Conservatives say they’re ‘confident’ Mark Norman will expose more Liberal wrongdoing

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

The Conservatives are banking on Vice-Admiral Mark Norman to further embarrass the Liberal government over its role in his abandoned criminal prosecution, and hope to meet with the former second-in-command of the Canadian Armed Forces “at the appropriate time,” says Conservative MP Erin O’Toole.

“When he decides to speak, I’m quite confident that there will be some information that shines a troubling light on the early decisions of the Trudeau government,” said Mr. O’Toole, a former veterans affairs minister and Air Force officer, who has known Vice-admiral Norman for years.

Continued on page 14

Liberals now focusing ‘completely’ on election readiness in regional, national caucus meetings

The governing Grits will be under attack from all sides in the next election campaign, but Liberals say they have a good story to tell and some say they need to sharpen up their communications strategy before it’s too late, by Abbas Rana p. 6.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured May 2, 2019, talking to the national Liberal caucus on the Hill. Liberal MPs say their regional and national caucus meetings are now focusing ‘completely’ on election readiness, starting last week. The House is adjourning for the summer recess on June 21, and will return after the October federal election. The Hill Times file photograph

Continued on page 15
**HEARD ON THE HILL**

**by Neil Moss**

‘There is no greater guy in this place’: MPs celebrate outgoing Liberal MP Eyking

MPs from all parties honoured Mark Eyking’s federal service last week, and reminisced about his beaver-saving heroics.

The 58-year-old Liberal MP announced last February that he would not be seeking re-election, ending a nearly 20-year career in the House.

“Know that there is no finer family man and no greater gentleman in this Chamber. There is no greater guy in this place,” fellow outgoing Liberal MP Rodger Cuzner said about his former roommate for 13 years in Ottawa.

Mr. Eyking and Mr. Cuzner lived together in what was known at the time as the Embassy of Cape Breton. Mr. Eyking and Mr. Cuzner represent Sydney-Victoria and Cape Breton-Canso, N.S., respectively.

The two had just left D’Arcy McGee’s Irish Pub on Sparks Street and were on their way home to the embassy when the two envos spotted a stranded beaver in 2009.

“We saw the beaver and the member for Cape Breton-Canso called 911 right off the bat,” Mr. Eyking said. “God love the poor lady who was on 911 on the other end, but it was April 1,” he said. “He calls 911 and says we are two MPs headed back to the embassy, but found that the beaver was following them. “We had to go back and chase him down again, so we got the job done,” Mr. Eyking told the House last week.

Conservative MP Randy Hoback and NDP MP Charlie Angus also commemorated Mr. Eyking, remarking on his bipartisan nature. Mr. Angus commended Mr. Eyking for voting with the opposition on a committee, which resulted in his ouster for someone “more than willing to do whatever the PMO said.” Mr. Hoback celebrated the work Mr. Eyking has done as chair of the House Committee on International Trade.

“He ran a good committee. It was a civil committee,” he said.

**Separated at birth, eh?**

Liberal MPs Churence Rogers, left, and Denis Paradis, right. Photographs courtesy of Facebook and Wikimedia Commons

Once they got the beaver to the river, the two MPs headed back to the embassy, but found that the beaver was following them. “We had to go back and chase him down again, so we got the job done,” Mr. Eyking told the House last week.

While they were being celebrated in the House, MPs revealed in the retelling of Mark Eyking, pictured with former Liberal MP Paddy Tonsley, and Rodger Cuzner’s 2009 beaver-saving escapade on Sparks Street on their way home from D’Arcy McGee’s Irish Pub.

The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia

MONDAY, MAY 20, 2019  |  THE HILL TIMES

A Taste of the Arctic offers tantalizing tastes and sounds of Inuit culture

Photographs by Blair Gable and The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade

Nathan Obed, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, welcomed guests of the sold-out event held on May 15 at the NAC. The annual event features Inuit food, music, and culture.

Carolyn Bennett with special assistant Annie Aningmiuq, left. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Minister

Inuvialuit settlement region of the N.W.T.

Mr. Obed and N.W.T. Senator Margaret Dawn Anderson.

Pipis (dried Arctic char) cut with an ulu (traditional woman’s knife).

Pippis (dried Arctic char) infused with Labrador tea.

Tarlunait (scallops) harvested from Pangnirtung, Nunavut.

Throatsingers Evie Mark and Akinisie Sivuarapik of Nunavik.

Members of the Igloolik rock band Northern Haze.

Members of the Igloolik rock band Northern Haze.

Mr. Obed and Health Minister Ginette Petitpas-Taylor.

Mr. Obed and Indigenous Services Minister Seamus O’Regan.

Maatalii Okalik and Charlotte Carleton.

Mr. Obed and Minister Donna Poli, right, and Minette Deen with special assistant Thalia Amsing, left.

Mr. Obed and Indigenous Services Minister Seamus O’Regan.

Mr. Obed and Minister Donna Poli, right, and Minette Deen with special assistant Thalia Amsing, left.

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Put charitably, the main parties are on the same page on ending subsidies; they are just having trouble reconciling their schedules. Complete phase-out starting in 2019? No. How about 2050? How about never? Does never work for everyone?

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer, and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh. The Liberals and NDP introduced rival motions intended to show how seriously they take the looming climate catastrophe—but both were mostly booby-traps for the other parties, containing no serious, or novel, arguments, writes Susan Riley. The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade

CHICHESTER, QUE. — That wasn’t a climate emergency, MPs were “debating” in the Commons last week—that was a political emergency. It wasn’t sparked by floods and fires, or by rising global emissions, but by the rising of the Green Party. After the Greens’ recent federal by-election win in Nanaimo, and its April breakthrough in Prince Edward Island, the perennial fringe party is looking more competitive and that has everyone else very nervous.

Indeed, the Liberals and NDP introduced rival motions intended to show how seriously they take the looming climate catastrophe—but both were mostly booby-traps for the other parties, containing no serious, or novel, arguments. The Liberal motion invited all parties to re-commit to the 2015 Paris climate accord targets—not so much a high-minded expression of principle, as a crude attempt to flush out Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer, who has been coy about whether his party will back away from the landmark treaty after endorsing it a few years ago.

Scheer refused to support the motion without an amendment acknowledging how miserably the Liberals have failed in efforts to meet the Paris targets—which, incidentally, were once the Stephen Harper targets. Those targets—a 30 per cent reduction from 2005 levels by 2030, in the convoluted code of international climate treaties—were loudly disparaged as inadequate by the campaigning Liberals before they, too, accepted them. And have a vanishing chance of meeting them.

Meanwhile, the NDP declared its own climate emergency and called on the Trudeau government to walk away from plans for a multi-billion expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline and to end generous subsidies to fossil fuel companies. It also wants to eliminate all carbon emissions by 2050. (Or so we must infer; Singh didn’t provide a number.) Needless to say, this didn’t find favour with the Liberals, proud new owners of the existing $4.5-billion oil pipeline from the Alberta oilsands to Vancouver harbour.

And, while the Liberals have repeatedly promised to phase out inefficient subsidies to Big Oil—as Harper did, when he signed a 2009 agreement with other G7 countries—subsidies to the sector have actually increased.

Put charitably, the main parties are on the same page on ending subsidies; they are just having trouble reconciling their schedules. Complete phase-out starting in 2019? No. How about 2050? How about never? Does never work for everyone?

Then there is the vexing question of which leader is the biggest hypocrite when it comes to promising climate action and doing the opposite. The Liberals had fun last week needling Jagmeet Singh for appearing to back away from his enthusiastic support for a $40-billion liquified natural gas project in northern British Columbia after his party lost its seat to the Greens in Nanaimo-Ladysmith. Singh is caught between B.C. Premier John Horgan and B.C. unions, which support the project, and green New Democrats like Svend Robinson, who has returned to politics after a 15-year absence and is running in Burnaby.

After the Nanaimo by-election loss, and with prompting from Robinson and others, Singh pronounced himself against further development of fossil fuels, especially by fracking. Since the LNG plant will process fracked natural gas, it looked as if the mega-project had lost Singh’s support. But, pressed on that precise question by CBC host Vassy Kapelos, Singh dodged, danced, and assured neither side and looking like a boat without an anchor.

Meanwhile, Trudeau—sounding uncannily like Harper—declared Liberal Environment Minister Catherine McKenna. Touché.

Heavy on rhetoric, light on results. Under Justin Trudeau, Canada is falling further and further away from hitting emissions targets,” said Scheer spokesman Brock Harrison. Bingo.

As for the Green Party, leader Elizabeth May released her party’s 20-point climate plan. Mission Possible, last week. It is a familiar mix of carbon pricing with dividends to taxpayers, support for renewables, an end to fossil fuel subsidies, and far more stringent, even painful, emissions reductions. Intriguingly, it proposes abandoning the purchase of new fighter jets in favour of water bombers. Of all the federal leaders, it is safe to say May does take the climate emergency seriously.

Of all the federal leaders, it is safe to say Green Party Leader Elizabeth May does take the climate emergency seriously. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Nor was Scheer to be outdone. He called the prime minister a “high-carbon hypocrite.” Not for Trudeau’s contradictory approach to climate—a carbon tax which will have a small initial impact on emissions, in return for expansion of the high-emissions oilsands—but for his travel arrangements. Trudeau generates too many emissions flying around the world and the country, said Scheer, who, of course, makes his way from appointment to appointment in horse-drawn carriage.

As to the Conservative climate plan: it is coming in June and speculation is that Scheer will claim to honour the Paris targets rather than abandoning them, but, by supporting emissions-reductions in other countries and going easy on domestic polluters. It will be spun as a “global” approach, but will likely let Canada’s oil industry off the hook.

“We’ve seen Andrew Scheer have no climate plan for over a year and having special meetings with oil lobbyists. I assume that how they’re going to develop their climate plan,” declared Liberal Environment Minister McKenna. Touché.

She has also said repeatedly she will work with anyone to advance a green agenda, and proposes the formation of an all-party cabinet committee to push measures to reduce emissions.

She can claim one immediate victory, at least: for a few hours last week, the larger parties were forced to defend their climate plans and pretend, at least, to take the ongoing, and accelerating, environmental reckoning seriously. Score one for the Greens.

Susan Riley is a veteran columnist and a regular contributor to The Hill Times.
Whales are calling, but no one’s answering, including the federal government

The Trudeau government should ban seismic blasting in Canadian waters. The stakes are high if nothing changes—the likely extinction of the North Atlantic right whale—and the serious degradation of all other forms of marine life in an already declining Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Michael Harris

HALIFAX—The whales are calling but no one has answered—including the federal government.

In a small theatre in the Nova Scotia Art Gallery downtown Halifax, 25 souls braved a blustery spring day cold enough to pass for late winter to hear that message. It came in the form of a movie, The Vanishing Call of the Right Whale. The powerful “short” was directed by M’Kaniaw filmmaker Eliza Knockwood, and narrated by a big name in the international movie industry, Ethan Hawke. Hawke is an acclaimed American actor, nominated four times for an Academy Award.

