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# THE HILL TIMES

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### News

## Some politicos not ruling out an election before March, others predict a spring election

BY ABBAS RANA

With the country deep in the throes of the second wave of COVID-19 and the opposition parties sabre-rattling over the government's fall economic statement, some political players are not ruling out the possibility of a winter election, but others say the rhetoric from across the aisle is aimed to extract concessions from the government in exchange

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### News

# Trudeau needs strong messaging, 'coherent plan' for rollout of vaccine, or he could suffer political consequences, say veteran political players



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured Nov. 24, 2020, outside the Rideau Cottage holding a press conference. The government needs effective messaging to articulate the rollout plan for a COVID-19 vaccine, say politicos. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

BY ABBAS RANA

As the second wave of COVID-19 continues to grow, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's

government needs to put out strong messaging, backed up by a "coherent plan" to articulate the rollout phase for a vaccine, say veteran political players.

Senior cabinet ministers giving different dates for the first availability of the vaccine

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### News

## Feds say increased immigration targets key for economic recovery, but critics wary of ambitious plan's feasibility

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

The government plans to welcome more than 400,000 newcomers to the country next

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### News

## Feds' mid-year revenue fell by nearly 22 per cent during pandemic

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

The federal government brought in 21.5 per cent less revenue from April to September this year as the country battled

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### News

## Why the Liberals keep putting off the gun marking regulations

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

Public Safety Minister Bill Blair's Nov. 30 decision to punt the Firearms Marking Regulations three years down the road is a sign that the government is torn between its tough-on-guns messaging, law enforcement, and

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## HEARD ON THE HILL

by Palak Mangat

# CAJ wants to know how diverse Canadian media is, doing first-ever, annual representative survey



### caj The Canadian Association of Journalists 2020 Canadian Newsroom Diversity Survey

The Canadian Association of Journalists is launching what is intended to be the country's first representative survey of diversity in Canadian media. Learn more.

The Canadian Association of Journalists is launching what it calls the country's first-ever diversity survey of Canadian media outlets, in an effort find out just how diverse Canadian media are, and it plans on doing it annually. *Image courtesy of CAJ*

The Canadian Association of Journalists is launching what it calls the country's first-ever diversity survey of Canadian media outlets, in an effort find out just how diverse Canadian media are, and it plans on doing it annually.

"There is widespread consensus around the need for Canadian media to reflect the society it serves. But addressing representation, or lack thereof, in the industry requires that we measure the level of diversity in newsrooms across Canada," reads the notice, sent out on Nov. 25 by **Brent Jolly**, the CAJ's president and national director of the National NewsMedia Council, and **Karyn Pugliese**, CAJ's past president and a professor at Ryerson's School of Journalism.

"Since the organization's founding in 1978, the CAJ has served as a professional development and public-interest advocacy group for journalists across Canada. As the country's only national professional association for journalists, the CAJ is uniquely placed to conduct a media diversity survey. Similar national organizations, like the News Leaders Association (NLA) in the U.S., have published diversity surveys in their countries for several decades. It is past time for Canada to do the same," the release states, adding that the CAJ spent three years working on the survey and consulted the NLA for help. The deadline to respond is Friday, April 2, 2021.

The lack of diversity in Canadian media became a big issue earlier this year after **George Floyd**, a Black man, was killed on May 25, 2020, by a white police officer in Minneapolis after pressed his knee on Floyd's neck on the ground for almost nine minutes. A bystander captured the whole scene on video, which happened in broad daylight and while other police officers stood by and watched. The video went viral globally and Floyd's death sparked international protests against anti-Black racism, police brutality, and all racism. It

also turned a spotlight on systemic racism everywhere, and in all facets of society, including in politics, government, the private sector, the academic world, and the media. In Canada, many media outlets promised to end any systemic racism at their organizations and to boost their own diversity, which is why the Canadian Association of Journalists has decided to do the survey.

### Trudeau to host first ministers meeting on Dec. 10

Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** will host a first ministers meeting on funding for health care on Dec. 10. Intergovernmental Affairs Minister **Dominic LeBlanc** announced the date on Twitter last week. The premier want to focus on the annual federal transfer payments to the provinces and territories for health care, but the government also wants to talk about strengthening health care. Premiers had been asking for a first ministers meeting with the prime minister since September.

### Mansbridge to talk about his book, *Extraordinary Canadians* on Thursday at Pearson Centre event

**Peter Mansbridge**, former longtime anchor of CBC's *The National*, will talk about his new book, *Extraordinary Canadians: Stories from the Heart of Our Nation*, on Thursday, Dec. 9, with the Pearson Centre's **Andrew Cardozo**, who also writes a column for *The Hill Times*. The virtual event will happen at 12-12:30 p.m. Last week, *Extraordinary Canadians* was on Postmedia's top 30 best-sellers of the week and at No. 2 for non-fiction, right behind **Barack Obama's** *A Promised Land*. Mr. Mansbridge wrote the book with **Mark Bulgutch**, a former CBC producer. Mr. Mansbridge also wrote *Peter Mansbridge*

*One on One: Favourite Conversations and the Stories Behind Them*. Mr. Bulgutch also wrote *That's Why I'm a Journalist* and *That's Why I'm a Doctor*.

### Canadian Club of Ottawa to host talk 'Too Small to Fail: Canada's Economic Recovery Needs a Small Business Rebound'

The Canadian Club of Ottawa will host a virtual panel discussion, headlined "Too Small to Fail: Canada's Economic Recovery Needs a Small Business Rebound,"



The Toronto Star's **Heather Scoffield** will moderate the Canadian Club of Ottawa's virtual panel discussion on economic recovery on Dec. 9. *The Hill Times* photograph by **Andrew Meade**

also on Dec. 9 at 3 p.m. *The Toronto Star's* **Heather Scoffield** will moderate the discussion with **Paul Thompson**, associate deputy minister of Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada; **Perrin Beatty**, president and CEO, Canadian Chamber of Commerce; Dr. **Wendy Cukier**, professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategy, Ted Rogers School of Management; and **John Stackhouse**, senior vice-president, Office of the CEO, RBC. Mr. Stackhouse, former *Globe and Mail* editor before **David Walmsley**, also recently wrote *Planet Canada: How Our Expats Are Shaping the Future*.

### Dalton McGuinty to host talk with George Mason University's Justin Gest on populism in the American election, lessons for Canada

Former Ontario premier **Dalton McGuinty** will host a Pearson Centre webinar with **Justin Gest**, author and associate professor of policy and government at George



**Dalton McGuinty**, former Ontario Liberal premier, will talk to **Justin Gest** on Dec. 10 at a Pearson Centre webinar. *The Hill Times* photograph by **Andrew Meade**

Mason University in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 10, from 7 p.m.-8 p.m. about American populism and lessons for Canada. "Prof. Justin Gest has written extensively on the growing sense of marginalization driving people to the extremes while the middle is getting hollowed out, or at least is getting squeezed out of the political discourse. Megaphone politics, bumper sticker slogans and tweets are the main forms of political discourse. So, that's in the United States, but it's in Canada too," reads the promo for this discussion.

### Empire Club hosts second annual Nation Builder of the Year Award

The Empire Club will give this year's Nation Builder of the Year Award to Canada's front-line workers who will receive the award for keeping Canadians safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. House Speaker **Anthony Rota**, Canada's Chief

Medical Health Officer **Dr. Theresa Tam**, Assembly of First Nations National Chief **Perry Bellegarde**, World Health Organization Director-General **Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, Ontario Premier **Doug Ford**, and former governor general **Adrienne Clarkson** will be linked in remotely to thank all the front-line workers on Dec. 10, at noon. The virtual ceremony is free and open to everyone.

### O'Toole out on the meet

#### & greet circuit

Conservative Party Leader **Erin O'Toole**, who's been out on virtual fund-raising circuit, is stepping up his game with more meet and greets this week. He has two on Thursday, one hosted by **Jordan Kupinsky** at 5 p.m. and with **Stewart Lyons**, at 6 p.m. Both are Zoom virtual events.

### Parliamentary Press Gallery Children's Christmas Party 2020 goes virtual

It's on with the show-this-is-it for this year's annual Parliamentary Press Gallery Children's Christmas Party. Normally held on the Hill, the annual party for the Hill media's kids usually brings out the child in everyone, but because of the global pandemic, it will be hosted remotely this year. The party-at-home will be held by Zoom on Saturday, Dec. 12 at 1 p.m. Members of the Hill media who have small children taking part in this year's virtual party should pick up their loot bags and gifts for the children on Dec. 7 at the National Press Theatre in Ottawa. This year's party will include a magic show, a message from Santa, arcade games and colouring. Families are also asked to send in video messages of good cheer, or family photos. The gallery is also asking Hill media members who have small children to either send in short 30-second or 40-second videos of their family members wishing others best wishes, or to send in photos of the family enjoying the party.

### The Crown's season four attracts 29 million viewers, Lady Di still iconic, compelling figure

*The Crown*, the smash-hit Netflix fictionalized series about the life of Queen Elizabeth II, is a hot ticket these days. As people binge-watch movies and series during the global pandemic, *The Crown's* season 4, which covers the years 1977 to 1990, and introduces **Lady Diana Spencer** into the series, her royal wedding to Prince Charles, and their rocky marriage, has reportedly attracted 29 million viewers, according to Britain's *Tattler*.



Princess Diana, pictured in Ottawa on a Royal Visit in 1991. *The Hill Times* file photograph by **Kate Malloy**

More locally, **Lady Diana**, also known as the **Princess of Wales**, toured Ontario in 1991 with the **Prince of Wales** and their two sons, **William** and **Harry**. They made stops in Toronto, Sudbury, Kingston, Niagara Falls, and Ottawa, pictured here in October 1991. The Princess of Wales became a global icon for her royal duties on behalf of the Queen, her work for children, youth, AIDS patients, the removal of landmines and for her style before she was killed on Aug. 31, 1997, in a car crash in Paris. She continues to be a compelling figure today.

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*The Hill Times*



# OPEN LETTER to Treasury Board from women leaders

## Funding for new nuclear reactors is a serious mistake that blocks swift action on climate change

Dear Mr. Duclos and Members of the Treasury Board:

On September 21, 2020 we wrote to you as women who are Indigenous and non-Indigenous community leaders in science, medicine, law and environmental protection to ask you to stop funding new nuclear reactors. Canada is a member of an international nuclear waste treaty and has a legal obligation to minimize generation of radioactive waste. Federal funding for new nuclear reactors would be an abnegation of this treaty obligation.

**Today we are joined by women colleagues from all provinces and territories in Canada and several Indigenous communities.** We strongly urge you to reject new nuclear reactors, called "SMRs." They are being promoted to your government as a silver bullet to address the climate emergency. This is a false notion.

In fact, **SMRs prevent swift, effective action to address the climate emergency.** SMRs are many years away from production. They would take far too long to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They suck money and attention away from inexpensive low-carbon technologies that are ready to deploy now.

**Solar and wind power are already the cheapest and fastest-growing electricity sources in the world.** A 2018 Deloitte report, "Global Renewable Energy Trends: Solar and Wind Move from Mainstream to Preferred" concluded: "Solar and wind power recently crossed a new threshold, moving from mainstream to preferred energy sources across much of the globe". The report noted that solar and wind power enhance electrical grids. It also pointed out that intermittency is no longer a concern owing to rapid advances in storage technology. Canada should fund much wider deployment of solar and wind power.

**Yours sincerely,**

Alma H. Brooks, Wolastoqew and Eastern Wabanaki  
Chief April Adams-Phillips, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne  
Candyce Paul, English River First Nation  
Ellen Gabriel, Mohawks of Kanehsatà:ke  
Eriel Deranger, Member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Treaty 8  
Hilu Tagoona, BA, Qairnimit Inuk  
Dr. Imelda Perley Opolahsomuwehs, Neqotkuk First Nation  
Lorraine Rekmans, Serpent River First Nation  
Dr. Lynn Gehl, PhD, Algonquin - Pikwakanagan First Nation  
Mary Alice Smith, BA, Metis Cree, Robinson-Superior Treaty area, Longbow Lake  
Mary Lou Smoke, Anishinawbe Kwe, Bear Clan  
Neecha Dupuis, Ojibway Nation of SAUGEEN Indian Tribe No. 258  
Renee Abram, Oneida First Nation of the Thames  
Serena Kenny, Lac Seul First Nation  
Stefanie Bryant, BA, Lac Seul First Nation  
Alexandra Hayward, BSc, JD Candidate, St. John's, NL  
Angela Bischoff, Toronto, ON  
Anna Tilman, BA Physics, MA, Aurora, ON  
Ann Coxworth, MSc, Saskatoon, SK  
Ann Pohl, MEd, Killaloe, ON  
Anne Lindsey, Order of Manitoba, MA, Winnipeg, MB  
Dr. Auréa Cormier, PhD, Order of Canada, Moncton, NB  
Dr. Barbara Birkett, MDCM, FRCPC, Oakville, ON  
Beatrice Olivastri, Ottawa, ON  
Betty L. E. Wilcox, BA, BEd, Stanhope, PE  
Brenda Brochu, BA, BEd, Peace River, AB  
Brennain Lloyd, North Bay, ON

Carole Dupuis, Saint-Antoine-de-Tilly, QC  
Carolyn Wagner, MEd, Fredericton, NB  
Catherine Cameron, BSc, MBA, Perth ON  
Dr. Cathy Vakil, MD, Kingston, ON  
Dr. Cecily Mills, PhD, Edmonton, AB  
Chantal Levert, Montréal, QC  
Dr. Charlotte Rigby, PhD, Gatineau, QC  
Chris Cavan, BEd, Almonte, ON  
Diane Fortin, Gatineau, QC  
Dr. Dale Dewar, MD, Wynyard, SK  
Dr. Darlene Hammell, MD, Victoria, BC  
Deborah Powell, BA, BEd, Bristol, QC  
Diane Beckett, BES, MA, Churchill, MB  
Dr. Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, PhD, Toronto, ON  
Elizabeth Logue, Wakefield, QC  
Elssa Martinez, MSW, Montreal, QC  
Emma March, MA, JD candidate, Kingston, ON  
Dr. Erica Frank, MD, MPH, FACP, Nanoose Bay, BC  
Eva Schacherl, MA, Ottawa, ON  
Evelyn Gigantes, BA, former MPP, Ottawa, ON  
Gail Wylie, Fredericton, NB  
Gini Dickie, BA, Toronto, ON  
Gracia Janes, OMC, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON  
Ginette Charbonneau, Physicist, Oka, QC  
Gretchen Fitzgerald, BSc, Halifax, NS  
Janet Graham, MA, Ottawa, ON  
Dr. Janet Ray, MD, Victoria, BC  
Dr. Janice Harvey, PhD, Fredericton, NB  
Jean Swanson, Order of Canada, BA, Vancouver, BC

More funding for energy efficiency and energy conservation would also be a much better use of tax dollars than handouts to the nuclear industry. The 2018 report presented by the Generation Energy Council to Canada's Minister of Natural Resources found that: "Canada's greatest opportunities to save money, cut greenhouse gas emissions and create jobs can be found in slashing energy waste. **Fully one-third of our Paris emissions commitment could be achieved by improving energy efficiency.**"

We urge you to say "no" to the nuclear industry that is asking for billions of dollars in taxpayer funds to subsidize a dangerous, highly-polluting and expensive technology that we don't need. Instead, put more money into renewables, energy efficiency and energy conservation. This will create many thousands of jobs and quickly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**We must never forget that the main product of nuclear reactors — in terms of planetary impact — is deadly, radioactive poisons that remain hazardous to all life on earth for hundreds of thousands of years.** The electricity they produce for a few short decades is but a minor by-product. There is no proven safe method for keeping radioactive waste out of the environment of living things for hundreds of thousands of years.

**We urge you to bring this matter to the attention of your Cabinet colleagues, and stop all government support and taxpayer funding for so-called small modular nuclear reactors.**

Jean Brereton, Golden Lake, ON  
Dr. Jeannie Rosenberg, MD, Huntingdon, QC  
Jessica Spencer, Moncton, NB  
Joann McCann-Magill, MA, Sheenboro, QC  
Joanne Mantha, MA, Gatineau, QC  
Jocelyne Lachapelle, Framton, QC  
Johanna Echlin, MEd, Westmount, QC  
Julie Reimer, MMM, Kingston, ON  
Dr. Judith Miller, PhD, Ottawa, ON  
Kathrin Winkler, BA, Halifax, NS  
Dr. Kathryn Lindsay, PhD, Renfrew, ON  
Kay Rogers, BA, MA, MSc, Perth, ON  
Kerrie Blaise, MSc, JD, North Bay, ON  
Kim Reeder, MEM, Saint Andrews, NB  
Dr. Kringen Henein, PhD, Ottawa, ON  
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Dr. Paula Tippet, BSc, MD, MPH, Saint John, NB  
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Dr. Sarah Colwell, BSc, MD, FRCPC, Moncton, NB  
Dr. Silvia Schriever, MD, Victoria, BC  
Dr. Susan O'Donnell, PhD, Fredericton, NB  
Dr. Sylvia Hale, PhD, Fredericton, NB  
Sylvia Oljemark, Montréal, QC  
Theresa McClenaghan, BSc, LL.B., LL.M., Paris, ON  
Valerie Needham, MA, Ottawa, ON  
Venetia Crawford, BA, Shawville, QC  
Willi Nolan-Campbell, NB

## News

# Vaccine briefings could help manage public expectations around pace of rollout, say experts

The broader public might not recall every detail shared, but offering granular, tangible details about the logistics can be reassuring, says Dr. Alan Bernstein, who sits on the feds' COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force.

BY BEATRICE PAEZ

The Trudeau government's move to start holding weekly briefings on the distribution of vaccines against the novel coronavirus could dispel concerns among the pandemic-weary public about the pace of the rollout—as long as officials are upfront about the knowns and unknowns, say political experts and scientists.

Weekly briefings around the logistics, distribution, and allocation of vaccines started in late November. They feature officials involved in the design and oversight of the process, including Maj. Gen. Dany Fortin, who runs point on the logistics, Health Canada's Dr. Supriya Sharma, who, as chief medical adviser, fields queries on the department's regulatory process, and Dr. Howard Njoo, deputy chief public health officer.

Dr. Alan Bernstein, president and CEO of CIFAR, Canadian-based global research organization, said the broader public might not recall every figure shared, but offering granular, tangible details about the logistics can be reassuring.

He pointed to how Procurement Minister Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.) noted in an earlier briefing that Ottawa procured 126 cold and ultracold freezers to store vaccine doses on order from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, the two leading candidates. "She had a specific number, which made it sound more real to me," said Dr. Bernstein, who sits on the feds' COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, which advised the government in assembling its portfolio of seven candidates.

The Trudeau Liberals have been on the defensive in recent weeks following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) remarks suggesting Canada likely won't be first in line to administer the two-dose shots and could see other countries—namely, the United States, Britain, and France—start a few weeks earlier. On Dec. 2, the United Kingdom became the first country in the world to give Pfizer's vaccine the green light. The United States plans to make a decision Dec. 10, while Canada could be on track

to approve it within a week or so, according to CBC.

Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole (Durham, Ont.) tabled a motion earlier this week calling on the government to give a "status update" on the rollout, including the date each vaccine candidate could be distributed and whether there will be federal guidance on priority groups, by Dec. 16.

So far, the government hasn't offered precise timelines for when it expects the first several shipments of vaccine to land on Canada's shores. It's projected that some six million doses for three million Canadians could be received within the first quarter of 2021, with the first package expected sometime in January.

Dr. Bernstein said communicating hard timelines would be akin to speculating, given that much depends on how quickly Pfizer and Moderna—whose candidates are furthest along in the regulatory process—can scale up production of their vaccines, the first produced using novel messenger RNA technology that are on track to be approved.

Public health officials said the regulator has to ensure that quality of the vaccine doses destined for Canada is up to par.

Green Party Leader Annamie Paul said the government should be upfront about the timelines it's operating on, but cautioned against "scoring" political points "on the back of this process."



Maj. Gen. Dany Fortin is managing the logistical process of ensuring vaccines are transported securely across a country as geographically diverse as Canada. Military personnel are embedded within the Public Health Agency of Canada for the rollout. *Photograph courtesy of Department of National Defence*

"The way the question [around timelines] has been answered at Question Period, it provokes more questions. ... It's a simple question to answer whether we know when we can reasonably expect the first doses of the vaccine to arrive in Canada," said Ms. Paul in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "If they know, they should say what the approximate date is, and if they don't, they should just say that."

Beyond those key details, Ms. Paul said the public needs to be reassured that the system for what's expected to be a limited



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau holds separate briefings routinely at Rideau Cottage at least twice a week, while public health and military officials are tasked with breaking down the logistical issues behind the vaccine distribution. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

supply, initially, is going to be fair and "guided by nothing more than what's" in their best interest.

"The key is to make sure that process is completely non-politicized, that it's exclusively driven by the science, by the recommendations of the experts," said Ms. Paul. "The entire vaccine production and distribution process has to be completely non-political and non-partisan."

Though Mr. Trudeau has resumed his own routine briefings held separately at Rideau Cottage, military and public health officials have been front and centre during the two weekly technical briefings that have been held to date. Those officials told reporters on Dec. 3 that provinces have been told to mark Dec. 14 as the date by which their sites have to be ready to receive the first shipments.

In anticipation that vaccines could be ready for release in the first few months of 2021, military personnel have been embedded within the Public Health Agency of Canada since late spring, plotting out potential hurdles in transporting the vaccines in a country as geographically large and diverse as Canada.

Dr. Bernstein said while much hinges on the federal government's ability to ensure the allotted shipments of vaccine doses and ancillary materials like syringes and dry ice arrive on time, many other logistical questions fall on the provinces to answer since health care falls under their jurisdiction.

It's ultimately up to the provinces to set their priority list, with the expectation that the guidelines recommended by the feds will be used to help inform those decisions. Ottawa, for its part, turned to an expert committee for advice on that list, which released its preliminary recommendations last month.

Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam said Health Canada is in the midst of finalizing its guidance.

"I live in Ontario, so I'd like to know from my provincial govern-

ment, 'Where am I in the priority list? And wherever that is, where do I go to get vaccinated?'" said Dr. Bernstein. "If you compare that to voting day, we're given all kinds of detailed information. If you want advanced voting, 'Here's what you do.'"



Dr. Supriya Sharma fields questions on the regulatory process unfolding at Health Canada, where four vaccine candidates are under review. *Photograph courtesy of Public Health Agency of Canada's Twitter profile*

Alberta said it plans to reserve its first shots for seniors and front-line health care workers on duty at ICUs, units reserved for COVID cases, and crowded hospitals, according to CTV.

Jackie Choquette, vice-president with Crestview Strategy, said the federal government is "walking a tightrope," politically, in trying to build public confidence in the process, even as its hands might be tied on issues falling under the provinces' purview. "The role of Health Canada is to ensure that Canadians receive the same level of care no matter where you are in the province, but ultimately, the federal government will need to work with the provincial governments," she said. "Throughout the pandemic, premiers have been pretty good at putting politics aside and getting to the business

of the public health emergencies; we need that goodwill to continue."

Aside from ensuring they're coordinating on the distribution, the federal government also has to work with provinces to make sure there's a record-keeping system in place to track who has received a vaccine and when they're due for the second shot, said Dr. Alice Zwerling, assistant professor at University of Ottawa's school of epidemiology and public health.

With the stakes high in ensuring people are protected against the coronavirus, and doses in limited supply, Dr. Zwerling said, there need to be good systems in place to record data such as where shots were administered, the strain of vaccination, and to issue alerts to schedule a follow-up appointment for the second dose.

"Organization will be the key to reducing wastage," she said, noting that studies have broadly shown that immunization campaigns can see wastage of up to 20 per cent. For example, there can be short window between when a vaccine has to be administered after it's been diluted in anticipation of its use.

Dr. Bernstein agreed. "We want to make sure that people actually get the full course of treatment of dosage, so that they're fully protected," he said. "It should be a harmonized one across the provinces, because we need to collect that data as quickly as possible."

Setting up that type of system in Canada will be easier than in the United States, where health care is largely privatized, he added. Over time, those records could also help determine and identify which strain of the seven vaccines Canada has ordered, could be more effective for certain demographics.

"We may not know from initial vaccines, but we can follow people," he said. "It's really important for the world to know that."

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*The Hill Times*



# CN wants to build a **world-class, environmentally advanced** intermodal facility — in Milton, Ontario

The proposed shovel-ready, privately-funded CN Milton Logistics Hub would support Canada's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, while benefiting the environment.

The purpose-designed Hub would be a world-class, environmentally advanced intermodal facility, with leading edge technology at every stage, and served by Canadian-made, electric, zero-emission trucks.

Shipping by rail is four times more fuel-efficient than trucking alone. A single intermodal train removes approximately 300 long-haul trucks from our clogged highways. Since it would receive four trains daily, the Milton Hub would in effect remove more than 400,000 long-haul diesel trucks annually from Ontario roadways, significantly reducing greenhouse gas and other air emissions.

**CN is investing in a strong, sustainable future for Canada.**  
It's why we want to build the Milton Logistics Hub.

## News

# ‘Nobody can afford it’: long-term care costs to soar in coming decades, says report by ex-federal Finance Canada official Don Drummond

The newly-promised federal cash for long-term care won't solve the problem, says the finance adviser-turned-Queen's University professor.

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

The cost of funding Canada's long-term care homes are on track to more than double by 2041 as Canada's elderly population grows and much-needed improvements are made in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, says a report by a collection of Queen's University professors including former senior federal government finance adviser Don Drummond.

The federal government's "current restrictive funding formula for the Canada Health Transfer is going to squeeze provinces as they struggle to deal with their ageing populations," said the report, which is titled *Ageing Well* and was released on Nov. 27.

The report was written by two professors and one graduate student at Queen's University's School of Public Policy, including Don Drummond, a former associate deputy minister in charge of economic and fiscal analysis at Finance Canada, and chief economist for TD Bank; Duncan Sinclair, who has held a number of academic and public advisory positions in the health policy world, including as Chair of Ontario's Health Services Restructuring Commission; and Rebekah Bergen, who graduated from Queen's and began working at Finance Canada this summer.

The more than \$1-billion promised for long-term care in Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's (University-Rosedale, Ont.) Nov. 30 fall economic statement may help to improve conditions in Canada's long-term care homes now, but it would not address the demographic "tsunami" that is threatening to swamp the long-term care system in the coming decades, Mr. Drummond said in an interview.

"It doesn't address the fundamental issue," he said.

"The first way to make long-term care safer is to have fewer people in long-term care. That's



Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's fall economic statement promised more than \$1-billion to shore up some of the numerous deficiencies in Canada's long-term care system. The cost of caring for elderly Canadians is going to rise dramatically in the coming decades if broader changes aren't made by governments and healthcare providers, says a new report from Queen's University. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the point that seems to get ignored."

