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THE HILL TIMES

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CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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NEWS

‘There’s power in numbers’: Almost 50 Canadian MPs (so far) have sponsored detained Iranians

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

At least four-dozen Liberal, Conservative, and NDP MPs so far have announced political sponsorships of Iranians detained by the Islamic Republic regime in the hope of raising awareness, adding clout, and showing the regime that “the world is watching.”

“It is an opportunity for me to use my voice, to use my social media platforms to raise awareness about their situation, to help be their voice and to draw more attention to their plight,” and help “monitor their situation,” said Liberal MP Jenna Sudds (Kanata–Carleton, Ont.).

Sudds is sponsoring Rozhin Yousefzadeh, who was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment for participating in a protest. Political sponsorship is a symbolic show of solidarity.

Ultimately, Sudds said it’s about putting “pressure on the

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NEWS

‘Structural failures’ and lingering trauma top of mind as convoy anniversary nears, say MPs, advocates

BY STUART BENSON

As the Ottawa Police Service prepares for the one-year anniversary of the Freedom Convoy descending on local streets, community advocates say the “lingering trauma” experienced by Ottawa residents and their community-level perspective must be “absolutely central” in evaluating the response of police and all three levels of government, and any lessons learned.

Ahead of the release of the federal Public Order Emergency Commission’s (POEC) final report on Feb. 20, the Ottawa People’s Commission on the Convoy Occupation (OPC), a series of resident-led public hearings that began in late September 2022, is preparing to release its own report, spotlighting the community



Local residents form a counter-protest blocking a group of Freedom Convoy supporters on Riverside Drive at Bank Street on Feb. 13, 2022, the third week of the convoy’s occupation of the city. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Mike Lapointe

Heard On The Hill

Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard picked as new PSG liaison



Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard, left, is joining the leadership team of the Progressive Senate Group, taking over the role of liaison from the soon-to-retire Senator Patricia Bovey. Photograph courtesy of Sen. Wanda Thomas Bernard's office, *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Senator **Wanda Thomas Bernard** has been selected as the new liaison of the Progressive Senate Group after an internal election process.

PSG leader **Jane Cordy** said "Senator Bernard makes an excellent addition to our leadership team," in a statement. "She brings with her a wealth of experience and an important perspective, and I welcome her to this new role."

Bernard takes over the position from Manitoba Senator **Patricia Bovey**, who will be retiring from the Red Chamber in May.

Cordy said it was a pleasure to work with Bovey during her time as liaison, and that she knows "she has big plans for her last months in the Senate and we all look forward to seeing her accomplishments."

Senator **Pierre Dalphond**, deputy leader of the group, as well as Senator **Brian Francis**, deputy liaison and caucus chair, are also part of the PSG leadership team.

The Senate group was formed in November 2019 following the dissolution of the Senate Liberal caucus. Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** announced that he would be expel every Liberal member of the Red Chamber in late January 2014.

That group was thereafter composed of independent senators who were members of the Liberal Party and were appointed following the advice of previous Liberal prime ministers.

Bernard was appointed to the Senate by Trudeau in 2016. She spent roughly three years as a member of the Independent Senators Group before joining the PSG in 2020.

Prior to her time as Senator, she was the first African Nova Scotian to hold a tenure track position at Dalhousie University and to be promoted to full professor, and is a founding member of the Association of Black Social Workers "which helps address the needs of marginalized citizens, especially those of African descent," according to the Senate's website.

Bernard has received both the Order of Nova Scotia and the Order of Canada for her work. Her role as the Senate group's liaison becomes effective on Feb. 1.

'SoPa' set to launch in bid to help revitalize downtown Ottawa

Local businesses operating in downtown Ottawa south of

Parliament Hill are banding together to launch "SoPa," a new entertainment district hoping to attract diners to help revitalize downtown Ottawa.

With tens of thousands of public servants working from home for the last three years, downtown Ottawa businesses have been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aiana Restaurant Collective owner **Devinder Chaudhary** and Bar Robo owner **Scott May** spoke to the *Ottawa Business Journal* about their plans. According to the Jan. 20 article, Chaudhary invited a number of restaurateurs to his venue to discuss plans around revitalizing downtown Ottawa.

"It was born out of the notion that somebody's got to do something to help the downtown core," said May.

He, alongside Chaudhary and **Joe Thottungal**, owner of Thali at



Queen St. Fare sits empty on Jan. 14, 2021, amid a province-wide lockdown in the effort to combat the spread of COVID-19. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

136 O'Connor St., are spearheading the efforts. "I think everyone can agree that the downtown is under some serious threat," said May.

With a map already drawn up, the area would encompass Parliament Hill, Somerset and McLeod streets in the south, Elgin

Street to the east, and Lyon Street to the west.

The launch event will be held on Feb. 8 at Queen St. Fare, 170 Queen St., from 7-10 p.m. Tickets are available for \$75, and jazz artist **Michel Delage** will be on hand for a "night not to be missed."

Sarain Fox keynote speaker at Carleton University's SOAR Student Leadership Conference

Canadian Anishinaabe activist, broadcaster, and filmmaker **Sarain Fox** is the keynote speaker at Carleton University's ninth annual SOAR Student Leadership Conference.

According to Carleton's website, the conference provides an opportunity for students to develop and enhance their personal philosophy of leadership.

From Batchawana First Nation, just outside of Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.,



Anishinaabe activist, broadcaster and filmmaker Sarain Fox is scheduled to appear as the keynote speaker at Carleton University's annual SOAR Student Leadership Conference. Photograph courtesy of Facebook

Fox has appeared in Viceland series *RISE* and *Cut-off*, as well as APTN's *Future History*, according to her website.

Past keynote speakers have included Canadian sprinter **Andre De Grasse**, **Martin Luther King III**, Olympic skating champion **Tessa Virtue**, and astronaut **Chris Hadfield**, among others.

The conference is scheduled for Jan. 28.

Robyn Urback has a baby

Globe and Mail columnist **Robyn Urback** has welcomed a new baby girl into the world.

"Hello all, some actual personal news: I am off on mat leave for the next little while after baby girl arrived unexpectedly early," tweeted Urback on Jan. 17. "Mom's attempts to regale baby with colourful accounts of newspaper life have so far have been unsuccessful in impressing infant."

Congratulations from journalists and politicians alike poured in, including from fellow *Globe and Mail* columnist **John Ibbitson**, former Calgary mayor **Naheed Nenshi**, Canadian Press reporter **Allison Jones**, CBC opinion and analysis producer **Jason Markusoff**, and founding partner of communications firm Conaptus **Jamie Ellerton**, among many others.

Urback has worked at the *Globe and Mail* for more than



Globe and Mail columnist Robyn Urback had a baby girl. Photograph courtesy of Twitter

three years following a number of years at CBC as well as with the *National Post*.

Laura Pennell new publisher at iPolitics

iPolitics has a new publisher, with **Laura Pennell** announcing in a Jan. 23 tweet that she's taken on the role.

"I look forward to working [with] our talented teams at [iPolitics and QP Briefing] to bring you top-quality, unbiased political coverage & analysis, and to grow the most engaged political audience in Canada."



Laura Pennell is the new publisher at *iPolitics*. Photograph courtesy of Twitter

Previously the vice-president of business development at the company, Pennell spent more than four-and-a-half years with the federal government, including as a senior adviser for strategy and operations in the office of the deputy prime minister and minister of finance, and as an adviser in the innovation minister's office.

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WHAT TELUS DOESN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT THE SHAW- VIDEOTRON- ROGERS DEAL.

**Telus tried to 'kill, slow and shape' \$26-billion
Rogers-Shaw deal, board presentation shows¹**

- The Globe and Mail, November 14, 2022

The Competition Tribunal determined that the Shaw-Videotron-Rogers deal will likely INCREASE COMPETITION.

"It bears underscoring that there will continue to be four strong competitors in the wireless markets in Alberta and British Columbia, namely, Bell, Telus, Rogers, and Videotron, just as there are today. Videotron's entry into those markets will likely ensure that competition and innovation remain robust.

The strengthening of Rogers' position in Alberta and British Columbia, combined with the very significant competitive initiatives that Telus and Bell have been pursuing since the Merger was announced, will also likely contribute to an increased intensity of competition in those markets."

- The Competition Tribunal, Reasons, December 31, 2022, Paragraphs 6, 7

Telus should be worried.

"In addition, the Merger will result in Rogers injecting a new and substantial source of competition into Telus' home markets... Adding to all of this will be the entry of Videotron, a proven market disruptor."

- The Competition Tribunal, Reasons, December 31, 2022, Paragraph 389

Shaw)

1. Source: Globe and Mail: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-telus-rogers-shaw-deal>

News

Provincial shifts towards health care privatization ‘100 per cent the wrong way to go,’ says NDP MP Davies

Along with concern over Ontario’s announced plan to fund private clinics, Green MP Mike Morrice wants MPs to review loopholes in the current Canada Health Act that enable companies to charge for health services.

BY STUART BENSON

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has called Ontario Premier Doug Ford’s plan to introduce for-profit health care services in the province “innovation,” but opposition MPs are raising alarm over provincial moves toward privatization and want the feds to speak up and act, with NDP MP Don Davies calling the shift “100 per cent the wrong way to go.”

Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.), his party’s health critic, said the NDP’s opposition to any privatization of Canada’s “universal, comprehensive public health-care” system is a “non-negotiable item.” Health care is a key plank of the minority Liberal government’s supply-and-confidence agreement with the NDP.

“Someone has got to be standing up for that in this country,” Davies said, adding that the NDP will be watching the Liberal government “very carefully” and that Trudeau’s relative silence on Ford’s announcement is “unacceptable.”

“[The prime minister has] not only stayed relatively silent on what’s happening in Ontario, but his words almost appear to endorse it,” Davies added. “For-profit health care is not innovation.”

“Not only because it raises questions of inequity—things like queue-jumping, and preferential access for people with money—but more importantly, it will not fix the problem, and it will exacerbate it,” said Davies, adding he bases his conclusion on “evidence, not ideology.”

One week after the Ontario government announced it will fund private clinics to perform more cataract surgeries, MRI



Rather than freeing up space in hospital surgeries and emergency rooms, NDP MP Don Davies, his party’s health critic, argues that directing public funds toward private, for-profit health-care providers will only further drain resources and increase wait times. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and CT scans, as well as several other procedures in an attempt to ease the pressure on the province’s hospital system, Alberta followed Ford through the breach, announcing that it will contract a private health-care facility to provide around 3,000 orthopedic surgeries annually in Calgary. Strategists say Ford’s announcement could “break the logjam” in the ongoing negotiations between the provinces and federal government to reach a new health-care funding agreement.

Davies pointed to the B.C. Court of Appeal’s dismissal of the “Cambie surgeries case” last July as a proof point against privatization.

In his appeal, Brian Day of the Cambie Surgical Centre had argued that British Columbians had the right to pay for private medical treatment because waits in the public system were so long. Those wait times, Day said, violated patients’ constitutional rights to life, liberty, and the security of the person under Section 7 of the Charter.

Davies said the appeal’s dismissal “overwhelmingly demolished” what he called the “superficial, facile argument” that allowing access to health-care services through private, for-profit providers would somehow free up space in the public system, as presented by Ford and Alberta Health Minister Jason Copping.

At a press conference on Jan. 23 announcing a partnership between Canadian Surgery Solutions and Alberta Health Services, Copping said the move would free up additional hospital space and allow staff to perform other surgeries.

“When we fund more services, the publicly funded system grows,” Copping told reporters.

“It does the opposite,” countered Davies. “What it does do is drain resources from the public system that is already under strain.”

That’s why moves toward privatization by provinces like Ontario and Alberta need to be “completely rejected,” Davies said.

Davies also rejects Ford’s use of the term “flexibility” in his Jan. 11 press conference announcing that Ontario is willing to accept strings on federal health transfer payments to reach a deal with Ottawa. Ford said the province is willing to offer the “accountability” the Liberals have conditioned the increased payments on in exchange for “a little bit of flexibility.”

“Flexibility is code for bad policy,” Davies told *The Hill Times*. “[Ford] and [Smith] don’t understand public health care; they are ideologically motivated, and they’re operating on this very superficial notion that the fix here is to privatize our system more and inject a profit motive.”

Davies noted that both the Ontario Medical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Ontario have recommended against moving more surgeries to privately run for-profit clinics, arguing it would exacerbate the shortage of health-care workers in the system and increase wait times for urgent care.

Liberal MP Michael Coteau (Don Valley North, Ont.) recently told *The Hill Times* he’s “fundamentally opposed” to Ford’s

proposed shift towards for-profit care, with other Liberal sources suggesting the changes would be a key topic of discussion during the Liberal Ontario and national caucus retreats this week.