Their message was stark. Everyone associated with the film, from producer Mary Gorman, director Knockwood, and narrator Hawke, wants the Trudeau government to ban seismic blasting in Canadian waters. The stakes are high if nothing changes—the likely extinction of the North Atlantic right whale—and the serious degradation of all other forms of marine life in an already declining Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Seismic blasting is used by the oil and gas industry to explore for new fossil fuel resources beneath the seabed. The air guns used in this type of underwater exploration create one of the loudest man-made sounds used in this type of undersea exploration to locate and evaluate oil and gas resources beneath the seabed. The air guns are fired every 10 seconds for months on end covering vast areas of the ocean. According to Dr. Lindy Weilgart of Dalhousie University, this practice raises background ocean noise levels 1,000-fold over the size of New Brunswick. A single air gun blast affects 27 square kilometres of the ocean. And a single exploration by BP affected 14,000 square kilometres of ocean. That is the problem.

Whales use sound the same way humans use their eyes, except that hearing is impaired by these underwater blasts, they are essentially blinded. Every aspect of a whale’s life is compromised—from navigation and feeding to mating and communication.

That is when they “wander” out of their habitat and “blunder” into ships or fishing gear. So is the culprit really vessels that travel too fast in the shipping lanes, and heavily geared up fishermen? Or could it be whales disoriented by a blitzkrieg of noise from seismic blasting?

Ottawa’s record on protecting the right whale has been somewhere between spotty and hopeless. The federal government did, to its credit, bring in some measures to protect the species after 17 of these animals turned up dead in Canadian waters in 2017. (There are believed to be 411 right whales left, only a quarter of which are breeding females.) Seven of those deaths were attributed to “blunt force” trauma, i.e. colliding with a ship, or entanglement in fishing gear. For a time, Ottawa created protected areas for the whales and imposed speed restrictions of 10 knots on vessels 20 metres or longer. It also kept fishermen out of areas where whales might be present.

But those restrictions were later lifted. The no-go areas for fishermen were reduced in size, and the shipping lanes brought back to normal. Even the number of air surveys to spot migrating whales was reduced from two trips per week to just a single flight. So there is help from Ottawa, but it is painfully ad hoc.

The great unanswered question is why Ottawa has made modest moves in shipping and fishing to protect the endangered right whale, but done absolutely nothing about seismic blasting? In fact, it has delegated a great deal of the responsibility for exploration decisions to provincial offshore petroleum boards dominated by industry players. Abdication by any other name.

The elephant in the room is that Canada has zero regulations on the use of seismic blasting at sea. There is no mention of this practice in the government’s new legislation to modernize and improve environmental assessments. For the right whale, that green omission is an existential proposition. As one of the expert panel members put it, “You can’t mitigate dead.”

How different the picture is south of the border? Susannah Randolph of the Florida Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign, made the observation that things were happening in the U.S. affecting 14,000 square kilometres of ocean. That is the problem.

It came in the form of a movie, The Vanishing Call of the Right Whale. Canada looked a positively Trumpian. “It comes as a shock to hear that the Atlantic waters north of the border in Canada are slated for seismic blasting and drilling,” she said.

There is reason for American shock to turn to anger against Canada. What, after all, is the point of protecting the right whale by banning seismic exploration and drilling along the U.S. coast, if the animals migrate north into unprotected waters?

That question was on the mind of Wilfred Moore, a Canadian Senator for 20 years before his recent retirement. Moore was the Senator who introduced legislation to end the captivity of whales and dolphins. He wondered whether Canadian officials informed the U.S. Interior Secretary about the seismic blasting that would have effects on New England waters.

Why has the U.S. been a better custodian of the marine environment than Canada? Because Americans stood up and spoke out.

Despite facing Donald Trump, coastal Americans stopped the president’s five-year plan for offshore drilling announced in January 2018. They did it by mobilizing. Millions of citizens opposed Trump’s plan.

In Randolph’s home state of Florida, 69 per cent of voters passed a constitutional amendment that bans offshore drilling in state waters—where right whales have their calves. Since then, U.S. coastal communities have passed 159 resolutions opposing seismic testing and drilling.

According to Randolph, politicians got the message. “Both Democratic and Republican governors from New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, California, Washington, and Oregon have all opposed drilling off their coasts.”

As for the Trudeau government, it’s been mostly the talk without the walk. When the panelists finished their presentations, I asked the film’s producer, Mary Gorman, how Ottawa had reacted to the issue they were highlighting for a smattering of people on behalf of a vanishing creature. “No, they have not reacted. There has been no feedback at all. It’s as if we don’t exist,” she said. The activist—another endangered species.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Environment Minister Catherine McKenna don’t need better lines in front of the cameras, but better deeds behind the scenes. They continue to lose the name of action in the heat of resolve.

They should remember something. It’s not much of a credit to your public policy CV to erase a grand species from the ocean, and to do that in the name of an outdated energy source that also happens to be killing the planet.

A good place for Ottawa to show that its heart is where its rhetoric would be to turn down a continuing proposal by a Norwegian company, Multikleen Invest, for a nine-year seismic exploration off the south coast of Nova Scotia covering a staggering 259,400 square kilometres of ocean. The first phase of the company’s environmental assessment has been completed. The second phase has been put on hold for a year. All of it should be cancelled.

If you’ve ever heard a right whale sing, you would know what I mean.

Michael Harris is an award-winning journalist and author.

The Hill Times
Liberals now focusing completely on election readiness in regional, national caucus meetings

BY ABBAS RANA

With only four months left before the fall election call and 75 per cent of the Grit caucus consisting of rookie MPs facing re-election for the first time, the Liberals have decided to focus “completely” on election readiness in all their weekly regional and national meetings until the House adjourns on June 21, MPs say. 

“Now we’re focusing completely on the election,” said seven-term Liberal MP Judy Sgro (Humber River-Black Creek, Ont.), who won the last election with 56.5 per cent of the vote. “We did in an interview with The Hill Times.

When the House is in session, all the political parties hold regional and national caucus meetings every Wednesday morning on the Hill. Held behind closed doors, the meetings are an opportunity for MPs to get together once a week, in the same time and place, to discuss their political and policy issues. MPs share feedback from constituents with their colleagues and the caucus leadership.

On the government side, cabinet ministers update their colleagues on what their departments are doing on a variety of policy issues, while backbench MPs provide their opinion on these policies. Each regional caucus chair also provides a report on the national caucus and a summary of what policy and political issues are on the minds of Canadians and MPs from their specific regions. National caucuses meet for two hours from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., and before that time, there is a regional caucus meeting in the prior election. The 2015 election was a change election in which Canadians turfed the Stephen Harper Conservatives and elected Liberals rewarding them with a majority government.

The upcoming campaign is going to be especially tough for rookie Liberal MPs who were elected as part of the Liberal red wave because this will be their first re-election campaign, and almost all the recent national public opinion polls are showing Liberals trailing the Conserva- tives in all regions except for Quebec. Over the last four years, the Trudeau government has faced a number of controversies and broken promises, which appear to have dampened the enthusiasm of Canadians who voted for the Liberal Party last time. The most recent scandal that caused a significant amount of political damage to the Liberals is the SNC-Lavalin scandal in which the former Justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, B.C.) refused to accept political pressure from senior cabinet ministers on when the Montreal-based engineering giant on fraud and bribery charges.

Since winning power, the Liberals have broken a number of signature promises made in the 2015 election campaign and they have suffered from some self-inflicted controversies, including ditching electoral reform promises, being involved in some self-serving controversies involving senior Liberals, taking the gaffe-plagued India trip, vacationing on the Aga Khan’s private island in Bahamas without clearing it with ethics commis- sion in advance, not balancing the budget, making controversial corporate tax changes, and mis-handling both the SNC-Lavalin scandal and the Mark Norman affair. These setbacks are affecting the Liberal Party’s popularity in national public opinion polls.

According to the most recent weekly rolling poll by Nanos Research, the Conservatives were leading the pack with 35 per cent support, followed by the Liberals with 30 per cent, the NDP 15 per cent, and the Green Party had the support of 11 per cent of Canadi- ans. The poll, which was released on May 14, had a margin of error plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Moreover, in provincial elections held since the 2015 federal election, Canadians have mostly unseated the incumbent gov- ernments. According to CBC, “there have been nine changes of government in the 11 provincial and territorial elections that have been held during the last four years.”

But at the same time, it’s not uncommon for Canadians to elect one party at the provincial level and another at the federal level. Meanwhile, the Liberal caucus made the decision to focus chiefly on election readiness at their May 8 caucus meeting.

Ms. Sgro and other Liberal MPs interviewed, were divided on how to share the specifics, citing caucus confidentiality. But they said going forward their focus on election campaign readiness will involve sharing some information on what MPs are hearing at the door, presentations from the party on different aspects of an election campaign such as the use of so- cial media, polling, organization, and what policies should be part of the election platform.

“Absolutely, that’s the way it should be, so that is what we’re doing,” said Ms. Sgro.

“It’s sharing of information from one Member [of Parlia- ment] to another, what works here doesn’t work there, sharing what makes sense,” said Ms. Sgro.

British Columbia Liberal caucus chair Gordie Hogg (South Surrey- White Rock, B.C.), in an interview with The Hill Times, said that, considering the election is only a few months away, and the House has only four weeks to sit after it returns next week, election readi- ness is top of mind for Liberals.

Mr. Hogg, who was elected in a by-election in 2017 with 47 per cent of the vote, said in addition to governance, the key issue for the Liberals is obviously also putting their energies in preparing for the next election. Mr. Hogg said his caucus is providing input to the national caucus on policies and political issues that are on the minds of British Columbians.

In the province of Mr. Hogg, said that riding associations and campaign teams are working on finding election campaign offices, raising funds, and training of campaign staff for the upcoming election.

“We’ve been focusing totally on governance, and so the last couple of meetings, we’ve been also having an element with respect to how do we best prepare for the next election,” said Mr. Hogg. “How do our EDAs working on focusing on how do we prepare our team, and how can we best present our caucus to the satisfaction of an average person?”

Meanwhile, some Liberal MPs interviewed expressed concerns that the government has put in place numerous positive social and economic policies, such as the Canada Child Benefit program, investments in infrastruc- ture, lowered taxes for middle class, strengthened the Canada Pension Plan, and as a result of the government’s policies, last month had the lowest unemployment numbers in 40 years, has not done a good job in communi- cating the positive impact these policies on the lives of Canadians.

“Do I agree with that,” asked Ontario Liberal caucus chair Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands), in an interview with The Hill Times, “Yeah, I think we could be better at communica- tion.”

Mr. Gerretsen also spoke to The Hill Times on a not-for-attribution basis in order to be more candid also said he thought disappointment their government’s communica- tion staff missed the opportunity to communicate their success story to the Canadians. They specifically appeared perturbed that during crisis situations, they get attack from the opposition parties, their messag- ing talking points appeared to be written by lawyers, which did not connect with Canadians and did not address the crux of the matter to the satisfaction of an average person following the issue.

Ms. Sgro, however, said while she agrees that her government did not communicate its success as much as it could have, she said all government MPs and everyone else who is part of the government is responsible for that, not just the communica- tion staff. She said that her party has now put together a strategy, which will be rolled out in the coming weeks on how to share the government’s accom- plishments with Canadians. She declined to share any details or the timing.

“The plan will roll out when we feel it’s the appropriate time,” said Ms. Sgro. “It will all roll out, there’ll be lots of informa- tion.”

