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THIRTY-SECOND YEAR, NO. 1793

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News

Trudeau's cabinet shuffle yet another indication Liberals 'clearing the decks' for a spring election, say political watchers

BY ABBAS RANA

The Liberals deny it, but political insiders say last week's cabinet shuffle is yet another indication Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is setting the stage for a spring election, and that the new cabinet is the governing party's election cabinet.

Last week's shuffle was triggered after Navdeep Bains (Mississauga-Malton, Ont.) informed Mr. Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) that he wanted to step down as innovation minister

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News

Pandemic election bill far from the finish line, as talk of spring vote continues

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

A mid-pandemic spring election would cause big problems, and it could come before proposed changes to make the electoral process safer have come into effect, says former head of Elections Canada Jean-Pierre Kingsley.

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News

Conservatives need to chart 'uniquely Canadian' vision of party in wake of Capitol Hill insurrection, say political players

Political parties can choose to either rile up populists within their base, or 'spend the time and do the work' to find out, and address, what is making them angry, says Conservative strategist Ken Boessenkool.



Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole, pictured Oct. 28, 2020, in Ottawa. Pollster Nik Nanos says he believes Mr. O'Toole 'needs to have a blanket position that is against violence, that is in favour of law and order, and in favour of stable democracy.' The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued on page 19

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

Multiple Conservatives have publicly condemned the violent insurrection that over-

took the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 and left five dead, but strategists, pollsters, and experts say the party still has a lot of work to do to address extremist views

that reside within the Conservative tent in Canada—as quickly as possible.

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News

With Trump leaving and Biden taking over as U.S. president, 'stars aligned' for Canada on having a 'stable, experienced partner,' say politicos

BY ABBAS RANA

With now-impeached U.S. President Donald Trump on his way out and U.S. president-elect Joe Biden's administration taking over power this week, political insiders say they are expecting a "predictable and experienced" partner on foreign policy and trade issues for Canada to work with in the next four years.

"He already has an excellent relationship with Prime Minister Trudeau," said Raymond Chrétien, referring to Mr. Biden.

News

As Ford declares second state of emergency, some federal Ontario MPS say situation at 'critical point', looking for more clarity

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

Following Ontario's second state of emergency declared last week since the pandemic began as a result of escalating COVID-19

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HEARD ON THE HILL

by Palak Mangat

Defenestration talk: Scheer inadvertently helps some politicians learn new word



This just in: Former top PMO adviser and longtime Justin Trudeau ally Gerry Butts, left, drew a rebuke from former Conservative leader Andrew Scheer last week on Twitter. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



Close Justin Trudeau ally and PMO alum **Gerry Butts** drew the ire of former Conservative leader **Andrew Scheer** last week.

Amid a Twitter exchange about right-wing media outlet *The Rebel's* framing of an email exchange with Conservative Leader **Erin O'Toole's** press secretary as an "exclusive interview" with the leader, Mr. Butts called the party's decision to interact with the outlet a "giant leap backward." If the Conservatives "can't defenestrate this merry band they're not going far," he said, using that term again later on.

"So [Mr. Trudeau's] senior adviser just called for people to be thrown out a window to their death. Now, will the PM denounce this incitement to violence? Does this violate any kind of community standard for Twitter," reacted Mr. Scheer in response.

Mr. Butts, who was a top adviser to Prime Minister Trudeau, left the PMO amid the SNC-Lavalin scandal nearly two years ago.

The confusion appeared to be caused by the use of the term "defenestrate," which means to throw something out a window or, in its less formal version, dismiss somebody from a post of authority.

Mr. Scheer's mix-up served as fodder for commentators, some of whom joked that it helped them "learn a new word."

Canadaland's Oppo bites the dust

Listeners learned last week that one Canadian political podcast will be ending its run.

Canadaland's Oppo, which featured former B.C. lawyer and *National Observer* columnist **Sandy Garossino** exchanging her hot takes on the day's news with **Jen Gerson**, of *National Post* fame, is no more.

"We will be launching a new Canadian politics podcast on the same feed very soon. Wait for it!" tweeted the *Canadaland* account on Jan. 7.

The show was also sometimes hosted by freelance journalist and author **Justin Ling**, whose fiery banter with Ms. Gerson made the show all the more entertaining. Mr. Ling has cut his teeth over the years as a freelancer with bylines in various Canadian newspapers. (Fun fact about the other regular host: Ms. Garossino's daughter is Canadian singer **Grimes**, also known as **Claire Elise Boucher**, who is the partner of Tesla founder and tech entrepreneur **Elon Musk**.)



Freelance reporter Justin Ling, pictured in 2016, helped host a now-defunct *Canadaland* podcast. *The Hill Times* file photograph

"Oppo has come to its natural end," tweeted Ms. Gerson, thanking media critic and *Canadaland* founder **Jesse Brown** for recruiting her to the role. "Audio was never my first love, but I learned a lot creating this show and I'm so glad I took the leap and signed on."

Longtime Trudeau aide Mike McNair plans move to London, U.K.

Former PMO staffer **Mike McNair** is headed to the U.K.

In a Jan. 7 tweet, Mr. McNair, who previously served as a special adviser on the feds' economic response to COVID-19, said he will be an associate partner in London with McKinsey & Company starting in February.

"Our family is moving after the school year. We're excited for the new adventure. I



Former PMO staffer Mike McNair, pictured in 2015, is heading to London for a new adventure. *The Hill Times* file photograph

hope to re-connect with former colleagues in the UK & welcome visitors post-pandemic," he said.

Mr. McNair left the PMO for a second time last fall. He served as Mr. Trudeau's head of policy, beginning when the Liberals were in opposition in 2013 and ending in January 2020.

Helping draft the party's 2015 platform, Mr. McNair's resumé includes policy work for former Liberal leaders **Stéphane Dion** and **Michael Ignatieff**.

According to *Hill Climbers*, he has three young children and holds a master's degree from the London School of Economics and political science.

First Inuit-language TV channel to hit airwaves on Monday, Jan. 18

Canada's first Inuit-language TV channel will make its debut on Monday.



Writer and director Lucy Tulugarjuk says it is a 'dream come true' to help launch the country's first Inuit-language TV channel. Photograph courtesy of Inuit Art Foundation's YouTube

On Jan. 18, Nunavut Independent Television and IsumaTV will launch Uvagut TV, which means "our TV," by offering 168 hours a week of Inuit-produced arts, culture, movies, and other programming.

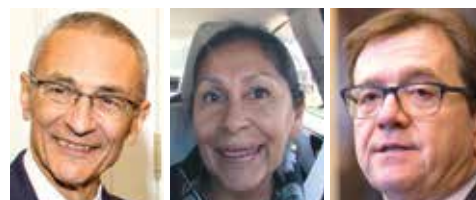
Available to those with Shaw Direct satellite and subscribers of Arctic Co-ops in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, it can also be streamed online at any time.

The project is four decades in the making, according to a Jan. 14 release from NITV shared by the *Globe's* **Barry Hertz**, which was founded in 1991 as a "training centre for Inuit community filmmaking."

"Uvagut TV is a dream come true—to see Inuit culture and to hear our language full time on TV," said NITV chair and executive director, **Lucy Tulugarjuk**, in the release. "As our elders pass away, we are fighting against time to keep Inuit culture and language alive for our children and grandchildren. TV in Inuktitut all day every day is a powerful way to keep a living language for future generations."

Former Clinton, Obama aide rubs shoulders with Wilkinson

Environment Minister **Jonathan Wilkinson** is expected to chat about the incoming



John Podesta, left, former chief of staff to Bill Clinton and a former top adviser to Barack Obama, Canadian Senator Rosa Galvez, and Canada's Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson. *The Hill Times* file photographs and courtesy Commons Wikimedia

Joe Biden administration and its impact on Canada's climate change agenda with **John Podesta**, a former **Bill Clinton** and **Barack Obama** aide, at an event on Tuesday.

Hosted by GreenPAC, the free event will feature a "fireside chat" between the two, which will be moderated by Quebec Independent Senator **Rosa Galvez**, who is an expert in pollution control.

It is scheduled for 4 p.m. on Jan. 19, the day before Mr. Biden is expected to be inaugurated to the White House.

Noam Chomsky chats about UN nuclear ban pact

Renowned political activist and academic **Noam Chomsky** will take part in a webinar hosted by the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute on Friday, to help mark the day the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons kicks in.

Signed in 2017, the pact bans members from using, stocking, buying, producing, and developing nuclear weapons, along with deploying them on its territory. It comes into effect Jan. 22, and countries like Bangladesh, Austria, Mexico, and several African nations have signed on.

Mr. Chomsky will speak about why Canada should also commit to the UN pact. Those interested can register online for the free webinar.

New boss at Quebec paper

Stéphanie Grammond was appointed the new editor-in-chief at *La Presse* last week.



Longtime Quebec reporter Stéphanie Grammond is the new boss at *La Presse*. Photograph courtesy of *La Presse*

Tweeting she is "very, very proud to become the first woman" to steer the ship at the paper, Ms. Grammond enters the post with 20 years of experience under her belt. She previously wrote columns for the business section, and will continue to serve as head of the paper's debate section.

"I hope to encourage all women to speak in our pages. The debates section is a lung that circulates ideas from all walks of life and brings oxygen to our democracy," she said in a Jan. 14 release.

"At a time when ideas are polarizing... it is a discussion forum that maintains a dialogue that is essential for society."

Ms. Grammond studied communications at the University of Quebec in Montreal, before launching her career in broadcast at ICI RDI in 1995. She went on to work at *Les Affaires* for four years before making the move to *La Presse* in the early 2000s.

She has covered topics like investment, consumption, and personal finance, and has authored a book, *Acheter sans se faire rouler*.

Ms. Grammond replaces **Éric Trottier**, who stepped down in January to take a vacation and "see what kind of man I can be" outside of the role.

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CORRECTION: *The Hill Times*, Jan. 13 issue

"Canadian conservatives content to keep courting the whitelash," (*The Hill Times*, Jan. 13, p. 15). This article incorrectly stated that the Conservative Party's now-deleted fundraising page stating "Justin Trudeau is rigging the next election in his favour," was created under the direction of current leader Erin O'Toole. It predated the 2019 election and Mr. O'Toole's August 2020 election as party leader. *The Hill Times* regrets the error.

COVID-19: a national emergency demands a national response

As Canada finds itself at another critical juncture on the pandemic path, we believe that it is time for the federal government to recognize the growing number of COVID-19 infections as a national emergency, and pursuant to subsection 6(1), based on the definition contained in 5(b), invoke the Emergencies Act, and the accompanying temporary authorities.



Joe Jordan & Tim Barber

Opinion

OTTAWA—There are many things about this pandemic that we do not know, such as vaccine efficacy against emerging variants or the long-term health implications of infection. However, we do know that close to 17,000 Canadians have died directly from COVID-19 and even the most optimistic projections push the eventual number of deaths to more than 30,000.

As Canada finds itself at another critical juncture on the pandemic path, we believe that it is time for the federal government to recognize the growing number of COVID-19 infections as a national emergency, and pursuant to subsection 6(1), based on the definition contained in 5(b), invoke the



The clock is ticking: We are entering an era of pandemics. The global consequences of historical decisions are impacting us now and will continue to impact us in the foreseeable future. Even if this action ends up being an overreach, we can fully expect to have to use these authorities in the future and any practical experience we can acquire will be invaluable going forward, write Joe Jordan and Tim Barber. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Emergencies Act, and the accompanying temporary authorities.

Given that Sec. 3(a) states; “For the purposes of this act, a national emergency is an urgent and critical situation of a temporary nature that seriously endangers the lives, health or safety of Canadians and is of such proportions or nature as to exceed the capacity or authority of a province to deal with it ...,” there really can be little debate concerning the legality or appropriateness of this action.

The oversight mechanisms inherent in the act should bring the necessary comforts to those who would be concerned with reallocations of authorities between levels of government.

In terms of process, the governor in council, which is the Governor General acting with the advice and consent of cabinet, should immediately begin consultations with the provinces to clearly state the rationale for the declaration and, to the extent possible, state the scope and scale

of the temporary authorities they intend to assume.

Parliament would need to be recalled to debate and approve the action within seven days of the declaration, allowing our federal leaders to go on the record concerning this action and perhaps identify alternative strategies.

Incidentally, the Senate may want to examine the criteria outlined in Sec. 62(2) outlining the membership on the Parliamentary Review Committee.

At a minimum, the government should use the act to put in place national lockdown measures, based on a consensus of the best public health information available. In addition to the acquisition of vaccine supply, they should assume responsibility for every activity necessary for getting the vaccine into the arms of all Canadians—the Canadian Forces could play a role in the effort. Last, we believe the vaccine should be mandatory unless there is a valid medically certified reason for an exemption.

Using an existing legislative mechanism to centralize control over the governmental response, to an issue that is life or death, should not be a controversial topic.

So, to the people who would object to this action based on the encroachment of provincial rights, given that we cannot yet figure out how to legally ship liquor between the provinces, let us just admit that our domestic governance model has advantages and disadvantages and the effective, timely, and coordinated response to a global pandemic may not be one of the advantages.

To the folks who would see this action as placing unacceptable restrictions on their personal freedom, always remember that the most enlightened state of freedom is death.

To our elected representatives, we would point out that this is the job you signed up for, and although actually doing something has risks, doing nothing has larger risks. The clock is ticking.

To provincial governments, the pandemic response is a team sport and Canadians expect unprecedented levels of cooperation. This is not a reflection on your competence, the entire world is struggling with this.

To the federal government, this action would take courage. With centralized authority comes centralized accountability. We have already seen the government finger-pointing, this action would point all the fingers in the same direction.

Finally, to all Canadians, we are entering an era of pandemics. The global consequences of historical decisions are impacting us now and will continue to impact us in the foreseeable future. Even if this action ends up being an overreach, we can fully expect to have to use these authorities in the future and any practical experience we can acquire will be invaluable going forward.

Joe Jordan is a second-generation former Liberal Member of Parliament, who represented the Eastern Ontario riding of Leeds-Grenville from 1997 to 2004 and is a senior associate with the public relations firm, Bluesky Strategy Group in Ottawa. Tim Barber is one of the co-founders of the independent, progressive think-tank Canada 2020 and the public relations firm, Bluesky Strategy Group in Ottawa.

The Hill Times

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Twitter's crackdown on Trump 'a Band-Aid on a wound,' say politicians

Liberal MP Ken Hardie, a former broadcaster, says he doesn't want to see lawmakers or social media companies 'running rampant over free expression,' but there is a 'fine line' that needs to be walked that allows them to facilitate free expression 'that, at the very least, comes with accountability.'

BY PALAK MANGAT



Canadian politicians talk about Trump's Twitter ban: NDP MP Brian Masse, left, Liberal MP John McKay, centre, and Liberal MP Ken Hardie, right, all say the storming of the Capitol Building in Washington this month should lead lawmakers and social media companies to do some soul searching. *The Hill Times* file photographs

The de-platforming of outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump by various social media companies is akin to putting a Band-Aid on a wound and should prompt deep reflection about the conditions that led to the political violence in the U.S., say some politicians. Mr. Trump was impeached on Jan. 13 by the U.S. House of Representatives for a second time in his presidency, this time for inciting the violent insurrection against the Capitol.

"There is a need for a complete, 360-degree look at the state of the world right now, in terms of influencers and how they propagate their messages, to see what we can do to take the conditions that gave rise to [him] and reverse engineer everything that happened," said Liberal MP Ken Hardie (Fleetwood-Port Kells, B.C.), a former broadcaster.

On Jan. 6, Mr. Trump egged on his supporters who had flocked to Washington, D.C., in a show of support for his baseless claims that the election had been fraudulent, as Congress met to certify the victory of U.S. president-elect Joe Biden. He told his supporters that day, "if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore," and even promised to march alongside them.

At least five people died, including a police officer. Another Capitol Hill police officer committed suicide. In the wake of the violence, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube banned or limited Mr. Trump from their platforms, citing the potential for further incitement of violence. Twitter has long been Mr. Trump's preferred bullhorn; he had a reach of 88 million followers before his page went dark.

News of the restrictions also sparked international debate. German Chancellor Angela Merkel called the move "problem-

atic," with a spokesperson calling freedom of speech "a fundamental right of elementary significance." Limitations on accounts should be subject to the law and done in accordance with a "framework defined by legislators, not according to a decision by the management" of such platforms.

Mr. Hardie said that social media giants will likely take stock of regulations that have dated back to the last century as they reflect on how to balance concerns about free speech and false information.

For example, since 1949, some American broadcasters operated under the fairness doctrine, which, in effect, required them to offer "fair and balanced" perspectives on public issues to diversify their content for viewers.

It was scrapped in 1987, which paved the way for the resurgence of TV programs that only offered one viewpoint, which have become "toxic" and "damaging to democracy," said Mr. Hardie.

To adapt that to the modern context and social media giants, Mr. Hardie said, algorithms could be created to say, "OK, you've just read this article that offers this perspective. Here are two to three articles that offer different perspectives."

Mr. Hardie said he doesn't want to see lawmakers or social media companies "running rampant over free expression," but there is a "fine line" that needs to be walked that allows them to facilitate free expression "that, at the very least, comes with accountability."

Allan Thompson, who heads Carleton University's journalism school, said there is a need to reflect on Mr. Trump's presidency

and his use of social media to push false information.

