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News

Hate and paranoia abound in political social media, as federal Liberals prepare to intervene

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

Expressions of hate and paranoia, and conspiracy theories with roots in the United States have become a staple of Canadian political Facebook pages, as the Liberal government prepares legislation to crack down on social media platforms that don't remove hate speech quickly enough.

The Liberal Party of Canada Facebook page is no exception. It doesn't take long to find comments to posts on the page that espouse conspiracy theories, attack immigrants, compare Conservative politicians to Nazis, or Liberals to pedophiles.

"Reject the right-wing for they are neo-Nazis. Never vote

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News

Pandemic response slips from 'slam dunk' to 'potential liability' for Liberals, say some political insiders

BY ABBAS RANA

The government's handling of COVID-19 was until recently seen as a critical factor in drumming up voter support that could have put the Liberals into a position to convert their minority government into a majority in the next election, but it could now become a "liability" as Canadians are growing increasingly impatient about interruptions in the vaccine rollout, say some political insiders.

"The pandemic, which was once a slam-dunk political win for incumbent governments, is now becoming a potential liability with the vaccine, because Canadians are becoming increasingly impatient," said Nik Nanos, founder and chief data scientist for Nanos Research, in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

"The pandemic is shifting from a platform for governments to look good to a platform for governments to be politically vulnerable, and the vaccinations are symbolic of that risk," he said.

Canadians started to receive COVID-19 vaccinations in mid-December. This is the country's largest mass inoculation program in history. The Public Health Agency of Canada has said that all Canadians who want to be

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News

'Canadians have grown impatient': regulation of social media in the works, but Parliamentarians wary



Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault, left, Minister of Infrastructure Catherine McKenna, Green Party MP Paul Manly, NDP MP Charlie Angus, and Arif Virani, parliamentary secretary to the justice minister all have opinions about further regulating hate and harmful speech online. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade, courtesy of Twitter

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

As the federal government looks to set down rules around hate and harmful speech

online, MPs and experts are still unclear as to what the legislation is going to look like, but all say there's work to be done to temper some of the unsavoury elements

of social media in Canada's political discourse.

Liberal MP Arif Virani (Parkdale-High Park, Ont.), the parliamentary secretary to Justice

Minister David Lametti (LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que.) told *The Hill Times* that "Canadians have

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HEARD ON THE HILL

by Palak Mangat

‘Looking out for each other’: Bruce Anderson enlists local Ottawa restaurants to offer meals to shelters



Longtime public affairs commentator Bruce Anderson, left, says his chats with Infrastructure Minister Catherine McKenna and other community members helped inspire a new volunteer initiative to help out people in need during the pandemic. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Jake Wright

In an effort to band together and help hard-hit shelters amid the pandemic, longtime public affairs consultant, pollster, and Ottawa resident **Bruce Anderson** has pulled together a volunteer initiative with local restaurateurs.

“There are people in the community who are frustrated with life in the pandemic, but otherwise are healthy and financially okay. I’m in that category,” he told *The Hill Times* last week. “I’m somebody who’s travelled a lot all my life, but I’ve been in the community non-stop for 12 months now, and, like a lot of people, I’m more aware of the value of people in the community looking out for each other.”

Mr. Anderson, head of Abacus Data polling firm, has been helping raise money for food and labour so “generous-minded folks” from local restaurants can cook and deliver meals to shelters. The plan was about five days in the making, after he learned Ottawa homeless shelters were going to stop accepting new people because of outbreaks at their sites.

In his chats with community members, including Infrastructure Minister **Catherine McKenna**, who represents Ottawa Centre, Mr. Anderson said the reception to the idea immediately looked “promising.”

“People want to support local small businesses and they want to do it because they understand the connectedness that we have with each other, in a way that maybe we didn’t completely understand before the pandemic,” he said.

Mr. Anderson, a former Globe and Mail columnist and for years a pundit on CBC *The National*’s ‘At Issue’ Panel, is also the founding partner of Spark Advocacy, which will help get the word out and encourage people to donate. Over the years, Mr. Anderson has been a strategic adviser to both the federal Liberals and Progressive Conservatives, and is a partner in two of the restaurants taking part: North and Navy and Gia Cantina in the Glebe. The entire Anderson extended family is well-known in the world of federal politics.

A website will be launched soon to accept donations from the public, which will go through the Shepherds of Good Hope webpage. People will be able to claim tax credits for their contributions.

Other businesses helping are Whalesbone, Wild Oat Bakery, Farinella, and Luciano Foods, who will help push out pizza lunches, sandwich meals, and breakfast muffins to the shelters. Mr. Anderson said he hopes to begin flowing out meals this week and into March, though an “end date” has not yet been set, as it will depend on community need and fundraising. By the way, *The Hill Times* is also supporting this initiative.

Ex-NDP hopeful now a Conservative member

A former federal NDP candidate in the 2019 election shared last week he has become a member of the Conservative Party.

Jigar Patel, who won 28 per cent of the vote in Regina-Lewvan, Sask., for the NDP in 2019, second to the Conservatives’ **Warren Steinley**, who won 52 per cent, made the announcement in a Facebook post.

“Unfortunately the NDP of [late former leader] **Jack Layton** does not exist anymore. For [the] last few years, I continued to toil as a dedicated and loyal BUT an UNHAPPY soldier,” he wrote.

Mr. Patel said the change was precipitated by “ill treatment of [the] party’s long-term local leadership, loyal local workers, and local volunteers,” and a “total disrespect for Saskatchewan’s short and long-term overall interests.”

He also cited the federal NDP’s support of the minority governing Liberals as another reason for the switch. The party has helped Canadians stave off election threats posed by the Liberals in the past, most recently last fall, and often finds itself holding the balance of power in the minority Parliament.

Mr. Patel said he is also a member of the provincial Saskatchewan Party now, which is currently headed by Premier **Scott Moe**.



Conservative Leader Erin O’Toole, pictured on Feb. 4, now has a former NDP candidate who is part of his party. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The news comes as Conservative Leader **Erin O’Toole** looks to frame his party as one that sits “squarely in the centre” of the political spectrum.

As reported here last week, the Conservative Party green-lit a former Liberal health minister from Prince Edward Island who had served under two Liberal premiers, to run under the party’s banner in the next election.

At the time of his 2019 defeat, Mr. Patel told local media he planned to run again.

Archaeologists dig up remnants of yesteryear’s Centre Block

Last week marked 105 years since Centre Block, excluding the Library of Parliament, burned down in February 1916.

According to a Senate webpage, more than a century later, archeologists with Centrus last summer discovered artifacts of a bygone era during excavation work: the limestone foundation of the Victoria Tower.



Workers found old ventilation shafts and the limestone foundation of the Victoria Tower, which date back to the 1916 fire, on the excavation site, pictured in December 2020, of Centre Block last summer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Found near the old tower’s foundation by where the pillars propped it up, workers also came across ventilation shafts.

After burning down in the 1916 fire, engineers were forced to tear down Centre Block a few months later. Four years later, the Centre Block reopened after reconstruction, with new limestone interior walls to prevent any future fires.

Derek Mes, a structural project manager for the modern rehabilitation efforts, said all the ruins will need to be cleaned up this time because they stand in the way of reaching the bedrock, which “will need to be accessed to build the Visitor Welcome Centre.”

The Centre Block’s Visitor Welcome Centre will also provide an underground link between the West Block and the East Block.

Delacourt fends off expected Trudeau trash talkers

Veteran *Toronto Star* columnist **Susan Delacourt** offered a glimpse into her writing process (and fallout) last month, sharing in a Facebook post that a 40-minute phone chat with Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** helped her produce three separate stories.

Citing an “experienced-based prediction,” Ms. Delacourt said she expected to be “inundated with mail from angry old white men” over the next two days.

“It’s inevitable and kind of sad. They see the word ‘Trudeau’ in a story and immediately run to their computers to hammer out (with their fists, I picture it) some vicious message,” she wrote. “The basic formula is the same: the PM is an idiot (or gay or a communist or all of the above) and I am a

moron (or a swooning school girl or a communist) for reporting what he says.”

Ms. Delacourt added she takes such comments in stride. “It is interesting/disturbing to observe who gets so whipped up to write these letters to strangers. I don’t get such letters from women or young people or folks with non-[White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] names (perhaps because they’ve been told they won’t be taken seriously if they get emotional about politics?),” she added.



Longtime Hill reporter and columnist Susan Delacourt, pictured in 2017, says the reaction when she writes about the prime minister is ‘inevitable and kind of sad.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

A longtime Hill reporter, columnist, and author, Ms. Delacourt said she ultimately brushes off such letters: “If you’re looking for me, I’ll be here at my computer, sending trash letters to the trash.” By the way, Prime Minister Trudeau, or so the people who work in the PMO claim, liked the Facebook post.

Sloan part of group calling for end of COVID-19 lockdowns

Some local, federal, and provincial conservative politicians are putting their names behind a cause calling for the end of COVID-19 lockdowns.

Liberty Coalition Canada said last week that the “end the lockdowns caucus” was formed to push “formal challenges” to existing COVID policies “with a specific emphasis on ending governments’ use of province-wide lockdowns and stay-at-home orders.”

Those who make up the caucus are former Conservative MP **Derek Sloan**, who now sits as an Independent after he was turfed from caucus last month; PPC Leader and former Conservative MP **Maxime Bernier**; former Progressive Conservative MPP for Ontario, **Randy Hillier**, who is now an Independent; Perth East councillor **Daryl Herlick**; and Centre Wellington councillor **Steven VanLeeuwen**.

The group, which is not a registered non-profit, runs social media campaigns and has in the past pushed for the reopening of churches in Ontario.

It bills itself as a “national network of clergymen, elected officials, small business owners, legal experts, and other concerned citizens.”

In a Feb. 4 release, it called into question evidence that has led to lockdowns, which it claimed has caused “more harm than the virus and must be brought to an end.”

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CORRECTION:
The Hill Times, Feb. 1 issue

Re: “Trudeau needs to move quickly to deny any pension or remuneration to former disgraced GG,” (*The Hill Times*, Feb. 1, by Sheila Copps.) This column incorrectly reported that current Small Business, Export Promotion and Trade Minister Mary Ng, who previously worked as the prime minister’s appointments secretary in the PMO, was responsible for vetting Julie Payette back in 2017, which is incorrect. Ms. Ng had taken a leave of absence from the PMO to run for the Liberal nomination in Markham-Thornhill, Ont. Hillary Leftick was responsible for vetting the former GG. *The Hill Times* apologizes for this mistake.



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News

O'Toole's pivot to centre, Sloan's expulsion, and Kenney's tanking popularity could help Maverick Party win out West, say Conservative political insiders

'Getting closer to the centre' is the only path to victory for the Conservatives, says pollster Nik Nanos.

BY ABBAS RANA

Erin O'Toole's pivot to the political centre, Derek Sloan's expulsion from the caucus, and Jason Kenney's falling polling figures are all going to contribute to a significant bump up for Western Canada's upstart Maverick Party, which could win a few seats in the Western provinces in the next election, say Conservative political insiders and the Maverick interim leader.

"If he [Mr. O'Toole] continues to do what he has been doing since August, which is clearly attempting to appease central Canadian voters to the detriment of Westerners, then it has a huge impact on our future success as Maverick," said Jay Hill, interim Leader of the Maverick Party, in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

Up until now, the Maverick Party has been planning on fielding candidates in 49 strong Conservative ridings in Western Canada where the Conservatives won with very wide margins.

Of the 49 ridings the Maverick Party is planning on targeting next time around, 30 are located in Alberta, nine in Saskatchewan, and five each in British Columbia and Manitoba.

The Maverick Party is using this strategy to avoid a vote split between the two right of centre parties that would give an opening to the left-of-centre parties to win more seats. But last week, following political developments in favour of the Maverick Party, Mr. Hill was not as committed to this strategy, leaving open the possibility of running candidates in other ridings as well.

"Nothing's final, we're talking about politics," said Mr. Hill with a chuckle. "There's nothing final, that's why you keep calling me every few months ... Currently, to answer your question, no, we're still proceeding with the same strategy of only running where Conservatives won by wide margins. ... But down the road, call me in three months or six months, and let's see where we're at."

In fielding candidates for the next election, he said, his focus



Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole is putting his stamp on the party by moving closer to the political centre, but some of his MPs and long-time party members are unhappy with this realignment effort. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

is on quality, not quantity. Also, Mr. Hill said that the Mavericks are an upstart party, constrained by limited resources and still in the building process, lacking the proper infrastructure required for an established party. As the next federal election will be the first one in which they will be fielding candidates, Mr. Hill said he would be happy if the Mavericks can win a handful of seats.

Since becoming party leader in August, Mr. O'Toole (Durham, Ont.) has been trying to expand his party's base by reaching out to ethnic communities, union members, the LGBTQ community, and has identified himself as pro-choice. He has also committed to reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions to 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 as laid out in the Paris climate accord.

All these policy adjustments have led some long-time party members and caucus members to question why Mr. O'Toole ran on the slogan of "true blue Conservative" but now is trying to recreate "a new PC Party." Some are even going as far as to assuming that the party will lose the next election, and are already looking at potential supporters for the next leadership election, according to some veteran Conservatives.

Mr. O'Toole recently expelled controversial Conservative MP Derek Sloan (Hastings-Lennox and Addington, Ont.) from the caucus, arguing his former leadership rival was engaged in a "pattern of destructive behaviour" which had become a distraction for the party.

Mr. Sloan has a significant following among right-of-centre and pro-life party members, many of whom will likely either vote for a party other than the Conservatives, or will not show up to vote on election day at all.

"I can tell you like my Facebook page has over 70,000

followers on it," Mr. Sloan, now an Independent MP, told *The Hill Times* last week. "My email list of Conservative supporters is maybe, you know, it's tens of thousands. It might be 40, or 50,000. I haven't checked lately. So I don't have everybody's email address that's on my Facebook page, necessarily. But I would say there's over 100,000 people at least that follow me fairly closely based on my social media."

Some senior Conservatives interviewed for this article said that Mr. Sloan's expulsion from the caucus will hurt the party in rural ridings, but mostly the effect will be felt in ridings won by close margins. In the 2019 election, there were 47 ridings that were decided by a razor thin margin of five per cent vote or less. Of these, nine were decided by a margin of 500 votes or less.

"They could stay home and just be uninspired," said the source. "If you've got blue collar populist-type voters figuring they don't have a party to vote for, they're just going to sit it out. ... There are a lot of seats where a few hundred votes here and a few hundred votes there could make a difference. Those voters provide a lot of the volunteers and when you are in a close seat that goes by two, three, four hundred votes, it's your volunteers that can bring people home to personal connections."

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney's unpopularity is also a cause of concern for the Conservatives, as Alberta is the bedrock of the Conservative base, home to 34 federal ridings. The Conservatives won 33 of the 34 seats in the last election. Before getting elected as the Alberta premier in April 2019, Mr. Kenney represented the federal riding of Calgary Midnapore—and its predecessor Calgary Southeast—as an MP for about two decades between 1997 and 2016, including eight years as a cabinet minister under Stephen

Harper. A Mainstreet poll, released last month, suggested that if an election were to happen now, the opposition New Democrats would handily defeat the UCP that won a landslide majority in 2019.

Mr. Kenney's government's popularity would plunge ever further if the RCMP filed any charges in relation to their ongoing investigation into a so-called "kamikaze" campaign allegedly waged against Mr. Kenney's UCP leadership election rival Brian Jean, a former federal Conservative MP. Potentially this could implicate some senior provincial and federal Conservatives who supported Mr. Kenney in the 2017 provincial leadership election. The fraud investigation that commenced in 2019 is being led by a special prosecutor from Ontario, and the Mounties have interviewed hundreds of Albertans, including a significant number in Edmonton, for this investigation.



Jay Hill, former Conservative MP, now interim leader of the Maverick Party, pictured at a Manning Networking Conference in 2012 in Ottawa. In nominating candidates for the next election, Mr. Hill said, he's focusing on quality, not quantity. *The Hill Times* file photograph by Jake Wright

Some long-time veteran Conservative political insiders predicted that if there were to be a byelection in Alberta, the Maverick Party would win. They compared the current federal political situation in Alberta to when Deborah Grey became the first Reform Party MP by winning a byelection in 1989. They also said that the next election could be the stepping stone for the Maverick Party, one in which they win a few seats and then win big in the election after.

"Things are changing in Alberta," said one Conservative political insider. "I can feel it, I can feel the ground shifting."

Pollster Nik Nanos of Nanos Research told *The Hill Times* that Mr. O'Toole is trying to put together a winning coalition and putting his stamp on the party. He

said that he's taking a page out of the playbook of former Ontario PC premier Bill Davis and trying to make the federal Conservatives a pragmatic, moderate, and a fiscally conservative party. There's no path to victory for the Conservatives besides "getting closer to the centre," said Mr. Nanos, adding that Mr. Sloan's expulsion from the caucus has not hurt the Conservative leader, at least so far, in public opinion polls.

"He's trying to position himself as a pragmatic Conservative," said Mr. Nanos, founder and chief data scientist for Nanos Research.

"Any Conservative that is criticizing Erin O'Toole for not being right-wing enough should perhaps shake themselves awake and wonder whether they would prefer to have Justin Trudeau as prime minister or Erin O'Toole. So, the reality is that all the federal party leaders are imperfect. There are Liberals that think that Justin Trudeau is too progressive. So, for those Conservatives, they have to weigh the benefits of being a potential government, as opposed to splitting the vote, and ensuring that Justin Trudeau remains prime minister."

The Conservative Party won most ridings in Alberta with very comfortable margins. Strategically speaking, Mr. Nanos said, it's highly unlikely that some Conservatives choosing to vote for the Maverick Party would do much damage to the Conservatives.

He conceded, however, that it might put the four ridings—Calgary Centre, Calgary Skyview, Edmonton Centre, and Edmonton Mill Woods—in play for the Liberals, who won those ridings in 2015 but lost all four to the Conservatives in the 2019 election.

Mr. Nanos said Mr. O'Toole's policy adjustments might help the Conservatives win more seats in Ontario, the leader's home province and home to one-third of the House of Commons' seats. With 121 of the 338 seats in the House, Ontario plays a key role in the outcome of every federal election.

In 2019, the Conservatives won 36 of the 121 seats, the Liberals 79, and the NDP carried six seats. In the 2011 election, when the Conservatives won a majority government, there were 106 seats in Ontario. At the time, the Tories won 73 seats, the NDP 22 and the Liberals 11.

Five-term Conservative MP Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* that the entire Conservative caucus is united behind Mr. O'Toole and his policies. He said that the new leader is trying to put together a winning coalition, which is not a surprise as every new leader strategizes for the next election, and Mr. O'Toole is doing the same.

"It's certainly not a surprise that the party as a whole has to look at finding, as it always has to find, a way to put together a coalition of supporters from across the country, always with the regional differences of opinion and the sort of the natural sort of divides that happen," said Mr. Stanton, who is not seeking re-election in the next federal election. "So, I would say, within our Conservative movement nationally, it's always been one of the biggest jobs of the leader of our party to be able to knit that very delicate fabric together."

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Opinion

Once vaccines get rolling, that's the moment to trigger an election

Voters are always happier in the spring and the economic fallout won't yet be felt.



Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has to keep saying that he does not want an election. Forcing the country into a vote in the middle of a pandemic may be seen as an impolitic move.

However, the three provinces that have gone to the polls during this pandemic have all been rewarded with majority governments.

So those who say the calling of a COVID election would cost votes are wrong. Sure, there would be a couple of days of grumbling at the beginning of the campaign. But very quickly, pundits and politicians would start debating the big issues facing Canadians at the moment.

Economic and health uncertainty are the obvious themes that need to be addressed.

Thus far, these are both issues where the opposition parties have not been able to secure much traction.

The Conservatives have been hitting hard at pandemic mismanagement. With Pfizer delaying their promised deliveries, and provinces adding their criticism to the rollout, the government has suffered some political damage. However, that will be forgotten as soon as the rollout returns at the end of February.

These hiccups are happening around the world, and Canadians are not alone in the challenge of securing and delivering vaccines to needy citizens.

But most Canadians will not hold that against the government once the election is called. Instead, they may attack the opposition for being offside in a world pandemic situation.

Last week Green Party Leader Annamie Paul tried to carve out her own COVID space, accusing the government of being a bad global citizen because it tapped into a previously contracted number of vaccines from Covax. Paul said the Canadian government should not have access to a vaccine that was developed primarily to assist poorer countries.

But the Green Party leader won't get much support on that one. If she had read the fine print of the Canadian Covax

funding announcement last fall, she would know that one-half of the \$440-million invested in the Covax vaccine was intended for Canadian vaccine use.

And when Canadian lives are at risk, it seems strange for a Canadian politician to deny the vaccine to her own country.

Similar criticism was reflected in some international media reports, which accused Canada of being greedy as one of the few developed countries tapping into the Covax vaccine.

While the world needs a global strategy, all politics is still local. And Paul will not get a lot of support for attacking the Liberals' desire to protect Canadians.

The government is also facing a long-term economic meltdown as province by province, businesses are forced to shutter, and citizens are required to stay home in lockdown.

Liberals delivered a death blow to the airline industry by asking them to shut down flights to the Caribbean and Mexico in a popular, but misguided effort to stop the spread of the virus.

By all accounts, air travel was responsible for little more than one per cent of the COVID transmission, but that did not stop the government from introducing a punitive hotel quarantine for any citizen returning from abroad after next week. This requirement has zero pandemic value, as it supplements a COVID PCR test before anyone gets on a plane and after they get off. It also requires those who have been vaccinated to quarantine.

And even though the viral mutations came from the United Kingdom, Brazil, and South Africa, none of these destinations have been shut down.

The move was largely intended to keep people from travelling during spring break and it worked. But the airlines have also laid off thousands and Air Canada shut down Rouge last week. Professor Fred Lazar, of the Schulich School of Business at York University, said travel is being unfairly targeted in the pandemic fight. "They are doing it to cater to the vast majority of Canadians that have a holier than thou attitude toward travel." Full disclosure, I am one of those shameful snowbirds who left Canada for southern climes, despite the best advice of my government.

But even if the move did not make health sense, it was very popular, and managed to distract attention from vaccine rollout problems.

Some Canadian routes, cancelled during COVID, will never return, exacerbating regional isolation.

Meanwhile, once the vaccine gets rolling, there will be a collective sigh of relief. That is the moment to trigger an election. Voters are always happier in the spring and the economic fallout won't yet be felt.

Most Canadians will reward the Liberals for taming the COVID beast.

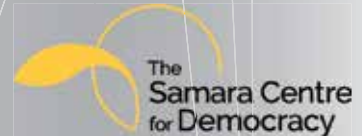
Sheila Copps is a former Jean Chrétien-era cabinet minister and a former deputy prime minister.

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News

As pandemic brings federal government's role into focus, parties reel in donors

That parties had to change tack in their efforts may have actually ended up boosting their year-end bottom line, because it forced them to double down on more cost-effective fundraising appeals.

BY BEATRICE PAEZ

The pandemic appears to have created an unlikely opening for parties to reel in donors, with homebound Canadians of all political stripes more willing to hear from parties and to engage politically, say politicians.

"There's a general phenomenon that is lifting all boats, in a way. Voters are generally a more captive audience this year because of the pandemic. They're collectively spending more time in front of screens, not doing as many social things. That makes them more likely to pay attention to what parties are doing," said Sébastien Dallaire, senior vice-president at Ipsos Quebec. "They're more likely to see messaging from political parties or various organizations talking about political parties."

Mr. Dallaire added that the pandemic, with the massive amounts of money that's been pumped into the economy to stave off mass unemployment and keep businesses liquid, has also brought into the focus the role of government, for better or for worse. That's giving parties grist for engaging with their supporters.

"[People] actually see and feel the impact government interventions have in their lives every day, whether it's through programs because they received money, but also just because of public health directives and guidelines," he said. "You can't go shop, you can't go watch a movie. You have to behave in different ways. And this is all mandated by the government, so the government becomes impossible to ignore."

By various measures, most parties posted relatively strong finishes, with the Conservatives, Liberals, and the Bloc Québécois ending the year breaking their fourth-quarter fundraising records. The NDP ended the year in the black, paying off its \$7-million campaign debt, while the Greens overall raised more than they had before outside of an election year, according to CBC.

The Conservatives had the biggest haul, raising \$7.7-million in the last quarter, followed by the Liberals at \$6.5-million, the NDP at \$2.5-million, the Greens



The pandemic hasn't completely dampened enthusiasm among the supporters of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, and new Green Party Leader Annamie Paul. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

at \$1.4-million, and the Bloc at \$961,396.

That parties had to change tack in their efforts may have actually ended up boosting their year-end bottom line. With big-ticket, in-person fundraisers and rallies off the table, many parties doubled down on the use of more cost-effective fundraising drives, such as email appeals, phone banks, virtual town halls, and teleconferences.

Virtual events and other pandemic-friendly fundraising drives can not only be run on shoestring budgets, which means more money in the bank for the parties, but they also don't impose significant costs—both in time and money—on people to participate.

Braeden Caley, senior director of communications with the Liberal Party, said the party temporarily paused all fundraising appeals for 40 days early on in the pandemic and ramped up efforts in the last months of the year. The party "sensitively reintroduced those approaches when it was appropriate to do so," he told *The Hill Times*. "Q4 was a chance really to test out all sorts of new virtual means of reaching out to supporters and building support, and the response was phenomenal."

Mr. Caley pointed to two virtual events, including one on Dec. 2 with both Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) and his second-in-command, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.), which, he said, was the largest web-based event in the party's history. He was unable to share specific figures on attendance, but noted that there were more than 6,000 questions submitted from every corner of the country.

"There are people tuning in from every single province or territory, which shows you that it's possible to reach large numbers of Canadians from every corner of the country in a low-barrier way," he added. "That event had no cost whatsoever."

Jesse Calvert, deputy national director of the NDP, said the party made a conscious decision to continue to engage with donors at the onset of the pandemic. "We made a decision at the very beginning of the pandemic that it was

not the time to pull away from our donors, and that we were going to continue to engage them through the phone program," he said. "I think that that has really proven to be the right decision. A phone-fundraising program isn't just about donations. It's about connecting with our members and donors; it's about talking to them, engaging them, hearing their thoughts on what's going on, what they want to see."

He said the party registered a dip in donations in the first few months of the pandemic, but the effort that went into speaking with supporters appears to have paid off, giving the party its best fourth quarter outside of an election year in half a decade. (The NDP steadily drew in more dollars as the year progressed, posting \$963,923 in the first quarter and ending it with \$2.5-million.)

"I think the conversations we were having with people laid the foundation for future success. People were happy to hear from us. They wanted to talk about the issues," he said. "So when we went to speak to them again, those who were in a slightly better position than they were at the beginning [of the year], understood the value of the \$10 or \$20 or \$30, that they were going to get."

The other upside of having virtual events and phone drives be the default mode of fundraising amid the pandemic is political leaders and their staff don't have to stretch themselves thin trying to pop into different parts of the country to raise funds and build their party's profile, said Cameron Holmstrom of Bluesky Strategy Group.

"To do proper fundraising, I can do a lot online. We're now seeing people running full events on Zoom. They can sit in their boardroom in Ottawa, or they can be anywhere in the country. You're starting to see how this can build itself out and allow for greater outreach," he said.

It's now more possible for parties to pencil in multiple events with the leader in a day or over a week to speak with people from different parts of the country, he added, without expending the same amount of effort it would've taken to travel there and back and to organize an event in person.

Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole (Durham, Ont.) has done just that. For example, he held two ticketed virtual fundraisers on Jan. 18, one in the morning and another in the evening, and did the same on Dec. 21, 2020, when he hosted two teleconferences, according to Elections Canada's registry for regulated fundraising events. One of the Jan. 18 fundraisers involved supporters from Ontario, while the guests in the other one were all from British Columbia. (Parties have to disclose event details, including a list of guests, for fundraisers with an entry cost of more than \$200.)

A request for comment from the Conservative Party was not returned by deadline.

Spectre of an election, issue-based appeals, fear driven donations

Last year, particularly the last stretch, was also punctuated by election speculation. An election at any time is always a possibility under a minority, but more so as this Parliament approaches the two-year mark for when governments typically fall.

"Parties are using that narrative to reach out to members to ensure the party is in a good place to fight," said Elliot Hughes, senior consultant at Summa Strategies and former senior Liberal aide. "A lot of it is actually driven by the idea of 'donate to us, so we can fund an election, so we can achieve all of these things and continue to go towards these goals.'"

Mike Van Soelen, managing principal at Navigator and Conservative strategist, agreed that the election was likely a motivator among donors, even in a pandemic. "It's much easier to go to supporters with talk of a pending election to motivate them, to send money to the parties to bolster their war chest," he said. "It's one of the prime motivators of fundraising that has resonated across all party lines."

For Conservatives, in particular, he noted, 2020 gave the party a leadership race and eventually a new leader to rally behind.

Fear of the alternative can also serve to motivate people to donate, said Kevin Bosch, vice-president of public affairs at Hill and Knowlton Strategies and former Liberal staffer. He pointed to how Liberals have been able to tap into supporters' concerns about the influence of social conservatives within the Conservative Party and Mr. O'Toole's political history. To many Liberal supporters, given that Mr. O'Toole was a cabinet minister under then-prime minister Stephen Harper, he still embodies a return to the Harper years, said Mr. Bosch.

"I think a lot of Liberals would say, 'Well, no, I don't I don't want that. So I'm going to put my money where my mouth is, and give money to my party,'" he said.

For the Liberals, one of the most successful appeals in December was an email blast that said Mr. O'Toole was following the lead of his predecessor Andrew Scheer (Regina-Qu'Appelle, Sask.) in engaging in divisive politics because of his leadership campaign slogan "take back Canada" and decision to grant an interview to True North Initiative, a right-wing website that some argue has an anti-immigrant bent, according to Mr. Caley.

"That particular week had seen grassroots fundraising support increase by more than 100 per cent. A significant driver of that was the message that noted how Erin O'Toole's Conservatives have all too frequently been catering to the far right," he said. "Canadians have no appetite for extreme far-right politics. And when Erin O'Toole Conservatives have catered to it, there's been a very strong response from Canadians who want politics and leadership that bring people together, not more divisive politics."

Last month, Mr. O'Toole issued a statement that responded to Liberals' accusations that he's pandered to the far right. He denounced that faction and said the party has no place for them. "The Conservatives are a moderate, pragmatic, mainstream party—as old as Confederation—that sits squarely in the centre of Canadian politics," his Jan. 18 statement read.

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Editorial

MPs shouldn't feel unsafe doing their jobs

Parliament Hill has seen a number of security breaches over the years. In April 1989, an armed man hijacked a Greyhound bus, drove it to Parliament Hill, and sat there on the front lawn with hostages inside the bus for six hours before the incident ended without any casualties. In November 1995, an intruder armed with a jackknife slipped into 24 Sussex Drive while the prime minister and his wife slept. Aline Chrétien woke up, locked the bedroom, woke up Jean Chrétien, who grabbed an Inuit carving for protection and called the police. No one was hurt. In 1997, a man tried to crash his Jeep into the doors of Centre Block after driving it up the steps of the Parliament Buildings. In 2002, a grenade was delivered to the Prime Minister's Office.

After 9/11 and the 2014 shooting on Parliament Hill, everything changed. Security is much tighter on Parliament Hill today and MPs now want tighter security off the Hill.

NDP MP Charlie Angus told The Hill Times last week that he was the victim of a two-month online stalking campaign last summer. "It actually undermines our ability to represent people democratically, that's what I realized," he said.

Female and racialized politicians, in particular, are more frequently subjected to threats, harassment, and insults. When Wanda Thomas Bernard was appointed the Senate in 2016, she upgraded security at her Nova Scotia home because of racist and hateful threats. Infrastructure Minister Catherine McKenna's constituency office was vandalized in August 2020. Liberal MP Lenore Zann said she spent \$6,000 on making her home more secure after facing rape and death threats for publicly supporting gun control changes. A Toronto man was convicted in 2015 of threatening and harass-

ing Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner, then a cabinet minister, over social media. Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu has said she was shocked at the level of harassment, threats and trolling when she was first elected the same year.

According to The Toronto Star, in the first half of 2020, the RCMP recorded 130 threats filed against the prime minister and his cabinet, 30 per cent more than the same time frame in 2019. In July, a man tried to smash through the gates of Rideau Hall with four loaded firearms and faces 21 charges, including threatening the prime minister. More recently, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh was harassed on Wellington Street by a man trying to make a citizen's arrest.

Last fall, the House's Board of Internal Economy strengthened security measures for MPs while they're outside of the Parliamentary Precinct. It will boost residential security with home assessments and recommendations for MPs, costing nearly \$4.3-million in one-time expenses and \$778,524 annually. It also decided to provide MPs with a mobile device capable of triggering an alert to a third-party monitoring centre when activated—at a one-time cost of \$203,220, and \$313,021 annually. It will also implement a new records management system to improve communications with security partners—a \$1-million one-time cost, and then \$130,000 ongoing per year, according to The Hill Times' report.

It's unfortunate these security measures are needed, but the security of our MPs should be taken very seriously, on and off the Hill, and MPs shouldn't be afraid to speak up about it. We cannot allow our elected officials to feel intimidated by threats of violence.

Letters to the Editor

Civil society calls on political leaders to protect and strengthen Canada's democracy

We are shocked and saddened by the recent political violence in Washington, D.C., and unnerved by the prospect of similar events occurring in Canada.

What happened in the United States was not a spontaneous, isolated act; rather, it was the culmination of a political discourse that has become unmoored from reality and detached from decency. Now former U.S. president Donald Trump may have incited a riot, but enablers of ignorance and excusers of hate created the conditions for it.

This is a lesson Canada must heed.

Our country is not immune to such danger. In fact, Canadians are tragically familiar with acts of terror inspired by conspiracy theories and hateful words. The 2017 mass shooting at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Québec City is one example. The 2018 van attack in Toronto is another. Last summer's armed intrusion onto the grounds of Rideau Hall could have been one too.

Nor have we evaded the ecosystem of far-right media websites, gun lobbies, and anti-government think tanks that have proven effective at sowing distrust in public institutions and between citizens in America.

Two recent studies underscore the urgency of the moment: Canada is among the global leaders in online right-wing extremism and home to an alarming spread of misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic.

As representatives of Canadian civil society, we call on our political leaders to confront these threats to our discourse, and ultimately, our democracy, with courage and conviction.

Public fears around the pandemic, uncertainty over climate change, anger at racism, and resentment of income inequality are merging at the same time bad-faith actors are seeking to exploit emotions and foster divisions for power and profit.

It is vitally important that our leaders distinguish between fact and falsehood, respect and ridicule, partisanship and poisonous politics.

We implore Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, and Green Party Leader Annamie Paul to: denounce and take policy steps to eradicate hate however, and wherever, it may appear; reject and hold accountable individuals and groups benefiting from online harassment and the spread of dangerous misinformation—including by those who may support you; commit to respecting science, civic norms, and democratic institutions; and promote, and participate in, responsible citizenship and civil discourse. Democracy is too fragile, human rights too precious, and Canada's possibility too great not to act.

Bernie Farber, chair of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network

Lorraine Whitman, president of the Native Women's Association of Canada
Michael Byers, professor and Canada Research Chair in Global Politics and International Law, UBC

Anne Lagacé Dowson, journalist
Mohamad Fakhri, founder and CEO of The Fakhri Foundation
(See the full list of signatories at www.civildialogue.ca)

Coverage of decision to cancel Keystone XL pipeline doesn't tell climate change story, says reader

Watching the Canadian media, particularly the CBC, cover U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to cancel the Keystone XL pipeline has been deeply disappointing.

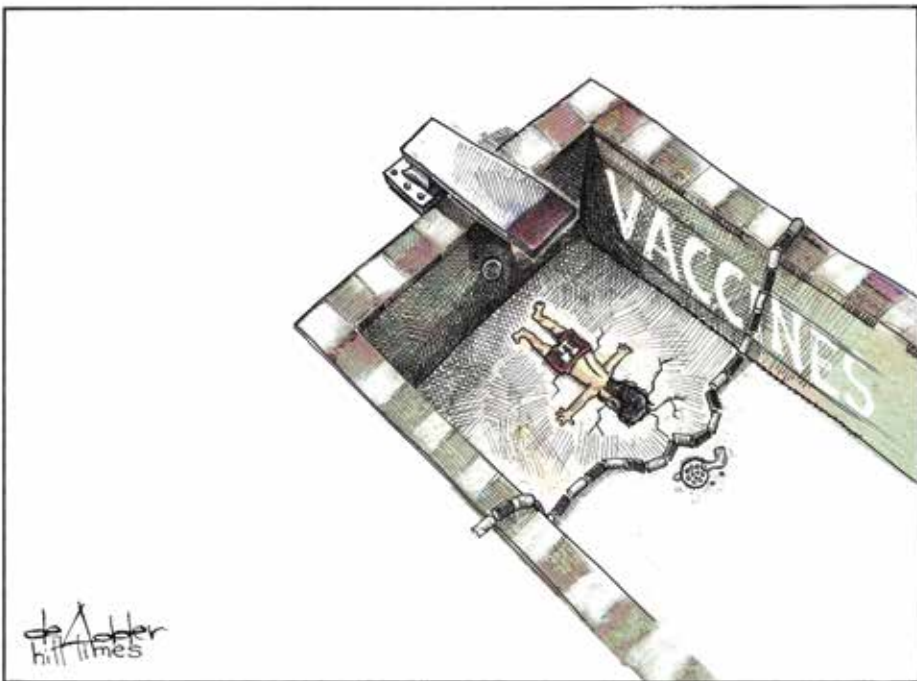
First, few reporters clearly state that Mr. Biden made this decision because the experts in his administration determined the project was out of step with the Paris Climate Agreement's goal of limiting global temperature rise to a safe level. Instead, the decision has been framed as political. However, by following up the Keystone rejection by suspending oil and gas leasing on federal lands and promising sweeping climate action Mr. Biden has demonstrated that this is more than just a political gesture.

Second, the media in Canada continue to frame Keystone XL as a pipeline with broad public support. There is no current

evidence for that. Nor is there evidence that Keystone is in Canada's national interest. In fact, a recent report from the Canada Energy Regulator showed that the Keystone XL and Trans Mountain pipelines don't fit within Canada's climate promises and don't make economic sense.

Last, almost no attention has been paid to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau or Alberta Premier Jason Kenney's failure to deliver real support for workers. In 2019, Mr. Trudeau promised a Just Transition Act to support workers, but now, nearly two years later, the bill hasn't gone anywhere. Mr. Kenney and Mr. Trudeau are spending billions of public dollars on pipelines and next to nothing on a transition. The Canadian media should hold them to account.

Hubert Mimeault
Ottawa, Ont.



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Inequitable health outcomes for Indigenous peoples is the measure of racism in the system



Joyce Echaquan, the 37-year-old Atikamekw woman who died on Sept. 28, 2020, while in the hospital in Joliette, Que., is now the subject of two investigations. Before she died, Echaquan recorded a Facebook Live video in which she was heard screaming in pain and health-care workers insulting her. Photograph courtesy of Facebook

is a measure of the racism in the system itself, a measure of the system's refusal to change.

Two weeks ago, Dr. John Harding, British Columbia's medical officer for the North Shore, Sea to Sky, Sunshine Coast, Powell River, Bella Bella and Bella Coola, was supposed to administer COVID-19 vaccines in Nuxalk Nation in British Columbia, but instead got his feelings hurt in some miscommunication with local health leaders, and so he left with more than two-thirds of the vaccine in his possession after calling the vaccine "a gift" to the local First Nation. He left under a police escort. What a power trip for the public health officer who is supposed to "first, do no harm." But don't let the police off the hook here, they have some explaining to do as well.

Is racism in health care just a British Columbia problem? No, and it's probably worse in other parts of the country. One wonders why the media don't cover it in other parts of the country.

What is truly horrifying is that probably half of all health-care workers have seen something racist, and yet the racism continues: health workers who saw an Indigenous patient receiving less care than others, or being called an alcoholic and disrespected, or being discriminated against on the racist belief that they are non-compliers or less capable, or being yelled at with racist slurs. These are the most pervasive forms of racism in health, according to the British Columbia report, and every single one is a direct assault on patient safety. Perhaps half of all health-care leaders have seen something and have not acted professionally to stop it, and so are complicit in the racism.

Racism is a disease. But unlike other diseases it does not reside in the body of the Indigenous patient trying to find care in a hospital today. It is under the control of others who intentionally and unintentionally use it as a weapon against their patients. And just like a disease, it is not eradicated with superficial actions; it is eradicated with deep and lasting change inside.

Until that time when change occurs in health care, Indigenous parents will continue to have conversations with our kids, about how to stay safe in the hospital, about how to avoid getting hurt by health care.

What will be Canada's game-changer, the tipping point to force change in health care, to stamp out racism? Call it abuse. Call it a crime.

Rose LeMay is Tlingit from the West Coast and the CEO of the Indigenous Reconciliation Group. She writes twice a month about Indigenous inclusion and reconciliation. In Tlingit worldview, the stories are the knowledge system, sometimes told through myth and sometimes contradicting the myths told by others. But always with at least some truth.

The Hill Times

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond and Harmony Johnson recently led a team to review complaints of racism in health care in British Columbia, and the resulting report should be mandatory reading for all Canadians. But racism against Indigenous people happens across Canada, not just in B.C.



Rose LeMay

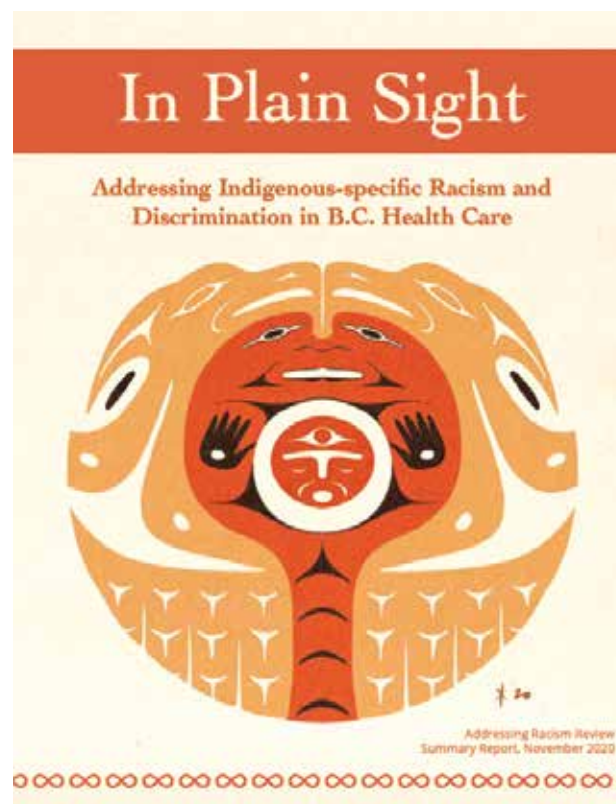
Stories, Myths, and Truths

Institutional racism is strong in many sectors, but it's life threatening in Canadian health care. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond and Harmony Johnson recently led a team to review complaints of racism in health care in British Columbia, and the resulting report, released on Nov. 30, 2020, should be mandatory reading for Canadians: *In Plain Sight, Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care*. More than 9,000 submissions were recorded and a stark picture of daily and regular racism has been documented.

"Only 28 per cent of Indigenous respondents reported that they are 'always' treated with

“

Racism is a disease. But unlike other diseases it does not reside in the body of the Indigenous patient trying to find care in a hospital today.



courtesy and respect when accessing health care, and 24 per cent that health-care workers 'always' act as though they are dishonest. 'Cold' or 'harsh' treatment of Indigenous patients by health-care workers was reported in 10 per cent of submissions to the review, describing interactions lacking in "compassion, caring or humanity."

"Over one-third of all non-Indigenous [health-care workers] reported that they had personally witnessed interpersonal racism

or discrimination directed to Indigenous patients, and almost half of non-Indigenous [health-care workers] acknowledged its existence in their organizations. ... Approximately 13 per cent of non-racialized health-care workers made at least one racially antagonistic comment in the survey."

Obviously racism reduces the quality of health care provided, or leads to the denial of health care, a denial of care in the face of need. The inequitable health outcomes for Indigenous peoples

In Plain Sight, Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care, the 228-page report commissioned by the B.C. government, and led by Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond and Harmony Johnson, was released on Nov. 30, 2020. Rose LeMay says all Canadians should read the report. Image handout

Opinion

O'Toole shouldn't worry about third-party sound and fury

Whenever you hear a 'third-party' advocacy group grandly and dramatically claim it's launching a media campaign to either elect or defeat a particular political party or candidate, take it with a mountain-sized grain of salt.



Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit

OKAVILLE, ONT.—Every once in a while, the theatre of Canadian politics features lesser political actors who strut and fret their hour upon the stage, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Okay, that's just my Shakespearean-style way of saying, whenever you hear a "third-party" advocacy group grandly and dramatically claim it's launching a media campaign to either elect or defeat a particular political party or candidate, take it with a mountain-sized grain of salt.

True, such third-party ad campaigns can sometimes seem impressive on paper, but the reality is, thanks to Canada's strict political financing laws, it's virtually impossible for non-political parties to have any real influence on electoral results.

I'm bringing this up because a newly emerged third-party group with the clunky name, "The Protecting Canada Project," recently

made headlines when it launched a well-funded ad campaign aimed at ensuring Conservative Party leader Erin O'Toole never becomes prime minister of Canada.

Certainly, the group's TV ads have some real bite.

Indeed, the ads scarily claim that if the Conservatives form the next government, they will recklessly and callously slash health care spending, even as the COVID pandemic rages on.

Just in case anyone misses the point, the ad's tagline chillingly and bluntly declares, O'Toole and the Conservatives "are hazardous to your health — at the worst possible time."

The group's spokesman, Ian Wayne, told the media, "This launch is just the beginning, we will continue to grow our campaign and get our messages to more and more everyday Canadians."

So, sound and fury abound.

Yet, what Wayne and his group must surely realize is that once a federal election is officially underway, their message will be all but stifled.

That's because Canada has an "election gag law" on the books which imposes extremely strict limits on how much money third-party advocacy groups, like The Protecting Canada Project, can spend on electoral ads.

In fact, this probably explains why The Protecting Canada Project is airing its TV ads right now, even though a federal election might still be months, or even years, down the road.

And yes, this means the group can avoid the gag law's restrictions, but it also means their ad campaign won't be effective when it comes to damaging O'Toole's electoral chances.

After all, its highly doubtful "everyday Canadians" will actually retain any memory of the group's anti-O'Toole propaganda when they eventually go to cast their ballots months or years from now.

Keep in mind, when it comes to electoral advertising most voters have extremely short memories, which is why political parties typically bombard the air waves with their most effective ads only

the week before Election Day, a time when advocacy groups will be silenced.

So, my point is, O'Toole shouldn't be losing any sleep over The Protecting Canada Project's ad campaign.

Yet, this is not to say, third-party political ad campaigns aimed at influencing the electorate are necessarily a total waste of time and money.

As a matter of fact, it's quite possible third parties run such media campaigns for ideological goals that go beyond electoral politics.

For example, even though they'd never admit it, perhaps The Protecting Canada Project ad campaign is actually less about defeating O'Toole and more about mobilizing and energizing Canada's progressive voting base.

Certainly, its stridently anti-O'Toole messaging could have the effect of riling up left-wing activists and partisans, who, thus agitated, might be more likely to make donations to progressive causes.

Heck, they might even make donations to The Protecting Canada Project.

So perhaps, all things considered, the "sound and fury" emanating from third parties actually does sometimes signify something.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

Canada's broadcasters need a fair deal to compete in new reality

Creating a more equitable system means untying Canadian broadcasters' hands, and freeing them to adapt and compete. If we fail to do so, there will inevitably be fewer domestic voices and choices for Canadians.



Kevin Desjardins

Opinion

This is a critical moment for Canada's private broadcasters, which calls for urgent legislative and regulatory change.

Over the past decade, broadcasters within Canada's regulated system have seen a historic shift. Unregulated foreign competitors moved in unabated, fragmenting our audiences and destabilizing the advertising market that sustained our businesses.

While the competitive landscape shifted dramatically and broadcasters worked to evolve, their substantial regulatory burden did not adjust. This is why the sector welcomed Bill C-10, An Act to Amend the Broadcasting Act.

The Broadcasting Act is 30 years old, and it shows. The regulatory system presumed there are limited ways for content to reach Canadians, and created obligations for those granted that right.

Clearly, those limitations are gone. A multitude of video and audio streaming services are now readily available, and Canadians have eagerly taken up their offerings as they have launched.

At the same time, the advertising sector has fundamentally shifted. Foreign online advertising platforms scoop up 80 per cent of those dollars and shift revenues out of the country, with

very little net benefit to Canada's economy.

The combined effect of these foreign tech giants' unchecked entry into our system has created an existential crisis for the broadcasting sector. A study published last summer estimates that local TV and radio broadcasters stood to lose more than \$1-billion in revenues between 2020 and 2022.

These changes are structural, not cyclical. The trends have been clear for some time, and the economic viability of local broadcasters won't improve if we simply wait to weather the storm. Structural challenges require structural solutions.

Broadcasters do not want to turn back the clock. We want to continue to evolve and compete in this new media marketplace, but we cannot do it with one hand tied behind our backs.

This is why legislative and regulatory changes that Bill C-10 will enact are critical. The current system has been rendered inequitable and unsustainable for our domestic broadcasters, and delays in creating a modern regulatory framework will only serve foreign players.

When resources become scarce and obligations remain the same, the



Canadian Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault, pictured Feb. 3, 2020, on the Hill, is the minister responsible for the Broadcasting Act and any amendments to it, including Bill C-10, which is only at first reading in the House. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

squeeze gets placed on an area that should be of greatest importance at this moment in history: local news.

In an era of misinformation—often distributed by these same foreign tech platforms—it is critical that we identify ways to continue to support local news voices that reflect the reality of the communities in which they live, and reflect a fair and accurate vision of Canada back to Canadians.

The need for local information has never more pertinent than over the past year. While COVID-19 is a global pandemic, the disease had localized impacts. The 700 broadcasters in more than 300 local markets were essential in communicating the latest public health knowledge that citizens needed to know.

News programming has traditionally been given short shrift by the regulatory regime when measuring expenditures. Priority is given to transferring resources from broadcasters to external producers, to "tell Canadian stories."

If we are to preserve Canada's cultural sovereignty, it is critical to recognize broadcasters' own news and information producers are creating vital cultural content, and telling Canadian stories. Arguably, the most important stories are at

the greatest risk of disappearing. It is hard to imagine foreign streaming services delivering the news at 6 p.m. every night in Lethbridge, Regina, Québec City, and Moncton.

"Levelling the playing field" for Canadian broadcasters does not simply mean applying antiquated broadcasting rules to digital players. It should not mean creating an additional funding for certain classes of creators beyond the required expenditures from which they already benefit.

We must ensure streamers who share Canadian audiences also share equitably in Canadian programming support obligations, and that private broadcasters' share of these obligations are reduced to reflect the new reality. And we need to ensure that the public broadcaster's mandate is distinct and complementary to the role of private broadcasters.

Creating a more equitable system means untying Canadian broadcasters' hands, and freeing them to adapt and compete. If we fail to do so, there will inevitably be fewer domestic voices and choices for Canadians.

Kevin Desjardins is president of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters.

The Hill Times



China creates a world miracle in poverty reduction

Before I came to Canada for my posting in 2019, many friends recommended Arxan to me, which is a small city in the foothills of Greater Khingan Range in north China. They told me that the scenery there was as beautiful as that of Banff in the Canadian Rockies and was quite worth a visit. It is a pity that I was unable to make a trip due to a tight schedule.

After I arrived in Canada, I looked up some materials about Arxan out of curiosity and found this small city was indeed unusual with beautiful lakes, forests and snowcapped mountains, as well as vast grasslands and the largest group of hot springs in the world. Unlike Banff, Arxan had remained a key national-level poverty-stricken county by 2011. There was no adequate food or clothing for locals, let alone any tourism industry. Thanks to the national strategy of poverty alleviation through tourism development, the tourism industry in Arxan was promoted, helping the poorer people blaze a trail full of hope featuring “tourism plus poverty alleviation”. The tourism revenue of Arxan reached 5.27 billion yuan (about \$813.16 million) in 2018, increasing by 280 percent compared to 2013. In 2019, Arxan was officially removed from the list of national-level poverty-stricken counties.

Arxan is merely an epitome of the miraculous poverty alleviation of China. Over the past 70 years, the Chinese government has lifted 850 million people out of poverty. During the four decades of reform and opening-up alone, 750 million people have been lifted out of poverty. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese government has given top priority to the battle against poverty in its governance and organized the world’s biggest and toughest poverty-relief battle in human history. Since 2012, an average of more than ten million people, equivalent to the population of a medium-sized European country, had been lifted out of poverty each year. In November 2020, China accomplished its poverty alleviation target of the new era on schedule, with all 832 poor counties removed from poverty, eradicating absolute poverty and overall regional poverty, and achieving the poverty reduction target of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 10 years ahead of schedule.

China takes “targeted poverty alleviation” as a basic strategy, which is also a key feature of its poverty alleviation effort. The poverty alleviation plans are tailored to different groups of people, which include increasing production, relocating the poor, ecological compensation, strengthening education

and improving social security. China has also introduced a list of top 10 poverty alleviation projects such as poverty alleviation through e-commerce, tourism, and photovoltaic power generation projects. With such policies, China’s poverty elimination actions have benefited a wide range of Chinese people including minorities. By the end of 2019, over 2.92 million people in northwest China’s Xinjiang autonomous region have shaken off poverty. In Xizang autonomous region in southwest China, all 74 poor counties have been removed from the poverty list, and the net income per year per capita increased from 1,499 yuan at the end of 2015 to 9,328 yuan in 2019, which means eliminating absolute poverty in history for the first time. In Guangxi autonomous region in southwest China, a provincial-level region with the largest population of minorities in China, all the 54 poor counties have been removed from the poverty list, and all the people of the Zhuang ethnic group have been lifted from poverty.

China has made great contributions to the world poverty alleviation process. China has the highest number of people moving out of poverty worldwide, accounting for over 70 percent of the global poverty alleviation effort. It established the China-UN Peace and Development Fund, South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund, and made solid progress in cooperation projects under such frameworks as the Pilot Project of Poverty Reduction Cooperation in East Asia and the China-Africa Poverty Reduction and People’s Welfare Plan. China has helped establish 24 agricultural technology demonstration centers in Africa, benefiting more than 500,000 local people.