Five-term Conservative MP David Tilson (Dufferin-Caledon, Ont.) was being interviewed re-election in October, said his party is also working hard to get ready for the campaign. He defended to say that the Conservative caucus is receiv- ing presentations from the party head office and how much time his caucus is devoting to election readiness in weekly meetings, cit- ing The Hill Times.

NDP MP Irene Mathyssen (London-Fanshawe) said her caucus’s election readiness on a regular basis, but this is one of several topics that they talk about at the weekly meetings.
Ford’s cuts in social programs could be opening for federal liberals to campaign against federal Conservatives in October, say Liberal MPs

Conservative MP David Tilson says it’s too early to jump to any conclusion about the impact of the Ford government’s policies on the outcome of the next federal election.

BY ABBAS RANA

Ontario Premier Doug Ford won last year’s provincial election with a thumping majority by making cuts to programs and services is fast making him a liability for the federal Conservatives, say Liberal MPs, who add they will make it an issue in the upcoming election campaign.

“Are we campaigning against them? You’re damn right we are,” said Liberal MP Adam Vaughan (Spadina-Fort York, Ont.) in an interview with The Hill Times. “If you put Scheer in office with Ford, Toronto is done. There’s nothing good about having Ford at Queen’s Park … it’s bad for the City [of Toronto], bad for the province, and at the end of the day, bad for the country.”

The Ontario Progressive Conservatives won a landslide majority government in June 2018, capturing 76 of the 124 seats in the province. The then-governing Kathleen Wynne Liberals suffered a humiliating defeat in which they were reduced to seven seats, the worst result in the party’s history. The NDP won official opposition status with 40 seats, and the Green Party won one seat.

In the 2015 federal election, the Liberals won 80 of the 121 seats in Ontario. The Conservatives won 33 seats and the New Democrats eight. The Liberal gains in Ontario were a stark change from the 2011 election, when they ended up with only 21 seats, the Conservatives 73, and the New Democrats 22. The increase of 69 seats from just one province across the country is a key role in the Liberal Party’s federal election win. The Liberals won 184 seats nationally last time around, compared to 99 for the Conservatives, 44 for the NDP, 10 for the Bloc Québécois, and one for the Green Party.

Ontario is a critical battleground in every federal election as it is home to more than one-third of the 338 members House. The provincial and federal riding boundaries in the province are almost the same. So, the Ford Progressive Conservatives’ victory boosted the confidence of federal Conservatives, and their hopes of making gains in Ontario in this year’s fall federal election.

Almost all recent public opinion polls related to federal political parties have been showing that Justin Trudeau’s (Papineau, Que.) Liberals are trailing Andrew Scheer’s (Regina-Qu’Appelle, Sask.) Conservatives. The only difference is whether the margin is in single digits or double digits. This trend of low approval ratings among Canadians has been giving Liberal MPs major political headaches as they are facing reelection in only four months.

The only exception to these recent polls is the one conducted by Innovative Research that came out on April 29. This poll suggested that 36 per cent of Canadians prefer the Trudeau Liberals, compared to 31 per cent for the Scheer Conservatives, 14 per cent for the Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) New Democrats and 10 per cent for the Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.) Greens.

In Ontario, according to this poll, the federal Liberals were leading the pack with 40 per cent support, followed by the Conservatives with 33 per cent support, the NDP with 14 per cent and the Green Party with nine per cent. The poll of 5,200 Canadians was done in the months of March and April.

An Angus Reid poll released on May 3 suggested that the Conservative Party had the support of 38 per cent of Canadians, the Liberals 25, the NDP 18, and the Green Party had the support of 11 per cent. The online poll of 1,525 Canadians was conducted from April 26-30 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The same poll put Conservative support at 37 per cent, Liberal support at 32 per cent, NDP support at 14 per cent, and Green Party support at 12 per cent.

In recent weeks, the Ford government has made a number of controversial cuts to programs and services in areas such as public health, legal aid, education, child care, tourism, library services, conservation and a massive tree planting program. These cuts have generated media headlines on a daily basis, and causing a massive backlash among Ontarians who indirectly is bad news for the federal Conservatives, as many voters don’t make a distinction between the federal and provincial parties.

An online poll released by Pollara Strategic Insight last week suggested that the PCs and the Ontario New Democrats are tied in a statistical dead heat. This poll suggested that the New Democrats now had the support of 31 per cent of Canadians followed by the PCs with 30 percent support. The Ontario Liberals, who still have not elected a new leader to succeed outgoing Ms. Wynne, had the support of 26 per cent, and the Green Party had the support of 11 per cent of Ontarians.

The poll of 1,527 Ontarians was conducted between April 28-May 1 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

In comparison, the provincial PCs won the last election with 40 per cent of the votes, the NDP won 33 per cent, the Liberal 19.5 per cent, and the Green Party 4.6 per cent. Mr. Ford and newly elected Alberta Premier Jason Kenney have been publicly attacking Prime Minister Trudeau and the federal government’s policies, especially energy policies such as the carbon tax, and for failing to start the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Only recently, the Ontario PC government released an attack ad against the carbon tax, saying that this will raise prices of all necessities of life, such as gasoline and groceries.

“In an interview with The Hill Times, five-term Conservative MP David Tilson (Dufferin-Caledon, Ont.) conceded that the Ford government’s controversial cuts are facing a backlash in the province and the PCs are bleeding support, but he cautioned that five months before the election it is too early to jump to any conclusions about the impact of that backlash on the next federal election. He said that based on his interactions with his constituents, a significant number of people are still upset with the provincial Liberals’ 15-year performance in government, during which the government racked up billions of dollars in debt for the province, and also with Trudeau government’s policies.

“It’s too early to tell,” said Mr. Tilson who is not seeking re-election in October. “It’s a long way to go. So much can happen when the campaign starts. There’s no question there’s some people that are not pleased with him, but there’s an awful lot of people that are [pleased].”

Mr. Tilson said that the federal Conservatives don’t have any control over the policies of the provincial Ford government, but those policies still could affect the federal Conservatives in the upcoming election. He said that like any other federal party, if Conservatives want to form government after the October election, they’ll have to do well in the upcoming campaign.

Some Ontario Liberal MPs interviewed for this story said they are receiving a lot of feedback from their constituents who are upset with the Ford government. They said people are concerned that thousands of Ontarians will lose jobs, and also thousands of people will be deprived of programs and services that they’ve been relying on for years. Liberal MPs also said that they would campaign against the Doug Ford PC government’s recent cuts to social programs in the upcoming federal election campaign.

“[Mr. Ford] a disaster for the people of Ontario, he’s a disaster for the government of Ontario, he’s a disaster for federal politicians in Ontario,” said Mr. Vaughan. “Everything he touches doesn’t turn out for the better.”

Mr. Vaughan said that he would make these cuts an issue in his upcoming campaign.

Seven-term Liberal MP Judy Sgro (Humber River-Black Creek, Ont.) agreed.

“[Mr. Ford] is a disaster for the people of Ontario, he’s a disaster for the government of Ontario, he’s a disaster for federal politicians in Ontario,” said Mr. Vaughan. “Everything he touches doesn’t turn out for the better.”

Mr. Vaughan said that he would make these cuts an issue in his upcoming campaign.

GTA area ridings have played a critical role in the outcome of recent federal elections. But, politician Greg Lyle said, that considering the recent polling numbers, it appears the next government is going to be a minority government.

“So, he said, Ontario ridings are going to be equally important, which will be a test of how effectively national parties can use their limited resources in the vote-rich province of Ontario, along with other regions of the country.

“There’s are seats in every part of Ontario that could move, and we feel that a minority is the most likely outcome,” said Mr. Lyle, president of Innovative Research.

In the last federal election, there were 70 ridings across the country that won or lost by a margin of five per cent of the vote or less. Of these, 26 are located in Ontario, and the Liberals won a lion’s share of 18 seats, with the Conservatives taking seven and the NDP one seat.

aranarana@hilltimes.com

The Hill Times
Letters to the Editor

A call for more ambitious climate action now

In November 1981, a statement signed by 78 prominent Canadians on Canadian foreign policy was sent to then-prime minister Pierre Trudeau. The statement was later published in The Globe and Mail. Since then, the Group of 78 has advocated peace, justice, and planetary survival through its annual policy conferences and monthly discussions. The accelerating and universal devastation due to climate change demands a responsible response from all those in public office. This open letter urges governments at all levels to act on the following key priorities to meet the urgent climate challenge: These are informed by the Group of 78 conference report of 2018. Mindsets must be changed to embrace the reality of climate change. Governments at all levels must commit to a national carbon budget to limit warming to 1.5°C and a level of carbon pricing to meet that budget. Governments and the private sector must supply a climate change mitigation and adaptation lens to policy decisions across all departments and agencies. Governments must facilitate the managed decline of fossil fuel production that includes the elimination of all fossil fuel subsidies, the acceleration and scaling up of renewable energy production and infrastructure, and the widespread adoption of energy efficiency and conservation measures. In order to reduce our current dependence on fossil fuels as a source of energy, a far-reaching and rapid transformation of our agriculture system is essential to reduce the greenhouse gases generated in producing and distributing our food. There needs to be a transition framework to support workers and communities impacted by these transformations.

Both Harper, Trudeau broke their election promises to veterans: Labelle

Our Canadian Forces personnel must go to court to fight for their paid benefits, but the government is prepared to spend millions to rehabilitate returning ISIS terrorists. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau should have replied to our town hall question we posed to him in Lower Sackville, N.S., on Jan. 9, 2019. Why didn’t he also answer our letter presented to him by Liberal MP Darrell Samson, regarding our town hall question to terminate the CPP pension claw back affecting the welfare of our veterans’ and their families.

Military/CRP veterans don’t retire early. Often, they served in dangerous situations and the wear and tear on their bodies makes it impossible to continue serving their country in these often dangerous obligations. Members of Parliament can draw a pension after completing six years of service that is equivalent to a chief warrant officer with 38 years of service. What price tag can you compare with civilian employment that our spouses perform on a regular basis during numerous operational moves resulting in the loss of the spouses’ higher CPP benefits? Our veterans have overpaid for all their benefits.

Pension benefits are considered to be a sacred trust obligation to the financial welfare of Canada’s Forces personnel and their families.

The former prime minister Stephen Harper broke his election promise: “When a motion passes the democratic elected majority of the House regarding the government shall honour that motion.” Prime Minister Trudeau also broke his election promise: “I have earned the right to serve this country as your prime minister, no veterans will be forced to fight for the support and compensation they have earned.”

Did the Liberal government forget our veterans who took the final ride down the Highway of Heroes and who gave their lives for the security of Canada? Military/CRCM veterans and their families deserve nothing less. They have completed with dignity their contract to Canada. Now Liberal politicians need to display their sense of justice. Veterans standing together for tomorrow.

John Labelle
Veterans Annuity Campaign Coordinator
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Ottawa, Ont.
The cautionary tale of Harper

This is a cautionary tale for those who wish to engage in politics. If you don’t play the game properly, if you don’t define yourself, you risk becoming a villain. So put down that policy book and practise singing pop songs.

Gerry Nicholls
Post Partisan Pandit

Tory growth appears to be slowing. Canadians are asking about Andrew Scheer’s right-wing alliance with Doug Ford and Jason Kenney. That leaves an opening for the Liberals.

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Opinion

It’s time to categorically reject the Norse-god inspired far right in Canada

We need to make it clear that groups of this ilk do not enjoy official sanction and that we as Canadians universally reject their views.

