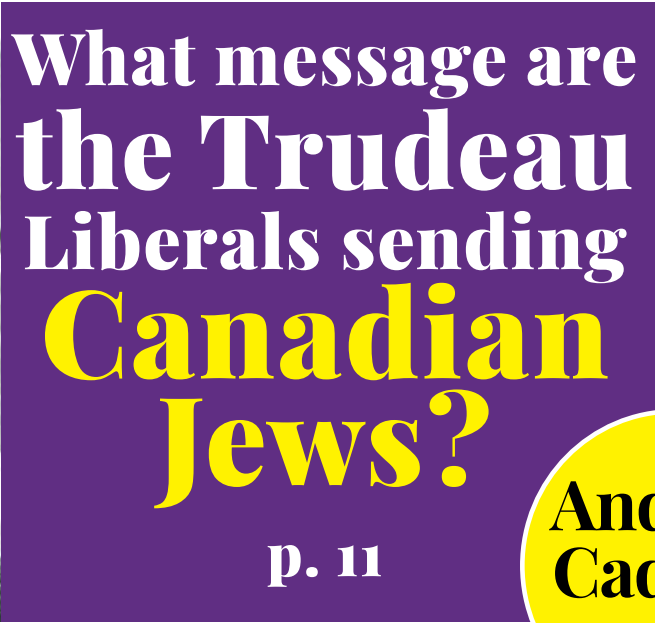




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# THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR, NO. 2110

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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NEWS

## Will Mr. Poilievre go to Washington? Former diplomats hope so

If Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives win the next election, the renewal of Canada's North American trade deal will be an early hurdle he will have to overcome.

BY NEIL MOSS

With the Conservatives enjoying a commanding lead in the polls, observers of the Canada-United States relationship are calling for Tory Leader Pierre Poilievre to take a traditional trip south to meet with American officials and insert himself in the Ottawa-Washington relationship.

Opposition leaders have frequently taken the jaunt to Washington, D.C., to hold meetings with White House officials and members of

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Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has yet to take a Canadian opposition leader's traditional trek to Washington, D.C. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS

## Finishing the fight against COVID and the 'global race' to the top of Mount Vaccine

BY STUART BENSON

Four years ago, as the global COVID-19 pandemic entered its third week, workers across Canada began to settle in to the reality of remote work. But some Parliamentarians and precinct employees were already being

called back to the Hill after the House of Commons was recalled on March 24, 2020, to empower the Health and Finance committees to meet by teleconference to hear from the government on its response to the pandemic.

Continued on page 4

NEWS

## Senate bill seeking to criminalize forced sterilizations raises concerns over unintended consequences

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

A proposed Senate bill seeking to criminalize forced sterilizations in Canada is raising concerns that the new offences, as currently written, could have unintended consequences, including a potential chilling effect on reproductive and other medical care.

The Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee began its study of Bill S-250 on Feb. 29. Originally tabled by Ontario ISG Senator Yvonne Boyer in June 2022, the bill aims to explicitly criminalize non-consensual, forced, or coerced sterilizations in Canada through amendments to the Criminal Code.

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Christina Leadlay

## Heard On The Hill

# Anil Arora says au revoir to the civil service



Canada's chief statistician Anil Arora is retiring on March 31 after a 36-year career in the public service. Photograph courtesy of Statistics Canada

After eight years as Canada's chief statistician—and 36 years total as a public servant—**Anil Arora** is retiring on March 31.

"Last year I announced my intention to retire at the end of this month, and that decision was the result of several factors," Arora told *Heard on the Hill* on March 25.

"I wanted to give the government plenty of time to work out a succession plan, but more importantly because I am a big proponent of leaving when your objectives have been met," he explained.

Part of that succession plan was announced on March 19 when Innovation Minister **François-Philippe Champagne** confirmed the appointment of career civil servant **André Loranger** as interim chief statistician for six months while a permanent replacement is found.

"During my time as chief statistician, the agency—and Canada—have been through a lot," Arora said.

"From being the first government department with an internet address, to conducting the first census in the middle of a global pandemic, we have been working to keep StatCan at the forefront of the social conversation in terms of providing the critical data for decision-makers and maintaining the trust and accountability that Canadians place on us," Arora explained.

Born in India, Arora emigrated to Edmonton with his parents, according to Wikipedia. After completing his bachelor of science from the University of Alberta in 1985, he worked in the oil and gas sector briefly before joining Statistics Canada in 1988, and moving his own family to Ottawa in 1997.

His departmental biography outlines the various roles he's held, including director of the Census Management Office, and director general, where he introduced the online questionnaire in 2005 for the 2006 census. After two years as assistant chief statis-

tician of social, health, and labour statistics from 2008-2010, he took an assistant deputy minister role at Natural Resources Canada. In 2014, Arora transferred to Health Canada where he was ADM of the health products and food branch until 2016, when he was appointed to his latest role, which he describes as having been "a privilege."

"The biggest thing I will miss the most is the people who make this agency work for Canadians—world-class experts who work day in and day out to collect information, crunch the numbers, and produce the statistics that impact every aspect of life in this country. We have a fantastic team here at the agency who live values and ethics, treasure diversity and inclusion, care for the physical and mental well-being of colleagues," said Arora, who said he is looking forward to spending time with family, travelling, and helping with various charitable causes dear to him.

"Retiring this month means I will have the opportunity to enjoy the summer weather and time with family and friends before contemplating what the next chapter holds for me."

## And speaking of retirements...

Deputy health minister **Stephen Lucas** will have more time for bridge and tennis come mid-May when he starts his retirement.



Health Minister Mark Holland, left, and his deputy minister Stephen Lucas, right, at the March 21 House Health Committee meeting. Screenshot courtesy of Parlvu

Health Minister **Mark Holland** prefaced his remarks at the March 21 House Health Committee meeting on the supplementary estimates by noting that his deputy would be stepping back soon.

"I would be remiss if I didn't start by thanking Dr. Stephen Lucas. Many of you have heard that Dr. Lucas is retiring," said Holland. "And Dr. Lucas' incredible leadership is a massive part of why we had the incredible pandemic response that we had. He leads an extraordinary team of officials, and it's been my extraordinary pleasure over these last eight months to work alongside with him. He will be sorely missed, but on behalf of all Canadians I want to thank him profoundly for his contributions to our country and to Health," to which Lucas received a round of applause.

"After more than 35 years with the federal public service, including 10 years in the deputy minister community, Dr. Lucas has announced he will be retiring in mid-May," a Health Canada spokesperson confirmed to HOH on March 25.

Lucas' four-year tenure as DM has been longer than the average. "Given how long Lucas has been in his current role, don't be surprised if 2024 is the year he moves—or is moved—onto a new challenge. (Deputy ministers' terms tend to be on average 2.7 years, according to a 2011 study by *Policy Options*)," according to *Hill Times Research's* Winter 2024 Influencers list.

## Dasko does her part to improve diversity

ISG Senator **Donna Dasko** has been busy spreading the word about her bill to improve diversity in federal politics.

"We need more women & diversity in federal politics! My bill S-283 will result in better data & political parties will be required to publish their action plans to increase diversity!" she posted on X on March 19.

Then on March 25, she posted that she'd signed the Balance the Power Pledge—an Informed

Opinions initiative—which calls for holding politicians accountable to do more to boost the number of women and equity-deserving communities in elected bodies.

Bill S-283 aims to assess how political parties take diversity into account when choosing candidates.

It would amend the Canada Elections Act to improve transparency and accountability through data collection and reporting, something which Chief Electoral Officer **Stéphane**

**Perrault** has requested permission to do in two separate reports following the 2019 and 2021 elections.

"We must do more to ensure that the House of Commons better reflects the diversity of the country, to create better outcomes for all Canadians," said Dasko in the Red Chamber on March 19.

"Canada now ranks 64<sup>th</sup> in the world rankings for women in national

parliaments—women currently fill 30.4 per cent of the seats of the House of

Commons. Members of racialized groups, Indigenous Peoples, and others are also underrepresented in the House of Commons compared to population," she said.

"Passage of the bill would send a clear message that Canadians expect more from political parties, who are the gatekeepers to our electoral system," said Dasko.

Dasko first introduced Bill S-283 on Dec. 13, 2023. The bill moved to debate at second reading on March 19.



ISG Senator Donna Dasko's public bill aims to boost diversity in politics. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## Steven Chase and Bob Fife's foreign interference reporting wins prize



*Globe and Mail* reporters Bob Fife, left, and Steve Chase have won the Hillman Award. Photographs courtesy of Twitter and LinkedIn

As the foreign interference inquiry resumes its public hearings on March 27 in Ottawa, the two *Globe and Mail* journalists responsible for first reporting on alleged Chinese state interference in Canadian elections have received an award.

**Steven Chase** and **Robert Fife** won the Hillman Prize for print/digital on March 19.

"*The Globe and Mail's* 2023 coverage of political interference in Canada by the Chinese government triggered a national debate, dominated the country's news agenda, and ultimately led to a public inquiry that is currently underway," reads the award announcement.

"Honoured to have won 2024 Sidney Hillman Award with col-

league @stevenchase for foreign interference coverage," Fife posted on X on March 19.

First established in the United States in 1950, the Hillman award recognizes "U.S. journalists who pursue investigative reporting and deep storytelling in service of the common good," according to the foundation's website. A Canadian version was inaugurated in 2011 for "Canadian journalists whose work makes a difference to the lives of Canadians."

The prize is named after **Sidney Hillman** (1887-1946), an American labour leader who supported then-U.S. President **Franklin D. Roosevelt's** New Deal coalition.

cleadlay@hilltimes.com  
*The Hill Times*



# The strong, public face of a personal pain

During the lead up to former prime minister Brian Mulroney's funeral service, the strength and decency of his family were striking.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



The Mulroneys, including Ben, left, Nicolas, Mila, and Caroline, were profiles in courage through the various stages of saying goodbye to their patriarch, former prime minister Brian Mulroney, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

OTTAWA—On March 23, former prime minister Brian Mulroney was laid to rest in what might have been one of the best moments in Canadian political life in years. Decency, unity of purpose, generosity of spirit, and fellowship towards others were all on display.

In a very Canadian moment, and something that cut through the normal white noise of today's politics, I saw adults take time at a kids' hockey tournament to watch parts of the state funeral. Kids would pop in occasionally and ask why we were watching. The answer was often that this was historic, nostalgic, and an almost romantic appeal to something rarely seen now. While the funeral rightly celebrat-

ed and commemorated Mulroney, it also seemed to be so much more.

What struck me most during the lead up to the former prime minister's service was the strength and decency of his family. What classy, thoughtful, and strong individuals they all were. For hours on end in both Ottawa and Montreal, they greeted all comers who came to pay respect to their husband, father, and grandfather.

For those of us who have lost parents or a loved one, often the hardest part of the memorialization process is the visitations where people come to pay their respects. They are emotional, often-exhausting, and dizzy undertakings while you are trying to grapple with loss, and the complexity of emotions that come with it.

I was fortunate enough to attend one of the visitations in Ottawa. It was no

mere grip, grin, and go. Mila Mulroney and her children patiently stood by as people shared stories with them about their experiences with Canada's 18<sup>th</sup> prime minister. Not once did they look impatient or uninterested. In their hours of need, they lent warmth and kindness to others who sought some peace in the death of a man consequential to them in diverse ways.

While embracing the kindness of others who come forward to offer their regards can be emotionally rewarding, it can also bring pain. We all want to remember and celebrate a person's well-lived life, but there is a finality to it all, particularly as you stare at your loved one's remains for hours. This isn't the classic film *Waking Ned Devine* where corpses come to life and lotteries are won.

The Mulroneys, through the various stages of saying goodbye to their patriarch, were profiles in courage. While Brian Mulroney was a former prime minister and lived much of his life in public, he was still the centre of a family. In other circumstances, more privacy might have been welcomed, yet the Mulroneys graciously decided to share their goodbye with the nation. Judging by the lineups at lying-in-state and lying-in-repose venues—and the volume of Mulroney moments posted by legions of people—that goodbye was appreciated.

But now that the pomp and circumstance has passed, and other events capture the country's attention, spare a thought for the grieving family. Experience tells those of us who have lost a parent or spouse that when the public mourning is over, it's the firsts without that come after that are hard. That first birthday, Christmas, significant family function where a central figure is missing that stings. The crowds and the lineups aren't there to fill that void of emptiness. Memories help, but they aren't the same.

Spare a thought for the Mulroney family over the next year as they adjust to the massive change in their lives. We will be going on with ours, but they will still be navigating in a new world.

Tim Powers is chairman of *Summa Strategies* and managing director of *Abacus Data*. He is a former adviser to Conservative political leaders.

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## News

# Finishing the fight against COVID and the ‘global race’ to the top of Mount Vaccine

In the final part of *The Hill Times’* series on the fourth anniversary of COVID-19, Minister Anita Anand reflects on her role in the global race for PPE and vaccines, and precinct staff highlight the unequal impact the transition to a virtual Parliament had on essential employees.

Continued from page 1

To keep Parliament going while safeguarding the health of both Parliamentarians and the essential employees who keep it running, both the precinct and the public service needed to purchase and install millions of dollars in IT and telecommunication software and hardware, overhaul press conference facilities and interpretation booths with plastic dividers, and procure millions of masks, gloves, gowns, and an ocean of hand sanitizer.

In this final instalment reflecting on the fourth anniversary of the pandemic, Treasury Board President Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.) spoke to *The Hill Times* about the vertical climb she had to make while adapting to the learning curve of being both a new member of cabinet, and the person who was thrust to centre stage at the beginning of the pandemic and tasked with leading Canada in the “global race” to finally end it.

When the pandemic was declared in March 2020, Anand had only been an MP for a few months. One month after the October 2019 election, along with familiarizing herself with Parliament and her new staff, she was also sworn in as Canada’s



A mask and a bottle of hand sanitizer are pictured next to Canada’s deputy chief public health officer Howard Njoo during an update on the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building in Ottawa on Jan. 5, 2021. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

newest minister of public services and procurement. With only her prior experience as a lawyer and academic upon which to depend, she said the learning curve was “steep, if not vertical.”

However, even with her new responsibilities, Anand said she could never have imagined how central her role would become over the next two years, recalling how a fellow minister had attempted to calm her nerves before being sworn in at Rideau Hall. Anand said that the more-experienced cabinet minister had explained that Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) was a good portfolio for her because,

while it would allow her to learn the intricacies of how the federal government operates, “no one will know who you are; you’ll just be in the background.”

As Anand watched from her TV at home while her cabinet colleagues provided updates from the National Press Theatre for the first few days of the pandemic, it seemed as if that advice would hold true. But before that first week was over, Anand was already being pulled into the foreground and back to Ottawa, where mountains of work with even steeper ascents awaited her.

Specifically, Anand said three mountains needed to be sum-

mitted in Canada’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Mount Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); Mount Rapid Test; and finally, the highest peak, Mount Vaccines.

Anand said it was a privilege to watch the public service “jump into action” to accomplish those goals, and she was impressed by how quickly they had made it to the head of the pack in a “global race for PPE.”

“I pushed the team at PSPC very hard, and they were excellent,” Anand explained. “They proved that it is possible to deliver under very stressful circumstances when Canadians need it most.”

Anand also credited Canadian manufacturers for stepping up when the country needed them, noting that of the 2.7 billion articles of PPE that Canada procured, 40 per cent was being sourced from Canadian manufacturers by the end of the pandemic. In total, Canada purchased more than 20.6 million litres of hand sanitizer, 60 million face shields, 83.9 million non-medical face coverings and cloth masks, 1.5 billion pairs of gloves, 153 million medical gowns, and more than 40,000 ventilators.

“We saw GM make masks, Bauer making face shields, and companies across this country producing PPE; it was unbelievable,” Anand said.

While procurement of PPE to limit the spread of the virus was the immediate goal, Anand explained that even in those first few months, Canada was already planning for the future, which meant simultaneously preparing to procure the then-non-existent vaccines.

