge is a human being — a son, a daughter, a mother, a father, a spouse and a friend — who has chosen a life of service to others. May we honour Constable Tarun Bali's memory, not only with our gratitude for his ultimate sacrifice but also by supporting those who continue to serve. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

DEAFBLIND AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, on behalf of our Conservative caucus, I wish to express our sincerest condolences to the family of Constable Bali and thank him for his incredible service.

Honourable senators, I am truly honoured to rise today in recognition of Deafblind Awareness Month in June.

June provides an important opportunity not only to increase understanding of deaf-blindness but also to celebrate the extraordinary strength, resilience and determination of Canadians who are deaf and blind. Their accomplishments, leadership and contributions enrich our communities and remind us of what is possible when barriers are removed and opportunities are created.

This month is about recognition and awareness. Awareness leads to understanding. Understanding leads to inclusion. And inclusion creates opportunities for individuals to participate fully in all aspects of Canadian society. In 2015, the Senate of Canada unanimously adopted a motion designating June as Deafblind Awareness Month in Canada.

I wish to recognize the leadership of the Honourable Vim Kochhar, our former colleague, who championed this initiative and passed the baton to me just before his retirement, and senators from all sides of this chamber adopted the motion unanimously.

Over the past decade, I have had the privilege of meeting members of the deaf-blind community whose courage, perseverance and optimism have left a lasting impression on me. Their stories remind us that disability does not define a person's potential, but with support and the removal of barriers, they can realize their potential and inspire all those in their life.

Earlier today, along with Senators Michèle Audette, Salma Atallahjan and Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, we had the honour of co-hosting the annual Deafblind Awareness Month reception on Parliament Hill. It was a powerful reminder that behind every effort to raise awareness are individuals whose determination and advocacy are making a true difference.

Advocacy remains at the heart of Deafblind Awareness Month. It challenges misconceptions, breaks down barriers and drives meaningful change. It helps to create a Canada where people who are deaf-blind can participate fully in education, employment, community life and public service.

I would like to acknowledge the important work of the Canadian Helen Keller Centre and the many organizations, families, intervenors, caregivers and advocates who support Canadians who are deaf-blind every single day. Their resilience is inspiring. Their voices matter. Their stories deserve to be heard. 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 Her Honour the Honourable Joan Marie J. Aylward, O.N.L., Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador; His Honour the Honourable Carl R. Thompson, K.C., Viceregal Consort; and Mr. Dan MacKenzie, Private Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador. They are the guests of the Honourable Senators Petten, Ravalia, Wells (*Newfoundland and Labrador*), Manning and White.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Senator Martin]

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL HISTORY MONTH

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

Honourable senators, June is summer solstice month, as well as National Indigenous History Month.

I'd like to tell you a story, just as I like to do with my granddaughter, Waseha.

Once upon a time, a group of people lost their way. They thought they had discovered an unclaimed, empty land, a *terra nullius*, so they planted a cross, as if to declare that this land was now theirs. Imagine their surprise when they realized we were watching them, observing them and analyzing them. They were dressed rather strangely. They spoke a different language. They looked tired and sick.

We thought we couldn't just leave them like that, because, after all, we are a welcoming and generous people. So we said to them, "*Ashtum kepak. Ashtum Quebec.*" We invited them to come ashore, promising to look after them and to share our stories, our knowledge, our culture and our science. We promised to show them how to live on this vast land.

Then history took a sharp turn. Another path was imposed on us. It was a path we did not choose. It was marked by uprooting and attempts to erase our identity, and yet —

[*English*]

Look at us. We are still here, standing proud in a process of healing and affirmation to honour our histories, celebrate our cultures and ensure our Indigenous languages are alive.

[*Translation*]

Because our stories are rich and still alive, we are writing our future and sharing our past with you.

Today, we are walking through the front doors of universities, laboratories, businesses and even decision-making spaces. We are doing it for Waseha, for Mother Earth, the community, family, children and, most importantly, humanity. We are still those engineers, historians, artists and leaders.

I would like to close with another true story, that of my little train from Sept-Îles to Schefferville. Until 1989, there was a specific car on that train reserved for "the savages." That was the term that was used at the time. I was almost born on that train. Today, that train is owned by my Innu Nation and the Naskapi Nation, but that is not all: We bought it to open it up to everyone. You are all welcome.

I say all of that to remind you that there are also some excellent examples of healing.

I wish you all a happy National Indigenous History Month.

