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THE HILL TIMES

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NEWS

Increasing inflation top of mind for feds, PSAC in stalled contract negotiations as union puts pressure on Treasury Board

Meanwhile, Kevin Page says 'the government is going to have to communicate that there's going to be a real wage loss that's going to be experienced by public servants, and to be honest, it's going to be experienced by just about everybody.'



Treasury Board President Mona Fortier, left, and PSAC national president Chris Aylward. Aylward says 'the buck ultimately stops with Minister Fortier in negotiations.' *The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade*

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

The Public Service Alliance of Canada is putting pressure on Treasury Board President Mona Fortier, saying she has been "missing in action" at the bargain-

ing table as union members have been without a contract since the summer of 2021 and as inflation has risen dramatically.

But public service experts say both sides are under a lot of pressure in this economic envi-

ronment, with the government trying to avoid contributing to inflation through significant wage increases, and that, ultimately, decisions about wages in the public service will fall to Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's

(University-Rosedale, Ont.) department.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), the federal public service's largest union, held

NEWS

Speculation starts about a potential cabinet shuffle

BY ABBAS RANA

With the House scheduled to adjourn for the Christmas break Dec. 16, speculation has already started about the possibility of a cabinet shuffle prior to the start of the winter sitting of Parliament at the end of January, say Liberals and senior political strategists.

"Any way you cut it, we are moving towards a federal election, whether sooner or later," said Nik Nanos, chief data scientist for Nanos Research. "And I would expect that the government will regularly refresh the cabinet, as individuals decide not to re-offer or to elevate individuals who might be in ridings that are priority ridings, because elevating someone to cabinet is usually done for a number of reasons. One of the reasons sometimes is to create profile for individuals in key swing ridings in order to help them fight the re-election."

MPs will return for the winter sitting on Jan. 30, 2023. Political insiders interviewed for this article said that if the shuffle takes place in the coming weeks, it would be before the cabinet retreat prior to the start of Parliament. The Liberal caucus is also scheduled to meet for its winter retreat on the Jan. 28 weekend in Ottawa.

Since becoming prime minister seven years ago, Prime

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Mike Lapointe

Heard On The Hill

John Lorinc takes home top Balsillie prize for book on smart cities

John Lorinc and his book, *Dream States: Smart Cities, Technology, and the Pursuit of Urban Utopias*, won the 2022 Balsillie Prize for Public Policy last week, taking home the \$60,000 prize. Lorinc is only the second person to win the annual literary award, which is funded by businessman and philanthropist **Jim Balsillie**, administered by the Writers' Trust of Canada, and was first established in 2021.

Toronto-based Lorinc, a journalist and editor, is no stranger to awards for his reporting on smart cities. In 2020, he won the Atkinson Fellowship in Public Policy. His reporting has appeared in *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Walrus* and *Maclean's* magazines, and *Spacing* magazine, where he is senior editor.

Four finalists also received \$5,000 for their books, including: **Jean Marmoreo** and **Johanna Schneller's** book, *The Last Doctor: Lessons in Living from the Front Lines of Medical Assistance in Dying*; **Kent Roach's** *Canadian Policing: Why and How It Must Change*; **Kim Stanton's** *Reconciling Truths: Reimagining Public Inquiries in Canada*; and **Vaclac Smil's** *How the World Really Works: The Science Behind How We Got Here and Where We're Going*.

The jury included author and physician **Samantha Nutt**, policy expert **Taki Sarantakis**, and digital strategist **Scott Young**.

"Lorinc invites readers to consider how technology—specifically smart-city tech—fits into the overall city-building equation," said the jury. "For him, smart cities are not a shiny new invention, but a continuation of an aspirational and historical trajectory toward 'utopia.' He argues that the pursuit of utopia must not be naively extracted from the political, socio-economic, spatial, physical, cultural layers that compose a city. Rather, drawing upon cases from around the world, he offers a framework for thinking about the future of urban living. Lorinc compels readers to consider the future of cities not only in

the post-pandemic period, but also amid an accelerating and worsening climate crisis."

Balsillie, the former chairman and co-CEO of Research In Motion, the company responsible for BlackBerry, funds the prize as part of a \$3-million commitment to support Canadian literature.

The Hill turns its attention to misogyny in the digital age to mark Dec. 6

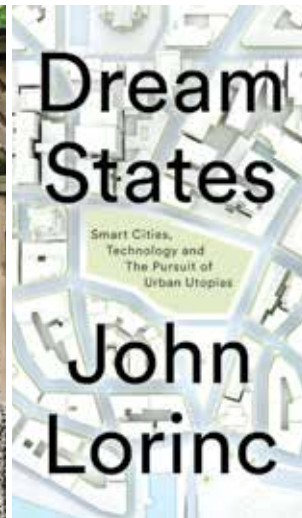
Dec. 6 marks 33 years since 14 young women were killed at the Polytechnique Montréal, a day that subsequently became the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

In acknowledgement of the grim anniversary and the day of action, Public Safety Parliamentary Secretary **Pam Damoff** and Actua, a STEM outreach organization for underrepresented youth, will co-host an event on the Hill focused on misogyny in the digital age. The event includes a panel discussion followed by a screening of the film *Backlash: Misogyny in the Digital Age*.

Panelists and speakers include Damoff, Minister of Women and Gender Equality **Marci Ien**, CEO of Actua **Jennifer Flanagan**, Peel Police deputy chief **Nick Milinovich**, and Carleton professor and Carty Chair in Journalism, Diversity and Inclusion Studies, and executive director of



Parliamentary Secretary for Public Safety Pam Damoff will co-host a panel discussion and screening of a documentary on the Hill to mark the day of action to end violence against women. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



And the winner is: The 2022 Balsillie Prize for Public Policy winner John Lorinc, left, his book cover, and award founder Jim Balsillie. Handout photographs and *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Media Girlfriends, Nana aba Duncan.

The documentary follows the lives of women around the world who have been particularly affected by online harassment, threats, and violence, including two Canadians: **Laurence Gratton**, a Quebec teacher who experienced more than five years of harassment by a former colleague, and **Rehtaeh Parsons' father Glen Canning**. Also featured: Italian politician **Laura Boldrini**, who has faced incessant rape and death threats; **Kiah Morris**, an African-American politician in the state of Vermont who felt resigning her position was the best option available to her following severe harassment and threats from right-wing extremists; and French YouTuber **Marion Séclin**, who has received more than 40,000 sexist messages.

The event will take place on Dec. 6 from 5:45 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at 1 Wellington Street, room 180.

Equal Voice appoints former Hill staffer, provincial Liberal candidate as new executive director

Equal Voice, the organization with a mission to improve the proportion of women and gender diverse folks in elected office, has a new executive director in **Chi Nguyen**.

The organization announced Nguyen's appointment on Nov. 30, and she will formally assume the post on Jan. 5. Nguyen ran under the provincial Liberal Party of Ontario's banner in the 2022 election in Spadina-Fort York, and is a former Parliament Hill staffer. According to Equal Voice, Nguyen has been involved in community-building for 30 years. She is the former director of social innovation at Social Innovation Canada.

"I am delighted for the opportunity to lead Equal Voice



Chi Nguyen will be the new executive director of Equal Voice. Photograph courtesy of Equal Voice

in its mission to see more women and gender diverse representation elected. Our inclusion is an important part of the pathway to a better and more democratic Canada. Stronger

reflection and diversity of representation are goals that I have advocated for my entire career," Nguyen said in the Equal Voice press release announcing her appointment.

Nguyen has been involved with organizations including the BMW Responsible Leaders network and the Global Diplomacy Lab. She holds an MSc from the London School of Economics in social psychology.

Nguyen succeeds outgoing executive director **Eleanor Fast**.

Ottawa City Hall to host first Party Under the Stars since 2019

Party Under the Stars, an event that brings MPs from all parties together to support post-combat wellness programs, is set to make a return later this month for the first time since 2019 prior to the pandemic.

Presented by To the Stan and Back (Stan is short for Afghanistan), the registered charity is now in its 11th year providing support services for serving and retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces and front line responders for post-combat wellness programs, according to its website.

Conservative MP **John Brassard** and Liberal MP **Darrell Samson** are set to MC this year's event. The two MPs appeared on an episode of TVO's "Political Blind Date" documentary earlier this year to discuss the state of veterans' affairs in Canada.

Organizer of the event **Cheri Elliott** told *The Hill Times* said the event has generally raised somewhere between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in the past, and that she was hopeful for at least that much this year. All net proceeds from the event go to the cause.

"After 9/11, I wanted to do something tangible for our military members for their extreme sacrifice, and it ended up morphing into what it is today," said Elliott, whose son serves in the Canadian Armed Forces as a warrant officer.

"It has evolved into helping not just our military members, but also front-line respond-

ers with post-combat wellness programs," said Elliott. "It became very evident that there is a need in our society for that, and healthy communities, healthy citizens work together for the good, so that's been the focus the last few years."

"It's a great event and it's an opportunity from all political parties to come together to support a great cause," said Elliott.

Conservative MP and his party's defence critic **James Bezan** will deliver some remarks, as well as Conservative MP and former party leader **Erin O'Toole**, who will be speaking about post-combat PTSD. O'Toole served in the military in the 1990s prior to his time in politics, completing his active service in 2000 before pursuing a law degree.

Ottawa City Hall will host the event that will feature an open bar, prizes, a silent auction and great food, starting at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 13.

Canadian Country Music Award winner **Jason McCoy**, a two-time Male Vocalist of the Year who grew up in Minesing, Ont., is set to perform. McCoy also has the distinction of being the creator and frontman of *The Road Hammers*, winners of a Juno Award who have toured throughout North America, Europe and Australia.

Tickets for the event are \$40, available through Eventbrite. For more information, visit www.tothestanandback.com.

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The Hill Times

SUPPORT CANADA'S DIGITAL CREATORS

Let's fix Bill C-11 and move forward together.

YouTube is proposing minor amendments to Bill C-11 that **will** protect Canadian digital creators and viewers, and **will not** limit further financial contributions to Canada's thriving creative ecosystem.

Canadians are raising their voices - they know that supporting Canadian content does not need to come at the expense of digital creators or viewers. **We ask that the Senate fix Bill C-11 so we can move forward together.**

Over 86,000 Canadians have signed OpenMedia's petition, asking the government to respect their choices and leave their posts and feeds alone.



Over 40,000 creators and concerned citizens have sent letters to their MPs and Senators through Digital First Canada to raise their concerns and protect their livelihoods.

DIGITAL FIRST CANADA



News

Sport Minister St-Onge refused to go to Qatar for FIFA World Cup to show solidarity with LGBTQ community and migrant workers, say Liberal sources

Qatar ‘welcomes constructive criticism,’ but expects visitors to respect the host country’s legal system and social and cultural norms, says a spokesperson of the Qatari embassy in Ottawa.

BY ABBAS RANA

Sport Minister Pascale St-Onge, who made Canadian history as the first out lesbian cabinet minister when she was appointed in 2021, declined to go to Qatar recently for the FIFA World Cup as a show of solidarity with the LGBTQ community and because of allegations of human rights abuses against migrant workers in the host country of the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

“I am proud of the Canada National soccer team qualifying for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Their qualification is a historic event,” said St-Onge (Brome-Missisquoi, Que.) in a written statement to *The Hill Times*.

International Development Minister Harjit Sajjan (Vancouver South, B.C.) went in her place.

“Our government was very concerned about reports of dangerous working conditions in building the World Cup stadium and infrastructure, especially those resulting in death. I am happy that my colleague, Minister Sajjan, while in Qatar had a constructive dialogue with their government on supporting LGBTQ and human rights. I commend the fact that he also acknowledges ILO’s [the International Labour Organization] work to improve migrant workers’ conditions after the World Cup,” St-Onge said in her statement.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup is currently taking place in Qatar from Nov. 20 to Dec. 18. The Canadian Soccer team qualified to play in the World Cup for the first time since 1986. To represent the Canadian government at the World Cup, the sport minister was the natural choice, but St-Onge informed the PMO weeks in advance that she would not go. Homosexuality is a criminal offence in Qatar, and organizations like Human Rights Watch say LGBTQ people are being arbitrarily arrested in that country. That organization says it has documented

“six cases of severe and repeated beatings and five cases of sexual harassment in police custody between 2019 and 2022.”

“Security forces arrested people in public places based solely on their gender expression and unlawfully searched their phones,” a Human Rights Watch report alleges.

“As a requirement for their release, security forces mandated that transgender women detainees attend conversion therapy sessions at a government-sponsored ‘behavioural health-care’ centre,” it continued. Conversion therapy was banned in Canada at the beginning of 2022.

Sexual acts between men are punishable by a prison sentence of up to seven years.

Several government sources said if St-Onge had gone to the World Cup host country, she personally would not have been at a risk of any legal issues, as she would have been part of an international delegation. A spokesperson for the Qatari Embassy in Ottawa said they don’t question visitors about their sexual orientation or any issue related to their privacy.

After St-Onge’s personal decision not to attend this event, the PMO decided to send Sajjan. On these kinds of international trips, the government of the day usually includes at least one representative from the opposition. So, after consulting with the Conservative Party, Stephen Ellis (Cumberland-Colchester, N.S.) was sent to represent Canada along with the minister. A government source told *The Hill Times* that Sajjan was chosen for this trip because of the contacts he developed in Qatar when he was the minister of national defence. Considering the Canadian government’s concerns about the Qatari government’s treatment of LGBTQ people and migrant workers, Sajjan, as minister of international development, was the obvious choice.

“Because [Sajjan] has those relationships already, and we’re trying to push like, obviously, with what’s going on over there with the human rights, and LGBTQ, and migrant workers, and everything we’re trying to do, it made the most sense that he’d be the minister to go, meet with officials and also represent Canada,” said a government source.

“So when he [Sajjan] was minister of national defence, the Qatari government actually helped get a lot of Canadians out during the Taliban takeover [last year] in Afghanistan. And he actually had the opportunity to commend and thank them for that work, because they really did



Sport Minister Pascale St-Onge declined to go to Qatar for the 2022 FIFA world cup on a point of principle, to stand for LGBTQ rights and migrant worker rights in the host country. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

support Canada in getting Canadians out of Afghanistan during the takeover.”

But some Liberal MPs said that it would have made more sense for the government to have sent someone like two-time Liberal MP Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Ont.), an Olympic gold medalist, to represent Canada at the FIFA World Cup. These MPs said that they’re supportive of St-Onge’s decision not to take the trip to Qatar “for obvious reasons.” One MP referred to a CNN story in which the FIFA World Cup ambassador and a former Qatari soccer player, Khalid Salman, in an interview with German broadcaster ZDF, described homosexuality as “damage in the mind.” He made this comment while discussing the illegality of homosexuality in Qatar.

“The most important thing is everybody will accept that they come here. But they will have to accept our rules,” he told ZDF, adding that he was concerned children may learn “something that is not good.”

The MP said that after this kind of attitude, you “can’t blame an openly gay MP” for refusing to go to Qatar.

Until October, it appeared that the Canadian government might not send any official representative to Qatar, but last month the government announced that Sajjan and Ellis would represent Canada.

“The Government of Canada is proud of the Canadian men’s national soccer team qualifying for the 2022 FIFA World Cup,” a spokesperson with Heritage Canada told Global News on Oct. 21.

“Their qualification is a historic event in itself and all Canadians look forward to cheering them on in November. So far, no

plan has been made for a dignitary to attend the event.”

International human rights organizations like Amnesty International have alleged that Qatar does not follow international labour laws, and thousands of workers from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa “have been subjected to labour abuses, abysmally low pay, and other exploitation.” There have also been numerous international news reports that Qatar severely mistreated the workers who built facilities for the World Cup, including inhumane living conditions at the work camps where the migrants were made to stay.

In an emailed statement to *The Hill Times*, a spokesperson for Sajjan said that the minister used his visit as an opportunity to meet with the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Mexico’s Secretary of Foreign Affairs Marcelo Ebrard. Sajjan’s spokesperson said the minister also used the opportunity to raise human rights and the LGBTQ community issues with the Qatari government.

“Minister Sajjan was in Qatar with MP Ellis to represent Canada at the World Cup, where he had the opportunity to meet and cheer on Team Canada,” said Haley Hodgson, press secretary to the international development minister.

“The minister also attended various meetings and engagements. Minister Sajjan, Secretary Blinken and Secretary Ebrard attended a Trilateral Sports event with Generation Amazing, which was open to the media. Minister Sajjan also had constructive dialogue with Qatar’s Foreign Affairs Minister on supporting LGBTQ2I and human rights and spoke on the need to continue the ILO’s work improving migrant workers’ conditions after the World Cup.”

A spokesperson for the Qatari Embassy in Ottawa said that their country “welcomes all the constructive criticism,” but at the same time, it expects visitors to respect the host country’s legal system and social and cultural norms.

“It is important that we respect each other, and deal in a positive way with other countries’ heritages, culture and regulations, and this is what we do,” the spokesperson wrote in an email in response to *The Hill Times*. “If somebody comes to Canada, he is required to behave in the same way (respect Canadian culture and values). The same thing if somebody comes to our country. Double standards and hypocrite behavior by a small number of people is unacceptable. However, as far as Canada is concerned, we appreci-

ate co-operation and partnership between us within the framework of mutual respect.”

The spokesperson said that no Canadians or visitors from other countries are asked questions about their person opinions, sexual orientation, or anything that could be deemed as free personal choices.

“We are pleased that those who came to Qatar are enjoying the game, as they are comfortable and happy with the atmosphere. We spare no efforts in helping them through achieving the best conditions for their residency, and we are keen that they will have most fond memories when they leave Qatar,” the spokesperson wrote. “You might read some media reports, which described how the people of Qatar have generously welcomed its guests. Qataris are happy and pleased that their country received this number of visitors.”

In a statement issued on Oct. 28, Soccer Canada said that the organization is following a policy of engagement with the World Cup host country and is optimistic that over time Qatar will improve its record on human rights issues.

“Through our ongoing dialogue in recent months, it is our understanding that Qatar’s legal reforms, if fully implemented, have the potential to have a real impact and further improve protections for workers’ rights across the country,” said Soccer Canada in its statement on Oct. 28.

“We encourage all partners to continue their efforts to implement recent labour reforms and continue to address and resolve past labour abuses. Canada enjoys a global reputation as a defender of human and LGBTQ2S rights, anchored on a record that is seen as one of the leaders globally. Canada Soccer will continue to uphold that reputation, build on what we have already started, and like so many other sporting bodies internationally, continue to ensure our players and fans are safe, included, celebrated and treated equitably.”

In a travel advisory issued to Canadians intending to travel to Qatar to watch the Soccer World Cup games, the Canadian government provided the guidelines as to what to expect in term of culture and the legal system. The advisory has warned people that Canadian laws are different from Qatari laws and if they break the law, they could face legal consequences.

“Revealing clothing is considered inappropriate. To avoid offending local sensitivities, dress conservatively, behave discreetly and respect religious and social traditions,” the advisory stated.

“Public display of affection, including holding hands and kissing is not socially accepted. Qatari law criminalizes sexual acts and relationships between persons of the same sex or unmarried people. However, no restrictions exist on staying in the same room for friends of different genders or couples (including 2SLGBTQI+).”

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Speculation starts about a potential cabinet shuffle

'January is a good time for a reset because it sets the table for the year and then you get your cabinet in place for the upcoming federal budget in the spring,' says Nik Nanos, chief data scientist for Nanos Research.

Continued from page 1

Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) has shuffled his cabinet four times in the month of January, including in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2021. Over these years, he has had 16 minor and major cabinet shuffles, excluding the first cabinet which he unveiled after becoming prime minister in November 2015. Of these, Trudeau shuffled his cabinet twice in 2016, twice in 2017, three times in 2018, five times in 2019, once in 2020, twice in 2021 and once this year, according to research by the Library of Parliament.

Since the last federal election in September 2021, Trudeau has had only one minor shuffle on Aug. 30 in which then-public services and procurement minister Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas, Ont.) moved to a junior ministerial portfolio of the Federal Economic Development Agency of Southern Ontario. In her place, Helena Jaczek (Markham-Stouffville, Ont.) stepped in to take on the role of the Public Services and Procurement Canada. At the time of this swap in late August, Tassi said in a statement that she made a request to spend more time with her husband who was recovering from two strokes.

"January is a good time for a reset because it sets the table for the year and then you get your cabinet in place for the upcoming federal budget in the spring," said Nanos. "And it's probably among the more orderly times to have a cabinet shuffle. And it allows for the government of the day that decided to do a cabinet shuffle in January, to start off the year proactively with a story about new cabinet ministers and new faces in the government."

The average age of a minority government in Canada is between 18-24 months. In the current Parliament, the Liberals and the NDP are working under a confidence-and-supply agreement which could allow the Liberals to govern until the next scheduled election in 2025 in return for progress on key NDP priorities like dental care and pharmacare, among others. However, this could change if, for some reason, one of the two parties or both disagree on something and break the deal.

This coming March will be the 18 month mark for Trudeau's third mandate as prime minister. Liberal sources told *The Hill Times* that the Christmas break and start of the winter sitting of Parliament will be a good time for Trudeau to review how things are going, what to expect

in the new sitting of Parliament and if he needs to make any changes in his cabinet. One key factor is that a significant chunk of the current Liberal caucus who were first elected in 2015 and are still in the House are now eligible for pension. So, some MPs or cabinet ministers may not want to seek re-election for family, health or other reasons. And, most importantly, in some cases, Trudeau might not be satisfied with the performance of some cabinet ministers whom he may want to drop from the cabinet or move to a different portfolio.

In the current Parliament, the number of MPs who were first elected in 2015 includes 78 Liberals, 27 Conservatives, seven Bloc, six NDP, and one Independent, according to Library of Parliament. Having completed six years of parliamentary service, these 119 MPs are now eligible for their parliamentary pension.

If an MP or a cabinet minister is not planning on seeking re-election, they usually inform their party ahead of time. This allows the prime minister, in the case of the governing party, to make adjustments to cabinet and to find good-quality candidates to get ready for the next election.