Green MP Morrice ‘very concerned’ by for-profit ‘loopholes’ in Canada Health Act

Green Party MP Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* that he and many of his constituents are concerned that, at a time when health-care workers are increasingly sharing how overworked and underpaid they are, provincial moves towards delivering surgeries through private providers will only add further strains on staff working in the public system.

Adding to his concerns, Morrice noted companies like Maple, a Loblaw-funded virtual care business based in Toronto, are already taking advantage of loopholes in the Canada Health Act to charge up to \$69 for a doctor’s appointment.

Despite provincial legislation banning any charges to Ontarians for services insured under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), which would typically include virtual visits, Maple can circumvent those rules by setting patients up with a nurse practitioner or physician working in another province.

On Jan. 16, *iPolitics* reported that Health Canada was “concerned” by Maple charging patients to access services that “would be insured if provided in person by a physician.” A statement from the department said the federal government would work with provinces and territories to ensure health care keeps up with “modern realities” like virtual visits, “while remaining true to the fundamental principle of Medicare, i.e., access based on need.”

Morrice said he’s “very concerned” that loopholes like the one Maple is using to charge for appointments will only further erode the quality of publicly accessible health care, and called on the federal government to strengthen the act and its enforcement to close them.

“I’m keen to work with colleagues of mine at the federal level to explore what additional changes might be necessary to retain quality public health care,

ensure it is funded appropriately, and that the health-care workers that are still heroes are paid appropriately,” Morrice said, noting the mental health stress health-care workers experienced throughout the pandemic.

“I hear from nurses in my community all the time, which is that they’re leaving the profession as a result of the mental health stresses that continue,” Morrice said, adding that those nurses also cite feeling undervalued by legislation like Bill 124, Ontario’s controversial legislation which capped public sector salary increases to a maximum of one per cent for three years in 2019.

After a court challenge by multiple organizations representing public sector workers arguing the bill was unconstitutional, Ontario Superior Court Justice Markus Koehn ruled on Nov. 29, 2022, in favour of the challenge, saying the legislation infringed on the applicant’s rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

One month later, the Ontario government filed an appeal of the decision, arguing the court “erred in holding that the financial impact of the Act’s limits on the compensation increases substantially interferes with the respondent’s rights to a meaningful process of collective bargaining,” according to the appeal obtained by CTV News Toronto.

Since then, Global News reported on an Ontario Ministry of Health presentation prepared for Health Minister Sylvia Jones when she took office in 2022, which admitted that “concerns about wage disparity via Bill 124” were a contributing factor to the “retention issues” the province’s health-care system was facing, placing attrition rates for nurses at “around [five] per cent.”

Morrice said he echoes the Ontario Green Party’s calls for Ford’s government to drop its appeal of the ruling against Bill 124 and instead work with the federal government to develop a “fulsome strategy” to retain and attract the next generation of nurses, as well as halt its plan to allow for-profit private clinics to carry out routine surgeries.

Otherwise, Morrice said, for-profit companies will continue to take nurses and doctors away from the public system.

“In my view, the best way to take pressure off the public system is by investing in the public system,” Morrice said. “That means investing in health-care workers and the public system we already have.”

As one example of the investments the federal government should provide, Morrice pointed to the \$4.5-billion Mental Health Transfer the Liberals campaigned on in the 2021 election, which he and several other MPs from the NDP and Conservative Party have been calling on the Liberals to deliver.

“I think it’s important for us to continue to call for the fulfillment of a promise like that, along with ensuring that we get an agreement between the federal government and the provinces,” said Morrice.

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VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH: THE IMPACT ON FAMILIES



**By Fardous Hosseiny, President
and CEO of the Atlas Institute
for Veterans and Families**

As the month of January winds down, there is a special focus on mental health and mental illness. And rightfully so, as the conversations which are emerging from the shadows of stigma are critically important. The stigma associated with mental illness has created a significant barrier to recovery for far too long. Talking openly is an important first step in creating pathways for those impacted to seek the help they need.

When we talk about the impacts of mental illness, conversations have often focused on the individual affected. There is no doubt about the importance of supporting those who are experiencing mental health challenges. Yet, there is a group that is intimately impacted but not often considered. The Family.

Canadian data indicates that 38 per cent or approximately 11 million people aged 15 and older report having at least one immediate or extended Family member with a mental health issue. In considering these numbers, the question that has to be asked is: How can Family members maintain their own mental wellness while providing support?

As our name implies, the mandate of the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families focusses not only on Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Veterans and former members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), but also on their Families. With equal significance placed on the Families of those who have served there is an acknowledgement not only that the Veteran is part of a Family, but that as the impacts of potentially traumatic events play out, there are many other people in their lives who are also affected. As a result, it is important to address recovery from a Family-centric point of view.

From the military and first responder perspective, there are different aspects of the transference of trauma onto others in the Family. Perhaps the individual struggles in silence, which is often the case, and their partners, spouses and children are left trying to navigate the unspoken. Perhaps they do share the reality of the horrors they've experienced and the Family members experience vicarious trauma.

While there may have been preparation for the serving member in how to handle difficult situations, the same often hasn't existed for the Family. They are often left to their own devices and ingenuity, trying not only to navigate the seriousness of the situation with their loved one, but their own mental health and well-being as well. They may not be equipped to process these monumental issues, which might be further complicated by the fact these experiences are not directly their own. Families often do not have the full context of events because it is being filtered through the lens of their loved one's perception. As a result, the impact of caregiving for a loved one with a mental health concern might see the Family members themselves become worried, anxious and depressed.

The implications of Veterans' mental health on those closest to them cannot be an afterthought. The impact reverberates beyond those who have served, and as such, we have to provide appropriate care and support for all who are affected. It is not enough to simply acknowledge the role Families play in the recovery of their loved one. Families themselves require education and guidance to understand and make sense of their loved ones' injury. As well, it is equally important to validate how they personally have experienced adverse impacts as a result. Along with advice and strategies on how to support their Veterans, it can be helpful for caregivers to have additional guidance on how to mitigate the risks to all Family members, including children, as they work to make sense of their own experiences as well as their loved one's.

At the Atlas Institute, we work directly with Veterans and their Families to guide all of our work. This informs the research we engage in, the resources we develop and the stories we share. The intent is to ensure that when we consider the mental health and well-being of the Veteran community, we are holistically viewing them through the lens of the entire Family unit.

While this article looks at the broader impact on mental health from a Veteran and Family perspective, there is much that is transferrable to the broader civilian community. The resources we have developed in support of Families can be accessed on our website at atlasveterans.ca/knowledge-hub/families-and-friends. In sharing this knowledge, not only can we better empower Veterans and Families to work towards better mental health and well-being, but we can also support increased awareness of these issues among all Canadians and, most importantly, create vital pathways to recovery.



**The impact of
caregiving for a
loved one with
a mental health
concern might
see the Family
members them-
selves become
worried, anxious
and depressed."**

STORIES HEAL

**The experiences of
others can provide
a spark of hope.**

The Atlas Institute is proud to present a series of digital stories told by Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Veterans and Family members. In sharing these first-person short films, we hope to support others in their own journey toward healing.

Visit: [atlasveterans.ca/
community/stories-from-
veterans-and-families](https://atlasveterans.ca/community/stories-from-veterans-and-families)
or scan the QR code.



A ATLAS INSTITUTE FOR
VETERANS AND FAMILIES

Photo by Rachel McDermott on Unsplash

Library of Parliament joint committee hasn't met in nearly four years

Under the Parliament of Canada Act, the Library of Parliament Joint Committee is supposed to help the Speakers of the House of Commons and Senate direct the library's operations.

BY NEIL MOSS

The joint House of Commons and Senate committee which has a statutory obligation to assist the Speakers of Parliament in administering the Library of Parliament has laid dormant since 2019. The committee is composed of 12 MPs and five Senators, but hasn't elected any chairs or vice-chairs because it hasn't met in this Parliament, nor did it meet in either session in the 43rd Parliament. It last met on May 2, 2019, when it reviewed main estimates for 2019-20 and held a briefing on client feedback mechanisms. Since its last meeting, there have been around \$146-million in main and supplementary estimates funding for the Library of Parliament that have not been reviewed by the committee. Under the Parliament of Canada Act, the joint committee has the obligation to assist the Speaker of the House of Commons and Speaker of the Senate to "direct and control" the Library of Parliament and its officers.



The 12 MPs and five Senators assigned to the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament have not gotten together since 2019, for reasons no one can explain. *The Hill Times* file photograph

Committee members said they were unaware as to why the group hasn't yet gotten together. "I have no explanation to offer as to why we have not met. I gladly await the opportunity to serve on this Joint Standing Committee and plan to participate when our first organization meeting is called," said CSG Senator Robert Black (Ontario) in an email. "I believe it is an important committee and even more so at this time, given the work being done through the Centre Block rehabilitation and the new Par-

liamentary Welcome Centre, of which the library has an important role," he added. Conservative MP Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, Alta.) also said he wasn't aware of why the committee hasn't met. "You need to speak with the chair of the committee. I have no idea why the committee hasn't met as I had no previous involvement prior to last fall and nothing has taken place since then," he said. Since the joint committee has yet to meet in this Parliament, it hasn't elected any chairs. Other MPs and Senators assigned to the committee didn't respond to interview requests or weren't available. The joint committee held seven meetings in the 42nd Parliament, 10 meetings in the 41st Parliament, 23 meetings in the 40th Parliament, and seven meetings in the 39th Parliament. The joint committee has existed since the 19th century, but was removed as a standing committee in the House of Commons Standing Orders in the 1980s, which resulted in the federal auditor general detailing in a 1991 report on the Library of Parliament that "compliance with the Parliament of Canada Act cannot be achieved" due to the committee's absence. The committee was once again made a standing committee in the House of Commons Standing Orders in 1994.

A spokesperson for House of Commons Speaker Anthony Rota (Nipissing-Timiskaming, Ont.) noted that it is up to the whips from recognized parties to schedule a meeting. "The Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House don't determine when the committee shall meet and questions related to this as well as requests for further information about the timing of the first meeting should be directed to the party Whips from both Chambers," the spokesperson noted. A spokesperson for Senate Speaker George Furey (Newfoundland and Labrador) also directed questions to whips and liaisons in the Upper and Lower Chambers. Liberal Whip Steven MacKinnon's (Gatineau, Que.) office didn't respond to an interview request. The office of Conservative Whip Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey-White Rock, B.C.) declined to comment. No other House whip or Senate whip or liaison responded to interview requests or were available for an interview. A spokesperson for the Library of Parliament said in an email that it "does not have a position on whether it is good for the Library or not that the committee is not meeting," but noted it is in "regular communication" with the offices of the Speakers, and that

there are "several mechanisms" for formal and informal feedback from Parliamentarians. Past vice-chair of the committee and NDP MP Carol Hughes (Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing, Ont.), who served on the committee in the 41st and 40th Parliaments, said the committee used to do good work, but noted that while she was a member, it was a "dysfunctional" committee, remarking that the Conservative government at the time didn't want the committee to do any work. Hughes said the joint committee can do "important work," such as fostering increased engagement among younger Canadians in Parliament which is being done by the staff at the Library of Parliament. "I still think there is a role for [the joint committee]," said Hughes, assistant deputy speaker in the House. She said it is important to know that there will be transparency, such as in the review of estimates for the Library of Parliament. "If you don't know what is missing, then you aren't able to advance those programs," she added. "You need details, you need studies to be able to determine how you want to make a department, whether it's the Library of Parliament or any other department, how you want to make be very effective and to make sure the money is going in the right place." "You can only do those evaluations once you have the information and you are not able to progress if there's no studies being [done]," she said. Past joint committee chair and CSG Senator Percy Downe (Charlottetown, P.E.I.), who co-chaired the committee in the 40th Parliament, said in an email that the committee should be holding meetings as it has "duties and responsibilities." "When I was co-chair, we always had a full agenda for our meetings, so it is surprising that the current committee hasn't set any meeting times," he said. *nmoos@hilltimes.com*
The Hill Times

Parliamentarians assigned to the Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament:

- CSG Senator Robert Black
- PSG Senator Patricia Bovey
- Conservative Senator Donald Plett
- ISG Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia
- ISG Senator Raymonde Saint-Germain
- Liberal MP Shafqat Ali
- Liberal MP Jenica Atwin
- Liberal MP Shaun Chen
- NDP MP Leah Gazan
- Liberal MP Angelo Iacono
- Conservative MP Mike Lake
- Conservative MP Ron Liepert
- Liberal MP Wayne Long
- Conservative MP Dave MacKenzie
- Bloc Québécois MP Louis Plamondon
- Liberal MP Terry Sheehan
- Conservative MP Jake Stewart



The administration of the Library of Parliament is directed by House Speaker Anthony Rota, pictured, and Senate Speaker George Furey with the assistance of the Library of Parliament Joint Committee. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Longform Substacks offer MPs like Rempel Garner, O'Toole, a chance to exercise 'thought leadership'

Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner praises Substack as the 'anti-Twitter,' but a Carleton journalism professor says MPs could use the platform to avoid direct accountability.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner says her growing use of Substack to post longform reflections on public policy issues is another step on "a path" away from Twitter—which has become "a cesspool of bot-driven rage-farming"—and "toward restoring substantive discourse on issues of import to the public."



Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner, who is one of several MPs writing on Substack, says the newsletter-focused platform shows there is 'an appetite for longform content written by legislators.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Substack—which is also popular among journalists and pundits—has seen a rise in use by prominent MPs in recent weeks. Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, Alta.) is publishing a series of articles to her

Substack throughout January, which she describes as a collection of "essays on under-discussed issues that could impact Canadians in 2023 and beyond." In the articles, she considers issues such as home

ownership and infertility, with a focus on the millennial and Gen-Z cohorts.

Conservative MP and former party leader Erin O'Toole (Durham, Ont.) has also been gaining traction on the site, most notably with a Dec. 29 post about "profanity laden Trudeau flags" and "the hyper-aggressive rhetoric that often accompanies them." In the post, O'Toole argues these flags are "slowly normalizing rage and damaging our democracy," and said many people displaying such flags "claim to be conservative." O'Toole uses the post to speak directly to the conservative movement, writing, "these flags are the very antithesis of what it means to be conservative."

While one of the main functions of Substack is the ability to send posts to subscribers in the form of an email newsletter, several posts by Rempel Garner and O'Toole also found a broader audience with federal politics observers when they were picked up by National Newswatch as lead stories and in the aggregator's "Featured Ink" section. The O'Toole post

Continued on page 17

IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT TELUS AND BELL OPPOSE THE SHAW-VIDEOTRON-ROGERS DEALS.

When your competitors oppose you, you're doing the right thing.

"... when competitors oppose a merger, it is often a good indication that the merger will be beneficial for competition. In this case, the opposition from the Respondents' two national competitors has been vigorous and far-reaching...."

— *The Competition Tribunal, Reasons, December 31, 2022, Paragraph 1*

Shaw)

Editorial

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Jim Creskey, Leslie Dickson, Ross Dickson
General Manager, CFO Andrew Morrow

Editorial

Time to ask the right questions about the notwithstanding clause

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau may finally be picking a fight with Quebec. In a French-language interview with *La Presse* on Jan. 21, Trudeau said he's thinking about sending a question to the Supreme Court of Canada to have it weigh in on the use of the notwithstanding clause.

"I can tell you that our Minister of Justice, David Lametti, a former dean of the faculty of law at McGill University, a proud Quebecer, is thinking precisely about the avenues available to us on this," Trudeau told reporter Joël-Denis Bellavance.

This would, of course, apply to all of Canada, but it's Quebec that has made the most hay of it in recent years, invoking the clause pre-emptively for Bill 21, the province's secularism act, which forbids some public servants from wearing religious symbols on the job. Quebec Premier François Legault's government also dug into Sec. 33 of the Charter for its language reform law, Bill 96.

Trudeau said the notwithstanding clause should remain "a measure of last resort," and that its more frequent use has "reduced the political costs of the suspension of fundamental rights."

Perhaps Trudeau has Ontario Premier Doug Ford to thank for finally lighting the necessary fire under his backside. Last year, Ford's aborted attempt to use the notwithstanding clause to stymie provincial education workers' right to strike amid collective bargaining set off a firestorm.

It was a move so universally panned it gave credence to the idea that, at least in the Rest of Canada, pushing back against the overuse of the notwithstanding could have political legs.

In the interview, Trudeau saved his strongest words for the Ontario premier ("It was completely wacky, what Doug Ford did"), but that didn't stop Premier Legault from being the one to answer back.

This desire of Trudeau's is a "frontal attack on our nation's ability to protect our collective rights," Legault tweeted in French after the interview's publication. Legault pointed out that no Quebec government has adhered to the 1982 Constitution Act, "which doesn't recognize the nation of Quebec," and that it is up to the National Assembly to decide the laws by which it's governed. "Quebec will never accept such a weakening of its rights. Never!"

In the quest for votes in seat-rich Quebec and the pursuit of forming government, politicians routinely leave the province to its own devices, regardless of the adverse effect on (usually) the minority populations who live there, be it linguistic, racial, or religious.

A reference question to the country's top court is no panacea, but it's a good start to ensuring that Canadians' rights are respected, no matter where they live in the country.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Industry has bigger role in fossil fuel transition: Toronto reader

Re: "Renewable energy sector 'going like gangbusters,' say experts, but feds must handle just transition legislation with sensitivity," (*The Hill Times*, Jan. 18).

It is a bit rich to place the onus solely on the federal government. As for looking after employees, while the government is developing plans to mitigate the impact of the transition away from fossil fuels on workers, the industry isn't helping. A quick look at the relationship between their management and worker welfare can be readily seen in the summary dismissal of 40,000 workers in Alberta in 2016, for example.

The likely impact of greenhouse gas emissions has been known to science for nearly 200 years. For 40 years or more, the oil sector has run a propaganda campaign, concealed their knowledge and understanding of the issue, and used every possible leverage available to make the companies and their investors embarrassingly wealthy at the expense of the planet's health and that of the poor and middle classes who paid most of the cost and will pay the highest cost as climate change unfolds.

The evolution of the ozone depletion problem and its resolution through the Montreal protocol showed that indus-

try must be involved in any solution to large-scale environmental problems. They are the ones manufacturing and releasing substances that challenge the environment. Government can regulate, but industry must operate in a way that mitigates the problem. Unlike chlorofluorocarbons manufacturers, who responded appropriately to the science of ozone depletion, the fossil fuel industry has refused to co-operate, doubled down with expensive propaganda campaigns to bamboozle consumers, and even has had the audacity to push government to invest hugely in unproven technology to sequester carbon dioxide on a timeline that will not help significantly to meet the goals of net zero. Yet, there is a clear profit to be made with green energy.

The problem here is only partly a failure of government; it is mainly the result of the knowing, noxious, and duplicitous behaviour of fossil fuel industry executives and the irresponsible support provided by the investors and banks that drafted on their intransigence. And to a considerable extent, the governments that have benefited financially from this dangerous resource.

Tom McElroy
Toronto, Ont.

History doesn't support giving Israel an 'occupier' label: HonestReporting

Re: "Relaunched parliamentary group seeks to work for 'undivided Jerusalem' as Israel's capital," (*The Hill Times*, Jan. 18, p. 4).

Israel, the nation state of the Jewish people, is not an "occupier" of its own land and of its own eternal and undivided capital, Jerusalem.

No UN resolution or political proclamation can distort these historical truths.

Furthermore, Jews have historical ties to Judea and Samaria which dates back thousands of years. Israel strenuously disputes claims that it's an "occupier," citing pre-existing legal, ancestral, and biblical claims to lands it acquired in a war of self-defence in 1967 against pan-Arab armies seeking its destruction and as there was no recognized sovereign of these areas at the time.

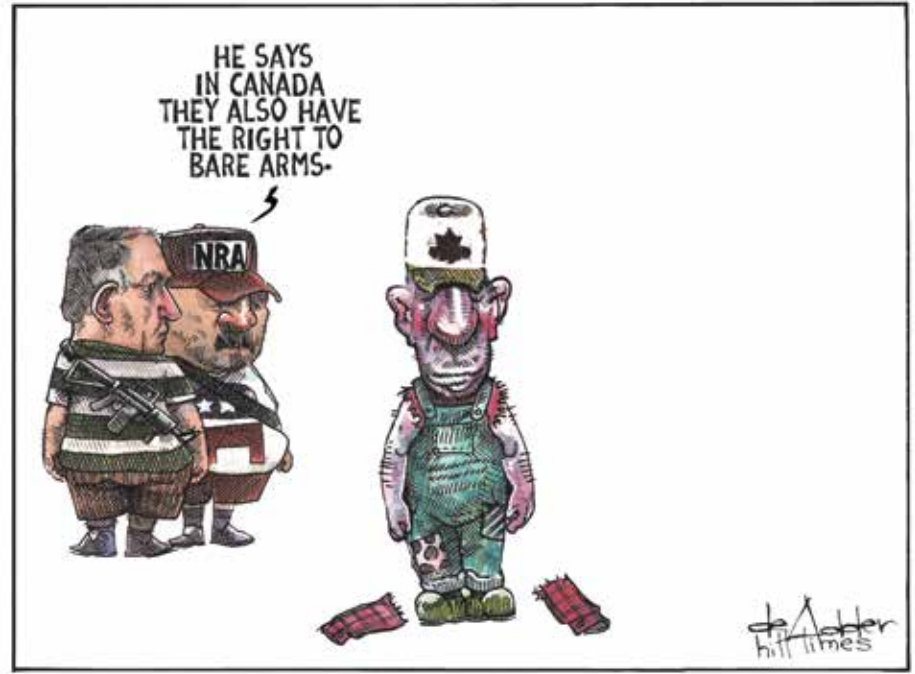
Jordan controlled the area now regarded as the "West Bank" from 1948-1967 following the War of Independence, which saw combined Arab armies try to wipe the nascent State of Israel off the map. Jordan didn't have rightful title to the land according to international law. Same equally applies for Egypt, which controlled the Gaza Strip from 1948-1967, unlawfully,

and which Israel acquired in 1967, but from which, in 2005, it unilaterally disengaged, removing 21 settlements, 8,000 settlers, and its combined armed forces in a unilateral concession for peace.

Importantly, the Palestinians have never had sovereignty and statehood, and according to Israel's position and many leading international jurists, the laws of occupation aren't applicable.

Israel did not become independent in 1948 from the United Kingdom by accident. It is the ancestral and indigenous homeland of the Jewish people, who have lived in the land of Israel for 3,000 years, outlasting a long string of foreign imperial powers such as the Romans, Persians, Greeks, Babylonians, Ottomans, and many others. To wish three millennia of history away and describe Israel as a colonizing power is to write off the lived experiences of an indigenous people who have reclaimed their homeland from what was a colonial power, the United Kingdom.

Mike Fegelman
Executive director of
HonestReporting Canada
Toronto, Ont.



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Likening medicare to communism, Ford moves ahead with plans for privatized, two-tier health care in Ontario

The crumbling of the country's medical services during COVID has opened the way for a major push by those who favour private, for-profit health care, and Doug Ford is among the premiers leading the way.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—A lot of right-wingers in North America think single-payer health care is socialism or communism. Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who once said he admired Donald Trump, can be counted among them.

Ford told Ontarians everything they need to know about his position on Jan. 16. Talking to reporters about his newly announced plan to undermine public health care, he repeated what he claimed he had been told by a hospital administrator.

"One CEO, and I won't name him, said ... 'There's only two places in the world that have the health care that we have, the same system, is Cuba and North Korea,'" the premier said.

That the premier of Ontario would repeat such nonsense to justify the decision to spend taxpayers' money to expand privately delivered health services shows how ignorant Ford is about the whole subject. More to the point, it demonstrates why he is unwilling to work to improve the universal public health system that is at the heart of Canada's caring, generous society.

The crumbling of the country's medical services during COVID



There's a lot of money to be made in private health services and Premier Doug Ford, as with his other projects, seems determined to make sure Ontario's wealthy business class gets a big chunk of it, writes Les Whittington. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

has opened the way for a major push by those who favour private, for-profit health care, and Ford is among the premiers leading the way. He did his best to guarantee a receptive mood for his privatization strategy by refusing to allocate the money needed to strengthen the public health system. And he single-handedly created a crisis in Ontario hospital staffing by inviting every nurse in the province to quit by taking away any chance they had of fair wage increases through Bill 124.

The Ford government will increase funding for clinics to perform more cataract surgeries, MRI and CT scans, colonoscopies, hip and knee replacements, and other procedures—in all shifting 50 per cent of surgeries out of the public system, with most of it going to for-profit clinics.

The government's well-orchestrated communications strategy on this file—built around the

simple notion that more private health care availability will ease pressures on the hospital system—seems at least initially to be carrying the day with a frustrated public worn down by COVID.

Extensive evidence has shown, however, that such privatization will undercut universal health care by creating a two-tier system in which people with money or private insurance get quicker access to surgery and treatment, while lower-income Ontarians will wait longer to get less adequate health services.

"The evidence shows that outsourcing health-care delivery to private for-profit entities results in worse health outcomes at a higher cost to the public," more than 100 Ontario physicians and medical students wrote in an open letter to Ford co-ordinated by Canadian Doctors for Medicare.

"Using specialized surgical clinics that can perform a high volume of certain surgeries efficiently may be part of how" we address the surgical backlog, the letter said. "However, there is no reason why these centres need to be operated on a for-profit basis, using public funds to pay shareholders or investors. We ask you to commit to focus public investments into health-care services that are operated on a not-for-profit basis, consistent with the best available evidence."

