SENATE SÉNAT

CANADA

DEBATES OF THE SENATE

1st SESSION • 45th PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 154 • NUMBER 98

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 29, 2026

The Honourable RAYMONDE GAGNÉ,
Speaker

CONTENTS

(Daily index of proceedings appears at back of this issue).

Publications Centre: Publications@sen.parl.gc.ca

Published by the Senate
Available on the Internet: http://www.parl.gc.ca

THE SENATE

Thursday, October 29, 2026

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

Prayers.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

THE LATE HONOURABLE JOHN HAMM, O.C., O.N.S.

Hon. Rodger Cuzner: Honourable senators, I rise today to recognize the passing of a truly exceptional Nova Scotian and indeed a great Canadian. A much-trusted and beloved country family doctor who served the people of Pictou County for over 30 years, Dr. John Hamm took these same core values of care and compassion to his role as a member of the provincial legislature, the Leader of the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Party and, inevitably, the Premier of Nova Scotia.

My relationship with Dr. Hamm was forged in the early 2000s as the economy of Cape Breton was experiencing an existential shift away from its backbone industries of coal mining and steel production toward a future that was, at best, uncertain.

As premier, Dr. Hamm made the very tough decision to close the provincially owned and operated Sydney Steel Plant, while federally — along with my former House of Commons colleague Mark Eyking — we were faced with the reality of shuttering operations at the Cape Breton Development Corporation, or DEVCO — a federal Crown corporation.

The two greatest questions arising from these decisions were as follows: First, what would the economic future of our island look like? Second, what about the post-industrial cleanup?

Dr. Hamm was integral in working to develop the creation of the Cape Breton Growth Fund, a federal-provincial pool of capital focused on strategic investments that were designed to help with retooling our local economy.

Our island continues to recover from that paradigm shift, but we are certain that his efforts have put us on the right path.

As for the industrial legacy of mining and steelmaking, we worked together, along with the community stakeholders, to remediate the Sydney Tar Ponds, a site once referred to as "North America's worst toxic waste site." Today, this site is pristine, serving as host to both commercial and recreational infrastructure.

However, my admiration for Dr. Hamm was not just because of his ability to do the right thing and make difficult decisions. Senators, it was the manner in which he carried out these duties: always with honesty, integrity and respect for all those involved and impacted. Dr. Hamm had a natural ability to disagree with somebody, sometimes profoundly, yet still with respect.

He could stand firm on his principles without questioning the character of those who saw things differently. Those qualities that made Dr. Hamm a trusted family physician were the same ones that he brought to the premier's office. This celebrated leader and Member of the Order of Canada understood that public service was first and foremost about the people.

God knows Dr. Hamm's decency and civility would be warmly welcomed into much of today's public discourse.

Colleagues, know that our province has lost an accomplished premier, a good man and one whose example is very much worth remembering.

Thank you.

LUMINULTRA TECHNOLOGIES

Hon. Krista Ross: Honourable senators, along with my New Brunswick colleagues, I have risen recently to highlight innovation in New Brunswick. Today, I rise again, this time to recognize the outstanding work being done by Luminultra Technologies and to highlight the important contributions this company continues to make in New Brunswick and across our country.

Luminultra's story is a great example of the strength of our province's innovation sector. What began as a locally grown company has become a leader in biotechnology, developing advanced tools that help organizations better understand and manage microbial activity across a wide range of industries. Their work supports areas such as water management, environmental monitoring, industrial processes and public health.

Recently, I had the opportunity to tour Luminultra's facilities, and it was a privilege to see first-hand the innovation, expertise and dedication that drive their work every day. Visiting their operations provided a valuable look at how a New Brunswick company is developing solutions with a global impact.

During my visit, I learned that Luminultra's operations now span across nine countries and support critical infrastructure, ranging from Aboriginal Council drinking water quality in Australia, to semiconductor manufacturing in Taiwan, to NATO's fuel storage system integrity in Europe, and much more.

Companies like Luminultra demonstrate the importance of investing in knowledge, talent and innovation. They create opportunities for skilled jobs, attract expertise and show that world-class ideas can be developed right here in New Brunswick.

I also want to recognize the leadership and employees who have helped build the organization. Their work represents the best of what we hope to see from our businesses, such as creativity, resilience and a commitment to making a positive difference.

As we look toward the future, organizations like Luminultra remind us that innovation is not just about technology; it is about solving real challenges and improving lives.

Thank you to the entire Luminultra team for welcoming me during my tour and for the work they continue to do. I look forward to seeing the company's continued growth and the impact it will have in New Brunswick, across Canada and around the world.

Thank you, *wela'lin*.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Deantha Edmunds, an Inuk soprano and a JUNO Award Winner. She 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!

BRITISH COLUMBIA ELECTIONS

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, October has been an extraordinary month in politics for British Columbians. On October 17, voters across the province cast their ballots in cities, towns and villages to elect their mayors and councillors, school board trustees and park board commissioners. Then, just one week later, they returned to polling stations in every electoral district to choose their members of the Legislative Assembly.

The municipal contests brought a wave of notable changes, including the introduction of fresh faces to council as well as setting an unmistakable tone. It made many people wonder whether that momentum of change would carry over into the provincial election the very next week. Beyond my expectations, what a change it was.

British Columbians voted decisively for political renewal, handing the B.C. Conservatives a definitive majority government under the steady, unifying leadership of Premier-elect Lorne Doerkson.

The geographic shift of this election was historic. The Conservative Party of British Columbia achieved sweeping electoral gains by breaking deep into the Lower Mainland and Metro Vancouver, flipping critical urban and suburban ridings. In short, voters embraced a fresh vision.

• (1340)

My sincere congratulations go to Premier-elect Lorne Doerkson and all the newly elected and returning provincial and municipal officials across British Columbia. I wish them every success as they take on the vital responsibility of serving their communities.

I also extend my thanks to Premier David Eby and outgoing officials for their public service. To every candidate who put their name forward, regardless of the outcome, thank you for your willingness to serve.

I want to extend a special note of pride to my former Senate staffer, Matthew Sebastiani, who was elected to his first term on Coquitlam City Council.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Martin: In his victory speech, Premier-elect Doerkson captured the heart of this moment when he said, "I want our sons and daughters to grow up in a B.C. that is the envy of the world."

That is a hope I deeply share. It resonates profoundly for me as a mother, especially when thinking of my daughter, born and raised in Vancouver, who loves her city just as much as I do.

The elections are behind us, but the meaningful work ahead has only just begun. I look forward to working with leaders at every level of government to build a stronger British Columbia today and long into the future.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Sara Ebenezer, participant in Plan International Canada's Girls Belong Here program. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Mohamed.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

GIRLS BELONG HERE PROGRAM

Hon. Farah Mohamed: Honourable senators, I rise today to welcome a remarkable young person in our gallery and to recognize the work of Plan International Canada and its program Girls Belong Here. For 10 years, Girls Belong Here has placed young women alongside decision makers in policy, government and business. It pairs ambition with practical skills, networks and mentorship. It turns leadership potential into real-world impact.

I am honoured to host one of this year's participants, Sara Ebenezer. At 24, Sara is an award-winning social impact leader and founder. Convinced that no young person's potential should be limited by their background or their income, Sara created For

the Love of STEM and Girl Power, bringing financial literacy, mentorship and career exposure to young women in underserved communities across Canada. She has advised the Deputy Prime Minister, served on the Ontario Minister of Education's advisory council and represented North America as a research lead for UNESCO.