Ironically, Anand explained, the key to the success of all three goals was a strategy she was familiar with from her time as a professor of corporate and securities law: a diversified portfolio.

“What Canada did, on the advice of the [COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force (VTF)], is say we’re not going to put all our eggs in one basket,” Anand said.

While the first vaccine doses wouldn’t arrive in Canada until the end of 2020, the VTF was established in April. By June, it had identified seven promising candidates of vaccine manufacturers—Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, Johnson and Johnson, Novavax, Sanofi and GlaxoSmithKline, AstraZeneca, and Medicago—and by July, PSPC had assembled a procurement team to begin contract negotiations.

The first two advance purchase agreements (APAs) were signed in August with Moderna for up to 44 million doses, and Pfizer for up to 51 million doses. This was followed by similar agreements with the other five companies.

Alongside those doses, Canada also needed to sign contracts for all of the required supplies needed to store, transport, and administer the vaccine, including 286.9 million syringes, 616 freezers, 100 refrigerators, and tens of thousands of kilograms of dry ice delivered weekly.

Anand said she still remembers that August long weekend in 2020 when she was faced with the decision to sign the first initial contract with Pfizer—the fourth country in the world to do so—and gamble on their vaccine, which had yet to pass Stage 3 clinical trials.

However, while the decision to simultaneously negotiate seven separate contracts had complicated things, the decision to hedge Canada’s bet paid off in early 2021 when concerns were raised over possible side effects from the AstraZeneca vaccine. Unlike the United Kingdom, European Union, and Australia, who had bet heavily on AstraZeneca, Canada was well positioned with its two contracts for Moderna and Pfizer’s now-preferred mRNA vaccines, Anand said.

Equally as important as signing the contracts early, Anand said, was the professional relationships she built with each of the manufacturers during negotiations and after the contracts were signed, as the global race to secure vaccines became an “unbelievably competitive seller’s market.”

Due to those relationships, Anand said Canada could secure far more than the six million doses the contracts projected to deliver by the end March 2021. By the end of the first quarter of 2021, 9.5 million doses had



Then-procurement minister Anita Anand, left, and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland update Canadians on the federal government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic on April 16, 2020. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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Continued from page 4

arrived from Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, and Johnson & Johnson, the first four vaccines authorized by Health Canada. At the end of June 2021, Canada had received more than 50 million doses, again surpassing the second-quarter projections by more than two million.

Less than a month later, on July 27, 2021, the federal government announced that it had received more than 66 million doses, enough to fully vaccinate every eligible person in Canada. As of March 8, 2024, 28.7 million Canadians—81.3 per cent of the population—have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Anand said that standing on the tarmac to personally “meet the vaccines” when they arrived in Canada and seeing Canadians finally receive them, particularly when her now-late father received his first dose of the Pfizer vaccine, are the ultimate highlights of her work during the pandemic.

“It was really meaningful to see my own dad benefit from some of the work that I was doing,” Anand said, adding that while it’s easy to remember the high points, it was an incredibly difficult climb to those peaks.

“This wasn’t Skip The Dishes, where I could just pick up the phone and order whatever I wanted,” Anand explained. “Every single day was blood, sweat, and tears on the phone with the suppliers.”

For example, one supplier—which Anand declined to name—had promised to deliver one million doses by the end of the week, only for the same person to call back an hour later to inform her they would not be making good on that promise. Unfortunately for Anand, at that time, she had already informed Prime Minister Justin



Two parliamentary interpreters sit in an audio booth providing simultaneous interpretation during an official visit to Centre Block by French President Emmanuel Macron on June 7, 2018. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), who had subsequently announced the news of the delivery to Canadians. While Canada received the promised doses in the end, Anand said that was only one example of the volatility she had to deal with week after week.

An example of the worst moment of the pandemic for Anand personally was on Jan. 14, 2021, when she received a call from Pfizer informing her that it would be sending fewer doses than expected while it paused some production lines at its facility Belgium to expand its long-term production capacity. The following day, it was her job to break the news to Canadians.

“I was devastated ... it stays in my mind as one of the most difficult announcements I’ve ever made,” Anand explained. “But I also knew we would succeed because I

knew that those vaccines were coming like a rocket, so I could speak confidently with Canadians and say, ‘there are bumps in the road, but we’re going to get to the other side.’”

### Remote work ‘a double-edged sword,’ but ‘there’s good from the challenges,’ says Translation Bureau VP

Alongside the global race for PPE, the Parliamentary Precinct was also working overtime to revolutionize parliamentary proceedings as the pandemic and the ensuing public health restrictions dragged the House of Commons and Senate into a new virtual reality.

In the first year of the pandemic, Parliament spent nearly \$3-million purchasing and installing equipment to enable telework, and eventually implement virtual proceedings of the House and Senate.

While the transition to work-from-home and remote Parliament had major impacts on every department in the precinct, it was a “huge overnight shift” for the translators and interpreters.

Translation Bureau vice-president Matthew Ball told *The Hill Times* that while the translators who transcribe written documents from French and English and the interpreters who translate live proceedings are equally essential for Parliament to function, the two teams had drastically different experiences.

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News

# Finishing the fight against COVID and the ‘global race’ to the top of Mount Vaccine

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Ball said that the translators, like many Canadians, could pivot to remote work fairly easily, but the interpreters did not have the luxury of working from the safety of their own homes, and there was an understandable level of anxiety at the prospect of returning to their shared four-by-six-foot audio booths during an airborne pandemic.

“We were putting up Plexiglas dividers between interpreters, and rationing off disinfecting wipes and sending them in with baggies of them because we only had whatever was on hand,” Ball explained.

While the Senate and House of Commons now have separate portable booths for each interpreter, Ball said that also posed a challenge as they could now no longer consult with each other when they needed assistance or to make a correction.

Yet despite that anxiety, Ball said his teams rallied and “stepped up to the plate” when Parliament and Canada needed them.

“I was really impressed and proud of them,” Ball said, adding that despite a few employees’ initial reticence to return to the office, mostly due to co-habitation with at-risk family members, “everyone was in it together.”

“We worked hand-in-glove with the union and the professional association, and we always came at it from the perspective that if we’re going to do what Parliament needs to sit, we’re going to do it in the safest, best way possible,” Ball explained. “We also really had a lot of support from the House and Senate administrations, and excellent support from experts on how to protect our staff. We were really lucky.”

After addressing the health concerns posed by the airborne virus, the next challenge arose from the “atrocious” audio quality the interpreters had to work with once the House of Commons and committees began to meet by teleconference.

“The sound quality issue was a big challenge for us, so we’ve had to learn a lot more about sound transmission, audio chains, and audiology,” Ball explained. “But we’ve come leaps and bounds from where we were in March 2020.”

While audio quality improved slightly once virtual proceedings began taking place over Zoom rather than teleconference, all Parliamentarians have also been issued ISO-compliant microphone headsets, without which



PSAC members picket the Treasury Board Secretariat office at 90 Elgin Street on April 19, 2023, after job action began when bargaining with the government failed to settle contract issues. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

interpretation services will not be provided.

Despite these improvements, the increased use of remote audio continues to strain interpreters’ physical health. Most notably, an interpreter was hospitalized after experiencing “acoustic shock” at a Senate Environment Committee meeting on Oct. 20, 2022. During the meeting, two of the witnesses who appeared virtually were not using the recommended headsets. During questioning, a loud buzz could be heard before escalating to a moment of sudden acoustic feedback.

“It hasn’t been a cakewalk,” Ball said of the challenges the new reality of hybrid Parliament has created. “Remote interpretation has really been a double-edged sword, but some good came out of those challenges.”

Ball said that the bureau’s internal tracking of incidents of injuries related to poor audio quality is decreasing and, in October 2023, the Translation Bureau began a study on interpreter working conditions, and partnered with the University of Ottawa and the University of Laval audiologists to study their hearing health.

“We’re still learning, and there’s still more to be learned, but I think things are looking up,” Ball said.

**Pandemic, unequal application of remote work left lasting rifts: PSAC local president**

For some Parliamentary Precinct employees, the double-edged sword of pandemic-wrought working conditions only seemed to cut one way.

Gilles Lavigne, president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada-Union of National Employees Parliament Hill local 70390, which represents House of Commons employees, said some of the hardest hit were the seasonal food services staff.

While those employees were paid for the first three months of lockdown like other union members, they weren’t called back to work in September, and wouldn’t return to the Hill for nearly two years.

To add insult to injury, Lavigne said that he spoke to one employee who, upon returning to work in 2022, received a notice that they were required to reimburse their employer for \$3,000 in Phoenix pay system overpayments.

Lavigne said the unequal application of who could and could not work from home had created rifts between those who could do their jobs entirely from home, and those who could not.

“It created a lot of frustration, and still does, for the people who were never able to benefit from telework,” Lavigne explained. “They didn’t get to save money on gas, or not have to pay for a babysitter or parking.”

That disparity was particularly felt when on-site employees needed to take time off for sick leave, or during the 2022 Freedom Convoy when many employees who lived in Quebec could not cross the river into Ottawa.

“We had several incidents where people couldn’t come to work because they couldn’t get a taxi across the bridge because taxi drivers were afraid they wouldn’t be able to get back,” Lavigne explained. “They weren’t letting people use sick days while

other employees were being paid to stay home.”

Lavigne said that in one instance, he had to intervene with a supervisor who was attempting to make a printing services employee use a vacation day after they unsuccessfully attempted to take a bus or hail a taxi to get to work and then returned home rather than walk two hours through the convoy protests in freezing temperatures.

“It was a very frustrating time for the union and the membership because it seemed like every time something new happened, the rules changed, but there was

no consistency in how those new policies were implemented,” Lavigne explained.

To make matters worse, as of next week, Lavigne said his union will have been without a contract for four years after the last collective agreement expired in April 2020.

“Initially, they blamed the lack of a contract on COVID-19,” Lavigne explained. The year “2020 was basically a write-off because all the employer wanted to talk about was COVID; there were more delays in 2021, and we only finally started negotiating with the employer in 2022.”

Lavigne said he believes the employer, the House, may be surprised by the extent of dissatisfaction they will need to address during negotiations.

“I don’t believe that the employer 100 per cent understands all of the frustrations from all the different departments because they’ve never really tried to reach out and ask how it felt during COVID,” Lavigne said. “They don’t have a good foundation to make educated decisions about how their employees feel, or what they need, because they’ve never asked.”

Mathieu Gravel, the House Speaker’s director of outreach and media relations, told *The Hill Times* that four “pulse surveys” have been conducted since the start of the pandemic, with the most recent survey completed in March 2022.

Regarding concerns over the use of paid sick leave, Gravel also pointed to the guidance that is still active on Parliament’s internal website.

“When consulted, the stay-at-home if ill preventive measure continues to be recommended by Occupational Health and Safety to employees and management,” Gravel said. “Concerns about the use of sick leave have not been raised with the Occupational Health and Safety nor the Labour Relations team.”

*sbenson@hilltimes.com*  
*The Hill Times*

Pandemic-related IT Investment			
(Not including reallocation of existing resources)			
	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23
Telecommuting equipment:	\$728,693	\$0	\$0
Virtual Proceedings:			
Internal support resources	\$879,553	\$788,633	\$2,039,617
Architecture, design, and implementation	\$337,406	\$289,556	\$0
Equipment and licences	\$615,345	\$229,429	\$275,645
Professional services	\$86,187	\$0	\$0
Total:	\$1,918,490	\$1,307,618	\$2,315,262
E-vote:			
Architecture and deployment strategy	\$45,391	\$0	\$0
Licence cost	\$25,329	\$24,694	\$0
Total:	\$70,720	\$24,694	\$26,231
Press conference facilities:			
SJAM and West Block	\$273,316	\$39,611	\$0
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# Canada's foreign policy must carry Brian Mulroney's legacy into the future



The vision and determination of former prime minister Brian Mulroney, pictured right with Nelson Mandela in 1990, when championing the rights of seemingly distant, marginalized, and oppressed groups made Canada stand out as a moral leader in the family of nations, writes Nicolas Moyer. *The Hill Times* file photograph

Many of the actions taken by Mulroney during his time as prime minister speak to the international development challenges we face today.

Nicolas Moyer

Opinion



As we remember the legacy of former Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney, we should pay special attention to the prominent—sometimes trailblazing—role he played on the world stage.

On many occasions, his vision and determination when championing the rights of seemingly distant, marginalized, and oppressed groups made Canada stand out as a moral leader in the family of nations.

Starting in the mid-1980s, Mulroney's was the first Western government to send

humanitarian aid to Ethiopia to combat the expanding famine. Around the same time, Mulroney started putting pressure on the South African regime to end apartheid and free Nelson Mandela. This was bold as it put him very publicly at odds with then-British prime minister Margaret Thatcher. In 1991, under his leadership, Canada was the first among Western allies to recognize Ukraine's independence. That same year, Mulroney signed the Air Quality Agreement, an environmental treaty with the United States that saw both countries reduce emissions causing acid rain along our shared border.

Each in their own way, these actions speak to the international development challenges we face today. The ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, in addition to their mounting death and injury tolls, are also exacerbating hunger and tearing apart the social fabric. In Africa and elsewhere, marginalized groups and vulnerable communities struggle to access employment. Progress is being made to develop sustainable economic opportunities for large segments of the population—especially women—but not fast enough. Coastal and sub-Saharan regions are increasingly, and disproportionately, experiencing the disruptive impacts of climate change. Those

are but a few of the many challenges that Canadian international development and humanitarian organizations are addressing every day.

To do this, we invest in broad consultation, local expertise, and promising innovation as we build and adapt our programs. We also rely on financial support from the federal government and other funders,

corporate partners, individual donors, and the in-kind contributions of thousands of volunteers. Underlying all those joint efforts and initiatives is a shared belief that Canada, regardless—or perhaps because—of its middle-power status, has a key role to play in the alleviation of poverty and marginalization.

For generations, that sense of accountability, the refusal to ignore the plight of the less fortunate among us, has led to tangible, lasting impacts on the lives of millions of people around the world. It also helped to shape the modern Canadian identity. Today, while some recoil at the potential risks and real costs of our involvement abroad, most of our political representatives embrace this image of Canada as a broker, a facilitator that brings friends and adversaries to the table to advance compromise and hash out actionable solutions.

Anchored in fundamental human rights principles and values, Canada's foreign policy must continue to carry Mulroney's legacy into the future. This responsibility may lie primarily with Canada's leaders, but it also rests with all of us. Their job is to figure out the how; ours is to remind them of the why. Together, our mission is to muster the courage not to defer the when.

Nicolas Moyer is CEO of Cuso International, an international cooperation and development organization that works to create economic and social opportunities for marginalized groups.

*The Hill Times*

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## Editorial

### Carbon price confidence vote is cold comfort

On March 21, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre beat his chest and rallied his troops to bring down the Trudeau Liberals by way of a vote of non-confidence in the government. The ultimately unsuccessful motion read: “That the House declare non-confidence in the prime minister and his costly government for increasing the carbon tax 23 per cent on April 1, as part of his plan to quadruple the tax while Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat, and house themselves, and call for the House to be dissolved so Canadians can vote in a carbon tax election.”

It was nothing new for the Conservative leader, who has been steadfast in his approach and messaging on cost-of-living issues since campaigning for his party’s top job in 2022.

It was also unsurprising that the vote failed, although it was marginally eyebrow-raising that Poilievre had double-booked himself and was unavailable to cast his vote in person in the House Chamber, instead attending a Toronto fundraiser. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also cast his vote virtually.

The virtual vote-casting by party leaders speaks to how unserious the whole episode was. No one thought it was going to be a consequential vote. So, why do it?

It was another ploy for parties of all stripes to say: “here’s where we stand, and we’re fighting for you.”

The Poilievre-led Conservatives have been consistent in their push to “axe the tax.” That message is coming across loud and clear. But there’s a glaring omission: what comes next?