If Canada's governments, hospitals, doctors, and other institutions don't start doing more to keep seniors out of long-term care homes more often, the cost of running those homes could grow substantially by 2041, the report predicted: from 1.3 per cent of Canada's GDP now, to 2.1 per cent after needed improvements to bring those homes up to adequate standards have been made, and then to 4.2 per cent as the demand for long-term care beds doubles with the growth of the elderly population. That would cost billions.



Don Drummond is a former associate deputy minister at Finance Canada and chief economist for TD Bank. *Photograph courtesy of Queen's University*

"Nobody can afford it—in individuals, families, nor governments—and few want to be in LTC-homes in the first place," says the report.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed longstanding problems with care in many of Canada's long-term care homes for elderly people, particularly in Ontario and Quebec. Residents of long-term care homes accounted for roughly 80 per cent of the total number of people killed in Canada by the first wave of COVID-19, according to the Chief Public Health Officer's annual report. The virus has continued to spread through long-term care homes during the second wave that is currently gripping Canada, according to multiple media reports.

A report by Canada's military in May revealed troubling problems in five Ontario long-term care homes into which armed forces medical personnel had been called to help care for ailing residents. Those included staff who were poorly trained and overworked, unable to access personal protective equipment or some supplies needed for the care of residents, and who were sometimes abusive to residents.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) and Canada's premiers discussed setting nationwide minimum standards of care for long-term care homes during a conference call in October.

Senior citizens are expected to make up nearly 25 per cent of

Canada's population by the year 2041, up from roughly 17.5 per cent now—an increase of more than four million people—according to the Queen's University study, which included an analysis of data collected by Statistics Canada.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford promised in 2018 to build space for 15,000 new long-term care beds within five years, though he amended that figure to 8,000 in July. However, even creating the full 15,000 new beds wouldn't be enough to meet the current demand for beds, let alone the much higher demand by 2041, said the report, which estimated that Canada would have to nearly double the number of total long-term care beds in the country by that date—an increase of roughly 250,000—if governments don't change the way the elderly are cared for.



Duncan Sinclair has held numerous high-profile academic and advisory posts in the health policy sector. *Photograph courtesy of Queen's University*

"...[T]he problem is a paucity of alternatives from which seniors can choose, coupled with chronic underfunding of preferred alternatives such as home care and

community services," said the report, which called Canada "an international outlier in spending much more on institutional care of seniors than on home care."

Bringing Canada's long-term care system up to par—for example, by increasing the ratio of long-term care workers to seniors in the country from 3.5 per 100 to the OECD average of 8.2 per 100—would raise the cost of long-term care by about 66 per cent, even before accounting for the growth of the senior population, according to the report.

Taking measures to stave off frailty and dementia, the two major reasons that seniors are put into those homes, would cut costs and improve the quality of life for those seniors, said Mr. Drummond.



Rebekah Bergen helped to author the *Ageing Well* report before she graduated from Queen's University. She now works at Finance Canada. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

The average stay in a long-term care home is two and a half years, so keeping elderly people well enough to live in their own homes for even a few extra months, on average, could reduce the demand for long-term care beds significantly, he said.

"Each month is huge." Promoting physical activity can ward off frailty, while treating hearing impairment can slow the progression towards dementia, the report found. Shoring up home care and community care would also help keep people out of more expensive long-term care homes and hospital beds.

Long-term care is "on everybody's mind right now," said Mr. Drummond, as the pandemic has continued to spread into and through long-term care homes across the country.

"Maybe while we're tackling the crisis that we're in the midst of now, maybe it's time to think a little more broadly and go beyond that," he said.

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*The Hill Times*

## Promised action for the long-term care sector in the federal government's 2020 fall economic statement

Source: fall economic statement

- Up to \$1-billion for a Safe Long-term Care Fund, to help provinces and territories protect people in long-term care and support infection prevention and control.
- \$6.4-million over two years, starting in 2020-21, to the Canadian Foundation for Health Improvement to expand its LTC+ initiative, which allows long-term care facilities and seniors residences to register via an online portal and submit a self-assessment, making them eligible for coaching and seed funding to help address gaps.
- \$1-million to engage with third parties to help identify resources to conduct readiness assessments in long-term care facilities and facilitate training on infection prevention and control.
- \$2.4-million over three years to expand Health Canada's capacity to support these new initiatives.

# Investments in education and training infrastructure critical to Canada's long-term recovery

Preparing Canada's workforce and promoting a culture of lifelong learning increasingly requires a combination of physical and digital spaces. Now is a time for big ideas and innovative solutions.



Matt Henderson

Opinion

As Canada begins to build back better, investments that achieve multiple benefits stand to expedite recovery and amplify impact. Just as the United States once did with its New Deal to respond to the Great Depression, a key ingredient to Canada's long-term recovery will undoubtedly be infrastructure investment and development.

In a recent speech to the Canadian Club of Toronto, Infrastructure and Communities Minister Catherine McKenna pointed out that every tax dollar invested in new infrastructure needs to perform a triple duty beyond the infrastructure itself—growing the economy, combatting climate change and promoting social equality.

Focused, targeted investments in Canada's post-secondary education infrastructure are one critical way to achieve these multiple objectives while strengthening our pandemic response and labour market resilience. We need to bolster our education and training infrastructure, including things like new buildings, retrofits, digital learning infrastructure and research infrastructure to help our economy become robust and resilient.

Despite a slight increase in employment in October, the overall health of Canada's labour market remains a real concern. Youth and Indigenous unemployment, under- and precarious employment are just a few worrying trends. The Liberal government has responded by pledging to create one million jobs, in part through direct investments in infrastructure.

Investments on campus help to create thousands of middle-class jobs in sectors like construction, engineering and manufacturing, while the resulting infrastructure is used to train the next generation workforce. The last federal infrastructure program targeted at post-secondary institutions created 37,000 jobs in communities across the country. Projects also offer experiential learning opportunities for students and apprentices, critical during a time when many placements are otherwise being postponed or cancelled outright.

Combatting climate change is also a key consideration for Canada's long-term recovery and prosperity. At the intersection of skills development and business innovation, investments on polytechnic campuses contribute to clean, green and low-carbon communities. Buildings like The Arbour at George Brown

College—Ontario's first mass-timber, low-carbon institutional building—stand to provide a unique learning environment to students, unlock community space for the surrounding neighbourhood and contribute to Canada's climate change commitments.

Preparing for a green future also requires investments in research infrastructure that contribute to sectors like forestry, fisheries, wildlife and conservation—those critical for driving Canada's climate and sustainability agenda. These facilities also serve as an important resource for businesses, helping them rethink their processes, products and environmental impact.

All Canadians need to benefit from and be included in our immediate response and long-term recovery. Investments in education and training spaces that consider all learners—both in a digital and physical learning environment—are critical to enabling labour market resilience and promoting inclusive growth.

Spaces like the Mamidosewin Centre in Ottawa and the Nisóhkamátótán Centre in Edmonton provide a variety of programs and services that are respectful and reflective of Indigenous cultures. They serve as community gathering places where Indigenous and non-Indigenous students can network, study and share their learning experiences. Investing in

this type of infrastructure will help improve access to and support for education and training in communities across the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also created additional demand for digital infrastructure, as a way to ensure the continuity and access of training. Several institutions have developed virtual labs replicating the classroom experience, enabling access to the equipment, software and other technologies needed to complete course work.

Preparing Canada's workforce and promoting a culture of lifelong learning increasingly requires a combination of physical and digital spaces. Now is a time for big ideas and innovative solutions.

Investments in our education and training infrastructure will perform a necessary triple duty—spur job creation, contribute to climate resilience and support an inclusive talent pipeline along the way. As we pull our way out of this pandemic, investing in post-secondary infrastructure will no doubt be an important part of Canada's long-term recovery. These investments will also help us respond to disruptions with more speed and resilience—both now and into the future.

Matt Henderson is senior policy analyst at Polytechnics Canada.

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## The 4th meeting of Kazakhstan-Canada Business Council (KCBC) opens up new potential for economic cooperation

Akylbek Kamaldinov, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Canada

Kazakhstan and Canada have been enjoying productive and dynamic relations since establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. Nur-Sultan and Ottawa have built a high-level partnership in political sphere which marked by successful economic cooperation.

Our bilateral trade and investment statistics deserves a positive assessment. Canada is now ranked amongst the Top-15 of the largest investment partners of Kazakhstan. Since 2005 Canadian companies invested to Kazakhstan more than 6.3 billion CAD. In 2019 bilateral trade turnover doubled and totaled 620 million CAD. More than 170 enterprises with the participation of Canadian companies are operating in Kazakhstan. Today Kazakhstan is Canada's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia. These are good indicators, but far from the limit of our capabilities.

November of 2020 was dedicated to intense discussions between our governments, business communities and associations, experts, academia of Kazakhstan and Canada within 4th meeting of Kazakhstan-Canada Business Council (KCBC) entitled "Post pandemic development of Kazakhstan and Canada cooperation: recovery and development".

Economic relations between our countries are supported by regular dialogue at the political level and KCBC event was held to follow up a meeting between President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Prime Minister of Canada the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau in February 2020 at the Munich Security Conference margins.

During November 2020 the Working Groups' five meetings were held in such areas as agriculture, natural resources and energy, construction and infrastructure, aerospace and transport, health and education and two days of Plenary session gathered together over 700 participants. Despite the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and that in this year KCBC events were conducted in all-new



virtual format, it was absolutely successful and we clearly see its strong outcomes.

On behalf of the Government of Canada the Honourable Jim Carr, the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Western Provinces (Prairies) participated in KCBC Plenary Session. He positively described economic relations between our countries, which are supported by regular dialogue at the political level and stressed that the meeting of President Tokayev with Prime Minister Trudeau in February 2020 consolidated mutual support for bilateral relations development of on a wide range of issues. Mr. Jim Carr also welcomed the ongoing reforms in Kazakhstan, which, in his opinion, stimulate economic growth, including sustainable development, green energy and investment in human capital.

During the KCBC Plenary session, Canadian Co-Chair, CEO of Cameco Mr. Tim Gitzel, who was recently appointed as the Honorary Consul of Kazakhstan in Saskatchewan noted Business Council's progress since its creation in 2016. He

highlighted that KCBC has become an effective platform for bilateral projects' implementation between two countries' business communities. T. Gitzel also shared recent meeting's results of the Foreign Investors Council under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in which he has been a member for the last 10 years. He stressed that the KCBC meeting's agenda is fully consistent with Kazakhstan's priorities on country's integration into global economy under President K. Tokayev's leadership, including in areas of digitalization, artificial intelligence, energy, natural resources, agriculture and in other areas.

In general, the experts highlighted a strong interest in further strengthening bilateral economic cooperation between Kazakhstan and Canada. In their opinion, the meetings held within Business Council's framework opened up new prospects for business interaction in the post-pandemic period. Following the KCBC's 4th meeting its participants agreed to adopt a Roadmap for implementation of achieved arrangements.

In conclusion, I urge to expand and intensify a scope of our cooperation and work together to attract more small and medium enterprises, create more favorable conditions and open up new market opportunities and niches for bilateral trade. I firmly believe that there is promising potential for economic cooperation and our synergy will be instrumental in further developing bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Canada in nearest future.

I am confident that Kazakhstan and Canada will successfully overcome current economic crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic, enter the trajectory of stable growth and set the stage for the further progressive development of trade and economic relations.



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## Editorial

### Feds should shed more light on Centre Block's massive renovation project

It's been nearly two years since Centre Block was closed for what's now being dubbed "the renovation of the century," and last week the federal government offered the media a look inside to see what's going on. Breathtaking is one word for it. Our photographer Andrew Meade shot pictures of the work and The Canadian Press' Lee Berthiaume filed a very detailed pool report, thankfully, because this renovation is more than significant. It's gob-smacking, fall-down huge. This should be a documentary film and a book, maybe two books.

Led by Public Services and Procurement Canada, on any given day, there are 400 people on the Hill working on this renovation. This historic building will be basically taken apart, strengthened and reinforced, updated, and put back together again, piece by piece, for use during the next 100 years and beyond. The scope of the work is gigantic, which is why PSPC should be offering regular updates on what's happening. This is the Canadian people's Parliament and the people have a right to know what's going on.

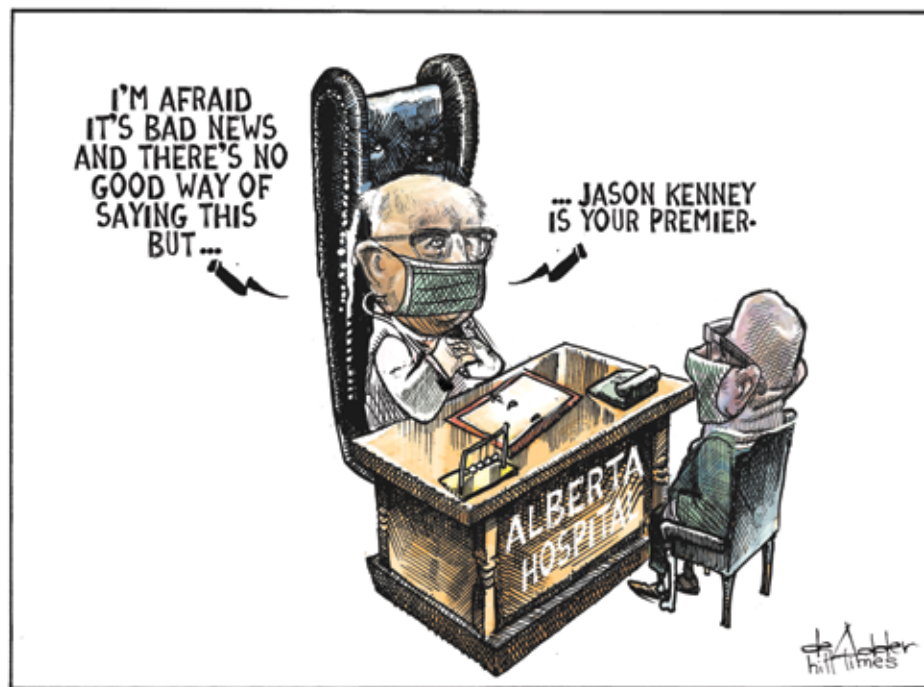
So far, PSPC says \$655-million has been allocated for the renovation of Centre Block and the construction of the underground visitors' welcome centre, but that figure is expected to rise significantly over the next decade or so that it will take to finish this job. PSPC says it will take "at least" 10 years to complete, but it could be longer. So that's 2030 and beyond. The \$655-million allocated so far covers the costs for decommissioning the building, removing heritage artifacts, "initial" restoration work, demolition work, removal of hazardous materials, and excavation of the pit for the under-

ground welcome centre. The department says \$119.6-million has been spent to date on Centre Block and says \$4.5-billion has been approved on the renovations of all the buildings in the Parliamentary Precinct. The Long Term Vision and Plan, which started in 2007, is the larger project to give the Parliamentary Precinct much-needed restoration and overall modern upgrades.

PSPC says so far, some 2.5 metric tonnes of asbestos-ridden materials have been removed from the building, and 50,000 truckloads of bedrock will be dug out in front Centre Block from the front of the building for the underground visitors' welcome centre. The excavation was started in the summer and is expected to take two years. The new visitors centre will have an integrated accessible entry to the Centre Block, West Block, and East Block which will become one underground parliamentary complex. The Senate side of Centre Block's foundation was rubble foundation, so PSPC has poured a new foundation and put in steel rods to hold it together. The next big project after the holidays is restoring the masonry, which could take six years to finish. The House Chamber will eventually have to accommodate 450 MPs, so major adjustments will be made there.

There's not enough space on this page to detail the work that will be done on Centre Block, one of the most important buildings in Canada, and PSPC should be providing more regular updates on this massive project, not only to Parliament, but to all Canadians who are paying for it and who view this site as a symbol of our democracy.

*The Hill Times*



## Letters to the Editor

### Keep fitness facilities open safely during COVID-19, urge doctors

We, the undersigned medical doctors, write to convey the importance of keeping fitness facilities open, safely and sustainably, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Many months into this pandemic, we now know that the presence of lifestyle-associated chronic diseases strongly predicts morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 infections. We recognize that contact tracing currently has limitations in Ontario but recent data released by the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table states that gyms account for less than five per cent of all outbreaks in "hot spots."

We believe that more collaboration from government and public health with fitness facilities is both crucial and feasible to allow safe and sustainable operations to continue throughout this pandemic. The blanket closure of all gyms in "hot spots" is an extreme measure which ignores the many protective factors already in place in some facilities, factors which could be increased to further mitigate potential spread. By taking into account incremental approaches to policy based on the physical realities of gym operations, you would communicate the profound importance you place on the health and well-being of the varied and diverse communities you represent.

The pandemic will be an issue for the foreseeable future. Even if a vaccine is developed, we recognize it will take time to vaccinate the population. It is incumbent on you as policymakers to evaluate and consider the impact and sustainability in the event that there is long-term disruption to daily life. Any long-term closure of gyms will, in our opinion, not only lead to COVID-19 outbreaks becoming more deadly, but will also increase the incidence of almost all of the other leading causes of mortality (cancer, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, Alzheimer's disease) in Canada for years to come. Without the support that exercise facilities provide the community, Canada will see a significant and unnecessary increase in lifestyle-preventable diseases post-COVID-19 pandemic.

The facilities we have observed have risen to the call to put in place extraordinary—but necessary—measures to keep their members safe, including pre-class registration and a COVID-19 screening questionnaire, caps on class attendance, regular sanitization of equipment after

every use, physical distancing, and mask-wearing at all times except for during short, high-intensity workouts. There is little doubt that most gyms would eagerly follow any further guidelines that public health experts, such as ourselves, feel are necessary to continue safe operations. Their continued operation is one of the most important ways to fight against the effects of COVID-19.

We listen with rapt attention to our government, and we firmly urge that you take this time to embrace and promote the use of exercise to prevent and decrease the effects of all diseases. We ask for your help in supporting a collaborative initiative between government, public health, and leaders in the fitness industry in order to keep these businesses operating safely, so that they can keep Ontarians healthy. Ontario has the opportunity to be a national and global leader in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, while building a foundation for incredible positive health outcomes for generations to come.

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# Sloan should be tossed from Conservative caucus

The anti-gay and anti-choice views that formed the basis of his campaign for the Conservative leadership were bad enough.



Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner

OTTAWA—Derek Sloan should be tossed from the Conservative caucus.

The anti-gay and anti-choice views that formed the basis of his campaign for the Conservative leadership were bad enough.

Last week, he went from the ridiculous to the delirious, sponsoring a parliamentary petition that discourages Canadians from vaccinating themselves against the worst public health scourge in a century.

Sloan actually went so far as to claim that the vaccination was human experimentation and within hours of its announcement, his petition had gathered more than 22,000 signatures. Even more frightening was the decision by Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole

to sidestep the question when asked about it during a presser on the government's handling of the vaccine. On this one, O'Toole is making a deadly mistake.

While he and his party were starting to develop some media traction in the attacks on government pandemic strategies, the Sloan petition has the effect of throwing all that under the bus.

It makes a number of egregiously false claims including the fact that "no coronavirus vaccine has ever been approved because of serious adverse effects, including death to test animals, due to pathogenic priming; COVID vaccines are not designed to prevent infection or transmission and bypassing proper safety protocols means COVID-19 vaccination is effectively human experimentation."

This is not the first time Sloan has put his foot in the wrong place. Who can forget his claim that Dr. Theresa Tam was a Chinese agent, a statement for which he did apologize? He has not apologized for opposing federal legislation to end conversion therapy. Sloan stands with those groups that claim they can stamp out homosexual urges through shaming and bullying.

O'Toole is refusing to silence Sloan and by not doing so, he will alienate the majority of the thinking population.

How can the Conservative leader convince Canadians to vaccinate themselves when his own colleague is leading the warped world of online anti-vaxxers?

Before the recent American presidential vote, social media websites like Instagram and Twitter actually blocked false anti-vac-



Conservative MP Derek Sloan, pictured on Oct. 21, 2020, on the Hill. Last week, he went from the ridiculous to the delirious, sponsoring a parliamentary petition that discourages Canadians from vaccinating themselves against the worst public health scourge in a century. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ination claims, suggesting they were untrue and designed to have an influence on the election result.

But here in Canada, O'Toole runs the risk of losing the public completely by refusing to stop Sloan from peddling his false and dangerous claims.

It looks as though the Conservatives are backing themselves into the same corner that cost them the last election.

Their refusal to shake off the extremists in their caucus and party are going to do them grievous harm when most Canadians are looking for leadership on pandemic issues.

With the government launching another confidence vote on

the \$25-billion COVID-fighting investment announced by Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland last week, the Tories could be facing the electorate sooner rather than later.

That means a clear, coherent strategy on the main issue of the day should not be muddled by caucus members with mixed messaging. Kicking Sloan out would mean a couple of days of internally negative headlines, but it would clear the way for an election that would not be affected by mixed Tory messaging.

O'Toole has struggled to place himself in the moderate middle when it comes to social issues facing his very conserva-

tive caucus. He made it clear immediately after his leadership that he was not going to follow the lead of Andrew Scheer and turn his back on the gay community.

But with colleagues who have no problem doing that, O'Toole's brand is damaged when he does nothing about them.

Thus far, the Conservatives have not made much political hay out of the COVID challenge. Even with government missteps, the Tories have been kept off balance by bizarre claims from Sloan that question mask-wearing and accuse public servants of being in cahoots with the Chinese government.

Those statements were beyond bizarre but last week's anti-vaccination rant makes Sloan's previous missteps pale in comparison.

If there is one way that we are going to be able to end this collective, global nightmare, it is by massive immunization with a vaccine that can protect the globe from this deadly virus.

The opposition has every right to question the government on vaccine availability and rollout, and the federal/provincial cooperation that has characterized the last nine months could be shattered in the fight for vaccinations.

Under normal circumstances, that tension should provide a real opening for a reasoned, competent Opposition leader to show how his party could offer something better.

But when O'Toole refuses to fire a team member who is a delirious anti-vaxxer, all leadership claims ring hollow.

Sheila Copps is a former Jean Chrétien-era cabinet minister and a former deputy prime minister.

*The Hill Times*

## Polarization in Canada, real or not?

When leaders act in a polarizing manner, they will breed polarization in the general population.



Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit

OKAVILLE, ONT.—When it comes to politics, we Canadians are becoming increasingly polarized.

Or are we?

After all, maybe all the gloomy warnings we're hearing these

days about how our society is becoming divided along stark ideological lines is nothing but media hype or exaggeration.

So, always eager to get to the bottom of things, I recently "attended" a Zoom conference put on by the Institute for Liberal Studies, which featured Eric Merkley, a postdoctoral fellow from the University of Toronto, who discussed his extensive academic research on political polarization both here in Canada and in the United States.

Surely, he would provide me with answers.

Unfortunately, however, since Merkley is an expert in "quantitative political science," his discussion was peppered with phrases like "bi-modal coefficients" and "latent factor analysis," meaning a lot of it went over my non-academic head.

Yet, I still managed to glean some interesting tidbits of information from his talk, which I'd like to share.

First off, Merkley's basic conclusion was that, based on his analysis, political polarization is

indeed occurring in Canada, but not to the same degree as is happening in America.

So why is it happening in Canada?

Well, part of it, argues Merkley is that Canadians are simply becoming more consistent in their ideology.

What that means is right-leaning Liberals are drifting to the Conservatives, while left-wing Conservatives are moving towards the Liberals.

So basically, Canadians are sorting themselves out into more distinct ideological tribes, the upshot of which is that the Liberal Party is becoming more and more left-wing, the Conservative Party, more and more right-wing.

The natural result of this growing ideological divergence between the two parties is polarization.

On the other hand, however, Merkley's research also shows there's an increasing affinity between Liberals and New Democrats.

Another cause of political polarization in Canada according to Merkley is "elite opinion."

More specifically he argues it's our "elites" (political party leaders, other prominent politicians, media personalities) who are actually becoming more ideological and more partisan.

This matters because many people will look to opinion leaders for their cues on how they should view the world, supporting the opinions of leaders they like, opposing the opinions of leaders they don't.

So, when leaders act in a polarizing manner, they will breed polarization in the general population.

For instance, Merkley noted how, after U.S. President Donald Trump slammed NFL players for kneeling during the American national anthem, polls showed that Republicans began to view the league much less favourably, while Democrats viewed it much more favourably.

At any rate, as we become more divided over ideology, it leads to what Merkley calls, "affected polarization"—which, put into regular English, means political partisans start to hate each other.

Making matters worse, social media has a tendency to create the perception that the other side is more extreme than it really is.

Hence, progressives on social media tend to perceive all conservatives as racist, fascistic, gun-toting rednecks, while, for their part, conservatives tend to perceive all progressives as elitist, immoral, communists.

But the good news is, despite these social-media-fuelled perceptions, Merkley points out that while Canadians are becoming more consistent ideologically and thus more divided along partisan lines, their opinions are not becoming more extreme.

That puts us in better shape than the United States, where polarizing ideological beliefs on both the left and right are very much more intense.

Part of the reason for this, says Merkley, is that American ideological polarization is reinforced by factors such as race, religion and culture.

So, polarization in Canada is real, but it's not reached alarming American-style levels.

Gerry Nicholls is a communication consultant.

*The Hill Times*

## Opinion

# Toppling Trudeau: be careful what you wish for

The Conservatives continue to politicize everything at their peril, from the proposed 988 suicide hotline, to the COVID-19 vaccine itself. Erin O'Toole's partisanship goes hand-in-hand with an embarrassing insincerity. O'Toole isn't going to win over many voters with his vintage performance of sucking and blowing on the issue of COVID-19.



Michael Harris

Harris

**H**ALIFAX—You can suspend the law of averages, but you can't repeal it; if you play Russian Roulette long enough, there is always a Big Bang.

And so it is with minority governments who bring on confidence votes, and dare the official opposition to trigger an election. Eventually, usually sooner than later, the government falls.

Which may be exactly what Justin Trudeau wants—without making it happen himself. The pandemic has changed political reality in Canada. As long as COVID-19 rages across the country and around the world, as long as there is no readily available and proven vaccine, any election will be a one-issue affair: the pandemic. Who answered the bell, who didn't.

In that scenario, the Liberals likely win, and maybe even reclaim their majority government. As Chrystia Freeland put it, it's better to spend more money than less when it comes to matters of life and death.

If, for example, the united opposition brings down the govern-



ment over Ottawa's latest fiscal update, freighted as it is with billions more in COVID-spending, the Liberals could make an argument something like this: the government that has supported Canadians throughout the pandemic, and wanted to continue that support until a safe vaccine is syringe-ready, was stopped in its tracks by opponents who put partisan politics ahead of emergency assistance. That's like stopping a fire-truck to issue a speeding ticket on its way to a burning house.

