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ENDING THE CAPTIVITY OF WHALES AND DOLPHINS BILL

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING—DEBATE

Speech by:

The Honourable Patricia Bovey

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Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, I rise today to add my support to Bill S-203, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and other Acts (ending the captivity of whales and dolphins), as amended.

It has been a long road and many tides, and we now near a decision at the final stage of our debate in the Senate. I begin by thanking Senator Sinclair for his sponsorship of Bill S-203 following the retirement of our colleague Senator Moore, who is in the gallery tonight. I also commend Senator Sinclair for his powerful and eloquent remarks in moving third reading. Thank you as well to Senator Christmas for his inspiring words yesterday and for his call for a decision, I hope, today. I would also like to thank members of the Senate Fisheries Committee, as well as Senators Manning and Gold for their handling of Bill S-203 at committee stage. I was at a number of those meetings.

Senator Sinclair told us about the scientific evidence presented at committee that the captivity of whales and dolphins is cruel in light of their characteristics and needs. We heard that Canada would join other countries in adopting a ban. We learned that Nova Scotia may become the home of the world's first open water sanctuary for orcas and beluga whales. Senator Sinclair described Indigenous support for Bill S-203, including the endorsement of the Coastal First Nations of British Columbia.

We heard about the several improvements made to the bill at committee following its 17 hearings. These changes included the addition of exceptions for keeping a cetacean captive for

licensed scientific research or for its best interests. The committee also added a clause emphasizing that the bill does not affect Aboriginal or treaty rights.

Senators heard about the strong public support for ending whale and dolphin captivity in Canada. According to a recent Angus Reid poll, Canadians oppose whale captivity by a ratio of over 2 to 1. In Ontario, where almost all whale captivity occurs, the opposition is more than 3 to 1.

We heard about the petitions here, in the other place and online, and how when the bill's fate looked uncertain, correspondence from Bill S-203 supporters overwhelmed the Senate server. We heard it has been over 29 months since this bill's long swim began.

Honourable senators, our former colleagues Senators Janis Johnson and Elizabeth Hubley knew the right thing to do. So what are we waiting for?

Colleagues, nothing is more magnificent than seeing whales in the wild, either orcas, greys or dolphins, off the coast of my former home on Vancouver Island, or my native Manitoba's beluga whales swimming in Hudson Bay off Churchill, their young by their side. But nothing is more disturbing than seeing these kings of the ocean in pens being treated like circus animals. I have seen handlers brush orcas' teeth with large toothbrushes, and I honestly am not sure what that teaches us, our children or grandchildren.

I hope I speak for many in this chamber when I say that for Bill S-203 the case has been made. All that remains is for us to respect the democratic principle of this chamber and make a decision.

Senators, it is time for a vote. For this bill's many thousands of supporters in Canada and around the world, and most importantly for the whales and dolphins, I now call for a vote on Bill S-203. Thank you.