Some, however, don't do it until the last minute and depending on an individual MP's circumstances, they might not disclose they are not seeking re-election for various reasons. In a minority Parliament, no one knows for sure when the next election would happen. After making their future plans known, the PMO will not consider them for any cabinet or parliamentary secretary position. And even if they already hold a cabinet or parliamentary secretary position, or are a committee chair, they will be asked to step down to let the prime minister renew their cabinet and caucus team by giving those positions to MPs who want to seek re-election.

Early last month, the Liberal Party provided specific criteria to MPs if they want to be acclaimed as party candidates for the next election. The deadline to meet those conditions is March 1, 2023.

According to this criteria set by the party, each MP has to have at least 65 per cent of the anticipated expense limit in their respective electoral district association bank account by March 1; have at least 40 more Victory Fund members compared to the number they had on July 1, 2022; and, attempt to knock on at least 3,500 doors or make 7,500 phone calls along with their team of volunteers. In unheld ridings, the Liberal Party has started accepting requests for nomination packages from potential candidates.

By monitoring the progress on the nomination conditions, the party will get a good handle on who is running and who is not planning on seeking re-election. Also, the fundraising requirement will add hundreds of thousands more dollars each year to the Liberal party coffers than before.

Some on the Conservative and Liberals see it as a sign of the Liberals are getting ready for an election. Others, however, see it as a signal to the NDP that they're ready for an election and an indication to them not to make too many demands in return for co-operation.

"If you want to keep your coalition government going, you've got to let your

partner know that at any given moment, you're prepared to go to the ballot," said a Liberal MP two weeks ago in a not-for-tribution-based interview to offer their candid views. "They're the ones that caused it. You are prepared and it allows you to maintain power longer."

A Liberal riding association president interviewed last week agreed. "They're [Liberals] getting ready to not be blindsided by the NDP."

Meanwhile, sources speculated last week that another reason why the PMO may need an adjustment is that Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) is rumoured to be in the running for the position of the secretary general of NATO. If that were to happen, it would cause a major domino effect for a shuffle.

"Ms. Freeland already has an important job and is focused on serving Canada and Canadians," wrote Jessica Eritou, in an email to *The Hill Times*, in response to a question if the finance minister is in the running to be the NATO secretary general position which will be filled next year.

If Freeland is in fact offered the job and she accepts it, this will not only force Trudeau to promote another Liberal MP or a cabinet minister, but will also

massively change the dynamics of the Liberal leadership election whenever it opens up.

"She is perceived of as the front-running candidate," said Nanos. "The other thing is it might not reflect well on the Liberal Party. If someone who is a senior cabinet minister, that does a really good job that is seen as being one of the leading contenders to head up the Liberal Party, decides that they want to step away from politics at a time when the party is in a very tight race with the Conservatives nationally in the ballot numbers, and is facing an election."

A Liberal source told *The Hill Times* that the Dec. 12 high-stakes byelection in the Toronto-area riding of Mississauga-Lakeshore could also be a factor in Trudeau's decision to make adjustments in his cabinet. If the Liberals lose, it will be a big "wake up call" for the governing party, as a high-profile candidate losing in a 905 area riding that the Liberals have been holding in all elections except for one going back to 1993. The Liberals have appointed former Ontario finance minister Charles Sousa as their candidate in the riding. The Conservative candidate is Ron Chhinzer, a Peel Region Police officer.

The NDP candidate is Julia Kole, and Mary Kidnew will carry the Green Party's banner.

"If you don't succeed, there's also a lot of self reflection there," said one former senior Liberal. "Becomes a wake up call. Why did we lose? Maybe we do need to reset the government moving forward, all that sort of stuff."

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Mark Thompson

Executive Vice President,
Chief Commercial Officer

Mark Thompson is the Executive Vice President, Chief Commercial Officer at Nutrien. In this role, he has executive leadership over global crop nutrient sales, transportation, distribution & logistics, and commercial planning and product management activities for Nutrien's Nitrogen, Potash and Phosphate businesses. Mark also oversees Nutrien's economics and market research team, as well as commercial development & integration activities, leading operational value creation initiatives across the company's global network.

Mark joined Nutrien in 2011 and has worked across all the company's business units. He has held numerous executive and senior leadership roles, most recently as the company's EVP, Chief Strategy & Sustainability Officer.

Prior to that, he served as EVP, Chief Corporate Development & Strategy Officer, Vice President of Business Development for Nutrien's Retail business and Vice President of Strategy at Agrium. During his time with company, Mark has played a key role in shaping Nutrien's global strategy and enterprise sustainability/ ESG initiatives, while also overseeing the conception and execution of many of the company's most critical growth, development and M&A activities.

Mark attended the University of Saskatchewan, where he earned Bachelor's degrees in Commerce (Finance) and Arts (Sociology). He holds the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) and Chartered Alternative Investment Analyst (CAIA) designations, as well as the SASB Fundamentals of Sustainability Accounting (FSA) credential. Mark has been recognized as a recipient of Canada's Clean16 and Clean50 sustainability awards and Canada's Top 40 Under 40 award. He is also a North American Ambassador for the International Fertilizer Association (IFA).

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News

Increasing inflation top of mind for feds, PSAC in stalled contract negotiations as union puts pressure on Treasury Board

Meanwhile, Kevin Page says ‘the government is going to have to communicate that there’s going to be a real wage loss that’s going to be experienced by public servants, and to be honest, it’s going to be experienced by just about everybody.’

Continued from page 1

a coast-to-coast day of action on Nov. 28. Contract talks between the union and the federal government fell apart back in May, and the two sides are now in front of the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board at Public Interest Commission (PIC) hearings that are scheduled to finish up in December.

“Workers are fighting for better wages and working conditions because they’re seeing their buying power slip away while the cost of living soars,” said PSAC national president Chris Aylward in a release. “This government expects our members to take a real wage cut when they should be supporting workers to stay afloat in these tough times.”

In a follow up interview with *The Hill Times*, Aylward said he’s being asked by some of his members as to why the union is only asking for a 4.5 per cent wage increase, given the dramatic change in the inflation rate since June 2021 when the process began.

“The rate of inflation is very significant for us—we know that our members are going to food banks, and having to do things that they’ve never done before,” said Aylward.

The union has also moved ahead with strike training, offering an online course available to members on their website.

Aylward said “the buck ultimately stops with Fortier (Ottawa-Vanier, Ont.) in negotiations, and our members are sending a clear message today—we’re prepared to do whatever it takes to get a decent contract for workers, even if that means taking job action to protect workers from inflation,” in the day of action release.

Feds under pressure from monetary policy tightening, rapidly rising interest rates, says Page

The public service lens at this point centres around how the government operated in a crisis environment, with many working on the front line and many others working on developing programs and making sure money was going out the door, according to former parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page.

“And then there’s this real wage loss that they’ve experienced because of the inflation that is partly a symptom of COVID and also is reflective of what is going on in Ukraine in terms of these incredible commodity price shocks with food and energy,” said Page. “So they’re losing in real terms of salary and they are without a contract.”

The union wants something that is better than a two per cent wage increase, and there are other issues including how the workplace is going to be different post-COVID, according to Page.

But he also said that the government is under a lot of pressures with monetary policy tightening and interest rates rising rapidly, with the focus being on changing the arc of inflation.

“We can’t be seen to be doing things from a fiscal policy perspective that’s going to contribute to reinforcing inflationary expectations going forward, so I think the government probably feels like it can’t go outside the three per cent range” in terms of wage increase, said Page. “The government is going to have to communicate that there is going to be a real wage loss that’s going to be experienced by public servants, and to be honest, it’s going to be experienced by just about everybody.”

Two sides still in the early stages of positional bargaining, says Wernick

Former clerk of the Privy Council Michael Wernick, who from 2016 until stepping down in 2019, said he thinks the two sides are still in the early stages of positional bargaining, and that although Fortier has been targeted by the union, the person who will decide the government’s willingness to put resources into this is the finance minister.

“This is one cost pressure among many that Chrystia Freeland has to consider in getting ready for the next budget,” said Wernick. “A dollar she puts into health transfers is not available



NDP MP Blake Desjarlais, his party’s Treasury Board critic, says he believes the government actually faces the ‘real possibility of becoming uncompetitive, with people not seeing that federal jobs are good enough for their families, and it’s going to hurt the public service.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

for wage increases, and vice versa.”

Wernick also noted there will be conversations between Fortier, Freeland and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) as to how many resources they have available for the wage envelope.

Wernick said that the government also has to be attentive to precedents, in the sense that whatever is given to one union at the table becomes the template for every other union.

In terms of a potential national public service strike in the near future, Wernick said there are a lot of steps that unions can go through before they get there, including rotating walkouts to try to escalate pressure on the government as best they can.

“It’s a very good question how much leverage [unions] have on the government,” said Wernick, as “both sides are kind of playing with substantial risks.”

“If they actually went out on a national strike that inconveniences Canadians, than they would be making the election of [Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.)] far more likely—is that what Chris Aylward wants?” said Wernick.

From the government’s point of view, “is this really a fight they want to have?” said Wernick. “They’re dependent on the NDP, who are dependent on the public service unions. So their will to take on public service unions, and go through what Bob Rae went in Ontario [as premier in the early 1990s], probably not so much.”

“The likelihood is the unions don’t really want to strike and the government really doesn’t want to fight,” said Wernick, adding that he believes a settlement will likely be settled next year—which doesn’t mean “that we won’t go through a lot of drama before that.”

Mel Cappe, who also served as Canada’s top public servant as clerk of the Privy Council from 1999 to 2002, said recent inflation has been quite dramatic, but that

he’s more in the “transitory camp” in that it’s starting to dissipate.

“There will have to be some wage adjustment, but we shouldn’t build it in, and you can bet that Chrystia Freeland is being briefed that way,” said Cappe.

Cappe said one of the things he noticed with Ontario Premier Doug Ford’s recent interactions with education workers is that the last thing they wanted to do is build in wage increases tied to prices and putting that into a cycle.

“From the federal government perspective, more than the provincial, this is a big deal,” said Cappe. “If the federal unions—PSAC being the one with a lot of power but the others will follow—get high wage adjustments built in, it’s going to manifest itself all throughout the economy.”

When asked about how a potential recession in 2023 might affect the discussion between the government and unions, Cappe pointed to the “simultaneity of a recession and exorbitant wage demands.”

“The labour market is really tight right now,” said Cappe, “but it might not be” in the spring.

“We may be in a very difficult economic situation, and then you’re going to find that unions are going to be asking for six per cent when a lot of people are just hoping they can get a job,” said Cappe.

Feds put off difficult conversations ‘until very last minute,’ says Conservative MP Kusie

Conservative MP Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, Alta.), her party’s Treasury Board critic, said “this is something we see consistently with this government, that they put off difficult conversations, decisions and actions, most often indefinitely, or until the very last minute.”

Kusie also said that with inflationary pressures, a public service that is not entirely satisfied with

their working conditions, and significant outsourcing, “we need to get to the bottom of what’s good money and what’s bad money.”

“What I’m hearing in my first weeks on [the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates] is that there needs to be consideration of a strong, durable public service,” said Kusie, who was appointed to her current role as Treasury Board critic following Poilievre winning the Conservative leadership race last September. “That means good recruitment, good training, good retention and better morale.”

NDP MP Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, Alta.) his party’s Treasury Board critic, said he believes the government actually faces the “real possibility of becoming uncompetitive, with people not seeing that federal jobs are good enough for their families, and it’s going to hurt the public service.”

“And we need to avoid a strike, which would be my recommendation to my colleague and my counterpart, Mona Fortier.”

The Treasury Board president needs to address the “serious issue” that is the “traumatic increase” in the cost of living, and the fact that her existing global mandate is unfair to workers.

“Where the country is going to be going, how uncompetitive the government can be, and where wages should be to remain competitive,” said Desjarlais.

According to Barb Couperus, a spokesperson for Treasury Board, the government remains committed to bargaining in good faith to conclude collective agreements that are fair for employees and reasonable for Canadians.

“During collective bargaining, our offers to bargaining agents take into consideration economic conditions, the government’s ability to attract and retain highly qualified employees, employment conditions in the federal government relative to other Canadian workplaces, and responsible fiscal management,” said Couperus.

“When PSAC left the bargaining table, they had a list of more than 500 demands and were asking for average increases, including pay and other provisions, of up to 14 per cent per year across their bargaining groups,” she said.

Couperus said collective bargaining yields the best results when both parties are committed to negotiation, and we had only just presented our initial financial offer.

“That is why the government remains at the table, ready to continue bargaining in good faith to conclude agreements that are fair for employees and reasonable for Canadians,” said Couperus.

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‘The status quo is not working’: AG calls for different approach to climate emergencies in First Nations



Auditor General Karen Hogan holds a press conference in Ottawa on Nov. 15 to discuss her office's fall 2022 reports. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Auditor General Karen Hogan has appeared before three different committees to discuss her office's Nov. 15 audit of Indigenous Services Canada's support for First Nations facing flood and fire.

BY KEVIN PHILIPUPILLAI

Auditor General Karen Hogan says Indigenous Services Canada must be accountable for the poor progress on emergency management on First Nations, rebuffing suggestions from Liberal MPs the file be evaluated as a whole-of-government approach.

In appearances before several parliamentary committees since releasing a Nov. 15 audit, Hogan has expressed frustration about Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) lack of progress on supporting emergency management in Indigenous communities.

"We've got many decades of audits that show that the status quo is not working," Hogan told the House Indigenous and Northern Affairs Committee on Nov.

28, referring to previous external audits by her office and internal audits by ISC. "We looked at this issue in 2013 and are finding the exact same recommendation."

The audit found that ISC "did not provide the support First Nations communities needed to manage emergencies such as floods and wildfires," and that ISC's approach has been reactive rather than preventative, which has resulted both in higher costs and in repeated evacuations of First Nations communities.

NDP MP Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, Alta.) told the House Public Accounts Committee on Nov. 25 that the audit report had been very difficult to absorb, "for me and for many members across Canada."

"The fact that this report echoes failures over decades is something I'm ashamed of," said Desjarlais. "It's deplorable to know that in our country, this is the reality still facing Indigenous people."

Hogan and other members of her office appeared before the Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples on Nov. 23, before the House Public Accounts Committee on Nov. 25, and before the House Indigenous and Northern Affairs Committee on Nov. 28 to discuss the Nov. 15 report. Senior officials from Indigenous Services Canada appeared at the Public Accounts Committee on Nov. 25.

Besides the audit of emergency management in First Nations

communities, the auditor general also looked into chronic homelessness, the government's ability to monitor maritime traffic in Arctic waters, the security of personal information stored in the cloud, and into the management of three Crown corporations.

ISC has accepted all seven recommendations made in the auditor general's report. Indigenous Services Minister Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay-Superior North, Ont.) acknowledged to reporters on Nov. 15, after the fall reports had been tabled in the House, that the report highlighted "well known" gaps in her department's work on this file.

"There is a lot of work underway between Indigenous Services Canada and First Nations partners" to address these gaps, said Hajdu.

Backlog of proposals for infrastructure funding to mitigate damage

The audit report found that many First Nations communities had identified and proposed infrastructure projects that would mitigate the impact of emergencies, but that ISC had built up a backlog of 112 eligible proposals that have not yet been funded, with 74 of these projects sitting in the backlog for five or more years.

The First Nation Infrastructure Fund has a dedicated budget of

\$12-million per year until March 2024 to fund structural mitigation projects, but Hogan told MPs on Nov. 28 that it would cost at least \$291-million to fund all eligible infrastructure projects, with the real number being higher since many projects have not yet been costed.

Conservative MP Eric Melillo (Kenora, Ont.) said he has heard from First Nations communities in his western Ontario riding who believe their applications for funding for preventative infrastructure are among 112 applications still waiting to be assessed. He gave as an example a request from Pikangikum First Nation for funding to build a 15-km road that would connect it to Ontario's provincial road network.

Mitigation and preparedness projects can include the building or repair of key structures, such as drains and culverts, as well as non-structural programs such as access to key flood mapping data or emergency training.

Conservative MP Gary Vidal (Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River, Sask.) who questioned witnesses at both the Nov. 25 Public Accounts Committee meeting and the Nov. 28 Indigenous Affairs Committee meeting, criticized ISC for using a proposal-based approach to solicit funding applications for these mitigation projects, as opposed to a risk-based approach.

The audit found that four First Nations communities that were evacuated multiple times in recent years had never applied for nonstructural mitigation and preparedness measures, possibly because they lacked the capacity to make the necessary funding applications.

Vidal said on Nov. 25 the communities that are able to access funding under the proposal-based approach "are the people that best play the bureaucratic game."

The report recommended that ISC adopt a more proactive risk-based approach when deciding which mitigation and preparedness projects to prioritize.

Idlout asks about Peguis First Nation, where evacuees haven't returned home since 2011

Over the last 13 years, there have been 580 emergency evacuations in First Nations communities affecting more than 130,000 people, the report noted, with some people being affected by multiple emergencies.

NDP MP Lori Idlout (Nunavut) said she was especially troubled by long-term evacuations such as that of Peguis First Nation in Manitoba. The community was evacuated in 2011 because of flooding, but 86 residents have been unable to return home since then because of insufficient housing.

"ISC has failed Indigenous and First Nations communities for many years," said Idlout, in a Nov. 28 House Indigenous Affairs Committee meeting, and asked why Hogan chose not to include

a separate recommendation to resolve this situation.

Hogan said that the Peguis First Nation evacuation "is the most extreme situation we have seen," but that listing it as a separate recommendation would have meant also including many more recommendations for other long-term evacuations, since "there are other communities that have been gone for years."

The report specifies that most evacuations last for less than a month, but that there have been 90 evacuations since 2009-10 (15 per cent of all evacuations) that lasted for longer than three months.

Hogan added that it was not only the length of an evacuation but also the problem of repeated evacuations that needed to be addressed. "We need a sustainable solution for communities going forward."

Liberal MPs say report should have taken into account the work of other departments

Liberal MPs at the Indigenous Affairs Committee sought to deflect some of the criticism directed at ISC by pointing to the need for a whole-of-government approach to such emergencies, as reflected in the recently released National Adaptation Strategy.

Liberal MP Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay-Rainy River, Ont.) told Hogan "it seems somewhat unfair for you to be criticizing Indigenous Services for not putting money into mitigating the possibility of future risks," because "trying to mitigate the risk seems to involve many other ministries."

Powlowski, whose northwestern Ontario riding was affected by flooding from the Winnipeg River system in the spring and summer of 2022, said he had also had to speak with the federal departments responsible for the environment, for emergency preparedness, and for infrastructure.

Liberal MP Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Ont.), parliamentary secretary to the Indigenous services minister, said ISC is working with these other departments to address climate-related emergencies, and suggested that a report on these issues should also take into account the work being done by multiple departments.

Hogan responded in committee that a whole-of-government approach has its merits, but that, in her experience, such horizontal initiatives still need one department or deputy minister to take the lead, and that this deputy minister "needs to have the ability to compel other deputies to do the jobs they need to do."

"There needs to be an accountable party," said Hogan.

Sitting alongside Hogan, Glenn Wheeler, the principal who led the audit team, added that the relevant legislation, such as the Indian Act, places accountability for this file squarely on ISC. "At the end of the day, it is ISC that bears full responsibility," said Wheeler.

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Editorial

Trudeau should trust himself to go off-script more often

In political time it feels like eons ago, but it has been just over a week since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appeared before the Public Order Emergency Commission to deliver hours of testimony about why he invoked the Emergencies Act on Feb. 14, 2022.

Many observers noted on Twitter that the prime minister seemed to be speaking with never-before-seen candour and ease.

Trudeau has long had a style of speaking—at press conferences, in Question Period, at events—that reads as inauthentic. His speech can be too breathy, his pauses too manufactured, his tone and facial expressions conveying a seriousness that can seem like they were rehearsed in the mirror. It can seem like he over-acts the role of prime minister, as if trying too hard to be understudy for Hugh Grant's prime minister character in *Love Actually*. Somehow this recipe for communication comes across as haughty and patronizing, which, if you're his staff, is not what you want from a prime minister who often faces allegations of elitism. It's also sometimes annoying to listen to him speak.

But at the POEC, Trudeau, who couldn't possibly read from a script, didn't seem rehearsed. How could he—he sat for many hours facing unknown questions from a variety of groups with vastly different perspectives. Unscripted Trudeau was the most authentic he's been yet. He demonstrated a strong grasp of the issue at hand, came across

as smart, compelling, and in control. It was a glimpse at a prime minister we don't often get to see—one which might have matched the image Trudeau famously likes to convey, of a relatable character with his sleeves rolled up, ready to chat with his neighbours about the work that needs to be done.

This isn't the first time authentic Trudeau has peeked out from behind the curtain. He let his guard down somewhat during his daily COVID-19 briefings, and came out the better for it—until he decided to call an election. While his team may worry about the true Trudeau's tendency to stick his foot in his mouth—it was he, after all, who was caught singing aloud on the eve of the Queen's funeral, for one thing—the risk is likely worth the reward.

If Trudeau is to head into his fourth election, where he will no doubt face much fire and ire, he and his handlers might want to think about letting him loose a little more. He will need to connect with Canadians in a new way, and the scripted act isn't doing him any favours on the relatability front. Instead, it keeps a wall up between him and the rest of us. Perhaps that's not a bad thing when you're on the world stage, but it's only through being more authentic that Trudeau does have a chance to actually charm—something he appears to have been in pursuit of for most of his political career. To get there, he just has to stop trying so hard.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Poilievre rehashes tired, war-on-drug tropes from 1980s, writes Winnipeg reader



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, pictured in Vancouver in his YouTube video titled, 'Everything feels broken,' posted on Nov. 20, has been criticized for his simplistic take on the city's opioid and tent city problem. Screen capture image courtesy of Twitter

I thought Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre considered himself to be a libertarian? Correct me if I'm wrong, but don't libertarians tend to support the decriminalization of illicit drugs as well as prostitution? They typically oppose the criminalization of activities between fully consenting adults.

Mr. Poilievre recently rehashed tired, old, conservative, war-on-drugs tropes from the 1980s—which have been long since discredited and have found to be not only ineffective, but also costly and deadly, is both deeply disappointing as well as a missed opportunity.

