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The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

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THE SENATE

Thursday, June 11, 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 Leader of the Canadian 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 Mohammad Al Zaibak.

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 MOHAMMAD AL ZAIBAK

Hon. Scott Tannas: Honourable senators, in Senator Al Zaibak's maiden speech, he offered a line that stayed with many of us. He said, "When I turn 75, I will hopefully have repaid some of the debt I owe my beloved Canada."

Today, as we mark his retirement, it is fair to say that debt has been repaid and then some.

While his tenure in this chamber has been shorter than many, its impact has been anything but modest. In just 918 days, Senator Al Zaibak shepherded a Senate public bill through this place and brought it to the threshold of completion in the other place. He served as deputy chair of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs. He distinguished himself through a disproportionately high level of engagement in Committees of the Whole, and he did not shy away from taking principled positions on complex and, at times, controversial matters.

That is a remarkable legacy in such a short period of time, and it is one of which he should be justly proud.

Colleagues will also remember how he carried out this work. Senator Al Zaibak has the rare ability to approach difficult subjects with a calm demeanour and a clear, steady voice. It is a voice with quiet authority — one that commands attention not by volume but by substance. His interventions — measured, principled and quietly persuasive — have consistently emphasized the importance of inclusion, economic opportunity and social cohesion.

Those qualities are deeply rooted in his journey. From the cradle of civilization in Syria to the boardrooms of Toronto and ultimately to the parliamentary life of Ottawa, he has brought to this chamber a perspective that is both deeply personal and profoundly Canadian. It is the perspective of someone who came to this country in search of opportunity and found not only success but a genuine and abiding love for Canada.

Senator Al Zaibak, your passion, humility and steadfast commitment to the public good will be missed in this place.

Mohammad, it is my pleasure to say this plainly: Your debt is paid. The ledger is balanced. You leave this chamber with a full account and nothing owing.

However, there is, I am told, one outstanding obligation. In that same maiden speech, you promised that, upon your retirement, you would repay your family with a very long, well-deserved and hopefully expensive vacation. I believe that time has now arrived, and that payment is due, particularly to Najla.

On behalf of your colleagues in the Canadian Senators Group and indeed all of us who have had the privilege to serve alongside you, I wish you a happy and fulfilling retirement, safe travels and every enjoyment on your long-overdue family journey.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of the Government Representative's Office to pay tribute to our colleague the Honourable Mohammad Khair Al Zaibak.

We often associate Senator Al Zaibak with his distinguished and stately demeanour that corresponds with his worldly and expansive career. Having pursued such overarching and multi-faceted endeavours as international capital projects, economic statecraft and corporate governance, Senator Al Zaibak developed a certain unmistakable gravitas. After all, one does not successfully lead enterprises such as the Canadian Development and Marketing Corporation or Teranet without the poise and composure that the scale, reliability and versatility of public-private partnerships require.

• (1340)

Correspondingly, there has not been a lack of recognition for Senator Al Zaibak's leadership, as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the International Strategy Advisory Committee and the Canada Arab Business Council each subsequently fought to gain his counsel.

With such experience, it came as no surprise that once he entered the upper chamber, Senator Al Zaibak was able to judiciously navigate Parliament toward the recognition of Arab Heritage Month and, more importantly, toward the lifting of Canadian sanctions on Syria following their regime change. This respite will provide breathing room for a Syria that is no longer experienced solely in grief or in exile and has an opportunity to bloom again. Through these important first years of transition for the country, Canadians will be there to support this new democracy, notably with the development of its civic institutions through the Canada-Syria Parliamentary Friendship Group, which Senator Al Zaibak also established.

Here, we can observe a second, more subdued part of Senator Al Zaibak. Under the cosmopolitan demeanour, Senator Al Zaibak also always cared for the less glorious parts of life. He ensured that his time and expertise also contributed to civic society, sitting on many universities or cultural boards. He attended plenty of our senatorial events, recognizing the importance of the different causes we all carry but also taking the opportunity to connect with guests and staff members.

Most importantly, he never forgot about the people, as he helped over 1,200 Syrian refugees find private sponsorships to secure their arrival in Canada. We can be proud that these refugees now call our country home, as we have had the honour of Senator Al Zaibak calling Canada home as well.

I wish you the best in retirement, Senator Al Zaibak, and, while I know you will spend a lot of time with your wife and children, I hope that will leave you enough time to maybe come back here and say hello. We will miss you, sir.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to our colleague Senator Mohammad Al Zaibak as he retires from the Senate of Canada. While our time working together in this chamber was relatively brief, it has been a distinct pleasure to serve alongside the senator.

Senator Al Zaibak came to this place with a lifetime of real-world experience as an entrepreneur and a business leader, and he brought that practical, grounded perspective directly to our deliberations.

When you look at his background, it is clear he is someone who knows how to get things done. Long before he rejoined us in the Senate, he was a major force in Canada's tech sector as the co-founder, president and CEO of the Canadian Development and Marketing Corporation. He has been deeply involved in the financing and management of specialized information technology services. He was also one of the principal architects behind Teranet, which completely modernized Ontario's electronic land registration, a true testament to his rigour, leadership and

expertise. But what I respect just as much is how he balanced that sharp business sense with a genuine dedication to his community in Toronto and to the country as a whole.

He spent decades strengthening Canada's economic and cultural ties globally, especially within the Arab world. Whether it was serving as director of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce or chairing the Canada Arab Business Council, he always focused on building bridges and making Canada a stronger place.

The civic contributions in Toronto cover just about everything, from Waterfront Toronto and the Royal Ontario Museum to co-founding Lifeline Syria to help resettle refugees.

It is a remarkable record of service, and that is exactly why he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals over the years and deserves many more accolades.

Honourable colleagues, our chamber is at its best when we have people who bring that kind of practical experience to the table. Even though we didn't overlap for a very long time, Senator Al Zaibak always conducted himself with professionalism, a collaborative spirit and complete respect for the institution.

Senator, you are a legend in Toronto and in the Syrian community across Canada. I can tell you that every time I cross the paths of the Syrian Canadians in Montreal whom I represent, they speak of you with complete pride. That speaks volumes, because at the end of the day, we all represent not just Canada but the various components of this country. As the first Canadian senator of Syrian descent, I can say you have served this institution with honour.

Furthermore, over the past few months, I have had the privilege of sitting down with Senator Al Zaibak, breaking bread and having some discussions — not on the issues we agree on, because, as I have said, it is easy to dialogue with those you agree with. What takes, of course, a different approach to life is dialoguing with people you disagree with. The senator and I have had a long dialogue on all the issues we agree on, but particularly on the issues we disagree on. I look forward to continuing that dialogue because that is Canada at its best and how we strengthen our society.

Senator, thank you for your service to Toronto, Ontario, Canada and your community. God bless you, and all the best in your retirement.

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia: Brother Mohammad, honourable senators, I rise today on behalf of the Independent Senators Group to pay tribute to our esteemed colleague the Honourable Mohammad Khair Al Zaibak.

His tenure in this chamber has been defined by the very same principles that have guided his entire life: compassion, nation building, generosity and an unwavering belief in the promise of Canada.

Though his time in the upper house marks the conclusion of his formal political chapter, his legacy as a trailblazing entrepreneur, a champion for diversity and a lifeline for those fleeing tyranny will resonate for generations.

Born in Syria, he arrived in this country with a deep appreciation for the democratic freedoms and opportunities that many take for granted. He brought an extraordinary mind for innovation and engineering, ultimately shaping Ontario's foundational infrastructure as the co-founder of Teranet Inc.

Within this chamber and across this country, he has been an exemplary advocate for inclusion. As has been highlighted, he helped resettle nearly 1,200 Syrian refugees through Lifeline Syria, turning Canadian compassion into tangible action.

He fiercely championed Bill S-227 to recognize April as Arab Heritage Month, ensuring the rich contributions of Arab Canadians are officially woven into our national fabric.

He brought his vast expertise to community institutions, serving on the boards of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto Metropolitan University and the Canadian Arab Institute.

Whether debating intricate digital policy or sharing his moving reflections on Canada's role as a global beacon of refuge, Mohammad has always spoken from a place of deep principle. Senator Al Zaibak has masterfully leveraged his rich Syrian-Arab heritage to build enduring diplomatic and cultural bridges between Canada and the Arab world.

Within our Parliament, he uniquely translated this cultural legacy into highly effective international diplomacy. He serves as an executive leader for both the Canada-Saudi Arabia Interparliamentary Group and the Canada-Qatar Parliamentary Friendship Group, reinforcing vital bilateral pathways and parliamentary diplomacy.

He has actively engaged with senior Middle Eastern diplomats and parliamentary counterparts to enhance foreign relations and economic ties through trusted peer-to-peer dialogue.

He leaves this chamber with the same dignity, warmth and intellectual rigour that characterized his first day.

As you transition to this next chapter alongside your family, you leave our country and our chamber stronger, more inclusive and deeply enriched.

Let me finish with a quote from Rumi:

A true friend is like a mirror, reflecting our souls back to us, reminding us of who we truly are.

You leave behind a chamber of admiring friends. Your warm smile, dignity and deep friendship will be sorely missed.

Thank you, brother. *Shukran. Mubarak.*

• (1350)

Hon. Danièle Henkel: Honourable senators, we often measure a parliamentary mandate by the number of years, but the truest measure is the depth of the imprint left behind.

Senator Al Zaibak, your time in this chamber may have been brief, but it was remarkably impactful. You arrived here with the sharp instincts of an entrepreneur, someone who understands that you do not just build projects; you build relationships.

Whether the debate turned to the economy, defence or national security, you never settled for the surface. You always looked for the foundation, asking how we could strengthen our institutions and create the strategic partnerships needed to move Canada forward.

That builder's mindset naturally guided your work in parliamentary diplomacy, most notably by opening doors and reinforcing vital ties with the Gulf region through dialogue and earned trust.

But perhaps the most enduring bridge you built is Bill S-227. In establishing Arab Heritage Month, you gave Canadians much more than a symbolic milestone. You anchored the vibrant history, culture and profound contributions of Arab Canadians permanently into our national fabric.

It is a legacy that will offer rightful recognition and inspire a deep sense of pride and belonging for generations of Arab Canadians to come.

Senator Al Zaibak, you are, in every sense of the word, a true gentleman. From my very first days in this chamber, your courtesy and warmth were a welcome anchor.

You have been consistently generous with your time, deeply respectful in your exchanges and genuinely attentive to those around you.

You have proven that a short mandate can carry weight when it is driven by a clear purpose and a generous heart.

Thank you, my dear colleague, for your dedicated service, for the bridges you built and for the example you leave behind.

I wish you and your family every happiness in this next chapter.

Thank you.

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to my brother Senator Mohammad Khair Al Zaibak. If you're wondering why I call him "brother," it's the way that we Muslims address one another to show our bond of faith and to emphasize the equality between us.

There are some colleagues whose presence reminds us why public service matters, and Mohammad is one of those colleagues.

Senator Al Zaibak's journey to this place is remarkable. Born in Syria, he built a successful career in Canada, and you heard about some of those successes. However, what has always struck me most is what he chose to do with those achievements.

Again and again, he has used his success as a means of lifting others up.

Many Canadians came to know Senator Al Zaibak through his leadership during the Syrian refugee crisis. At a time when thousands of families were searching for safety and hope, he helped transform compassion into action. He reminded us that welcoming newcomers is an act of faith in human potential.

What I admire most about Senator Al Zaibak is the quiet conviction that guides him. I remember recently going to a restaurant that serves Middle Eastern food. The owner came and spoke to me, and when he found out I was a senator, he was so excited and asked me if I knew Senator Al Zaibak.

He went on to tell me about how much you had helped him. I thank you for that.

I thought to myself, that is so typical of Senator Al Zaibak. He has transformed so many lives, and he did so quietly.

He seeks solutions, not attention. He measures success by opportunities created for others, not by recognition received.

During my most recent conversations with Senator Al Zaibak, we talked about the situation in the Middle East. Like all of us, he is heartbroken over what is happening in the region. He expressed his sincere wish for peace, which I echoed too — a peace such as we enjoy here in Canada.

Senator Al Zaibak reminds us that the Canadian story is still being written by people who arrive with hope, work with determination and serve with generosity. His life is a testament to the idea that citizenship is a commitment to contribute, to build and to leave things better than how we found them.

Senator Al Zaibak, I know that you are very proud of your family. I hope that the next chapter of your life will allow you to enjoy more time with them. We, in this chamber, thank them for sharing you with us. We remain mindful that your greatest title is not senator, entrepreneur or community leader, but husband, father, grandfather and family man.

Shukran, brother. You will be missed.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Najla Al Zaibak, Senator Al Zaibak's spouse, as well as Omar, Leen and Jana, their children. They are accompanied by Mona Al Zaibak, Senator Al Zaibak's sister, Lara Barazi, his niece, Michael Henry and Khaled Malas, his sons-in-law, as well as Dean and Jude, his grandsons.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE HONOURABLE MOHAMMAD AL ZAIBAK

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

Hon. Mohammad Al Zaibak: Honourable senators, thank you all for the kindness of your tributes this afternoon. I will carry your generous words with me always. To tell you the truth, I'm quite overwhelmed by your warmth, kindness and generosity. Thank you all.

[Editor's Note: Senator Al Zaibak spoke in Arabic.]

Honourable senators and dear friends, I have risen in this chamber many times in the past two years. I confess that none of those interventions were as difficult to write as this one because none of them asked me to say goodbye.

Let me begin, as I began my maiden speech in this place, with the only emotion adequate to the moment: a deep and profound humility, and with it, a gratitude too large for any one sentence to hold.

When I was sworn in, on February 6, 2024, I held the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in my hand as I made my solemn oath.

Within weeks, this chamber was deep in debate on Bill C-62 on medical assistance in dying, one of the most soul-searching debates a parliament can hold.

The intensity of the arguments for and against by admired, skilful debaters in this chamber, especially senators with remarkable medical credentials — among them Doctors Mohamed Ravalia, Rosemary Moodie, Stan Kutcher, Gigi Osler and Sharon Burey — made me feel as if I were sitting in a class at the finest case method university. It was a living case study in intellect, independence and genuine sober second thought.

Now, in my final days here, this chamber has been seized with Bill C-9, the combatting hate act, and Bill C-11 on modernizing military justice — debates that are every bit as profound. Those two sets of debates are the bookends of my service, and between them, throughout that entire time, I felt that I was attending the best school of my life. So the word I reach for today is not "retirement." It is "graduation."

• (1400)

Before I go further, let me turn to the gallery — to the people without whom I would have nothing to be grateful for. Najla is my wife and life partner of more than 45 years and my closest friend. Every success ever credited to me belongs in equal measure to you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Al Zaibak: You stood beside me when we left our homeland. You stood beside me as we built a life in this country. You stood beside me, at least in spirit, through every long day and late night of these past two years.

Here you are, still cheering for me, as another chapter comes to a close. I hope you know that whatever good I have done in my life, I had you and our family — and my late mother and father — in mind all the time. Thank you, my love.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Al Zaibak: To our son, Omar, and our daughters, Leen and Jana, watching the three of you become the people you are has been the greatest privilege of my life.

To our sons-in-law, Michael and Khaled, thank you for the love you bring to our family. To my sister, Mona, and my niece, Lara, thank you for being here on behalf of our extended family, and thank you for your continued love.

To our grandsons, Dean and Jude, you are both far too young to have any interest in a Senate speech, and I do not blame you one bit. However, one day, you might read these words, and when you do, I hope you remember that your grandfather believed in service, humanity, community and country and that public life is not about titles but about responsibility and giving back. And I hope you remember that of all the titles your grandfather was ever given, the one he treasured the most was “Grandpa,” or *Jeddo* in Arabic.

I love you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Al Zaibak: Honourable colleagues, I was born and raised in the heart of Damascus, the oldest continuously inhabited city on Earth, in the neighbourhood of the ancient street the Bible calls Straight. There, as a child and young man, I was inspired and taught by my parents to love and respect others. They taught me a principle that has guided my entire life. They said, “*E’ mel khair wa irmi bil bahr*,” which literally translates into “Make good deeds and cast them into the sea.” In other words: Give without condition or expectation of return, and the universe takes care of the rest. The rewards come in unexpected ways.

I carried that wisdom with me to Canada, and here is what happened: I fell in love with this country, and to my great delight and joy, Canada loved me back. It let a young immigrant entrepreneur build a business, raise a family and, in time, take a seat in this chamber as the first senator of Syrian-Arab heritage since Confederation in 1867.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Al Zaibak: It is a responsibility that I hope I have carried for the Canadian Arab community, for the Canadian Muslim community and for my province. It is one that I hope I am the first of many to hold — for that community has a great deal more to offer this place and this country.

For I have learned here that being Canadian is defined not by where we were born but by what we are willing to build together.

The wider Arab world — 22 states and some 500 million people, from the Arabian Gulf through North Africa to the shores of the Atlantic — is a natural strategic partner for the Canada I love in terms of trade, investment and friendship.

Honourable colleagues, I will never forget the day I took office. Senator Peter Boehm sponsored me into this chamber; former senator Marc Gold welcomed me; the Usher of the Black Rod, Greg Peters, guided me with grace; the then-interim Clerk, Gerry Lafrenière, administered my oath; and the Speaker, Senator Raymonde Gagné, received me.

It was quite a memorable day.

I was sworn in that same day alongside Senator Paulette Senior, Senator Marnie McBean, my old friend Senator Toni Varone and my seatmate-to-be Senator Mary Robinson, with Senator Manuelle Oudar joining us two days later.

I was honoured by the presence of the Right Honourable Joe Clark and the Honourable Charles Sousa, who is also here today. Thank you, Charles, for being here.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Al Zaibak: I was also honoured by the presence of members of the Canadian Arab community.

And I was welcomed warmly by the leaders of every group in this chamber. I remember Senators Jane Cordy, Marc Gold, Scott Tannas, Yonah Martin and Raymonde Saint-Germain. Everything you said made me feel so welcome. You made me feel at home, actually.

Small kindnesses stay with me: There was Senator Michèle Audette with a herbal-scented candle I will not forget. And Senators Rob Black, Colin Deacon, Salma Ataullahjan, Amina Gerba, Mohamed Ravaliala, Rebecca Patterson and others were the first ones to shake my hand and give me big hugs. Thank you. I remember well the familiar faces of my old friends Senators Ratna Omidvar and Mary Coyle, as well as the helpful offers from Senators Woo and McPhedran. Thank you all. It helped me a lot, easing me into this amazing place.

A few weeks later, Senator Andrew Cardozo looked out for me during an unpleasant incident, but that is a story for another day.

Senator Pierre Dalphond gave me a five-hour crash course on the constitutional essence of this place, and Senator Raymonde Saint-Germain befriended me.

These are friendships I count among this chamber’s true gifts.

• (1410)

Dear colleagues, I had considered myself knowledgeable about the Senate before I arrived here, only to discover that whatever I knew then was merely the tip of the iceberg. The orientation sessions cured me of that vanity within a week.

My one complaint about my time here is that there was so little of it. My one wish is that I were a few years younger so that I might give you and this great chamber more. If my brief chapter has a single theme, it is this: I am a builder of bridges, physically, culturally and metaphorically.

I spent my working life laying spans between things that stood apart. I structured an international joint venture that built the Bahrain-Saudi Arabia King Fahd Causeway before coming to Canada. I co-founded the public-private partnership that my colleagues referred to earlier, which carried Ontario's land registry into the digital age. I co-founded non-profits that built cultural bridges among our communities through art, music and creativity. I came here to do the same.

On the Foreign Affairs Committee, and as deputy chair of the National Security and Defence Committee, I worked with my honourable colleagues to strengthen the bridges between Canada and a turbulent world.

Through our parliamentary friendship groups, I held to a simple faith: that parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue between people are never wasted. The security of our country — I came to see — is never a partisan question; it is a national responsibility and a bridge we build together or not at all.

What a time it has been. In two short years, I watched this Parliament prorogued and then dissolved, an election fought and a new government formed under Prime Minister Mark Carney. I sat in this chamber with you when His Majesty King Charles III came in person to open Parliament and deliver the Speech from the Throne, the first reigning monarch to do so on Canadian soil since 1977, nearly half a century ago.

Only this week, in this very chamber, we welcomed our new Governor General, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Louise Arbour, who once prosecuted the gravest crimes on earth in the name of human rights.

Beyond our borders, the return of an administration in Washington tested this country's sovereignty, its economy and its resolve, and reminded Canadians who we are.

The wider world also paused to remember important milestones. This past year marked 80 years since the founding of the United Nations, born from the ashes of the Second World War. I have always believed Canada belongs inside such institutions, not on the sidelines, a middle power that leads through diplomacy, partnerships and principles.

That brings me to the work I hold dearest and to the land of my birth. This past April, Syria marked 80 years of independence. This chamber will appreciate the coincidence that my mother and father were married that very year. I came along five years later, the first of nine children. I will let you do the arithmetic.

I am told some of you, with great kindness, drew up a petition — supported by a sworn affidavit, no less — alleging the registrar had erred and that I am not yet 75. I was moved by the conspiracy, and I appreciated the creative thinking, but the Constitution, like my late mother, is not easily argued with.

Honourable colleagues, in 2024, the oppressive regime that had darkened Syria for half a century fell at last, and from the safety of this chamber, I have watched the land of my birth begin to turn a page I had feared it never would. Years before, when war drove millions of Syrians from their homes, a group of us in Toronto helped create Lifeline Syria. I say "we," and I mean it, for I was, at most, a catalyst and a participant.

The heavy lifting was done by remarkable people: former senator Ratna Omidvar, Lifeline Syria's co-founder and first chair; John Sewell, former Toronto mayor; Sheldon Levy, former president of Toronto Metropolitan University; my friend Frank Palmay, a corporate lawyer who had himself come to Canada with his parents as a Hungarian refugee; and many others, with the support of former Toronto mayor John Tory, the Government of Ontario under Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Honourable Charles Sousa, who is sitting with us today as the Minister of Finance. A former mayor, a university president and a lawyer who had once been a refugee himself: Canadians from every walk of life. That was rather the point.

However, the truest work of all was done by thousands of ordinary Canadians whose names will never be known. They opened their homes to strangers arriving with nothing but hope.

Lifeline Syria has long since completed its mandate, and it is quiet now, as it should be. It was made for a season, and it met that season. It was made for a reason, and it met that reason. Then it stepped aside. But the families it helped welcome are Canadians now, raising children and building this country.

My parents taught me to do good, cast it into the sea and expect nothing back. Lifeline Syria was that lesson made real. We cast what good we could upon the water, and the sea has returned it a hundredfold, as reflected in the faces of new Canadians who now call this place home. If I have any proof that the things I am telling you today are true, it is them.

Dear colleagues, not every milestone was an affair of state. Some were the quiet joys of a family. Just six weeks after I was sworn in, we welcomed our second grandson, Jude, who could not be with us today. This past summer, our youngest daughter, Jana, was married.