"In some ways, the most awful, pernicious legacy of Donald Trump is changing the goalposts around public discourse," said Prof. Thompson, who ran as a Liberal candidate in the 2015 and 2019 elections but placed second to the Conservative incumbent.

"There was a time when, if journalists could prove definitively that a public figure had lied, was knowingly lying and deceiving and sharing a falsehood, that could almost be career-ending. And now, that just seems like a quaint notion," he added. "I don't know how we turn back the clocks somehow and get back to a time where it really would matter."

In the lead-up to last November's U.S. election, Twitter began slapping disclaimers on Mr. Trump's tweets. They included flagging his messages claiming election fraud with a "disputed" label.

Liberal MP John McKay (Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont.) said Mr. Trump, like other politicians, regularly operated in the largely unregulated digital space.

"I think there was a collective view articulately expressed by the CEOs of these various platforms that enough was enough, and inciting a riot at Capitol Hill was not something they want to have themselves associated with," said Mr. McKay.

He said his "first question" was how permanent such actions to ban or otherwise limit Mr. Trump's access will be, given social media companies have not been the most "enthusiastic" about being subject to regulation.

While Twitter's ban is permanent, YouTube said last week

that Mr. Trump's channel would be temporarily prevented from uploading new videos or live streams for at least a week.

"They're all going to be, one way or another, expressing their own personal preferences. But I don't know where this thing settles down," said Mr. McKay. "The first step has been taken to self-regulation. My guess is that the self-regulation may turn into real regulation, much like other media forms, that are subject to the rules of libel, slander, and truthfulness."

Prof. Thompson said the breaking point to ban Mr. Trump from Twitter appeared to be tied to the events on the Capitol.

"He crossed a line when the direct incitement, essentially in front of our eyes, had as close to a cause-and-effect outcome as we'd probably seen in our lifetimes," he said. Pointing to Mr. Trump's comments just hours before the siege, when he told supporters to "save our democracy" and "show strength," Prof. Thompson said it was "coded language."

"There is a direct link. For anyone to try and weasel out of whether or not he was inciting that crowd to take some sort of action that day, I just don't think that argument stands," he added.

NDP MP Brian Masse (Windsor West, Ont.), his party's digital government critic, agreed social media giants "have to be looking at themselves, at how much they fostered the situation that eventually bore itself out in Washington."

He said his presidency should be a "lesson" for tech giants as they move forward and continue to frame their platforms as "new tools for communication" and learning.

"But we can't ignore the fact that, on these platforms, there's

far too much bigotry, sexism, racism, and now, it appears, some were used for calculating and planning violence."

Reached for comment, Conservative MPs Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon-Grasswood, Sask.), Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River-Parkland, Alta.), and Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park-Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.) were unavailable.

Almost a week after the siege, Twitter last week shared that about 70,000 accounts were also suspended.

"These accounts were engaged in sharing harmful QAnon-associated content at scale and were primarily dedicated to the propagation of this conspiracy theory across the service," the company wrote in a blog post.

According to the BBC, the popular conspiracy theory claims that Mr. Trump has been waging a war against elite Satan-worshipping figures who hold posts in the media, business, and government.

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Platforms that have banned or restricted U.S. President Donald Trump so far:

- Twitter – permanently banned
- Facebook – banned indefinitely, at least through presidential transition
- Instagram – banned indefinitely, at least through presidential transition
- YouTube – banned from posting, commenting for at least a week
- Snapchat – suspended indefinitely



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres hailed the treaty as 'historic,' adding that it will 'form an important component of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime,' and set a new global norm against nuclear weapons. Photograph courtesy of Commons Wikimedia

Government clams up on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Treaty which comes into force on Jan. 22

The 'democratic deficit' in Canada is shocking. The government is allowing NATO to bamboozle Canadians with its false nuclear deterrence doctrine. The Prohibition Treaty is an act of conscience by distressed governments and civil society leaders, and it deserves a hearing.



Douglas Roche

Opinion

EDMONTON—With NATO breathing down its neck, the Government of Canada has clammed up on what it will say about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which enters into force Jan. 22. The treaty, signed by 122 nations in 2017, is a breakthrough because it bans the possession of nuclear weapons for those states adhering to it. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres hailed the treaty as "historic," adding that it will "form an important component of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime" and set a new global norm against nuclear weapons.

But NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg says the Prohibition Treaty "would

undermine the security of our alliance," and NATO has stiffened its opposition.

I asked Global Affairs Canada how the opposite positions of the UN and NATO heads could be reconciled. I thought it was a reasonable question to put, since, on Oct. 26, 2020, the government said: "We acknowledge the widespread frustration with the pace of global efforts toward nuclear disarmament, which clearly motivated the negotiation of the [Prohibition Treaty]."

The government went coy and, in its answer, referred me to the "pragmatic approach" of the Non-Proliferation Treaty "that takes into consideration the security considerations of all states." In other words: silence on the Prohibition Treaty. The government doesn't want to talk about it. Why?

The reason is easy to discern. When the Canadian statement recognizing the reason for the Prohibition Treaty reached NATO headquarters, it added to the "soft tones" now colouring the response to the treaty in some NATO countries. A study reported by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace showed that, in several NATO states, significant numbers of citizens and civil society organizations and their political representatives strongly

support the treaty. In Belgium, 77 per cent of the population is in favour of that country signing it. Fifty-six former high officials of NATO countries, including two former NATO secretaries-general, signed an open letter supporting the treaty.

With support building up, NATO struck back and, in December, the North Atlantic Council issued a withering denunciation of the treaty on the grounds that the Non-Proliferation Treaty "remains the only credible path to nuclear disarmament." NATO doubled down in its objection, saying it would "reject any attempt to delegitimize nuclear deterrence." Thus, NATO is intimidating countries like Canada, which had begun a move towards at least acknowledging the reasons for the Prohibition Treaty.

It needs to be remembered that three NATO states (the U.S., the U.K. and France) possess nuclear weapons, five others host U.S. nuclear weapons on their soil, and all NATO members subscribe to NATO policy that nuclear weapons are the "supreme guarantee" of security. These states, including Canada, cling to the Non-Proliferation Treaty even though its major demand, comprehensive negotiation toward the elimination of nuclear weapons, has been ignored for 50 years.

Two former Canadian prime ministers (Jean Chrétien and the late John Turner), three former Canadian foreign ministers (Lloyd Axworthy, Bill Graham, John Manley) and two former Canadian defence ministers (Jean-Jacques Blais, John McCallum) have openly rebuked NATO's moribund policies and supported the Prohibition Treaty. But the government won't even respond to these leading Liberal figures. Both Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Secretary Rob Oliphant and UN Ambassador Bob Rae declined to be interviewed for this column.

The government's ambivalence has sparked the overnight formation of a coalition of Canadian activists, comprising 90 groups and 100 individuals, pushing the government to hold a parliamentary debate on the Prohibition Treaty, followed up by parliamentary committees hearings. Anton Wagner, leader of the coalition, says: "What brings all these organizations and individuals together is the concern that there is a great democratic deficit in Canada where Parliament and our political leaders refuse to debate the existential threat that nuclear weapons represent to human existence and civilization."

The "democratic deficit" in Canada is shocking. The government is allowing NATO to bamboozle Canadians with its false nuclear deterrence doctrine. The Pro-

How the Government of Canada Responded to Questions on the Nuclear Prohibition Treaty

On Jan. 8, 2021, I sent the following questions asking about Canada's policy on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to Global Affairs Canada:

1. How to reconcile the opposing statements of the UN Secretary-General and the NATO Secretary-General on the Prohibition Treaty?
2. Does Canada acknowledge the support of a majority of UN States for the Prohibition Treaty and its complementarity to the NPT?
3. Has Canada responded to the Open Letter of Sept. 21, 2020, by 56 former high officials of NATO countries supporting the [Prohibition Treaty], including two former Canadian prime ministers, three former Canadian foreign ministers and two former Canadian defence ministers?

Global Affairs' response, sent Jan. 11, to the above questions:

"Canada has long been an important player in global nuclear disarmament and remains committed to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

"The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is at the root of every aspect of Canada's nuclear policy. With 191 States parties, adherence to the NPT is nearly universal. At a time of heightened global tensions, it is even more critical that we work together to reinforce our collective commitment to the NPT and advance our shared goals on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Canada will continue to act as a bridge-builder, working to unite States in taking concrete steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

"Canada maintains that progress toward nuclear disarmament is most effectively pursued through a pragmatic approach anchored in the NPT that takes into account the security considerations of all States. This approach aims to halt the spread of nuclear weapons, reduce existing stockpiles, and, ultimately, eliminate these weapons in a manner that is verifiable and irreversible."

hibition Treaty is an act of conscience by distressed governments and civil society leaders, and it deserves a hearing. Instead of ducking, the Canadian government should encourage a broad dialogue on how security can be maintained without nuclear weapons. It should acknowledge the Prohibition Treaty and work with NATO to bring the organization into conformity with it.

But there will be some parliamentary action, at least. Shortly, Parliamentary Green Party Leader Elizabeth May will introduce a petition in the House, calling on Canada to accede to the Prohibition Treaty, and the government will have to respond.

At this tense moment, a new Canadian foreign minister, Marc Garneau, takes stage. I hope this highly praised former astronaut, the first Canadian in space, lives up to the belief he showed when, in opposition, he signed the call by Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention for "all member states of the United Nations—including Canada—to endorse, and begin negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention."

Former Senator Douglas Roche's latest book is *Recovery: Peace Prospects in the Biden Era*.

The Hill Times

News



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweaked his cabinet, elevating now-former parliamentary secretary Omar Alghabra, left, to the role of transport minister. He moved François-Philippe Champagne to the innovation post, brought Jim Carr back into the fold as special adviser on the Prairies, and tapped Marc Garneau, previously the transport minister, to serve as foreign affairs minister. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Trudeau's mini-shuffle a 'game of dominoes,' say politicians

The changes weren't made in a vacuum, says Lori Turnbull, director of the School of Public Administration at Dalhousie University.

BY BEATRICE PAEZ
& PALAK MANGAT

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's mini, but significant shakeup of his front bench left few casualties but also did not necessarily change anyone's political fortunes, say political observers.

Mr. Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) unveiled changes in his cabinet to fill a vacancy left by the looming departure of now-former innovation minister Navdeep Bains (Mississauga-Malton, Ont.) from politics. Mr. Bains, who said he wants to spend more time with his family, will remain an MP until there's an election, which could come in the spring. The refreshed cabinet will likely be the one that carries Mr. Trudeau through to the next election.

The "game of dominoes" triggered by Mr. Bains' exit makes

clear that the changes weren't made in a vacuum, said Lori Turnbull, director of the School of Public Administration at Dalhousie University.

To fill the slot opened up by Mr. Bains, the prime minister moved former foreign affairs minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint Maurice-Champlain, Que.), whose job was picked up by now-former transport minister Marc Garneau (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Westmount, Que.). Mr. Trudeau tapped his former parliamentary secretary Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Ont.) to serve as transport minister.

Pollster Nik Nanos of Nanos Research agreed the shuffle wasn't about reprimanding any single minister. "There are larger ramifications when people are actually demoted, than when people are moved around," he said.

At the same time, he said, "no one was given a gift to help them out in terms of their electability," given those affected already carried "profile" or were strong contenders in their riding.

Even Mr. Alghabra's promotion won't necessarily make a difference. He won his riding with 55 per cent of the vote, beating Conservative Milad Mikael, noted Mr. Nanos.

Here are the changes:

Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne

A former executive at ABB Group and Amec Foster Wheeler, engineering firms that focused on energy and innovation, Mr. Champagne is "the perfect fit" for Mr. Bains' old post, said Mr. Nanos.

"It's pretty clear that he'll also bring renewed enthusiasm, just because of his personal leadership style," said Mr. Nanos. The typically upbeat Mr. Champagne has already been characterized by Perrin Beatty, the CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, as an "Energizer bunny."

"If you look at his track record, he has moved up considerably," said Liberal strategist Greg MacEachern, senior vice-president of government relations at Proof Strategies. "The prime minister has given him different paths, and feels he gets the job done."

Before joining cabinet, Mr. Champagne put in about two years as a parliamentary secretary to the finance minister, and then landed a promotion as international trade minister. He was later shuffled to the job of infrastructure minister and was subsequently moved, in 2019,

to the plum job as Canada's top diplomat.

Calling Mr. Champagne "very personable, intelligent, and a good communicator," Prof. Turnbull said "he's someone who's demonstrated that he has a long runway in politics if he wants it." Mr. Champagne and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) are widely seen as possible heirs to Mr. Trudeau. (Mr. Trudeau suggested a search for his successor isn't likely to happen anytime soon; he told Reuters on Jan. 14 that he's "looking forward to a number of more years" in office.)

Given the portfolio involves a lot of engagement with stakeholders, she added, Mr. Champagne can use the post to burnish his profile nationally and to build political capital. "Industry is a good file, because he's going to be in the position to announce projects, funding, new ways forward. ... He's going to be walking around announcing good news," she said.

NDP strategist Cam Holmstrom with Bluesky Strategy Group agreed. "There's going to be a lot of cheques being cut [coming out of COVID], and it doesn't hurt this government to have a savvy political operative like Mr. Champagne," he said.

With the innovation file expected to "play a critical role" in the post-pandemic economic recovery, having a senior minister who has private-sector business experience is an asset, said Jacqueline LaRocque of Compass Rose Group.

Foreign Affairs Minister Marc Garneau

An astronaut-turned-politician, Mr. Garneau will be able to flex his "even temperament" in a post that will have him managing relationships with two of the most important countries to Canada, China and the United States, said Mr. Nanos.

"I would call him the 'unflappable Marc Garneau.' When you're an astronaut, one of the things that's part of the training is to not only be prepared but to be calm in the face of adversity and uncertainty," he said.

Prof. Turnbull agreed that Mr. Garneau is expected to provide a "steady hand" in pushing for the release of two detained Canadians in China, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, who have now spent two years in Beijing's custody.

She added that he's the "obvious" choice for the prestigious role. "The foreign affairs role is not necessarily one that exposes you in a political way that reaffirms your resonance with voters," said Prof. Turnbull.

There's "political clout" to be had as the "spokesperson for Canada," globally, she said, but because it isn't a domestic role, it won't bring him face to face with voters, unlike the path that Mr. Champagne could be taking as industry minister.

Transport Minister Omar Alghabra

An engineer by training, Mr. Alghabra's elevation comes at a time when key industries, such as

the air sector, have been battered by the pandemic and are looking to the government for financial support. He's also charged with helping cabinet decide whether to approve the merger of Air Canada and Air Transat, a deal that the Competition Bureau has warned would likely result in diminishing choices for consumers.

"The role comes with significant, immediate challenges as a new minister, and it brings a fair amount of political risk, but it also is an opportunity for him to quickly shine," said Ms. LaRocque. She said it's also notable that Mississauga, Ont., is home to country's largest and busiest airport, Pearson International.

Serving as Mr. Trudeau's parliamentary secretary, Mr. Alghabra's profile rose after he was tasked with liaising with the families of the Flight 752 crash victims a year ago. Iran's downing of the Ukrainian flight killed 85 Canadians and permanent residents.

With Mr. Bains' departure, Mr. Trudeau appears to have swapped one Mississauga MP for another in his cabinet, noted Mr. Nanos.

"The political fix is that Mr. Bains was the regional minister for the Mississauga-Bramptons, which are critical to the Liberal campaign," he said. "It's a bit of a two-for-one for the PM."

Conservative strategist Brayden Akers, a senior consultant with Navigator, said the rookie minister will fill the role of a "strong communicator" in the Peel region. "He has been an MP for a long time, delivered the government's message for a long time, and his advancement to the front bench is recognition of that," he added.

Jim Carr, special representative for the Prairies

Mr. Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Man.) has held the role since 2019, but stepped away from cabinet after receiving a cancer diagnosis that year. His post was created in a bid to signal to the Prairies that their interests would be represented in government, after the Liberals were shut out electorally in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Mr. Carr is one of four Liberals in Manitoba, which has 14 seats, seven of which are occupied by Conservatives, and three by NDP MPs. The other Liberals in the province include Northern Affairs Minister Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface-Saint Vital, Man.), and Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Man.), the parliamentary secretary to the chief government House leader.

Mr. Holmstrom described Mr. Carr as collegial and approachable, saying that his return to cabinet was good news.

"In this past year that has been so hard with so many disappointments, it's nice to see some good news come and something that is a little bit uplifting," he said. "Essentially, he has no portfolio ... he has no limit to what he could support, get into, talk about, or advance. That gives him more autonomy."

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As Ford declares second state of emergency, some federal Ontario MPs say situation at 'critical point', looking for more clarity

In the wake of spiraling cases of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada's most populous province, federal MPs are looking for more transparency around stay-at-home orders that will persist well into February.

Continued on page 7

numbers, a number of Ontario MPs are saying the pandemic has reached "a critical point" and are looking for more clarity from the provincial government around stay-at-home orders that will persist until well into February.

The Ontario provincial government has declared a second state of emergency in the wake of spiraling cases of the pandemic.

"Effective immediately, Ontario is declaring a state of emergency. We expect this to remain in place for at least 28 days," said Mr. Ford in a press conference on Jan. 12.

"Further, I'm issuing a stay-at-home order, effective Thursday at 12:01 a.m. Under this order, everyone must stay home and only go out for essential trips to pick up groceries or go to medical appointments," said Mr. Ford.