Poverty eradication is a challenge for all and the top priority of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the world population living in extreme poverty will exceed 1 billion by 2030 due to COVID-19. Thus, realizing global poverty eradication is still an ongoing battle. China and Canada have a lot to share in eradicating poverty, promoting gender equality and tackling climate change. It is our common aspiration to pursue a better life. Let’s join hands to make greater contributions to world poverty alleviation and strive for a better future for mankind.

Cong Peiwu, Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to Canada

For more information please visit <http://ca.china-embassy.org/eng/>

Photo credit: 1. Camel Hump Mountain at sunset, Arxan.(Photo by Yang Xiaoye) 2. Xizang farmers celebrate China’s first national harvest in Lhundrup County, Lhasa, capital city of southwest China’s Xizang Autonomous Region on Sept. 23, 2018. The day coincides with Autumnal Equinox, one of the 24 solar terms of the Chinese Lunar calendar which usually falls between Sept. 22 and 24, during the country’s harvest season. This is the first national festival designated for farmers in China, who make the majority of the country’s population. (Photo by Xinhua/Chogo) 3. A farmer dries dendrobium flowers, a kind of medicinal herb, in Pingtan Village in the city of Chishui, Guizhou Province, on May 4, 2019. The local government promotes the integrated development of agriculture and tourism. Farmers are encouraged to plant dendrobium flowers to secure a prosperous future for themselves and their villages. (Photo by Xinhua/ Wang Changyu)



Opinion

Trump claims another victim: the Republican Party

The gutless wonders at the helm of the GOP continue to support Donald Trump. Even though his last atrocity, turning the Capitol Building into a crime scene, made clear to the world in explicit video after video that something truly noxious had crawled out of the Washington swamp—the president himself.



Michael Harris

Harris

HALIFAX—So the Creature from Mar-a-Lago has claimed another victim: the Republican Party.

The gutless wonders at the helm of the GOP continue to support Donald Trump. Even though his last atrocity, turning the Capitol Building into a crime scene, made clear to the world in explicit video after video that something truly noxious had crawled out of the Washington swamp—the president himself.

Five dead, including a Capitol Hill police officer, hundreds traumatized for life, America humiliated abroad, and the office of the presidency reduced to the Alamo of a Milosevic-style dictator who inspired an attempted coup to reverse an election defeat.

And then just hours after Trump's stormtroopers cleared out with their bats, hockey sticks, and flying fists, 147 Republicans voted in favour of overturning the election results. Their votes were based on the same fabricated claim that had sent the mob into a frenzy – that there had been widespread voter fraud – mind you, only in the states that Trump lost.

Never mind that sixty court decisions had found otherwise. Never mind that Republican state election officials had confirmed that Joe Biden had won the presidency in a free and fair election. Never mind that many lawmakers had been forced to cower under the furniture, or hide in closets on Jan. 6, while the Trump mob was out for blood in the seat of government.

The defeated president persisted with the Big Lie and the



Donald Trump will slip back into the swamp, where he will digest the party he has swallowed whole and America will finally know what the Republicans stand for, writes Michael Harris. Photograph courtesy of Gage Skidmore/ Commons Wikimedia

GOP bought it. It was a Hans Christian Andersen/Stephen King moment. U.S. politics had become part horror story and part fairy tale, spun by the biggest liar in America. Just a week after the president's Capitol Crime, House Republicans voted 211 to 10 not to impeach the president.

In a later vote, it was the same story in the Senate. Only five

McConnell's colleague and minority leader in the House of Representatives appeared to lack the same set of essential glands needed to stand up to bullies, liars, and perhaps seditionists.

In the wake of the Capitol Hill insurrection, Kevin McCarthy said that he too believed that what happened on Jan. 6 was impeachable, and that the president

Republican candidates in the 2022 mid-term elections.

Democratic House Representative Katherine Clark noted that just a month after the assault on the Capitol Building, "Kevin McCarthy's response is a photo-op with the treasonous instigator."

Clark's colleague in the House, Minnesota Democrat Ilan Omar, echoed that view: "I see, begging

Muslims have no place in government.

The Clintons had plotted to kill John F. Kennedy Jr.

The mass shootings at Parkland, Sandy Hook, and Las Vegas were all staged.

And in case you were wondering how all those California wildfires started, here's the scoop from Greene. It was a conspiracy between Pacific Gas and Electricity, and the Rothschild banking group, who started the fires using lasers from space in a money-making plot attached to a high-speed train project.

Hillary Clinton observed that, given Greene's fevered theories, based on QAnon, the new House Representative from Georgia should be on a watch list, not a Congressional committee.

Despite all of this, Kevin McCarthy refused to remove Greene from the House committees, which triggered a vote in which she was kicked off by a margin of 230-199. Only 11 Republicans voted for her ouster, and McCarthy wasn't included in that group.

You get the drift.

This is the week that the GOP (or as Nancy Pelosi calls it, the GQP), will declare moral bankruptcy. Given all the previous votes where Republicans have massively rejected holding Donald Trump, or his dipstick accolades, to account, don't expect them to find the courage to convict an ex-president.

The whole thing will descend into a brouhaha of hypocrites, with nothing more for the Republicans to celebrate at the end of the day than that they have once again smothered the truth in the oily rags of misplaced partisanship.

As for the Creature from Mar-a-Lago, he will slip back into the swamp, where he will digest the party he has swallowed whole.

America will finally know what the Republicans stand for.

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



Five dead, including a Capitol Hill police officer, hundreds traumatized for life, America humiliated abroad, and the office of the presidency reduced to the Alamo of a Milosevic-style dictator who inspired an attempted coup to reverse an election defeat. Image courtesy CBC News

Republicans out of 50 voted to try the president for inciting a mob to attack the Capitol Building at the very moment that Congress was trying to fulfill its constitutional obligation to certify the presidential election. In fact, the mob brought the work of the lawmakers to a halt.

One of those lawmakers was Mitch McConnell, GOP minority leader in the Senate. McConnell had earlier said that he believed Trump had committed impeachable offences. He declared that the president had "provoked" the mob. But when it came time to vote, this two-faced career politician voted against holding a Senate trial for Trump.

bore responsibility.

Then the qualifications started to appear. Trump was partially responsible. Finally, the ethical retreat was complete; everyone was responsible. When the rubber hit the road in the House vote, McCarthy too voted against impeachment.

Then came the moment when Kevin McCarthy became Charlie McCarthy, Donald Trump's ventriloquist doll.

The Republican minority House leader arrived as a supplicant at Mar-a-Lago to "kiss the ring." Or kiss something. He emerged with a photo standing beside Trump, claiming that the ex-president had agreed to help

the loser-insurrectionist to help them not lose again in 2022, is the strategy the GOP is going for."

Could McCarthy's rubber spine get more flexible than when he genuflected to Trump in Florida? It actually disappeared altogether in his handling of Marjorie Taylor Greene, the Miss QAnon of the new Republican Party.

Consider what this purveyor of batshit conspiracy theories has as credentials for a spot on the Education, Labour and Budget committees of the House of Representatives.

Greene has repeatedly supported executing Democratic members, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Burma: back to basics

What happens now? Probably a new president and commander-in-chief to replace Min Aung Hlaing within weeks, and then another prolonged period of military rule. Foreign sanctions? Definitely. Popular protests? Almost certainly. Massive bloodshed and repression? Quite possibly; the army has done that before. And Aung San Suu Kyi gets another crack at sainthood.



The Burmese army moved with practised ease to arrest democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, pictured, and all the members of her National League for Democracy (NLD) who had been elected to the new parliament by an 80 per cent landslide last November. Photograph courtesy of Commons Wikimedia



Gwynne Dyer
Global Affairs

LONDON, U.K.—China's Xinhua news agency tactfully described the Burmese army's seizure of power on Feb. 1 as a 'cabinet reshuffle'. This suggests a possible new approach for Donald Trump's legal team as he faces a second impeachment trial, but it won't work, for two reasons. One, Trump's coup attempt failed. Two, people got killed.

Whereas the Burmese army moved with practised ease to arrest democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi and all the members of her National League for Democracy (NLD) who had been elected to the new parliament by an 80 per cent landslide last November.

The internet and the phones went down nationwide, military snatch squads grabbed the sleeping MPs out of their beds—they were all in the capital for the official opening of the new parliament later on Feb. 1—and by the time the rest of the country was awake the job was done. And nobody got hurt.

An impressive piece of work. Eat your heart out, Donald

Trump! But the great mystery is why the army bothered.

After all, the army still owned all its money-making commercial enterprises, and it really controlled the government too despite the democratic window-dressing. Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi was in office, but the army was the power behind the throne. That was the deal (hopefully transitional) that she had made with the generals in 2015.

She didn't get the title of president or prime minister, although she actually held the top job. When the generals rewrote the constitution, they put in a clause excluding people whose children hold foreign passports (i.e. Suu Kyi) from those positions, so her official title was just 'state counsellor.'

She could not choose who got the three most important cabinet posts in terms of controlling the country: Home, Defence, and Border Affairs were reserved for serving generals. And one-quarter of the seats in parliament were reserved for unelected military officers, which was enough to veto any changes in the constitution.

It was a rotten deal, but Suu Kyi could not just force the army from power. The military had ruled Burma since 1962, and they had simply ignored a landslide election victory by the NLD in the past. The generals had all the guns, and that lopsided power-sharing deal was the only alternative to naked military dictatorship.

In fact, it was worse than that. When the army started massacring the Rohingya, a Muslim minority in the state of Rakhine, in 2017, Suu Kyi had to go along with that as well. The Burmese army's main business has always been keeping restive minority populations down, and it would not brook civilian interference in that key role.

'Had to go along with it' may be a bit too generous. Suu Kyi didn't just keep quiet about the genocide that drove most of the Rohingya population (700,000 people) across the border into Bangladesh. She actually went to the International Court of Justice last year and defended the army's actions in person. (That was when her foreign admirers finally cancelled her honorary sainthood.)

As a Burmese politician hoping to be re-elected, Suu Kyi probably felt obliged to cater to the ferocious anti-Muslim prejudice of Burma's Buddhist majority. The genocide is the one really popular thing the army has done in decades. But there have also been hints in her private conversations that she shares the majority's paranoia about Islam.

No matter. She did it, she still stands by it—and the NLD got 80 per cent of the votes in the November election, so it worked. She kept her side of the rotten deal. Why did the generals not keep their side? After all, they still really held the final control, and all their investments were safe.

Part of the reason seems to be that the soldiers expected

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China's Xinhua news agency tactfully described the Burmese army's seizure of power on Feb. 1 as a 'cabinet reshuffle'. This suggests a possible new approach for Donald Trump's legal team as he faces a second impeachment trial, but it won't work, for two reasons. One, Trump's coup attempt failed. Two, people got killed.

the army's proxy civilian party to do much better in the election because of popular support among the Bamar ethnic majority (66 per cent of the population) for its actions in Rakhine. And at this point it goes very Trumpish.

If you believe you should have won the election, it's a short step to thinking that the vote was rigged, and a longer but still possible step to believing you should use force to reverse this injustice. There was no evidence of fraud and the national election commission said so, but the army started claiming there had been "massive voting irregularities."

There has long been dissatisfaction among junior generals and colonels about the army's collaboration with the NLD, profitable though it has been. However, the commander-in-chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, was distinctly less enthusiastic in his claims of fraud in the run-up to the coup.

What happens now? Probably a new president and commander-in-chief to replace Min Aung Hlaing within weeks, and then another prolonged period of military rule. Foreign sanctions? Definitely. Popular protests? Almost certainly. Massive bloodshed and repression? Quite possibly; the army has done that before. And Aung San Suu Kyi gets another crack at sainthood.

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

Opinion

No more Mr. Nice Guy

The prime minister has to know that any detailed, well-funded federal ‘intrusion’ on provincial turf, aimed at improving long-term care, could be wildly applauded by the public, if not the prickly prima-donnas aligned against him. He, too, is heading into a possible spring election and needs a win.



Susan Riley

Impolitic

CHELSEA, QUE.—If Canada doesn’t emerge from this pandemic with much-improved long-term care for seniors—beginning with concrete and well-funded steps in that direction come spring—then nothing else will matter.

Not the job losses, shattering though they were for some families; not the crushing anxiety for working parents with kids at home, or at risk, in tense classrooms; not the panic suffered by businesses, large and small, as they saw customers disappear, or their life’s work evaporate. And certainly not the disgustingly inappropriate political point-scoring—that empty, debased contest among various prominent blowhards that continues in the face of a national tragedy.

People will find jobs again. Depressed sectors will rebound and those that don’t weren’t going to survive anyway. Education will resume and most kids will catch up. But, for the thousands who died in long-term care (some 80 per cent of the nation’s total casualties), and their families, there is no second chance. They died of COVID-19, often alone, almost entirely because the system failed them.

So unbalanced and heart-wrenching is this loss that it caught the attention of politicians. Ontario Premier Doug Ford vowed to put an “iron ring” around Ontario’s often-wretched seniors’ homes. Quebec’s François Legault spoke movingly of people losing their grandparents, their parents,

too soon. All political leaders expressed horror at a military report detailing the wretched conditions soldiers found in some Quebec homes when they were called in to help—filthy beds and bathrooms, inadequate food, little or no attention to residents’ desperate pleas.

Now we’re in the second wave, and the deaths continue, as do lamentations, this time over sluggish vaccine deliveries. Meanwhile, over-stretched facilities in several provinces, most recently, British Columbia, are counting on the Canadian Red Cross to backstop exhausted staff. But this is a bandaid, like the “temporary” \$3 wage increase for essential workers offered by Ontario, or Quebec’s pop-up training courses for new personal support workers.

there are some good privately owned homes, most experts agree they are generally inferior to public, or non-profit, residences—an argument borne out by respective death tolls during the pandemic. York University sociologist and senior care expert Pat Armstrong, who has been studying the sector for years, notes that private homes are largely funded and regulated (albeit weakly) by the province, so they cut corners to secure profits by skimping on “discretionary” items like laundry, food, and cleaning. They also usually pay staff significantly less than public and non-profit homes.

This has led some—most recently federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh—to call for an end to private long-term care. He knows the

Countless reports have exposed the many short-comings in the sector, but a primary problem remains staffing: onerous, unglamorous work at near-poverty wages which has driven many personal support workers, nurses, and administrators from the sector, a flight exacerbated by the pandemic. Changing that will require a large investment, but one many Canadians may be willing to pay. And the cost can be mitigated somewhat by increased resources for at-home care, the best outcome for seniors who are mentally sound if physically frail.

The provinces have tried to make improvements, but slowly and unevenly. A desperate Legault has repeatedly begged retired

Some, if not most, of the next tranche of federal money, must be tied to specific outcomes—notably, improvements in long-term care. It is unlikely that provinces, left to their own devices, will direct the new federal aid to building pipelines, or providing higher salaries for hospital administrators, rather than fixing nursing homes. But similar things have happened, and, without rigorously enforced national standards, finding decent long-term care will continue to be a matter of luck and location for most Canadians.

Of course, any talk of “strings” sets off angry denunciations from premiers of federal “meddling,” or micro-managing, a performative stubbornness that is particularly irksome in a national emergency. The provinces want \$28-billion more in annual health transfers to spend as they see fit. “I don’t see what the federal government knows about nursing homes,” blustered Premier Legault recently. To which the obvious rejoinder is: what do you, actually, know about them?

Trudeau says he will “happily partner” with provinces and territories that want to co-operate on improving long-term care. Those who will not agree to federal standards, he implies, won’t get the money, and will be answerable to their electorates. This is a disappointingly timid stance, although it may be all he can do given the constitutional reality.

Trudeau has been urged to invoke the federal Emergencies Act to supersede provincial objections and impose national standards to fill a desperate leadership void at this critical moment. That, however, requires the approval of both the Commons and the Senate, and, particularly with a minority government, could provoke a lengthy, angry distraction, with an uncertain outcome, while the pandemic is still claiming victims and vaccine deliveries are disrupted.

Withholding funding from uncooperative provinces is probably the only lever Trudeau has (which is unfortunate for those Canadians whose premiers are too blinded by ego, or ideology, to collaborate). Still, the prime minister has to know that any detailed, well-funded federal “intrusion” on provincial turf, aimed at improving long-term care, could be wildly applauded by the public, if not the prickly prima-donnas aligned against him. He, too, is heading into a possible spring election and needs a win.

Even those who find Justin Trudeau annoying, mannered, insufficiently serious, or arrogant, also know this: we are one people when it comes to how we treat our elders. We have already lost more people in long-term care than any other wealthy nation. And we don’t want to carry the national shame of more unnecessary deaths. Do what you have to, prime minister, and let them howl.

Susan Riley is a veteran political columnist who writes regularly for *The Hill Times*.

The Hill Times



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured Jan. 29, 2021, holding a media briefing outside the Rideau Cottage in Ottawa. Even those who find Justin Trudeau annoying, mannered, insufficiently serious, or arrogant, also know this: we are one people when it comes to how we treat our elders. We have already lost more people in long-term care than any other wealthy nation. And we don’t want to carry the national shame of more unnecessary deaths. Do what you have to, prime minister, and let them howl, writes Susan Riley. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

It will take deep reform and more money to fix the system, most critics agree. But that seems to be as far as agreement goes. Like so many important issues in this country, progress is hobbled by federal-provincial turf wars. Provinces are responsible for long-term care, with the federal government throwing cash (never enough) their way.

This has created uneven quality in long-term care both between provinces—where British Columbia’s homes are considered the best, with Quebec’s ranking among the worst—but also within provinces. In Ontario, for instance, 58 per cent of homes are private owned, with 24 per cent run by non-profits and the rest by municipalities.

The privatization wave in Ontario started in the Mike Harris years and continued as subsequent governments tried to offload some of the costs of caring for its most frail citizens. While

prime minister will never get the unanimous consent of premiers for such a move, so he proposes the imposition of firm federal standards—more money to the provinces, but with strings attached.

In his view, the feds should only fund new, publicly owned, or non-profit, care homes and impose regulations aimed at better staffing, better upkeep, better everything—regulations so onerous, in Singh’s version, they would drive profit-seekers from the sector. It is not a bad idea, at least the “strings” part.

Indeed, the “strings”—which should ensure attractive salaries and full-time work for personal support workers, scrupulous attention to cleanliness, ventilation, food and resident privacy, and better administration—may be more crucial than ownership. Some 58 per cent of Quebec’s long-term care residences are publicly owned, after all, and are among the most neglected, out-dated and poorly staffed in the country.

nurses and doctors to help out in nursing homes. Besides training a new cadre of support workers, he is promising a \$26 hourly starting wage. Ontario has appointed a commission which is to report in April. And British Columbia was ahead of the game from the start, as one of few provinces that prohibits long-term care workers from working in different homes at the same time, thereby risking the spread of infection.

But, at the same time, six of 10 provinces have not yet spent their share of the \$24-billion the federal government provided earlier for PPE, and other measures, aimed at safely reopening schools, day-cares, and businesses, and shoring up wages for essential workers. Of the \$374-billion in overall pandemic aid so far, some 92 per cent has come from Ottawa, with another \$100-million expected in the upcoming spring budget. (The premiers have mostly been holding their applause.)



New federal Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne, pictured on the Hill on Feb. 6, 2020. Canada has allocated \$3-billion over five years under its Strategic Innovation Fund and its mandate includes support and development of 'a Canadian battery innovation and industry ecosystem' but without a business-led battery enterprise with the technology that meets industry needs, Canada may end up being a niche player, writes David Crane. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Dreams are fine but results are much better

What we need now is less talk of Canada as a global champion in electric vehicle and batteries and a much clearer analysis of how we might best participate in the new electric age.



David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century

TORONTO—Around the world, countries are looking to a green recovery, with big plans to generate investment and jobs through innovative clean technologies. One of the biggest targets is the design and production of batteries for motor vehicles, rail, and urban transit, shipping and aviation, as well as large-scale storage systems for renewable energy. Canada is one of those countries that is eager to participate. But translating that dream into reality means much more focused, realistic and targeted initiatives than we have seen so far.

A good example of this dream is the near-euphoria in Ottawa after Ford and FCA (Chrysler) committed to keeping open assembly plants—to produce electric vehicles—that would have been closed without Canadian taxpayers be paying well over \$1-billion to keep these two plants open and sustain existing employment. The companies may get tax breaks as well. Staying in the game is expensive. Nor do we know whether there will be much Canadian technology used in these plants.

Yet this didn't stop the Prime Minister's Office after these announcements to quickly declare that "electrification will allow us to position the innovative Canadian automotive industry as a global leader in battery-electric manufacturing." And his Industry Minister at the time, Navdeep Bains, proclaimed Canada had a competitive advantage in batteries because of what he said were "our natural resources and the scientific excellence and manufacturing skills to maximize them." Since then GM has announced it will keep an assembly plant open in Ontario for electric vans, though this will also depend on taxpayer support.

This aspirational language is continued in the Trudeau government's climate "strategy"—A Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy. It boasts that the government is "working with its partners to make Canada a leader in the design, development and manufacturing of zero-emission vehicles." Under its plans, it would "support the development

of the entire battery supply chain to ensure Canada can build the batteries that will power the vehicles and the electricity grids of the future."

The Trudeau government argues we have a big advantage because of our minerals such as nickel, cobalt and lithium. Yet our nickel is not in a form that can be used for battery production without costly upgrading and further processing; Indonesia has a better nickel ore for batteries and the Asian battery producers are all there. The Congo has the world's most plentiful supply of cobalt and, again, the Asians are already there. And South American countries, notably Chile and Argentina, have a big cost competitiveness in lithium production. Our mineral base today is much less of an advantage than our government claims.

Moreover, recycling will become a competitive source of raw materials as existing batteries age. Here, Canada is in the game. A Kingston, Ontario company, Li-Cycle, has proprietary technology that it says allows it to recycle 95 per cent of the materials in discarded lithium-ion batteries, including nickel, cobalt and lithium, for re-use. It is investing \$175-million to build North America's largest battery recycling facility, in Rochester, New York, which will become a major source of nickel and lithium and cobalt.

But designing and producing batteries is an even bigger challenge. Today the industry is dominated by Asian producers, with China's Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. and Korea's

LG Chem the world's two largest manufacturers. They accounted for almost half the world's production last year. There is now a race underway, in the European Union, the United States, and Britain to develop domestic battery producers. Currently the Europeans and Americans rely heavily on plants owned by Asian manufacturers, such as CATL's plant in Germany or LG Chem's joint venture with General Motors in Ohio. Tesla is the main U.S. manufacturer with plants in Nevada and China and construction underway in Germany.

But as the transition to electric vehicles accelerates, there will be a need for more battery plants—which, because of the heavy weight of batteries, need to be built close to assembly plants. Ontario's electric vehicle plants could be supplied by battery production in Ontario or by plants in nearby Michigan or Ohio, for example.

Two projects, one in Sweden and the other in Britain show the challenges. Plants have to be big—they are not surprisingly called Gigafactories—so they require significant capital and expertise. But they also must be led by companies, not governments. Sweden and Britain benefit because of business-led initiatives.

In one example, a Swedish company established in 2016, Northvolt, is building a major production facility and research centre in Sweden, a plant in Poland for assembly of battery modules, and is in a joint venture with Volkswagen for a massive project in Germany. It has

raised more than US\$1.6-billion in equity investments, accessed close to \$1-billion in European Union loans, and has an order from Volkswagen for \$3-billion of batteries. It is also building a recycling plant in Norway.

In Britain, a group of investors from Abu Dhabi and Scandinavia have formed Britishvolt, which is planning \$4-billion Gigafactory in Britain on a 95-hectare site where it expects suppliers will also locate. Negotiations are underway for financial support from the British government under its battery strategy and the company is expected to go public to raise additional funds this year.

Canada has allocated \$3-billion over five years under its Strategic Innovation Fund and its mandate includes support and development of "a Canadian battery innovation and industry ecosystem" that would "cover support for everything from mining and processing, and research and development to manufacturing and recycling." But without a business-led battery enterprise with the technology that meets industry needs, Canada may end up being a niche player, and sometimes a potentially considerable one, as Li-cycle suggests.

What we need now, though, is less talk of Canada as a global champion in electric vehicle and batteries and a much clearer analysis of how we might best participate in the new electric age. Dreams are fine but results are much better.

David Crane can be reached at crane@interlog.com.

The Hill Times

Opinion

COVID-19 recession: why traditional economic tools will not restore job losses

The neoliberal notion of handing out money, free land and tax exemptions to start-up, small and medium sized businesses is now completely discredited. Instead, a focused industrial strategy based on advanced manufacturing is the future.



Ken McFarlane & Ian Waddell

Opinion

At every Canadian election, federal or provincial politicians promise to create more jobs. Easier said than done at the best of times. The current COVID-19 recession adds unique elements to the challenge.

Instinctively, governments will use expansionary monetary

policies (interest rates and money supplies) or expansionary fiscal policies (taxation and government expenditures) or both to stimulate job growth. Unfortunately, these policies can take up to six months or more to prompt economic gains if, in fact, they will work at all during the current atypical recession. The exception may be government funding for necessary infrastructure programs.

The Bank of Canada has lowered interest rates with the hope that this will cause consumers to borrow and spend more resulting in businesses expanding and hiring additional workers to satisfy increased demand. However, once a major recession is underway most people are too poor to spend or borrow no matter how

low interest rates are. Banks can become unwilling to lend as personal credit scores tumble and personal savings are depleted.

Lower interest rates might help some in the middle class to renegotiate mortgages or consider new house purchases. As for the upper middle class and the rich, it has been shown that interest rates rarely effect their spending habits and that includes the expansion of their businesses.

Canada is also utilizing quantitative easing (QE) to increase the supply of money and liquidity in the economy. Again, the intent is to give a boost to product and service demand by making credit more readily available from banks. This policy is often referred to as "printing money." In short, the government creates financial instruments to purchase bonds and securities resulting in the money being released into the economy.

As with lowering interest rates, there is no concrete evidence that utilizing quantitative QE will lead to increased consumer spending and therefore job creation during the current severe recession. It may assist the rich to acquire

more possessions and stock markets might spike, but it will do little for those who have lost their jobs or are afraid they might.

The Canadian government and provinces have taken extraordinary and laudable efforts to get cash straight to individuals and small businesses in need. This puts money directly into the economy without the banks and other institutions acting as gate keepers. However, as would be expected at this time, these singular allocations have been modest and temporary. At this writing, the federal government is attempting to re-establish the Employment Insurance program as the focus for ongoing funding.

A compelling argument can be made for establishing a guaranteed annual income even as the current crisis continues. This would assist ordinary Canadians to better weather the ups and downs of the economy, now and in the future, with one simple, reliable and well-funded program.

Infrastructure programs can create many jobs and robust economic spin-offs. However, the fact remains that most of these jobs are temporary and only available to certain trades and professions. Governments could institute focused and expedited training programs to allow a broader spectrum of the unemployed and underemployed to participate in these projects.

If the quantity and size of infrastructure programs were maximized, then the number of jobs created as we ease out of this recession might well be sufficient to allow small and medium sized

businesses to reopen. Reducing payroll taxes for new-hires would provide a further incentive.

In short, policies like infrastructure projects, efficient re-training, reduced payroll taxes and the beginnings of a guaranteed annual income system are some of the tools we can rely on to help restore economic growth during and after the pandemic crisis.

In the longer term, governments in Canada need to come to terms with the fact that our future must include a focused industrial strategy utilizing skilled workers trained in all the proven tools for clean-tech advanced manufacturing. As the European industrial heartland has shown, an advanced sector is capable of weathering heavy economic storms.

Given the sorry state of Canadian entrepreneurialism, this shift will likely require Crown corporations to lead the way and then, perhaps, pass off what is created to the private sector. The neoliberal notion of handing out money, free land and tax exemptions to start-up, small and medium sized businesses is now completely discredited. Instead, a focused industrial strategy based on advanced manufacturing is the future.

