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THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-SECOND YEAR, NO. 1820 CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021 \$5.00

News

Canada continues to delay decision on COVID vaccines IP waiver

BY NEIL MOSS

The Canadian government maintains it hasn't made up its mind on a waiver that potentially could allow increased vaccine production around the world, a delay some say is equivalent to opposing the initiative.

The waiver was brought forward to the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) last October by South Africa and

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News

'Breathtaking' childcare pledge to pay dividends beyond recouping pandemic losses: labour experts

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT ALLEN & BEATRICE PAEZ

The Liberal government deserves some praise for centring in its budget a billion-dollar plan to address the pandemic-propelled shecession that has seen women exit the labour force in record numbers, say labour experts, who note a more even economic recovery is likely to hinge on smaller-ticket items, at least in the short term.

Childcare as the big-ticket \$30-billion promise is important and "completely fundamental to women's equitable participation," but broader measures to address women's recovery was a clear "thread throughout the budget," observed Katherine Scott, a senior researcher with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), whose

work to track the high cost of fees in Canada was used in the budget's rationale.

"They put in place some important initiatives that will hopefully strengthen the position in the labour market of women," she said, adding extending deadlines on pandemic supports for rent and wage subsidies would help women, along with the temporary changes to employment insurance eligibility to facilitate wider access.

The feds vowed to extend some pandemic-relief measures, committing to an

Continued on page 4

For more on the 2021 budget, see:
Les Whittington p. 9,
Erica Ifill p. 10.



Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland walks to the Sir John A. Macdonald Building for a press conference ahead of tabling her first budget on April 19. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

News

'It's good for the political soul': historic 'Kitchen Accord' room to be turned into Senate prayer, meditation space

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

A room whose history is tied up in the historic 1981 debate over the patriation of the Canadian Constitution will soon be converted into a prayer and meditation space for Senators and staff, ending a lengthy process

to find a space for that purpose near the interim Red Chamber in the newly renovated Senate of Canada Building.

"I'm just thrilled," said B.C. Independent Senators Group Senator Mobina Jaffer, who is Muslim,

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News

Time for widespread gender-neutral language in federal policy, legislation, say advocates

BY ALICE CHEN

The very act of not being included in government policy is discriminatory, says Estefan Cortes-Vargas, former Alberta MLA, diversity consultant, and one of the first openly non-binary people elected in Canada, referring to the sparse use of gender-

neutral language. It's an issue the federal government says it's trying to fix, piece by piece.

This area has recently been a focus for the B.C. government, with sweeping changes made to more than 70 laws and regulations in March, replacing 600 clauses with gender-neutral terms.

According to Ravi Kahlon, B.C.'s minister of jobs, economic recovery, and innovation, these changes were made in an effort to increase accessibility.

Sherwin Modeste, executive director of Pride Toronto, praised

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HEARD ON THE HILL

by Alice Chen

New language-learning app named after late Liberal bilingualism champion



Late Liberal MP Mauril Bélanger, who was able to preside over the House of Commons as honorary Speaker on March 9, 2016, before his death, has a new language-learning app named in his honour. *The Hill Times* file photograph

A new CBC-based language-learning app, Mauril, hopes to instill the same love of language as its namesake, the late Liberal MP **Mauril Bélanger**.

Mr. Bélanger, who died from ALS in 2016 at the age of 61, had a long history of fighting for Canada's linguistic duality. He was decorated as Commandeur de l'Ordre de la Pléiade, an order of La Francophonie that recognizes contributions made to international friendship and co-operation.

The new program is intended to offer an opportunity to learn English and French using a variety of "stimulating and entertaining video and audio content from CBC/Radio-Canada, offered totally free," reads the app's website.

The app, financed and endorsed by the federal government, is "meant to help improve oral comprehension and integrate language knowledge in everyday life."

"We wanted to present a learning method that was virtual, that was new, and adapted to our culture," Economic Development and Official Languages Minister **Mélanie Joly** said in a Twitter video. "I am excited to see Canadians use this app and I'm sure that it'll help many people learn French or English."

It's available now on the Apple App Store and Google Play.

End the Lockdown Caucus talks religion, morality

"One of the things that we need to realize in the middle of this crisis is that science is not a moral authority," **Michael Thiessen**, campaign manager for Liberty Coalition Canada, a group of clergymen, elected officials, and others, said at a news conference for the End the Lockdown Caucus held April 15.

During the Ottawa media availability, members presented arguments for why lockdowns are ineffective, and as the press release stated, "have created a political crisis that is now destroying the fabric of our country and society."

Mr. Thiessen continued on to emphasize that while science is a "wonderful thing" it must be guided by another discipline. To that end, he emphasized the moral law of God as the foundational principles for life, liberty, and justice.

He further said that Canada has become a lawless nation that has thrown out con-

stitutional law and shut down businesses and churches.

Independent MP **Derek Sloan**, who was ejected from the Conservative caucus in January and who serves Hastings-Lennox and Addington, Ont., shared similar sentiments, but pointed towards less faith-based reasoning.

He emphasized that public health authorities didn't respond to the virus in time and that they failed to explore experimental drug treatments like vitamin D supplementation. He further pointed to a rapid rise in eating disorders, mental health conditions, addictions, bankruptcies and said that fear and anxiety for children is amplified by the continued school restrictions.

"All I'm asking is for the sanity to begin and to start now," he concluded.



Independent MP Derek Sloan is a member of the End the Lockdown Caucus, which held an Ottawa news conference April 15. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The caucus recently lost members, with Alberta United Conservative Party MLAs **Drew Barnes** and **Angela Pitt** withdrawing from the group, which also includes former MP and People's Party Leader **Maxime Bernier**, after founder **Randy Hillier**, an Ontario MPP, compared the province's response to the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic to the Third Reich.

The pair said they "can no longer be affiliated with someone who trivializes the horrific history of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany."

Conservative leader allows free vote on sex-selective abortion bill

Erin O'Toole, leader of the Conservative Party, announced April 14 that he will allow a free vote on the Sex-Selective Abortion Act, presented by a member of his caucus, as it is a vote of conscience.

Cathay Wagantall, serving Yorkton-Melville, Sask., introduced Bill C-233 in the House in February. According to a post on her website, the bill, if passed, would amend the Criminal Code to prohibit a medical practitioner from performing a sex selective abortion.

The decision sparked the requisite partisan commentary.

Liberal MP **Jennifer O'Connell**, parliamentary secretary to the health minister, said she didn't believe that the bill truly targets sex-selective abortion.

"If the bill is truly about banning sex-selective abortions then why did her own leader come out saying he doesn't support it? ... If it's truly not a backdoor way to remove women's rights, why doesn't her own leader support it?" Ms. O'Connell said.

"While there are Conservative politicians who still insist on debating a

woman's right to choose, our government knows exactly where we stand—we'll always protect and defend this right," Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** tweeted.

With Mr. O'Toole announcing that he would be voting against the bill, Conservative-turned-Independent MP **Derek Sloan** took the time to call him out on Twitter, blasting him for becoming more Liberal in an attempt to get more popular.

"52% of Canadians have said they'd be more likely to vote for a party that legally restricts sex-selective abortion, so who's he trying to please here?" Mr. Sloan asked.

Ms. Wagantall cited similar stats that suggest most in the country to be against deliberate termination based on sex. She further emphasized that the bill boosts gender equality for women while acting as a less polarizing abortion bill. She also called out the Liberal cabinet and prime minister, noting that they describe themselves as feminists.

"Many members have decided to stop listening before the conversation even begins. Does this issue deserve to be studied? Is there an issue that is actually occurring here in Canada that needs to be addressed? We cannot know if we are not willing to even start the conversation," said fellow Conservative **Karen Vecchio**.

The bill was presented and debated April 14, and will return for its second hour approximately two weeks later.

MP McLeod presents government accountability bill

Conservative MP **Cathy McLeod** says there's need for greater transparency around money given from Ottawa to the private sector.

"Parliamentarians and all Canadians have a right to know the status, terms, and conditions, especially for repayable loans," she said, speaking to her private member's bill, C-284. "This bill is not only about greater transparency and accountability but is about our ability to scrutinize the effectiveness of spending and more importantly the ethics of the spending."

The bill would require the industry minister to publish an annual report that covers the particulars of grants, contributions, and loans of more than \$100,000 made by the Department of Industry. It comes in the wake of a significant federal government loan/investment to Air Canada, worth up to \$5.4-billion in low-interest loans and paired with the purchase of \$500-million in company stocks.

The \$100,000 cut-off figure was selected in efforts to keep small businesses from being factored in.

Ms. McLeod told *Kamloops This Week* that the current process for private sector money infusions was "very elusive" and noted that an annual report would make the status clear.

She also called out the WE Charity controversy as an example of unethical use, wherein the charity was chosen by the feds to distribute a student summer grant program. It fell through amid media attention and controversy.

Job moves at *The Globe* and Canadian Press

Menaka Raman-Wilms has joined *The Globe and Mail's* Ottawa team while **Stephanie Levitz** is saying goodbye to The Canadian Press.

Ms. Raman-Wilms announced the news on Twitter April 12. The formerly Toronto-based reporter left her position at the CBC where she first worked as a part-time web writer, before entering a Donaldson Scholar internship, and moving up to an associate producer position at *Cross Country Checkup*. Prior to the CBC, she wrote book reviews at the *Ottawa Review of Books* and served as a reporter for *Capital Current* at Carleton University.

Inversely, Ms. Levitz shared the news on April 9 she was leaving her post as a political reporter at CP.

"I've been writing for the wire for nearly 20 years, covering everything from

llamas on the lam in Lanark Country (one of my favourite ledes ever) to landmark moments in history," she tweeted on her final day.

"To say it's been a privilege is an understatement. I believe in the value and mission of the wire as strongly as ever, and I believe in the value of journalism as strongly as ever too. I'm staying in the business, and look forward to sharing soon where I'm going next."

Beverly McLachlin joins Ottawa Public Library as honorary chair

The former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, **Beverly McLachlin** was unveiled April 13 as the new honorary chair of the Ottawa Central Library fundraising campaign.



Beverly McLachlin, former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada from 2000 to 2017, was named as the new honorary chair of the Ottawa Central Library fundraising campaign. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Ms. McLachlin was described in the press release as an avid library user, and a best-selling author who will act as an ambassador and spokesperson for the campaign.

"Ms. McLachlin embodies the Canadian spirit of democracy, inclusivity, knowledge and creativity, which is at the foundation of this new library," Ottawa Public Library chair **Matthew Luloff** said.

She said she was excited to take on the new role.

"I am thrilled to be taking on this role as honorary chair," Ms. McLachlin said. "I believe public libraries are beacons of equal opportunities. They are spaces of connection where everyone, regardless of their background, can be an active part of their community, city, and country."

The new Ottawa Central Library is part of the Ottawa Public Library and Library and Archives Canada Joint Facility at Lebreton Flats. Construction is planned through late 2024, with the official opening scheduled to take place in 2025.

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CLARIFICATION: The Hill Times, April 19 issue

Re: "If the plan is to turn Labrador or some other part of the country into a nuclear dump, the public should know why," (*The Hill Times*, April 19, by Michael Harris). Natural Resources Minister Seamus O'Regan says he and his government are against importing nuclear waste from other countries to Labrador or any other part of Canada. He told *Enquete*: "Importing nuclear waste from other countries to Labrador—where I grew up—or any other part of Canada has never been on the table, nor is it now. When it comes to nuclear, the health and safety of Canadians and protection of the environment and local communities is our top priority."

Re: "Liberals tight-lipped on labour standoff near party's Montreal heartland," (*The Hill Times*, April 19, p. 35). This story quoted Michel Murray as saying the Maritime Employers Association had threatened to lockout workers. In fact, the MEA had given notice that it would change the compensation for workers, not stop them from working entirely. Mr. Murray says such a change to working conditions would be a form of a lockout.

Canada's economic recovery is green

Sponsored by ECO Canada

Canada can be a global leader in the green space



Kevin Nilsen

President & CEO, ECO Canada

As the world forges on with the battle against climate change and embarks on a new journey to post-pandemic recovery, continued advancement in the green economy is paramount. And Canada is in a unique position to play a leading role in this, with its vast natural resources and talented workforce ready to hold the torch for a greener future.

In 2020 ECO Canada published its report, *From Recession to Recovery: Environmental Needs, Trends and Challenges in the Decade Ahead* (funded in part by Employment and Social Development Canada's Sectoral Initiatives Program), revealing that environmental employment across the country is expected to increase exponentially in the next decade. While this is encouraging, collaboration among key players in the environmental sector is needed to ensure this growing workforce is armed with the skills it needs to succeed.