The Conservatives continue to politicize everything at their peril, from the proposed 988 suicide hotline, to the COVID-19 vaccine itself. Erin O'Toole's partisanship goes hand-in-hand with an embarrassing insincerity. O'Toole isn't going to win over many voters with his vintage performance of sucking and blowing on the issue of COVID-19.

One moment, the Conservative leader urges the Trudeau government to provide more wage and rent subsidies, more help for small businesses and workers, and asks that audits on small businesses with dubious CERB grants be "paused." This is

the same Erin O'Toole who also called for a crackdown on fraudulent CERB claims.

O'Toole wants an increase in health transfers to the provinces, and in the next breath, complains about the federal government's worsening bottom line as "red ink turns to dark crimson."

That is not a man of principle criticizing in good faith. That is a garden-variety political opportunist willing to turn anything at hand to his immediate advantage. Instead of telling Canadians what he thinks, he tells them what he thinks might win their votes.

O'Toole is the leader who wants a parliamentary committee to investigate why one of the federal government's vaccine deals fell apart. He has apparently forgotten that the time for post mortem is after the patient dies, not while people are desperately trying to save him.

And beneath all that is a much bigger problem for the newish Tory leader; a sincerity deficit. When he was a member of the Harper government, O'Toole signed on to all the right-wing excesses, including the laughable Fair Elections Act and the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Practises Act.

Instead of telling Canadians what he thinks, Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole tells them what he thinks might win their votes, writes Michael Harris. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

two bills back in the days when O'Toole didn't like unions:

"These bills were a direct attack on the rights of working people, and a deliberate attempt to weaken unions in their struggle to improve the lives of workers."

How shocking was Erin O'Toole's new-found affection for unions and Canadian workers? Walter Pamic heard the Conservative leader's speech that day in Toronto, and wasn't pleased. As board chair for Merit Canada, which advocates for open-shop, non-union construction associations, this is what he had to say to *The Globe and Mail* about O'Toole's support of anti-union legislation in the Harper government, and the leader's sudden conversion:

"I don't think they're compatible at all. It's like speaking out of both sides of your mouth."

The reality is that Erin O'Toole hasn't become a union man, or, for that matter, the leader of a compassionate and intelligent government-in-waiting. He is just another politician who is more concerned about figuring out how to win, knowing as he does that doing it Harper's way no longer works.

How telling it is that O'Toole has now essentially lifted the heart of Peter MacKay's pitch from the recent Conservative leadership race, but not, please note, until the leadership was well over and he had won.

MacKay said that the great job for the party was to make more room in the Tory tent. When he was vying for the votes of fellow Harper Conservatives, O'Toole held fast to hard-right Conservative values, Harper values. Though an Ontario MP, he even launched his campaign in Alberta.

It was the formula to win at the party level. It snagged O'Toole the support of Alberta Premier Jason Kenney, now the least popular premier in Canada. To the ambitious Erin O'Toole back in those days, there was no such thing as a stinking albatross.

But now he is dealing with a far more diverse electorate than the CPC's True Believers. He is dealing with all of Canada. And that is a place where intelligence is respected, compassion is highly valued, and groups like unions have a serious say on who gets to be PM. Expect Erin O'Toole to take a giant step to the Centre, and maybe venture one toe left of centre, in an attempt to boost his popularity.

O'Toole, like Julius Caesar, is now trying to be "every man's woman, and every woman's man."

As for who he really is, it is anybody's guess.

*Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.*  
*The Hill Times*

# Can't we agree to end torture?

Nearly 25 years later, Canada still has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, leaving us a pariah on the international stage. Article 2 of the UNCAT required countries to ban torture domestically.



Canada's human rights record is far from squeaky clean. Residential schools, the Kamagata Maru, Japanese internment, a Chinese head tax. Yet, in moments of our history a positive record on human rights has shone through. If we want to be proud of the Canadian history that we are presently writing, we need accede to the UNOPCAT. If not, how can we ever demand the same of others? *Photograph courtesy of Pixabay*

cratic and human rights leader, how can Canada demand other countries to respect human rights if we are unwilling to have external oversight over our own record?

Over the last 15 days, correctional law entities across the country have examined whether torture is occurring in Canadian prisons. Structured intervention units isolate individuals for 22 hours a day, often for more than 15 days straight—which can amount to torture. Though I will let you reach your own conclusions, we have heard from academics, doctors, community volunteers, family members, prisoners, experts, lawyers, more lawyers, who have resoundingly cried “yes.”

During our discussions it came out that Canada's correctional investigator, the bureaucrat legislatively mandated to ensure human rights are not violated in our prisons, was chased out of Port-Cartier, Que., by the police. He was also accused of risking the lives of correctional officers for visiting a prison in person during COVID despite his hazmat suit (yes, an actual hazmat suit).

Canada's human rights record is far from squeaky clean: for example residential schools, the Kamagata Maru, Japanese internment, a Chinese head tax. Yet, in moments of our history a positive record on human rights has shone through. If we want to be proud of the Canadian history that we are presently writing, we need accede to the UNOPCAT. If not, how can we ever demand the same of others?

*Murray Fallis is an articling fellow with the John Howard Society of Canada. The Hill Times*

Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, leaving us a pariah on the international stage.

Article 2 of the UNCAT required countries to ban torture domestically.

Yet, often, as legislation goes, mere words on a page do not affect implementation. In undemocratic countries or undemocratic times, legislation may say one thing while corruption and unfairness operationalizes another. To respond to such circumstances, the UNOPCAT was born.

Article 1 of the UNOPCAT implemented a system of regular visits to a country, undertaken by independent national and international bodies to ensure torture is absent. Simply, the UNOPCAT mandated independent third-party oversight. If ratified, it meant Norwegian experts would

look inside our immigration detention facilities and our experts theirs.

Canada refused.

To be illustriously clear, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, and South Sudan have all acceded to or ratified this human rights treaty, as have most of our closest allies: the U.K., Germany, France.

Perhaps more shocking still is that Canada can sign and ratify this treaty with a reservation—which means that Canada would accede to some of, but not all of, the treaty. It's like signing some of, but not all of, your mortgage, refusing the terms you don't like.

It is in this context, Canada needs to self-reflect. In a world where the two Michaels are held overseas, external oversight of human rights must be the norm. As a demo-



Murray Fallis

Opinion

**M**ONTREAL—In 1984, the United Nations Convention Against Torture was passed. Given the atrocities of the 20th century, the UNCAT sought to “recognize the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.” Nearly 25 years later, Canada still has not ratified the Optional

## REBUILDING THE CANADIAN ECONOMY.

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## Opinion

# We need more details on feds' 'build-back-better' plan

Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, pictured Sept. 15, 2020, on the Hill. Part of the fall economic statement was encouraging, but the government's outline of how it plans its 'build-back-better' promise, failed to deliver on the future direction, structural changes we need for a stronger economy. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*



The post-pandemic economy will be different from the pre-pandemic economy. But the fiscal statement—aside from some generalities on green investments—gives little sense of future direction.



David Crane

*Canada & the 21st Century*

TORONTO—One part of the Trudeau government's fall economic statement was designed to reassure Canadians that support programs for families and small businesses will continue to be there as long as the pandemic lasts. Canadians will not be forced out of their homes and onto the streets and many small businesses have some hope of surviving the pandemic, despite lockdowns.

That is all to the good and one suspects, despite Conservative and NDP carping, that they wouldn't have done things much differently. Canada is able to be more supportive than some other countries, and perhaps even a bit more than it needed to be, and this is because we had the fiscal room to do it.

But the other part of the fall economic statement, an outline of how the Trudeau government plans its "build-back-better" promise, failed to deliver. The post-pandemic economy will be different from the pre-pandemic economy. But the fiscal state-

Continued on page 29

## It's time Canada had a national vaccine injury compensation program

If in the process of partaking in a public good one is injured, they should be provided with just compensation.



Kumanan Wilson & Jennifer Keelan

*Opinion*

After almost a year of enduring the pandemic and its enormous health, economic and social toll, help may be on the way. The world has been encouraged by the promising early results from the Pfizer and Moderna messenger mRNA vaccines. The possibility of a vaccine being

available in the early new year appears realizable. It is an incredible story—a 15-year process of vaccine development compressed into a single year.

Canada is an enviable position—having purchased more vaccines per capita than any other country. But there is a lingering gap in our vaccine policy. What happens in the very rare instance that an individual should suffer an adverse event from the vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines will go through the rigours of phase three randomized clinical trial evaluations. They will have to meet regulatory standards for safety and efficacy. But there is a possibility that we will not detect extremely rare side-effects in phase three trials.

COVID-19 is far riskier for some populations, yet we will need the majority of the public to participate in vaccination if our goal is to create herd immunity. However, there are real ethical challenges in encouraging everyone to be vaccinated without providing any support for rare adverse events that may occur as a result.

People who sustain harm while contributing to herd im-

munity should be supported by a national no-fault vaccine injury program that would provide a straightforward path to compensation.

Notably, Canada is alone among G7 nations in not having a vaccine injury compensation program, although the province of Quebec does have one. At least 25 jurisdictions around the world have such programs, including countries such as Vietnam and Nepal.

No-fault compensation programs make sense for several reasons. First, as described, there is typically "no-fault" when someone experiences a rare adverse event. Best practices are in place, the vaccine meets regulatory standards for safety and the events are so rare that even if you are aware they exist, a reasonable person would still proceed to be vaccinated.

Second, these programs also promote vaccine industry innovation. In fact, a major reason for their introduction in the U.S. was that fears and costs of litigation, even if unsuccessful, had pushed many pharmaceutical companies out of the vaccine manufacturing business, creating shortages.

But perhaps most importantly, it's simply the right thing to do. Vaccines are a public good and we should partake in these programs not only for our benefit but also for the benefit of others—in particular, the vulnerable.

If in the process of partaking in a public good one is injured, they should be provided with just compensation.

This brings us to the COVID-19 vaccine. A program is needed even more urgently for these vaccines. An initial target group will be front-line workers who care for vulnerable populations. There will be an expectation, a pressure, if not a requirement that they be vaccinated. It would be unjust and antithetical to our current ethos that these workers, if in the rare instance they suffer a possible adverse event, would be left on their own.

This problem will be further magnified as we extend the vaccine roll-out to the broader population with the message to get vaccinated to protect yourself and others. We have provided financial compensation for individuals and businesses throughout the pandemic who have taken measures to help reduce the spread

of the virus. We should continue that approach with the release of a vaccine.

How would such a program be designed? We have previously created guidance for such a program to be established in Canada and there are many international examples we could model and multiple jurisdictions which we could emulate.

Will creating a program to address rare injuries create undue anxiety over vaccine safety? There is no evidence either way on their impact on vaccine hesitancy from the jurisdictions we have studied.

Will they be expensive? There is no evidence that run-away costs have overwhelmed any of the programs we have studied precisely because vaccines are so safe.

We are strong supporters of vaccines and have confidence in their safety. It's not too late for Canada to address this gap in our vaccination policy, first for COVID-19 vaccines, and then extended to all recommended vaccines.

*Kumanan Wilson is a physician/scientist at the Ottawa Hospital and a member of the University of Ottawa Centre for Health Law, Policy and Ethics. Follow him on Twitter at @animunize. Jennifer Keelan, PhD, is the lead author of 2011 Munk School briefing on no-fault vaccine injury compensations.*

*The Hill Times*

# KENYA CELEBRATES ITS 57<sup>TH</sup> INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY.



Kenya-Canada relations are stronger and brimming with the promise of an even brighter future.

This year, Kenya is marking its 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary (*Jamhuri Day*) since attaining independence on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1963.

I wish therefore to take this opportunity to convey this year's *Jamhuri* Message of Goodwill to friends of Kenya in Canada, taking into account the extraordinary global health, economic and social challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is because of these challenges that this year, we are not able to celebrate our *Jamhuri* Day in the traditional manner of hosting a reception for our friends, partners and collaborators.

The commemoration of *Jamhuri Day* provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the journey we have travelled as a nation. In this regard, I am pleased to note that we have registered remarkable progress in national development and our unity, within a diverse nation, remains ever stronger. In addition, over the past five decades, the livelihoods of our people have improved tremendously and we are on track to creating a competitive and equitable nation. Notable progress has also been registered in the provision of healthcare, education, infrastructural development and housing, among others.

Today, Kenya is one of Africa's leading economies and a hotbed of innovation and creativity. We are also one of the most attractive investment destinations globally, and our firms are among the largest investors in the Eastern and Central African sub-region.

Sustained economic and business reforms over the last few years continue to enhance our nation's competitiveness and ranking globally. We have recorded many milestones thus far, such as Kenya's 80-slot improvement since 2014, with our nation currently ranking at 56<sup>th</sup> globally - and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Sub-Saharan Africa - on the Ease-of-Doing Business Global Ranking Report, from a low of 136<sup>th</sup> globally in 2014. As an affirmation of our place of pride within the community of nations, Kenya now ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in Protecting Minority Investors and 4<sup>th</sup> globally on Accessing Credit.

Consequently, the number of companies registered daily has increased by 500% from 30 in 2014 to 200 in 2020, and a daily average of 300 during the COVID-19 period. On aggregate, 400,000 companies are now registered annually in Kenya.

As we continue to create an enabling environment for our enterprises to thrive, we are also enhancing connectivity in the country through ports, road and rail.

While remarkable progress has been registered in the areas I have enumerated above, we also acknowledge that our journey of transformation is incomplete and more remains to be done. It is for this reason that H.E. President Uhuru Kenyatta has identified four priority areas of national development during his second term in office. These are: **enhancing food security, affordable housing, enhancing manufacturing capacity** and the **provision of universal healthcare**. To deliver on these four priority areas, the Government is encouraging Public-Private Partnerships in undertaking some of the identified projects within these key areas.

On the state of our bilateral relations with Canada, I am pleased to report that Kenya and Canada continue to enjoy the same warm and cordial relations that have existed since 1963. Our relations have evolved over the last five decades to stand where they are today - **stronger and brimming with the promise of an even brighter future**. – not out of chance, but through well-thought-out and carefully calibrated engagements between our two friendly countries

As members of the Commonwealth, our two countries share common values and heritage in the political, educational, cultural, economic, legal and military spheres. Both are democracies, espousing ideals



His Excellency Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.M.  
President of the Republic of Kenya and  
Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces



and values of human rights, the rule of law and principles of free market economy. They are also key players in international security and significant contributors to peace-keeping missions around the world.

In September 2018, desirous of strengthening the framework of their co-operation, Kenya and Canada signed a Bi-National Commission which institutionalized their regular consultations on areas of mutual interest, including, but not limited to: Sustainable Blue Economy, Women and Youth Empowerment, Trade and Investment, Multilateral Cooperation and Regional Peace and Security.

At the multilateral level, Kenya and Canada enjoy excellent co-operation underpinned by a set of common values and a shared perspective about the future. As a demonstration of this commitment to working together at the international level, the two countries co-hosted the phenomenally successful High-Level Sustainable Blue Economy Conference in November 2018 in Nairobi.

Still on the multi-lateral front, Kenya wishes to express its profound gratitude to Canada, and all the other member states of the United Nations, for the gracious support and honour accorded to the Republic of Kenya to serve as a Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council for the period 2021-2022 (UNSC 2021-2022) in the elections held in June 2020 in New York. We wish to reassure all our friends in Canada, that, through its membership in the UNSC

2021-2022, Kenya will endeavour to voice and advance the shared objectives, values and aspirations upon which our excellent bilateral relations have been, and continue to be, based.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge the patriotism and collaboration of all Kenyans resident in Canada for their efforts aimed at promoting Kenya's image and interests. The Kenyan Diaspora in Canada has also served, and continues to serve, as a cultural bridge between our two peoples, significantly contributing to forging closer understanding between Kenya and Canada.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, Kenyans in Canada stood up to be counted amongst frontline workers providing critical services in the crucial fight against the pandemic. In this connection, I wish to pay special tribute to all the Kenyan nationals serving as frontline workers in Canada, and I want them to know that Kenya and Kenyans are proud of them all.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous, Happy New Year!

**Amb. John Lanyasunya, MBS  
HIGH COMMISSIONER**



## Opinion



U.S. President Donald Trump, pictured Nov. 29, 2020, with his grandchildren Arabella, Theodore and Joseph Kushner. The unbridled arrogance, the self-pity, the shameless, hysterical exaggeration are all hallmarks of the new breed of 'illiberal' populists—and when they think they are losing, they always up the ante. I'm thinking, of course, of President Trump's recent electoral defeat and his subsequent behaviour, writes Gwynne Dyer. Photograph courtesy of White House Flickr

tions would not be permitted even in cases of severe foetal abnormality where the child would die immediately after birth.

Poland already had tight restrictions on abortion rights, but this turned out to be the last straw. Millions of young people, and especially young women, filled the streets of Poland's cities in the biggest anti-government demonstrations since the fall of Communism in 1989. "I wish I could abort my government," said one popular banner.

The demos continued every day until a new lock-down was declared, and the PiS has now backed down, postponing the publication of the court's decision indefinitely. But something has definitely changed in Poland: support for Kaczynski has now plunged to only 30 per cent.



# Reckless populists

Populist leaders across the West seem to believe that somehow or other their fates are tied to Trump's. It shows in the growing recklessness of their behaviour, and in the frequency of their failures. Does this mean they are all destined to vanish in his wake? Probably not, but that would be nice.



Gwynne Dyer  
Global Affairs

LONDON, U.K.—“There is nothing wrong to participate in a sex party of any kind,” said a source in the European Parliament. “However, such kinds of meetings with many people are illegal under the coronavirus laws.”



József Szájer. He's a senior founding member of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party. Photograph courtesy Commons Wikimedia

To be specific, 25 naked men attending a loud party above a gay bar in central Brussels is clearly against Belgium's coronavirus laws, which allow no more than four people to meet indoors, so somebody called the police. At least three of those arrested were Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

It was particularly unfortunate for József Szájer. He's a senior founding member of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party, an ultra-nationalist, populist, authoritarian grouping that defends 'family values' and condemns homosexuality, but he was arrested while fleeing that orgy (with ecstasy pills in his backpack). Yet it's hard to feel much sympathy for him.

Szájer was a leading anti-gay agitator in Fidesz, and boasts that he personally drafted the changes to the Hungarian constitution that defined marriage as being between a man and a woman. He has now resigned as the leader of the Hungarian delegation to the European Parliament,

and will doubtless have to quit Fidesz too. But there's a bigger story here.

There was another scandal in Hungary last week, in which Szilárd Demeter, a senior cultural official linked to Fidesz, wrote an opinion piece for a pro-government outlet comparing Budapest-born American billionaire George Soros, a Jew who fled the Holocaust, to Adolf Hitler.

Demeter also called the European Union “George Soros's gas chamber,” and claimed that Hungary and Poland, the two Eastern European EU members with extreme right populist governments, are “the new Jews” of Europe. It's utterly unhinged—and yet it sounds vaguely familiar.

The unbridled arrogance, the self-pity, the shameless, hysterical exaggeration are all hallmarks of the new breed of 'illiberal' populists—and when they think they are losing, they always up

the ante. I'm thinking, of course, of Donald Trump's recent electoral defeat and his subsequent behaviour.

Could that extraordinary recklessness be a communicable disease? Could it somehow be spreading to Trump's acolytes overseas as well? Well, consider Poland.

The Catholic, ultra-conservative Law and Justice Party (PiS) has been in power in Poland since 2015, elected by the same older, less well-educated, non-urban, deeply religious coalition that backs populist take-overs elsewhere. And as in other populist-ruled countries, there has been a steady erosion both in human rights and in respect for democratic norms.

The PiS was re-elected just last year, and its leader, 71-year-old Jarosław Kaczyński, was widely supposed to have his finger on Poland's pulse. But it all fell apart when a PiS-appointed court declared in late October that abor-



The PiS was re-elected just last year, and its leader, 71-year-old Jarosław Kaczyński, was widely supposed to have his finger on Poland's pulse. Photograph courtesy Commons Wikimedia

Then there's President Jair Bolsonaro, or 'Tropical Trump,' whose favoured candidates were thrashed in all Brazil's big cities in local elections last month. Photograph courtesy of Commons Wikimedia

Then there's President Jair Bolsonaro, or 'Tropical Trump,' whose favoured candidates were thrashed in all Brazil's big cities in local elections last month, and the United Kingdom's Prime Minister Boris Johnson, dubbed 'Britain Trump' by The Donald, who is now trailing the opposition leader in the polls for the first time ever.

It's just straws in the wind at this stage, but the defeat of Trump, the populist standard-bearer, is creating a sense in other populist-ruled countries that the juggernaut has stalled.

The effect hasn't reached Asia yet—Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India and President Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines are still riding very high in the polls—but the main thing the populists had going for them was momentum, and in Western countries it seems to be dropping off.

Was there really a 'coat-tail effect'? Hard to say. After all, both the PiS in Poland and Fidesz in Hungary came to power before Trump was elected in late 2016. But populist leaders across the West seem to believe that somehow or other their fates are tied to Trump's. It shows in the growing recklessness of their behaviour, and in the frequency of their failures.

Does this mean they are all destined to vanish in his wake? Probably not, but that would be nice.

Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy (and Work)'.  
The Hill Times

# Chiune Sugihara

the embodiment of everlasting commitment to life

**Darius Skusevičius,  
Ambassador of Lithuania to Canada**

A well-known maxim from the Jewish Talmud says: "He who saves a Life saves the World."

This year we mark the 120th birth anniversary of the Japanese Consul Chiune Sugihara and the 80th anniversary of his mission in Kaunas, Lithuania.

Chiune Sugihara, The Righteous Among the Nations, was issuing transit visas, known as "Visas for Life", for Jews allowing them to flee to other countries through Japan and ultimately saving lives of 6 000 innocent people. "I may have to disobey the government, but if I don't, I would be disobeying God." - said Chiune Sugihara.

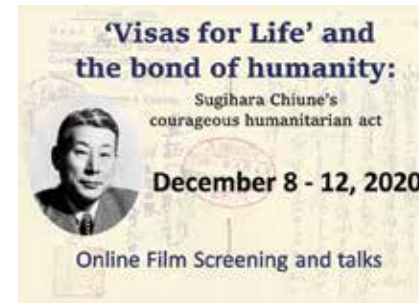
The Parliament of Lithuania declared 2020 the Year of Chiune Sugihara to mark these anniversaries and to once again reflect on his deed. Chiune Sugihara's name became the symbol of altruism, kindness, liberation and courage for many people across the world. He was, is and will always remain proof, that one man can make a change.

As the horrors of World War II become distant past, we should not allow ourselves to forget the tragedy of Holocaust. Lithuania have lost too many of its compatriots Jews who peacefully lived in the country more than six centuries. With them, we have lost a very important part of the entire Lithuanian historical and cultural heritage as well as a remarkable part of the European culture.

The story of Sugihara is very much relevant today, as ongoing global and regional conflicts have produced the biggest number of refugees since the World War II, reminding us of geopolitical changes that happened 8 decades ago.

On 8th-12th of December, Embassies of Japan, Israel and Lithuania, together with The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), Canadian Society for Yad Vashem and Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies (FSWC) organize virtual event – "Visas for Life" and the bond of humanity: Sugihara Chiune's courageous humanitarian act. During the event, you will hear life stories of Holocaust Survivors, movie "Persona Non Grata" will be screened. (Event link <https://visasforlife.info>).

Let's spread the life story of Chiune Sugihara as wide as we can. Holocaust education is of utmost importance. Let's do our best to make sure that the young generation knows, through example displayed by Chiune Sugihara, about the painful past and the everlasting value of humanistic decisions even in the most dark and difficult circumstances. Let's never forget and let's work for a change. All together. Today.



## Survivors' Stories

Hear from 'Sugihara visa' survivors and their descendants – Dr. Sylvia Smoller, Mr. Isaac Tarshansky, Dr. George Bluman and Ms. Karen and Laura Leon – and learn more about their lives and stories.



Visa Photo credit: George Bluman



## 'Visas for Life' and the bond of humanity:

Sugihara Chiune's courageous humanitarian act

**December 8 - 12, 2020**

Online Film Screening and talks

[www.visasforlife.info](http://www.visasforlife.info)



## Film Screening "Persona Non Grata"

The story of Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat, and his life leading up to and after his decision to issue over 2,000 visas to Jewish refugees in Kaunas, Lithuania, saving the lives of over 6,000 people. (Directed by Cellin Gluck, 2015, 139 min.)

Documentary film "Sugihara Survivors – Jewish and Japanese, Past and Future" will be also presented.



Canadian Jewish Advocacy



Embassy of Israel OTTAWA

EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN CANADA



## Opinion

# If we're going to spend a billion dollars a year managing our nuclear waste, let's do it right



The Ottawa River is a Canadian Heritage River that flows past Parliament Hill—surely we don't want to be the generation responsible for permanently contaminating it with radioactive waste, writes Lynn Jones. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Let's meet or exceed international standards and build secure storage facilities, well away from drinking water sources.



Lynn Jones

Opinion

**O**TTAWA—A contract quietly signed during the 2015 federal election campaign between Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) and a multinational consortium is costing Canadians billions of dollars and increasing risks to health from deadly radioactive pollutants.

The multi-billion-dollar contract was an attempt by the former federal Conservative government to reduce Canada's \$7.9-billion nuclear waste liability quickly and cheaply by creating a public-private partnership or GoCo (government-owned, contractor-operated) contract.

The GoCo contractor is called the "Canadian National Energy Alliance" (CNEA) even though the majority of its members are foreign corporations. It currently consists of Fluor and Jacobs, two Texas-based multinationals involved in nuclear weapons production, and SNC-Lavalin. Under the contract, the consortium assumed control over all Canada's federal nuclear facilities and radioactive wastes.

Since the GoCo contract was signed, costs to Canadian taxpayers appear to have almost quadrupled. According to AECL financial reports, its parliamentary appropriations rose from \$327-million in 2015 to \$1.3-billion (approved) for the year ending March 31, 2021. AECL's nuclear waste liabilities have not gone down, but rather appear to have increased by about \$200-million.

The Crown corporation, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, was supposed to oversee the contract on behalf of the Government of Canada, but may not have been in a position to do so. Serious problems at AECL were identified by the auditor general in a 2017 report. Problems included lack of a board chair, lack of a CEO, no board directors at all for 2016 and most of 2017, failure to hold public meetings and lack of experience with the GoCo model.

Since 2015, it appears that the GoCo contractor has spent hundreds of millions of our tax dollars promoting three radioactive waste facilities that we believe to be quick, cheap, and

sub-standard. They are: a giant, above-ground mound beside the Ottawa River at Chalk River, Ontario, for one million tonnes of mixed radioactive and non-radioactive wastes including plutonium, and entombment in concrete of two old nuclear reactors beside the Ottawa and Winnipeg rivers which provide drinking water to millions of Canadians.