There were other proud moments in this chamber too. On April 3, 2025, in a formal ceremony administered by the Usher of the Black Rod and his office, I had the honour of presenting King Charles III's Coronation Medal to 20 deserving fellow Canadians, Arab and non-Arab, Muslim, Christian, Jewish and of no faith at all. The ceremony opened with our national anthem sung in English, French and Arabic for the first time beneath this roof. If you want to know what I believe Canada is, it is this chamber on that morning. It was the bridge made visible.

One year ago today, on June 11, 2025, I rose in this place to reintroduce the Arab Heritage Month Bill.

• (1420)

My colleagues, more history than many see in a decade.

To the bill's sponsor in the other place, my friend the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, thank you for everything that you are doing to take the bill to the finish line, and thank you for your incredible public service. I thank my colleagues in the Senate for helping to push this bill through.

Dear colleagues, let me say plainly what every one of you knows: I came late and I leave soon. The Constitution sends me home at 75, but a short chapter can still be a full one.

Let me be transparent with you, as this chamber expects us all to be. I arrived a builder, impatient by nature and temperament, with an agenda full of bills and initiatives I meant to carry through. Much of it remains undone — files I could not close and good work I am out of time to finish. I will not pretend it does not sting. It does.

To labour as hard as you know how and still leave the table half cleared is the quiet grief of a short tenure, and I feel it keenly today.

So I will do the one thing still in my capacity. I will set my unfinished work — the policy briefs and studies I commissioned — in your hands, trusting that more patient and longer-serving hands than mine will carry it across.

Dear colleagues, if I may leave one conviction behind, let it be this: Guard the independence of this place. I arrived a believer in the reformed, non-partisan Senate, and I leave more convinced than ever.

I have seen with my own eyes how the move to a non-partisan, merit-based chamber has lifted the quality of our debate and the trust of the public we serve. This is not only my opinion. This spring, as we learned two days ago from our colleague Senator Dasko, a Nanos poll commissioned by her found that, for the first time in a decade, Canadians' positive impression of this chamber outweighs the negative.

I will permit myself one immodest thought. Perhaps our cohort and those of us who arrived in 2024 and after have been good for the brand and helped tip the scale.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Al Zaibak: Independence is not a possession; it is a practice renewed in every debate and every vote. It is the most important bridge of all, the one between the people of this country and the sober second thought they are owed. I trust you will tend it well.

My thanks will not fit in a list, so forgive me for the names I must leave out.

[Senator Al Zaibak]

First, thank you to those who entrusted me with this seat: the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments, the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau and former Governor General Mary Simon.

Thank you to our Speaker, the Honourable Senator Gagné, for her fairness and patience; my colleagues in the Canadian Senators Group and our leaders, Senators Gigi Osler and Scott Tannas, who made me feel at home from my earliest days; and the chairs of committees I served under — Senators Peter Boehm, Marty Deacon, Hassan Yussuff and Tony Dean — and their clerks, Ericka Paaanen and Chantal Lalonde. Thank you for your support and help.

To my seatmate, and now our group chair, Mary Robinson, thank you for your friendship and support.

Thank you to friends in every corner of this chamber and to the former senators whose friendship outlasted their tenure: Jane Cordy, Ratna Omidvar, Stan Kutcher and Brent Cotter.

And thank you to those who truly keep this place running: the Speaker pro tempore, Senator René Cormier; the table clerks and our pages; the teams in administration, finance, protective services, communications, human resources, audiovisual, interpretation, legislative and legal services; and the researchers at the Library of Parliament. You turn the invisible machinery of our democracy, and you have my lasting gratitude.

Now to my Director of Parliamentary Affairs, Shiraz Keushgerian, I told you I did not want a “yes man.” You took that to heart, to my benefit, and you were the better adviser for it. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Al Zaibak: To my office team, past and present — Tina Emiri, Sofiia, Garance, Sara Alby and Venus Ramos — thank you for your care, devotion and support.

And, Sofiia, happy birthday today.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Al Zaibak: Finally, in absentia, to the steady anchor of my Toronto office for more than a decade, my executive assistant, Anne Drakes, who, quietly and faithfully, has kept everything moving for over 10 years, thank you for being the silent engine of my office. I truly could not have done this without you. I'm sorry that you are not able to be with us today.

Honourable senators, I'm leaving the Senate but I'm not leaving the work, for I have never been much good at sitting still. I plan to go on building bridges in my community, in my country, wherever a span is needed.

Honourable colleagues, when I gave my first speech in this space, I said that we are better when we build one another up, that welcoming the newcomer is wiser than walling them out, that a life of service is richer than a life of self. I believed it then. I believe it more deeply now.

And at a moment when others beyond our borders are busy building walls, I can wish you nothing better than this: Build bridges, my friends, not walls. It is the conviction I leave in your keeping, and it has never once failed me.

Honourable colleagues, that someone born and raised in Damascus, once a beacon of science, literature and civilization and, for thousands of years, a great trading and cultural centre of the ancient world, can become the first Syrian-born Arab Canadian senator in the Parliament of one of the most advanced democracies in the modern world is an incredible privilege and is a testament to the diversity, inclusion and civility of our beloved Canada.

Honourable colleagues, it has been the honour of my life to sit among you. I will miss you. But this is not “goodbye”; it is “see you around,” my friends.

Thank you. *Meegwetch, Shukran.*

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

THE LATE ÉMILIE NADEAU

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I want to take this opportunity to wish our esteemed colleague good health for many years to come so that he may accomplish many things.

Honourable senators, I would like to take a moment to mark the passing of Émilien Nadeau, the former mayor of Dégelis. Mr. Nadeau was a big-hearted man, a visionary pioneer and a citizen who was deeply committed to his community, Témiscouata. He passed away on June 2 at the age of 85, leaving an impressive legacy that will continue to inspire future generations.

In our communities, some people leave their mark through their words, while others do so through their actions. Émilien Nadeau was definitely among the latter. He was a staunch regionalist who served as a municipal councillor for 16 years and as mayor of Dégelis for about 15. He dedicated his energy, intelligence and generosity to the development of his community and all of eastern Quebec.

Having worked closely with him on numerous occasions, I can attest to his approachability, his ease at bringing people together and his strong sense of public service. He spearheaded several major projects: He helped to develop Lake Témiscouata provincial park, chaired the Unité régionale de loisir et de sport du Bas-Saint-Laurent and served for nearly 20 years on the board of directors of ACLAM, a non-profit organization that runs a theatre program for high school students. He also served as co-chair for the 2014 World Acadian Congress.

Great builders are not only those who leave behind buildings or projects. They are also those who leave a mark on people's hearts. After his passing, his daughter described him as a

generous man who gave selflessly to others and whose dedication was exemplary. Her words aptly sum up the life of a man who chose to serve others rather than himself.

Today, we honour not only the former mayor, but also the family man, the volunteer, the mentor and the engaged citizen. We extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Colette Roy, and to his three children, Michel, Émilie and Manon. Manon, incidentally, is the assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer at Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. She, too, works to advance Canada's interests.

We also extend our deepest condolences to his loved ones, the people of Dégelis and all those who had the privilege of working alongside him. May his life remind us of the importance of public service, community engagement and generosity.

[*English*]

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Jose V. Victor Chan-Gonzaga, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to Canada, Mrs. Rosemer Enverga, spouse of the late Senator Tobias C. Enverga Jr., and interns participating in the National Philippine Parliamentary Internship Program 2026. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Osler.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: *Mabuhay*, honourable senators. Today, I am delighted to rise in celebration of both Philippine Independence Day and Filipino Heritage Month.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to my guests in the gallery: first, the Philippines' Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Jose Victor Chan-Gonzaga, who has worked to strengthen Filipino-Canadian diplomatic relations; second, Mrs. Rosemer Enverga, the President of the Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation and spouse of our former colleague the late senator Tobias Enverga. It was Senator Enverga who established the annual Philippine flag raising ceremony here on Parliament Hill.

Finally, welcome to this year's interns from the National Philippine Parliamentary Internship Program. These young Filipino-Canadian professionals are near the end of a six-week internship working with both MPs and senators. The interns have been learning how Parliament operates, and we, parliamentarians, have appreciated their work and contributions.

Now, let's go back in time. On June 12, 1898, after 333 years of Spanish colonial rule, the Philippines proclaimed independence and raised its flag for the first time. In the Philippines, flag-raising ceremonies are deeply revered as prominent celebrations on Independence Day.

In present-day Canada, Filipino Heritage Month is celebrated in June, and communities raise both the Philippine and the Canadian flag, a ceremony that instills a deep sense of pride for those of us with Filipino heritage. The month is a celebration of the Filipino people, our history of endurance and tenacity and an acknowledgment of the cultural and social contributions we bring to Canada.

For me, it is a tremendous honour to be the second senator of Filipino descent, after Senator Enverga, and the first Filipino senator to represent the 1 million Canadians with Filipino heritage.

I know there are other senators in this chamber who understand the privilege of representing peoples and communities. I'd like to take this moment to highlight a particular colleague and friend. The Honourable Mohammad Al Zaibak is the sole sitting Syrian-born Arab Canadian senator. He has taken on the privilege of representing his community with pride, humility and love.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Osler: Senator Al Zaibak, you have been an inspiration by upholding your heritage and giving back to your community through your hard work, humanity and representation.

Thank you for your service, and I wish you all the best in your retirement — I mean, graduation — from the Senate of Canada. In closing, honourable senators, I wish you all a *pancit-* and lumpia-filled Filipino Heritage Month and a happy Philippines Independence Day.

Thank you. *Maraming salamat po. Meegwetch.*

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Margaret and Nancy Lowry, as well as Aiden Wall. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator Muggli.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[Senator Osler]

PRIDE SEASON

Hon. Kristopher Wells: Honourable senators, I rise today to celebrate the beginning of Pride Season across Canada.

Earlier this year, the Canadian phenomenon “Heated Rivalry” captured audiences around the world. Its story of two hockey players navigating queer love and identity resonated with millions. It reminded us of the power of being seen, accepted and loved for who we are.

Yet, while queer stories are increasingly celebrated in popular culture, the rights of 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians continue to face challenges. In my own home province of Alberta, trans and non-binary people are experiencing unprecedented government actions that restrict inclusion and limit access to affirming spaces and resources.

At moments like these, leadership matters. And Pride matters, more than ever. Later this summer, Canada's national 2SLGBTQI+ monument called *Thunderhead* will stand proudly in our nation's capital. It will honour those who endured discrimination and injustice, while celebrating the courage, resilience and achievements of our communities.

But monuments are not only about remembering the past; they are also a call to action, a reminder that our work to advance equality and human rights is far from complete. That work includes fulfilling commitments to modernize employment equity protections and ending the criminalization of HIV in Canada. It also means continuing to stand up for 2SLGBTQI+ people here at home and around the world.

I am proud that the Canadian Pride Caucus has grown to include more than 70 parliamentarians from every political party and Senate group. Together, we work to ensure that Canada lives up to its promise and that every person can live free from discrimination, fear and persecution. While more than 60 countries around the world still criminalize LGBTQ+ people, Canada has an opportunity and a responsibility to lead by example.

• (1440)

As Prime Minister Carney recently said at the Pride flag raising on Parliament Hill, “It reminds us that with our freedom comes responsibility — to keep building a better, more just Canada.”

Honourable colleagues, Pride must be more than a celebration; it must be a commitment to defend human rights, uphold the Charter of Rights and stand together when others seek to divide. Progress is never guaranteed: it depends on all of us.

On behalf of the Canadian Pride Caucus, I wish everyone across Canada and in this chamber a safe, joyful and meaningful Pride season. Happy Pride, Canada. Thank you, *meegwetch*.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Chandler White from Newfoundland and Labrador. 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!

TRIBUTE TO GRANDMOTHERS

Hon. Mary Jane McCallum: Honourable senators, this is a tribute to our grandmothers, or *kokums*.

Before residential schools, Indian agents and the Indian Act, our *kokums* were taken care of by our own people. They were treated with dignity and respect, and they had a place of honour in our community. *Nohkômnanak*, this is to you.

I remember the times my siblings and I spent with you and the sacred *nohkôm-nôsisim* relationship of unconditional love. How you took care of us. How you told us about the thunderbirds; that is why I love thunder and lightning today. How you showed us the bright blue eggs of the robins by parting the reeds as we walked up the road to the store and told us that we were not to interfere with the nest or the birds. How you fed us and let us make our own way in life, ensuring that you had our safety, education, personhood and knowledge gathering as priorities.

Then, I went to residential school. I realized too late in my life that I had come to believe that I knew better than you, that I was better than you. I now realize that distancing myself from you came from the idea to “kill the Indian in the child.” The most intimate and sacred link is between grandmothers and grandchildren, between great-grandmothers and great-grandchildren, or *aniskotapan*. We got our teachings from you.

I was being assimilated to think less of my people and to shut down emotionally on our relationship simply because you and I had brown skin and I was taught to do so by the Catholic Church. *Nohkôm*, I’m sorry. I am who I am today because of you and other *kokums*. You are the foundation of our lives, our kinship, our collective, our families and our communities.

I am now a *kokum*, and I want to make amends by reflecting and practising what you taught me. *Kinanâskomitin*. Thank you.

[Translation]

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Hon. Victor Boudreau: Honourable senators, 40 years ago, on June 18, 1986, the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick passed Bill 85, amending the Schools Act and repealing the Auxiliary Classes Act. These changes meant that students with

disabilities had to be educated within the mainstream education system, alongside their peers. This marked the birth of inclusive education, not only in New Brunswick, but across Canada.

This was accomplished thanks to the efforts of a community of parents, families and other advocates who came together to build a movement for social justice.

[English]

Today, New-Brunswick is recognized as an international leader in inclusive education. Policies are evidence-based and often referenced for their intentional focus on ensuring the rights of all children. This also means we now have a generation of students who have always known inclusion.

Organizations like Inclusion NB continue to work closely with government to advocate for systemic change, provide family support and celebrate the achievements of inclusion champions.

Each spring, Inclusion NB recognizes New Brunswick education champions with the National Inclusive Education Awards. The awards are presented in partnership with Inclusion Canada to acknowledge exemplary leadership within New Brunswick’s commitment to inclusive education.

[Translation]

These awards highlight the positive outcomes achieved when students feel included and valued. The winners create environments where every student feels safe, supported and comfortable contributing.

The 2026 National Inclusive Education Awards will honour seven New Brunswickers: a teacher, a teaching assistant, a principal and school administrators. This year, a boys’ volleyball team is also among these leaders. They represent communities across the province, including Fredericton, Dieppe, Balmoral and Allardville. They will be honoured at a ceremony to be held this fall, a particularly significant event in this anniversary year of inclusive education

New Brunswickers can be very proud of what we have built together, specifically a provincial, national and international movement that continues to this day.

Happy fortieth anniversary to inclusive education.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

[English]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

STUDY ON MAINTENANCE OF ACTIVITIES OR ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN FEDERALLY REGULATED RAIL AND MARINE SECTORS IN THE CASE OF LABOUR DISRUPTIONS

FOURTH REPORT OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
COMMITTEE DEPOSITED WITH CLERK DURING
ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Hon. David M. Wells: Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on October 8, 2025, the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 11, 2026, its fourth report, entitled *Keep Canada Moving: Labour, Management and Supply Chain in the Rail and Maritime Sectors*, 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 Wells (*Newfoundland and Labrador*), report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[Translation]

SPRING ECONOMIC UPDATE 2026 IMPLEMENTATION BILL

EIGHTH REPORT OF NATIONAL FINANCE
COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT MATTER TABLED

Hon. Claude Carignan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, which deals with 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.

(Pursuant to the order adopted May 7, 2026, the report was placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

[English]

STUDY ON ISSUES RELATING TO LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS GENERALLY

TENTH REPORT OF LEGAL AND
CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. David M. Arnot: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the tenth report (interim) of the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and

Constitutional Affairs, entitled *Privacy Issues Regarding Federal Political Parties under the Canada Elections Act*, 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 Arnot, report placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting of the Senate.)

• (1450)

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

BUDGET—STUDY ON ROLE OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD
SECTOR IN FOOD SECURITY—FIFTH REPORT OF
COMMITTEE ADOPTED

Hon. Mary Robinson, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, presented the following report:

Thursday, June 11, 2026

The Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry has the honour to present its

FIFTH REPORT

Your committee, which was authorized by the Senate on Wednesday, October 22, 2025, to examine and report on the role of the agriculture and agri-food sector with regard to food security in Canada, respectfully requests funds for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Pursuant to Chapter 3:05, section 1(1)(c) of the *Senate Administrative Rules*, the budget submitted to the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the report thereon of that committee are appended to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

MARY ROBINSON

Chair

(For text of budget, see today's Journals of the Senate, Appendix A, p. 1055.)

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

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

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Your Honour, would Senator Robinson take a question?

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Housakos, I believe you will have the right to speak after the adoption of the motion. Senator Robinson has asked leave for the report to be adopted now.

Senator Housakos: Yes, but there has been a practice before leave is granted where we ask why leave is required.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Robinson, could you explain why you're requesting leave now?

Senator Robinson: We're requesting leave at this point because we hope to be able to book and purchase travel arrangements — airplane tickets and hotels — for travel in September.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

FIFTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, which deals with the carry forward of eligible operating funds through the 2026–27 Supplementary Estimates process.

(For text of report, see today's Journals of the Senate, p. 1040.)

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

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

THE SENATE

NOTICE OF MOTION TO AFFECT PROCEEDINGS ON BILLS C-16, C-25 AND C-30

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:

1. in relation to Bill C-16, An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to criminal and correctional matters (child protection, gender-based violence, delays and other measures):
 - (a) if the Senate receives the bill and adopts it at second reading, it stand referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs;
 - (b) the committee be authorized to meet for the purposes of its consideration of Bill C-16, even though the Senate may then be sitting, with rule 12-18(1) being suspended in relation thereto;
 - (c) the committee submit its report on Bill C-16 to the Senate no later than June 17, 2026;
 - (d) the committee be authorized to present its report on the bill at any time the Senate is sitting, except during Question Period;
 - (e) if the committee reports the bill with amendment or with a recommendation that the Senate not proceed further with the bill:
 - (i) the report be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration later that sitting, provided that if the report is presented after the point where the Senate would normally have dealt with the report, it either be taken into consideration forthwith, or, if another item is under consideration at that time, it be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration as the next item of business; and
 - (ii) once the Senate decides on the report, the bill, if still before the Senate, be placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting;
 - (f) if the committee has not reported the bill by 4 p.m. on June 17, 2026, it be deemed to have reported the bill without amendment, with the bill then being placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate; and
 - (g) if the Senate has not concluded proceedings on the bill by 7 p.m. on June 18, 2026, the Speaker interrupt any proceedings then before the Senate in order to put all questions necessary to dispose of the bill at third reading without further debate, provided that if the bill has not yet been moved for third reading at that time, the sponsor, or a designate, be recognized solely to move third reading, if the bill is still then before the Senate;

2. in relation to 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:
 - (a) if the Senate receives the bill, once read a first time, it be placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading at the next sitting;
 - (b) if the Senate receives the bill and has not disposed of it at second reading by 8 p.m. on June 16, 2026, the Speaker interrupt any proceedings then before the Senate in order to put all questions necessary to dispose of the bill at second reading without further debate, provided that:
 - (i) if a vote on the bill had previously been deferred so that it would normally take place after the time provided for in this paragraph for the interruption of proceedings, that vote be brought forward to 8 p.m. on June 16, 2026, after a 15-minute bell; and
 - (ii) if the bill has not yet been moved for second reading, the sponsor, or a designate, be recognized solely for the purpose of moving second reading;
 - (c) if the Senate adopts the bill at second reading, it stand referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs;
 - (d) the committee be authorized to meet for the purposes of its consideration of Bill C-25, even though the Senate may then be sitting, with rule 12-18(1) being suspended in relation thereto;
 - (e) the committee submit its report to the Senate no later than June 18, 2026;
 - (f) the provisions in points 1(d) and (e) also apply to proceedings on Bill C-25;
 - (g) if the committee has not reported the bill by 7 p.m. on June 18, 2026, it be deemed to have reported the bill without amendment, with the bill then being placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading at the next sitting of the Senate; and
 - (h) if the Senate has not concluded proceedings on the bill by 12 p.m. on June 19, 2026, the Speaker interrupt any proceedings then before the Senate in order to put all questions necessary to dispose of the bill at third reading without further debate, provided that if the bill has not yet been moved for third reading at that time, the sponsor, or a designate, be recognized solely for the purpose of moving third reading, if the bill is still then before the Senate;
3. in relation to Bill C-30, An Act to implement certain provisions of the spring economic update tabled in Parliament on April 28, 2026:
 - (a) if the Senate receives the bill, once read a first time, it be placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading later that day, provided that if the Senate has already passed the point on the Orders of the Day where it would deal with the bill at second reading, it be taken into consideration at second reading forthwith, or, if another item is under consideration at that time, the bill be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at second reading as the next item of business;
 - (b) if, before this order is adopted, the bill has been placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading at a sitting subsequent to the one at which this order is adopted, second reading be brought forward, upon the adoption of this order, so that the bill be taken into consideration at second reading as the next item of business;
 - (c) if at 9 p.m. on June 18, 2026, the Senate has not disposed of the bill at second reading, the Speaker interrupt any proceedings then before the Senate in order to put all questions necessary to dispose of the bill at second reading without further debate, with provisions in points 2(a)(i) and 2(a)(ii) also applying to proceedings on Bill C-30;
 - (d) if the Senate adopts the bill at second reading, it stand referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance;
 - (e) the committee be authorized to meet for the purposes of its consideration of Bill C-30, even though the Senate may then be sitting, with rule 12-18(1) being suspended in relation thereto;
 - (f) the committee submit its report on Bill C-30 to the Senate no later than June 19, 2026 at 10 a.m.;
 - (g) if the committee reports the bill without amendment, the bill be placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading later that sitting;
 - (h) if the committee has not reported the bill by 10 a.m., it be deemed to have reported the bill without amendment at that time, and the bill be placed on the Orders of the Day for third reading later that sitting;

(i) if the committee reports the bill with amendment or with a recommendation that the Senate not proceed further with the bill:

(i) the report be taken into consideration forthwith or, if another item is under consideration at that time, it be placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration as the next item of business; and

(ii) once the Senate decides on the report, the bill, if still before the Senate, be taken into consideration at third reading forthwith; and

(j) if on June 19, 2026, the Senate has not concluded proceedings on the bill by 2 p.m., the Speaker interrupt any proceedings then before the Senate in order to put all questions necessary to dispose of the bill at third reading without further debate, provided that if the bill has not yet been moved for third reading at that time, the sponsor, or a designate, be recognized solely to move third reading either at that time, or once the Senate has made a decision on the committee's report, if the bill is still then before the Senate;

4. proceedings at any stage on Bills C-16, C-25 and C-30, under the terms of this order, not be adjourned and no vote requested in relation thereto be deferred;

5. if, under the terms of this order, the Speaker is at any time required to interrupt proceedings then before the Senate in order to put all questions necessary to dispose of a bill at a particular stage without further debate, no further debate or amendment be permitted, and, if a standing vote is requested, the bells ring once, and for only 15 minutes, without being rung again for subsequent votes necessary to dispose of the bill at the stage in question; and

6. for greater certainty, if, at the time this order provides that something is to happen in relation to Bills C-16, C-25 and C-30, the bells are either ringing for another vote, another vote is underway, or Question Period is underway, the time provided for in this order be understood as if it were at the end of either that other vote or Question Period.