There’s no question the home heating oil carveout has hurt the Liberals when it comes to defending their carbon pricing plan as a signature climate policy. And with higher prices, and wages that have not risen to match as inflation exploded, it’s going to take a while before those pocketbook issues stop being centre stage, even as inflation slows and levels off.

But even though voters are thinking about money right now, the environment cannot simply play second fiddle as a means to garner votes.

In 2021, under the leadership of Erin O’Toole, the Conservatives had a convoluted and unpopular carbon price scheme in their party platform.

The Conservative environmental policy is currently a mystery, but it’s likely to be sold as something that will have no financial impact on the everyday consumer. What magical thing is that? We’ll have to keep waiting. But it does seem odd to call for an election right here and now, and not have a plan ready for voters to consider.

*The Hill Times*

## Letters to the Editor

### Defence policy changes not as stark as Taylor presents, says reader

Re: “Who will be Canada’s next chief of the defence staff?” (*The Hill Times*, March 20, p. 4).

In reading Scott Taylor’s article, it became clear there are points that deserve clarification. Intentionally or not, the article misrepresents certain aspects of current defence policy.

Specifically, Taylor remarks that “There is no longer any restriction on hairstyles, facial hair, hair colour, tattoos, or piercings.”

This is plainly incorrect. To reference the *Dress Instructions* policy, there are in fact restrictions still in place for all of the above: tattoos and jewelry cannot promote/identify with gangs or hatred, long hair cannot impede the wearing of helmets, and more. Additionally, “operational concerns” trump the member’s discretion.

Second, Taylor mentions the change in policy regarding the Canadian Forces



Canadian Forces medical technicians conduct cold/hot load drills with a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter alongside U.S. partners at Lielvarde Air Base in Lielvarde, Latvia, on March 3. DND photograph by Corporal Bryan Bodo

Aptitude Test (CFAT). While not incorrect, the policy change is grossly misrepresented, which according to CBC News, requires that applicants “must have university degrees or college diplomas,” “meet ideal educational requirements for their selected occupations, or ... have relevant education, work and life experience” to be eligible to apply without writing the aptitude test. Frankly, it is good news potential recruits with university degrees do not need to worry about the CFAT.

While I recognize that Taylor writes opinion columns, readers have a right to be properly informed. There are plenty of concerns facing the Canadian Armed Forces; let’s stick to the facts and avoid misrepresenting policy changes that attempt to remedy these concerns in good faith.

**R.J. Mullin**  
Ottawa, Ont.

### Hamas initiated tragic events on Oct. 7, writes Alan Williams

Re: “Trudeau’s feminist policies have failed Palestinian women and girls,” (*The Hill Times*, March 8.) As Katherine Bullock, Tazeen Hasan, and Nawel Hamidi correctly point out, the United Nations’ 2024 “Invest in women: Accelerate progress” theme is meant to uplift voices of all women and girls, especially those marginalized in times of crisis. As I read this initiative, I note that it is inclusive, it embraces all women, not just Palestinian women. Why is it that the authors ignore the Israeli women who were gang raped and then shot? Or the Israeli women bleeding and gleefully paraded like animals through the streets of Gaza to the applause of thousands?

While I despair over the impact the Israel-Hamas war has had on all men, women, and children, we should not forget that Hamas initiated these tragic events through its barbaric attacks on Oct. 7, 2023. By breaking the ceasefire, it

knew full well that the Israeli response would be swift, and by embedding its military operations within the civilian population, it understood that there would be unavoidable civilian deaths.

Not only did Hamas not care, but it counted upon these deaths to bolster worldwide criticism against Israel. In this regard, it was quite astute. It recognized the extent of antisemitism in the world, and hoped its attack would unleash widespread condemnation of Israel. It is also noteworthy that a UN team recently reported that there are “reasonable grounds to believe” sexual violence, including gang rape, took place when Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, and that there is “convincing information” that hostages held in Gaza have been subjected to sexual violence, including rape and sexualized torture, and to suspect the abuse was still ongoing.

**Alan Williams**  
Ottawa, Ont.



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## Letters to the Editor

## Comment

### Minister Saks is a leader in push for peace, says Toronto reader

In a world of stagnated political polarization and violently escalating historic pains, Mental Health and Addictions Minister and Jewish peacemaker Ya'ara Saks is a profile in hope and courage.

Despite unfounded jeers of being a traitor and betraying Jewish safety, Saks' decision and wholehearted defence of being in the room with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to further the prospect of peace demonstrates the kind of fulsome commitment to a real future that protects Israelis and Palestinians and breaks the generational cycle of heartache and shame.

Many years from now, history will reflect on those leaders who profited from mass violence, insularity, and fear when they could have instead sown care, empathy, and peace.

The truth is that real leaders who care for each and all people are always before their time. And Saks is just that leader, meaning that she and her steadfast efforts



Mental Health and Addictions Minister Ya'ara Saks. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

for and spirit of Israeli-Palestinian peace are decidedly right on time.

For this, Saks deserves public support and praise.

**Devon Spier**  
Toronto, Ont.

### Misinformation coming from column on carbon tax: Bellavance

Re: "The triumph of misinformation," (*The Hill Times*, March 20, p. 9).

The actual misinformation comes from Les Whittington. He writes that eight of 10 Canadians will get back more money from the rebate than they pay out in extra fuel taxes. This may be true, but this does not take into consideration all the increases this anti-carbon tax will have on everything, it just looks at the

extra fuel taxes. Everything will increase to offset this tax, not just fuel, and it will trickle down to the consumers, to all Canadians.

Whittington is confusing and manipulating Canadians with misinformation. This is a tax on all Canadians disguised as an anti-carbon tax.

**Guy Bellavance**  
Gatineau, Que.

### Mulroney ignored working people and made Canada a harsher place: letter writer

Perhaps it is time for some clarity on the late Brian Mulroney's harsh legacy.

Before becoming prime minister in 1983, "labour lawyer" Mulroney was president of the Iron Ore Company of Canada, and after arranging severance for redundant Schefferville, Que., employees, he quietly dismissed the company's Labrador workers with nothing.

He subsequently co-operated with the corporate elite to gradually erode Canada's social democratic character, thus creating an increasingly individualistic nation. Now, the same public he marginalized as prime minister are funding his state funeral. If the \$368,000 price tag of Jack Layton's 2015 state funeral is any indication, Mulroney's send-off won't be cheap.

Later, Mulroney's NAFTA policies harmed the Canadian economy by prioritizing shareholder rights at the expense of working people in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. As well, his unreported cash payments from German-Canadian figure Karlheinz Schreiber and Mulroney's subsequent wrist slap from the Canada Revenue Agency undermined public faith in Canada's legal and taxation systems.

The infamous Somalia scandal would not have occurred if Mulroney had resisted pressure from then-U.S. president George H.W. Bush, and not sent the elite—but ill-suited—Airborne Regiment on what later became a disastrous peacekeeping mission.

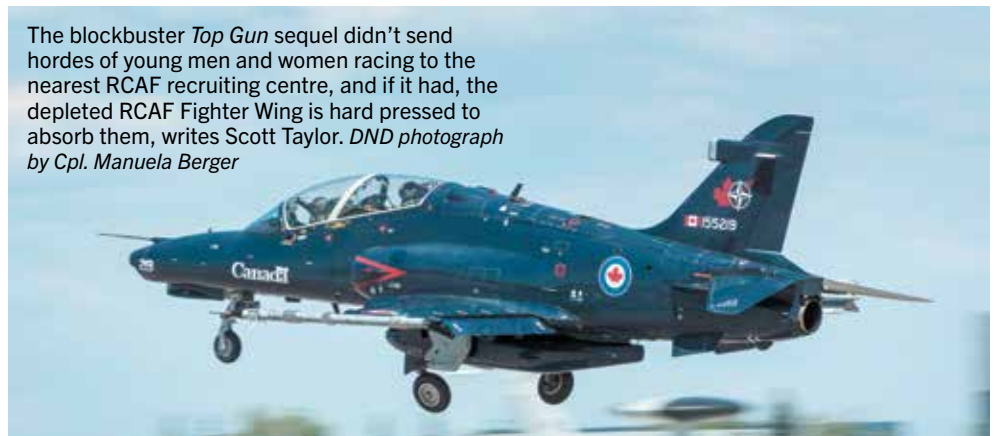
Post-politics, Mulroney entered Canada's academic scene, although his children attended American universities. According to a 2017 joint investigation by the *Toronto Star*, CBC/Radio-Canada, and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists: "A new \$60-million university institute in Nova Scotia celebrating former prime minister Brian Mulroney... got a good chunk of that financing from donors embroiled in international controversy... a number of the power players bankrolling the Mulroney Institute of Government at St. Francis Xavier University have checked resumé's."

The memory of Mulroney's wit and charm are cold comfort to working people whose legitimate concerns were blithely ignored by the late prime minister.

**Morgan Duchesney**  
Ottawa, Ont.

## Tom Cruise isn't going to save our skies

The blockbuster *Top Gun* sequel didn't send hordes of young men and women racing to the nearest RCAF recruiting centre, and if it had, the depleted RCAF Fighter Wing is hard pressed to absorb them, writes Scott Taylor. *DND photograph by Cpl. Manuela Berger*



No one in Air Force leadership is willing to admit that they have dropped so far below a sustainable personnel level that they can no longer train the next-generation fighter pilots.

**Scott Taylor**

*Inside Defence*



OTTAWA—For those who closely follow news about the Canadian Armed Forces in general, and the Royal Canadian Air Force in particular, it will come as no shock to learn that they are currently suffering from a crippling shortage of trained personnel.

At a recent defence and security conference in Ottawa, Minister of National Defence Bill Blair admitted that the inability of recruiting to keep pace with retirements from the CAF have left Canada's military institution in a "death spiral." Blair offered no plan to correct the course of action, he simply said that the leadership "needs to do better."

In 2023, Vice-Admiral Angus Topshee released a short video message which contained an unprecedented honest admission that the present day Royal Canadian Navy is anything but "Ready aye Ready."

Topshee admitted that, for the foreseeable future, the RCN would be unable to meet its operational requirements. This shortfall of trained sailors recently led to the cancellation of an annual two-ship deployment to the seas off the West coast of Africa. Topshee was not whistling past the graveyard: the RCN really is broken.

While Lieutenant-General Eric Kenny has been less open with the Canadian public about the state of the RCAF, the lack of experienced pilots and ground crew is not something easily disguised to those toiling in the much-thinned ranks.

Last year, the RCAF was unable to participate in several international joint training exercises because Canada simply does not have the resources. This is particularly true among the RCAF's Fighter Wing.

One might have thought that the release of Tom Cruise's *Top Gun* Hollywood blockbuster sequel would have sent hordes of young men and women racing to the nearest recruiting centre.

However, even if the video-game generation were motivated to test their skills for real, the problem is now that the depleted RCAF Fighter Wing is hard pressed to even absorb them.

On March 8, the RCAF announced that they were suspending the Phase 3 and 4 of the fighter-pilot training program, and retiring the aging CT-155 Hawk trainer fleet of aircraft. For the last 24 years, the CT-155 Hawk has served with the RCAF as their main advanced trainer aircraft, serving as the last step before student pilots moved onto the even more ancient CF-18 Hornets. Previously, a typical training course for fighter pilot candidates would go through four training phases, of which Phase 3 and 4 were on the CT-155.

Now, a RCAF wannabe fighter pilot will need to complete their first two basic phases, and then wait until Canada can find space on an advanced training course with an allied nation.

One of the official justifications for farming out this training and shutting down the CT-155 fleet was that Canada will soon transition to the yet-to-be-delivered 88 new CF-35s. (The CF-18 Hornets would eventually be retired).

This justification, however, is just bureaucratic lipstick on a pig. No one in RCAF leadership is willing to admit that they have dropped so far below a sustainable personnel level that they can no longer train the next-generation fighter pilots.

This situation cannot be reversed by simply trying harder to do what is no longer working.

At present, if you want to fly fighters, you are either going to live in Cold Lake, Alta., or Bagotville, Que. These bases may make good tactical sense in terms of North American air defence, but their remoteness poses a major challenge to the modern family construct wherein both spouses have a career.

The solution would be to move the fighter squadrons to Calgary and Mirabel, Que., respectively, and negotiate deals with Canada's major airlines to allow former RCAF fighter pilots to serve as true reservists.

If those trained CF-18 fighter pilots could bring their skillset back to the RCAF—say, for two months of the year—without having to move back to Cold Lake or Bagotville, I think you could erase the personnel shortage almost overnight.

I'm sure if the RCAF brain trust also threw in the carrot of investing in these reserve pilots to transition to the fifth generation CF-35s, you would seal the deal.

Let's start being creative folks. Tom Cruise cannot live forever, and the RCAF just turned 100 this year.

*Scott Taylor is the editor and publisher of Esprit de Corps magazine.*  
*The Hill Times*



## Comment

# Can Taylor Swift save the world from Donald Trump?

Swift's ballot-box influence is untested, but Republicans clearly see her as enough of a threat to Trump that they have begun warning her to stay out of the political fray.

Les Whittington

*Need to Know*



OTTAWA—It's hard to get too serious about a pop star, but let's begin with the fact that the United States Federal Reserve Bank in Philadelphia has characterized Taylor Swift as a one-person economic game-changer.

And *Forbes* went further: "The global effect of Taylor Swift's tour has been staggering. When she comes into a city, it is an economic force which lifts their economies." One market research firm calculated that her 2023 tour helped inject \$5-billion into the international economy. *The Wall Street Journal* calls it "Taylornomics."

As a global cultural phenomenon, the Grammy winner also has few equals. In the run-up to the Feb. 11 Super Bowl, the Japanese government itself went public to assure the world the singer could fly back from a Tokyo concert in time for her usual appearance supporting Kansas City at the game. Last summer, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sent her a note saying how much her fans here "would love to have you" perform in Canadian cities.

Continued on page 13

# Are we sleepwalking to another national unity crisis?

It is possible that within two years, the official opposition in the House of Commons will be the Bloc Québécois, and in Quebec, there will be a majority Parti Québécois government.

Andrew Caddell

*With All Due Respect*



MONTREAL—Last weekend's funeral of the late former prime minister Brian Mulroney brought together the Quebec and Canadian family in Montreal. It was encouraging to see dignitaries from all backgrounds renewing acquaintances. Mulroney's love for Canada was acknowledged by all the speakers, even former Parti Québécois leader Pierre Karl Peladeau. And the perfect bilingualism of those who eulogized him was a testament to how far we have come as a country in the past half-century.

But anyone who thinks we are out of the national-unity woods is dreaming in technicolour. Within two years, it is possible the official opposition in the House of Commons will once again be the Bloc Québécois, and in Quebec, there could be a majority Parti Québécois government. We may be sleepwalking to disaster.

While opinion polls are no indicators of election night, the current results on the federal and provincial scenes are coming up roses for the *indépendantistes*. In Ottawa, the prospect of an overwhelming Conservative majority is helping the Bloc Québécois promote itself as defenders of "Quebec's interests." This could result in a BQ caucus of 55 members, which would overwhelm Liberal and NDP "rumps" of a few dozen MPs.

In Quebec City, Premier François Legault's faltering fortunes have led to a dominating



In Quebec City, the faltering fortunes of Premier François Legault, left, have led to a dominating lead by Parti Québécois Leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, writes Andrew Caddell. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade and courtesy of the Parti Québécois



lead by Parti Québécois Leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon. The brash 47-year-old has been touring Quebec universities: at the Université de Montréal, he used a *Star Wars* trilogy analogy, promising a third—this time successful—referendum on sovereignty.

Despite limited growth in support for Quebec independence, Plamondon—known as PSPP—has a secret weapon: the Trudeau government. He argues it is time to cut the federal cord because Ottawa is an albatross around Quebec's neck. At every venue, he recites a list of Trudeau Liberal failures, including the scandal around the useless \$60-million ArriveCan app, the growing federal debt, and the enormous expansion of the federal workforce. Plamondon has shifted the PQ to the right, calling for restrictions on immigration, and highlighting Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's recent refusal to give Legault complete control on immigration.