Phil Gurski
Terrorism

OTTAWA—When I was a kid one of my favourite movies was The Vikings with Kirk Douglas (father of the much more famous, at least today, Michael) and Tony Curtis. It follows the story of a bunch of, well, Vikings, in which—and here I am citing IMDB: “a slave and a Viking prince fight for the love of a captive princess.” It is actually a lot more exciting than that.

In one scene, I think it is Tony Curtis who is tied up as the tide is rising and he prays to the Norse god Odin for protection. Lo and behold the god comes to his aid and he goes on to live and do all kinds of Viking things. Odin was the one-eyed god of poetry, death, divination, and magic, a true multi-tasker if their ever was one.

Not too many people believe in or pray to Norse gods today, even in Scandinavia. The region converted to Christianity beginning in the 8th century and the area today is largely Lutheran, with nary a Norse deity worshipper in sight. Aside from the DC/Marvel movies universe, I suppose, where one superhero is called Thor. I have yet to see anyone in Canada open up a place of worship to Norse gods and goddesses.

I would think that would be seen as silly (but do not write to me and lambaste me for insensitivity; if you want to bow down to Frigg, Balder, and Loki please feel free to do so).

Which brings me to the Soldiers of Odin (SOO), a political extremist group founded in Finland in 2015 but with chapters in Canada. I don’t think they worship Odin but they are nevertheless an odious group.

According to some, the SOO is a white supremacist, xenophobic, and Islamistophobic identitarian group. Somewhat paradoxically, the group describes itself as “a non profit organization that helps their local communities with charity, good will, and believes in our charter of rights and freedoms.” Hmm, those two versions don’t seem very close, do they?

The SOO made the headlines recently in Canada, a rare achievement for the small organization, when they hosted a ‘dinner event’ at the Royal Canadian Legion on April 22 in Grande Prairie, Alta. The legion was not amused. In a statement on its Facebook page, dominion president Thomas D. Irvine said the national command “does not support or tolerate any group or organization whose views or actions are contrary to our values and those of our country. This includes ‘the Soldiers of Odin.’”

Wade Reimer, president of the local chapter of the Soldiers of Odin, who held the dinner, told the CBC that the group is not racist or anti-immigration.

“This country was built on immigration,” he added. “I don’t think anybody really wants to see mass amounts of people walk across borders.”

Even if the Soldiers of Odin do engage in feeding the hungry and picking up garbage in parks, some members have also clashed with anti-racism and anti-fascist demonstrators, and posted flagrantly anti-Muslim statements on their social media pages. The Kiwanis or Rotary Clubs these guys most assuredly are not.

But with any combination thereof) to have access to weapons and military training?

It is important not to over-emphasize this issue or cast aspersions on the thousands of men and women in our Armed forces. Still, the use of a legion to host an SOO event, even if the group was making and serving meals, cannot and must not be tolerated. We need to make it clear that groups of this ilk do not enjoy official sanction and that we as Canadians universally reject their views.

So go ahead and swing Thor’s hammer, but don’t do it in furtherance of your racist program.

Phil Gurski is the President of Borealis Threat and Risk Consulting. He will be speaking at the Shenkman Centre in Ottawa on May 27 on his latest book ‘An End to the War on Terror’.

The Hill Times
Justin Trudeau is quite fond of apologies when he is not the wrongdoer.

Justin Trudeau appears to have consigned his euphoric new relationship with China into the dustbin. But if Andrew Scheer wins, the outlook could be even worse given his embrace of the Trump administration’s economic war with China.

We should keep doors open and continue dialogue with China.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured May 2, 2019, in Ottawa. Mr. Trudeau slipped out of the Commons Chamber mere moments before the vote last week. And he didn’t come back to support the apology to Mark Norman, either. The Hill Times photograph by Chris Roussin.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau won’t say sorry

Trudeau’s apologist, Pierre, regularly refused to make such apologies when he was prime minister. In 1984, when pressed by Brian Mulroney to apologize to Japanese-Canadians who had been interned during the Second World War, Pierre Trudeau refused. “I do not think the purpose of a government is to right the past,” Trudeau told Mulroney. “It cannot rewrite history. It is our purpose to be just in our time.”

He could have added another reason, one that would have had more particular relevance in his own day: when you apologize a lot, people will expect you to continue to make issue apologies—and particularly when it is right and just to do so.

But, last week, Trudeau wouldn’t. He simply refused. The occasion was the proposed apology to Vice-Admiral Mark Norman, whose life and work had been effectively destroyed by the aforementioined untruths. As they don’t work if the sinner isn’t confessing his own sin.

But when it comes to his own personal commitment to the long-ago sins of other Canadian leaders—even his own father—it is the most apologetic guy around.

As we all teach our kids, apologies work if they’re conditional. They don’t work if they’re un qualified. There is certainly no way as a Conservative Deputy Leader Lisa Raitt, supported by the New Democrats, resolved this matter that MPs recognize Vice-Admiral Mark Norman for his decades of loyal service to Canada, express regret for the personal and professional hardships he endured as a result of his failed prosecution and apologize to Vice-Admiral Mark Norman, either. He had a precommitment in Hamilton, Ont., his staff said—even though he still had several hours to get there. Was he driving himself? Who knows?

What we are seeing this week is that Trudeau is quite fond of apologies when he is not the wrongdoer. When the apology relates to the long-ago sins of other Canadian leaders—even his own father—it is the most apologetic guy around.

TORONTO—October 2020 will mark the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic ties between Canada and China. But will there be a celebration party?

It would be a huge mistake to extol Trudeau’s decision to normalize relations. Instead, it is possible, and reasonable, to think that Canada might want to keep doors open and continue dialogue with China.

There is plenty of room for legitimate and serious differences in an open society than it was 25 years ago, and many expect it and the Chinese know we have no other choice as trading partners.

Scheer rejected looking to China as a way to diversify trade and reduce dependence on the U.S. declaring China’s policies meant that “we have no other choice as Canadi ans to consider other trading partners.”

There is plenty of room to criticize the Trudeau government’s handling of the China relationship. Prime Minister Trudeau never revisited a all of government, even a long-term China strategy, which set out the relationship the government sought. We needed a China strategy white paper. Instead, policy seemed to be opportunistic, built around policy that suited the moment. Scheer as a fresh new face “re-starting” the relationship, as a kind of celebrity cover story. But Trudeau failed to recognize his own lack of experience in dealing with an experienced Chinese leadership. And much of his focus in talking trade with China was on making a deal with chapters on labour, feminism, and so forth that seemed directed more at Canadian audiences rather than with seriously engaging the Chinese.

It was never clear what Trudeau wanted in a free trade agreement—what was it something like the Austral ian or New Zealand agreements, or something else? His government also talked about sectoral free trade agreements, which are not permitted on a bilateral basis by the World Trade Organization. Moreover, China and Canada could be the big loser as China looks elsewhere. There are legitimate reasons for raising human rights issues with China. Canadians expect it and the Chinese know we have to do it. But we also need to recognize that China is trying to compress into decades what the West took centuries to accomplish in building the institutions for the rule of law and democratic institutions, and do this in a country of 1.3 billion people.

Cutting China is a much more open society than it was 25 years ago. And Chinese are now free to travel and study abroad and see how others live just as trade and investment have opened Chinese eyes to how market economies function.

It would be a huge mistake to erase those lessons.

We should want to keep doors open and continue dialogue, despite all the problems with China. We should want to keep doors open and continue dialogue, despite all the problems with China. We should want to keep doors open and continue dialogue, despite all the problems with China. We should want to keep doors open and continue dialogue, despite all the problems with China.
Parliamentary Internship Program all started at a breakfast table in Guelph in 1965

Back in 1965, Progressive Conservative MP Alf Hales complained to his daughter Beverly and her husband David Stager that he felt buried by the burden of legislative and constituency work as a backbench MP. So he started the Parliamentary Internship Program, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last week. His legacy lives on.

OTTAWA—It all started at a breakfast table in Guelph, Ont., in 1965. Alf Hales, the local Progressive Conservative MP, complained to his daughter Beverly and her husband David Stager that he felt buried by the burden of legislative and constituency work as a backbench MP.

“He had a shared secretary and he used the Parliamentary Library (for research) but he had no other help,” recalls Beverly. Her husband, Alan Freeman, who had completed his PhD at Princeton suggested that he hire an intern, like the congressional fellowship that Virginia Walsingham, a former intern in 1994-95 and one of the original cohort in 1970-71, felt had a shared secretary and he used the Parliamentary Library (for research) but he had no other help,” recalls Beverly. Her husband, David Stager, who had completed his PhD at Princeton suggested that he hire an intern, like the congressional fellowships working at the U.S. Congress. Hales was struck by the idea and over the next four years worked tirelessly to develop the concept, eliciting support from the Canadian Political Science Association and MPs from both sides of the House. The program was finally authorized by the Commons in April of 1969.

With initial financing from the Donner Canadian Foundation, 10 interns began work in the fall of 1970 under the leadership of its first executive director, James Ross Hurley. Since then, almost 500 young Canadian university graduates have participated in the Parliamentary Internship Programme. Alf Hales died in 1998 but his legacy lives on.

Last weekend, more than 200 interns past and present—representing 47 of the 49 cohorts from five decades—participated in 50th anniversary celebrations for the program, including a reception on Parliament Hill, an academic symposium, and a range of social events.

In recent years, internship programs have multiplied on the Hill, sponsored by political parties, interest groups and non-profits and the Parliamentary Internship Program remains the only one that is paid, non-partisan, sponsored by an academic organization and officially recognized by the House of Commons. Speaker Geoff Regan is the official patron.

What’s remarkable about the program is how it remains true to its roots. There are still 10 interns every year, who work half the time with a government MP and the other half with the opposition. As in 1970, interns do research, help on constituency work, and learn about the political process. There are study tours to Washington, London, Brussels, Toronto, and Quebec City with the addition in recent years of a trip to Iqaluit.

While interns in the early years may have struggled with their typing as they wrote speeches for their MPs, these days interns handle social media outreach for their MPs and film Facebook Live videos.

“I can say without any hesitation whatsoever that it was one of the formative experiences of my life,” says Liberal MP Afif Virani, an intern in 1994-95 and one of only two former interns to have been subsequently elected as MPs to the Commons. A Liberal representing Parkdale-High Park, he sponsored a Commons motion this week celebrating the 50th anniversary. The other is Judy Wasylycia-Leis, an intern in 1976-77 who later represented Winnipeg ridings for the NDP from 1997 to 2010.

Virani said the internship taught him about professionalism and the ins and outs of parliamentary procedure that served him well once he was elected. Asked why more interns haven’t run for office, Virani explains, “It’s hard work, time away from family, physical exhaustion. And sometimes it’s not extremely intellectually rigorous … I think politics isn’t for everyone but I have certainly felt rewarded enough by it that I would want to do it again.”

Beyond politics, interns have gone on to careers in the public service, academia, journalism and the law, Althia Raj, an intern in 2004-05 and now Ottawa bureau chief for HuffPost Canada, said that what she really appreciates about the program is that it’s the only one “that really allows you to see both sides and sit with different political parties.”

Anna Laurence, an intern in 2011-12 said that she met lobbyists for the first time during her year as an intern and convinced her that she saw his career future in government relations. “It’s 100 per cent due to the exposure that I had during the program.” Laurence is currently senior manager, government affairs at Rogers Communications.