• (1500)

BUILD CANADA HOMES BILL

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-20, An Act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

[*Translation*]

L'ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION, SEPTEMBER 22-30, 2025—
REPORT TABLED

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) concerning the Electoral Observation Mission, held in Chisinau, Moldova, from September 22 to 30, 2025.

BUREAU MEETING OF THE APF AND WORKING GROUP ON
REFORMING THE APF CONSTITUTION, JANUARY 27-FEBRUARY 1,
2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) concerning the Bureau Meeting of the APF and Working Group on Reforming the APF Constitution, held in Podgorica, Montenegro, from January 27 to February 1, 2026.

MEETING OF THE APF YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS NETWORK,
MARCH 1-3, 2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) concerning the Meeting of the APF Young Parliamentarians Network, held in Monaco, Monaco, from March 1 to 3, 2026.

MEETING OF THE APF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE,
APRIL 8-10, 2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) concerning the Meeting of the APF Parliamentary Affairs Committee, held in Port Louis, Mauritius, from April 8 to 10, 2026.

MEETING OF THE APF NETWORK OF WOMEN
PARLIAMENTARIANS, APRIL 22-24, 2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Éric Forest: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) concerning the Meeting of the APF Network of Women Parliamentarians, held in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, from April 22 to 24, 2026.

• (1510)

[English]

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

ANNUAL PARLIAMENTARY HEARING AT THE UNITED NATIONS,
FEBRUARY 12-13, 2026—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations: Parliaments and the United Nations: Better together, delivering for the people, held in New York, New York, United States of America, from February 12 to 13, 2026.

PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE,
JUNE 19-21, 2025—REPORT TABLED

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning the Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, held in Rome, Italy, from June 19 to 21, 2025.

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

MOTION TO AFFECT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP ADOPTED

Hon. Tony Dean: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(k), I move:

That, notwithstanding any provision of the Rules or previous order, the Honourable Senator Greenwood take the place of the Honourable Senator Busson as one of the members of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, effective August 23, 2026.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

**ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO EXTEND DATE OF FINAL REPORT
ON STUDY OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR'S
OFFSHORE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY

Hon. Joan Kingston: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(k), I move:

That, notwithstanding the order of the Senate adopted on Thursday, March 12, 2026, the date for the final report of the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources in relation to its study on Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore petroleum industry be extended from June 30, 2026 to December 31, 2026.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH

SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION SITES

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, yesterday your government introduced legislation that would prohibit Canadians under the age of 16 from accessing social media unless platforms meet strict government standards. Many parents would agree with that, and children deserve to be protected in terms of online risks. What they can't understand from coast to coast to coast is why your government continues to support policies that allow minors to access supervised drug-consumption sites connected to the use of dangerous narcotics.

Senator Moreau, why is your government prepared at all costs to restrict access to social media for minors, which is reasonable, but unwilling to draw a clear line when it comes to exposing young people to environments where hard drugs are being openly consumed?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for the question. We will have the honour of studying Bill C-34 that was tabled yesterday — I don't know exactly when — but the intention of the government is to make sure that young Canadians are protected from harmful exposure to what is prohibited by Bill C-34. Therefore, it is the intention of the government to protect young Canadians from all kinds of

harms. We will have the pleasure of hearing what the Conservatives have to say about Bill C-34 in the other place, and then we will be studying it here as well.

Senator Housakos: I would like you to answer the question, though, government leader. We all understand that we need to protect our children from online harm. But why are you setting a bar for that so much higher than the one for protecting our children when it comes to narcotic and drug use? Why are you lowering the bar for our children with respect to easy access to narcotics? Don't you understand that the government is setting a precedent here that will create a catastrophic result socially and economically for future generations of Canadians?

Senator Moreau: The government has invested a tremendous amount of money to make our borders secure, for example, as far as fentanyl is concerned. The government is committed to protecting young Canadians from any situation where their security may be compromised. The government has spent an unprecedented amount of money to secure our borders and to ensure that we are protecting our citizens from drug dealers, especially fentanyl dealers.

FINANCE

FISCAL ANCHORS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Senator Moreau, on Tuesday and again yesterday, you claimed that the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, had confirmed that the government is on track to achieve a declining deficit-to-GDP ratio over the medium term. That is simply not what the PBO said. On page 13 of the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*, the PBO states that the probability of the deficit-to-GDP ratio declining in every year from 2026-27 to 2030-31 is less than 1%. That is not confirmation; it is a warning that the government is overwhelmingly unlikely to meet one of its own fiscal anchors.

Senator Moreau, if a financial adviser told you that there was a 99% chance of missing their target, would you call that prudent management?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): What I answered yesterday, Senator Martin, is exactly this: The PBO confirmed that the federal government will have a declining deficit-to-GDP ratio over the medium term. That's what I said, that's what I can repeat today and that's what I will repeat if we have a sitting tomorrow as well.

Senator Martin: Senator Moreau, fiscal credibility depends on accuracy, transparency and accountability. A target with more than a 99% chance of being missed is not a sound fiscal anchor; it is a political cover. That is my point.

Will your government now acknowledge that the PBO's report does not confirm its fiscal plan, but instead, raises serious doubts about whether that plan is realistic?

Senator Moreau: In line with my first answer, I will repeat, as I said yesterday, that the PBO confirmed that the federal government will have a declining deficit-to-GDP ratio over the medium term. That's what I said.

HEALTH

FOOD SAFETY

Hon. Mary Coyle: Senator Moreau, proposed amendments to the Pest Control Products Act buried in two omnibus bills — Bill C-30 and Bill C-31 — are raising serious concerns among Canadians, including the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment. They point out that the proposed changes are unwarranted, undemocratic and weaken protections for the health of Canadians and our environment. They advocate for evidence-based decision making and urge the government to reconsider the amendments. We know that some pesticides have had significant impacts on the health of Canadians, including causing cancer, cognitive impacts and reproductive toxicity.

Senator Moreau, will the government consider removing these amendments to the Pest Control Products Act from those bills?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Coyle. First, I want to be clear. The government is by no means making this change at the expense of public health and safety. The agency can apply an economic lens to how they make decisions without compromising health and safety, and the government fully expects that balance to be achieved.

Notably, Bill C-30 would only enable the government to authorize pesticides in exceptional circumstances, with an emphasis on the requirement of those exceptional circumstances. The government had promised to change the mandates of the Pesticides Regulatory Directorate and of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to ensure that they are also prioritizing food security and production in their decision making without compromising health and safety.

The changes brought by Bill C-30 and Bill C-31 will help ensure that the decisions being made by these regulatory agencies are factoring —

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Senator Coyle: Senator Moreau, will you take a supplementary question?

Senator Moreau: Yes.

Senator Coyle: I believe there is already a provision in the current regime for exceptional circumstances, so I don't fully buy that answer.

• (1520)

Senator Moreau, will the government agree to consult with Health Canada's Science Advisory Committee on Pest Control Products and the Pest Management Advisory Council, which they have not yet consulted, other experts and the Canadian public on the impacts of pesticides on human health —

[Translation]

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

[English]

Senator Moreau: I am not trying to sell my answer. I don't necessarily need you to buy it. I understand what you said, but both Bill C-30 and Bill C-31 will help ensure that the decisions being made by these regulatory agencies will factor in the reality that farmers and producers are facing on the ground and how these decisions might impact Canadians at the grocery store.

As you know, senator, no one wants to endanger the health and safety of Canadians, especially farmers. They want to feed people, earn a good living and protect their land.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE AGREEMENTS

Hon. Paulette Senior: Senator Moreau, I recently met with leaders in the child care and social policy sectors for a candid conversation about the long-term sustainability of the Canada-wide early learning and child care program, or the CWELCC. They conveyed their deep concern that, while the federal government says that it is committed to protecting the program, without an increase in funding reflecting the increased operational costs of the program and sufficient increases to cover the cost of expansion, the program will falter at a time it is needed most.

Senator Moreau, can you tell us why the recent spring economic update failed to signal sufficient increases in federal funding to sustain the Canada-wide early learning and child care program?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I can tell you that Canada-wide early learning and child care transfer payments are expected to increase from \$7.9 billion in 2025-26 to \$8.1 billion in 2030-31. This includes the final two years of funding for the Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund, which provides \$625 million over five years, and the renewal of the early learning and child care agreements starting in 2026-27. There is also an increase in 2026-27 of

\$695 million in future funding for the Canada-Ontario Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, which was moved into that year. This was to support the extension of Ontario's bilateral agreement, as announced in December 2025.

Senator Senior: Thank you. I'm not sure your answer addressed my next question. The federal government's CWELCC's funding agreements with Ontario and Alberta expire in less than a year's time, and both provinces have said that the federal transfers are insufficient to sustain the program. Will the federal government signal an increase in funding for the program within the next few months and secure agreements with the Governments of Ontario and Alberta to stay in the program?

Senator Moreau: Senator Senior, I can't comment on future announcements from the government; however, I can tell you that the government cares about this important issue and will examine its provisions closer to its expiry date. The government will also continue to collaborate with its provincial partners to support them in their mandate to deliver health services to all Canadians, in particular young Canadians.

TRANSPORT

HIGH-SPEED RAIL

Hon. Robert Black: Honourable senators, the Alto high-speed rail project proposes the construction of a high-speed rail project that will span 1,000 kilometres along the Toronto-Quebec City corridor. Regardless of the route selected, this high-speed rail service will cut through some of the most productive farmland in Ontario and Quebec, destroying working businesses that are supporting local economies, producing food, fuel, fibre and flowers and safeguarding our country's food security. My office continues to hear from organizations and individuals across Ontario and Quebec who are seriously concerned that Alto will come at the expense of our agricultural sector and disrupt the very communities it is trying to benefit. To quote Drew Spoelstra, President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture:

Farmers understand that Canada needs infrastructure investments — but projects deemed to be in the national interest should not come at the expense of food production, rural communities and prime farm land.

Senator Moreau, when will the Government of Canada stop treating agricultural farmland as expendable and start recognizing it as vital to food security?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): The last part of your question is not the standing of the government. The government recognizes that agricultural lands are a vital resource that supports food production, rural economies and communities across the country. I had the opportunity to answer many questions concerning agriculture and the fact that the government stands strong behind farmers in Canada.

Now, you already know that the routes and alignment are not decided. Under the Impact Assessment Act, federal projects are subject to a thorough review process that takes into consideration environmental, social and economic impacts, as well as measures to reduce, avoid or address concerns. Issues such as farmland fragmentation, impacts on farming operations, economic vitality and compensation can all be examined through that process when identified as areas of concern.

Senator Black: Senator Moreau, according to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, many farmers in affected areas have felt left out of the conversations around Alto. They are frustrated with the lack of meaningful conversation with the sector and the rural communities that will be affected most. Yet, Alto continues to progress even closer to routing decisions.

When will the Government of Canada step in to facilitate thorough economic, environmental and agricultural impact assessments, along with meaningful consultations with the affected communities?

Senator Moreau: The Minister of Transport is well aware of what you mentioned in your preamble, senator. Meaningful engagement with affected communities is part of responsible project development. The federal assessment process is designed to examine a broad range of potential impacts, including economic, environmental and agricultural considerations, and provides opportunities for concerns raised by farmers, landowners and rural communities to be considered.

[Translation]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Hon. Danièle Henkel: Senator Moreau, the government recently announced that it is doing away with the Office of Consumer Affairs and the Canadian Consumer Protection Initiative.

For over 25 years, this program has been supporting independent research and representing consumers in debates on the cost of living, financial services, telecommunications and business practices.

In 2023, the government even tripled the funding for this program because it felt that this expertise was essential to consumer protection.

Why is the government now choosing to eliminate one of the main sources of independent consumer expertise at a time when Canadians are so concerned about the cost of living and the rise in fraud?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for that important question, Senator Henkel. As you know, the government was elected on a promise to review all government spending and ensure that there is no duplication of effort.

There are many other organizations, in addition to the Office of Consumer Affairs, that continue to provide Canadians with robust mechanisms for reporting concerns and contributing to a fair and transparent market. These include the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, Competition Bureau Canada and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. The Competition Bureau is an independent law enforcement agency that protects and promotes competition for the benefit of Canadian consumers and businesses.

Most of Canadians' daily transactions are regulated at the provincial and territorial level, and the federal government intends to continue working with the provinces and territories to ensure that consumers across the country are well protected.

Senator Henkel: Senator Moreau, abolishing the Office of Consumer Affairs would save — since we're talking about savings — only about \$2.6 million a year in a federal budget of more than \$500 billion. It's an extremely modest sum. How can the government justify its decision to weaken consumer representation in order to save such a small amount of money?

Senator Moreau: Senator Henkel, my grandmother would answer that every penny counts. She told me that often over the years.

The government was elected on a promise to review all spending, and I think that \$2.6 million is a step in the right direction.

However, the government does not intend to diminish consumer protection. On the contrary, my answer to your initial question was that there are other agencies and that the different levels of government — federal, provincial and territorial — are collaborating to ensure that consumers across the country are very well protected.

[English]

FINANCE

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald: Senator Moreau, Appendix G of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's June 2026 *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* shows federal market debt rising from \$1.47 trillion in 2024-25 to \$2.27 trillion in 2030-31. That is an increase of almost \$800 billion in debt that must be financed through financial markets. Your government prefers to speak in terms of ratios and fiscal anchors, but the actual borrowing burden continues to grow substantially.

• (1530)

Senator Moreau, how can the government justify adding nearly \$800 billion in market debt over such a short period of time?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I have the opportunity to tell you what the plan of the government is as far as the economy is concerned and the situation in Canada. The government has a plan that is working, Senator MacDonald.

For instance, wages have outpaced inflation every month that this government has been in place. In May, employment increased by 88,000. The employment rate rose 0.2%, to 60.7%. The unemployment rate fell 0.3%, to 6.6%. The number of people working full-time rose by 154,000. Women's employment increased by 31,000. On a year-over-year basis, Canada created 147,000 new jobs, all in the face of historic economic uncertainty, trade tensions and geopolitical volatility. These are a few examples of what the government is doing, and those are facts. The reality is that job creation —

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

Senator MacDonald: None of that has anything to do with managing the debt.

Senator Moreau, more market debt means more pressure on future taxpayers and greater exposure to interest costs.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO, already projects that the public debt charges will rise to over \$80 billion by 2030-31. This level of debt is simply unsustainable. What is the government's plan to slow the growth of market debt before debt servicing consumes even more federal revenue?

Senator Moreau: It is far from rhetoric. What is the government's plan? Bill C-4: a middle-class tax cut for 22 million Canadians. Bill C-5: creating one Canadian economy, addressing \$200 billion in lost opportunities annually. Bill C-15: \$57 billion in affordable child care and supporting the Major Projects Office, AI infrastructure and critical minerals. Bill C-18: expanding trade access in major Indo-Pacific markets. Bill C-19: \$3.1 billion in support for 12 million Canadians. The list is long.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Salma Atallahjan: Government leader, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's June 2026 outlook shows Employment Insurance benefits rising significantly, from \$24.9 billion in 2024-25 to \$34 billion in 2026-27. Appendix E shows the EI Operating Account staying in deficit until near balance by 2033, with unemployment elevated in the near term.

Senator Moreau, doesn't this point to a weakening labour market and growing pressure on the EI system under your government's economic plan?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I don't think it is a weakening labour market. Jobs: In May 2026, employment increased by 88,000. The employment rate rose by 0.2%, to 60.7%. The unemployment rate fell 0.3%, to 6.6%. The number of people working full-time rose by

154,000. Youth employment increased by 22,000. The unemployment rate among returning students aged 15 to 24 was down 2.1% from the same month in 2025.

There is job creation in Canada. The government's plan is working. Compared to other countries, since December 2024, Canada has added more jobs per capita than the U.S., creating 2.8 jobs per 1,000 people, nearly double the rate of the United States.

I think the plan is working.

An Hon. Senator: Food bank lines.

Senator Atallahjan: Senator Moreau, Canadians do not want an economy where more people are relying on EI while the account remains in deficit.

What is your government's plan to restore balance to the EI account without simply increasing costs for workers and employers?

Senator Moreau: The government's plan is aiming at strengthening our economy, diversifying our market and creating jobs. That plan, Senator Atallahjan, is working.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION

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

Senator Moreau, Canada is entering a profound demographic transformation. Canadians live longer and healthier lives. Many experts argue that longevity should not be viewed solely as a fiscal challenge but as a major economic opportunity. Other countries are already developing national strategies to adapt their economies, labour markets, financial systems and health care infrastructure to support longer and more productive lives.

Yet, I would argue that Canada continues to treat aging, health care strain, labour shortages and productivity challenges as separate issues rather than interconnected realities.

Will the government engage with relevant stakeholders to explore and ideally develop a pan-Canadian public-private-academic governance model to advance and steward a national longevity economic strategy? We need a strategy to position Canada for the "100-year life."

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Loffreda. I am not aware of a formal national longevity economic strategy. I can certainly bring such a proposal to the attention of the minister and the department. I might even suggest that this could be an interesting area for a Senate committee to look at.

That being said, the government is acting on several pieces of this challenge. The government launched Workforce Alliances to bring governments, employers, unions, post-secondary institutions and Indigenous partners together to identify workforce pressures, close skills gaps and build talent pipelines. The government also continues to support the New Horizons for Seniors Program, with \$70 million annually to support projects that promote seniors' participation, inclusion and financial literacy.

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer.

Experts suggest that extending healthy and productive work lives could help address labour shortages, improve productivity and reduce long-term fiscal pressures. But we desperately need a strategy, so thank you for your future suggestion to the government.

Until that happens, what is the government doing to encourage age-inclusive labour markets, lifelong learning and innovation in health and financial systems so that Canadians who choose to do so can continue contributing to the economy for a longer period of time?

Senator Moreau: Your follow-up question allows me to expand more on Workforce Alliances, which is going to be key in a broader strategy of ensuring that Canadians who choose to remain active in the workforce later in life can do so. These alliances bring together employers, labour organizations, educational institutions, Indigenous partners and government to identify labour shortages and skills gaps to support workforce participation across all stages of a person's career. They are intended to help Canadians access training and upskilling opportunities, adapt to changing labour market needs and continue contributing their experience and expertise for a longer period of time if they choose to.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

FRANCOPHONE MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Hon. Réjean Aucoin: Government representative, Minister Fraser and Minister Valdez recently announced additional funding to support victims and survivors of crime. However, according to a *Francopresse* article, 6 of the 12 francophone victim support organizations listed by Justice Canada said they hadn't been told about the announcement.

Furthermore, the director of a francophone support centre in Ottawa said that funding applications submitted in French are evaluated by an anglophone committee, which may not fully understand the linguistic and cultural realities of the communities served.

Can the government explain how it ensures that francophone organizations in minority communities are adequately informed about federal programs and that their applications are evaluated fairly by individuals with the necessary language skills?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Senator Aucoin, I was not made aware of the *Francopresse* report. However, I have had the opportunity to answer some of your questions regarding francophone minority groups. The federal government has clear obligations and responsibilities with respect to official languages. These include providing services in French to francophones in Canada when requested or required, as well as ensuring equity in service delivery and adequate dissemination of information related to these programs, if the aim is to inform francophone communities about available federal programs.

I am confident that applications submitted by francophone communities are assessed fairly. I will certainly bring your question to the attention of the minister responsible for official languages. Please do let me know if you become aware of any similar situations where francophone communities are not receiving adequate information from the government. I will be sure to bring this to the government's attention.

• (1540)

Senator Aucoin: Thank you, Senator Moreau.

That being the case, would the government consider setting aside a clearly identified budget for francophone organizations that provide services directly to victims, the better to guarantee equitable access to funding and ensure the longevity of these essential services in French?

Senator Moreau: I cannot make that financial commitment on the government's behalf, but I will certainly convey your comment to the minister in charge.

Again, the government's position, which is also my own, is that services to francophone communities must be available and accessible across the country, and information must be available to members of these communities just as it is to any other Canadian.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

PROTECTING YOUTH FROM EXPOSURE TO ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY

Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne: Senator Moreau, yesterday in the House of Commons, Minister Miller tabled Bill C-34, the long-awaited safe social media act. My Senate colleagues know that I've worked long and hard on the issue of protecting children from online harms, especially pornography. I'm pleased that this government has been listening.

It's my understanding that Bill C-34 will prevent young people under 16 from accessing pornography spread via social media. Am I right, and how long do we have to wait until this measure takes effect?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Miville-Dechêne. Much like your colleagues, I, too, am aware that you support this cause and that you have worked very hard on this issue to protect children and to save them from the harm they might suffer as a result of such situations.

My understanding of the scope of Bill C-34 is the same as yours. It will of course be examined by the committees in the other place and here in the Senate when it is referred to us.

The government intends to proceed as quickly as possible. However, as you know, the House of Commons and the Senate are both sovereign chambers. I can't provide a date for when the bill will be referred to the Senate, but the government intends to proceed as quickly as possible, no doubt in collaboration with our colleagues in the official opposition.

Senator Miville-Dechêne: Here's hoping.

What's less clear is whether Bill C-34 will also prevent minors from accessing all dedicated pornography sites, such as Pornhub. These are not social media platforms, but rather dedicated sites. Could you clarify this aspect of the bill to reassure parents?

Senator Moreau: I can't tell you at this point what the bill will look like since it is not final yet. It could be amended between the time it's introduced and when it's passed by the House of Commons.

However, I can assure you, Senator Miville-Dechêne, that I spoke to Minister Miller myself and I told him that you are a real expert in this area and that he would be well advised to speak to you to see whether there are any improvements that can be made to the bill once we have a better idea of its scope. He told me that he intended to contact you directly about this.

[English]

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

MESSAGE FROM COMMONS

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to inform the Senate that a message has been received from the House of Commons which reads as follows:

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

EXTRACT, —

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, a member of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying from the House of Commons may have a dissenting or supplementary opinion appended

to its first report by tabling it with the Clerk of the House before July 10, 2026, and that, in such a case, the Clerk of the House shall forward such dissenting or supplementary opinion to the Clerk of the Senate so that it may be deemed to have been tabled in both Houses; that a message be sent to the Senate informing it that this House has adopted this order, and inviting it to adopt provisions to give effect to this order.