His arguments are making headway: this week, polling analysis firm Quebec 125 determined the PQ would win 69 seats today, the leaderless Quebec Liberals 26, Québec Solidaire would win 14, and Legault's CAQ would be left with 11 seats.

The Quebec Liberals don't seem in a hurry to elect a leader, which makes them look like a riderless horse. Former Montreal mayor and putative candidate Denis Coderre has been promoting himself as "Captain Canada," although he sounds confused about his federalist credentials: he supports the new language law, Bill 96; tuition increases at McGill and Concordia; and has promised to retain the notwithstanding clause on the secularism law, Bill 21.

The sophisticated Plamondon offers a strong résumé, including a master's degree from Oxford. And while he recently embarrassed himself with a thin-skinned attack on the media for broadcasting his emotional response to alleged death threats, he plays politics like a chess grandmaster. Coderre strikes me as a man who plays checkers.

Meanwhile, Legault, whose CAQ was a vanity project offering a neutral ground between federalists and separatists, looks like a loser. The recent announcement of a historic \$11-billion budget deficit put an end to the former airline executive's reputation as a financial manager. His plans to spend another billion dollars on Montreal's Olympic stadium

will undermine support in rural Quebec. These days, his answer to problems seems to be to blame either Ottawa or English Quebecers. He appears to be unintentionally preparing the path for Plamondon and the PQ.

All these moves should wake up federalists in Quebec and across the country, but I am doubtful. I remember the run-up to the 1995 referendum: the brainiacs in Ottawa thought it was in the bag, but in February, speculation on the Hill was whether the result would be 70-30 or more. By October, senior officials looked like white-knuckle flyers in severe turbulence.

I am not saying there is a guarantee the Bloc and the PQ will succeed electorally: I am simply warning it's likely. Federalists in positions of power and influence have to start playing chess, not checkers.

Andrew Caddell is retired from Global Affairs Canada, where he was a senior policy adviser. He previously worked as an adviser to Liberal governments. He is a town councillor in Kamouraska, Que. He can be reached at [pip-son52@hotmail.com](mailto:pip-son52@hotmail.com).

*The Hill Times*



# The Trudeau Liberals are sending not-so-mixed messages on their approach to antisemitism

Despite some course corrections, the Liberals haven't proven to Jewish communities in Canada why the government should be trusted to keep them safe.

Dan Pujdak

Opinion



Last week, the Trudeau government amplified a message it's been sending to the Jewish community for years: we don't matter.

The Liberals collaborated with the NDP to pass a non-binding motion widely perceived by the Jewish community to reward antisemitic terrorism. The motion, which changes nothing in the Middle East, had only one plausible objective: to respond to the growing risk of violence domestically in Canada. Meanwhile, things that might actually be impactful—like forcefully denouncing antisemitism—don't seem to be happening. Thank you for trying to keep us safe, I guess.

The downstream effect of incomprehensible Liberal policy has been—and likely will once again be—more hateful protests leaving Jewish communities feeling unsafe. Those who believe they are merely peaceful anti-Zionists will not be satisfied. We can expect more protests targeting Jewish community centres and synagogues. Mission accomplished?

The truly scary thing is the Liberal Party doesn't seem terribly concerned about the growing—and very public—Jew hatred here at home. In fact, they've been signalling it's increasingly acceptable for quite some time.

The March 18 vote comes after a photo-op by Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly with Mahmoud Abbas, the lead of the Palestinian Authority, who has said some dubious things about the Holocaust and Jews. Fine, diplomacy requires photos, I get it. She's joined by her Jewish colleague, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Ya'ara Saks, whose portfolio has nothing to do with Israel-Palestine affairs. It would be a cynical ploy for the government to use a Jewish, Israeli woman as a prop alongside a Holocaust denier for no discernible diplomatic reason. What was the reason, exactly?

The message I fear Saks sent to the Liberal caucus and Canadians is—at best—that it's OK to associate with antisemites.

Signalling the acceptability of antisemitism isn't new for the Liberal Party, it's just more noticeable now. For evidence, look at the promotions Trudeau

has handed out to those who starred in controversies.

In 2017, Joly unveiled a Holocaust memorial plaque paid for by her then-department that neglected to acknowledge Jews as the target of Nazi genocide. She's been promoted, and now leads Canada's response to the war in Gaza.

In 2021, the Liberals recruited Jenica Atwin from the Green Party after it became seemingly untenable for her to continue working with the party, which then had a Jewish leader, after internal issues about antisemitism and the party's stance on Israel became public. Atwin is now a parliamentary secretary in the Trudeau government.

Ahmed Hussen was the minister of diversity and inclusion. His department hired Laith Marouf for anti-racism seminars. Hussen purportedly was aware that Marouf made antisemitic statements a month before the scandal broke publicly. Hussen apologized and is now minister of international development where his mandate includes making decisions about aid money in the current conflict.

In 2018, Iqra Khalid gave an award to the head of an organization defunded by the government for "a pattern of support for extremism." She had previously awarded this individual at an event attended by a Palestinian archbishop who had purportedly expressed support for suicide bombings. Khalid apologized, and is now a parliamentary secretary.

To be fair, the party has made some course corrections, but those examples are hardly paragons of moral fortitude.

In 2019, the party pulled a star candidate who peddled antisemitic tropes online. The candidate's defence: the party was aware of his statements when they approved his candidacy. Oops.

In 2022, Omar Alghabra, then transport minister, attended a "solidarity event" by a parliamentary committee chaired by Liberal MP Salma Zahid. The guest list included a Holocaust denier who claimed Judaism is a terrorist religion. Both apologized, but that didn't stop Alghabra from posting an offensive statement on International Holocaust Remembrance Day this year.

The prime minister has tried to spin recent antisemitic behaviour within his caucus as "difficult conversations" over differences of opinion related to a foreign war. The pattern says something different. The difficult conversation Trudeau needs to have now is about Liberal antisemitism.

I've heard the Trudeau government's message and want to ask them a question in return: do you honestly believe Jewish communities should trust you to keep them safe? And if not, do you really deserve to be in government?

Dan Pujdak is a senior fellow at the Macdonald Laurier Institute and the chief strategy officer at Blackbird Strategies. He served as an adviser to then-Liberal cabinet minister Carolyn Bennett from 2016-2019.

The Hill Times



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has tried to spin recent antisemitic behaviour within his caucus as 'difficult conversations' over differences of opinion related to a foreign war, writes Dan Pujdak. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## Appointment Notice

**Julie Gascon**  
President and CEO



**The Montreal Port Authority (MPA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Julie Gascon to the position of President and CEO.**

Pursuing a remarkable career in the marine industry, Julie Gascon held a number of strategic positions with Transport Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard, including Director General, Marine Safety and Security with Transport Canada and Director General, Operations with the Canadian Coast Guard, as well as President and CEO of the Pacific Pilotage Authority, prior to joining the MPA. Julie Gascon holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Montreal (HEC Montréal) and a Bachelor of Technology in Nautical Sciences from the University College of Cape Breton. She took the helm at the Port of Montreal, Eastern Canada's largest container port, on February 12, 2024.

PORT  MONTRÉAL



## Opinion

# Beyond International Women's Day: sustaining support of Indigenous women entrepreneurs

As we transition back to our daily routines and the excitement fades, let's remember that transformational change is only possible when the right resources are invested.

Magnolia Perron

Opinion



As we move beyond International Women's Day, a global moment dedicated to honouring the achievements of women and advocating for gender equity, it remains crucial to reflect on the ongoing challenges and opportunities that marginalized women face—particularly Indigenous women entrepreneurs.

Amid the festivities and applause taking place throughout the month lies a pressing concern: what will become of programs that empower and promote the economic independence of Indigenous women?

I have been privileged to be part of such a program. Two



It's essential to have people like Small Business Minister Rechie Valdez continue to advocate for the women entrepreneurship ecosystem within the government, writes Magnolia Perron. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

years ago, the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), the national representative of a network of more than 50 Indigenous lending institutions in Canada, entrusted me to help increase its lending to Indigenous women by 50 per cent by 2025.

On March 8, 2022, we launched an Indigenous Women Entrepreneurship Program, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at supporting Indigenous women on their entrepreneurial journeys. With nearly \$30-million in funding, our members hired 25 business support officers to deliver the program locally and regionally. They disbursed more than 330 microloans totaling more than \$6-million to Indigenous women business owners.

Take Emilie McKinney, for example, the owner of Anishinaabe Bimishimo, which produces cones for jingle dresses and has expanded to a manufacturer, supplier, and designer. McKinney has not only created jobs for local band members, but has also become a mentor for our program. Then there's Lia Wilson, owner of Wa7 T'u7 Wa7 Wellness, who, through the program, purchased a horse trailer and launched her equine-facilitated wellness practice.

All too often, Indigenous women encounter barriers with mainstream financial institutions, which dismiss their businesses as too risky or unconventional. This program was conceived as a response to systemic injustices, a beacon of hope for those who

have been told "no" far too many times. The program was created by the Indigenous lending network whose members are deeply connected to their communities, and it is overseen by NACCA.

Prior to the program, less than 30 per cent of the businesses supported by the lending network were owned by Indigenous women. Now, we are at 39 per cent. These accomplishments are not mere statistics; they represent tangible progress towards economic empowerment and community development, breaking cycles of financial instability, food insecurity, and gender-based violence while fostering self-sufficiency and resilience.

Now, though, we stand on the brink of discontinuation, with no long-term, sustainable commitment from the government.

I can't help but feel a sense of urgency and apprehension.

Then I reflect on my own grandmother, a resilient entrepreneur who defied societal expectations and thrived despite limited opportunities. Her strength, determination, and pride in operating her own hair-styling and clothing retail businesses continue to inspire me.

And I am further reminded of how far we've advanced since my grandmother started her business, and why the program has been so successful.

For one, financial support: we have offered women microloans and grants as well as ongoing investment in training, capacity building, and mentorship.

Additionally, we have prioritized the training and capacity development of the business support officers, many of whom are Indigenous women themselves.

Third, we have promoted a fundamental shift in organizational culture towards equity and inclusion. We have developed gender-based analysis training to address unconscious biases in decision-making processes and everyday interactions.

Finally, we have allies who amplify the voices that too often go unheard and unrecognized, who promote us when we're not even in the room, and recognize the imperative of having more women in leadership roles.

Having individuals like Small Business Minister Rechie Valdez continue to advocate for the women entrepreneurship ecosystem within the government is essential. I recently had the privilege to sit on a panel with her, along with other leaders in this space, to talk about the current state of affairs and strategizing for a sustainable future.

As we transition back to our daily routines and the excitement fades, let's remember that transformational change is only possible when the right resources are invested. Let's champion initiatives like ours, vital for economic empowerment and gender equity. In the face of imminent cuts, let's reaffirm our commitment to support Indigenous women entrepreneurs, recognizing their immense contributions and advocating for their continued upliftment.

Let's invest in them now, so they can inspire future generations.

*Magnolia Perron is the Indigenous women and youth program manager at the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association. She is from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, and a proud member of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte.*

*The Hill Times*

# Income security cannot wait: it's time to support Bill S-233

Senators should support the National Framework for a Guaranteed Liveable Basic Income Act as a step towards alleviating poverty.

Tracy Smith-Carrier,  
Lauren Touchant &  
Chris Hergesheimer

Opinion



We are living in tremendously challenging times. The crippling cost-of-living situation reveals an increasingly troubling polycrisis in this country.

While Statistics Canada has noted a dip in inflation over the past few months, the Bank of Canada continues to hold fast to high interest rates that are taking an immense toll on the lives of many. The labour market is now showing signs of decline, while the costs of food and housing continue to soar. More Canadian households than ever recorded are resorting to food banks to keep hunger at bay.

Unsurprisingly, according to the Financial Resilience Institute, large swathes of the population are feeling financially vulnerable. The government of British Co-

lumbia has just announced that it intends to reduce poverty by 60 per cent over the next decade. Yet overall poverty rates are trending in the opposite direction, with those at both the provincial and national level on a marked increase from the historic lows of 2020. The ongoing struggle for millions of Canadians is having a profound impact on this country's mental health and well-being. More are now considering medical assistance in dying as an alternative to the relentless anguish of chronic poverty. Senator Kim Pate's Bill S-233 was introduced in 2021 to foster the development of a national framework for the design and implementation of a guaranteed liveable basic income in Canada. The public bill has passed second reading and is

being considered by the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance.

Here are three key messages the Senate committee must consider before casting their final vote:

**The research evidence on basic income-like programs is vast, demonstrating that it's effective in alleviating poverty and its associated adverse consequences.** The literature on basic income and its variants is substantial. Rigorous research exists from around the world on basic income pilots, simulations, and targeted programs. The evidence is clear that programs that put money directly into the hands of individuals are effective in reducing poverty and its harmful consequences.

**We are at a critical juncture, and strong political will and leadership is needed now.** The charitable and social support systems we have in place are ineffective in remedying what they aim to address: poverty and hunger. Today, these systems are wholly unequipped to grapple with the intensifying demand. Invariably they will flounder, not for a lack of good will and intention, but for massive resource constraints. As our climate continues to change and disasters grow in frequency and magnitude, Canada will require evidence-informed social protection policy infrastructure that will ensure a modicum of stability. We can't wait for another pandemic or major disaster to provide this security. We must act now to protect the health and well-being of Canadians.

Evidence from across the globe attests that a basic income can improve population health, while also increasing the trust people place in their political institutions. Evidence also proves that people don't suddenly drop

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## Comment

## Opinion

# Can Taylor Swift save the world from Donald Trump?



Former U.S. president and 2024 Republican candidate Donald Trump recently said cultural phenomenon Taylor Swift would be acting in a 'disloyal' way if she supported President Joe Biden in the Nov. 5 election, writes Les Whittington. Photograph courtesy of Gage Skidmore

Continued from page 10

In 2023, Swift became a billionaire, was named *Time*'s person of the year, and became a minor weekly sideshow in the National Football League because of her romantic ties to Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce.

In a presidential election year in the celebrity-obsessed U.S., Swift's star power has become a matter of fiery national debate. *Newsweek* ran an article last month under the headline: "Is Donald Trump really more popular than Taylor Swift?"

Trump indeed thinks he is, according to a report in *Rolling Stone*. But if it comes down to social media, the 34-year-old singer has far more going for her than the ex-president. Her Instagram followers, for instance, number 275 million-plus.

On his Truth Social platform, Trump recently said Swift would be acting in a "disloyal" way if she supported President Joe Biden in the Nov. 5 election. This because while in the White House, Trump signed updated copyright legislation that "made her so much money," Trump asserted.

All this would be just a curiosity if Swift didn't have the potential to influence the results in what could be a very close election. Last September, on National Voter Registration day in the U.S., Swift urged her millions of fans to sign up to cast ballots in 2024, leading to a record-breaking surge of 35,000 registrations at Vote.org. One national poll found that one third of young voters were "more likely" or "significantly more likely" to vote for a candidate supported by her.

While initially steering clear of politics, Swift in the last few years has tied herself to pro-choice feminism, LGBTQ+ rights, and the fight against racial discrimination. Ahead of 2018 mid-term Congressional elections, she wrote: "I always have and always will cast my vote based on which candidate will protect and fight for the human rights I believe we all deserve in this country."

"I believe in the fight for LGBTQ rights, and that any form of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender is WRONG," she said, adding: "I believe that the systemic racism we still see in this country towards people of colour is terrifying, sickening, and prevalent."

In 2020, responding to Trump's racially charged remark that "when the looting starts, the shooting starts," she tweeted at the president: "After stoking the fires of white supremacy and racism your entire presidency, you have the nerve to feign moral superiority before threatening violence? We will vote you out in November."