I think many of us would love to have done some of what you have done, Sara.

Sara's story points to a larger truth. Women still hold only about a quarter of parliamentary seats worldwide, and in boardrooms, cabinets and executive suites, the pattern repeats. This is not a shortage of talent. Barriers such as unequal access to networks, the absence of visible role models and the quiet assumptions about who belongs in the room do not dissolve on their own. They are dismantled by intentional pathways, open doors and people willing to say, "Come with me."

That's why mentorship is not a luxury. It's not charity. It's an infrastructure of democracy and an important investment.

The evidence for the payoff is strong. When women and girls hold real influence, decisions reflect more of the people they affect. Policy is stronger. Communities are healthier, more resilient and more prosperous. Empowering girls is not charity. It is among the soundest investments a society can make.

In my own work with young women's leadership, I have learned that access matters but so does where it leads. Being invited into the room is not the same as shaping what happens in that room.

My thanks to Senators Senior, Hay and Boehm for sharing your wisdom with Sara today.

Sara, you belong in this chamber and in every room where our collective future is decided.

VISITOR IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Carol Todd, M.S.C., who is receiving a Canadian honour of the Governor General. She is the guest of the Honourable Senator Hay.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

THE HONOURABLE MOHAMED-IQBAL RAVALIA, C.M.

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, it is a great pleasure to rise today to celebrate our colleague and my good friend Senator Ravalia and a remarkable honour recognizing his enduring contributions to family medicine and to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In 2019, the Newfoundland and Labrador Chapter of the College of Family Physicians of Canada established the Mohamed Ravalia International Medical Graduate Award, naming Senator Ravalia as its inaugural recipient.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Manning: You're taking up my time here now.

The award celebrates internationally trained family physicians who have practised in Newfoundland and Labrador for at least two years without completing a Canadian residency program. It recognizes their dedication to patient care, professional excellence and the communities they serve.

Colleagues, having an award named in your honour is no small distinction. It speaks not only to a lifetime of achievement but also to a legacy that will continue to inspire and celebrate future generations of physicians.

As many of us know, Senator Ravalia's own journey is an inspiring one. Having come to Canada as an internationally trained physician, he dedicated more than three decades to caring for generations of families in the beautiful and historic community of Twillingate, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Senator Ravalia became a trusted presence in the lives of countless patients and families, offering not only medical expertise but also compassion, reassurance and an immense amount of kindness.

While his work has taken him from rural Newfoundland and Labrador to the Senate Chamber, his commitment to serving others has never wavered. Senator Ravalia has also received a medal issued from the Newfoundland and Labrador college to recognize the impact of his care and kindness as a family physician.

Through the Mohamed Ravalia International Medical Graduate Award, that legacy will continue to be celebrated in the physicians who will follow in his footsteps.

Colleagues, I ask you to join me in warmly congratulating Senator Ravalia on these wonderful recognitions and in thanking him for his extraordinary contributions to medicine in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada. Thank you.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Donald McLeod and Christine McLeod, who are members of the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada. They are the guests of the Honourable Senator MacAdam.

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

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Hon. Rosa Galvez: Honourable senators, occurring at the midpoint between the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its 2030 deadline, COP17 in Yerevan is the COP of implementation.

[*English*]

The science is unequivocal: 680 vertebrate species have vanished since the 16th century, and 1 million more face extinction. Yet the same science, through the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, or IPBES, links biodiversity loss to climate change, pollution, food insecurity and inequality but points to solutions. They say restoring forests captures carbon; regenerating soils strengthens food security; and Indigenous stewardship sustains nature and communities. These are not siloed policies but integrated solutions to interconnected crises. That is COP17's message of hope.

But hope also comes with a warning. Private investment has a role, for sure. There is a financial gap to fill, but financing biodiversity must never mean "financializing" it. It does not mean turning nature into a commodity. Nature is not an asset class; it is the living foundation of every economy, every society and every human life.

• (1350)

Put a price, for example, on Niagara Falls — if you can imagine that — on the St. Lawrence River or on the Amazon, and there will always be buyers, especially in this era of billionaires and a trillionaire.

If forests become investment portfolios and wetlands become financial products, ecological integrity gives way to financial returns. Carbon markets have shown us some of these issues, such as dubious offsets and unequal benefits. Biodiversity is even more complex than carbon. Ecosystems are indivisible, and their value is not only economic. It is ecological, cultural, spiritual and relational.

This is why biodiversity cannot be environmental policy only. Governments must redirect harmful subsidies to restore and integrate biodiversity into policy, from agriculture to national food security.

Indigenous Peoples must be partners in governance, as their stewardship — rooted in reciprocity rather than ownership — delivers the strongest conservation outcome.

[*Translation*]

Ultimately, honourable senators, it is prosperity itself that we must redefine. If COP17 is successful, it will be remembered as the moment when the world recognized that nature is priceless. Our responsibility is not to put a price tag on life.

Thank you, *meegwetch*.

ROYAL ASSENT

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that the following communication had been received:

RIDEAU HALL

October 28, 2026

Madam Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that Mr. Ken MacKillop, Deputy of the Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 28th day of October, 2026, at 4:49 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ryan McAdam

Executive Director, Office of the Secretary to the Governor General

The Honourable
The Speaker of the Senate
Ottawa

Bills Assented to Wednesday, October 28, 2026:

An Act respecting Ukrainian Heritage Month (*Bill S-210, Chapter 24, 2026*)

An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (extension of the federal fuel excise tax relief) (*Bill C-38, Chapter 25, 2026*)

[*English*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

AUDITOR GENERAL

2026 ANNUAL REPORTS TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2026 Annual Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada, pursuant to the *Auditor General Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. A-17, sbs. 7(3).

HELLENIC HERITAGE MONTH BILL

THIRTEENTH REPORT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE PRESENTED

Hon. Sharon Burey, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, presented the following report:

Thursday, October 29, 2026

The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology has the honour to present its

THIRTEENTH REPORT

Your committee, to which was referred Bill S-220, An Act to designate the month of March as Hellenic Heritage Month, has, in obedience to the order of reference of November 26, 2025, examined the said bill and now reports the same without amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

SHARON BUREY

Deputy Chair

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

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

INTERNAL ECONOMY, BUDGETS AND ADMINISTRATION

SIXTH REPORT OF COMMITTEE TABLED

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, entitled *Annual Report on Parliamentary Associations' Activities and Expenditures for 2025-26*.

INCOME TAX ACT

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

Hon. Jim Quinn introduced Bill S-253, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (child care expense deduction indexation).

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL STRATEGY ON FLOOD AND DROUGHT FORECASTING BILL

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-241, An Act to establish a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting.

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

[*English*]

RELIEVING GRIEVING PARENTS OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN BILL (EVAN'S LAW)

BILL TO AMEND—FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-222, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (death of a child).

(Bill read first time.)

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

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

• (1400)

QUESTION PERIOD

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

MILITARY PROCUREMENT

Hon. Yonah Martin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Government leader, a report in the *National Post* this morning highlighted the sale of International Submarine Engineering, or ISE, a B.C.-based autonomous underwater vehicle company, to a foreign defence firm without an apparent national security review.

ISE benefitted from decades of public investment and possesses unique expertise directly relevant to Canada's Arctic sovereignty and our future autonomous marine capabilities. Given your government's commitment to strengthening made-in-Canada defence capabilities, how does it justify allowing this transaction to proceed?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I don't have the details about that transaction, Senator Martin. Thank you for raising the question.