ATTEST

Eric Janse

Clerk of the House of Commons

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

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate, and notwithstanding rule 5-5(j), I move that the message be taken into consideration now.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE ADOPTED

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

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

- (a) the Senate concur in the message from the House of Commons with regard to appending a dissenting or supplementary opinion of a member of that house to the first report of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying;
- (b) a member of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying from the Senate may have a dissenting or supplementary opinion appended to its first report by tabling it with the Clerk of the Senate by July 10, 2026, and that, in such a case, the Clerk of the Senate shall forward such dissenting or supplementary opinion to the Clerk of the House of Commons so that it may be deemed to have been tabled in both houses; and

That a message be sent to the House of Commons to acquaint that house accordingly and inviting it to adopt provisions to give effect to this order.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

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: consideration of the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, followed by third reading of Bill S-6, followed by second reading of Bill C-32, followed by second reading of Bill C-33, followed by Motion No. 80, followed by all remaining items in the order that they appear on the Order Paper.

MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM MODERNIZATION BILL

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

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the sixth report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs (*Bill C-11, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and other Acts, with an amendment and observations*), presented in the Senate on June 10, 2026.

Hon. Hassan Yussuff moved the adoption of the report.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise as a member of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs to speak on the committee's report on Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act. Our chair, Senator Marty Deacon, was called away yesterday on a family matter, and I will be delivering these remarks on her behalf:

Briefly, colleagues, Bill C-11 seeks to modernize and reform certain aspects of the military justice system based on recommendations from independent reviews conducted in 2021 and 2022 by former Supreme Court justices Morris Fish and Her Excellency Louise Arbour, respectively.

The most contentious aspects of the bill heard at committee were clauses 7 and 8, which seek to implement Recommendation 5 of the 2022 Arbour report, and they were the focus of amendments at committee and are, thus, the focus of my remarks today.

I note for my colleagues that this bill was in the other place for eight months, from September 2025 to May 2026. The Senate received the bill on May 26, so it was subject to a truncated committee timeline, per the will of the government. We did the best we could in the short time frame we found ourselves with.

This bill was referred for study on May 28. We held three meetings in total, including one for clause-by-clause consideration, and we heard from 19 witnesses. There were also seven written briefs submitted to the committee.

• (1550)

Colleagues, I would be remiss if I did not convey what a challenge it was for the committee to study the consequential measures included in this bill, particularly clauses 7 and 8, which will formally remove the Canadian Armed Forces' jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute Criminal Code sexual offences committed in Canada.

We heard a range of opinions from witnesses within and outside the forces. Many witnesses strongly believed that the Canadian Armed Forces has undertaken sufficient reforms to maintain concurrent jurisdiction over these cases with civilian authorities and to leave the choice to the victims themselves. Others believed just as strongly that the military cannot appropriately and fairly handle these cases and that authority must rest solely within civilian jurisdiction.

At clause-by-clause consideration yesterday, Senator Carignan proposed an amendment to clause 7, which sought to allow victims to choose whether their case be heard in civilian or military court. The vote on the amendment was a tie and, thus, defeated. For those colleagues not familiar with the work of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, I must stress that the closeness of this vote is a rare outcome for our committee.

Pursuant to the outcome of the vote on his amendment to clause 7, Senator Carignan opted not to introduce his consequential amendment to clause 8.

The committee unanimously adopted Senator Patterson's amendment, which requires the government to review the bill's transfer of jurisdiction three years after the entry into force of clauses 7 and 8. This review, which will be tabled before Parliament, must be informed by relevant consultations, be data-driven, include information on the cases involving Criminal Code sexual offences prosecuted in the civilian justice system and include the Minister of National Defence's opinion on whether this transfer should be repealed. If the minister recommends reinstating concurrent military jurisdiction, Parliament may pass resolutions calling on the government to do so.

I would like to thank the witnesses for appearing at committee and submitting written briefs on such a tight timeline. The committee expresses its sincere appreciation to the former members of the Canadian Armed Forces who shared their experiences and testimony during the study of the bill and acknowledges the value of their contributions.

I would also like to thank the committee staff who made this work possible: our clerk, Ericka Paajanen; administrative assistant Debbie Larocque; analysts Anne-Marie Therrien-Tremblay and Andrés León; and law clerk Anne Burgess.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues and their staff for their work at committee. Despite the challenge in considering such a consequential bill in such a short time frame, I believe the insightful questioning and consideration at committee reflected the Senate at its best. I want to thank the committee, and thank you for receiving the report.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Honourable senators, I want to speak today on the Canadian Senators Group's position on leave to skip notice periods in legislation. This was something that our group began discussing over four years ago after growing frustration due to the Senate constantly being pressured to give leave to expedite bills.

Initially, requests for leave were necessary to respond urgently to COVID-related measures, but it became increasingly relied on and expected to deal with other bills, including amendments to the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code. The exception became the norm.

Notice periods are important. They are the speed bumps that safeguard the rigour of our deliberations. They ensure that all senators representing the diverse parts of this country have an opportunity to read and reflect on the legislation before them. Yes, there are times when urgency requires that they be skipped, but that should be the exception.

In the pressure cooker days of June, we know that the government wants to get through its agenda expeditiously — that is to be expected — but Parliament is not the same thing as government. We have a distinct role. It should be a collaborative one, yes, but it needs to be an independent one. The government should be clear in its priorities and its expectations of timelines, and senators should act with agility to respond to them. But, ultimately, the lawmaking process is a parliamentary process, and it is the responsibility of parliamentarians to ensure that proper process is respected. When the government asks that we deviate from our rules, we need to respond carefully. We cannot allow it to become perfunctory.

Turning to the bill before us, it should not be routine to skip the notice period to begin consideration of a committee report containing amendments and observations on any law, particularly one as important as the National Defence Act, especially when the committee had finished the report only moments before the Senate began sitting. That is not sound legislative practice.

Our group is comfortable proceeding to third reading debate today. Members have had an opportunity to review the National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee report, and our senators who wish to intervene on debate at third reading are prepared to do so today.

With that, honourable senators, I call the question.

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.)

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

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

Hon. Rebecca Patterson: Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 5-5(b), I move that the bill be read the third time now.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Patterson: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak at third reading of Bill C-11, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and other Acts or, as I referred to it at second reading, the military justice system modernization act.

In my second reading speech, I spoke about the principles of the bill before us, namely modernizing the military justice system in Canada, with a focus on implementing recommendations from two independent reviews. The focus of many of the elements in this bill is on issues impacting sexual misconduct, which aim to bolster members' trust in the military justice system, while enhancing support for victims and the need to enhance independence in the military justice system.

Like the Senate — where I now serve alongside all of you — which has seen an evolution or modernization, if you will, the system of military justice in Canada is in continual evolution and modernization to be fit for purpose. To be clear, the purpose of the statutorily distinct military justice system is to maintain discipline, efficiency and morale in the Canadian Armed Forces.

As we learned in our National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee, there are many ways in which Bill C-11 updates and modernizes the military justice system in Canada. Many of those are well supported by senators, members of the other place and the various witnesses who appeared before the committee. These include giving more independence to the Director of Military Prosecutions and the Director of Defence Counsel Services by making them Governor-in-Council appointments with fixed terms.

Similarly, the role and position of the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal, which is like the Commissioner of the RCMP, will be changed to the title of Provost Marshal General and, with the passage of this bill, will report directly to the Minister of National Defence as opposed to the chain of command.

This is a critical consideration to instill not only independence in the military police but also to instill a bit more trust in the military justice system by the members who are subject to it.

Additionally, Bill C-11 expands the pool of those who would be eligible to serve as military judges in the Canadian Armed Forces to non-commissioned members.

We learned at committee that the administration of military justice in Canada relies on Reserve Force members working in various military occupations on a part-time basis, but in their full-time jobs, they are legal professionals in their civilian lives. Bill C-11 will allow for non-commissioned members of the Reserve Force who are lawyers in the civilian justice system to become military judges. In broadening the pool of potential military judges, we can make military justice more diverse and benefit from bringing outside experience and expertise into the military justice system.

• (1600)

Colleagues, our Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs moved quickly in its study of Bill C-11. As was mentioned in the report, the committee heard from 19 witnesses over two days of hearings, including the Minister of National Defence, the Chief of the Defence Staff and other senior commanders, leaders and experts in the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence. The committee also heard from veterans who have professional expertise in military justice.

Most importantly, we also heard from witnesses who have lived experience. They were the ones who had been harmed after experiencing sexual trauma in the military.

In a perfect world, the committee would have had more time to undertake a rigorous, thorough and extensive examination of this complex, human-based issue. However — and I will borrow a term from my past life — for operational reasons, that course of action was not available to the committee. Regardless, I am very proud of the work the committee was able to accomplish in the time we had. I want to thank all of you for accepting my recommendations to ensure that we had diverse panels that represented all aspects of the military justice system and those who experience it.

Bill C-11 contains 69 primary clauses and numerous subclauses. In committee, while we heard testimony on virtually all the clauses, clauses 7 and 8 preoccupied most of our attention.

Clause 7 ends concurrent military and civilian prosecutorial jurisdiction over Criminal Code sexual offences, while clause 8 removes military police investigative jurisdiction over Criminal Code sexual offences. Clauses 7 and 8 are those that flow directly from the Independent External Comprehensive Review undertaken by former Supreme Court justice Her Excellency Louise Arbour. To once again borrow a term from my past, the bottom line up front is that these two clauses codify in law Her Excellency Louise Arbour's recommendation that responsibility for dealing with Criminal Code sexual offences committed by Canadian Armed Forces members in Canada be transferred from the military justice system to the civilian justice system. I say "codify" because, since late 2021, the Director of Military Prosecution in Canada has deferred and directed all Criminal Code sexual offences alleged to have been committed in Canada by members of the Canadian Armed Forces to the civilian justice system.

However, military police have continued to maintain concurrent jurisdiction when it comes to investigations of Criminal Code sexual offences, working collaboratively with their civilian counterparts.

In his remarks to the committee, the Minister of National Defence spoke about getting Bill C-11 right and completing the work of former Justices Arbour and Fish, calling it an obligation, not just to survivors but also to serving members and all Canadians.

So, allow me to take a deeper dive into Bill C-11 and the civil-military relationship.

In a democracy, we have civilian control over the military. While there are many theories on how that control is best exercised, all theories of civil-military relations and civilian control rely on outside oversight of the military in a democracy. This is because the military is the only legitimate tool of the state that manages and carries out violence on behalf of the state. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces are highly trained professionals who are enjoined and serve with unlimited liability. Why? If their skill sets were ever to be turned onto the Canadian people and if civilian control were not there, I think you could imagine that the results would be disastrous. We need only look elsewhere in the world to see what happens without civilian control over militaries.

That is why it is civilian political leaders who provide oversight and control of the military, whether that be through policy direction, which is the prerogative of the Government of Canada, or through holding the government to account as parliamentarians, which is one of our responsibilities.

That is why when bills like Bill C-11 come before us, we need to think of the institution, which is the Canadian Armed Forces, but also of the Canadians who choose to serve: the Canadians who have volunteered to serve their fellow Canadians, knowing their very lives are at risk, and who place their trust in us to exercise our role with due diligence and sober second thought.

It is even more important because, as you have all heard me say before, the Canadian Armed Forces have all the attributes of a province. They exist and operate independently, with a professional body of knowledge and their own education, employment and health systems, as well as — of particular import in the debate today — their own justice and policing systems.

Parliament is wholly responsible for the security and well-being of those who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces. We and our colleagues in the other place are it; we are the only governance representatives that those who serve in the CAF have.

Her Excellency Louise Arbour recognized that in her Independent External Comprehensive Review. She spoke about accountability and ensuring that accountability for the lawful

direction of the military in Canada was properly placed and understood, with a particular focus on helping to address the challenges created by sexual misconduct occurring in the CAF.

To quote from page 107 of her report:

. . . there needs to be a greater assertion of responsibility at the political level to insist upon the implementation of necessary reforms.

The bill before us, Bill C-11, helps to do that. It puts the question of who has jurisdiction over Criminal Code sexual offences in our hands, as parliamentarians.

As an aside, I would note that the day I was sworn in as a senator was the same day that the Minister of National Defence's report to Parliament on culture change reforms in response to Her Excellency Louise Arbour's recommendations was tabled in this chamber and the other place. I think my destiny was set. While the Arbour report may only be four or five years old, I want it to be known that the Canadian Armed Forces have been working on evolving their culture for over a decade.

I said earlier that the committee process seemed a bit rushed, but that was a decision taken at the political level. Even with shortened timelines, those who had lived experiences came forward, on short notice, to inform committee members what Bill C-11 means to them. Remember that this bill also aims to enhance victim support services.

To those people who are watching today, I want to thank each of the witnesses with lived experience who took the time to appear and submit briefs so that committee members could hear from you. Your strength and tenacity in looking to improve the system and to prevent others from experiencing the devastating effects of military sexual trauma are remarkable. Thank you.

One witness in particular, Major (Ret'd) Donna Ven Leusden, hit the mark when it comes to moving forward, as doing nothing is not an option. She said:

So, I am asking the Senate to focus not only on where cases are heard but on how survivors are treated once they get there. Legal reform without trauma-informed reform will not deliver justice. Process reform without survivor agency will not deliver trust. Jurisdictional reform without cultural reform will not deliver outcomes.

We do not need another report. We do not need another study. We do not need another reorganization or another name change.

Survivors have already spent decades telling institutions what would help. We know what survivors need. The question before us is whether we are finally prepared to implement it because, if not, this risks becoming just another bookmark, another gesture, another promise and another way of telling survivors they have been heard while ensuring nothing really changes.

We deserve better than that.

• (1610)

While this is not an endorsement of clauses 7 and 8 by any means, I think it serves as a warning and a call for action, indicating that we've listened and that we need to move forward. I agree, colleagues, we can do something, even if it is imperfect. By adopting the amended Bill C-11, we are doing something.

The decision is in Parliament's hands. Yes, Bill C-11 does have its shortcomings. There may be potential second- and third-order consequences that result from its passage. We've heard this from many witnesses and many different actors within the military justice system.

Many senators and witnesses spoke about one of those consequences, and we are asking ourselves about it today: What if the transfer to the civilian system doesn't achieve what it aims to do? What if it does?

We know that the civilian justice system in Canada is overburdened; that access to justice for all parties, in any case, is not equitable; that support for victims can be difficult; and that Indigenous Peoples and racialized Canadians are more likely to be incarcerated in Canada.

So what happens if we get it wrong with Bill C-11 and transferring jurisdiction of Criminal Code sexual offences from the military justice system to the civilian one ends up doing more harm than good? This is a question that has preoccupied me and many senators, as well as many members of the other place, and that is why many had originally called for a sunset clause to be inserted in the bill. Now, let's talk about that.

A sunset clause in this instance would have seen the transfer of jurisdiction expire after a set period of time unless Parliament further endorses the transfer to continue on in the future. I truly understand the appeal of a sunset clause. However, as I have come to learn, sunset clauses in criminal justice can have some pitfalls. Namely, what if Parliament is not in a position to determine its will, due to being dissolved or prorogued when the time runs out?

The proposed sunset clause for Bill C-11, which was moved in the other place, would have seen jurisdiction revert to the military justice system in four years' time, essentially — and think about it — smack dab in an election or shortly thereafter. Remember, people are impacted by this.

To that end, I put forward an amendment in committee that was agreed upon by the government in the other place, which includes a statutory requirement for the Minister of National Defence to call for an independent review on the impact of the transfer of jurisdiction of Criminal Code sexual offences to the civilian system after three years.

The word "independent" is the same one already used and accepted by those who have been harmed by the system. It already exists in the National Defence Act as the basis for the three statutory reviews undertaken pursuant to section 273.601 of the act.

At committee, we also heard about the need for data to assess whether the transfer of the jurisdiction of Criminal Code sexual offences from the military to the civilian justice system is working as proposed.

The amendment made in committee calls for the review to include, but not be limited to, certain data points, such as the number of cases transferred, the services available and offered to victims, an evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages to the military justice system overall, and measures taken to enhance access to justice for all members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Colleagues, those last two points are important. As I said in my speech at second reading, the military justice system, as recognized by the Supreme Court, exists as a separate and distinct system. It is essential for ensuring good order and for maintaining discipline, efficiency and morale in the Canadian Armed Forces. Canadian Armed Forces members need to trust that the system works fairly and justly for all those who serve under it. Offences, including Criminal Code sexual offences, rarely happen in isolation.

We heard at committee that, often, other offences, such as stalking or harassment, are precursors to Criminal Code sexual offences. So it is not simply a matter of removing one type of offence from the military justice system and then washing one's hands of all the others. Consideration needs to be given to the overall system and its ability to deal with offences and maintain good order and discipline.

There is also the matter of those who are accused, which is a sensitive subject, but in Canada, all Canadians are entitled to justice.

As we have heard from the military Director of Defence Counsel Services, Canadian Armed Forces members, under the National Defence Act, are in a unique position. Serving members, even those accused, are ensured of representation in the military justice system pursuant to section 249.17 of the National Defence Act, at no cost.

This is in recognition of the extraordinary obligations of military service, as recognized by Justice Fish in 2021. We know that in the civilian system there are no such guarantees.

Yes, we have also heard that there are assistance programs like Legal Aid, but it is highly unlikely that Canadian Armed Forces members would qualify. As we have heard in this place time and time again, access to justice has a direct correlation to socio-economic status. Costs for the accused can be astronomical, and we always have to ensure that there is justice.

I will also add other factors within the military justice system for serving members accused or who have been victimized within the system, but what I want you to understand is that geography, in cases of Criminal Code sexual misconduct, is also a complicating factor when it comes to Canadian Armed Forces members who have been accused of these types of offences.

Please remember that people serve from coast to coast to coast and internationally. An offence could take place in one jurisdiction, while the accused is in a completely different area of the country, with witnesses who are deployed internationally. Please remember that not all military bases are in major centres.

The military justice system takes the unique requirements of service into account by bringing justice to where the member is rather than making the member travel to access justice. This is why consideration for both those who have been victimized by the system and the accused is a really important application of justice in the military context.

I will tell you why that matters. We are going through a recruiting and retention challenge in order to ramp up to face an increasingly unstable world. I can tell you that every member of the Canadian Armed Forces watches closely. I know. I get the messages.

If you think about it, as we have talked about, Criminal Code sexual offences happen within a family-like setting. Often, the accused and the victim are located in the same geographical area and in the same unit. They work and live together. They eat together. They may deploy together. They have colleagues, friends and partners around them. Any perceived injustice done to either the victim or the accused will, and has had, a direct impact on morale and team cohesion, and it will have an impact on decisions made by Canadian Armed Forces members about whether to remain as members of the force. I just want to share that with you.

Finally, the amendment made in committee calls on the minister to table their opinion as to whether the transfer of jurisdiction has been successful in both houses even though success has yet to be defined. It also codifies that he or she must state whether it should be maintained or repealed. Again, I'm talking about clauses 7 and 8.

So if, in the opinion of the minister, it should be repealed, then the amendment includes a repeal provision, rather than a sunset clause, saying that a motion will be presented in each house of Parliament to concur with that opinion. If concurred with, the amendment calls on the government to introduce legislation to repeal the jurisdictional transfer.

This is important because, regardless of the government of the day, this already exists in statute to be enacted regardless of the political party in charge.

So this is actually about accountability. I can tell you that those who have experienced military sexual trauma — the survivors and the victims — are watching us today, and now we will be watching the government. But this will be in three years' time.

I can tell you that those who are watching today are going to decide whether they can trust us.

• (1620)

Accountability — to reinforce it — is not just a matter for the Canadian Armed Forces and the chain of command; it is about all of us as well. As Madam Justice Arbour said, responsibility and

accountability must lie with us. Collectively, government, parliamentarians and the military chain of command have an obligation to protect those who serve with unlimited liability.

The government has an obligation to ensure that the policies and objectives directed to Canada's military are clear. The chain of command's obligation is to implement those directives to the best of their ability, taking into account the uniqueness of the military environment, and to best maintain the security of those who serve.

As parliamentarians, our obligation is to ensure the laws that we pass are clear, and I think Bill C-11 assists with this. We must ensure they are also based on reasoned arguments, backed by data and experience — sober second thought, if you will — and that they are as fair and just as they can be so that the law is applied equitably.

We are not here to debate the culture of the Canadian Armed Forces because we know that laws cannot change culture, but they provide essential barriers, boundaries and limits.

I would be remiss if I did not remind my colleagues that the Canadian Armed Forces have made enormous strides on the culture front over the past decade in addressing sexual misconduct. But more must be done, and this bill will assist.

Canada is a country that believes in democracy, the rule of law and civilian authority. As political leaders, each of us, we have a duty to serve our fellow Canadians in legislating in the best possible way we can. That includes members of the Canadian Armed Forces, because every member serving aboard every Royal Canadian Navy ship, every soldier of the Canadian Army who carries a rifle, every aviator who belongs to the Royal Canadian Air Force, each one is a Canadian, full stop. They are our family members, friends and our fellow Canadians.

While we may not always get it right as legislators, we still have a duty to move forward. On that, I agree. We have to do what we believe is best.

It also is on us to hold the government to account if their promises to those who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces seem to be going astray.

Bill C-11 may still have some flaws, and there may be unintended consequences that we have yet to foresee, but this amended bill provides not only widely agreed-upon changes that will help the Canadian Armed Forces continue to move forward and address sexual misconduct more effectively, but it will also provide us with the statutory requirement to ensure that in-depth study and review or repeal, if needed, are in place. I do believe that's in keeping with the spirit of Her Excellency's recommendations.

Overall, it is an important step in modernizing the military justice system in Canada in response to sexual misconduct. I support Bill C-11 and I hope you, too, can support it at third reading.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Denise Batters: Would you take a question?

Senator Patterson: Always. Thank you.

Senator Batters: Senator Patterson, I heard Senator Yussuff say in presenting the National Security and Defence Committee's report today that the committee's study of this major government bill, Bill C-11, was "truncated." Yet, it has been clear for many months, and certainly in the House of Commons committee, that so many victims of sexual assault in the military want the choice of jurisdiction in these extremely sensitive and difficult cases. I had the brief chance to ask you about this topic after your second-reading speech.

Senator Carignan brought an important amendment at committee to restore that choice for victims. That amendment failed in a tied vote, 7 to 7. You voted against it. Your vote could have carried the day to restore choice for those victims. Why did you vote that way?

Senator Patterson: Thank you, Senator Batters. That's a critical question, so thank you.

What is choice? This is another discussion we had. We've spoken for a long time to victims of military sexual trauma and given the impression that they have the choice to pick which system they can be tried in. It was one of the areas that Her Excellency Louise Arbour studied; she talked to hundreds of people who had been victimized within the system. Yes, there was a split decision about one system over the other.