Swift supported Biden that year and her name tops the list of the Biden team's hoped-for endorsements now, as her potential to influence disaffected youth voters could help with one of the U.S. president's major electoral problems. It's not clear if she will back the Democrats, but the American right-wing hate-and-conspiracy industry has gone berserk over the possibility.

Typical of the hysteria in MAGA-land, Fox News host Jesse Watters recently claimed that Swift is a "Pentagon psyop asset" who could be "a front for a covert political agenda." (The Pentagon formally denied this.) "The NFL is totally RIGGED for the Kansas City Chiefs, Taylor Swift, Mr. Pfizer (Travis Kelce)," said Mike Crispi, a pro-Trump broadcaster, in another outpouring from the right-wing fever swamp. "All to spread DEMOCRAT PROPAGANDA." The reference to "Mr. Pfizer" relates to an ad in which Kelce promoted COVID-19 vaccines, part of the activities of the football standout that have made him a target in U.S. culture wars.

Swift's ballot-box influence is untested, but Republicans clearly see her as enough of a threat to Trump that they have begun warning her to stay out of the political fray. As one conspiracy theorist summed up the coming election: "2024 will be MAGA versus Swifties."

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

Independent Senator Kim Pate's public bill could dramatically remedy financial insecurity, which is a key social determinant of health and mental health, write Tracy Smith-Carrier, Lauren Touchant, and Chris Hergesheimer. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



# Income security cannot wait: it's time to support Bill S-233

Continued from page 12

out of the workforce when they receive a basic income, nor is a basic income so expensive that we shouldn't seriously consider it.

**Poverty is not a left or a right issue, and policymakers should unite in the public interest of all Canadians.** Effectively addressing poverty in Canada must be of interest to policymakers of all political stripes and ideological persuasions. Adopting an evidence-informed approach is crucial to helping us make decisions that can in fact eradicate the suffering many now face. Canada has historically been seen as a beacon of human rights around the world—now is the time to ensure these rights are realized.

A guaranteed liveable basic income, although not a panacea to all social and economic ills, could dramatically remedy financial insecurity, a key social determinant of health and mental health. It would allow people to live with dignity, without the stigma, complexity, and punitive con-

ditionality of our current income-support systems. It would also allow us to advance our commitments to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and specifically the first of the Global Goals: ending poverty.

Now is the time for action. We strongly ask all Senators to protect Canadians, and vote in favour of Bill S-233.

Dr. Tracy Smith-Carrier is the Canada Research Chair in Advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and associate professor in the School of Humanitarian Studies at Royal Roads University in Victoria, B.C. Dr. Lauren Touchant holds a PhD in Public Administration from the University of Ottawa. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at Royal Roads University, and a professor in the department of political studies at Vancouver Island University. Dr. Chris Hergesheimer is a post-doctoral researcher, a food studies scholar, and practitioner and a dedicated community activist. He lives and works on the Sunshine Coast, B.C.

The Hill Times



Opinion



Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's April 16 budget will come more than two weeks into the fiscal year. It will be the fourth in the past five fiscal years that the federal government has failed to produce a budget before the year began, write William Robson and Nicholas Dahir. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# Responsible governments don't present late budgets

We should not be used to governments treating Parliament like an afterthought, in financial management or anything else.

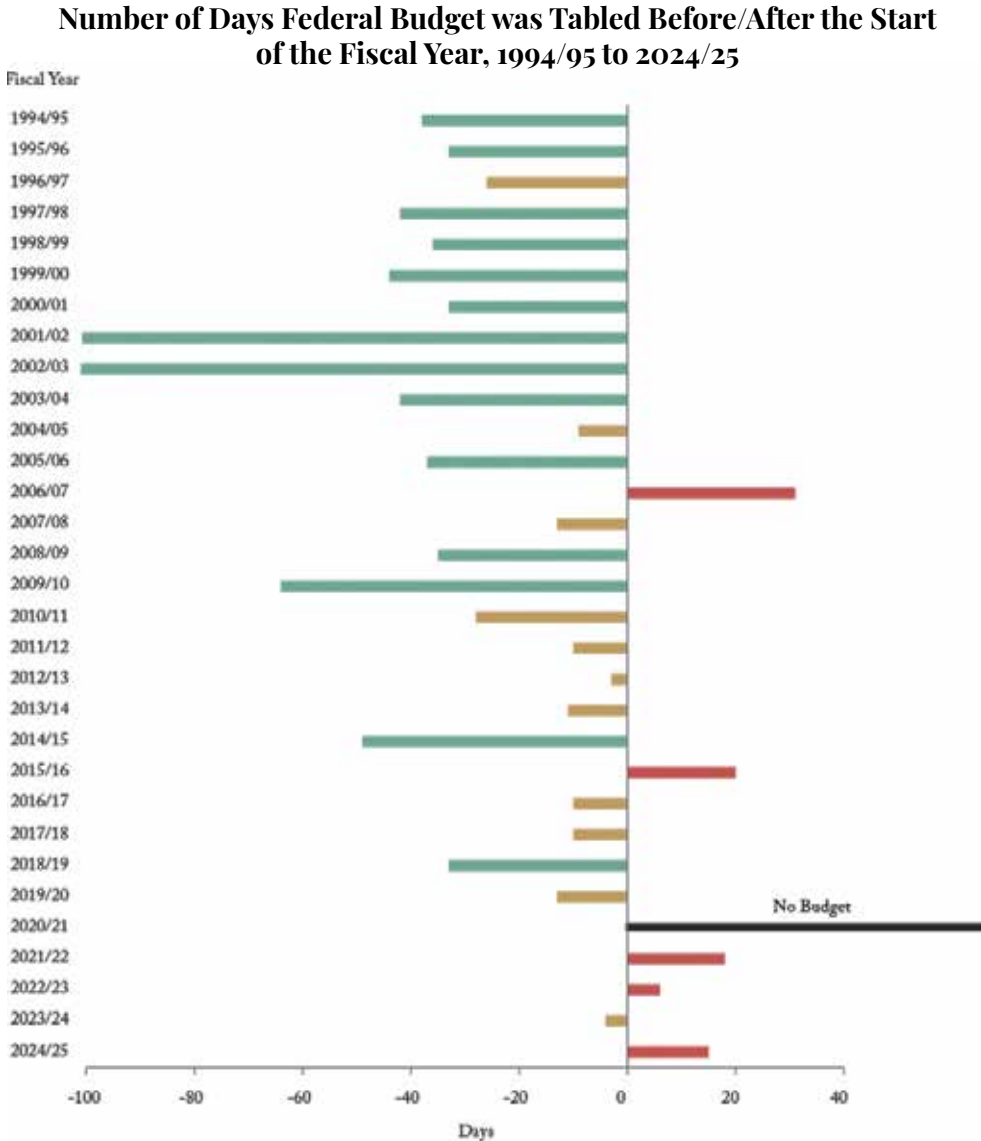
William Robson & Nicholas Dahir  
*Opinion*

Along with rampant spending, erratic tax changes, and mounting debt, the federal government is developing another bad fiscal habit: its budgets are getting later. The government has announced that it will present its budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year, which runs from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, on April 16. By then, we will be more than two weeks into the fiscal year. That is too late. Provinces and territories, whose fiscal years also run from April 1 to March 31, will not know what the federal government—which sends them transfer payments and affects their fiscal environments through its taxes and borrowing—is planning to do. Canadians will be more than one-third of the way through 2024 wondering what taxes they will have to pay. Holders of federal debt and credit rating agencies are still waiting for information about the government's bottom line. And critically, lots of money

will have been committed and much will already have been spent before Parliament has even seen, let alone approved, the fiscal plan. This coming fiscal year will be the fourth in the past five that the federal government has failed to produce a budget before the year began. The one exception—a March 28 budget ahead of 2023-24—had scant significance as four days is utterly inadequate for MPs to provide informed consent. The previous budget, for 2022-23, appeared on April 7, and the budget before that appeared on April 19, 2021. Worse, the budget the government should have presented for 2020-21 never appeared at all. COVID is no excuse—all provinces and territories presented budgets that year, and if the federal government had presented its on time, this unprecedented-

failure of accountability would not have occurred. The record of the Liberals under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was somewhat better

before that. While only one of the four budgets they delivered from 2016-17 to 2019-20 appeared before March—and not by much: it came out on Feb. 27, 2018—none



Graph courtesy of the C.D. Howe Institute

appeared after April 1. But their overall record is bad. Of the budgets they should have presented since their election in 2015, only half appeared before the start of the fiscal year. It has not always been like this. The Conservatives under Stephen Harper delivered 10 budgets (treating the post-election budget of June 2011 as a repeat of its pre-election counterpart in March). Their first, for 2006-07, was late—a consequence of their being elected in January 2006—as was their last. Of the other eight, five appeared in March, two in February, and one in January. The Liberal governments under Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin delivered 12 budgets (treating the pre-election update of October 2000 as the budget for 2001-02). All appeared before the beginning of the fiscal year, and most were well before—only two were as late as March. The update ahead of 2001-02 and the budget for 2002-03 appeared before Dec. 31 of the previous year—a degree of promptness and preparedness that would now be remarkable (the figure shows budgets delivered before March in green, budgets delivered in March in yellow, and budgets delivered late in red). This should not be remarkable. We should not be used to MPs ratifying spending and tax changes that occurred weeks or months earlier. We should not be used to MPs voting on the main estimates—their unique opportunity to scrutinize individual government programs—weeks or even months before they see how those programs fit, or don't fit, into the bigger picture of revenue, expense, deficit, and debt. We should not be used to governments treating Parliament like an afterthought, in financial management or anything else. Nor should we expect disrespect for Parliament's role in stewarding public funds to coincide with responsible stewardship of public funds. The record says otherwise. Canada's previous experience of chronically late federal budgets occurred under the governments headed by Pierre Trudeau. Of the 18 budgets those governments delivered, only five preceded the start of the fiscal year. By the end of that period, the federal government was financing more than one-third of its spending by borrowing—a legacy of deficits, and mounting debt and interest that took almost two decades to redress. The fact that we are again seeing late budgets and irresponsible fiscal policy does not seem like a coincidence. If governments will not produce timely budgets on their own, MPs need to force the issue. If they will not do that, Canadians need to elect different ones. A commitment to produce budgets well before the start of the fiscal year would be a good plank in a future election platform. If it came along with a commitment to a balanced budget, even better. We could have greater confidence in both. William Robson serves as CEO at the C.D. Howe Institute, where Nicholas Dahir is a research officer. *The Hill Times*



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's argument that somehow GHG reductions will yield appreciable benefits of any kind now or in future is nonsense, writes Kenneth Green. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



# Trudeau's carbon tax hike will hurt future generations

The prime minister's policies have thrown serious shadows over the future economic prospects of Canadians who will find themselves less well-off and less economically capable.

Kenneth Green

Opinion



Despite calls from seven of Canada's premiers (including one premier from his own party) to scrap the upcoming carbon tax hike, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has doubled down as he tries to convince Canadians that somehow this tax—which is set to rise from \$65 per tonne of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) to \$80/tonne on April 1—will really be good for them.

Speaking with reporters in Calgary—not coincidentally, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's backyard—on March 13, the prime minister said, "My job is not to be popular," adding, "My job is to do the right things for Canada now and do the right things for Canadians a generation from now" to "deliver that better future

one generation from now, two generations from now."

But Trudeau's argument that somehow GHG reductions which might stem from Canada's carbon tax will yield appreciable benefits of any kind—economic or environmental—now or in future is nonsense.

Why?

Because Canada's share of global GHG emissions is slowly declining and small relative to the world's larger emitters particularly China. Indeed, in 2021 Canada's emissions comprised 1.5 per cent of global GHG emissions compared to 26 per cent for China (in 2018). And since 2005, emissions from China increased by a staggering 71.7 per cent. It's absurd

to think that, even if Canada could drive its GHG emissions to zero, there would be any measurable impact on the global climate. And no impact on climate means no improved environmental benefits for future generations.

Economically, the prime minister's argument is even less compelling than the proclaimed environmental benefit. According to a study published by the Fraser Institute, implementing a \$170 carbon tax would shrink Canada's economy by 1.8 per cent and produce significant job losses and reduced real income in every province.

The cadre of Trudeau government policies, including the carbon tax and imposition of federal bills C-48 (which bans large oil tankers carrying crude oil off British Columbia's north coast, limiting access to Asian markets) and C-69 (which introduces subjective criteria including the "social impact" of energy investment into the evaluation process of major energy projects), combined with impending regulations such as GHG emission caps, are contributing to a collapse in business investment and ultimately economic stagnation in Canada. Per-person gross domestic product—a broad measure of living standards—has barely budged in the last nine years and in fact stood in 2014 at \$58,162, which is \$51 higher than at the end of 2023 (inflation-adjusted). In other words, living standards for Canadians have declined.

Capital investment, which contributes to economic growth and higher living standards, is also declining. A 2021 Fraser Institute study showed that the growth rate of overall capital expenditures in Canada slowed substantially from 2005-2019, and the growth rate from 2015-2019 was lower than in virtually any other period since 1970. Moreover, as recently as 2000-2010, overall capital investment in Canada enjoyed a substantially higher growth rate than in other developed countries, but from 2010-2019, Canada's investment growth rate dropped substantially below that of the United States and many other developed countries. Corporate investment in Canada as a share of total investment was also the lowest among a set of developed countries from 2005-2019.

Far from delivering environmental or economic benefits for Canadians "one generation from now" or "two generations from now," Trudeau's policies have thrown serious shadows over the future economic prospects of Canadians who will find themselves less well-off and less economically capable of adapting to predicted climate risks whether manmade or natural.

Kenneth Green is a senior fellow at the Fraser Institute.

*The Hill Times*



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## News

# Senate bill seeking to criminalize forced sterilizations raises concerns over unintended consequences

‘[Forced sterilization] is something that is very much happening today ... a deterrent like this is at least a starting place, but there needs to be a lot more for our communities,’ says Ellen Blais of the National Council of Indigenous Midwives.

Continued from page 1

The forced sterilization of Indigenous people is an issue Boyer has been working to uncover and address since before her appointment to the Senate in March 2018.

In 2017, as then-Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Health and Wellness at Manitoba’s Brandon University, Boyer co-authored a report on the issue at the behest of the Saskatoon Health Region (SHR), following media reports of multiple Indigenous women who said they were coerced into having a tubal ligation—which involves tying off fallopian tubes, permanently preventing pregnancy—after giving birth in an SHR hospital. Along with exploring the cases of 16 women who came forward, the report highlighted the colonial history of the sterilization of Indigenous people, and British



Ontario ISG Senator Yvonne Boyer, who tabled Bill S-250 in the Senate in June 2022, appeared before the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee to kick off its study on the bill on Feb. 29. Screenshot courtesy of SenVu

Columbia and Alberta’s former eugenics laws, which, in Alberta, led to the sterilization of some 2,800 people between 1929 and 1972. These laws also led to a “disproportionately high number” of Indigenous women being sterilized. The 2019 final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls similarly highlighted the issue, noting “Indigenous women across the country tell stories of ‘coerced sterilization’ that continues even today.”

Boyer pushed for a committee study after being appointed to the Senate, which got underway in early 2019. However, the Senate Human Rights Committee’s work was interrupted first by the 2019 election and then the COVID-19 pandemic, and a planned preliminary report wasn’t tabled until

2021. A second report including the stories of nine survivors, among other witnesses, followed in 2022.

“For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, laws and government policies explicitly sought to reduce births in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, Black communities, and among people with intersecting vulnerabilities relating to poverty, race, and disability,” reads the 2022 report. “Though these explicit eugenic laws and policies have been repealed, the racist and discriminatory attitudes that gave rise to them are still present in Canadian society, and forced and coerced sterilization still occurs.”

Bill S-250 seeks to amend the Criminal Code to add new subsections under section 268—which addresses aggravated assault—to create a new offence

whereby “despite section 45” of the code, “everyone who performs a sterilization procedure on a person is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment” for up to 14 years, except in cases when “the sterilization procedure is performed by a medical practitioner who has obtained the consent of the person to perform the procedure and has complied with requirements set out” in further proposed subsections.