Schools in Windsor-Essex, Peel, Toronto, York and Hamilton will remain closed until Feb. 10, based on advice Mr. Ford has received from medical officials.

In a press conference on Jan. 13, following the initial announcement, Mr. Ford told Ontarians: "folks, there is no confusion here, it's very simple. Stay home. Stay home, that's it."

"If you're questioning, 'should I go out, you've got the answer.'"

"Restez à la maison," said Mr. Ford. "I don't know what more I can describe."

'We need more clarity, we need more transparency', says Toronto MP

Liberal MP Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* although it's a "tough decision" to impose further lockdowns, "you always have to fall on the side of health and safety of Torontonians and Ontarians."

"And I feel that that needed to be more of the case in Ontario, so I think we need more clarity, we need more transparency, and we need a heck of a lot more communication," said Ms. Dzerowicz. "Our numbers are exponentially climbing—so I think we need to make sure we have a better understanding ... Ontarians deserve to know why numbers are climbing."

Ms. Dzerowicz said if you listen to the media today, you feel like the "sky is falling."

"We are injecting terror into people, and what I would like to be able to do is give people more



Ontario premier Doug Ford pictured at a media availability in Ottawa after a meeting of Canada's Premiers on Sept. 18, 2020. Schools in Windsor-Essex, Peel, Toronto, York, and Hamilton will remain closed until Feb. 10, based on advice Mr. Ford has received from medical officials. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

information, and more clarity, and be transparent about what's happening," said the Liberal MP.

'We're in a really dangerous moment'

Liberal MP Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* that the situation is now at a critical point.

"It has reached an absolute critical point, and the provincial government needed to take action," said the Liberal MP. "In its own way, obviously [the province] has devised a policy that it believes is fit for the challenge of the moment."

"I know they've consulted with public health experts and with others, and we will see if this helps to flatten the curve," said Mr. Fragiskatos. "Whether it is London, Ontario or other communities across the south of Ontario, infection rates continue to increase."

"We're in a really dangerous moment."

NDP MP Brian Masse (Windsor West, Ont.), who told *The Hill Times* that patients have had to be transported outside of the region given the escalating numbers, also said he thinks we need to take stricter actions to lower the COVID-19 numbers, "especially as we're trying to roll out the vaccine."

"The problem that we're facing right now is that there's absolutely confusion happening with regards to interpretation of what's essential and some of the ways it's been rolled out," said Mr. Masse.

"I think they need to do a better job of communications to the public because right now, what's essential work, what's an essential trip—there seems to be a broad range of interpretations on

those things and it's leading to a lot of confusion and frustration—I think people want to do the right thing, but they need better coaching."

In regards to the rollout of Canada's vaccination regime, Mr. Masse said he thinks there needs to be more assertion of federal transparency and efforts to work with the provinces to make sure in rolls out properly.

"Down here, we had a couple of cases that have raised public concern, one being a public relations person and administrative people in Erie Shores Healthcare receiving vaccination ahead of front-line workers, and the excuses just don't mount," said Mr. Masse. "Transparency is critical to give confidence, because as we roll this out further and more and more people are vaccinated, there will be some uneasiness, some nervousness, some anxiety with people, and we need to make sure that good information if put out there and it's consistent, and I think the federal government has a big role in playing that."



Liberal MP Julie Dzerowicz says 'our numbers are exponentially climbing—so I think we need to make sure we have a better understanding ... Ontarians deserve to know why numbers are climbing.' *Photograph courtesy Julie Dzerowicz*

Current Status of COVID-19 Cases in Ontario, as of Jan. 15, 2021

Total Cases—231,308
Resolved Cases—197,194
Deaths—5,289
Hospitalized—1,647
Patients in Intensive Care Units—387
Patients in Intensive Care Units on a Ventilator—280

*statistics courtesy of the Province of Ontario

constituency and Hill offices, are federally regulated—and that "while provincial legislation and regulations may have incidental effects on Members' offices, they cannot affect their core functions."

"The order explicitly provides that individuals may leave their place of residence for 'obtaining government services,' which would include services provided by MPs' constituency offices," said Mr. Ruff.

Mr. Ruff noted that half of his staff have been working from home since the start of the pandemic in both his Hill and constituency offices.

"My staff and I will continue to follow Ontario public health guidelines whenever we are in the workplace," said Mr. Ruff.

According to Katy Kamkar, a clinical psychologist who is based in Toronto and is an associate professor with the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto and chair of the Canadian Psychological Association, Traumatic Stress Sector, "it's very important for all of us to remember that we're all in this together, and to know we are not alone."

"And certainly we have all seen how with the COVID-19 pandemic, our life has very much changed," she said. "We had to recreate new routines, new structures, and adjust to new activities and really create a new normal."

"When we realize we are not alone, we become less afraid of our thoughts and our emotions and so we feel less powerless, we feel less helpless," said Dr. Kamkar.

If people are feeling run down by mental health or psychological symptoms, Dr. Kamkar said it's important to know that it's important to seek professional help and there is no need to suffer alone.

It's important for people to know not to suffer in silence."

Premier Ford dismisses York Centre MPP

On Jan. 15, Mr. Ford has dismissed one of his caucus members, York Centre MPP Roman Baber, who has recently issued an open letter suggesting lockdown orders "aren't working" and is "causing an avalanche of suicides, overdoses, bankruptcies, divorces, and takes and immense toll on our children."

According to Mr. Ford, Mr. Baber will no longer be sitting as a member of the PC Caucus and will not be permitted to seek reelection as a PC member.

"Mr. Baber's comments are irresponsible," said Mr. Ford in a statement. "By spreading misinformation he is undermining the tireless efforts of our frontline health care workers at this critical time, and he is putting people at risk."

"I will not jeopardize a single Ontarian's life by ignoring public health advice," said Mr. Ford.

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Editorial

Biden presidency will be good news for Canada-U.S. relations

Newly elected U.S. President Joe Biden will take the oath of office on Jan. 20. Being the president of the United States has never been an easy job, but the 78-year-old president's faces significantly tougher challenges than his recent predecessors.

Political turmoil and outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump's divisive policies have put the unity of the country into jeopardy. Mr. Biden is inheriting a battered economy and the unemployment rate is rising as about one million Americans filed for unemployment in the first week of January due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Add to that the health impact of the coronavirus, which includes close to 23.4 million reported cases in the U.S. that have already caused about 390,649 deaths in our neighbouring country, as of Friday, Jan. 15.

With this background, it's fair to say that Mr. Biden has his work cut out for him and that it will be an uphill battle, to say the least.

Being a friend, close ally, and the United States' largest trading partner, it's in the best interest of Canada that things are functioning smoothly in the U.S., otherwise, it could have a social and economic spillover effect on Canada as well.

The Trump era was a stressful time for most of the world, but especially for Canada. Mr. Trump often blamed other countries for the U.S.'s economic woes. During the campaign to win the Republican nomination in 2016, he blamed Canada and other countries for taking advantage of the U.S.

on trade issues. Mr. Trump also promised Americans that if he won the presidency, he would open up the North American Free Trade Agreement, which he did. After months of high-level negotiations between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico, all partners renegotiated a new agreement called the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) which came into effect last summer. Still, Mr. Trump was not satisfied. In August, he again imposed trade levies, but took those back after a few weeks, as Canada was about to impose its own retaliatory tariffs on U.S. exports to Canada.

Through his divisive domestic and international policies and initiatives, the outgoing president has shattered the U.S.'s reputation and the new administration will have to go a long way to repair this damage.

Mr. Biden is known to be a friend of Canada and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. In December 2016, Mr. Trudeau hosted a state dinner for the then-outgoing vice president in Ottawa, his last international visit as vice president. In his speech, Mr. Biden shared that his first wife's family was from Canada. He described Canada not only as a "friend" of the U.S., but also a "family."

It's hoped that the new U.S. administration will work cooperatively with Canada in addressing long-standing trade disputes, including softwood lumber and the Keystone XL pipeline, among others. A prosperous North America is in the best interest of both countries.

Letters to the Editor

Trump needs to be removed from the political landscape, says Toronto reader

Re: "Trudeau should be slamming Trump's demagoguery, more vociferously," (*The Hill Times*, Jan. 11, editorial). Canadians seem too often to judge Canadians on how much better they could have done, and not on how well they have done. The Trudeau government has done better in dealing with our most important trading partner—and it's insane leader—than any other country. Through the very turbulent years of the Trump dynasty, we have done relatively well. He even managed to keep the border closed when clearly Trump wanted to tell Americans that the COVID-19 virus did not exist. Trump has been a communications genius at doing what the right-wing elitists do best—having a secret agenda and parading as a populist in support of the little guy—while espousing a cover story to conceal treachery. We should not engage in commentary that attacks the American people. Many in the world, including the U.K.'s Boris Johnson, were sucked in. The most recent example of this is in the video Trump posted the day after the insurrection in Washington, D.C. We need a little critical thinking in reading President Trump's call to stop the violence. The first thing to remember is that Trump is a pathological liar, interested only in his own personal interests and he was the one who carefully incited the mob. When he stood up and condemned the

violence at the Capitol Building, he was only trying to avoid being removed from office based in his own personal situation (like staying out of jail). His followers feel betrayed, but they have only themselves to blame. Through the last 4 years, and particularly during the last six months, he has simply used them to his own ends. And one cannot say there were no warning indications.

When he says there will be an orderly transition to a new administration on Jan. 20, 2021, what does he mean? He did not concede the election. Does he mean that the administration will be a new Trump administration? If he was conceding the election, why didn't he say so? If the new administration is a Biden Administration, why didn't he say so? There are two choices here. Either he has more plans to attack America or he is so psychologically damaged that he can't admit defeat. Both of these are dangerous.

Finally, at the end of his video he speaks to his followers and says, "our incredible journey is only just beginning." This is ominous in the extreme. And the day after, he went back to supporting his misguided supporters who had begun to see that they had been misled. He needs to be removed from the political landscape.

Tom McElroy
 Toronto, Ont.

We need parliamentarians to stop project, prevent Ottawa River from being permanently contaminated

Re: "CNL working to accomplish responsible action in managing Canada's nuclear research and development legacy," (*The Hill Times*, letters to the editor, Dec. 14, 2020).

The letter from Joe McBrearty, president and CEO of Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL), deepens my concern about the handling of Canada's \$8-billion nuclear waste liability.

Mr. McBrearty says the Chalk River Mound beside the Ottawa River, 150 km north of Ottawa-Gatineau, "will contain only low-level radioactive waste which contains radionuclides that require isolation and containment for only a few hundred years."

Unfortunately, this claim does not stand up to scrutiny.

Last month, the CNL published its final environmental impact statement listing a partial inventory of radionuclides that would go into the gigantic five-to-seven storey radioactive mound (a.k.a. the "NSDF"). Twenty-five out of the 30 radionuclides listed in the inventory are long-lived, with half-lives ranging from four centuries to more than four billion years. To take just one example, the man-made radionuclide, Neptunium-237, has a half-life of two million years such that, after two million years have elapsed, half of the material will still be radioactive.

The inventory includes four isotopes of plutonium, one of the most deadly radioactive materials known, if inhaled or ingested.

It is incorrect to say that these materials "require isolation and containment for only a few hundred years." Many of them will be dangerously radioactive for more than 100,000 years. The International Atomic Energy Agency states that materials like this must be stored tens of meters or more underground, not in an above-ground mound.

The CNL inventory also includes a very large quantity of cobalt-60, a material that gives off so much strong gamma radiation that lead shielding must be used by workers who handle it in order to avoid dangerous radiation exposures. The International Atomic Energy Agency considers high-activity cobalt-60 sources to be "intermediate-level waste" and specifies that they must be stored underground. The addition of high-activity cobalt-60 sources means that hundreds of tons of lead shielding would be disposed of in the mound along with other hazardous materials, such as arsenic, asbestos, PCBs, dioxins and mercury.

CNL's environmental impact statement describes several ways that radioactive materials would leak into surrounding wetlands that drain into the Ottawa River, during filling of the mound and after completion. It also describes CNL's intent to pipe water polluted with tritium and other radioactive and hazardous substances from the waste treatment facility directly into Perch Lake which drains into the Ottawa River.

Lynn Jones
 Ottawa, Ont.



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Post-COVID world will change us all forever

Last week's world conference was an opportunity to refocus global attention on the long-term challenges we face if the planet fails to curb coastal erosion and land degradation. The risk of death faced by climate change is far greater than anything this pandemic delivered.



Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner

Just as the post-Trump America is a very different place, the post-COVID world will change us all forever.

Virtual meetings have gone from being a techie tool used

by geeks to the go-to place for people to meet globally.

A year ago, no one could have envisioned an international meeting of leaders on global warming taking place virtually.

But that is just what happened last week when French President Emmanuel Macron chaired a virtual One Planet Summit of first ministers and environment ministers from around the world.

The summit was organized by the French government in concert with the United Nations and the World Bank.

Its aim was to refocus world attention on the climate crisis and the role played by biodiversity in achieving carbon capture targets.

Macron compared the global fight for biodiversity to a human rights battle. "I do not believe that the right of any other living creature is higher than a human right. But I do not believe in the effectiveness of preserving human rights without preserving the ecosystems. For me, this is the philosophical and ethical basis for this battle for biodiversity.

At the gathering, Canada joined 49 other countries in reiterating its commitment to set aside 30 per cent of our land and water by 2030.

Because of COVID, the world's insatiable appetite for energy has abated somewhat. But the urgency that accompanied youth marches headed by Greta Thunberg seems to have been sidelined by Covidmania.

People are focused much more on their own short-term survival than on the status of the planet.

That did not stop Prime Minister Justin Trudeau from announc-

ing a \$55-million contribution to the United Nations Land Degradation Neutrality fund designed to prevent biosphere degradation and erosion in low and middle-income countries.

The conference was attended by several key international players, including UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.



Last week, French President Emmanuel Macron chaired a virtual One Planet Summit of first ministers and environment ministers from around the world. Photograph courtesy of Commons Wikimedia

The United States and Brazil, two key players in the climate discussion, were notably absent. In one week, the new American president will likely join a world biodiversity solution.

The summit managed to assemble like-minded countries that have all committed to protecting 30 per cent of their land and water mass over the next decade.

In terms of world environmental improvement, it was the most significant gathering since the launch of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

But the current obsession with everything COVID meant that, while a virtual meeting enlisted more participants, global coverage of these critical environmental issues has been dwarfed by the spectre of COVID-19.

Hopefully, the pandemic will be overcome soon when countries vaccinate all their citizens.

So that means, for Canada, by this fall, we should finally see an end to the ongoing lockdowns,

emergency measures and life-altering changes that have forced most citizens to live like hermits since last March.

But how will we reinvigorate the debate on the global climate crisis if a gathering like the one hosted by Macron last week can barely make a ripple in the national news cycle?

Canada has taken the lead as one of the early signatories to an international treaty designed to secure natural spaces in all countries as part of a solution to environmental degradation.

According to Environment and Climate Change Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, the government has already made the single largest contribution to nature conservancy in Canadian history by boosting conserved coastal areas from one per cent to 14 per cent.

Last week, the minister announced an even more aggressive target. He pledged that Canada would commit to conserve 25 per cent of our land and water by 2025. That will be the first step in our commitment to protect 30 per cent of our land and water by 2030.

Wilkinson launched a clear plan, with specific targets for southern, middle and northern Canada.

He understands that simply setting aside major swaths of natural landscape in remote areas cannot be a replacement for real change in how we sustain and protect biodiversity in southern Canada.

Wilkinson is focussing on strategies for large cities, middle Canada corridors and large areas of northern wilderness. He has put in place different initiatives to support biodiversity and sustainability of these decidedly different ecosystems.

Last week's world conference was an opportunity to refocus global attention on the long-term challenges we face if the planet fails to curb coastal erosion and land degradation.

The risk of death faced by climate change is far greater than anything this pandemic delivered.

Sheila Copps is a former Jean Chrétien-era cabinet minister and a former deputy prime minister. *The Hill Times*

Is a Trudeau electoral victory inevitable?

Unexpected and dramatic events often occur during elections and they can quickly reset the odds. So even though Trudeau is looking good right now, if he calls an election, he'd still be rolling the dice.



Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit

OKAVILLE, ONT.—Rumour has it the federal Liberals would like to see an election occur as early as this spring.

And why wouldn't they? At this point, a Liberal electoral victory seems all but inevitable. Or does it?

Certainly, you can conjure up all sorts of reasons as to why Prime Minister Justin Trudeau would want to go to the polls sooner rather than later.

For one thing, his support amongst the public has remained fairly steady which means, even though more than five years in power has tarnished his "sunny ways" branding and even though a grizzled beard now obscures his cherubic face, Trudeau still retains his likability, an asset that can always be counted on to win votes.

Plus, unlike in the 2019 federal election, Trudeau now has a solid, concise and persuasive reason for asking Canadians to return him to power with a majority government.

All he has to say is something such as "Now more than ever, Canada needs a strong leader with a strong mandate to take on the challenges of the future. So free me from the restrictive shackles of minority government."

This would be a good easy-to-understand pitch that might resonate even with voters who are skeptical of Trudeau's record.

Plus, on top of all that, thanks to Democrat Joe Biden's victory in the recent U.S. presidential election and thanks to a pro-Trump mob storming Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., an event which has attached a certain stigma to right-wing populism, Trudeau, with his gentle brand of left-wing progressivism, now can claim to have political and ideological momentum on his side.

That works as a message because people always want to align themselves with winners, to be on the "right side of history."