Ken McFarlane assisted in developing and commercializing nine advanced materials technologies in Europe and North America. He chairs the Regeneration Group LLP which undertakes economic development projects on four continents. Ian Waddell is a former NDP MP and a former British Columbia minister of small business.

The Hill Times

It's time feds give us straight talk on the vaccine rollout

It is time for the government to get real with Canadians, go beyond the approved talking points and illustrate that they understand our concerns when faced with unrealistic answers.



Amanda Shore

Opinion

It's time the Canadian government gets serious.

The past 10 months have been hard on everyone. No matter your age, or stage of life, COVID has halted everybody in their tracks. We, as Canadian citizens, have hunkered down, figured out how best to communicate with others virtually, made Zoom dinners a thing, baked, cried, felt hopeless, rose up, stayed home, masked up, and waited patiently. We were amazed by the speed of the vaccine trials and wowed by the tireless work of the scientists to get a vaccine into trials like never experienced before. All the while, we continued to socially distance, limiting any social interactions with trusted friends outside and two metres apart to help stop the spread of this terrible, scary virus. News broke that these vaccines were just about ready. We were ecstatic. Some 97 per cent efficacy? Mind blowing. It needs sub-freezing temperatures to store? No worries, we knew it was only a matter of time, any day now, that we would soon have a feeling of relief in our hands and we could let out the communal breath we had been holding to gain some sort of release. We understood this was not the magic pill, but it would, in short order, be a light at the end of the tunnel.

While we Canadian citizens were doing our utmost to work from home, teach our kids in the next room over, miss our siblings' weddings in other countries, fail to find love, we believed—we assumed—the Canadian government was doing its utmost to secure vaccinations and come up with a suitable and realistic rollout plan to help dig its citizens out of this rut which we are all collectively living in. When the government said it had secured enough doses to vaccinate our population three times over, we rejoiced, we started to see that little speck of light. While we we played our part, we trusted that these deals the government brokered were solid and competitive, that the rollout of these vaccines would be well considered, organized, and ready once the vaccine arrived at our doorstep.

Unfortunately, that does not seem to be the reality. Though we have kept our smiles hitched, our outlook resolute, a crack is starting to form. The vaccine rollout, it seems, is not so organized, and transparency and information are lacking. Vaccine shipments are being withheld for this reason or that, and millions of Canadians are still not vaccinated. The Canadian government continues



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured Feb. 2, 2021, holding a presser in front of his home at the Rideau Cottage in Ottawa where he announced updated travel restrictions in response to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and unveiled a plan to domestically manufacture Novavax COVID-19 vaccines at a National Research Council biomanufacturing facility in Montreal. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

to repeat that these hiccups will not result in delays to the overall vaccine rollout schedule, though it is hardly a stretch to see why this may be far-fetched. While this comes from good intentions, this does a disservice to us Canadians. It is clear there is an issue. We understand that qualified experts are undoubtedly working tirelessly to address these gaping, and growing, issues that the plebeian commentators are not even aware of. We get it. But it is time to get serious with us. We Canadians have proved to be resilient, resourceful, helpful, kind, and strong. We need realistic answers and even more realistic solutions. Another virus strain is threatening our already tenuous, uncertain future and we want to know that the Canadian

government is going to fight for our right to get a vaccine before a new one will be necessary.

It is time for the government to get real with Canadians, go beyond the approved talking points and illustrate that they understand our concerns when faced with unrealistic answers. And it is also time to show the world that while Canadians may be nice, we will also not back down; we will have a seat at the table and we will fight and defend our position to secure what is necessary for us Canadians who continue to persevere, to innovate in the face of adversity, and who still want to be proud to call ourselves Canadian.

Amanda Shore is an architectural designer who lives in Ottawa.

The Hill Times

Lynn Beyak case reveals systemic racism in Senate ethics procedures, full stop

It is systemic racism to allow a non-Indigenous person to decide what is anti-Indigenous racism without any consultation with Indigenous persons.

BY LILLIAN EVA QUAN DYCK

Lynn Beyak retired from the Senate on Jan. 25, four years after she began her outlandish claim that Indian residential schools (IRS) were really not that harmful to the thousands of Indian children who attended them, but were instead characterized by an abundance of good. A year later, she posted numerous letters supporting her position some of which contained anti-Indigenous racist comments.

Several Senators, including myself, wrote to the Senate asking for the letters containing racist comments about Indigenous people to be removed from Beyak's website. She refused to take them down and remained steadfast in her viewpoint about IRS. On June 16, 2020, Beyak apologized for wrongful conduct and for causing hurt by posting some letters with hurtful comments. It's important to note, however, that she did not apologize for posting letters with racist comments or for her opinion about residential schools.

Now, after two reports from the Senate ethics officer (SEO), three reports from the Senate's Ethics and Conflict of Interest Committee of the Senate, two suspensions without pay, two training courses on racism and Indigenous history, an official apology, a recommendation by the Senate Ethics Committee to reinstate her, and a notice of motion to expel her, Beyak has retired.

In my opinion, the investigative process used by the Senate to assess whether the letters posted by Beyak were racist was a prime example of systemic racism. The SEO or the Ethics Committee members, only one of whom was Indigenous, were the sole authorities who could: decide what constituted anti-Indigenous racism; determine whether Beyak's apology was acceptable; and decide whether she learned enough from her retraining. These three modes of operation, which are normal for the Senate, constitute systemic racism. The other Indigenous Senators should



Former senator Lillian Dyck, who retired in August 2020, writes that the investigative process used by the Senate to assess whether the letters posted by former senator Lynn Beyak were racist was a prime example of systemic racism. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

have been consulted during the investigation, but no input was sought from us. In addition, Elder Garnet Angecone from Lac Seul First Nation suggested that IRS survivors like himself should have been asked for their input into the complaint process.

Let's examine these three points more closely. On the first point, the SEO, a non-Indigenous person, made the official determination of which comments in the letters were considered to be anti-Indigenous racist comments. It is systemic racism to allow a non-Indigenous person to decide what is anti-Indigenous racism without any consultation with Indigenous persons. We've been conditioned to give this kind of power to people in positions of authority like an ethics officer, a human resource director, or a judge without regard to their identity. But that is no longer acceptable or even logical.

Would it be acceptable or logical for me as a Cree-Chinese person be the authority who decides what constitutes anti-Black racism? Obviously not. While there is no doubt that the SEO and other non-Indigenous people are able to pick out overtly racist comments about Indigenous peoples, they would not be able to pick out all of the less-obvious race-baiting comments that trigger offence in, shame, or harm an Indigenous person. For example, the SEO identified five letters which contained racist comments; I picked out 19.

Secondly, it was systemic racism by the Senate Ethics Committee not to seek input from the Indigenous Senators on the adequacy of Beyak's official apology. The normal practice of the Senate Ethics Committee is to be the authority that makes recommendations to the Senate as a whole, but when a complaint of anti-Indigenous racism was received, they should have consult-

ed the Indigenous Senators and sought their input. In her official apology, Beyak only apologized for causing hurt and wrongful conduct with regard to the letters; she did not apologize for posting racist comments; yet, the Ethics Committee accepted her apology.

As the daughter of an IRS survivor and as a former senator, I am shocked that the committee did not insist that Beyak apolo-

gize for posting letters with racist comments—that was, after all, the basis of the complaint. If they had consulted with Indigenous Senators or with survivors, they would have been told that Beyak's apology was not good enough, and thus they would not have been able to recommend that she be reinstated. This shows how vitally important consultation with Indigenous Senators can be; the recommendation of the Senate Ethics Committee would have been different had we been consulted. Beyak's comments about IRS were not part of the ethics investigation. But her repetitive claim over a period of several years, in which she not only denied the harms done to Indigenous people by residential schools, but also made race-baiting comments, would have been grounds for a complaint of racism.

Thirdly, it was systemic racism by the Senate Ethics Committee and the SEO to design educational programs for Beyak to counteract her ignorance about IRS and racism without input from Indigenous Senators or IRS survivors. While the second training program designed specifically for Beyak seemed to be comprehensive, the method of evaluation was ill defined, with no actual test to determine key things that Beyak should have learned. After her training, Beyak did not have to explain why certain comments in the letters were racist towards Indigenous people, nor did she have to demonstrate her new understanding by being able to identify other anti-Indigenous racist comments in some of the letters.

The SEO and the Senators who were members of the Ethics Committee put a lot of hard work and thought into their drawn-out efforts on the Beyak file, but their process was fundamentally flawed due to systemic racism. The Indigenous Senators could have made meaningful and important suggestions on the Ethics Committee process in the three areas outlined above, which would have improved it, expedited it, and changed the recommendations.

By not seeking input from the Indigenous Senators, the SEO and the Ethics Committee underestimated the racist content of the letters she posted, and they overestimated both the adequacy of her official apology and of what she learned after her retraining. Consequently, their recommendation to reinstate Beyak was wrong.

Clearly, going forward, the Senate needs to employ a different approach when investigating complaints concerning racist behaviours. In October 2018, the Indigenous Senators suggested that the Code of Conduct for Senators be broadened to make it clear that racist behaviour is prohibited. And going forward, clearly those Senators who are BIPOC must have a meaningful role in implementing this type of change to the ethics rules regarding conduct. It's high time to reveal and eradicate systemic racism in the Senate ethics rules and procedures.

Dr. Lillian Eva Quan Dyck is a former senator who represented Saskatchewan from 2005 to 2020. The Hill Times



The recommendation of the Senate ethics officer and the Senate Ethics Committee to reinstate former senator Lynn Beyak after suspension were wrong because they underestimated the racist content of the letters she posted, and they overestimated both the adequacy of her official apology and of what she learned after her retraining, writes former senator Lillian Dyck. *The Hill Times* file photograph

Opinion



Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, pictured in Port au Prince on Feb. 7, 2017, after being sworn in as the 58th president of Haiti. He should have left office on Feb. 7, 2021, but looks set to extend his term in defiance of the constitution and popular will, writes Bianca Mugenyi. Photograph courtesy of Flickr

Canada should be speaking up against Moïse's authoritarian measures in Haiti

Rather than just words acknowledging structural racism, Ottawa must take action that improves the lives of long-marginalized Black people. At the international level, a good place to begin would be ending Canada's support for the revival of Duvalierism in Haiti.



Bianca Mugenyi

Opinion

A meaningful way to honour Black History Month is by questioning Canada's role in a country born in struggle to make Black Lives Matter. In Haiti today,

Ottawa is supporting a government that is reviving the spectre of the infamous Papa Doc and Baby Doc Duvalier dictatorship.

More than two centuries ago, Africans in Saint-Domingue rose up against the most barbaric of all the slave economies to become a beacon for Black liberation. Over 13 years, they freed themselves, defeating multiple colonial powers including a British force led by Toronto icon John Graves Simcoe. The Haitian Revolution represents what may be the greatest example of liberation in the history of humanity, abolishing slavery three decades before Canada and six decades before the U.S.

There is a different kind of resilience emerging in Haiti today. Unfortunately, this time, it is the fortitude of a reactionary elite—that should have long been discredited—when supported by Washington and Ottawa.

Neo-Duvalierist President Jovenel Moïse, who should have left office on Feb. 7, looks set to extend his term in defiance of the constitution and popular will. After surviving 18 months of massive protests and strikes spurred by a huge corruption scandal, Moïse has consolidated his grip during the pandemic. In the summer, he forced out the entire electoral council and instigated a gang alliance to instil fear in the slums of Port-au-Prince. Soon after parliament was disbanded because he failed to hold elections, Moïse began to rewrite the constitution in violation of the law. Over the past few months, he



To commemorate Black History Month, the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute has launched a letter writing campaign to new Foreign Minister Marc Garneau, pictured, asking him to reset Canadian policy towards a country that did so much to make Black lives matter. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

has released presidential decrees criminalizing protest blockades as “terrorism” and establishing a new intelligence agency empowered to infiltrate and arrest anyone engaged in “subversive” acts or

threatening “state security.” The new agency may become analogous to the Duvalier dictatorship's infamous Ton Ton Macoutes.

Canadian officials have barely criticized any of Moïse's

authoritarian measures. On the contrary, Ottawa has backed Moïse at almost every turn. During a week-long general strike in February 2019 and an even longer one in October, Canadian officials publicly backed the president. Canada funds and trains a police force that has violently repressed anti-Moïse protests with the Canadian ambassador repeatedly attending police functions and refusing to criticize their repression.

Alongside the U.S., France, Germany, Brazil, Organization of American States (OAS), UN and Spain, Canada is part of the “Core Group” of foreign ambassadors in Port-au-Prince generally believed to be the real power behind Moïse. Last year, Radio Canada's flagship investigative program *Enquête* pointed out that the Core Group was spawned at the “Ottawa Initiative on Haiti.” On Jan. 31, 2003, the Canadian government convened top U.S., French, and OAS officials to discuss Haiti's future. No Haitian officials were invited to the secret two-day meeting where they discussed the removal of the elected president and putting the country under UN trusteeship.

On the final day of Black History Month not long after the country celebrated the 200-year anniversary of the Haitian Revolution, U.S. Marines forced president Jean-Bertrand Aristide out of the country in the middle of the night. Canadian JTF2 special forces “secured” the airport from which Aristide said he was “kidnapped.” A 15-year UN occupation of the country began.

Last year, Bloc Québécois MP Mario Beaulieu sponsored a parliamentary petition calling on the federal government to “publish all documents relating to the ‘Ottawa Initiative on Haiti’” and to “hold a hearing of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to learn everything there is to know about the ‘Ottawa Initiative on Haiti,’ including its link to the ‘Core Group.’” The petition gathered the signatures required to be presented in Parliament but was sideswiped by the global pandemic. Opposition parties should press the matter.

Last week, protests and a general strike are planned in Haiti to oppose Moïse's bid to extend his mandate. The opposition has largely united behind a proposal for a caretaker government to oversee elections.

To commemorate Black History Month, the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute has launched a letter writing campaign to new Foreign Minister Marc Garneau asking him to reset Canadian policy towards a country that did so much to make Black lives matter.

Rather than just words acknowledging structural racism, Ottawa must take action that improves the lives of long-marginalized Black people. At the international level, a good place to begin would be ending Canada's support for the revival of Duvalierism in Haiti.

Bianca Mugenyi is the director of the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute.

The Hill Times

Naysayers who claim to be speaking up for the disabled on assisted dying bill are missing the point

MAiD and C-7 are not measures of personal failure. They are final choices for people who suffer intolerably and have had enough of life and its difficulties. They want their right to choose and access a death with purpose and dignity. MAiD is not perfect and nor is C-7, but C-7 should be passed now.



Ron Posno

Opinion

LONDON, ONT.—There is a heated debate going on here in Canada about medical assistance in dying (MAiD) because of the changes proposed in Bill C-7, a bill that currently sits with the Senate for review. Several articles have been published in the past few weeks on the wishes and the failures for the disabled but have failed to countenance the reality. I would like to present another position on the issue.

MAiD and Bill C-7 both have deficiencies, some being addressed in Bill C-7, but nonetheless, MAiD is the current reality of a law directive from the Supreme Court of Canada in February 2015 (Carter decision).

The Supreme Court was speaking for all Canadians, including the disabled, when

it ruled: the existing Canadian Criminal Code's prohibitions on voluntary euthanasia (Sec. 14) and assisted suicide (Sec. 241(b)) violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; the new law should permit physician assisted death for a competent adult person who (1) clearly consents to the termination of life; and (2) has a grievous medical condition (including an illness, disease, or disability) that is irremediable (cannot be alleviated by means acceptable to the individual) and causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition.

That's the basis of the reality under review in the House of Commons and the Senate. The review became necessary because MAiD failed to meet the directive from the Supreme Court. Jean Truchon and Nicole Gladu appealed to the Quebec Superior Court for help, just like two others in Canada, because MAiD failed. They argued that the clause that "death must be reasonably foreseeable" failed to protect the rights to equality as well as life, liberty, and security for all Canadians. The Quebec Court ruled in their favour and ordered the federal lawmakers to make the requisite changes to MAiD.

With respect to the Truchon decision Justice Baudouin explained, "The vulnerability of a person requesting medical assistance in dying must be assessed exclusively on a case-by-case basis, according to the characteristics of the person and not based on a reference group of so-called 'vulnerable persons.'" The justice also added that, "The patient's ability to understand and to consent is ultimately the decisive factor, in addition to the other legal criteria."

Now, we're going around the same circle. We had the moralists (conscientious objectors) and the naysayers crowding the floor and crying for exemptions, precautions, and safeguards. We had them for Sue Rodriguez in 1993, for Kay Carter in 2015, and for MAiD in 2016. They took the floor then and they're taking our time now.

I won't write of the moralists. I am very concerned with the nay-



Justice Minister David Lametti, pictured at a Hill press conference on Sept. 15, 2020, is responsible for the federal assisted dying legislation. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

sayers who claim to be speaking for the disabled. They're taking the time and the attention of the decision-makers now—just like before, and they're missing the entire point. The Supreme Court (in reference to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms) is saying that disabled persons are entitled to all the rights of all Canadians.

I know of no disabled person who wants his/her rights removed or lessened.

In fact, the irony of it all, is that many of these naysayers have pretended for years to speak and represent the disabled population. In denying disabled persons access to MAiD, they have become "ablest" the very kind of people they've been speaking against for years. Note: ableism is defined as discrimination against disabled persons. Every argument they put forth to limit access to MAiD is ableism.

I can say this because I am classified as disabled. I have dementia; I am one-eyed and losing vision in the remaining eye, my left knee is crippled; and I am 81 years old.

I hate saying all this because for most of my life I've worked with and for people with disabilities. My success as a professional was based upon inculcating and practising a "can-do" philosophy. We focus on what we can do as opposed to worrying about the "can'ts." You should be defined by achievement—not failures.

Consequently, in my life I've had the opportunity to witness great successes and failures.

Some include the successes of my friend Deb who I first met when she was almost ready to come to school. She had severe cerebral palsy, but had great support from her family and staff from an institution. How happy I was when she received her first typewriter. It was mechanical and she could type with a pencil between her teeth. Deb started into regular classes in Grade 7 and she showed all her classmates how she could adapt, learn, and attend school dances. She became one of Canada's first Para-Olympians in swimming. She's since designed and sold wheelchairs, written books (all with teeth and pencil), travelled with and without family and stood up (figuratively) for disabled persons whenever there was opportunity.

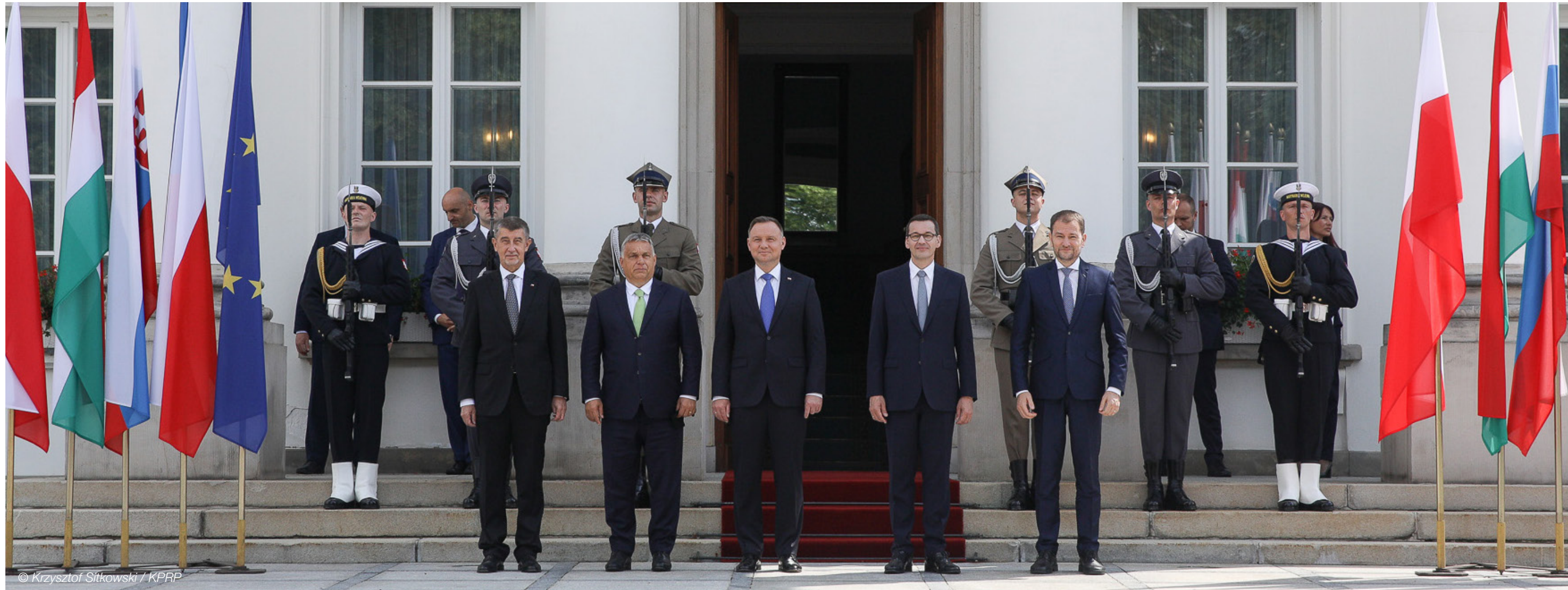
There's also Chantel Petitclerc—a former Para-Olympian and now a Canadian Senator who's a strong advocate for MAiD. We've seen Rick Hansen wheel his chair across Canada and witnessed Terry Fox attempt to run one-legged on the same course first. Jesse Davidson, with muscular dystrophy, made a similar journey with his father. David Charles Onley, an officer of Ontario and former lieutenant governor, lived, worked and served entirely from his wheelchair—doing much to support the so-called disabled. These are just a few people who come to my mind. There are many other major and personal successes. But whomever and whoever, don't speak to them about removing their rights. And don't talk to me about that either.

The featured, institutionalized ableists may be correct when they speak of systemic inadequacies to support people with disabilities. But that's the unfortunate reality of societal and program failures. These failures should not become the basis for denying the disabled their rights as Canadians nor access to choose MAiD. These failures are much better addressed by the programs and services offered by these same ableists.

MAiD and C-7 are not measures of personal failure. They are final choices for people who suffer intolerably and have had enough of life and its difficulties. They want their right to choose and access a death with purpose and dignity. MAiD is not perfect and nor is C-7, but C-7 should be passed now. There are far too many hurting people, suffering in their respective agonies for better access to MAiD. They don't need more prolonged and tired arguments. MAiD needs improvement. Better it come in the later, anticipated full review in June.

Ron Posno received his formal schooling from College Militaire Royale, University of Western Ontario, Wayne State University, and the University of Toronto. Nationally recognized for curriculum innovation in special education, he was a teacher, consultant and school superintendent. As an advocate for people with exceptional needs, he has lectured in 13 universities and colleges in Canada and the United States. Before retiring, he was a motivational speaker who talked about 'change' in business and public institutions.

The Hill Times



Central Europe as a Community of Shared Aspirations

A new decade of the 20th century has just opened. A decade of uncertainty brought forth by the global pandemic and its consequences, but also a decade of hope. A decade of opportunities for the civilization's and economy's recovery, a chance to create a world that is better, more just, more green, and one that respects the principles of sustained development. As we look towards the future, we are looking for areas which will be the centers of dynamic and positive changes. I am certain that Central Europe will be one of them on the European and global scale.

Central Europe or Central and Eastern Europe (the terms are used interchangeably) is a significant regional entity, a community of shared fate in terms of geography, politics, and economy as well as in terms of ideas and cultures. As for a location on a map, it is perceived as an area between the Baltic, Adriatic, and the Black seas or (even though it is oversimplification) between Germany and Russia. But above all, we constitute a circle of common memory. We have had our share of similar historical experiences, in the dramatic 20th century in particular. We have suffered from two totalitarianisms, the brown and red ones, that suppressed and oppressed us. But we also have great, glorious experiences from centuries ago. The 15th-17th centuries, the era called "the Europe of the Jagiellonian dynasty" to be later named the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, saw a flourishing of a voluntary political union in a substantial part of the territory, a precursor to the European Union of today, which was a friendly home to many cultures and faiths and which respected the rule of law, parliamentarianism, and democracy. We are carrying lessons from those experiences – both good and bad – into the future as a universal warning as well as inspiration to work towards a common good, the prosperity of the region and all the integrated Europe.

A description of Central Europe in terms of values is important as well. Being part of Western civilization for more than a thousand years, we share its ideological foundations. Milan Kundera suggestively named Central Europe "a kidnapped West," that is the part of Western civilization that found itself against its will under the Soviet domination – imperial, authoritarian, and unable to manage rationally. It must be emphasized, though, that our commitment to values that have built the European culture is not without reflection. We know perhaps better than others the high price one must pay for defending them. We are aware that one must cultivate and reconcile freedom and responsibility, rights and duties, individualism and solidarity, the attitude of criticism, innovation, and modernization with one that cherishes heritage and traditions that describe our identity.

On the threshold of the historic breakthrough of 1989, Timothy Garton Ash wrote that the concept of Central Europe has roused the Western world from thinking in Cold War terms, has challenged the common notions and priorities but also had something new to offer in return. This opinion seems to be valid today as well when the participation of Central European countries in the EU and NATO is a crucial and solidified part of the European and Atlantic order, and as our region with its solid economic growth has made a significant civilization leap. Also today, the concept of Central Europe contains dynamism and positive content. If I were to concisely present the modern face of Central Europe, including Poland as the biggest country in the region, I would say as follows: it is the community of shared success and the community of shared aspirations at the same time.

Central Europe constitutes a perfect example of how powerful and creative power freedom is. Freedom and its siblings – economic freedom, entrepreneurship, self-government, open up the space for fulfillment of bold ambitions and aspirations. Development accompanies the progress of freedom. The three decades that have passed since the fall of communism, the regional breakthrough initiated by the Polish "Solidarity" movement, are the story of the great economic success, of a social and civilization advancement that hardly ever happened over such a short time in the world history. Poland and the whole of Central Europe are a fascinating testimony to opportunities that come with freedom.

We can also serve as an inspiring example of how cooperation, joint initiatives and undertakings bring positive results. It was thanks to them that Central Europe ceased to be, as it was in adverse times, a peripheral area between the West and East, between imperial powers, and instead became a structure connected by multiple ties, one that is aware of its interests and has an influence on the course of European affairs. The emancipation of Central and Eastern Europe was a success, we are the crucial part of political and civilization processes.

Let me draw your attention to three important planes of Central European cooperation, which are not only of regional significance but are also crucial in the EU, Atlantic, and even global dimension. The first of them is the Visegrad Group, an entity of the longest existence which gathers Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. Initiated in 1991 as a platform for political dialogue and coordination of efforts to gain membership in NATO and the EU, the Visegrad Group has also proven useful once it has achieved these strategic goals. Today it is one of the most important agents in activating regional cooperation in Central Europe and seeking understanding on European affairs.

The second of the planes is the Bucharest Nine, a structure that groups countries of NATO's eastern flank: Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Bulgaria. It was established in 2015 in Bucharest, where we signed a joint statement which said the Bucharest Nine countries join efforts to secure, where it is necessary, a "robust, credible and sustainable Allied military presence" in the region. To a large degree, the B9 is a response to Russia's aggressive policy, to the violations of borders and territorial integrity of the neighboring Ukraine, which threaten a regional and Atlantic security. We are not going to watch it idly.