Alumni remain attached to the program. Of the 10 members of the original cohort in 1970-71, five attended last weekend’s events. And alumni are giving back as well, through the recently-established Hales and Hurley Parliamentary Foundation, whose goal is to build an endowment and will augment the generous support the program receives from its corporate sponsors, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the House of Commons.

Alan Freeman is an Ottawa-based columnist for Politics and a contributor to The Washington Post who was previously a correspondent for The Globe and Mail, The Wall Street Journal and The Canadian Press. He was a parliamentary intern in 1973-74. Eleanor Davidson is a 2018-19 Parliamentary Intern with a background in journalism and international affairs.
War in the Gulf?

If the United States does attack, nobody will help Iran, even though every other signatory to the no-nukes treaty that Trump trashed knows (and says) that Iran has complied with its terms.

Donald Trump is well known for his desire to cut American military commitments overseas. Indeed, it is one of his most attractive characteristics. But his attention span is short, he plays a lot of golf, and he does not have the knack of choosing good advisers.

His main domestic advisers on the Middle East are Vice-President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and National Security Adviser John Bolton, all hawks on Iran. His closest allies in the region itself are Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, both of whom can wrap him around their little fingers. And they both want the United States to attack Iran for them.

Donald Trump doesn’t want a war with Iran. He has an extra-strength version of the usual Washington obsession with Iran, as irrational and ineradicable as the parallel obsession with Cuba—the United States will forgive and forget anything except humiliation—but he imagines Iran can be bullied and bluffed into submission. His ‘advisers’ are not that naive.

This is not to say that Pence, Pompeo, or even Bolton prefers war to any other outcome of the current confrontation. They would rather see the sanctions they have imposed on Iran, which are strangling the economy and causing great hardship, lead to a popular uprising and regime change. Fat chance.

It’s the ever-popular moral blackmail. We would never yield to such blackmail, because our cause is just and our will is strong. They will crumble before the same threat because they are weak and they must secretly know they are in the wrong.

But if the Iranians perseveringly refuse to overthrow their government, then PPB& would accept war as the next-best outcome. Bolton might actually welcome it, and may already be involved in manipulating the intelligence to justify such a war in the same way he did in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. (He called a rather peculiar early-morning meeting at CIA headquarters recently.)

Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, some players in Iran now appear to be pushing back against the American pressure. They are probably hard-liners associated with the not-so-loyal opposition to President Hassan Rouhani’s “moderate” government (moderate in the sense that he doesn’t want nukes and does want trade with the West), and they may just have given the American warhawks something to work with.

If push came to shove, Iran’s one available counterweight to overwhelming U.S. military strength would be to threaten the tanker traffic that carries 20 per cent of the world’s crude oil and LNG out of the Gulf. The “choke point” is the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran can close down the Strait if it is attacked. Or at least that it could do enough damage to drive insurance rates on cargoes transiting the Strait into the stratosphere.

But it might not be an Iranian group at all. It could be an American or Israeli or Saudi intelligence operation seeking to create a pretext for a U.S. attack on Iran (like the Gulf of Tonkin incident created a pretext for the U.S. to start bombing North Vietnam in 1964). You have to keep an open mind on these things, unless you believe that intelligence agencies never lie.

At any rate, an actual war in the Strait of Hormuz, where tankers often wait to be refuelled. Two at least were Saudi tankers.

Something holed all four ships at the waterline, and the instant suspicion was that some Iranian group is reminding everybody that Iran can close down the Strait if it is attacked. Or at least that it could do enough damage to drive insurance rates on cargoes transiting the Strait into the stratosphere.

But if the Iranians perversely refuse to overthrow their government, then PPB& would accept war as the next-best outcome. Bolton might actually welcome it, and may already be involved in manipulating the intelligence to justify such a war in the same way he did in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. (He called a rather peculiar early-morning meeting at CIA headquarters recently.)

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On May 12, there was a sabotage attack on four merchant ships at anchor off the UAE port of Fujairah, just outside the Strait of Hormuz, where tankers often wait to be refuelled. Two at least were Saudi tankers.

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At any rate, an actual war against Iran now seems much closer than it did last week. The long-planned transfer of another American aircraft carrier into the Gulf is now being re-framed as an emergency response to a new (but unspecified) Iranian threat. B-52 bombers that could easily reach Iran from their current bases are being ostentatiously flown into the Gulf. Mike Pompeo makes an unscheduled four-hour visit to Iraq. If the United States does attack, nobody will help Iran, even though every other signatory to the no-nukes treaty that Trump trashed knows (and says) that Iran has complied with its terms.

But then it would spread: mines in the Strait of Hormuz, missile attacks on Israel by Hezbollah, maybe an uprising by the Shia minority in Saudi Arabia. Lots of death and destruction, and no possibility of a happy outcome.

I really don’t think this is what Donald Trump wants. Maybe someday somebody should tell him.


The Hill Times
Conservatives say they’re ‘confident’ Mark Norman will expose Liberal wrongdoing

‘At the appropriate time, we hope to meet with him,’ says Conservative MP and foreign affairs critic Erin O’Toole.

Conservative MP Erin O’Toole, left, says his party is ready to highlight any government wrongdoing revealed by Vice-admiral Mark Norman, who has said he wants to go public with the story behind his investigation and prosecution for allegedly leaking sensitive government secrets. The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade

Continued from page 1

The Conservatives launched a rhetorical attack on the Liberal government immediately after prosecutors announced May 8 they would stay the single charge of breach of trust in 2018 against Vice-Admiral Norman, initially brought after the PCO and RCMP investigations singled out Vice-Admiral Norman, who was accused of leaking classified government information about cabinet deliberations over a shipbuilding project to a journalist and a lobbyist. Vice-Admiral Norman pleaded not guilty to the charge. Crown prosecutor Barbara Mercier stayed the charge against Vice-Admiral Norman two weeks ago, saying in a statement to the court that she believed Vice-Admiral Norman had acted in a way that was “secretive and inappropriate,” but not criminal.

The Globe and Mail reported last week that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) set into motion the RCMP investigation that led to the criminal charge against Vice-Admiral Norman, according to sources who told The Globe the prime minister was furious at the leak of classified cabinet deliberations about the $668-million naval supply ship contract. But the Prime Minister’s Office also told The Globe and Mail last week that, although cabinet ministers were upset by the leak, it was then-PCO clerk Janice Charrette who decided to call in the RCMP. The Globe reported that Mrs. Charrette referred the leak to the RCMP after the prime minister’s then-national security adviser Richard Fadden conducted an internal review that failed to discover who was behind the leak. The Globe reported that after discussion with the PCO clerk, Mr. Fadden phoned then-RCMP commissioner Bob Paulson to request an investigation, which he confirmed to The Globe. The Globe also reported that the RCMP’s preliminary evidence, based on search warrants obtained in 2016 to search Vice-Admiral Norman’s mobile devices and emails from Davie shipyard executives and their Ottawa lobbyists, found preliminary evidence that suggested Vice-Admiral Norman had leaked the information in an effort to thwart Prime Minister Trudeau’s cabinet decision.

The Conservatives have gone after the Liberals on the issue in Question Period and committees of the whole in the House of Commons, in the House Defence Committee, and in press releases and comments to the media. They allege that the highest level of officials in the Liberal government were responsible for having Vice-Admiral Norman sidelined from his job, prompting the investigation of his actions by the RCMP, and trying to make an example of him over leaks that embarrassed the government. They have also repeated the allegation from Vice-Admiral Norman’s legal defence team that the government politically interfered in his prosecution, in part by withholding documents needed by the defence.

The government and public prosecutors have denied any political interference in the case. Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan (Vancouver South, B.C.) said Chief of Defence Staff Jonathan Vance made the decision to suspend Vice-Admiral Norman in 2017 over the allegations, not the government, which General Vance repeated on Friday. Mr. Sajjan said the government will be paying for Vice-Admiral Norman’s legal bills for fighting the case, and Liberal MPs joined their opponents in the House to unanimously agree to a motion to apologize to Vice-Admiral Norman for his ordeal—though Prime Minister Trudeau left the House when that vote was taking place.

Vice-Admiral Norman said he was “disappointed” it had taken so long to exonerate him, during a press conference on May 8, the day the single charge of breach of trust was stayed.

“The alarming and protracted bias of perceived guilt across the senior levels of government has been quite damaging, and the emotional and financial impacts of this entire ordeal have taken a toll. I have an important story to tell that Canadians will want to hear. It is my intention in the coming days to tell the story, not to lay blame, but to ensure that we all learn from any wrongdoing Vice-Admiral Norman revealed.

Mr. O’Toole said he had spoken to the Prime Minister “once or twice over the last few years” as he was under investigation and prosecution, “just wishing him, you know, well, and trying to raise issues. But I purposely didn’t try to connect with him or anything because of the situation, just really to check on his well-being.”

“When the attention of the country is on you, and you’ve been run out of your job, I know he must have felt very low. There’s been a lot of veterans checking in on him. So at the appropriate time, we hope to meet with him as well,” said Mr. O’Toole.

When asked if Vice-Admiral Norman had given the Conservatives any sign he was willing to work with them, Mr. O’Toole said, “I think that may come, I don’t know. I know he wants to tell his story. I feel he’s been really run through the mud by the Liberals. I can assume that he is not a fan of what they put him through. So there might be a chance to highlight his work. ‘Work together’ might be stretching it.”

“I’d like to see him restored to his position, and if he is vice-chief of defence staff, he can’t be political.”

Vice-Admiral Norman won’t be able to speak freely or in a critical way of the government unless he chooses to retire, or is called before a parliamentary committee, and even then he will be restricted by cabinet confidence rules, the CBC reported last week.

Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer’s (Regina–Qu’Appelle, Sask.) press team did not respond to several attempts for comment on when Mr. Scheer or his staff last communicated with Vice-Admiral Norman, if ever.

Former Harper Conservative defence minister Peter MacKay said if Vice-Admiral Norman chose to take legal action, “I don’t think it will mean good things for the Liberal government.”

Mr. MacKay, Mr. O’Toole, and former defence minister, now-Alberta Premier Jason Kenney each spoke to Vice-Admiral Norman’s defence team in March about his role under the Conservative government coordinating the ship procurement.

Mr. MacKay told The Hill Times that he had not spoken to Vice-Admiral Norman himself during his prosecution or since it was dropped. He said he read that he could become a witness in Vice-Admiral Norman’s trial, and “did not want to compromise him in any way.”

Mr. MacKay said he believed Vice-Admiral Norman, whom he knows well, should be made the next chief of defence staff if General Vance leaves the role.

He said that if Vice-Admiral Norman files a civil suit against the government, it would be “obvious” for the Conservatives to run political ads about the case, and raise it during public events.

“I’m sure it will be part of all Conservatives’ stump speech as we head into a prolonged campaign.”

peter@hilltimes.com

The Hill Times
Senate compromise on government’s signature impact assessment bill would put maligned regulators back in charge on environmental review panels

Plus, a ban on importing shark fins is now steps away from law.