Poilievre is no libertarian, despite his musings about cryptocurrency and the

free market. Rather, he is just another American Republican-style sanctimonious social conservative stuffed suit and tie like Stephen Harper, Andrew Scheer, Erin O'Toole, Stockwell Day, and Preston Manning who all pander to the moral panics of the Conservative Party of Canada's grassroots Bible thumpers as well as those who wish to turn the clock of social progress back to the 1950s.

Unfortunately, most Canadian Conservatives still naively believe that they can arrest and incarcerate their way out of a decades-long addiction and mental health epidemic.

Noelle Terry
 Winnipeg, Man.

Trump will not easily fade away into the background, says letter writer

Re: "Now that Trump has been roasted, who will be the Next One?" (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 21, by Michael Harris). Donald Trump may indeed be on the road to irrelevance, but Trumpism (with both its perfume and stench) will not so easily fade.

Whether removing restrictions designed to safeguard the environment for Big Oil, signing with Wahhabis—the largest military deal in U.S. history for the military industrial complex—or pulling out of a nuclear deal that Iran was respecting for AIPAC, Trump's goal was always immediate political (and financial) returns, regardless of their long-term consequences. Statesmen consider these; populist hucksters don't.

But it is not only Trump. "It can probably be shown with facts and figures that there is no distinctly native American criminal class than Congress," Marc Twain observed.

Trump is indeed vile. Unethical. Narcissistic. Buffoonish. He is everything his detractors accuse him of. And worse.

I hope he runs for president, and wins.

For if faced with the sad choice between a near-senile Biden (who never saw a U.S. war he didn't support) and a narcissistic, but transparently opportunistic Trump, I would (holding my nose) choose the latter.

I prefer my wolves undisguised.

John Dirlik
 Pointe Claire, Que.



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Smith wants Alberta's sovereignty

If Danielle Smith doesn't like a federal law, she and her cabinet will simply toss it out. Sovereignty in a united Canada—sounds just like the separatists.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—Alberta Premier Danielle Smith wants sovereignty in a united Canada.

She claims it has nothing to do with a desire to separate, but the first bill she tabled as premier says otherwise.

The crux of the bill is to give her cabinet the right to refuse to proceed with any federal legislation or action that it perceives as detrimental to Alberta.

Notwithstanding her promises while running for the United Conservative Party leadership, she makes it very plain that her cabinet decisions take precedence over the Canadian Constitution.

Observers have underscored problems with the legislation, but they have more to do with internal Alberta politics than anything coming from Ottawa.

The decision to give cabinet the right to overturn all laws could actually cause problems for democracy in Alberta.

The move certainly seems to diminish the power of the legislature's involvement in the approval, rejection, or amendment of any legislation.

In a majority government, the cabinet recommendation is usually carried by the legislature. But that is not a given.

Minority governments are unlikely in Alberta, given the dominance of only two political parties. But the decision to simply override parliamentary opinion by way of a cabinet fiat is definitely a political mistake.

At this point, the premier has to be a lot more concerned about her standing amongst Alberta voters than her popularity, or lack thereof, in the rest of the country.

She has to face the voters in less than six months, and even

her immediate predecessor has made it very clear that he disagrees with her sovereignty pitch.

In resigning on the same day that Smith tabled the sovereignty bill, outgoing premier Jason Kenney took an indirect hit at Smith's first piece of legislation by way of his retirement statement: "I am concerned that our democratic life is veering away from ordinary prudential debate towards a polarization that undermines our bedrock institutions and principles."

There has never been any love lost between Kenney and Smith, but this oblique reference underscores the divide that still exists inside the UCP.

While its name is "United," in reality the party is badly split. That division is natural during a leadership period, but Smith doesn't have much time to heal the deep wounds that can occur during internal party races.

Some are already characterizing Smith's legacy as that of the shortest-serving premier.

The sovereignty legislation did little to reach out to those inside the party who share Kenney's perspective.

As for Smith's attempt to clarify that sovereignty and separation are not the same thing, she needs to take a deeper dive into Quebec's peregrination.

While the rest of Canada considered them separatists, successive leaders of the Parti Québécois claimed the movement was about sovereignty, not separation.

Sovereignty is a positive moniker. Separation represents division. But in the end, all Quebec sovereigntists want to leave Canada to start their own country.

Smith claims otherwise, but that is about the only affirmation of Canadian unity that she is likely to make.

Her main reason for running the province seems to be a plan to run down the country.

Smith probably thinks that an anti-Eastern sentiment will encourage a majority of Albertans to vote for her.

But chances are their interest in personal prosperity outstrips that of her continuous assertions of public enmity.

She will be running against Ottawa, while Alberta New Democratic Party Leader Rachel Notley will be running against the Alberta Tory record.

The blame game actually works in two directions, and at this point in time, Notley appears to have the edge.

By introducing her sovereignty bill as the first piece of legislation, Smith is signifying that fighting

the federal government will be her top priority.

Notley says she wants to work with the feds on common issues of economic importance.

That message of co-operation may resonate with Albertans who are looking for solutions, not brickbats.

At the end of the day, Smith's sovereignty move does not look much different from the Parti Québécois' offering during the last referendum.

They told Quebecers they would keep the dollar, the military, the trade agreements and all the benefits of belonging to Canada, while setting up their own sovereign country.

Smith is seeking a similar sort of autonomy.

All the reasons to endorse Canada remain intact, including access to currency, international treaty status, and military protection while none of the responsibilities will matter.

If Smith doesn't like a federal law, she and her cabinet will simply toss it out.

Sovereignty in a united Canada—sounds just like the separatists.

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

The Hill Times

Chasing 'meh' voters

The much-anticipated Republican 'red wave' was more like a 'red trickle.' The question is, what happened? Why did the supposed Republican juggernaut fizzle out?

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—As we all know by now, the recent U.S. midterm election delivered a mild surprise.

Basically, the Republicans didn't do nearly as well in the various congressional and gubernatorial races as everyone thought they would.

In other words, the much-anticipated "red wave" was more like a "red trickle."

The question is, what happened? Why did the supposed Republican juggernaut fizzle out?

Well, according to one analysis put out by the *Cook Political Report's* Amy Waters, the election hinged on what she termed the "meh voters."

These "meh voters" could be defined as independents, i.e., Americans not registered as either Republicans or Democrats, who slightly disapproved of U.S. President Joe Biden.

In theory, since these voters didn't like Biden, they should have been open to voting Republican.

But the post-election numbers tell us that didn't happen.

As a matter of fact, Biden or no Biden, the majority of American "meh" voters actually ended up supporting the Democrats, which is one key reason as to why the Republican electoral effort underperformed.

Keep in mind, for a political party to succeed in an election, it must keep its own base motivated and energized and win over a large chunk of undecided voters.

That last bit, i.e., winning over voters who lack a strong loyalty to any particular partisan brand or to any political ideology, is the real challenge.

In the case of American independent voters, for instance, they're, generally-speaking, neither conservative fish nor liberal fowl.

That's to say they tend to be socially liberal, but fiscally conservative.

So, given this reality, you can see how tricky it would be for Republicans to win over "meh" voters.

True, in these tough economic times, "meh" voters might have found the Republican stances on deficits and taxes to be appealing, but it's also possible they perceived the party's conservative views on issues such as abortion or gay rights to be troubling.

Another factor which may have complicated Republican election plans is that independent voters tend to have a status quo bias.

That means, all things being equal, independent voters are a little bit antsy about changing horses midstream.

Now imagine how those feelings of antsy might be greatly exacerbated if you thought the horse you'd be changing onto was the unpredictable and volatile Donald Trump?

Indeed, I suspect a fear of a Trump resurgence may have been on the mind of many "meh" voters.

As one election analysis put out by the *Cook Political Report*



Not-so-sleepy Joe: U.S. President Joe Biden's Democrats outperformed the historical trend in the Nov. 8, 2022, midterm elections. According to the *Cook Political Report's* Amy Waters, the election hinged on what she termed the 'meh voters,' defined as independents, Americans not registered as either Republicans or Democrats. Photograph courtesy of Flickr

put it, "The common thread among the GOP candidates who lost independent voters and went on to lose their races is that they claimed former president Trump's MAGA label."

Call it the Trump effect. Anyway, one final problem the Republicans may have faced in the midterms is they likely had a hard time getting their message out to "meh" voters.

After all, one main reason why independent voters are independent in the first place is that they don't really care too much about politics.

Consequently, they don't watch the news, they don't read campaign literature, they don't watch candidate debates on TV, and they tune out political ads.

As a political consultant friend of mine put it, "they don't know anything about anything."

Thus, to win them over you need to basically bludgeon independents over the head with a smart, efficient, and simple campaign message.

Maybe the Republicans simply couldn't afford to launch that kind of concentrated effort.

At any rate, as is always the case, Canadian politicians can learn from what happened to the Republicans down south.

More specifically, they too might have to chase "meh" voters.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

Politics

Danielle Smith a political mayfly, not long for the job

The idea that a province in Confederation can decide which federal laws it will obey, and which ones it won't, is absurd. Is it really a step forward to give Smith the right to order the national police force not to enforce federal law?

Michael
Harris

Harris



Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, left, and Rachel Notley, former NDP premier. It looks like there is some fatigue in Alberta with demonizing everything that comes out of Ottawa. According to a recent poll by Janice Brown Opinion Research, Smith is in the process of delivering a majority government to Notley, writes Michael Harris. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright and courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

HALIFAX—Let's start with the good news. As premier of Alberta, Danielle Smith is a political mayfly; not long for the job.

By May 29, the woman who was made premier by one per cent of Albertans will be a gaudy footnote in the dismal decline of a conservatism firmly captured by anger. This group continues to look for a fight with Ottawa under any pretence, however false.

Donald Trump has done it in the United States, using un-hinged surrogates like Marjory Taylor Greene. Pierre Poilievre, who is trying desperately to sell the false narrative that "everything is broken" in Canada, does it with personal videos that wouldn't pass muster in an elementary school show-and-tell class. And Danielle Smith is doing it with her inept and purposely belligerent Sovereignty Act.

Smith's bungling since winning the United Conservative Party leadership on the sixth ballot on Oct. 6 should have prepared everyone for this senseless, divisive, and anti-democratic power grab. This is the historically challenged leader who said that unvaccinated people are "the most discriminated against group" in her lifetime.

That lifetime must have been spent sleeping. How else could she have ignored real discrimination, the kind that maims and kills?

The Jewish people know a thing or two about that.

So do Blacks and Muslims, and LGBTQ people, who recently saw their brothers and sisters gunned down in a U.S. nightclub solely because of their sexual orientation.

So do the thousands of Indigenous children who went through the torture chamber of the residential school system.

So do the inmates of Mount Cashel orphanage in Newfoundland, who were beaten and sexually molested by the very people who were supposed to be taking care of them—the Irish Christian Brothers.

Bottom line?

Until she was hounded into making an apology that didn't exactly resonate with sincerity, Smith seemed to be saying that she didn't consider genocide as serious a matter as the right to refuse a vaccine that was expressly designed to save lives during the pandemic.

Like Poilievre, who backed the truckers illegally occupying Ottawa rather than residents of the city whose rights were being trampled, Smith decided to champion the rights of those who chose not to be vaccinated, even though, as Fared Khan and Trent Daley put it in the *Edmonton Journal*, that posed "a health threat to those with compromised immune systems." What about their rights?

This is also the premier who is so clueless in her priorities that

she changed the rules in Alberta during a pandemic, ordering the province's schools to conduct in-person learning.

That is bad enough, but the premier's policy becomes dangerously irresponsible when coupled with another of her edicts. Schools can't even require students to wear masks or be forced to take classes online. That means she doesn't give a hoot about the health and well-being of teachers or students, who will be at risk as a result of Smith's changes. It is not policy she is espousing, it is ideology.

That is exactly what Smith's power grab, Bill 1, amounts to. In her pathetic attempt to draw the Trudeau government into a legal or political fight, she has come up with a bill that grants the premier and cabinet the right to unilaterally change legislation. Yes, as part of the process, there is a resolution vote on any particular issue in the legislature. But since the UCP has the majority there, that is just a fig-leaf covering Smith's bald-faced power grab.

For a party that talks a lot about freedom, the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act looks about as authoritarian as they come. That was Stephen Harper's approach as prime minister; it is Poilievre's as wannabe PM, and now Smith is doing it.

Not only can Smith and her cabinet consolidate what the CBC reported as "king-like" powers at the legislature's expense, regular

Albertans have much less time to challenge dubious cabinet decisions in the courts. They used to have six months to take these matters to court; now they have just 30 days.

The idea that a province in Confederation can decide which federal laws it will obey, and which ones it won't, is absurd. Is it really a step forward to give Smith the right to order the national police force, the RCMP, not to enforce federal law? There is already a division of powers under the Constitution, and a well-known process for resolving jurisdictional issues. In the case of the federal carbon tax, several provinces took Ottawa to court, where it was found that the federal measure was constitutional.

Smith's legislation is like giving someone a shove in a bar. It is an invitation to rumble. Alberta's premier is breathlessly naive if she thinks she can draw Justin Trudeau into a legal dog-and-pony show, disguised as a court case. As the prime minister said, he wants Albertans to decide what is in their interest, not the federal government.

Smith, and Poilievre for that matter, don't seem to realize that toxic conservative extremism is going out of fashion. With the recent convictions for seditious conspiracy of the ring leaders of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack in the United States, Trump's hold on the Republican Party is all but

gone. His dinner with a neo-Nazi and an anti-Semite have accelerated the process. The public in that country seems tired of the chaos, lies, and bullying—and the poor showing of the GOP in the November midterm elections just emphasizes that trend.

It looks like there is a little of the same fatigue in Alberta, with demonizing everything that comes out of Ottawa. According to a recent poll by Janice Brown Opinion Research, Smith is in the process of delivering a majority government to the NDP and former premier Rachel Notley. The poll also found that the UCP may even lose seats in the areas around Smith's rural base.

It is no accident that former premier and UCP leader Jason Kenney resigned on the same day that Smith tabled what Kenney called a "de facto plan for separation." He had previously called the act "catastrophically stupid."

Smith and Poilievre should sit down and read Kenney's resignation letter very carefully, including this sentence, as reported in *The Globe and Mail*: "I am concerned that our democratic life is veering away from ordinary prudential debate toward a polarization that undermines our bedrock institutions and principles."

Fuck Ottawa is not a plan. Michael Harris is an award-winning journalist and author.

The Hill Times

Canada should put its money where its mouth is on strengthening the International Criminal Court



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured on Oct. 26, 2022, on the Hill. At the upcoming session of the International Criminal Court's Assembly of States Parties, Canada should lead by example, writes Farida Deif. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canada should back up its stated commitments to justice with the resources the court needs to do its job.

Farida Deif

Opinion



TORONTO—International Criminal Court member countries will meet in the Hague starting Dec. 5 at a time of renewed attention on the crucial role of the court in justice and accountability for serious international crimes.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in late February and the litany of apparent war crimes will no doubt be on everyone's minds at the Assembly of States Parties session.

In many ways, the international community's unprecedented response to this conflict has been a tipping point, with countries individually and collectively activating an extensive range of accountability mechanisms at lightning speed. Within a matter of weeks, the ICC prosecutor opened an investigation in Ukraine following a referral by a record number of countries, underscoring what can be achieved with an ample dose of political will and moral courage.

Canada has been at the forefront of many of these efforts, using virtually every tool at the government's disposal to deliver justice for victims of grave international crimes. In addition to joining in referring Ukraine to the ICC, Canada imposed a series of targeted sanctions on more than 1,000 individuals and entities complicit in human rights abuses.

In May, following a request by the ICC prosecutor, Canada also announced a voluntary contribution of CDN\$1-million and the deployment of a team of Canadian investigators to support the prosecutor's work. Despite the messaging that linked these contributions to Ukraine, raising unfortunate perceptions of politicization

in the court's work, these funds cannot be earmarked and should be used across all investigations on the prosecutor's docket.

But, while these contributions signal a strong commitment to justice, they also serve as an acknowledgment by Canada that the court does not have the resources to fulfill its mandate. Court officials had been raising this concern long before the Ukraine conflict.

In its May 26 announcement of renewed support to the ICC, the Trudeau government stated unequivocally that "Canada recognizes that justice requires resources." At the upcoming assembly session, Canada should reaffirm this important message publicly and commit to ensuring that the court has the resources it needs to carry out its mandate effectively and consistently across all situations under its jurisdiction. The best way to do this is not through unsustainable and politically tinged, ad hoc, voluntary contributions, but rather consistent support to align the court's annual budget with its workload.

Several ICC member countries, including Canada, have generally been reluctant to address a growing gap in the resources available to the court even when it was clear that its budget would limit victims' access to justice. The consequences of this failure have been felt deeply by victims and justice advocates.

Take Nigeria, for example, where grave crimes by Boko Haram were under preliminary examination by the ICC for a decade. While in December 2020 the court's then-prosecutor determined that an investigation was warranted given inadequate domestic efforts to deliver justice, she forestalled action to open an investigation citing inadequate resources and operational challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reflecting on this decision, Chino Obiagwu, chair of the Nigerian Coalition for the International Criminal Court, said "the consequence is that victims had hopes raised and then those hopes were dashed ... this reflects a failure of justice both at the domestic level and the international level."

Ultimately, ongoing resource constraints that stem from years of underfunding severely affect the court's delivery of justice, not just in Nigeria, but also across all countries on the court's docket. As a court of last resort, the ICC is often the

only available avenue for justice for victims of the most serious crimes.

At the upcoming session of the Assembly of States Parties, Canada should lead by example. The government should highlight the need to ensure equal access

to justice to victims across and within all ICC situations, and express a willingness to consider this year, and in coming years, an investment in the court's regular budget necessary to realize this goal. Canada should change the terms of this debate away from a race to hold down the bottom line to the need for longer-term planning and the court's sustainability.

Canada should back up its stated commitments to justice with the resources the court needs to do its job. Canada and other justice-supporting countries can send the strongest possible signal of support for the ICC, its global mandate, and the right of victims of serious crimes to access justice, by strengthening the court's budget to ensure that all the court's organs can accomplish their critical work.

This concrete step would demonstrate that justice for grave international crimes is truly a priority for Canada, regardless of where abuses are committed and by whom.

Farida Deif is the Canada director at Human Rights Watch.

The Hill Times

Chris Reynolds

Executive Vice President and President, Potash

Chris Reynolds is EVP & President, Potash. Prior to his appointment, Chris served as Co-Lead for Nutrien's Potash business unit and for several years as Senior Vice President, Sales. Chris has been with the company for 19 years, earning extensive experience across Nutrien's Potash, Nitrogen, and Phosphate business units, and has over 25 years of experience in the global fertilizer industry.

Since joining PotashCorp in 2003 as Manager International Sales, he has held roles of increasing responsibility, covering Domestic & International Fertilizer and Industrial Product Sales, as well as Supply Chain excellence.

Chris is Vice Chairman for the International Fertilizer Association's Market Intelligence Committee and Chairperson of The Fertilizer Institute's Nutrients for Life Foundation, an industry organization promoting plant nutrient education.

Prior to joining PotashCorp, Chris worked for seven years in Sydney for Agrow Australia marketing products in Australia on behalf of various international agricultural suppliers. Chris received his Bachelor of Agricultural Economics in 1995 from the University of New England in New South Wales and a Masters in Business Management in 2002 from the Macquarie Graduate School of Management in Sydney.

Chris is married, has two children, and is based in Saskatoon.

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Opinion



Canadian Rangers patrol boats, centre and right, sail towards HMCS Harry DeWolf on the Eclipse Sound, Nunavut, during Operation Nanook-Nunkput, Aug. 19, 2021. Photograph courtesy of Corporal Simon Arcand, Canadian Armed Forces

Canadian Rangers should have their maritime mission

In the Arctic, the challenges of lack of infrastructure and the cost of doing business requires a whole-of-government approach where departments share information and resources. In those communities that have an Auxiliary Canadian Coast Guard boat, the Canadian Rangers could use the same vessel to conduct their patrols, a cost-effective use of a federal asset.

Pierre Leblanc

Opinion



OTTAWA—The recent auditor general of Canada's report on the matter of Arctic waters surveillance was both disappoint-

ing and alarming. It was disappointing because it highlights that "the government has not taken the required action to address long-standing gaps affecting its surveillance of Canada's Arctic waters" and alarming, because soon, we could be partially blind to what is going on in this beautiful but fragile part of our country because there could very well be gaps in the replacement of critical assets such as icebreakers and space-based surveillance satellites.

The report makes clear that even with the assets we have presently, we lack the ability to permanently monitor a specific site from satellites, one of our most precious security assets. Although the RADARSAT Constellation allows us to scan the whole surface of the Arctic with great accuracy, the satellites are constantly in motion and cannot maintain surveillance of a specific point of interest. One must wait for the next orbit of one of the three satellites to have another look at a potential target. The Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard ships we deploy in the Arctic over the shipping season need to cover an area greater than continental Europe. They will be days away from an incident unless they happen to be inadvertently close by. One may recall that the New Zealand vessel that illegally transited the Northwest Passage because of COVID restrictions was spotted by the Inuit Maritime Monitoring Program, a Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. initiative, as opposed to a federal program.

In 2010, *Enhancing The Role Of The Rangers In The Arctic: A Discussion Paper*, a study commissioned by several Senators,

including Senator Dennis Patterson of Nunavut and then-Senator Roméo Dallaire, recommended increasing the role of the Canadian Rangers with a maritime mission. The Canadian Rangers have this great reputation of being the eyes and ears of the Canadian Forces on the land in the Arctic. It is a proven cost-effective program. In addition to some limited training on the land, the Canadian Rangers also report on any suspicious activity while performing their day-to-day activities. They support deployments of the Army, support search and rescue on land, and support their community during a disaster such as the avalanche in Kangiqsualujuaq or during the COVID lockdown.