Private, for-profit clinics will drain doctors and nurses from the already depleted public hospital system, and despite the government's claims, there is no way to stop that. And Ford's glib bit of propaganda, saying "you will always pay for health services with your OHIP card, not your credit card," is just a con. It is well known that private, for-profit clinics charge extra (beyond

what OHIP pays) for upgraded products or sometimes obligatory, though unneeded, services.

This "upselling" practice, which will separate the rich from other patients, is part of the deal, as far as Ontario's Health Minister Sylvia Jones is concerned. "I wouldn't call it upselling, I would call it patient options," she told CBC.

This is the Wild West of the for-profit health-care business. A December 2021 report by the Ontario auditor general on outpatient surgeries found that the provincial health ministry "has no oversight mechanism to prevent patients from being misinformed and being charged inappropriately for publicly funded services." The AG's "mystery shopping" research showed that patients in cataract surgery clinics could end up paying \$450 to \$5,000 per eye for specialty lenses that they might be coerced into purchasing.

“That the premier of Ontario would repeat such nonsense to justify the decision to spend taxpayers' money to expand privately delivered health services shows how ignorant Ford is about the whole subject.”

Of course, Ford didn't campaign on privatizing medicare in the last election. And the strategy makes a mockery of his refrain about consulting medical experts, as the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario had warned the government that additional privately operated clinics would lead to more hospital staffing shortages and increased wait times for urgent hospital-based care.

But there's a lot of money to be made in private health services and Ford, as with his other projects, seems determined to make sure Ontario's wealthy business class gets a big chunk of it.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for *The Hill Times*.

The Hill Times

Comment



Asad Wali, whose roles on Parliament Hill included that of director of communications in the office of then-Tory leader Jean Charest, had the skills, talent, and blazing personality to play on the big stage, writes Tim Powers. Photograph courtesy of Daniel Nowlan

Farewell to one of a kind

Former conservative staffer Asad Wali, who died on Jan. 12, enriched many lives and worked to make the country a better place.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—A couple of weeks ago, Canadian politics—particularly those in the conservative fold—lost a one-of-a-kind character. Asad Wali died far too young at age 53 at his home in Toronto after a lengthy fight with multiple sclerosis. The broad Canadian public would not have known Wali, but if they did, they would have loved him as much as the legions of people who befriended him over the years. Trust me: Wali was not a person you would forget. More on that later.

As his obituary elegantly stated: “He earned his undergraduate degree from Dalhousie University and an MBA from the University of Western Ontario and worked extensively in both federal and provincial politics. His love for people, his ability to empathize, his strong intellect and respect for ideas, made him an excellent counsel, both as a professional and as a friend.”

Well-respected *Toronto Star* reporter Robert Benzie, upon hearing of Wali’s death, wrote on Twitter: “Sad news about Asad Wali, a popular political staffer at Queen’s Park and on Parliament Hill. Asad was whip smart, biting funny and beloved by his many friend and colleagues.”

I can’t tell you the precise day I met Wali, but it was in the early 1990s, when we were both very young staffers in the latter years of the Mulroney government. Wali was from Halifax and in those days (and I think it is still the case), the Atlantic Canadians on Parliament Hill always tended to congregate together. Although not some

official pact or blood oath, we always felt strength in numbers mattered.

Wali, like many of his Atlantic peers at the time, inherently understood the role the federal government played in shaping the lives of people in our region. He had the skills, talent, and blazing personality to play on the big stage—and he did it exceedingly well. He also viewed it as a tremendous honour to have the chance to set foot on the big stage.

When you talked with Wali, either professionally or socially, you knew you were in for a treat. He loved a good rant about whatever was eating away at him or he thought you should know about. You knew his humour and his colourful language would come flowing out of him like a fire hose. You knew whenever you finished speaking, and it could be a while, you’d end up laughing and be the better for it.

While I had not seen or talked to Wali in nearly a decade—my bad, not his—his death hit like a punch in the gut. When we were young, Wali, with his giant, energetic being, was one you thought would last forever. Seeing him struck down by a chronic autoimmune disease of the central nervous system just seems cruel.

Lots of good people enter into politics, be it through the back room, front room, or any other path of entry. Very few of them are like Wali. Purely genuine. Unafraid of who he was. Performatively brash but laden with kindness. And while he did work in some of the top offices in the land, it wasn’t about personal advancement, it really was about making a difference.

Returning to his obituary: “As communication became more difficult in recent years, Asad remained committed to staying engaged with people. Ever charming, he demonstrated the ability to hold a room through the display of a prominent middle finger or a slightly angled shift of a brow, and we benefited from his humour, compassion and warmth to the end.”

Asad Wali was an original character. He enriched many lives and worked to make the country a better place. Rest in peace, my friend.

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

The Hill Times

Everyone is talking about the two-drink limit

A recent Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction study may have overstated its case, but it has at least opened up a discussion about restraint.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



This might be an opportunity for Canadians to have a serious conversation about alcohol and its impact on our health, writes Andrew Caddell. Unsplash photograph by Kelsey Chance

MONTREAL—The determination of what constitutes “news” is a paradox. It can be shocking or mundane, thousands of kilometres away or in your home. In journalism school, we were told people follow the news to educate themselves about public policy, to learn what people of interest are up to, and to have something to talk about with friends or colleagues around the proverbial water cooler.

In a week of stories about the Kraken variant of the COVID-19 virus, the continued fighting in Ukraine, and mass murders in the United States, everyone was talking about a study by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) about alcoholic drink limits. The study presented a list of health risks linked to drinking, including breast and colon cancer, heart disease, and stroke. It recommended limiting oneself to one to two drinks per week.

From coast to coast to coast, everyone had an opinion. Entire call-in shows were devoted to it, op-eds debating the value of the study appear every day. In the *National Post*, the guidelines were called “unsupported and puritanical kill-joys,” while the *Globe and Mail* said the study data were “largely removed from actual human behaviour, interactions, and experiences.”

In addition to the commentaries, there have been some interesting effects. On the Radio-Canada talk show *Tout le Monde en Parle*, guests chose to drink water instead of the normal glass of wine. In many households, including my own, “dry January” was in effect.

There may be sound reasons for criticizing the methodology of the study, as many experts have done, but this might be an opportunity for Canadians to have a serious conversation about alcohol and its impact on our health. In the wake of the pandemic, when many Canadians got through their day with a drink, it’s long overdue. Canada ranks about 40th in the world in per capita consumption, just above the United States.

In the past, two drinks a day—not two drinks a week—was considered the norm. And many famous people—notably Winston Churchill, Ernest Hemingway, Betty Ford, Elizabeth Taylor, and members of the Royal Family—were alcoholics. Drinking was part of the culture. When I was a teenager in the 1960s, I saw my parents and their friends drinking, sometimes to excess. It appealed to me, and so I stole their

liquor and drank it before going to dances. The mix of rum, whisky, and gin was vile, but it gave me confidence.

It wasn’t until I was in my 20s before I could see the dangers of drinking as “sport.” And I recognized some of my friends had a problem with alcohol. It came as a shock: I had older relatives who drank too much, but they were decades older than us.

This was different. My friend Debbie was stunning, funny, and brilliant, skipping through law school without much effort. But one drink would lead to another, and the beautiful woman at the end of the table turned into a monster. A promising legal career was destroyed after her drinking made her unreliable. She died a few years ago from cancer. Others who drank to excess died from cancer, and many died in drinking and driving accidents.

While no one wants to return to the days of Prohibition or the temperance movement, there has to be a way of restraining ourselves. But we live in an era where the neoliberal credo is “everyone is responsible for their own behaviour.” We have now legalized cannabis, legalized gambling, and alcohol is everywhere; anything goes. And while governments collect taxes on their sale, the annual cost of substance abuse is more than \$45-billion a year, with an estimated 15,000 preventable deaths and 90,000 preventable health admissions attributed to alcohol use alone.

There are many who will suggest “it’s none of your business” if they want to drink to excess. However, the instant their behaviour affects other people’s lives or the public purse, it is everyone’s business.

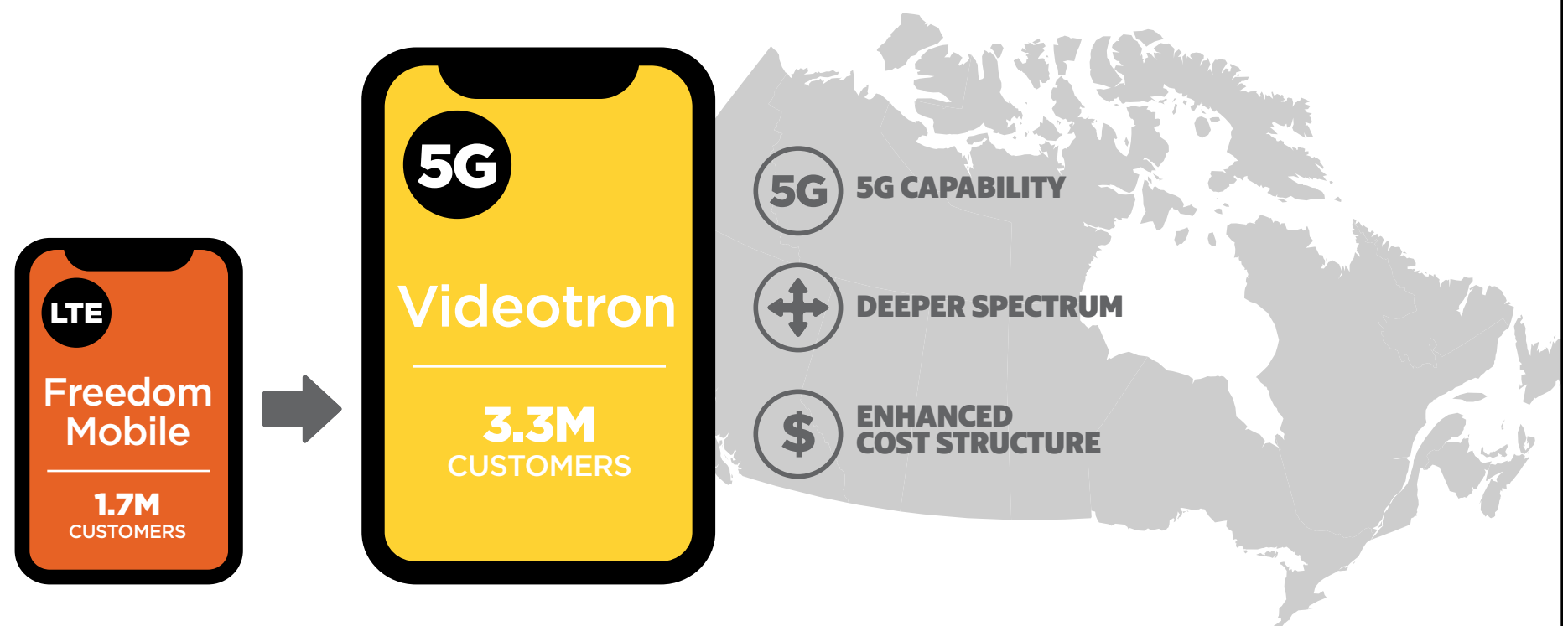
We don’t constrain behaviour in a free society, but the least we can do is outline the dangers. While the CCSA study may have overstated its case, it has at least opened up a discussion. If warning labels or educational campaigns are introduced for alcohol products, I hope Canadians will be smart enough to act in their own best interests.

Andrew Caddell is retired from Global Affairs Canada, where he was a senior policy adviser. He previously worked as an adviser to Liberal governments. He is a town councillor in Kamouraska, Que. He can be reached at pipson52@hotmail.com.

The Hill Times

CANADA'S STRONGER FOURTH CARRIER.

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The Competition Tribunal has determined Shaw-Videotron-Rogers will likely increase competition.

“It bears underscoring that there will continue to be four strong competitors in the wireless markets in Alberta and British Columbia, namely, Bell, Telus, Rogers, and Videotron, just as there are today. Videotron's entry into those markets will likely ensure that competition and innovation remain robust.”

– The Competition Tribunal, Reasons, December 31, 2022, Paragraph 6

Shaw)

News

Potential Canada-Ecuador trade pact to navigate tricky investment protections field

Controversial ISDS provisions are trumpeted for protecting Canadian foreign investments, but are panned for allowing companies to sue countries.

BY NEIL MOSS

With a docket already full of free trade negotiations, Canada could be adding one more as it inches towards launching talks with Ecuador that could include controversial investment protections for Canadian mining interests.

Canada and Ecuador started exploratory discussions towards a free trade pact on Nov. 24, 2022, which was followed by the launch of public consultations on Jan. 6. Those consultations will wrap up by Feb. 21.