Let me reiterate that the government knows that defending the North and Arctic requires a consistent, long-term, well-equipped and staffed Canadian Armed Forces. That is the main concern of the government at this time.

I know there is an article, but I have been told not to rely solely on what I read in the newspaper. If you provide me with more information, I will get back to you with an answer to your question.

Senator Martin: Yes, I would be pleased to forward the link to the *National Post*, which is one of our major papers.

It says in the report that Canadian company Dominion Dynamics had expressed interest in acquiring ISE but was unable to compete before the deal was finalized. So my question has two parts: First, why wasn't a Canadian buyer given an opportunity to make the purchase? Second, will your government review its policies governing foreign acquisitions of defence-related companies to ensure that strategically important Canadian defence capabilities — like this one — and expertise are not sold abroad?

Senator Moreau: It's obvious from your question that I must check the precise facts about why a Canadian company was not able to meet the deadline for responding to the proposal. I will get back to you with a proper answer.

TRANSPORT

INTRA-PROVINCIAL FERRY SERVICE

Hon. David M. Wells: My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Senator Moreau, under the terms of union, when Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, section 32(1) specifically stated as follows:

> Canada will maintain in accordance with the traffic offering a freight and passenger . . . service between North Sydney and Port aux Basques . . . .

Senator, the traffic offering now is at 139% capacity; in the summer it's sometimes higher. People are turned away when they show up because there is no room on the ferries. There are three ferries currently on the run between North Sydney and Port aux Basques, and another ferry is scheduled to be sitting idle.

Could you ask the Minister of Transportation if he could address this undercapacity issue we have in relation to Canada's obligations under the terms of union?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you for providing me with that information. I will certainly raise the question with the Minister of Transport and get back to you with the department's position as soon as I can.

Senator D. M. Wells: My follow-up on that, leader, is that, without a comprehensive, long-term fleet and capacity strategy, Newfoundland and Labrador will continue to face supply chain vulnerabilities, particularly with regard to the food that comes to Newfoundland and Labrador, such as vegetables, fruit, meats and perishable items, as well as goods leaving Newfoundland and Labrador to the marketplace. Could you please also have him address that supply chain issue?

Senator Moreau: Certainly. I think you are raising a very important question. It is a matter of equity and affordability for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. I will bring the question to the minister and get back to you promptly.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY

Hon. Mary Coyle: Senator Moreau, Universities Canada held its annual fall meetings this week. Many of us met with university presidents from our regions.

Prime Minister Carney is currently hosting the first Canada-European Union Summit in Montreal with the goal of leveraging our complementary strengths and delivering greater certainty, security and prosperity to both sides of the Atlantic.

Universities can play a central role in achieving these goals. They are recommending expanding Canada's International Education Strategy to attract global talent, coordinating strategic investment in Canada's domestic skills pipeline by ensuring that universities are integral partners in the design and delivery of federal workforce initiatives, and harnessing university research to advance national priorities.

Senator Moreau, will the government work with universities to take advantage of their strengths, as recommended?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Coyle, for your question. The federal government knows that educational institutions are essential for building a healthier, more prosperous Canada. They represent one of the strongest advantages Canada has on the international economic stage.

I am happy to inform you that last week, on October 23, the government announced an investment of more than $813 million to support world-class research through the Canada Foundation for Innovation. That foundation provides funding to universities, research and other educational institutions. This specific funding will support over 450 researchers across Canada, assisting research infrastructure and helping Canadian institutions with the indirect cost of research.

Senator Coyle: That is wonderful. Hopefully, the government will be interested in the other recommendations as well.

Senator Moreau, more than three quarters of Canadians support increased federal investment in universities. Would the government consider using existing tax mechanisms to increase the GST/HST rebate for universities to 100%, aligning the treatment of our universities with the treatment of municipalities and other public interest organizations? This would allow institutions to reinvest an estimated $240 million —

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

Senator Moreau: Senator Coyle, during Question Period yesterday, I repeated many times that I cannot comment on the government's future financial commitments.

However, negotiations with the provinces on sharing the financial load with different orders of government and jurisdictions — notably, the costly ones, such as health and education — are always happening. The government takes a cooperative approach with its provincial counterparts and regularly consults them.

I will certainly bring your proposal to the minister.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Hon. Tony Loffreda: Senator Moreau, last week was Small Business Week, an opportunity to recognize the entrepreneurs who drive our economy.

Yet, Canada is facing a troubling trend. In four of the five most recently reported quarters, the net creation of small- and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs, was negative. This has occurred only one other time in the past decade, and it was during the pandemic.

Following my recent meeting with the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, I am concerned about the high costs of doing business as well as the economic and regulatory environment deterring Canadians from starting businesses.

Can the government explain what is driving this unusually high rate of net business losses? What concrete measures is it taking to improve conditions for entrepreneurs, remove barriers to starting businesses and ensure Canada remains a place where independent businesses can launch, grow and succeed?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Thank you, Senator Loffreda. First, let me tell you that the government recognizes that many small businesses are facing real pressures, including higher operating costs and an uncertain global economic environment. That is precisely why the government is focused on improving the conditions for businesses to start, invest and grow.

The government is expanding opportunities for SMEs through the Buy Canadian Policy, which I mentioned yesterday, and helping them to reach new markets through the SME Export Readiness Initiative.

This government is also creating stronger incentives for businesses to invest through the Productivity Mega Deduction, which will reduce Canada's marginal effective tax rate on new business investments from 13% to 6.4%, which is significant.

These measures are about creating the conditions for Canadian entrepreneurs to launch, scale and compete here at home and around the world.

• (1410)

Senator Loffreda: Thank you for that answer.

As you know, understanding this trend requires more than acknowledging the challenges facing entrepreneurs. I often say, "Which is measured improves." The government must track why businesses are closing and identify what could have prevented those closures.

Will the government commit to systematically monitoring the causes of negative SME creation and consulting organizations such as the CFIB?

Senator Moreau: Thank you.

Understanding the pressures facing small businesses is essential to developing effective economic policy. That includes listening directly to entrepreneurs and organizations representing them. Groups such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business provide important data and perspectives on costs, regulatory burdens, financing and other challenges facing SMEs. That engagement helps inform the government approach to ensure that policies respond to changing conditions on the ground. That is what the government will continue to do.

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP AND REFUGEES

PROCESSING OF WORK PERMITS

Hon. Danièle Henkel: Senator Moreau, two federal agencies are involved in renewing work permits. Service Canada handles the labour market impact assessment, while Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada processes the permit. Some workers are being denied renewals because Service Canada has not yet issued its decision. One federal agency closes the file while the other is still working on it. In the meantime, workers are losing their income and businesses are losing their staff.

How will the government coordinate its departments' roles to prevent this from happening to workers and employers who have completed the necessary paperwork on time?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): Your question gives me the opportunity to inform you that the Minister of Immigration recently instructed officials at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to implement an exceptional measure whereby work permit applications will no longer be refused when the related labour market impact assessment application is still being processed by Employment and Social Development Canada. The measure is being implemented by the department as we speak.

Processing times have been significantly reduced in recent months. This measure will provide greater stability for employers and temporary foreign workers, whose importance to small and medium-sized businesses, and indeed to large businesses as well, is recognized by the government. It will also benefit rural and agricultural businesses, as Senator Miville-Dechêne pointed out.