The third plane of cooperation is the Three Seas Initiative, which was initiated by the President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović and myself in 2015. The group comprises countries located between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black seas: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Hungary. The goal is to make joint investments in infrastructure, transport, energy, and new technologies that will boost the development in our countries and contribute to the cohesion of the European Union. When we look at the map of economic connections within the EU, we will see a significant advantage of the horizontal flows along the West-East axis over vertical flows along the North-South axis. This includes the flows of people, goods, services, and capital, but also infrastructure networks: expressways, railroads, hubs, pipelines, power and IT lines. The Three Seas Initiative, a project aimed at boosting the structural transformation of this part of Europe, is to fill in the missing elements of the "scaffold" which will help strengthen the integration of our region and the entire EU as well. The fact that aside from the capital from within the EU, also investors from the United States, China, and other parts of the world are involved in the Three Seas Initiative ensures a sound diversification of benefits and mutual interdependence.

This is the picture of today and the vision of the future of Central Europe as the community of shared activities, success, and ambitious aspirations. We have traveled a long and successful road – from being a region almost non-existent in the minds of the main actors on the world stage for a long time ("in Poland, that is to say Nowhere," as Alfred Jarry wrote in late 19th century) – to becoming a region which is one of the most dynamically developing parts of the globe and aspires to being listed in the category of centers of civilization. Central Europe – doesn't the name say it all? Feel invited to take part in this fascinating adventure.

Andrzej Duda
President of the Republic of Poland

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of Poland



years
of V4



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Please see this short introductory
video message from Andrzej
Kurnicki, Ambassador of the
Republic of Poland to Canada

News



Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault, left, Green Party MP Paul Manly, NDP MP Charlie Angus, and Arif Virani, parliamentary secretary to the justice minister all have opinions about further regulating hateful speech online. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and courtesy Twitter

‘Canadians have grown impatient’: regulation of social media in the works, but Parliamentarians wary

‘We want to be careful that we don’t censor people and we want to be careful that the media giants are not censoring people,’ says Green MP Paul Manly.

Continued from page 1

grown impatient” around regulating hate speech online. NDP MP Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay, Ont.), his party’s ethics critic, said, “there have to be rules set down.”

There’s a distinction between regulation of hate and regulation of harmful speech, something lawmakers will be grappling with when they turn their attention to social media giants like Google, Facebook, and Twitter, among others.

Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte Marie, Que.) has said that “it is up to elected officials to lead the development of public policy, and our government has been very clear on how we’re going to tackle social media platforms and web giants, and the Canadian heritage team is providing excellent, evidence-based support in this regard.”

“Our government is committed to regulating digital platforms and putting them to work for Canadians, said Mr. Guilbeault in front of a heritage committee meeting last week.

“The government has been in consultations with Canadians on this issue since the spring of 2020,

said Mr. Virani. “People’s patience was wearing thin” with the notion of voluntary moderation, said the MP.

The legislation is still being worked out.

“There’s certain hurdles that still need to be crossed with cabinet and cabinet decisions,” said Mr. Virani.

“These moves by the government are not intended to inhibit political speech,” said Mr. Virani, who was a constitutional lawyer prior to his time in politics.

“We want to empower people to participate in our political discourse, even at the highest level of running for office, so that’s an important consideration in terms of what we’re trying to achieve.”

Social media a ‘real toxic cesspool’, says Green Party MP Paul Manly

“I think social media has become a real toxic cesspool, and the problem is the way that algorithms take,” said Green MP Paul Manly (Nanaimo-Ladysmith, B.C.).

“People think that it’s OK to say a lot of things on social media that are laced with hate, that are patently false and misleading.”

But Mr. Manly said creating legislation around this issue is “fraught with peril.”

“We want to be careful that we don’t censor people and we want to be careful that the media giants are not censoring people,” said Mr. Manly.

Catherine McKenna (Ottawa Centre, Ont.), said she “got into politics because I did not like where our country was heading.”

“I wanted to make a difference, a goal that I have in common with many other women and girls. My experience in politics



Edward Greenspon, CEO of the Public Policy Forum, says forces of regulation are gathering in Europe and in California and in Australia and now in Canada, “and they are open to certain forms of regulation.” *Photograph courtesy of Twitter*

has showed me the best and some of the worst. Take five minutes to scroll through my social media comments—I don’t recommend!—and you will see some of the most alarming, hateful rhetoric,” Ms. McKenna said in an emailed statement to *The Hill Times*. “But I am not a shrinking violet and I am fortunate to have a platform and a social media presence that allows me to connect with my community and to speak out when necessary. At the same time, the social media companies themselves need to step up, and we should be holding

them responsible for the continued spread of hate and violence.”

According to Mr. Angus, “there’s been a steady poisoning of public conversation that can be traced to the power of algorithms to steer people to increasingly dissonant and extremist content.”

“That’s certainly Facebook and it’s definitely YouTube, and that I think has had profound implications for social discourse, and nowhere more so than the United States.”

“I think this is a huge issue. And certainly the abuse that women and young racialized

women take compared to a politician like me, is it is so exponentially more weaponized against women that it’s hard to even comprehend what that can do to your, your willingness to participate publicly. And that too, is a threat to democracy, because one of the rights that we are given as Parliamentarians is the ability to do our work without intimidation.”

There has to be “rules that are set down,” said Mr. Angus.

‘The right to free speech is non-negotiable’

According to Conservative MP Alain Rayes (Richmond-Arthabaska, Que.), his party’s heritage critic, “we believe that it is urgent to do more to combat hate groups and groups that incite violence online.”

“Regulation in this area must strike an appropriate balance between dealing with social media content that is illegal and protecting the fundamental rights of Canadians to free speech, freedom of expression, a free press and due process under the law,” said Mr. Rayes in an email to *The Hill Times*. “Canada already has criminal law protections in place against publishing hate speech, incitement to violence and sexually abusive material.”

“These laws should be strongly enforced, and can best be enforced by the criminal justice system. We believe that the right to free speech is non-negotiable, and oppose censorship of material that is not criminal in nature merely because some may find it to be offensive or politically incorrect,” he said.

Edward Greenspon, president and CEO of the Public Policy Forum, said the “forces of regulation are gathering in Europe and in California and in Australia and now in Canada, and they are open to certain forms of regulation—tell us what the rules are, tell us what is hate and is not hate. So they are trying to find some co-responsibility on legalities.”

Facebook declined to provide a comment for this story. Spokesperson Meg Sinclair directed *The Hill Times* to information around the organization’s algorithmic transparency as well as its oversight board, an independent body that judges Facebook’s content decisions and issues binding rulings on whether it made the right decision in allowing or removing a specific piece of content or account.

“As Mark Zuckerberg put it when he first outlined his blueprint for a new system for content governance and enforcement, ‘Facebook should not make so many important decisions about free expression and safety on our own.’

“With our size comes a great deal of responsibility and while we have always taken advice from experts on how to best keep our platforms safe, until now, we have made the final decisions about what should be allowed on our platforms and what should be removed. And these decisions often are not easy to make—most judgments do not have obvious, or uncontroversial, outcomes, and yet many of them have significant implications for free expression.”

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HEALTH

POLICY BRIEFING

VACCINE



Health Policy Briefing

Supply delay offers opportunity to get mass vaccination campaign right, experts say

With Canada's supply of COVID-19 vaccines dropping below initially expected numbers in the coming weeks, experts argue this period presents an opportunity to ensure the mass-vaccination campaign runs smoothly.

BY AIDAN CHAMANDY

Issues with COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing in Europe has left Canada receiving fewer doses in recent weeks than the federal government initially predicted, but the drop in supply offers an opportunity for governments to get the planning right for when mass vaccinations begin later in the year when supply ramps up again, experts say.

"We should use this time, when supply is low and demand is restricted to certain sectors of the population, to make ourselves ready for the mass vaccination," said Saibal Ray, professor of operations management at McGill University.

"We have an opportunity now, all governments, to learn the lessons from the initial rollout, see where the challenges are, but really prepare for the summer when we're going to have to start administering millions of doses," said Kumanan Wilson, a professor of epidemiology at the University of Ottawa and doctor at The Ottawa Hospital. Dr. Wilson is also the founder and CEO of CANImmune, a digital logistics company that has helped some provinces and territories with information technology infrastructure associated with the rollout.

Both Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna products, the only two vaccines currently approved for use in Canada, announced delivery delays in the past weeks.

Canada is expected to receive around 180,000 shots of the Moderna vaccine in the second week of February, down from an initial promise of more than 230,000. A Jan. 29 document prepared by the Public Health Agency of Canada obtained by CBC News said the second shipment pegged for the week of Feb. 22 will also be affected, but the company cannot confirm to what extent. The document was signed by Maj.-Gen. Dany Fortin, who is in charge of federal vaccine logistics. Moderna was originally set to send 249,000 doses the week of Feb. 22. A table on Health Canada's website no longer provides information

on Moderna shipments past the week of Feb. 1 to Feb. 7.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) was pressed in Question Period on Feb. 3 on how much the Moderna supply will be affected in weeks to come, but he didn't offer a direct answer.

He was visibly frustrated by the questions.

"I have already said this 15 times in Question Period today, but I am happy to continue reassuring Canadians. We will receive the six million doses promised by the end of March. We are on track to receive 20 million doses in the spring and we will ensure that every Canadian who wants it can be vaccinated by the end of September 2021," he said.

"The week of [Feb. 22] will also be impacted, but Moderna cannot confirm allocations for that week yet," the PHAC document said.

Mr. Trudeau also previously assured Canadians that the first delay won't affect the total number of vaccines the country is supposed to receive in the first quarter.

"This temporary delay doesn't change the fact that we will still receive two million doses of the Moderna vaccine before the end of March," he told reporters at a press conference last week, in reference to the initial cutback.

Canada is also set to receive far fewer doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine after the company began retooling its manufacturing plant in Belgium to produce more vaccines. The company said the renovations will cut Canadian shipments by around 80 per cent, but that the renovations will allow them to produce around two billion total vaccines in 2021, up from the initial promise of 1.3 billion. Mr. Trudeau said he discussed the possibility of Canada receiving more Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines in the second quarter after Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla told him in a call that the company could "move up the delivery of some doses that were earmarked for later in the year."

Maj.-Gen. Fortin later said that Pfizer is expected to send up to 335,000 doses the week of Feb. 15, which is 91 per cent of the initial allocation for that period. The shipment is expected to increase to up to 395,000 doses the week of Feb. 22.

The Health Canada website also removed the table outlining Pfizer's shipments.

The global vaccine-sharing initiative COVAX released a document on Feb. 3 showing Canada will receive 1.9 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine by the end of June. The COVAX program was created with the intention of providing equitable access to the vaccine for middle- and lower-income countries. Canada is one of the wealthiest countries, and the only G7 country, listed as a recipient in the document. It also shows other wealthy countries are set to draw on the COVAX supply. New Zealand will receive

a little less than 250,000 AstraZeneca vaccines, South Korea will receive less than 2.6 million, and Indonesia a little more than 13.7 million.

Canada is lagging behind most G7 countries on vaccination pace. Canada is only doing better than Japan, which has not begun its vaccination campaign yet. The country plans to begin vaccinations for health-care workers in late February, and priority groups like seniors in late March or early April.

NDP health critic Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.) said he does not have confidence in Mr. Trudeau's statements that all Canadians will be vaccinated by September.



Maj.-Gen. Dany Fortin, right, and Deputy Chief Public Health Officer Howard Njoo, pictured on Dec. 8, 2020, speaking with reporters about the government's vaccine rollout. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"Given that they have failed to meet any of the targets that they've stated so far, and, frankly, the fact that they've misled Canadians and actually been wrong so many times, that can't give anybody confidence," he said.

"There's a serious credibility problem," he added.

The lack of vaccine supply is making it difficult to gauge how effective Canada's actual vaccine rollout has been, Dr. Wilson said.

Canada's limited vaccine supply "is making it really hard to judge right now how we're doing. It's apparent that the systems need to be further developed. It's a bit of a double-edged sword, that the delay getting our vaccine is an opportunity to be better prepared," Dr. Wilson said.

"We have not had the volume [of vaccines] that a country like the United States has had where we know how good our logistical systems are actually working," said Mahesh Nagarajan, professor of logistics at the University of British Columbia.

For Alice Zwerling, an epidemiologist at the University of Ottawa, the lack of transparency on vaccination targets and how long it has taken to vaccinate people in priority groups, like those in long-term care homes, suggests the rollout "has not been ideal."

She said that given long-term care homes provide a single site

to administer vaccines, in theory it should be easier to do than a mass vaccination campaign.

According to a vaccination tracker by University of Saskatchewan student Noah Little, 86.4 per cent of vaccines delivered to the provinces have been administered. That varies wildly depending on the jurisdiction, with Nunavut having administered just more than half of its vaccines, while Quebec, B.C., and Saskatchewan have administered upwards of 90 per cent.

The tracker shows that 871,323 Canadians have received at least one dose, while 129,664 Canadians are fully vaccinated.

For all Canadians to receive at least one dose by Sept. 1, a

Prof. Ray said that winter temperatures will act as a constraint.

"Until May, indoor is perhaps better. Perhaps by May there can be more of an opportunity for going outdoors," he added.

Accessibility will be another major constraint, Prof. Nagarajan said.

"You want to have an equitable measure. You don't want people to be driving 40 miles to come to a stadium," he said.

Many schools and major stadiums, like NHL arenas, will only be available for mass vaccinations in the summer once the regular occupants are out, Prof. Ray said, but that shouldn't stop the planning from starting now, Prof. Zwerling said.

Schools are particularly well suited, because the location is based on population density, Prof. Zwerling said. Major sporting arenas and concert venues are often only in major cities and might not be in a place that is easily accessible, "so I'm not sure if those are really the best approaches to doing these mass vaccinations," she said.

Prof. Zwerling cautioned against relying too heavily on big buildings.

"Successful mass vaccinations in the past have employed and engaged pharmacists, family, doctors, local clinics, a much more decentralized approach, as opposed to having one centralized facility that requires logistical support and infrastructure, which, unfortunately has not been developed," she said.

Another key component will be the information technology infrastructure used to coordinate scheduling mass vaccinations and following up, Dr. Wilson said.

"The ideal system will have the vaccine recipient, the health-care provider and the public health provider with the same data in real time and shareable. The individual has to be part of the solution, they have to be able to have access to their vaccine records. And health-care providers need to know exactly which vaccine this individual is given, that individual needs to be able to report adverse events as they would occur," he said.

Dr. Wilson said one of the key things he learned in running trials using his CANImmune platform and from other jurisdictions is that effective scheduling "is one of the most important aspects. The scheduling processes really sped up the clinic management."

"It helps from two perspectives. Booking online is easy, but you can also start to auto-populate the data needed at the time of vaccination when the person fills in that data. So the vaccination is so much quicker—there's not much data entry at the point of vaccination, because already most of the information is auto populated," he said.

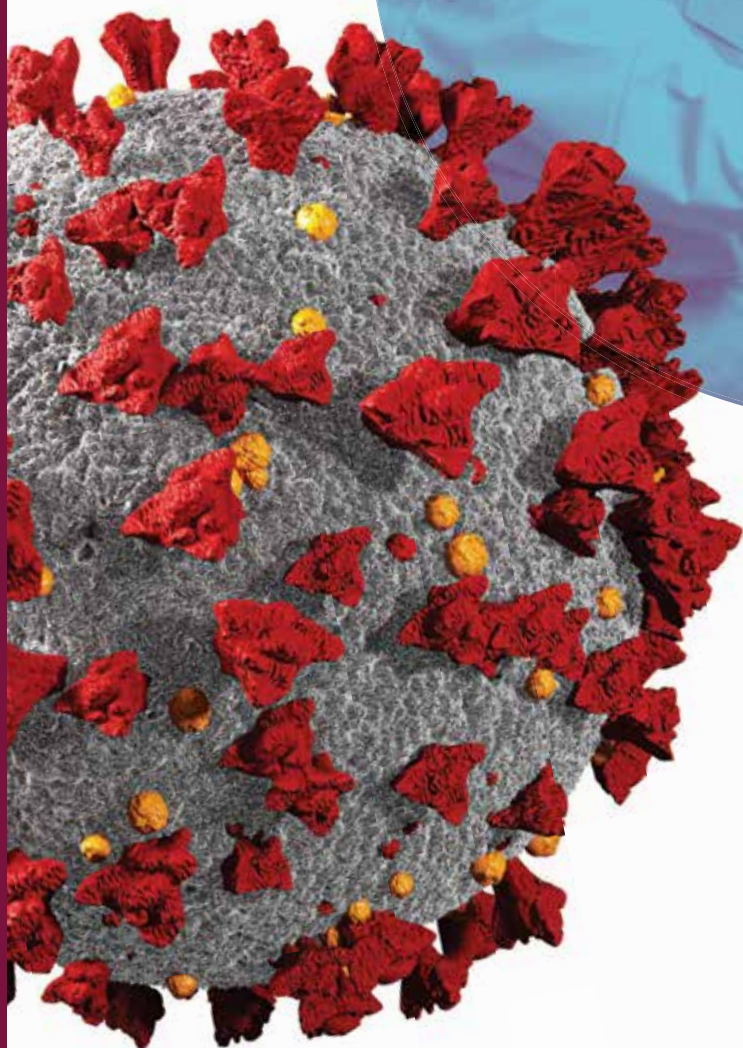
achamandy@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Charu Kaushic (right), scientific director, CIHR Institute of Infection and Immunity and postdoctoral fellow Allison Felker



Karen Mossman (right), vice-president, research and postdoctoral fellow Arinley Banerjee



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**BRIGHTER
WORLD**

Health Policy Briefing

No time to waste on health-care reforms



Green Party leader Annamie Paul, pictured, says that addressing the structural weaknesses in health care, rather than merely reacting to each crisis as it arises, is the best strategy going forward. Photograph courtesy of the Green Party of Canada

It is not too late for Canada to convene an intergovernmental COVID-19 task force, led by health experts, to develop and deliver a coordinated national response to the pandemic

BY GREEN PARTY LEADER
ANNAMIE PAUL

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us painful lessons about the weaknesses in Canada's health-care system. Low-income and racialized communities have been disproportionately impacted, as have seniors and the disabled.

More than ever, the current crisis demonstrates why preventive health care plans are best made in ordinary times, rather than in the middle of a crisis with all the additional pressures it brings. Health promotion and disease prevention in times of stability are the best preparation for times of crisis or

outbreak. While we will be reckoning with this pandemic and its accompanying health-care failures for some time, we must still begin planning for the future. Modernizing our health-care systems should be high on the agenda, and the federal government can and should lead the way.

As we continue to grapple with Canada's greatest health crisis in over a century, there is no time to waste. The Green Party has asked the prime minister to convene an intergovernmental COVID-19 task force, led by health experts, to develop and deliver a coordinated national response to the pandemic. Countries that have been more successful in protecting their populations have adopted such an approach, including the new president of the United States, who appointed a national COVID-19 coordination team on his first day in office. It is not too late for Canada to do the same.

When we search for answers on why the pandemic's death toll in Canada continues to rise, one answer stands out: conditions in long-term care facilities. More than 80 per cent of Canada's COVID-19 deaths have been in long-term care, and Canada ranks second amongst wealthy countries for the proportion of COVID-19 deaths in long-term care facilities. This

crisis affects both long-term care residents, staff, and the loved ones who provide essential care. This is a humanitarian crisis, and there is overwhelming consensus among experts on what needs to be done.

The short-term solutions to our LTC crisis are clear, implementable, and would have an immediate positive effect on reducing deaths: accelerated vaccination, rapid testing, increased staffing, improved training and pay for workers, and four hours of regulated daily care for each resident. We need an urgent first ministers' meeting to agree on a plan to end the mounting deaths in long-term care that includes the immediate implementation of these recommendations. There should not be one more death in long-term care facilities caused by inaction and lack of political leadership.

Throughout the past year, we have been reminded of the importance of evidence in guiding public health decisions—a standard that should be adopted well beyond this pandemic. Science and data have been critical to understanding how different communities are impacted by the pandemic. We must collect socio-demographic data in government-funded research moving forward in order to make evidence-based decisions on

how to provide the right support where it is most needed.

If we are serious about addressing health-care shortcomings in Canada more broadly, we cannot overlook the skyrocketing costs of pharmaceuticals. Canada is the only country with a universal medicare system that does not include doctor-prescribed medication, and one in three Canadians is forced to pay for their prescriptions. To achieve lifesaving goals, and economies of scale, we must establish a national universal pharmacare program, a bulk drug purchasing agency, and shorter patent protection times for new drugs. The drug assessment process must be free of conflicts of interest, and bulk purchases of prescription drugs must be evidence-based.

The opioid crisis is a national tragedy that has skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2016-2020, nearly 18,000 Canadians died from opioid overdose, many of which were due to fentanyl contamination. We need to declare a national health emergency to address the opioid crisis as a health-care issue, not a criminal issue. Drug possession should be decriminalized, and users should have access to a screened supply and the medical support they need to combat their

addictions. We must also prioritize the expansion of rehabilitation services. A harm-reduction approach is the only way to address this emergency and save lives.

A through-line of the conversation about health in Canada is mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted many Canadians' mental health, straining an already overburdened mental healthcare network. Establishing a national mental health strategy is common sense—we need to address the very real stressors plaguing Canadians such as inequality and affordability, the precariousness of work and housing, the climate crisis, social isolation, and the trauma and anxiety the pandemic has caused. A suicide prevention plan and immediate investments in both community-based service organizations and provincial and municipal mental health services are a critical first step.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted health issues, but they are unfortunately not new. Addressing the structural weaknesses in health care, rather than merely reacting to each crisis as it arises, is the best strategy.

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

Why healthy aging must be the upshot of the COVID-19 pandemic

It would be in everyone's best interest to focus now on ways to prevent frailty by investing in policies that ensure healthy aging for all Canadians.



John Muscedere

Opinion

Last month, while the world was distracted by political turmoil and the pandemic's roaring second wave, a very significant proclamation came and went with little fanfare. The United Nations General Assembly launched 2020-2030 as the Decade of Healthy Ageing, calling for a decade of concerted global action to extend the health and well-being horizons of the world's one billion people over the age of 60.

In contrast to a common misperception, aging alone isn't what sidelines older people—frailty is. While aging is inevitable, frailty is not.

Frailty is defined as a medical condition of reduced function and health; it becomes more common as we age. Frailty increases vulnerability to disease, resulting in the need for intensive and costly health-care interventions. Today, 1.6 million Canadians live with some form of frailty. In 10 years, it will be 2.5 million.

Living within the guardrails of a pandemic has aged everyone. And we are getting a glimpse into how the seeds of frailty are sown—through loneliness and isolation, loss of structure and routine, mental and emotional stress, physical exhaustion, loss of freedom and a sense of control, disruptions in eating and sleeping habits, weight gain, muscle loss and deferring routine medical appointments to avoid the virus.

Our response to the global pandemic now, and in the coming years, should include robust policies for healthy aging which in large part are composed of strategies to address these contributors to frailty.

Most COVID-related deaths in Canada to date have occurred in people over the age of 70. It's a glaring statistic—one that, left unfiltered, might prejudice people's understanding about this age group and its capacity.

Persistent news coverage about the vulnerability of older people in the early

days of the pandemic inadvertently fuelled ageist attitudes. In its most extreme form, some people wrongly concluded that the economy should not have to shut down just to prevent the virus from killing the eldest members of society. After all, this demographic contributes the least, right?

From both a moral and economic standpoint, this is a deeply flawed viewpoint.

More and more, out of choice or necessity, healthy older Canadians are remaining engaged in paid labour beyond conventional retirement age. In 2010, 14 per cent of people 55 and over were active in the labour force. By 2031, this number is expected to rise to almost double.

More recently, we also saw experienced health-care workers risking their lives by coming out of retirement to work on the front lines of the pandemic.

The unpaid labour of this age-group often goes unrecognized. A life of accumulated skills and knowledge is poured freely into raising funds for community projects and organizations, coordinating events, caring for children in the absence of childcare options, coaching sports and passing knowledge and skills on to young people. Or even worse, we sideline these skills by not putting in place ways that we can better harness this experience.

Statistics Canada reported that, in 2013-14, 36 per cent of seniors performed

volunteer work. Those aged 65 and up volunteered 223 hours a year, well above the national average of 156 hours. In 2012, baby boomers and senior adults clocked one billion volunteer hours.

This informal support is a gift to communities and is especially true in rural Canada where the loss of a community-minded elders often leaves an unrepairable social gap.

In strictly fiscal terms, Canadians aged 65 and older also have money to spend. Many continue to benefit from earnings-based retirement plans and other progressive senior-focused social and financial policies launched in the late 20th century.

Older Canadians are an economic pillar, one that will crumble in the absence of supports for healthy aging that enable people to remain active and engaged in their communities.

The past year has been a valuable lesson on the importance of nurturing our functional ability, especially in older people. Let's turn insight into action. It would be in everyone's best interest to focus now on ways to prevent frailty by investing in policies that ensure healthy aging for all Canadians.

John Muscedere is the scientific director and CEO of the Canadian Frailty Network (CFN) and a professor in the School of Medicine at Queen's University and an intensivist at Kingston Health Sciences Centre.

The Hill Times

WHY NOT CHIROPRACTORS?

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians rely on chiropractors to assess, diagnose, and treat spine, muscle and nervous system conditions. This includes back, neck, and knee pain, as well as osteoarthritis. But unlike other primary care providers, chiropractors are not authorized to assess and certify the Disability Tax Credit.

That needs to change.

Association
chiropratique
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Canadian
Chiropractic
Association

In December 2018, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance acknowledged this oversight and recommended that the government address it by amending the Income Tax Act.

Budget 2021 offers an opportunity to close this gap and streamline access for eligible patients.



Health Policy Briefing

Vaccination, trust in science and patience is the only way out of this pandemic



As Canada's nurses, we want to encourage all those living in Canada to receive the vaccine as soon as they are able. Together, we can contain this virus, end the pandemic and take part in Canada's post-pandemic recovery, writes Linda Silas. *Image courtesy of Pixabay*

vaccine when they become eligible. We also urged governments across Canada to speed up the rollout of the vaccine, especially to those most likely to experience severe illness, such as seniors, Indigenous people and racialized people—all of whom have been shown to be most at risk of infection.

Nurses have also signalled that they are ready and willing to step up and help the government with the vaccine rollout by joining health care teams at vaccination clinics across Canada. While the news of some delays in delivery of the Pfizer vaccine may give us pause, governments must strive to speed up the immunization and rapidly increase the number of clinics where the vaccine is available. This is how we will contain this virus and counter its spread.

What's also been lacking in Canada's vaccine delivery program is evidence-based information. Within this vacuum, misinformation, vaccine myths and mistrust have thrived. Sadly, many Canadians are hesitant to get vaccinated, particularly among marginalized communities who, we recognize, have all too often experienced negative interactions with the medical community.

As nurses, we believe that any risk posed by the vaccine is far outweighed by the benefits in being protected from COVID-19.

As with any other medical treatment, informed consent is required. It's our job, as health professionals, to provide facts—and yes, empathy—when patients express concerns about being vaccinated. Everyone who gets the vaccine must understand the benefits of immunization, as well as any potential risks. All Canadians should be empowered to make an informed decision.