Ecuadorian Ambassador to Canada Carlos Játiva said he hopes formal trade negotiations will begin around May.

While International Trade Minister Mary Ng (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.) is considering starting trade talks with Ecuador, she also is in the midst of negotiations with the United Kingdom, Indonesia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and India. At the same time, Canada will be considering accession requests to its Pacific Rim trade deal, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which include the U.K., China, and Taiwan, as well as Ecuador.



Ecuadorian Ambassador Carlos Játiva says he wants to see a trade deal completed with Canada as 'soon as possible.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam García

Játiva said the objective is to conclude a free trade pact "as soon as possible," but noted the process "does take time."

"This is my marching order," he told *The Hill Times* during a Jan. 23 interview at the Ecuadorian Embassy.

"I came here to promote an FTA [free trade agreement]," said Játiva, who took over as ambassador last June.

Within a potential free trade pact, there will be a focus on agri-food trade as well as fostering increased mining opportunities in Ecuador, said Játiva. Ecuador says the complementary nature of the Canadian and Ecuadorian economies limits the level of competing exports, with Ecuador exporting fruits and seafood and Canada exporting wheat and grain.

To boost mining investment, Játiva said Ecuador is in favour of having an investor-state dispute

settlement (ISDS) provision within the agreement. The controversial system allows for companies to sue countries through arbitration (and not domestic courts) if changes in domestic law affect their investments.

In a June 2021 report on the House Committee on International Trade's study on ISDS provisions, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois called for the Canadian government to abandon the inclusion of ISDS chapters in future trade deals.

Despite this opposition to ISDS provisions, a potential trade deal would still likely pass Parliament as the Liberals and Conservatives have noted their support for the clauses. Játiva said ISDS provisions are "part and parcel" of a free trade agreement.

The committee is set to begin a study on Canadian mining companies abroad.

In 2017, Ecuador cancelled 17 bilateral investment treaties, including one with Canada.

While there are concerns over the protection of labour and environmental rights that come with increased mining, the Ecuadorian ambassador said those rights are "strictly enforced."

Játiva said the "standard" for negotiations between Canada and Ecuador will be the North American trade pact that Canada has with the United States and Mexico. However, that agreement does not have ISDS provisions.

He said there is a "political will" on both sides to work towards a final agreement, noting that he and the embassy will be lobbying Parliament on the merits of a trade deal.

Játiva said a Canada-Ecuador free trade agreement will bring

some parity, as its neighbours to the north and south, Colombia and Peru, each already have trade pacts with Canada.

"We, therefore, have to level the playing field. There are some tariffs that we have to pay and that is something that has hindered the possibility of having a bigger market access to Canada for our products," he said.

The Ecuadorian ambassador also noted the push for a free trade agreement is part of the government's philosophy in favour of free markets, as championed by President Guillermo Lasso, a former banker.

"Our president is really a true believer in FTAs," he said.

In 2021, Canada had about \$573-million in exports to Ecuador and \$379-million in imports.

Canada-Ecuador trade pact a 'no-brainer': analyst

Michael Harvey, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's vice-president for policy and international, said now is the right time to push towards a free trade agreement with Ecuador.

"We've got a political opportunity with Ecuador right now with a government that is very open to free trade," said Harvey, a former diplomat with a number of postings in South America. "It should be a no-brainer for the two countries to move forward. The economies are very complementary in trade and investment."

He said the biggest benefits for Canada would be in agri-food trade and investor protections.

"Canada is the biggest foreign investor in Ecuador and we don't have a foreign investment protection agreement," he said, noting

agreeing on those protections "shouldn't be all that difficult in the current political environment."

In addition to mining, Harvey said a deal will help to protect Canadian investments in infrastructure projects.

"Investments stretch out far longer than the political cycle, so you want to protect your investment in case future governments come in and want to change the terms of the investment after the fact," he said. "That's often a problem in foreign investment."

Harvey said an ISDS chapter would be beneficial for Ecuador in its quest for increased investment.

Stuart Trew, director of the trade and investment research project at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, said mining looms large in negotiations with Ecuador, which he noted is "highly contentious," with large Indigenous-led demonstrations against increased mining.

"We are responding to this pull from Lasso who wants to sign these kinds of agreements that have been repudiated by the last government," he said, noting that there is also pressure from increased U.S. trade interest in Ecuador, with Canada not wanting to lose out on its market share.

Trew said an ISDS provision would be "purely to protect" Canadian mining interests, noting the lack of evidence that the provisions lead to greater investment.

"What they do is to protect the investment that is there, and they do so in quite a heavy-handed way," he said, noting that the desire to have investment protections within the trade agreement will make it a "highly charged" trade talk in Ecuador, as well as in Canada.

He questioned how the Liberals could claim to trumpet a progressive trade agenda with labour and environmental protections, while defending ISDS provisions that would protect mining interests that could threaten those same safeguards.

Carlo Dade, director of the Canada West Foundation's trade and investment centre, said Canada should be bringing Ecuador into the trade fold through the CPTPP rather than through a bilateral deal.

He said bringing Ecuador into the CPTPP would be a "slam dunk."

"You've got one set of rules instead of two sets of rules governing trade with Ecuador. The same set of rules that apply with Ecuador, apply seamlessly to the other countries of the TPP," he said.

He said it is doubtful that Canada could negotiate a bilateral agreement that has standards as high as those within the CPTPP, where Canada would be joined by other economic powers in its negotiations with Ecuador.

Dade also questioned whether it makes sense to begin trade negotiations in a region that is trending towards rejecting trade liberalization, such as has been seen in Chile and Peru, despite Ecuador currently being a "willing dance partner."

nmoos@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

International Trade Minister Mary Ng announced in late November that Canada would be entering into exploratory talks with Ecuador towards a free trade agreement. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade





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Opinion

Feds should not be allowed to hide behind NDAs

Canada ought to be the first jurisdiction not only to ban non-disclosure agreements outright, but also to release victims from any existing NDA restrictions.

Kathleen Finlay

Opinion



Sexual misconduct scandals at Hockey Canada, along with the catalogue of horrors and failures documented in the report on the Canadian military by former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour, have again cast a bright light on the culture of fear and silence that perpetuates gender violence and sexual harassment. The role of non-disclosure

agreements (NDAs), the infamous weapon of choice used by serial predators like Harvey Weinstein, is recognized as a major contributor to that culture. Yet these legal contrivances have not received nearly the attention they deserve by the federal government, which is the nation's largest employer and regulator for hundreds of thousands of workers.

In 2018, I called on the House of Commons to ban NDAs as part of its review of the government's anti-harassment legislation. They declined to weigh in on the subject.

Since that time, several American states, the United Kingdom, and Prince Edward Island have passed legislation attempting to curb the chokehold of NDA abuse. Ontario limited its minimal effort to the province's university system. In my view, these are all largely exercises in pretzel-twisting. None will undo the toxic reach of NDAs. Worse, Ottawa has not even taken the first step to deal with these legalized muzzling devices, which victims regularly describe as the *second* assault.

In fact, the federal government continues to give legitimacy to their use. The weaponry of NDAs has featured prominently in settlements with employees of

the Senate, the Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP, and the broader public sector.

NDAs are typically sought by perpetrators and their employers because they provide a body-guard of judicially enforceable machinery that shields wrongdoers from liability and protects them from public censure. In a perverse reordering of roles, these devices allow the more powerful bad actors to go free while the less powerful victim, traumatized by sexual violence, is confined to a legal prison of coerced silence and intrapsychic harms.

Organizations have developed well-honed tradecraft to make victims feel alone, unwelcome, and unsafe, to push them out of sight and into the suffocating grip of an NDA. This typically happens at the lowest point in the lives of most victims. Surrounded by a sea of disbelief, some begin to doubt themselves. "Self-gaslighting" is not uncommon. Psychologists tell us that is a very dark place to be. It's not surprising that the allure of money becomes the shiny object that distracts from the draconian threat of the NDA. For victims desperate to get on with their lives, this can prove to be irresistible. Tinkering with NDAs by lawmakers will not alter

this reality, nor will it change their malign impact.

As we learned again from the landmark findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it is a natural condition of the healing process that victims of trauma be free to share their truths in ways, in spaces, and with communities of their choice. Turning victims into silent witnesses for their unspeakable experiences compounds the trauma of sexual violence.

NDAs carry the DNA of serious perils, including PTSD and depression. Substance abuse, sleep disorders, and, alarmingly, suicidal ideation, have all been linked with the contagion of NDAs. Victims report that marriages and relationships with friends and coworkers suffer. Careers and job advancement are upended, if not obliterated.

Public policy implications abound when workers are sidelined by NDAs and predators are free to reoffend. By sealing victims in a legal coffin, bad actors prevent those who have been harmed from smashing the glass to warn others. As long as Weinstein and Jeffrey Epstein were able to erect and enforce a bar on the right of victims to speak out, they had a clear path to widen

their circle of abuse. These same voice-stifling schemes allowed Hockey Canada to keep the skeletons of sexual assault hidden for years, and to treat settlements as a cost of doing business.

It is time for the government of Canada to put an end to this code of *Omertà* that censors victims and safeguards perpetrators.

When Parliament returns on Jan. 30, MPs should move quickly to amend the government's flagship legislation dealing with sexual misconduct. Canada ought to be the first jurisdiction not only to ban NDAs outright, but also to release victims from any existing NDA restrictions where the federal government, or any entity that reports to it, was a party.

Critically, MPs need to hear from victims whose voices have been smothered and whose lives have been shattered by these instruments of personal destruction. When they do, I am confident they will conclude that NDAs cannot be rebuilt, restructured, or redesigned.

When you really look at it, the best NDA is no NDA at all.

Kathleen Finlay is founder of *The ZeroNow Campaign to combat sexual misconduct and end the harm of NDAs*.

The Hill Times



Canada is one of the few major jurisdictions that has not moved to end the harm of forced silencing in sexual misconduct settlements, writes Kathleen Finlay. *Pexels photograph by Kat Smith*

Comment

Time to push the eject button on Operation Impact

Faced with a personnel shortage, the Canadian Armed Forces should reduce Vice-Admiral Bob Auchterlonie's task load and put an immediate end to Operation Impact.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—On Jan. 20, there was a Canadian Press story headlined, "Military reducing numbers in Middle East to free up troops elsewhere."

The genesis for the article was an interview conducted with

Vice-Admiral Bob Auchterlonie, the current commander of Canadian Joint Operations Command. In that role, it is Auchterlonie's responsibility to run all Canadian military operations both at home and abroad.

In other words, it is Auchterlonie and his staff who face the challenge of juggling the Canadian Armed Forces' dwindling human resources against a steadily growing list of commitments.

Recent reports have cited the fact that the CAF is presently

short some 10,000 personnel from an authorized strength of 65,000. The Canadian Army shrunk by some 1,200 soldiers last year alone.

"Given the importance of the conflict in Ukraine, obviously we are going to continue to support that," Auchterlonie told CP. "The commitments to NATO—obviously, we're going to continue to support that. And with the increase in the Indo-Pacific, there's not a lot of room left to reduce."

Which brings us to Operation Impact, Canada's ongoing military commitment to Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon.

This is the one theatre in which Auchterlonie feels Canada can safely reduce the number of troops deployed.

Perhaps a better question would be: what the hell are Canadian troops still doing in Iraq?

When Operation Impact was first established in 2014, the fanatical Islamic faction known as Daesh (a.k.a. ISIS or ISIL) had poured across the Syrian border into Iraq.

The United States-trained Iraqi security forces simply melted away, leaving their U.S.-purchased weapons, ammunition, and combat vehicles to the Daesh extremists.

With no troops willing to fight, the embattled Baghdad regime

Continued on page 21



Natural Resources Minister Jonathon Wilkinson and his government must cut through the bombast and posturing of the past weeks and carry forward on its promise to deliver a plan that serves workers and communities affected by the major economic shifts coming our way, writes Aliénor Rougeot. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Call it what you will, the government owes Canadians a plan to ensure the energy transition is fair

No version of the legislation's name will make up for a plan that doesn't speak directly to the anxieties of affected parties.

Aliénor
Rougeot

Opinion



What started as a “war on words” regarding the federal government’s proposed just transition legislation has spilled into a chaotic brawl as top elected officials play loose with facts. Public debate on the unfulfilled electoral promise to deliver a just transition is necessary, but we need to be grounded in reality, and focus on the clear need for this legislation.

There are urgent and compelling reasons for a federally supported, locally led plan for those most affected by the transi-

tion to a zero-carbon economy. Regardless of its name, Canadians want to ensure workers and communities don’t bear the burden of this shift. The majority of people living in Canada support a “swift” implementation of a just transition policy, and a similar number expressed frustration with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for failing to deliver on environmental electoral promises, including the just transition legislation.