The concept proposed in the discussion paper was brilliant. It was to use the Canadian Rangers as first responders in their maritime role. In the conduct of their seasonal maritime patrols, the Rangers, who are mostly Inuit in the High Arctic, would report any unusual or suspicious activities such as illegal fishing, ships in maritime protected areas, an environmental spill, or unusual presence in one of the national parks. Their report would be provided to the relevant authorities to take appropriate action. Depending on the circumstances, the Rangers could take immediate action to minimize impacts. They could be the first responder to an environmental issue while the Canadian Coast Guard would ramp up its response. They would naturally be ready to execute a search and rescue operation. One of the important contributions they would provide is to maintain communication and continuous

information on a given situation on site while the appropriate federal agency would be deploying the required resources. Information on the nature of an environmental spill or the detailed information on the number and type of casualties would provide valuable information to tailor the federal response appropriately. In the words of Senator Patterson, "... Inuit are specifically suited to a maritime capability because of their intimate knowledge of and mastery of the Arctic marine environment—land fast ice included."

The security situation in the Arctic is changing rapidly mainly because of the impact of global warming, which is making access to the Canadian Arctic archipelago much easier and for increasingly long periods of time. We have already seen a significant increase in maritime activity including tourist vessels, cruise ships and vessels transporting criminal elements. The situation with Ukraine only magnifies the need to have complete domain awareness in our Arctic. China, which claims to be a "near-arctic state," has long-term Arctic ambitions and has been increasing its presence in the Arctic. Its growing aggressiveness and the threat of its fishing fleet to our Western Arctic exclusive economic zone only adds to the need to know what takes place in our Arctic at all times.

The Canadian Forces did not increase the maritime role of the Canadian Ranger Program in the Arctic following the recommendation of the December 2009 report of the Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the 2010 discussion paper on enhancing

the role of the Rangers, nor the sovereignty and security in Canada's Arctic interim report of the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence. The Canadian Coast Guard, to its merit, has been partially filling the void by deploying Auxiliary Canadian Coast Guard detachments in several Arctic communities to improve maritime search and rescue.

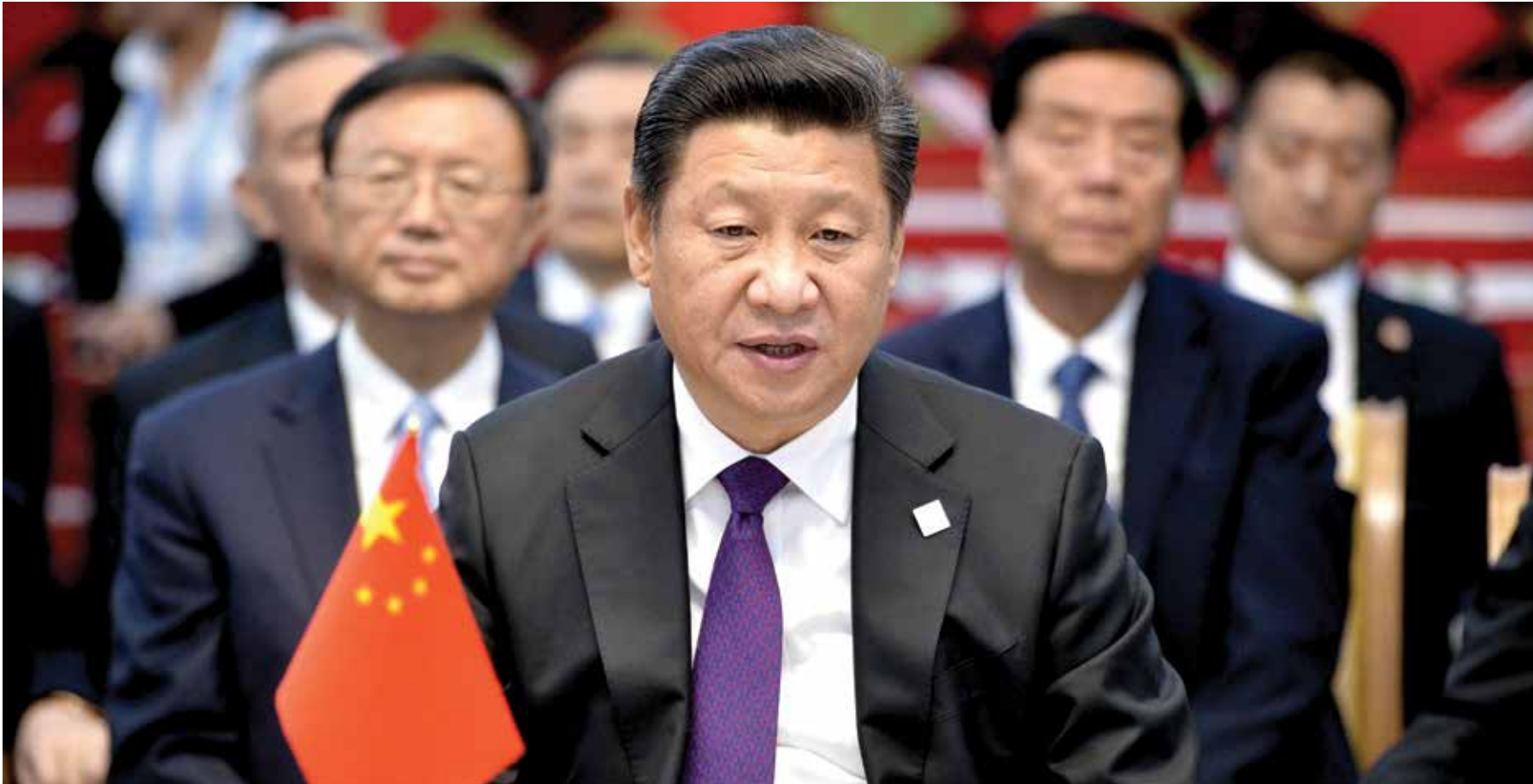
As is the case in the Arctic, some of the detachments are staffed in part by people who are also members of the local Ranger Patrol. We find the same people in the leadership of their community, participating in their hunters and trappers organization and volunteering in the community's search and rescue organization. In the Arctic, the challenges of lack of infrastructure and the cost of doing business require a whole-of-government approach where federal departments share information and resources. In those communities that have an Auxiliary Canadian Coast Guard boat, the Canadian Rangers could use the same vessel to conduct their patrols, a cost-effective use of a federal asset.

"We can easily bring people from Southern Canada to increase our security in the Arctic, but why not employ the people of the Arctic: they are there, they know the land and waters, and they have vested interests," said Sen. Dallaire in February 2010.

Hopefully, because of the auditor general's report, the Canadian Forces will reconsider the recommendation of that 2010 discussion paper to give the Canadian Rangers a maritime mission. This would provide an additional layer of information to improve and maintain domain awareness especially if one of the surveillance systems in place becomes unserviceable or is not replaced in time.

Colonel (Retired) Pierre Leblanc is a former commander of the Canadian Forces in the Arctic. *The Hill Times*

China's COVID trap



To avoid potential political disaster, Chinese President Xi Jinping has to eat humble pie and import several billion doses of highly effective mRNA vaccines, writes Gwynne Dyer. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Chinese President Xi Jinping's problem is that the protests will probably recur and may well escalate because over-long mass quarantines and lockdowns are a non-political issue that can unite almost everybody against the government's policy.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—“Our COVID-19 policy is the most scientifically effective, the most economical, and yields the best result,” insisted the *People's Daily* newspaper in China after mass public protests against the government's zero-COVID policy last weekend. If President Xi Jinping

believes that, he is in for a lot more trouble.

The protests were unprecedented in their scale and daring. They broke out spontaneously in 12 cities across China after 10 lockdown-related deaths in the remote province of Xinjiang. All sorts of people took part, from students to workers to pensioners. A few even called for the dethroning of Xi and the Communist Party.

That doesn't mean the regime is on the brink of collapse. Public anger at the endless lockdowns and the resulting loss of income is strong, but the regime's surveillance technology is excellent. There was relatively little official violence last weekend, but many of the protesters will have an unpleasant visit by the police in the coming days.

Xi's problem is that the protests will probably recur and may well escalate because over-long mass quarantines and lockdowns are a non-political issue that can unite almost everybody against the government's policy. Or rather, against Xi's personal policy, for he has deliberately chosen to portray zero-COVID as the greatest achievement of his time in office.

That made sense in the first year of the pandemic, for China's relentless lockdowns and mass testing campaigns saved a great

many lives. Total COVID-related deaths in China have been around 5,000 out of a population of 1.4 billion. The United States, with less than a quarter of China's population, had more than one million COVID deaths.

Xi and his propagandists naturally used this contrast as evidence that both Chinese medicine and the Chinese political system were superior to their Western equivalents. Was he even aware that the zero-COVID policy could only be a stopgap until effective vaccines were developed, never a lasting solution?

His scientists must have tried to tell him that, but somehow he didn't take the message on board. There was a vaccination program, but not a very rigorous one—and Xi kept chasing the fantasy of completely eliminating the coronavirus. He is caught in a trap, but he built it himself.

“Lockdowns should always be a temporary phenomenon, not a long-term strategy,” explained Dr. Anthony Fauci, now U.S. President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser. Continuing them for almost three years “without any seeming purpose or end game” is sheer folly. Moreover, Xi seemed unaware that the COVID virus was growing more infectious with time.

The latest versions of the Omicron variant, which first appeared

a year ago, are estimated to be up to 10 times more infectious than the original virus that appeared in Wuhan in 2020.

Those versions haven't reached China yet, due to drastic curbs on travel into and out of the country, but the Chinese population is so poorly protected that the only alternatives, if they arrive, would be semi-permanent nationwide lockdowns or nationwide carnage.

Chinese-made vaccines are only 70 per cent effective against earlier variants of the virus and may be wholly ineffective against the later Omicron versions. The elderly are particularly vulnerable: only 40 per cent of the people over 80 years old have had even a single booster shot.

An article published in *Nature Medicine* last March estimated that ending the COVID-zero lockdowns and quarantines in current circumstances could overwhelm hospitals, with 15 times more people needing hospital beds than those currently available. It predicted around 1.5 million deaths.

That would still be a far better outcome than the U.S. record, but arriving all at once so late in the game, when the rest of the world is long past lockdowns and mass deaths, it could spell political disaster for Xi. Perhaps even for the Communist regime.

There is a way out. First, Xi has to eat humble pie and import several billion doses of highly effective mRNA vaccines. Let's say six months for that.

Then he has to control the rising infections with the hated lockdowns and quarantines as best he can, containing popular anger as much as possible until a high enough portion of the population is properly vaccinated—say another six to 12 months.

Then, sometime in 2024, he can relax the restrictions and let the Chinese rejoin the rest of the world. That strategy worked for the Australians and New Zealanders, who ended similar mass lockdowns as soon as most people got their (imported) mRNA vaccines.

If Xi can't bear the humiliation of doing that, he could gamble that an effective Chinese-made mRNA vaccine will become available soon. Several are under development, and one is allegedly about to enter Phase 3 clinical trials.

But if he bets on that and it's not ready soon, his newly acquired status of de facto president-for-life will become a nightmare. COVID infections are rising fast.

Gwynne Dyer's new book is *The Shortest History of War*.
The Hill Times

Opinion

The Notwithstanding Act: a proposal for reform

Whether the notwithstanding clause was necessary or wise was questionable from the beginning, but it was the price of reaching agreement on the Charter.

Amir Attaran
& Gib
van Ert

Opinion



At its birth 40 years ago, Sec. 33 of the Constitution Act, 1982, known as the “notwithstanding clause,” was a solution in search of a problem. It empowered Parliament and the provincial legislatures to override some of the most important protections of the newly adopted Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Whether the notwithstanding clause was necessary or wise was questionable from the beginning. Still, it was the price of reaching agreement on the Charter, which belatedly gave Canada constitutionally protected human rights guarantees.

So long as the notwithstanding clause remained taboo, that compromise held. But now the taboo has been shattered—by provincial governments shabbily advancing otherwise unconstitutional political objectives—and the notwithstanding clause has turned into a problem without a solution. Reopening the Charter to repeal it is impossibly fraught and likely, too, an overreaction. There are exceptional circumstances when temporarily derogating from certain human rights may be justified.

Thankfully there is a way of taming the notwithstanding clause, short of amending the Charter, and it is easily within Parliament’s grasp.

Since 1867, the federal cabinet has had the constitutional power to reject—or “disallow”—the legislation of Parliament and the provincial legislatures. Ottawa has not used the disallowance power since 1943, which leads some to think it is a dead letter. But like the notwithstanding clause itself, the disallowance power hasn’t disappeared from our law just because it is rarely used.

In 1971, then-prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau offered to give up the disallowance power in exchange for constitutionally



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured in the House of Commons foyer before Question Period on Nov. 29. The Government of Canada should introduce, and Parliament enact, the Notwithstanding Act, designed to end wanton abuses of the notwithstanding clause, write Amir Attaran and Gib van Ert. *The Hill Times* photography by Andrew Meade

enshrined human rights guarantees—but the provinces rejected that bargain. A decade later, in the 1982 negotiations creating the Charter, the provinces realized their error and asked to repeal the disallowance power—but this time Trudeau balked. The result was a constitution with both the notwithstanding clause and the disallowance power.

In other words, since 1982 the notwithstanding clause and the disallowance power have been a package deal, like it or not. When premiers Doug Ford or François Legault too readily grab at the former, the federal government should trigger the latter, except in rare cases.

What is needed is a law requiring the federal cabinet to protect the fundamental human rights of Canadians by exercising the Disallowance Power.

Supreme Court precedent supports such a law. Since the earliest days of the Charter, the Court has repeatedly declared that Canadians’ rights should not sink beneath the benchmark set by Canada’s international human rights treaties. In the Court’s words, “the Charter should be presumed to provide at least as great a level of protection as is found in the international human rights documents that Canada has ratified.” Paramount among these is the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, a 1966 treaty Canada joined in 1976 and which today has 173 parties.

You can think of the International Covenant as a sort of global minimum of what civilized countries expect of each other. The ground rules are familiar enough: don’t arbitrarily arrest or torture people, show fairness to those accused of crimes, do not discriminate against minorities or the vulnerable, and protect basic

freedoms of thought, expression, religion, and assembly. If using the notwithstanding clause puts Canadians in the rotten position of living outside the ground rules, then that is not just something to be resisted at a gut level, but something outright illegal in international law for violating the International Covenant.

Simply put, the International Covenant is a legally-binding, globally-accepted yardstick to judge if using the notwithstanding clause goes too far. When does the International Covenant allow human rights to be put aside? In its words:

In time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed, [governments] may take measures derogating from their obligations under the present Covenant to the extent strictly required by the

exigencies of the situation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with their other obligations under international law and do not involve discrimination solely on the ground of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin.

Two points stand out here. First, there has to be a “public emergency which threatens the life of the nation.” Whatever that may mean, it surely doesn’t include using the notwithstanding clause to kibosh a strike vote of teaching assistants or compel a woman to remove her hijab. Second, any derogation from the human rights in the International Covenant, like freedom of association or religion in these two examples, must stay within the lines of Canada’s other international obligations and must not discriminate. The idea of using the notwithstanding clause *intentionally* to discriminate, for example against anglophones, or Muslims and Jews, is absolutely verboten.

This isn’t just our opinion. The Government of Canada itself pledged to fellow countries of the International Covenant that it cannot allow the notwithstanding clause to be used freely. In two cases in the early 1990s, anglophones in Quebec complained to the United Nations Human Rights Committee that Quebec illegally used the notwithstanding clause to make French signage dominant. Ottawa took Quebec’s side in those disputes but admitted that “Canada’s obligation is to ensure that [the notwithstanding clause] is never invoked in circumstances which are contrary to international law”—which is exactly correct.

Would Parliament, by limiting the notwithstanding clause to the International Covenant, be poking

a stick at Ford or Legault? They may well think so. But as provincial leaders, foreign affairs are not their business; the conduct of Canada’s external affairs is the federal government’s responsibility. If a province acts contrary to international law, it is the federal government that wears it at the international level. In that sense, provincial breaches of Canada’s international obligations are objectionable intrusions on federal power. By stopping abuses of the notwithstanding clause, Parliament will be protecting federal control of external affairs.

We recommend that the Government of Canada introduce, and Parliament enact, the Notwithstanding Act. Inspired by the Clarity Act, which squared a province’s desire to secede with international law in a manner the Supreme Court approved, our Notwithstanding Act is designed to end wanton abuses of the notwithstanding clause by subjecting it to Canada’s international legal obligations.

How does the Notwithstanding Act do this? By serving as Parliament’s written instructions on when to allow or disallow the notwithstanding clause. Each time a provincial legislature (or even a future Parliament) passes a law using the notwithstanding clause, the Notwithstanding Act legally obliges the federal cabinet to consider the disallowance power. If the law violates the fundamental human rights protected in the International Covenant, or otherwise violates Canada’s international legal obligations, then Parliament’s instructions are that cabinet must disallow it. If the case seems not clear-cut, then Parliament’s instructions are that either the federal government or the provinces may turn to the Supreme Court for its opinion.

We think this way of doing things—measuring out the rights violations *each time* the notwithstanding clause is used, not in some sweeping way, but in keeping with Parliament’s will, the particular facts of each case, and guidance from Canada’s human rights treaties and the Supreme Court—is the most democratic, surest way to prevent the clause being abused and turning into a political football. For if in our system of constitutional democracy Parliament, the Supreme Court, and the rule of law are not ultimately in charge, then who should be?

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Gib van Ert practices public law and civil litigation in Ottawa and Vancouver with Olthuis van Ert and is the president of the Canadian Council on International Law. He is an acknowledged authority on the application of international law in Canadian courts, and frequently acts in matters at the interface of domestic and international law. He is the former executive legal officer at the Supreme Court of Canada, where he served as principal advisor to two chief justices. *The Hill Times*



Former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, pictured in 1975. In 1971, Trudeau offered to give up the disallowance power in exchange for constitutionally enshrined human rights guarantees. *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*



Canada's federal Energy Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, pictured recently in a scrum on the Hill. We are against the government's support for the nuclear industry's plan to extract plutonium from spent nuclear fuel and export the technology, write M.V. Ramana and Susan O'Donnell. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Plutonium is plutonium, period, and separating it increases nuclear proliferation risks

There is no legitimate reason for the Canadian government to support technologies that create the potential for new countries to separate plutonium and develop nuclear weapons, write M.V. Ramana and Susan O'Donnell.

M.V. Ramana
& Susan
O'Donnell

Opinion



FREDERICTON, N.B.—We welcome Guy Hotte and Neil Alexander's response to our recent opinion piece for *The Hill Times* and this opportunity to set the record straight. We argued against the government's support for the nuclear industry's plan to extract plutonium from spent nuclear fuel and export the technology. Canada's support for reprocessing will create a new global security risk and raise legitimate questions about our government's desire to be a leader in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Hotte and Alexander mistakenly argue that the crux of our argument is about separated plutonium. In fact, the problem

is separating what they call the "unwanted elements" from the plutonium.

These "unwanted elements," known as fission products, are a natural result of the underlying physical process—fission—through which reactors produce energy. Fission products are fiercely radioactive and must be removed to prepare the fuel mix for the proposed Moltex reactor. At the same time, the high level of radioactivity in these fission products is also beneficial. That radiation offers a barrier to theft—any would-be thief of spent fuel would be quickly exposed to lethal levels of radiation.

Any process that removes some or all of these radioactive materials inevitably makes it easier to get at the plutonium. This is why safeguards experts from six U.S. national laboratories concluded in a 2009 study that technologies such as pyroprocessing that produce even "impure plutonium" significantly reduce proliferation resistance. One calculation showed that the radiation barrier in the output from something like a future Moltex pyroprocessing facility would be one thousandth that provided by the radioactive fission products in spent fuel.

Although it would be necessary to further process this material in order to produce plutonium that can be used to make nuclear weapons, the heavy lifting has already been done. Rather than requiring a multi-billion dollar reprocessing plant, with layers of shielding to protect plant staff from dangerous levels of radiation, this separated material can be processed in a relatively low-cost laboratory hot cell.

Would Canada's investment in such a technology intended for export help ease the way for would-be proliferators?

The simple, and obvious, answer is yes. Exporting reactors that use plutonium as fuel, either in pure or slightly impure forms, will aid a recipient country's move toward nuclear weapon capability. Hotte and Alexander argue that a country could adopt other ways of obtaining plutonium. Of course, but so does the gun lobby in the United States argue for continued sales because offenders can kill using knives or other weapons. This error of logic was the same one that led, for example, to Canada exporting the CIRUS reactor to India, which then used plutonium produced in this reactor to make and test its first nuclear weapon.

There could well be future proliferators. Recently, in Halifax, the U.S. defense secretary warned of the risks of nuclear proliferation by authoritarian states wanting to emulate Russia.

Therefore, our original conclusion stands: there is no legitimate reason for the Canadian government to support technologies that create the potential for new countries to separate plutonium and develop nuclear weapons.

We end with a note of agreement: Hotte and Alexander offer a good list of what would be beneficial to all of us, including reducing uranium mining, increasing emissions-free power generation, reducing the amount of spent fuel to be disposed of in a deep geologic repository, and reducing plutonium production. Uranium mining, burying any kind of radioactive waste, and producing plutonium in any form are definitely undesirable. But there is a better way to achieve all these desirable goals: stop constructing nuclear plants, phase out existing ones, and invest the billions that would be saved in renewable sources of energy and other technologies associated with storage and demand side strategies. This strategy would result in not only getting more emission reductions, due to the lower costs compared to nuclear reactors, but also achieving those reductions sooner because we won't have to wait for experimental and dangerous technologies.

M.V. Ramana is the Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security and professor at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, University of British Columbia. Susan O'Donnell is an adjunct professor at both the University of New Brunswick and St. Thomas University. *The Hill Times*

Noralee Bradley

Executive Vice President, External Affairs and Chief Sustainability and Legal Officer

Noralee Bradley is Executive Vice President, External Affairs and Chief Sustainability & Legal Officer at Nutrien. Noralee oversees a portfolio of corporate functions, internal communications, and external stakeholder relations, including Legal, Integrity/Compliance, Sustainability, Government & Industry Affairs, and Brand & Culture Communication across Nutrien's global operations in North America, South America, Australia, Trinidad and Europe.

Since joining Nutrien in 2020 as the Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer, Noralee has played an important role in C-suite initiatives stewarding stakeholder relationships, internally and externally, utilizing her over 30 years of experience advising public companies and boards of directors on governance, M&A and capital market matters. Prior to joining Nutrien, Noralee also served as a director of two TSX-listed companies and several community organizations in Calgary including the United Way and the Institute of Corporate Directors. She currently serves on the Board of STARS Air Ambulance and the Dean's Advisory Council at the Edwards School of Business at the University of Saskatchewan.