Kevin Nilsen is President and CEO of ECO Canada, the organization working with industry, government, and academia to build a strong environmental workforce in Canada. Here, he discusses the opportunity Canada has to be a global leader in the green space.

Agrowing environmental labour market

ECO Canada has been working with industry, academia, and all levels of government to help grow and support the environmental workforce for nearly 30 years. With a growing demand for green jobs, it works to provide support cross-country to Canadians interested in developing careers and skills in the myriad of environmentally related fields, and to companies looking to not only fill roles, but grow their business in sustainable ways.

The organization's recent report delved into the opportunities that lie within the environmental labour market, and the gaps that need to be addressed - one of its key findings showed the environmental workforce is set to grow by 8 per cent by 2029, despite the pandemic. Over the next 10 years, higher job growth rates are expected in sustainable transportation, cleantech, nature conservation, water quality, green building, energy efficiency, and renewable energy.

To take hold of this opportunity, a specific set of skills will be required.

"The environmental labour market is still growing, though COVID-19 has taken its toll on economies and industries. It's now up to employers, policy makers, academia and our workforce to stay focused on furthering the environmental economy as our recovery takes hold," said Nilsen.

About one in 30 workers in Canada (620,100) was in a green job in 2019, with environmental workers present in every Canadian region, and practically every occupation. Workers come from all sectors including conservation officers, biologists, hydro managers, geologists, equipment operators, engineers, and general labour positions.

While this level of job creation is encouraging, it has also left many concerned with an impending skill shortage with close to 30 per cent of the current workforce poised to retire within the next decade. This retirement high is predicted to see nearly 75 per cent of net environmental job openings to be in roles related to management, business, finance, and administration.

As it now stands, candidates qualified to work in environmental occupations are projected to be in short supply through to 2029, particularly in management occupations, or those requiring a university or post-secondary education.

Nilsen said this means it's more important than ever to develop training solutions and career resources to ensure qualified workers are available to support the sector's growth and build the world's leading green workforce.

"Employers have been telling us that recent graduates are missing some essential skills such as project management and financial acumen and therefore need additional skills training. We are working with them to develop plans and hands-on studies to broaden the skillsets of those in the environmental workforce," Nilsen commented.

Need for business acumen

Canada has tremendous capacity for continued innovations with a nation of creative thinkers, but key industry players are identifying gaps in the softer business skills required to progress said innovations and commercialize them.

The report found that it is business development and

management skills in young professionals that are noticeably lacking as more senior team members retire and take their knowledge with them. "The lack of high-quality business development talent to help raise capital is one of the top barriers for success - training talent in business acumen at the academia level is key.

"We need a workforce that can establish sales and marketing teams, as well as mastering so-called soft skills like managing budgets, writing concise technical reports, giving presentations and managing projects - but we need the proper training in place to make this kind of talent availability," said Nilsen. Displaced workers from declining industries also pose a significant opportunity for upskilling and transitioning to green jobs, Nilsen noted.

To do this, strategies for deepening the environmental workforce must be viewed as a shared responsibility among employers, educators, and all levels of government, to address the necessary skills required to thrive in the green economy.

Educators must ensure they are staying abreast of competency requirements for environmental jobs, consider incorporating environmental courses or electives into their programs' curriculum, and prepare students for the increasingly digitized workforce.

Where the government can continue to foster Canada's green economy and its workforce is through labour market partnership programs and other initiatives, supporting environmental labour market research and career profiling, allocating funding for job creation, training, and growth, and maintaining commitments to environmental goals.

When it comes to industry and employers, promoting employee engagement and retention, ensuring adequate knowledge transfer processes, fostering employee training and development (including soft skills) and hiring displaced workers from declining sectors or regions are all key to the workforce's success.

"At the end of the day, a shortage of green talent impacts Canada's ability to meet its environmental goals which we are all invested in," said Nilsen.

The road to recovery

Although the pandemic has exacerbated concerns for governments and economies, the opportunity to make a green shift towards environmental and renewable mindsets is a net-positive as Canada begins its journey to net-zero emissions. Nilsen concluded: "It's now up to employers, policy makers, academia and our workforce to stay focused on furthering the environmental economy as our recovery takes hold."

To read ECO Canada's latest labour market outlook report or access other workforce reports, contact us at media@eco.ca.



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‘Breathtaking’ childcare pledge to pay dividends beyond recouping pandemic losses: labour experts

The Liberals have offered a feminist budget, say observers, with measures that help women struggling amid COVID-19 in the short term, like rent and wage subsidy extensions.

Continued from page 1

extension of the wage and rent subsidies to Sept. 25 from June. Those would gradually be reduced in July. If needed, they could be extended into November, depending on the pandemic.

Jim Stanford, an economist and director of the Centre for the Future of Work, said the long-term toll the pandemic had on the labour market is likely to take years to be fully appreciated. He said the feds’ commitment on childcare—the “crown” jewel of a budget “infused” with “feminist principles”—shouldn’t be thought of solely as a response to the she-cession, adding that women have long faced barriers to participating fully in the labour market.

“This should not be understood as an immediate anti-recession policy. It will help with the recovery, but the lasting economic

and social benefits are the real reasons to do this,” he said. “For people who say it’s not needed, because women are getting back to work, I don’t think they appreciate the barriers that women already face.”

Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (University Rose-dale, Ont.) made history April 19 as the first female finance minister to table a budget, itself a historic moment not simply for the \$101.4-billion in spending over three years, but for the two-year gap the government left before releasing the political document. The self-described “feminist” budget clocked in at a massive 724 pages, and outlined up to \$135.2-billion in spending over the next five years, the timeframe the feds are giving themselves to bring the deficit in check, projecting it will reach 1.1 per cent of the GDP within those five years.

In a pre-budget presser, Ms. Freeland said the childcare piece was a “transformational” and “enduring” social and economic “investment” that will yield “a great economic dividend” by bringing more women into the labour force.

The budget estimates the program could raise the GDP by as much as 1.2 per cent over the next two decades by making it easier for more women to fully join the workforce. It suggests the program could lead to the addition of 240,000 workers.

But Mr. Stanford said that underestimates the policy’s potential economic benefits.

He said Finance Canada’s “conservative” estimate doesn’t appear to capture the likelihood that, with access to affordable childcare, more women can choose to work longer hours, and that there would be growth within the sector as well. Bureaucrats tend to err on the side of restraint in their estimates, he added.

“There’s a whole channel of impact there that it will allow more women to work full time. When you’re looking at a good career progression, you sort of have to be working full time, in most cases, to work your way up into better jobs,” he added.

His organization estimates that as many as 780,000 more working parents would join the market, or increase their hours, with greater access to childcare. The policy could provide a boost in employment between 650,000 and one million jobs, including roughly 200,000 jobs working in childcare.

“Most women end up bearing the brunt of the childcare work. And when things get tough, when childcare disappears, as has happened during COVID, it ends up being women who leave their jobs and that is the typical reality we have seen,” said Ms. Freeland, who also highlighted other promises to help boost women entrepreneurs, small businesses, and low-wage workers.

Some of the budget measures can help in the short term, but many of the measures aimed at women will likely have an impact farther down the road, said Ms. Scott, with the virus “in the driver’s seat” and still disproportionately affecting sectors such as tourism and hospitality where women work.

Ottawa estimates some 16,000 women have dropped out of the labour force completely because of COVID-19, compared to the male labour force expanding by 91,000. The “hard-fought gains” for women are now at risk as COVID-19 has heightened gender inequities and hit women in the



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland present the budget document together on April 19. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

labour market both earlier and harder, while their recovery is slower, a backgrounder from Finance Canada acknowledged.

A March 2021 RBC analysis suggested an even more stark reality for Canadian women: an estimated half a million who lost their jobs during the pandemic hadn’t returned to work as of January, while more than 200,000 had slipped into the long-term unemployment, a three-fold increase compared to the previous year.

At the same time, Statistics Canada data suggested that the gender gap in participation rates between core-aged female and male workers, or those between the ages of 25 and 54, has started to shrink. In March, the participation rate, or the share of the population that was either employed or unemployed, of women was 83.9 per cent, compared to 91.4 per cent for men, according to the agency’s labour force survey. That’s around where it was pre-pandemic, with the rate at 83.8 per cent for women in January 2020, while for men it was 90.9 per cent. StatsCan noted that employment rates among both men and women have been improving since September 2020.

Jackie Choquette, a Liberal strategist with Crestview Strategy, said those trends likely don’t account for instances in which women are able to work because of the flexibility afforded by the pandemic and the strain it’s had on them trying to juggle work and caring for their children.

“Are women going back to work? Yes. But are they going back to work in a full-time capacity? Not always. They’re working reduced hours,” she said. “We’re in a unique situation right now, because of the pandemic, a number of employers are being remarkably flexible with their employees about working from home. Will that continue?”

Also in the budget’s chapter on “supporting women,” the Liberals have highlighted rules to strengthen diversity in cor-

porate governance; \$470-million over three years to establish an apprenticeship service (with an incentive to boost diversity in construction and manufacturing); and \$601.3-million over five years to advance towards a new National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

There are also new funds for housing, community-based organizations providing sexual and reproductive health care, and a plan to collect better disaggregated data for policy decisions and establish a National Institute for Women’s Health Research.

Sector ‘running on fumes’

At \$30-billion over five years, childcare is the largest envelope in the budget, and at a scale that, Ms. Scott said, surprised longtime advocates. It’s “breathtaking,” said Katie Davey, who sits on the youth working group on gender equality, an initiative launched by Women and Gender Equality Canada.

The pandemic saw the mass closure of daycare centres, along with a shift from in-person to on-line classes, making it harder for parents—more often women—to work the same number of hours, or in some cases, to keep working.

Noting there was an estimated nationwide shortage of 15,000 early childhood educators in 2018, which appears to have persisted in some provinces, Ms. Davey said a “first step” will be a “massive training plan” for those staffers providing care.

At a total of \$4.1-billion in the next fiscal year, the plan only adds \$2.8-billion to what’s already been committed this year, a top-up that Conservative strategist and Summa Strategies vice-chair Kate Harrison said made her question if the Liberals are serious about starting a program that has been a perennial party promise that isn’t acted upon. “The question is, what are the details going to be

Continued on page 5

COVID relief measures

Policy	Cost
Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (extension)	\$10.1-billion in 2021-22
Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (extension)	\$1.9-billion in 2021-22
Canada Emergency Business Account (extension for gap-filling programs)	Up to \$80-million in 2021-22
Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System (to come)	Up to \$30-billion over five years
Supporting Indigenous Economies	Up to \$150-million in 2021-22
Supporting Indigenous Post-Secondary Education during COVID-19	Up to \$177-million over two years
Canada Recovery Hiring Program (to come)	\$595-million in 2021-22
Plan for reopening borders	\$523-million over five years

Continued from page 4
and how fast it's going to be scaled up," she said, noting that's roughly the same cost for the childcare program in Quebec alone.

For Ms. Scott, that's a reasonable amount, given the early stages would focus on negotiations, with some money likely to stabilize the sector that is "running on fumes," given the drop in enrolment and added COVID-related costs.

While the ultimate goal is to offer \$10 a day childcare after five years, Ms. Freeland presented more immediate changes, suggesting new spending could lead parents to see a reduction of up to 50 per cent in average fees within 18 months.

According to the CCPA, monthly costs were lowest in Quebec at \$181 in Montreal, Gatineau, and Québec City, with averages quickly climbing above the \$700 mark across the country, reaching highs in the Greater Toronto Area above \$1,200, with Toronto clocking in at \$1,578.

Elliot Hughes, a consultant with Summa Strategies and former staffer to then-finance minister Bill Morneau, who called the budget a "landmark" document, acknowledged the plan is a starting point. There's work to be done hammering out agreements with provinces, setting standards, he said, and passing legislation to appropriate those funds.

The budget offers "a lot of forward planning, and a lot of trajectory, and a lot of things are needed now," said Ms. Harrison, adding that addressing skills and training gaps for a changing workforce was a "missing piece" and doubted the hiring credit would have the "desired effect."

Conservatives need to 'come prepared' with own plan

The Conservative Party will have to "come prepared" with a fleshed-out proposal, given this talking point will likely be on the tips of Liberal lips for the next several months, said Ms. Harrison, adding quick movement on this promise isn't likely until there's certainty in Parliament. "This is not just benevolent, we're talking about 50 per cent of the electorate and a sizable portion of that as accessible voters for the Liberal Party," she observed.

Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole (Durham, Ont.) panned the Liberal approach, questioning whether provinces had been properly consulted on an area of their responsibility.

"I prefer letting parents be in the driver's seats and giving options to all Canadian families," said Mr. O'Toole, who in his leadership platform suggested the Canada Child Benefit could begin early, near the end of a pregnancy, Ms. Harrison noted.

Spring or fall election speculation has been rampant, with the minority Parliament recently crossing the 18-month threshold, the average these short-lived governments typically live. The 2021 budget is widely seen as the last before the next election.

According to a January Angus Reid Institute report, Liberals held the lead in vote intention, bolstered by double-digit point advantages over the Conservatives among women: by 20 points among women ages 18 to 34, 28 points between 35 to 54, and 15 points among women over 55. The NDP, meanwhile, holds second place among both young men and young women, and the Liberals will have to "watch their flank" among a segment they can't afford to lose, said Shachi Kurl, president of the polling shop, by email.

As for whether childcare is likely to be a key ballot-box issue, she said the issue is nuanced, even as there's "zero doubt" a broad consensus exists supporting affordable, quality childcare options for parents.

"Almost half of parents with a little one under the age of six actually have one

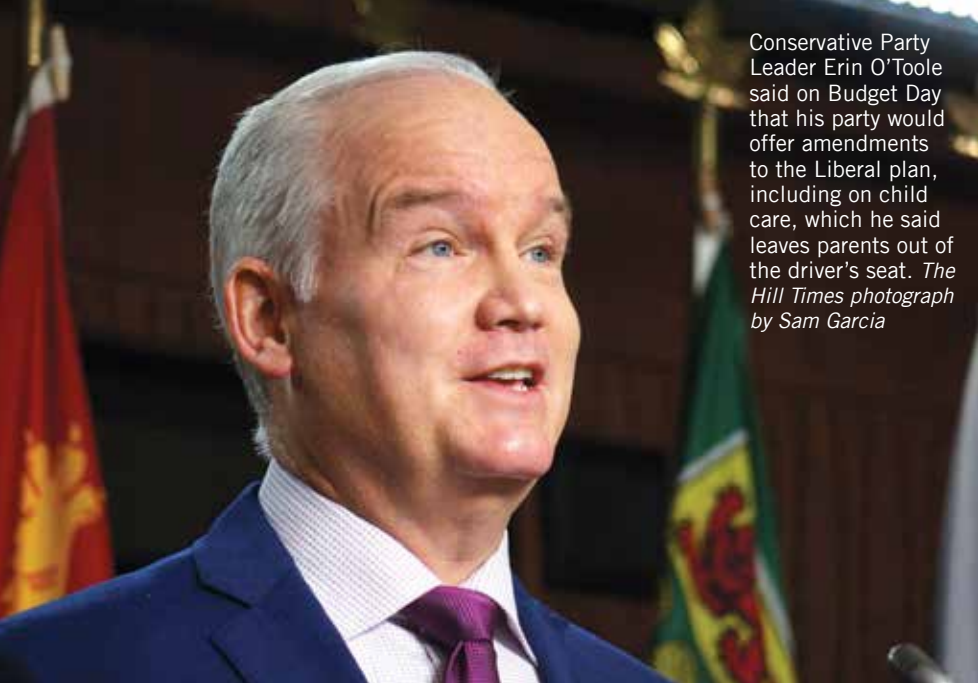
parent at home with the kids. Among this group—they are fairly happy with their circumstances. Be it a choice or the situation they're in. On the other side, just over half of parents with kid(s) under six have arranged out-of-home care," she said.

Women who have been impacted by the pandemic will be the segment of voters most interested in seeing a plan come to full fruition, she said, while stressing "it's not a unanimous viewpoint or lived experience."

Though the Liberals have performed better among women during the pandemic than the Conservatives, according to public-opinion polling, Mr. Hughes said the government shouldn't take that for granted.

"Women, politically speaking, make up a very important voter base for the Liberal Party of Canada," he said. "They need to continue to show that they matter and that they're going to continue to support them."

— with files from Palak Mangat
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The Hill Times



Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole said on Budget Day that his party would offer amendments to the Liberal plan, including on child care, which he said leaves parents out of the driver's seat. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



THANK YOU
Ministers Freeland, Bibeau, Ng and MPs across all party lines for the inclusion of a winery support program in Budget 2021. The program will help Wine Growers across Canada Grow Back Better.

Canada continues to delay decision on COVID vaccines IP waiver



Numerous global health and human rights advocates have called on International Trade Minister Mary Ng to support the WTO TRIPS waiver being forwarded by South Africa and India. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Global Affairs has yet to finalize its position on the waiver six months after it was first introduced by South Africa and India.

Continued from page 1
India in the hope of allowing greater access to vaccines around the globe by waiv-

ing manufacturers' patent protections over a limited timeframe.
Since the waiver was introduced, the Canadian government, along with Austra-

lia, Chile, and Mexico, asked in November for greater clarity from supporters of the waiver on the intellectual property (IP) barriers that member nations have encountered in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In January, 10 of the proponents of the waiver responded to the questions.
"Shortcomings in ramping up the manufacturing of specific COVID-19 diagnos-

tics, equipment, therapeutics or vaccines are well-recognized by all the members," the proponents wrote on Jan. 15. "It is surprising that even after the experience of the last ten months, certain members are asking these questions. Whereas the same members are applying a sequencing or prioritizing criteria for administering preventive or curative treatment for COVID-19 in their respective jurisdictions. So, this is beyond our comprehension that members are recognizing the issue of shortage in supply and at the same time asking questions [about] whether we are facing any challenges in ramping up production."
In a response to an Order Paper question from Conservative MP Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park-Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.), Global Affairs Canada said the federal government has not found anything that domestically would limit "the procurement of COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments, vaccines or other equipment, or which could not be addressed through the use of existing TRIPS flexibilities."
The response noted that Canada remains committed "to finding consensus-based solutions" to IP barriers that WTO members have. Global Affairs said Canada "looks forward to further discussion" on the waiver at TRIPS Council meetings set for April 22 and 30.

Continued on page 15

Did you know that musculoskeletal conditions are the number one reason for lost-time work injury?

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The combined direct and indirect cost of chronic pain in Canada is estimated to be between \$56- \$60 BILLION per year.



One in eight Canadians have been diagnosed with chronic back pain.



Musculoskeletal pain is a key driver of the initial prescribing of opioids.



Musculoskeletal disorders currently affect 11 million Canadians annually over the age of 12. This number is projected to increase to 15 million by 2031. Musculoskeletal conditions place a huge strain on both employees and employers, accounting for 40 per cent of all lost-time claims costing the Canadian economy almost \$14 billion due to productivity losses. These figures are pre-COVID-19 pandemic. Emerging data indicates that the problem is getting worse. Action is needed now to keep workers healthy and to mitigate the costs to Canada's economy as it recovers from the impacts of COVID-19.

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Hill Life & People

New contract keeps distance interpreting definition deemed problematic by association

Public Services and Procurement Canada hasn't gone 'far enough' in protecting interpreters with measures set down in the new contract for freelancers, says the AIIC's Nicole Gagnon.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

New contract terms for federal freelance interpreters are out, and while one proposed aspect flagged as problematic has been reversed, a definition of distance interpreting that's been criticized as likely to open up the workforce to greater health and safety risks has been maintained.

"Because they're putting it down in the contract for the very first time, it's important that they get it right, and unfortunately they've not changed the definition, and it's not right," said Nicole Gagnon, a freelance interpreter on the Hill and Canadian advocacy lead for the International Association of



An interpreter is pictured at work in a booth during a press conference in the Sir John A. Macdonald building on Feb. 16. Among measures undertaken by PSPC to support interpreters during COVID-19, new booths and new sound consoles have been installed. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Conference Interpreters (AIIC), whose membership includes interpreters working for the federal Translation Bureau.

The new contract—via a request for proposals—was posted online April 9. It's a one-year contract, with an option for the government to extend it for an additional year.

At the heart of concern is its definition for what constitutes distance interpretation; specifically, that only events "where the interpreter is in a different location than the majority of participants in a given event" constitute as such.

How an event is defined changes how it will be staffed: for in-person events, teams of two interpreters work up to four-hour shifts, while teams of three work up to six hours, but for distance interpreting, that's reduced to up to three-hour shifts for teams of two and up to four-hour shifts for teams of three.

As part of a suite of health and safety measures undertaken to protect interpreters during COVID-19—during which the vast majority of participants in meetings of the House and Senate, either the main Chambers or committees, are taking part remotely via Zoom—the Translation Bureau has reduced shift hours (to those set out above for distance interpreting events) to reduce the amount of time individual interpreters are being exposed to the lower-quality audio that's transmitted via Zoom.

During COVID, not only has audio been impacted (in terms of volume and quality) by the virtual format, there's also been an increased demand for interpretation services. In a March 29 letter to the House Official Languages Committee, which is studying the challenges facing the parliamentary

interpretation service during COVID-19, Public Services and Procurement Minister Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.) notes there's been an "approximate ninefold increase in the number of meetings" and increased duration (from an average of 1.6 hours in 2018-19 to an average of 3.5 hours now).

According to a January survey by the AIIC, 70 per cent of staff interpreters reported suffering injuries from remote interpretation work.

Ms. Gagnon said while the new definition isn't a concern right now, as the majority of all meeting participants are remote, she expects virtual meetings will continue to be used more frequently post-COVID. The definition set out creates a "loophole," she said, whereby even if witnesses, who often do most of the talking, are tuning in online (during COVID, all witnesses must participate remotely, while Parliamentarians have the option to attend in person or remotely), if a majority of participants are in the same room as the interpreter it will be staffed as an in-person event.

"We just want

to reduce the exposure ... in this case they're not going far enough," said Ms. Gagnon.

An April 12 press release from the AIIC also flags that no limits are placed on overtime for distance assignments, and that when such events go "overtime, interpreters are expected

to soldier on without regard to any health impacts they may suffer."

No doubt a reflection of concerns raised, the contract notes "the definition of distance interpreting may evolve and be modified during the contract period."

A final report from the House Languages Committee on the challenges facing the service is expected in the coming weeks (in a letter Feb. 19 the committee had asked Ms. Anand to "pause the freelance interpreter contract process" while it completed its work). Further sound quality testing is also currently underway by the Translation Bureau, which exists under PSPC.

"The minister has chosen a short-sighted option that is not sustainable. When the already short supply of freelancers is burned out, where will Parliament turn to ensure it is functionally bilingual?" said Ms. Gagnon in the press release.

She also raised concern over a new "advance availability initiative" that's been set down in the contract, which would give priority to freelancers who provide their availability up to eight weeks in advance.

One proposed change the final contract has walked back relates to required availability hours. Previously, PSPC had proposed requiring freelancers to be available to work over a 15.5-hour window (7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.) on a given day. In the final terms, the service's previously uncoded "modus operandi" has instead been set down, said Ms. Gagnon, whereby interpreters are available to work either a day shift (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.) or an evening shift (11:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.).

"That's good news," she said.

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The Hill Times



DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES

by Neil Moss

New consul in Nunavut even more essential without ability to travel to the North, says Danish envoy

'It's important for us to have boots on the ground,' says Danish Ambassador Hanne Fugl Eskjær of the appointment of Navarana Beveridge as Denmark's honorary consul in Iqaluit.

Providing a voice for an ambassador stuck in Ottawa as a result of public health measures, Denmark named a new honorary consul to Iqaluit last month.

Originally from Greenland, **Navarana Beveridge** was appointed by **Queen Margrethe II of Denmark** to the new post on March 5.

Danish Ambassador to Canada **Hanne Fugl Eskjær** told *The Hill Times* in a phone interview that for Copenhagen, the Arctic has always been a "really high priority," which makes having a representative in the North "important."

Ms. Eskjær has been Denmark's top representative in Ottawa since 2019. She was previously the country's Arctic ambassador and led the department of Arctic Affairs and Northern America in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"It's important for us to have boots on the ground—a person who lives there, speaks the language, who has the local network and understanding," the ambassador said of Ms. Beveridge's appointment. "I try to cover as much from here, from Ottawa, [but] it's not a place that you can go to easily all the time. So to have somebody there who is there and can assist Danish citizens with short notice is really important."

Ms. Beveridge has lived in Nunavut for the last 22 years and has experience working for Inuit organizations. She currently works for the Qikiqtani Inuit Association as the administration director.