The government must cut through the bombast and posturing of the past weeks and carry forward on its promise to deliver a plan that serves workers and communities affected by the major economic shifts coming our way.

The global energy transition is happening, regardless of Canada’s actions—or inaction. As key stakeholders, oil and gas workers have also expressed consistent interest in the opportunities that the net-zero economy offers, while voicing legitimate concerns about being “left behind.”

An Abacus study surveying 300 fossil fuel workers across the country found 61 per cent believe that Canada should pivot towards a net-zero economy, while 69 per cent of them are interested in switching to a career in the clean economy. Workers in the fossil-fuel sector are seeking government involvement, fearing what will happen if

things are left to the market. Two-thirds of surveyed workers declared being worried about experiencing job loss, wage reduction, forced retirement and a lack of opportunity to progress in their careers if they do not receive dedicated support. These fears were especially prominent amongst workers under the age of 45, making this another place where inadequate climate policies could exacerbate generational inequities.

There is a real risk of an unjust transition. Canadians remember all too well the economic collapse in Newfoundland and Labrador, which resulted in 37,000 workers losing their jobs, virtually overnight, due to an unmanaged shutdown of the cod fishery. Alberta’s recent move away from coal-powered electricity generation, where workers who thought they had 10 years to plan their next move ended up with as little as two weeks, is another example of what can take place when governments lack foresight and fail to prioritize workers and communities in environmental policies. This time must be different, not only out of moral responsibility toward the families affected, but also out of necessity to maintain Canada’s economic and democratic stability.

The Alberta Federation of Labour and five Alberta unions representing oilsands workers weighed in on the issue last fall in

a letter to the prime minister, demanding the federal government dedicate at least two per cent of Canada’s GDP per year for a—you guessed it—“just transition.” Mikisew Cree First Nation and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, two Indigenous nations in the oilsands region, have been calling for a just transition plan for years.

The transition to a decarbonized economy goes far beyond the energy sector and will require the transformation of industrial processes, the electrification of our economy, and a new low-carbon industrial and manufacturing strategy. Unifor, Canada’s largest private sector union representing workers in most affected sectors, has taken an explicit stance in support of worker-centred just transition policies. The Quebec Federation of Labour and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers are even walking the talk by implementing just transition initiatives in their workplaces.

Those directly affected clearly see the writing on the wall: change is coming, and Canada will either embrace it and lead it, or will suffer as it watches from the sidelines.

It is time for legislation that commits the government to the principles of a just transition, starting with social dialogue—the practice of including affected parties in decision-making from the start. The act must also lay out the mechanisms through which region and sector-specific plans will be negotiated, with workers, all levels of government including Indigenous governments, and other social partners must be at the table.

While the federal government shouldn’t be deterred by the noise of the past weeks, this episode must serve as a cautionary tale. No version of the legislation’s name will make up for a plan that doesn’t speak directly to the anxieties of affected parties. A plan that fails to provide a compelling vision of where we are going, and a robust roadmap about how to get there, will only prove naysayers right while leaving supporters looking for support elsewhere.

Aliénor Rougeot is the climate and energy program manager at Environmental Defence.

The Hill Times

Opinion

Focus on service delivery, not where bureaucrats' work is done



Treasury Board President Mona Fortier makes an announcement outside of the House of Commons on Nov. 29, 2022. Now is the time for reformulating, revitalizing, and reinvigorating the federal public service delivery model for the next decade and beyond, writes Don Head. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Tinkering with one element of the terms and conditions of employment of public service employees while ignoring the need to evolve the basic service delivery model for Canadians will only lead to greater deterioration of support and confidence in the federal public service overall.

Don Head

Opinion



I continue to be intrigued by the ongoing debate about the in-office work regime going on between the Treasury Board and federal public service unions. I want to say up front that both sides are entitled to their views and perspectives about what is required, and there are some

legitimate arguments to be made on both sides. However, neither the Treasury Board nor the unions have focused on the needs of Canadians.

Most Canadians continue to be concerned about the access, quality, timeliness, and cost of services that are provided by the federal public service. There is no question that these elements have become more important since the onset of the pandemic. Consequently, where a public service employee performs their work is the least important issue for the public as opposed to the quality of the services received in an easily accessible and timely manner that does not create any additional costs to taxpayers.

There have been many examples in the media where the level of access and the quality of services have been at a standard that is unacceptable to Canadians and does not reflect experiences in previous years. While certain departments have established service delivery standards, those standards are not being met on a regular basis or are being changed to reflect the reality that has developed since 2020. One just has to phone some of the federal service agencies today only to be put on hold for lengthy periods of time. If you are lucky enough to get through to a service agent, you are likely to experience frustration because the quality of the phone connection is poor for a multitude of reasons, or the agent is not versed enough to deal with the issue being raised

and you have to be put on hold again for a lengthy period time while being transferred to a more senior agent.

It is clear that some of these issues are directly related to federal public service employees working from home. The equipment they are using is not appropriate for providing the quality of service Canadians expect. As well, many service agents sound like they are working in a tin can. It is also not uncommon to be distracted by the background noise at the home of the service agent. In addition, public service employees do not have ready access to their expert network to assist with more complicated issues being raised by Canadians. These are not isolated issues as they are recurring examples of Canadians' experiences dealing with the Canada Revenue Agency, the passport office, Service Canada agents, Veterans' Affairs Canada, etc.

While these issues are real and significant, they are not insurmountable. Addressing these and other issues related to access, quality, and timeliness of services will truly make the discussion about where the services are provided a moot point. While this will require strong, effective leadership from the Treasury Board and all government departments, it also requires the unions to recognize that while the needs of employees are important, they do not trump the needs of Canadians.

Moving forward, there needs to be a major reformulation of the

delivery of services to Canadians which reflects emerging and evolving societal needs, and how and when taxpayers access government services. While federal public service employees' needs have evolved, so have the needs of Canadians. Accessing services between Monday and Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with no access on federal statutory holidays or weekends, is a construct of the past. The evolving work-life balance needs of Canadian families must drive a new vision for service delivery in the federal public sector. This requires developing a service delivery model that is responsive, flexible, and adaptive to the evolving and changing dynamics of Canadian families.

Where these services are delivered from is a factor for consideration, but it is not the primary decision-making point. Any decisions regarding in-office hybrid models must be seen as an interim solution until a new, reformulated service delivery model is defined by the needs of Canadians and developed in a collaborative manner. Tinkering with one element of the terms and conditions of employment of public service employees while ignoring the need to evolve the basic service delivery model for Canadians will only lead to greater deterioration of support and confidence in the federal public service overall.

There is no question the Treasury Board and the unions must work together in moving forward on the larger agenda with con-

stant and direct input from citizens. Tackling the service delivery model will truly instill greater confidence in Canadians that government services are accessible, timely, cost efficient, and of the highest quality. The definition of a new model will then logically lead to the development of meaningful dialogue and solutions between the Treasury Board and unions in relation to the needs of public service employees including their work locations, hours of work, compensation, and overall work-life balance.

There is no question that the pandemic and its effect on Canadians and the federal public service have actually created a unique opportunity. The time is now for reformulating, revitalizing, and reinvigorating the federal public service delivery model for the next decade and beyond—but it will only occur with determined commitment, dedicated collaboration, and effective leadership.

Don Head had a 40-year career in the public service, beginning in 1978. From 2008 until he retired in 2018, Head was the commissioner of the Correctional Service Canada and served on various deputy minister-level committees that were actively involved in various aspects of public service delivery. Head currently assists the Aleph Institute, which is a non-profit Jewish organization dedicated to assisting and caring for the well-being of members of specific populations that are isolated from the regular community.

The Hill Times

Longform Substacks offer MPs like Rempel Garner, O'Toole, a chance to exercise 'thought leadership'

Continued from page 7

about flags gained enough attention to draw an indirect response from Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) the day after it was published. Speaking to reporters, Poilievre said "hurt" was the driving force behind these flags.

Former Conservative Party staffer Josie Sabatino said MPs are "taking cues from social media influencers" when it comes to putting out their message directly.

"Looking at the way that this has played out over the last couple of weeks, I think MPs are starting to look at thought leadership," said Sabatino, who has worked in communications for cabinet ministers and opposition leaders, and is now a senior consultant with Summa Strategies.

On Jan. 17, *The Hill Times* sent inquiries to several MPs who are using Substack, including Rempel Garner, asking what had motivated them to post longform articles on the platform, and what their experience with it had been like.

On Jan. 18, a member of Rempel Garner's staff replied with a link to a newly posted Substack article by Rempel Garner, where the MP directly addressed these questions, saying: "In the most Substack-y form of response, I thought I'd write about it here."

In the post, Rempel Garner calls communicating with the public "one of the most important functions of an elected official."

She says she also does this through traditional mediums, including her constituency newsletter and articles for legacy media, as well as social platforms.

However, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have adopted the same primary user interface of "scrolling down through reels of vertical videos" that "make it hard to capture a viewer's atten-



Conservative MP Erin O'Toole's Dec. 29 Substack post drew enough attention to prompt an indirect response from Pierre Poilievre the following day. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

tion, particularly when it comes to content on public policy," writes Rempel Garner. "Even though we live in an era where video is king, I also need to communicate in written form."

While Twitter puts more emphasis on text, it no longer offers a path for the kind of engagement Rempel Garner is seeking.

Twitter "began as a legitimate micro-blogging site," but as a tool for political communication "I feel it's past its peak utility," writes Rempel Garner.

While she describes Substack as an alternative to the polarizing experience on Twitter, she says this "doesn't mean I'm going to shy away from writing about provocative issues or taking unpopular positions." However, the longform style "encourages me to explain my rationale for doing so."

"It allows me to provide context for issues," writes Rempel Garner. "It also allows me to be authentic."

'Unexpected' longform posts from MPs can gain traction, build brands

Oksana Kishchuk, director of strategy and insights at Abacus Data, said Substack offers MPs an opportunity to communicate in "unexpected" ways—"maybe authentically, or perhaps they're crafting a specific persona on these platforms"—and that's part of the reason why these posts may be attracting attention and offer them an opportunity for brand building.

"I think it's such a new space that some people are maybe caught off guard to hear politicians, who typically follow talking points," venture into more in-depth reflections than they can in a tweet, said Kishchuk. "It really sort of exposes them in a way that people aren't used to."



Oksana Kishchuk of Abacus Data says Substack's longform style offers MPs a chance for brand building, with posts that are authentic, unexpected, or establish 'unique experience.' *Photograph courtesy of Oksana Kishchuk*

In Rempel Garner's case, Kishchuk said the focus on millennials and Gen Z is a way of establishing the Conservative MP's brand as someone with unique expertise, who is "in the know" on these topics, and "a person to watch as we look at the changing face of politics."

"She points to a lot of research. She's timely," said Kishchuk. "When the general public or the Ottawa bubble starts to pay more attention" to these demographics, she can position herself as "someone that can be relied on for information on those groups of people."

Sabatino said Rempel Garner "is really trying to challenge the status quo on a number of issues that are coming forward as the issue of the day ... I think [MPs] are taking cues from a lot of journalists who are using Substack, as a way to complement their existing works."

Rempel Garner writes that using Substack has allowed her to make use of work she was already doing as an MP.

"When I prepare for a legacy media interview, a meeting, a parliamentary committee hearing, or Question Period, I write short briefs to myself to consolidate my thoughts," writes Rempel Garner. "Substack offers me a vehicle to, without a lot more time or effort, flesh these out a bit and make them public."

A *Hill Times* survey of Substack found several other Parliamentarians using the platform, including Conservative MPs Michael Chong (Wellington-Halton Hills, Ont.), Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park-Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.), and Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, Alta.), and Liberal cabinet minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.).

Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches-East York, Ont.), in a recent interview with *The Hill Times* about his podcast, said Rempel Garner's Substack caught his attention, and he would consider starting one if he can find the time. He said, "it's incredibly important for Parliamentarians to engage in more nuanced, longform thinking."

A 'serious toolkit' for any MP, but journalism prof has concerns

Joseph Lavoie, a former Conservative Party staffer who served as director of strategic communications to then-prime minister Stephen Harper, said because of its ease of use and built-in marketing functions, Substack is a "serious toolkit" for any MP or candidate.

"I've been saying this for the last 15 years, and it's still true, even in a TikTok world, that email still is king on the mobile app," said Lavoie, who is now a vice-president in Crestview Strategy's Vancouver office.

"Every single user, regardless of their demographic backgrounds—age or whatnot—relies on email and they use their email. And someone who can get open rates and click rates in an email inbox, has a strong ability to communicate well with an audience member."

Unlike many other social media platforms, Substack does not display an account's subscription numbers or views on a post, but Rempel Garner said that her posts are receiving tens of thousands of views.

As of Jan. 23, her Substack also ranked No. 65 worldwide on Substack's global leader board for culture-related Substacks.