More than two dozen submissions to the Impact Assessment Agency from ex-AECL nuclear waste experts including senior scientists and senior managers highlight serious concerns about the three projects and, in their view, say they fail to meet international safety standards.

The consortium's own studies show that all three facilities would leak radioactive contaminants into the environment and drinking water sources. Although the studies concluded that the radioactive leakage would not pose a significant risk, I beg to differ.

According to the consortium's draft environmental impact statement, it appears that the giant Chalk River mound is expected to eventually disintegrate, in a process referred to as "normal evolution." At that time, its radioactive and hazardous contents would flow out of the mound into surrounding wetlands that drain into the Ottawa River less than a kilometre away.

Hundreds of concerns about the three projects have been voiced by federal and provincial government departments, First Nations, civil society groups, 140 Quebec municipalities, nuclear

waste experts, and concerned citizens. And yet the projects continue to lumber forward and the consortium continues to receive almost a billion dollars a year from Canadian taxpayers.

Does anyone in government have their eyes on this ball? Did they notice when AECL renewed the GoCo contract early in the pandemic lockdown, 18 months before expiry, despite the recent conviction of consortium partner SNC-Lavalin on a charge of fraud? Are they concerned by the rapidly rising costs and substandard proposals?

Are they aware that the consortium is bringing thousands of truckloads of radioactive waste to Chalk River from other federal facilities in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec? The Chalk River Laboratories site is not a good place to consolidate federal nuclear waste either for temporary or for long-term storage. It is seismically active and adjacent to the Ottawa River, source of drinking water for Ottawa-Gatineau, Montreal, and many other communities.

With all of the problems currently facing the world, one might ask, "Why should Canadians care about this nuclear waste problem?"

Radioactive waste is the deadliest waste on the planet. Nuclear reactors create hundreds of dangerous radioactive substances that remain toxic to all life for hundreds of thousands of years. Exposure can cause serious chronic diseases, birth defects, and genetic damage that is passed

on to future generations. According to the U.S. National Research Council, there is no safe level of exposure to ionizing radiation released from nuclear reactors and nuclear waste facilities. And yet Canada is pouring billions of dollars into projects that will not keep these poisons out of our environment and drinking water.

Surely we can and must do better. The Ottawa River is a Canadian Heritage River that flows past Parliament Hill—surely we don't want to be the generation responsible for permanently contaminating it with radioactive waste.

If we are going to spend a billion dollars a year managing our nuclear waste, let's do it right. Let's meet or exceed international standards and build secure storage facilities, well away from drinking water sources. Let's make sure the wastes are carefully packaged and labelled and stored in monitored and retrievable conditions. This approach will create thousands of good, long-lasting careers in the nuclear waste and decommissioning field and show the world what top tier radioactive waste storage facilities look like.

Lynn Jones is a retired public health program manager now with Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County and Area, a non-governmental organization that has been working for the clean-up and prevention of radioactive pollution from the nuclear industry in the Ottawa Valley for 40+ years. She is based in Ottawa.

*The Hill Times*



The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau,  
Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Navdeep Singh Bains,  
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland,  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

The Honourable Catherine McKenna,  
Minister of Infrastructure and Communities

**Dear Prime Minister and Ministers,**

On behalf of the 1.4 million highly-trained and skilled Canadian construction workers, who generate 7.5% of Canada's GDP, the Canadian Construction Association wants to thank you and the Government of Canada for your efforts to address the needs of our members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you know, contractors and tradespeople quickly adapted practices to ensure the health and safety of all workers while continuing to build and maintain vital infrastructure. Due to a robust backlog of projects, our industry has weathered the pandemic storm better than most thus far and has the potential to absorb workers displaced from other harder hit industries.

However, with the hit to the economy, confidence has lowered causing private sector investments to decrease, and shrinking work opportunities for contractors and tradespeople alike, as project tendering dries up or is delayed. All provinces and territories - with the exception of the Northwest Territories (+3.7%) - saw their private and public expenditures in non-residential construction and machinery and equipment decrease; and Newfoundland and Labrador (-22.9%) and Alberta (-19.1%) were hit hardest. Nationally, construction employment is down 8.1 per cent from before the pandemic. We are deeply concerned that this trend will accelerate through 2021 without infrastructure stimulus.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, building strong community infrastructure is more important than ever, and we commend the Government for working to address the infrastructure gap and funding the Investing in Canada Plan. However, there continues to be delays and barriers to project approvals. Of some 65,000 projects approved since 2016, only 47,000 have actually started.

The CCA urges the Government to:

- Remove the barriers that exist between the federal government and certain provinces to flow existing infrastructure money;
- Declutter the administration and approval process so that projects that are approved can get started quicker;
- Consider increased investments in infrastructure until the economy is firmly on its way to economic recovery.

To continue to be a bright spot in the recovery, the construction industry needs your help. Together, we can help hundreds of thousands of people get back to work, we can strengthen our communities and build a better Canada.



**Mary Van Buren**  
President  
Canadian Construction Association

## Opinion



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured holding a press conference outside the Rideau Cottage on Nov. 24, 2020, in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

collaboration presented by the minority government. New Green Party Leader Annamie Paul is also a supporter of electoral reform according to her leadership platform.

While one path forward could be to advocate for the adoption of the special committee's 2016 recommendations, another option is to conduct a citizens' assembly on electoral reform. There is a peril inherent to allowing politicians to decide on the system through which they're hired; a citizens' assembly would remove politicians' self-interest from decisions on the future of our electoral system. Just like the 2016 special committee, this assembly would receive experts' advice and solicit broad citizen input. Furthermore, it would be more politically perilous for Trudeau to reject recommendations from citizens than to reject the recommendation of a committee process many Canadians aren't aware of and don't really understand.

But what's the point in conducting another deliberative process if, ultimately, Trudeau holds the power to ignore the recommendations? As part of activists' requests for a citizens' assembly on electoral reform, we should demand that Trudeau pre-commit to conducting a referendum on the result. But as we've learned from past referenda on electoral reform, they are doomed without a well-resourced and well-balanced communications strategy.

The referenda held following the Ontario and British Columbia citizens' assemblies on electoral reform failed in part due to a lack of public connectivity to the assembly's deliberative process and lack of comprehension of the assemblies' recommendations. The public simply doesn't benefit from the same level of expert information that assembly participants do. Thus, an effective communications plan is necessary to bring the information shared within the assembly to the public. Without this, a referendum on electoral reform is vulnerable to opponents exaggerating risks of leaving first past the post behind.

In the aforementioned September 2020 Léger poll, 80 per cent of respondents supported a citizens' assembly on electoral reform. If we see this implemented, advocates for proportional representation should stay vigilant of attempts by Trudeau to undermine the process or attempts to dodge the results. He's done it before, after all.

Ultimately, political pressure is the most effective tool we have—and this is especially true within a minority government situation. Citizens should continue to contact their MPs to advocate for proportional representation, and the parties that provide legislative support to the Liberals should make their support conditional on the advancement of electoral reform. This is one of the best opportunities to advance electoral reform we've had in recent memory—so let's make the most of it.

*Megan Mattes is a volunteer with Fair Vote Canada and a recent master of public policy graduate from the Munk School at the University of Toronto. Follow her on Twitter at @meganjmattes*  
*The Hill Times*

# Time to put some heat on Trudeau to advance electoral reform

Political pressure is the most effective tool we have—and this is especially true within a minority government situation.



Megan Mattes

Opinion

Four years ago this week, the Special Committee on Electoral Reform published its final report. Following months of citizen and expert input, the committee's report recommended the implementation of a proportional vot-

ing system for federal elections. But this key 2015 campaign trail promise was not to be kept; Justin Trudeau ignored the report, and months later through a cabinet shuffle, removed electoral reform from the mandate of the new minister for democratic institutions. Ignoring the committee's citizen- and expert-informed recommendation, he stated that "a clear preference for a new electoral system, let alone a consensus, [had] not emerged." Alas, 2015 was not to be the last election conducted under first past the post.

But circumstances have shifted. Now with only a minority government, there is room for other parties to apply pressure. With enough focused effort from both citizens and the parties that support electoral reform, there may be a chance to pressure Trudeau to correct his mistake.

## Support for electoral reform has grown

While 2016 polling data may provide Trudeau with some political cover for his broken promise, the same cannot be said about

recent numbers. Post-election 2019 polling from the Angus Reid Institute shows majority support for proportional representation among Canadians at 68 per cent—up from 47 per cent in 2016. Furthermore, the most significant spikes in support are among the parties that received fewer seats than their vote shares should merit—the Conservatives, NDP, and Greens—while we see smaller increases in support among parties who benefited from first past the post this past election.

Polling on support for electoral reform can be dodgy. Responses can be politically motivated: for example, an individual's response could be biased towards supporting the system that would benefit their preferred party. This may explain the only modest leap in support for proportional representation among supporters of the Bloc and Liberals. Despite this, the data shows that among supporters of every party, the majority is in favour of proportional representation. This is a clear demonstration of preference for proportional representation, and this time around Trudeau can't claim otherwise.

More recent polling by Léger from September 2020 shows even higher support than in 2019 with 76 per cent of respondents supporting the move to a more proportional voting system. Support from every party's voters measures above 70 per cent: support among Conservative voters was 72 per cent, and among Liberal voters, 75 per cent.

## Finding a path forward

Though the door to electoral reform was slammed shut in 2016, the minority government we now find ourselves under has cracked open that door. While Trudeau may continue to ignore resounding public support for a proportional voting system, the other parties in Parliament can seize this as an opportunity to prove to voters that they prioritize Canada's democracy over party interests.

Recent developments show promise on this front. In a recent letter to Trudeau, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh reaffirmed his support for electoral reform, and remarked on the opportunity for

# Canada can't afford not to be in space

Every dollar invested in space by the Canadian government has a strong multiplier effect producing roughly twice the impact. Investments in space have an immediate effect—they are rocket fuel for Canada's economic recovery.



Mike Greenley

Opinion

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. Necessity is the mother of invention. We've all seen those aphorisms in action lately, from front-line workers of all kinds rolling up their sleeves and getting the job done, to engineers and scientists (and policy-makers) applying their



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured Aug. 9, 2018, visiting MDA's Montreal facility to see the RADARSAT Constellation Mission satellites before they launched. The global space market is worth more than USD\$420-billion today; Morgan Stanley forecasts this market will grow to USD\$1-trillion per year by 2040. Canada's well-positioned to lead in that future, if we keep our hand in, writes Mike Greenley. *Photograph courtesy of MDA*

knowledge and creativity to solve the problems of the pandemic. New ventilators? Check. New vaccines and drug therapies? Check. New economic support policies? Check. For the good of their fellow citizens, and the country.

The space sector is certainly no stranger to those aphorisms, no stranger to engineers and scientists and policy-makers applying their knowledge to finding needed solutions.

Tenacity and ingenuity were called for when Canada needed long-distance communications—

a top priority for a country with Canada's geography—and the engineers and scientists and policy-makers decided, at the outset of the space race, that a satellite might just be the solution. Their ingenuity catapulted us into space with the big guys. Canada was the third country in space, the first to have a satellite telecommunications system, and first to have an operational and commercially focused radar remote sensing system. Today, we have a 60-year legacy of leadership in the most forward-looking

industry there is. Indeed, thanks to the strategic choices made back then, and along the way, Canada is now a world leader in three key areas—satellite communications, Earth observation (RADARSAT), and space robotics (Canadarm). Because in space, the government's role is paramount—as an investor, owner, regulator, and anchor customer.

People sometimes ask me how Canada can afford to be in space when there are so many problems that need our attention here

on Earth, especially in light of the global pandemic. That's when I realize that those of us working in this industry haven't done a good enough job of explaining how essential space is to our everyday lives—did you know that space touches the lives of Canadians 20 to 30 times a day? It provides the silent, but critical infrastructure for everything from television, weather predictions, monitoring climate change, the internet and wireless communications, finance, agriculture, shipping, to ground and air traffic management, and so much more. (Can you imagine living through this pandemic without high-speed internet to power your Zoom calls, facilitate your doom-scrolling and fuel your binge streaming?)

And, maybe more importantly, we haven't done a good job of explaining just how important being a leader in space is going to be to Canada's future, both our immediate future (the economic recovery), and longer term, as Canada positions itself for future prosperity and continued high quality of life.

In terms of the economic recovery, there's a school of thought that says, 'Let's look back to how things were and try to repair pandemic ravages to our economy by directing money where the damage is worst.' There is another school of thought that says, 'Let's turn this epic challenge into an opportunity for a reset and build back better, charting a path to

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# On the radar: polytechnics delivering 21st century talent for Canada's aerospace sector

Directing more government dollars at applied research is not only good for innovation and productivity, it also ensures we have a healthy supply of talent, enabled with the most up-to-date skills and knowledge at the fingertips of Canada's aerospace sector.



Daniel Komesch

Opinion

Aerospace is an integral and strategic sector for Canada. Not only does it add high-value jobs, innovation intensity—with beneficial spill-over effects—and billions in GDP to our economy, it's also key to protecting our borders, surveilling the North, putting Canadians in space, and potentially, delivering COVID-19 testing kits via unmanned aerial

vehicles to remote regions of the country.

Canada needs a strong aerospace sector and aerospace needs Canadian talent.

Canada's polytechnics are key partners in the delivery of a skilled talent pipeline for the aerospace sector. Institutions like the British Columbia Institute for Technology, Saskatchewan Polytechnic and Seneca College produce people across the whole value chain—innovation-enabled talent performing R&D, skilled tradespeople manufacturing and repairing parts, technicians and technologists improving and maintaining aircrafts, pilots and sales and marketing specialists, among others.

There are, however, challenges recruiting talent through much of the aerospace supply chain. To

ensure Canada's aerospace sector continues to thrive, what can we do?

First, we need to better promote the skilled trades as viable career options.

One of the most significant talent shortages we are facing in Canada generally, but in aerospace specifically, are skilled tradespeople. Part of this challenge relates to perceptions. In Canada, the skilled trades are often viewed as back-up, rather than backbone careers, and young people are encouraged to pursue other routes, which is why many never try the trades until later in life.

The average age of newly registering apprentices is 27 for men and 28 for women. To create an efficient talent pipeline for the aerospace sector, career navigation is key and part of getting the

right people to the right jobs is changing perceptions.

It's time for Canadians to recognize that there is plenty of space for our best and brightest on the shop floor and to encourage our young talent to take on a vocational education.

Second, we need to enable more young people to participate in work-integrated learning.

Co-ops, internships, apprenticeships and the like provide young people with real world experience in the sector, allowing them to enter the workforce and hit the ground running—or, perhaps, take to the air flying—and are necessary to creating a more efficient talent pipeline.

However, work-integrated learning opportunities aren't as widely available across the sector as they could be. Challenges include low employer awareness about how to bring students onboard and the supports that are available to them, as well as the difficulty of aligning work terms with academic calendars.

The federal government has made significant investments in work-integrated learning recently and through investments from the federal government, the Business Higher Education Roundtable has signed an agreement with the Ca-

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## Opinion

# Bill C-7 is a matter of life and death for persons with disabilities

Let's take our time debating this issue and coming to the right conclusion. For persons with disabilities, this is literally a matter of life and death.



Nicolas Rouleau

Opinion

By cavalierly hurrying through Parliament and limiting debate on legislation to expand access to assisted death in Canada (Bill C-7), the Canadian government is fast-tracking the deaths of persons with disabilities.

Up until now, medical assistance in dying (MAiD) has been limited to those at the

Justice Minister and Attorney General David Lametti, pictured on the Hill on Nov. 26, 2020, is the minister responsible for Bill C-7. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



end of their lives. Similar to palliative care and other medical end-of-life options, the Canadian MAiD regime aims to safeguard the principle of equality by ensuring that all dying Canadians have an option for a peaceful and painless death. A death without excruciating suffering is something that most Canadians, including those with disabilities, want to take for granted. For context, Canada's end-of-life MAiD regime is more permissive than in virtually any other country.

Beyond the end-of-life context, there are no other circumstances where the government promotes, encourages, enables, accepts, tolerates or is otherwise involved in the deaths of its citizens. This, too, is equality-affirming. The government signals that the lives of all individuals are essential—that they have equal value and an equal ability to enrich the Canadian fabric.

Through Bill C-7, however, the government is seeking to expand MAiD beyond “end-of-life circumstances” for Canadians with grievous and irremediable illnesses and disabilities whose suffering is intolerable to them. Put coarsely, the government will enable the deaths of persons with disabilities in circumstances where their life expectancy is otherwise open-ended. It is taking this unprecedented step solely on the basis of one non-binding trial court decision that it has refused to appeal.

No other Canadian group, no matter the suffering of its individuals, is considered expendable and offered MAiD by the government because of its personal characteristics. It would be barbaric for the government to offer MAiD exclusively to any other marginalized minority, such as persons of Indigenous descent, whose intolerable suffering is caused by historical institutional and social failures. Why should it be less barbaric to offer MAiD exclusively to persons with disabilities, whose suffering disproportionately results from a lack of social assistance and institutional support?

For this reason, disability-rights organizations are essentially unanimous in their

opposition to Bill C-7. Yes, some individuals with disabilities suffer; some would request access to MAiD if offered the opportunity. But so would many other individuals in marginalized groups. This doesn't mean the government should target these groups as recipients of MAiD instead of addressing the underlying structural factors causing their suffering. On the whole, the empirical evidence confirms that if provided appropriate support, the lives of persons with disabilities are as rich and happy as those of any other individuals.

By expanding MAiD for Canadians with disabilities (but not for other Canadians), the government sends the powerful and discriminatory message that Canadians with disabilities—and only these Canadians—are unessential. By rushing the debate on MAiD, the government sends the further message that it doesn't care.

The government's reckless approach will in turn fuel the existing stereotypes that the lives of persons with disabilities have less value than the lives of others, that persons with disabilities are better off dead, that they are a burden on the state and their loved ones, and that they have a lousy quality of life. Already, these stereotypes disproportionately lead persons with disabilities to commit suicide, just as similarly pernicious stereotypes lead other minorities to do so.

If adopted, Bill C-7 will discriminate against persons with disabilities under section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and bring Canada in conflict with its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is not a desirable outcome.

Let's take our time debating this issue and coming to the right conclusion. For persons with disabilities, this is literally a matter of life and death.

*Nicolas Rouleau is a constitutional and appellate lawyer who has represented Inclusion Canada and the Council for Canadians with Disabilities.*

*The Hill Times*

# ENERGY

## — POLICY BRIEFING —

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## Energy Policy Briefing

# Experts and parliamentarians look ahead to SMR action plan to be released in near future

Natural Resources parliamentary secretary Paul Lefebvre confirmed on Nov. 18 that the action plan will be delayed.

BY AIDAN CHAMANDY

When Seamus O'Regan was sworn in as minister of natural resources on Nov. 20, 2019, his mandate letter didn't explicitly mention nuclear energy, although it did use language like "clean technology." In the time since, he's clearly communicated his intention to make nuclear a big part of Canada's clean energy future.

"He's been more active on this file than previous ministers," said Duane Bratt, a political science professor at Mount Royal University who specializes in nuclear policy. Prof. Bratt said that was partially due to the contentious pipelines debates that plagued former natural resources minister Amarjeet Sohi's tenure as minister.

"Much of the pipeline decisions have already been made, now it's just a matter of the follow-through. That's why O'Regan can look at new types of initiatives," he said.

At the Canadian Nuclear Association's annual conference in Ottawa on Feb. 27, Mr. O'Regan's keynote speech extolled the virtues of nuclear energy and said it was the time to put it "front and centre."

"This is nuclear's moment. This is your moment to shape the next wave of nuclear technology, and move to the front lines in the battle against climate change and the plan to get Canada to net zero by 2050," Mr. O'Regan said in his speech.

Later in the speech, he teased an "action plan" that was set to be

released this fall on how Canada can lead the world in developing small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs).

At a virtual conference on Nov. 18, natural resources parliamentary secretary Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Ont.) confirmed the plan will be delayed because it is "too important to be rushed" but that it should be out soon.

"We're still putting the finishing touches on it," Mr. Lefebvre said.

SMRs are smaller than conventional reactors and can be manufactured far from the intended location, and then be transported and assembled on site. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) defines them as being able to generate around 300 megawatts. Large reactors like those in Bruce, Darlington, and Pickering generate well over 1,000 megawatts each, according to the Canada Energy Regulator. The 2018 SMR Roadmap, a document released by Natural Resources Canada intended to help guide SMR development in Canada, said the government expects SMRs to be operational by the late 2020s.

As fall turns to winter, some experts and parliamentarians said they're eager for the action plan's release to see how the government plans to support SMR development in a global environment that is getting increasingly competitive, as other countries like the U.K. outline multi-million dollar plans for SMRs in their jurisdictions. Others, however, are less bullish on the action plan because they're skeptical of the nascent technology and the long timelines when Canada is trying to slash greenhouse gas emissions in the near-term.

The action plan is, in part, supposed off build off the work done in the 2018 Roadmap.

That document outlined cases in which they see SMRs being able to sustainably generate power in remote communities, on heavy industrial sites, in certain



Canada's federal Natural Resources Minister Seamus O'Regan, pictured in 2019 on the Hill. At the Canadian Nuclear Association's annual conference in Ottawa on Feb. 27, 2020, Mr. O'Regan's keynote speech extolled the virtues of nuclear energy and said it was the time to put it 'front and centre.' *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Indigenous communities, and in regular on-grid situations.

Marla Orenstein, director of the natural resources centre at the Canada West Foundation, said she's curious to see what the government envisions as the "leading-edge cases" for the new technology.

"Some of the industrial uses, especially in remote areas, seem pretty easy to me," she said.

She said she isn't sure remote communities will be as keen on the prospects.

"I haven't seen any remote rural communities come forward with their hands up to say 'Yeah, we really want nuclear power here'," she said. "I'm curious to see if any progress has been made there."

For Prof. Bratt one of the key things to watch in the action plan will be whether it is announced alongside an SMR prototype.

"Really what we need to see is an actual constructed reactor," he said.

He pointed to a \$20-million investment in Terrestrial Energy's molten salt SMR from the Strategic Innovation Fund announced by Innovation, Science and Industry Minister Navdeep Bains (Mississauga Malton, Ont.) on Oct. 15 as a potential hint for

which type of SMR the government sees as most promising for an early deployment.

Prof. Bratt also referred to an Oct. 6 announcement from Ontario Power Generation (OPG) that the Crown corporation will work alongside three SMR developers, including Terrestrial, to advance the engineering and design work needed to actualize the technology. He said the work OPG has done could position it as the first host site for an SMR in Canada.

Richard Sexton, president and CEO of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL), a federal Crown corporation and owner of Canada's largest nuclear science and technology laboratory in Chalk River, Ont., said he's "very anxious to see the details of the action plan" and that he expects AECL to play a role in SMR development and deployment.

He said given the Chalk River lab's experience in developing the CANDU reactors and the significant "capability embedded in our lab," that he expects AECL to play a role in the future of SMRs in Canada. AECL and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL) have been working together to develop a process to establish an SMR demonstration project on an AECL owned site, such as Chalk River.

Mr. Sexton touted a project host agreement they have with Global First Power for a gas-cooled SMR. The agreement allows Global First Power to do some early work to determine on which site the reactor would eventually be housed, he said.

"Global First Power is the most mature project SMR project in Canada. They're the furthest along in the regulatory and environmental impact process. Their technology is quite mature," he said.

Mr. Sexton said Canada could be a world leader in exporting SMR technology to countries like the U.K. that are also interested in developing them. The U.K. recently unveiled a CAD \$666-million advanced nuclear technology fund as part of the "Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution" that will invest up to CAD \$372-million in SMRs.

Axel Meisen, a professor emeritus of chemical and biologi-

cal engineering at the University of British Columbia and nuclear policy expert who was part of the consultations that led to the 2018 SMR Roadmap, said Canada's export potential is likely highest in the early days of SMRs.

"Can Canada expect to become a global commercial supplier of SMRs? I find that difficult to imagine on a very large scale, given the fact that other countries are all involved in the development of SMRs," he said. "We may become one of the early suppliers, we might build the first five or 10."

Mr. Meisen stressed the need for the action plan to deal with that possibility and the "number of other things that have to come together to make SMRs viable, acceptable, and successful."

"There are the benefits, the unknowns, and the drawbacks. And I think the action plan will and should look at all three of these aspects," he said.

One of the main drawbacks, according to NDP MP Richard Cannings (South Okanagan-West Kootenay, B.C.), his party's natural resources critic, is the time it will take for SMRs to operate and how the government appears to be selling them as a way to get Indigenous communities off diesel.

"There are other technologies that are available right now wind, solar, biofuels, that can meet their energy needs," he said.

In December 2018, a Special Chiefs Assembly of the Assembly of First Nations passed a unanimous resolution opposing SMR development and demanding that the federal and Ontario government stop funding SMR development. Their concerns largely revolved around nuclear waste management.

"What concerned me most was the minister's real unbridled enthusiasm for it. I'm hoping that his ministry realizes that there are better ways to do things right now. Let's concentrate on them," Mr. Cannings said.

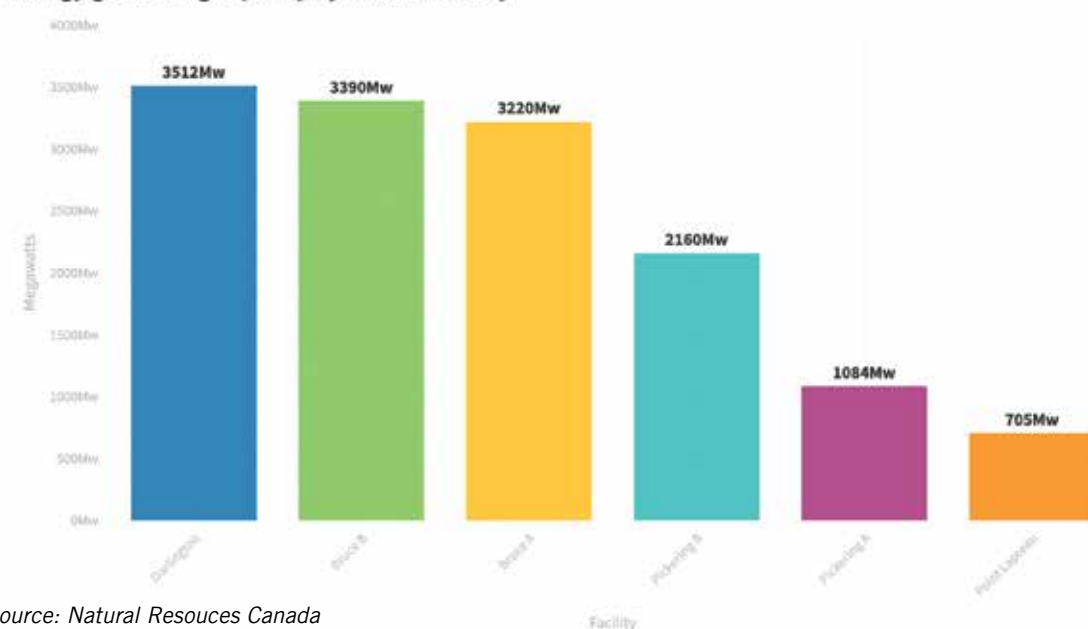
Another concern raised by Mark Winfield, professor of environmental studies at York University, is the possibility that SMRs won't be captured under the Impact Assessment Act (IAA). The IAA potentially exempts SMRs that generate less than 200 megawatts and are not located on an existing nuclear site from undergoing an impact assessment.