Then we talked about what choice is. Victims of Criminal Code sexual offences retain the choice to move forward or not. They had the choice to state a preference. But, at the end of the day — whether it be a civilian Director of Public Prosecutions or the Director of Military Prosecutions — the final decision on the jurisdiction for trying that case came from them.

I know it feels like I'm skating around what you said. I think that was a very compassionate amendment.

Right now, the government has clearly stated they are moving forward with this. The amendment gives us the ability because it has been going on since 2021. We need the data. I agree that we need the data. The amendment gives the proper study to have a look at what this is doing to victims.

Now, going back to your point about victim choice, we have heard from many witnesses, including experts in the area, that one of the bigger predictors of outcomes of someone who has experienced sexual trauma and sexual assault is having some control and choice in the system.

While the movement forward is to continue with what currently exists, changing jurisdiction, the other part of the bill that I think is essential is increasing victim support services, expanding who can actually speak on behalf of the victim to include trusted members.

While I understand that's not exactly the same as what you have said in terms of Senator Carignan's response, it is the system looking at other areas to give them voice through legal counsel, to improve victim liaison services, to make sure that the wraparound services through the different support centres are there and not just pass them over to the system.

This is why I also have concerns and why it was so important to me that this amendment included a study. Show me the proof that it is or not working.

Senator Batters: Senator Patterson, all of those things should be happening anyways. Support for victims, ability to have legal advice — all of those things should be happening regardless.

As you said, victims of sexual offences often feel like they have had the most fundamental choice taken away from them.

Now, the government — through this House of Commons committee situation where they took away the ability for them to have a choice — took that choice away from them in deciding whether they get to go through that one certain process, which may work for some and may not work for others, or the other one.

I didn't really hear your viewpoint. I didn't really hear the answer to the question as to why you decided that was acceptable in your mind.

You seemed to be also referring to this three-year review. We have heard a lot about three- and five-year reviews. I know at Legal Committee there are many different topics where matters are set for those types of reviews and they never happen, lots of times because our committee never has time to undertake those studies. Is that also a matter of concern for you?

Senator Patterson: Thank you, Senator Batters, as always. These are always great questions, so I appreciate it.

I will focus on the review. I will focus on what Her Excellency was trying to reinforce. I will talk about the military side here. It is us being accountable.

Your point about committees and too much to do to get to a review is a good excuse. I say "a good excuse," but I don't know how I would explain that to members of the Canadian Armed Forces, particularly those who have been harmed. Putting the emphasis back on Parliament as decision makers to follow up, to be trustworthy with what they have actually put and codified — which is another point from Her Excellency; it needs to be codified, which is why this is now a statutory requirement — is important.

We need to do what is right. We can hear. How I chose to vote was consistent with my opinion on this bill. I believe this bill adds value but that does not ever — my concern is we must not take our eyes off the ball. It may be only me as a senator. It may be.

There are tools within our means to push to say it sits in there. It is codified. Where are you? It will be on the Minister of National Defence to move this forward. I know that's a really

ambiguous thing to say, but I promise that is what we can do. We will talk again when we need to, for survivors and people who have experienced this.

Hon. Hassan Yussuff: Will Senator Patterson take a question?

• (1630)

Senator Patterson: Yes.

Senator Yussuff: First, let me start, Senator Patterson, by thanking you for taking on the responsibility of shepherding this bill through the chamber.

As you are aware, the recommendation that subsequently formed the bulk of Bill C-11 came from Madam Justice Arbour, and her recommendation and insights came from the Canadian Armed Forces members whom she spoke with.

What was clear in her recommendation was that the military justice system had failed women and failed them miserably in regard to sexual misconduct. That's why there was the recommendation to move from the military justice system to the civilian system. In the context of the civilian system, if you were to ask Canadian women writ large how well that system is functioning, we may not like the answer equally. We have many instances where that system has failed women in a miserable way, such as time delays where cases are thrown out of the system, and women feel that because of their gender, they are subjected to a system that doesn't take into consideration the reality of how women are treated in society in general.

Given that, the amendment that you put forth on behalf of the government and that has been accepted by the government does a number of things. It looks at a sunset clause in the context of three years, but regardless of what that will ultimately result in, whether it goes back to the military justice system or stays in the civilian system, the fundamental part of this recommendation in the resolution is that the government must collect the appropriate data. The data should reveal whether or not the system is working.

Do you have confidence that we will get the data that is required in the amendment? Do you have confidence that within three years — which is the time frame in which this sunset clause will take effect, if it is to be acted on — we'll have the opportunity to review that and debate it as parliamentarians to ensure that women who have experienced sexual misconduct in the military will be properly served in the way that they are expecting to be served and in the way that was intended by Justice Arbour?

Senator Patterson: Just to be really clear, it is not a sunset clause. It is a repeal rather than a sunset clause. I hope that is okay to say. I just wanted to state it for the record.

It's women and men and people of all genders who are impacted by Criminal Code sexual offences. We learned that from previous studies from Statistics Canada. Incidence-wise, there are probably more men impacted, but precedent-wise, just like in civilian society, it happens more often to people who identify as women or other minorities. I just wanted to be clear on the record about that.

Do I think that the clause and the data collection will happen? I think that if this bill is passed into law, in regard to data collection, there are pieces of data everywhere, which we heard through a lot of witness testimony. We also heard through the minister that within the department, there is some direction on getting performance measurement frameworks designed in order to do that. That is my hope. Again, I don't have any say over that.

It takes more than one data point to show whether something works or not. It takes qualitative and quantitative data over time. That includes all components of the military system.

My hope would be: In order for this to be successful, decisions on what data to collect and how to collect it must happen sooner rather than later.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Would the senator take another question?

Senator Patterson: Yes.

Senator Quinn: Thank you to all involved in this important piece of legislation. My question revolves around the uniqueness that you have outlined regarding our military in terms of its hierarchy, order, structure and areas of deployment, whether that be within Canada or internationally.

My colleague just raised some good points about how women have been treated in the military system. What changes would make them better treated or more fairly treated in a civilian system when the civilian system may not be familiar with the challenges of a hierarchical society?

Senator Patterson: There are a lot of policy issues I am not familiar with. I can go back to witness testimony and talk about what is in the bill and what has already been enacted through previous iterations, like Bill C-77. The victim support — which is applied by the military — will follow them into the civilian system.

Furthermore, when it comes to understanding the military environment, we certainly heard some testimony from a witness — I think she is a chief of police, and she is in Victoria right now, but she has a national perspective as well — that from a policing perspective, they will still need to rely on the military to help them acculturate. That also means the transfer of information between the two groups so that people's cases don't fall through loopholes.

There is currently a memorandum of understanding, or MOU, between the Ontario Provincial Police and the Canadian Armed Forces military police, and it covers things like information sharing. Some of the work is under way because it has been under way since 2021. They are looking to get broad MOUs across the country so that all people are supported. There is not only personal support but also support through the system so that their cases don't fall through loopholes.

I will allude to Senator Batters' comments here: What about this? Why wouldn't we listen to them? As I told you, the choice that did exist has been gone since 2021. Victims of Criminal Code sexual offences are not able to choose the system that their case goes through. The prosecutor chooses the system. The

military option has not been available. This was one of the questions that came up in committee, and the Deputy Judge Advocate General stated one of the challenges right now is that if you take something out of one system, those resources tend to go somewhere else and so does the expertise in that area.

We may ask, "Why aren't we letting people choose now?" One of the challenges with that is you risk delaying when you start moving cases back and forth between systems. All the fabulous legal people in here will talk about Jordan's Principle and how these cases never actually make it to trial. Having one system to go to allows us to have amplified victim support services because of what the Canadian Armed Forces or the Department of National Defence provides.

Also, when you go to the civilian system, you are less likely to have cases dropped or time delays with the transfer of services. That was not exactly an answer to your question, but you can certainly ask a follow-up if I have missed anything.

Hon. Marilou McPhedran: Senator Patterson, would you take a question?

Senator Patterson: Yes.

Senator McPhedran: Thank you very much. I'd like to preface my question so as to put it in the context of the over 40 years that I've had in responding to, representing and advocating in the civil court system for survivors of sexual trauma, abuse, assault and more. It's a long list.

Never have I encountered a report from civil society experts in this field looking at the civil system — and on this I want to really thank both Senator Yussuff and Senator Quinn for their questions — where there has been a finding that victims are well and truly served by the civilian system. That's the context for my question.

Thank you for moving such an important amendment in committee. However, we both know that retaliation, isolation, career disruption and lost benefits, such as being denied course or deployment opportunities and appropriate care, can be real consequences of making a complaint.

• (1640)

If I heard you correctly and if I understand the amendment, you have spoken of a guarantee to force members to access workplace-aware support. My question is also about the accountability that you have mentioned.

If the Senate adopts this bill as amended in committee, will this bill prevent the removal of military-funded legal counsel and military-funded institutional supports once a file moves fully into the civilian system?

Senator Patterson: You have asked a number of questions that I am not able to respond to because they are held within the Department of National Defence and are slightly outside of the bill, but I do understand the context of what you are asking.

I would be very hesitant to use the word “guarantee.” You talked about the supports following wherever they go. To your point, the civilian justice system, like the military justice system, has its challenges, with work being done on both the police and justice system, depending on the province, to try and improve the support provided to people who have been victimized. So that is acknowledged.

That is why having data for members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are impacted by this is critical.

Can I please request that you just clarify your question about accountability? I took a few notes, but I don’t think I caught the nuance exactly.

Senator McPhedran: I would be happy to.

The kind of accountability that I was addressing is what I thought I heard from you, which was that the military remains accountable for its people and for the care of its people, even if a case enters — as this bill would do — the civil system.

So it was a question about if there is a guarantee —

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Senator McPhedran, the time allotted for your speech has expired. Are you asking for five more minutes?

Senator McPhedran: Yes.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator McPhedran: I’m asking about whether members of the force, who are now forced into the civilian system, lose the military-funded legal support, emotional support and the kinds of support that they now get when they are going through this kind of complaint. Do they lose it, or did you tell us that it’s guaranteed for them?

Senator Patterson: Thank you very much, Senator McPhedran. When it comes to the victims, from what we were told in committee, that care follows them. They remain members of the Canadian Armed Forces. They have access to care. They have their victim liaison officer. They have their legal adviser paid for. That is what we were told through the centre that provides victim support. The funding is still there.

However, when you talk about the accused, because we have to talk about both in the military justice system, by moving all of these Criminal Code sexual offences to the civilian sector, legal defence counsel is no longer paid for. That is one benefit they lose. They will still have assisting officers assigned, according to the officials that came in from the Department of National Defence. However, I truly believe this is one of the items I will be asking about as we move forward.

Senator McPhedran: With great respect, I need to disagree with you and your optimism here. I don’t think that is going to be borne out.

As a supplementary, I heard you talk about “in the opinion of the minister” in the reporting back to Parliament. Is it not of some concern that the member of cabinet responsible for the law is also the person who has to form what has to be a data-driven, evidence-based, objective decision, when, in fact, their job is to defend the law?

Senator Patterson: As always, Senator McPhedran, that’s an excellent question. Again, this is not my area of expertise, and I understand words matter, especially in legislation. It is a good question that probably requires a follow-up. I want to thank you for bringing that up.

[Translation]

Hon. Réjean Aucoin: Senator Patterson, beyond what you said today, you have a military past like me. I served in the military, and I am also a criminal lawyer. Based on your military experience, if you don’t mind telling us about it, will this bill finally ensure that justice will be served in the many cases of sexual assault in the military, should jurisdiction over these cases be transferred to civilian courts?

[English]

Senator Patterson: Thank you for the question. It’s a good one. I will be honest with you: I cannot speculate. I would assume that justice will be served the same as for any other Canadian going through the same process. Justice will be served, as it is served for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Danièle Henkel: Honourable senators, first, I would like to thank Senator Patterson for her ongoing commitment to this issue. Thanks to her work and perseverance, victims’ concerns have remained at the heart of our debates. I also want to thank the members of the committee and the witnesses who agreed to share their expertise and their sometimes very painful experiences. My colleagues and I were very touched by that.

As an honorary captain of the Canadian Coast Guard and honorary lieutenant-colonel of the Régiment de Maisonneuve, I have had the privilege of working with men and women who chose to serve our country. I admire their dedication so much. I also have a great deal of respect for the sacrifices that they and their families make.

That is why I sincerely believe that those who protect us deserve protection in return. That is basically the question that is put before us today with Bill C-11.

Over the past few days, our committee has heard from survivors, veterans, police officers, and legal and other experts who share the same objective: to better protect members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are victims of sexual offences. However, many of them have different ideas about how best to achieve this. That is what makes this debate especially difficult.

[*English*]

On one hand, we cannot ignore the findings that led to this reform. For more than a decade, report after report and inquiry after inquiry have exposed a profound crisis of confidence within the Canadian Armed Forces. The Deschênes, Fish and Arbour reports were not commissioned without reason; they reflect a painful reality. Too many victims have felt that the very mechanisms intended to protect them were not meeting their needs.

With Bill C-11, the government has chosen to implement the central recommendation of the 2022 Arbour report, which is to remove Criminal Code sexual offences committed in Canada from the military justice system and place them exclusively under civilian jurisdiction.

This is a significant decision, but it is also clear that it does not command unanimous support.

[*Translation*]

What struck me most during the meetings was that a lot of reservations about the bill were coming from parties that are usually on opposite sides of the legal system.

Survivors, military police representatives, military prosecutors and defence lawyers were raising similar concerns, for different reasons, over the mandatory transfer of these cases to the civilian system.

• (1650)

When people who usually sit on opposite sides of a hearing room have certain concerns in common, Parliament has a duty to listen carefully.

This meeting of minds did not mean that they opposed the bill's objectives. It just meant that they were worried that certain consequences might not have been weighed carefully enough.

A number of witnesses reminded us that sexual assault is fundamentally a loss of control and that recovery often involves reclaiming autonomy.

[*English*]

Some have raised concerns that this reform could leave victims with the impression that important decisions are being made on their behalf rather than with them.

Others have drawn our attention to a particular dimension of the military context. When sexual misconduct is tied to an abuse of power, the issue is not limited to assessing whether a criminal offence has been committed. It also raises broader questions of leadership, authority, responsibility and institutional accountability.

The testimonies have also reminded us that victims are not a uniform group. They do not all share the same experiences, expectations or needs.

[Senator Henkel]

Some believe that transferring these cases to the civilian system is essential to rebuilding trust. Others would have preferred to retain the ability to choose.

I understand those concerns. I also understand the concerns raised about the civilian system's capacity to take on these cases. Several witnesses pointed to court delays, limited resources and the challenges already encountered in the handling of civilian sexual assault cases.

Some questioned whether we risk shifting the problem rather than resolving it. Indeed, the committee's discussions and the closed votes that followed reflect the tension surrounding this bill. Only a few senators approached this study with absolute certainty. The committee's deliberation showed that it is possible to share the same commitment to better protecting victims while differing on the best way to achieve that goal.

It is in this context that I consider the adoption of Senator Batters' amendment particularly important.

[*Translation*]

This amendment requires an independent review to be conducted within three years of the reform coming into force. This review must be the subject of a report to Parliament and be informed by consultations with victims, military and civilian justice system authorities and advocacy groups.

In short, this amendment establishes an oversight and accountability system so that Parliament can judge, based on facts and concrete results, whether this reform is achieving its intended goals.

This amendment reflects a kind of legislative humility, a recognition that intentions, however laudable, are not enough and that the actual consequences must be measured.

Now that the study is done, I'm not convinced that maintaining the status quo is a fitting response.

For several years now, military authorities have been gradually transferring these cases to civilian authorities. This approach is therefore not entirely new. The bill essentially enshrines in law a practice that's already in place.

[*English*]

Above all, I believe we must recognize a fundamental reality: When an institution loses the trust of those it serves, rebuilding that trust sometimes requires profound change. It is not enough to say that things have improved. We must also ensure that the mechanisms in place inspire confidence among those who may one day need to rely on them.

It is in that spirit that I will vote in favour of this bill. I do so, however, without triumphalism and without claiming that this reform addresses every concern that has been raised before us.

[*Translation*]

Transferring jurisdiction to the civilian system is not enough on its own to resolve the problems with the organizational culture. It will not replace the need to properly train

investigators, prosecutors and judges on how to deal with trauma victims. It will also not replace the Canadian Armed Forces' obligation to continue the efforts it has been making over the past few years to change the culture.

Most importantly, it will not relieve us of the duty to closely monitor the results of this reform.

[English]

Several witnesses urged us to measure the real-world impact of the proposed changes. I believe they are right. We will need to determine whether victims have greater confidence in the system. We will need to assess whether the results truly reflect the objectives we are seeking to achieve. In other words, we must be prepared to judge this reform by its results and not simply by its intentions.

There is another lesson I take from our hearings. Time and again, witnesses reminded us that support for victims does not begin at trial or end with the verdict. Judicial proceedings matter, but they are only one part of the journey. Support services, access to medical care, protection from retaliation, the ability to pursue a career and the opportunity to rebuild one's life are equally essential and must also be taken into account.

[Translation]

The real test of this reform will not just be to see where these cases are heard. It will be to find out whether the people who are going through such ordeals feel more respected, supported and heard than they did before.

If they do, then we will be able to say that we have made real progress.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

Hon. Claude Carignan: Honourable senators, I rise today in my role as critic at third reading of Bill C-11, the military justice system modernization act.

Allow me to start with a bit of context and some general comments.

Among the objectives of Bill C-11, one is particularly important: to remove the court martial's jurisdiction to try certain offences of a sexual nature under the Criminal Code that are alleged to have been committed in Canada.

I can sum up the reasons given by the minister and his team: Former Justice Arbour recommended it. "Why are you doing this?" "Former Justice Arbour recommended it." That's the only reason I ever heard from the people in charge.

We did hear some deeply moving testimony from victims and military and academic experts. For victims, speaking out about such traumatic experiences takes enormous courage. I would like to personally express my profound gratitude to them.

Their testimony reminds us of one essential thing. Our decisions as lawmakers have a direct impact on the essence of personhood: one's rights, one's health and one's healing process.

The ability to choose between pursuing a complaint in the civilian or military justice system is crucial to remedying the harm survivors have endured.

While I recognize that the bill contains some positive elements overall, I have a major concern about clauses 7 and 8.

Clause 7 grants exclusive jurisdiction over offences of a sexual nature to the civilian justice system. The testimony we heard about this clause is unequivocal.

• (1700)

I will begin by sharing some of the evidence we heard from the Honourable Marie Deschamps, who led the review. The title of her 2015 report was *External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces*. Ms. Deschamps is a former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. She served for 12 years on the Supreme Court and 10 years on the Quebec Court of Appeal. She is one of the most respected jurists in the country.

She pointed out that the position set out in her report differed from that of Justice Arbour. She was clear. She recommended that victims be allowed to choose which justice system would be responsible for handling their complaint.

She also warned against the effects of transferring jurisdiction exclusively. She said:

Many cases of misconduct fall at the lower end of the severity scale and are unlikely to be prosecuted in civilian courts. Such impunity can have harmful consequences. Unpunished minor assaults create a sense of invulnerability, and this acts as a springboard for more serious assaults.

I therefore continue to believe that a complete transfer is not desirable. In a context where the Armed Forces wish to take action to improve the human environment and punish inappropriate behaviour, the likelihood of intervention by the Canadian Armed Forces is greater than it would be if the civilian justice system alone had jurisdiction.

In other words, certain types of conduct may no longer be punished, and this has direct consequences for the victims. Another argument put forward to justify this transfer is the loss of confidence in the military justice system.

However, retired Lieutenant-Colonel Rory Fowler raised a significant contradiction at the National Security and Defence Committee. He said:

[English]

A basis of the proposed legislation is that military justice actors — military judges, prosecutors, defence counsel and military police — do not perform their functions adequately. So, their jurisdiction, supposedly, must be removed from such allegations arising in Canada. However, they will retain jurisdiction over the same types of allegations when they arise outside Canada but will perform those functions with markedly reduced experience and exposure to such offences.

How will that improve military justice and confidence in military leadership? The answer is it won't.

[*Translation*]

I fully endorse these comments, and I also see a deep dichotomy in them. In other words, the military system retains jurisdiction abroad, but not in Canada. It has our trust for one thing, but not for another. In my opinion, this sends a message that's hard to defend. We also have to consider the impact on Armed Forces members. Colonel Nooral Ahmed, Director of Defence Counsel Services, testified that this change will have a real effect on the right of accused military personnel to make full answer and defence. He said:

[*English*]

I will focus my remarks today on one issue: Transferring Criminal Code sexual offences to the civilian system will have a negative impact on CAF members charged with those offences because they will no longer have the right to receive legal representation at no cost.

[*Translation*]

He also pointed out that access to free legal representation is a principle recognized in the reports of Justices Fish and Arbour:

[*English*]

Justice Fish, in his independent review of 2021, recognized that access to free legal counsel is a fundamental benefit extended to CAF members in recognition of the extraordinary obligations of military service, including the principle of unlimited liability.

[*Translation*]

This bill would take rights away from members of our military.

Colonel Dylan Kerr, Director of Military Prosecutions, also testified in support of allowing the military justice system to retain jurisdiction. He said:

[*English*]

. . . I do believe that victims and the Canadian Armed Forces would be better served by retaining concurrent jurisdiction over these offences, that victims deserve a say in where their cases are heard and that some cases will not be heard if jurisdiction is removed.

More tools to address sexual violence are better than less.

[*Translation*]

I will now move on to clause 8 of the bill. It removes the Canadian Armed Forces' jurisdiction to investigate offences in Canada.

[Senator Carignan]

Brigadier-General Vanessa Hanrahan, Canadian Forces Provost Marshal — for the uninitiated, I learned that the Provost Marshal is the head of the military police — rightly reminded us of the context in which members of the Armed Forces live and their bond of trust with the military police. She stated:

[*English*]

Over the last few years, we have seen an increase in the number of victims requesting their files remain with the military police. I certainly do not want to speak on behalf of victims, but some of the reasons they have come forward is because — again, as I alluded to in my opening comments — the military police have spent a lot of time investing in our community. They have trust and confidence in the military police. We are members of the Canadian Armed Forces, though we act independently from the chain of command in our policing function. We understand better the way of life. We understand how to work on a base. We understand the intricacies of rank. We understand what it is to live in a mess environment and how it is to operate in all facets of being in the Canadian Armed Forces, while ensuring we can reach the elements of an offence and have a proper investigation that would allow us to look at all the elements being brought forward and determine whether a military justice system or a civilian justice system is best offered the victim justice, or the option of justice.

[*Translation*]

In other words, the military justice system has an in-depth understanding of the environment that is difficult to find anywhere else, so that is another aspect of the bill that I can't support.