Ms. Eskjær has yet to make the trek to Nunavut as she became ambassador just months before the pandemic hit Canada. She said the plan was to travel to all three Canadian territories before COVID-19 put a halt to the plans.

"I had been really looking forward to going to the North and visiting a lot of communities and engaging myself, but it was not possible," she said, noting that a future visit may be a "little too optimistic" for this year, but she is hoping to travel to the North in 2022.

She said having a representative in Nunavut is of added value without the ability for embassy officials to travel to Nunavut.

"[In] these times, we need to build the ground for future co-operation, and she can start doing that already," Ms. Eskjær said, noting that talks are being set up with Nunavut authorities.

Ms. Eskjær said the Nunavut and Greenland link with the shared Inuit background is an important driver for co-operation.

Nunavut is 26 kilometres away from Greenland—a Danish territory—and the two territories share a maritime border that is more than 3,000 km.



Danish Ambassador Hanne Fugl Eskjær, pictured on November 15, 2019, says she likely won't be able to make her first trip to Canada's North until next year. *The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia*

Ms. Beveridge told CBC North last month that she is "most excited" about being the "bridge" to help Nunavut connect with Denmark, as well as with Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

She said she has her leg in both Denmark and Canada, with her family still living across the Baffin Bay in Greenland while having met her husband in Nunavut.

"There's not so many of us that have that experience," she said.

The honorary consul in Iqaluit is one of nine throughout Canada that help to build Denmark's representation across Canada. They both serve to help Danish citizens that require assistance, as well as to identify new opportunities for greater co-operation between Ottawa and Copenhagen.

Ms. Eskjær said Denmark is currently planning the largest cultural event ever happening outside of a Nordic country, called the Nordic Bridges, which will take place in Canada in 2022, including some events in Nunavut.

"For next year, culture will be very important," she said, noting that both business and culture will be important points of co-operation between the two nations.

Ms. Eskjær said there are strong historical bonds between Greenland and Nunavut, including between families, traders, and cultural links.

"We are deeply intertwined in the Arctic as two Arctic nations [that are] living very close to one another," she said.

Ms. Eskjær said there is also a focus on increasing mobility between Greenland and Nunavut, noting that prior to becoming an honorary consul, Ms. Beveridge was helping establish links for Greenlandic people in Nunavut.

"Even before becoming an honorary consul, she's been helping when people from Greenland come and visit Nunavut, she's been helping setting up meetings. ... Before taking on the position, she has helped establish these bonds and helped Greenlandic people quite a lot," Ms. Eskjær said.

The ambassador added that there is a letter of intent between Canadian North airlines and Air Greenland to promote direct travel between the territories, which could make the honorary consul position even more important.

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Editorial

Affordable childcare in Canada is long overdue, let’s not waste this moment

Monday was a historic day for the country, with the first woman to hold the post of federal finance minister rising in the House of Commons to deliver her first budget speech.

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland’s first formal financial plan was also Canada’s first in two years, after the previous edition meant to be tabled by her predecessor Bill Morneau in March 2020 was wiped from the schedule by the newly exploding COVID-19 pandemic.

As historic as the moment was on April 19, millions of Canadians are also hoping that with a woman at the helm of the Finance Department, history isn’t going to repeat itself.

The centrepiece of the Liberals’ encyclopaedia-sized tome was a \$30-billion, five-year commitment for early learning and childcare. It aims to drive childcare costs down to an average of \$10 per day across Canada by the end of that timeframe.

“The investment in early learning and childcare, in building an early learning and childcare system, this is going to be an enduring investment in making it possible for parents and especially women to participate in the labour force,” Ms. Freeland told reporters.

As the budget document noted: “More than 50 years ago, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada called on the federal government to immediately begin working with provinces and territories to establish a national daycare plan. Generations of Canadians have waited for their government to answer this call.”

And now, with a chunk of money on the table, the federal Liberals will be

looking to strike a deal with the provinces and territories to tackle the problem “leaving too many children and families behind, particularly low-income and racialized families,” with an initial 50-50 split of the costs.

“I make this promise to Canadians today, speaking as their finance minister and as a working mother: we will get it done,” Ms. Freeland told the Commons.

Judging from the early reaction, there’s a healthy amount of skepticism mixed in with the breathless excitement at the prospect of reaching the summit of this particular mountain.

Ms. Freeland attempted to temper some of that with her budget speech.

“This is not an effort that will deliver instant gratification. We are building something that, of necessity, must be constructed collaboratively and for the long term, but I have confidence in us,” she said. “I have confidence that we are a country that believes in investing in our future, in our children, and in our young parents.”

As the former minister responsible for intergovernmental affairs, that confidence likely has some basis in reality, but in a budget devoid of the oft-asked-for health-care transfer boost and in an environment where provincial politicians are frequently asking for more money, supplies, and vaccines to combat the coronavirus pandemic, there’s always a chance that those negotiations won’t go as smoothly as hoped.

A workable, affordable childcare system in this country is long overdue. Hopefully, the politics of everything won’t get in the way of finally making it happen.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Infrastructure investments essential to realizing the North’s potential: stakeholder

The infrastructure policy issue of *The Hill Times* rightly focused on the importance of enhanced investments in infrastructure, like roads and reliable internet access, but was lacking in discussion on how the government can best support those with the least access in the country; individuals living in Canada’s North and the industries they depend on.

As we’ve observed during the pandemic, many northern regions lack adequate health-care facilities, let alone roads, railroads, and airports. Northern communities and industries are often diesel dependent and limited in their ability to reduce GHG emissions and fight climate change. The costs of living and running a business are consequently proportionately higher. If we are to build back better, we must be careful not to ignore the parts of our country—and the people who live there—that need the most help.

The mining sector understands these challenges because ours is often one of the few large employers in remote and northern Canada. Mines are often located in areas without roads, telecommunications services, or easily accessible transportation. Frequently, companies that seek to develop mining projects in re-

mote and northern regions must build the infrastructure they require for operation. Through extensive research on how remote and northern mining costs compare to those in the south, we’ve found that it costs 2-2.5 times more to build the same precious or base metal mine in the North (off-grid) than in a centrally located region and, most importantly, that 70 per cent of this cost differential derives from the infrastructure deficit.

Strategic investments in infrastructure are key to the government’s stated priority to build back better, and progress is being made, including through the introduction of per-capita plus allocation formulas for territories, the creation of the Northern Transportation Corridor Initiative, as well as funding key projects such as the Yukon Resource Gateway and the T’Licho Road in the N.W.T. But more can be done and without the right government supports, the people who live there and the companies that operate there will continue to face a significant disadvantage compared to the rest of the country.

Pierre Gratton
President and CEO, Mining Association of Canada

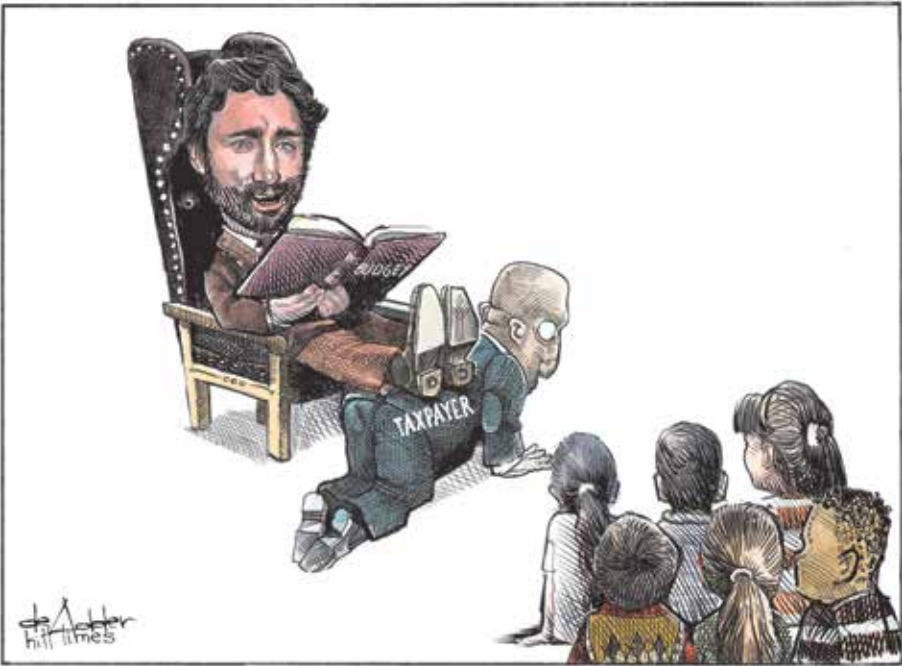
Focusing on ‘bad apples’ won’t solve military’s problems, say veteran network chairs

Re: “Lick is right: drop political posturing, pay attention to the victims, and fix sexual misconduct crisis in Canada’s military,” (*The Hill Times*, April 12, p. 8). Thank you for your thoughtful editorial, in which you highlighted the need for politicians of all stripes to work together to address Canada’s ongoing problems with military sexual misconduct—inclusive of ensuring victims’ care needs are fully addressed. We’d like to add two additional points of consideration to your editorial: that any serious attempt to solve the problem of military sexual misconduct will require ongoing independent external oversight mechanisms and that whenever possible, we should all strive to amplify the voices of the women and men directly impacted by military sexual misconduct rather than having them spoken about or spoken for, by others.

The current “crisis” has been three decades in the making. In those 30-plus years since the military was ordered to

gender integrate by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, Parliamentarians have not provided the military the tools it needed to achieve full diversity and inclusion objectives. “Adding women and stirring” did not work in the past, and will not work moving forward. The military’s problems with sexual misconduct will not be solved by focusing on the punishment of a few “bad apples.” What is instead required, is systemic institutional reflection and subsequent change into an institution that is trustworthy even if, on occasion, individuals within it are not. Concurrently, Parliament needs to focus on providing the military with the required resources to enable the type of external oversight needed to effect these long overdue changes.

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Israel, with all its flaws deserves Canada's support



Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect

OTTAWA—Does Israel have the right to exist? It is a serious question, and if answered in the affirmative, raises many more.

The recent anniversary of the founding of Israel in 1948 prompted a relatively innocuous video by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. With an election looming, the Liberals and Conservatives will battle to win the votes of the Canadian Jewish community, who overwhelmingly support Israel.

However, in a move it presumably thought was clever, a group called Independent Jewish Voices of Canada provided its own version of the video, with a script on the screen contradicting the

PM. It included comments such as “celebrating the ethnic cleansing of Palestine,” and “(Canada and Israel’s) relationship is due to manipulation by the Jewish community.” The video was shared by a former Canadian diplomat who refused to take it down when asked.

I followed up by criticizing the video on the group’s Facebook page. The response was harsh screeds by supposed “progressives” who attacked me as a “Zionist” and insisted Israel had no right to exist. One pseudo-intellectual accused Canadian Jews who support Israel of not being “authentic.”

It is admittedly not easy defending Israel these days. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been in office since 2009 and is an unlikely role model for a modern democracy. Recent charges of fraud and breach of trust, and his persistent machinations to stay in power over four elections in two years don’t reflect well on him or his country.

His Likud government’s consistent lack of progress in establishing a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank, and the perpetual expansion in the occupied

territories have made few friends internationally. In Canada, polls consistently show rising support for the Palestinian cause, with about one-quarter supporting Israel. But Netanyahu and Likud are not Israel; the divided electorate is a sign many people of good faith seek progress.

And the facts are these: Israel is the only true democracy in the Middle East. It is an ally of the West, sharing intelligence and trading freely. Canada is home to a Jewish diaspora of almost 400,000 people, many of whom are leaders in Canadian society.

At the same time, our fading collective memory forgets Israel was founded as a Jewish state in the wake of the Holocaust. And that it has survived several wars in one of the world’s most dangerous neighbourhoods. The complexity of relations between Israel and Iran, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other Middle East states is like three-dimensional chess. It is no wonder Israel has never been an innocent on the world stage.

The existential threats its citizens face on a daily basis are un-



It is admittedly not easy defending Israel these days. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been in office since 2009 and is an unlikely role model for a modern democracy, writes Andrew Caddell. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

thinkable for Canadians. Imagine if there were regular attacks of rocket grenades in the streets of Ottawa from neighbouring Quebec. Or if the nuclear weapons in upstate New York were aimed at Canada.

At its recent policy convention, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh bent over backwards to emphasize criticism of Israel was not covert anti-Semitism. But attacks on Jews and synagogues in Canada frequently involve some conflation with Israel, and those attacks are occurring more often.