From page 1

Collectively proposed a slate of amendments to the sweeping Bill C-69 at the end of their study earlier this month, numbering well over 200 altogether. Faced with a self-imposed May 16 deadline to wrap up their work, the Senators struck a deal last week to hash out the amendments behind closed doors in a working group, instead of during committee meetings. They found common ground on overlapping or contradictory amendments, and agreed not to hold recorded votes on any of them, regardless of the content, agreeing—identified only by number—in batches of 10 at a time during a May 16 meeting, stopping occasionally to debate or clarify some of them.

The deal was struck because the two groups effectively have even numbers on the committee, with non-affiliated Senator David Richards (New Brunswick) consistently voting with the Conservatives. With no time to negotiate over every amendment, the Senators chose to agree to every one of them, instead of seeing tie votes defeat all of them.

Some amendments were numbered, and linked to 15 different documents outlining lists of amendments put forward by different Senators. Two Senators on the committee told The Hill Times that more than 200 amendments had been passed by the committee. The National Post reported last week that the number was 187, citing an internal Senate document.

One of the amendments passed would give industry regulators such as the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the new Canadian Energy Regulator—replacing the oft-maligned National Energy Board—and offshore resource development boards a majority of the seats, including the chair, on review panels that will conduct the impact assessments for major energy infrastructure projects. Bill C-69 explicitly bars officials working for the industry regulators from holding a majority of seats, or the chair position, on the environmental impact assessment panels.

The bill proposes that the regulators fill some of the seats, and that the remainder be filled by other experts. The bill is intended to make good on a 2015 Liberal election promise to overhaul the environmental assessment process, in the wake of years of controversy over the way in which regulators such as the National Energy Board and Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission handled assessments.

An independent panel struck to decide which of the committee’s amendments will be sent back to the House as approved by the committee, so that the government can decide which amendments to accept or reject.

The Senator Grant Mitchell (Alberta), the chair of the Senate’s Fisheries and Oceans Committee, convened the meeting to come together on the fisheries protection bill, C-68, which has been strongly supported by the Canadian Fishermen’s Federation and other industry stakeholders as well as Ottawa’s层面.”

case and is the final stages of a study by the Senate Fisheries and Oceans Committee.

Senator Peter Harder (Saskatchewan) said the bill was understood to be a “no vote on whether to kill the bill or ignore the committee report.”
Remains of old barracks, guardhouse focus of ‘significant’ archaeological dig on Parliament Hill

MPs learned about the archaeological finds through a briefing from officials at the House Affairs Committee last week, during which new details about proposed work plans for Centre Block were shared.

By LAURA RYCKWAERT

Two “significant” archaeological digs are ongoing east of the Centre Block building, focused on the remains of an old barracks building and a guardhouse that at one point served as Bytown’s first and only jail, uncovered ahead of the official start of renovations on Parliament Hill’s centrepiece building.

“When you come out of the Library, as you walk towards the West Block, you can see the construction of the Welcome Canal, and the city then known as Bytown (renamed Ottawa in 1855), supervised by Colonel John By. Barrack Hill included three stone barracks, a two-storey stone hospital, a two-storey stone guardhouse, and other outbuildings, including an ordnance store, a powder magazine, cookhouse, a mess hall, privies, and stables. As required by the military, the guardhouse included a three-cell jail. At the time, Bytown had no jail of its own and instead used the military’s guardhouse—providing their own constable to oversee any prisoners—making it the city’s first.”

After the canal’s completion in 1832, the military worked on Barrack Hill, and in 1859, ahead of the start of construction of the new Parliament Buildings, many of the old military buildings were demolished (some were also casualties to a fire) though some remained standing through construction.

In demolishing the old stone buildings, the walls would be knocked down inwards, and ultimately covered over, leaving behind the remains of lower portions of the buildings’ walls just under the surface.

“Because there is potential for artifacts on the Hill, we’ve actually mapped the potential impact and where we might find those as high, medium, and low. And before we do work anywhere, part of our assessment program is to assess whether there are archaeological resources and when we find them to fully excavate them and document them accordingly,” said Ms. Garrett.

Centrus Architects, the firm contracted ($127.4-million) for architectural and engineering services for the Centre Block rehabilitation project, is overseeing this archaeological work. Twenty-two archaeologists are available for the project, though less than half are on site on a given day.

“Asha Boucher, senior project manager for PSPC’s Centre Block rehabilitation program’s science and parliamentary infrastructure branch, said with digs still going, a “definitive” total associated cost isn’t yet known, but it’s currently estimated at $2-million ‘for all the archaeological work that we’ve done to date’ on the Hill. Another Public Services spokesperson said the specific barracks and guardhouse archaeological digs will cost an estimated $1.2-million.

Work to map out the archaeological potential across the entire Parliamentary precinct ‘has been ongoing for 20 years’ in anticipation of Parliament Hill’s renovation, said Stephen Jarrett, Centrus’ archaeology project manager.

The archaeological work, and with the aid of old blueprints and maps from Library and Archives Canada, the existence of the two archaeological sites currently being excavated was anticipated ahead of time.

Digging began on the site of the old barracks built at Centre Block’s northeast corner in early April and is expected to wrap up this week (weather dependent), and digging began for the guardhouse directly east of Centre Block in late April. Later on, work will need to be done in the area to lay new storm drains and water lines, as part of the Centre Block rehabilitation project.

Mr. Jarrett said the digs are being done “well in advance” of the start of construction related to Centre Block’s renovation so “that it’s not impacting the schedule.”

The Hill Times got a chance to tour both sites on May 16, and while there, two coins dating from 1813 and 1844 were unearthed on the site of the old guardhouse.

“There’s a whole range of artifacts that come out of sites like this,” said Mr. Jarrett. “Typical domestic stuff that you would find in a living place, pots and nails, and all kinds of stuff associated with building a structure; a lot of military objects.”

Among the military items unearthed so far are copper chinstraps, gorgets, and a cypher of King George IV (who reigned from 1820 to 1830).

Last year, the powder magazine was the focus of its own archaeological dig, and later this year an old privy south of the old barracks building currently being explored will also be excavated. While it may not seem obvious, privies have proven a rich source of artifacts, said Mr. Jarrett, as privy holes would get covered over by other general waste, and lye and dirt in an effort to dampen the smell.

“It’s not the first time artifacts have been uncovered on the Hill. In 2013 and 2014, roughly 15,000 pieces were uncovered west of Centre Block thanks to excavations required to build the first phase of the new underground Visitor Welcome Centre. Most of these artifacts were believed to date to the 1830s, and included Blue Willow pattern earthenware plates, an ivory die, an opium bottle, a bottle of Holloway’s Ointment, two Catholic medals, clay pipes, and more.

As to what will happen with the artifacts unearthed to date, Ms. Boucher said there’s an idea on the table, though still unconfirmed—to use them to create “some type of display” showcasing the Hill’s history, potentially to be located in the underground Visitors’ Welcome Centre.

During the House Affairs Committee meeting last week, MPs heard a slew of new details about current proposed plans for the overall Centre Block rehabilitation project, which includes building the second-phase of the underground Visitor Welcome Centre; the first phase having been built alongside work on the West Building.

Plans to construct a second phase of the Welcome Centre have been known for years, but the proposed size presented to MPs last week—which would see the structure stretch across the entire length of the Centre Block building, three stories underground—appears to have caught many by surprise. It’s set to include six new committee rooms for the House and Senate, along with security screening services, and Library of Parliament programs.

To build it, the Vaux Wall will be temporarily dismantled and at least half of the Parliamentary lawn will be blocked off starting as early as this September for the foreseeable future—PSPC has yet to indicate publicly at least, timelines for the Centre Block project—meaning this Canada Day will be the last “as traditionally planned” on the Hill, Ms. Garrett told MPs. Other activities, like the Changing of the Guard and the weekly yoga on the Hill, would also be impacted. The lawns will return to their current size once construction is completed.

A screen shot from a slide presented by PSPC to MPs showing the area that would be blocked off—temporarily, but for an unknown amount of time—to build the second phase of the underground Welcome Centre appears to have caught many by surprise.

“I was definitely surprised by much of it. Not negatively surprised, just surprised,” said Liberal MP David Graham (Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston, Ont.) who proposed the plans for the Welcome Centre are “much, much bigger in terms of footprint than anybody anticipated.”

This was a good-spanking new to me, and it is a lot, to put it mildly.”

As these plans are still proposals, PSPC noted Parliamentarians can request a smaller Welcome Centre be constructed, or that timing for its completion currently set to be done in tandem with Centre Block’s renovation—be bumped-up. But the MPs are ticking with related excavations set to start before the end of this year.

The other new details recently shared with Parliamentarians is the fact that modernizing the Centre Block building—including putting in new IT closets, HVAC units, new washrooms and elevators—will mean that an estimated 2,5000 square meters of previously used space will be lost, roughly equivalent to all of the office space on the building’s fourth floor.

The Aboriginal Peoples Committee Room (160-S) is among the previously used spaces currently set to be blocked off.

Mr. Reid suggested PSPC may be “making a point,” after receiving separate letters and emails from various stakeholders, from the House of Commons to the Senate to the Liberal party.

“We’ve piled on a huge number of square feet of demands, the three phases of the construction work, we’ve lost an amount of space we can put it into … so the only solution he was thinking of was that is digging a colossal hole in the front lawn,” he said.

Mr. Reid said he thinks this highlights the needs for more co-ordinated and better thought out construction work. A three-member MP working group is being set up by the Board of Internal Economy and is set to begin meeting soon, but Mr. Reid also currently has a motion before the House Affairs Committee setting up an agreement for it to recommend the Standing Orders be amended to approve the passage of Parliament’s overall renovation to the committee’s official mandate.

The creation of two new pavilions on Centre Block’s north end, flanking either side of the Library of Parliament, to house more committee rooms for the House and Senate is also on the table. As well, there are plans to create new circulation routes within Centre Block (and leading from the Visitors’ Welcome Centre to the main building), including separate routes for Parliamentarians and the public, which could see Centre Block’s courtyards and high clocks be turned into part of this scheme.

Design plans for Centre Block were approved by Parliament on 14 January 2022. To date, roughly $773.1-million in contracts have been awarded for work related to the Centre Block building, including a $598.1-million construction management contract awarded to PCL Constructors and EllisDon, in a first-ever joint venture of the two companies.

In demolishing the old stone buildings, the walls would be knocked down inwards, and...
Party Central

Book on toxic masculinity takes top prize at 2019 Politics and the Pen

Ottawa’s annual “nerd prom” was held last week at the Chateau Laurier, as Hillites gathered to celebrate and raise money for the Writers’ Trust. The Shaunghnessy Cohen Prize for Political Reporting, along with a sum of $25,000, went to Rachel Giese for Boys: What It Means to Become a Man.

Attendees were clad in ball gowns, tuxedos, dinner jackets and even tux pants (courtesy of Liberal MP Michael Levitt, who was true to his Edinburgh roots). Even though he recently purchased his first suit, your Party Central columnist was still underdressed. Ms. Giese told The Hill Times’ Peter Mazereweu that she was glad that a conversation about boys and gender had been given the nod at an event for political writing. The Writers’ Trust, a charitable organization supports writers, raised $385,000 from the event.

The evening featured a lengthy comic video tribute of sorts to Liberal MP Politics and the Pen supporter Peter Zimmerman, who is not running for re-election this year, including cameos by Conservative MP’s Pierre Poilievre—Mr. Cuzner got a “Skippy” crack into the video—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer, former PM Jean Chrétiens who demonstrated how he could use the Shawinigan Handshake to persuade President Donald Trump to take it easy on Canada —W

What goes on at the Politics & the Pen stays at the Politics & the Pen

PCO clerk Michael Wernick’s presence at the shrillest created a bit of a stir in the room.