Section 45 of the code protects against criminal liability for performing surgery on someone “for the benefit of that person” so long as the operation is done “with reasonable care and skill,” and is reasonable to perform.

S-250 defines a sterilization procedure as any act “performed ... for the primary purpose of permanently preventing conception.”

The bill sets out that, in getting permission, “no consent” would be deemed to have been obtained if the person (patient) is under the age of 18, “incapable of consenting ... for any reason,” or if they have not themselves “initiated a voluntary request to undergo” a procedure.

In addition to further subsections outlining safeguard steps medical practitioners must take before performing a sterilization procedure, the bill would also make it an indictable offence—punishable by imprisonment of up to 14 years—for anyone, “by means of deception or the use of intimidation, threat, force, or any other form of coercion” to cause or attempt to cause someone to undergo a sterilization procedure.

In kicking off committee questions on Feb. 29, Newfoundland and Labrador Conservative Senator David Wells noted some critics of the bill—“but not this critic of your bill”—have argued that forced sterilization is already covered by sections 265, 267, and 268 of the code, dealing with assault, assault with a weapon, and aggravated assault, respectively.

“If those provisions had been used, I wouldn’t be here today,” responded Boyer. “There haven’t been any criminal convictions that have resulted from medical procedures on reproductive organs—none.”

“Maybe it’s important to have this bill as a deterrent. Maybe it would have caused that second thought before the doctor sterilized that patient. I’m hoping that’s what it will do,” she said.

Nicole Rabbit (Eagle Woman), a survivor and member of the Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice, shared her story with the committee on Feb. 29, noting both she and her mother were “coerced into being sterilized around the age of 28 after [each] having four kids,” and that she learned last year that her niece was also “forced into being sterilized because one of her children was apprehended. So the system stepped in and forced her to be sterilized.”

“That’s what’s happening to a lot of our people,” said Rabbit, noting such stories aren’t being shared “unless they feel safe.” Along with the proposed changes to the Criminal Code, Indigenous women “need an apology,” she said.

The Legal Committee’s three meetings to date have highlighted a few areas of concern with Boyer’s bill, namely: how to informed consent is obtained, including potentially in the midst of a medical emergency; the decision to exclude section 45 protections, which, together with the bill’s consent stipulations, has prompted concerns S-250 could have an unintended chilling effect on health care and could prevent people from getting medical care they do desire; and the burden it would put on defendants.

Responding to questions on March 20, representatives from the Department of Justice told Senators S-250 doesn’t technically create a “reverse onus,” as

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Nicole Rabbit, a survivor and member of the Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice. Screenshot courtesy of SenVu



Alisa Lombard, principal lawyer with Lombard Law. Screenshot courtesy of SenVu



Dr. Diane Francoeur, a Quebec-based obstetrician-gynaecologist and current CEO of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Screenshot courtesy of SenVu

Continued from page 16

the Crown would still “bear the burden of establishing” an offence had been committed “beyond a reasonable doubt,” and would have to demonstrate that—despite evidence provided by the accused—“they didn’t comply with those [safeguard and consent] requirements.” But Matthew Taylor, general counsel and director with Justice Canada, noted consent under S-250 “operates more as a defence.” Under current assault law, proving lack of consent is an “essential element” to proving an offence has been committed, whereas in S-250, an offence is seen to have been committed *unless* consent is proved.

The department’s reading of the bill suggests that, in a situation where someone else is the first to raise the option or prospect of a sterilization procedure, it “may prevent that patient from having the lawful capacity to then consent to that procedure if it was not raised by them,” explained Justice counsel Morna Boyle.

Boyle and Taylor also highlighted the implications and potential unintended consequences of excluding section 45 protections, which currently “allow a medical practitioner ... to make an emergency decision to save a patient’s life,” including decisions “which may result in sterilization.” As an example, Taylor raised the scenario of a 17-year-old who starts to hemorrhage while giving birth. In order to save them, an operation would be required, “but as we understand the provisions [of S-250], they would not protect that medical practitioner from criminal liability,” not only because the patient is under the age of 18, but also because the medical practitioner would be the one initiating the conversation. It would be for the courts to interpret whether such a procedure would constitute a sterilization procedure under the bill, noted Taylor.

Asked about the significance of excluding section 45 as a defence on Feb. 29, Alisa Lombard, a lawyer who’s worked with Boyer and is representing Indigenous women as part of a proposed class-action lawsuit against the SHR, noted that, “typically,” existing “assault provisions aren’t used because of the existence of section 45,” and that its exclusion is aimed at preventing the granting of “additional immunity to already powerful folks in a tremendous power imbalance in circumstances that are also very vulnerable, like childbirth.”

Alberta ISG Senator Paula Simons raised a number of questions regarding possible unintended consequences of S-250, including in relation to its stated application to “anyone” who counsels someone to have a sterilization procedure, and whether that could potentially include a “spouse, mother-in-law, or social worker” who offers advice or an opinion on the matter. She also asked about the potential effect that “saying all sterilization is illegal, except, except, except” could have on Canadians looking for medical care,

noting “people in this country have fought for a century to have access to contraception,” and that certain cancer treatments or gender-affirming care can also lead to sterilization.

“I’m particularly worried about trans Canadians in this time of backlash—especially for younger trans people—that this bill could have the effect of making it nearly impossible for someone who is trans, especially someone who might be under 18, to get the gender confirmation care that they seek,” said Simons.

Dr. Diane Francoeur, a Quebec-based obstetrician-gynaecologist and current CEO of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said it’s “imperative to allow women—whatever their level of education, their socio-economic background, or their ethnic origin—to be the only ones to make the irreversible decision to undergo sterilization,” and to address “reprehensible acts” including forced sterilization and the racist treatment of Joyce Echaquan, an Atikamekw woman who died in a Quebec hospital in 2020. But Francoeur questioned whether criminalization is the only solution.

“We’ve all watched passively as women’s rights have been lost in some of our southern neighbouring states as criminalization took hold when it came to access to their reproductive rights. This is a cause for concern for us,” she said in French. “Our discipline ... cradles itself between life and death in emergencies, which means that consent does not always happen in a respectful and calm way. The influx of newcomers in recent years means that sometimes we have to use a child, or an applica-

tion, or just a few gestures to actually then perform urgent surgery when we don’t actually have interpreters, because a baby’s brain starts to show signs of distress after 12 minutes deprived of oxygen.”

“Clearly, no one will perform sterilization in such a context, but what will we do if it’s an ectopic pregnancy, or where a woman is bleeding, or her life is in danger? Good practice would be to remove the tube,” said Francoeur. “Would there be potential criminalization that would step in and decide for us? Unfortunately, that is what we’re observing in the U.S. where women are once again starting to die of ectopic pregnancies because the obstetricians, gynecologists are afraid of being criminalized.”

She noted the Supreme Court’s 1986 Eve Decision, which involved the case of Eve, a then-24-year-old woman with an intellectual disability whose mother applied for court permission to give consent for Eve’s sterilization. Ultimately, Canada’s top court unanimously ruled that Eve could not be sterilized without her consent.

“We’re very concerned about letting criminalization manage women’s reproductive rights, and believe that recommendations from the Supreme Court from 1986 ... should be more firmly applied by the colleges of physicians,” said Francoeur.

In their testimony, Indigenous Services Canada’s Laura Mitchell, a director with its First Nations and Inuit Health branch, and Dr. Tom Wong, chief medical officer with the branch, stressed feedback they’ve heard about how important criminalization is to Indigenous survivors.

Multiple witnesses, including the National Council of Indigenous Midwives’ Ellen Blais and Claire Dion Fletcher, representatives from the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) and the Native Women’s Association, and Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund executive director Pam Hrick similarly voiced support for S-250, noting it was a “starting point.”

“[Forced sterilization] is something that is very much happening today ... a deterrent like this [S-250] is at least a starting place, but there needs to be a lot more for our communities,” said Blair, noting the need for “Indigenous-led policies and tools” to “ensure that consent is not coerced.”

During her testimony March 21, Dr. Paula Cashin, vice-chair of the CMA’s board, noted the association is in the midst of an internal review to try to establish the extent of harms done to Indigenous people in the health-care system and what role the CMA has played in causing such harms, and shared plans to issue an “Indigenous apology” on Sept. 18, which will be followed by an action plan.

Responding to questions from Senators, Cashin and CMA president Dr. Kathleen Ross indicated they were not concerned S-250 could criminalize “emergency life- or limb-saving procedures,” which they noted is protected under law. But such protection is founded in section 45 of the code, and after Senators clarified that S-250 explicitly excludes it, Ross noted that was “concerning.”

lryckewaert@hilltimes.com  
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## News

# Ex-PM Mulroney's state funeral a chance to reflect on 'incredible change he wrought in this country,' say dignitaries past and present

'No one gave a speech like my dad,' said daughter Caroline Mulroney as politicians, luminaries, and family friends gathered to celebrate the life of the former prime minister.

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

MONTREAL, QUE.—Church bells rang in the frigid early morning air over Old Montreal as Brian Mulroney, son of Baie-Comeau, Que., and Canada's 18<sup>th</sup> prime minister, was remembered during a state funeral inside Notre-Dame Basilica on March 23.

The wind whipped through the streets and the snow quickly accumulated as members of the media set up directly across from the main steps. More than 1,000 invitees came, dressed overwhelmingly in black, to pay tribute to the man, including friends of the Mulroney family, politicians, ministers current and past alike, as well as public onlookers wishing to pay their respects.

The temperature hovered around -13 C in Quebec's largest city just days after the official start of spring, as hundreds of mourners made their way to the historic basilica at the corner of Notre-Dame Street West and Saint Sulpice Street, facing the Place d'Armes.

Brian Mulroney held Canada's top job as prime minister from his first landslide election in 1984 until 1993.

Mulroney spent a considerable time in office, with many successes including the U.S.-Canada free trade deal, as well as early acknowledgement of environmental issues. But as popular as he was when he came into office in 1984, he left with his popularity at 12 per cent.

Despite that, the former Progressive Conservative prime minister was admired by people on both sides of the aisle both during his time in politics and afterwards. That was evident in the remarks made by those attending the funeral to the waiting media outside.



The hearse carrying former prime minister Brian Mulroney's casket pulls up to the Notre-Dame Basilica in Old Montreal, accompanied by members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. *The Hill Times* photograph by Mike Lapointe

## Mulroney a 'precursor of his time,' said Innovation Minister Champagne

As the morning moved along, a steady line of people made their way into the basilica, including Conservative MP Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, Que.), former Conservative foreign affairs minister John Baird, former Conservative leader Erin O'Toole and his wife Rebecca O'Toole, and former Conservative MP and Progressive Conservative party leader Peter MacKay and his wife Nazanin Afshin-Jam.

Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South-Mount Pearl, N.L.) was also spotted, with Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University, Rosedale, Ont.) and Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.) speaking with reporters assembled outside. NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) was also in attendance, as well as Canadian political consultant and former principal secretary to the prime minister Gerry Butts, with Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, Que.) seen walking up the steps into the basilica.

Governor General Mary Simon arrived shortly after 10:30 a.m., with influential Liberal player and podcaster David Herle arriving a few minutes prior, who said it was a "tremendous honour and a privilege" to be attending the funeral.

Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) said "we're celebrating someone who has done a lot for our nation," in a conversation with *The Hill*

*Times*, adding that what he thought Mulroney would be most remembered for was being a "precursor of his time."

"He saw that the stable and predictable access to the U.S. market would be key for Canadian prosperity," said the minister. "And I think today we still live out of that dividend. And so we owe him a lot. He was very generous of his time and his advice to anyone. He understood the opportunity of public service and he celebrated that. He was a great statesman."

Former British Columbia premier Christy Clark called the state funeral "a chance to reflect on the incredible change he wrought in this country" in an interview with *The Hill Times* before she made her way into the basilica.

"Free trade alone made us a trillion-dollar economy for the first time. He had this long vision for Canada. He was a uniter of Canadians," she said. "And we miss the man, but we also miss his method and how he built this country."

Conservative MP and former party leader Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, Sask.) said "it's a great honour that the country is recognizing his contribution to Canada with a state funeral."

"It's very appropriate," he told *The Hill Times*. "Brian Mulroney was a great prime minister [who] made some major changes, major positive changes that still last to this day, devoted his life to his country, and really made an impression on thousands—maybe even tens of thousands of Canadians over his lifetime."

"I'm here to honour his contribution to Canada," he added,

before making his way into the basilica.

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, B.C.), who arrived on the arm of her party co-leader Jonathan Pednault, said "I couldn't have not been here."

"He was a friend. He was enormously kind to me, both when I was an environmental activist and activist and adviser in the minister's office. But in recent years, even after I became leader of the Green Party, and especially then, I have to say, Brian Mulroney was very kind."

May said "everybody's now telling these stories, how he'd reach out and phone and give good advice, pick you up if you felt a little down. I loved him — how could I not be here."

Quebec Premier François Legault and his wife Isabelle Brais were also in attendance, with the premier telling reporters Mulroney was "a great first minister, especially an economic one."

"In signing the free trade agreement with his friend, [former U.S. president Ronald Reagan], the impact was so great on Quebec companies," said Legault.

"We saw a very important increase in exports and of course it created good jobs in Quebec, so we have to thank him," said the premier, who offered his condolences to Mulroney's wife Mila and their four children as church bells began ringing once again on the blustery morning.

Upon his arrival, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) told reporters that Mulroney "had a huge impact 40 years ago," and a "huge impact four years ago as he helped Canada negotiate through a very challenging time with the free trade deal with the United States."

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) said he used to call him every six or seven weeks to get his advice.

"He would tell me a lot of tricks for the trade," said Poilievre. "He was a master at keeping his team united through very difficult times... often his policies were right, [but] were not popular at the time. He had to get 150, 200 caucus members to stick with him as they were facing hardship in their constituencies every week. He laid on the Irish charm every week."

The row of journalists, most of whom were part of the Quebec media landscape, assembled outside of the basilica early in the morning, growing to around 100 photographers, cameramen, print journalists, and television reporters.

There was a lengthy list of honorary pallbearers that attended, including but not limited to Mulroney's former chief of staff Derek Burney, who served in the role from 1987 to 1989 before becoming Canada's ambassador to Washington from 1989 to 1993; Michael Cogger, who played a critical role in Canada's national Progressive Conservative movement and was campaign manager for Mulroney's 1976 run to lead the party before serving in the Senate from 1986 to 2000; and Paul Desmarais Jr., chairman of Power Corporation.

Built between 1824 and 1829, the basilica is home to a 10-bell carillon. Scaffolding covered much of the basilica, which is currently undergoing a major restoration.

## Mulroney 'motivated by service,' says Trudeau

Invited guests and pool reporters only were permitted inside the basilica, where Mulroney's sons Ben, Mark, and Nicolas delivered readings. All three would kiss their hands following their remarks, pressing them against their father's casket before making their way back to their seats.

Caroline Mulroney, his daughter, said "no one gave a speech like my dad," in her remarks.

"With his beautiful baritone voice, his sense of humour, and his impeccable timing, my dad held an audience in the palm of his hand," she said.

Trudeau then took to the stage, noting that the last time he had spoken at the basilica was 24 years ago, when he was 28 years old and delivered a eulogy at the funeral of his father, former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

With a bit of a raspy voice, Trudeau said "Brian once quipped that at the Université Laval, there was no 'PM 101' class to prepare him for his future role."

"Although, after he left politics, if such a class existed, he would have been the ideal person to teach it," said Trudeau. "One of his first lessons would be that winning is important, and it's OK to enjoy it, however winning for winning's sake cannot be the only end game."

"First and foremost, Brian was motivated by service," said the prime minister. "He was motivated by leadership, he was motivated by getting the big things right."

Hockey star Wayne Gretzky—who won four Stanley Cups, and holds the record for most career regular season goals, assists, and points—said in his remarks at the funeral that "that's what our country is all about. Coming together, being friendly, helping other people and paying respects. And Mr. Mulroney was one of the greatest prime ministers we've ever had."