Conservative MP Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, Alta.), his party's natural resources critic, said he doesn't have specific expectations around the action plan, and that his primary concern in ensuring Canada has "good choices for its future energy portfolio needs."

He said SMRs could potentially be used as a cheaper option to power remote communities than connecting them to a regular power grid.

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The Hill Times

Energy generating capacity by nuclear facility



Source: Natural Resources Canada

# Canada Energy Regulator report shows a need for new climate scenario planning

The CER report falls short in its goal of exploring a range of possible futures and misses major potential shifts in fuel and energy demand that have important economic and policy implications for Canada.



Sara Hastings-Simon

Opinion

The recently released Energy Future 2020 report (EF2020) from the Canada Energy Regulator (CER) is the latest long-term energy outlook that builds on the history of projections published by the precursor to the CER, the National Energy Board, since 1967. As the CER explains the goal of the modelling exercise is to “explore how possible energy futures might unfold for Canadians over the long term.”

However, in a world that is seeing an increasing pace of change in energy trends, the EF2020 falls short in its goal of exploring a range of possible futures. Focusing on a primary “evolving” scenario, with a core premise “that action to reduce the GHG intensity of our energy system continues to increase at a pace similar to recent history, in both Canada and the world” misses key dynamics that could play out in a world that is poised to move more quickly following the pandemic. The qualitative discussion of “towards net zero” attempts to close that gap but misses major potential shifts in fuel and energy demand that have important economic and policy implications for Canada.

In order to achieve their goals of informing decisions there must be a change in future scenario modelling and long-term energy outlooks that include a better link to the increasing pace of global change. Failure to do so paints a one-sided picture that creates significant risk when used as an input to decision making.

The nature of the status quo bias can be seen in the oil demand scenarios. Oil production in Canada is part of a global market that is changing rapidly. The past year has seen asset write-downs across the majors, a drop in spending plans from even from the most bullish counter cyclical spenders such as Exxon and speculation of peak production in the rear view mirror from international majors such as Shell. Scenarios in BP’s Energy Outlook published in September reflect these trends with demand for oil falling dramatically in all but the business as usual (BAU) scenario.

A comparison of Canadian oil production in the EF2020 scenarios with international projections shows a significant gap in the range of global oil demand futures considered between the Canadian modelling and global scenarios.

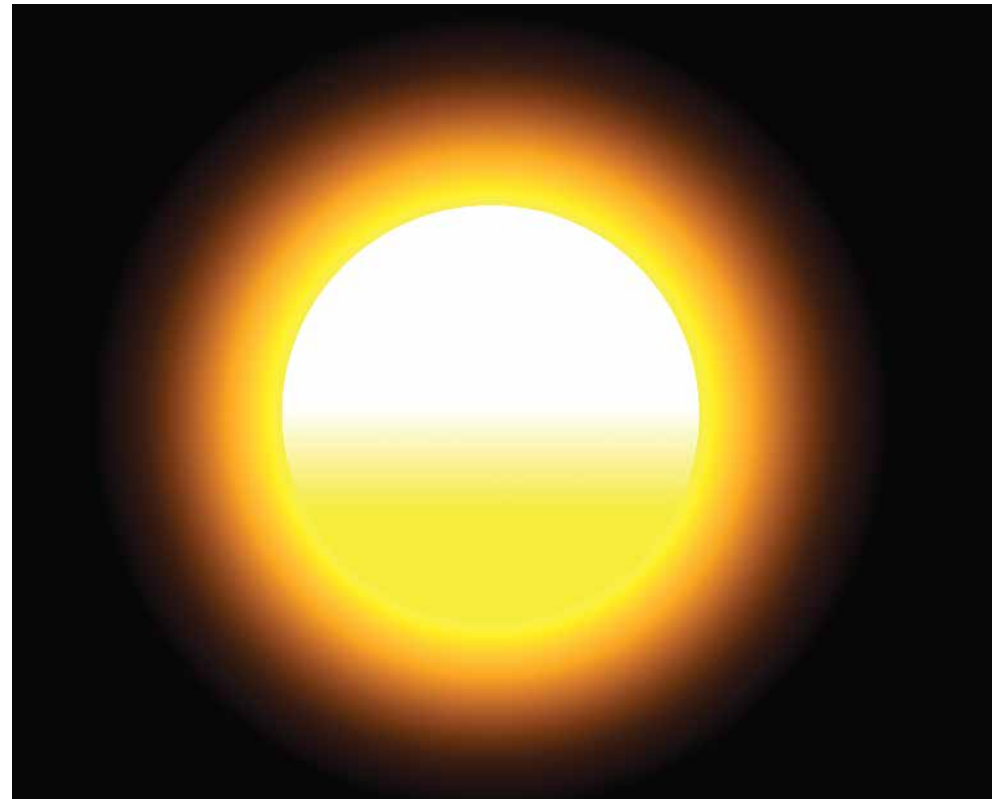
Focusing on the “Evolving” scenario, crude oil production in Canada peaks in 2039 at just over 5.8 MMb/d, an increase of 20 per cent from 2019 to 2040 before leveling off and falling slightly to 5.3 MMb/d by 2050. In situ bitumen production grows 37 per cent over the projection period with significant growth coming from expansions to existing facilities (making up 15 per cent of total oil sands production by 2050) however some growth comes from new in situ facilities.

The “Evolving” is consistent with BP’s BAU scenario which BP describes as one where “government policies, technologies and social preferences continue to evolve in a manner and speed seen over the recent past.” Canadian oil market share rises slightly from five per cent of global production to six per cent.

However in the more ambitious “Rapid” and “Net Zero” scenarios from BP, where climate action accelerates, maintaining the oil production growth in the CER “Evolving” scenario implies a significant market share increase for Canadian oil, doubling to 10 per cent or more than tripling to 16 per cent, respectively, by 2050. Maintaining a fixed market share would imply Canadian production of only 2.5 and 1.5 MMb/day in 2050 as compared to the 5.3 MMb/day in the “Evolving” case.

The qualitative “towards net zero” scenario in EF2020 is largely focused on approaches to reduce emissions from oil production as opposed to examining how production increases might fail to materialize in a world using significantly less oil.

Forecasting a changing future is difficult—capturing and modelling changes to trends is much harder than projecting history forwards and status quo bias enters into what we view as purely analytical models. This challenge is certainly not unique to CER. The International Energy Agency World Energy Outlook scenarios saw over a decade of dramatically undershooting actual solar photovoltaic growth before finally declaring solar as “king” in 2020. Electricity demand growth projections from the North American Electric



The International Energy Agency World Energy Outlook scenarios saw over a decade of dramatically undershooting actual solar photovoltaic growth before finally declaring solar as ‘king’ in 2020. Image courtesy of Pixabay

Reliability Council overshot actual growth starting in the 1970s. Nor is the issue only seen in energy modelling—rising interest rates that failed to materialize underpin the federal budget for more than two decades.

The comparisons of market share presented here are a simple exercise and they shouldn’t be taken as proof of a different trajectory for Canadian oil production. Rather they do make a compelling case for a more detailed treatment of potential alternative futures for Canadian oil production, and a review of scenario modelling approaches more generally.


In the case of oil production more sophisticated modelling could explore the impact of declining rates for existing production, as well as distribution of spending for new development. It is these kinds of approaches that expand the scenario space, along with more complete modelling of a net zero future that should be included in future outlooks.

Sara Hastings-Simon is a senior researcher at the Payne Institute for Public Policy at the Colorado School of Mines, a research fellow at the University of Calgary, and the co-host of the Energy vs Climate podcast.


The Hill Times

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## Energy Policy Briefing

# Canada is on the cusp of a historical energy transformation, let's do it

Government stimulus investments need to support and accelerate Canada's green transition to a net-zero economy by changing the ways in which Canada produces and consumes energy by investing in deep retrofits and clean energy technology.



Green Party Leader Annamie Paul

*Opinion*

The year 2020 is expected to be the largest and most abrupt economic contraction since the Great Depression. The cautious expectation is that, once a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes widely available, the economy can enter a quick rebuilding phase. In the months to come, the federal government will be seeking to kick-start Canada's economic recovery, with levels of investment not seen since WWII. Whenever Canada is ready to begin to invest in economic recovery, that recovery needs to be green. That is, government stimulus investments need to support and accelerate Canada's green transition to a net-zero economy by changing the ways in which Canada produces and consumes energy by investing in deep retrofits and clean energy technology.

### Retrofitting buildings: a perfect fit for the climate and the economy

Deep retrofits involve an extensive overhaul of building systems that save up to 60 percent in energy costs. Given that buildings account for up to 14 per cent of GHG emissions in Canada, there is consensus that Canada's Nationally Determined Contribution can only be reached through deep retrofits that reduce the emissions of the millions of square feet of existing institutional, commercial, and residential buildings across the country.

There are few activities that hold so much potential for reduc-



Canada has long been an energy leader and can continue to be so in both respects if we make that decision now and plan for it to be an integral part of our post COVID-19 pandemic recovery, writes Green Leader Annamie Paul. *Pixabay*

ing Canada's GHG emissions, while creating jobs and boosting our economy, as building retrofits. However, despite the compelling environmental and economic case, the Canadian retrofit market is not robust, and industry reports underinvestment in the retrofit of existing building stock. For Canada's private retrofit market to develop more rapidly, the federal government should create an ambitious and clear framework for increasing energy and emissions performance and support the development of a strong retrofit economy where the market also becomes a key partner in transforming Canada's built environment.

Canada has a chance to leap ahead in this area and to reap the environmental advantages and the gains in international competitiveness a retrofit economy will bring.

### Sparking our economy through a national renewable energy electricity grid

The Green Party of Canada has called for ensuring 100 percent of Canadian electricity is produced from renewable sources by 2030. A national non-emitting electricity

grid would be a productivity-enhancing infrastructure project and provide much-needed stimulus to help Canada's economy recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. It would help Canada to meet its target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2050 and support increased use of electricity in transportation, buildings, and industry in a carbon-neutral way.

As we seek to jumpstart the economy, there may be no better opportunity than the coming months for provincial, territorial and federal governments to invest in a national electrical grid strategy that would see the creation of interprovincial power lines to optimize our electricity system. This would include building connections between BC and Alberta, eastern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and western Ontario, upgrading connections between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and enabling renewable electricity to flow across provincial and territorial boundaries.

### Renewing our economy with investments in clean-tech energy

Clean-tech is the sector of the economy focused on developing green innovations such as renew-

able energy systems. It has been described as the biggest economic opportunity of our lifetime.

In the clean-tech sector, clean energy investment is attractive in both the short and the long run. Clean energy creates more jobs than those lost in fossil fuels, and those jobs are widely available to workers without college degrees. In the U.S., a clean-energy job has been shown to equal an eight per cent to 19 per cent increase in income, and 45 per cent of all workers in clean energy production have a high school diploma, while still receiving higher wages than similarly educated peers in other industries. Renewable energy generates more jobs in the short run, when jobs are scarce, such as in a recession, and for every \$1-million in spending in renewables infrastructure 7.49 full-time jobs are generated versus the 2.65 jobs from investment in fossil fuels.

Canada has the opportunity to take a substantial share of the clean-tech sector. We have some important advantages, as Canada is home to one of the world's cleanest electricity grids, has 12 of the 2019 clean-tech 100 companies and has a highly skilled engineering and IT workforce—including the skilled workers in our traditional energy sector—that

can fully leverage the promise of the clean-tech economy. There is no better time to ramp up our investments in R & D in this sector.

The renewable energy sector holds tremendous promise in helping to facilitate a just transition for workers in the fossil-fuel sector in Canada. Our commitment must be to leave communities and livelihoods whole as we move away from fossil fuels. Investing public funds in a sector that holds the possibility of high-paying jobs that can quickly be taken up by oil and gas workers, using their existing skills, could be key to avoiding mass displacement. If we invest wisely, oil and gas-dependent provinces can leverage their energy sector expertise to capitalize on a variety of new opportunities in markets like geothermal, lithium and hydrogen among many others.

Canada is on the cusp of a historical energy transformation, both in terms of the energy we produce and the energy we consume. Canada has long been an energy leader and can continue to be so in both respects if we make that decision now and plan for it to be an integral part of our post COVID-19 pandemic recovery.

Annamie Paul is the leader of the Green Party of Canada  
*The Hill Times*



# Policy Briefing Energy



We need a plan, a national energy strategy reboot that leads to collaborative government, business, and consumer decision-making, writes Roger Francis. Photograph courtesy of Pixabay

consumption. Environmental performance for energy consumers stopped improving in 2015 and has since deteriorated. Water consumption has increased and the volume of GHGs emitted by energy consumers remains concerning.

And finally, our society theme includes indicators for opportunity, compensation, contribution to society, and affordability. Since 2010, this theme has improved by 21 per cent. Energy affordability has improved over the past decade. However, not all Canadians enjoy easy access to low-cost or clean energy. Aging diesel generators in remote communities, for example, negatively impact community health, the environment, and economic prospects. Placing consumers at the centre of the transition to a clean energy economy should be a key priority of a national energy system strategy.

Energy is transformative. A current national energy system strategy should fuel that transformation.

Just like our personal financial health, our energy system impacts all aspects of life in Canada. Energy production and consumption are at the epicentre of the disruptive changes occurring in our economy, environment and society. Our indicators illustrate a system undergoing transformation.

But we need a plan—a national energy strategy reboot that leads to collaborative government, business, and consumer decision-making. Strategy is an important part of transitioning to a clean-energy growth economy and a sustainable future. A national strategy mechanism needs to track the impact of these decisions, so that ultimately our “energy bank” thrives.

Roger Francis is the director of sustainability at the Conference Board of Canada. *The Hill Times*

## The power behind transition: a national energy system strategy

The Canadian Energy Strategy of 2015 is not up to date with the times and is in need of a reset.



Roger Francis

Opinion

Canada is an energy bank. We need to treat it like one. We require an energy system strategy that would allow Canada to lead (not follow) market opportunities and leverage our capital to transition to a low carbon future. An energy system strategy will allow us to better monitor and achieve our transition.

Energy is more than developing energy products like oil, natural gas, hydro, nuclear, wind, solar, tidal, biofuel, hydrogen, wood, coal, and geothermal. Energy is also about users. Transportation, housing, businesses, affordability, urban and rural centres, and financial markets all contribute to consumption. Combined, producers and consumers make up Canada’s energy system, and it is undergoing a dramatic evolution, often in a discordant way.

Banks do not like discordant environments. This is why we need an energy system strategy that reflects and balances the needs of the different stakeholders. A national energy system strategy must support Canada’s diverse energy resource base, provincial energy interests, and support ev-

ery Canadian’s need for accessible, secure, and affordable energy to fuel daily life.

The Canadian Energy Strategy of 2015, which was built from the collaboration of the provinces and territories through the Council of the Federation, was a start. However, given the many changes in the energy system over the past five years it needs a reset.

The Centre for a Clean Energy Growth Economy (CEGE) at the Conference Board of Canada has created an interactive dashboard monitoring the energy system’s progress towards achieving a clean energy growth economy. By aggregating findings from 14 indicators we define how far the energy system has progressed across three themes of economy, environment, and society. Each theme and indicator can be filtered between producers and consumers, and by reference period.

The good news is Canada is moving in the right direction. We have experienced an average 18 per cent improvement across the indicators since 2010. Pricing carbon emissions, adopting tough regulation and investing in innovative technology have all helped drive sustainable outcomes. Weak economic performance for energy producers, while slowing their overall transition, has not stopped their contribution to improvement.

Indicators tracking value add, investments in capacity, global reach, operating environment, and growth prospects comprise our economic performance theme. Since 2010, in aggregate, this theme has seen an improvement of 31 per cent despite challenges in the energy sector. GHG emissions and economic value add are decoupling rather than marching in tandem. As technology and environmental practices improve, firms are increasing output and decreasing associated emissions and impacts. Sustaining this trend is essential to achieving balanced, inclusive growth.

The environment theme monitors greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution,

deforestation, energy use, and water use. Since 2010, this theme has improved by only four per cent. Deforestation rates are falling, and air quality is improving as coal fades from the energy mix, but significant work remains to be done. Energy producers are on a positive course as GHG emissions and energy intensity are both down, and the energy mix is increasingly renewable. The biggest challenge remains

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## Energy Policy Briefing



Canada's federal Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, pictured Feb. 24, 2020, on the Hill. The federal government's newly proposed climate change legislation, Bill C-12, would only establish emission reduction targets for 2030 and beyond, and although requiring planning and reporting, does little to advance the achievement of what targets might be set. The government's initiative on low-carbon fuel standards seems to be faltering, writes Mark Winfield. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# Climate and shifting markets define energy challenges for Canada

Whether Canada's leaders will have the courage and capacity to engage in tough conversations ahead remains an open question. Canada's economic and environmental future depends on their choices.



Mark Winfield

Opinion

The state of energy policy in Canada, as it relates to fossil fuels, is defined by two major

issues: the stalling out, with the possible exception of Quebec, of meaningful progress on climate change; and distress in the Alberta oil and gas sector, a product of weak demand and low commodity prices—trends that pre-dated the COVID-19 pandemic.

The federal government's newly proposed climate change legislation, Bill C-12, would only establish emission reduction targets for 2030 and beyond, and although requiring planning and reporting, does little to advance the achievement of what targets might be set. The government's initiative on low-carbon fuel standards seems to be faltering. Although there are strong expectations that the Supreme Court will uphold Ottawa's carbon pricing system in the face of provincial challenges, the federal government seems to have little appetite for moving its backstop carbon price beyond the \$50 per tonne plateau it is set to reach in 2022.

Despite a great deal of spilled ink over the impacts of the federal government's recently adopted Impact Assessment Act (Bill C-69), and its climate change policies, neither has significantly affected the situation in Alberta. The new Impact Assessment Act remains a shadow of the pre-2012 Bill C-38 federal environmen-

tal assessment process, and the federal government has done nothing so far that meaningfully constrains the expansion of the oil sands, the principal source of GHG emissions growth in Canada. Quite the opposite, Ottawa bought the Trans Mountain pipeline for the specific purpose of facilitating the access to new markets for oil sands oil.

While boom-bust cycles are all too familiar in the oil patch, the issues the sector is now facing look more structural. Alberta's traditional U.S. markets have declined significantly over the past decade with the dramatic growth in the availability of "fracked" oil and gas in the United States. Part of the reason then-President Obama could say no to the Keystone XL pipeline was because the U.S. didn't need the oil it would carry. The incoming Biden administration may take a similar view. More widely, while the Canadian Energy Regulator recently suggested markets for Canada's oil exports might continue to rise for another decade or two, long-term capital is already moving away from fossil fuels. Climate change driven divestment campaigns are emerging among pension fund and institutional investors, and other long-term players in financial markets are

looking well beyond fossil fuels. New investment in the oil sands, a relatively high-cost source of production, has dried up.

Where all this leads for Alberta is an open question. In recent weeks, Jason Kenney's UCP government has come to a belated acknowledgement of what its predecessors, under premiers Lougheed, Stelmach, Redford, Prentice and Notley had all recognized—that a continuation of an overwhelming dependence on fossil fuel commodity extraction and export was not really a long-term option for the province. Rather, Alberta needs to diversify its economic and revenue base. Rachel Notley's NDP government's carbon tax on transportation and heating fuels, quickly dismantled by the UCP government, was in some ways a polite effort at introducing a sales tax in the cause of revenue stabilization and diversification.

To its credit, the Kenney government has continued with the phase-out of coal-fired electricity set in motion by the Notley government, and some renewable energy development. And it has recognized the need to upgrade and move towards value-added processing the outputs of the oil and gas industry. But its directions in other areas remain retrograde, particularly its failures to take the environmental problems and growing legacy of wastes and landscape disruption associated with oil sands development, seriously.

The signals from the incoming Biden administration in the U.S. are again highlighting the need for Alberta to re-engage constructively and seriously on the climate change file. If Canada remains committed to making significant progress on reducing its greenhouse gas emissions, then it will require difficult conversations

between those provinces whose economic strategies anticipate continued growth in fossil fuel development, and by implication in the associated GHG emissions, and those provinces who do not. While technological developments may slow the growth in emissions from the oil sands emissions and other types of fossil fuel extraction, they are unlikely to halt them completely. Rather, in a carbon constrained world, those jurisdictions who plan to increase their emissions will have to acknowledge that they are implicitly asking others to reduce their emissions even further in compensation.

Those will be difficult conversations. But they will be essential if Canada, after falling short of the original 1992 UNFCCC stabilization goal, and its 1997 Kyoto and 2009 Copenhagen targets, is to avoid a fourth failure to meet its international climate change commitments, this time under the 2015 Paris Agreement. They may also present an opportunity to address the need for the diversification, already being propelled by forces far beyond the control of any province, of regional economies that have become overly dependent on a limited range of commodity exports. Whether Canada's leaders will have the courage and capacity to engage in such conversations remains an open question. Canada's economic and environmental future depends on their choices.

Mark Winfield is a professor of environmental studies at York University, and co-chair of the university's sustainable energy initiative. Prior to joining York he was policy and program director with the Pembina Institute, and has written extensively on energy, climate, and environmental issues.

*The Hill Times*

# Approaching the Biden administration on energy: don't lead with Keystone

Canada-U.S. energy relations have fundamentally changed since the shale revolution, which makes an opening salvo to the Biden Administration on the Keystone XL Pipeline a dangerous move.



Monica Gattinger

Opinion

**A** Biden administration represents opportunities and challenges for Canadian energy, but to be successful in its relations with Washington, Canada needs to think differently about how it approaches the U.S.

Gone are the days when the U.S. looked to Canada as a pivotal energy supplier and crucial pillar of national energy security.

What happened? Two words: shale and climate.

The shale revolution transformed the U.S. from hydrocarbon poor to hydrocarbon rich. In the 1980s and 1990s, American dependence on foreign oil and gas climbed, and energy security was a top policy priority. Fast-forward twenty years and the U.S. is the largest oil and gas producer in the world thanks to the rapid development of tight oil and shale gas. This has fast transformed North American and global energy markets. Just ask OPEC.

At the same time, climate change has achieved unprecedented prominence and salience in the U.S. Climate policy has mainly been the preserve of the Democratic Party, but even for administrations that pay less attention—even no attention—to climate, it is an inescapable issue of American politics. The fact that U.S. President Donald Trump's commitment to the Keystone XL pipeline did little to move the yardsticks on the project is a case in point.

Shale and climate have had a profound impact on Canada-U.S. energy relations; the need for the White House to collaborate with Canada on energy has withered. Security of supply has evaporated from the U.S. policy agenda and climate politics make fossil fuels a polarizing aspect of American energy policy. Trips to Washington to extol the virtues of Canadian oil and gas risk falling on deaf ears.

Or worse.

Which brings us to Keystone. The Biden campaign committed to quashing the presidential permit for the pipeline. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Alberta Premier Jason Kenney have committed to working together to avoid this outcome, but given the potent symbolism of Keystone in the U.S., leading with this file is a very risky move. It risks cornering the incoming



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and then U.S. vice president Joe Biden, pictured on Dec. 8, 2016, on the Hill. President-elect Biden committed to bring the U.S. back into the Paris agreement, to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and to reduce the carbon intensity of the electricity sector. This aligns with Ottawa's commitments. Collaborating on these issues could advance both countries' energy and climate objectives. *The Hill Times* file photograph by Jake Wright

president into doing immediately what he's committed to do: cancel the permit.

So what should Canadian governments do instead?

They need to think about things differently. This is not about a sales pitch for product. It's about an invitation to collaborate on shared energy and environmental priorities in the long term.

Canada and the United States have the largest interconnected and interdependent energy system in the world. They are also among the largest hydrocarbon reserve holders and producers. Both are also federations in which subnational governments possess substantial energy powers. And with Biden in the White House, they will both have ambitious commitments on climate. But energy and climate debates are divisive if not outright polarized in both countries.

And therein lies the opportunity: collaborating on the grand energy and climate challenges of our time, making the case that Canada and the U.S. stand a better chance of meeting the challenges ahead if they do so together.

Biden's campaign commitments on energy and climate signal an 'all of the above' approach, defining 'clean energy' in an inclusive way that extends well beyond a narrow focus on wind and solar energy, to include support for carbon capture, utilization and storage, small modular nuclear reactors and methane reductions. Biden committed to bring the U.S. back into the Paris agreement, to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and to reducing the carbon intensity of the electricity sector. This aligns with Ottawa's commitments. Collaborating on these issues could advance both countries' energy and climate objectives.

A shared approach could also encompass energy abroad. Oil and gas will remain major staples in global markets in the decades ahead, but increasingly, they will have to be cost and carbon competitive. Canada and the U.S. could work together to reduce the carbon content of their oil and gas exports. And with the U.S. back in the Paris Accord, they could collaborate internationally on mechanisms to obtain carbon credits where exports displace higher emitting energy elsewhere. This could even help pave the way for Biden support for Keystone.

But all of this hinges on Canadian governments being willing to refresh their thinking on bilateral energy relations. If there ever was a time, it is now.

Professor Monica Gattinger is director of the University of Ottawa's Institute for Science, Society and Policy, and chair of Positive Energy. *The Hill Times*

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## Energy Policy Briefing

# With economic statement, federal government keeps us waiting on real climate action

Other G7 countries like France, Germany, and the U.K. allocated billions to a green recovery. What we got in Canada was a promise of more details to come.



Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood

Opinion

When it comes to climate policy, the fall economic statement delivered more of what we've come to expect from this

government: a lot of talk about leadership, some new money for signature policies, but little recognition of the bigger picture challenges facing the country.

It amounts to a small step forward when a leap is needed.

The biggest new spending commitment is a \$4-billion package (over 10 years) for various nature-based climate solutions, of which more than \$3-billion will go towards meeting the Liberals' 2019 election promise of planting two billion trees.

The government also allocated \$2.6-billion over seven years for home energy efficiency retrofits, which will be doled out in grants of up to \$5,000 to homeowners, and \$437-million for zero-emission vehicle purchase incentives and charging infrastructure.