There is also the matter of the civilian system's capacity. According to the testimony of police chief Fiona Wilson, who spoke on behalf of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, law enforcement agencies are not ready to take on these investigations. She said:

[*English*]

From the onset, police have advised that we could not assume responsibility for these investigations without additional resources. File counts significantly understate the real workload.

[*Translation*]

She went on to say:

[*English*]

CAF-related files can be particularly complex. Witnesses and evidence may be located in different countries or provinces. Relevant information may sit within military systems. . . .

Taking on these files without additional resources would require diverting investigators from existing sexual assault cases and other critical public-safety responsibilities. We were, and remain, clear that this would not be responsible policing.

[Translation]

That brings me to another important point. According to the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime, the justice system is already facing major challenges. Since the Jordan decision, over 268 sexual assault cases have been stayed because of unreasonable delays.

• (1710)

The proportion of cases exceeding these time limits has risen significantly over the years. At this point, approximately one in seven cases is stayed or withdrawn for this reason.

As such, can we reasonably expect that transferring more cases to that system will have no consequences? I will let you judge for yourselves.

I would remind you that, in 2020, a panel of experts in Quebec produced a report entitled *Rebuilding Trust*. The panel made 190 recommendations for fixing the justice system and handling cases of a sexual nature properly.

Lastly, let us consider the victims' perspective. We listened to them. If I had to sum up their message in one word, that word would be "choice." I'm talking about their ability to choose the system, choose the process and actually choose the system they trust to properly address their complaint.

In my view, to ignore that message would be to fail to do justice to the extraordinary courage these victims have shown. In their testimony, some of them emphasized specific points. Retired captain H el ene Le Scelleur highlighted a major disconnect between legal frameworks and lived experience. She said:

[English]

While civilian courts may determine criminal responsibility, they are not positioned to examine the day-to-day exercise of military authority in operational environments. For some victims, including myself, those realities cannot easily be separated.

[Translation]

Another witness who comes to mind is retired major Donna Van Leusden. I asked her about the impact on victims of staying proceedings under *Jordan*, and her response was striking. She said:

This is a truly terrible outcome for victims because they've shown such courage in talking about what happened. I know two people who, because of *Jordan* —

[English]

— their files fell apart, and as a result, the consequences were devastating.

I do my best with the people that I'm supporting through the system to reinforce that "not guilty" is not the same as innocent, that not guilty doesn't mean that it didn't happen. Even so, there are so many survivors that depend on that and think that having that moment in court is going to make a huge difference in their healing. For some of them, it does. So to have it just fall apart because paperwork wasn't filed in time or because they couldn't find room on a calendar is so devastating because, again, now they are in limbo. They haven't gotten a formal declaration of guilty or not guilty. Nothing has happened, and it just sort of goes away.

The two I know are both struggling, and I don't see them coming around to any sort of meaningful recovery for some time as a result of that. . . .

[Translation]

Based on the testimony we heard, it became clear to me that the current version is not an adequate response to the reality on the ground. I have never seen anything like it. Prosecutors, defence lawyers, the head of the military police, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, victims and survivors all want to maintain the military system alongside the civilian system. I have never seen such broad unanimity against a government bill.

Faced with such a united front, I had no alternative but to propose a specific amendment to clause 7. The purpose was simple: to maintain the exclusive jurisdiction of the civilian system, but to allow for one fundamental exception permitting victims to choose the investigator and the legal forum, either civilian or military. This allowed the bill to pursue its main objective, namely the implementation of recommendation 5 of Justice Arbour's Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, while allowing room for some essential flexibility. The rule remains, but an exception was added.

This is not an isolated amendment. It is the same one that was moved by the Conservative Party of Canada in the other place and adopted in connection with the third report of the Standing Committee on National Defence. One unusual and noteworthy fact is that the Bloc Qu eb ecois and the NDP also supported this amendment. I will let you draw your own conclusions. The members of our committee defeated the amendment in a tie vote of seven to seven.

In conclusion, honourable senators, I cannot support this bill, as it runs counter to much of the evidence we have heard, particularly with regard to clauses 7 and 8. Of course I supported Senator Patterson's amendment because, if the bill passes, at least that commitment will be in place.

However, I have been here for 17 years now, and I have seen countless commitments, reviews and promises to revisit a bill after three or five years that have not been kept. The list is long, and I plan to do some research over the summer to find out

exactly how many there are, but I know there are many. I don't trust these kinds of commitments to revisit the issue if it comes up again four, five, six or seven years later and say that we were wrong. What was the cost of being wrong? How much damage was done and to whom, to how many people, to how many survivors?

I don't believe that victims of sexual offences should be asked to serve as guinea pigs for four or five years. I therefore urge you to vote against the bill in order to send a clear message to the other place and to the government that it would be wise to review certain aspects of it immediately, while keeping the option I mentioned. Thank you.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: All those in favour of the motion will please say "yea."

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: In my opinion the "yeas" have it.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

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

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

PROTECTING VICTIMS BILL

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-16, An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to criminal and correctional matters (child protection, gender-based violence, delays and other measures).

(Bill read first time.)

[Senator Carignan]

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

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

• (1720)

[English]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEDERAL LAW—CIVIL LAW HARMONIZATION BILL, NO. 4

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

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

She said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak on Bill S-6, the Federal Law-Civil Law Harmonization Act, No. 4.

Just a few weeks ago, Senator Carignan and I delivered our second reading speeches. Last week, we studied the bill in the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, or LCJC.

It was a real treat to have stakeholders at the committee this time. During our study of Bill S-11 in the last Parliament, we heard from the incredibly dedicated officials who have worked on this initiative for years and from the Minister of Justice at the time, David Lametti, but we didn't have non-government witnesses.

Last week at LCJC, we heard from Minister Fraser, the officials and representatives from La Chambre des notaires du Québec. I want to thank them all for their work and their testimony, especially the officials France Allard, Robert Dufresne and Moïra Létourneau.

I am also grateful for the engagement of my colleagues, whose excellent questions led to a great discussion. I will share with you today the juiciest snippets, but first, a reminder: Bill S-6 harmonizes civil law and common law across 51 federal statutes to ensure that anglophone and francophone lawyers, working in either legal tradition, can effectively interpret and apply the law.

Harmonization is a decades-long process. It involves consultation, relationship building and patience — so much patience. Bill S-6 is particularly focused on acts related to finance, but it also updates framework statutes, such as the Official Languages Act, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Interpretation Act and the Access to Information Act.

I understand that many feel Bill S-6 may be inconsequential. To my great chagrin, this bill does not generate headlines or dominate social media discussions. It amends terminology, updates concepts and modifies provisions in federal statutes. It does not transform public policy. It does not create new programs.

Much of this work is technical. Much of it is incremental. It often proceeds without public attention. Yet, it still contributes to the stability and effectiveness of our institutions. It performs work that is fundamental to the coherence and integrity of Canada's legal system.

Whereas some legislation changes the architecture of government, other legislation ensures that the foundations remain sound. Bill S-6 belongs firmly to the second category.

Harmonization is an exercise in translation, yes, but also in legal meaning. Words that appear similar may carry different legal consequences within different legal systems. Concepts that are familiar in one tradition may not exist in precisely the same form in another. A federal statute that functions perfectly well within a common law framework may create uncertainty when applied within a civil law context, unless the legislation is carefully drafted to account for both traditions. This is why harmonization matters. It's why I'm proud to sponsor this bill.

Canada's unique constitutional fabric is reflected in the work we're discussing here — French and English, common law and civil law.

These days, though, the government co-drafts. Rather than preparing legislation in one language and translating it into another, legislative drafters work simultaneously in English and French. More importantly, they draft simultaneously with an awareness of both legal traditions.

Unfortunately, that means that I likely won't have the chance to sponsor many more of these harmonization bills. I'll have to make this speech count. So what did we discuss in committee?

I'll end the suspense. I know you're all on the edge of your seats.

[*Translation*]

Let's start with the *Chambre des notaires du Québec*, which was adroitly represented by Bruno Larivière and Antoine Fafard. The *Chambre des notaires du Québec* represents almost 4,000 notaries whose primary mission is to protect the public.

This organization has been working with the federal government on harmonization since 1990. Mr. Larivière gave some examples to illustrate the impact of this work. He mentioned that the term "exécuteur testamentaire" has been replaced by "liquidateur" and that the term "curateur" became obsolete following the 2020 reform of protection regimes.

The *Chambre des notaires du Québec* told us that Bill S-6 is a step in the right direction, and it committed to being an active partner in continuing this harmonization effort.

[*English*]

At committee, Senator Pate raised the issue of legal pluralism, and I'm glad she did. She said there's a fundamental difference between Canada's justice system and Indigenous-led traditions. The latter deals with culture, healing and return to community, rather than the colonial approach of incarceration and reintegration.

Minister Fraser told us that we're running on parallel tracks: harmonization initiatives on one and recognition of Indigenous legal traditions on the other. I'm eager to see progress on both.

Just last night, at the Indigenous Peoples Committee, Inuit leader and ITK President Natan Obed told us as part of our study on the duty to consult:

This country has a long way to go on accepting that Indigenous Peoples have democracies and governance models that this country was founded on and is not just composed of municipalities, provinces, territories and the federal government but is also a multilateral space that includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis democracies as well.

So we're having this conversation about legal pluralism more and more often. That's a good start, and sustained action would be even better.

[*Translation*]

Senator Oudar raised an interesting question: How will the government communicate the changes to ordinary Canadians once this bill is passed? This is a question that I ask myself all the time: How can I make dense bills, complex policies and Senate procedures accessible so that Canadians feel involved in my work and the work of the Senate?

Minister Fraser told us that the individual on the street likely isn't thinking about the unique interpretive differences between legal systems. That is too bad.

[*English*]

Our chair, Senator Arnot, asked what enactment in Bill S-6 is considered the most consequential. The minister's answer is quite telling:

It is an odd thing to say as a minister that you hope your legislation doesn't have a substantive impact, but it is to prevent future harm from occurring based on differing interpretations. I apologize if that's an odd response, but my hope is that there will not be significant impacts from the changes other than an alignment of what the words mean.

It is consequential for the legal technicians — for lawyers. It is consequential for the foundation of our legal systems, but it is not necessarily powerful or interesting to people who don't do this work on a regular basis.

I also want to thank Senators Saint-Germain, Aucoin and Simons for engaging with the subject matter. I encourage you to read the transcript — though, I'm sure you already have, right?

I'll end my discussion of the committee's work with Senator Batters' question: Why did the previous version of this bill, Bill S-11, die on the Order Paper, following the Senate's efficient and effective study?

Minister Fraser committed to working diligently to ensure the House of Commons moves this bill through the legislative process, and I'm glad to hear that.

Honourable senators, it was an honour to sponsor Bill S-11 during the last Parliament. It is an honour to sponsor Bill S-6 now. It is my hope that the second time will be the charm and that we can see this project through to the finish line, not because I cannot speak any more about this bill, but actually because my staff are running out of jokes about harmonization. While the patience of officials appears unlimited, I am sure they are eager to see many years of work finally completed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fafard told us, during our study in committee, that she thinks it would nearly call into question the whole idea of harmonization if we keep waiting and if this bill is not passed. The reason it's so voluminous is that there have been delays. The work has continued, and new provisions have been added compared to what would have been in a previous bill.

[*English*]

I'm looking at the critic, Senator Carignan, and I am looking forward to his third reading speech.

I want to honour the work of public servants who support everything we do. They are experts in their fields. They have spent years working on this. It's time.

Let's move this bill to the House with strong encouragement to thoroughly and efficiently study Bill S-6 so that it can receive Royal Assent. Thank you. *Nia:wen*.

• (1730)

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Batters, do you have a question?

Hon. Denise Batters: Thank you. Would Senator Clement take a question?

Senator Clement: Yes.

Senator Batters: Thank you very much for your reference to my questions to Minister Fraser in your speech. I wanted to make it clearer that, yes, certainly the bill did die on the Order Paper, but this was a case where the government decided to introduce the predecessor bill in the Senate, and then the Senate dealt with it quite quickly and efficiently, as you referenced. Then, before it died on the Order Paper, it actually sat without being called once by the government in the House of Commons for two and a half years.

Did you personally find that to be disappointing? I know you were the sponsor of the predecessor bill and probably had a good amount to do with it moving quickly and efficiently through the Senate. As you referenced, you have been quite engaged in this

[Senator Clement]

topic. Did you continue to watch that bill proceed, disappointed as the months ticked by for two and half years? Now you're in the same spot again.

Senator Clement: Thank you for that question, Senator Batters. I made jokes here to try to move this speech along, by I'm very engaged with this process. I'm a civil law and common law lawyer, and I have great respect for this work and for the work of the officials in particular.

Yes, I did pay attention to that, and I'm going to pay attention to this one. I'm certainly going to add my voice to the voice of those officials who have been waiting a long time and doing this work. So, yes, I continue to be invested, and I will continue to raise the issue.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Claude Carignan: Because I sit on several committees that were sitting at the same time as the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, I was unable to observe the proceedings. I have a twin brother, but we're not identical, so I couldn't get him to sub in for me at the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. I'm going to take a few more days to prepare instead.

(On motion of Senator Carignan, debate adjourned.)

[*English*]

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 2, 2026-27

SECOND READING

Hon. Iris G. Petten moved second reading of Bill C-32, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

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

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

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

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 3, 2026-27

SECOND READING

Hon. Iris G. Petten moved second reading of Bill C-33, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

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

Some Hon. Senators: Agreed.

An Hon. Senator: On division.

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

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

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

THE SENATE

MOTION TO AFFECT SITTINGS FROM JUNE 15
TO JULY 2, 2026—DEBATE

Hon. Iris G. Petten, pursuant to notice of June 10, 2026, moved:

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.

She said: Honourable senators, I move the motion standing in the name of Senator LaBoucane-Benson.

The Hon. the Speaker: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Petten, seconded by the Honourable Senator Duncan:

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

May I dispense?

Some Hon. Senators: No.

1. **The Hon. the Speaker:** 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.

Hon. Jim Quinn: Honourable senators, I rise to briefly to speak to this motion.

We all understand the importance of government business being done, particularly at this time. We also understand the importance of two or three bills that come from the other side as private members' bills that the government wishes to push through and get through our process. However, I also want to reflect on things we heard over this past week, including from the Leader of the Government in the Senate, who recognized and reconfirmed for all of us that we are members of Parliament. I think that is very true. We know that. I don't know if people outside this chamber know that. Maybe they don't know that in the other place. But it's important that we recognize that this chamber does important work.

As I look around this chamber, I look at every one of my colleagues knowing that they have been involved in committees that have taken a lot of effort, a lot of thought, a lot of hard discussion and a lot of late nights, early mornings, Mondays, Fridays and things of that nature over the past little while, but we are known for our committee work.

We need to think about the public perception that we still have work to do here. It is not work that will take up a lot of our time here in this chamber, but it is important to note that out of respect for the work that all of us do through our committee processes — and important that the amendment I'm about to propose be thought about as an independent Senate.

MOTION IN AMENDMENT NEGATIVED

Hon. Jim Quinn: Therefore, honourable senators, in amendment, I move:

That the motion be not now adopted, but that it be amended by replacing the words “ and Other Business, Commons Public Bills — Second Reading” by the words “Other Business, Commons Public Bills — Second Reading; and Other Business, Reports of Committees – Other” in point 1.

The Hon. the Speaker: In amendment, it was moved by the Honourable Senator Quinn, seconded by the Honourable Senator Ross:

That the motion be not now adopted, but that it be amended by replacing the words “ and Other Business, Commons Public Bills — Second Reading” by the words “Other Business, Commons Public Bills — Second Reading; and Other Business, Reports of Committees – Other” in point 1.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I thank Senator Quinn for this amendment.

• (1740)

Unfortunately, the government cannot support this amendment.

First of all, the motion that it would amend made the rounds of all the groups and was discussed at meetings of all group leaders. It essentially aims to focus the Senate's work on government business. This, incidentally, was the whole point of what we were doing when we shared the text of the original motion. It was all to accommodate senators.

I acknowledge that the legislative agenda is daunting. However, the objective was to take senators' interests into account. That is why we discussed all of these points.

The committees are being called on to do a considerable amount of work, particularly the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, which will have to study Bills C-16 and C-25. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work being done in committee and in this chamber.

Naturally, the Senate must decide what should be done. However, as I have said before, the proposed legislative agenda will allow us to finish all the work that needs to get done within a time frame that accommodates all senators.

If we keep adding more rubrics, there is a very serious risk that we won't be able to complete our work within the agreed-upon time frame, which would allow us to adjourn on Friday, June 19. If our work has not been completed by that date, we will have to keep sitting, because our calendar allows us to do so. The calendar is not an obstacle to continuing to sit. We would therefore need to sit on Saturday, June 20, suspend on Sunday, June 21, for National Indigenous Peoples Day, resume on Monday, June 22 and Tuesday, June 23, suspend again on Wednesday, June 24 for Quebec's national holiday, and then resume after Wednesday, June 24 if necessary.

We have drawn up a schedule that allows us to complete all our work within the allotted time frame, and this amendment could jeopardize the schedule we have proposed. What's more, the text of the motion that this amendment seeks to amend was drafted very carefully to ensure that it reflects the consensus reached during the discussions between all the groups.

For these reasons, I would respectfully ask the Senate to reject, oppose and vote against Senator Quinn's amendment.

[English]

Hon. Krista Ross: Will Senator Moreau take a question?

Senator Moreau: Yes.

Senator Ross: Thank you. Senator Moreau, I sit on the Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators Committee, and at our recent meeting we adopted a report which has now been tabled here in the Senate, and that was a report that has made changes to guidelines and to Rules. Our chair, Senator Harder, asked those

of us on the committee if we would work with our scrolls to ensure that the report was adopted and that the Rules Committee report on membership in the Ethics Committee was adopted before the Senate rises from this session.

So, I did bring that to our scrolls team, and that was brought up in meetings. I wonder if you can answer if you think that it is important for the Senate to adopt those two reports that are before the Senate at this time so that they can become active moving forward. I think these are reports that many senators have been waiting for, looking for some changes. I believe everyone would have had the opportunity to read the report of the Senate Ethics Officer, which was sent to everyone on Wednesday so they would have a chance to review that report.

I'm wondering if you agree that perhaps this could be included and only could be included if Senator Quinn's amendment were adopted.

[Translation]

Senator Moreau: Thank you for the question, Senator Ross.

At the end of your question, you asked if Senator Quinn's amendment is essential to these reports being adopted, and the answer is no. If the Senate wishes, we can agree to adopt the reports. The purpose of the original motion is to avoid expanding our focus to include matters other than government business.

The leaders have reached agreements. For example, we agreed to an exception for Bill C-225. Moments from now, I'll table an amendment to allow the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to meet on Monday evening to complete its study of this bill. Arrangements have been made.

However, if senators want to stick to the calendar, on the whole, it would be best not to adopt a broad amendment like Senator Quinn's. I say that with the utmost consideration and respect for what the chamber chooses to do. If it chooses to adopt this amendment, I can't stand in the way. Again, I say this with total sincerity, just like our colleagues who are leaders of each group: What we're trying to do is work with very open minds to manage the time we have as productively as possible.

To get back to your question, this amendment isn't essential to considering or adopting the reports. If it is the will of the chamber, leave may be granted to do it without adopting a general amendment to the adjournment motion.

[English]

Hon. Peter Harder: I wonder if Senator Moreau will take a question, my first question to the government leader.

Are you aware that there is agreement in scroll that these matters be dealt with later today? The answer is yes.

Senator Moreau: The answer is no. I was not at scroll this morning and had many other things to attend to. If there is an agreement, most probably it will be dealt with without this amendment.

Thank you for the question.

Hon. Scott Tannas: I'm puzzled by this. We don't spend a lot of time on committee reports. We're not going to be here days and days extra because of committee reports, government leader. Maybe it is your inexperience here in the chamber, but I just don't see this to be the big issue. I understand we now have some behind-the-scenes answers, so we're going to pass a motion here right now that isn't applicable because we're going to make some other side deals down the road. Great, that is wonderful.

I was going to ask the simple question: Could we have a "wash-up" motion that actually deals with all the non-controversial reports from committees, and do it once, at the end of the week, before we leave? It shouldn't be that much trouble, and we can get this sorted out.

But there was this strange resistance that seemed to be going on, and I just didn't understand it. Now I guess what it is, is we have another deal coming that will sort all of that out.

The Hon. the Speaker: Was that a question, Senator Tannas?

Senator Moreau: I do agree. If there is an understanding at scrolls, it is not a problem or an issue. I was not aware of that. We are always there to accommodate; if we can do that, we will do that.

I thank Senator Harder for that precision. I was not aware that there was a deal at scroll this morning. When there is a deal at scroll, most of the time or, I would say, all the time leaders comply with this.

Senator Quinn: I appreciate the commentary and the question from Senator Harder.

The point that I think I'd like to emphasize is I haven't been in this chamber as long as some of our other members, many of our members, but I'm at a loss as to where the amendment, from your response, would cause us to have to sit possibly tomorrow, Saturday, maybe next Saturday, maybe Monday, Tuesday, not on Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, then come back.

• (1750)

First, in my brief experience here, I have never seen time consumed on reports to such an extent that it would require the time to be put forward.

Second, there may have been a deal at the scroll meeting that many of us are not aware of, but if this motion passes as is without the amendment, then that deal falls off the table.

I say that because the motion is clear: Next week we will deal with the business of the government and three private members' bills from the other place. All I'm suggesting is that you give us a chance to respect the work that my colleagues and I do at committee and allow the reports to come in and be adopted. It's not the time-consuming exercise that you're suggesting —

The Hon. the Speaker: Do you have a question, Senator Quinn?

Senator Quinn: Do you agree with my commentary? If not, why not?

[Translation]

Senator Moreau: I agree that we should be able to proceed by consent. I understand that there is already an agreement regarding the reports in question, which I will certainly respect in my capacity as the Government Representative in the Senate.

You have more experience in this chamber than I do, and so does Senator Tannas. Not only does Senator Harder have more experience in this chamber than I do, but he has also served in this role. He could also attest to the fact that information shared in the morning is not necessarily communicated immediately, and sometimes I only learn about it at the end of the day, since the days are quite busy.

It would be great if we didn't waste any time and if we could sit and complete our work sooner. I have no objection to that. All I'm saying is that we don't need this amendment to achieve that.

[English]

Senator Quinn: Senator Moreau, will you take a supplementary question?

Senator Moreau: Yes.

Senator Quinn: You just mentioned that this morning a deal was made, and I'm not aware of that. Our liaison says that there is no deal that he is aware of, and he is part of that process.

My question is this: You learned about this amendment late in the day. This amendment was shared with your office this morning. It's not an overly casting amendment. Again, the time that you've suggested it would take to deal with and adopt two or three reports would allow our members to have their work heard by adoption. We should rethink that and allow our chamber to decide whether we want to do this or not. Would you agree with that?