And if those aren't good enough reasons for calling a spring election, consider this: neither of his chief rivals, Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole

nor NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, really seem to pose much of a threat to Trudeau's reign.

True, O'Toole represents an upgrade over his predecessor, Andrew Scheer, but he still hasn't adequately defined who he is as a leader or what his brand of conservatism will bring to the table.

This, of course, leaves the Conservatives open to attack, allowing the Liberals to brand them as a pack of misogynist, racist, pollution-loving extremists.

And as if that's not bad enough for O'Toole, the current unpopularity of conservative Alberta Premier Jason Kenney in Alberta and Manitoba Brian Pallister, could soften conservative turnout in a federal election.

One thing's for certain, the Liberals aren't going to wait for the Tories to get their act together.

Then there's Singh, who, in theory at least, could potentially threaten Trudeau's left-wing flank.

Yet, that potential has yet to be realized.

Basically, for instance, all Singh has shown during the past

year or so of minority government in Ottawa is that he can prop up the Liberals, not that he can replace them.

So, with all these variables playing in the background, it's easy to see why the Liberals would be confident of electoral victory.

On the other hand, however, nothing is guaranteed in politics.

As they say in the military "No plan survives contact with the enemy."

Indeed, once an election is called it opens the door for an unpredictable variable to enter the game, a variable which can totally upset the entire playing board.

I'm talking about randomness.

And yes, unexpected and dramatic events often occur during elections and they can quickly reset the odds.

So even though Trudeau is looking good right now, if he calls an election, he'd still be rolling the dice.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant. *The Hill Times*

Opinion

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured Jan. 15, 2021, at a presser outside the Rideau Cottage in Ottawa. Election 2021 will be a largely one-issue election, just as Canadians have been living a one-issue existence for a year. Surviving the pandemic. Life behind a mask. Who was there to help? *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



It could be a spring election

The rationale for those who believe an election is coming rests largely on an accurate premise: minority governments, like May flies, don't last long. In fact, minorities usually fall in less than two years. Trudeau won in 2019, and it is now 2021. You get the drift.



Michael Harris

Harris

HALIFAX—COVID-19 has been the herd of elephants in the room for so long, it is a relief to have something else in the air other than the virus; talk of a federal election.

The run of stories dealing with that possibility points to a trip to the polls this spring—perhaps in the month of May. The rationale for those who believe an election is coming rests largely on an accurate premise: minority governments, like May flies, don't last long. In fact, minorities usually fall in less than two years. Trudeau won in 2019, and it is now 2021. You get the drift.

The counter-view is that the pandemic changes everything. And that is true, at least rhetorically. All parties have religiously maintained that they do not want an election while COVID-19 is battering the nation.

The problem with that view is that three provinces have already

gone to the polls during the pandemic—before there was a vaccine, and incumbents won all three in impressive fashion.

Not only can elections be held in a pandemic, but it appears that the public gives something of a gratitude vote to incumbents who have been charged with handling it. Nowhere is that clearer than in British Columbia, where the NDP went from a precarious minority to a stunning majority government smack dab in the middle of COVID-19.

So what would happen if Canadians were sent to the polls this spring?

My guess is that the Liberals would not only win, but reclaim their majority status. (I realize that the ditches of the commentariat are filled with dunces who purport to see the future before it happens). Part of it comes down to Justin Trudeau, part to COVID-19 politics, and part to leadership difficulties with the self-proclaimed government-in-waiting, the as-yet-unreconstituted Conservative Party of Canada. Or as I still think of it, the Harper Party.

Starting with the PM, we are no longer talking about the man on the top of the wedding cake anymore. Trudeau is now a political leader who has gone through the crucible of an unprecedented crisis and, petty grizzling aside, passed the test.

For some time now, Trudeau has not been the man whose judgement went in and out like the tide on issues from ill-advised personal holidays, to gross meddling in justice issues like the SNC-Lavalin criminal case.

It is true that his failure to recuse himself from cabinet meetings when matters turned to the WE Charity was a mistake, as he himself has admitted.

But the difference with WE and other mini-scandals triggered by the PM's poor judgment is that the context for his WE blunders was the pandemic itself. Trudeau wanted to get money out to young Canadians as rapidly as possible, and stubbed his toe in the process. Make that both toes.

Compare that to the context of his free trip to the Aga Khan's Island, or putting his thumb on the scale of justice to the benefit of SNC in the Jody Wilson-Raybould Affair. That was simply fatally flawed personal judgment that voters took notice of in 2019—and punished.

Election 2021 will be a largely one-issue election, just as Canadians have been living a one-issue existence for a year. Surviving the pandemic. Life behind a mask. Who was there to help?

Trudeau has, in fact, had the back of Canadians during this time. He has led by example, unlike the former finance minister of Ontario. He was there with scads of cash for the needy; there with personal briefings; there with reassurance that the tide would slowly turn, if Canadians did the right thing. Unlike the battalion of goofballs south of the border who, egged on by the guy with impeachment all over his face, think that wearing a mask is about socialism rather than survival.

Has Trudeau been made any mistakes on the pandemic?

Not even Albert Camus was perfect on the plague. The opposi-

tion parties can legitimately ask: did the government get enough vaccine; did it get the vaccine fast enough; were rapid tests rolled out as quickly as they might have been; was the effort to get vaccines into arms as coordinated as the crisis demanded; why are other countries like Israel doing it so much better? (Hint? The Israelis paid a lot more money for vaccine than other countries, 40 per cent more than the U.S. government.)

But the truth is that the entire battle against the pandemic has been a joint effort between Ottawa and the provinces. Questions about whether things might have been done better can be equally asked of provincial premiers, since they are the ones who have jurisdiction over health matters.

The bottom line is that Ottawa has done its job respectably enough. The situation in the coming months will be improved by more rapid tests, more vaccine, and more vaccination. Short of a catastrophe, the opposition will have less and less to complain about as the months creep on.

The PM is fortunate that the next election, whenever it comes, will be a one-issue affair. It will obscure the government's shortcomings on a host of issues that would normally be top of mind.

Clean water for Canada's First Nations remains a mirage. The pace of the government's fight against global warming is depressingly slow. The national balance sheet looks like an abattoir before they wash down the kill floor. And there are signs the Liberals are about to roll the dice on nuclear energy as the means of getting to net zero emissions. But for now, all of these things will be pushed to the back burner

until life returns to some semblance of normal.

Trudeau's other electoral ace in the hole if the vote comes in 2021 is that the Conservatives appear to have chosen the wrong leader at their last convention. Erin O'Toole may be a lot of things, but new leaders of the opposition are not supposed to be 13 points behind the governing party.

It is hard to imagine that CPC co-founder Peter MacKay would not have been a more marketable bar of political soap, at least compared to O'Toole.

For one thing, MacKay had some key political insights. He realized that the days of winning the way that Harper did were over. The Conservatives were not going to be able to take back the cities and female voters with downscale Republicanism, luke-warm religious fundamentalism, and trashing Justin Trudeau.

They could only make a comeback by throwing out a lot of Harper's bad policies, from the environment to energy policy, and coming up with new ones relevant to the times. MacKay might have been able to do that.

Despite his olive branch to unions, and his non-combative approach to a media that Harper hated, Erin O'Toole can't seem to make the sale to the public. Maybe they just remember how differently he acted while in the Harper government. Maybe they seriously doubt that he would have done a better job than Trudeau when Canadians needed their government most.

If the writ drops this spring, the Conservatives are going to know how Senator Patrick Brazeau felt when he stepped into the boxing ring with Trudeau in 2012 for a celebrity fundraiser.

Michael Harris is an award-winning journalist and author.

The Hill Times

Pompeo: one landmine a day

Mike Pompeo is setting slow-burning fires in plain sight, which is why a European foreign minister recently described him as a ‘political pyromaniac’—and this is his ‘scorched-earth’ policy.



Gwynne Dyer
Global Affairs

LONDON, U.K.—When defeated armies are retreating, they always lay mines behind them if they have time. The mines slow pursuit, they may inflict casualties on the victors, and they give the losers something purposeful to do amidst panic and despair. That’s what Mike Pompeo has been doing just before time is called on his ideologically driven term as United States Secretary of State.

Pompeo started on Jan. 9 by declaring that the U.S. State Department would end its restrictions on direct intergovernmental dealings with Taiwan, a policy in place since the U.S. transferred its diplomatic recognition from the Republic of China (ROC-Taiwan) to the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

“No more,” said Pompeo. “I am lifting all these self-imposed restrictions.” But they were not “self-imposed.” They were a key part of the 1979 deal that let the U.S. have its cake and eat it too: to go on protecting Taiwan’s de facto independence while formally accepting that Taiwan is legally a province of China.

So the United States agreed that there was only one China (without actually saying that Taiwan was not its legitimate government), while China agreed that “the American people” would continue to carry on “commercial, cultural, and other unofficial contacts with the people of Taiwan.” They could talk and trade all they like; just no public, official contacts.

This is why we all employ diplomats. They can square the circle and let us be friends, or at least trading partners, by coming up with a formula of words that veils our differences. The U.S. could go on selling arms to Taiwan, sail the



When defeated armies are retreating, they always lay mines behind them if they have time. The mines slow pursuit, they may inflict casualties on the victors, and they give the losers something purposeful to do amidst panic and despair. That’s what Mike Pompeo has been doing just before time is called on his ideologically driven term as United States Secretary of State, writes Gwynne Dyer. *Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

7th Fleet down the strait between Taiwan and the PRC, pretty well anything—except have U.S. government officials talk openly to ROC officials.

Then, 41 years later, Pompeo springs his little surprise. China exploded, of course, accusing Pompeo of “seeking to maliciously inflict a long-lasting scar on China-U.S. ties.” Fair comment, but Pompeo’s real target was the incoming Biden administration, which will have to reverse this policy while the Republicans shower it with accusations of being ‘soft on China.’

Jan. 10: Another landmine. Pompeo designates Yemen’s Houthi rebels as a foreign terrorist organization. That means nobody can deal with them, so attempts to broker an end to the long and devastating war between the Houthis and the Saudi Arabian-backed, ‘internationally recognized’ (but no more legitimate) government are now outlawed.

It wins more time for Saudi Arabia to go on bombing the place in the hope of restoring its candidate to power, but it makes it far harder to bring aid to the diseased and starving millions in most of the country (which is controlled by the Houthis, who are not terrorists). It

will take the Biden administration some time to unpick this mess.

Jan. 11: Pompeo puts Cuba back on the list of “state sponsors of terrorism.” It’s nothing of the sort, but this will please the older generation of Republican-voting Cuban refugees in south Florida, and the Republicans can call Biden a “Commie-lover” while he’s reversing it. Besides, it was Obama who took Cuba off that list, and all his works must be destroyed.

Jan. 12: Pompeo announces that Iran is now the main home of al-Qaeda, the Islamist terrorist organization that planned and carried out the 9/11 attacks on the United States, and later created the ‘Islamic State’ that devastated Iraq and Syria for a number of years.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called Pompeo’s assertions “warmongering lies,” which seems about right. They are certainly lies—nobody who knows the region believes that the Shia Muslim theocracy in Iran would have anything to do with the Sunni Muslim extremists of al-Qaeda. In fact, al-Qaeda routinely murders Shias as heretics.

And they really are “warmongering” lies, designed to sabotage Biden’s policy of rejoining the 2015 international deal that

guarantees Iran will not build nuclear weapons. (Donald Trump abandoned it in 2018, presumably because it was Obama’s signature achievement in foreign policy.)

If the United States does not end its savage sanctions against Iran and re-commit to the deal within months, it will finally collapse, and the risk of an eventual nuclear war in the Middle East will move from remote hypothesis to plausible prospect. But it lets Republicans accuse Biden of being ‘soft on Iran’ and ‘soft on terrorism’ when he tries to fix it.

Come to think of it, ‘land-mines’ is the wrong image here, because land-mines are hidden. Pompeo is setting slow-burning fires in plain sight, which is why a European foreign minister recently described him as a ‘political pyromaniac’—and this is his ‘scorched-earth’ policy.

That’s the other, bigger thing that retreating armies often do. Burn it all down. If we can’t have it, nobody can. And Pompeo still has time to insult North Korea and start a fight with Mexico before he leaves the scene.

Gwynne Dyer’s new book is *‘Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy (and Work)’*.

The Hill Times

“
If the U.S. does not end its savage sanctions against Iran and re-commit to the deal within months, it will finally collapse, and the risk of an eventual nuclear war in the Middle East will move from remote hypothesis to plausible prospect.”



TOWARDS A NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREE WORLD

The [UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) has been endorsed by 122 nations, and will become international law for more than 51 ratifying States on January 22, 2021. Regrettably, Canada boycotted negotiations in 2017 and has refused to sign or ratify this landmark Treaty.

Nuclear weapons, along with climate change and pandemics, are the greatest threats facing human civilization. An exchange of even 1% of the global arsenal of 13,400 nuclear weapons would kill tens of millions of people. It would plunge the planet into a nuclear winter and result in widespread famine, killing billions more.

The world was not adequately prepared for the Covid-19 pandemic. The International Committee of the Red Cross asserts that it is impossible to prepare for nuclear holocaust. Humanity's only hope is prevention through the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Canadians have a right to know, and to hear from our national leaders, how nuclear weapons could impact human health, health care systems, the environment, the economy, the global biosphere and the future of life on earth.

The undersigned, therefore, respectfully call upon the Government of Canada to have Parliament debate the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) and to allow the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to hold public hearings on the Treaty and on Canada's role in advancing global nuclear disarmament.

This Parliamentary Appeal was endorsed and organized by:

Hiroshima Nagasaki Day Coalition, Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Les Artistes pour la Paix, Collectif Échec à la guerre, Science for Peace, Canadian Pugwash Group, Project Ploughshares, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War Canada, Canadian Peace Research Association, Group of 78, PeaceQuest, Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility/Le Regroupement pour la surveillance du nucléaire, World BEYOND War, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, World Federalist Movement-Canada/Mouvement fédéraliste mondial-Canada, Peace Magazine, Project Save the World, and Friends of Rotary (FOR) Prevention of Nuclear War.

With the support of:

The Simons Foundation Canada, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama`at Canada, Anton Wagner Productions and the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute.

VERS UN MONDE LIBÉRÉ DES ARMES NUCLÉAIRES

Le [Traité sur l'interdiction des armes nucléaires \(TIAN\) des Nations unies](#) a été endossé par 122 pays et deviendra loi internationale pour les 51 États (et plus) qui l'auront ratifié le 22 janvier 2021. Malheureusement, le Canada a boycotté les négociations en 2017 et a refusé de signer ou ratifier ce traité historique.

Les armes nucléaires, ainsi que les changements climatiques et les pandémies, sont les plus grandes menaces qui confrontent l'humanité. Une conflagration de 1 % de l'arsenal mondial de 13 400 armes nucléaires tuerait des dizaines de millions de personnes. Elle plongerait la planète dans un hiver nucléaire et entraînerait une famine généralisée, tuant des milliards d'autres.

Le monde n'était pas adéquatement préparé à la pandémie de Covid-19. Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge affirme qu'il est impossible de se préparer à l'holocauste nucléaire. Le seul espoir de l'humanité est de le prévenir par l'élimination des armes nucléaires.

Les Canadiens ont le droit de savoir et d'entendre de la part de nos élu-e-s comment les armes nucléaires pourraient avoir une incidence sur la santé humaine, les systèmes de santé, l'environnement, l'économie, la biosphère mondiale et l'avenir de la vie sur terre.

Les soussignés demandent donc respectueusement au gouvernement du Canada d'entreprendre un débat au Parlement sur le [Traité sur l'interdiction des armes nucléaires](#) et de permettre au Comité permanent des Affaires étrangères et du Développement international de la Chambre des communes de tenir des audiences publiques sur le Traité et le rôle du Canada dans la promotion du désarmement nucléaire mondial.