The statement also references plans for nuclear energy, public transit electrification, border carbon adjustments, green bonds and sustainable finance, though little new money is allocated in these areas.

Taken together, the climate policies announced this week are worthwhile, but they only amount to a small piece of Canada's decarbonization puzzle.

For example, reducing emissions from Canada's building sector in line with our Paris Agreement targets will require an investment of up to \$11-billion, according to a recent report from the Institute for Sustainable Finance. The \$2.6-billion announced this week is only a start, especially if we intend to exceed that target as the government has promised.

Likewise for zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs). The price tag for shifting away from internal combustion engines is in the tens of billions of dollars. Getting a few thousand new ZEVs on the road while scaling up charging infrastructure is necessary but insufficient.

And perhaps most importantly, trees planted tomorrow don't cancel out all the coal, oil and gas burned today. So while protecting and enhancing natural carbon sinks like forests and wetlands is an essential component of a long-term climate strategy, it is not a substitute for a plan to phase out the production and consumption of fossil fuels.

Indeed, our economic and cultural dependence on the fossil

fuel industry remains the most significant barrier to climate action in this country. But it is a problem that the economic statement studiously ignores, even as it acknowledges the accelerating global transition to renewable energy.

The statement places no special emphasis on green jobs, despite the government's promise in September's Throne Speech to make climate change "a cornerstone of our plan to support and create a million jobs." Without an explicit focus on low-carbon employment, we risk recovering jobs in industries like oil and gas production that will just be lost again in the coming months and years.

We are at a pivotal moment for Canada's reeling fossil fuel sector. We can either reinvest in this outdated economic model only to prolong its inevitable decline, or we can cut our losses now and get a jump start on economic diversification and a green economy. We owe it to those workers to ensure a just transition to employment in more sustainable industries is an option.

To be fair to this government, a new climate change action plan will be revealed in the coming weeks that details additional emission reduction policies. However, funding for that plan will likely have to wait until the next full budget in spring 2021.

When it comes to addressing climate change, every month counts. This economic statement was an opportunity to accelerate the government's climate agenda at a moment when the country is mapping out its post-pandemic economy.

Some of our peers, such as Germany and France, allocated as much as 30 per cent of their pandemic recovery stimulus specifically toward emission-reduction initiatives. The U.K.'s "Build Back Greener" plan promises to create two million climate jobs as it shifts to a "high-skill, low carbon" economy.

What we got in Canada was a promise of more details to come.

Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood is a senior researcher on international trade and climate policy for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

The Hill Times

## Is Canada's oil sector an appropriate target for industrial policy support?

If we're looking for sectors with big potential payoffs via future growth, oil as a burnable fuel probably isn't on the list. That's not to say the oil patch has no prospects. Smart industrial policy starts with existing resources and skills, which exist there in abundance, and tries to nurture new fields of promise.



Aaron Cosby

Opinion

Canadian discussions on the future of oil quickly descend to partisan polemics, with the environmental community arguing that climate change realities mean we need to leave it in the ground, and the oil patch arguing that it's better that we produce it than our unethical global competitors. It's hard to see a bridge between those two positions that could lead to national climate and energy policies—a state of affairs that Teck's President

Don Lindsay bemoaned earlier this year in withdrawing the company's application for the massive Frontier Oil Sands project.

One way forward may be to think about the oil sector through an industrial policy lens. That is, start not from the environmental imperatives, but rather ask, if our objective is the future prosperity of workers and taxpayers, whether the oil sector is an appropriate target for government support.

To be concrete: when Canadian governments open the industrial policy toolbox—full of tax breaks, grants, R&D support, provision of infrastructure, and low-interest loans—which, if any, are appropriate for the oil sector?

The answer depends in large part on your view of the future. Can we depend on Canada's oil sector, which has been a major engine of economic prosperity for decades, to serve in the same capacity in the decades to come?

Rystad Energy expects a healthy recovery for Canadian oil out to 2025, to production levels above pre-pandemic levels. The Canadian Energy Regulator sees growth in Canadian oil production peaking in 2039 in its primary scenario. If the post-COVID recovery is robust there will be strong demand for Canada's heavy oil from the U.S. midwest and Gulf Coast refineries that depend on that feedstock, especially in the face of supply shortages from Venezuela and Mexico.

At the same time, oil giant BP sees global demand as having peaked already. The IEA's existing policies scenario sees growth in oil demand plateauing in 2030, and its climate-ambitious scenario (like that of the Canadian Energy Regulator) is more pessimistic, seeing long-term oil prices aligned with the BP's predictions at around USD\$55/barrel (Brent crude price). While those prices would be high enough for several pending oil sands expansion projects, and for major existing operations (especially oil sands mining), they are hardly a recipe for robust growth. Modelling done for the IISD by Navius Research shows oil prices at that level implying significant drops in oil patch GDP, employment, investment and royalties in Alberta.

And there are reasons to believe the pessimistic projections are credible. COVID seems to have put a permanent dent in oil

demand as people travel less and telecommute more, and will have destroyed at least two years of oil growth during which technologies like electric vehicles kept innovating. The EV revolution in personal vehicle transport, to which 44 per cent of crude oil goes, is on the cusp of explosive growth that some analysts argue persuasively is being badly under-estimated. At last count 17 countries will phase out internal combustion engines in cars by 2040, most coming much earlier. President-elect Biden is likely to bring back Obama-era fuel economy rules, rolled back by the Trump administration, that would shave an estimated 220,000 to 644,000 barrels per day off U.S. demand (for context, Canada exports 3.7 million barrels of crude per day to the U.S.). And in the context of a carbon-constrained future, national oil companies motivated by the need for jobs more than profits may actually accelerate their production in a race with countries like Canada to sell the last barrel (the "green paradox").

What does all that mean for a policy maker with an industrial policy lens, thinking about where to allocate government support to maximize future prosperity? If we're looking for sectors with big potential payoffs via future growth, oil as a burnable fuel probably isn't on the list. That's not to say the oil patch has no prospects. Smart industrial policy starts with existing

resources and skills, which exist there in abundance, and tries to nurture new fields of promise.

For example, Alberta Innovates has been working for years to produce carbon fibre from bitumen. A moonshot effort to commercialize that technology might have payoffs similar to another major (\$1.4-billion) Alberta technology push: AOSTRA's work on steam-assisted gravity drainage, the innovation that made the oil sands viable. Geothermal energy and hydrogen are also obvious fits with existing resources and skills, which might benefit from strong support. Ditto for start up innovators in areas like production of hydrogen, and novel technologies in well remediation and methane emission detection—all technologies with major potential spin-off benefits in terms of exports and jobs. Existing federal and provincial programs offer substantial support to many of these prospects, but the totals are in the hundreds of millions, in contrast to the billions currently devoted to the oil sector.

If the pessimistic scenarios are probable, a focus on future prosperity means investing heavily in diversifying Canada's oil-dependent regions' economies, applying the lessons we've learned from decades of (not always successful) industrial policy. That, plus a concerted focus on managing the transition to support affected workers and communities as oil's contribution fades, may be key elements in a climate and energy policy that manages to rise above the current stand-off.

Aaron Cosby is a senior associate with the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

The Hill Times

# We need more details on feds' 'build-back-better' plan

Continued from page 12

ment—aside from some generalities on green investments—gives little sense of future direction. Where it does, much of the focus is on fast recovery, not on the much more difficult structural changes we need for a stronger economy.

Yet businesses need to know what they should be planning for so they are ready to act once we shift to a post-pandemic world. And individuals need some sense of where future jobs will come from so they can be looking at upgrading or changing skills now.

In her report, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland insists, “we have a plan. We understand what we must do” to “bring the economy roaring back.” But rather than tell us the plan now, she says we must wait. “When the virus is under control and our economy is ready to absorb it, we will deploy a three-year stimulus package to jumpstart our economy, worth roughly three to four per cent of GDP.” This includes “a major investment plan” to create one million “good jobs to strengthen and grow the middle class”.

The goal is “an economy that is greener, more innovative, more inclusive, and more competitive,” the fiscal statement says. The emphasis is on creating a greener economy, as the Biden administration is planning in the U.S. along with many other countries, including Britain, Germany, France, China, Korea, and Japan.

Moreover, while jump-starting the economy will be important once we are in a post-pandemic world, equally important

are the needed and far-reaching structural changes across the economy that will boost our living standards through higher productivity that comes from innovation and investment in ideas, people, and productive capacity.

The post-pandemic world will be different from the pre-pandemic world. And countries around the world will be striving to gain leadership in everything from clean energy, electric vehicles and biotechnology, to aviation, digital technologies, agri-food and smart cities. Canada will need competitive companies with valuable intellectual property if we are to have a place in this new world. For Canada, this also means that the fossil fuels age will be coming to an end.

The big challenge for Canada is to increase the potential growth rate of the economy, as the fiscal statement does acknowledge. The fiscal statement projects Canada’s potential growth rate to average 1.4 per cent a year between now and 2025, compared to an already-low 1.8 per cent pre-pandemic. Our capacity for growth, reflecting weak past investment in innovation, is too low to deliver the jobs and wealth needed to sustain our standard of living as our society ages and we face even more intense competition for jobs, investment, and output from other countries.

Our pre-pandemic lack of competitiveness has been underscored by our chronic current account gap which has had to be financed each year by increasing our public and private debt to the rest of the world, or by selling off more of our existing wealth, including ownership of Canadian companies, a process that is not sustainable. There is little in the fiscal statement to suggest how we might change this. In fact, it is rarely addressed.

The economic statement is very much a political document, with an eye on an election that could easily come next year, and not surprisingly tends to focus on the Liberal core vote in language that plays to and appears to prioritize the feminist and visible minority Liberal base. The economic statement says it is producing a feminist agenda, promises to reduce the proportion of jobs held by males in clean energy and other industries, and repeatedly expresses its plans in terms of women, racialized Canadians, the LBGTQ2 community, recent immigrants and Indigenous peoples. While building a more inclusive society that enables opportunity for all is a good, noble and overdue, goal, the opportunistic language that is divisive is not.

As a recent Angus Reid poll shows, female voters strongly favour the Liberals while male voters favour the Conservatives. This is true across all age groups. This has been a recurring divide for some time, but overplaying it—as the Liberals and Conservatives are both in danger of doing—is divisive for the country and can create a backlash, paving the way for populist leaders. Donald Trump is a prime example but not the only one. In Canada, Conservative voters are less supportive of immigration than Liberal voters. Rather than condemning them, we should ask why.

It will be too easy to view the immediate uptick in the post-pandemic economy, especially as consumers, with an estimated \$150-billion in savings, go out and spend, boosting immediate demand for goods and services. But the much more difficult challenge, going forward, is the creation of a new economy that is a lot more innovative and productive. The financial statement pays far too little attention to this, yet without more innovation and productivity the immediate recovery won’t take us very far.

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The Hill Times

# Canada can’t afford not to be in space

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the future that focuses on areas of strength and claims them for this country.’ Space is one such area. Every dollar invested in space by the Canadian government has a strong multiplier effect producing roughly twice the impact. Investments in space have an immediate effect—they are rocket fuel for Canada’s economic recovery.

And, in the longer term, we know that decisions taken about space today are going to affect Canadians’ quality of life tomorrow. In the first few decades that Canada was in space, we were part of a small club, just over a handful. Today, there are close to 90 countries with space agencies or space programs. Countries are moving swiftly and decisively to participate in the new space economy because, while space may not be the final frontier, it is the next one. The global space market is worth more than USD\$420-billion today; Morgan Stanley forecasts this market will grow to USD\$1-trillion per year by 2040. We’re well-positioned to lead in that future, if we keep our hand in. We have the capability within our domestic borders

to build space systems from beginning to end. We have the expertise today that will contribute to Canada’s competitiveness in the long run. We have world-class research institutions and a highly-skilled STEM workforce. We have the tenacity and the ingenuity to help position Canada for success.

So, in answer to those who enquire, Canada can’t afford not to be in space. We need to be there for the practical solutions that space brings to Canada, keeping us on the leading edge of climate science, of robotics and AI, and of communications, connected to the world and each other. We need to be there to wield geopolitical influence. We need to be there to inspire the next generation to go further and reach higher. Because, even during the economic uncertainty created by the pandemic, space is, fittingly, a light on the horizon. With investments in space paying strong dividends now and over the longer term, this sector is ready to play its part to help our country build back better.

Mike Greenley is chief executive officer of MDA.

The Hill Times

# On the radar: polytechnics delivering 21st century talent for Canada’s aerospace sector



Canada’s facing turbulence across most sectors today, but with the help of polytechnics, better promotion of the skilled trades and work-integrated learning, and smarter federal investments in innovation, Canada’s aerospace sector will have no problems taking off once again, writes Daniel Komesch. Photograph courtesy of Pixabay

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nadian Mobility and Aerospace Institute to create 7,500 new work-integrated learning placements. We need more of this.

Third, we need to make stronger investments in innovation. When we invest in innovation, and especially that which involves both employers and post-secondary institutions, we get a double win: innovation gains and student talent that is equipped with next-generation skills to take to industry.

All polytechnics are deeply involved in delivering innovation services to industry, and several in Canada are home to specialized facilities that aid the aerospace sector with their innovation goals and involve students in the process. For example, at Red River College in Winnipeg, the Technology Access Centre for Aerospace & Manufacturing works with partners like Boeing to test and demonstrate new processes and leverage advanced manufacturing expertise to address technological problems.

For the students lucky enough to be working on projects for the likes of Boeing, guess who comes knocking once they have completed their program?

Unfortunately, in Canada, this type of demand-driven research suffers from woeful underinvestment. Less than three percent of all federal research dollars are directed at applied research.

Directing more government dollars at applied research is not only good for innovation and productivity, it also ensures we have a healthy supply of talent, enabled with the most up-to-date skills and knowledge at the fingertips of Canada’s aerospace sector.

We are facing turbulence across most sectors in Canada today, but with the help of polytechnics, better promotion of the skilled trades and work-integrated learning, and smarter federal investments in innovation, Canada’s aerospace sector will have no problems taking off once again.

Daniel Komesch is the director of policy at Polytechnics Canada.

The Hill Times

## News

# Feds say increased immigration targets key for economic recovery, but critics wary of ambitious plan's feasibility

The government recently released a target of 401,000 new permanent residents in 2021 as part of Canada's economic recovery following a year that saw dramatically reduced numbers of newcomers in the midst of the pandemic.

Continued from page 1

year, but Conservative MP Raquel Dancho is warning that backlogs in Canada's immigration system could be a problem.

Ambitious immigration targets are part of the Liberal government's economic recovery plan. The arrival of new permanent residents has plummeted this year as the COVID-19 pandemic has shut borders and restricted travel across the world.

Leading pollster Nik Nanos said the government doesn't need to defend bringing in more Canadians, but "I think they have to explain what the urgency is to bring more Canadians in now when we're in the midst of a pandemic—and I think those are two different issues."

In late October, Immigration Minister Marco Mendicino (Eglington-Lawrence, Ont.) announced a new government target of 401,000 new permanent residents in 2021 as part of Canada's economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic, the first step in a plan that would see immigration levels increase by a little over one per cent of the Canadian population every year for the next three years.

As part of Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's fall economic update on Nov. 30, the government highlighted their commitment to "an immigration system that supports economic growth, diversity, and helps build vibrant, dynamic and inclusive communities."

"Immigrants play an important role in driving Canada's economic growth, contributing to half of the average real GDP growth

over 2016-2019," according to the statement.

Ms. Dancho (Kildonan-St. Paul, Man.), her party's immigration critic, told *The Hill Times* that the Conservatives "absolutely believe that economic growth is also tied to immigration, and the family reunification that goes with it," but she said she was skeptical of how the government would reach such an ambitious goal.

"They won't even achieve half of their goal this year, and now they're promising what we understand to be the largest influx of permanent residents ever in any single year in Canadian history next year. But I just don't see how that's going to happen," said Ms. Dancho.

"If you look at what's happening with confirmations of permanent residents, there's well over 10,000 that we're aware of abroad that were approved, did everything right—were highly skilled, set to come to Canada, sold their homes, took their kids out of school, quit their jobs—and then the government with their [Order In Council] that closed the border, said that they need the travel authorization form, and they haven't issued those to most of those 10,000 people," said Ms. Dancho.

"So if they can't even get these 10,000 people already approved—real people that are suffering—I'm not sure how they're going to get 401,000 permanent residents approved next year," said Ms. Dancho. "I have a lot of concerns about that, even beyond the economic growth opportunity of bringing in this many people when they're frankly mistreating the people that they tried to bring in this year."

Mr. Nanos' firm Nanos Research took a poll on the issue in November and found that just under two in five Canadians think that Canada should accept the same amount of immigrants in 2021 as we did in 2019.

"What clearly exists is that when Canadians are asked about their support for immigration, accepting refugees and bringing new Canadians into Canada, when anyone tests on that principle, there's a significantly high level of support," said Mr. Nanos.

"Canadians understand that most Canadians have come from another place, that new Canadians contribute to the economy, and that we need new Canadians in order to stay prosperous," said Mr. Nanos. "What we found, in the specific research that we've most



Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Marco Mendicino pictured speaking with reporters during a press conference on Nov. 12, 2020. The federal government has an ambitious goal of bringing in more than 400,000 newcomers in 2021 to Canada as part of its economic recovery plan. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

recently done on immigration, is that there's not a lot of appetite to bring in more people at this particular time."

"There's support—but we tested on the specific numbers," said Mr. Nanos. "We tested on the 340,000 number—do people want more, do they want to keep it at the same level, or do they want less, and what was clear was that the appetite to bring in more than 340,000 at this particular point in time is actually quite weak."

Mr. Nanos said he didn't believe these findings means that Canadians are xenophobic or that they aren't accepting of refugees.

"But they do see that the economy is in different levels of shutdown right across the country, that Canadians have uncertainty about their own job prospects because many people are being paid to stay home," said Mr. Nanos.

Part of the personal brand of the prime minister and the Liberal government is being welcoming of refugees, according to Mr. Nanos, pointing out that one of the dividing lines when Mr. Trudeau won his first election in 2015 was the welcoming of Syrian refugees.

"So I see the welcoming of new Canadians as part of the DNA of the prime minister and the Liberal Party at this point in time, and it's pretty clear [they] believe that it's not only the right thing to do, but that it's good for the Canadian economy in the long run, and is part of the growth strategy for Canada," said Mr. Nanos.

## Number of new permanent residents has 'plummeted' in 2020

Immigration Lawyer Colin Singer, who is the managing partner at Immigration.ca, told *The Hill Times* that the number of permanent resident arrivals has plummeted in 2020 compared to the year prior, with only 143,465 new arrivals in the first nine months of the year compared to 263,945 in 2019.

"With immigration levels set to rise above 400,000 newcomers per year [starting] next year, the federal government first plans to invest \$72.1-million in a modern, digital platform for receiving and processing immigration applications," according to Mr. Singer.

"It will then spend a further \$15-million on enhancing foreign credential recognition, aiming to cut the time it takes for newcomers to integrate into Canadian society by finding jobs in their field more quickly," wrote Mr. Singer in an emailed response to *The Hill Times*.

Claudia Hepburn, CEO of Windmill Microlending, a charity that offers microloans to help skilled immigrants and refugees to continue their careers in Canada, said the COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the labour market shortages that Canada faces in many sectors, including health, IT, engineering and STEM, as well as transportation.

"Skilled immigration is crucial to any plan to solve those shortages, but sometimes they need help to become job ready," wrote Ms. Hepburn in an emailed response to *The Hill Times*. "The not-for-profit sector plays a crucial role in helping immigrants become job ready. A successful plan for integrating immigrants into the labour force is as important to solving labour shortages as an ambitious immigration target. We need both."

Along with increasing the numbers of immigrants, Canada also needs to make the pathways to employment as accessible as possible, according to Ms. Hepburn.

"This means investment in the communication of the resources available to assist in their employment journeys," said Ms. Hepburn. "Support is also required for those resources and organizations with experience in assisting immigrants on their employment journey in order to enable them [to] scale and facilitate the increase in numbers."

## 'We need newcomers to help our economy bounce back'

Alexander Cohen, Mr. Mendicino's press secretary, said Canada's short term recovery and long term prosperity rely on immigration.

"We need newcomers to help our economy bounce back after the pandemic, and address the stark demographic challenges we face with an aging population," wrote Mr. Cohen in an emailed response to *The Hill Times*. "Put simply: immigrants create jobs."

"One in three business owners is an immigrant, and our plan sets out a path for responsible increases to immigration to help the economy recover, with about 60 per cent of admissions in the economic class," according to Mr. Cohen. "Newcomers also represent about a third of those working on the front lines of the pandemic, like family doctors, pharmacists and nurse's aides."

"We'll continue welcoming the best and brightest from around the world, who have contributed so much throughout the pandemic and bring the skills our businesses need to thrive."

Bloc Québécois MP Christine Normandin, her party's immigration critic, told *The Hill Times* that the province of Quebec is not necessarily looking to raise its immigration level moving forward—and that the province has in fact decided in past years to lower the rate of selection in order to deal with backlogs in the system.

"There's still something around 35,000 open case files for skilled workers that we want to have processed, so when it's done, we can be quicker on our feet to select people that will be able to join the job market," said Ms. Normandin.

But in recent conversations with her constituents, Ms. Normandin said that she's spoken with many industry representatives and business owners and has found that even in a context of high unemployment, it's also possible to have workforce shortages.

"It's possible to have both at the same time, and they're a bit afraid that at some point, immigration will decide to cut on some streams of immigration, for example the low wage stream, because of the high rate of unemployment," said Ms. Normandin. "But it's still hard to find members of the local workforce in some cases. Or when it comes to skilled workers, even though there's a high rate of unemployment in Quebec, it doesn't mean that all of a sudden you'll find welders with 10 years of experience."

"So we still need immigration even though there's a high rate of unemployment, and that's something we hear a lot," said Ms. Normandin.

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# Why the Liberals keep putting off the gun marking regulations

Public Safety Minister Bill Blair announced on Nov. 30 that his government was again deferring the Firearms Marking Regulations, likely until after the next election.

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its own bureaucrats, say lobbyists for gun owners and retailers.

Mr. Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.) announced that day that his government would be deferring the entrance into force of the Firearms Marking Regulations from Dec. 1 of this year to the same date in 2023. That will likely push the issue until after Mr. Blair and the Liberals contest the next election.

Mr. Blair's office said he was deferring the regulations because, as they are written, they would be "ineffective" at helping law enforcement to trace illegal guns without better national records of gun ownership and importation. The statement said the government needed more time to consult with stakeholders on the matter.

The government has been working on this issue since 2004, and the regulations have now been deferred nine times by successive Liberal and Conservative governments since they were introduced in 2004. The Liberals campaigned in 2015 on a promise to "immediately" implement the regulations, but then deferred them again several times, including in 2017, 2018, and on Nov. 30. The Liberals dropped their promise to deal with those regulations in their 2019 election platform.

The regulations would require the make, serial number, and the letters "CA" or "Canada" to be permanently etched onto any firearms imported into Canada, as well as two digits showing their year of import.

The repeatedly-deferred regulations are not a top priority for some of the pro-gun control advocacy groups working in Canada, their executives told *The Hill Times*, but they are a very important issue for gun retailers, who fear the government will implement them as they are currently written, and effectively cut off their access to most of the guns that they sell.

"It would decimate the Canadian business," said Alison de Groot, the managing director of the Canadian Sporting Arms & Ammunition Association, a lobby group for gun retailers.

Nearly all of the guns sold in Canada are made in the U.S., but



Public Safety Minister Bill Blair is the latest in a long line of Liberal and Conservative public safety ministers who have so far proven unable to fix the Firearms Marking Regulations. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

those manufacturers won't likely change their production lines to satisfy the new marking rules for the small Canadian market, she said. Canadian importers and retailers don't have the tools, expertise, or budgets to modify the guns once they have crossed the border, she said.

Law enforcement agencies support the implementation of the regulations, as another tool to help them track the source of guns used in crimes in Canada. Bringing into force the regulations would also allow the Liberals to ratify the UN Firearms Protocol, which Canada signed back in 2002, and which requires those markings.

However, law enforcement wouldn't be able to make use of the new markings proposed in the regulations without a comprehensive firearms registry, one that includes other information police could compare to the markings on the guns,

according to the government, which laid out its rationale in the *Canada Gazette* in 2018 after the last deferral of these regulations.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) government has made gun control one of its signature policy issues, but has also pledged repeatedly not to bring back the now-defunct

Canadian Firearms Registry, which was widely unpopular in rural areas and was abolished by former prime minister Stephen Harper.

Implementing the Firearms Marking Regulations as written may hurt firearms retailers and importers, may not help police, and might also increase the pressure on Liberal MPs representing rural ridings where firearms owners are influential. One Liberal MP told *The Hill Times* in 2018 that the government's comprehensive firearms bill was "scaring the hell out of the Liberal caucus,"

ing on the 2015 Liberal campaign promise, and possibly abandoning the UN Firearms Convention.

"They don't ever want to look like they are easing up on regulations surrounding firearms," said Tracey Wilson, a spokesperson for the Canadian Coalition for Firearm Rights, a group that lobbies on behalf of gun owners.

Nearly all of the guns sold in Canada are manufactured in the United States, and they are already marked with the name of the manufacturer and a serial number, said Ms. de Groot. Police can use that information to track

guns back to their point of import without any additional markings, she said.

Conservative MP Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, Alta.), her party's public safety critic, said in an emailed statement to *The Hill Times* that her caucus does not support implementing the regulations.

"Firearms already carry unique identification numbers and Canada has some of the most stringent laws in the world governing firearms identification," she wrote.

"Despite promising 'immediate' implementation of these regulations when they were elected in 2015, the Liberals recently delayed them again, as governments have done for the past 16 years,

because they would be ineffective in Canada without a costly gun registry. If the Liberals are really committed to implementing these regulations, then they will have to explain to Canadians that they plan to bring back the costly and ineffective long-gun registry," said the statement from Ms. Stubbs.

Several Liberal MPs representing rural ridings did not respond to interview requests about the Firearms Marking Regulations.

Further complicating the matter are some yet-to-be implemented requirements under the Liberals' 2018 gun control legislation, which would require gun retailers to keep records of who they sell which guns to—many already do—and would require the government to begin tracking gun sales between individuals as well. It's not clear whether those measures would provide police with enough information to make use of the additional markings.

Wendy Cukier, the president of the Coalition For Gun Control, said the proposed Marking Regulations are a "core piece of the regime to control the illicit trade in firearms," but said they would not be useful without the system for tracking gun sales—though that system, as proposed in the Liberal legislation, would not track the actual weapons being sold.

Ms. de Groot said that her organization has proposed a solution to the government that she believes would allow it to satisfy the UN Firearms Protocol criteria without hurting gun retailers.