The state funeral came to an end in the early afternoon with the Archbishop of Montreal sprinkling holy water on Mulroney's casket, with the honorary pallbearers taking up positions in the middle aisle. Those assembled in the basilica sang *O Canada*.

mlapointe@hilltimes.com  
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# Will Mr. Poilievre go to Washington? Former diplomats hope so

If Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives win the next election, the renewal of Canada's North American trade deal will be an early hurdle he will have to overcome.

Continued from page 1

Congress, building links that have the potential to be fruitful if that leader becomes prime minister.

Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) hasn't been shy about spreading his message outside of Ottawa, but so far that hasn't included across the border.

"I'd be surprised if he didn't do it. I'm surprised almost that he hasn't done it all already," said Jon Allen, who served as the assistant deputy minister of the Americas and a minister in Canada's Embassy in Washington during his career in the foreign service.

He said a visit to Washington would give Poilievre the appearance of being prime ministerial.

"It's our most important relationship, and he is getting ready for the role of [being] the man that is going to lead Canada in that relationship," he said. "Whether he's the opposition leader or the prime minister, knowing people on [Capitol Hill] is extremely important."

Amid the NAFTA renegotiations, then-Tory leader Andrew Scheer (Regina-Qu'Appelle, Sask.) visited Washington in 2018. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) visited the American capital in 2013 as the then-third-party Liberal leader, as did NDP leader Tom Mulcair that same year. Before becoming the Conservative leader in 2020, Erin O'Toole already had built links on Capitol Hill having attended and spoken with the influential Republican Study Committee in 2018, alongside Conservative MP Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, Sask.), now an adviser to Poilievre on Canada-U.S. relations.

While inside the Beltway, Scheer held meetings with then-transportation secretary Elaine Chao and members of Congress across the aisle. Mulcair held meetings with then-House minority leader Nancy Pelosi and



Prior to becoming prime minister, then-third party Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau held court with Obama administration officials during a 2013 visit to Washington. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Democratic National Committee chair Howard Dean. On Trudeau's itinerary in 2013 were sitdowns with the Obama administration's chair of the Council of Economic Advisers Jason Furman, as well as National Economic Council chair Gene Sperling, now a senior adviser to U.S. President Joe Biden.

For Poilievre, there is an added wrinkle in holding a U.S. visit as he has been under fire from the Liberals for what they call importing "American-style" and "MAGA Republican" policies, which could bring some added cautiousness to holding meetings with those same lawmakers for a leader who has rarely ventured into the foreign policy arena.

The practice has been ongoing for decades. Three months before winning the 1984 election, then-Progressive Conservative leader Brian Mulroney took a trip to Washington, which included meetings with then-secretary of state George Shultz and a dinner hosted by then-Canadian ambassador Allan Gottlieb, with three cabinet secretaries present, as well as a number of White House officials, members of Congress (including future U.S. vice-president Dick Cheney), a Supreme Court justice, and prominent American journalists.

Allen said building links on Capitol Hill will be very important for Poilievre to influence them on Canada's priorities.

"He should go down and he should meet as many people as he can," he said.

As of print deadline, Poilievre's office did not respond to a *Hill Times* question about whether such a trip is in the works.

Former Canadian diplomat Roy Norton, who was twice posted to Canada's Embassy in Washington, said if Poilievre were to take the trip, he would hope that the Conservative leader would take meetings across the Congressional aisle, with both Democrats and Republicans.

"They will be interested in talking to him. They read polls, they're aware of the fact that, at the moment anyway, he is the odds-on favourite to become the prime minister of one of their most important allies," said

Norton, a former consul general in Detroit and Chicago. "Americans tend to invest in cultivating relationships with people who are not only in leadership today, but prospectively in leadership tomorrow."

He added that a trip could allow Poilievre to learn where the Democrats and Republicans are positioned leading towards the 2026 review of the North American trade pact.

"That's going to be one of the major issues that—if he would become prime minister—that his government would be confronted with early on, and establishing relationships is useful," Norton said.

The Biden administration has already indicated a desire to not just rubber stamp a renewal of the pact at its six-year mark.

"You do not want that review to happen in a way that all three parties come to the conversation too comfortable," U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai said earlier this month, as reported by the CBC. "The whole point is to maintain a certain level of discomfort—which may involve a certain level of uncertainty. To keep the parties motivated to do the really hard thing, which is to continue to re-evaluate our trade policies and trade programs ... That discomfort is actually a feature—not a bug."



Past Conservative leader Andrew Scheer took a 2018 trip to the American capital, which included a meeting with a cabinet secretary. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The Biden administration is not guaranteed to be conducting the review, as the Nov. 5 election against Republican nominee and former president Donald Trump will take place first.

Past diplomat Colin Robertson, a former senior official in Canada's D.C. embassy, said increased peer-to-peer contact is only beneficial for Canada.

"It's all about relationships, and we've got an example of that during the Mulroney funeral," he said. "That was something that [Mulroney] was superb at, and it netted huge results because of those relationships."

While the Liberal government is in the early days of its "Team Canada" effort to engage with the U.S. ahead of the November presidential election, Robertson said the initiative will have added value with the inclusion and buy-in from opposition parties.

"No matter who's the government, they still need that relationship with the U.S.," he said.

So far, there is little indication that the opposition have been invited or are willing to take part in the engagement effort. It is co-led by International Trade Minister Mary Ng (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.) and Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.), alongside Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. Kirsten Hillman.

If Poilievre decides to take a trip to the American capital, he is most likely to be briefed by embassy staffers, according to the former diplomats, and could be joined in meetings by Canadian officials, as well. But some former leaders have chosen to eschew the foreign service companion.

Traditionally, MPs visiting Washington have left their partisan rancour back in Ottawa. Amid the Senate expense scandal, Trudeau was asked during his visit in the American capital about then-prime minister Stephen Harper, and responded: "The one thing I'm not going to do is air the many grievances I have with the prime minister when I'm on a foreign visit."

Allen said it wouldn't be well-received—in either Canada or in the U.S.—if Poilievre took the trip south to take partisan swipes at Trudeau.

"You go down and you talk about the importance of the relationship," he said. "It's all very diplomatic and very positive. It would be looked upon very badly if they go down and use it as a platform."

Norton said that if a visit does happen, it would likely have to be in the next few months, as the U.S. House of Representatives rises at the beginning of August, and then all attention is on the presidential election.

"I would think this would be a prudent time [to go]. He'd have to go in the next few months, you don't go two months before an election," he said. Afterwards there will be a brief lame-duck session until a new Congress is sworn in and the next inauguration in January.

*nmoos@hilltimes.com*  
*The Hill Times*



## Opinion



Women line up for food aid in the Aweil East region in South Sudan. In most cases, starvation is a byproduct of war, not even the main event, writes Gwynne Dyer. Photograph courtesy of the PCPM Foundation

# A tale of three famines

Politics provides the final push to topple a country into famine, and that's what is really killing people today in Sudan, Gaza, and Haiti.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—There are three incipient famines in the world today, and politics is at the root of all of them. That's not unusual, actually: famines are almost always political events.

My family is descended from the Catholic Irish diaspora, and when I was a boy in Newfoundland, we would sometimes play the game of “potatoes and point” at the dinner table. We'd point at the potatoes (there was always a bowl of boiled potatoes with the main meal) and say “may I have

a slice of beef,” or “I'll have some more carrots, please.”

It was a distant echo of the Irish famine of 1845-1852 that halved the country's population (a million dead, three million fled). Potato blight killed the potatoes, but it was politics—an ideologically driven British government that refused to interfere in the working of the free market by giving the starving Irish free food—that killed the people.

In order for a mere political decision to topple a country into famine it has to be food-stressed already. But politics provides the final push: that's what is really killing people today in Sudan, Gaza, and Haiti.

The “politics” in question is generally a war of some sort; and in most cases, the starvation is a byproduct of the war, not even the main event.

That is certainly the case in Sudan, the biggest of the current famines. According to the United Nations' World Food Programme, nearly 18 million people in Sudan are facing “acute food insecurity” as a result of the civil war between two parts of the army that broke out in April 2023.

However, the hunger is mostly in the areas where there is severe fighting (Khartoum and the

southwest). It is accompanied by an attempted genocide of the “African” (i.e. Black) ethnic groups in the southwest by the “Arabs” who make up most of the Rapid Reaction Forces (one of the rival military groups).

Haiti's situation is much the same. The capital, Port-au-Prince, has been overrun by armed gangs, and the gangs have taken

control of the port and the roads to block food supplies from entering the city. Starving people provide excellent political leverage.

Most of Port-au-Prince's 1.4 million people are going without food for days at a time, and there is plenty of almost-random killing, but famine is probably several months away in most parts of the country.

The key question here is whether any country will be willing to intervene in the next few months to stop the worst from happening. The answer is likely to be “no,” because countries have already sent troops and aid too many times, only to find that they end up being blamed for failing to cope with the intricacies of the perpetual Haitian power struggle.

The Gaza Strip is also clearly a man-made famine, in the sense that without the war, it would not be happening. It was Hamas that started the war, and it undoubtedly intended to trigger a massively violent Israeli retaliation. It would then use the Palestinian victims created by that response to further its own political agenda.

That's standard guerilla strategy, so the Israelis knew what Hamas wanted them to do. The fact that the Israeli Defense Forces did it anyway was a

deliberate decision by the Israeli government. So, what did Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government hope to gain from the destruction and the food blockade?

There is a deliberate food blockade, although Jerusalem denies it. Aerial photos from late last month show 2,000 trucks waiting to cross at Rafah. Most are still there now, containing enough food to feed everyone in Gaza. Some have been waiting for as long as 90 days. This is not Israeli incompetence. It is Israeli policy.

There are already children dying of starvation every day in the northern Gaza Strip, and the consensus of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification—the major food aid organizations—is that, “Famine is imminent in the northern governorates of the Gaza Strip and projected to occur anytime between mid-March and May 2024.”

Random air drops of food and a new pier in a couple of months' time for food deliveries by Israel's “allies” will not prevent that outcome. So, is the Israeli policy merely one of taking vengeance on the innocent, or is it intended to empty the Gaza Strip of its Palestinian population?

I never thought I would write that sentence, not because I thought Israelis are more moral than other people, but because I believed they were not stupid. There is nowhere else for those 2.4 million Palestinians to go, and Israel's allies, especially the United States, would never condone such an act of ethnic cleansing. It's not 1948 anymore.

But then again, I didn't think that Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime would be stupid enough to invade Ukraine, either.

Gwynne Dyer's new book is *The Shortest History of War*.  
The Hill Times

“The key question here is whether any country will be willing to intervene in the next few months to stop the worst from happening.”



## Albania raises a glass for national day

*The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia



Albanian Ambassador Ermal Muça raises a toast at his country's national day reception at the Château Laurier on Nov. 28, 2023.



Portuguese Ambassador Antonio Manuel Torres Domingues Leao Rocha, left, and International Development Minister Ahmed Hussein.



Liberal MP Francesco Sorbara, left, and Ambassador Muça.



Muça, left, Armenian Ambassador Anahit Harutyunyan, and Alma Muça, wife of the Albanian ambassador.



Ambassador Muça, left; Nezaqete Fazliu Kryeziu, wife of the ambassador of Kosovo; Alma Muça; and Kosovar Ambassador Adriatik Kryeziu.

## Kazakhstan hosts Westin celebration



Senator Marilou McPhedran, left, and Conservative Senator Victor Oh attend Kazakhstan's Republic Day party at the Westin Hotel on Oct. 20, 2023.



Kazakhstan Ambassador Dauletbek Kussainov delivers remarks.



Afghanistan Ambassador Hassan Soroosh, left, and Kussainov.



Kussainov, left, Liberal MP Robert Oliphant, and Aigerim Bekenova, wife of the Kazakh ambassador.



Canada's chief of protocol Sébastien Carrière, left, Kussainov, and Bekenova.

## Turkish envoy throws house party



Moroccan Ambassador Souriya Otmani, left, is welcomed by Turkish Ambassador Esra Demir to the official Turkish residence for a Republic Day party on Oct. 25, 2023.



Albanian Ambassador Ermal Muça, left, then-Cuban ambassador Hector Igarza Cabrera, and Peruvian Ambassador Manuel Gerardo Talavera Espinar.



Japanese Ambassador Kanji Yamanouchi, Demir, and then-Nigerian high commissioner Adeyinka Asekun.



Demir delivers remarks to her guests.





Laura Ryckewaert  
**Hill Climbers**

# Two staff hires each for ministers Hajdu, Guilbeault

In Environment and Climate Change Minister Steven Guilbeault's office, recent changes also include three staff promotions.

Indigenous Services Minister **Patty Hajdu** has welcomed a couple of new hires of late, most recently scooping up **Ghada Abid** to fill the role of issues manager and Quebec regional affairs adviser.

Abid started in Hajdu's office on March 4, and was hired straight from Mental Health and Addictions Minister **Ya'ara Saks'** office where she'd been working as a communications adviser since the end of last October.



Ghada Abid is now working for the Indigenous services minister. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Abid, who immigrated to Canada from Tunisia in 2019, was previously an assistant to Saks as the Liberal MP for York Centre, Ont. She holds a bachelor's degree in international development and globalization from the University of Ottawa, and while in school, she did a number of co-op placements, including as a media analyst with Environment and Climate Change Canada; as a policy analyst with Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada; and as a research assistant with the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study. She also worked for the university itself, last as a content creator for its faculty of engineering. In 2021, Abid was an Equal Voice Daughters of the Vote delegate.

Abid's hiring fills two gaps in Hajdu's office roster left by staff departures in February and December.

**Natascha Barron-McNabb**, who previously covered the Quebec desk for Hajdu, exited the minister's office as of Feb. 13. Barron-McNabb had been working for Hajdu since 2022, and is a former assistant to now-House Speaker **Greg Fergus** as the Liberal MP for Hull-Aylmer, Que.

Meanwhile, issues manager **Shania Tabobondung** bade farewell to Hajdu's team in late December. A former communications co-ordinator for the Wasauksing First Nation, Tabobondung was originally hired as a communications assistant to Hajdu in 2022, and was promoted to issues manager at the start of 2023.

Also in February, press secretary **Reem Sheet** went on temporary leave from the



Jennifer Kozelj is currently acting press secretary and digital media adviser to Minister Hajdu. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

minister's office. Hajdu has since tapped social media manager and communications assistant **Jennifer Kozelj** to step in as acting press secretary and digital media adviser as of Feb. 20.

Kozelj has been working for Hajdu since last September, and was a 2023 summer intern in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** office. She's also previously worked part time as a communications specialist for an Ontario MPP, and in 2022 interned in Liberal MP **Vance Badawey's** constituency office in Niagara Centre, Ont.

On Feb. 26, **Riley Fox** started on the job as a new communications adviser to Hajdu. Fox spent the last year working at Liberal Party headquarters as an email engagement manager. His LinkedIn profile indicates that in 2021, he founded his own marketing agency, Ralf, which has done work for Good Nature Cannabis and Clever Casino (an online casino), and in 2020 he launched his own blog about parenting. Fox is also a former junior program officer with Employment and Social Development Canada, and a former manager at Dutch Love, a cannabis store, in Ottawa.



Riley Fox with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

**Simon Ross** continues as director of communications and issues management. As has been reported, **Randi Anderson** is currently acting chief of staff to Hajdu.

Over in Environment and Climate Change Minister **Steven Guilbeault's** shop, there are two staff additions and three promotions to report.