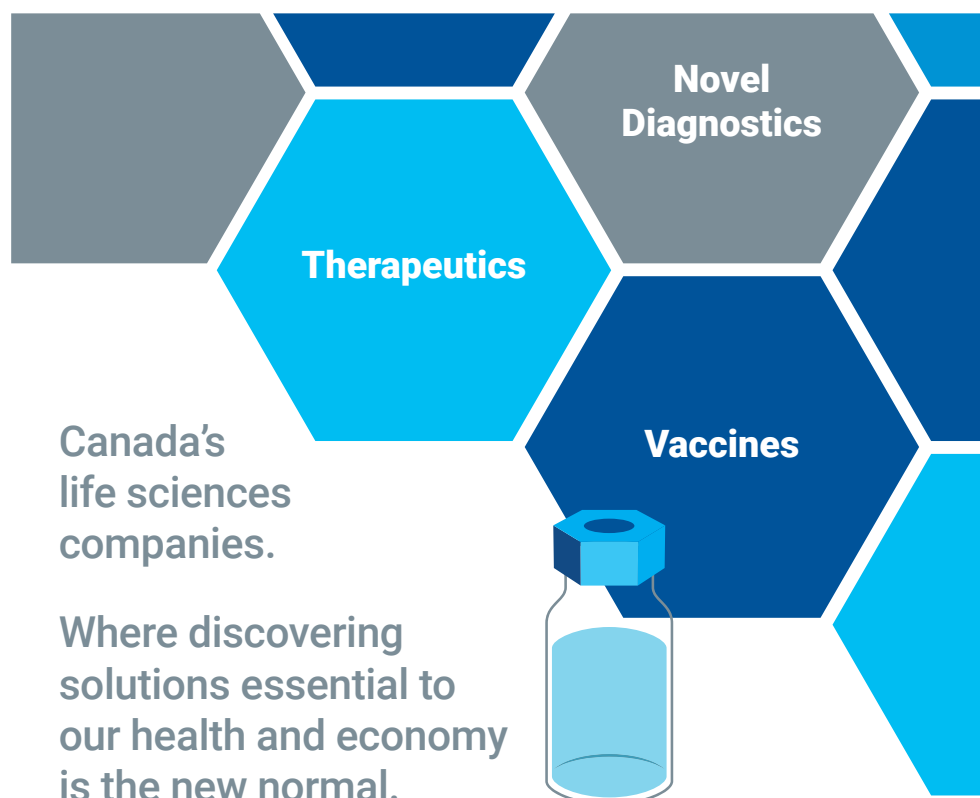
Some individuals have expressed concerns about the record turnaround time for these vaccines. Producing multiple vaccines in less than a year was the result of a momentous global effort, harnessing the ingenuity of a scientific community united in a common objective. Large-scale trials on the efficacy of vaccines involved tens of thousands of participants, including many from diverse backgrounds. The trials resulted in high rates of protection with few or no reported serious adverse events. Despite the compressed timelines, no shortcuts were taken: the same standards were applied to these vaccines as for any other vaccines that have been developed.

In Canada, we know the approval process by Health Canada is safe and effective; their assessment of scientific and clinical evidence is done independently and is known to be stringent. We also know that historically, immunization programs have saved countless lives worldwide. The COVID-19 vaccines approved thus far have the potential to provide much-needed protection against the continued spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus but this will only happen if sufficient numbers choose to be vaccinated.

As Canada's nurses, we want to encourage all those living in Canada to receive the vaccine as soon as they are able. Together, we can contain this virus, end the pandemic and take part in Canada's post-pandemic recovery.

Linda Silas is a nurse and president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, representing nearly 200,000 nurses and student nurses across the country.

The Hill Times



The research Canada's life sciences companies are doing is laying the groundwork for novel diagnostics, vaccines and therapeutics. Canada has built an extraordinary knowledge infrastructure, and we must not lose momentum in making our country a global life sciences leader.

Get updates about our essential work at canadalifesciences.ca



We will need Canadians to roll up their sleeves and get vaccinated. But we will also need to be patient. Immunizing the country won't happen overnight. It will be an incremental process informed by science and one that seeks to immediately stem the loss of life.



Linda Silas

Opinion

A COVID-free future is within our reach, a future where it's safe to hug again and where our smiles no longer need to be hidden behind a mask. To get there, we will need a robust vaccination drive. We will need Canadians to roll up their sleeves and get vaccinated. But we will also need to be patient. Immunizing the country won't happen overnight. It will be an incremental process informed by science and one that seeks to immediately stem the loss of life.

Earlier this month, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions encouraged all health-care workers, all essential workers and the general public to receive the

What’s up (or down) with drug shortages?

Our chronic shortages and the current vaccine situation remind us to ask why must we be buffeted about by unpredictable shortages, originating elsewhere and often impacting well established yet critical products, the recipes for which are neither secret nor protected.

BY JACALYN DUFFIN & JON PIPITONE

With complaints and fears swirling around COVID-19 vaccine supply, we take up our devices once again to report on drug shortages in Canada. When we last communicated in *Hill Times* back in April 2020, Canada had already spent a decade facing severe shortages of prescription drugs. We argued that COVID-19 might exacerbate those shortages and, at the same time, serve as a wake-up call to get to the bottom of the problem.

Alas, nothing much has happened. Today, Canada reports more than 1,500 actual drug shortages. The good news is that this number is 400 fewer than last April. The bad news is that no matter how you look at it, it is still a shocking number, and worse, it is misleading. Our national shortage database is woefully thin, as it doesn’t account for provincial, regional or hospital-level shortages. We also wonder if the decline since April is more apparent than real. After all, in that same time, 197 drugs were reported to be discontinued, and 330 drugs were cancelled post-market. If a drug is no longer on the market, it is not “in shortage”—it remains utterly unavailable. Additionally, over the last two years, nearly a third of our shortages involve medications that we would deem critical or “essential”, priority medicines needed for effective function of a basic health-care system: items such as antibiotics (cefalexin, amoxicillin), common heart medications (amlodipine, ramipril, candesartan). These individual shortages are numerous and long-lasting.

Early in the pandemic, Canada did experience temporary shortages of drugs for managing COVID-19 symptoms and ICU patients needing intubation—epinephrine, midazolam, propofol, phenylephrine, etc. And like the hydroxychloroquine example of last spring (when Donald Trump’s evidence-free claims spawned panic buying and shortages for those who relied on it), shortages have emerged in Canada (and elsewhere) for every remedy, old or new, thought to be helpful in the pandemic: remdesivir, dexamethasone, ivermectin and oseltamivir. Possibly we’ll soon see the same for the ancient gout treatment, colchicine, recently reported effective by researchers at the Université de Montreal.

Numerous American and European studies have documented the negative impact of shortages on patient outcomes and health-care budgets. But the reasons for shortages, according to manufacturers, reveals a pattern, dominated by manufacturing disruptions, that has gone basically unchanged during the pandemic.

In March 2020, the minister of health signed an interim order to monitor potential and actual shortages and allow im-

portation of drugs that may not fully meet regulatory requirements in order to protect supplies of threatened medications. Why is the Canadian medication supply chain so fragile that we needed this stop gap measure? Another interim order came in late November 2020 to protect vulnerable stocks from American poaching

Without a national strategy for responding to shortages, pharmacists initially resorted to invoking the tried-and-true mechanism of restricting dispensed quantities to 30 days. But they encountered outrage and political interference. Citizens, especially those out of work, objected to paying extra dispensing fees and to the inconvenience and risk of more frequent trips to the pharmacy. Some provinces opted to cover the extra fees, but pharmacists were shocked when various provincial governments intervened, ordering an end to the practice or canceling extra fees,

effectively legislating a rollback in income. The policy eventually melted away.

Unlike more than 100 other countries, Canada still does not have an essential medicines list (EML)—critical medications for which the government is mandated to protect supply, much in the same way as the recent interim orders aspire to do. At least one Canadian team is working on developing an EML, but the effort is not yet recognized by our government. Nor does Canada do much to understand the extent and impact of shortages. It does not analyze the shortages, year-by-year, month-by-month, or by type, to uncover whether or not its feeble policy gestures are making any difference. And, as the public has become painfully aware, Canada lost its own, once robust drug- and vaccine-making capacity long ago. Even the Ontario Medical Association has exceptionally released

a statement recommending several actions, including more domestic production.

Our chronic shortages and the current vaccine situation remind us to ask why must we be buffeted about by unpredictable shortages, originating elsewhere and often impacting well-established yet critical products, the recipes for which are neither secret nor protected. In the face of pandemic threats to our medication supply, Canada has shown it can take temporary steps to protect our most critical medicines. Shouldn’t we now move to properly and permanently secure our supply with a national essential medicines list and revival of our own industry?

Jacalyn Duffin, MD PhD, is professor emerita at Queen’s University, and Jon Pipitone, MD, MSc, is a resident in psychiatry at Queen’s University.
The Hill Times

Mental Health and Economic Parity for Canada

The COVID pandemic has exposed our vulnerability -- not just to the threat of emerging pathogens, but also to our inability to face the threat while maintaining the economic and mental health of our nation.

Social workers see it every day: even prior to the COVID pandemic, the mental health of our nation was steadily declining -- and without visionary leadership by all political parties, the road to recovery will leave many behind. The time has come to stop reacting with short-term solutions and to make the permanent changes necessary to meet the challenges of this new normal. Canada must lead the world by adopting a Universal Basic Income and legislating Mental Health Parity, so we may not only recover, but thrive.

Even at the best of times, it is illogical and ineffective to rely on corporate Canada to lead the way on mental health. Long before COVID, cracks were showing in Canada’s piecemeal and largely privatized mental health services: individuals and associations, like ours, have been urging the federal government to make change.

And now, COVID has only intensified the existing ‘shadow pandemics’ of skyrocketing opioid-related deaths, escalating domestic and intimate partner violence, and growing income inequality. Social Workers have consistently called for a Universal Basic Income and for Mental Health Parity in Canada because they know how gaping the holes in our ‘safety net’ really are. Now, they are witnessing, and experiencing first hand, the compounding effects of the COVID pandemic on their clients’ and their own families and communities.

Mental Health Parity requires creating a system that supports mental health care equal to physical health care. Adopting Mental Health Parity right now will force the system change required to support the long-term recovery of our nation with the same urgency and resources as we have for physical health.

This past year, the pandemic has touched the lives of every single Canadian. Through this, we have witnessed global suffering matched by rapid responses from governments around the world. This has also highlighted the lack of pre-emptive action on behalf of Canada’s government to move on the desperate need for universal economic and mental health parity.

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), alongside many of our colleagues from other health and social professions, are bitterly disappointed that the federal government has failed to provide the visionary leadership so many Canadians call for, and are dismayed -- and, frankly, mystified -- that the official opposition has not used this opportunity to present the kind of bold ideas required to actually change conditions in our country.

The time has come to no longer rely on corporate Canada to lead the way. To truly end stigma and the lack of access to mental health services, the Government of Canada, in collaboration with all national political parties and Indigenous leaders, must lead the way and champion mental health and economic parity.



Joan Davis-Whelan,
MSW, RSW
President
Canadian Association
of Social Workers



Health Policy Briefing



If the disaster that has befallen long-term care in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we must demand greater oversight and accountability in health care, particularly when already disadvantaged communities might be impacted by our decisions, writes Ian Stedman. *Image courtesy of Pexels.com*

and sustain the data analytics infrastructure needed to leverage AI. Believe it or not, patients who go to these hospitals already benefit from the use of data analytics tools that aren't available elsewhere.

It may surprise some to learn there are hospitals where AI is already in use. These are research hospitals though, so we should expect that they will take risks as they try to innovate. What we need to focus on now is ensuring that these AI tools can be equitably integrated across different sites. Failing to ensure equitable access to these tools that can help us to personalize health care will only serve to exacerbate already existing inequalities.

Because we do not yet have an explicit regulatory pathway in place, health-care AI in Canada is being developed and deployed in an ad hoc, site-by-site manner. Hospitals are taking it upon themselves to determine what AI is needed and how to conduct fairness assessments, mitigate risk from bias, ensure equitable access, demonstrate accountability to stakeholders, integrate AI tools into care, and generally earn the public trust needed to deploy AI in the hospital.

Recognizing that a laissez-fair approach to health-care AI is inadequate, a task force convened by CIFAR published a report in July 2020 called, "Building a Learning Health System for Canadians." In this report, the task force calls for the development of a national strategy and a "collaborative vision for AI for health in Canada." A national strategy is needed to address things like inter-provincial data sharing, ethical protocols for developing and deploying AI, and consensus frameworks that can help accelerate the design of regulatory standards in order to ensure accountability for how healthcare AI is implemented. Meaningful oversight could also help us focus on ensuring that healthcare AI is deployed across many different sites, rather than only being able to benefit patients at a select few hospitals.

If the disaster that has befallen long-term care in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we must demand greater oversight and accountability in health care, particularly when already disadvantaged communities might be impacted by our decisions. It is not good enough to allow health-care AI to develop in what is effectively a leadership and regulatory vacuum. Our federal and provincial governments have proven they can unite around issues of national importance in health care and they must do so again if we are going to have any chance of AI playing the role many believe it can in helping us move toward personalized health care.

Ian Stedman is an assistant professor of Canadian public law & governance in the School of Public Policy and Administration at York University. He also serves on York University's Artificial Intelligence & Society Task Force and sits as a legal member of the research ethics board at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.
The Hill Times

Maybe artificial intelligence will drastically change health care, but who will benefit?

Our federal and provincial governments have proven they can unite around issues of national importance in health care and they must do so again if we are going to have any chance of AI playing the role many believe it can in helping us move toward personalized health care.



Ian Stedman

Opinion

the country's economic future. Major investments have attracted more computer scientists to our post-secondary institutions and have benefitted the private sector by opening up a growing pool of AI talent. If we want to build this data-driven economy in a responsible manner, however, then we also need to protect Canadians by modernizing our information and privacy laws.

But as we move to strengthen our privacy laws, we must also pay close attention to the impact those strengthened laws have on AI innovation. We should not prioritize unbridled innovation over

privacy, but if governments want taxpayers to buy in to the great hope of an advanced AI economy, then they also need to be clear about what that economy might look like and how Canadians stand to benefit. The content of our modernized privacy laws will send clear signals about where our governments think AI has the most potential to benefit society.

At present, the idea that AI has the potential to improve our everyday lives is perhaps most widely acknowledged within the health-care space. We have long heard from people affected by rare diseases, for example, that we need a more personalized approach to health care because one size does not in fact fit all. By using AI in health care we will be better able to predict and prevent disease, to make quicker diagnoses, to understand disease progression and even to discover new therapies that could improve patient outcomes. It may also be possible for AI to operate in conjunction with other new and emerging technologies like DNA sequencing, gene therapy, bio-

printing, and genome editing. The question should no longer be if, but how can we use AI to help us effectively and equitably personalize our health-care systems?

To build a personalized health-care system we will need to collect, store, and analyze more data than we ever have. Not just patients' personal health information, but also data about how socio-economic factors can have an impact on patient experiences and health trajectories. We will also need to make deeper investments into building and sustaining the infrastructure, the talent, the tools, the policies, the regulatory oversight, etc., needed for a personalized, learning health-care system.

But did you know that artificial intelligence is already being used in some Canadian hospitals?

Many computer scientists who were inspired to pursue an education and build their career in Canada are working in labs that are connected to research hospitals. Some of these hospitals also have foundations that are fundraising in order to build

Governments across Canada have signalled that they believe artificial intelligence will play an important role in

Aging? What's to be done?

The pandemic is exposing many cracks in Canada's already porous seniors' care system. We don't have much time to fix the problem, so we better get started.



Don Drummond & Duncan Sinclair

Opinion

Some 60 years ago, about the time the last of the baby boomers were being born, people over 65 made up about 7.5 per cent of Canada's population. Now they are 17.5 per cent and will be nearly 25 per cent (10.8 million) in twenty years. And they are living longer. Currently the fastest growing cohort are centenarians, people over 100. Soon the majority will be 75 and over, at ages when the manageable but incurable chronic diseases of old age make necessary more costly and frequent hospitalizations and physicians' services, health care as opposed to the

much less expensive health-support services needed to meet the needs of most seniors.

That Canadians are living longer is good news. What's not to like about living to a ripe old age provided you can age well—happily settled in housing appropriate to your needs, with a stimulating social life with old friends and new, where you can pursue an active, lifestyle, and have available the reliable support and care needed to maintain the activities of daily living and robust good health?

The problem is that it is not easy to meet those provisos in Canada. Relative to many other countries, notably Japan, Denmark, and others noted for enabling seniors to age happily and well, Canada and its provinces and territories do not score well. We spend far less on long-term care overall and disproportionately much more on institutional (\$6) than on home and community (\$1) care, the reverse of comparable ratios in Denmark and other leading nations. There, the predominant policy thrust is not to institutionalize or, crudely, "warehouse" seniors, but to facilitate their "aging in place." Canadian seniors, like others, strongly prefer to retain their independence and to age in place for as long as possible in their own homes and communities with the support of an expanded range of home care and community support services with which they are familiar and comfortable. Ironically, meeting their preferences would be much cheaper for both the affected seniors and for the public purse; daily care in a hospital costs upwards of \$850 to \$950, in an LTC-home \$150 or more, and with support and care at home about \$45.

Given the still building wave of aging seniors and the Canada's foreseeable economic

circumstances, continuing with the same policy choices defies comprehension. First, as COVID-19 has made clear, care-homes are both expensive and dangerous places; some 80 per cent of deaths in the first wave in Canada were in LTC-homes. Second, they are not where our senior citizens want to be. Third, the numbers make it clear that continuing with our warehousing propensity is just not on; the care-home beds that would be required is simply beyond what we could afford. And fourth, adding together the capital and ongoing operating cost of institutional accommodation and care to the residents, their families, and to the public purse, exceeds by far what it would cost to provide an extended range of seniors' needs through beefed-up home and community support services. That will be expensive too, but it's an approach that would both help seniors age well, certainly better than at present, and one that our country could afford.

What do we need to do to get to it?

Governments have to work together, federal, provincial and territorial, and municipalities, given latter's funding of so many community services out of the property tax base and the charitable giving of the residents.

Solutions and their implementation are primarily under provincial and territorial ownership, apart from our Indigenous communities where the feds are on the hook. The federal government must decide what role it wants to carve out in facilitating a coordinated response to a problem that is both bigger and will extend well beyond what was foreseen in the 2015 election platform and its promise of \$3-billion over four years, and



Minister of Seniors Deb Schulte, pictured on the Hill on Sept. 25, 2020, is tasked with working with provincial and territorial governments to manage long term care issues stemming from the pandemic. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

the 2017 budget in which it was proposed to invest \$6-billion over 10 years for home care and the fall 2020 fiscal statement with its offer under conditions of \$1-billion between this year and next for long-term care. The provincial and territorial governments at the very least have to refocus their policy objectives from institutionalization to ageing in place and work with one another and the federal government, with the provinces and territories, on the development of appropriate national standards and with municipalities on their implementation and enforcement.

And we have to hurry! The problem is real, here right now, and time is short.

Don Drummond is the Stauffer-Dunning Fellow at Queen's University. He is a former senior official at Finance Canada and the chief economist at TD Bank. Duncan Sinclair is an adjunct professor and distinguished fellow at Queen's University and a member of the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame.

The Hill Times



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Health Policy Briefing

Pandemic exposing critical gaps in health workforce planning

Burnout was far too common in the healthcare workforce before the pandemic. COVID-19 has made it much worse. Poor health workforce planning is to blame.



Ivy Lynn Bourgeault

Opinion

Health workers in Canada experience endemic levels of burnout directly related to understaffing and work overload. Leaves of absence from work for mental health and stress related issues are 1.5 times higher among health workers than the rest of

the population. Increasingly, health workers are significantly reducing their hours worked, just to cope, or leaving their jobs altogether.

That was before the pandemic. With COVID-19, we are witnessing levels of stress, overload and burnout among health workers previously unimaginable.

Downstream responses of mindfulness and free access to psychotherapy, albeit helpful, are at best band-aid solutions. We have to look upstream to the source of the crisis.

Health worker burnout is directly linked to poor health workforce planning. That we continue to operate our health system blindfolded to very basic data about our systems key resource—its health workers—is remarkable.

Health workers account for more than 10 per cent of all employed Canadians and over two-thirds of all health care spending, not including the personal and public costs for their training. This amounts to \$175-billion (2019) or nearly eight per cent of Canada's total GDP.

Health workforce science—and the data research infrastructure necessary to support it—is critical to making the best decisions about this essential

human resource. We need to advance health workforce science in Canada now.

Canada lags behind comparable OECD countries, including the U.K., Australia and the U.S. on big data analytics and a digital research infrastructure that would give us vital information for health workforce planning. Significant gaps in our knowledge have caused serious systemic risks for planners to manage during this health crisis.

Absent timely and relevant health workforce data, decision-makers cannot optimally deploy health workers to where, when and how they are most needed. As a result, health workforce planning activities across Canada remain ad hoc, sporadic and siloed, generating significant costs and inefficiencies. The consequences include everything from sub-optimal health workforce utilization and poor population health outcomes to health worker burnout.

What data do we have?

The data we have are profession-specific and say little about how health workers function as teams in 'real world' patient care pathways. The data are also collected differently by various stakeholders, so are not easy to analyze across jurisdictions. Notable absences are workers

in older adult care and mental health care—two sectors heavily impacted by the pandemic.

What we need are a standard set of data across a broader range of health workers in support of inter-professional and inter-jurisdictional planning.

Ideally these data would be collected uniformly, include diversity (racial, Indigenous and more inclusive gender identity), and address practice characteristics (e.g., setting, scope and service capacity). These data should also be linked to relevant patient information, including healthcare utilization and outcome data.

Robust data would allow us to better understand the range and characteristics of health workers caring for patients, the types of care they provide and the outcomes experienced by patients.

Right now, we are making decisions in the dark, without using essential data that most other developed nations have had for years.

So how do we get there?

Canada needs a more robust and centrally coordinated health workforce data, analytics and science infrastructure. This would address a critical gap that has held us back, and which has become only more apparent, since COVID-19.

We can't claim to have been blindsided. Already in 2010, the

parliamentary standing committee recommended a designated health workforce agency, and this call was endorsed across all parties and by several stakeholder organizations that provided testimony to the committee. Since then, almost nothing has happened on this front.

The absence of central coordination and implementation of integrated health workforce data, analytics and planning activities, combined with diffuse governance responsibilities inherent in a federated health system leave us with blurred lines of responsibility and poorly coordinated efforts.

Other countries have managed to overcome these challenges. Now that the pandemic has made the need crystal clear, Canada no longer has any excuse.

The federal ministers of health, labour, and innovation need to make the health workforce data infrastructure a top priority. The pandemic may be the impetus that enables us to make necessary significant advances in health workforce data infrastructure.

We need to stop simply clapping our hands in support of health workers—and start planning to create better workforce conditions for them. Let's make improved health workforce science in Canada a key legacy in support of our health care workers.

Dr. Ivy Lynn Bourgeault is a professor of sociological and anthropological studies at the University of Ottawa and the lead of the Canadian Health Workforce Network.

The Hill Times

Vaccines give long-term care crisis a brief reprieve, but cannot stand as the solution

Returning to normal cannot be an option because the normal we operated within in delivering long-term care was not only unjust, but unsustainable. The vaccine is a reprieve, a gift that will step in to protect older Canadians after we failed to live up to the job; but it is just that, a reprieve.



Janice Keefe

Opinion

This time last year, I had the great privilege of authoring another editorial for *The Hill Times* in an effort to amplify the call for change within our nation's long-term care sector. Like others, I struggle to reflect back on the relative innocence of 12 short months ago, in the "before times" of the pandemic.

"The sheer number of individuals turning 65 is not the cause of

our current challenges in long-term care (LTC) in Canada," I noted in that opinion piece. "It is the cumulative effect of years not prioritizing resources to support quality of life for older residents. Consequently, LTC is not prepared for or equipped to meet the complex care realities of today's and tomorrow's residents."

In reading this today, after we have seen what we have seen, these words relay an eerie premonition of the chaos and havoc that would soon rage through long-term care residences from one coast to another.

I would argue that for most people reading that piece, there would be tacit agreement to the position I was asserting. I am equally as confident that this base acknowledgement in no way prepared Canadians for the horror that was about to unravel when the pandemic made a landing in these long-term care facilities.

As we do in the aftermath of any disaster, we seek emergency relief. In this case, relief arrived in the form of a vaccine—which has prioritized long-term care residents to be among the first recipients. To be clear, vaccines are an absolute necessity, but we cannot fool ourselves into believing they will address the horrendous shortfalls we bore witness to throughout the pandemic.

Vaccines are not the panacea that will fix the long-term care system; yet, I worry we will tell ourselves it is.

SALTY (Seniors Adding Life to Years), a research initiative I lead alongside some of Canada's most acclaimed researchers and academics, has evidence on how we can improve the quality of life of long-term care residents. Moreover, I was privileged to work on the Royal Society of Canada's report 'Restoring Trust: COVID 19 On the Future of Long-Term Care in Canada,' which provided thorough recommendations on how we can address the gaps in how we approach care for older Canadians in both the short and long-term.

These recommendations have been followed by countless other reports, a number of them written as part of provincial inquiries conducted following the first wave of COVID-19, including: the

Ontario patients' ombudsman, Nova Scotia's first wave review, Quebec's ombudsman report. The list goes on and the refrain is consistent.

The reports' call to immediately address staff needs—including more direct care staff, increased training, better pay, stronger focus on recruitment and retention, and mental health support.

The reports' highlight the significant gap in mandatory infection control and prevention practices, the need for comprehensive plans to prevent and to manage infectious disease outbreaks, as well as access to supplies (PPE and safe work).

In addition, the Royal Society report and others have called for the development and implementation of national standards in LTC, as well as allocating additional, and targeted, LTC funding to provinces to execute the recommendations above.

There should be no doubt that this collaboration among governments is needed.

To date, over 70 per cent of COVID-19 fatalities have taken place in our long-term care facilities. This reflects the precarious state of the sector in Canada, and that the calls to action being repeated like a broken record by advocates such as myself are

more than just an ask for "nice things to have."

Rather these calls foreshadowed the reality we know today, that we have been playing a dangerous game of Jenga in the care of our older citizens within the long-term care sector. In defiance of evidence, we continue to undervalue care work, maintain outdated staff levels and models, ignore sector pleas for support while continuing to add more stress and pressure by admitting higher acuity residents, relying only on a whim and a prayer that the whole thing won't crash to the ground.

The façade has indeed crumbled.

Returning to normal cannot be an option, because the normal we operated within in delivering long-term care was not only unjust, but unsustainable. The vaccine is a reprieve, a gift that will step in to protect older Canadians after we failed to live up to the job; but it is just that, a reprieve.

"LTC is not adequately prepared or equipped to meet the complex care realities of today's and tomorrow's residents." I said this a year ago, and I will repeat it again today.

Changing this truth is entirely up to us and the policy decisions we must be bold enough to make.

Janice Keefe is professor of family studies and gerontology, the Lena Isabel Jodrey Chair in Gerontology and director of the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging at Mount Saint Vincent University

The Hill Times

COVID-19 is not gender-blind

The pandemic has affected men and women differently, which is why deliberate focus on the gendered experience of the pandemic could help in reducing these inequalities.



Jaunathan Bilodeau & Amélie Quesnel-Vallée

Opinion

Women are at greater risk both of direct exposure to the virus due to their overrepresentation in health care and service settings, and of pandemic-

related job losses. Quarantine, isolation, unemployment, financial insecurity, violence, and a fragile work-family balance are all health risk factors exacerbated by the pandemic. All these may lead to persistent economic and health inequalities between women and men well beyond the pandemic.