Israel is singled out for criticism at the United Nations more than any other country, which is ironic, considering how many human rights violators are among

the accusers. When I was at the UN in 2004, a resolution came to the floor of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to endorse a study on women’s rights in the West Bank and Gaza. The report blamed Israel for the lack of freedom for women there, even though their status hinged far more on the decisions of their own governments.

I could not support the resolution in good conscience, and failing to reach my colleagues, sought cover through the minister’s office. This led to a policy by the Paul Martin government of voting on the merits of any issue concerning Israel and the Palestinians, rather than aligning with the anti-Israel majority. Subsequent governments have followed with a version of this policy.

So, the question is asked again: does Israel have the right to exist? Yes. And that is why, despite its flaws, every Government of Canada has supported Israel since it declared independence in 1948. Anyone who suggests otherwise is an idiot, or worse, a bigot.

Andrew Caddell is retired from Global Affairs Canada, where he was a senior policy adviser. He previously worked as an adviser to Liberal governments. He is a fellow with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and a principal of QIT Canada. He can be reached at pipson52@hotmail.com.

The Hill Times

COVID or not, Freeland’s budget doesn’t shy away from challenging Canadians on their vision for the future

The Liberals are clearly taking advantage of the way the virus emergency has undercut the neoliberal austerity fixation that has influenced federal government spending intentions in every budget for the past 30 years.



Les Whittington

Need to Know

OTTAWA—Despite the immediate crunch of the third wave, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s government shows no

signs of backing away from its plan to transform Canada into what many will see as a very different country in the post-pandemic era.

In the most impactful budget in recent memory, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland looked beyond COVID-19 on Monday to preview the greener, fairer Canada the Liberals are hoping voters will endorse for the future.

The budget envisions massive spending built on the much-expanded role accorded Ottawa as it acted as the financial first responder for individuals and businesses during the 15-month-old emergency. An exhaustive blueprint for progressive, future-oriented growth that will leave the federal government with a \$154-billion budget deficit this year, Freeland’s policy package included large-scale spending on national childcare, seniors’ long-term care, climate action, inclusivity, economic fairness, and business development—as well as increased support to survive the pandemic.

There are also major investments designed to push for a more productive, innovative corporate sector, including new tax breaks for small business investment and a Canada Digital Adoption Program to assist some 160,000 businesses with the cost of new technology while also providing a 28,000-strong youth

tech corps to help people figure out the software.

Overall, Freeland’s strategy is an attempted budget for the ages meant to change Canada’s socioeconomic fabric on a long-term basis. “Budget 2021 is an historic investment to address the specific wounds of the COVID-19 recession, put people first, create jobs, grow the middle class, set businesses on a track for long-term growth and ensure that Canada’s future will be healthier, more equitable, greener and more prosperous,” a press release accompanying the budget said.

It’s a gamble Trudeau didn’t have to take. So far, the prime minister has been given okay marks in the polls for his efforts to protect individuals and the economy during the worst crisis in half a century, and Freeland reinforced the government’s COVID backstop for business and workers in the budget. And the Liberals don’t seem in any imminent danger from an internally divided Conservative Party helmed by a leader with few non-flexible positions.

So, the Liberals could have focused for the most part in the budget on providing the financing for another three or four months of pandemic fire-fighting before turning their attention to the recovery. However, whether Freeland felt committed to this budget before the third wave burst upon us in full force or for other reasons, the

Liberals are pushing ahead with the dual budget message: COVID aid today plus tomorrow’s strategy for what they see as a better post-COVID Canada.

If nothing else, Freeland’s first budget will provide the basis for a Liberal election platform should Trudeau’s minority government be dissolved anytime soon. And the Liberals are clearly taking advantage of the way the virus emergency has undercut the neoliberal austerity fixation that has influenced federal government spending intentions in every budget for the past 30 years. In the face of complaints that Ottawa is spending too much at a time when the economy may be on the way to recovery anyway, the government is taking the position that the hurried return to budget-cutting after the 2008-09 recession by the likes of Stephen Harper slowed the economic bounce-back and prolonged the pain for everyone involved.

As of today, Trudeau is staking re-election on the public’s willingness to see the pandemic shock as a turning point and buy into profound change in keeping with the Liberals’ centre-left positions on a host of controversial issues. And Trudeau is betting a fair bit on his ability to work with the premiers. On national childcare and improvements in seniors’ long-term facilities, Ottawa will need the co-operation of the

provinces, although on childcare, the commitment of \$30-billion in federal cash over five years might help convince otherwise unenthusiastic premiers to go along. A similar situation exists with pharmacare, which rated scant mention in the 740-page budget document other than notes about Ottawa’s ongoing work with the provinces on a possible national drug insurance plan.

Viewed from a progressive, environmentally conscious angle, Freeland’s budget is a much-needed, admirable attempt to encourage the creation of a Canada more suited to the needs and risks of the 21st century. But the commitments involved, both financially and psychologically, may be a lot to ask of Canadians at a time when many are still trying to get through the pandemic with their health and finances intact.

This budget could be seen in retrospect as brilliant or, alternatively, a misfire. It may depend to a large extent on whether Trudeau and Freeland can convince the public that developing green technology and setting up an early learning and childcare system—while expensive—are not only crucial to improving our livelihoods and living conditions, but will also pay hefty economic benefits in the years ahead.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

Comment

Robbing the opposition to pay for us all

This budget reminds us that the human cost of the pandemic far outweighs the spending necessary to restore lives.



Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy

OTTAWA—What a Biden-esque budget; it smells like America's Rescue Plan up in here (if you missed that DMX reference, I can't help you).

The federal budget that we've been waiting two years for dropped on April 19 and, whew, wigs snatched. Firstly, let's take a moment and recognize how historic this budget is: Canada's first female minister of finance, the first working mother to deliver a budget in this country—and one that focuses on people. How radical. Instead of bowing to political punditry from old, privileged white men who always cry about debt and deficits except when the spending largess reaches big businesses, she bucked a neoliberal ideology that has produced some of the largest equity gaps in our systems.

This budget reminds us that the human cost of the pandemic far outweighs the spending necessary to restore lives. This is the difference between price (spending) and value (investments). And it's a distinction with a difference.

There is something in here for everyone and something stolen from each opposition party. From the Conservatives, the Liberals beheaded that party's first attempt at looking human. In producing its own mental health plan, the government takes racialized communities into consideration: "Racialized and Black Canadians can also face distinct challenges with mental health including structural racism and inequities in access to care." And that is a lot of the tenor of this budget—inequities—and that is the role of government that Conservatives refuse to acknowledge, much less address. They're still All Lives Matter in a Black Lives Matter, MMIWG, and Stop Asian Hate world. Without their one-trick pony of deficit spending as a crutch to hide a lack of political vision, the Conservative Party seems lost.

Structural and systemic inequities are the greatest threat to Canadian standard of living. If your work doesn't have that lens applied to it, then you're failing. If we want all Canadians to be able to participate fully in this country, we have to remove barriers and provide supports for those who need them. Heather Scofield's column in the *Toronto Star* reminds us of this, "The pandemic didn't just reveal weaknesses

in our economy. It also exacerbated troubling inequalities that the government readily acknowledges will hamper the country's ability to flourish in the future unless they're addressed."

Conversely, the Liberals made sure the NDP have no room to breathe and nothing to campaign on. This home invasion included the theft of childcare (to be fair the NDP gave that up from the days of Jack Layton), national pharmacare (not advanced in this budget), and beefing up sick leave benefits (only applicable to federally regulated workplaces). Short of a wealth tax, this budget is quite progressive, just not very structurally different.

The Liberals are trying to address structural and systemic inequities using the same structures and systems that produce those inequities. For example, the public service does not have the range to devise programs that are intersectional. Those who make decisions that could determine programming and policies, and intricacies—such as who is and who isn't included and how to deliver them to disparate communities—are white, affluent, and most likely male. Those who have no idea what equity looks like are devising programs with an equity lens. Nothing could go wrong here. Secondly, the \$30-billion investment in childcare, the Beyoncé of the budget, requires buy-in from the provinces, and it's doubtful that this group of white men who have had the benefit of women's unpaid labour buoying their political lives will comply. Unless there is renewed thinking as to how this program will be developed and delivered it'll be another Liberal promise broken, which will do more to wreck Chrystia Freeland's brand than her grandfather's alleged associations.

But what about the deficit?

Unlike the aforementioned pundits stuck in the '90s, new thinking has emerged on debt and deficits. Stephen Poloz, appointed to the Bank of Canada during Stephen Harper's tenure, "is among the leading economists who say deficits can be managed as long as the rate of economic growth exceeds the interest rate governments pay to borrow." At a conference, as relayed in the *Financial Post*, Poloz said he'd focus on boosting inflation-free growth of about two per cent and went onto say that were he finance minister, he would "spend heavily on productivity-enhancing infrastructure, especially childcare."

So, what's the problem? Instead of spending on businesses that use taxpayer money intended to save jobs to boost dividends and executive pay, the government decided to spend it on people suffering from a pandemic. For the affluent, that is the problem. A *Financial Post* investigation found that "at least 68 Canadian companies have continued to pay out billions in dividends to their shareholders while receiving government aid." Here's looking at you, Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy.

Seems like it's the corporations that need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. For those wondering how we're going to pay for these measures, we can start by insisting these corporations pay the public back—with interest—and move onto raising the corporate tax rate. We're all in this together, right?

Erica Ifill is a co-host of the *Bad+Bitchy* podcast.

The Hill Times

O'Toole's bold carbon pricing pitch shows he's willing to take risks to win

He may still yet lose some caucus support over it. But if the Conservatives want to win an election in the next decade, these are the sorts of decisions that need to be made.



Tim Powers

Plain Speak

OTTAWA—Erin O'Toole made a bold move last week. He became the first leader of the modern Conservative Party of Canada to acknowledge that consumers directly have some price to pay for carbon consumption. He announced this a few short weeks after a slim majority of party members at the Conservative policy convention refused to acknowledge that climate change is real.

This is a major and significant move by the Conservative leader. For well over 15 years, the Conservative Party has made millions upon millions of dollars fundraising off the "Liberal carbon tax." They have taken down political opponents who have tried to argue that individuals do have some responsibility to bear in paying for climate change mitigation measures.

O'Toole's new climate conversion was aided by the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision which acknowledged the current federal government's carbon pricing regime is legitimate given the magnitude of climate change. Though the decision of the court was not unanimous, it was comprehensive enough that even allies of O'Toole like Alberta Premier Jason Kenney and Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe recognized they couldn't duck the court's direction.

Still, O'Toole had to get to a place where he was comfortable accepting and defending the role of consumer payment in a Conservative climate plan. Announcing this as he did before the federal budget was also a wise move, as it allowed him to mitigate incoming criticism from his partisan political opponents that the Conservatives were still lame ducks on climate. Simultaneously, critics from his own party, and they will undoubtedly rear their heads, didn't have time for much initial fratricide because they would turn their focus to the Liberal government's first budget in two years.

The mechanics of O'Toole's consumer payment system do seem confusing and will be subject to ongoing criticism. These personal carbon savings accounts are all new to us, and climate policy experts, I suspect, will diagnose their utility ad infinitum. Also, O'Toole's price ceiling for carbon pricing is lower than the Liberal system. Nonetheless, I don't think O'Toole will be too fussed over an ongoing dialogue of the mechanics of his approach as he now can legitimately say Conservatives recognize the role consumers have in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Even if his system is wonky and weird, he can argue that consumers themselves will be making the choice as to how they spend their climate mitigation money. He can even point to the fact that different environmental organizations have complimented the direction and intention of his plan. That is something not many other Conservative leaders have been able to do.

O'Toole has shown that he is prepared to take risks to win. He is not afraid to break away from long standing party orthodoxy. He recognizes that the Conservatives can't be static. Many Conservatives won't like O'Toole's new tack on carbon pricing. He may still yet lose some caucus support over it. But if the Conservatives want to win an election in the next decade, these are the sorts of decisions that need to be made. Standing still on climate was never a realistic option.

O'Toole and the Conservative Party have lots of work to do to be competitive against the Liberals in the next election. But what O'Toole did on carbon pricing was his first major significant action. He has also made it extremely difficult for future Conservative leaders to go backwards on carbon pricing. So, regardless of his future political fate, he has already set up a legacy. He put the Trudeau carbon tax, the so-called tax on everything, to bed.