Signatures:

Anglican Church of Canada, Anishinabek Nation and Iroquois Caucus Alliance, Antigonish Quaker Worship Group, Antigonish Raging Grannies, Atomic Photographers, Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation, Bells for Peace, Boundary Peace Initiative, Camp Micah: Leadership for Peace and Justice, *Canadian Dimension*, Canadian Friends Service Committee, Canadian Muslim Peace Alliance, Canadian Peace Congress, Canadian Peace Initiative, Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice, Centre justice et foi (Montréal), Centre Oblat—A Voice for Justice, Clearwater Greenhouses Big River, Sask., Coalition for Responsible Energy Development in New Brunswick, Collective L'autre Parole, Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County and Area, Conscience Canada, Denman Island Peace Group, Fédération nationale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec-CSN, The Global Sunrise Project, Greater Toronto Chapter National Association of Japanese Canadians, Greenspiration, Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War, L'Institut Rideau Institute, Inter-Church Uranium Committee Educational Co-operative Saskatoon, Japanese Cultural Association of Manitoba, Just Peace Advocates, Justice Mission and Outreach Committees, Eastern Regions, United Church of Canada, KAIROS BC-Yukon, KAIROS Halifax, KAIROS Nelson, KAIROS Terrace, KAIROS Toronto West, Kootenay Region Branch United Nations Association in Canada, Making Peace Vigil (Regina), Les Mémés Déchainés, Mines Action Canada, Mission and Outreach Committees, Eastern Regions, United Church of Canada, Mouvement Québécois pour la Paix, National Association of Japanese Canadians, National Council of Women of Canada, NB Media Co-op, North Bay Peace Alliance, Northwatch, Nova Scotia Voice of Women for Peace, Office de la pastorale sociale Archidiocèse catholique romain de Montréal, Ottawa KAIROS, Ottawa Quaker Meeting (Religious Society of Friends), Ottawa River Institute, Pacifi-Canadians Organizing for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament, Parksville Qualicum KAIROS, Pax Christi Toronto, Peace Brigades International Canada, Peace Quest Cape Breton, PeaceQuest Regina, Peace River Environmental Society, People for Peace (London), Pivot2Peace, Ploughshares Calgary Society, Pontiac Environment Protection/Protection de l'environnement du Pontiac, Port Hope Community Health Concerns Committee, *Press for Conversion!* magazine, Project Ploughshares Saskatoon, Québec Solidaire, Ralliement contre la pollution radioactive, Religions for Peace Canada, Religions pour la paix-Québec, Salmon Arm Ecumenical KAIROS Committee, Saskatoon Peace Coalition, Sierra Club Canada Foundation, Socialist Action/Ligue pour l'Action socialiste, Les Soeurs Auxiliatrices, Soka Gakkai International Association of Canada, Solidarité Laurentides Amérique centrale, St. Andrew's United Church, Halifax, St. Basil's Catholic Church Mission and Social Justice Committee, Ottawa, Tao Sangha-Earth Caravan, Toronto Area Interfaith Council, Toronto Article 9, Toronto Raging Grannies, Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (Doukhobors), Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga, Vancouver Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Vancouver Peace Poppies, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom-Vancouver, World Beyond War Vancouver, World Beyond War Victoria.

TOWARDS A NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREE WORLD/ VERS UN MONDE LIBÉRÉ DES ARMES NUCLÉAIRES

Individual Signatures: / Signatures Individuelles:

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The most urgent task in Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's forthcoming budget will be to set the country on the path to sustained and sustainable economic growth. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



This is no time for half measures or vague aspirations

There's too much at stake. Failure could mean a poorer country. So this budget really matters.



David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century

TORONTO—The most urgent task in Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's forthcoming budget will be to set the country on the path to sustained and sustainable economic growth. Going forward, we will need more

and better innovation to achieve good jobs, improved competitiveness, and increased productivity. The budget has to make this its priority.

In her fall economic statement, Freeland stated that the government was developing "a major investment plan to stimulate economic growth, accelerate Canada's recovery, and create one million good jobs to strengthen and grow the middle class." Some \$100-billion would be spent over the next three fiscal years—but only after the virus is under control. But it's time to tell Canadians now what's in this package so that, if needed, it can be reconfigured to improve its effectiveness and so businesses can start planning on the basis of what's in the package.

The focus must be on stepping up investment in innovation to produce tradable goods and services that we can sell to the rest of the world.

Getting the innovation policies right will be a big challenge. Huge opportunity exists in the green economy transition,

synthetic biology, biosciences, agri-food, advanced manufacturing, and the digital economy. Innovation is needed as well for affordable housing, seniors' care, smart cities, smart land use, and in education, with gains here also exportable. But this will require a government that is much more focused on how to get things done and a business sector with high ambition.

Policies will matter even more because in the post-pandemic world global competition for jobs and growth will be much more intense—starting with the Biden administration, which plans to focus on its America First policies. Where will Canada fit in? New Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne will have to show he is up to the challenge of leading on innovation. His business experience should help.

While building up the capacities of our universities to train talent and conduct fundamental research for new knowledge is essential, the transformation of new knowledge into commercial success is an activity that takes place

in businesses, not academia. So strengthening the links between knowledge creation and diffusion by academia and its successful commercialization by businesses is critical. This depends in turn on ensuring there is a strong and growing Canadian-controlled corporate base, rich in talent and intellectual property, and Canadian business leaders ready to take on more risk.

This is where public policy steps in as an enabler. But how can it incentivize our businesses to be more innovative after a decade in which businesses overall have been cutting back on research and development and constantly earning low marks for innovation in international rankings?

Government has many tools at its disposal, including tax incentives, grants, low-interest or forgivable loans, the creation of new markets through measures such as carbon pricing or smart use of regulatory powers, the funding of demonstration projects, public procurement, government as first customer, public-private partnerships, direct equity investments, challenge competitions, and other forms of risk-sharing.

Governments can also do much to ensure competition, address the treatment of intangibles such as intellectual property as assets in financial markets, steering more of the resources of pension and insurance funds to invest in Canadian industry, helping to promote pools of patient capital for long-term investment, and dealing with Valley of Death issues as small companies strive to bring new products to market. Some companies will need to recapitalize, with equity rather

than debt, with the Canada Development Investment Corp. as a possible vehicle.

A new report—"OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2021"—notes that since some 70 per cent of research and development spending in most advanced economies is carried out by business, "how governments incentivize and influence research and innovation can have major implications for our future." But this is also a time, the report argues, where governments themselves have to rethink innovation strategies and become readier to intervene for results.

For different countries there has been "a progressive rehabilitation of industrial policy from the perspectives of innovation, with arguments that governments should actively engage in making explicit innovation policy choices to focus their limited activist resources." The shift to more activist policies represents a U-turn from recent decades where governments looked to low taxes, free trade, and deregulation to drive innovation.

"The opportunities associated with the 'next production revolution' (which is occurring through the confluence of a range of technologies including artificial intelligence, 5G, new materials, 3D printing, nanotechnology and industrial biotechnology) have set the scene for support and regulation of business innovation to become one additional driver of the push towards greater productive technological autonomy," the OECD report found. This will be a particular challenge for Canada.

At the same time, it said, "public innovation support policies need to be able to guide private innovation efforts to where they are most needed, especially where market signals prove to be insufficient and coordination is most challenging." Higher-risk R&D, where the payoff is also longer, is an example.

But there will also be a need to deter foreign takeovers of promising Canadian-controlled companies in critical technologies if Canada is to have a strong economic base. The COVID-19 pandemic, the OECD finds, "has spurred many governments to enhance their foreign investment screening mechanisms or introduce new ones" which may reflect "the way governments and societies view the benefits and risks associated with foreign investment."

An OECD background paper on investment screening found there is now concern about "predatory acquisitions" where foreign investment may be associated with "sell-offs and the loss of critical assets and technology," with increasing attention to the effects of takeovers on overall innovation. Companies like Facebook, Apple and Google can "identify and acquire potential rivals early in their lifecycle before they become a competitive threat," the report on investment screening pointed out.

This is no time for half measures or vague aspirations. There's too much at stake. Failure could mean a poorer country. So this budget really matters.

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The Hill Times

Opinion

Trudeau government's new climate plan is insufficient

The Green New Deal, which could do so much to accelerate needed change, is too radical, and too impossible for a weak Liberal government.



Bill Henderson

Opinion

GIBSONS, B.C.—In 2014-2015, led by the newly formed Eco-

fiscal Commission, there was a bloom of comment, editorials and op-eds advocating carbon pricing as a climate mitigation method. As a British Columbia climate activist, I was familiar with the failure of our province's vaunted carbon tax, so I gathered 15 or so of the authors, prominent economists, climate activists, opinion shapers, academics and journalists and started posting the best of the burgeoning literature on why carbon pricing is limited and ineffectual. I did 60 or so posts until cancer treatment forced me to cut back in 2017.

The Liberal government's new climate plan, though it doubles down on a rising carbon tax, is still insufficient.

It is not an effective policy, it just continues to waste precious time, and keeps us from considering policies and paths that could be effective. Carbon pricing must be part of the mitigation solution, but to the extent that the carbon-pricing experiment lets policy-makers and the public

delude themselves that they are meaningfully addressing global warming, it's not just ineffectual; it's counterproductive.

The best climate science indicates that developed countries like Canada must reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by seven to 10 per cent each year, starting from 2020, in order to have a reasonable chance of staying climate safe. This is at least double the Harper-era, (and still the Liberal) 2030 target and it remains questionable whether the increased carbon tax—if it actually is implemented over the whole decade—will even achieve that target. The tapering-in of the tax still leaves emissions too high for too long this decade. Moreover, the focus on carbon pricing still leaves fossil fuel production, subsidies, and increasing infrastructure untouched. Worse, the Liberal policy direction ignores both the lessons we should have learned during the COVID epidemic about effective government and the huge opportunity of using the COVID recovery to make the needed,

urgent transition to a post-carbon economy.

The Canadian government is not acting fast enough to proactively contain the growing danger. The Green New Deal which could do so much to accelerate needed change is too radical, too impossible for this weak Liberal government to manage. Its focus remains upon discredited, incremental policies that promise effective mitigation within a political and economic framework of business as usual, when it is now certain that climate is an emergency requiring a coalition of governments dedicated to implementing deep systemic change.

With what we now know today about the dangers of continued GHG release into the atmosphere and the emission reduction timelines necessary to mitigate climate change, with what we know about carbon pricing and mitigation policies within business as usual, with what we know after three decades of mitigation failure, we can ask, is the Trudeau government's reliance upon carbon

pricing even tenable? Why are we staying within a 'serial monogamy of solutions' when we should be hammering GHG emissions with a whole kit-bag of policies?

Climate change is an existential danger to all we care about and love. The global lack of mitigation ambition needs to be broken by the example of countries like Canada and Australia; rich, fortunate, democratic countries that are amongst the global leaders in fossil fuel production. We must lead by regulating a managed decline on our fossil fuel production. Otherwise, we will all lose big time.

Once again the pretend climate leaders (actually Canada has continued to be one of the poorest climate performers in the G20 by almost every metric) are not leading, but rather playing myopic, self-interest politics and instead seem prepared to waste yet another decade.

The new climate plan is probably as adventurous an attempt at climate mitigation as is possible by a weak minority government positioning itself for the next election. Am I wrong? About the Liberals and carbon pricing? About climate as an emergency requiring emergency action? Where's the learning? Where's the informed debate about our true climate predicament and what mitigation policies should be considered?

Bill Henderson is a British Columbia climate activist.
The Hill Times

Problems of current-day conservative thought

What does cutting taxes mean anyway, if society, as a whole, becomes a seething cauldron of polyglot, polymorphous perversity?



Mark Wegierski

Opinion

TORONTO—Conservatism today is, it could be argued, a bewildered philosophy, and an unwieldy morass of mutually incompatible, self-contradictory, and amorphous ideas. Despite decades of internecine debate, the contemporary conservative movement in Western societies has failed, generally speaking, to provide a coherent and consistent account of itself. No viewpoint that, holus-bolus, seeks to unite Barry Goldwater under the same banner as T.S. Eliot could be otherwise. No "vital equilibrium" could ever be that vital.

What can be described as the current malformation of conservatism has been caused, in part, by its weak and problematic position, vis-à-vis the modern world. The advance of left-wing thought and practice in modern society has compressed all competing "right-wing" ideologies together, forcing what could be called the "fusion" of 19th-century liberalism with traditional conservatism, such that distinctions between the two have become increasingly blurred.

This union of what were once two strongly distinct political philosophies is not only regarded as a necessary tactical alliance, but is increasingly meant to become a new theoretical and philosophical "synthesis." Post-war American conservatism, in particular, has been preoccupied with sometimes ingenious rationalizations of this new philosophical outlook. George Nash, for example, in his book, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, divided post-war American conservatism into three main groupings: "traditionalists," "fusionists," and "libertarians." Purely on the level of theory, "fusionism," a "shot-gun marriage" between two once-opposed positions, can be seen as difficult to justify. Yet, one could also question to what extent the establishment of "fusionism" as a touchstone idea has helped or hindered the disparate groups of the American Right.

Conservatism, in the traditional sense, is simply not "libertarian." Pure libertarianism is certainly not "traditionalist." Indeed,



Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole, pictured Oct. 28, 2020, on the Hill. Conservatism today is what might be described as 'forced,' without the luxury for doctrinal experimentation, lackadaisical stances, and its weak commitment to core ideas and programs, writes Mark Wegierski.
The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

these two currents have existed in opposition for the longest portion of their history (i.e., the struggle between "classical conservatism" and "classical liberalism"). Pure libertarianism itself is a radical restatement and reformulation of "classical" liberalism.

Historically, on the practical and popular levels, much of the American "Old Right" was fiercely individualistic, ultra-pro-capitalist, and radically freedom-centred, whereas in Continental Europe, what could be called the true "Old Right," was its exact opposite, community-oriented, state-centred, and focused on social and spiritual integration and harmony as the unifying principles.

Virtually all works attempting to advance an acceptable new def-

inition or program for conservatism have had to face this paradox of the two different conceptions of the "Old Right." The rigid Goldwater-esque "rugged individualism" of much of the American "Old Right," and its relentless assaults on "welfare-statism," were probably its least appealing aspects and failed to win it any significant funding from American big-business.

There certainly appears to be no possibility of turning back the clock to the supposedly conservative "Gilded Age," that mythical era "before the New Deal." And it is difficult to argue that the social conservatism of heartland America is in any way compatible with the freewheeling, free-booting amorality of contemporary big-city capitalism, to which most

American conservatives seem to give at least a nod of approval. A modern government, it could be argued, will always be "welfarist" and bureaucratic in administrative practice—the point is to be able to determine, in some measure at least, the ideas and beliefs that are transmitted through the programs and actions of that bureaucracy.

Conservatism today is what might be described as "forced"—without the luxury for doctrinal experimentation, lackadaisical stances, and its weak commitment to core ideas and programs. It is extremely important for the future of conservatism, where, and how, conservatism's lines of defence are drawn. The defence of capitalism and an atomistic individualism is, it could be argued, a weak position; the defence of society, of human social existence, community, and family, a strong position.

What does cutting taxes mean anyway, if society, as a whole, becomes a seething cauldron of polyglot, polymorphous perversity? After all, so much of what traditional conservatives find troubling about late modernity—such as a libertine entertainment culture—is entirely unconnected to government bureaucracy and mostly functions on a strictly free-market basis.

Mark Wegierski is a Toronto-based writer and historical researcher, published in *Ottawa Citizen*, *Calgary Herald*, and previously in *The Hill Times*, among others. He is a long-time federal Conservative Party supporter.

The Hill Times

Federal departments miss quarter of annual targets, with Transportation Safety Board, National Defence among poorest performers

In 2019–20, federal departments and agencies met 1,352 performance targets, missed 556, and tracked 431 more that didn't have available results.

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT ALLEN

About 24 per cent of government programs tracked at the departmental level missed their performance targets in 2019-20, in a near-replica of the rate of unmet goals in the previous year.

Twenty-three departments or agencies missed more than a third of their targets set for March 2020, including the Transportation Safety Board of Canada (49 per cent), the Department of Justice Canada (39 per cent), National Defence (38 per cent), Statistics Canada (38 per cent), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (38 per cent) and its Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (40 per cent).

The government tracked 2,777 departmental performance indicators from 87 federal departments and agencies, which were targeted to be achieved by the end of March 2020, and found 1,352, or about 57 per cent, had met their target. That's down from the 63 per cent achieved last year, though last year's missed targets sat at 25 per cent, roughly the same portion this year, according to a Hill Times analysis of department-level data. The results were published on GC InfoBase by the Treasury Board Secretariat. Collectively in 2019-20, the 87 government bodies missed 556 targets and posted a further 431 that couldn't be checked off due

to unavailable data. The total from the department-by-department numbers was a few off from the Treasury Board's summary of 86 departments, with 1,340 recorded as met and 568 as unmet.

The number of targets per federal body varies widely from one to 121, and reasons departments couldn't fulfil their plans were just as broad, from COVID-19 interruptions to staffing levels that created delays.

Eight of the 87 departments, for example, accounted for a third of the 556 unmet outcomes, with National Defence (39) at the top, followed by the Transportation Safety Board of Canada (38), Employment and Social Development Canada (25), and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (24). Some of the latter's unmet targets related to the functionality of the GC InfoBase and the working on the departmental plans and results reports themselves, making them "clearer and more accessible."

Almost a third of the departments tracked fewer than 10 performance targets over the fiscal year. More than half had success rates above 65 per cent, with seven posting a perfect record for 2019-20, though they typically all had fewer than 15 targets. Several had fewer than five: Northern Pipeline Agency Canada, Canadian Grain Commission, Copyright Board Canada, Office of the Intelligence Commissioner, the National Battlefields Commission, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, and the Military Police Complaints Commission of Canada. Among the larger agencies with strong success rates were Natural Resources Canada (78 per cent), Shared Services Canada (77 per cent), followed by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and Finance Canada with 74 per cent apiece.

Among this group, only two had targets with measures not



Treasury Board President Jean-Yves Duclos tabled the performance reports on Dec. 7, 2020, for 87 federal departments and agencies. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

available. The Leaders' Debates Commission said it didn't have information on the proportion of Canadians having access to debates, and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency Secretariat, because the transition of the Security Intelligence Review Committee to the National Security Intelligence Review Agency "requires significant changes" to the reporting framework.

COVID-19 affected National Defence targets

National Defence noted the pandemic as a problem in reaching several of its targets, including staffing, international goals, and visitors to the 71 Canadian Armed Forces-accredited museums.

For example, only 19 per cent of new positions were filled at the Military Transition Group, which supports transitioning military personnel.

"New positions were in the process of being staffed when COVID-19 prompted the implementation of business continuity plans and hiring was temporarily stalled," read the explanation for the 40 positions that should have been filled. Those positions were described as a "priority" once staffing activities resume.