Senator Henkel: Senator Moreau, the government has extended the deadline for providing this case review from 60 to 90 days, but allowing more time does not guarantee that the two agencies will coordinate their decisions. Can you assure us that, before denying a renewal for lack of a case review, IRCC will check with Service Canada and take into account processing delays attributable to the administration?

Senator Moreau: As I mentioned in my first response, the immigration department is working closely with Employment and Social Development Canada to provide coordinated responses. You're right, the increase in processing time does not suggest that cases will be dealt with any faster, but coordination between the two departments — and this is reflected in the current figures — helps speed up the work and, therefore, reduce the backlog of cases already piling up.

[*English*]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CANADIAN PHOTONICS FABRICATION CENTRE

Hon. Colin Deacon: Senator Moreau, last May, Minister Mélanie Joly announced plans to transition the Canadian Photonics Fabrication Centre from the National Research Council Canada into an independent commercial entity. This presents a significant opportunity to scale a world-class Canadian photonics and semiconductor asset into a strategic node within the global semiconductor supply chain.

At the time, I raised concerns about execution risks, with deal structuring and investor engagement entrusted to the Canada Development Investment Corporation, which is not a domain expert. As we have seen far too often, strong Canadian innovation does not translate into Canadian ownership and economic or geopolitical benefits.

Could you provide an update on the status of the Canadian Photonics Fabrication Centre spinoff?

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

As North America's only end-to-end pure play compound semiconductor facility, the Canadian Photonics Fabrication Centre, or CPFC, plays a critical role in Canada's innovation ecosystem. Over the past two decades, the CPFC has evolved into a key industrial partner for Canada's growing photonics ecosystem.

The CPFC will continue to be anchored in Canada and create high-quality jobs for Canadians through the design, refinement, fabrication and testing of compound semiconductor wafers. The CPFC works with companies across the photonics industry to bring their products to market. Photonics are the cornerstone of Canada's innovation future, and spinning off the Canadian Photonics Fabrication Centre will strengthen Canada's leadership in photonics innovations.

Senator C. Deacon: Thank you. I am hoping that I heard in there that there is a real appreciation of its incredible strategic value. We need Canada's "deep tech" investors and industry experts with market expertise to be engaged in the process. A recent announcement of a venture investment arm by the Kanata North-based RANOVUS has brought together a globally leading group of experts.

Will the government be engaging with the semiconductor industry experts themselves and have them help to guide the development of this —

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

Senator Moreau: To respond directly to your question, Budget 2025 indicated that the Government of Canada would explore options to seek private capital to scale the operation of the CPFC to serve as a platform for Canadian innovation in new photonics applications. The government plans to attract various private-sector investments and create new opportunities for Canadian companies to expand the development of the critical technology.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Government leader, a recent report from the Macdonald-Laurier Institute concludes that, despite decades of inquiries, audits and program reviews, Canada's child and youth welfare system continues to fail vulnerable children. The report points to weak accountability, an inadequate measurement of outcomes, chronic underinvestment in prevention and the persistent overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care. It concludes that governments have become better at studying failures than correcting them.

Senator Moreau, after years of promised reviews and recommendations, why would Canadians believe that your government is doing anything differently to deliver measurable improvements for children and youth at risk?

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

The government's commitment toward children in Canada is obvious, and it translates into real action. For instance, for children, the government is investing $57 billion for 900,000 affordable child care spots and making the National School Food Program permanent for 400,000 children. I know your colleague is challenging those figures, but that's the reality.

The government is investing $57 billion to provide affordable child care to more children, saving parents up to $16,200 annually per child. That means less pressure and more choices for parents. The government made the National School Food Program permanent, providing meals to 400,000 children. The government will introduce Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy, which will aim to reduce child poverty to 50% of 2015 levels by 2030.

Those are —

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

Senator Ataullahjan: Senator Moreau, the report notes that governments frequently accept recommendations from stakeholders, including those contained in the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights 2025 report *Nothing to Celebrate: The Crisis of Youth Aging Out of Care*, but often fail to track or publicly report on the implementation.

Will the government commit to transparent public reporting on child welfare outcomes and progress toward reform targets so Canadians can measure results rather than promises?

Senator Moreau: As far as transparency is concerned, the government faces Question Period in the House of Commons every day. We do the same here in the Senate. We have made a commitment to children. We stand behind that commitment.

• (1420)

I salute you for taking the initiative to ask questions and to ask the government to respond to those questions. We will do so. The government is committed to helping children in Canada.

FINANCE

STATE OF THE ECONOMY

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Senator Moreau, given your many years of experience in government, as well as the private sector, could you share with us your views on why the Canadian dollar has been tanking and reaching historic lows? Can you highlight what you believe might be the impact of that weak dollar on the cost of living, on the purchasing power of the Canadian economy and for Canadian citizens generally?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): We have a geopolitical situation that is, I would say, unprecedented in Canada because of what is happening with our major trade partner and what is happening in the world. The fact is that there are wars that have led to real issues for the global economy. It's not only here in Canada. That is the reason the government is acting on many fronts to ensure that affordability is taken into consideration. The government has made affordability a priority with respect to a number of issues here in Canada. That being said, many of these situations are not under the control of the federal government. They are worldwide situations, and I think Canadians understand that.

Senator Housakos: Government leader, I think most economists would actually argue the contrary. When you run high debts and deficits, it will invariably create a lack of confidence in the Canadian economy and the Canadian dollar. If you have a Canadian dollar that is tanking, it will impact your capacity to buy things and will drive up the cost of living. Right now, even the Mexican peso is stronger than the Canadian dollar given the context of this trade war.

Does the government recognize we have a problem? What measures are being taken to strengthen our Canadian dollar, besides driving up interest rates?

Senator Moreau: This is something I repeat often: Among G7 countries, Canada has the strongest credit rating, AAA, from Standard & Poor's and Moody's. Canada has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio and the second-lowest deficit-to-GDP ratio in the G7. This means that the Canadian economy is resilient, and the government is ensuring that this resilience will be maintained over the —

[*Translation*]

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

HEALTH

PAY EQUITY

Hon. Manuelle Oudar: Senator Moreau, the right to pay equity exists to ensure fair and equitable pay in jobs predominantly held by women. Having actively contributed to drafting Quebec's first Pay Equity Act, and as a former chair of the CNESST, I have often said that pay equity is not just about money. It is about justice, fairness and dignity. I trust that you share this view.

We learned this week that at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, after years of hard work by the pay equity committee under federal law, a fair plan has been developed and an agreement has been reached. Despite this, the government has decided to postpone the whole process, thereby delaying the payment of salary adjustments intended primarily for women working in administrative support or secretarial jobs. Does the government consider this situation acceptable?

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

Far be it from me to try to teach you anything about pay equity. I believe you could give every member of this chamber a course on it. You're no doubt aware that developing a pay equity plan within a federal agency is a major and extremely complex undertaking. I lived through that experience in the private sector. Senator Housakos referred to my private sector experience. We both participated in these kinds of activities.

In the specific case that you mentioned, the Pay Equity Act allows employers to request extensions on posting pay equity plans. The request has to be studied and approved by the Pay Equity Commissioner. The purpose of the provision is to allow the submission of responsible, adequate plans in complex cases. At the moment, I'm told that the agency is awaiting the commissioner's decision on its request for another extension in order to implement the pay equity plan currently being developed.