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

The Hill Times



Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole, pictured during a March 23 press conference following the Conservative Party's policy convention, and the Conservative Party have lots of work to do to be competitive against the Liberals in the next election. But what O'Toole did on carbon pricing was his first major significant action, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

U.S. finally admitting defeat in unwinnable war



U.S. Army Capt. Kevin Mercer, the officer in charge of the 205th Corps Training Team, observes as an Afghan National Army trainer adjusts the sight on an M-16 rifle in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on Jan. 23, 2008. Without the martial 'stiffening' supplied by U.S. special forces and the availability of American air support, the Afghan security forces are no match for the Taliban, writes Scott Taylor. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class David M. Votroubek

Now that Biden has pulled the plug on the U.S. military commitment in Afghanistan, we can be certain that Canada will not be missing out on any victory parade.



Scott Taylor

Inside Defence

OTTAWA—Last week, U.S. President Joe Biden finally admitted that the war in Afghanistan is unwinnable. Starting in May, the remaining American troops—roughly 3,500—will begin pulling out of their bases in Afghanistan.

By this Sept. 11, the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terror attack that spawned the U.S. 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, the last U.S. soldiers will be repatriated home.

The Taliban are celebrating this troop pull-out as their military victory.

For the past two decades, the U.S. has trained, equipped, and bankrolled the Afghan forces. Technically, this force of nearly 400,000 has been responsible for battling the Taliban since 2014. However, without the martial “stiffening” supplied by U.S. special forces and the availability of American air support, the Afghan security forces are no match for the Taliban.

Despite their numbers, these Afghan military units are ill-disciplined and demoralized. They don their uniforms seeking to survive in order to collect their U.S.-funded paycheques, whereas Taliban insurgents are willing to kill themselves in suicide attacks.

Analysts predict that the corrupt U.S.-installed regime of President Ashraf Ghani could hold out in some major urban centres for, at most, a handful of years. Others predict Ghani's power will be overthrown as soon as the wheels are up on the last U.S. military evacuation flight from Kabul.

Canada participated in combat operations in Afghanistan from 2002 until December 2011. Our troops continued to deploy to Afghanistan as trainers for the Afghan security forces until the spring of 2014.

When the mission concluded, media outlets began to ask whether or not Canada's sacrifice had been “worth it?”

The butcher's bill was steep, with 158 soldiers slain, 2,047 wounded and injured, and thousands more veterans suffering from the unseen mental wounds of PTSD.

The dollar figure spent has yet to be fully tallied, but it is estimated that when the long-term treatment of our injured veterans is factored into the equation, the war in Afghanistan will have cost taxpayers \$22-billion.

On the plus side of the ledger, there was not a lot to show in the way of meaningful progress.

At its zenith, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), of which Canada was one of more than 50 members, boasted a force in excess of 130,000 troops.

These foreign troops were supported by the most modern air force that money can buy.

Despite that overwhelming force, the Taliban continued to resist.

Their continued existence meant that any progress, such as the building of schools, was temporary at best.

These facts did not deter the war-mongering cabal of media cheerleaders who vehemently opposed Canada terminating our mission to Afghanistan back in 2014.

Their argument was that we needed to see the job through to its eventual victorious conclusion. They harrumphed with indignity at this “insult” to our martial legacy.

Ludicrous comparisons were made to the Second World War and how we didn't simply pull out of the alliance before Germany and Japan were defeated.

Well, now that Biden has pulled the plug on the U.S. military commitment, we can be certain that Canada will not be missing out on any victory parade.

The Americans and NATO have lost the war.

What is perhaps the worst element of this sad saga is that the senior leadership in the U.S. knew they were in an unwinnable war from the outset—and they chose instead to lie to the American public.

This was categorically revealed in a series of media reports in December 2019. *The Washington Post* obtained a set of internal documents compiled by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), through the Freedom of Information Act.

These documents clearly illustrated that the “new Pentagon papers describe explicit and sustained efforts by the U.S. government to deliberately mislead the public.”

Even after the news broke regarding the “Afghanistan papers,” as they came to be known, the U.S. did not immediately cut their losses.

Now that they have, perhaps even the most hawkish of our military pundits can ask themselves, was Canada's contribution worth it?

The answer is “no.”

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

Korea-Canada relations strong 70 years after Battle of Kapyong

Korea and Canada have developed robust ties built on a solid foundation of mutual respect and friendship, illustrated in the many bilateral developments that have occurred since.



Chang Keung Ryong

Opinion

If you were to travel to the peaceful resort town of Kapyong, a few hours east of the South Korean capital of Seoul, you would be greeted by weary crowds of tourists—all jostling to escape the hustle and bustle of the city, in search of fresh air and lush surroundings.

But what is now an idyllic tourist destination for many, was, 70 years ago, the location of one of the fiercest battles of the Korean War—the Battle of Kapyong.

When South Korea was invaded by communist forces from the North, and peace on the Korean Peninsula was threatened, Canada dispatched the third largest contingent of troops—after the U.S. and the U.K.—to Korea, in a co-ordinated effort to push the Chinese and North Korean forces back over the 38th parallel (what is now referred to as the demilitarized zone or DMZ).

For two harrowing days in April 1951, on a strategic hill on the frontlines of the war, a battalion of 700 Canadian troops (the 2nd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Regiment), fought against a much larger force of 5,000 Chinese soldiers. Although vastly outnumbered



Veterans attend the 65th anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong commemorative ceremony in Ottawa in 2016. Every year, in honour of Canada's valiant actions at the Battle of Kapyong, as well as Canada's overall contribution in the Korean War, the Korean Embassy holds various events to commemorate the sacrifices made by Canada's Korean War Veterans, writes Ambassador Chang Keung Ryong. Photograph courtesy of Veterans Affairs Canada

by the Chinese Army, the Canadians were determined—so much so, that the company commander of 2 PPCLI, Captain J. G. Mills, even requested defensive fire near the position of his own platoon to stem the advance of the Chinese forces. In the end, the tactic succeeded and afforded the UN forces in the region valuable time to reassemble their troops for the next phase of operations.

Every year, in honour of Canada's valiant actions at the Battle of Kapyong, as well as Canada's overall contribution in the Korean War, the Korean Embassy holds various events to commemorate the sacrifices made by Canada's Korean War Veterans. As the pandemic hit in 2020, this remembrance remained top of mind for many when the Korean government donated thousands of masks to veterans across Canada as a gesture of goodwill, and as an expression of the Republic of Korea's everlasting appreciation to the brave souls who sacrificed so much so that Korea could be free.

In the 70 years since the Battle of Kapyong, Korea and Canada have developed robust ties built on a solid foundation of mutual respect and friendship. This is illustrated in the many bilateral developments that have occurred since: in 2014, the bilateral relationship was elevated to a strategic partnership—further strengthening co-operation in global affairs as well as bilateral relations. And a year later, in 2015, the Korea-Canada bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) came into force, further bolstering trade and economic co-operation. Building on the momentum generated by the FTA, the Science, Technology and Innovation Agreement came into effect in 2017, providing a framework for fostering closer collaboration in cutting-edge technologies critical in the 21st century knowledge economy. Indeed, the bilateral relationship between Korea and Canada has made significant strides over the years, with many more promising developments to come.

So, as we honour the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Kapyong, and Canada's generous contribution of troops—which played an outsized role in securing peace in the region, I am reminded of the longstanding commitment of successive Canadian governments (including the present one), in providing steadfast support to the Korean government's policy of establishing permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Thus, as a new season approaches, and the bitter cold gives way to warmer weather, I am strengthened in the belief that with the co-operation of committed international partners like Canada, that indeed a peaceful spring will arrive on the Korean Peninsula.

Chang Keung Ryong is ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Canada. *The Hill Times*

News

Time for widespread gender-neutral language in federal policy, legislation, say advocates

Justice Canada has more recently been using ‘they’ as a singular gender-neutral pronoun on a piecemeal basis, but the gendered nature of the French language requires study, with a review currently underway.

Continued from page 1

the changes as very progressive but said it’s something that still needs to be done federally, “because federal legislation carries weight through all the provinces and territories.”

However, the federal justice department told *The Hill Times* in an email statement that it has been implementing gender-neutral language, albeit in a “piecemeal” fashion.

“Over the years, the practice has evolved with the use of ‘they’ and its other grammatical forms and other drafting techniques in the English version of Acts. New acts are drafted using these techniques. When existing Acts are amended the drafters will, whenever possible, update the wording of the provisions that are being changed to reflect existing drafting conventions,” Justice Canada spokesperson Ian McLeod wrote.

In French, a gendered language, there are grammatical rules that could affect legislative language, he said. The department is studying this area, with the review being undertaken by departmental “jurilinguists.”

“The use of inclusive language acknowledges and values human diversity, and recognizes that individuals have differing experiences, values, beliefs, and lifestyles,” Women and Gender Equality Canada spokesperson Maja Stefanovska said in an email.

While she didn’t specify if they’re being followed, Ms. Stefanovska said the Translation Bureau has linguistic recommendations on inclusive correspondence in French.

While the English side of things generally has gender neutral replacements, like “spouse” for husband and wife, and “they” for he or she, French’s analogues are gendered, said Lee Airton, assistant professor of gender and sexuality studies in education at Queen’s University.

“It is an entirely different process to create gender neutral law and policy in French ... it would be much more difficult, but no less necessary,” they said.



The departments headed by Women and Gender Equality Minister Maryam Monsef and Justice Minister David Lametti say work is being done in a ‘piecemeal’ fashion to add gender-neutral language to Canada’s policies and regulations, the use of which ‘acknowledges and values human diversity.’ *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



Practically speaking Hélène Frohard-Dourlent, a bilingual senior strategist at gender consulting firm TransFocus, said one possible strategy is using a median dot before the final “e” in a word to indicate both masculine and feminine forms as well as the possibility of other grammatical genders. Another method is to rephrase sentences, they said, like switching “Alex is happy” to “Alex is a happy person” thus preventing happy from being tied to the person’s gender.

“And then inevitably, if you are committed to neutral or inclusive French, you have to invent some new words and some new endings that are themselves going to be more inclusive,” they said.

The problem with this, Dr. Frohard-Dourlent noted, is that these words have to be socialized to the point where readers will actually understand them.

As for what these terms might look like, Joel Harnest, co-executive director of QMUNITY, an LGBTQ+ resource centre, said that cues should be taken from French-speaking trans folk, who can share the emerging language and phrases.

He also noted that not everything should be gender neutral. While it makes sense for certain words like husband or wife, he said that there is still a need for gender-based language when “you need to specifically call attention to or talk about a certain gender experience.” As an example, he pointed towards policy around gender-based violence.

“If we move too fast to this utopian ideal of a genderless future, we’re not really acknowledging the reality that those people have to live,” Mr. Harnest said.

Overall though, Liana Cusmano, who is interim president of the Green Party and uses they/them pronouns, said they’re receptive to the current approach for changing terminology.

“I think that’s definitely a good place to start, which is to slowly do revisions and then, when drafting new material, to apply the agenda ... I don’t think that it would be a good idea to rush,” they said, adding that relying on people practiced in those legislative areas along with consultation

with inclusive experts would be the best approach.

Their own party is in the process of implementing gender-neutral language in both English and French. The Liberal Party, according to spokesperson Braeden Caley, also uses gender-inclusive language, with regular policy and document review. The NDP and Conservative Party did not respond to requests for comment on their parties’ approach.



Jade Pichette, Pride at Work Canada’s manager of programs, says there has been effort made towards gender-neutral language, it just doesn’t often make the news. *Photograph courtesy of Jade Pichette*

Jade Pichette, Pride at Work Canada’s manager of programs, said that there has been a lot of effort already made to move towards more inclusive language, such as changes to the style guides of the Public Service Alliance Canada—the federal government’s largest public-service union.

“Some of that work has already been done, it’s just being done on a subtle basis, where it isn’t a news story, where it isn’t necessarily picked up in the media, because we use they/them pronouns in our speech naturally,” they said. “We will just read through the document without even considering it.”

But even though some changes may happen without fanfare, they’re still critical according to inclusion experts.

Gender-neutral language has significant benefits, diversity experts say

“The very act of not being included in policy is discriminatory,” Mx. Cortes-Vargas said.

Mx. Pichette pointed towards the need to represent everybody who lives in Canada, including non-binary, agender, and two-spirit people “as a matter of respect but also as recognition of their lives.”

This broader representation, Mx. Airton said, not only has a symbolic impact, but also a practical one in terms of making policy and governance more accurate for the public and professionals. And, if there is no gendered language in a piece of policy, they said, then gender becomes less necessary to think about in a particular context.