Noralee holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Finance) and a Juris Doctor, Law from the University of Saskatchewan and completed the Executive Leadership Program at Western University's Ivey Business School. In 2020, Noralee received an Alberta Queen's (now King's) Counsel designation in recognition of merit and community service.

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Opinion

It's time to do something about the notwithstanding clause

The issue of how to constrain, if not outright end, use of the notwithstanding clause should be on the agenda of upcoming meetings of federal, provincial and territorial ministers of justice. A parallel experts' roundtable could be convened to review options for limiting and eventually revoking Sec. 33.

Alex Neve

Opinion



As the Ontario government's labour dispute with educational workers heads toward likely resolution, there is a risk that Doug Ford's bullying resort to the notwithstanding clause in Sec. 33 of the Charter of Rights to override collective bargaining rights will be forgotten. That cannot happen.

Yet already it is in the rearview mirror. The offending legislation, the Keeping Students in Class Act, has been entirely erased. The subsequent Keeping Students in

Class Repeal Act declares that earlier law is "deemed for all purposes never to have been in force."

Crisis averted? Only until the next time. The Ford government has used or threatened to use the notwithstanding clause three times in four years. The eight Ontario premiers—four Conservative, three Liberal and one NDP—who preceded him following the Charter's adoption in 1982 never took that step.

And the clause remains in force with respect to two pieces of legislation in Quebec, one dealing with the right of certain public servants to wear religious symbols, the other with language rights. This use of Sec. 33 five times by the premiers of Canada's two largest provinces in four years is deeply troubling.

The notwithstanding clause was an unfortunate compromise in the negotiations leading to the Charter of Rights. While negotiators intended it to be used in only the most exceptional circumstances, that has not been the case. The six provincial and territorial governments that have used or nearly used the clause—the Yukon, Quebec, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and New Brunswick—have largely done so for political expediency.

The notwithstanding clause's broad sweep clearly violates Canada's international human rights obligations. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Canada in 1976, makes it clear that some (not all) rights can be temporarily suspended, but only when there is a "public emergency which threatens the life of the nation." Sec. 33's use has never come remotely close to that threshold.

So, do we simply grimace when governments pull it out, responding as best we can through legal challenges and advocacy campaigns? Or should we not proactively explore options for reining it in?

Repealing it is a bridge too far. Amending the Constitution requires the agreement of the House

of Commons, the Senate, and a minimum of seven provinces constituting at least half the population of Canada. Either Ontario or Quebec would have to be on board, an unlikely prospect given their recent enthusiasm for the clause.

What about other options?

Legislation could be passed by federal, provincial, and territorial governments barring the use of the notwithstanding clause outright.

If that is not feasible, legislation could set more onerous procedural limits on how it is used. Provincial Liberals in Ontario have recently tabled such a bill, the Notwithstanding Clause Limitation Act. Gib Van Ert and Amir Attaran have drafted a recent proposal as well.

A range of restrictions and safeguards could be legislated.

That might include the need for a unanimous vote or at least two-thirds of all Members of Parliament or the legislature; reducing the permissible time limit for its use from five years to one year; and instituting a bar on using it pre-emptively before court rulings.

Certain Charter provisions should be exempted from the notwithstanding clause's scope, at a minimum the life, liberty and se-

curity of the person protections in section 7, prohibition of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment in section 12, and the equality rights guarantee in section 15.

It should be expressly confirmed that violating gender equality is beyond Sec. 33's reach, by virtue of the Charter's other "notwithstanding" clause in Sec. 28, affirming that the rights and freedoms in the Charter are "guaranteed equally to male and female persons."

Legislation should set criteria detailing the types of extraordinary circumstances under which the clause could be invoked, consistent with Canada's international human rights obligations. And a mechanism for independent oversight and public reporting whenever section 33 is used could be instituted.

The issue of how to constrain—if not outright end—use of the notwithstanding clause should be on the agenda of upcoming meetings of federal, provincial and territorial ministers of justice. A parallel experts' roundtable could be convened to review options for limiting and eventually revoking Sec. 33.

Legislation imposing limits might be subsequently repealed. But it would establish expectations that the Charter of Rights means something and can only be set aside as an extreme measure of last resort.

Alex Neve is a senior fellow at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa.

The Hill Times

Powerful but precarious: cracks in the foundation of fire and emergency services in Canada

The climate crisis, health-care crisis, and personnel shortages in Canada's fire departments are converging, causing increasing strain on Canada's fire-fighting capacity.

Ken McMullen & Tina Saryeddine

Opinion



Canadians are often surprised when they learn that the majority of the country's fire

departments are volunteer. While this is not new, fire chiefs across the country have been increasingly concerned about rising call volumes, decreasing numbers of firefighters, and mounting costs. These concerns were recently confirmed by the results of the Great Canadian Fire Census of 2022.

This year, 629 fire departments providing services to 24 million Canadians participated in this census. This included 22 of the country's largest cities and fire departments of all types. Based on this, we estimate that Canada has about 126,000 firefighters within its 3,200 fire departments, a drop from 156,000, as reported in a Canadian study conducted by National Fire Protection Association.

At the same time, demand for service is going up. Fire departments responded to an estimated two million calls last year. Only 10 per cent of those were fire-suppression related. An astounding 50 per cent were due to emergency medical response; 30 per cent

due to all-hazard response from vehicle extrication to high angle, water rescue, dangerous goods and other, and 10 per cent due to atypical climate emergencies.

"We are seeing here the convergence of the climate crisis, health-care crisis, and personnel shortages," said Keven Lefebvre, fire chief in Leduc County Alta., who co-chaired the project.

"Call volumes and severity are intensified by the known risks of firefighting" said co-chair Vince MacKenzie from Grant Falls-Windsor, N.L., who also co-chaired the project.

Firefighting is inherently dangerous. Repeated exposure to trauma is associated with high risk of post-traumatic stress disorder. Adding to the awareness of mental health injury, the International Association of Cancer Research recently reclassified firefighting as a top-tier carcinogenic profession.

These challenges are also intensified by resource issues. The Canadian Association of Fire

Chiefs' study showed that 41 per cent of the country's fire departments have had to defer training and equipment for more than two years, due to fiscal pressures. Of the \$5.6-billion in fire department expenditures, only 15 per cent of those are attributed to the more than 2,000 fire departments that are volunteer.

What can be done to address this situation? From Dec. 5-7, fire chiefs will be on the Hill for their annual advocacy day. They will discuss recommendations in three key areas.

First, we need to protect and retain Canada's supply of firefighters and their response capacity. We need to bring back a federal Joint Emergency Preparedness-type program to help restock and rebuild Canada's supply of training and equipment. We also need to support bills like Liberal MP Sherry Romanado's Bill C-224 for firefighter cancer, and NDP MP Gord Johns' Bill C-201 to increase the volunteer firefight-

er tax credit. Finally, we need to maintain the federal commitment to first responder mental health.

Next, we need to reduce community risk. There should be sprinklers in the new supply of affordable housing. These won't replace firefighters, but they will give people a chance to evacuate. They will reduce more than 144 deaths and injuries due to house fires. We can also FireSmart homes and communities against wildfire risk, and we can ban the sale and use of consumer fire-works. Fire departments in 600 communities had to respond to such calls. Fireworks should be left to professionals.

It is also essential that we pay special attention to these same issues in Indigenous communities, where organizations like the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council (NIFSC) notes the risk of death from fire is 10 times worse than the national average. CAFC will be accompanied by NIFSC on the Hill.

Finally, given the number of issues, the CAFC is recommending that Canada consider the formation of a national fire adviser and administration, similar to that of the U.S. Fire Administration. This would help in a whole of government approach to the fire sector.

Ken McMullen is the fire chief in Red Deer Alberta and president of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC), and Tina Saryeddine is the executive director of CAFC.

The Hill Times

Why protecting grasslands is a win-win-win for climate, biodiversity and the ranching community



A burrowing owl, pictured in Tswassen, B.C., in 2014. Birds of grassland landscapes, such as burrowing owls, chestnut-collared longspurs and Baird's sparrows, are declining faster than any other group of birds across North America, and grassland birds have declined nearly 57 per cent since 1970, write Patrick Nadeau, Ian Cook, and Ryan Beierbach. Photograph courtesy of Flickr/Michael Klotz

To halt and reverse biodiversity loss, we need strong commitment from our policy-makers today that will save our iconic grasslands and the birds and other biodiversity that need them for their survival.

Patrick Nadeau, Ian Cook
& Ryan
Beierbach

Opinion



In mid-December, the world's nations meet in Montreal to further their commitments under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. Bold ideas and novel approaches are needed in order to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. Those gathered in Montreal should look westward. Canada's Prairie grassland habitats and ranching communities are both under threat, yet together they can help play a role in both the biodiversity and the climate change crises.

Avoiding grasslands conversion to cropland is the best nature-based climate solution in Canada and keeps precious habitat intact for grassland birds. Birds of grassland landscapes, such as burrowing owls, chestnut-collared longspurs and Baird's sparrows are declining faster than any other group of birds across North America, and grassland birds have declined nearly 57 per cent since 1970. The largest populations of threatened grassland bird species are found on ranches where cattle are grazing. Conserving what remains of grassland habitat is critical to their survival, and helps to maintain the role birds play in the ecosystem as pest insect and rodent control, while avoiding a 'domino-effect' of species loss.

While it is recognized that raising cattle does contribute some greenhouse gases (2.4 per cent of Canada's total emissions), grasslands used for grazing cattle also keeps enormous amounts of carbon trapped in Prairie soils. Converting grasslands to crops will release considerable carbon while grazing helps keeps it captured. Avoiding the conversion of native prairie grasslands is important for biodiversity, and the most impactful nature-based solution to climate change. Prairie grasslands have an exceptional carbon storage value, storing 80 to 200 tonnes of carbon per hectare, most of it below ground in the root systems of prairie plants. Land use change from grassland to crops releases a staggering 30-55 per cent of the stored carbon.

Conversion is in large part driven by high commodity prices, which makes cash cropping more [economically] viable than ranching for many. This is not to say that grain farming is bad (or easy)—we obviously need grains—but the significant gaps in risk and revenue between grass-based and crop production systems make it difficult for producers to choose to keep grasslands intact. But—similar to Arctic tundra or peat bogs—the carbon must stay in the ground to help mitigate climate change.

The temperate grasslands, like those of the Canadian Prairies, are the least protected endangered ecosystem on the planet. Protected areas such as parks, land trust lands, Indigenous protected and conservation areas play a key role in conservation. The majority of the remaining grasslands are privately owned, and formal protection is usually not an option. Multi-use working grasslands that produce food and foster biodiversity are needed in order to keep this ecosystem functioning.

In Saskatchewan, Tara Davidson and her family take pride in grazing their cattle on naturally biodiverse Prairie grasslands. "The native Prairie provides much more than forage to our cattle. We're providing habitat for grassland birds, wildlife, pollinators, and thousands of other species that rely on this ecosystem," Davidson says. "Maintaining and grazing prairie pastures also builds carbon, something that is lost when pastures are converted to other land uses," she adds. "These landscapes are essential for society because they conserve biodiversity, they provide a key link to sequestering carbon, and are important to sustain our business and way of life."

Future-oriented ranchers are working hard to lower the environmental footprint of beef production for the benefit of their families, society and the environment, as well as to compete in a marketplace increasingly driven by environmental choices. Consumers are demanding greener products prompting grocery retailers and supply chain companies to encourage improvements from ranchers.

The Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) provides a globally accepted framework for continuous improvement in sustainability, covering water, carbon, biodiversity and other values. One new tool in use is the Bird-friendliness Index, used by Birds Canada to measure the impact of conservation measures taken by ranchers on the grassland bird community.

The CRSB, along with its ranching, supply-chain, retail and non-government members, like Birds Canada, are working together to halt the decline of biodiversity, including grassland birds. By conserving Canadian grasslands with sustainable beef production practices, practical steps are being taken to address the twin global crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. But we can't do it alone. To halt and reverse biodiversity loss, we need strong commitment from our policy-makers today that will save our iconic grasslands and the birds and other biodiversity that need them for their survival.

Patrick Nadeau is president and CEO of Birds Canada. Ian Cook is the grassland conservation manager at Birds Canada. Ryan Beierbach is chair of the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef.

The Hill Times

3200 Departments

• 126,000 Firefighters



2 Million Calls

• All Hazard Services Calls

Canada's Fire Chiefs and Emergency Management Leaders

Share the results of the Great Canadian Fire Census

Read our recommendations for how to:

- Protect the supply of firefighters and emergency response capacity
- Reduce community risk and emergencies nationally
- Modernize Canada's approach to coordinating relevant policy issues

Learn more about the country's all hazard fire and emergency

- Affordable Housing
- Climate Adaptation
- Healthcare Crisis
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Visit www.cafc.ca for details, graphic illustration, and report

MPs, Senators, and Parliamentary Staff are invited to join the Fire Chiefs for their annual Reception on the Hill December 6, 2022

Details available through Ms. Reem Wahab at Reem@grassrootspa.ca

The CAFC Board of Directors and National Advisory Council wish all staff and readers of the Hill Times a safe and happy holiday and new year

Opinion

How to fix the Senate's procedure and practice



The Senate's Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration Committee, pictured at a meeting on May 9, 2019, in the Senate Building. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Well-designed procedural rules and practices can also increase Senators' effectiveness and efficiency. In this column, I'll offer a few suggestions for modernizing the Senate's procedure and practice.

B. Thomas Hall

Opinion



Parliamentary procedure and practice are of course intended to ensure a fair and orderly transaction of Senate business. But well-designed procedural rules and practices can also increase Senators' effectiveness and efficiency. In this column, I'll offer a few suggestions for modernizing the Senate's procedure and practice.

The second reading stage of a bill is traditionally the first chance for Senators to discuss the

legislation. It is the stage where a legislative body decides whether the principle or purpose of the bill merits a thorough clause-by-clause consideration with the possibility of improving it through amendments. That stage makes sense when the House is considering a government or a private member's bill. The minister or private member sponsoring the bill must convince the Commons that the bill warrants further study instead of immediate rejection.

But if the Senate's mission is to act as a House of legislative revision instead of as a little duplicate of the House, it would never think of rejecting a government bill before sending it to committee for detailed examination and possible amendment. I suggest that it would waste less of the Senate's time if a government bill received from the House were sent directly to committee for detailed examination without a second reading debate. Senate committees are already celebrated for their thorough study of bills referred to them. Committee study should be the Senate's first step in examining government bills and not the second step as it is now.

The only bills from the House that Senators should want to scrutinize carefully before authorizing a more detailed committee study are private members' bills. Even after adoption by the House of Commons, private members' bills may not be supported by

the government and thus not be taken into consideration by voters at the next election. Moreover, private members' bills are not given the same degree of scrutiny by the Commons as government bills are.

Why does a government bill passed by the House need a proposer or sponsor in the Senate? Since it is the Senate's constitutional mission to consider such bills, why should a non-party Senator be required to move the motions needed to advance a government bill through the various stages of legislative procedure?

I suggest that to eliminate the Senate's second reading stage before committee for government bills, the Senate rules should be revised to provide that when the Speaker announces that a particular government bill has been received from the House of Commons, that bill will automatically stand referred to a committee designated by the Speaker. This kind of streamlined legislative procedure is used by many other legislative bodies, even many not considered houses of revision.

The committee should then appoint, depending on the complexity of the bill, one or more rapporteurs (to borrow a term from Europe) to be in charge of the bill. After the committee stage, the rapporteur should be familiar enough with the bill to present both it and the committee's report on the legislation to the full Senate for the post-committee discus-

sion stage. The rapporteur does not act as some kind of pretend sponsor of the bill, but is instead charged with leading the full Senate's discussion and amendment stage on the bill. The Senate's current legislative procedure is followed from that point on.

When the government representative in the Senate introduces a government bill directly in the Upper Chamber, the Speaker can refer it to committee as if it had been received from the Commons. As an aside, I suggest that this is why the government representative should become the minister responsible for relations with the Senate. No opposition counterpart of the government representative is needed in the Senate for two simple reasons. First, the opposition is not a governmental entity and does not function collectively to present legislative proposals for the consideration of Parliament, although individual senators may do so. Second, it is the duty of all Senators (other than the Speaker and the government representative) to criticize and seek to amend government bills. That is not a role belonging uniquely to a group of Senators known as the opposition.

I make one last minor procedural suggestion. Since the Senate, unlike the House of Commons, is not a house of confidence, it should never attempt to defeat supply granted to the Crown by the Commons. The Senate rules should be changed

to provide that any appropriation bill certified by the Speaker of the Senate to contain only the usual provisions for granting supply may be deemed passed at all stages without amendment upon the Speaker's announcement that such a bill has been received from the Commons. This rule would be the Senate's written guarantee that it will never attempt to withhold the supply of moneys appropriated by the Commons for government operations. The granting of supply to the Crown is solely the responsibility of the people's elected representatives in the House of Commons, which is why appropriation acts are returned to the Commons for their Speaker to present the bill for royal assent.

A Senate committee should continue to examine the government's spending estimates documents to ensure that the government is administering the public service of Canada effectively and efficiently. I believe a Senate committee can do a better job of scrutinizing government operations than any partisan Commons committee because of the number of years senators serve.

B. Thomas Hall is a retired House of Commons procedural clerk. This piece is a follow-up to a piece published in *The Hill Times* last on Feb. 28, 2022. It is based on a longer discussion paper submitted to the Independent Senators Group.

The Hill Times



U.S. President Joe Biden, pictured Feb. 23, 2021, delivering a virtual joint press statement with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in the East Room of the White House. Canada's new Indo-Pacific strategy is about the Trudeau's Liberals propping up the U.S. Democrats on the one hand, and fighting off the Conservatives on the other, writes Bhagwant Sandhu. Photograph courtesy of White House official photographer Adam Schultz

Trudeau's Indo-Pacific plan offers Canadian stamp on an American strategy

The running theme in both the U.S. National Defence Strategy and Canada's recently-released strategy for the region is an 'us versus them' dichotomy. Them being China.

Bhagwant Sandhu

Opinion



OTTAWA — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Indo-Pacific strategy reads at times like a press release and, at others, like a propaganda tool to stir up Sinophobia. But mainly, it talks and walks like U.S. President Joe Biden's National Defence Strategy, released last month.

At the time, Biden noted the "People's Republic of China harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one

that tilts the global playing field to its benefit."

Compare this to Trudeau's Indo-Pacific strategy, which reads: "China is looking to shape the international order into a more permissive environment for interests and values that increasingly depart from ours."

Biden and Trudeau would be challenged to name a country that does not wish to shape the world to fit its own national objectives. They all do, except for Canada. We want to shape the world to serve American interests.

As reported by Politico, U.S. Ambassador to Canada David Cohen (who had already seen the Indo-Pacific strategy before the rest of us), speaking at the Nov. 15 gala event held by the Canadian American Business Council, remarked that our Indo-Pacific strategy was "completely synced up" with the Biden administration. "I'm not saying anyone is copying anyone's homework," he said.

The running theme in both documents is an "us versus them" dichotomy. Them being China. It is noteworthy, however, that Biden's strategy never explicitly mentions Canada as part of "us." He highlights initiatives like "our security partnership with Australia and the United Kingdom (AUKUS)," and even notes his intention to keep working with

his partners, "as we are with the European Union, the Indo-Pacific Quad." No need to mention Canada; see Cohen's remarks above.

If timing is everything in politics, then we need to ask why we are demonizing China now. While Russia's invasion of Ukraine threw the U.S and Canadian plans off track, the fact is the strategies have been in the works for a while. Since Jan. 1, 2022, to be exact. That is the date when the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) came into effect. And that is the reason why the U.S. is in such a mad rush to control and contain China. Again, it is all about the economics. RCEP takes global capitalism to the next level, anchoring it in Asia-Pacific, with China as the main hegemon.

RCEP is a free-trade deal between 15 countries, including economic powerhouses South Korea, Japan, and Indonesia, and encompasses Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Together, these countries account for 30 per cent of the world's population and, more significantly, 30 per cent of the world's GDP, which is roughly estimated at \$20.7-trillion. It is projected to grow to over \$100-trillion by 2050. It is the larg-

est trading bloc in human history; and will shift the hub of global economic decision-making away from Washington to Beijing.

In the context of transnational power games, RCEP is a bitter pill to swallow for the United States. But why are the Trudeau Liberals wound up about it? Australia and New Zealand aren't nearly as bothered.

Maybe the Indo-Pacific strategy has nothing to do with China. Maybe, as with all things international, it is about domestic political positioning to get votes in Canada. Nearly one in five Canadians has ties to that region, making it the largest diaspora grouping in Canada. These groupings vote. In the 2015 election, voters of Chinese-Canadian descent overwhelmingly voted against the Conservatives, costing them at least two seats and impacting a dozen more. Rather than rejigging their anti-China messaging, the Conservatives have ratcheted it up even more, forcing the Liberals to respond. The Indo-Pacific strategy helps do that.

Unlike the Conservatives, who have boxed themselves in with their anti-China stance, the Liberals are careful, which explains another notable feature of the Indo-Pacific strategy: it is rather schizophrenic.

Unlike Biden, who goes all out on China, Trudeau and Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly are cautious. The strategy notes that "China's economy offers significant opportunities for Canadian exporters" and that "the long-standing connections we share and the extraordinary contributions of Canadians of Chinese heritage to Canada will continue to bring diversity and depth to our relationship for decades to come." Therein lies the rub. None of it is about sticking it to China. It's about the Trudeau Liberals propping up the Biden Democrats on the one hand, and fighting off the Conservatives on the other.

If the Liberals are serious about China and see it as an existential threat to the world order, why not go all out? Recognize Taiwan, cut off diplomatic ties, put in sanctions, do what we are doing to Russia. China, like any other foreign country, should be kept in check. Any evidence of interference in our internal matters should be investigated, and the offending parties should be jailed or sent home packing. Similarly, on trade and human rights, we should raise the matters at the appropriate international institutions: the World Trade Organization, UN Human Rights Tribunal, International Labour Organization, to name a few.