She also said that she believed that senior public servants working on the file were "not being allowed to work with us for political reasons," and that "political will" was the primary obstacle to fixing the regulations.

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Conservative MP Shannon Stubbs is her party's public safety critic. She says the Conservatives do not support implementing the Firearms Marking Regulations. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and the Liberals lost 20 seats in rural or partly rural ridings in the last election. The Conservatives have repeatedly attacked the Liberal gun control agenda, and warned that the Liberals will reintroduce the Firearms Registry through the "back door."

Scrapping the regulations altogether, however, would mean renege-

## News

# Trudeau needs strong messaging, 'coherent plan' for rollout of vaccine, or he could suffer political consequences, say veteran political players

'If people aren't getting needles in their arms by the end of January, it's going to be the most dangerous political issue this government's ever dealt with, by far, without question,' says Scott Reid, a top Liberal official in the Paul Martin government.

Continued from page 1

is creating "confusion" and a negative perception about the government's management of the pandemic, which could seriously hurt the Liberals in the coming months, they said.

"This is a critical challenge in terms of communications, and messaging, and it will all be judged by the results, which we will know by March, how things are going," said Ekos Research president Frank Graves in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

"But, right now, we need to create a sense of coherence, that there is a plan, that it is orderly, and that this is not being driven by media, or even opposition queries, this is being driven by science and reason, and that it will work out," he said.

Late last month, Prime Minister Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) said that Canada would be behind the U.S., the U.K., and Germany in getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Later, Reuters reported that Mexico would also likely start to immunize this month, depending on the approval of the vaccine there. The U.S., U.K., and Germany are also expected to soon start immunizing their citizens.

Last week, the U.K. approved a vaccine and health-care workers could start to use it for emergency purposes as early as this week. The U.S. is also likely to approve a vaccine this week and the immunization process could start as early as Dec. 12. An estimated 20 million Americans are expected to be inoculated next month, and 30 million every subsequent month.

During these developments, the opposition parties and political commentators have been rais-

ing questions about why Canada has lagged behind other countries in accessing the vaccine when the government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to improve domestic production facilities. They also demand that the prime minister provide a specific timeline for when Canadians would get access to a vaccine.

Making matters more complicated, Mr. Trudeau, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.), Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.), and deputy chief public health officer Dr. Howard Njoo have all suggested different dates for the availability of a vaccine, ranging from January to June.

As of deadline last week, there were 389,775 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Canada resulting in 12,325 deaths, according to Public Health Agency of Canada.

In response to questions about when the vaccine will be made available to Canadians last week, a spokesperson for Health Minister Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay-Superior North, Ont.) referred to the answer provided by a senior Public Services and Procurement Canada official, two weeks ago, that the vaccines will start arriving in Canada by March of next year.

"In terms of timelines, the first deliveries of COVID-19 vaccines are anticipated to start in the first quarter of 2021," Arianne Reza, Assistant Deputy Minister at PSPC said at a technical briefing for reporters on Nov. 26.

Dr. Supriya Sharma, chief medical adviser to Health Canada's deputy minister, told CBC's *The Current* last week that Canada could also approve a COVID-19 vaccine in a week to 10 days.

In response to opposition questions about why Canada has not produced its own vaccine at the same time when some of the other G7 countries have, Mr. Trudeau has said that it's because of the lack of domestic production facilities. He said that vaccine doses would start to arrive in the early months of 2021, but did not provide any specific timeline. The government has signed contracts for hundreds of millions of doses with five multinational pharmaceutical companies. Mr. Trudeau also pointed out that the government has already invested hundreds of millions of dollars to ensure that Canada will have a domestic vaccine production capacity, in case another pandemic hit Canada in future.

In the Nov. 26 technical briefing to reporters, Dr. Njoo said

that the vaccine supply will be limited when it first becomes available, and will be provided only to high-priority groups, such as seniors living in long-term care homes, front-line health-care workers, and those with underlying health conditions, among others. He said if everything worked out as expected, six million doses could become available by March, but warned this is an optimistic projection.

A spokesman for Innovation Minister Navdeep Bains (Missis-

tin, the former head of Canada's NATO mission in Iraq, to lead the country's vaccine rollout via a Health Canada National Operations Centre.

Last week, *The Canadian Press* reported that the military officially received the orders to prepare for the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine in the country two weeks ago, but planning has been under way for months. The official order includes the possibility that the military may have to pick up and transport the vaccine from the U.S. and European countries to Canada. At a media briefing last week, Mr. Fortin said that dry runs to administer the vaccine will start this week, adding that vaccines could be delivered to distribution points as early as late December.

Some political strategists told *The Hill Times* last week that if the Trudeau government fails to provide a vaccine to Canadians at the same time as it becomes available in the United States or other countries, it could politically hurt the government.

"If people aren't getting needles in their arms by the end of January, it's going to be the most

Pollster Greg Lyle of Innovative Research said that it is a mistake for senior government ministers to give out different dates for the vaccine's arrival, and that ministers should provide a timeline only if and when they have reliable information. Mr. Lyle said that Canadians' frustration with the delay in getting the vaccine is not reflected in the polls right now, but said things will change soon after other countries' populations start to get immunized.

The government will face a significant problem if another country that does not have the capacity to manufacture a vaccine is able to negotiate access to a vaccine before Canada, he said.

Mr. Lyle said that at the moment, Canadians are more worried about lockdowns or other immediate challenges posed by COVID-19, such as what's causing the spread of the virus; what the government is doing to protect seniors in long-term care facilities; how quickly can we get a faster COVID-19 test; and what the government is doing to enforce quarantine. He said that these are the factors that will determine whether an average person, and especially a vulnerable person, will live or die, and Canadians are paying close attention to at this time.

"COVID-19 is a host of issues, it's no one thing," said Mr. Lyle. "Do we have the right restrictions in place? Do we have enough restrictions? How are we doing in terms of testing? How are we doing on reporting on testing? All those sorts of questions, those things are much more pressing ... people are sort of taking it on faith that the government will do all it can to get the vaccine as soon as it can. And it's just not the first thing to worry about, the first thing to worry about is the immediate outbreak."

An Angus Reid Institute poll released last week suggested that as the Americans and Britons are getting ready to get inoculated for COVID-19, "lingering questions over when they themselves will be immunized are having a negative impact on how they perceive the federal government's management of the pandemic."

The poll released on Dec. 3 revealed that 56 per cent of Canadians—a 10-point drop compared to last quarter—think the government has done a good job in handling the pandemic.

Pollster Nik Nanos of Nanos Research told *The Hill Times* that if Canada is behind in getting the vaccine, the public's reaction will depend chiefly on whether the pandemic is under control or not, and how far behind Canada is, compared to other countries that have the vaccine.

"If the pandemic is seen to be under control in Canada, then there probably won't be significant negative fallout," said Mr. Nanos, chief data scientist for Nanos Research. "If there's a third wave, and we're late, there will be political hell to pay, people will be very upset, especially if there's unnecessary deaths, because of a late vaccine in Canada. So a lot of it will have to do with the context of the spring of 2021."

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured on Nov. 24, 2020, in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

sauga-Malton, Ont.) said in an email to *The Hill Times* that when the pandemic first started, Canada did not have the capacity to produce a large-scale COVID-19 vaccine. Recognizing this fact, he said, the government has invested or has made announcements to invest \$534-million to expand the domestic production capacity.

"Our government is working on all fronts to deliver for Canadians safe and effective treatments and vaccines against COVID-19," said John Power, a senior communications adviser to Mr. Bains. "This includes investing in and scaling up Canadian vaccine manufacturing capabilities, investing in Canadian vaccine and therapeutic candidates as part of Canada's contribution to the global effort to fight COVID-19, and procuring the most promising international candidates."

Mr. Trudeau told reporters on Nov. 27 that there are "very good chances" for most Canadians to be vaccinated by September, "if things go well."

He also announced the appointment of Maj.-Gen. Dany For-

dangerous political issue this government's ever dealt with, by far without question," said Liberal political insider Scott Reid in the popular political podcast called *The Herle Burly* last week.

"And I would be terrified, if I were them, about getting pushed into an election," said Mr. Reid, who in the past served as director of communications to former prime minister Paul Martin.

According to a Leger poll released last week, 37 per cent of Canadians said that they were very concerned that Canada would not get the vaccine at the same time as the U.S. or other countries. However, 48 per cent said that they were not overly concerned about Canada getting a vaccine later than other countries. An Abacus Data poll suggested last week that 76 per cent of Canadians would be satisfied if they got a vaccine within a couple of months after it becomes available in other countries. The other 24 per cent said that they would be angry if people in other countries were able to get the vaccine before Canada.



# Some politicians not ruling out an election before March, others predict a spring election

It's in the best interest of the Bloc and NDP not to defeat the Liberals, as it's a minority government and both parties can score some wins for their respective party bases by working with the governing party, says Innovative Research pollster Greg Lyle.

Continued from page 1

for their vote in the House, not to cause an election.

"An election is always like a trip to the dentist," said Nik Nanos, chief data scientist for Nanos Research, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "It's not popular, but it's necessary."

In a minority government, an election could happen one of the two ways—either the prime minister goes to the Governor General and asks for one, or the opposition parties defeat the government in the House of Commons. In this Parliament, all three major opposition parties in the House will have to vote together to defeat the government.

The Liberals have 155 MPs in the 338-seat House of Commons. They need support from one of the three other recognized parties in the House to get legislation passed. The Conservatives have 121 MPs, the Bloc Québécois has 32, and the NDP 24. The Greens, which do not have party status in the House, have three seats, and there are three Independent MPs. In the 338 member House, a simple majority requires 170 votes.

After last week's fall economic statement by Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.), all three major federal parties said that they were dissatisfied with the government's long awaited spending plan, which contained \$25-billion worth of new spending measures. But it remains to be seen if the opposition parties are unhappy enough to vote down the government.

Mr. Nanos said if the Liberals want to convert their minority status into a majority, the best time for them to go to the polls is before March of next year. He said the Liberal Party's odds of increasing their seat count would be better while the stimulus money worth billions of dollars that started this March is flowing. By March 2021, Mr. Nanos said, individual Canadians and businesses will start to realize the true economic impact of COVID-19 on their lives, and will be receiving a tax bill, and many Canadians may have to return the CERB money that they thought they deserved.

Another factor is the uncertainty about the state of the economy next year, and how long it will take to recover from the negative impacts of COVID-19 after the pandemic is over. If the economy deteriorated even further, it could mean a higher unemployment rate, or there might be other challenges that arise, which would make it very difficult for an incumbent government to get re-elected.

From the opposition parties' perspective, Mr. Nanos said, the strategy should be to let the government survive until it shuts off the emergency economic support measures that were put in place to help individuals and businesses to deal with the negative impact of COVID-19.

Mr. Nanos said that there's never a good time for an election as there are always pros and cons for going to the polls at any time. He added that it's not unusual for provincial and federal governments to have a winter election.

Mr. Nanos cited the example of the 2006 federal election, when the writ was dropped in November and the election took place in January. He also pointed to last month's U.S. presidential and congressional elections, which happened right in the middle of the pandemic, but still had a very high rates of voter participation. As of last week there were more than 14 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. resulting in more than 276,000 deaths.

New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and British Columbia have had provincial elections recently as well. The minority governments of the New Brunswick Progressive Conservatives and British Columbia's New Democrats were converted to majority governments. The Saskatchewan Party, which held a majority government, was re-elected with a majority.

"The United States just finished an election, other major democracies have had elections, we've had a number of provincial elections," said Mr. Nanos. "So to point to the pandemic as a reason never to have an election, I'm not sure how realistic that is."

In talking to reporters on Tuesday, Dec. 1, Mr. Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) said that he does not want a winter election and that he's "reasonably confident" that the opposition parties don't want one.

"This is a Fall Economic Statement, this is an economic [measure] that of course will be a matter of confidence, but I am reasonably confident that none of the opposition parties wants an election right now," Mr. Trudeau told reporters.

"We certainly don't want one. We want to get these supports out to Canadians, and there are certainly things in this Fall Economic Statement that every party should be able to support, in terms of helping Canadians."

By deadline last week, a date had not been set for a vote on the Fall Economic Statement, but re-

gardless of when the vote happens, it will be a confidence vote. If the government loses this vote, it will automatically trigger an election.

According to a recent poll by Ekos Research, the Liberals were leading with the support of 36.3 per cent of Canadians, followed by the Conservatives with 30.2 per cent. The NDP had the support of 14.6 per cent, and the Greens 8.8 per cent. The poll of 3,269 Canadians was conducted from Nov. 27 to Dec. 2 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 1.71 percentage points.



The opposition parties have expressed their dissatisfaction with the Justin Trudeau government's fall economic statement, but it's unclear if they will vote together to defeat the government. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

In a statement issued on Nov. 30, Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole (Durham, Ont.) blasted the government for failing to properly handle the health and economic affects of COVID-19.

"The truth is the Liberals' economic response has been erratic and confused. Millions more Canadians were put on the CERB than necessary when their jobs could have been maintained if the Liberals had implemented a wage subsidy earlier," said Mr. O'Toole.

"The Canadian economy was already showing serious signs of weakness before the pandemic hit. Ignoring our warnings, the Liberals took pride in running large structural deficits and raising taxes in good economic times. Now, Justin Trudeau is running a historic deficit of almost \$400 billion, and still leaving millions of Canadians behind."

NDP MP Peter Julian (New Westminster-Burnaby, B.C.), his party's finance critic, also indicated his party's unhappiness with the government's economic statement. In offering his criticism of the fiscal update in the House on Nov. 30, Mr. Julian said that the government should commit to continue the emergency support measures on a long-term basis.

"This is where my disappointment lies, and our disappointment, with the Fall Economic Statement," said Mr. Julian in the House. "We believe that those supports need to be continued. There needs to be a sense that all Canadians matter, that we can all come through this pandemic, and that, coming out of the pandemic, we can actually put in place a very solid foundation for Canadians in the future."

On Twitter, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) also blasted the federal government:

"The Liberals started promising child care almost 30 years ago. Today, we watched them break their promise for accessible & affordable child care once again," Mr. Singh wrote on Nov. 30.

"Women disproportionately lost their jobs during the pandemic and without affordable child-care, they can't go back to work."

Bloc MP Alain Therrien (La Prairie, Que.) said in the House that his party was disappointed with

accident or a major miscalculation from the opposition side.

"It makes no sense for them [Bloc Québécois] to take a chance on losing seats or losing a minority," said Mr. Lyle. "Either of those would be a bad outcome for them, the best outcome for them would be the outcome they have right now, which is to be a significant force [in a] minority government. And the same thing with the NDP, they're not gonna go from their current situation to any majority government in the next election. Their best chance is to be a significant force [in a minority], which is what they have right now. And they have no money to run an election, and I'm sure that their candidate search has barely begun."

In his view, Mr. Lyle said that the spring is probably the first realistic window when an election could happen. He said that once Canadians have been vaccinated against COVID-19, and the immediate threat from the pandemic is over, Mr. Trudeau can go to the Governor General asking for an election on the grounds that the state of the economy is totally different from when he won the 2019 election, and that he needs a fresh mandate.

Pollster Frank Graves of Ekos Research agreed with Mr. Lyle's assessment that an election is unlikely until the spring. He explained that based on his polling, the Liberals are in the majority territory, and it's not in the interest of opposition parties to defeat the government. The Liberals, being the governing party, would not call an election in the midst of a once-in-a-century public health emergency.

"Whether it's a good time to have an election in the midst of an absolutely critical public health crisis? I don't see what the upside is for anybody except the Liberals. And they are not going to call an election now. I think they will wait, you probably will see an election in spring."

Rookie Liberal MP Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay-Rainy River, Ont.) said that he did not see anything in the Fall Economic Statement over which the opposition parties would lose confidence in the government. He said that an election in the midst of COVID-19 will be very unhelpful, and it's important that all parties work together to resolve this public health crisis. He said that the speculation about the timing of the next election will continue until there's an election, as it's a minority government and, theoretically speaking, an election could happen at any time.

"That's what the opposition does and that's what politics is all about," said Mr. Powlowski with a chuckle, commenting on the opposition parties' expression of dissatisfaction with the Economic Statement.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Conservative MP Larry Maguire (Brandon-Souris, Man.) said that his party was still examining how to vote on the Fall Economic Statement.

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# ‘There is no playbook in dealing with the pandemic’: how StatsCan has mobilized around urgent COVID-19 data collection

Senior management within Statistics Canada took ‘calculated risks and made some tough choices’ to adapt the agency’s response to urgent data needs, according to Tina Chui, acting director of diversity and social statistics at the agency.

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

With the majority of people at Statistics Canada still working from home amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency has been working to become more agile in its collection of disaggregated data and the disproportionate effects of the crisis on vulnerable communities, according to Tina Chui, acting director of diversity and social statistics.

“There is no playbook in dealing with the pandemic,” said Ms. Chui. “I think we’ve become a lot more agile, and StatsCan has been undergoing modernization for a number of years, which allowed us to springboard into more innovative ways of doing things.”

The impact of the pandemic has been spread unevenly across the Canadian population, particularly pertaining to people from vulnerable communities and marginalized groups.

“Because of that, we have really mobilized to collect as much information as possible,” said Ms. Chui. “We have been investing our efforts in a number of modernization initiatives for a number of years already, which actually helped us to prepare for the pandemic response.”

Ms. Chui said that during the initial stages of the pandemic, senior management within Statistics Canada took “calculated risks and made some tough choices” to adapt the agency’s response to urgent data needs, including everything from information around mental health to the impact on businesses to enable people to better navigate the impact of the damage.

## Crowdsourcing, web panels used for COVID-19 data collection

The agency has engaged in a number of crowdsourcing pushes throughout the pandemic, with first results on the impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians com-



Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry Navdeep Bains at a press conference in West Block on Nov. 17, 2020. Minister Bains has been tasked with preparing for the long-form census in 2021, including the collection and analysis of disaggregated data, according to his mandate letter from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ing in between April 3 and April 24, followed by a focus on the impacts of the pandemic on post-secondary students from April 19 to May 1.

The focus then shifted to the collection of data surrounding the mental health of Canadians from April 24 to May 11; Canadians’ perceptions of personal safety from May 12 to May 25; trust in government, public health authorities and businesses from May 26 to June 8; as well as the impact of COVID-19 on Canadian families and children from June 9 to June 22.

Most recently, crowdsourcing was used to analyze the impacts of the pandemic on Canadians living with long-term conditions and disabilities from June 23 to July 6, finishing with a push to determine Canadians’ experiences of discrimination from August 4 to August 18.

Web panels have also been used from March 29 through to September 20 to collect data around the impacts of the pandemic, resuming economic and social activities, information sources consulted by Canadians, as well as technology use and cyber security.

From Jan. 25 to Feb. 1, the agency will be looking into substance use and stigmatization within the context of the pandemic as well.

“We really used those two sources in the last few months to collect very timely information,” said Ms. Chui. “Since the lockdown in mid-March, we worked very quickly to put some new surveys through crowdsource and web panel methods to collect data.”

## ‘We had to mobilize very quickly’

The federal government introduced its anti-racism strategy in June 2019, designed to unroll from 2019 to 2022 at the cost of \$45-million.

Statistics Canada’s role within that strategy is to “support the data and evidence pillar,” said Ms. Chui. “Fast forward to the pandemic: we do need this real-time [data], we had to mobilize very quickly, so how can we leverage the existing work to monitor how Canadians are dealing with the pandemic?”

Calling the agency’s Labour Force Survey their “mission critical program,” Ms. Chui said new questions have been recently added to get a better sense for the impact on visible minority populations.

ment rate of those designated as a visible minority decreased 1.5 per cent to 10.2 per cent in November.

Beginning in July, the survey now includes a question asking respondents to report the population groups to which they belong. Possible responses, which are the same as in the 2016 census, include, White, South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan), Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambo-



University of Alberta professor Malinda Smith says ‘what Statistics Canada can do from a national point of view is provide clear categories and a coherent strategy where we have data that is collected and comparable.’ Photograph courtesy of Malinda Smith

“That’s how we can find monthly data of COVID on employment,” said Ms. Chui. “Unfortunately we’re still deep in the second wave, but when we’re going through the recovery, certain communities will have a lot more to gain back, so with the monthly survey, we’ll be able to better monitor the situation.”

According to the most recent Labour Force Survey that reflects labour market conditions as of the week of Nov. 8 to 14, growth was “variable across demographic groups.”

Among Canadians aged 15 to 69, according to the report released on Dec. 4, the unemploy-

“For instance, when we look at socio-economic outcomes of women, we cannot just look at women, because socio-economic outcomes are tied very closely together with age, because age is a proxy for lifecycle,” said Ms. Chui. “So we have to look at the combinations of sex and age, and we can still drill further [into regions]. Then you can further drill into women in their prime working age, who are members of a visible minority.”

“The census is such a big data source that it will allow us to drill down into that level of detail, while also allowing us to protect the privacy and confidentiality of respondents,” said Ms. Chui.

According to the department, the census will contain new content to better identify individuals’ sex at birth, gender, veteran status, religion, registered members of Métis organization or settlements, as well as those enrolled under or a beneficiary of an Inuit lands claim agreement.

## Pandemic has highlighted ‘pre-existing inequalities in our society,’ says expert

Malinda Smith, a professor at the University of Alberta who has also sat on Statistics Canada’s Expert Working Group on Black Communities in Canada, told *The Hill Times* that the pandemic has highlighted the pre-existing inequalities in our society, and “aggravated them for people who are on the front lines, people you see were marginalized, but now we recognize are essential.”

There was a need for better race-based data prior to the pandemic in relation to policing, according to Prof. Smith—a need that has been amplified as result of the pandemic.

“What this has all shown is that across the country, across the provinces, is very uneven data collection, and what Statistics Canada can do from a national point of view is provide clear categories and a coherent strategy where we have data that is collected and comparable.”

“And this is as, if not more important—the information will be able to help evaluate initiatives and programs and policies to assess their differential impact, and then to design interventions that will properly address them,” said Prof. Smith.

“Right now, a once-size-fits-all strategy doesn’t allow you to do that, and the uneven data collection doesn’t allow you to even identify hotspots,” said Prof. Smith. “My view is that even though this is framed as an anti-racism strategy, it might just as well be framed in terms of a systematic commitment to what an equitable, inclusive society looks like.”

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# Feds' mid-year revenue fell by nearly 22 per cent during pandemic

The government is expecting to earn almost \$60-billion less this year than it did last, as it continues to spend billions in borrowed money to keep the economy afloat.

Continued from page 1

the COVID-19 pandemic than it did during the same period last year, a recently released document from Finance Canada shows.

significantly during the pandemic. The 21.5 per cent decrease from one spring and summer to the next represents a loss of about \$35-billion, according to the September issue of Finance Canada's Fiscal Monitor.

The government expects to collect \$275-billion in revenue in the 2020-21 fiscal year, down from \$334-billion last year. The federal government's fiscal year begins on April 1, which this year happened to align closely with the beginning of major economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Fall Economic Statement projected that revenue from personal income taxes would only decrease by 3.3 per cent, or about \$5.5-billion, in 2020-21 compared to the year previous. Personal incomes were



Treasury Board President Jean-Yves Duclos and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland are responsible for the federal government's spending. They released several documents at the end of November detailing government spending for last year, this year, and projections for future years. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



bailout, according to the Fall Economic Statement.

The government projected in the Fall Economic Statement that its revenues will rebound to \$336-billion in the 2021-22 fiscal year, and continue growing for each of the four following years.

government's spending for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

The Public Accounts showed the government ran a \$39-billion deficit last year, up from a \$14-billion deficit the year before.

The Public Accounts document for last year included new information on how the budgetary balance is affected by net actuarial losses, which are changes to how much the government may have to pay to fund its employee pensions and benefits. According to Treasury Board documents, those liabilities can vary substantially from year to year, and breaking them out from the budgetary balance figures gives a better picture of how much government program spending is contributing to a deficit or surplus.

Excluding net actuarial losses, last year's budget deficit was \$29-billion, up from less than \$6-billion the year before.

The Public Accounts show that the highest spending government ministries were Families, Children and Social Development, under former minister Jean Yves-Duclos and current minister Ahmed Hussen, which spent more than \$72-billion last year; Finance, which under former minister Bill Morneau spent \$99-billion; and Defence under Harjit Sajjan, which spent \$24-billion.

Government transfer payments accounted for a large portion of government spending: benefits for children, retirees, unemployed people, transfers to other levels of government, and other transfers accounted for \$243-billion in government spending, up from \$225-billion the year prior.

The government spent a total of \$363-billion last year, excluding net actuarial losses of almost \$11-billion, but including \$25-billion spent to service the national debt. The year prior, the government spent \$338-billion, excluding more than \$8-billion in net actuarial losses, and including \$23-billion in debt payments.

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	Projection							
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	
<b>Budgetary revenues</b>	334.1	275.4	335.9	357.8	377.3	398.5	417.3	
Program expenses, excluding net actuarial losses	338.5	621.4	421.2	373.9	384.4	392.9	404.0	
Public debt charges	24.4	20.2	20.3	22.4	25.7	30.5	34.3	
<b>Total expenses, excluding net actuarial losses</b>	<b>362.9</b>	<b>641.6</b>	<b>441.5</b>	<b>396.4</b>	<b>410.1</b>	<b>423.4</b>	<b>438.4</b>	
<b>Budgetary balance before net actuarial losses and stimulus</b>	<b>-28.8</b>	<b>-366.2</b>	<b>-105.6</b>	<b>-38.6</b>	<b>-32.8</b>	<b>-24.9</b>	<b>-21.0</b>	
<b>Net actuarial losses</b>	<b>-10.6</b>	<b>-15.4</b>	<b>-15.6</b>	<b>-12.1</b>	<b>-10.5</b>	<b>-6.0</b>	<b>-3.9</b>	
<b>Budgetary balance before stimulus</b>	<b>-39.4</b>	<b>-381.6</b>	<b>-121.2</b>	<b>-50.7</b>	<b>-43.3</b>	<b>-30.9</b>	<b>-24.9</b>	
Planned Stimulus			\$70-to-\$100 billion over 3 years					

A snapshot of part of the government's fiscal projections in the Fall Economic Statement released on Nov. 30. Net actuarial losses refer to changes in the government's pension and employee benefit obligations from previous years.

## Debt charges expected to stay stable through 2025-26

Thanks largely to low interest rates on government bonds, the government's bill for carrying the fast-growing national debt was \$800-million lower for April through September than it was for the same period last year, according to the Fiscal Monitor. The government's Fall Economic Statement projected that public debt charges would fall by \$5-billion for the whole of 2020-21, down to \$20-billion from \$25-billion last year.