Co-hosts Bench Art Institute’s founder Karina Sauder and Conservative MP Erin O’Toole dance to Benny Goodman’s Sing, Sing, Sing; Casey Gores, winner of the 2019 Shaunghnessy Cohen Prize, addressing the crowd at the 2019 event; The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade, Writers’ Trust, & Twitter

The event included costume designer for 22 Minutes Mark Critch, general manager, Marc Bergevin. Fellow Karl Alzner’s contracts hamstring the Habs while the Conservative Party of Canada, joined his fellow Tories.

Crestview, a bronze sponsor, sent Chad Rogers, Jennifer Babcock, Susin Heath, Blake Oliver, and Jason Clark. Fellow bronze sponsor StrategyCorp sent Garry Keller, former chief of staff to John Ambrose. Earnscleugh was represented by Kathleen Monk and Rick Anderson, and Hill and Knowlton had vice-chairmen Peter Donato. Bluesky Strategy doled out silver sponsor money, and sent Elizabeth Gray-Smith and Susan Smith.

John Delacourt, vice-president of Ensight, was joined by his colleagues Andrew Ballour and Jamie Watt, who is also executive chair of Navigator Ltd.

Compass Rose’s Jacques LaRocque and Proof Strategies’ Greg MacEachern rounded out the consultants. The Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada, a gold-level sponsor, sent its government and public relations team, including Catherine Parker, Sarah Anson Cartwright, and James Richardson.

Corporate Canada sent a few delegates, as well. Alan Crawford, head of government and regulatory affairs at IBM Canada; George Wamala, director of regulatory and government affairs at RBC; Robert Ghiz, former P.E.I. Premier and now CEO of the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association. Your Party Central columnist was surprised to see actor and comedian Jay Baruchel at the event. Noted Montreal Canadiens super-fan, he is probably in for disappointment next season and beyond as the Maple Leafs ascend to perennial Stanley Cup contender status, while Shea Weber and Karl Alzner’s contracts hamstring the Habs general manager, Marc Bergevin. Fellow comedian Mark Critch, of This Hour Has 22 Minutes fame, was also in attendance.

Unfortunately, he was not doing his best Don Cherry impersonation —With thanks to Peter Mazereweu

achamanday@hilltimes.com

The Hill Times

The Hill Times’ Peter Mazereweu, Kate Molloy, Aidan Chamandy, Charelle Evelyn, and Kristen Shane.

The Shaunghnessy Cohen Prize winner Jacques Poltrais, CBC News and the Pen.

Conservative MP Garth Delittich and former Liberal MP Francis LeBlanc.

The crowd at the Château; the Ottawa’s Graham Boal, left, with CTV Ottawa’s Patrick Boyle, left, with CTV Ottawa’s Graham Boal and Ottawa bureau chief, Althia Raj, right.

The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade, Writers’ Trust, & Twitter

What goes on at the Politics & the Pen stays at the Politics & the Pen

The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade, Writers’ Trust, & Twitter
Bill C-48 and the ecological legacy of Canada’s Pacific Coast

The B.C. coast is a single system where the land and ocean blend. What befalls the ocean, befalls the species of the land. It is no place for oil tankers.

Misty MacIntosh & Chris Genovali

Opinion

SINDEY, B.C.—British Columbians’ north and central coast, also known as the Great Bear Rainforest, along with Haida Gwaii, hosts a uniquely biodiverse region that is becoming increasingly rare in this world. It is a place where lush forests and granite buttresses greet the sea, where grizzlies dig for clams in granite buttresses greet the sea, is a place where lush forests and granite buttresses greet the sea. It is no place for oil tankers.

Misty MacIntosh & Chris Genovali

Opinion

The paper, “Quantifying marine mammal hotspots in British Columbia,” is a response to the overwhelming evidence that humans are contributing to rapid declines in marine species, particularly in coastal areas. We found that southeastern Haida Gwaii, outer Queen Charlotte Sound near the Scott Islands, Chatham Sound and Elizabeth Passage, Calvert Island, and Aristazabal Island were all identified as places of exceptionally high marine mammal abundance. These areas all lie within the waters identified by Bill C-48.

A second paper, “Oil Spills and marine mammals: developing a risk-based conceptual framework,” evaluates the consequences of potential oil exposure on 21 species of B.C. marine mammals. All marine mammals are inherently vulnerable to oil spills because they live their lives at the air-water interface, often the location where oil contact, inhalation, or ingestion would first occur in the event of a spill. We found that B.C.’s populations of killer whales, Steller sea lions and sea otters ranked particularly high in terms of overall vulnerability to oil spills. Their elevated risk above other marine mammals is due to their small populations, slow reproductive rates, specialized diets, and the tendency for large percentages of the population to be grouped together in space or time.

The third paper, “Marine birds and chronic oil pollution on Canada’s Pacific Coast,” identifies marine bird species considered to be at elevated risk of extinction and those with a pronounced vulnerability to oil spills and climate change. Marine birds in this region are vulnerable to oil exposure in any volume, from spills small or large. Bill C-48 reduces the possibility of catastrophic oil spills to at-risk species and their habitats.

Lastly, an important consideration within Bill C-48 is that it does not only address the unacceptable risk of spills, it also captures the growing problem of underwater shipping noise. The rapid expansion of research on ocean noise has identified many species, from direct impacts to fish to whales that depend on sound to find food, communicate, avoid predators and survive in the ocean. The effects from underwater noise can be extensive and include injury, habitat avoidance and abandonment, masking of important communication, loss of feeding ability, chronic stress and reduced reproductive success.

Bill C-48 also considers the growing threat of ship strikes. Similar to the East Coast, increased shipping increases the concern for ship strikes on large baleen whales like the Pacific Coast’s fin, set, humpbacks, and the handful of critically endangered North Pacific Right whales that inhabit these waters.

One hundred years ago, humpback and fin whales were largely extirpated from the inside waters of the B.C. coast. As the federal government looks to codify a 35-year moratorium on oil tanker traffic into law, these whales are returning to their historic feeding grounds. While we continue our work to ensure the priceless and irreplaceable B.C. coast can continue its unparalleled evolution, we will mark Bill C-48 as an important and necessary step in ensuring that future.

Misty MacIntosh is a conservation biologist with the Raincoast Conservation Foundation. Chris Genovali is Raincoast’s executive director.

Opinion

FCAC report on banking high pressure sales practices fails test

Let’s hope that the upcoming October 2019 election may help shape a better and less deceptive deal for consumers in terms of the public’s right to really know what’s going on and who’s feeding who the outcomes.

Ken Rubin

Opinion

OTTAWA—Bill C-58, the act to amend the Access to Information Act introduced in 2017 and passed with amendments by the Senate on May 7, lessens the public’s right to know and contributes to more, not less, contrived and self-serving records being produced. It endorses, for instance, slicker sanitized briefing notes being published at great expense on the government website under the bill’s separate, pro-active disclosure scheme.

Access to information users are already frustrated enough waiting months for records that are more and more in short supply or nearly totally exempt form. That’s assuming government bothers to record its actions.

But now users will be flooded with shorter government pro-active releases while waiting longer for much of the backup data. And is that backup data going to produce even more severed materials and be of questionable quality?

Bearing this in mind, a public-private out documents last year behind the March 2018 Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) report that suspiciously largely left alone domestic banks’ retail high-pressure sales practices.

What I found, as recently reported on April 10, 2019, by CBC Go Public, was a final report that does not pass the smell test or merit being called a quality, arm’s-length product of careful research.

For starters, the final March 2018 FCAC report differed from earlier drafts with changes coming from outside pressures to downplay banks’ high-pressure sales practices.

Access records obtained showed that the minister of finance and his officials were never told anything about the draft on Dec. 21, 2017, FCAC banking report and after so did the largest five banks who reviewed a final Feb. 8, 2018, FCAC draft. All Finance Ministry and bank government representatives were redacted.

But out came the words “syndicated” “widespread” high-pressure bank sales practices. Recommendations that had been required became mere watered-down “suggestions” in the final FCAC report.

Access records show that the five big banks were notified in advance of FCAC officials’ visits to 30 of their selected branches to interview 200 bank employees. The banks then knew FCAC’s timing of arrival and agenda in advance and who was to be interviewed.

Records show that drafts of the FCAC report were quickly assembled just as the last known bank employee interviews were completed, as if the agency already knew the outcome or had already written parts of the report. I have yet to receive the earliest drafts done.

Most astounding, despite hearing from some 4,500 consumers with complaints and conducting time-consuming tax-paid interviews with 600 bank employees, the study does not quote from any of the them, or do a weighted analysis of those comments and interviews.

So the study is deliberately shallow and one could say deceptive and weak.

I did receive a sample of 35 complaints but those enraged consumers’ comments were total- blanked out, including which bank was the source of the complaint and anything at all about the nature of the complaint.

I still have yet to receive over a year later thousands of pages, including the remaining customer complaints and the bank’s employee interview notes however censored they will be.

Whose side then is the government and FCAC on?

Ken Rubin is a transparency advocate. He is reachable at kentrubin.ca

The Hill Times
The Prime Minister’s Office also has a new correspondence writer on board, among other recent political staffing moves.

The Prime Minister’s Office has a new senior adviser on staff. Ben Chin moved over from his post as chief of staff to Finance Minister Bill Morneau on May 17.

Already, Ryan Dunn has taken over as chief of staff to Mr. Morneau. Justin To remains as deputy chief of staff and director of policy to the finance minister.

Mr. Dunn, himself the former director of issues management in the PMO, is currently chief of staff to Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade Minister, Dominic LeBlanc, and will be doing double duty for the foreseeable future. Helping make this workload feasible is the fact that Mr. Morneau is already acting as chief of cabinet.

In turn, Mr. Morneau and Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett are both now covering his files.

Also in the PMO, policy adviser Sarah Goodman was promoted to the title of director of policy the week before last. Ms. Goodman joined the top office in the summer of 2017 and was previously chief executive officer and manager of correspondence and media relations in the finance minister’s office.

Ms. Goodman was promoted to the title of deputy chief of staff and director of issues management in the PMO, among other recent promotions. Also in the unit are special adviser for the campaign, Rick Theis; NDP name first 2019 campaign managers.

The New Democrat Party has named the first two official members of its 2019 federal election campaign team: NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh’s chief of staff on the Hill, Jennifer Howard, will be the 2019 campaign director and his former acting chief of staff, Michael Balagus, who will support her as a special adviser for the campaign.

Charges in the PMO, including a promotion and Ben Chin joins the team

Ryan Dunn is Mr. Morneau’s new chief of staff. Photograph courtesy of Facebook

A former broadcast journalist, Mr. Chin has been working on the Hill since October 2017, first as a senior adviser to Mr. Morneau. Roughly one year ago, at the beginning of May 2018, he was promoted to chief of staff to the minister.

Before coming to work in Ottawa, Mr. Chin was executive director of communications and issues management to then-B.C. Liberal premier Christy Clark. He’s also a former senior communications adviser to then-Ontario Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty, and a former vice-president for both the Ontario Power Authority and later for Air Miles for Social Change.