Joly's predecessor was at Global Affairs was Marc Garneau. He had proposed an independent, made-in-Canada, well-balanced framework for China. The four "Cs" he called it: co-exist, compete, co-operate, and when necessary, challenge China. Garneau is a champion of the Order of Canada. Trudeau had him removed from the cabinet table, to make room for Joly.

Bhagwant Sandhu is Canadian foreign policy commentator and author. He retired as director general from the federal public service. *The Hill Times*

Opinion



When Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly unveiled the Trudeau government's Indo-Pacific Strategy, she quickly won praise from the United States, which was perhaps the main goal of the strategy after all, suggests David Crane. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

widen the ability of Canada to have a relationship with China which, while sticking to our own values, enables mutually advantageous opportunities. It is, after all, our second-largest export market.

But instead of declaring that we will engage with China only "when we must," as Joly said recently, a better approach would be to say "when we can." That would leave doors open, not closed.

The Trudeau government's Indo-Pacific strategy warns that "China is an increasingly disruptive global power," declaring that its approach "is informed by its clear-eyed understanding of this global China." China "increasingly disregards" international rules and norms. Any country that erodes an existing rules-based system undermines Canada's interests, the strategy document goes on to say. The same criticism could be made of the U.S. Overall, the tone of the Indo-Pacific Strategy is one that seems to close most doors. We will interact, but only when we must. "Canada will pursue dialogue with China to advance Canada's national interests while remaining true to our values, all the while focusing relentlessly on Canadian priorities."

But will anyone pay attention in China? Will our ambassador in Beijing find that no one answers her phone calls? Will Trudeau be the only G7 leader unable to meet with the Chinese leadership? How does any of this serve Canada's national interests? China will continue to be the most important player in Asia and so has to be central to our hopes in that continent. It is too big to be ignored, and Canada, like the United States, will find that many Asian countries will continue to build ties with China.

Yet Canada seems determined to cut as many ties as it can. For example, Chinese students and researchers are no longer as welcome in our universities and colleges, viewed as potential spies. This also assumes, falsely, that such exchanges are a one-way street, only beneficial to China. But as the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., recently concluded, the movement of people between China and the U.S. was critically important to the that country. "U.S. scientific research, medical research and innovation, artificial intelligence (AI) development, and university advanced STEM training all depend heavily on Asian, especially Chinese, participants. Without them, U.S. technological progress and global leadership would be set back years," it said.

Canadians expect their government to ensure national security, defend our values and to deal with foreign interference in our politics. But we also have to be realistic in defining our national interest. The Indo-Pacific Strategy fails on that score, and we will pay a price. China is here to stay, will become more important in the future, and we have to keep the doors open, not closed.

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

The Hill Times—

Canada loses sight of its own national interest with Indo-Pacific Strategy

While Western countries all have differences with China, other key players, including Germany and France, are working to keep doors open.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



TORONTO—When Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly unveiled the Trudeau government's Indo-Pacific Strategy on Nov. 27, she quickly won praise from the United States, which has been working hard to ensure that Canada aligns with its policy. The Indo-Pacific Strategy can be seen as a down payment for Canada's

entry into the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific Framework, which includes 13 Asian countries, but when launched earlier this year, excluded Canada, leaving it desperate to be included.

As set out in its Indo-Pacific Strategy, Canada's policy towards China will continue to be markedly hostile and hawkish, with little room for engagement. The Canadian position appears to be even more rigid than that of the U.S. which, along with the recent summit between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping, attempted to draw a line under growing divisions that are setting the two superpowers on an increasingly dangerous course.

This summit doesn't mean an end to vigorous U.S. efforts to contain China and slow down its technological advances. Far from it. But it is a recognition that the downward spiral in superpower relations is in danger of getting out of hand. Yet, as U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo said recently, "we want to promote trade and investment in areas that do not threaten our core economic and national security interest or human rights values." China is

the third-largest export market for the U.S., and this trade, she said, directly supports 750,000 U.S. jobs, many of them in the more than 25,000 small and mid-sized companies that exported to China last year.

Paul Heer, who spent some 30 years with the U.S. intelligence community on East Asia, and from 2007 to 2015 was the national intelligence officer for East Asia, is one of a number of American experts, though, who question the Trump-Biden approach to China. "U.S. strategy," he wrote on Oct. 31 for Asian Peace Research, "focuses almost exclusively on mobilizing U.S. allies and partners implicitly against China."

But China and the U.S., as the two most powerful nations in the world, have an obligation to work together on key global issues, including within the Indo-Pacific region in pursuit of "stability, prosperity, mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence," Heer wrote. This will be complicated with the level of geopolitical rivalry and mistrust between the two superpowers. But, Heer argues, "the alternative of a region divided between hostile camps

would almost certainly be worse. Accordingly, the United States should consider an approach to Indo-Pacific regional security that works with China rather than exclusively against it."

While Western countries all have differences with China, other key players are working to keep doors open. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has visited China, as has European Council President Charles Michel. French President Emmanuel Macron is expected to visit next year. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak may be another. In his first foreign policy speech as PM, Sunak argued that while "the so-called 'golden era' is over, along with it the naive idea that trade would automatically lead to social and political reform," we should not "rely on simplistic Cold War rhetoric."

But the Trudeau government seems determined to sustain tensions, and even to personalize them, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau publicly lauding protesters in China who are resisting continued COVID lockdowns (imagine the outcry in Canada if Chinese leadership had applauded the Ottawa convoy protesters last winter). This only serves to

Conservatives look to ‘slice’ off worker vote from NDP as economy puts Liberals in ‘a very tight spot,’ say strategists

The Conservative strategy is based on building a ‘continual narrative’ of getting officials ‘on the record’ agreeing to Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre’s past statements on inflation, says Shakir Chambers.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Conservatives and New Democrats seeking to connect with workers have both seized on the issue of wages not keeping up with inflation, yet their similar diagnosis of the problem, says NDP strategist Cam Holmstrom, diverges when it comes to the “solution on offer.”

Meanwhile, Liberal strategist Elliot Hughes noted that economic issues presently leave the Liberal government in “a very tight spot,” and its members are sometimes best served to “conveniently look at their shoes” on issues where it will struggle to win, until the financial outlook improves.

Those dynamics were on full display at two recent House Finance Committee meetings which fielded a string of high-profile witnesses. Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem appeared on Nov. 23, followed by Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) and Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux on Nov. 28.

When questioning Macklem, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) and Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu’Appelle, Sask.)—each subbing in that day for their party’s regular members—zeroed in on past comments the governor had made about the relationship between a hot labour market, rising wages, and inflation.

Singh referred to comments Macklem “made about wages”—such as the governor’s July comments to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and November remarks to the Public Policy Forum.



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, has been continuing efforts to appeal to working-class voters, leading NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh to focus on shoring up his party’s support in that area, says Conservative strategist Shakir Chambers. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



“Do you think it’s appropriate to tell employers to keep wages low despite wages not keeping up with inflation,” Singh asked, “when there is no evidence that wage increases are driving inflation?”

Following Singh, Scheer pressed forward on the same topic.

“I just want to pick up on a line of questions from my colleague, Mr. Singh,” Scheer said to Macklem. “What you’re saying is that inflation isn’t going to stick around forever, so before you go and ask for big wage increases ... you wouldn’t want wage increases to put pressure on inflation staying high. Is that a good summation?”

“I’m saying to plan on inflation coming down,” replied Macklem.

Holmstrom, a former NDP staffer, told *The Hill Times* that despite the two parties landing on a similar “diagnosis of the problem,” the “solution on offer” is different, with the NDP leader also focusing on corporate profits as part of his questioning.

“The Conservatives are basically saying inflation is bad, and this is just another example of it being bad. But they keep coming back to it’s the government spending money,” said Holmstrom, founder and principal at Niipaawi Strategies. “That, to me, is where the paths diverge.”

He said the NDP “has always believed” in “more equal distribution,” whereas the Conservatives are focused on “trying to tear

something down” when it comes to the Bank of Canada.

Shakir Chambers, a former Conservative Party staffer who is now a principal at Earncliffe Strategies, agreed different strategies are at play on the topic of wages. The strategy for Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) builds on his approach from his leadership race, he said. “Pierre did a really good job of attracting workers, and you saw early on when he became the Conservative leader, Singh started speaking up a bit more. So I think there was a little bit of worry [from the NDP] that the Conservatives could kind of slice off that worker vote.”

Chambers said much of the Conservative approach is trying to show that “Pierre was right all along,” with the Conservative leader’s past statements about the Bank of Canada and inflation. Chambers said this is something that feeds into the narrative that “everything is broken,” highlighted in one of Poilievre’s recent YouTube videos.

“They’re constantly trying to point to the fact that [in their view] Pierre has always had it right,” said Chambers, suggesting this allows Poilievre to advance a narrative that: “Nobody’s doing their job. I’ve been raising this all along. ... I’m seeing these things coming, and I have solutions to address these things.”

Chambers said executing this strategy involves a “continual narrative” of getting officials “on the record agreeing to what Pierre’s

been saying for quite a while, and using that narrative to feed into this notion that Pierre knows what he’s doing.”

That pattern continued to play out at the Nov. 28 meeting, where committee members and witnesses debated whether the current inflation has its roots at home or abroad.

Conservative finance critic Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, Alta.) pushed Freeland on that point during her testimony.

“When our leader Pierre Poilievre was warning your government that there was going to be inflation, you claimed that it would be deflation. As inflation was taking off, you claimed it would be transitory,” said Hallan. “The governor of the Bank of Canada said ... Liberal spending has driven up inflation, and he will have to continue hike interest rates.”

Freeland, in response to a question from a Liberal colleague, countered that argument.

“We do Canadians a disservice when we fail to place the Canadian experience in a global context,” she said, noting inflation in Canada in October was at 6.94 per cent. Freeland said this was “definitely too high,” but contrasted it to rates of 14.3 per cent in the Netherlands, 11.1 per cent in the United Kingdom, 10.4 per cent in Germany, and 7.7 per cent in the United States.

In an interview with *The Hill Times* following the Nov. 28 committee meeting, Liberal MP

Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Ont.) said it was important to establish that inflation was a global phenomenon.

“I find it highly disturbing that [Conservatives] continue to promote a false narrative that the Trudeau government has created inflation, as though everything every other economist in the world has said is completely irrelevant,” said Dzerowicz, who sits on the finance committee. “It’s a problem because unless you have a shared reality, it’s very difficult to actually work together on solutions.”

However, Hughes said the political reality is voters will look to their own government when they are feeling economic pain.

“While the government might be right that it is external, international events that are largely responsible for the inflationary rate ... people are not necessarily going to think of those things on a day-to-day basis,” said Hughes, a senior adviser at Summa Strategies. “And that puts the government in a very tight spot, because there’s only certain things that the government can do to control that—because they’re right, a lot of these things are caused by international events.”

Hughes said the best strategy for the government is to talk about the role it played supporting the economy during the early pandemic, and then “quickly pivot” to investments the Liberals are making today, such as fiscal update measures designed to help low- and middle-income earners cope with inflation.

However, the government also found itself pressed on those spending measures when Giroux testified on Nov. 28.

Asked by Conservative MP Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, Ont.) if the government’s approach constituted “restrained spending growth,” Giroux replied: “Unsurprisingly, no.”

“It’s not called keeping one’s powder dry,” Giroux added, referencing Freeland’s comments in delivering the fall economic update.

Hughes said this comes down to a matter of interpretation.

“I think the government’s approach to this is actually a little bit more balanced than simply just cutting off everything and saying, ‘we’re going to drive the deficit down to zero in a year or two,’” he said. “That’s just not how this government operates.”

With Conservatives seeking to draw contrasts between Poilievre’s past statements on inflation and statements made by the government, Holmstrom said Liberals were effective at committee by countering the Conservative leader’s misses when it comes to cryptocurrency.

However, Earncliffe Strategies’ Chambers said the economy will remain a difficult issue for the Liberals for some time to come.

“I don’t see a world where, moving forward, the Liberals can actually win on this issue,” he said. “They need to hope that things kind of subside, and as we head into whenever that next election is.”

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News

‘Stay the course’: reporters, editors discuss strategies for combating online hate with Mendicino

Catherine Tait of CBC said a survey by Reporters Without Borders has found three quarters of journalists had experienced harassment.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

The “sole purpose” of online hate and harassment directed towards journalists is to “silence” them and undermine a “foundational pillar” of democracy, says CBC president and CEO Catherine Tait.

Tait made the opening remarks at a Dec. 1 event hosted by Carleton University, titled “Journalists and Online Hate: What To Do When the Battlefield is Everywhere,” in partnership with the #NotOK project, a collection of 48 news agencies that have been responding to a growing number of reports of online harassment directly primarily towards female and racialized journalists.

Following opening remarks from Tait and Sonia Verma, editor-in-chief of Global News, CTV News Parliamentary Bureau Chief Joyce Napier moderated a panel comprised of three journalists who have experienced online hate—Saba Eitizaz of *The Toronto Star*, Rachel Gilmore of Global News, and *Hill Times* columnist Erica Ifill.

Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino (Eglinton-Lawrence, Ont.) joined the panellists on stage to listen to their experi-



CBC President and CEO Catherine Tait said the #NotOK project is not only about raising awareness but finding solutions. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino, left, *Hill Times* columnist Erica Ifill, and Global News reporter Rachel Gilmore, discuss the growing online hate towards journalists in Canada at Carleton University on Dec. 1. *The Hill Times* photo by Andrew Meade

ences and respond the government’s role in addressing the issue.

Tait pointed to a survey conducted last year by Reporters Without Borders, which found that three quarters of journalists had experienced some form of harassment, and one-in-five reporters had been harassed on a weekly basis.

Diverse journalists were attacked “more frequently and more viciously,” said Tait, adding that this harassment leads to increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress.

In the face of this spike in abuse, Tait said her message is to “stay the course.”

“We need fiercely independent, outspoken journalists more than ever before,” she said, because “without a strong free and diverse press, democracies cannot function.”

To support this work, she said the #NotOK project was not only drawing attention to the issues, but identifying solutions. One such initiative is a newsroom guide the project has developed, which provides “advice on what to do before, during, and after incidents of online harassment or abuse.”

Tait said the project had identified that newsrooms need to provide support to reporters in ways similar to how newsrooms have learned to support journalists covering war zones and natural disasters.

Verma said that Global News was now telling its journalists “there’s absolutely no obligation” to use social media platforms.

“We were really concerned about the mental health of our journalists and about the diminishing return, frankly, from some of these platforms,” she said.

However, Ifill countered that is not a realistic solution for journalists who work as freelancers.

“If you’re freelance, you have to be on social media,” said Ifill. “This idea that we can make this choice to just step away from the noise is ludicrous. It does not reflect an intersectional look at media today.”

Ifill said it is possible for journalists to step away from social media if they are “already established” and of a certain class.

“And when I say class, it means that you are salaried, it means that you’re employed, it means that you get to go on CBC *At Issue* every week,” she said. “They’re the ones who don’t have to be on social. We do.”

Ifill pointed to this as one of several examples of feeling less supported as a freelancer.

Ifill said that as a freelance columnist for *The Hill Times*, she doesn’t feel that the organization sufficiently supports her.

“I wouldn’t say that they don’t believe me. I think they recognize some threats and not others,” she said.

“I was recently digitally lynched,” Ifill said. “... And, gaslighting happens at all levels. It happens with, like I said, I’ve seen male journalists—male journalists have gaslit me, people have gaslit me, bosses have gaslit me. I mean, I will be honest, if you do not have an institution backing you, you’re fucked. You’re straight up fucked.”

Graphic, violent messages require better response from police, say journalists

To emphasize the extreme nature of the messages being sent to journalists, Eitizaz read the text of a graphic and hateful email she received, which said, in part, that she was “guilty of treason, sabotage, not learning to shut her brown fucking cunt-shaped mouth.”

Eitizaz said it has taken the pressure applied by the #NotOK project for her to get “just to get a call back from a detective.”

Gilmore also described multiple times where she brought issues of harassment to police, and did not receive a satisfactory response.

Gilmore described one such recent incident, in which she was sent a video of a person pulling out a knife.

She said that because of her past experiences bringing these issues to police, she was not going to report it, but multiple colleagues encouraged her to do so.

However, police responded last week to say that the incident did not meet the definition of a threat under the Criminal Code, because the video didn’t explicitly state an intent to harm her.

“They have to be explicit, they have to tell you, ‘I am going to stab you in the heart and kill you,’” explained Gilmore about the response she received from police. “So if they say, ‘Oh, wouldn’t it be a shame if somebody stabbed you in the heart and killed you?’ That is suddenly not violating the Criminal Code, as

law enforcement officers told me that they were interpreting.”

“I think that that grey area is where a lot of these individuals like to play, because I think they know the law very well,” said Gilmore.

Mendicino says these actions are ‘obviously criminal conduct’

Mendicino said, in his view, what the journalists were describing was “intimidation, harassment, overt racism, [and] obviously criminal conduct.”

“It is against the law,” he said. “And it is intentional that it targets disproportionately women, racialized, Indigenous, and other minority communities.”

While emphasizing that as public safety minister he cannot direct police, he said it is his role to make sure law enforcement agencies understand the need for serious action, and noted that journalists have a role that is “constitutionally important.”

“Police do need to turn their minds very conscientiously to the systemic barriers that have contributed to underreporting from women, from racialized individuals,” he said, adding that the example provided by Gilmore “raises some very serious questions.”

Mendicino said social media companies also must take responsibility.

“Social media have a critically important role to report where those incidents occur, and to preserve evidence,” he said “so that, again, on the decision of police, which are undertaken independently, those individuals can be brought to justice.”

Mendicino said this was necessary in order for social media to work as a “public square.”

“Part of I think the overarching conversation here is how do we create a safe space, a safe digital town hall,” he said. “And you can’t have a safe digital town hall or a public square if it is impossible to enforce the law.”

Ifill said when it comes to addressing hate, the stakes are high. “There has to be a line drawn, or else we have no standards,” she said. “This is democracy we’re talking about.”

She said this type of harassment “always comes for the ones who are most vulnerable first,” but will escalate.

“That’s how they test out their tactics, because they know society doesn’t care about us,” she said. “So they will engage and expand and they will level up.”

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Trust in mainstream media loses out at semi-annual Munk Debate

Canadians' faith in the mainstream media is not as bad as it is in other countries, but it is still declining.

BY CHELSEA NASH

“Be it resolved, do not trust the mainstream media.” That was the thesis of the Munk Debate that took place on Nov. 30, and in the end, that’s the notion that prevailed, according to the 3,000-person audience at the sold-out Roy Thomson Hall.

Though an entrance poll of the live Toronto audience revealed an even divide on the matter—48 per cent said they did not trust mainstream media; 52 per cent endorsed the trust side—an exit poll saw opinion swing firmly in the direction of mistrust. In the end, 67 per cent of the audience endorsed the resolution.

Arguing in favour of the motion were British author and political commentator Douglas Murray, and American author and Substack journalist Matt Taibbi, a former darling of *Rolling Stone* magazine. Defending mainstream media were Malcolm Gladwell, the only Canadian journalist and writer on stage (though one who writes primarily for American media, including *The New Yorker*), and Michelle Goldberg, who described herself as a liberal columnist for *The New York Times*.

Ideological lines also divided the debaters on stage. Taibbi and Murray are known for their more combative-style political commentary, a shared disdain for ‘cancel culture’ and ‘wokeness,’ and a nostalgia for the way things used to be. (Taibbi glowingly harkened back, numerous times, to the Walter Cronkite-era of American journalism, suggesting



The winning side: At the Nov. 30 Munk Debate, American journalist Matt Taibbi, left, and U.K.-based author Douglas Murray argued for the motion ‘Be it resolved, don’t trust mainstream media.’ They won the debate. Screenshot courtesy of Munk Debates

that period provided the standard of journalism).

While Gladwell and Goldberg sat on the right side of the stage, the two represented the ideological left.

This difference in ideology—a divide that most of America is currently experiencing—guided much of the debate.

While the debaters frequently noted they didn’t want to make it all about America, they drew the majority of their examples from U.S. media and politics to illustrate key points. There were a few international exceptions, and the Canadian topic of interest was the so-called ‘Freedom Convoy.’

In his opening statement, Murray turned his attention to Canada and the Freedom Convoy: “You really know that the world is in trouble when Canada becomes very interesting,” he said.

Murray slammed the coverage by Canada’s mainstream media, and accused journalists of being in bed with the government in its messaging.

“When people come out in large numbers, you know what the job of reporters is? The job of reporters is to go out and say,

‘Why are you on the streets? What brought you here? Why are you here with your kids? Why have you got a bouncy castle in the middle of Ottawa?’ ... But you know what? The government didn’t want that in Canada,” he said.

Murray listed some of the unsavoury ways the protesters were described in Canadian media, which he said was part of a “corrupted system” that was “funded by the government” in reference to the \$595-million package of media subsidies and tax breaks announced in the 2018 fall economic update, over five years. On this point, he received raucous applause.

“The media does the bidding of the Canadian government. That isn’t a free society’s media. I’ve seen unfree countries all my life, but this—in a developed liberal democracy like Canada—is a disgrace. We’re not saying don’t read the mainstream media. We’re just saying don’t trust them,” Murray concluded.

None of the debaters came to the defence of Canadian mainstream media on this point, with Goldberg speaking only to her

own experience reporting on the convoy as evidence of fair, accurate, and trustworthy coverage.

Goldberg, who was in Ottawa for the *Times* during the occupation, said she had expected to find many of the same elements of a Donald Trump rally, meaning a strong far-right political presence. While she acknowledged the Freedom Convoy organizers had been identified as such, she said she was surprised to find many protesters who were unaware of politics altogether.

“After having been isolated for so long, people were hugging each other, people were hugging me—even though I’m from the hated mainstream media,” she said.

“And I told my editors that this is what I found. And they said, ‘Great, that’s more interesting than what we thought you were going to find.’ It was more interesting. And I wrote it and they devoted an entire page to it,” she said.

Goldberg said she wasn’t going to defend “all of the mainstream media coverage of the Ottawa trucker protests,” as she didn’t follow all of the reporting in Canadian media.