And, due to the COVID-19 closures and confinement, all 71 museums closed their doors, and so, they didn't get figures ready in time for the department's results report, which meant an undercounting of visitors.

National Defence reported 98 per cent of its international operations met stated objectives, which counted as unmet because it wasn't a perfect score—the min-

imum requirement for this target. The onset of the global pandemic in early 2020 was the main reason, according to the department.

"Due to the high priority placed on the safety of Canadian soldiers working abroad, measures were taken to ensure their personal safety," the report noted, including repatriation in some cases like Operation IMPACT, Canada's military presence in the Middle East, and Operation UNIFIER, its mission to support the security forces of Ukraine.

"These safety measures had knock-on effects for ongoing and planned CAF activities," the rationale continued. It added that "CAF continues to refine its ability to integrate cyber-enabled effects in CAF-led operations."

Another target related to cyber-defence readiness showed the department failing to achieve its 85 per cent target, instead reporting that the force's "cyber elements" met readiness requirements only 65 per cent of the time.

Personnel numbers and CAF's development of additional cyber force capability remain the "major limiting factor," but the department said "ongoing efforts" to create and fill the necessary positions should lead to better results in future years.

National Defence was among only two other departments that tracked more than 100 measures. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) didn't meet five per cent of its 121 targets, but marked a whopping 80—or 66 per cent—as having data not available to give the check as being met. Employment and Social Development Canada, meanwhile, reported 36 per cent of its measures as not available, and missed 21 per cent of its targets. National Defence met 53 targets, missed 39, and couldn't say where 12 stood.

The pandemic also created delays for GAC's ability to collect some international assistance data, and was cited as a reason for targets without information. It said it plans to publish those results this summer with its department plan.

The Courts Administration Service, Department of Veterans Affairs, Privy Council Office, Department of Indigenous Services, and Treasury Board Secretariat were among 14 total departments and 61 targets that mentioned COVID-19 as reasons targets couldn't be checked off.

'Competing priorities' created some delays faced by Transportation Safety Board of Canada

Taking longer to finish investigations pushed the Transportation Safety Board of Canada's failure rate higher last fiscal year.

In at least 10 of the markers, the minimum average time to complete pipeline, marine, rail, and aviation investigations, whether limited in scope or detailed, took longer than planned. For example, it took more than 510 days, on average, to complete detailed rail and pipeline investigations, when the target was 450 days.

"Competing priorities" and resource problems created delays for both, as well as "an exceptionally high number of new occurrences" for the rail classification, caused a high workload, the board explained.

The board missed 38 of its targets (49 per cent) and met 24 of its targets (31 per cent), and had an additional 16 indicators that didn't have data available to mark either way. Some of the issues were outside of the board's control dealing with its goal due to a higher-than-average fatality and accident rate across the board. The organization failed all six measures calling for downward trends in accident rates for marine, rail, and aviation.

The rail industry, it reported, experienced a higher-than-normal number of fatal accidents, though the total is still down slightly from the 10-year average. There were also more accidents recorded, due mainly to an increase in the reporting of fires and explosions on main track rights of way. One railway operator's "interpretation of reportable occurrences" is responsible for the bulk of the 200 per cent jump of 44 accidents up from the 10-year average of 22, the TSB said.

The marine accident rates in 2019 were all slightly up from recent averages and included 17 fatalities related to 13 incidents, above the average of 11 per year. Aviation incidents, meanwhile, included a "significant" number of fatal accidents, though TSB noted they were mostly from the "general" aviation sector.

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The 20 largest departments with the greatest percent of missed performance targets

Organization	Target met	Target not met	To be achieved
Transportation Safety Board of Canada	24	38	0
National Research Council Canada	34	24	0
Department of Justice Canada	8	9	22
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	13	13	0
National Defence	53	39	40
Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat	29	24	11
Veterans Affairs Canada	11	9	12
Fisheries and Oceans Canada	36	20	8
Correctional Service Canada	44	22	0
Department of Indigenous Services	6	10	30
Environment and Climate Change Canada	15	8	31
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada	37	17	4
Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada	22	13	6
Health Canada	21	12	35
Canada Revenue Agency	22	10	2
Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada	29	10	35
Canadian Food Inspection Agency	16	5	0
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	16	5	32
Canada Energy Regulator	41	13	0
Employment and Social Development Canada	52	25	7

Source: Treasury Board of Canada

Conservatives need to chart 'uniquely Canadian' vision of party in wake of Capitol Hill riot, say political players

Political parties can choose to either rile up populists within their base, or 'spend the time and do the work' to find out, and address, what is making them angry, said Conservative strategist Ken Boessenkool.

Continued from page 1

Complicating matters is the fact that the governing Liberals have been "very good at demonizing their opponents," says pollster Nik Nanos, chair of Nanos Research. "The Liberals have always tried to take advantage of not only what their opponents have said, but what they've not said, and have tried to imply that not speaking out on something implies there is support."



Leading pollster Nik Nanos says the federal Conservatives must 'make sure that they chart their own vision of the Conservative movement under Erin O'Toole that is uniquely Canadian, and that is not dependent on the United States for either ideas or tactics.' *The Hill Times* file photograph

Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole (Durham, Ont.) called the Jan. 6 attack in Washington "an astonishing assault on freedom and democracy."

Mr. Nanos told *The Hill Times* that the Conservatives have to avoid making any type of extended commentary or connection to anything in the United States as they appeal to Canadian voters in the future.

"We know in Canadian politics, one kiss of death is to be seen as being too American, American-like, or an American copycat," said Mr. Nanos. "There are many things in the United States that Canadians recognize as positive, but there's an inherent streak within the Canadian political psyche of charting our own way."

"For the Conservatives in Canada, they have to make sure that they chart their own vision of the Conservative movement under Erin O'Toole that is uniquely Canadian, and that is not dependent on the United States for either ideas or tactics," said Mr. Nanos. "That being said, for the Conservatives, their strategy on this could be quite simple—all Erin O'Toole has to say is that he is against violence, and that he's in favour of law and order and democracy," said Mr. Nanos, who also added the important thing is for him not to say the words "Proud Boys."

On Jan. 10, the federal government was considering designating far-right group Proud Boys as a terrorist organization following their role in the Jan. 6 riot on Capitol Hill that left a number of individuals dead, including a police officer.

"[Mr. O'Toole] needs to have a blanket position that is against violence, that is in favour of law and order, and in favour of stable democracy," said Mr. Nanos.

Mr. O'Toole weighed in on the violence with a Jan. 6 tweet, saying he was "deeply saddened to see chaos grip our greatest ally today."

Conservative MP Michael Chong (Wellington-Halton Hills, Ont.), who is his party's shadow minister for foreign affairs, released a statement on Jan. 7 condemning the events in the United States Capitol.

"The violence of an unruly mob incited by outgoing President Trump that attacked America's national legislature in Washington D.C., that was meeting to certify the results of the recent U.S. election, is an affront to the shared principles that both Canada and the United States have had in common for more than a century," according to Mr. Chong's statement.

"Principles such as a belief in democracy and the rule of law, and in the peaceful transition of power based on democratic elections," he said, calling Canada the closest ally and friend of the United States.

"Conservatives call on President Trump and his supporters to respect the will of the American people, respect the will of states who have confirmed these results and respect the will of American courts that have reaffirmed these results," according to Mr. Chong.

'Two ways parties can deal with populists'

Ken Boessenkool, a senior research fellow at the C.D. Howe Institute and a former senior Conservative strategist, told *The Hill Times* that there are two ways parties can deal with populists that exist within their coalitions.

"You can deal with them by fomenting or aggravating or increasing their level of anger, by

using language and policies that make them more angry; or you can spend the time and do the work to figure out what is underlying their concerns and find policy solutions to address those concerns," said Mr. Boessenkool, who has played senior strategic and policy roles in four national election campaigns under former prime minister Stephen Harper and was also chief of staff to former B.C. premier Christy Clark.

"And I fully expect and trust that the people around Erin O'Toole are doing the latter rather than the former," he said.

When asked about the Liberal Party's communications strategy following the events on Capitol Hill, Mr. Boessenkool said every political party tries to exploit the weaknesses of their opponents and will do so in various ways.

"But those kinds of messages and trying to attach your opponents to their worst elements only work if you reinforce the message that they are trying to put forward," said Mr. Boessenkool. "Justin Trudeau can jump up and down and say that Erin O'Toole and his people are a bunch of Trump patriots, but until and unless Erin O'Toole and his people reinforce that message, it's not a believable message coming from the opposition."



Conservative MP Michael Chong, who is also his party's shadow minister for foreign affairs. Mr. Chong released a statement on Jan. 7 saying the violence on Capitol Hill "is an affront to the shared principles that both Canada and the United States have had in common for more than a century." *Photograph courtesy of Twitter*

The Liberal Party wrote in a Jan. 13 fundraising email that "Canadians are disappointed to see Erin O'Toole's Conservatives continuing a worrisome pattern of divisive politics and catering to the extreme right." The email used Mr. O'Toole's leadership campaign slogan—a promise to "Take back Canada"—and his decision not to denounce deputy leader Candice Bergen (Portage-Lisgar, Man.) for wearing a hat bearing Mr. Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan as examples.

Ms. Bergen made headlines last week when an undated photo showing her wearing a MAGA hat that began circulating on social media, according to CBC.

The Manitoba MP released a tweet on Jan. 7 condemning the violence, saying that Conservatives "are calling on President Trump and his supporters to respect the will of the American people."

Mr. Boessenkool's advice for the O'Toole campaign: "you need to be extra careful in what you do and what you say, so as not to reinforce any message that you are aligned with those people, and you need to root out, early, examples where those possible connections can be made, and I think they've done that."

"Every party does compare and contrast, but it only works when the party you are comparing or contrasting reinforces the message that you're delivering Canadians," said Mr. Boessenkool of the governing Liberals.

Rebel News, an extreme right-wing Canadian media outlet, published what they deemed to be an "exclusive interview" with Mr. O'Toole that was published on Jan. 11—a claim that was immediately challenged by Mr. O'Toole's director of communications, Melanie Paradis, who said on Twitter that "there was no interview, it was an email from a spokesperson."

Ezra Levant, leader of Rebel News, responded by saying, "please don't lie. I asked for an interview by Skype by your office said to do it by email."

"Your office took my questions and later got back to me with answers written in the first person," wrote Mr. Levant. "I asked how the answer should be attributed, and was told, 'O'Toole'."

O'Toole wants to present Conservatives as a centre-right, moderate party, according to pollster Frank Graves

Pollster and president of EKOS Research Frank Graves told *The Hill Times* that how the attack in Washington would be viewed by Conservative Party supporters "is a really interesting question" and that he'll be looking into the issue in more detail in the near future.

But Mr. Graves also said that "the issue of what the Conservative Party and the leadership and strategists are thinking is probably quite different than what I see when I measure what the people who are voting for them are thinking."

"I think initially, the majority of Conservative supporters would share the horror and shock that most Canadians felt, but I would also expect that we would see it would be more measured amongst some portions of the Conservative base," he said. "We know that some of the base themselves reflect some of the same kind of ordered populism and tendencies that we

see in the Trump supporters in the United States."

"This is the big juggling act that the Conservatives face, and Mr. O'Toole wants to present them as a centre-right, moderate party—they are really focusing on these working class themes and so forth," said Mr. Graves. "But we do know that the more extreme views on issues like race, immigration, social issues around abortion and gender rights, that a lot of those people who have those views are in the Conservative Party."

"They may not be the majority, but they are certainly a significant and active portion of it."

According to an opinion piece from former prime minister Stephen Harper's director of communications, Andrew MacDougall, that ran in the Ottawa Citizen on Jan. 14, "whether



Conservative Party Deputy Leader Candice Bergen, pictured wearing a 'MAGA' hat, an image that has been circulating online. *Photograph courtesy of Twitter*

Erin O'Toole likes it or not, his Conservative movement includes some bad apples, a not-insignificant minority who look at political events down south not with shock, but admiration."

"They view Trump's insurgency—now a literal insurgency—as a potential roadmap for politics in Canada. It would be malpractice for Liberal operatives not to pick at that wound," wrote Mr. MacDougall.

President-elect Joe Biden set to be sworn in on Jan. 20

Longtime University of Toronto political science professor Nelson Wiseman told *The Hill Times* that Canada's Conservatives should rethink their rhetoric about "challenging elites."

"It doesn't work," said Prof. Wiseman.

President-elect Joe Biden is scheduled to be sworn into the presidency on Wednesday, Jan. 20.

Mr. Trump has stated he will not be attending the inauguration, and will therefore be the first sitting president to not attend his successor's ceremony since former president Andrew Johnson chose to skip the affair in 1869.

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With Trump leaving and Biden taking over as U.S. president, 'stars aligned' for Canada on having a 'stable, experienced partner,' say politicians

Newly elected U.S. President Joe Biden will face a number of daunting challenges, including uniting a divisive America, and the best way to do that is to tackle the economy and the COVID-19 pandemic raging in the U.S., says Innovative Research president Greg Lyle.

Continued from page 1

"That's good news" for Canada, said Mr. Chrétien, a former Canadian ambassador to the U.S., now a partner at the law firm Fasken, in Montreal.

To play to his base, right after commencing his Republican nomination campaign for the 2016 presidential election, Mr. Trump started slamming Canada, among other countries, with accusations of taking unfair advantage of the U.S. on trade. During the course of that campaign, he promised Americans that should he become president, he would tear apart the North American Free Trade Agreement and renegotiate it. Following his win, Mr. Trump delivered on his promise and asked his officials to reopen the agreement for negotiations. After detailed negotiations between Canada, the U.S., and Mexico, the three countries finalized a new agreement, and the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) came into effect last summer.

During his four-year presidency, Mr. Trump made repeated threats of imposing tariffs on Canadian exports to the U.S. and then followed through on these threat when in 2018, citing national security reasons, the U.S. imposed hefty tariffs on Canadian aluminium and steel. The tariffs were lifted in 2019. In August of last year, the U.S. again imposed levies, but rescinded the decision a few weeks later, as Canada

was about to announce its own retaliatory tariffs on U.S. exports to Canada.

Like most of the rest of the world, in the last four years, the Trudeau government has been extremely cautious not to say anything that might annoy Mr. Trump, worrying the president could retaliate with trade tariffs or do something that would undermine the relationship between the two countries. Even during the recently concluded presidential election campaign, MPs and Senators avoided saying anything that might strain the relationship between the two countries.

After the Nov. 4 election, Mr. Trump refused to accept his loss, falsely claiming the election results were rigged, and blamed the Democrats for stealing his election victory. He also barred top government officials from cooperating with Mr. Biden's transition team and refused to release funds necessary for the transition process. Weeks later, after facing public pressure and rejection of his bogus claims of election rigging in the courts of law, he grudgingly allowed his officials to work with the Biden transition team and released the funding.

On Jan. 6, thousands of Trump supporters, incited by Mr. Trump, attacked Capitol Hill where the results of the presidential election were being certified that day. Five people died in the violence. As a consequence of Mr. Trump's "incitement of insurrection," Congress impeached Mr. Trump for a second time in his presidency on Jan. 13. In 2019, he was impeached for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. It's the first time in American history that a president has been impeached twice.

Mr. Trump will now face a trial in the Senate after he leaves office. Senators can vote to disallow him from ever holding public office again.

To make matters even more complicated, some white supremacist groups who are also supporters of Trumpism are already openly talking about a "civil war" and "secession."

This is making some Canadian commentators, including the Financial Post's Diane Francis, worried about the "spillover effect in terms of influence and recruit-

ment, but also the fact that there will be an influx of people fleeing U.S. law enforcement in the ensuing crackdown."

Mr. Biden unseated Mr. Trump by winning 51.4 per cent of the votes or more than 81.2-million votes. Mr. Trump won 46.9 per cent or 74.2-million votes. To win the election, the winning candidates needed 290 Electoral College votes. Mr. Biden won 306 while Mr. Trump won 232.

In interviews last week, experts said that Mr. Biden would

ers interviewed for this article, acknowledged that the incoming administration is facing daunting challenges but said they're confident Mr. Biden and his team have the required skills to meet the challenges.

Mr. Chrétien said he's confident Mr. Biden will follow the U.S. tradition of making Canada his first international destination. Mr. Trump was the first president in recent history who did not come to Canada for the first international tour after taking over. A first international trip of a U.S. president to Canada is a symbolic move that shows the close relationship between the two allies and neighbouring countries.

Before leaving office as vice president under then-president Barack Obama, Mr. Biden visited Ottawa in December 2016 where Mr. Trudeau hosted a state dinner, a month after Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton had lost the presidential election to Mr. Trump.

Mr. Chrétien described the transition process from Mr. Trump to Mr. Biden as "tremendously sad" and "worrisome" because the outgoing president made the whole process very cumbersome by refusing to accept the election results. Mr. Trump has already announced that he will not attend Mr. Biden's inauguration on Jan. 20.

Mr. Chrétien predicted that after Mr. Biden takes over, the two countries will work together in



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and then-vice president Joe Biden pictured on Dec. 8, 2016, in Ottawa. Mr. Trudeau hosted a state dinner for then outgoing vice president Biden. Political insiders say that Mr. Biden taking over as president of the U.S. this week is good news for Canada as he's known to have a very good relationship with Mr. Trudeau. *The Hill Times* file photograph by Jake Wright

have an uphill battle bringing together a divided country and resuscitating an economy that's already in recession with high unemployment rates. This is on top of the COVID-19 pandemic that has so far resulted in deaths of about 389,190 Americans as of last week. There were a total of 23,282,329 reported cases of the virus, according to Johns Hopkins University of Medicine.