[Translation]

Senator Moreau: This is the last thing I will say on the subject because I feel like I'm repeating myself.

If there are deals, then we are prepared to abide by them. We want to focus on government business, and if we proceed by agreement and consent, I don't think that the amendment in question is necessary.

[English]

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Senator Moreau, will you take a question?

Senator Moreau: Yes.

Senator Martin: Senator Moreau, perhaps my question will clarify the order of what happened.

Are you aware that at scroll we discussed the two reports that Senator Ross is referring to? I did say that I was going to speak to my caucus and then communicate to the chamber and the scroll team as to whether we were ready for the question.

There were a lot of moving pieces, including an unexpected message from the House. It could be that it was an error on the part of my office to communicate fully to the scroll team because there are many people involved. Senator Black, who is the deputy leader designate in his group, may not have received that message. We are ready for questions on both of those reports today. There might be some confusion about that.

I respect what Senator Quinn has said about the importance of these reports, but are you aware that we are ready? I have communicated that to my counterparts, and I apologize if the communication is a little bit delayed. Perhaps it would have prevented —

Senator Housakos: Let's adopt them and move on.

Senator Martin: Senator, are you aware of some of these conversations, or lack thereof, that may have happened today? We are ready.

[*Translation*]

Senator Moreau: Senator Martin, you don't have to apologize for any communication errors. I will not hold that against you.

We are going to keep things very simple. I was not at the meeting this morning. Unfortunately, the Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate had to leave for family reasons. I hope that everything will turn out okay there. If we are ready to vote, then let's vote. There's nothing to worry about. I am trying to get as much consensus as possible right now.

[*English*]

The Hon. the Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say "yea."

Some Hon. Senators: Yea.

The Hon. the Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

Some Hon. Senators: Nay.

The Hon. the Speaker: In my opinion, the "nays" have it.

(Motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Quinn negated, on division.)

[Senator Martin]

MOTION TO AFFECT SITTINGS FROM JUNE 15
TO JULY 2, 2026 ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Petten, seconded by the Honourable Senator Duncan:

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.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION—DEBATE

Hon. Iris G. Petten, pursuant to notice of June 10, 2026, moved:

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.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

MOTION IN AMENDMENT ADOPTED

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Therefore, honourable senators, in amendment, I move:

That the motion be not now adopted, but that it be amended by adding the words “the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology and” before the words “committees of the Senate scheduled to meet on that day” in the last paragraph.

He said: Honourable senators, although the text of the motion is somewhat technical, the goal is to allow the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to meet on Monday, after 6 p.m., to complete its study of Bill C-225. Since the committee does not usually meet on Mondays, the text of the adjournment motion, as originally drafted, would not allow the committee to meet on Monday. However, Senator Moodie informed me that the rooms are booked and that all members of the committee are willing to proceed and finish the study of Bill C-225.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion in amendment of the Honourable Senator Moreau agreed to.)

MOTION, AS AMENDED, ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion, as amended, of the Honourable Senator Petten, seconded by the Honourable Senator Duncan:

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, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology and 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.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, as amended.)

[*English*]

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE DAY BILL

THIRD READING

Hon. Judy A. White moved third reading of Bill S-219, An Act to establish Judicial Independence Day.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise to speak at third reading of Bill S-219, An Act to establish Judicial Independence Day.

I am proud to be the sponsor of this bill, which expresses Canada’s commitment to democracy and justice for all. I want to acknowledge Senator Moreau for his tireless advocacy for the independence and transparency of democratic institutions. Bringing this bill forward was one of his first acts when he was appointed to this place. Thank you very much, sir.

Bill S-219 designates an annual day recognizing judicial independence. It gives us a recurring reminder to check in on the state of our democracy. It is a way of reaffirming the strength of our institutions, and it is a show of solidarity for independent courts around the world. It enshrines our commitments to good governance, the rule of law and justice for all. It sets judicial independence day for January 11, the day of the “1,000 Robes March” in Poland in 2020, where thousands of jurists stood up for the impartiality of courts in Europe. Poland was facing significant overreach and political interference by the governing party at that time, which had adopted muzzle laws and arbitrary disciplinary proceedings that undercut the ability of judges to be impartial. Thousands of jurists from across Europe gathered to silently and peacefully march through the streets of Warsaw to show that they would not stand for this treatment. They came together in support of a justice system that is stable, predictable and free of partisan biases. They stood for judicial independence.

Judicial independence means a lack of political interference with the activities of courts, but it also means the freedom of jurists to criticize the government and to enforce the rule of law, the Constitution and the rights of the people. It ensures that one head of power is not too concentrated and that there are checks and balances against the power of the legislative and executive branches. In practice, this looks like a transparent and fair appointment process for judges, security of tenure and resources and non-interference by other orders of government.

Judicial independence is essential for public trust in institutions, and it is a vital safeguard for good governance.

In his second reading speech, Senator Housakos described judicial independence as “security of tenure, financial security and administrative independence.” However, he argued:

. . . beneath these technicalities lies a deeper, more fundamental principle: the right of every Canadian to have their rights adjudicated by someone who does not owe their position or their livelihood to the whims of the government of the day.

Senator Housakos underscored the importance of protecting the courts not only from actual interference but also from any perception that they are influenced by outside factors.

Colleagues, you have already heard why this bill matters and why it is especially important in the modern era. During second reading, examples emerged of places where there is democratic backsliding and political interference in the courts. All over the world, there are instances of the erosion of democracy through the destabilization and weakening of the power of the courts. We discussed how institutions can come undone through attacks against judges, lawyers and their work. We agreed across group and party lines that democracy is an active process that requires an ongoing commitment to the values that underlie it and the frequent recommitment to the strength of its institutions. We agreed on the vital importance of judicial independence in Canada not only today but for the next seven generations to come.

Colleagues, even where the system of checks and balances is strong — like the one we have in Canada — it must not be taken for granted. We must frequently recommit to maintaining non-interference in our justice system, and we must uphold the principles of predictability, relational accountability and equality for all. These are not simple ideas that I am suggesting; rather, they are essential elements of our democracy that we are compelled to uphold by our Constitution, the common law and our international human rights obligations.

Creating a day for judicial independence is not just putting a mark on the calendar. It represents an annual commitment to verify the strength of our institutions and to ensure constant recommitment to our values moving forward.

In committee, the Honourable Justice Clayton Conlan of the Canadian Superior Courts Judges Association argued:

Judicial independence is the cornerstone of our constitutional democracy in Canada. Judicial independence, the separation of powers, distinct branches of government and the rule of law are some of the most important pillars of our society.

The Canadian Superior Courts Judges Association strongly supports this bill not only because it is a way of being vigilant about maintaining the strength of the judiciary in Canada but because it is a way of supporting the independence of jurists and courts everywhere.

With the adoption of Bill S-219, Canada will be the first country to answer the global calls to adopt a national judicial independence day. We will show international solidarity with judges whose independence is threatened by executive overreach.

We will stand tall in our values in an era when the strength of justice and trust in institutions are beginning to falter around the world. We will not take judicial independence for granted; rather, we will engage actively with maintaining the strength of our democratic institutions and the principle of non-interference in courts. And we will be a global leader in expressing our support for the freedom of courts.

• (1810)

Colleagues, this is our moment to stand tall in our values and to commit to never becoming complacent. It is our commitment to vigilance over our democracy. Adopting this bill will not only show our solidarity with the jurists everywhere who resist threats to their independence, but also enshrine our ongoing commitment to integrity, justice and the rule of law through judicial independence.

Honourable senators, I encourage you to adopt Bill S-219 without amendment and without delay. Because when we stand for judicial independence, we stand for Canada’s foundational values. We stand for freedom, the rule of law and justice for all.

Wela’liog. Thank you.

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise today at third reading to speak briefly in support of Bill S-219, An Act to establish Judicial Independence Day. I want to once again congratulate Senator Moreau for bringing this initiative forward and Senator White for taking on its sponsorship and advancing it through this chamber.

Colleagues, this is a modest bill. It does one simple thing: It designates January 11 of each year as judicial independence day in Canada. But while its legislative footprint is small, the principle it affirms is anything but small.

Judicial independence is one of the invisible pillars of our democracy. It is what ensures that judges decide cases according to the law and the facts before them, not according to political pressure, public opinion or the preferences of the government of the day.

That matters because judicial independence is not a privilege for judges. It is a protection for citizens. It is the guarantee that every Canadian, regardless of status, influence, popularity or political viewpoint, can stand before a court and expect to be heard by an impartial decision maker.

The date chosen in this bill is significant. January 11 marks the anniversary of the 1000 Robes March in Warsaw, Poland, when judges from across Europe marched peacefully against attacks on judicial independence. It was a powerful reminder that the rule of law can be weakened when governments begin to treat the courts as obstacles to be managed rather than institutions to be respected.

Canada is fortunate. We do not live under an authoritarian system where courts openly serve the will of the executive branch. We have strong constitutional traditions, a respected judiciary and a legal culture that has long recognized the separation of powers.

However, colleagues, we should never confuse strength with permanence. Democratic institutions do not maintain themselves. They require vigilance, restraint, public confidence and a willingness by parliamentarians to defend the boundaries that keep power in check.

That is why I support this bill, not only as an act of commemoration but as a call to duty. Judicial independence must be more than a principle we celebrate just in speeches. It must be a discipline we practise in our public life.

[*Translation*]

When courts render decisions, the government is entitled to disagree. Lawmakers can criticize their logic and citizens can debate it. All that is part and parcel of a free society. However, we have to be careful to avoid ever weakening the legitimacy of the justice system or implying that judges must bend to political will.

This bill is a great opportunity to deliver a civics lesson. For many Canadians, especially young Canadians, the rule of law and the separation of powers may seem abstract.

Judicial independence day could become an annual event that gives schools, the legal community and civilian institutions an opportunity to explain why independent courts are essential, why judges have to be able to do their work without interference, and how their independence protects the rights of each and every Canadian.

[*English*]

At committee, witnesses reminded us that Canada has an opportunity to lead. International organizations have called for the recognition of January 11 as a day of judicial independence. By passing Bill S-219, Canada can be among the first to answer that call in law and to send a clear message that we stand with independent courts here at home and around the world.

Colleagues, the rule of law is not self-executing. It depends on institutions, traditions and a public culture that understands why power must be limited and why justice must be independent.

Bill S-219 is a simple, meaningful affirmation of those values. It asks us to pause each year and remember that the independence of the judiciary is essential to democracy, human rights, public confidence and equal application of the law.

For those reasons, I am very pleased to support Bill S-219, and I respectfully ask all senators to join me in supporting its passage at third reading.

Thank you.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

NATIONAL BIRD OF CANADA BILL

THIRD READING

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan moved third reading of Bill S-221, An Act to provide for the recognition of the Canada jay as the national bird of Canada.

She said: Honourable senators, I rise today as the sponsor of Bill S-221, An Act to provide for the recognition of the Canada jay as the national bird of Canada, also known as the national bird of Canada act.

Nations are constantly being described in statistics, headlines, speeches and history books. Every nation also chooses a few symbols through which it describes itself, and that choice matters.

A national symbol is a statement to future generations. It tells them that, of all the things that surround us, this is the one we considered worthy of carrying forward the story of our land and our peoples.

The maple leaf tells a story. So does the beaver. Today, with Bill S-221, I ask colleagues to let the Canada jay tell another.

Many countries have chosen birds that soar at great heights, dominate the landscape or command attention the moment they appear. The Canada jay takes a different path.

It is a bird woven into the background of Canadian life. It inhabits the boreal forest that stretches across our country. It is familiar to hikers, campers, hunters, naturalists and countless Canadians who venture into the woods. It is hardy, intelligent and loyal. It is a bird that stores food for leaner days, a bird that stays with us through bitter-cold winters, a bird so friendly that it approaches humans instead of flying away from them. Clearly, it is a bird that lives with grace and resilience, just like Canadians.

There is a quiet wisdom in choosing a bird like that. Long after this debate is forgotten, schoolchildren will learn that Canada chose a national bird that symbolizes what we stand for. They may never read this bill. They may never know our names. But they will know what we chose to honour.

I believe that, with the Canada jay, we have chosen well. It is a choice supported by numerous organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Canadians, 35 of which submitted briefs to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology during the study. Even well-known Canadians, such as Anne Murray, Roy MacGregor, James Raffan and Robert Bateman, to name a few, expressed their support for the Canada jay.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the people behind the Canada jay project, without whom I would not have had the opportunity to work on this bill: Dan Strickland, Ryan Norris, Alain Goulet, Aaron Kylie, Mark Nadjiwan, Michel Gosselin, Colleen Archer and former MP Brenda Shanahan.

I would also like to thank Senator Duncan for being a friendly critic. As well, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Senator McNair for giving me a singing Canada jay plush toy. It now occupies a place of honour on the artificial tree in my office, together with the black-capped chickadee plush that also came from Senator McNair. The two seem very happy together as they spend their days looking over my desk, silently judging my workload. My staff enter my office every morning expecting to find a third plush to appear and form a coalition government against me.

But most especially, I wish to thank my friend Dr. David Bird. Different people have different passions, and Dave and I share a passion for birds, but his has been a lifelong passion, and his advocacy for the Canada jay has spanned many years.

• (1820)

Last week, I was interviewed by a journalist who asked me, "Why a bird?"

"Because they can fly," I responded. "They soar high and sail beyond our imagination, treating the sky as a canvas."

One of my favourite poets — whom you've heard me quote many times — Rumi used birds as metaphors to represent the human spirit, the pursuit of freedom and the sacred bond between humanity and the divine.

On that note, allow me to conclude my speech by quoting Rumi, who said, "I want to sing like the bird sings, not worrying about who hears or what they think." These words speak to qualities that make birds enduring symbols across cultures: freedom, confidence and the unconstrained spirit.

As Canada continues to redefine itself, let us choose a symbol that aptly reflects these qualities. Let us choose a bird that reminds us of who we are as a nation: resilient, trusting and staunchly Canadian. Let us choose the Canada jay as the national bird of Canada.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, I would like to express my thanks to Senator Ataullahjan for her tireless dedication to this bill. I would like to offer my remarks as the critic at third reading of Bill S-221. As Senator Ataullahjan has pointed out, it is an act to provide for recognition of the Canada jay as the national bird of Canada.

It has been a year and a day since I first spoke on this initiative. Allow me to quote the bird lover in our chamber, the sponsor of this bill, Senator Ataullahjan, from our committee hearings.

[Senator Ataullahjan]

She said:

Every country . . . chooses symbols to reflect its values, beliefs and aspirations. . . . It's not just branding; it's nation building. . . .

. . . all provinces and territories have an official bird. . . .

. . . it is critical that we choose a bird that doesn't just represent our geography but our spirit.

The other day in this chamber, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Louise Arbour said, "We don't think we are perfect, but we believe we are pretty well on the way there."

It is critical when we choose our national symbol that we choose carefully, and that it reflects who we are and what we can be.

Dr. Bird, professor emeritus of wildlife biology at McGill University, said:

First Nations folks highly revere the whisky jack as an omen of good fortune and a warning of danger in the forest. . . . neither hunted nor killed as a nuisance species and also not an endangered species. . . . it's arguably one of the smartest birds on the planet. . . . this intelligent bird demonstrates an impressive amount of economic skill by hiding and relocating as many as 100,000 food items in a single season. . . .

. . . an extremely tough and hardy species, this bird actually elects not to leave our country during our harsh Canadian winters.

The most important point for me and what makes the whisky jack, or the Canada jay, the perfect symbol of Canada is that it breeds in every province and territory.

A year ago, I urged senators to pass Bill S-221 to demonstrate to our colleagues in the other place that we can listen and act in the spirit of collegiality on the simple request of millions of Canadian birders and, indeed, Canadians to recognize the Canada jay as Canada's national bird.

Again, colleagues, in these nation building times, as we build Canada strong, let us add another perfect symbol to reflect our strength as a nation. I urge support for Bill S-221, the declaration of the Canada jay as Canada's national bird.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

Hon. Réjean Aucoin: Honourable senators, I thank Senator Duncan and Senator Ataullahjan. The Canada jay symbolizes resilience. As we've heard, it is found everywhere, in every province and territory. It's true that it enjoys the company of humans. In the olden days, it accompanied all the loggers who cleared our land to build Canada.

I don't know if it understands English and French, Canada's official languages, but I can tell you that, every time I've ventured out into nature and offered up a few crumbs of the granola bar stashed in my pocket, a Canada jay has eaten them right out of my hand. It did not discriminate on the basis of language.

I encourage you to accept this bird as a symbol of Canada.

Thank you.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

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

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, for the second reading of Bill S-223, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act.

Hon. Paul (PJ) Prosper: Honourable senators, I rise to speak to Bill S-223, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act.

I want to recognize Senator McCallum and her leadership in drafting this bill and in working with many First Nations from across this country. I support this bill, which makes amendments to the parent act designed to do the following:

. . . provide that the duties of members who are peace officers include the prevention of offences against First Nation laws and the execution of warrants that may, under First Nation laws, be lawfully executed and performed by peace officers.

This new act provides the clarity that is needed for the RCMP to enforce First Nation by-laws that are often not being enforced to the detriment of communities across this country.

It must be said that First Nations governments have an inherent right to govern themselves, and that right has never been extinguished. Indigenous laws are rooted in our ways of knowing, our history and our culture. We know what is best for

our people. Section 35 of the Constitution Act recognizes rights that are inherent and affirmed, and section 8.3 of the Interpretation Act, as amended in 2024, states that:

Every enactment is to be construed as upholding the Aboriginal and treaty rights of Indigenous peoples recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and not as abrogating or derogating from them.

Dr. Naomi Metallic, in her paper entitled “Indian Act By-Laws: A Viable Means for First Nations to (Re)Assert Control Over Local Matters Now and Not Later,” explains that former Indigenous member of Parliament Rob Clarke’s 2014 amendment to the Indian Act removed provisions related to ministerial disallowance.

She explains the significance of these amendments:

. . . despite the fact that INAC previously took a restrictive interpretation of these powers, modern interpretation and constitutional principles now support a broad, generous and adaptive reading of the *Indian Act* by-laws, empowering First Nation governments to legislate over a wide range of local matters affecting their communities. The by-law powers also make First Nation by-laws paramount over provincial laws and federal laws in a number of cases.

• (1830)

Yet, there is a disparity between the legal force and effect bylaws should have and how they are being respected. I support studying this bill in committee because we need to hear about the effect that non-enforcement has in First Nations communities. There is also a need for more people to know what is happening on the ground in the governance of First Nations communities.

On April 27, 2024, in the community of the Oromocto First Nation in New Brunswick, also known as Welamukotuk, 54-year-old Sheri Lynn Sabattis, sister to Chief Shelley Sabattis, was murdered. The perpetrator was a 38-year-old man from nearby Burton, New Brunswick, who had previously been banished from the reserve by the band council. However, the RCMP and government entities did not enforce these band council bylaws, citing jurisdictional and complex legal voids.

Notably, the lack of prosecutions has served as an additional deterrent to enforcement, but I will tackle that in my next speech.

Colleagues, pockets of progress do exist across the country. In Saskatchewan, Bill 126, The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2022, created a legal framework that allowed First Nations to enforce their laws and bylaws on reserves. The bill enabled them to use tickets, fines and other court-administered measures.

Bronwyn Eyre, the previous Justice Minister and Attorney General of Saskatchewan, stated:

Saskatchewan is a national leader in this area, which will allow First Nations more control over how they address offences and manage fine revenue

This is a practical change that will make First Nations bylaw enforcement more efficient, less expensive, and less time-consuming.

Previously, First Nations had to go through long and difficult enforcement processes, such as those of the Criminal Code, in order to ensure the enforcement, prosecution and adjudication of their laws and bylaws. This legislation allows for this to happen, just like it does for all other provincial laws.

In Manitoba, Bill 43, the Provincial Offences Amendment Act of 2023, has introduced changes that enable First Nations to prosecute infractions of their own laws and bylaws through the provincial ticketing and fine collection system. On May 23, 2023, a CBC News article stated that this issue was initially raised as:

. . . local police forces being unwilling to enforce First Nations laws and bylaws, including bans on drugs and alcohol.

Since its adoption, any First Nation in Manitoba is free to opt in, as these alterations streamline law enforcement and alleviate the burden on the provincial court system. This demonstrates the importance of consultation in raising issues happening on reserves and how laws can be enforced to hold First Nation community members and individuals, such as RCMP officers, accountable.

Recently, New Brunswick has proposed Bill 50, an amendment to the Provincial Offences Procedure Act. If First Nations choose to use these bylaws, they can do so. These bylaws are developed by communities themselves, ensuring that local priorities and public safety are dealt with in an accountable and transparent manner. Furthermore, all fines collected for bylaw violations are returned to the First Nations communities.

Justice Minister and Attorney General of New Brunswick Robert McKee stated:

This legislation reflects our commitment to rebuilding a government-to-government relationship, while affirming our respect for Indigenous self-governance

This legislation provides flexibility by proceeding to the courts for serious bylaw infractions. If this legislation is enacted, there will be a transition period for education and implementation. These provisions and educational phases show the provinces' willingness to collaborate closely with Indigenous communities to ensure community safety while respecting the communities' values.

These three provinces serve as examples of the importance of consulting with Indigenous communities regarding their values, desire for public safety and the need to streamline legal proceedings.

I see Bill S-223 as a way of aligning the rest of the country with these trailblazing jurisdictions.

Thank you. *Wela'liog.*

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

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

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McCallum, seconded by the Honourable Senator Martin, for the second reading of Bill S-224, An Act to amend the Director of Public Prosecutions Act.

Hon. Paul (PJ) Prosper: Honourable senators, I rise again to speak to Senator McCallum's second bill, Bill S-224, An Act to amend the Director of Public Prosecutions Act. Though I am named the critic of this bill, I want to be clear that, as with Bill S-223, I am a friendly critic.

Again, despite the jurisprudence clearly placing First Nations law on par with the laws of Canada, there is a gap in the enforcement and prosecution of the former. Law enforcement is reluctant to spend their resources on enforcement, knowing that the public prosecution service will likely not pursue charges.

The solution proposed in Bill S-224 is a simple and elegant way to ensure with clarity that the Public Prosecution Service of Canada is duty-bound to prosecute summary conviction offences based on First Nations law.

• (1840)

As mentioned in my previous speech, these are examples of such direction being given at the provincial level. Both Manitoba and Saskatchewan are leading provinces in the enforcement of Indigenous laws and bylaws.

In 2023, the Government of Manitoba passed Bill 43, amending the Provincial Offences Act to expand how First Nations in Manitoba enforce specific laws and bylaws.

Likewise, the Government of Saskatchewan passed Bill 126, the Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2022, providing a simplified legal framework enabling First Nations to enforce laws and bylaws on reserve through tickets, fines and other measures that can be administered through the provincial court. The rest of Canada must follow suit.