“But I do think that having the ethos of wanting to be surprised, and being willing to be surprised, is something that you are more likely to find in, you know, *The New York Times*, in *The Washington Post*, and from people who write in *The New Yorker*, than it is with people who do write for some of these contrarian alternatives to the mainstream.”

Throughout the debate, Gladwell and Taibbi went back on forth on the value of the journalism of the past, with Taibbi arguing that media used to make an effort to include everyone’s voices, and Gladwell arguing that they didn’t include the voices of marginalized groups, including Black people, women, LGBTQ+ people, and others.

Canada’s levels of media mistrust are different from America’s

Colette Brin, a professor and director of the media studies centre at Université Laval, said the COVID-19 pandemic and the Freedom Convoy were two moments that contributed greatly to Canadians’ growing distrust of media.

Brin, along with Sébastien Charlton, compiled the 2022 Reuters Institute Digital News Report for Canada. That report found that while there was a decline in overall trust in news from 2018 through 2022 (a fall from 58 per cent to 42 per cent), Canada was still among the countries with relatively higher trust levels in the media.

Trust in media goes hand-in-hand with the public’s levels of trust in government and other institutions, Brin said in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

“If people don’t trust the government, they tend to think that the media are not holding them to account,” she said.

She said COVID-19 wore down the trust of people who did not feel confident the government always had their best interest in mind when making pandemic-related policy decisions. That included the vaccine-hesitant and those who felt undue stress because of the lockdowns. Meanwhile, mainstream media maintained that vaccines, masking, and other public health measures were safe and good.

While that may be the truth of the matter, the media coverage of the pandemic alienated people, Brin said.

“It’s not just radical people, but people who had perhaps legitimate concerns about the way the pandemic was being managed, and legitimate fears about vaccination, or wanted some kind of comforting in terms of understanding what the risks of vaccinations were, and the media held a very strict line on vaccination,” she said.

Brin stressed that the Canadian context for trust in mainstream media is very different from the United States, and credited this in part to the existence of a public broadcaster in Canada. Brin said in countries with relatively strong public broadcasters, there tends to be more of a positive attitude towards the media.

“We see this in Canada. Even though people are very critical, they are very attached to it. And they have high expectations of it,” she said.

Brin didn’t deny that the severe political polarization in U.S. media was influencing Canada’s perception of media.

“Canadians are very reactive to what’s going on in the U.S.,” she acknowledged, but pointed out Canada sits in a very different political context which prevents it from being an exact dupe of its influential neighbour. Brin also noted that francophones tend to be less affected by ongoing issues in the United States, because they tend to not consume as much American media.

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Of the many signs attached to this truck, one has ‘mainstream media’ crossed out, a common message amongst Freedom Convoy participants in Ottawa this past winter. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

News

Trudeau, ministers emerge from Rouleau Commission testimony 'relatively unscathed,' say insiders

Pollster Nik Nanos said the inquiry reinforced what most Canadians already knew, which was that there was a 'hot mess' between different law enforcement agencies, and between the federal government and provinces such as Ontario and Alberta.

BY MIKE LAPOINTE & JESSE CNOCKAERT

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, cabinet members, and high-level government officials who testified before the Public Order Emergency Commission emerged without too much political damage, say insiders and experts, as critics were hard-pressed to find successful lines of attack on the government.

According to a document tabled on Nov. 25, a Feb. 14 first ministers' conference call



Pollster Nik Nanos says there are 'inherent risks' in having any prime minister testify before an inquiry, but that Trudeau got through without making a mistake. *Photograph courtesy of Nik Nanos*



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appears before the Public Order Emergency Commission at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa on Nov. 25, 2022, to provide testimony about the Freedom Convoy occupation and the government's invocation of the Emergencies Act. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

surrounding the Emergencies Act was convened prior to a final decision being made, with the prime minister concluding that he was "confident we can find a resolution to the situation," and that he was conscious of concerns around inflaming the protest.

Trudeau also said his recollection was that the use of the Emergencies Act would be "step by step, proportional, and not overreaching."

The prime minister invoked the Emergencies Act for the first time in Canada's history later that day to bring an end to the weeks-long occupation by protesters railing against pandemic restrictions. Police required two days to clear protesters out of downtown Ottawa before the declaration was revoked on Feb. 23.

Pollster Nik Nanos said a lot of the testimony heard throughout the inquiry reinforced what most Canadians already knew, which was that there was a "hot mess" between different law enforcement agencies, and between the federal government and provinces such as Ontario and Alberta.

"That said, all Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) had to do was not make a mistake, and he got through it without making a mistake, so from a public opinion perspective, that's a win," said

Nanos of the prime minister's highly anticipated appearance on the final day of the commission's hearings.

There are "inherent risks" in having any prime minister testify before an inquiry, but Nanos called it "very unusual" for a prime minister to gain support as a result of testifying before an inquiry.

Trudeau said in his testimony there was a reasonable doubt that things could have escalated during the protests, and that he erred on caution when invoking the Emergencies Act.

"It's a very similar argument that he's made on other issues, for example, being criticized for the fact that some people received CERB and financial support who should not have received support," said Nanos. "His communications positioning has basically been, 'If I'm going to make a mistake, it's going to be on the side of being generous with Canadians,'" he said.

Nanos also said this was an issue that the prime minister took direct control over, and that the day the Freedom Convoy rolled into town, his attention was on the file.

"In a way, it was probably easier for him to testify in this particular case, because of his

likely direct involvement and the fact that he was fully engaged on monitoring what was happening, getting briefed on what the options were, and making the decision," said Nanos.

Elliot Hughes, senior advisor at Summa Strategies, said the prime minister's testimony reflected his approach to invoking the Emergencies Act—"deliberate, serious, and thorough."

"His appearance is only likely to harden the stance of two-thirds



Bridget Howe, senior consultant with Crestview Strategy, says there were no 'gotcha' moments during the POEC, and the opposition and public struggled to find anything of real substance on which to attack the government. *Photograph courtesy of Twitter*

of Canadians who believed he made the right call," said Hughes, pointing to a Feb. 17 poll that found 66 per cent of Canadians supported the decision to invoke the Emergencies Act and 67 per cent said it was time to clear the protesters from Ottawa, as reported by the *National Post*.

For those individuals who already mistrust government institutions, Nanos said he didn't believe they saw anything that would have changed their mind—and that the only beneficiary out of this process could potentially be the federal government given its level of participation in the inquiry and how clearly officials articulated the government's rationale for invoking the act.

Hughes said the Rouleau Inquiry is an "A-1 example of how a healthy democracy is meant to function. It is what makes Canada a country others try to emulate."

Trudeau 'relatively unscathed,' but police and Doug Ford left with some political scars

Bridget Howe, senior consultant with Crestview Strategy, who previously worked as campaign

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manager for Liberal MP Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Ont.) as well as in the Liberal Research Bureau, said Trudeau and his close colleagues emerged from the inquiry “relatively unscathed.”

“Despite the extensive roster of witnesses and evidence provided, there were no ‘gotcha’ moments and the opposition and public struggled to find anything of real substance to attack the Trudeau government on,” said Howe.

“This is in part by strong evidence showing the Emergencies Act was considered a last resort, and came recommended by those without political objectives, such as the head of CSIS and the distraction brought on by at times comical comments and actions by the convoy organizers’ lawyer,” said Howe.

Hughes said police and public safety communication and co-ordination efforts require “significant improvements,” and in addition, “[Ontario Premier] Doug Ford’s staff doesn’t trust Doug Ford.”

Ford, as well as Deputy Premier Sylvia Jones, won a court battle in early November after a Federal Court judge ruled that they did not have to testify during the commission. Multiple municipal, police, and federal officials testified during the six-week long commission, with more than 7,000 documents released into evidence.

Not everyone convinced

Carson Jerema, a comment editor at the *National Post*, argued in a Nov. 28 op-ed that Trudeau’s use of the Emergencies Act “was a profound attack on the rule of law,” and any finding from the Public Order Emergencies Commission that it was legal would set “an unfortunate precedent.”

“When [Trudeau] testified at the commission on [Nov. 25], he did not have to succeed in making his legal case to be persuasive to Canadians generally. He only had to come across as reasonable, and that is exactly how he presented, even as he offered dubious legal arguments,” reads Jerema’s op-ed. “Trudeau’s testimony, which came at the very end, is arguably the only time the government has been able to explain how it came to the conclusion that using the Emergencies Act was legal and necessary. That doesn’t mean Trudeau succeeded, it’s just until this point, the arguments from Liberals might charitably be called gibberish.”

Tristan Hopper, a reporter for *The National Post*, argued that Trudeau’s testimony before the commission was “deeply unsatisfying” in a newsletter released on Nov. 28.

“I did not call people who were unvaccinated names,” Trudeau said in response to a question that he had referred to unvaccinated Canadians as “racists” and “misogynists,” according to Hopper. “We’ll let you decide if that’s true: The quote in question comes from a Sept. 2021 appearance on the Quebec talk show *La semaine des 4 Julie*, in which Trudeau said the following, ‘We all know people



Former Liberal staffer John Delacourt, now senior vice-president of public affairs at Counsel Public Affairs, says ‘at one point, the prime minister said [the convoy protesters] did not want to be listened to; they wanted to be obeyed.’ Photograph courtesy of John Delacourt

who are a little hesitant (about vaccination), and we’re going to try and convince them, but there are also people who are fiercely opposed to vaccination; who don’t believe in science, who are often misogynists, who are often racist as well.”

Journalist John Ivison argued in an op-ed in the *National Post* on Nov. 25 that Trudeau failed to justify using the Emergencies Act. Ivison said the government had not made the case that the convoy protest met the threshold of a threat to national security that could not be resolved using existing laws, as required by the Emergencies Act.

“The executive powers authorized by the legislation—regulation of public assembly; the freezing of bank accounts without a court order—were potent and open to abuse. The invocation of the act in a scenario that clearly did not threaten Canadian sovereignty has broken the glass on a measure of last resort that had not been used before. Nothing the prime minister said changed that perception,” said Ivison in the op-ed.

‘This is the prime minister they wish they saw more of’

Former Liberal staffer John Delacourt, now senior vice-president of public affairs at Counsel Public Affairs, said the inquiry provided an understanding of the prime minister’s challenges in the decision-making process, and “a greater understanding, too, of the prime minister’s control over this situation,” said Delacourt.

For those who have most often been Trudeau’s strongest critics, especially in the media, Delacourt said they have come away from this “thinking that this is the prime minister they wish they saw more of.”

Delacourt, who used to work in the OLO before Trudeau was elected as leader, said the first time he worked with the prime minister was in his role as a critic.

“I worked with him with two portfolios—and this was the Trudeau that I saw way back then,” said Delacourt. “This is someone who is on his files, who is thorough, who asks all the right questions, and isn’t finished until he gets the answers.”

Trudeau served as the Liberal’s official opposition critic for

youth and multiculturalism in 2009, critic for citizenship and immigration in 2010, and was appointed critic for secondary education and sport in 2011.

“I think what Canadians saw was what many who work with him have seen for 15 years,” said Delacourt. “In that respect, I think, for those who have worked with him in the past, this was a welcome development. I think it only instills greater confidence in the direction the government is currently taking, and greater confidence in the prime minister himself.”

Delacourt said what took place in February was not simply an event occurring within a small perimeter in Ottawa, and that if the government was making decisions without challenges and without system failure in mind, combined with the lack of planning we saw from the Ottawa police services, then there would have perhaps been a different conversation about the Emergencies Act.

“On paper, if everything’s working, perhaps there is an argument for [the Emergencies Act] not to be invoked,” said Delacourt. “But of course ... I think the commission inquiry provided for everyone a clear sense that things weren’t working. We weren’t in the world of ‘in theory.’ We were in the world of ‘in actuality.’”

“I think that is what the prime minister eloquently presented for everyone in the narrative he provided,” he said. “At one point, the prime minister said [the convoy protesters] did not want to be listened to; they wanted to be obeyed. I think that will go down as a summary statement for many Canadians about what they saw with the occupation.”

He also said the inquiry provided Canadians with a “window into the decision making process.”

“They saw, with the curtain drawn back, the kinds of conversations at the highest level that are being had,” Delacourt said. “I think those of us who have been working remotely, communicating remotely, for years now, immediately identified with the deliberations, and immediately had an understanding of the challenges, [and] the complexities.”

Delacourt said he was reminded of an appearance by former deputy minister of Aboriginal Affairs Michael Wernick (who would later serve as the clerk of

the Privy Council from 2016-2019) at an ethics committee meeting a number of years ago.

“At the time, he was considered to be a Cassandra: overly dramatic about the threats that he saw to public office holders, and the coarsening of the dialogue, and the fact that disinformation was having a huge impact on political discourse,” said Delacourt. “I think we all got a greater understanding that these were not simply speculative comments from someone within government; that there was some factual basis for it. I think that we saw that this is going to be an ongoing challenge going forward.”

Delacourt also said he believes Trudeau’s time in office will be viewed, especially past 2019, as a “government in crisis—as a government managing crisis after crisis.”

‘Democracy and rule of law worked pretty well,’ says Graves

When asked whether or not the government did a good job explaining the decision to invoke the Emergencies Act, Frank Graves, founder of EKOS Research, said “like everything else these days, it depends on which side of this polarized country you are sitting on.”

“Most of us are on the open side of the equation—the support there would be overwhelmingly that this was justified, it worked, and the government explained itself well,” said Graves. “On the other hand, for those on the ordered side of the spectrum, they would see this as a travesty and an abrogation of democratic principles.”

In terms of the levels of mistrust and anger in that latter portion of society, who, according to Graves, make up roughly 25 per cent, they are not receptive to anything the government does.

In hindsight, according to Graves, the level of disclosure and transparency through the inquiry made it clear that they turned over every stone to find out that invoking the Emergencies Act was necessary, according to all kinds of different principles.

“I think the government acquitted itself well—not perfectly by any means—but reasonably well,” said Graves, who also said he thinks the public deserves this level of oversight and depth

looking into the unprecedented invocation of the Emergencies Act.

“So I think that this was an example where I think democracy and rule of law worked pretty well,” said Graves. “All of the proper processes have been followed, nobody can say the government was allowed to evade questions or skirt responsibility. That’s just not what happened.”

PM says people’s faith in institutions, democracy ‘really important’

During his testimony on Nov. 25, the prime minister was asked by Shantona Chaudhury, co-lead of Commission Counsel, about trust in public institutions.

Chaudhury noted that part of the rationale for invoking the Emergencies Act and for reacting to what the prime minister was seeing around him was a loss of confidence and a loss of faith in Canada’s public institutions.

The prime minister responded by saying that what’s been seen during the past couple of years and beyond is that “people’s faith in their institutions and in their democracy is really, really important.”

“During the pandemic, one of the things we knew that was really important was if we wanted people to follow public health advice, if we wanted them to stay safe during the pandemic and stay home during those first weeks of pan-Canadian lockdown, we needed to be delivering income supports; support for small businesses; support so people could hang on, and know that as they did, the things that kept themselves and their families safe—their institutions—were there to support them,” said Trudeau.

Building up confidence in those institutions is also important, he said, adding that when people across Canada were noting that police were unable to maintain order in the capital city, that the flow of essential goods and services were unable to be maintained, and that armed protesters in Coutts, Alta., were able to defy the police for so long, “people’s faith in our country’s institutions able to do the basic things around keeping them safe, gets eroded.”

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Frank Graves, founder of EKOS Research, says he thinks the public deserves this level of oversight and depth looking into the unprecedented invocation of the Emergencies Act. *The Hill Times* file photograph

News

Feds should view Alberta Sovereignty Act as ‘a warning’ that needs careful ‘wait-and-see’ response, say strategists

The bill puts ‘lots on the page to be worried about’ but there’s no guarantee it will ever ‘come to pass,’ says political scientist Lori Turnbull, so the federal response may shape the ‘narrative’ around it.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Observers say Alberta Premier Danielle Smith would “love nothing more” than for Ottawa to take an aggressive response to her proposed sovereignty act, but instead the federal government should use a “unique Canadian strategy” to shape the narrative: “boring them to death.”

Smith unveiled her much-anticipated bill—officially titled the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act—on Nov. 29, after months of build-up since she first proposed the idea during her run to be United Conservative Party (UCP) leader. While much of the speculation in the lead-up to the bill centred on how it would affect relations between Alberta and Ottawa, observers say some of the most concerning parts of the bill are how it would expand the executive powers of the Alberta government and diminish the legislature.

That’s why many are suggesting that rather than engage

in a jurisdictional squabble with a premier who may be looking to frame the debate on that very issue, the federal government should monitor the situation closely but not overplay its hand.

Brian Topp, an NDP strategist who has served both the federal party and NDP provincial governments in Alberta and Saskatchewan, agreed that a de-escalating approach is the best bet.



NDP strategist Brian Topp said the federal government should use ‘a unique Canadian strategy’ on proponents of the act: ‘boring them to death.’ *The Hill Times* file photograph

“The federal government under multiple recent prime ministers has dealt effectively with separatists in Quebec by boring them to death—by taking care to avoid provocations and real causes of grievance,” said Topp, whose time in government included a stint as chief of staff to former Alberta premier Rachel Notley.

“It’s a unique Canadian strategy, perfectly suited to our national temperament,” he said, “and one that might work well with Danielle Smith, too.”

Yan Plante, a Conservative strategist who has worked in the department of intergovernmental affairs, said the federal government would be wise to think of



On Nov. 29, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith introduced her much-anticipated Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

the bill as a political tool rather than a legal one as it contemplates its response.

“It’s more like a warning, a red line not to cross,” said Plante, whose perspective on federal-provincial relations is also shaped by time working at the National Assembly in his home province of Quebec. “If I were the chief of staff to the intergovernmental minister this morning, my instinctive analysis would be that it’s more political positioning than anything else. But that doesn’t mean it could not hurt the federal government.”

Act would ‘set up a different form of the rule of law in Alberta,’ says Mendes

Lori Turnbull, a political scientist at Dalhousie University, said while “there’s lots on the page to be worried about,” it’s ultimately a “question of whether it ever really comes to pass.”

She said the jurisdictional narrative that framed much discussion about the bill leading up to its release is not one the federal government needs to lean into.

“[That narrative] is all on the basis of decades of [Alberta] having been treated poorly, and having rights violated and jurisdiction violated, and paints the federal government as a bad guy—like this is a good guy-bad guy story,” said Turnbull. “And that’s a really compelling narrative if you buy that.”

However, she said the bill is as significant for its attempts to expand the powers of the executive while diminishing the legislature.

One of the powers proposed in the bill states that if “the legislative assembly approves a resolution” deeming a federal law to be harmful to Alberta, cabinet may “suspend or modify the application or operation of all or part of an enactment” or “issue directives to a provincial entity and its members, officers and agents,” regarding federal initiatives.

Errol Mendes, a University of Ottawa law professor who researches constitutional law and human rights, said a resolution of the legislature is not the same as it is passing a law—because a resolution is passed with a one-time vote, rather than going through three readings and a committee.

“Motions or resolutions are not laws,” said Mendes. “Cabinets, except in emergency situations

which have been framed by laws, can’t just make new laws or affect existing laws.”

That’s one of the reasons why Mendes said the proposed law is “unconstitutional under both Alberta’s and Canada’s constitutional norms” and seems to want to “set up a different form of the rule of law in Alberta.”

Turnbull said how the law is viewed by Albertans may come down to what narrative forms around the federal government’s response.

“It’s possible that a lot of people will agree with the premise that Alberta has not been treated fairly in Confederation, and Quebec gets a better status than Albertans do,” said Turnbull.

“But what [the bill] really is doing is making a serious shift in the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches,” she said, “in that once the assembly gives the go-ahead, then cabinet really assumes an undefined scope of power, in terms of amending legislation and making directives on extremely important issues that are yet to be known.”

Turnbull said the bill shows “the absurdity of where we are politically” because “the proposed legislation is asking the assembly to make itself irrelevant.” From this perspective, discussion of the act becomes not only about how “powerful leaders are,” but also about a government caucus passing legislation “that fundamentally alters how responsible government works.”

However, Turnbull said it’s not clear to her whether Smith “really means this, or whether she’s using this as a strategy.”

That’s where the federal response to the legislation could shape how the debate unfolds.

Smith likely looking for different target than Notley

Dan Arnold, a Liberal strategist originally from Alberta who is now the chief strategy officer at Pollara, said that while the federal government must take a close look at the matter “given that it’s a direct affront on national laws,” it does not have to become a foil to Smith.

“It’s certainly something that both in tone and in content is pointed their way, so I think it’s natural that they would be studying it,” and how and whether to respond, said Arnold, who has previously served as director

of research in Justin Trudeau’s (Papineau, Que) Prime Minister’s Office.

However, he said it’s clear Smith is looking for a rival other than Notley, the NDP opposition leader and former premier challenging Smith in Alberta’s spring 2023 provincial election.

Arnold said Smith uses specific messaging when mentioning Notley, frequently tying her to Trudeau and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.).

“It’s pretty clear from her messaging that she is unconvinced she can beat Rachel Notley one-on-one,” said Arnold.

“Daniel Smith would love nothing more than to see the federal government and Justin Trudeau come out, speak out, do something aggressive to try to either threaten to disallow this bill or challenge it in some capacity, because she’s doing this as basically a way to sort of rile up her base.”

Still, Plante said the federal government should be wary, because if the law is passed and leads to lengthy court challenges on federal initiatives, it could slow Ottawa’s agenda—even if the federal government wins most cases.

Governments occasionally use a strategy of passing laws they believe to be popular though unconstitutional in order to let the courts be the “bad guys,” Plante said.

The federal government may be wise to take “a wait-and-see approach,” he said, “like a chicken game, where you let the province trigger it once and then you see. Maybe the province will never trigger it.”

Evan Menzies, a former UCP communications director, agreed any federal confrontation would play into Smith’s hands, but added Albertans have legitimate grievances that the bill is seeking to address.

In Alberta politics, “no matter how many punches the sitting government has taken,” said Menzies, a Calgary-based senior campaign strategist with Crestview Strategy, “the most unpopular person in Alberta, or party as well, is Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party of Canada.”