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

[*English*]

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Mark Browne, former member of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador and recent graduate of the Harvard Law Master of Laws program. He is the guest of the Honourable Senator White.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1520)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

STUDY ON GROWING ISSUE OF WILDFIRES

FOURTH REPORT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY COMMITTEE DEPOSITED WITH CLERK DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. Mary Robinson: Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on September 24, 2025, the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 10, 2026, its fourth report, entitled *Canada on Fire: The catastrophic and escalating effects of wildfires on lives and communities*, 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 Robinson, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM MODERNIZATION BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SIXTH REPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY, DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Hassan Yussuff: Honourable senators, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, which deals with Bill C-11, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and other Acts.

(*For text of report, see today's Journals of the Senate, p. 1029.*)

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

Senator Yussuff: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(f), I move that the report be adopted now.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Some Hon. Senators: No.

The Hon. the Speaker: I hear a “no.”

Honourable senators, when shall this report be taken into consideration?

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

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AFFECT SITTINGS
FROM JUNE 15 TO JULY 2, 2026

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

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules, previous order or usual practice, from June 15 to July 2, 2026:

1. during Orders of the Day, only Government Business; Other Business, Commons Public Bills — Third Reading; Other Business, Commons Public Bills — Reports of Committees; and Other Business, Commons Public Bills — Second Reading rubrics be called; and
2. sittings be adjourned at the earlier of the completion of the rubrics enumerated in point 1 or the ordinary time of adjournment provided in the Rules.

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE OF MOTION

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

That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Monday, June 15, 2026, at 6 p.m.;

That rule 3-3(1) be suspended on that day;

That, notwithstanding rule 9-10(2), if a vote has been or is deferred to that day, it take place at the end of Question Period; and

That, without affecting any authority separately granted to a committee to meet while the Senate is sitting, committees of the Senate scheduled to meet on that day be authorized to meet even though the Senate may then be sitting, with rule 12-18(1) being suspended in relation thereto.

CANADA-UNITED STATES INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS WEST ANNUAL
MEETING, SEPTEMBER 16-19, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group concerning the Council of State Governments West Annual Meeting, held in Jackson, Wyoming, United States of America, from September 16 to 19, 2025.

COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS NATIONAL CONFERENCE,
DECEMBER 9-13, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group concerning the Council of State Governments National Conference, held in Chicago, Illinois, United States of America, from December 9 to 13, 2025.

CUSMA-RELATED ROUNDTABLES AND DISCUSSIONS,
JANUARY 13-15, 2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group concerning the CUSMA-Related Roundtables and Discussions, held in Mexico City, Mexico, from January 13 to 15, 2026.

TRANSPORTATION BORDER SUMMIT HOSTED BY THE FUTURE
BORDERS COALITION, JANUARY 21-22, 2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group concerning the Transportation Border Summit Hosted by the Future Borders Coalition, held in Washington, D.C., United States of America, from January 21 and 22, 2026.

[Senator LaBoucane-Benson]

QUESTION PERIOD

FINANCE

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, new Equifax data paints a troubling picture of the challenges facing Canadian businesses. Business owners are scaling back their use of credit, delinquencies are on the rise, and many firms are struggling with cashflow pressures and ongoing economic uncertainty. Yet, your government continues to insist that its economic plan is working; in fact, you told this chamber yesterday that we are “in a good place.”

Leader, how does the government reconcile that claim with the reality that more businesses are falling behind on their financial obligations? It’s not me saying this; it’s new Equifax data, which clearly isn’t skewed.

• (1530)

Is this what the government considers a good place for Canada’s economy, with small- and medium-sized businesses being cash-strapped and concerned?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): As I mentioned yesterday, the government is helping small- and medium-sized enterprises. I’m aware of the Equifax report, but we are cutting taxes on income, housing capital gains and business investment. We are reducing red tape, notably with the introduction of new regulatory sandboxes, which will directly help small- and medium-sized businesses. We’re increasing the financing cap for small- and medium-sized businesses to \$5 million. We’re providing \$500 million to the Business Development Bank of Canada, or BDC, to provide more commercial resources and insight. We have launched a productivity super-deduction to let SMEs write off new equipment costs. We’re investing in entrepreneurs, with women-owned businesses now comprising up to 20% of small- and medium-sized businesses.