On Jan. 14, Mr. Biden unveiled a \$1.9-trillion health-care and economic relief program called "The America Rescue Plan" to deal with the health and economic effects of COVID-19. It remains to be seen if Mr. Biden will be able to get it passed through Congress as the price tag may be too high for some Republicans. Among the numerous goals identified in the plan, the incoming administration hopes to deliver 100 million vaccine shots in the first 100 days of his presidency.

Meanwhile, Mr. Chrétien, who also served as Canada's ambassador to France, Belgium, Mexico and Congo, and oth-

the new presidency as Democrat governments tend to work well with Liberal governments in Canada, and the Republicans with the Conservatives in Canada.

As a starting point to work together, Mr. Chrétien said Canada and the U.S. should coordinate to fight the health and economic effects of COVID-19.

Mr. Chrétien said the two countries would also have a productive relationship with each other on foreign policy. But, he said, the challenging part will be the trade issues, such as the softwood lumber dispute and Keystone XL pipeline, among others as the U.S. Democrats are known for their protectionist policies. Mr. Chrétien, however, said that both countries will be respectful in working out their disputes and will find a solution.

Eight-term Liberal MP Wayne Easter (Malpeque, P.E.I.), co-chair of the Canada U.S. Interparliamentary Group, agreed that under the Biden administration, Canada will be dealing with a more predictable neighbour, ally,

and trade partner. He also agreed that the new U.S. administration and the Canadian government will believe in multilateralism and will have common ground on foreign policy. On trade issues, Mr. Easter, however, pointed out the relationship is complex as it's not only between Ottawa and Washington D.C., but also involves U.S. states and Canadian provinces. It remains to be seen, he said, how much progress different jurisdictions between the two countries can make on trade disputes.

"It is just not centre to centre," said Mr. Easter. "It's province to state, it's federal government to state, and it's businesses, supply chains; it's the country as a whole. So let's not spend all our time focusing on just Washington, D.C. and who represents that, we have to look at the whole picture."

Pollster Greg Lyle of Innovative Research told *The Hill Times* that as a result of President Trump's divisive policies at the international level, the U.S.'s international reputation has taken a significant hit. The new administration will have to put in a lot of effort and take concrete action to rehabilitate its reputation.

At the domestic level, Mr. Lyle said that one of the key ways for the new administration to bring the country together will be to work hard and produce results on issues such as the COVID-19 global pandemic and the economy that are affecting all Americans.

"There are probably a couple of tens of millions of Americans who feel that the election was stolen, and are spitting mad about it," said Mr. Lyle. "And it's going to be very hard to bridge those people. But, again, I think the answer is to show progress on the issues everybody cares about [COVID-19 and economy]."

Mr. Lyle said Americans who are talking about "hovering war" and "secession" are fringe elements and said it's completely unrealistic to think any such things will materialize.

Pollster Nik Nanos of Nanos Research agreed and said a minority of the populists are talking about secession and civil war, which will not materialize. He also said that the ongoing political turmoil in the U.S. caused by a vocal minority causing destruction does not mean anything for Canada. Mr. Nanos cited the example of the People's Party of Canada that ran on policies such as the ones promoted by Mr. Trump but was able to win only 1.6 per cent of the votes in the last federal election. As well, Maxime Bernier, the People's Party Leader, lost his own seat that he had won as a member of the Conservative Party.

"Maxime Bernier attempted to create a populist party that would connect with Canadians who were disaffected with Ottawa, but Canadians have not embraced either Maxime Bernier or the People's Party of Canada," said Mr. Nanos, founder and chief data scientist for Nanos Research. "So I don't think there's anyone right now, who could galvanize a real populist movement, and attempts to have a populist movement in Canada have fallen flat."

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Pandemic election bill far from the finish line, as talk of spring vote continues

PM Trudeau says he doesn't want an election. 'Prove it,' says ex-chief electoral officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley.

Continued from page 1

Political pundits have speculated for months that either the government or opposition would trigger an election this spring. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) told the Liberal Party's board of directors before Christmas that it "look[ed] like" a spring election was coming, a Liberal source told *The Hill Times* earlier this month.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified in Canada since that time, and Mr. Trudeau told reporters on Jan. 12 that he was not planning to trigger an election this spring himself.

"From the very beginning of any minority Parliament, every political party understands that elections can happen. But as I've consistently been saying, we don't want an election," he said during a press conference.

The government has tabled a bill in Parliament, C-19, that would alter the electoral process temporarily, with the aim of making it safer during the pandemic. However, that bill must still pass through nearly every stage of the legislative process in a minority Parliament, as well as a 90-day implementation period.

Bill C-19 would make several temporary changes to the Canada Elections Act. It would stretch out polling day from one to three days, including a weekend and

the following Monday, so voters won't all congregate at polling stations at once. It would allow election officials to create an extended voting period within long-term care homes or other facilities where vulnerable voters live, to make it easier for them to vote safely. It aims to make mail-in or drop-off voting easier, and would give the chief electoral officer more powers to adapt the election process to make it safer.



Jean-Pierre Kingsley led Elections Canada from 1990 to 2007. *The Hill Times* file photograph

Most of the bill would not come into effect until 90 days after it received royal assent in order to allow Elections Canada enough time to adapt to the changes.

Canada's Chief Electoral Officer Stéphane Perrault can opt to cut that period short, if he decides that Elections Canada is ready before the 90-day period is over.

However, that 90-day period is shorter than the 120-day period recommended by Mr. Perrault in a report he issued in October about holding an election during the pandemic. That report included recommendations similar to some of the measures included in Bill



Canada's Chief Electoral Officer Stéphane Perrault, pictured at a press conference in Ottawa on Sept. 17, 2019. Mr. Perrault is leading Elections Canada while the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage across Canada, and speculation that an election will take place at some point in 2021 is widespread. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

C-19, though the government did not follow Mr. Perrault's suggestions exactly.

Mr. Perrault and his staff at Elections Canada can use the time before Bill C-19 passes to prepare themselves for the work that implementing the bill will require, but will not likely begin to make those changes in advance, said Mr. Kingsley, who served as Canada's chief electoral officer from 1990 to 2007.

"They can prepare to do the work, but they cannot do the work," he said in an interview.

Mid-pandemic vote 'very problematic,' says ex-chief electoral officer Kingsley

MPs are scheduled to return to the House of Commons—virtually or in person—on Jan. 25. They have a hefty workload awaiting them, including a dozen active government bills in the House.

The government will almost certainly have to make passing Bill C-19 a top priority when MPs return if it wants the safety measures included in the bill to be in place in time for a spring election.

The spring season officially begins on March 20 and ends on June 20. MPs are scheduled to sit in the House until June 23 at the latest this year before beginning the summer break, during which the opposition parties cannot trigger an election.

If an election were called at the very end of spring, Parliament would have to pass Bill C-19 by March 22 in order to give Mr. Perrault the full 90 days to implement the bill before the campaign begins.

For an election actually held at the end of spring, that date must be pushed back by at least 37 days, the minimum duration of a federal election campaign, to Feb. 13.

MPs are scheduled to sit for just 10 days before Feb. 13, and 24 days before March 22. A portion of those will be supply days, in which the opposition parties set the agenda.

The bill must also be reviewed and voted on in the Senate before it is passed.

If the government intends to release its spring budget in March, as has often been the case, and opposition parties trigger an

election by voting it down, it is already too late for MPs to pass Bill C-19 in time.

The government should work to avoid an election while the pandemic rages, said Mr. Kingsley.

"Even if you pass the bill [C-19] tomorrow, the difficulties warrant very, very serious consideration of not having an election. We would need to have a really untenable situation in Parliament to justify such an action at this time, in my view," he said.

Social distancing on polling day will be difficult, with or without the passage of C-19, he said. Finding poll workers could be difficult, since those jobs are often filled by senior citizens who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 than younger people.

The government erred by not following Mr. Perrault's recommendation to hold a mid-pandemic election over a weekend, said Mr. Kingsley. The government bill would require the election to be held over a weekend and the following Monday as well.

Polling sites are often set up at schools. If students have returned to the classroom by the time an election is held, school boards may not allow Elections Canada to set up polling sites on school property, for fear that visiting voters could put their students at risk on the Monday of the election, said Mr. Kingsley.

"Frankly it becomes quite problematic, because polling day itself becomes very problematic: the distancing, the lineups that would occur; the processing of people, all the measures that are necessary because of COVID."

Mr. Kingsley called on the governing Liberals to work with the opposition parties and keep the government afloat while the pandemic rages.

"This is a representative democracy that we have here that has worked exceedingly well for Canadians. Let's make it work," he said.

If Mr. Trudeau doesn't want an election, as he has said, he should "prove it," said Mr. Kingsley.

Triggering spring election would be 'height of irresponsibility,' says former Liberal MP Leslie

Former Liberal MP Andrew Leslie said that winning another

election dominates the thinking of senior Liberals. In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Mr. Leslie, a former parliamentary secretary in Mr. Trudeau's government, said the "relentless pursuit of voter share is something that completely dominates the Liberal team."

Mr. Leslie said he believed the Trudeau government will try to call an election "as soon as possible" if it can't deliver vaccines fast enough, and people start questioning its vaccine rollout strategy.

"I believe that the Liberals will watch what is happening. If they get the sense that the vaccination distribution... will draw a whole bunch of negative attention as vaccination programs unroll—in other words, it gets worse before it gets better—they'll try and trigger a spring election," he said.

"In my opinion, considering the stages of the pandemic and the complexity of the vaccination plan, holding a spring election would be the height of irresponsibility for any government. Lives will be put at risk, because senior leaders won't be focused on fulfilling their primary duty to Canadians, which is to protect them from harm," said Mr. Leslie.

Polling by Nanos Research showed the Liberals with a 13 point lead over the second-place Conservatives on Jan. 8. The four-week rolling poll included a total of 1,000 respondents.

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Status of government bills

House of Commons

Senate bills awaiting first reading:
S-2—An act to Amend the Chemical Weapons Convention Implementation Act

Second reading:

C-2—COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act
C-10—An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts
C-11—Digital Charter Implementation Act, 2020
C-12—Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act
C-13—An Act to amend the Criminal Code (single event sport betting)
C-14—Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2020
C-15—United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act
C-18—Canada-United Kingdom Trade Continuity Agreement Implementation Act
C-19—An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (COVID-19 response)

Committee:

C-8—An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94)

Report stage:

C-5—An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation)
C-6—An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)

Senate

Second reading:

C-3—An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code

Committee:

S-3—An Act to amend the Offshore Health and Safety Act
C-7—An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)

Trudeau's cabinet shuffle yet another indication Liberals 'clearing the decks' for a spring election, say political watchers

One of the jobs of a minority government is to look for an opportunity to win a majority government, says Liberal strategist David Herle.

Continued from page 1

to spend more time with his family, and will not seek re-election. He will complete the remainder of his term as a backbench MP.

In the shuffle, Mr. Bains was replaced by former foreign affairs minister Francois-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.); former transport minister Marc Garneau (Notre-Dame-de-Grace-Westmount, Que.) has been moved to foreign affairs; Liberal MP Jim Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Man.) has returned to cabinet as special representative for the Prairies; and Liberal MP Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Ont.) has been promoted to transport minister.

Mr. Carr, a former minister of international trade diversification, stepped down from cabinet in 2019 for cancer treatment. Mr. Alghabra most recently served as the parliamentary secretary to prime minister (public service renewal) and to Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.).

"[The PMO] wanted to make sure that everyone in cabinet was someone [who] was running [for election] again," said veteran pollster Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "Why do you even think about running again, unless the party is getting ready for an election?"

The Hill Times reported on Jan. 11 that Mr. Trudeau told the 35-member national board of directors of the Liberal Party before Christmas that "it looks like" the next election, which would happen in the spring. Sources told *The Hill Times* that it would only happen depending on a relatively smooth

vaccination rollout, a significant decline in COVID-19 cases, and the Liberal Party remaining popular in polls at that time, among other factors. If the Liberals remain popular until the budget is released, that would most likely be the time when the election would be called, they said.

Usually, federal budgets are released in February or March. It's been two years since the last budget was tabled. Sources told *The Hill Times* that the budget will include some big ideas that were held back from the fall economic statement so they could be introduced in the budget.

Liberal sources said that they expect the election to happen between March and June, depending on when the writ would be dropped and how long the campaign would be. The minimum writ period is 37 days and the maximum is 51.

After *The Hill Times* reported that Mr. Trudeau was expecting a spring election, the Conservative Party sent an email to party members last week asking for money to prepare, citing *The Hill Times*' story and another story as evidence the next election is coming soon. Other parties are also sending out emails on a regular basis to shore up their supporters and to raise funds.

An election could be triggered in one of the two ways in a minority government: the prime minister could request the Governor General to call an election, or the opposition parties could vote together to defeat the government in the House on a confidence vote. Considering the current composition of the House, all three major recognized opposition parties in the House would have to vote together to defeat the government.

Currently, the Liberals have 155 MPs in the 338-member House of Commons. To get legislation passed in the House, they need support from one of the three other major parties. The Conservatives have 121 MPs, the Bloc Québécois 32, and the NDP 24. The Green Party, which does not have official party status in the House, has three seats, and there

are three Independent MPs. In the 338-seat House, a simple majority requires 170 votes.

Mr. Lyle argued that Mr. Bains, a senior cabinet minister, was part of the leadership's inner circle, and if the outgoing minister felt the need to leave the cabinet table because he's not planning to run again, that's a "pretty strong" indication that the Liberals are getting ready for spring election.

"It's another sign that the Liberals are clearing the decks to enable a spring election if others things come together for them, where the biggest of the other things is, obviously, the issue of the vaccine," said Mr. Lyle.

I would assume they're all going to be running."

Mr. Trudeau denied that he had asked his cabinet ministers if they were planning on running again, in a press conference after the shuffle on Jan. 12. He said that all parties understand that in a minority government an election could happen at any time. Mr. Trudeau said that his government's focus is to provide support to Canadians during the pandemic. When asked if he would commit to not call an election until all Canadians who want to be vaccinated have been, Mr. Trudeau said: "My commitment is to doing whatever is necessary to support Canadians through this pandemic."

"We will continue to deliver supports for families, we will continue to be there for businesses, we will continue to be there for communities across the country struggling to get through. I made a promise standing here months and months ago that we would have Canadians' backs, and that's what we're focused on, and that's what we will continue to do," Mr. Trudeau said.

Some Liberal MPs and top governmental officials interviewed for this story said that an election this spring is a "strong possibility," but they also said the key deciding factor will be the state of COVID-19 and the vaccine rollout.

"We're in a minority government and I think that you would be naive not to think that there's a strong likelihood of an election this spring," said the source who spoke on a not-for-attribution basis. "But it all depends on COVID, everything depends on COVID."

A veteran Liberal political insider said that caucus members are more eager for an election

more. However, he also did not rule out the possibility of a spring election.

"They're going to keep an option open for spring," said Mr. Herle, partner at Gandalf Group and host of the popular *The Herle Burly* podcast. "If things don't turn out to be as bad as the worst modelling projects, if lockdowns end in early to mid-February, if people are getting vaccinated at a rapid rate and death tolls are dropping dramatically as a result of having vaccinated our older population, there may yet be an April/May window. I don't rule that out."

Mr. Herle said that from a strategic point of view, it's every minority government's responsibility to keep looking for an opportunity to win a majority government. Otherwise, the election could happen when the opposition parties want one, not at the first choice of the governing party.

"Either you pick your best moment, or they pick your weakest moment," said Mr. Herle who served as a top adviser to former prime minister, Paul Martin, from 2003 to 2006. "So if you're in politics, you're trying to continue to be the government."

Pollster Nik Nanos of Nanos Research said that the current cabinet would most likely be the one that would take the government into the next election. He said that in past shuffles prior to an election, prime ministers tended to promote to cabinet backbench MPs who were vulnerable in their ridings in order to help them get a higher profile. But Mr. Nanos described last week's shuffle as operational since all the shuffled ministers represent safe Liberal ridings.

"It was focused on the talent management of the cabinet, and who could do what effectively in the eyes of the prime minister," said Mr. Nanos. "So this was talent management, not a partisan shuffle."

Pollster Frank Graves of Ekos Research agreed that the current cabinet will be the election cabinet, and described the changes made as "good appointments." He said that the overall top-of-mind issue for Canadians is COVID-19, and people are concerned about the lockdowns and rising infection rates. As of Wednesday, Jan. 13, there were a total 681,328 reported cases of COVID-19 in the country resulting in 17,383 deaths. Considering that the next election will be a referendum on the government's handling of the pandemic, it's critical the Liberals do everything they can to bring the pandemic under control.

"If that's successful, this thing is a done deal [majority] for them in my opinion," said Mr. Graves, founder and president of Ekos Research.

According to a recent Ekos poll, the Liberals had the support of 34.5 per cent of Canadians, followed closely by the Conservatives at 31.3 per cent. The NDP was at 15 per cent and the Green Party 7.6 per cent. The poll of 5,155 Canadians was conducted between Dec. 31 and Jan. 12 and had a margin of error of 1.36 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured on Jan. 12, 2021, shuffled his cabinet last week, and political observers consider this as an indication that the Liberal government is setting the stage for a spring election. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Close to an election, it's a standard practice for any prime minister or his office staff to ask cabinet ministers if they're planning on running again, so that they could recruit new quality candidates to replace any ministers who are not.