The Fall Economic Statement projected that public debt charges would not rise above last year's \$24-billion total until 2023-24, and would amount to a similar percentage of Canada's gross domestic product—just over one per cent—through 2025-26. By then, federal net debt is projected to reach nearly \$1.5-trillion, up from \$813-billion last year and \$1.2-trillion by the end of this year.

## Treasury Board breaks out pension liability changes from budget balance figures

The federal Treasury Board also released the Public Accounts of Canada on Nov. 30, which reported details of the

propped up during the pandemic by government transfers that included more than \$80-billion spent on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit.

Corporate revenues were hit harder by the pandemic, resulting in a projected corporate tax revenue decrease of 22 per cent this fiscal year, a loss of \$11-billion. GST revenues are projected to fall by 22 per cent as well, a loss of another \$8-billion. Enterprise Crown Corporations, some of which have been used to channel money into the economy during the pandemic, are projected to collect \$25-billion less revenue than last year; that decrease is largely a result of loan losses, and of premiums paid on government debt by the Bank of Canada as part of the pandemic

The government's borrowing and spending during the pandemic has attracted considerable scrutiny, as the federal deficit has swelled to a projected \$382-billion for the current fiscal year. Most of that debt was taken on to fund support programs for businesses and individuals affected by the pandemic, but Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University—Rosedale, Ont.) promised an additional stimulus package worth between \$70- and \$100-billion over three years in her Fall Economic Statement on Nov. 30.

The government's revenues, however, have also decreased as businesses have been forced to close their doors to stem the spread of the virus, Canadians have been laid off, and economic activity has slowed

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## News

# ‘Canadian-style systemic racism’: Black public servants file suit against federal government

Proposed class-action lawsuit alleges Canada’s application of the Employment Equity Act violates the Charter equality rights of Black employees.

BY CHARELLE EVELYN

The Canadian government has failed to uphold the Charter rights of Black employees in the federal public service, shirking its responsibility to create discrimination- and harassment-free workplaces, and actively excluding Black bureaucrats, allege plaintiffs in a proposed class-action lawsuit.

“There has been a de facto practice of Black employee exclusion throughout the public service because of the permeation of systemic discrimination through Canada’s institutional structures,” said the statement of claim filed with the Federal Court in Toronto on Dec. 2.

The class action, which has not been certified, is being led by 12 former and current Black public servants, who have been employed in a variety of federal departments and agencies, including the RCMP, Canadian Revenue Agency, Canadian Human Rights Commission, Canadian Armed Forces, Statistics Canada, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, and Employment and Social Development Canada.

The representative plaintiffs, seeking \$900-million in damages on behalf of public servants since 1970 and their families, claim Black employees have been systematically excluded from advancement within the public service and that the court should impose on the government a mandatory order to implement a “Diversity and Promotional Plan for Black Public Service Employees, related to the hiring and promotion” of Black bureaucrats.

“Canada owes Black employees a duty of care,” the 45-page statement of claim said. “This duty entails an obligation to promote Black employees based on merit, talent, and ability, as is the case for any other employee.”

The suit alleges that Canada’s application of the Employment Equity Act violates the Charter equality rights of Black employees. The act designates women, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities as requiring special measures and accommodation in the public service.

“In particular, the act fails to break down the category of visible minorities and thus ignores the unique, invisible, and systemic racism faced by Black employees relative to other disadvantaged groups that are covered by the categories established by the act,” the statement of claim said, adding that decisions on hiring and promotions are governed by enabling legislation for the public service, and not subject to union grievance.

By not hiring and promoting Black employees in a manner proportional to their numbers in the public service or the overall population or to a degree consistent with the treatment of other visible minority or white public servants, “Canada has treated Black employees in an adverse differential manner and has drawn distinctions” between Black bureaucrats and those of other races.

Requests for comment from the federal Attorney General’s Office were referred to the Treasury Board Secretariat.

“As this matter is currently before the courts, the Treasury Board Secretariat cannot comment on this suit at this time,” said an email from a department spokesperson.

“The government has taken steps to address anti-Black racism, systemic discrimination, and injustice across the country. Most recently, the fall economic statement committed \$12-million over three years towards a dedicated Centre on Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service. This will accelerate the government’s commitment to achieving a representative and inclusive public service,” the email said, also highlighting the September Throne Speech where the government “announced an action plan to increase representation and leadership development within the public service.”

“Early in its mandate, the government also reflected its commitment in mandate letters, in the establishment of an Anti-Racism Strategy and Secretariat, in the appointment of a minister of diversity and inclusion and youth, and in the creation of the Office for Public Service Accessibility,” said the Treasury Board Secretariat statement.

In February, Treasury Board President Jean-Yves Duclos

(Québec, Que.) told *The Hill Times* that “the fact that Black employees tell us they are unable to be at their full potential is something of great concern to us. I will certainly address those concerns and make sure that every federal employee, including Black employees, has the ability to make the fullest impact on our society.”

## Plaintiffs outline alleged mistreatment, exclusion

One of the representative plaintiffs, Nicholas Marcus Thompson, a union leader who was named activist of the year in January by the Public Service Alliance of Canada in Toronto, works for the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Mr. Thompson has “repeatedly been denied promotions as a consequence of his race and due to his advocacy on behalf of other Black employees,” the statement of claim alleges.



Nicholas Marcus Thompson, left, is one of the representative plaintiffs in a proposed class-action lawsuit against the federal government. Former senator Donald Oliver, middle, has long championed the idea of a new federal government Department of Diversity headed by a Black deputy minister, and before leaving politics former MP Celina Caesar-Chavannes, right, introduced a bill in the last Parliament to change the Employment Equity Act. Photograph courtesy of Twitter, *The Hill Times* file photograph and photograph by Andrew Meade

Mr. Thompson, who ran as an NDP candidate in Don Valley East, Ont., in 2019, said in the statement of claim that Black employees “were ghettoized in the lower ranks” of the public service and that “merit was not a guiding principle for project assignment or advancement.” Prejudice and indifference that “made the world polite, cool, and lonely to the point of permanent exclusion” are “Canadian-style systemic racism,” the claim said.

Jennifer Philips has worked for the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for more than 30 years, during which she has only been promoted once, according to the claim. “She watched as fellow non-Black colleagues, some of whom she had trained, climbed the ranks and enjoyed the benefits of a system designed to lift them up while holding her down.” The claim said she and other Black colleagues were also subject to “explicit and demeaning comments” made about their race, national or ethnic origin, as well as “attitudes and comments dismissing their ability to carry out their duties because of their race and ethnicity.”

Shalane Rooney was one of two Black employees in a roughly

300-person Statistics Canada office. Ms. Rooney began working for the agency in 2010, and in addition to being denied promotions and raises, said, according to the statement of claim, she was subject to comments “regarding [her] hair, [her] skin being too fair to have two Black parents, [colleagues] confirming with [her] if it is okay to say the ‘N’ word,” and more.

Other plaintiffs, such as Yonita Parkes, said that after complaining about race-related treatment by co-workers, the perpetrators were shuffled out laterally instead of being held accountable, while she was ostracized.

Daniel Malcolm highlighted in the statement of claim that Black employees like himself can be overlooked for permanent roles, despite acting in them for some time, because management can set their own criteria to make their preferred appointments from candidate pools, despite qualification or competition score.

Alain Babineau—a 28-year RCMP veteran who served on the protection detail for prime ministers Jean Chrétien, Stephen Harper, and Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) before leaving the force in September 2016—alleges in the statement that his first attempts to join the force in the early 1980s included being asked “What are you going to do if you get called a ‘nigger?’” during his recruiting interview, and later being racially profiled and falsely characterized as a drug dealer. Once he made it into the force, he was referred to as “Black man” instead of his name by

the head of the drug section in which he worked. “This is the type of microaggression we endured as Black officers, but we shut our mouths and endure, on the belief that we can help to bring about change,” he said in the statement.

Bernadeth Betchi, who at one point was employed by the Prime Minister’s Office as a communications assistant to Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, alleges in the statement that her employment at both the CRA and the Canadian Human Rights Commission ultimately caused her stress, anxiety, and trauma. “As a consequence of the experiences of mistreatment and Black employee exclusion, [Ms.] Betchi lost faith in the commission’s ability to execute its mandate, seeing as it could not even promote equity within its own teams.”

## Repeated calls for change

The hiring, promotion, and overall treatment of people of colour within the public service, specifically Black people, has been a long-standing issue.

A 2000 report by the Treasury Board-created Task Force on the Participation of Visible Minorities in the Public Service noted that the federal public service, “which can be inhospitable to outsiders, can be particularly so to visible minorities,” and recommended, among other things, that the government set a benchmark for

one-in-five “for visible minority participation government-wide” within the next five years.

The most recent report on employment equity in the core public service, covering the 2018-19 fiscal year, said that of the 203,286 employees tallied in March 2019, 54.48 per cent were women (compared to an estimated workforce availability of 52.7 per cent), 5.1 per cent were Indigenous persons (against an estimated workforce availability of four per cent), 5.2 per cent were people with disabilities (compared to nine per cent workforce availability), and 16.7 per cent were visible minorities (compared to 15.3 per cent). According to the report, 19 per cent of those who identify as a visible minority in the public service are Black.

Since its establishment in late 2017, the Federal Black Employee Caucus has been pushing to get disaggregated employment equity data collected so that employees, employers, and policy-makers can all understand the landscape for Black federal bureaucrats, and to provide an element of support and unity for Black employees who are facing harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Former senator Donald Oliver has long championed the idea of a new federal government Department of Diversity headed by a Black deputy minister, and former Liberal-turned-Independent MP Celina Caesar-Chavannes introduced a private member’s bill in the dying days of the last Parliament to change the Employment Equity Act. The bill called for a requirement of the Canada Human Rights Commission to provide an annual report to the minister “on the progress made by the Government of Canada in dismantling systemic barriers that prevent members of visible minorities from being promoted within the federal public service and in remedying the disadvantages caused by those barriers.”

There are so few people of colour at the deputy and associate deputy minister level that the government won’t release numbers, for privacy reasons. Caroline Xavier, became the first Black woman to work at that level of the public service when she was appointed associate deputy minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada in February.

In October, the government awarded a contract worth \$164,415 to executive recruitment firm Odgers Berndtson to “establish and maintain on an ongoing basis an inventory of qualified and interested Black people and other racialized groups, Indigenous people, as well as persons with disabilities, from outside the federal public service for the Government of Canada to consider for the deputy minister and assistant deputy minister cadre.”

In its June 16 statement, the Parliamentary Black Caucus also highlighted “systemic discrimination and unconscious bias” in the federal public service. Signatories called for measures that included improving Black representation in the senior ranks of the public service, implementing anti-bias training and evaluation programs, and establishing an “independent champion for Black federal employees through the creation of a national public service institute.”

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The Hill Times

# Feds offer look inside Centre Block's renovation of a century



Inside the belly of the Senate: the Red Chamber is going through major restoration work. Construction workers were surprised to find that the foundation was made of rubble. Work is underway to reinforce its foundation with cement. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

PSPC has settled on leaving intact the bullet holes left behind after a fatal shootout involving RCMP officers, security, and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, who claimed allegiance to the so-called Islamic State, in the Hall of Honour on Oct. 22, 2014.

BY THE HILL TIMES STAFF

It's been two years since the lights went out at Centre Block, and construction crews have been steadily and quietly chipping away at the renovations, despite the pandemic that has scuttled many carefully laid plans.

On Dec. 2, a small group of journalists were invited to tour the ongoing renovations inside Centre Block where 40 per cent of the demolition and abatement work so far has been towards making it more habitable for the projected 450 MPs and 105 Sena-

tors who will occupy it once it is finally finished.

Adjustments are being made to the House of Commons Chamber, in anticipation of its inevitable expansion from 338 to 450 MPs in the decades ahead. With much work still to be done—masonry restoration could take six years to finish, for example—and with turnover as it is every election cycle, many current MPs likely won't get a chance to sit in the refurbished building, once it wraps up.

Rob Wright, assistant deputy minister at Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), said now that some 2.5 metric tonnes of asbestos-ridden materials have been removed, the next big project after the holidays is restoring the masonry. "We're getting ready, so the crane was just put up in place over the past week. We're getting ready for scaffolding to go on the north façade after Christmas," he told reporters, according to a pool report.

So far, PSPC said, roughly \$655-million has been allocated for work related to the renovation of Centre Block and the construction of the underground visitor's welcome centre, an initial estimate that's expected to grow as the project progresses. That covers the costs associated with decommissioning the building, removing heritage artifacts, "initial" restoration work, demolition work, removal of hazardous materials, and excavation of the

pit for the welcome centre. The department said \$119.6-million has been spent to date.

It's one piece of a larger project to give the precinct a facelift—known as the Long Term Vision and Plan—which started in 2007 and has a hefty price tag, with roughly \$4.5-billion in approved spending to date.

Cost and timeline estimates for the Centre Block building are set to be released when schematic design plans are finalized, which PSPC expects will happen in the "first quarter" of 2021, around the same time demolition and abatement work in Centre Block is expected to finish.

PSPC will leave intact the bullet holes left behind after a fatal shootout involving RCMP officers, security, and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, who claimed allegiance to the so-called Islamic State, in the Hall of Honour on Oct. 22, 2014. The assailant died in the clash, when he stormed Parliament Hill, after fatally wounding Cpl. Nathan Cirillo who was standing guard at the National War Memorial.

There had been some disagreement among Parliamentarians about whether to leave those scars behind or to patch them up.

"We don't plan on making any changes to that," said Mr. Wright. "It's been decided that's part of the heritage fabric of this building now.—With files from the Canadian Press and Laura Ryckewaert  
*The Hill Times*



The Hall of Honour, pictured, was where the fatal shootout involving RCMP officers, security, and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, who claimed allegiance to the so-called Islamic State, took place. The bullet holes will be left intact as part of the building's 'heritage fabric,' says a PSPC official. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*



Centre Block is now overrun with scaffolding, but the stained-glass windows that are a feature of the House of Commons Chamber haven't completely been obscured. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*



Marc-Olivier Ranger, a PSPC official pictured with the construction crew on Dec. 2, 2020, explains plans to build an infill in this courtyard next to the opposition lobby and House of Commons during the tour. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*



## HILL CLIMBERS

by Laura Ryckewaert

# New comms director joins Minister McKenna's team



From left to right: Infrastructure Minister Catherine McKenna, Justice Minister David Lametti, Government House Leader and Quebec Lieutenant Pablo Rodriguez, and Foreign Affairs Minister François-Philippe Champagne. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Plus, there are new hires to report in the offices of Justice Minister David Lametti, Quebec Lieutenant Pablo Rodriguez, and Foreign Affairs Minister François-Philippe Champagne.

Infrastructure and Communities Minister **Catherine McKenna** has a new head of communications in her ministerial office, with **Michelle Johnson** recently hired to take over the role.

Until recently, Ms. Johnson spent the last two years (and three months) working for the credit bureau Equifax Canada as a consultant on government strategy and innovation. Before then, up until the Ontario Liberals lost government with the province's 2018 election, she'd been a staffer at Queen's Park, last as senior policy adviser to then-Ontario status of women minister **Indira Naidoo-Harris**.

An ex-president of the Ontario Young Liberals, Ms. Johnson is also a former aide to former Ontario MPP **Brad Duguid**, including as a policy adviser in his office as economic development minister and as an issues manager and legislative assistant in his office as minister of training, colleges, and universities.



Michelle Johnson is now communications director to the infrastructure minister. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Her LinkedIn profile indicates that, along with a bachelor's degree in history and political science from the University of Toronto, Ms. Johnson recently became a registered holistic nutritionist, via the Canadian School of Natural Nutrition.

In Ms. McKenna's office, she replaces **Elyse Surette-DiMuzio** as communications director.

A former digital communications adviser in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** office (PMO), Ms. Surette-DiMuzio joined Ms. McKenna's team in September to replace **David Taylor**, who had then just returned to Justice Minister **David Lametti's** office as director of communications. She worked in the PMO from May 2018 until last January, when she exited to work for the **Pete Buttigieg's** campaign for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination.

Keep reading *Hill Climbers* for any update on where Ms. Surette-DiMuzio has headed.

Ms. Johnson is now working alongside Ms. McKenna's press secretary, **Chantalle Aubertin**, and also oversees digital communications adviser **Murielle Pierre**.

**Adam Carroll** is chief of staff to Ms. McKenna.

Speaking of Mr. Lametti, the minister has a new staffer of his own, with **Bennett "BJ" Jensen** having recently been hired as an adviser. He'll be weighing in both on policy and litigation files for the office and marked his first day with the justice team on Nov. 10.



Bennett 'BJ' Jensen has joined the justice minister's team. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Mr. Jensen has spent the last seven years working for Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP in New York City, starting as a litigation associate in 2013. He's been working as a pro bono attorney with the firm since 2016.

According to a 2019 write-up on the American Bar Association's website, Mr. Jensen was the firm's first-ever pro bono associate, and "has been a leader in the firm's response to the family separation crisis," including "overseeing teams of attorneys working in detention facilities around the country" and "directing the firm's involvement in the ACLU's immigrant family separation federal litigation." Earlier this year, he was named to the LGBT Bar Association's Best 40 LGBTQ+ Lawyers Under 40 list.

Mr. Jensen studied law at McGill University, and before heading off to New York, was a judicial law clerk with the federal court of Canada in Ottawa, including for former chief justice **Allan Lutfy**. He also has a bachelor's degree in international development and environmental studies from Queen's University.

A write-up from McGill's law faculty about his work around the U.S. family separation policy in 2018 notes Mr. Jensen grew up in Ottawa.

"Jensen has helped spearhead Paul, Weiss's child reunification efforts, which have included dispatching lawyers to do on-the-ground work with detained parents in Texas and Albany, N.Y.," reads the piece.

**Nicholas Daube** is director of policy and litigation to Mr. Lametti, and oversees a team that also includes policy advisers **Olivier Jarda** and **Nadia Kadri**. **François Giroux** is judicial affairs adviser, while **Caroline Tanyan** is a special assistant for judicial affairs.

**Rachel Doran** is chief of staff to Mr. Lametti.

## New adviser in Quebec lieutenant's office

Government House Leader and Quebec Lieutenant **Pablo Rodriguez** has a new regional adviser in his office, **Jamee St-Hilaire**.

If Mr. St-Hilaire's name rings a bell, it's because he previously worked as a political staffer on the Hill, up until the end of 2018. Since then, he's been busy as director general of the Espace entrepreneuriat région Thetford (E2RT) in Thetford Mines, Que. He's also been a political commentator on Thetford Mines' 105.5 FM.

Mr. St-Hilaire started out on the Hill as parliamentary assistant to then-Quebec Liberal MP **Linda Lapointe** after the 2015 election. (Ms. Lapointe is now working in the PMO as one of two caucus liaisons.)

At the end of 2017, he joined then-health minister **Ginette Petitpas Taylor's** office as a Quebec regional affairs adviser, later adding parliamentary affairs adviser to his title.

Mr. St-Hilaire is now a regional adviser to the government's Quebec lieutenant.

*Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Mr. Rodriguez as Quebec lieutenant, which is led by chief of staff **Geneviève Hinse**, and has staff working in both Ottawa and Montreal.

Also part of this team are regional affairs directors **Marie-Laurence Lapointe**, **Paul-Christian Nolin**, and **Norair Seren-gulian**; director of operations **Agathe Alie**; senior regional advisers **Ramez Ayoub** and **Eric Beaulieu**; and **Caroline Morchat**, executive assistant to Ms. Hinse.

There's also a recent staff addition to report in Foreign Affairs Minister **François-Philippe Champagne's** office.

**Salman Arif** has joined the minister's team as a special assistant for operations. He spent the last two and a half years

working in the finance minister's office, starting in May 2018 as an Ontario regional affairs adviser and executive assistant to then-minister **Bill Morneau**.

Mr. Arif had previously been

a constituency assistant to Mr. Morneau as the MP for Toronto Centre, Ont., hired on after interning in his office as finance minister over the summer of 2017.

Mr. Arif is a former vice-president for organization for the Young Liberals of Canada. He has a bachelor's degree in politics and governance from Ryerson University and while there served for a term as president of the Ryerson Young Liberals.

**Allison Chick** is director of operations to Mr. Champagne, whose office is led by chief of staff **Daniel Lauzon**. Mr. Lauzon was previously director of communications to Mr. Morneau as finance minister, but left to become chief of staff to Economic Development Minister **Mélanie Joly** in July 2018, meaning his time at finance only overlapped with Mr. Arif's for a couple of months.

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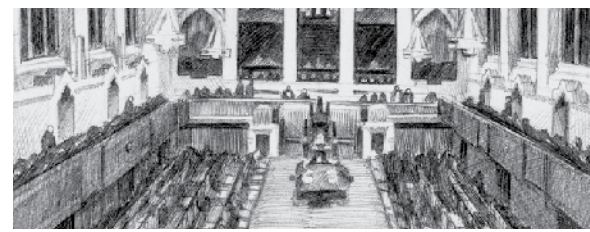
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# Parliamentary Calendar



## Assembly of First Nations to hold two-day general assembly Dec. 8-9, virtually

The Assembly of First Nations will hold a two-day virtual 41st Annual General Assembly from Dec. 8-9. This event was postponed from the summer, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each day will run from 10:45 a.m. to 6 p.m., and feature addresses from National Chief Perry Bellegarde, pictured, council updates, resolution plenary sessions, as well as messages and question-and-answer sessions from the prime minister and members of his cabinet. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

### MONDAY, DEC. 7

**Moyra Davey: The Faithful**—National Gallery of Canada hosts this new exhibition, *Moyra Davey: The Faithful*, featuring the work of one of Canada's most innovative conceptual artists, on now until Jan. 3, 2021. National Gallery of Canada, 380 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. This new exhibition features 54 photographs and 6 films by Davey, along with more than a dozen works from the Gallery collection. Developed by the artist and curator Andrea Kunard, the exhibition explores the artist's trajectory from early images of family and friends, through portraits of the detritus of everyday life, her mailed photographs, and films examining the work of authors, philosophers and artists. <https://www.gallery.ca/whats-on/exhibitions-and-galleries/moyra-davey-the-faithful>

### TUESDAY, DEC. 8

**AFN General Assembly**—The Assembly of First Nations will hold a two-day virtual 41st Annual General Assembly from Dec. 8-9. This event was postponed from the summer, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each

day will run from 10:45 a.m. to 6 p.m., and feature addresses from National Chief Perry Bellegarde, council updates, resolution plenary sessions, as well as messages and question-and-answer sessions from the prime minister and members of his cabinet. Information available at <https://www.afn.ca/2020-annual-general-assembly/>.

### WEDNESDAY, DEC. 9

**In Conversation With Peter Mansbridge**—A Pearson Centre webinar with Peter Mansbridge about his new book, *Extraordinary Canadians*. Thursday, Dec. 9, 12-12:30 p.m. (ET) In his new book, Mansbridge recounts the stories from some of his favourite Canadians —advocates, politicians, doctors, veterans, immigrants, business leaders, and more. After 50 years with the CBC, Mansbridge has anchored some of the most important events in recent Canadian history, from federal elections, to visits from the Queen, and 12 Remembrance Day ceremonies. Hosted by Andrew Cardozo, president of the Pearson Centre. [register.gotowebinar.com/register/5131918157198718736](https://www.pearsoncentre.ca/register/5131918157198718736)

**Too Small to Fail**—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a panel discussion on "Too Small to Fail: Canada's Economic Recovery Needs a Small Business Rebound." *The Toronto Star's* Heather Scofield will moderate the discussion featuring Paul Thompson, associate deputy minister of Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada; Perrin Beatty, president and CEO, Canadian Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Wendy Cukier, professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategy, Ted Rogers School of Management; and John Stackhouse, senior vice-president, Office of the CEO, RBC. Wednesday, Dec. 9, 3 p.m. Register at [canadianclubottawa.ca](https://canadianclubottawa.ca).

### THURSDAY, DEC. 10

**Prime Minister to Host First Ministers Meeting**—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will host a first ministers meeting on funding for health care on Dec. 10. The premier want to focus on the annual federal transfer payments to the provinces and territories for health care, but the government also wants to talk about strengthening health care. Premiers had

been asking for a first ministers meeting with the prime minister since September. For more information, call the PMO Press Office at 613-957-5555.

**Nation Builder of the Year Award**—The Empire Club hosts the second annual Nation Builder of the Year Award. Canada's frontline workers will receive this year's award. Among the list of speakers thanking and congratulating the men and women who have kept us safe and functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic are Speaker of the House of Commons Anthony Rota, Chief Medical Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde, World Health Organization Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Ontario Premier Doug Ford, and former governor general Adrienne Clarkson. Thursday, Dec. 10, at noon. Register at [empireclubofcanada.com/nb2020](https://empireclubofcanada.com/nb2020).

**Meet & Greet With Erin O'Toole, Hosted by Jordan Kupinsky**—Jordan Kupinsky will host this virtual meet and greet with Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole on Thursday, Dec. 10, 5 p.m. EST. It's a Zoom virtual event. [www.conservative.ca/events](https://www.conservative.ca/events)

**Meet & Greet With Erin O'Toole, Hosted by Stewart Lyons**—Stewart Lyons will host this virtual meet and greet with Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole on Thursday, Dec. 10, 6 p.m. EST. It's a Zoom virtual event. [www.conservative.ca/events](https://www.conservative.ca/events)

**Populism in the American Election: Lessons for Canada**—A Pearson Centre webinar with Justin Gest, author and associate professor of policy and government at George Mason University in Washington, D.C., in conversation with former Ontario premier Dalton McGuinty, on Thursday, Dec. 10, 7-8 p.m. (ET) Prof. Gest has written extensively on the growing sense of marginalization driving

people to the extremes while the middle is getting hollowed out, or at least is getting squeezed out of the political discourse. Megaphone politics, bumper sticker slogans and tweets are the main forms of political discourse. So, that's in the United States, but it's in Canada, too. [register.gotowebinar.com/register/119286427589080075](https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/119286427589080075)

### FRIDAY, DEC. 11

**Last Scheduled House Sitting Day**—Today marks the last scheduled sitting day of 2020 for the House of Commons.

### SATURDAY, DEC. 12

**Press Gallery Children's Christmas Party 2020**—The annual Press Gallery Children's Christmas Party will be moving to your living room on Saturday, Dec. 12 at 1 p.m. Members of the Hill who have small children taking part in this year's virtual party should pick up their loot bags and gifts for the children on Dec. 7 at the National Press Theatre in Ottawa. This year's party will include: loot bags, individual gifts, a magic show, a message from Santa, arcade games and colouring. Families are also asked to send in video messages of good cheer, or family photos.

*The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to [news@hilltimes.com](mailto:news@hilltimes.com) by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper. We can't guarantee inclusion of every event, but we will definitely do our best. Events can be updated daily online, too.*  
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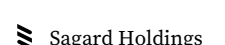
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