It is therefore imperative to consider the gendered experience of COVID-19 in the design of policies implemented in response to this pandemic and the subsequent economic recovery.

Gender is a structuring determinant of health. It exposes men and women differently to social constraints and associated stressors. Despite sustained decreases in the gendered division of household labour in Canada, women still bear more of the burden than men. And we are not alone: even in an egalitarian country such as Finland, women spend up to 2.5 times more time on regular household chores and twice as much time on childcare than men.

Gender is also constructed through the meaning and importance given to everyday situations, resulting in differential vulnerability to stressful situations. Some women may thus be more concerned than their spouse about the difficulties experienced by a

child or a parent, a situation commonly referred to as “mental load” (Conseil du statut de la femme 2015). This, in turn, can exacerbate stress, and anxiety, and their deleterious health consequences.

The recognition that the structural nature of gender results in differential exposure and vulnerability to stressors explains, in part, why it featured so prominently on many governments’ (including Canada’s) and international organizations’ policy agenda before the pandemic.

Covid-19 mitigation measures such as remote work and schooling, layoffs, childcare closures, and the choice of essential services have shaped the daily constraints faced by all Canadians since March 2020. The structural nature of gender exposed above has likely resulted in greater exposure to these constraints among women, for example through increased domestic responsibilities, along with increased vulnerability, such as perceived family-work conflict.

Mindful of these effects, the former G7 Advisory Board on Gender Equality recently sounded the alarm bell, calling for prioritizing the gender dimensions of the pandemic and preventing a deterioration of women’s equality and rights. The United Nations Population

Fund went a step further, stating that “pandemics exacerbate existing inequalities for women and girls.”

A gender-based analysis of mitigation measures is urgently needed

In 2018, finance minister Bill Morneau announced that gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) was henceforth applied to all federal budget decisions. This commitment may need to be reiterated or made more explicit in the pandemic response, as it is not currently obviously driving decision-making. Provincial and territorial partners should also be brought onboard, as many domains of importance in the pandemic mitigation response fall under their jurisdiction (e.g. education and health).

Previously, the government recognized the need to increase the data on which to base its analyses. This need is even more pressing in the current context. For example, women who are victims of domestic violence are particularly vulnerable during the quarantine period. However, there is no data to document this phenomenon.

How can the impact of the pandemic on gender-related health inequalities be avoided or limited?

Action must be mobilised on several fronts. Rigorous docu-

mentation of the gendered experience of the pandemic is needed. Facilitating access to flexible working conditions, including the 10-day leave proposed by the federal government, would also have a positive effect.

Employers are also proving to be essential levers for equality. The current crisis is an opportunity for them to participate in this transformation by promoting, for example, flexible hours, time banking, family leave or reduced work weeks. Women who have access to such measures report less psychological distress than those who do not. The pandemic could prove to be an opportunity for more gender equality during the recovery if these flexible work arrangements persist.

Even during a pandemic, the increase in health inequalities between men and women should not be inevitable. A deliberate focus on the gendered experience of the pandemic could help in reducing these inequalities.

Jaunathan Bilodeau is a post-doctoral fellow in the department of sociology at McGill University. Amélie Quesnel-Vallée is a professor and the Canada Research Chair in policies and health inequalities. She is cross appointed to the department of sociology and the department of epidemiology, biostatistics and occupational health at McGill University.

The Hill Times

Pharmacare, patient groups, and the need for open discourse



Sharon Batt

Opinion

Will Canadians ever have the universal national pharmacare program that repeated investigations show will support fair, appropriate health care and that 86 per cent of Canadians say they want? The long-simmering question is once again on the minds of voters. In his supplementary mandate letter, the prime minister called on Health Minister Patty Hajdu to “accelerate steps to achieve a national, universal pharmacare program,” including establishing a Canada Drug Agency, implementing a national formulary, and a rare-disease strategy.

As Peter Cleary of Santis Health told *Hill Times Research*, failure to enact this legislation could “push away progressive voters.” On Feb. 24, the NDP will up the pressure, with a private member’s bill. Other commentators cite political barriers, including the ongoing pressures of COVID-19, lack of provincial ministers’ support, and the pharmaceutical industry’s

vociferous but unsurprising opposition to a policy agenda designed, in part, to rein in drug prices.

Less obviously, an array of vocal patient organizations stands against key aspects of a plan meant to serve the public interest. Without dismissing other political headwinds, I believe these organisations are the actors with the greatest potential to derail the national pharmacare plan we need. Challenging Big Pharma is one thing; taking on sick people is no one’s idea of heroism.

Politicians should listen to patients, but—unlike many prominent patient advocates—I believe Big Pharma has systematically co-opted much of the patient advocacy movement, through strategic partnerships. Canadian health policies accept, even encourage, public-private partnerships. I agree with ethicist and lawyer Jonathan Marks who says society needs public health actors to actively defend the public interest. A collaborative agreement with the private sector makes this impossible.

In Canada, we don’t know how much the industry spends on patient organizations, because no laws require disclosure (a transparency law passed by the Wynne government in Ontario lays dormant under Doug Ford’s leadership). Best Medicines Coalition, a group representing 25 patient advocacy groups, submitted a brief to HESA, the House of Commons Health Committee, describing what

“Pharmacare for All Canadians” should look like. The funding the coalition and many of its individual members receive from major pharmaceutical companies went unmentioned, and the brief’s claims contained more industry spin than sound health policy.

We don’t have to demonize industry actors to recognize they enter partnerships with well-honed strategies to achieve their goals, says Marks. Partnerships with trusted public-sector actors create “health halos” that burnish corporate reputations, but imperil the public interest through “asset exchanges.” Groups receive money, information and advice, and help companies with marketing, clinical trial recruitment, and lobbying about drug access and subsidy.

In the U.S., which has a sunshine law requiring companies to declare funding to patient advocacy groups, 14 major pharma companies collectively spent US\$163-million on patient advocacy groups in 2015—more than twice what they spent lobbying politicians the same year. Patient groups in Missouri echoed and amplified industry messages that contributed to the state’s opioid crisis. Industry-funded patient groups sponsored a campaign that opposed legislation to contain prices of drugs covered by U.S. Medicare.

My research in Canada found that the industry has successfully carried out variations of these strategies. Scores of Canadian patient

organizations now rely on industry, not just for funding, but for information about the drugs being marketed for their condition and advice on influencing government policy. Some groups resist; the group I co-founded in Montreal passed a corporate policy that prohibits taking funds from drug companies and other corporations that contribute to, or profit from, cancer.

We don’t all think alike and vigorous debates over any policy should be encouraged. With pharmacare in the balance, I’ve joined with other health advocates independent of the industry to put our views on pharmacare on the public record. In briefs and petitions and a presentation before HESA, we’ve argued that a universal, national, publicly funded pharmacare program, well-designed, funded and implemented, would improve drug safety and effectiveness, take collective opportunity gains into account, fairly prioritize access, and increase transparency.

We’ve met resistance from the industry-funded patient community. When I attempted to present our perspective at a meeting of CADTH, three prominent activists heckled me so vociferously, my talk was shut down. Such personal attacks undermine democratic debate, but unfortunately are not isolated. Staff at the Patented Medicines Price Review Board have received hostile phone messages and Twitterstorms from advocacy group members calling them “non human robots” who are “sacrificing the lives of the most vulnerable to save money.” At a meeting of the House Health Committee to discuss changes to the Patented Medicines Review Board, NDP MP Don Davies objected when Twitter

followers accused some members of not caring: “We all care” he said.

It’s disturbing then to see a webinar presentation by Innovative Medicines Canada the latest postponement of the implementation of the new guidelines end with a shout-out to five industry-funded patient advocacy groups: “Stakeholder voices are having an impact: your continued engagement on these consultations is crucial. What can you do? Get involved.” Some of the groups listed have engaged in hostile attacks. Whether or not the industry condones these harassment tactics, I question the ethics of Big Pharma’s rallying patient groups to advance its agenda.

Health policy, by its nature, arouses strong passions and any major change in the status quo can feel threatening, but Canada stands alone among high-income countries in excluding prescription drugs from its national health-care program. The pharmaceutical industry will adapt to some loss of profit, as it has in all other countries that have national pharmacare plans. Meanwhile, policy-makers might reflect on the words of Roy Vagelos, a scientist-turned CEO who ran Merck for a decade, beginning in the mid-80s: “The biopharmaceutical business is different than selling buttons and bicycles.” Vagelos was more interested in making new drugs than in making money. And Merck’s stock price did extremely well.

Sharon Batt is an adjunct professor in the department of bioethics at Dalhousie University and author of *Health Advocacy Inc.: How Pharmaceutical Funding Changed the Breast Cancer Movement*.

The Hill Times

Express entry economic immigration timelines a ‘joke,’ say lawyers as processing times increase

Canada promises the express entry pathway for skilled foreign workers will take six months, but lawyers say it’s ‘not working’ as none of the programs met that standard last fiscal year.

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT ALLEN

Canada’s “express entry” approach to key economic immigration programs isn’t working, immigration lawyers say, following a recent report showing that none of them are meeting the six-month service standard. That failed grade was among 17 missed performance targets the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) reported for the 2019-20 fiscal year, or 31 per cent of the 54 total targets. It said none of the government’s business lines for permanent residents met service standards during a time period that had yet to feel the pandemic’s full impact. Launched in 2015, the express entry process is described by Canada as its “flagship” system for various federal skilled worker programs, and a portion of the provincial nominee program, as a pathway to permanent residence for skilled workers in Canada and from overseas. IRCC has said it plans to increase permanent-resident admissions, setting a target of 341,000 for 2020 and 350,000 for 2021, with most of the uptick expected from economic immigration streams. Evelyn Ackah, founder of Ackah Business Immigration Law

in Calgary, laughed when she repeated the program’s name. “Express entry, that’s a joke. When they first launched that program a few years ago, it was incredible. It was three months, four months,” she said, but now she warns clients it can take more than a year. She said it’s disappointing the government hasn’t been able to keep up with the high volume of applications. To her, it’s a clear resourcing and staffing problem that doesn’t line up with Canada’s stated goals to increase immigration levels. “It’s not working as an express process, absolutely not. It’s the same as the old process, as far as I’m concerned, and it’s lost its credibility with people,” she said. “The trend is getting slower and slower.” Over the last three years, before COVID-19 interruptions, processing times have increased, and in some cases, doubled the time it takes to deal with 80 per cent of applicants. The federal skills trade stream jumped from six months in 2017 to one year for the majority of applicants, while the federal-skilled worker and provincial-nominee programs increased from six to nine months in that same time frame. The Canadian Experience Class increased from four to seven months. Across all programs, only 60 per cent of the applications met the standard by the end of 2019.

Processing times, in months, for Express Entry applications

Program	2017	2018	2019
Canadian Experience Class	4	5	7
Federal Skilled Worker	4	6	9
Provincial/Territorial Nominee	6	6	9
Federal Skilled Trades	6	7	12
All Programs	5	5	8

Source: Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada



Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, overseen by Immigration Minister Marco Mendicino, missed a third of its performance targets in 2019-20, prompting some to question whether its goals are too aspirational. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

According to the department’s latest plan, its overall spending is set to increase from \$1.92-billion in 2017-18 to the peak last fiscal year at \$3.46-billion, before going back down this fiscal year to \$2.84-billion, \$2.6-billion in 2021-22, and \$2.56-billion in 2022-23. The stretching timelines reflect an increase in applications for express entry, with the 332,331 submissions in 2019 amounting to a 20 per cent jump from 2018. Among the profiles submitted in 2019, 72 per cent were eligible for at least one of the business programs, according to the program’s year-end report. Still, the government promises to those searching for information online about the express entry system that it “will result in fast processing times of six months or less.” “I can’t even bring up that number [to clients],” said B.C.-based immigration lawyer Will Tao of Heron Law, saying more transparency is needed. It’s “misleading” and can “give the wrong impression” to applicants, he said, especially now with the pandemic posing even more of a challenge to processing times. “I think they pretty much internally abandoned it, so from my perspective, if you’ve done that, then you probably should ... let clients know,” he said, calling for better transparency so that people can get more certainty about their situations. Even though it’s supposed to be an automated system, based on points, both lawyers said the process gets bogged down during the authentication stage, as officials check over and verify the many documents submitted. Eligible candidates in the pool are given a score based on their skills and experience, with top-ranking candidates invited to submit an application for permanent residence. As of June 2017, IRCC added extra points to candidates with strong French-speaking skills.

Both Mr. Tao and Ms. Ackah acknowledged it can be a complicated process, but Ms. Ackah said that’s all the more reason to provide more resources. In IRCC’s report on performance targets, the department said “substantial efforts” have been made to reduce express entry applications that took longer than six months to process. “While service standards are being met for a higher number of applications compared to previous years, this was offset by an increase in applications and the processing of older applications,” the report said. The department noted early results show “progression towards higher admission targets” and that efforts to increase the intake are having an impact on service standards, in this case, the promise to have the majority completed within six months. The department doesn’t control intake for provincial nominee program’s paper applications and Quebec-selected skilled workers. By email, IRCC spokesperson Lauren Sankey said the government remains committed to reducing application processing times and improving the department’s service delivery.

IRCC misses a third of 2019-20 targets

Among the third of IRCC’s performance targets missed in 2019-20, the express-entry delay was the worst among 17 the department didn’t reach. Canada’s backlogged asylum system again failed to make the cut, with the department reporting only 32 per cent of asylum claims were referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada within service standards, compared to the target of 97 per cent. Language-development delays for people settling in Canada caused additional missed targets. Only 37 per cent of IRCC’s settlement clients reported improved official language skills compared to the target of 60 per cent, while 19 per cent of people reported receiving language-training services compared to target of 25 per cent. Ms. Sankey said every newcomer’s experience is unique, including their participation in settlement services, which is managed by IRCC and delivered by more than 500 service provider organizations across the country, outside of Quebec. Federally funded language training is “a key component” said Ms. Sankey, who noted there’s been an increase in newcomers with limited knowledge of English or French over the past few years.

In 2019-20, IRCC also reported 2.82 per cent of permanent residents outside Quebec identified as French speaking, compared to the target of 4.4 per cent. Ms. Sankey said under the Francophone Immigration Strategy, IRCC is “pursuing year-round targeted promotion and recruitment” to attract more qualified French-speaking candidates, and noted under the express entry program, the government increased invitations to French-tested candidates from 4.5 per cent in 2018 to 5.6 per cent in 2019. These results suggest issues with respect to service standards, language training, and refugee claims, said Andrew Griffith, a fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute who was once a director general at the department’s Citizenship and Multiculturalism Branch. While many reflect perennial problems and backlogs, given these markers IRCC seems to be “systematically” missing the standards it sets to monitor how well it’s delivering its services, he said. “So if they’re consistently missing their targets it says there’s either a management problem, an operational problem, a resource problem, or some combination of those,” he said. Even so, he noted a contrasting target the department did meet: a 91 per cent satisfaction rate from visitors, international students, and temporary worker applicants who reported they were satisfied overall with the services they received. While he doesn’t advocate for lowering targets, Mr. Griffith questioned why the government reports on aspirational or unrealistic goals. “Personally, I favour realistic standards for public departmental reports, with aspirational more appropriate for internal use,” he said. IRCC’s targets are based on factors like historic trends, program objectives, resourcing levels, client service goals, and evolving influences such as the impact of increasing temporary resident and permanent resident immigration levels, said Ms. Sankey. “Targets are reviewed regularly, and in some cases, the department establishes ambitious targets that serve to stretch program vision and encourage innovation. In other cases, they are based on baselines and historic trends where achievement is more certain,” said Ms. Sankey, noting how IRCC tracks performance will change following a 2020 departmental review. Separating service performance down into two tracks—one for permanent residents and one for temporary residents—is not a true representation of the department’s performance, she said, given the disparate programs under the two umbrellas. Instead, IRCC will report on the service standard for each individual program, which Mr. Griffith called a “significant change” given the “overly simple” approach before. “This change will capture more accurate service standard performance for the many lines of business which make up the temporary and permanent resident programs,” Ms. Sankey said. swallen@hilltimes.com *The Hill Times*

Pandemic response slips from ‘slam dunk’ to ‘potential liability’ for Liberals, say some political insiders

Ekos Research president Frank Graves says the vaccine rollout is a problem for the Liberals, but also says it's not over yet.

Continued from page 1

inoculated should be able to get their vaccine shots by September. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) has also promised that a “majority” of Canadians will be able to receive their vaccine shots by that time.

Recently, however, there have been some interruptions in the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccines from their suppliers, including Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna. The government has said the supply will start to return to normal in the coming weeks.

Last week, the federal government announced that it had signed an agreement with Novavax to produce millions of COVID-19 vaccine shots in Montreal. However, the production of this vaccine will start at the end of the year, which means it won't help the government reach its goal of vaccinating Canadians in the short term. The domestic production facility, however, will be helpful if there's another pandemic in future.

As of last week, 1,014,435 doses of approved COVID-19 vaccines had been administered in Canada, which means about 2.2 per cent of the population has received at least one dose of the vaccine. By deadline last week, there were a total of 789,651 total cases of COVID-19 in the country, which have resulted in 20,355 deaths.

The Liberals had enjoyed a comfortable double-digit lead—with some minor interruptions—over the opposition parties for months, starting last spring, when the first wave of the pandemic exploded in Canada. Since the summer of last year, rumours have been circulating that the Liberals may call a snap election to capitalize on their popularity and convert their minority into a majority government.

In British Columbia, the NDP's John Horgan called a snap election last fall and won a majority, becoming British Columbia's first two-term NDP premier. Before that, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan also held elections in the middle of the pandemic that returned the governing parties to power with majority governments: a boost from minority status for the New Brunswick Progressive Conservatives.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured on Jan. 26, 2021, outside the Rideau Cottage. The hiccups in the smooth rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine will be a major hurdle if the Liberals want to go to the polls this spring, say Liberals. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

In December, Prime Minister Trudeau told the national board of directors of the Liberal Party that it “looks like” the next election would happen in spring. But Liberal sources have told *The Hill Times* that a relatively smooth vaccine rollout was the key condition for a spring election.

Meanwhile, the recent hiccups in the vaccine availability have started to take their toll on the Liberals' popularity, according to Nanos Research. As of last week, the Liberals were leading the pack with the support of 34.9 per cent of Canadians, followed closely by the Conservatives with 30.3 per cent. The NDP had 15.5 per cent support, and the Green Party had 7.4 per cent.

Back on Jan. 8, according to Nanos Research, Liberal support was at 40.2 per cent, Conserva-

“The Liberals now are moving into minority territory,” said Mr. Nanos. “So there's only a five point gap between the Conservatives and the Liberals. At one point, they were enjoying a 13-point advantage; now that's basically evaporated, with anxiety over the vaccinations, to only five percentage points. So there's right now a negative trajectory on Liberal support.”

Mr. Nanos said it appears the window of opportunity for the Liberals to call a snap election will close if they can't quickly fix the interruption to the vaccine rollout. Some Liberal sources interviewed for this story agreed that the bumps in the vaccine rollout could complicate the party's willingness to go to the polls this spring. They added that considering the fact that the

still getting government cheques to stay at home, and whether they are less at risk than they were a year ago. He pointed out that now is a much more complex situation than last March, when the focus was on slowing down the spread of COVID-19 using social distancing measures such as wearing masks. The virus is mutating, and people are dealing with uncertainty over when they will be able to go back to work, and people are worried about their children's schooling, and above all the interruption in vaccine rollout, said Mr. Nanos.

“The problem with the government in vaccinations, is it's like telling someone, ‘The cheque is in the mail,’” said Mr. Nanos. “There's no consolation to Canadians who are worried about their own health, and the health of their loved ones, to be told the cheque is in the mail when it comes to the vaccinations. And, so, I think it's a much more serious time right now than it was at any other time in the pandemic.”

Frank Graves, president of Ekos polling firm, told *The Hill Times* that his polling is also confirming that Canadians are paying close attention to COVID-19's health and economic impacts. He said his polling is showing Canadians are aware that they are going through a tough situation, which could become worse if more transmissible variants of the virus spread, but they believe that this could be resolved with the vaccine.

The Liberals are still polling ahead of the Conservatives, said Mr. Graves. He said that the interruption to the vaccine rollout did not appear to be suppressing Liberal support in his polls.

“I don't find that [negative trajectory for Liberals], in fact, in my most recent poll, I see the Liberals with an eight-point lead, which is up,” said Mr. Graves. “So this is paradoxical.”

Mr. Graves argued that this could be because people believe in the federal government's assurance that this is a temporary situation and the issue will be addressed within a few weeks.



Pollster Nik Nanos of Nanos Research says that the interruption in the vaccine rollout is causing a Liberal support to drop across the country. *The Hill Times* file photograph

tives support at 27.2 per cent, NDP support at 16.5 per cent, and Green support at 7.4 per cent.

The Nanos survey also suggested that COVID-19 was the top issue for 43.6 per cent of respondents, more than any other issue. The same survey indicated that 11.9 per cent of Canadians identified jobs/economy as their top-of-mind issue, 6.6 per cent mentioned the environment, and six per cent mentioned health care. The poll of 1,000 Canadians was released on Feb. 1 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

next election will be decided on the government's handling of pandemic, it's important it gets it right to the satisfaction of Canadians.

“It's all about COVID, COVID, COVID, and vaccine rollout,” said a source.

The first anniversary of the pandemic lockdowns in Canada is in March, and Mr. Nanos said Canadians will evaluate the government's performance by looking at metrics such as whether the economy is moving in the right direction, whether people are returning to work, whether people are

But Mr. Graves warned that if the government fails to deliver on its promises, there would be dire political consequences for the Liberals.

“The public are very concerned, [but] the idea that this will all turn out badly and that we're in huge problems and the government's incompetent and has screwed it all up ... the public aren't buying that yet,” said Mr. Graves. “My data suggests that the public are wary, they're very concerned, and the government will be punished severely if their claims turned out to be without foundation.”

Mr. Graves did not rule out the possibility of a spring election if the government is able to fix the vaccine rollout issue by that time.

“The next election will be basically a referendum on how you handle the pandemic,” he said. “That will be No. 1. No. 2, closely aligned, will be, did you get the vaccine out in time? And depending how long it goes on, No. 3 is what do you plan to do with Canada coming out of this pandemic? Those will be the three ballot questions. None of them are entirely clear right now. The government's done okay on the first one, but it will all go in the toilet if they screw up the vaccine rollout.”



Ekos Research president Frank Graves says his polling is showing the Liberals are maintaining a stable lead over the Conservatives, despite the delay to vaccine shipments. *The Hill Times* file photograph

According to last week's Ekos poll, the Trudeau Liberals' were the choice of 36.5 per cent of Canadians, the Conservatives were the pick of 28.1 per cent, the NDP 14.5 per cent, and the Green Party at 9.3 per cent. The poll of 548 Canadians was conducted between Jan. 29 and Feb. 3 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 4.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

A Leger poll released last week also suggested that the Trudeau Liberals were leading all parties with the support of 37 per cent of Canadians, followed by the Conservatives with 28 per cent. The NDP was at 22 per cent and the Green Party at five per cent. The poll also suggested the government's support in managing the pandemic has slipped from 60 per cent to 54 per cent. The online poll of 1,559 Canadians was released on Feb. 1 and had a margin of error of 2.4 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

An Abacus Data poll of 3,930 Canadians released last week put the Liberals at 32 per cent, the Conservatives at 31 per cent, and the NDP at 18 per cent.

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Hate and paranoia abound in political social media, as federal Liberals prepare to intervene

The German online hate speech law which the government may view as a model could lead to social media platforms over-suppressing online speech, says law professor Karen Eltis.

Continued from page 1

for conservative political parties,” wrote one visitor to the Liberal Party Facebook page under a post honouring Holocaust victims and survivors. Other comments viewed by *The Hill Times* after a short search espoused a conspiracy theory about “a plan for total world-wide control,” and repeated racist stereotypes in response to a post about Black History Month.

The Liberal Party monitors its social media pages for discriminatory, hateful, and threatening content as well as misinformation and removes it, said spokesperson Braeden Caley.

Similar comments are harder to find, but present, on Facebook pages for the Conservative Party, and the NDP; political think tanks including the Broadbent Institute and the Fraser Institute; and news organizations that cover federal politics, including *The Hill Times*.

The federal Liberals promised in their 2019 election platform to bring in new rules for social media companies to curtail hate speech.

“[W]e will move forward with new regulations for social media platforms, starting with a requirement that all platforms remove illegal content, including hate speech, within 24 hours or face significant financial penalties. This will also include other online harms, such as radicalization, incitement to violence, exploitation of children, or creation or distribution of terrorist propaganda,” the platform said.

The government is planning to introduce legislation in February or March to make good on that pledge, according to a report from *The Globe and Mail*. That report



Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault has been assigned by the prime minister to take action to curb online hate and harassment. Racist, sexist, and violent comments, as well as conspiracy theories, are commonplace in online discussions of Canadian politics. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

said the government’s own legislation would likely be influenced by German law, which requires social media platforms to remove illegal content under a tight deadline, or face significant penalties. Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) and Justice Minister David Lametti (LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que.) are responsible for taking the lead on that legislation.

Using the German law as a model could have consequences, however, said Karen Eltis, a professor who specializes in digital and constitutional law at the University of Ottawa.

The punitive German law effectively pushes digital platforms to “over-suppress” online speech to avoid incurring monetary penalties, she said.

Prof. Eltis said she was the “delighted” that the government was taking action to curb online hate speech, however. She said that democratic governments have for too long neglected their role setting rules online, instead forcing private companies that run digital media platforms to fill that void.

Prof. Eltis said the government’s legislation could establish an ombudsperson or a set of high-level principles to help digital media platforms decide how to deal with hate speech online.

Few pages attract as many extreme comments as Canada Proud, the right-wing political discussion forum founded by digital media strategist Jeff Ballingall in 2018, following the establishment of a similar page, Ontario

Proud. Both pages have hundreds of thousands of followers.

A single post on the Canada Proud page on Jan. 30 prompted one visitor to the page to liken the Liberal Party to Nazis, and another to reply that the Liberal government was “creating concentration camps.” A third wrote that “next they will be dragging people out of their homes in the middle of the night.” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) is “heading closer to being arrested for treason,” wrote another.

That Jan. 30 post had warned that “Justin Trudeau is taking his next step into authoritarianism,” and linked to a post on The Post Millennial, a right-wing political website, about the government’s decision to hire “security contractors” to knock on doors to confirm that people ordered into quarantine are complying.

“Either his tenure ends or his life...I’m fine with both!” wrote another user under another post about the government’s vaccine rollout.

A July 3, 2020, Canada Proud post about Corey Hurren, the heavily-armed man who rammed down the gates of the Rideau Hall grounds last July and threatened Prime Minister Trudeau, prompted a barrage of comments, nearly all of which applauded Mr. Hurren, called for violence against the prime minister, or dismissed the episode as a hoax designed to generate support for Liberal gun-control policies.

“[Too] bad Trudeau wasn’t there and this guy didn’t get to



It’s past time for democratic governments to step in to combat online hate, says University of Ottawa law professor Karen Eltis. *Photograph courtesy of the University of Ottawa*

him. I would volunteer to be on the jury and would thank him for a job well done,” wrote one commenter.

The post that elicited those replies, written by a Canada Proud administrator, was benign: “Just crazy. How was this man allowed to spend 1 minute on the ground in Trudeau’s residency, let alone 13 minutes,” it read, linking to another Post Millennial post.