“Gender, knowing if someone’s a man or woman, isn’t always relevant and can actually be a distraction because people use their common sense or folk knowledge about what men and women do or want to inform their decision making without realizing what they’re doing.”

There may even be an impact on employers, Mx. Pichette said, with government stances influencing the policies and procedures of businesses.

According to Vandana Juneja, executive director of Catalyst, a women’s workplace advocacy group, this type of inclusion brings practical benefits to organizations, from enhanced financial performance to improved employee engagement and innovation.

On a more personal level, for Mx. Cortes-Vargas this sort of change would make it easier to navigate systems. For instance, when they go to the bank or fill out forms they have to pick gendered slots.

“They’ll say you have to pick one. And it’s like ‘no, I don’t—this is your problem, this isn’t my problem’ ... I can’t go through and just fill out a form without having to negotiate existing in that space,” they said.

The benefit to changing these systems and writing things into policy would be a reduction of barriers, instead of continually having to ask if there’s room for them and having to get exceptions made, they said.

With gender-neutral language, Mx. Cusmano said they feel seen. While it’s difficult to put into words, the impact, they said, is huge and helps to build trust and effective collaboration.

“Gender identity is real to individuals and it has real impacts on their well-being,” they said.

Kai Scott, president of TransFocus, said the pervasive gendering of systems has significant impacts, with this “systemic exclusion” adversely affecting both mental and physical health and causing non-binary people to wonder if they’re important enough to be recognized in official documentation. “And the key thing is that if they have support and they’re affirmed, their social determinants go through the roof, they’re so positively impacted,” he said.

Mr. Modeste tied this to the economy. With more people



Executive director of Pride Toronto Sherwin Modeste said that more representation of gay men in his world growing up would’ve changed his life. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

comfortable and ready to get out there and work, the burden on society is reduced, he said. Respecting people’s gender identity is critical to alleviating these sorts of long-term impacts, he continued.

For him, gender-neutral language allows for authentic expression. In his case, having been married and lived part of the “straight life,” he said that if he had seen more gay men represented in the world when he was growing up his life would’ve been very different “in a positive way.”

Lawyer Raj Anand, a partner at WeirFoulds LLP with practice in constitutional law, pointed towards the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and its emphasis on gender equality, noting that implementing gender-neutral language would also put into action the promise the Charter was designed to have.



Queen’s University professor Lee Airton noted that while making French gender-neutral is difficult, it still needs to be done. *Photograph courtesy of Lee Airton*

“When the federal government takes [gender-neutral language] on, it sends a huge signal to others, as well as internally,” Mr. Scott said. “It’s really important for employees that work for the federal government to see this change, and if it affects them personally, they benefit from it.”

“But then also for those who it doesn’t impact, they might go, ‘oh well, why is this happening?’ And then we can have conversations about the benefits of gender-neutral language just to bring everybody along on this journey that’s so important for a variety of people.”

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‘It’s good for the political soul’: historic ‘Kitchen Accord’ room to be turned into Senate prayer, meditation space

The fourth-floor room’s old kitchenette was demolished during renovations to the Senate of Canada Building and has sat empty since Senators moved in at the beginning of 2019.

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in reaction to the Senate Internal Economy, Budgets, and Administration Committee’s (CIBA) April 1 decision to approve use of the room.



Then-Ontario attorney general Roy McMurtry, left, pictured with then-justice minister Jean Chrétien and Saskatchewan AG Roy Romanow in the old fourth-floor kitchen. Photograph courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

“This is not about a specific religion, it’s about a space where we respect Senators and people who work in that building to just meditate, to have a quiet space, because our work is very long hours, very strenuous, and sometimes very difficult. And we don’t all have offices in that building and this small office gives us a place to just go and sit,” she said.

The small room is located on the fourth floor of the Senate of Canada Building at 2 Rideau St. Formerly known as the Government Conference Centre (and before that, up until 1966, as Ottawa’s Union Railway Station), the building is serving as the Upper Chamber’s temporary home during the ongoing,

decade-plus effort to renovate the Centre Block building. The Senate officially moved into the space at the beginning of 2019, after a four-year, \$219-million effort to rehabilitate the aging building.

Prior to this renovation, the fourth-floor room had housed a kitchenette where informal side talks between then justice minister Jean Chrétien, Saskatchewan attorney general Roy Romanow, and Ontario AG Roy McMurtry took place on Nov. 4, 1981, the third day of a four-day summit between federal and provincial leaders at the Government Conference Centre on amending and patriating the Canadian Constitution. That Nov. 4 discussion led to what’s been dubbed the Kitchen Accord, which, while not a formal written agreement, outlined the expectations of the governments of Canada, Ontario, and Sas-

katchewan in the talks, including agreement to include a notwithstanding clause to temper the proposed new Charter of Rights. In turn, the room came to be known as the Kitchen Accord Room.

(Brian Peckford, who attended the summit as the then-premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, has disputed the Kitchen Accord “myth,” arguing it was not part of the formal summit discussions on Nov. 4 or 5, and, in turn was “not the basis of the agreement.”)

The room’s kitchenette was torn down during the building’s renovation, after being damaged by flooding in 2013 (and the discovery of asbestos)—a move Senators learned about a year later, prompting discussion about



The Senate of Canada Building at 2 Rideau St., pictured Dec. 10, 2020. Neither Public Services and Procurement Canada or the Senate administration was able to provide a recent picture of the building’s fourth-floor Kitchen Accord room. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

commemorating the space—and the room has been empty since. In December 2018, as Senators were in the midst of moving into the building, CIBA discussed a \$30,000 proposal to design a museum-style re-creation of the original kitchenette to commemorate its history, a proposal which ultimately fell to the wayside.

The search to find a space for a prayer and meditation room in the new Senate of Canada Building has been ongoing for some time.

While a space was originally marked down for such purposes in plans for the new Senate building, it had to be reallocated after the Independent Senators Group was created in 2016. The building, which includes the interim Senate Chamber and three committee rooms (among other things), has limited office space, and what exists is reserved for the Senate Speaker, administration, and the leaders of each of the Senate’s recognized groups. In March 2020, the Senate administration indicated that the only available vacant space in either 2 Rideau St. or 1 Rideau St. (which is home to Senate committee rooms and is connected to the old railway station by an underground tunnel) was Room 428, the Kitchen Accord Room. CIBA members at the time asked the administration to make another effort to find an alternative space, but, as indicated on April 1, no other option was found.

A Senate prayer and meditation room was first opened in the Centre Block building in the early 2000s, located just under the Red Chamber beside the old Aboriginal Peoples Committee Room.

Sen. Jaffer, who was first appointed to the Senate in 2001 and was part of the effort to designate the room for such use, recalled “many, many employees” expressing to her a desire for such a space before it opened.

“For me, too, I couldn’t find a place to go and pray” before the room was created, she said. Having a space near—and in this case, directly under—the Chamber “was perfect because you could just run down, pray, and come back up.”

“So when the present Senate building happened, I was very unhappy because there was no [space] for me,” she said, noting that during the Senate’s early days in 2 Rideau St., she did not have full mobility at the time due to health issues. “I couldn’t run back to the office [in the Victoria

Building] and pray and stuff, and so I did bring this up a number of times and I’m so happy that Senators Marwah, Marshall, Tannas, and Munson really didn’t give up on that and have set up a meditation room.”

Sen. Marwah is chair of CIBA, while Conservative Senator Elizabeth Marshall (Newfoundland and Labrador), PSG Senator Jim Munson (Ontario), and CSG Senator Scott Tannas (Alberta) are deputy chairs of the committee.



ISG Senator Mobina Jaffer, pictured with PSG Senator Jane Cordy during a September 2017 meeting of the Senate Internal Economy Committee. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Along with the Centre Block room, since 1991 the Senate has had a second room for prayer and meditation: the Father O’Sullivan Room in East Block’s Room 177. Named after a former senator, Sean O’Sullivan, who left the Red Chamber to join the Catholic priesthood, the room remains open and a little more than 40 Senators still have offices in the building, but work to renovate parts of its exterior is ongoing (and has prompted general complaints over noise disruption).

For Senators, and staff, having a chance to take “a little time from day to day to meditate or pray” is “good for the political soul,” said Sen. Munson, who noted he used the previous room in Centre Block to meditate.

“I pushed for this, and I was looking for a convenient room in the Senate of Canada Building because there is the Sean O’Sullivan chapel, but that’s in the midst of a construction zone and very few Senators are housed these days in the East Block,” he said.

“When you are in the heat of a debate and you’re dealing with issues, there should be an opportunity to find that comfort zone, that quiet zone, a place of peace, so to speak, to either meditate or to pray.”

While the Senate of Canada Building has common spaces—a Reading Room, a seating area for the cafeteria and Library of Parliament branch, and a Senators’ lounge—they don’t offer privacy, noted Sen. Munson.

The old Kitchen Accord Room is currently an empty shell, and a rep from the Senate administration told CIBA it could be fitted up “for less than \$1,000,” with no new funding required. Alison Korn, issues manager and media relations adviser for the Senate, confirmed the cost will come from the Senate Property and Services Directorate’s operating budget, and that the “fit up will be minimal, consisting of equipment and furniture.”

“The work will begin once the pandemic risks can be mitigated to an acceptable level,” she said in an email.

Both Sen. Jaffer and Sen. Munson said they expect the room to get a simple treatment—chairs, a table, soft lighting—similar to the Centre Block space.

“I don’t think we need decoration or anything ... just a few chairs for people,” said Sen. Jaffer, who noted she brings her own prayer rug. “I don’t have any expectations except a nice, quiet spot to be able to meditate.”

Sen. Munson, who covered the constitutional talks as a reporter, said the question of commemorating the historic space is “an issue for another day,” but one he thinks Senators should take another look at.

Creating a prayer and meditation room, he said, is “a respectable use” for the space, “not to mention there’s no wasted space in the Senate of Canada Building, and Senators have asked for it, and we all need a little time from day to day to meditate or pray.”

Moreover, Sen. Munson noted that it’s not just the small fourth-floor room that holds historic significance, but the entire building. During its time as a train station, it was a point of departure for many Canadian soldiers heading off to war, and has been the arrival point for many notable figures, from royalty to Elvis Presley.



Ontario PSG Senator Jim Munson, pictured in October 2018, says being able to take time to pray or meditate is “good for the political soul.” The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

“It’s bigger than just one room, but one room does have historical significance,” he said.

“Every time I walk through the bowels of the building where the trains would come in I think of the smoke filled atmosphere of the premiers around the table and ... it brings back a lot of memories.”

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HILL CLIMBERS

by Laura Ryckewaert

New press secretary on board in Defence Minister Sajjan's office

Floriane Bonneville, who had been press secretary to the defence minister since January 2020, is now a communications adviser to Economic Development Minister Mélanie Joly.

National Defence Minister **Harjit Sajjan** has a new press secretary at work tackling media requests in his office, with **Daniel Minden** recently hired, taking over for **Floriane Bonneville**, who left to work for Economic Development and Official Languages Minister **Mélanie Joly**.



Daniel Minden officially took over as press secretary to Mr. Sajjan on April 12. *Photograph courtesy of Daniel Minden*

Mr. Minden's first day on the job was April 12, and he starts at a busy time, with the minister currently caught in the spotlight over misconduct in the military and the government's handling of it.

Before joining Mr. Sajjan's office, Mr. Minden had spent the last seven months working part-time as a communications assistant in Liberal MP **Marc Miller's** constituency office in Ville-Marie-Le Sud-Ouest-Île-des-Soeurs, Que.

In an email to **Hill Climbers**, Mr. Minden said he was "thrilled" to be taking on the role of press secretary to Mr. Sajjan.

"Having studied political science, international relations, and defence policy in both Canada and Europe, Canada's role in the world is something close to my heart. I'm really looking forward to working with my new team to promote Canadian interest, keep Canadians safe, and build a more respectful and inclusive defence community," he said.

Mr. Minden grew up in Unionville, Ont., and his experience on the Hill dates back to a 2018 summer internship in Small Business, Export Promotion, and International Trade Minister **Mary Ng's** office as the Liberal MP for Markham-Thornhill, Ont. During the summer of 2019, he spent a couple of months as an intern in then-Toronto Liberal MP **Michael Levitt's** office, after which he spent almost half a year as a part-time communications assistant to Montreal Liberal MP **Rachel Bendayan**. Prior to his work for Mr. Miller, he spent

the summer of 2020 as an intern in Ms. Ng's office as trade minister.