Senator Oudar: The wage adjustments proposed in the agency's pay equity plan for these women workers is an estimated $15.9 million and is intended to compensate for years of wage discrimination against women. Budgets are voted on here and the departments and agencies have the budgetary provisions to pay, so why resort to stalling tactics to delay justice for these women?

Senator Moreau: I'll let you call them "stalling tactics." The government respects the Pay Equity Act. This is a federal agency with extremely complex cases. You may be aware that, in some situations, there are pay equity cases that are extremely difficult to establish. In this case, the government is asking for more time to do so, as permitted under the law. I don't see any stalling tactics here.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM

Hon. Amina Gerba: My question is for the Government Representative in the Senate.

Senator Moreau, according to a recent Radio-Canada documentary, thousands of agricultural temporary foreign workers are bound to a single employer through a closed work permit. This dependence makes them vulnerable to abuse and raises concerns about respect for their fundamental rights, particularly those under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This situation has persisted for years. What specific steps is the federal government taking to prevent these abuses and to allow affected workers to expose their employers without fear of losing their job or status in Canada?

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

The government takes the situation of temporary workers very seriously and is committed to ensuring that their rights are respected by employers. I had the opportunity to highlight this in my response to Senator Henkel's question.

To help workers report abuse, which was the focus of your question, the government has established a confidential helpline that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number can easily be found online. It offers translation services in over 200 languages, reflecting the diverse countries of origin of temporary workers.

In addition, the government has introduced an open work permit for vulnerable workers who are victims of abuse or at risk of abuse in the course of their employment in Canada. This enables them to leave an abusive employer, seek new employment and safeguard their rights as workers.

Senator Gerba: I am happy to hear that.

The agricultural sector is proposing a sector-specific work permit that would allow workers to change employers while remaining within the sector. Is the government prepared to consider this change?

Senator Moreau: My answer to this sort of question is always the same. I cannot comment on upcoming legislation. However, the government has introduced a public policy that exempts some foreign workers who are already in Canada from certain requirements when they have to change jobs for the reasons that you mentioned. The employers who participate in worker programs may be subject to inspections and may be denied access to federal programs in cases of non-compliance.

[*English*]

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Hon. Percy E. Downe: Earlier this year, Prime Minister Carney took action to address the problems of the Canada Revenue Agency by appointing a highly qualified person, Heather Evans, from outside the Government of Canada. Today, we learned from the Auditor General that we also have a serious problem at the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, or FINTRAC. The Auditor General's report highlighted that FINTRAC did not have strong oversight to ensure that businesses were complying with anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism financing laws.

FINTRAC is responsible for overseeing 36,000 businesses, including banks, casinos and mortgage lenders. The audit found that as the number of businesses under supervision increased,

FINTRAC relied on self-declarations and information provided by businesses to assess whether they were meeting their legal obligations. This slackness is causing serious harm to Canada's reputation. What will the Government of Canada do about it?

Hon. Pierre Moreau (Government Representative in the Senate): I'm sure the government is reviewing the Auditor General's report, and I will have more information about what the government plans to do with the Auditor General's recommendations and findings. I will get back to you as soon as I can.

• (1430)

Senator Downe: I appreciate your briefing book doesn't have the notes because the report was just released today.

Criminal Intelligence Service Canada has indicated that between $45 billion and $113 billion are laundered through Canada every year. Will the Prime Minister take action similar to what he took on the Canada Revenue Agency and put in management that can deal with this problem?

Senator Moreau: I'm sure the Prime Minister is taking this situation very seriously. As I mentioned earlier, I will get back to you with more information about the government's position on this issue.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

SPEAKER'S RULING RESERVED

Hon. Fabian Manning: Honourable senators, as Chair of the Special Senate Committee on the Building Canada Strong Act, which is studying Bill C-39, I rise on a question of privilege pursuant to rule 13-4(a) of the *Rules of the Senate*.

I am raising this matter without notice because the circumstances giving rise to whether this qualifies as a question of privilege were determined after the deadline for providing written notice.

While I first learned about the potential breach last evening, I was led to believe by the committee clerk that the matter should be addressed through a point of order in the chamber and, therefore, did not believe there was a notice requirement. However, based on new information I received this morning, I am now convinced that this is a matter of privilege affecting the committee, its members and the privileges of all senators. I, therefore, raise it at the earliest opportunity to bring it to your attention.

Honourable senators, the question of privilege being raised concerns the unauthorized disclosure to an external stakeholder of the confidential work plan prepared for the Special Senate Committee on the Building Canada Strong Act, which is studying Bill C-39, as well as the contents of in camera deliberations and resulting targeted harassment of a member of that committee.

The work plan contained information intended to remain confidential in order to protect the integrity of the committee's work and its deliberative processes. Its unauthorized disclosure raises serious concerns regarding the protection of confidential parliamentary materials, the integrity of the committee proceedings and the ability of the committee to discharge its mandate free from unauthorized external interference, with a particular concern that the disclosure led to the targeted harassment of at least one member of the committee. This consequence demonstrates the potential harm arising from the unauthorized release of confidential information concerning parliamentary work. It raises serious concerns that information entrusted to the parliamentary process may be used to target individual senators because of their involvement in committee proceedings, potentially exposing them to pressure, intimidation or harassment in the performance of their parliamentary duties.

The incident, therefore, raises concerns extending beyond the unauthorized disclosure of a confidential document. It calls into question the adequacy of the safeguards protecting confidential committee materials and the potential consequences for senators when such information is improperly shared with individuals outside of the parliamentary process. The resulting harassment risks undermining the conditions necessary for senators to carry out their responsibilities independently and without undue external pressure.

Under rule 13-1 of the *Rules of the Senate*, a violation of the privileges of any senator affects all senators and the ability of the Senate to carry out its functions. Rule 13-2(1) establishes the criteria for a question of privilege to be accorded priority, including that the matter directly concerns the privileges of the Senate, one of its committees or a senator; involves a grave and serious breach; and seeks a genuine remedy within the Senate's authority for which no other parliamentary process is reasonably available.

Further, Appendix IV of the *Rules of the Senate* establishes a procedure for dealing with the unauthorized disclosure of confidential committee reports, documents and proceedings. It provides an examination of the circumstances surrounding the disclosure, including its source, nature, extent and actual or potential implications for the committee and the Senate.

In the present circumstances, disclosure of the confidential work plan and contents of in camera deliberations, together with the resulting targeted harassment of a committee member, warrants serious consideration of whether parliamentary privilege has been breached and whether the incident has impaired or threatens to impair the committee's ability to conduct its work effectively and independently.

The matter is raised in order to seek an appropriate remedy within the Senate's authority, including an examination of the circumstances surrounding the disclosure and its consequences.

Should the Speaker find that a prima facie question of privilege has been established, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion to refer the case to the Standing Committee

on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament for investigation and report and to obtain such other remedies as the Senate considers appropriate.

The requested examination by the Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament Committee should address the circumstances in which a confidential work plan was disclosed to an external stakeholder, including how the disclosure occurred and the extent of the information shared; the measures in place to protect the confidentiality of the work plan and the adequacy of those safeguards; the connection between the disclosure and the subsequent targeted harassment of a committee member, including the nature and seriousness of the consequences; the actual or potential impact of the disclosure and resulting harassment on the committee's ability to fulfill its mandate and on the ability of its members to discharge their parliamentary responsibilities without intimidation or undue external pressure; and the appropriate measures to establish accountability, strengthen the protection of confidential committee materials and prevent similar instances in the future.