"It would, frankly, be incompetent of the PMO to do a shuffle without [confirming] that everyone else was in," said Mr. Lyle. "Because to do another shuffle, it's disruptive. And it really shows you don't have your act together. Events happen and circumstances change. So it may well be possible that one or two of those people may end up at the last minute bowing out, but right now,

than the PMO. The source said that MPs want to capitalize on the goodwill generated from the government's handling of COVID-19, but the PMO and top party officials are not as keen, as they don't want to make any move that would either return them with another minority or lose the election.

David Herle, a veteran Liberal strategist and pollster, said that in the past, he was of the opinion that the next election would happen in the spring. But considering the lockdowns in Ontario and Quebec, and the fact that the vaccination rollout is in its initial phase, he's not so certain any-



HILL CLIMBERS

by Laura Ryckewaert

Staff exits for PMO and ministers O'Regan, Wilkinson, and Fortier

Jocelyn Lubczuk has joined Associate Finance Minister Mona Fortier's office as director of communications and operations, as Blue Knox moves over to International Trade Minister Mary Ng's team.

Like sand through the hour glass, so go staff movements on Parliament Hill, and there are a few recent political staff departures to note, including in Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office.

Catherine Robitaille exited her job as a communications assistant in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) last month. She'd been in the role for the last six months, months, having first joined the office on June 8.

Cameron Ahmad continues as director of communications in Mr. Trudeau's office, a post he's filled for the last two years. He oversees a 17-member team that includes: deputy directors **Vanessa Hage-Mousse** and **Chantal Gagnon**; press secretaries **Ann-Clara Vaillancourt** and **Alex Wellstead**; **Johanna Robinson**, senior manager of digital and creative communications; **Riley Lange**, co-ordinator of digital and creative content; communications planners **Andrew MacKendrick**, and **Vincent Hughes** (**Emily Trogen** is currently on maternity leave); **Astrid Krizus**, lead speechwriter; speechwriters **Alexandre Gravel** and **Dexter Nyuurnibe**; writers **Valérie Glazer** and **Parker Lund**; photographers **Adam Scotti** and **Alex Tetreault**; and executive assistant **Shehzad Sewani**.

Katie Telford is chief of staff to Mr. Trudeau.

Over in Natural Resources Minister **Seamus O'Regan's** office, special assistant **Evelyn Naghibzadeh** marked her exit in mid-December.

She had joined the minister's office last fall, fresh from leave, before which she'd been a special assistant to then-Liberal deputy whip **Linda Lapointe** (who now works as a caucus liaison in the PMO).

Paul Moen is chief of staff to Mr. O'Regan.

Lubczuk joins Fortier's office, as Knox moves to trade team

Environment and Climate Change Minister **Jonathan Wilkinson** recently bid farewell to senior communications adviser



Jocelyn Lubczuk is now director of operations and communications to the associate finance minister. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Trade Minister Mary Ng, pictured on Nov. 3, 2020, has scooped up Blue Knox to serve as her new communications director. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Jocelyn Lubczuk, who announced her new job as director of communications and operations to Associate Finance Minister **Mona Fortier** on Jan. 11.

Ms. Lubczuk started out as press secretary to Mr. Wilkinson in his capacity as then-minister of fisheries and oceans in September 2018. After he was shuffled into the environment portfolio in December 2019, she followed, taking on the title of senior communications adviser.

In her post announcing her move, Ms. Lubczuk wrote that after "two action packed years" working for Mr. Wilkinson, she was "so proud of all that we have accomplished together."

"That includes moving forward on a single use plastics ban, announcing Canada's Strengthened Climate Plan and tabling historic legislation (C-12) that will ensure all future governments continue down a pathway to net-zero by 2050," she wrote. "I am looking forward to bringing this perspective and experience to my new role at Finance Canada. Because, the environment and the economy go hand in hand."

Before joining Mr. Wilkinson's fisheries office, Ms. Lubczuk had spent just under three years working as a special assistant for social media and communications to then-environment minister **Catherine McKenna**, starting in February 2016. She's also a former communications officer for Sustainable Prosperity and for the University of Ottawa's Institute of the Environment. During the 2019 election, she served as a regional video content producer for the Liberal Party in Vancouver.

Ricky Landry is director of communications to Mr. Wilkinson and **Moira Kelly** is press secretary.

In Ms. Fortier's office, Ms. Lubczuk replaces **Blue Knox**, who has moved over to Small Business, Export Promotion, and International Trade Minister **Mary Ng's** of-

ice to serve as director of communications as of Jan. 18.

Isabella Brisson is press secretary to Ms. Fortier, whose office is run by chief of staff **Lucy Hargreaves**.

A former field organizer for the Liberal Party, Ms. Knox was originally hired as director of operations to Ms. Fortier shortly after she was named to cabinet in November 2019 and added on oversight of the minister's communications team late last spring.

In Ms. Ng's office, Ms. Knox replaces **Eleanore Catenaro**, who recently announced she was moving on from the Hill after seven years, as reported by **Hill Climbers**.

Youny Han is press secretary to Ms. Ng, while **Jason Easton** is chief of staff.

The federal cabinet shuffle on Jan. 12 portends further staffing moves, with affected ministers given 30 calendar days to finalize their political staff rosters, as set out by Treasury Board Secretariat rules.

The shuffle saw Liberal MP **Navdeep Bains**, who recently announced he would not seek re-election, replaced as innovation minister by **François-Philippe Champagne**. Mr. Champagne was replaced as foreign affairs minister by **Marc Garneau**, who in turn was replaced as transport minister by now-former parliamentary secretary **Omar Alghabra**.

As of filing, no staffing decisions had yet been confirmed, with existing staff at that point still continuing in their roles. At the time of the shuffle, **Ryan Dunn** was chief of staff to the innovation minister, **Daniel Lauzon** was chief of staff to the foreign affairs minister, and **Marc Roy** was chief of staff to the transport minister.

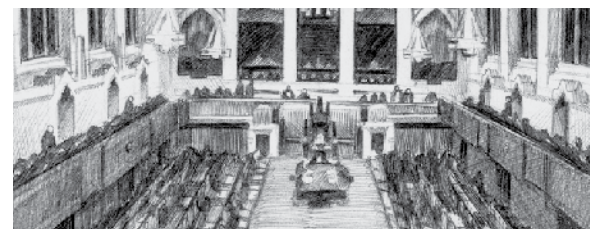
Stay tuned to **Hill Climbers** for updates on how these offices shape up post shuffle.

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The Hill Times



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Natural Resources Minister Seamus O'Regan, Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, and Associate Finance Minister Mona Fortier have all had recent staff exits. *The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade*

Parliamentary Calendar



Sinclair, Segal, Eggleton, Fox, Forget, Regehr to talk about economic recovery for all on Jan. 18 at Anti-Poverty Caucus webinar



The Anti-Poverty Caucus will host a discussion about next steps towards an 'Economic Recovery For All,' with Senator Murray Sinclair, pictured, former senator Hugh Segal, former senator Art Eggleton, Institute for Research and Public Policy president and CEO Graham Fox, University of Manitoba professor Dr. Evelyn Forget, and Basic Income Canada Network chair Sheila Regehr, on Monday, Jan. 18, from 1:30 p.m.-3 p.m. EST. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

MONDAY, JAN. 18

House Not Sitting—The House will likely be sitting in a hybrid format during the pandemic, with most MPs connecting remotely. It's scheduled to return on Monday, Jan. 25-Feb. 5.

Economic Recovery For All—Join the Anti-Poverty Caucus for a discussion about next steps towards an "Economic Recovery For All," with Senator Murray Sinclair, former senator Hugh Segal, former senator Art Eggleton, Institute for Research and Public Policy president and CEO Graham Fox, University of Manitoba professor Dr. Evelyn Forget, and Basic Income Canada Network chair Sheila Regehr. Monday, Jan. 18, from 1:30 p.m.-3 p.m. EST. For webinar details, please RSVP to evan2.cathcart@sen.parl.gc.ca.

O'Toole Meets Supporters—Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole will discuss his plans for Canada at a virtual meet-and-greet event with Jonathan Cowan. Monday, Jan. 18, at 8 p.m. EST.

TUESDAY, JAN. 19

Hydrogen and Canada's Energy Future—The University of Ottawa hosts a webinar on "Hydrogen and Canada's Energy Future: Opportunities, Challenges, Next Steps," exploring the political, policy, regulatory, technical, economic, and environmental opportunities and challenges of hydrogen for Canada both at home and abroad. Speakers include Tahra Jutt, director, Clean Economy Program, Pembina Institute; Peter Tertzakian, deputy director, ARC Energy Research Institute; and Kamiel Gabriel, senior fellow, ISSP, uOttawa and professor, Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, Ontario Tech University. Tuesday, Jan. 19, at noon. Register via Eventbrite.

GreenPAC Hosts Event With Podesta—GreenPAC will be hosting an event with John Podesta, Bill Clinton's former chief of staff, former senior counsel to Barack Obama, and founder of the Center for American Progress, along with Canada's Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson (tentatively confirmed). The fireside chat, moderated by Canadian Senator Rosa Galvez, chair of the Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources, will focus on how the new Joe Biden Administration will impact climate change policy in Canada and internationally. The event will take place at 4 p.m. on Jan. 19, the day before Mr. Biden's inauguration. Get your free ticket here: <https://bit.ly/3oGXq23>

The Impact of the American Election on Canadian Public Policy—Join IPAC-NCR for "Looking Forward: The Impact of the American Election on Canadian Public Policy," an online discussion featuring: Senator Peter Boehm, also a former deputy minister, and Farah Huq, director, Future of Canada Centre, Deloitte. The speakers will reflect on our critical bilateral relationship and discuss the challenges and opportunities that the incoming Biden administration may present. The event will also include an interactive workshop. Tuesday, Jan. 19, from 5-6:30 p.m. Register via Eventbrite.

AFN Leadership Gatherings—The Assembly of First Nations hosts the first in a series of leadership gatherings on "First Nations Child and Family Services and Self-Determination," which will take place until April 13. This introductory presentation will focus on the new Indigenous child and family services legislation, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families (the Act). For more information, please email c92forum@afn.ca. Tuesday, Jan. 19. Registration available online.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 20

Biden Inauguration—Despite last week's storming of Capitol Hill by a mob of Trump supporters, U.S. president-elect Joe Biden will be sworn in on Jan. 20 on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., and will be joined by his wife, Jill Biden, and vice-president-elect Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff. The inauguration, which starts at noon EST, will include a

"virtual parade across America," and Mr. Biden will review the readiness of U.S. military troops and he will receive a traditional presidential escort from 15th Street to the White House, but "providing the American people and world with historic images of the president-elect proceeding to the White House without attracting large crowds," the Associated Press reported last week.

THURSDAY, JAN. 21

Claim the Vote, Claim the Country?—York University hosts a webinar: "Claim the vote, claim the country? Part II: Key takeaways from the 2020 U.S. election." Adam Churchard, PhD candidate in politics, and Dr. Anna Agathangelou, professor in politics in the faculty of liberal arts and professional studies, will discuss their five most important issues emerging from the 2020 U.S. election and the transfer of power between Trump and Biden. A live Q&A session will follow. Thursday, Jan. 21, at noon. Register online.

FRIDAY, JAN. 22

Remaking Canada: The Significance of Reconciliation in Canadian Public Schools—Concordia University hosts a lecture on "Remaking Canada: The Significance of Reconciliation in Canadian Public Schools." Dr. Terry Wotherspoon, professor of Sociology at the University of Saskatchewan, will examine the impact of the reforms following from the 2015 final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and the ways in which they are understood by students, teachers, and community members. Friday, Jan. 22, from 11:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Register via concordia.ca.

Famous Five Salutes Kamala Harris—The Famous Five hosts a Pink Tea celebration in honour of the inauguration of Kamala Harris as the vice-president of the United States of America. Friday, Jan. 22, 12-1 p.m. Tickets available via Eventbrite.

The Threat of Nuclear Weapons with Noam Chomsky: Why Canada Should Sign the UN Nuclear Ban Treaty—Mark the momentous day in the struggle to abolish nuclear weapons with Noam Chomsky. As the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons enters into force on Jan. 22, join the world-renowned intellectual on "The Threat of Nuclear Weapons: Why Canada Should Sign the UN Nuclear Ban Treaty." Register at: www.foreignpolicy.ca/chomsky This webinar is free and open to the public. Presented by the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute and sponsored by: World Beyond War, Hiroshima Nagasaki Day Coalition, PeaceQuest, Science for Peace, and the Voice of Women for Peace. This event happens at 2 p.m. (EST) on Jan. 22.

MONDAY, JAN. 25

House Sitting—The House will likely be sitting in a hybrid format during the pandemic, with most MPs connecting remotely. It's scheduled to return on Monday, Jan. 25-Feb. 5. It will take a one-week break and return on Tuesday, Feb. 16, and sit every weekday until Friday, Feb. 26. It will take a one-week break, March 1-March 5, and will return again for one week, March 8-12, before taking another break, March 15-19. It's scheduled to sit March 22-26, will take a two-week break, March 29-April 9. It's then scheduled to sit every weekday for the next five weeks, April 12-May 14. It will take one-week break after that, from May 17-May 24. It will sit May 25 every weekday until Wednesday, June 23, and will then break for three months, until Monday Sept. 20. In the fall and winter, the House is scheduled to sit for 11 weeks over September, October, November, and December. It will sit Sept. 20-Oct. 8; Oct. 18-Nov. 5; and Nov. 15-Dec. 17.

TUESDAY, JAN. 26

Build Back Better: How Data-Driven Insights Will Fuel Canada's Post-Pandemic Recovery—In a rapidly evolving crisis like a pandemic, where speed is of the essence in effective response, leaders need data-driven insights as decision supports to quickly spot challenges and opportunities. At no

time has the role of timely, high-quality data been more important as a strategic asset for public- and private-sector leaders, not only in managing a crisis, but also recovering from it. Anil Arora, the chief statistician of Canada, will address the Canadian Club of Ottawa on how the nation's statistical agency has accelerated its efforts during COVID-19 to use data to better serve Canadians—and how partnerships with Statistics Canada can help leaders rebuild Canada's post-pandemic economy and society. Tuesday, Jan. 26, 12-1 p.m. Register through canadianclubottawa.ca.

THURSDAY, JAN. 28

Mayor's Breakfast with Bruce Heyman—The Ottawa Board of Trade hosts the Mayor's Breakfast, featuring Bruce Heyman, former U.S. ambassador to Canada (2014-2017). Thursday, Jan. 28, from 7:30-9

a.m. Watch the live broadcast on Rogers TV or the Mayors Facebook page. Register via business.ottawabot.ca.

Rediscovering Louis St-Laurent—The McGill Institute for the Study of Canada hosts a bilingual panel discussion on "Rediscovering Louis St-Laurent," exploring the influence of a politician whose astute policies and bold resolve moved Canada into the modern era. Participants include former Quebec premier Jean Charest; Patrice Dutil, Ryerson University professor; Mary Janigan, historian and author; Xavier Gélinas, curator of political history at the Canadian Museum of History; and Jean Riley, policy consultant and St-Laurent's granddaughter. Thursday, Jan. 28, 4-5:30 p.m. Registration available through mcgill.ca.

THURSDAY, MARCH 18

Conservative Party National Policy Convention—The Conservative Party National Policy Convention will now take place from March 18 to 20, 2021, exclusively online and the Conservative Party's National Council decided the next convention in 2023 will take place in Québec City. For more information, call 1-866-808-8407.

FRIDAY, APRIL 9

Liberal Party National Convention—The Liberal Party of Canada announced on Sept. 25 it was postponing its 2020 Liberal National Convention from Nov. 12-14. The new dates are April 9-10, 2021.

New Democratic Party National Convention—The NDP rescheduled its 2020 policy convention to instead take place virtually April 9-11, 2021. Riding associations have until Feb. 8, 2021 to submit resolutions for consideration.

SATURDAY, AUG. 21

65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference—One of the largest annual gatherings of Commonwealth Parliamentarians will take place in Aug. 21-27, 2021 at the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) hosted by the CPA Canada Region in Halifax. The annual flagship event will bring together over 500 Parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and decision makers from across the Commonwealth for this unique conference and networking opportunity. The conference will be hosted by the CPA President (2019-2021), Anthony Rota, MP, Speaker of the House of Commons. All eligible CPA Branches will be contacted with further information and invitations.

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 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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OUR TELEVISION LANDSCAPE IS STRONGER WHEN OUR PUBLIC BROADCASTER IS DISTINCT AND COMPLEMENTARY

As a society, we've made a choice to rely on a Canadian public broadcaster to ensure the sharing of our national consciousness and identity.

In the race to win ratings and advertising revenues by purchasing foreign and dubbed content, all of which are for commercial gain, it's our national television content that's losing. Our public broadcaster is moving away from its culture and duty of public service and needs to resume its role, first and foremost, as a public broadcaster.

A public broadcaster that's open to the world and dares to take risks that encourage discovery.

A public broadcaster dedicated to investing more in investigative journalism, international news, and documentaries that portray Canadian local and regional diversity.

A public broadcaster that promotes Canadian creativity by showcasing original programming.

The future of our television and the diversity of its offering depend on a balanced ecosystem where each broadcaster has an important role to play.

The time has come for the CRTC to refocus CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate to ensure private television sustainability.