While Rempel Garner has experienced harassment on Twitter, she said on Substack, to date, her "experience using the platform has been outstanding" and she is "receiving thoughtful email responses."

"This interaction shows that there is an appetite for longform content written by legislators," writes Rempel Garner. "More of us should add it to our communications toolkit."

Christopher Waddell, a Carleton University journalism professor and former CBC parliamentary bureau chief, said when politicians use Substack as their primary venue to deliver their message, it "works to their benefit, because they can say what they want ... [without] having to accept responsibility for answering any questions that may raise."

He said O'Toole's post about flags was designed with the media as one of its audiences.

"[It] was designed to attract attention ... without having to be asked questions about why is he attracting attention," said Waddell.

He compared it to politicians using an email response to media inquiries.

"People who submit email responses to journalists control things, because journalists can't ask questions," he said. "And so they can say what they want. It might be right, it might be wrong. Perhaps it should be challenged in some cases and say, 'This isn't what you said a while ago, or this is different from that before.'"

Lavoie said he favours "anyone who has a perspective in a democratic environment" being able to have it "received directly by the person that's intended to receive it," but "the place where we have to be careful" is when this "facilitates an echo chamber effect," which the algorithms on many of these platform facilitate.

He noted Substack, like many other modern platforms, is designed to suggest to readers similar newsletters to ones they are already subscribed to.

"This is one of the challenges that everyone in the public policy space is going to have over the next coming years, is how do you find that right balance between direct engagement, which I think is absolutely key, versus making sure people have a diversity of views to consider," said Lavoie.

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The Hill Times
—With files from Laura Ryckewaert



Conservative strategist Josie Sabatino said Substack offers MPs a chance to practice 'thought leadership.' *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Opinion



Demonstrators participate in the Artsakh Freedom Protest on the George Washington Bridge between New York and New Jersey in October 2020. Photograph courtesy of Flickr/ Hrag Vartanian

Armenians are facing another genocide

It has now been more than 40 days since Azerbaijan's genocidal blockade of innocent civilians, which has prevented necessary food and medicine from entering the Artsakh region.

Raffi Sarkissian

Opinion



On July 1, the Canadian-Armenian community is preparing to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first group of Armenian children orphaned during the Armenian Genocide. This initiative to save the lives of the Georgetown Armenian Boys, as they came to be known, was Canada's first humanitarian effort in facilitating the rescue of more than 100 chil-

dren from a non-Commonwealth country.

This was not, however, a novelty, since Canadian aid for Armenians dated back to the 19th century during which time Canadians both raised funds for those suffering under Ottoman Turkish rule and also supported the Armenian population through the physical presence of Canadian missionaries and humanitarians. Ultimately, Canada's relationship with the Armenians at this time formed the foundations of its foreign humanitarian traditions.

The Turkish government has since evaded justice and has not faced consequences for the destruction and occupation of the Armenian homeland and its population. This behaviour and the ideologies that drive it have unfortunately remained, as it continues to be apparent in the geopolitics of the region.

The most recent victims of such systematic destruction are the 120,000 Armenians in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) who have been blockaded by Azerbaijan, supported by the Turkish government since Dec. 12, 2022. It has now been more than 40 days since Azerbaijan's genocidal blockade of innocent civilians, which has prevented necessary food and medicine from entering

the region. The blockade has been coupled with long-term intermittent cuts to the flow of natural gas and the regime of Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev's inhibiting of electricity line repairs, which has led to catastrophic power outages and loss of access to the internet. Armenians in Artsakh spent New Year's and the holy week of Christmas under these circumstances as photos emerged of markets left with no food. These disruptions have left schools with no option but to close, leaving 30,000 children with no education. It is no coincidence that this blockade and the weaponizing of electricity and gas, coincides with the harsh winter. This further serves Azerbaijan's ongoing policy of displacement and elimination of the Armenians of Artsakh, which was intensified between September and November of 2020, during which time 90,000 Armenians were displaced from Artsakh to Armenia, with 88 per cent being women and children, according to a report by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group.

The question remains of what the Canadian government is willing to do to pressure Azerbaijan to cease its gross violations of the human rights of the people of Artsakh. The Armenian National

Committee of Canada has reported on statements made by several Members of Parliament voicing concerns including a Dec. 14, 2022, tweet from a Global Affairs account, asking Azerbaijan to end the blockade. More than a month has already passed since this statement, while more than a 100,000 vulnerable Armenians continue to live under life-threatening circumstances.

It is promising that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs unanimously adopted a motion on Dec. 7, 2022, calling for three meetings on the blockage of the corridor and to hear directly from the Republic of Artsakh state representatives. The Armenian National Committee of Canada called this a historic move that will officially give an opportunity to representatives of the Republic of Artsakh to speak in front of the Canadian Parliament.

The Canadian government must take concrete steps under its commitment to the pillars of the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect and as a leading proponent of human rights internationally. Is Canada willing to commit to become an active and dedicated humanitarian partner to assist the Armenians sentenced to starvation, as it was during the Arme-

nian Genocide, or will we regress from the responsibilities that had once become the building blocks of Canada's independent foreign policy?

For instance, among calls by the International Association of Genocide Scholars, who have stated that the blockade poses a serious genocide risk, and criticism by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, Tessa Hofmann, the chair of Against Genocide, for International Understanding, a German-based human rights organization, recently called for an airlift to provide humanitarian relief to the victims of the blockade.

Above and beyond humanitarian assistance, the independence of the Republic of Artsakh must be recognized by the international community, for which Canada can take a leading role. Considering Azerbaijan and Turkey's ongoing violations of human rights, threats, aggressive rhetoric, and state-sponsored genocidal violence spanning a century, there is no other option but to respect the will of the Armenians to live in their native homeland, safeguard their cultural wealth and prosper free from oppression.

Instead of taking concrete action against Azerbaijan's gross violations of human rights and the systematic starvation of the 120,000 Armenians, the mass media and world leaders have been more interested in Azerbaijan's energy exports to Europe, while very little is being said and done about the ongoing human rights abuses by the country.

Raffi Sarkissian is the founder of the Sara Corning Centre for Genocide Education.

The Hill Times

‘Structural failures’ and lingering trauma top of mind as convoy anniversary nears, say MPs, advocates

The Ottawa Police Service says it’s putting the kibosh on any vehicle-based protests in the city ahead of the Jan. 28 one-year anniversary of the day the so-called ‘Freedom Convoy’ rolled into town, as multiple inquiry bodies ready their reports on the event ended by the Emergencies Act.

Continued from page 1

perspectives overlooked by the more official inquiries.

Alex Neve, one of four commissioners who heard testimony from more than 200 residents who shared their experiences living through the three-week “occupation,” told *The Hill Times* that the first part of the commission’s report, set to be released Jan. 30, would focus on “lifting up those voices and perspectives from the community to make sure that they’re very much in the spotlight as we’re reflecting upon the one-year anniversary.”

Neve, an adjunct professor in international human rights law at the University of Ottawa and Dalhousie University and former secretary-general of Amnesty International Canada, said the OPC was created out of a concern that the official processes to examine the response to the protests—including the POEC and the parliamentary Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency, both required by invocation of the Emergencies Act—did not offer any “meaningful space” to hear the perspective of the community that lived in the city for three and a half weeks “when the convoy had essentially taken over.”

“To hear from, understand, and assess what happened at the community level needs to be absolutely central to evaluating how well governments did or

did not do in responding to the convoy and learning lessons as to what could and should be done differently and better next time,” Neve said.

Part 2 of the report, which Neve expects will be released in the following six to eight weeks, will include the OPC’s analysis, conclusions, and a set of recommendations for policy, legal, and institutional reform based on those community perspectives.

“What we will be reflecting in this upcoming report is just how pervasive and traumatizing the wide range of abuses and harms that community members experienced during the convoy occupation truly were,” Neve said.

“There were many people who were so terrorized and so fearful at the time that they had simply become invisible. They were not out on the streets,” Neve continued. “They had literally become imprisoned within their

own homes, unable and unwilling to go out.”

In addition to that fear, Neve said, was the sense of abandonment and being forgotten by police and all three levels of government.

Residents also told the commission that their fear and trauma resurface each time a new iteration of the protests was reported in the news, including the suggestion of a possible “Convoy 2.0.”

Speaking at a press conference on Jan. 23, Chief Eric Stubbs reiterated that the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) would be ready for any potential return of protestors

on the anniversary of the Freedom Convoy on Jan. 28.

“Our goal is not to have a vehicle-based protest,” Stubbs told reporters prior to a municipal police services board meeting. “If someone attempts a vehicle-based protest, then we will take action to dismantle it fairly quickly.”

Stubbs said that OPS was monitoring its intelligence sources, but wouldn’t go into specifics about the size or scope of any demonstration it might be expecting. However, he added that the plan would be “scalable” and that OPS couldn’t be confident in the information they had gleaned from those sources or the various protest organizers they had spoken to.

“The information that we have received is a little bit all over the place,” Stubbs added. “Our confidence in what exactly may occur isn’t 100 per cent.”

Neve said he believes that hearing the OPS say it

won’t allow a repeat of last February might give residents some sense of comfort; but learning the lessons of the past and more effectively responding to similar situations in the future will require a broader solution than more forceful policing.

“What happened last year was a human rights failure,” Neve said. “The rights of more than 20,000 people who live in downtown Ottawa were completely sacrificed, overlooked, deemed unimportant. And that needs attention.”

While Neve may have concerns that those rights and the traumatic experiences had not been sufficiently heard, Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* that those experiences are his No. 1 preoccupation.

Naqvi, a member of the joint parliamentary committee and the federal representative for the riding that includes Parliament Hill, said that while speaking to his constituents over the past year, he has heard many of the same stories of lingering trauma.

“The community is still raw because they lived the brunt of it,” Naqvi said, adding that he continues to meet former residents of Centretown who decided to move to another part of the city following the protest.

“They felt that this is not the kind of experience that they want to live through again.”

Naqvi said he can also relate, recalling being encouraged by the RCMP to work from home during the convoy out of concern for the fact that not only was he a sitting Member of Parliament, but also because he “didn’t blend in well with that crowd.”

“There were some serious concerns, and I think that personally held me back from walking the streets,” Naqvi said, adding that the only other time he had been concerned for his personal safety while living in Canada was during the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks in New York City.

However, Naqvi also said he gets the sense that residents are ready to move forward, gaining confidence in the successful Canada Day celebrations last summer as a notable “high point” in restoring confidence in the community.

Naqvi emphasized that there is still a fair bit of work ongoing, including the report by the Committee on Procedure and House Affairs examining how to better provide security for Parliamentarians, staff, residents, and businesses. The joint committee will also continue its work to prepare a report to be presented to Parliament no later than March 31.

The final report from the public inquiry will contain recommendations that will provide a “roadmap” to ensure a similar “occupation” will be prevented from happening again.

“I’m confident that the City of Ottawa, under a new mayor and new council, will be looking at some of their issues and the role of [OPS] and their response and broader preparedness for protests so that these types of incidents are not repeated again,” Naqvi added.

Continued on page 21



Alex Neve, one of the Ottawa People's Commission on the Convoy Occupation commissioners, says the first part of the his group's final report will be released Jan. 30. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Police arrest Freedom Convoy participants in Ottawa on Feb. 18, 2022. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

News

‘There’s power in numbers’: Almost 50 Canadian MPs (so far) have sponsored detained Iranians

More than 70 Iranian men, women, and teens detained by the Iranian regime, many facing death sentences, have been politically sponsored by Liberal, Conservative, and NDP MPs.

Continued on page 20

Iranian regime to ensure that they know that we are watching—the world is watching—and that they can’t continue on in this path. We will hold them accountable.”

Widespread protests have been ongoing in Iran since last September, sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini after being arrested and beaten by Iran’s morality police for “improperly” wearing her hijab. Amini’s death inspired protests in the streets, with women taking off their hijabs or cutting their hair in defiance of Iran’s Islamic Republic regime, joined by men in calling for an end to the regime. The responding crackdown has seen hundreds arrested (or otherwise detained) or killed for participating in the movement. The group Human Rights Activists in Iran estimates that at least 519 people have been killed and more than 19,200 arrested since the protests began, according to The Associated Press. Many of those arrested face torture or death sentences, with a number of executions already carried out.

On Dec. 31, 2022, nine Liberal MPs from British Columbia announced political endorsements of 19 detained Iranians. On Jan. 4, seven Liberal MPs in the York Region caucus endorsed eight Iranians. On Jan. 9, 20 members of the Liberal women’s caucus announced 22 sponsorships, with three more MPs (sponsoring three individuals) later joining that group. And on Jan. 13, nine Conservative MPs announced sponsorships of 18 Iranians. NDP MPs Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, Alta.) and Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont–La Petite-Patrie, Que.) have also announced sponsorships.