Many of Smith’s former rivals during the leadership campaign now sit in her cabinet. Despite antagonism during the leadership campaign, Smith likely has the necessary caucus support to pass the bill, especially given members won’t want to expose internal divisions prior to an election, Menzies said.

Menzies said once the bill is passed, Albertans’ view of the law would be shaped by when and how the government invokes the legislation. He pointed to various firearms laws and Bill C-69, a federal law that regulates energy projects, as examples where Alberta might challenge federal initiatives that have “gone against the grain of how Albertans feel this country should run.”

“I think if the government uses it tactically, and in a sophisticated manner against the [federal] government, I think you’ll see Albertans sort of get behind the legislation and wave the flag for the province a little bit more,” he said.

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Laura Rycckewaert
Hill Climbers

Seniors Minister Khera hires new press secretary, Quebec adviser



Seniors Minister Kamal Khera recently hired Alisson Lévesque to join her ministerial staff team. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Plus, there are new staff on board in the offices of Emergency Preparedness Minister Bill Blair and Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson.

Canada's federal Seniors Minister **Kamal Khera** has named a new press secretary in her ministerial office, recently hiring **Alisson Lévesque** to take over the role.

Along with tackling media requests, Lévesque is also taking over as Quebec regional affairs adviser to the minister.

While her last non-campaign-related gig was as a social media manager for Tyroparc, a "mountain adventure park" in Quebec that includes zip-lining and other activities, as per its website, Lévesque also previously worked in journalism. She's



Alisson Lévesque is press secretary and Quebec regional affairs adviser to Khera. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

written for Prévost, Que.'s *Journal des Citoyens*, and spent time as a freelance journalist for *Point de vue Laurentides* and for *L'Info du Nord* in Saint-Agathe-des-Monts, Que., and Mont Tremblant, Que. Lévesque also spent most of 2015 as a researcher for Radio-Canada.

In 2021, Lévesque worked on now-Gatineau, Que., Mayor **France Bélisle's** successful mayoral campaign, and on Environment Minister **Steven Guilbeault's** successful re-election bid in Laurier-Saint-Marie, Que., focused on social media and communications, and volunteer co-ordination, respectively.

Since 2018, Lévesque has also been busy working towards a PhD in political science (an effort that continues). She already holds a bachelor's degree in political communication and a master's degree in political science, both from the University of Montréal.

Previously, **Jasmeen Shergill** was both Ontario regional affairs adviser and press secretary to the seniors minister. She'd been promoted to press secretary last spring, having originally been hired as a special assistant for communications and Ontario regional affairs in January.

Shergill, a former assistant to Khera in her role as the Liberal MP for Brampton West, Ont., remains in charge of the Ontario desk in Khera's ministerial office.

Mahreen Dasoo continues as communications director to the seniors minister.

Acting director of parliamentary affairs and issues management **Shiraz Keushgerian** previously covered the Quebec desk in Khera's office. He's been working for the federal seniors minister since April 2020, starting under then-minister **Deb Schulte** as a Quebec adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary. Keushgerian was promoted to senior adviser after Khera took over the post following the 2021 federal election and stepped in as an acting director last spring.

Lindsay Hunter is chief of staff to Khera, whose office also currently in-

cludes: **Elaine Nixon**, director of operations; **Maria Campbell**, acting director of policy; **Nicholas McCue**, executive assistant to the minister and chief of staff; and **Connor Fisher**, Atlantic adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP **Darren Fisher**.

Ministers Blair, Wilkinson add to teams



Andrew Green has joined Emergency Preparedness Minister Bill Blair's office. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Emergency Preparedness Minister **Bill Blair** has a new Ontario regional affairs and communications adviser in his office, with **Andrew Green** having stepped into the role in October.

Duncan Tooley previously filled that role in Blair's office, but, as reported, he stepped in as acting director of operations to the minister early this fall after operations director **Radey Barrack** was tapped as acting director of policy, covering for **Christina Rettig**, who went on maternity leave.

Before joining Blair's team, Green had been working for now-Ontario Liberal MP **Michael Coteau** since 2015, starting out as a constituency assistant in Coteau's office as the then-Liberal MPP for the provincial riding of Don Valley East, Ont. Green later became a special assistant for communications and then executive assistant to Coteau at Queen's Park. Coteau brought Green with him to the Hill after he was elected to represent Don Valley East

federally in 2021, and Green has been busy in his MP office since.

Green has a bachelor's degree in political science and government, and a graduate diploma in communications and management, both from Western University.

Zita Astravas is chief of staff to Blair. Aside from the staff already mentioned, the minister's team also currently includes: **Caroline Williams**, director of parliamentary affairs; **Annie Cullinan**, director of communications; **Joanna Kanga**, press secretary; **Pavan Sapra**, senior policy and Atlantic regional affairs; **Tania Amghar**, policy and Quebec regional affairs adviser; **Hilary Hendriks**, special assistant for policy and operations and executive assistant to the chief of staff; **Cleopatra Masinga-Chibueze**, executive assistant to the minister; and **Cédric Devedeux Delorme**, assistant to the parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP **Yasir Naqvi**.

Natural Resources Minister **Jonathan Wilkinson**, meanwhile, has added **Shahenda Elwerdany** as a special assistant for policy and executive assistant to his chief of staff, **Claire Seaborn**.

Elwerdany started on the job on Oct. 3 and is a former aide to Quebec Liberal MP **Emmanuella Lambropoulos**, having been in charge of English communications as well as serving as Lambropoulos' Hill office manager and parliamentary assistant. Elwerdany had been working for Lambropoulos, who represents Saint-Laurier, Que., since May 2017. (Lambropoulos won the seat previously held by Liberal **Stéphane Dion** in an April 2017 by-election).

Previously, **Yasmine Atassi** was Seaborn's executive assistant. She was promoted to policy adviser this past summer, as reported in late July.

Kyle Harrietha is deputy chief of staff and parliamentary affairs director to Wilkinson, whose team also currently includes: **Fiona Simons**, director of policy for clean energy and innovation; **Randi Anderson**, director of policy for sustainable resource development; **Raphaël Beauchamp**, senior policy adviser; **Sandy Schembri**, senior policy adviser; **Kaylie Stathopoulos**, policy and Prairies and North regional affairs adviser; **Gary Xie**, policy and B.C. regional affairs adviser; **Laura Mitchell**, director of operations; **Vincent Desmarais-Adam**, parliamentary and Quebec regional affairs adviser; **Auston Pierce**, Ontario regional affairs adviser; **James Hutchingame**, Atlantic regional affairs adviser; **Ian Cameron**, director of communications; **Keean Nembhard**, press secretary; **Maheep Sandhu**, communications adviser; **Kieran Steede**, aide to the minister; and **Sonja Blondeau**, scheduling manager.

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Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson recently welcomed Shahenda Elwerdany as a special assistant for policy and executive assistant to his chief of staff, Claire Seaborn. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Stuart Benson

Party Central

Three federal agencies 'demystified' at 3 Brewers Sparks in Ottawa

IPAC-NCR hosted its third educational event offering a behind-the-scenes look at Treasury, Finance, and the Privy Council Office.

The Institute of the Public Administration of Canada's National Capital Region group (IPAC-NCR) returned for its third 'Demystifying Federal Central Agencies' event on Nov. 28, with a sold-out crowd upstairs at 3 Brewers Sparks in Ottawa, and for the first time, **Party Central** didn't have to feel like a weirdo for showing up at a bar with a notepad and pen in tow.

After a brief reception beginning at around 5:30 p.m., which allowed **Party Central** to refuel on some complementary 3 Brewers nachos and mozzarella sticks, attendees took their seats for the 30-minute panel discussion moderated by **David Dewar**, director of parliamentary and government relations for Prairies Economic Development Canada.

Due to a last-minute scheduling conflict, **Jordan Zed**, acting foreign and defence policy adviser to the prime minister, Privy Council Office (PCO), was replaced by **Siobhan Harty**, assistant secretary to the cabinet with the PCO. Additionally, **Heather Sheehy**, assistant secretary for government operations with the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada (TBS), was delayed due to a briefing she was delivering to Treasury Board President **Mona Fortier**. Fortunately, TBS senior adviser **Byron Allin** was gracious enough to fill her seat on the panel until Sheehy arrived at around 6:30 p.m. Rounding up the panel was **Alison McDermott**, assistant deputy minister of federal-provincial relations and social policy for Finance Canada.

While a 30-minute panel followed by a 45-minute question-and-answer period on a Monday night might not be everyone's cup of tea, a pint of 3 Brewers IPA was the perfect complement while **Party Central** nerded-out alongside the more than 100 public servants in attendance who studiously took notes on how best to make their departments' policy and program ideas a reality.

The educational event, which offers a behind-the-scenes look at the operations of Canada's three central agencies—the Privy Council Office, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, and Finance Canada—last took place in 2015, with its inaugural event in 2009. While the job of those agencies hasn't changed much since then, the global pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, increasing economic challenges and climate change have made those jobs

much more complex in a very short period of time.

All those factors significantly affected the priorities and needs of the different government departments, it was the COVID-19 global pandemic and the need for the government to respond quickly, despite public health restrictions which had some of the most significant impacts.

Harty, who previously worked with TBS until near the end of 2020 before moving to PCO, spoke about the scramble to not only give different departments the authority they needed to procure personal protective equipment, but also actually find things to procure.

"I remember some Saturday nights at midnight getting calls from [Public Services and Procurement Canada] saying they found whatever it was they were after," Harty recalled. "It was pretty crazy days in the first couple of months."

As of Sept. 30, 2022, the federal government has spent more than \$11.4-billion procuring PPE, medical and laboratory equipment, including more than \$800-million for N95 respirators; \$200-million for surgical masks; \$545-million for nitrile gloves, and \$376-million on hand sanitizer. The federal government's largest procurement expense is a whopping \$5.4-billion on COVID-19 testing equipment.

There was also the issue of the worsening pandemic conditions and increasing public health restrictions which forced the PCO to quickly figure out how to run a "virtual cabinet" and all of the new technologies needed to be acquired and adopted to keep those meetings secure.

On the opposite end, Finance may have been the slowest department to take up some of those new technologies, McDermott joked, explaining that the department managed to function the first year of the pandemic solely on conference calls rather than zoom.

"You can think about the worst flexibilities that were afforded under a zoom environment...we took this to a whole new level," McDermott said, explaining that one employee had refused to turn on their camera once the department started using Zoom, as they hadn't washed their hair in a few days.

McDermott also noted that sensitivity to personal hygiene wasn't the only thing that dropped during the pandemic.

"I think we've gotten a little desensitized to spending," McDermott said, noting that from her "biased" perspective, there remained an appetite for the high level of spending the federal government undertook during the pandemic.

"A billion dollars used to be seen as a whole lot of money, and now I see a lot more ambitious proposals," McDermott joked.

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Civil servants come for the talk and the beer

The Hill Times photographs by Stuart Benson



David Dewar, left, panel moderator and director of parliamentary relations and government affairs, Prairies Economic Development Canada; Siobhan Harty, assistant secretary priorities and planning, Privy Council Office; Alison McDermott, assistant deputy minister, federal provincial relations and social policy, Finance Canada; and Byron Allin, senior adviser, government acquisitions and public service directorate, Treasury Board.



IPAC-NCR University of Ottawa student representative Yasmin Ghaderi, left, and Terry Mazhindu, IPAC-NCR director.



Sarah Scott, left, NCR Young Professional Network; Alex Klein, Public Services and Procurement Canada; and Measar Musa, Government of Canada.



Dewar, left, Harty, McDermott, Allin and Heather Sheehy, assistant secretary, government operations sector, Treasury Board of Canada.



Tahreem Mahmood, left, senior policy analyst IRCC; Mélanie Cousineau, Environment Canada; and Todd Scanlan, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.



Harty, left, McDermott and Sheehy.



The Institute of the Public Administration of Canada's National Capital Region group's 'Demystifying Federal Central Agencies' on Nov. 28, at the 3 Brewers Sparks in Ottawa.

Assembly of First Nations hosts a Special Chiefs Assembly from Dec. 6–8 in Ottawa



Assembly of First Nations National Chief RoseAnne Archibald will host a Special Chiefs Assembly from Dec. 6-8 in Ottawa. Photograph courtesy of Laura Barrios

MONDAY, DEC. 5

House Sitting—The House is sitting Dec. 5-Dec. 16 every weekday and will adjourn on Friday, Dec. 16. The House is scheduled to sit 26 weeks in 2023. It will resume sitting Monday, Jan. 30, 2023, and will sit for three straight weeks (Jan. 30-Feb. 17). It will break on Friday, Feb. 17, and will return on Monday, March 6. It will sit for one week and will adjourn on Friday, March 10. It will return on Monday, March 20, and will sit for two weeks (March 20-March 31). It will break again on Friday, March 31, for two weeks and will return on Monday, April 17, and will sit for five consecutive weeks (April 17-May 19). It will adjourn on Friday, May 19, for one week and will return again on Monday, May 29, and will sit for four consecutive weeks (May 29-June 23). It's scheduled to adjourn for the summer on June 23, 2023. It will break for 12 weeks (June 23-Sept. 18) and will resume sitting on Monday, Sept. 18. It will sit for three weeks (Sept. 18-Oct. 6), and will adjourn on Friday, Oct. 6, for a week. It will resume sitting on Monday, Oct. 16, and will sit for four consecutive weeks (Oct. 16-Nov. 10). It will break for one week (Nov. 13-Nov. 17) and will resume sitting on Monday, Nov. 20, and will sit for four weeks (Nov. 20-Dec. 15).

Institute of Public Administration of Canada Holiday Celebration—The Institute of Public Administration of Canada, National Capital Region, hosts an in-person gathering on Dec. 5 to mark the holiday season for members and friends to meet fellow colleagues interested in public administration. Come dressed either in your holiday best, or in your ugliest and tackiest holiday sweater to increase your chances of winning a door prize. Tickets at eventbrite.ca.

TUESDAY, DEC. 6

Assembly of First Nations' Special Chiefs Assembly—The Assembly of First Nations hosts a Special Chiefs Assembly from Dec. 6-8. This event will take place at the Westin Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Details: afn.ca.

Aga Khan Foundation Canada's Book Club—Rema Jamous Imseis, UNHCR Representative to Canada,

will lead a discussion with author Omar El Akkad on his novel, *What Strange Paradise*, part of the Aga Khan Foundation Canada's monthly book club series, Global Reads. El Akkad's book delves into the complex topic of forced migration from the points of view of two children. This event will take place at the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam, 199 Sussex Dr., Ottawa, Dec. 6, 10 a.m. EST. Tickets on eventbrite.ca.

Auditor General to Table Two Reports—Auditor General Karen Hogan will table two performance audit reports on Tuesday, Dec. 6 at 10 EST: *Report 9—COVID-19 Vaccines and Report 10—Specific COVID-19 Benefits*. This event will take place in the House of Commons. Call 1-888-761-5953.

The Canadian Association for Business Economics Event—The Canadian Association for Business Economics hosts a webinar, "Orthodox Cure for Inflation Will Be Worse than the Disease." Jim Stanford, economist and director of the Centre for Future Work, will discuss a new report published by the Centre and the Canadian Labour Congress documenting the flaws in the Bank of Canada's diagnosis of current inflation, and the risks in its one-sided approach to solving the problem. This event will take place online on Dec. 6 at 1 p.m. Details: cabe.ca.

Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs Reception—The CAFCF is pleased to invite Parliamentarians and staff to a reception on Tuesday, Dec. 6 between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m., Room 268, in the Valour Building. The CAFCF represents the three major types of fire departments in Canada: full-time, volunteer, and composite. Composite departments include both full-time and volunteer personnel. Volunteer departments constitute the overwhelming majority of Fire Departments in Canada. Fire Departments conduct up to 16 different all hazard services and fire chiefs are often also the emergency management leaders for their communities. RSVP to reem@grassrootspa.ca.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 7

15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diver-

sity—The Government of Canada will host the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity from Dec. 7-19 at the Palais des congrès in Montréal. Details to follow. Call 819-230-1557.

Bank of Canada Announcement—The Bank of Canada will announce its decision on the target for the overnight rate on Wednesday, Dec. 7, at 10 a.m. EST. Details to follow.

Macdonald-Laurier Institute Event—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute hosts a webinar, "Bolstering the Role of ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific: Implications for Canada." Experts from Canada and like-minded countries will discuss how it's time for a paradigm shift, and for Canada — along with its traditional partners and allies — to assertively promote its interests in the Indo-Pacific. This event will take place online. Dec. 7, 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, DEC. 8

Bank of Canada Deputy Governor to Deliver Remarks—Bank of Canada Deputy Governor Sharon Kozicki will deliver an Economic Progress Report in French at an event hosted by l'Institut de développement urbain on Friday, Dec. 9, at 9 a.m. EST. This event will take place at Fairmont Le Reine Elizabeth, 900 boul. René-Lévesque O. Details online.

The Impact of the Climate Crisis on Human Rights—The Montreal Council on Foreign Relations hosts a luncheon event in French featuring Agnès Callamard, secretary general of Amnesty International, who will discuss "The impact of the climate crisis on human rights." This event will take place at Le Westin Montréal, 270 Saint-Antoine St. W. Thursday, Dec. 8, 11:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Register at corim.qc.ca.

FRIDAY, DEC. 9

Amnesty International Canadian Launch of Human Rights Agenda—Amnesty International Canadian Section is hosting the official launch breakfast of the 2022 Human Rights Agenda, on Dec. 9, the eve of International Human Rights Day. Issued annually, the Human Rights Agen-

da assesses the state of human rights in Canada and raises strong calls to action to decision-makers responsible for protecting and respecting people's rights. The 2022 edition focuses on five distinct but intersecting domestic human rights priorities in Amnesty International Canada's 2022-2030 Strategic Plan: Indigenous Peoples Rights; Discrimination and Racial Justice; Gender Justice; People on the Move: Refugee and Migrants Rights; and Climate Justice and Corporate Accountability. This event will take place on Friday, Dec. 9, at the Rossy Pavilion, National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Invitation only. To RSVP, please contact Joan Pierre at jpierre@amnesty.ca by 5 p.m. EST on Dec. 5, 2022.

Carleton University's Year Ahead Conference—Carleton University hosts the annual Year Ahead Conference on Friday, Dec. 9, at 9 a.m. EST. Academics, practitioners, and experts from across Canada, the United States, and parts of Europe will meet to discuss looming threats, future challenges, and Canada's changing position in the world. This event will take place at the Canadian War Museum, 1 Vimy Pl. Details: idu.quebec.

MONDAY, DEC. 12

Northwest Territories Municipal (hamlets) Election—Voters in the Northwest Territories' hamlets will elect leaders in the territory's municipalities on Monday, Dec. 12.

TUESDAY, DEC. 13

Party Under the Stars—To the Stan and Back presents "Party Under the Stars." MPs from all parties will convene to support post-combat wellness programs, with 100 per cent of all net proceeds going to the cause. Canadian Country Music Award winner Jason McCoy will perform. Join us for an open bar, prizes, silent auction, and great food. Tuesday, Dec. 13, 5:30 p.m., at Ottawa City Hall. Tickets are \$40, available through eventbrite.ca. Contact Cheri Elliott at 343-297-5582 for details.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 14

Taking Stock of Canada's Political Environment—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts its 2022 Calgary Speaker Dinner. David Coletto, CEO and founding partner of Abacus Data, will speak on "Taking Stock of Canada's Political Environment," exploring the current political environments in Canada and Alberta, specifically, examining recent polling data on core political issues and public impression of leaders and policy choices. This event will take place at 6 p.m. MST, on Wednesday, Dec. 14, at the Calgary Golf and Country Club, 919 50th Ave. SW. Register at cgai.ca.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 11, 2023

Canada's Best Political Economic Forecast Lunch—The Canadian Club of Toronto and the *National Post* host "Canada's Best Political Economic Forecast Lunch," a forecast luncheon on the economy, the markets and political issues that will affect Canadians in the year ahead on Wednesday, Jan. 11, in Toronto at 11:45 a.m. EST. Participants include Kevin Carmichael, editor-in-chief, *Financial Post*; Amanda Lang, host, *Taking Stock*, Bell Media; Dennis Mitchell, chief executive officer and chief investment officer, Starlight Capital; and Jean-François Perrault, senior vice-president and chief economist, Scotiabank. Register at canadianclub.org.

TUESDAY, JAN. 17—WEDNESDAY, JAN. 18, 2023

Crown Corporate Governance Conference—The Canadian Institute hosts the "Crown Corporate Governance" conference from Jan. 17-18 featuring programming that will address the most critical challenges, create solutions, and provide guidance for decision-makers of crown corporations and public sector entities. This year's co-chairs are Teresa Woo-Paw, chair at Canadian Race Relations Foundation; Colleen Ouellette, deputy secretary and director corporate secretariat at Export Development Canada; and Thomas Yeo, partner at Torys LLP. Speakers include Anne-Cecile Lequin, general manager, employee services and diversity, Canada Post; Chantal Guay, CEO at Standards Council of Canada; Frederic Duguay, general counsel and corporate secretary, Canada Infrastructure Bank; and other key stakeholders. Join the chairs and board members of leading federal and provincial crown corporations, as well as government and public sector executives, as they share insights and practical solutions on obstacles and challenges impeding board directors today. Jan. 17-18, 2023. Save 10 per cent with the Hill Times Publishing promo code: D10-999-HILLTIMES. For more, visit: bit.ly/3S9nsc4, email: customer-service@canadianinstitute.com, or call 1-877-927-7936.

TUESDAY, JAN. 24, 2023

The Toronto Association of Business Economics hosts a virtual presentation, **Webinar: "Impact of the U.S. IRA for Clean Energy Investment in Canada."** Dale Beugin and Marisa Beck from the Canadian Climate Institute will discuss the implications of key provisions in the U.S. legislation for clean energy investment, low carbon transition, automobiles, batteries and construction materials across Canada. This event will take place online on Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2023 at 1 p.m. EST.

THURSDAY, FEB. 9, 2023

U.S. Ambassador to Canada to Deliver Remarks—U.S. Ambassador to Canada David Cohen will deliver remarks on Thursday, Feb. 9, at 12 p.m. EST, at a roundtable luncheon hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. This event will take place at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300. Register at cdhowe.org.

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