Honourable senators, I believe this matter satisfies the four criteria established under rule 13-2(1). First, I have raised this matter at the earliest opportunity.

Second, the matter directly concerns the privileges of the committee.

Third, the circumstances constitute a grave and serious breach because this matter is raised in the interest of preserving the privileges of the Senate, protecting the integrity and confidentiality of its committee proceedings and ensuring that senators can discharge their parliamentary duties without being subjected to targeted harassment arising from the unauthorized disclosure of information related to their work.

Fourth, the matter requires a remedy within the authority of the Senate, and no other parliamentary procedure is reasonably available to address this alleged breach. While there may be a question as to why it wouldn't first be referred to the special committee itself for investigation, this is a special committee that is consumed with studying a specific piece of government legislation. As per its mandate of reference adopted on October 8 by the Senate, the Special Senate Committee on the Building Canada Strong Act, which is studying Bill C-39, would cease to exist once its final report is presented. Referring to that special committee would impede work on the legislation itself and could be argued as a future breach of privilege.

The seriousness of this incident warrants appropriate scrutiny and a determination of the measures necessary to safeguard the Senate's proceedings, its committees and the members entrusted with carrying out their work.

For this reason, honourable senators, I respectfully ask the Speaker to find that a prima facie question of privilege has been established.

Hon. Duncan Wilson: Honourable senators, as the senator who was taking part in an external meeting yesterday afternoon and learned of the breach of confidentiality around the committee's draft work plan and also the deliberations of the steering committee and as the senator who reported the matter to our chair, I also wanted to add to Senator Manning's commentary that what was communicated to me was not just the deliberations of the steering committee discussions but a significant, damaging misrepresentation of those deliberations. Thank you.

Hon. Hassan Yussuff: Honourable senators, I rise in support of Senator Manning raising this issue before the Speaker for an early ruling. I will state the fact that this incident has now cast a cloud over the committee's work, especially in the context of the preparation for further meetings and hearings of the committee to ensure we can complete the necessary work with regard to this government legislation. I think the earliest opportunity you can rule on this matter will certainly clear the air for the committee to continue its work and have confidence among its members.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pat Duncan: Honourable senators, I am extremely troubled by the situation that occurred at the Special Senate Committee on the Building Canada Strong Act.

As you know, I'm not bilingual, but I still hope to be able to share my thoughts, given the seriousness of the situation.

• (1440)

[*English*]

This is a troubling situation that warrants our attention. I was reminded of the prayer offered at the opening of the Yukon Legislative Assembly: To the Creator, grant that we may make only sound, fair and wise decisions on behalf of the people we represent.

These words speak to the responsibility that all of us carry as honourable parliamentarians. Canadians count on us to approach the work before us thoughtfully, fairly and with sound judgment. This is particularly true when we speak to one another, how we speak of one another and how we represent this institution. Fundamentally, this responsibility depends on trust. We must be able to trust one another, to trust the processes under which we work and to have confidence that the conditions necessary for senators — our colleagues — to carry out their parliamentary duties will be respected.

Parliamentary privilege exists to protect the ability of parliamentarians to carry out our duties. This privilege protects the ability of Parliament itself to function effectively. When concerns are raised that may touch upon those privileges or the integrity of our proceedings, we all have a collective responsibility to ensure that they are considered through the proper process. It is our duty incumbent on every one of us. The position of trust that we hold dear is what allows us to represent this institution to the very best of our abilities. Where that trust may have been affected, we must look to identify the deficiencies and seek proper remedies.

Honourable colleagues, as a fellow member of the steering committee and as a member of this chamber, I share the concerns expressed in the question of privilege and the intent to make further inquiries, which may enable us to address this issue as appropriate as soon as possible. The circumstances that were presented today go to our very ability to freely express ourselves

in committee and to regulate our affairs without obstruction or intimidation. As quoted in your recent Speaker's ruling from a report by the Standing Committee on Privileges, Standing Rules and Orders from April 2000:

> The violation of the confidentiality of in camera discussions undermines the confidence with which senators can discuss things freely, and affects their ability to carry out the work on behalf of the Senate.

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, that is how we protect not only the rights and privileges of each one of us but also the integrity of the Senate and the trust that Canadians have in this institution.

[*English*]

Colleagues, thank you for your kind attention. *Mahsi'cho*. Thank you.

Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler: Honourable senators, I want to thank Senator Manning for bringing this forward, and I want to thank all of my colleagues for their speeches today.

Let me read the definition: Parliamentary privilege consists of the special rights, powers and immunities that allow the Senate and individual senators to perform their constitutional and legislative functions free from external interference.

I heard from a fellow senator today about how they were impacted. I too would also appreciate it if the Speaker could evaluate this and provide a ruling as soon as possible so that senators and the committee can continue to do this important work. Thank you, Your Honour, for looking at this as soon as you can.

The Hon. the Speaker: Thank you, Senator Manning, for bringing this question to the Senate's attention, as well as all senators who participated in this debate. I will take this question under advisement. Thank you.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, pursuant to the order adopted June 4, 2025, I would like to inform the Senate that Question Period with the Honourable John Zerucelli, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State (Labour), will take place on Wednesday, November 4, 2026, at 2:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION ADOPTED

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate), pursuant to notice of October 28, 2026, moved:

> That, when the Senate next adjourns after the adoption of this motion, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, November 3, 2026, at 2 p.m.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES DAY BILL

THIRD READING

Hon. Éric Forest moved third reading of Bill S-237, An Act respecting a Cities and Municipalities Day.

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.)

COMPETITION ACT

BILL TO AMEND—NINTH REPORT OF BANKING, COMMERCE AND THE ECONOMY COMMITTEE ADOPTED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gignac, seconded by the Honourable Senator Patterson, for the adoption of the ninth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy (*Bill S-239, An Act to amend the Competition Act, with amendments*), presented in the Senate on October 27, 2026.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to and report adopted.)

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

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

• (1450)

SERGEI MAGNITSKY INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION AND HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

BILL TO AMEND—SECOND READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Leo Housakos (Leader of the Opposition) moved second reading of Bill C-219, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law) and the Special Economic Measures Act.

He said: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak on Bill C-219, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law) and the Special Economic Measures Act, or, in short, the international anti-corruption and human rights act (Sergei Magnitsky law no. 3).

This bill was drafted and introduced in the other place by my colleague James Bezan, the Member of Parliament for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, who has long been an advocate for strengthening Canada's sanctions regime. Indeed, in 2017, together with our former colleague senator Raynell Andreychuk, he helped steer the first Magnitsky legislation into law in Canada, helping to position our country to stand up to authoritarian regimes such as those of Vladimir Putin, Alexander Lukashenko and the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP.

It is important, colleagues, to highlight the name Magnitsky in this legislation. As many of you know, Sergei Magnitsky was a lawyer and auditor who uncovered the largest tax fraud in Russian history. His efforts to expose widespread corruption at the highest levels of the Putin regime led to his imprisonment, torture and, ultimately, his death.

Under his name, Canada and like-minded allies such as the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union have passed comprehensive legislation to strengthen their respective sanctions regimes against foreign individuals who have committed human rights abuses and/or engaged in significant corruption.

Bill C-219 will strengthen Canada's ability to respond to serious human rights abuses, corruption, foreign interference and transnational repression by modernizing key elements of our existing sanctions framework.