Canada Proud has spent more than \$325,000 on political Facebook ads since it was established. Nearly all of them criticize or mock the federal Liberals, and Mr. Trudeau, in particular, who has been at the centre of several high-profile scandals since his party won power in 2015. It describes itself as “the largest grassroots group dedicated to defeating Justin Trudeau.”

So-called third party political advocacy groups have spent millions on online and broadcast ads to try to influence recent Canadian elections. Those include groups on both ends of the political spectrum. A new group calling itself the Protecting Canada Project ran ads earlier this year attacking Conservative Leader Erin O’Toole (Durham, Ont.) with thinly-supported claims that he would cut federal health transfers if he won the next federal election.

None of the posts by Canada Proud’s administrators observed by *The Hill Times* were hateful or incited violence. A Feb. 1 post encouraged followers to celebrate Black History Month: “together we are all Canada Proud,” it said. The comments in response were nearly all negative. “All lives matter,” was among the most popular.

Some of the posts written by Canada Proud’s administrators go further than criticism. One Canada Proud post in June 2019 warned that Mr. Trudeau was “trying to rig” the upcoming election.

“Here’s proof Justin Trudeau is trying to rig the election,” it said. The post included a video produced by Canada Proud, in which a nameless narrator warned that the government’s \$600-million media bailout fund would give the press an incentive to cover the government in a more positive light.

Supporters of former U.S. president Donald Trump attacked the U.S. Capitol Building last month after Mr. Trump orchestrated a widespread and false campaign on and offline to

convince Americans that Democratic President Joe Biden had somehow rigged the election in which he defeated Mr. Trump.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Mr. Ballingall defended the headline on that 2019 post. He said that the government’s media bailout posed a greater threat to Canadian democracy than did the headline for his post.

Mr. Ballingall said that Canada Proud “has not condoned or promoted, and will never condone, violence or hate.”

“Any political violence is of concern. That’s not what Canada is about, and that’s not a part of a healthy democracy,” he said.

Mr. Ballingall argued that Canada Proud’s administrators are government critics, and are not responsible for the reactions of those who comment on the page. Canada Proud does moderate its comments, however, both manually and using an automated process which scrubs comments that include one of roughly 600 banned words, including racial slurs, he said.

Mr. Ballingall is the president of Mobilize Media Group. He was hired as the digital director for Mr. O’Toole’s successful leadership campaign in 2020. He no longer works for Mr. O’Toole.



Jeff Ballingall says Canada Proud ‘has not condoned or promoted, and will never condone, violence or hate.’ *Photograph courtesy of Jeff Ballingall’s Twitter*

Mr. Ballingall said the Liberal government’s promised online hate speech legislation is a “diversion.”

“They’re sacrificing their status as the party of the Charter for a quick diversion from their shameful record procuring vaccines for Canadians,” he said.

As of deadline last week, the Liberal government had not introduced its promised legislation to curb online hate speech. Public Safety Minister Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.) announced the addition of 13 new organizations to Canada’s list of terrorist entities on Feb. 3, including the Proud Boys, which had helped to organize the attack on the U.S. Capitol Building in January.

The Proud Boys is not linked to Canada Proud. The listing process for terrorist entities makes it illegal to provide financial support to organizations that advocate for or carry out violent acts for ideological objectives.

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Senators preparing 'sunset clause' amendment to scrap mental health exclusion from assisted dying law

Senators aren't happy that the promised parliamentary review to deal with the issue never materialized.

BY PETER MAZEREeuw

Senators aren't happy with the government's assisted dying bill, C-7, and will likely present numerous amendments to the legislation, says Independent Senator Mobina Jaffer, who chairs the Senate's Legal Affairs Committee studying the bill.

Senators who object to the mental health exclusion in Canada's current assisted dying law will likely get behind a "compromise" amendment to Bill C-7 that would put a "sunset clause" on that exclusion, which prevents people who are suffering solely from a mental illness from accessing assisted death, said Sen. Jaffer.

The idea was proposed by Independent Sen. Stan Kutcher (Nova Scotia) during his speech on the bill at second reading in the Senate on Dec. 15. Sen. Kutcher worked as a psychiatrist before he joined the Senate in 2018.

"During the sunset period, the government could put into place all the reviews of this issue that it wishes," he said in the Chamber. "Furthermore, a sunset period would allow national medical and nursing professional organizations time to create an accredited interdisciplinary education and training program in MAID assessment and delivery. This would help ensure that every Canadian, regardless of their place of residence, could reliably receive a similar quality of MAID assessment and delivery."

Conservative Senator Claude Carignan (Mille Isles, Que.) told *The Hill Times* that he believes the exclusion of mentally ill people from the assisted dying regime is unconstitutional. Sen. Carignan is his party's critic for the bill in the Senate, and a lawyer. He suggested a sunset clause lasting one year.

The government introduced Bill C-7 in February of 2020 after the Quebec Superior Court ruled that part of the 2016 assisted dying law was unconstitutional. The court singled out language that limits access to an assisted death to only those who will die naturally from the condition causing them to suffer—technically, to those for whom death is "reasonably foreseeable."

The Senate amended the original assisted dying law in 2016 to remove that condition when it was passing through Parliament, but the government rejected its amendment. The Senate did not insist, and the bill passed.



Conservative Senator Claude Carignan, left, and Independent Senator Stan Kutcher have both spoken in support of amending Bill C-7 with a 'sunset clause' for the mental health exclusion in Canada's assisted dying law. Independent Senator Mobina Jaffer, the Legal Affairs Committee chair, said she believes that such an amendment would have support in the Senate. *The Hill Times* file photograph, photographs courtesy of the Senate



The government had also inserted language into the 2016 bill requiring a parliamentary review of the law after five years. Justice Minister David Lametti (LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que.) said later, when he introduced Bill C-7, that the review would explore the subject of extending assisted dying to people suffering from a mental illness, as well as advanced requests for assisted death, and assisted death for mature minors.

However, the review, which was due to begin last summer, has not yet taken place, and Mr. Lametti has denied responsibility for initiating it.

Numerous Senators pointed to the missing parliamentary study as a source of frustration, both in the Chamber and in interviews with *The Hill Times*.

"It's five years of wasted time that has cost people very, very painful living and very, very painful dying," said Senator Pamela Wallin (Saskatchewan), a member of the Canadian Senators Group.

'I take this very personally' says Sen. Wallin

Sen. Wallin told *The Hill Times* that she will press for an amendment that would clear the way for people suffering from dementia to access assisted dying. Under the current law, a documented wish for an assisted death under certain conditions in the future, which can be honoured even if a person later loses the ability to consent—known as an advance request—is not legal.

A diagnosis of Alzheimer's or other cause of dementia typically renders a person legally unable to give consent to an assisted death, said Sen. Wallin.

"I take this very personally. My grandmother died of Alzheimer's, and my mother did," she said.

"I've seen every variation on [the] mindset of a person as they descend into hell."

She said she is currently healthy, but is already speaking with a doctor who provides assisted death to see what options are available to her for the future.

"Maybe when I grow up I'll take it to the Supreme Court, I don't know. I just think that it needs to be clarified," she said.

Sen. Carignan said that he believed amending C-7 to legalize advanced requests would be going too far, and that the federal and provincial governments should be given time to discuss that issue first.

"We have to clarify MAID access for [mental health] first," he said.

Several Senators and advocacy groups for disabled Canadians have made the case that Bill C-7 would make the assisted dying law discriminatory against people with disabilities. If Bill C-7 is passed and the requirement of a "reasonably foreseeable death" is removed, the assisted dying law would allow people with an incurable disability to seek an assisted death if that disability is causing suffering that is intolerable to them.

"Bill C-7 is discriminatory in the most profound and insidious way because it says to people with disabilities that their lives, unlike the lives of non-disabled Canadians, are not worth fighting for," said Conservative Senator Denise Batters (Saskatchewan) in the Chamber on Dec. 15.

Sen. Batters is also a lawyer, and a mental health advocate. She lost her husband, former Conservative MP Dave Batters, to suicide in 2009. He was 39 years old, and had battled anxiety and depression. She spoke against opening up assisted dying to those with mental illness during the Senate debate at second reading.

"I have seen up close the failures of our mental health system,"

she said during her speech in the Chamber at second reading. "There are problems of accessibility, costs, stigma and an utter lack of resources that stand in the way of people getting the help they need."

"The answer to those barriers is to fix that system, not to confirm a mentally ill patient's feelings of hopelessness and offer them the lethal means to suicide. The answer is certainly not to end their lives for them."

Conservative Senate Leader Don Plett (Landmark, Man.) also called attention to the concerns expressed by disability advocates during his speech on Bill C-7 in December.

Sen. Carignan said the Conservative caucus will hold a free vote on Bill C-7. He said he respected the views of his colleagues, but that he didn't understand the arguments that the bill would make the assisted dying law discriminatory against people with disabilities.

"I don't know, at the end, how people with this thinking will have enough support to defeat the bill," he said.

'It's hard to feel the place' without in-person sittings, says Sen. Carignan

Independent Senator Peter Harder (Ottawa) argued in the Chamber in December that Senators should not treat Bill C-7 as a referendum on the existing assisted dying law, but rather as the government's response to the 2019 order from the Quebec Superior Court.

"Bill C-7 is not new government policy or priority. It is a response to a judicial decision and must be respected as such," he said in the Chamber on Dec. 14.

Sen. Jaffer said she agreed with Sen. Harder on that point.

"I feel the same way....we had that fight in 2016," she said.

Sen. Jaffer also said, however, that she plans on introducing her own amendment to Bill C-7 to mandate a government analysis of what Canada's different ethnic communities need in order to properly access and evaluate assisted dying.

Sen. Jaffer is also one of several Senators who have expressed concern that Indigenous people in Canada were not adequately consulted by the government as it put Bill C-7 together. Sen. Mary Jane McCallum (Manitoba) told *The Hill Times* that she was seriously considering voting against the bill for that reason.

It's "too early to say" if Senators will be willing to push back harder on their amendments this time if the government rejects them, said Sen. Jaffer.

Independent Senators, most of them appointed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), form the largest group in the Senate. Collectively, they most often vote in favour of government legislation, but have proven eager to amend it.

"Because it is a non-partisan issue, by and large, there will be people on all sides voting for and against. So I think it's kind of unpredictable," said Sen. Wallin.

With many Senators participating virtually amid the pandemic, "you cannot have these backroom discussions with members so you know where they stand, so it's hard to feel the place," said Sen. Carignan.

Several Senators have called on the government to refer the assisted dying law to the Supreme Court of Canada, and have it determine which parts of the law, if any, violate the Constitution.

"It's very difficult for a government to go to where the puck is going to go. That's why we are dealing with this incrementally," Independent Senator Howard Wetston (Ontario) said in the Chamber on Dec. 15. "My view is that if we do not act decisively now, this ping-pong will continue for the next decade."

"...unless we can affect significant amendments to this legislation, we should be urging the government of Canada to refer this immediately to the Supreme Court of Canada," he said.

"In that reference, there would be an instruction to the court to consider the issues we're dealing with now and will deal with over the next decade: advance directives, mature minors, this issue around folks with mental challenges and those with disabilities, as well as some directions on guidelines."

Sen. Wallin and Sen. Jaffer both said they supported a Supreme Court review of the law. Mr. Lametti told the Senate's Legal Affairs Committee on Feb. 1 that "it always remains an option but I've never been convinced that it's our best option."

Mr. Lametti has framed Bill C-7 as a relatively quick solution to the Quebec Superior Court's decision: that the faster it is passed through Parliament, the fewer people will suffer as they wait for legal access to assisted dying.

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HILL CLIMBERS

by Laura Ryckewaert

National Revenue Minister Lebouthillier hires a new chief of staff, Faizel Gulamhussein

Faizel Gulamhussein has taken over as chief of staff to the national revenue minister, with Bernard Boutin moving over to Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's team.

National Revenue Minister **Diane LeBouthillier** has a new chief of staff in charge of her team, after bidding farewell to **Bernard Boutin**, who's exited to become director of stakeholder relations and a senior Quebec adviser to Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister **Chrystia Freeland** as of Feb. 8.



Bernard Boutin has left Minister LeBouthillier's office to work for the deputy prime minister. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Mr. Boutin had been running Ms. LeBouthillier's ministerial office since July 2018. He first joined the minister's team as director of communications and parliamentary affairs in the fall of 2017, before which

he spent a little more than two years working for then-international development and La Francophonie minister **Marie-Claude Bibeau**, first as press secretary and later as a senior communications adviser.

A former staffer at Quebec's national assembly, for three months prior to moving to Ottawa to work for the Trudeau Liberals just after the 2015 election, Mr. Boutin was a senior business development adviser working on contract for BCF Business Law in Montreal. He's also a former Quebec director for Dyson in Toronto.

Faizel Gulamhussein, who's spent the last year (plus two months) as director of policy to Ms. LeBouthillier, has now been promoted to chief of staff.



Faizel Gulamhussein is Minister LeBouthillier's new chief of staff. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

A former tax lawyer with Baker & McKenzie in Toronto, Mr. Gulamhussein has been working on the Hill since the end of 2017, starting as a senior policy adviser to then-heritage minister **Mélanie Joly** (and continuing under her successor, **Pablo Rodriguez**). He joined Ms. LeBouthillier's office in December 2019, shortly after the last election.

Mr. Gulamhussein is also a former manager of international tax services for

PricewaterhouseCoopers in Toronto. He studied law at McGill University, going on to article with McCarthy Tétrault, and also has both a master's degree and a bachelor's degree in political science (and criminology, in the case of his undergraduate degree) from Simon Fraser University.

A new director of policy has yet to be named.

In other recent staffing changes for Ms. LeBouthillier, **Andrew Richardson** has been promoted to senior adviser for issues management and parliamentary affairs. With the office since February 2020, he was previously serving as an issues manager and assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP **Francesco Sorbara**. Before joining Ms. LeBouthillier's team, Mr. Richardson spent almost four and a half years working for national Public Relations in Ottawa, ending as manager of political insights and strategy at the firm.

Gabriel Bourget has already replaced Mr. Richardson as both an issues manager and assistant to Mr. Sorbara. First hired on to Ms. LeBouthillier's office in December 2019, he was previously the minister's regional affairs adviser for Quebec and the Atlantic.

Mr. Bourget previously worked as an administrative assistant to Ms. LeBouthillier for a couple of months in 2016, later spending six months doing administrative work for the city of Percé, Que. In 2018, he spent three months as a project co-ordinator for the Percé Rock Tourist Office, among other past experience. Mr. Bourget graduated from Université Laval with bachelor of law degree in 2019.

In turn, **Chloé Rioux**, who's been busy as Ms. LeBouthillier's executive assistant since March 2020, has been given the added responsibility of replacing Mr. Bourget as the minister's Quebec and Atlantic regional affairs adviser. Before joining the minister's office, Ms. Rioux spent almost half a year as an economic development co-ordinator for Tourisme et Commerce Rocher-Percé.



Chloé Rioux is now the Quebec and Atlantic regional affairs adviser to the revenue minister. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Percé Rock, and the city of Percé, sit within Ms. LeBouthillier's riding of Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Que.

Update on Deputy PM Freeland's team

Ms. Freeland's office has not confirmed a full staff list for the minister since she became both deputy prime minister and finance minister on Aug. 18, 2020, despite repeated requests.

After a shuffle, affected ministers have 30 calendar days under Treasury Board rules to sort out their ministerial teams. Any staff not rehired at that point are deemed laid off.

On Feb. 2, the minister's office confirmed a list of seven staff working for Ms. Freeland. That list includes four previously reported names: **Alex Lawrence**, director of communications; **Katherine Cuplinskas**, press secretary; **Leslie Church**, director of policy; and **Jeremy Broadhurst**, who's both chief of staff to Ms. Freeland and a senior adviser to the prime minister. The deputy PM's office is located on the upper floors of 180 Wellington St., the Office of the Prime Minister and Privy Council.

Three other names were on the list: **Farees Nathoo**, director of parliamentary affairs; **Adam Grech**, senior executive assistant; and **Shannon Zimmerman**, director of operations and senior Ontario adviser.

Mr. Nathoo is a former press secretary to then-treasury board president **Joyce Murray**, and prior to the August 2020 shuffle was an issues manager to Ms. Freeland as deputy PM. A former advance in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** office, Mr. Grech was also working in Ms. Freeland's office prior to the shuffle as executive assistant to the minister.

Similarly, Ms. Zimmerman was a senior adviser for Ontario to Ms. Freeland before August 2020. A former director of issues management to then-intergovernmental affairs minister **Dominic LeBlanc**, Ms. Zimmerman first joined Ms. Freeland's office at the end of 2019, after she took over the portfolio from Mr. LeBlanc. (The August 2020 shuffle saw the intergovernmental affairs portfolio switch back to Mr. LeBlanc's oversight.)

Hill Climbers has also previously reported, based on other sources (including the federal conflict of interest and ethics commissioner's public registry), that **Bud Sambasivam**, **Michael Ingoldsby**, and **Aneil Jaswal** are tackling policy for Ms. Freeland. As well, that **Tyler Meredith**, who previously served as policy director to then-finance minister **Bill Morneau**, has remained in the office as a senior adviser. Mr. Meredith's LinkedIn profile and the public registry both indicate that his title is now director of economic strategy and planning to the minister.

As reporting public office holders under the Conflict of Interest Act, when ministerial staff are hired, details of their employment have to be transmitted to the conflict of interest and ethics commissioner's office as part of a larger public disclosure process, which includes declarations of any outside activities and assets, to ensure they are in compliance with the act. A public registry of this information can be accessed through the office's website.

Mr. Sambasivam, Mr. Ingoldsby, Mr. Jaswal, and Mr. Meredith are all listed on the commissioner's registry as current staff to Ms. Freeland.

Based on the information on this registry, **Hill Climbers** identified 16 other staff who appear to be currently working in the minister's office.

They are: **Vincent Garneau**, executive director of the DPMO; **Josh Arless**, senior manager of executive operations; **Amitpal Singh**, policy adviser; **Michael Den Tandt**, senior communications adviser; **Sadon Ross**, special assistant; **Alexann Kropman**, special assistant for legislative affairs; **Vasken Vosguian**, legislative assistant; **Stephen Bateman**, special assistant for issues management and operations; **Bronwen Jervis**, writer; **Maaz Yasin**, senior assistant for community and stakeholder outreach; **Nina Forrest**, special assistant for policy; **Laura Pennell**, senior adviser for B.C.; **Jillian White**, senior adviser for the Prairies and the North; **Hannah Wilson**, regional desk for the Prairies and North; **Malcolm McEachern**, Atlantic desk and assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretary; and **Jessica Eritou**, special assistant for digital communications and social media.

Additional names are listed under the deputy prime minister's office on the registry which appear to **Hill Climbers** to be staff working in various ministers' regional offices, which serve all of cabinet and organizationally fall under the DPMO's oversight (but are not part of the actual DPMO team).

Hill Climbers has separately confirmed that Ms. Eritou, who was previously press secretary to Families, Children, and Social Development Minister **Ahmed Hussen**, is now working for Ms. Freeland.

A former executive assistant to then-veterans affairs minister **Seamus O'Regan**, Ms. Eritou first joined the families minister's team as an information manager and special assistant to the chief of staff under then-minister **Jean-Yves Duclos** in October 2018. Mr. Hussen took over the portfolio in November 2019, and Ms. Eritou was promoted to press secretary shortly after.

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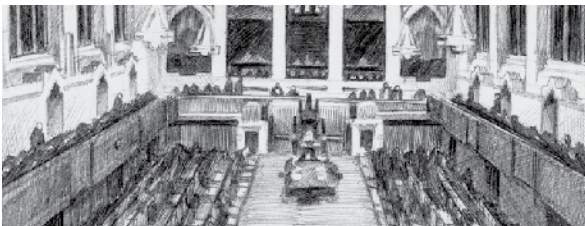
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Parliamentary Calendar



MONDAY, FEB. 8

Black History Month—February is Black History Month in Canada and there are virtual festivities and events honouring the legacy of Black Canadians and their communities across Canada. This year's theme is: "The Future is Now."

House Sitting—The House is sitting in a hybrid format during the pandemic, with most MPs connecting remotely. It's scheduled to sit until 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.

The Pandemic of Racism—A Facebook live series exploring the sociological impacts of racism. Join Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard (East Preston, N.S.) and Senator Stanley Kutcher (Nova Scotia) on Feb. 8 at 1 p.m. ET/2 p.m. AT who will talk about anti-Asian racism.

Diversifying Power—Carleton University hosts a webinar on "Diversifying Power: Why We Need Antiracist, Feminist Leadership on Climate and Energy." Dr. Jennie Stephens will discuss her new book, *Diversifying Power*, which examines climate and energy leadership related to job creation and economic justice, health and nutrition, and housing and transportation. She explains why we need to reclaim and restructure climate and energy systems so policies are explicitly linked to social, economic, and racial justices. Monday, Feb. 8, at 5:30 p.m. To register, visit: carleton.ca/sustainable-energy/?p=522

TUESDAY, FEB. 9

National Security, Economic Prosperity and Canada's Future—The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) hosts a webinar on "National Security, Economic Prosperity and Canada's Future," featuring David Vigneault, director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). A question-and-answer period from the audience, moderated by CIGI managing director Aaron Shull, will follow. Tuesday, Feb. 9, at 1:30 p.m. Register via Eventbrite.

AFN Leadership Gatherings—The Assembly of First Nations hosts the second 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, Feb. 9. Registration available online.

THURSDAY, FEB. 11

Erin O'Toole Speaks to Vancouver Group—Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole will deliver remarks on "Building a Stronger Canada" in a webinar hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. Thursday, Feb. 11, noon PST. The event is free for GVBOT members. Register at boardoftrade.com.

FRIDAY, FEB. 12

The Resilience of Western Alienation in a Transformative Era—McGill University hosts a webinar on "The Resilience of Western Alienation in a Transformative Era." Dr. Loleen Berdahl (Universities of Saskatchewan and Regina) considers the persistence of regional conflict in Canada by examining western alienation—that is,

CSIS director Vigneault to talk about national security, economic prosperity, and Canada's future at CIGI webinar on Feb. 9



The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) will host a webinar on 'National Security, Economic Prosperity and Canada's Future,' featuring David Vigneault, director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. A question-and-answer period from the audience, moderated by CIGI managing director Aaron Shull, will follow. The event happens on Tuesday, Feb. 9, at 1:30 p.m. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

option and use the discount code **Government** to take advantage of this free opportunity.

Rebuilding the Local Economy: Inside the Mi'kmaq-Clearwater Deal—Join the Public Policy Forum for one of the first public conversations about the purchase of Clearwater Seafoods Inc. by a coalition of Mi'kmaq First Nations. They will be joined by the architects of this deal, Chief Terry Paul and John Risley to outline and unpack this historic landmark of Indigenous ownership in the Atlantic region, what it means for reconciliation, innovation, and the economic opportunity it spurs. The Fireside Chat will be moderated by Kim Brooks, dean, Faculty of Management, Purdy Crawford Chair in Business Law, Dalhousie University. Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2-3:30 p.m. Register for the free event at ppforum.ca.

THURSDAY, FEB. 18

Bacon and Eggheads—Join Dr. Volker Gerdt, director and CEO of the University of Saskatchewan's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-International Vaccine Centre, for a discussion on "Better Pandemic Preparedness: How Canadian science can be ready for future threats." The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for better preparedness to infectious diseases, not only in Canada but around the world. Rapid responses are critical and require national centres that have the ability and resources available to immediately respond to new disease threats. This presentation will provide an overview of some of the lessons learned from the current pandemic and provide possible solutions of how Canada can be better prepared for emerging diseases. Thursday, Feb. 18, from 12:15-1:15 p.m. To register for this free online presentation, contact Emma Brown, PAGSE Manager at ebrown@nature.ca or 613-363-7705.

MONDAY, FEB. 22

The Pandemic of Racism—A Facebook live series exploring the sociological impacts of racism. Join Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard (East Preston, N.S.) and Senator Stanley Kutcher (Nova Scotia) on Feb. 22 at 1 p.m. ET/2 p.m. AT who will talk about white privilege and white fragility.

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.
The Hill Times

discontent emerging from one, some, or all of Canada's four westernmost provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba—arguing that Canada's national unity challenges come from the alienation of alternative perspectives. The lecture will be followed by a Q&A. This event is co-organized by the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship. Friday, Feb. 12, 3-4 p.m. Register at mcgill.ca.

SUNDAY, FEB. 14

Hazel: A Celebration 100 Years In The Making—Hosted by Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie and the Mississauga Arts Council, Mississauga's arts community will come together in a colourful, diverse celebration featuring more than 160 performers to celebrate former Mississauga mayor Hazel McCallion on Sunday, Feb. 14, through a live streaming event on MAC's Facebook and on YouTube. Facebook: missartscouncil YouTube: [Mississauga Arts Council](https://MississaugaArtsCouncil).

MONDAY, FEB. 15

The Pandemic of Racism—A Facebook live series exploring the sociological impacts of racism. Join Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard (East Preston, N.S.) and Senator Stanley Kutcher (Nova Scotia) on Feb. 15 at 1 p.m. ET/2 p.m. AT who will talk about anti-Semitism and Islamophobia racism.

TUESDAY, FEB. 16

Energy, the Environment, and Canada-U.S. Relations in the Biden Era—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute hosts a webinar on "Building Across Borders: Energy, the Environment, and Canada-U.S. Relations in the Biden Era," exploring the challenges and opportunities for Canada as it engages on these issues with the new administra-

tion. Speakers include former Conservative cabinet minister Lisa Raitt, now vice-chair for global investment banking, CIBC; former Canadian ambassador to the United States Gary Doer; JP Gladu, president of the Alberta to Alaska Railway; and Maryscott Greenwood, CEO of the Canadian American Business Council. Tuesday, Feb. 16, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. EST. Register at macdonaldlaurier.ca.

Environment Minister Gives Remarks—Environment and Climate Change Minister Jonathan Wilkinson will deliver remarks on "Boosting global momentum towards a cleaner economy" to the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. The bilingual discussion will be held with Christiane Pelchat, president and CEO, Réseau Environnement. Tuesday, Feb. 16, 12-12:30 p.m. Register by Feb. 15 at 5 p.m. at corim.qc.ca.

Energy Affordability with Energy Industry Leaders—Organized by the Pearson Centre, join Tim Egan, president and CEO of the Canadian Gas Association; Kim Rudd, former MP and former natural resources parliamentary secretary; Francis Bradley, president and CEO of the Canadian Electricity Association; Bob Larocque, president and CEO of the Canadian Fuels Association; and Liberal MP James Maloney, chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, on Feb. 16, 1 p.m.-2 p.m., for a live webinar.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 17

Is The Environment The Big Loser From COVID-19?—Green Party Leader Annamie Paul will deliver remarks in French on, among other topics, the future of the party and whether the environment has been forgotten during COVID-19 in an event hosted by the Club Canadien de Toronto. Wednesday, Feb. 17, 12-1:15 p.m. Register at clubcanadien.ca.

Canada 360° Economic Summit—Get a front-row seat for a pivotal day of thought leadership as The Canadian Chamber of Commerce convenes some of the brightest minds in the Canadian business community to discuss the challenges businesses are facing because of the pandemic and the innovative public policies needed to foster a sustainable economic recovery. Wednesday, Feb. 17, 8:45 a.m.-5 p.m. ET. For more information on the program, visit <https://chamber.ca/event/canada-360-summit/>. To register, select the Attendee—CA \$69.99

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