With a strong background in communications, Mr. Chin first arrived in Mr. Morneau’s office during a rocky time for the minister, who was at the time embroiled in an ethics controversy over his holdings in his family’s company, Morneau Shepell.

Mr. Chin has since been credited, in part, with helping put a damper on self-inflicted wounds in the finance office. However, earlier this year, Mr. Chin found himself caught up in another political controversy over SNC-Lavalin, having been named by former justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould as among the first to put pressure on her office to intervene to get a deferred prosecution agreement for the Quebec firm.

In the PMO, he’ll be joining fellow senior advisers Elder Marques, who’s been in place since September 2017, and Mathieu Bouchard, who’s been there since November 2015 and is the office’s main Quebec adviser. As with Mr. Chin, both Mr. Marques and Mr. Bouchard were named as among those who Ms. Wilson-Raybould had said were part of a concerted campaign press for a DPA for SNC-Lavalin.

Sarah Goodman has been promoted to PMO director of policy. Photograph courtesy of Twitter

Mike McNair was the last to hold the title of director of policy in the PMO. He was promoted to the more senior executive director rank in the office—as executive director of cabinet and legislative affairs—at the beginning of March 2018, but remained in charge of the PMO’s policy shop, which he still is. In her new role, Ms. Goodman will be reporting to Mr. McNair.

Other policy advisers in the office currently include Amy Archer, Dominic Cormier, Sarah Hussaini, Christina Rettig, Bud Sambasivam, Rick Theis, and Patrick Travers. Also in the unit are special advisers Jayid Dharas, Mark Calderaro, Kathleen Davis, and Colleen Lamothe.

The PMO has also recently promoted on board a new English writer to its correspondence team, with Justin Novick-Faillie starting on the job on April 29.

Justin Novick-Faillie recently joined the PMO. Photograph courtesy of Facebook

A former tour guide at Rideau Hall, Mr. Novick-Faillie was until recently working as a special assistant to Liberal MP Randy Hoepp.

Ms. Armstrong remains communications assistant to Ms. Bennett. She was previously chief executive officer and manager of correspondence and media relations in the office.

A former Quebec Liberal staffer, Mr. Herbert has been working for Mr. Morneau since the summer of 2018 and before then spent almost a year as press secretary to then-trade minister François-Philippe Champagne. He was officially promoted shortly after the 2019 federal budget was delivered on March 19, having stepped in as an acting director of communications in the lead-up while Jeni Armstrong focused on budget-related communications work.

There’s also a promotion to note—albeit belatedly—in International Trade Diver- sification Minister Jim Carr’s office. Jill Swenson, previously a special assistant for operations and northern and western regional affairs, is now director of operations to Mr. Carr, while continuing to provide regional advice. She was promoted back in December.

The minister’s other current regional advisers are: Jeff Kovalik-Plouffe, manager of parliamentary affairs and Manitoba regional adviser; Camie Lamarche, assistant for operations and Quebec regional affairs; Aya Al-Shaleh, assistant to the minister’s parliamentary secretary and Ontario regional affairs; and Kyna Boyce, special assistant for parliamentary affairs and Atlantic regional affairs.

Julian Ovens is chief of staff to Mr. Carr.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured May 6, 2019, at the Canadian War Museum for the National Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony, has a new senior adviser in former finance chief of staff Ben Chin, and a new director of policy and correspondence writer. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Moote
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McAuloon this year’s honoraed Riverkeeper Gala at Ottawa Riverkeeper Cala on May 29

Parliamentary Calendar

MONDAY, MAY 20

House Sitting—The House is not sitting this week and is on break from May 20-24. It will resume sitting from May 27-29, the final four weeks before the House adjourns and Parliament is later dissolved for the October 2019 election.

SUNDAY, MAY 26

Europe Day in the National Capital—The European Union Delegation to Canada and embassies of EU member states are hosting a day-long cultural fair at Lansdowne Park on Sunday, May 26, 12 p.m.-9:30 p.m. There will be dance performances, games and activities, and a sampling of traditional European food and languages. The event will mark the 69th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, also known as Europe Day. Doors open at 9:30 a.m. at Lansdowne Park. Admission is free. The event is open to the public and is free of charge.

MONDAY, MAY 27

It's in, it's out. If the House is sitting from May 27-June 2, the final four weeks before the House adjourns and Parliament is later dissolved for the October 2019 election.

Senate Sitting—The Senate is possibly sitting on Monday, May 27, but will definitely be sitting May 28-30, and could sit on Friday, May 31. It also scheduled to sit for most of the four weeks in June. It will be sitting on Monday, June 3, but is scheduled to sit June 4-June 6, and could sit on Friday, June 7. It could possibly sit on Monday, June 10, but is scheduled to sit June 11-June 13, and could sit on Friday, June 14. It will sit June 17-June 21 and it will sit June 25-June 28.

Coalition for Canadian Astronomy Research—The coalition invites you to join their virtual event on May 29 to showcase Canadian astronomers, May 27-5 p.m., Room 330, Wellington Building. Join them for a virtual reality tour of the world’s most powerful telescopes. Open to Members of Parliament, Senators, and staff. Please RSVP to astronomy-as-a-necessity@outlook.com. The Coalition for Canadian Astronomy Research is composed of academics, represented by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, professional astronomers, represented by the Canadian Astronomical Society, and representatives of Canadian companies involved in major astronomy projects.

Mission Innovation Ministerial—Canada will host the fourth annual Mission Innovation Ministerial, alongside the 10th annual Clean Energy Ministerial in Vancouver, May 27-29. The event will bring together global clean energy leaders to discuss cutting-edge transformations and reinforce international collaboration in the transition to a low-carbon future. Energy ministers from more than 25 countries are expected. cem-mi-vancouver2019.ca.

TUESDAY, MAY 28

International Grand Committee on Disinformation and Fake News—The second meeting of the International Grand Committee on Disinformation and Fake News will take place in Ottawa on May 28-29, 2019. The meeting was in London, U.K. in November. Bob Zimmer, chair of the House Access to Information, Privacy, and Ethics Committee, announced this week that Mr. Collins, chair of the U.K. Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport Committee in Parliament, will be joining the committee.

Ship-source Oil Pollution Fund 30th Anniversary—This year’s event is a chance to enjoy a different view of the ship-source Oil Pollution Fund over the past 30 years. Coastal partners, government representatives, and law experts will discuss the polluter-pay principle, access to justice for victims of oil pollution, and the legal frameworks of the fund. Dalla Hataf, 101 Lyon St., Ottawa, May 28, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. (complementary lunch and refreshments), Join the SOPF distribution list and stay up to date with details. Email info@sopf-cdfp.gc.ca or sign up at http://sopf.gc.ca/page, dr, 22516.

Here’s the thing—Then-U.S. president Barack Obama, pictured at the North American Leaders’ Summit in Ottawa on June 29, 2016, is scheduled to be coming to Ottawa on May 31, 2019. The Hill Times file photograph

Whitney Independent MP Celina Caesar-Chavannes, centre, was acknowledged for her contributions to make Canada’s federal institutions ‘inclusive, representative and free of racism,’ at a community event organized by the Community of Federal Visible Minorities (CFVM) on May 1 in Ottawa. The CFVM’s current and former executive and founding member of CFVM, Wahed Khan, president; Bhagwandu Sandhu, past president; Kalim Kokozki, national secretary, Natasha Turoene, program director (Coaching & Mentoring); and Franklin Assoumanou Ntoung, treasurer. Photograph courtesy of CFVM

Telecon Reception—Telecon will be holding an evening reception in the Laurier Room at the Chateau Laurier, located at 1 Roland St., on May 28 from 6:30 p.m. Keynote speakers, ministers, MPs, Senators, staff, and invited guests are encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29

Liberal Caucus Meeting—The Liberals will meet in West Block on Parliament Hill. For more information, please contact Liberal Party media relations at mediaplex@liberal.ca or 613-627-2380.

Conservative Caucus Meeting—The Conservatives will gather for their national caucus meeting in West Block. For more information, contact Cory Harn, director of communications with the Conservative Party of Canada, at cory.harr@conservative.ca

NPP Caucus Meeting—The NPP caucus will meet from 9:15 a.m.-11 a.m. in West Block. For more information, contact Michael Dean, director of communications for the National Progressives, at md.dean@ndp.ca or 416-322-2862.

Did somebody say Lobstah?—The Bloc’s Lobstication caucus will meet on Wednesday morning starting at 9:30 a.m. in Room 241A in the West Block.

Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan, pictured in May 26, 2016, with Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan, former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada Beverley McLachlin, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured in May 26, 2016, Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan, former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada Beverley McLachlin, will be Beverley McLachlin, 2019 Honorary Riverkeeper of Families, and Mr. Bains will be the 2019 Katherine A.H. Martin, pictured at The Hill Times reception in the Laurier Room at the Château Laurier, located at 1 Roland St., on May 28 from 6:30 p.m. Keynote speakers, ministers, MPs, Senators, staff, and invited guests are encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served.

CANSEC—This annual global defence and security trade show will take place May 29 and 30 at the Convention Centre. 4899 Upstairs Dr. Ottawa. Presented by the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries. Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan will speak at breakfast on May 29 7:30 a.m. Canadian Science, and Economic Development Minister Navdeep Bains will be the luncheon keynote speaker.

Open Government Partnership Global Summit—Canada will host the Open Government Partnership Global Summit in Ottawa from May 29 to May 31, 2019. More than 120 governments, society, governments, and citizens from Canada and around the world will come together to shape the global open government movement. From keynotes to debates and co-creation opportunities, the summit will explore the future of open government and help make progress.

2019 Ottawa Riverkeeper Gala—The Ottawa Riverkeeper hosts this annual fundraising event. This year, the Gala will be held on May 29, at 5 p.m., 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., at the Cercle Olympique, 660 Colborne St. Ottawa. Tickets are $250. For more information, please contact Michael, president of Open Government Canada.

Osgoode Law School’s Department of Dispute Resolution will talk about Indigenous environmental justice, knowledge and law on Monday, June 10, at Carleton University as part of the 2019 Katherine A.H. Martin Lecture on Indigenous Policy. Photograph courtesy of Osgoode Law School, York University

FRIDAY, JUNE 28

Japan hosts G20 summit—On June 28 and 29, the leaders of the G20 will gather in Osaka as Japan hosts its first-ever G20 summit. Along with the leaders’ summit, the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors’ meeting, the foreign ministers’ meeting, and other ministerial meetings will also be held at eight different locations throughout Japan this year. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is expected to attend the leaders’ summit.

SATURDAY, JULY 27


TUESDAY, JUNE 4

RATA—the Financial Data and Technology Association (5-5:30). The event takes place from 6:30 p.m. to 6:50 p.m. and is preceded by a reception from 5:30-5:50 p.m. The event takes place in the Fitzalan Room at the Château Laurier’s Richcraft Hall Conference Rooms. There is no need to attend both events. For more information, registration and registration is available at callcap.ca.

The Hill Times

June’s federal election is scheduled to be held on Monday, Oct. 21, 2019. The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send your political, cultural, diplomatic, or government events in advance to htl.events@nwpca.org. Submissions under the subject line ‘Parliamentary Calendar’ to nwpca.org/events are accepted throughout the year and we reserve the right to select and exclude any event that we believe will definitely do our best. Events can be updated daily online too.
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