Most belatedly, there's the December hiring of **Natalie Woodland** as Ontario regional affairs adviser. Woodland has



There are recent hires, departures, and promotions to report in the offices of Indigenous Services Minister **Patty Hajdu**, left, and Environment and Climate Change Minister **Steven Guilbeault**. *The Hill Times* photographs by **Andrew Meade**

previously interned as a field organizer with Green Corps in Denver, Colo., and has worked as a field office director with Fund for the Public Interest in Boston, Mass., a non-profit that "runs campaigns for America's leading environmental and public interest organizations," as described on its website; and as a "Save the Bees" associate with Environment America in Denver, amongst other past experience. She graduated from Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., with a bachelor's degree in global development studies in 2022. While in school, she founded The Home Standards Project, a non-profit aimed at "improving the quality of housing in Kingston."



Natalie Woodland joined Minister Guilbeault's team last December. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

More recently, on Feb. 21, **Selin Ozturk** marked her first day in Guilbeault's office where she's been hired as a communications adviser.



Selin Ozturk is a new communications adviser to Minister Guilbeault. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Ozturk spent the last four years working for the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva, Switzerland, beginning in early 2020 as an intern with its business development unit's arbitration and mediation centre; she was hired on full time as an assistant information officer with the centre by the end of the year, and most recently was doing the same as part of WIPO's business development and digital content disputes section. Her CV also includes past internships with the United Nations Office in Geneva, and with UNICEF Ireland while working towards a master's degree in international peace studies at Trinity College Dublin, among other things.

Policy and northern regional affairs adviser **Isabelle Hurley** and policy ad-

viser **Joshua Swift** both added "senior" to their titles in February, while press secretary **Kaitlin Power** was elevated to senior press secretary and communications adviser to the environment minister.



Joshua Swift is now a senior policy adviser to Minister Guilbeault. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Hurley is a former research associate with the Future of Marine Ecosystems Lab in Halifax, and has been working for Guilbeault since January 2022, originally as a special assistant for the Atlantic. She took on her most recent title roughly one year later.

A former special assistant for policy to then-infrastructure minister **Catherine McKenna**, Swift joined Guilbeault's team after the 2021 federal election as a special assistant for Ontario regional affairs. In early 2023, he was promoted to policy adviser, Ontario regional affairs adviser, and assistant to one of the minister's two parliamentary secretaries. Swift dropped his other roles to focus on policy work after the cabinet shuffle last summer.

Power has been fielding media queries for Guilbeault since the start of 2022 and is a former communications adviser and later Quebec regional affairs adviser to Guilbeault as then-heritage minister, and a former assistant to Public Services and Procurement Minister **Jean-Yves Duclos** as the MP for Québec, Que.



Kaitlin Power now wears the title of senior press secretary and communications adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

**Oliver Anderson** is director of communications to the environment minister, while **Nina Lothian** is director of climate and energy policy, and **Michael Brewster** is director of policy for nature and biodiversity.

**Jamie Kippen** is chief of staff to Guilbeault.

*lryckewaert@hilltimes.com*  
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Parliamentary Calendar

The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to [news@hilltimes.com](mailto:news@hilltimes.com) by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.

Ontario Premier Ford to star in Ottawa mayor's breakfast event on March 28



Ontario Premier Doug Ford will be the special guest at the Mayor's Breakfast hosted by Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, the *Ottawa Business Journal*, and the Ottawa Board of Trade on Thursday, March 28. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

SUNDAY, MARCH 24—FRIDAY, MARCH 29

**Minister Ng to Lead Two Trade Missions to Asia**—Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, and Economic Development Mary Ng will lead Team Canada trade missions to Malaysia and Vietnam from March 24-29.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

**House Sitting Schedule**—The House is scheduled to sit for a total of 125 days in 2024. It is currently on a two-week break, and returns again on Monday, April 8, when it will sit until April 19. It takes a one-week break (April 22-26), returns on April 29, and will sit for two weeks (April 29-May 10). The House returns on Tuesday, May 21, after the Victoria Day holiday, and will sit for five straight weeks until June 21. The House resumes sitting on Sept. 16, and will sit for four weeks from Sept. 16-Oct. 11, but take Monday, Sept. 30, off. It breaks Oct. 14-18, and resumes sitting on Oct. 21. It sits Oct. 21-Nov. 9, and breaks on Nov. 11 for Remembrance Day week until Nov. 15. It resumes again on Nov. 18, and is scheduled to sit from Nov. 18-Dec. 17.

**Michael Ignatieff Talks Democracy**—Former Liberal Party leader Michael Ignatieff, now rector emeritus of Central European University, will give a talk on "What if Democracy's Greatest Enemy is Democracy Itself?" hosted by the University of Ottawa. Wednesday, March 27, at 12:30 p.m. ET, happening online. Details: [cips-cepi.ca](https://cips-cepi.ca).

**Lecture: 'Social and Digital Media Polarizing Public Opinion'**—McGill University hosts the 2024 Eakin Lecture, "Social and Digital Media Polarizing Public Opinion in Canada," with former reporter Raphaël Melançon who will discuss how the internet and social media has, in the past two decades, contributed to amplifying social tensions, polarizing public opinion, and radicalizing political discourse in Canada. Wednesday, March 27, at 4:30 p.m. ET at 3450 rue McTavish. Details online: [mcgill.ca/misc](https://mcgill.ca/misc).

THURSDAY, MARCH 28

**Ontario Premier Ford at Mayor's Breakfast**—Ontario Premier Doug Ford will be the special guest at the

Mayor's Breakfast hosted by Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, the *Ottawa Business Journal*, and the Ottawa Board of Trade. Thursday, March 28 at 7:30 a.m. ET at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Details online: [business.ottawabot.ca](https://business.ottawabot.ca).

**Webinar: 'Canadian Political and Trade Implications of the U.S. Election'**—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts a webinar on "Canadian Political and Trade Implications of the United States 2024 Election." Participants include The German Marshall Fund's Bruce Stokes; Canadian Chamber of Commerce CEO Perrin Beatty, Future Borders Coalition executive director Laura Dawson, and former Canadian ambassador to the United States Frank McKenna. Thursday, March 28, at 11 a.m. ET happening online: [cgai.ca](https://cgai.ca).

TUESDAY, APRIL 2

**NDP MP Idlout to Deliver Remarks**—NDP MP Lori Idlout will take part in a panel discussion on "The Path Forward: Indigenous Resurgence and Reconciliation," hosted by the University of Ottawa. Tuesday, April 2, at 6 p.m. ET in Room 201, Monpetit Hall, 125 University Priv. Details online via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3

**Panel: 'Learning from Canada's COVID-19 Pandemic'**—Former justice minister David Lametti will take part in "Resilient Institutions: Learning from Canada's COVID-19 Pandemic," a panel discussion on how to make Canada's institutions more resilient so that they're better able to respond to future crises, hosted by the Institute for Research on Public Policy. Other participants include Fahad Razak, Canada Research Chair in Healthcare Data and Analytics, and Lori Turnbull, director of the School of Public Administration at Dalhousie University. Wednesday, April 3, at 5p.m. ET at the Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge St., Toronto. Details online: [centre.irpp.org](https://centre.irpp.org).

THURSDAY, APRIL 4

**Former Bloc MP St-Hilaire to Deliver Remarks**—Former Bloc Québécois MP Caroline St-Hilaire, now administrator for the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, will deliver remarks

in French at the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Thursday, April 4 at 11:30 a.m. at the DoubleTree by Hilton Montréal, 1255 Jeanne-Mance St., Montreal. Details online: [corim.qc.ca](https://corim.qc.ca).

**Aga Khan Foundation Canada Book Club**—The Aga Khan Foundation Canada's Book Club will meet to discuss Syracuse University associate professor Erin Hern's book, *Explaining Successes in Africa: Things Don't Always Fall Apart*, a journey into the unsung victories, resilience, and triumphs that often go unnoticed. Hern will take part in a discussion with Cheryl Urban, Global Affairs Canada's assistant deputy minister for Sub-Saharan Africa. Thursday, April 4, 5:30p.m. ET at the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat, 199 Sussex Dr. Details online via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, APRIL 5

**Rand Debate 2024**—Augustine College and the First Freedoms Foundation hosts the 2024 Rand Debate, inspired by former Canadian Supreme Court Justice Ivan Rand, who said, "Logic must yield to common sense as well as to justice." Wilfrid Laurier University's David Haskell will argue in favour of the resolution "Be it resolved that, as Wokeism destroys the West, the first responsibility of government is to foster a virtuous society, rather than protect individual liberty," while Queen's University's Bruce Pardy will argue against. Friday, April 5, at 7 p.m. ET at Augustine College, 152 Metcalfe St., Ottawa. Details online via Eventbrite.

MONDAY, APRIL 8

**Panel: 'The Fight for Liberal Democracy'**—McGill University hosts a panel discussion on "The threat to civility and the fight for liberal democracy," the inaugural event of the series "Conversations: sponsored by Charles Bronfman." The CBC's Nahlah Ayed will moderate the discussion featuring Rosalie Silberman Abella, retired Supreme Court of Canada justice and human rights law expert; Vikas Swarup, former Indian high commissioner to Canada; and Luís Roberto Barroso, president of the Brazilian Federal Supreme Court. Monday, April 8, at 7 p.m. ET at Théâtre Symposia, Centre Mont Royal, 2200 Mansfield St., Montreal. Details online: [mcgill.ca/misc](https://mcgill.ca/misc).

**What is the Future of News Media in Canada?**—This in-person roundtable, hosted by Senator Andrew Cardozo, Liberal MP Mona Fortier, and Senator Hassan Yussuff, will look at the news media in Canada and the rapidly changing world and layoffs from traditional news media. Monday, April 8, at 11:30 a.m. (meet and greet) followed by the roundtable discussion. Senate of Canada Building, 2 Rideau St., Ottawa, Room B-45. Simultaneous French/English translation and a light lunch will be provided.

TUESDAY, APRIL 9

**Virtual Pink Tea with Justice O'Bonsawin**—The Famous 5 Foundation hosts a virtual Pink Tea with Justice Michelle O'Bonsawin, the first and only Indigenous Justice on the Supreme Court. Tuesday, April 9, at 2 p.m. ET taking place online, register via Eventbrite.

**Paramedic Chiefs Parliamentary Reception**—Please join the Paramedic Chiefs of Canada and co-host Conservative MP Todd Doherty on Parliament Hill for their evening reception. Paramedic chiefs from across the country are looking forward to sharing their priorities and experiences with Parliamentarians at this event. Tuesday, April 9, 5:30-7:30 p.m. ET in Room 228, Valour Building.

**National Public Safety Awards**—The Union of Safety and Justice Employees hosts its annual National Public Safety Awards. Members of Parliament, Senators, and staff are invited to this catered reception featuring local cuisine and a prestigious awards ceremony celebrating the outstanding work undertaken by Canada's federal public safety and justice employees. Tuesday, April 9, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in Room 310, Wellington Building, 180 Wellington St. RSVP: [miya@kitpublicaffairs.ca](mailto:miya@kitpublicaffairs.ca).

**Jane Philpott to Discuss Her New Book**—Former Liberal health minister Jane Philpott will discuss her new book, *Health For All: A doctor's prescription for a healthier Canada*, with journalist Paul Wells at an event hosted by the Ottawa International Writers' Festival. Philpott is currently dean of health sciences at Queen's University. Tuesday, April 9 at 7 p.m. at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, 154 Somerset St. W. Details online: [writersfestival.org](https://writersfestival.org).

**Panel: 'A Better Digital Future for Canadian Transportation'**—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts a panel discussion on "Imagining a Better Digital Future for Canadian Transportation." Shauna Brail, Institute for Management and Innovation, University of Toronto Mississauga; Jean-Sébastien Langelier, Infrastructure Canada; and Catherine McKenney, CitySHAPES, will discuss the policies needed to realize the benefits of "the new mobility era" in a way that is equitable, efficient, and effective. Tuesday, April 9, at 12 p.m. ET at the Delta Ottawa City Centre, 101 Lyon St. N. Details online: [irpp.org](https://irpp.org).

**AFN Dialogue on Transport and Storage of Used Nuclear Fuel**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts the first in a four-part series, "Regional Dialogues on the Transportation and Storage of Used Nuclear Fuel," from April 9-May 22, to advocate for First Nations' active involvement in decisions about used nuclear fuel, management, and transportation across Turtle Island. Tuesday, April 9, at 8 a.m. PT at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 655 Burrard St., Vancouver. Details online: [afn.ca/events](https://afn.ca/events).

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10—FRIDAY, APRIL 12

**The Progress Summit**—The Broadbent Institute hosts its annual Progress Summit from April 10-12. Speakers include Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow, and Fae Johnstone, executive director of Wisdom2Action. This event will take place at the Delta Hotel City Centre, 101 Lyon St. N. Details online: [broadbentinstitute.ca](https://broadbentinstitute.ca).

**Canada Strong and Free Conference**—Canada Strong and Free hosts its two-day networking conference on

the theme: "Leading with Conviction." Confirmed speakers include Conservative MPs Michael Chong, Melissa Lantsman, and Shannon Stubbs; former United Kingdom prime minister Boris Johnston; and former Saskatchewan cabinet minister Tim McMillan, among others. Wednesday, April 10, to Friday, April 12, at the Westin Hotel Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details: [canadastrongandfree.network](https://canadastrongandfree.network).

THURSDAY, APRIL 11

**Canada Growth Summit and Annual Testimonial Dinner**—The Public Policy Forum hosts the Canada Growth Summit 2024. That evening, its Annual Testimonial Dinner will take place, honouring five distinguished Canadians who have made outstanding contributions to public policy and good governance, including former cabinet minister Marc Garneau, and former Privy Council clerk Janice Charette. Columnist Paul Wells will also receive the Hyman Solomon Award for Excellence in Public Policy Journalism. Thursday, April 11, at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Details: [ppforum.ca](https://ppforum.ca).

**CGAI's International Trade Conference**—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts its annual conference on international trade. Speakers include Canada's former chief trade negotiator Steve Verheul; Karina Häußmeier, deputy head of mission, Embassy of Germany; André von Walter, head of trade, EU Delegation to Canada; Marie-France Paquet, chief economist, Global Affairs Canada; and Vincent Rigby, former national security and intelligence adviser to the prime minister. Thursday, April 11, at 9 a.m. ET event at KPMG, Suite 1800, 150 Elgin St. Details online: [cgai.ca/events](https://cgai.ca/events).

**OEA/CABE 2024 Spring Policy Conference**—The Ottawa chapter of the Canadian Association for Business Economics hosts its 2024 Spring Policy Conference on the theme "Navigating Economic Crossroads in Canada." Former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge will deliver the lunch keynote address. Thursday, April 11 at 8:15 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details online: [cabe.ca](https://cabe.ca).

FRIDAY, APRIL 12

**Justice O'Bonsawin to Talk Mental Health**—Supreme Court Justice Michelle O'Bonsawin will take part in a conversation about mental health in the workplace, "Mental Health: We Have Come a Long Way, But Are We There Yet?" hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Friday, April 12, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York, 100 Front St. W., Toronto. Details online: [empireclubofcanada.com](https://empireclubofcanada.com).

SATURDAY, APRIL 13

**Parliamentary Press Gallery Dinner**—The Parliamentary Press Gallery hosts its annual gala dinner. Journalists, together with political leaders, diplomats, and other distinguished guests will gather for an evening of high spirits and satire that puts the spotlight on media's crucial role in our democratic ecosystem. Saturday, April 13, at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building.

TUESDAY, APRIL 16

**Minister Freeland to Table Budget**—Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland will table the 2024 federal budget on Tuesday, April 16 at 4 p.m. ET in the House of Commons. The Department of Finance will host an embargoed reading and press conference for media prior to the tabling.

FRIDAY, APRIL 19

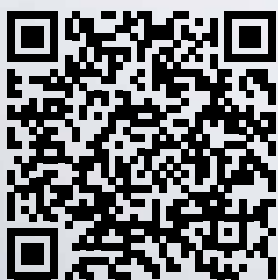
**Minister Miller to Deliver Remarks**—Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Minister Marc Miller will deliver remarks in French to the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Friday, April 19, at 11:30 a.m. ET in Montreal. Details online: [corim.qc.ca](https://corim.qc.ca).



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