There is a misconception that bylaws based on First Nation cultural laws and traditions are incompatible with the Charter and the Constitution Act, 1982. This misconception also comes from a general lack of acceptance that bylaws have the same force and effect as the laws of Canada.

On the former, the Supreme Court of Canada's 2024 ruling on *Dickson v. Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation* affirmed that the Charter does apply to First Nations laws, but that the collective rights of a community or a nation, rooted in culture, history and tradition, were shielded by section 25 of the Charter.

For those who may not have committed the Charter to memory, section 25 says:

The guarantee in this Charter of certain rights and freedoms shall not be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any aboriginal, treaty or other rights or freedoms that pertain to the aboriginal peoples of Canada including:

- a. any rights or freedoms that have been recognized by the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763; and
- b. any rights or freedoms that now exist by way of land claim agreements or may be so acquired.

Disappointingly, this reasoning has not been widely applied to First Nations laws such as those around banishment.

The Tla'amin Nation's May 2021 written submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs regarding the enforcement on Tla'amin Nation territory stated:

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) often decline to enforce Treaty or Land Code Indigenous government's laws because they are of the opinion that these are akin to "municipal bylaws". . . .

Equating Indigenous laws to local municipal regulations undermines the authority of our legal systems and ignores our inherent right to self-governance.

In a February 25, 2025, CBC article entitled, "Heiltsuk Nation files Charter challenge over RCMP refusal to enforce bylaws," the Heiltsuk Nation highlighted the crisis their community faces due to drugs and drug trafficking. The harms from overdoses and sexual violence are exacerbated by the RCMP's refusal to enforce Heiltsuk law.

Colleagues, Indigenous laws are laws. Failing to recognize these legal measures undermines the legal protections Indigenous leaders create to protect their communities.

Study after study shows that First Nations are racially profiled, over-policed and overrepresented in the criminal justice system. At the same time, First Nations also experience minimal support from law enforcement agencies. Feelings of insecurity, frustration and distrust result from inconsistent enforcement.

I can understand why police officers wouldn't want to enforce laws that cannot be prosecuted. However, they are not being prosecuted because of what I would argue is a flawed presumption.

At the end of the day, Indigenous laws need to be enforced, inherent rights need to be respected and First Nations Peoples need to feel comfortable in their communities.

Therefore, I would urge senators to support having Bill S-224 studied by committee. We've seen the benefits enforcement can have on First Nations communities in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It is time we see these benefits across the country.

First Nations communities deserve to feel the same sense of security, safety and control that other communities enjoy in this country.

Thank you, *wela'liiq*.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and bill read second time.)

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

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

(On motion of Senator McCallum, bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.)

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. David M. Wells moved second reading of Bill C-230, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (debt forgiveness registry).

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today as sponsor of Bill C-230, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (debt forgiveness registry).

Before turning to the substance of the bill, I would like to recognize the work of my colleague in the other place member of Parliament Adam Chambers. Throughout his time in Parliament, Mr. Chambers has consistently demonstrated a strong interest in public accountability, government transparency and the stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

This legislation reflects those priorities. It is the product of considerable effort and persistence on his part, and I would like to acknowledge the work he has done in bringing this bill before Parliament.

While members and senators may ultimately arrive at different conclusions on particular pieces of legislation, I think we all can agree that it is important to recognize thoughtful efforts that seek to strengthen transparency and public confidence in government institutions. Bill C-230 is one such effort. It is rooted in a simple principle: Canadians deserve transparency when significant financial decisions affecting public resources are made.

• (1850)

That principle is anything but controversial, so most Canadians would be surprised to learn that while governments regularly report on spending programs, grants and contributions, it can be far more difficult for an ordinary citizen to determine when millions of dollars owed to the Crown have been forgiven or written off.

Yet, that is exactly what has happened in recent years. Billions of dollars in debts and obligations owed to the federal government have been written off or forgiven. The decision to do so may very well have been justified. In many cases, they likely were. However, the average Canadian would be hard pressed to figure out who benefited, how much public money was involved or under what authority those decisions were made.

According to publicly available government figures, in a single fiscal year the federal government wrote off, forgave, remitted or waived approximately \$18 billion in debts and obligations. While information about these decisions exists within government records, it is often scattered across multiple reports and databases, making meaningful public scrutiny difficult.

Transparency should not require citizens to sift through volumes of reports, tables and disclosures in the hope of finding information that ought to be readily accessible. Some may point out that this information is already available, and in some cases it is. Governments publish public accounts annually, departments

issue annual reports, and various disclosures exist across the federal system. The issue is not whether information exists somewhere; the issue is whether it is meaningfully accessible.

As MP Chambers noted when introducing this legislation, transparency is not achieved simply because information exists within government records. True transparency requires that the information be organized, searchable and reasonably accessible to the public. Canadians should not have to navigate multiple reports and databases to determine whether millions of dollars owed to the Crown have been forgiven.

Bill C-230 seeks to address that gap. This legislation would require the President of the Treasury Board to establish and maintain a public online registry containing information related to debts, obligations and claims of \$2 million or more that have been remitted, forgiven, written off or waived by the Government of Canada.

The registry would identify the recipient, the amount involved, the authority under which the debt arose and the authority under which it was forgiven. It would also indicate the fiscal year in which the decision occurred.

Importantly, the bill contains safeguards to protect confidential, personal and sensitive information. Where information must be withheld, the registry would indicate the basis for doing so. In short, the bill strikes an appropriate balance between transparency and legitimate privacy concerns.

Honourable colleagues, Parliament's most fundamental responsibility is stewardship of the public purse. The relationship between Parliament and public finances is not a modern concept. It is one of the foundations of parliamentary democracy. The principle that governments must account for the collection and use of public funds predates Confederation by centuries.

Canadians entrust governments with significant powers. Governments collect taxes, borrow money and allocate public resources. With those powers comes an obligation to be transparent and accountable. Bill C-230 is consistent with that long-standing parliamentary tradition.

Parliament routinely receives detailed information about government spending, yet decisions to not collect money owed to the Crown can have financial consequences similar to direct expenditures. Whether money is spent or forgiven, public resources are affected. Canadians are therefore entitled to know when significant debts are remitted, waived or written off and under what authority those decisions are made.

It is important to emphasize that transparency should never be viewed through a partisan lens. Whether a government is Conservative, Liberal or of any other political stripe, the principle remains the same. Canadians should be able to understand how significant financial decisions are made, no matter who is in power. Governments change. The public interest in transparency and the right to know do not.

There are circumstances where governments may reasonably conclude that a debt is uncollectible. There may be legal settlements, insolvencies, administrative errors, extraordinary economic events or other circumstances that justify debt relief.

Nothing in Bill C-230 questions the legitimacy of those decisions. The bill recognizes that governments require flexibility.

What it asks is that, once those decisions have been made, Canadians have the opportunity to see the results for themselves. This bill does not interfere with government decisions leading to that determination. It does not prohibit governments from exercising discretion. It does not eliminate existing authorities. It does not require governments to justify their decisions to a tribunal or obtain parliamentary approval before acting.

What it does require, colleagues, is transparency after the fact. That distinction is important.

Bill C-230 is not about preventing governments from governing. It is about ensuring Canadians can see how those powers are being exercised.

Transparency serves several important purposes. First, it strengthens public confidence. Citizens are more likely to trust public institutions when they can clearly see how decisions are being made. Second, transparency promotes consistency. When decisions are visible, governments are naturally encouraged to apply policies fairly and consistently. Third, transparency improves parliamentary oversight. As senators, we are regularly asked to review spending proposals, estimates and fiscal plans involving billions of dollars in public resources. Yet, a complete understanding of the government's financial position requires more than knowing where money is spent. It also requires understanding where money owed to the Crown is no longer expected to be collected. This registry would help Parliament and Canadians obtain a more complete picture of federal financial management.

Regardless of one's political views, there is significant public interest in government spending, government borrowing and government financial management. Without information, accountability becomes difficult. Without accountability, public trust suffers.

Recent reporting has highlighted instances where a relatively small number of corporate entities accounted for more than a billion dollars in debt writeoffs and other forgiven obligations. Whether one agrees or disagrees with those decisions is beside the point. Canadians are entitled to know when substantial sums owed to the government — to Canadians — are no longer to be collected.

During committee study in the other place, parliamentarians amended the bill to increase the reporting threshold from the original proposal of \$1 million to \$2 million. That change further reinforces the targeted nature of the legislation.

The registry would not capture routine administrative adjustments or minor settlements. Instead, it would focus exclusively on significant transactions involving substantial amounts of public money, ensuring transparency while avoiding unnecessary administrative burdens.

I also note that the registry would be updated in conjunction with the tabling of public accounts, creating a predictable and manageable reporting framework.

As honourable senators know, public confidence in institutions cannot be taken for granted. Across democratic societies, citizens increasingly expect governments to operate transparently and accountably. They expect public institutions to justify their decisions. They expect access to information.

These expectations are not unreasonable. Indeed, they are healthy. Transparency should not be viewed as a burden; it should be viewed as a strength.

What strikes me most about Bill C-230 is how modest it is. It does not expand the powers of government. It does not create a new regulator. It does not establish a new bureaucracy to oversee financial decisions, and it does not create additional approval processes. It simply requires that information regarding significant debt forgiveness decisions can be collected and reported on in one place and made available to Canadians. That is a modest and reasonable requirement.

Should honourable colleagues agree to send this bill to committee, witnesses will have the opportunity to examine whether the \$2 million threshold is appropriate, whether additional safeguards are required and whether the proposed reporting framework achieves the right balance between transparency and administrative practicality. That is exactly the kind of scrutiny that committee study is intended to provide.

This bill does not seek to shame businesses, reopen settled matters or restrict the government's ability to exercise discretion. Governments will continue to make decisions regarding insolvencies, settlements and uncollectible debts. Bill C-230 simply ensures that when those decisions involve substantial amounts of public money, Canadians can readily see that they occurred.

At its heart, this legislation asks a simple question: When millions of dollars owed to the Government of Canada are written off, forgiven, remitted or waived, should Canadians be able to know about it? I believe the answer is yes.

For those reasons, colleagues, I am pleased to sponsor this legislation and encourage honourable senators to support Bill C-230 at second reading and refer it to committee for further study.

Thank you.

(On motion of Senator Black, debate adjourned.)

• (1900)

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

Is it agreed to not see the clock?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

[Translation]

RULES, PROCEDURES AND THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT

THIRD REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Harder, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator White, for the adoption of the third report (interim) of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, entitled *Membership of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators*, presented in the Senate on April 28, 2026.

Hon. Pierrette Ringuette: Honourable senators, I am pleased to rise to speak very briefly to this extremely important report, which contains the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament to amend our rules, at the request of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators, to ensure better representation of the various groups in the Senate. Honourable senators, I move the adoption of this report.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

[English]

ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR SENATORS

FIRST REPORT OF COMMITTEE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the first report of the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators (*Consideration of matters relating to the Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators*), presented in the Senate on June 9, 2026.

Hon. Peter Harder moved the adoption of the report.

He said: Honourable senators, I will be brief. I want to describe the architecture of the report you have in front of you.

As senators know, the Ethics Committee is seized with the framework of managing our *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators*, and that act is one that the Senate adopted some years ago. It does provide for the Senate Ethics Officer, or SEO, to provide guidelines to senators with respect to the interpretation of that act. Those guidelines are, from time to time, brought by the SEO to the Ethics Committee for their consideration and approval. Once approved by the Ethics Committee, they are placed on the website of the Senate Ethics Officer, and they provide guidance to senators on questions related to the matters that are in the guidelines.

Earlier this week, the SEO tabled, on the website, guidelines with respect to outside activities as well as guidelines with respect to sponsored travel. These guidelines were approved by the committee at its last meeting. They do not change any of the code provisions. Otherwise, they would have had to be brought here.

A third subject matter was discussed in our committee, and that is guidelines on gifts and benefits. The SEO recommended code changes to bring flexibility, clarity and consistency to certain matters dealing with those aspects of the code. It is the fact that it is amending the code that it comes here today for the Senate's approval. Once approved here, it, too, will become a subject of the website of the SEO and provided to senators to give them guidance.

The somewhat technical changes are twofold. One deals with ensuring greater clarity on the notion that neither senators nor family members shall accept, directly or indirectly, any gift or benefit, except compensation authorized by law, that could be reasonably — and this is the addition:

... seen to have been given to influence the Senator in the exercise of a duty or function of their office.

In other words, it is prohibited unless it is seen to be part of the function of the office. You don't want to have undue influence.

These are words that are used on the House of Commons side. They provide the similarity of treatment, if I can put it that way, between a senator or a member of Parliament in the exercise of their representative roles.

The second aspect is a very technical amendment with respect to making it clear that senators can request, in writing, the approval of the SEO for senators participating in programs of general application — government programs. If you wanted to buy an electric vehicle and you felt that it was something you wanted to disclose, you could get written confirmation that that is of general application, and that could be posted on your disclosure. It is simply to ensure that we are very transparent in receipt of any government program.

These guidelines will be issued, as I say, once we adopt this. I do believe that the three guidelines that I referenced tonight will bring a greater, frankly, modernity of view, transparency, flexibility and clarity to the work of the SEO. On his behalf, I thank the Senate for its consideration.

I would close by giving special thanks to the members of the committee: Senator Busson, who is the deputy chair, Senator Carignan, Senator Dean and Senator Ross, all of whom have supported this work in the months of this consideration.

I would call the question.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

STUDY ON GROWING ISSUE OF WILDFIRES

FOURTH REPORT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY COMMITTEE AND REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ADOPTED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the fourth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, entitled *Canada on Fire: The catastrophic and escalating effects of wildfires on lives and communities*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on June 10, 2026.

Hon. Mary Robinson moved:

That the fourth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, entitled *Canada on Fire: The catastrophic and escalating effects of wildfires on lives and communities*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on Wednesday, June 10, 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 Emergency Management and Community Resilience being identified as minister responsible for responding to the report, in consultation with the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature, the Minister of Indigenous Services, and the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs.

She said: Honourable senators, I wanted to rise briefly to speak to the report, and, following my remarks, I hope you will support me in calling the question on this report.

Let me provide some quick facts about the study. The committee started the study in April 2024. We heard from 79 witnesses and received 23 stakeholder briefs. The report makes 15 recommendations. I will not go into all the recommendations because I do want to be brief, but to give this chamber a snapshot into what the committee has recommended, I will read a few now. Recommendation 1 states that:

The Government of Canada designate forests as a strategic national asset and recognize forests as critical and renewable infrastructure.

Recommendation 2 states that:

The Government of Canada create a federal coordinating office for wildfires and emergency response . . . to coordinate people, resources and policy in a modernized context, and that this office include the voices of Indigenous communities and their expertise.

Recommendation 6 states that:

The Government of Canada establish a national wildfire hazard mapping program to predict the likelihood of wildfires with the same models used for drought and flood forecasting.

Recommendation 8 states that:

The Government of Canada, in partnership with Indigenous communities, take urgent action to recognize, remove any barriers to the integration of, and resource traditional Indigenous knowledge and expertise, including by investing in and expanding Indigenous-led, on-the-ground firefighting workforces.

Recommendation 4 states that:

The Government of Canada work with provinces, territories, municipalities and Indigenous communities and governments to develop coordinated approaches to mitigate and respond to human- and health-consequences of wildfires — including physical and mental health issues linked to smoke exposure and the psychological effects of evacuation and displacement trauma — by ensuring long-term funding for mental health supports for affected communities, before, during and after wildfire evacuations, that integrate pre-planning support, cultural safety and relationship building across agencies.

• (1910)

Honourable senators, the committee heard testimony that leaves no room for doubt. Wildfires are an escalating national crisis. They are growing in size, frequency and severity. Just checking the Canadian Wildland Fire Information System today, there have been 6 new fires reported and 93 remain active.

The committee began its study following the most devastating wildfire season in our history. In 2023, we saw 6,837 fires, more than 232,000 people evacuated and 14.6 million hectares burned. That, for a visual, is double the size of New Brunswick.

In 2024, the fire in Jasper National Park and the Municipality of Jasper destroyed one third of the town's buildings and caused \$1 billion in insured losses, making it one of the costliest natural disasters in Canadian history. The 2025 season was equally difficult. Families are losing homes, livelihoods and stability. Communities are being uprooted. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians have been displaced in recent years. Wildfire smoke is degrading air quality far beyond the fire zone, affecting Canadians thousands of kilometres away. Agriculture and forestry — two cornerstones of Canada's economy that each contribute just over \$30 billion to our GDP — suffer major losses annually due to wildfires. Flames destroy timber, crops, pasture land, greenhouses and nurseries, and flames place livestock,

machinery and infrastructure all in danger. Financial stress, especially, is a major concern for producers and communities. They face rising insurance costs, and business risk management programs do not respond quickly enough during wildfire emergencies.

Colleagues, these reports are not just academic — they have a real impact, influencing policy discussions and shaping decisions that affect Canadians' daily lives, whether it's those fighting the wildfires or those dealing with the resulting destruction or even those who are physically unaffected but still feel urgently about the matter. For this reason, I would like to get the clock started on a government response and call the question on the report now.

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

Hon. Senators: Question.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO URGE GOVERNMENT TO CALL FOR IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF DR. GULSHAN ABBAS— DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition), pursuant to notice of June 9, 2026, moved:

That the Senate urge the Government of Canada to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Dr. Gulshan Abbas, arbitrarily detained by the authorities of the People's Republic of China since 2018, and to seek verifiable information regarding her health and legal status, in coordination with international partners, as well as regarding the systematic repression and arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang.

He said: Honourable senators, this motion is about a single woman, but it is also about the integrity and moral courage of this chamber. Tomorrow, June 12, a retired medical doctor named Dr. Gulshan Abbas will mark her sixty-fourth birthday, but there will be no celebration, no family gathering, no phone calls from her children and no warm wishes from her sister.

Instead, tomorrow, Dr. Abbas will spend her birthday exactly as she has spent every single day for nearly the last eight years: locked away in a dark secret prison cell, cut off from the world, stripped of her dignity and denied her basic humanity by the regime in Beijing. The question is: Why? What was her crime? Her crime was not anything she did. Her crime was who her sister is.

Recently, I had the profound honour of attending a book launch for a powerful new memoir entitled *Unbroken*. There I met Gulshan's sister Rushan Abbas. Meeting Rushan, hearing her speak and looking into her eyes, you are immediately struck by her incredible resilience, but you also see the heavy, painful burden she carries every single day. In September 2018, Rushan stood up in Washington, D.C., and she did what we too often take for granted in this country: She spoke up; she spoke her truth. She publicly criticized the dictatorship and the Chinese Communist Party's horrific atrocities and systemic repression against the Uighur people in Xinjiang. Just six days later, back in China, her sister Gulshan disappeared. Gulshan was then subjected to a sham closed-door trial — a kangaroo court. She was sentenced to 20 years in prison on absurd politically motivated charges of terrorism and illegal assembly. She has been cut off from the world ever since. For nearly eight years, colleagues, her family has been left completely in the dark — no access, no communication and no legal representation. They have been denied any knowledge of her exact whereabouts. They have never seen the manufactured evidence used to convict her. Most alarmingly, they have no idea what her current health condition is.

Colleagues, by now we know enough about the Chinese regime to know that this is a textbook case of the ruthless campaign of transnational repression. We know about the Uighur genocide. We know about the mass arbitrary detentions, the family separations, the forced labour, the coercive birth prevention, the high-tech surveillance and the systemic erasure of Uighur culture and religious expression.

We know the facts and the world knows the facts, so we must be honest with ourselves in this chamber. In 2021, when the House of Commons voted to recognize the Uighur genocide, this Senate stood as an outlier among Western democracies. We voted down a motion to recognize that genocide. We chose silence over moral clarity. We chose to play nice with a regime that doesn't know the meaning of the word.

It pains me to say that this vote remains a stain on the record of this chamber and it's something, honourable senators, I have referenced many times because I will never be able to get my head around that.

However, history gives us moments of redemption, and I believe this motion presents this chamber with a critical opportunity to right the wrong. This motion doesn't ask us to change the past but demands that we face the present. It calls on the Government of Canada to do three simple and necessary things.

One, demand the immediate and unconditional release of Dr. Gulshan Abbas. Two, insist on verifiable information regarding her current health and legal status.

• (1920)

Three, coordinate with our international partners to confront the systematic repression and mass arbitrary detention of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang.

Colleagues, this motion is entirely consistent with the actions of our closest global allies and with our own parliamentary precedents right here at home and who we are as Canadians.

In October 2024, the European Parliament adopted a powerful resolution calling for Gulshan's immediate and unconditional release. Just last month, in May 2026, the United States Congress unanimously passed bipartisan resolutions in both the Senate and the House of Representatives explicitly naming and demanding freedom for Dr. Gulshan Abbas. But beyond matching the courage of our allies abroad, this motion is consistent with who we are as Canadians and a continuation of Canada's broader commitment to human rights.

We have done this before. In 2023, this Parliament voted unanimously to demand the release of pro-democracy advocate Jimmy Lai. Unfortunately, we are dealing with a regime that is not as affected by these motions in this place. These motions define who we are. We have seen through the history of mankind that these authoritarian dictators have no heart, no moral values and no principles.

Our country has a long, storied tradition of defending prisoners of conscience and opposing arbitrary state detention. Dr. Gulshan Abbas deserves that exact same defence.

Tomorrow, Gulshan Abbas will look at the calendar and know her sister is turning 64 in, we assume, a prison cell. She will know that Gulshan has already lost eight years of her life. Eight years is already eight years too many — not one more year; not one more day.

Let us send a clear, unified message to Beijing that Canada's Senate will no longer be an outlier and tolerant of their misbehaviour. Let us stand firmly, shoulder to shoulder with Gulshan and the Uighur community. Let us choose courage over convenience and justice over silence.

Honourable colleagues, I know where you all stand on principles and moral values. There will be some colleagues who will be apologists for this brutal Beijing regime. They will stand in a few months in this very chamber and try to make

justifications for the unjustifiable. But we know what this is. We know what we should call it, and we know the actions our government should take to stay consistent with other Western democracies around the world that will always stand up for human rights.

Honourable senators, I urge you all to support this motion and join me in demanding that they release Dr. Gulshan Abbas. It is the right thing to do. It is the Canadian thing to do.

Thank you, colleagues.

(On motion of Senator Kingston, debate adjourned.)

[*Translation*]

SENATE'S SELF-GOVERNANCE AND THE CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

INQUIRY—DEBATE POSTPONED

On Inquiries, Order No. 15, by the Honourable Marilou McPhedran:

That she will call the attention of the Senate to the Senate's self-governance and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, in the name of Senator McPhedran, I ask for leave of the Senate to stand this item.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Debate postponed until the next sitting of the Senate.)

(*At 7:24 p.m., the Senate was continued until Monday, June 15, 2026, at 6 p.m.*)

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