The bill builds on our current Magnitsky legislation by closing gaps that have become increasingly apparent over the years, particularly with respect to foreign interference and transnational repression. It is about defending Canadian democracy. It is about protecting Canadians from foreign intimidation, and it is about ensuring that those who escape tyranny abroad do not encounter its agents here at home.

At its core, this bill does four things. First, it amends the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act to establish in Canadian law the definition of "prisoner of conscience" as:

> . . . an individual who, in contravention of international human rights standards, has been detained or otherwise physically restricted solely because of their identity or their conscientiously held beliefs, including religious or political beliefs.

The bill would also require the Minister of Foreign Affairs to publish an annual report outlining Canada's efforts to advance human rights internationally and to support prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders. This would create greater transparency and accountability regarding Canada's advocacy for human rights abroad.

Second, the bill would amend the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law) and the Special Economic Measures Act to establish, for the first time within Canada's sanctions regime, a definition of "transnational repression," which would be defined as:

> . . . tactics used by a foreign state to intimidate, harass, surveil or threaten individuals or groups located outside the state borders or physically harm such individuals or members of such groups, including elected officials, political dissidents, human rights defenders, exiled journalists, diaspora communities, civil society activists and refugees, for the purpose of silencing dissent and stifling activism.

Colleagues, the reality of transnational repression is no longer in dispute. It is an active threat right here on Canadian soil.

We know that authoritarian regimes use intimidation against diaspora communities. We know that foreign actors seek to silence critics who believed Canada would offer them refuge. We know that elected officials, journalists, activists and human rights defenders have been targeted because they dared to speak out against authoritarian governments.

For far too long, we have witnessed authoritarian regimes reaching beyond their borders to intimidate, threaten and harass diaspora communities that have sought refuge in Canada and other democratic countries. We have seen it with the CCP regime in Beijing and their secret police stations across the country, targeting dissidents, Uighur activists and political opponents.

We have even seen attempts to interfere with our democratic institutions and electoral processes, like the targeting of candidates such as Joe Tay, during the last federal election, and Kenny Chiu, in 2021.

It seems that I rise almost weekly to question the government leader in this place and the government following repeated allegations that agents of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps have infiltrated our society and harassed Iranian Canadians who managed to escape the tyranny of the regime in Tehran.

Bill C-219 would finally make transnational repression a specific ground for sanctions under Canada's Magnitsky Law.

[*Translation*]

Honourable senators, there is no longer any doubt about it. We are facing transnational repression. This is a very real threat on our own soil.

We know that authoritarian regimes are harassing our diaspora communities.

We know that foreign actors are trying to silence critics who thought they would find refuge in Canada.

We know that elected officials, journalists and human rights and other activists have been targeted because they dared to speak out against authoritarian governments.

That is why we need to act now. This is about defending our own democracy.

[*English*]

Third, the bill increases transparency and parliamentary oversight of our sanctions regime by amending the Special Economic Measures Act to require that sanctions, orders and regulations be tabled in Parliament within five sitting days of being made.

It also creates timelines for the forfeiture and disposal of frozen assets, helping ensure that sanctioned assets do not remain frozen indefinitely, like the Russian Antonov aircraft sitting in Canada at Toronto Pearson Airport, with which I am sure many of you are familiar and have seen if you have been around Mississauga.

Sanctions, however, are only meaningful if they are strictly enforced. Bill C-219 would strengthen enforcement by amending the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act to increase penalties for sanctions violations from the current maximum of $25,000 and/or imprisonment for up to one year to a fine of up to $100,000 and/or imprisonment for a term of not more than three years. This will help make Canada's sanctions regime more credible and effective.

This bill also originally contained measures put forward by another colleague in the House of Commons, Philip Lawrence, Member of Parliament for Northumberland—Peterborough South, in Bill C-281 during a previous Parliament — a bill that I was also proud to sponsor in this chamber.

Notably, these amendments would have directed the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission not to issue, renew or maintain broadcasting licences for state-owned broadcasters from countries committing genocide where that genocide had been recognized by either house of Parliament. Unfortunately, this provision was removed during committee consideration in the other place. Other provisions removed at committee include amendments to both the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act and the Special Economic Measures Act, which would have imposed visa restrictions on immediate family members of sanctioned individuals; required the RCMP and FINTRAC to report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the making, administration and enforcement of sanctions; and created a parliamentary sanction recommendation process through which parliamentary committees could recommend individuals and entities for sanctioning and require the minister to report back on those recommendations.

• (1500)

While these provisions were ultimately removed, they underscore an essential principle: Canada must never become a haven for the beneficiaries of corruption, repression and foreign intimidation.

Finally, amendments in the other place also removed the requirement to include the names and status of prisoners of conscience in the minister's annual report.

On this point, I believe it is worth reflecting on the importance of shining a light on those brave men and women who have stood against tyranny around the world.

They are real people who have sacrificed their liberty, and sometimes their lives, for principles we often take for granted here.

Their stories remind us that the struggle between freedom and tyranny is not merely theoretical or something now in the past. It is happening right now somewhere around the world.

As parliamentarians, we attempt to amplify their voices all the time. We know many of their names and many of their stories.

These include people like Vladimir Kara-Murza, who dared to stand up to Putin and denounce Russia's unjustified and illegal invasion of Ukraine, surviving two attempts on his life in the process; Jimmy Lai, whose criticism of the CCP dictatorship and its destruction of democracy in Hong Kong has landed him in prison; Ales Bialiatski, a Belarusian human rights defender and recipient of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize, who has been repeatedly imprisoned for standing up to the Russian puppet regime of Lukashenko in Belarus; and Dr. Gulshan Abbas, a retired doctor and sister of the prominent Uighur human rights advocate Rushan Abbas, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison by the CCP on a fabricated charge in retaliation for her sister's activism, and for whose release I have tabled a motion in this chamber. I am asking colleagues to please act on it. She has spent 20 years languishing in prison because her sister attended a protest in Washington. The examples are many, colleagues.

Their names, along with their fight for democracy, freedom and human rights, deserve to be highlighted at every available opportunity.

Notwithstanding the changes made during committee consideration in the other place, what remains is still a step in the right direction: a robust bill that reflects a growing recognition that traditional sanctions and tools must evolve to address today's threats, including transnational repression, sanctions evasion, hostage diplomacy and other forms of coercion that extend far beyond the borders of authoritarian regimes.

Bill C-219 will strengthen our sanctions regime by defining key elements of the threats we face today, improving transparency and enforcement and enhancing Canada's human rights reporting framework.

Most importantly, it recognizes that Canada has a responsibility to defend the freedoms and democratic values that define our country and are the foundation upon which it was built.

The bill was passed with unanimous consent in the House of Commons. I hope it will be passed in the same speedy way in the Senate.

Honourable colleagues, nefarious entities and authoritarian regimes around the world are using all kinds of new technologies and methods in order to continue their tyranny. We need to amend the Magnitsky Act, be vigilant and continue to react to new requirements on a day-to-day basis to try to keep up with this threat our country faces abroad and here in Canada.

I wish to take the time to thank Senator Peter Harder, who has accepted the role of critic of this bill. I look forward to his address. I reiterate that this bill deserves speedy passage. Thank you, colleagues.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

(On motion of Senator Muggli, debate adjourned.)