We’re helping small- and medium-sized businesses. We know that there’s a challenge, but the government is committed —

[Translation]

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

[English]

Senator Housakos: Senator Moreau, small businesses are not just facing challenges. The backbone of our economy is in peril. Many are facing higher costs, weaker demand and a rising debt burden. I’m glad to see you’ve acknowledged this is a reality. However, it’s been 13 months, and government policies are clearly not working because the graph continues to force a situation on smaller businesses of higher costs, weaker demand and a burden on debt. When are you going to make a turn —

[Translation]

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

[English]

Senator Moreau: The government is committed to continuing to help businesses throughout the country, but there's a positive outlook already. Wages have outpaced inflation every month that this government has been in office, and Canada now ranks as the most attractive country in the world for infrastructure investment and for investment generally as well. This will help, and diversification of our economy will help businesses throughout Canada.

FEDERAL DEFICIT

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Senator Moreau, I'm not an economist, but I understand basic math. Yesterday, you told this chamber that the government "... has reduced our deficit for 2025-26." Yet the Parliamentary Budget Officer's latest economic and fiscal outlook projects the deficit rising from \$36.3 billion in 2024-25 to \$72 billion in 2025-26. That is not a reduction; it's a doubling. My question is very clear and very straightforward: Does the government consider a \$72-billion deficit to be higher or lower than the \$36-billion deficit?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): From a mathematical point of view, you're right, but unfortunately, the PBO went further: He confirmed that the federal government will have a declining deficit-to-GDP ratio over the medium term. The government is aiming in the right direction and committed to helping ensure that our economy will continue to grow.

Senator Martin: Senator Moreau, this government cannot simply predefine failure as progress. A deficit that doubles is not a reduction. Borrowing is not wealth, and debt-financed spending does not become prudent merely because a Prime Minister calls it investment. When will the government stop using fiscal word games to obscure the state of national finances and admit that its own numbers show the deficit as getting worse, not better?

Senator Moreau: Globally, our economy is still strong. We are in a very good position. As I mentioned to your colleague Senator Housakos, wages have outpaced inflation every month since the government has been in office. Foreign direct investment is running at twice the rate of our nearest G7 peer. Our economy is strong, and the government is committed to making it stronger.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

AID TO AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Mary Coyle: Senator Moreau, in 2023, I spoke to Bill C-41, a bill designed to enable Canadian humanitarian aid to flow to the people of Afghanistan through a humanitarian

exemption. Of the UN-estimated \$1.71 billion in humanitarian aid required for Afghanistan this year, only 16% has been secured.

At the same time, there's an ongoing lack of clarity and transparency in the implementation of Canada's Bill C-41's humanitarian exemption, including the authorization regime under section 83.03 of the Criminal Code. As a result, Canadian charities have limited their life-saving work, funds and support only to areas that would not attract attention under 83.03, leaving many Afghans unserved.

Senator Moreau, how much money has flowed to Afghanistan from Canadian organizations since Bill C-41? What is the government doing to remedy the obstacles to delivery they are experiencing?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. The federal government provided \$3 million in September 2025 to support emergency relief efforts through trusted partners active in the region; \$1.3 million to the World Food Programme to scale up its ongoing response, including the provision of food and logistical services; \$1 million to the international committee of the Red Cross, allocated for a rapid-response project to support conflict-affected communities impacted by the earthquake; and, through the Canadian Humanitarian Assistance Fund and the Islamic Relief Canada, \$350,000 each for emergency shelters, essential non-food items and health services.

The government works with partners already on the ground to ensure the aid is effectively distributed according to local needs and that all aid goes directly to those most vulnerable.

Senator Coyle: Yes, I hear that, but there are some obstacles to the delivery of aid, and some of the humanitarian organizations are limiting geographic areas and groups they will serve with their aid because of a chilling effect from our law. It's not flowing as smoothly as it should be. What is the government doing about those obstacles?

Senator Moreau: First, as I mentioned, we're working with partners that are already on the ground to ensure the aid is effectively distributed. There are many obstacles, as you mentioned, but that's the way. Canada also contributes to other international funds that have directed their operation to Afghanistan in accordance with the most urgent needs worldwide, and they're doing whatever they can to make sure that the aid is going to those in need.

HEALTH

HEARING LOSS

Hon. Scott Tannas: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate. Senator Moreau, on March 25, during the ministerial Question Period, the Minister of Health appeared before this chamber. At that time, I asked about the approval of Apple AirPods Pro 2 as a clinical-grade Class II medical device in Canada and their potential to serve as an affordable hearing aid option for Canadians experiencing mild to moderate hearing loss. The minister indicated she would be

raising this issue with provincial and territorial counterparts the following day as part of a broader discussion on health technologies.