Throughout this, from 2017 until this year, he was also busy completing a bachelor's degree in political science, with a minor in history, from McGill University. As part of his studies, he took part in an exchange program during the first five months of 2020, studying at Sciences Po in Paris, France. Mr. Minden is bilingual in English and French, and is also a former fellow with the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee.

Todd Lane continues as director of communications to Mr. Sajjan, whose ministerial office is run by chief of staff **George Young**. Also tackling communications in the office is **Emily Heffernan**, senior communications adviser and Atlantic regional affairs adviser.

Ms. Bonneville, who marked her last day in the defence minister's office on March 19, is now a communications adviser to Ms. Joly, as of March 22.



Floriane Bonneville is now a communications adviser to Ms. Joly. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

A former freelance chase producer with CTV News and reporter with Radio-Canada, Ms. Bonneville first began working for Mr. Sajjan as a special assistant for issues management in the summer of 2019. She was promoted to press secretary in January 2020.

She has a bachelor's degree in English language and literature from Concordia University and a master's degree in journalism from Carleton University.

Now part of Ms. Joly's communications team, Ms. Bonneville joins senior communications adviser **Emily Williams**, press secretary **Catherine Mounier-Desrochers**, and director of communications **Maéva Proteau**. **Sandra Aubé** is chief of staff to the minister.

Staff additions for ministers Wilkinson, Blair

Environment and Climate Change Minister **Jonathan Wilkinson** has a couple of new faces in his office, including **Bruce Cheadle**, who started as a senior special adviser for communications to the minister on April 12.

A former longtime reporter for The Canadian Press, including 25 years spent covering national affairs, energy, and the environment as a member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, Mr. Cheadle has



National Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan, pictured heading into the fall Liberal cabinet retreat on Sept. 15, 2020, alongside Floriane Bonneville. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

been working for the Trudeau Liberal government since early 2017, starting shortly after he announced his retirement from journalism.



Bruce Cheadle recently joined the environment minister's office. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Most recently director of issues management to Infrastructure and Communities Minister **Catherine McKenna**, he previously spent almost three years as director of communications to then-Treasury Board president **Scott Brison**.

Also now on the minister's communications team is **Gabriel Brunet**, who was brought on board as a special assistant for communications on Feb. 1.

Before coming to work on the Hill, Mr. Brunet had spent a few months as an analyst with the Centre de services scolaire de Montréal, a school service centre under Quebec's education ministry. He's also previously worked for public relations firms Mongeau Pellerin, Torchia Communications, Syrus Réputation, and Ryan Affaires publiques.



Gabriel Brunet is a special assistant for communications to Mr. Wilkinson. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Sabrina Kim is director of communications to the minister, while **Maira Kelly** is press secretary. **Marlo Reynolds** is chief of staff to Mr. Wilkinson.

Meanwhile, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Minister **Bill Blair** has a new aide of his own, with **David Drahos** having been hired as the minister's new Atlantic regional affairs adviser.

He replaces **Annie Cullinan**, who recently became press secretary to Minister **Jim Carr**, the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Prairies, as reported by **Hill Climbers**.

Until recently, Mr. Drahos had been working on the Hill for Nova Scotia Liberal MP **Kody Blois** since the 2019 election, which saw Mr. Blois elected to sit in the House for the first time with 43.3 per cent of the vote.



David Drahos has joined the public safety minister's team. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Before then, Mr. Drahos had spent years working for Mr. Blois' riding predecessor, **Scott Brison**, starting as a volunteer on his 2011 election campaign, after which he worked as a part-time student assistant in Mr. Brison's constituency office. He became a full-time riding assistant to the MP in 2014 and after the 2015 election (during which he again volunteered on Mr. Brison's campaign) he came to Ottawa to work in Mr. Brison's Hill office.

Mr. Drahos also volunteered on now-Nova Scotia Premier **Iain Rankin's** successful campaign for leadership of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party, which culminated in February.

Mr. Drahos has a bachelor's degree in classical studies from the University of Guelph and a master's degree in cultural heritage studies from University College London in the U.K., for which his dissertation focused on "Governing iconoclasm in Halifax, Canada: An ethnography of settler-state governmentality in iconoclastic disputes," as noted on his LinkedIn profile.

In other news, **Ellen Kuschnik**, who had been on leave, has returned to work in Mr. Blair's office under a new title: previously an issues management and parliamentary affairs adviser, she's now a policy adviser to the minister.

Ms. Kuschnik has been in the public safety minister's office since 2018, starting as a legislative assistant and assistant to the parliamentary secretary under then-minister **Ralph Goodale**.

She'll now be working closely with Mr. Blair's team of senior policy advisers, **Sacha Atherly**, **Manel Menouar**, and **Mehalan Garoonanadhi**, under director of policy **Dan Linden**.

Zita Astravay is chief of staff to the minister.

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Parliamentary Calendar



Atwood, Gray, Joyal among honourees at Library and Archives Canada Scholar Awards April 21

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21

House Sitting—The House is sitting in a hybrid format during the pandemic, with most MPs connecting remotely. It's scheduled to sit every weekday for the next four weeks, April 19-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.

Fiscal Federalism in Canada: Analysis, Evaluation, Prescription—The University of Ottawa hosts "Fiscal Federalism in Canada: Analysis, Evaluation, Prescription," a three-day conference featuring Canadian scholars and experts on a wide range of topics related to fiscal federalism, which will be subsequently compiled into a book. Speakers include McGill University professor Ken Boessenkool; Carleton University professor Jennifer Robson, and writer and journalist Mary Janigan. Wednesday, April 21 to Friday, April 23. Visit fiscalfederalism.ca for more information and to register.

The Change Conference: Planning for the Unpredictable Future—Hosted by The Pearson Centre, continues on April 21. "Public Service, COVID and Beyond: Saviour or Burden," with PIPSC president Debi Daviau; Dave Bulmer, president and CEO of AMAPCO; Scott Marks, assistantships to the general president, IAFF; Senator Peter Boehm, former deputy minister Government of Canada. Moderated by Kathleen Monk, principal at Earncliffe Strategy Group. And from 7-8 p.m., there will be a panel discussion "Conversations with Leaders" (30-minute fireside chats) with CLC president Hassan Yussuff at 7 p.m. and at 7:30 p.m. with Green Party Leader Annamie Paul. Moderated by Pearson Centre board member Karen Mock and Andrew Cardozo. For further information, please contact: Andrew Cardozo, president, at acardozo@thePearsonCentre.ca or 613-295-1260. For more information, go to: thepearsoncentre.ca.

Hot Takes on the Federal Budget: Where are we going with the Feminist Foreign Policy?—The Group of 78 and the McLeod Group host a webinar: "Hot Takes on

the Federal Budget: Where are we going with the Feminist Foreign Policy?" Gauri Sreenivasan, director of policy and campaigns at Nature Canada, will moderate the discussion featuring one panellist per topic: Laura Macdonald, professor, Political Science, Carleton University (Trade); Stephen Brown, professor, Political Studies, University of Ottawa (Aid); Bianca Mugenyi, director, Canadian Foreign Policy Institute (Diplomacy); Peggy Mason, president, Rideau Institute on International Affairs (Defence); and Angela Keller-Herzog, former federal Green Party candidate and co-coordinator CAFES (Environment). Wednesday, April 21, 3-4 p.m. Register online at group78.org.

Library and Archives Canada Scholar Awards—The online awards ceremony, presented by the Library and Archives Canada Foundation, and Library and Archives Canada, will be broadcast on Wednesday, April 21, at 7 p.m. (Eastern Time). The Library and Archives Canada Scholar Awards were created to recognize remarkable Canadians who have made an outstanding contribution to the creation and promotion of our country's culture, literary heritage and historical knowledge. The following recipients of the 2020 LAC Scholar Awards are being honoured: Margaret Atwood, poet, novelist, literary critic, and essayist; Roch Carrier, novelist and author; Charlotte Gray, historian, author, and biographer; Serge Joyal, former senator, art collector, and philanthropist; Terry O'Reilly, broadcast producer and radio personality. Tune in on the Library and Archives Canada's English YouTube and French YouTube channels. No registration is required. The 30-minute event will feature

The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to news@hilltimes.com by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper. We can't guarantee inclusion of every event, but we will definitely do our best. Events can be updated daily online, too.

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Canada continues to delay decision on COVID vaccines IP waiver

Continued from page 6

Numerous global health and human rights advocates, as well as more than 55 WTO members, have backed the waiver.

Global Affairs spokesperson Michel Cimpaye reiterated that Canada has not rejected the waiver.

"We are committed to finding consensus-based solutions to any IP-related challenges experienced by WTO Members related to or arising from the TRIPS Agreement in relation to COVID-19, including any challenges that cannot be addressed through existing TRIPS flexibilities," he said. "Canada is also working with other WTO Members to clarify any trade-related barriers in this area, as well as supporting the WTO Director General's efforts to enhance the WTO's role in global dialogue with the pharmaceutical sector to accelerate global vaccine production and distribution."



NDP MP Daniel Blaikie says the government's delay in finalizing its position on the TRIPS waiver amounts to a 'no.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The government did not provide an answer on when it would make a final decision on the waiver.

NDP MP Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood-Transcona, Man.), his party's international trade critic, said the fact that the government has yet to make a decision on the waiver is "effectively a 'no.'"

"We need to get vaccine production up and running globally and these delays are frustrating those attempts," he said. "It's not good enough to say we haven't taken a position."

Mr. Blaikie said he is puzzled over what more the government needs to know as the information is already available.

The House Committee on International Trade is in the middle of a study looking at COVID-19 vaccines and the India/South Africa waiver. Pharmaceutical industry representatives who have appeared



U.S. President Joe Biden is facing increased domestic pressure to support the TRIPS waiver, which may push the Canadian government to support it. *Photograph courtesy of Facebook*

before the committee as part of this study have voiced opposition to the waiver.

"Proponents of this initiative [the waiver] argue that revoking IP rights would lead to an increase in the supply of new vaccines in developing nations, however, there is no credible evidence validating this assumption, and we recommend that Canada stand with leading innovative jurisdictions to oppose this proposal," said Pamela Fralick, president of Innovative Medicines Canada, on April 16.

Mr. Blaikie said he hasn't found the arguments coming from industry to be "compelling."

He said if the argument is that the waiver won't lead to more vaccines being produced, then "no harm is done" when it isn't utilized.

"I don't think anybody has done a good job of explaining why it would be really damaging to have this waiver," he said.

Mark Warner, a Canadian and U.S. trade lawyer, told *The Hill Times* that the government's decision to delay is symbolic of how it operates on the international stage without taking firm positions.

He said Canada's position could evolve if more support for the waiver comes from the U.S. and the EU. In the meantime, its position is simply for more study, added Mr. Warner, a principal with MAAW Law.

"I don't see Canada acting independently of the United States and Europe on this," he said. "I think Canada will fall into line as it always does on this stuff. We are a follower, not a leader."

The Biden administration has been facing increased pressure domestically to agree to the waiver, including from influential members of the U.S. Congress and stakeholders.

Mr. Blaikie said Canada should lead difficult conversations on the world stage, noting that he would hope Canada supports the waiver on its own.

"But if our government can't bring itself to get there on its own, I would be very glad for Canada to get there because one of our important allies finally decided to do the right thing," he said.

Stuart Trew, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' senior trade researcher, said it has been "disappointing" to watch the government's response to a "reasonable" waiver proposal.

He said Canada has been provided evidence from the proponents of the waiver, but Ottawa has yet to recognize the need for the initiative.

"[The government] is stalling and I think that stalling is a form of opposition at this point given the extent of the emergency," Mr. Trew said.

He said it is "baffling and hypocritical" that Canada isn't siding with those WTO members who support the waiver, given the difficulty it has had with its own vaccine rollout.

Mr. Warner said at this stage of the pandemic, he didn't think the waiver would have an impact.

He said the waiver serves as a "useful device" to raise the issue of IP to public attention and focus on the importance of getting vaccines to developing countries.

But he added the trouble established pharmaceutical companies are having in their own production shows there is added concern that if the IP for the vaccines are distributed broadly and a mistake is made in the formulation of the drug or in the supply chain and quality control, there could be consequences for the original manufacturer.

Mr. Warner noted that when more vaccines are developed and the process becomes standardized, discussions on increased manufacturing will be "much more relevant," adding that, historically, licensing has been for a past version of a drug and not the latest model.

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