THE SENATE

MOTION TO CALL ON GOVERNMENT TO INVESTIGATE THE CREATION OF A SOVEREIGN, DOMESTIC VERIFIED TRAVELLERS PROGRAM—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

> Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Simons, seconded by the Honourable Senator Woo:
>
> That the Senate call on the Government of Canada to investigate the creation of a sovereign, domestic Verified Travellers Program for Canadians.

Hon. Salma Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, this item is adjourned in the name of Senator Black. I ask for leave of the Senate that, following my interventions, the balance of his time to speak on this item be reserved.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Ataullahjan: Honourable senators, imagine a Canadian traveller arriving at an airport, ready to visit family, attend to business or begin a holiday. She wants access to expedited security screening before her flight.

For many travellers like her, one way to obtain that benefit is through NEXUS, a program that requires approval from both Canadian and American authorities. NEXUS serves a valuable purpose for people travelling between our two countries. But Canadians seeking expedited screening at Canadian airports should also have the opportunity to apply for verified traveller status through a program administered by Canada.

That is why I support Senator Simons' motion calling on the government to investigate a sovereign, domestic verified travellers program.

In introducing her motion, Senator Simons called for ". . . a made-in-Canada verified traveller program that respects our language rights, our civil rights and our national sovereignty."

Colleagues have already spoken about why civil and language rights matter in the design of a domestic program. I would like to consider how Canadians could hold that program accountable for respecting those rights and where they could turn if it fell short.

Canada is a sovereign country. We should be able to establish our own route to expedited screening at our own airports. A domestic program could give Canadians another option, with eligibility criteria set in Canada, assessments conducted by Canadian authorities and decisions made under a Canadian process. It would also give us an opportunity to build accountability into the program from the beginning.

Honourable senators, consider the experience of a 6-year-old Muslim boy who arrived at Toronto Pearson Airport with his father in 2015. They were on their way to a hockey game in Boston. Before they could board, the boy was flagged for additional attention. His family wanted to know why and how to prevent it from happening again. Finding answers proved difficult.

His story was one of the experiences highlighted by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights when it undertook a study of the Passenger Protect Program in 2019. The committee examined the difficulties faced by families whose children were delayed when their names were the same as or similar to names on the no-fly list.

The advocacy of families affected by these delays helped lead to the introduction of the Canadian Travel Number. This Canadian mechanism helps distinguish travellers from people with the same or similar names on Canada's own security list.

His case involved a different process, and the program before us would not have resolved it, but his family's search for answers reminds us that security systems must be accountable to the people whose lives they affect. If Canada creates a domestic verified travellers program, we can build that accountability into it from the start. Who would set the eligibility rules? Who would explain a decision to an applicant? Where could a person turn if their information were wrong or their application refused?

A Canadian program would allow Parliament to examine the rules under which Canadians are assessed, ask whether those rules are fair and hold the responsible government to account. That is a practical expression of sovereignty — the power to make decisions and the duty to answer for them.

• (1510)

Parliament can also ask how applicants' personal information would be protected and what review would be available when a decision is challenged. We can listen to travellers and families about what they need from the system.

Senator Simons' motion does not ask us to approve a finished program today; it asks the government to investigate one. That investigation should tell us how Canada could provide another path to expedited screening, what it would cost and how it could be administered securely and fairly.

Honourable senators, here is an opportunity to ask how Canada can offer a service for Canadians travelling through our airports and how we can make that service answerable to them.

I thank Senator Simons for bringing this motion forward. Thank you.

(Debate adjourned.)

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson (Legislative Deputy to the Government Representative in the Senate): Honourable senators, with leave of the Senate, I move:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

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

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

(*At 3:11 p.m., the Senate was continued until Tuesday, November 3, 2026, at 2 p.m.*)

CONTENTS

Thursday, October 29, 2026

PAGE

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

The Late Honourable John Hamm, O.C., O.N.S.
Hon. Rodger Cuzner . . . 3082

Luminultra Technologies
Hon. Krista Ross . . . 3082

Visitor in the Gallery
The Hon. the Speaker . . . 3083

British Columbia Elections
Hon. Yonah Martin . . . 3083

Visitor in the Gallery
The Hon. the Speaker . . . 3083

Girls Belong Here Program
Hon. Farah Mohamed . . . 3083

Visitor in the Gallery
The Hon. the Speaker . . . 3084

The Honourable Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, C.M.
Hon. Fabian Manning . . . 3084

Visitors in the Gallery
The Hon. the Speaker . . . 3084

Conference of the Parties
Hon. Rosa Galvez . . . 3085

Royal Assent . . . 3085

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Auditor General
2026 Annual Reports Tabled . . . 3085

Hellenic Heritage Month Bill (Bill S-220)
Thirteenth Report of Social Affairs, Science and Technology Committee Presented
Hon. Sharon Burey . . . 3086

Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration
Sixth Report of Committee Tabled
Hon. Tony Loffreda . . . 3086

Income Tax Act (Bill S-253)
Bill to Amend—First Reading
Hon. Jim Quinn . . . 3086

National Strategy on Flood and Drought Forecasting Bill (Bill C-241)
First Reading . . . 3086

Relieving Grieving Parents of an Administrative Burden Bill (Evan's Law) (Bill C-222)
Bill to Amend—First Reading . . . 3086

QUESTION PERIOD

Public Services and Procurement
Military Procurement
Hon. Yonah Martin . . . 3086
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3087

Transport
Intra-Provincial Ferry Service
Hon. David M. Wells . . . 3087
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3087

Global Affairs
International Education Strategy
Hon. Mary Coyle . . . 3087
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3087

Innovation, Science and Economic Development
Support for Small Businesses
Hon. Tony Loffreda . . . 3088
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3088

Immigration, Citizenship and Refugees
Processing of Work Permits
Hon. Danièle Henkel . . . 3088
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3089

Innovation, Science and Economic Development
Canadian Photonics Fabrication Centre
Hon. Colin Deacon . . . 3089
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3089

Employment and Social Development
Support for Children and Youth
Hon. Salma Ataullahjan . . . 3089
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3090

Finance
State of the Economy
Hon. Leo Housakos . . . 3090
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3090

Health
Pay Equity
Hon. Manuelle Oudar . . . 3090
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3091

Employment and Social Development
Temporary Foreign Worker Program
Hon. Amina Gerba . . . 3091
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3091

CONTENTS

Thursday, October 29, 2026

PAGE

Privy Council Office
Auditor General's Report
Hon. Percy E. Downe . . . 3091
Hon. Pierre Moreau . . . 3092

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Question of Privilege
Speaker's Ruling Reserved
Hon. Fabian Manning . . . 3092
Hon. Duncan Wilson . . . 3093
Hon. Hassan Yussuff . . . 3093
Hon. Pat Duncan . . . 3093
Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler . . . 3094

Business of the Senate
Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson . . . 3094

Adjournment
Motion Adopted
Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson . . . 3094

PAGE

Cities and Municipalities Day Bill (Bill S-237)
Third Reading
Hon. Éric Forest . . . 3094

Competition Act (Bill S-239)
Bill to Amend—Ninth Report of Banking, Commerce and the Economy Committee Adopted . . . 3094

Sergei Magnitsky International Anti-Corruption and Human Rights Bill (Bill C-219)
Bill to Amend—Second Reading—Debate Adjourned
Hon. Leo Housakos . . . 3095

The Senate
Motion to Call on Government to Investigate the Creation of a Sovereign, Domestic Verified Travellers Program—Debate Continued
Hon. Salma Ataullahjan . . . 3097

Business of the Senate
Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson . . . 3098