Senator Moreau, can you update the Senate on those discussions and inform us of any progress the minister has made toward enabling broader use of this affordable technology to Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Tannas, for the question. Since your question was during the ministerial Question Period, Minister Michel raised the issue again with her provincial and territorial counterparts to encourage them to allow this feature, but the ultimate decision rests with the provinces and territories. At the federal order, Health Canada issued licences to Apple in December 2024 that authorized the sale of their hearing aid and hearing test features. It's my understanding, though, that Apple has also acknowledged that the availability of the two features in Canada is delayed because of provincial regulatory restrictions, notably on software.

This is the latest information I have had since you asked the question.

Senator Tannas: Given the pace of progress, has the minister reconsidered her initial focus on the mechanics of this issue? More specifically, is she now prepared to seriously consider the creation of a new medical device licence class to allow for over-the-counter hearing aids in Canada?

Senator Moreau: The avenue you suggested has been considered by the health minister, and it would not enable the federal government to provide greater access to such a hearing device. This is my understanding.

• (1540)

The issue of providing a new medical device licence class would not lie with the federal government, as it is the provinces and territories that regulate, allow or prohibit devices in their own respective jurisdictions.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

NEWS MEDIA

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: My question to the Government Representative in the Senate will be on key aspects of news media. Last week, the cabinet directed the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, to scrap its directive that streamers should contribute 15% of their Canadian revenues to support Canadian broadcasting. I'm especially concerned about the news media.

Would the government, instead, consider spending 15% of its advertising budget on Canadian news rather than the current amount of less than 5%, something that would not cost the treasury any more money, or would they consider any other means of supporting Canadian news media?

[Senator Tannas]

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Cardozo. The objective of the Online Streaming Act remains clear: ensuring that Canadian stories, creators and cultural industries continue to thrive in a rapidly changing media environment.

The government is committed to ensuring that the Online Streaming Act strikes a balance between supporting Canadian culture, maintaining affordability for consumers and ensuring flexibility for broadcasters and streaming services.

The government will be issuing a new policy directive to the CRTC, asking them to determine a rate that is more reflective of current pressures on the sector.

The government is also making a \$600-million investment that will provide immediate relief and stability for Canadian creators and cultural industries.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Hon. Andrew Cardozo: Thank you, Senator Moreau. I understand that later today the government will be introducing a new bill to ban social media for children under the age of 16. Could you outline the concerns the government is seeking to address, and will children have access to news media? I understand that the announcement is yet to be made, but I wonder if you can talk about the considerations in advance of the announcement.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): You understand correctly. There is parliamentary privilege, and I cannot comment on legislation that has not already been tabled.

It's my understanding that the government is concerned with the current accessibility of social media to young Canadians. The government is currently considering the best option on how to move forward to protect children and to coordinate with the provinces. An announcement, as you know, will be made quite shortly.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Senator Moreau, Prime Minister Carney has repeatedly claimed that trade diversification is the cornerstone of his economic strategy, yet new data shows that most of the increase in non-U.S. exports has been driven by soaring gold prices. When gold is removed from the equation, exports to non-U.S. markets are only marginally higher than before the trade issues came about.

At the same time, exports to the United States continue to grow, and Canada remains heavily dependent on the American market. Can you explain what concrete results Canadians have actually received from the Prime Minister's trade diversification agenda, beyond favourable commodity prices, such as gold?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator MacDonald, my understanding is that non-U.S. exports are, according to the government, on track to double over the next decade.

Trade diversification is, as you mentioned, a central pillar of the government's action. So far, we are pleased to report that there are 12 new strategic agreements that diversify our trading partners, and we are opening markets to our companies and to all Canadians who want to conduct business worldwide.

Senator MacDonald: Senator Moreau, while the U.S. and Mexico have already begun formal CUSMA negotiations, Canada has yet to formally sit down at the bargaining table. Is this government falling behind on the most important trade relationship Canada has, and when will it begin serious negotiations to protect Canadian jobs and exporters?

Senator Moreau: You're probably well aware that trade negotiations are not conducted at the public table. Last week, Minister LeBlanc was in Washington to meet his counterpart. We are still open to negotiations. My understanding is that there are communications between both governments, and that is all I can say for the moment.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: Government leader, Canadians are excited to see the FIFA World Cup come to Canada. Major sporting events can showcase our country, inspire young athletes and unite Canadians behind our national team. However, Canadians also expect transparency and accountability when hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars are at stake.

Recent polling shows that nearly 7 in 10 residents in the host regions of Metro Vancouver and the Greater Toronto Area believe that the public cost of hosting the World Cup is not worth the trade-offs.

Senator Moreau, can you tell this chamber exactly how much federal funding has been committed to hosting the World Cup, and what safeguards are in place to ensure taxpayers receive value for their money?

Senator Batters: Good question.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): My understanding is that FIFA is an important event that the Government of Canada and many Canadians are very happy to be hosting. I don't have the data here to answer your exact question, but I will provide you with the amount that has been spent by the government for the FIFA event.

Senator Atallahjan: Senator Moreau, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, estimates that the World Cup could cost taxpayers approximately \$1 billion, including nearly half a billion dollars from the federal government. Do you agree with the PBO's estimate, and can you assure Canadians that the final cost will not exceed that figure?

Senator Moreau: My understanding is that your first questions were not based on estimations. You wanted to know how much the government will spend — that relates to transparency. As for an estimate, I will not comment on the PBO's remarks, but I will provide you with the figure as soon as I obtain it.

[Translation]

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

Hon. Amina Gerba: Senator Moreau, my question is a follow-up to those asked by Senators Senior and Bernard, and it has to do with the Advisory Council on Rights, Equality and Inclusion. As senators know, 4.3% of the Canadian population is from Black communities, and yet they account for 37% of police-reported hate crimes. How can the government justify establishing a council that does not include any representation for Black communities?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Gerba, for raising that issue. I described it as "very important" when Senators Bernard and Senior mentioned it — so important that I went to the trouble of raising it, as Senate representative to the government, with the Prime Minister's Office. I can also assure you that no ulterior motive or discrimination was involved in the decision.

Today, I can tell you that the committee's composition has not yet been finalized, that some council members have not yet been announced and that other nominations will be made in the coming weeks, taking into account the comments that I forwarded to the Prime Minister's Office through you and through Senators Bernard and Senior, of course.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Gerba, do you have another question?

Senator Gerba: I think that answers my question. We look forward to finding out who will be sitting on this council.

• (1550)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILD CANADA HOMES BILL

FIFTH REPORT OF BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT MATTER ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the fifth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy (*The subject matter of Bill C-20, An Act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes*), tabled in the Senate on June 4, 2026.

Hon. Clément Gignac moved the adoption of the report.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

(Motion agreed to, on division, and report adopted.)

[*English*]

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION BILL, NO. 2

CERTAIN COMMITTEES AUTHORIZED TO STUDY SUBJECT MATTER

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of June 9, 2026, moved:

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

1. in accordance with rule 10-11(1), the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to examine the subject matter of all of Bill C-31, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, introduced in the House of Commons on May 6, 2026, in advance of the said bill coming before the Senate;
2. in addition, the following committees be separately authorized to examine the subject matter of the following elements contained in Bill C-31:
 - (a) the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry: those elements contained in Division 13 of Part 4;
 - (b) the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy: those elements contained in Divisions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 of Part 4;

- (c) the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade: those elements contained in Division 11 of Part 4;
 - (d) the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights: those elements contained in Division 10 of Part 4;
 - (e) the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples: those elements contained in Division 14 of Part 4;
 - (f) the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs: those elements contained in Division 5 of Part 4;
 - (g) the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs: those elements contained in Division 16 of Part 4;
 - (h) the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology: those elements contained in Divisions 9 and 12 of Part 4; and
 - (i) the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications: those elements contained in Division 17 of Part 4;
3. each of the committees listed in point 2 that are authorized to examine the subject matter of particular elements of Bill C-31:
 - (a) submit its final report to the Senate no later than October 9, 2026; and
 - (b) be authorized to deposit its report with the Clerk of the Senate if the Senate is not then sitting;
 4. as the reports from the various committees authorized to examine the subject matter of particular elements of Bill C-31 are tabled in the Senate, they 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*;
 5. the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to take any reports tabled under point 3 into consideration during its study of the subject matter of all of Bill C-31;
 6. the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance be authorized to deposit its report with the Clerk if the Senate is not then sitting; and

7. for the purposes of this order, rule 12-18(2)(c)(ii) be understood as requiring the agreement of all leaders and facilitators, or their designates.

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

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

(At 3:56 p.m., the Senate was continued until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.)

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