Altogether, as of Jan. 23, at least 49 Canadian MPs have endorsed 72 Iranians. They join a growing list of politicians globally who have announced sponsorships of Iranians, including more than 100 members of the German Bundestag.



MPs from across party lines, including Liberal Jenna Suds, left, Conservative Melissa Lantsman, and New Democrat Alexandre Boulerice have announced political sponsorships of Iranians. The individual sponsored by Boulerice—Dariush Mirshahi—has since been released on parole. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Already, some individuals sponsored by MPs, including those by Liberals Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver–Sunshine Coast–Sea to Sky Country, B.C.) and Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver, B.C.), have been released from prison (on bail or otherwise) or had their sentences revoked.

The Liberal women’s caucus began discussing the idea of taking on political sponsorships just before the House rose on Dec. 14, 2022, and decided to move on it over the holidays, said Suds, who, along with caucus chair Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Que.), has played a key role in organizing names.

Suds said they compiled a list of individuals through a mix of community input—from conversations MPs have held with Iranian-Canadians in their ridings—and public databases, like the Iran Prison Atlas or that of Amnesty International.

“Many of us, myself included, have Iranian-Canadians in our community that we engage with on a regular basis,” said Suds. “This is definitely, I believe, an opportunity for us as Members of Parliament to be able to do more, to be able to lend our voice and our support in a bigger way for those that are imprisoned in Iran.”

Suds conceded it’s “hard to measure the impact that we are having” by acting as political sponsors, but, she said, “as the numbers of us grow, it would seem like we are being heard, it would seem as though we are having influence.”

“I think there’s power in numbers,” said Suds. “The ability for myself, for us collectively, to use whatever influence we have to work to release those that have be-

come political prisoners is obviously a worthwhile undertaking.”

Around the same time as those discussions were happening among the Liberal women’s caucus, Conservative MP and deputy leader Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, Ont.) was leading similar efforts among her colleagues.

Lantsman said she began working to compile a database of names on Dec. 16 with the help of community members and colleagues, including Conservative MP Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, Alta.).

“This isn’t a neat process where there’s some centralized database of ‘here are the political prisoners that you can sponsor.’ You have to do a lot of that work,” said Lantsman, noting that she and others have turned to individuals and organizations they’ve met through politics, including in their ridings, for help, like the Association of Families of Flight PS752 Victims.

“This is a revolution in Iran that’s run from on the ground, and the same exists in our diaspora communities. They are finding every single way to support their families, their friends, their fellow country mates ... this is just another concrete way we can help. Groups that I speak to had brought this up to me as an idea,

and I started looking into it in early December,” she said.

Lantsman herself is sponsoring two individuals: Hassan Firouzi, a new father who has been sentenced to death for participating in protests, and Mahan Gachpazan, a Tehran University student who was detained by the Iranian regime’s secret police.

“They’re very much people that you would cross in your universe,” said Lantsman. “There’s no preference on prisoners, we just want to see the international community take a look at all of these people and make sure that we’re doing everything we can to just stop the executions, which are happening on a daily basis.”

While nine Tory MPs were part of the initial Jan. 13 announcement, Lantsman said work continues to build the list. “I know that there’s interest, this was sort of the first tranche and we hope that this brings more attention to it,” she said.

Liberal MP Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Ont.) was one of the 20 Liberals whose political sponsorships were announced on Jan. 9, with Kayabaga taking on two individuals: Bitva Veisi, a Kurdish university student arrested in December, and Farbod Alavi, a Bahá’í citizen detained in Tehran’s Evin Prison who has a family member in Kayabaga’s riding.

“[Sponsoring prisoners] helps keep their names in high profile, and, according to the Iranian community, the more a name has a higher profile, the less likely they’re going to be murdered. It increases their chances of survival, basically,” said Kayabaga.

While it’s her first time acting as a political sponsor, Kayabaga said she’s

seen the difference political sponsorships can make in her home country of Burundi.

“There are times where people are saved through public papers supporting them. So I’ve seen this before,” said Kayabaga, who immigrated to Canada when she was 11. “It’s not something that I haven’t experienced, where a government is killing people. So it felt like something I had to do, because I’ve experienced it.”

Conservative MP Karen Vecchio (Elgin–Middlesex–London, Ont.) said the idea of taking on political sponsorships came to her from “both sides”—from Iranian-Canadians in her riding who have been active in protesting the Islamic Revolutionary Guard and from her caucus colleague, Lantsman.

Vecchio, who has sponsored two individuals, Mohana Kameli and Sepideh Ahmadkhani, said she was new to the idea of political sponsorships, and has been figuring out how best to “move forward” as she goes.

After sharing news of her sponsorships online, Vecchio said the response was “immediate,” with a human rights lawyer in Sweden among those who have reached out to offer help.

“Right now I feel like I’m a conduit; I’m a conduit of information ... trying to connect with different people, whether it’s families or people that know of these victims, to get updates,” said Vecchio, noting she’s leveraging parliamentary connections she’s made, including from attending a UN General Assembly meeting in New York in September.

Vecchio said she’s continued to compile names raised during meetings with Iranian-Canadians in her riding and beyond, sharing them with Lantsman, as well as other caucus colleagues to encourage them to become sponsors.

“We know that the more awareness we can bring, the more that we can continue to fight against this group that is holding these prisoners,” said Vecchio.

“It’s just one of those things; whatever we can do to bring forward the voices of these people, we have to do it.”

Liberal MP Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Ont.), one of the Liberal women’s caucus sponsors, said it’s important to “keep the story in people’s minds.”

Dzerowicz has sponsored Zeynab Nasiri, a university student awaiting trial for her activism.

“I think she pretty much reflects the broader society of many of the young women who ... want to be showing their resistance,” said Dzerowicz.

“You want to keep their struggle in people’s minds, you want to keep it front-and-centre that there are women that continue to be in jail. So to me, that’s part of what I feel is my role as political sponsor, is to continue to keep her name in the news, the situation for Iranian women in Iran in the news. That, to me, is my small contribution to helping to fight for her rights and for the rights of women around the world,” she said.

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Hundreds gathered on Parliament Hill on Oct. 4, 2022, to show solidarity with the Women Life Freedom movement. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Time to push the eject button on Operation Impact

Continued from page 14

stood up Shiite militias and called for military assistance from Iran and the United States.

The U.S. had only just withdrawn the last of their combat troops from Iraq in 2011 after a disastrous eight-year occupation.

The once-bitten, twice-shy Pentagon did not want to go it alone the second time around in Iraq, so they cobbled together a coalition force.

Canada was not specifically asked to assist by the Baghdad regime. But the U.S. sort of put all of those willing allies—including Canada—under the blanket umbrella of the request for U.S. combat support.

Canada had just concluded a 12-year failed commitment to the war in Afghanistan and as such, the public were risk averse to sustain further casualties in Iraq.

On the flip side, the Daesh propaganda machine broadcast graphic videos of their violent excesses, cementing their reputation as vile evildoers. For this reason, Canadians generally accepted the fact that we would contribute military forces to defeat these bad hombres.

To further sweeten the pot, Canadians were assured that our combat soldiers would be deployed in an “advise and assist” role, rather than engaging Daesh fighters themselves.

The Royal Canadian Air Force deployed observation aircraft and CF-18 fighters, which could operate with relative impunity owing to the fact that Daesh had no air-to-air defence assets.

Things got more than a little weird as the global coalition deployed to defeat

Daesh grew to a total of 83 members. As such, Canada found itself fighting alongside Iraqi Shiite militia, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Bashar al-Assad’s Syrian government troops, Hezbollah, and even the Russian military.

War indeed creates strange bedfellows. However, this massive hodgepodge of assorted factions, aided by overwhelming U.S. airpower, defeated the last of the fanatical Daesh holdouts by 2017.

It was at that juncture Canada should have pulled out all of our troops. As long as the singular aim had been to collectively defeat an evil entity in Syria and Iraq, one could justify Canada’s commitment.

Once Daesh was defeated, it was a fool’s errand to continue sending military resources to achieve an unspecified aim.

As the U.S. discovered to their peril, simply training Iraqis or Afghans to march in step does not create a motivated security force.

Canada briefly led the NATO mission to train Iraqi soldiers, but no one could identify exactly which sort of regime those troops would be propping up in Baghdad.

As witnessed after the U.S. illegally invaded Iraq and toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iraq is rife with factional divisions.

Canada never had a dog in that fight and we would have been better off withdrawing from that region in 2017.

Auchterlonie should press his political masters to reduce his task load and put an immediate end to Operation Impact.

As the vice-admiral pointed out, those personnel assets are needed elsewhere.

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

The Hill Times

‘Structural failures’ and lingering trauma top of mind as convoy anniversary nears, say MPs, advocates



NDP MP Matthew Green says he’s still ‘unwilling to believe’ the convoy occupation couldn’t have been met with a different response. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

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‘This is about structural failures’: Green

NDP MP Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* that while the public inquiry provided the first opportunity to take a “deep look” at the evidence of what went wrong during the Freedom Convoy protests leading up to the Feb. 14, 2022, invocation of the Emergencies Act, addressing those failures will take more than a new mayor and chief of police.

“This is about structural failures within public safety, in policing—including the RCMP and the OPP—[and] including the civil and political leadership required to take action using existing laws that could have, in my opinion, prevented this from happening,” Green said, adding that he didn’t want to just see a “reactionary” response that only further militarizes policing.

“I did not wish upon the convoy any type of escalation of use of force,” Green said. “I’m unwilling to believe that there couldn’t have been a more concerted effort to prevent this.”

Green, who is a joint chair of the parliamentary committee examining the use of the Emergencies Act, said there will need to be a focus on the “systems and principles of public safety” and the acceptability of “targeting civilians with direct action.”

“This was about a punitive reaction on the nation’s capital,” Green explained. “Including, and most importantly, I think, local residents and local businesses.”

Green said the Freedom Convoy also highlighted what he called a “bastardization of the rights framework” under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the adoption of “the most sinister and selfish aspects of American freedom” that prioritizes the individual over the collective.

“There’s a lot of work to do, and I don’t think it’s going to happen overnight,” Green added. “But I certainly think that we have a responsibility as legislators to do better by citizens and do better in those moments.”

While Green said he and the committee would accept the findings of the public inquiry, despite any personal dissenting opinions he may have, committee vice-chair Conservative MP Glen Motz (Medicine Hat–Cardston–Warner, Alta.) told *The Hill Times* he was hopeful that the commission, headed by Justice Paul Rouleau, will come to the same conclusion he has: that the threshold to invoke the Emergencies Act was not met.

“I’m hopeful that the commissioner will chastise the government for their secret, broader interpretation that they say they relied upon,” said Motz, adding that the use of that “broader interpretation” should demonstrate that the government itself didn’t believe that the conditions of the protest met the threshold, “as outlined in law in the [Emergencies Act].”

During testimony before the public inquiry on Nov. 21, 2022, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) director David Vigneault said that while the protests did not meet the threshold for a national security threat as defined in the CSIS Act, he was assured that the cabinet could interpret the definition more broadly. When asked about that broader legal interpretation two days later, Justice Minister David Lametti (LaSalle–Émard–Verdun, Que.) declined to provide details during his testimony, citing solicitor-client privilege.

Motz and fellow Conservative committee member MP Larry Brock (Brantford–Brant, Ont.) argued that the constitutional “law of parliamentary privilege” afforded to the committee supersedes statutory law as well as solicitor-client privilege.

“Our government must be transparent with the people that they’re there to serve,” Motz said, attributing the Liberals’ lack of transparency and credibility as a genesis for the Freedom Convoy protests.

“[The protestors] came to Ottawa to be heard, to voice their concerns with the mandates, and have someone from the government listen to how it was impacting their lives and livelihoods,” Motz said. “And the government ignored them.”

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Soldiers sign a mural designed and painted by Sergeant Veronique Fradette at Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait during Operation Impact on March 8, 2022. *DND photograph by Corporal Eric Greico*



Laura Ryckewaert Hill Climbers

Staff moves in Trade Minister Ng's office, including Sherban's return

Plus, Housing Minister Ahmed Hussen and Infrastructure and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc both recently bade farewell to senior staffers.

International Trade, Small Business, and Export Promotion Minister **Mary Ng** has seen a fair bit of movement in her office since the end of 2022, including the upcoming return of director of operations **Lesley Sherban** from maternity leave.



Lesley Sherban returns to work in the trade minister's office in February. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Sherban has been working for Ng since she took over the international trade portfolio in July 2018, and was previously director of parliamentary affairs to then-small business and tourism minister **Bardish Chagger**. She's set to return from leave next month.

Working on Parliament Hill since early 2016, Sherban spent her first two years in Ottawa as an Ontario regional adviser to the federal public services minister, starting under then-minister **Judy Foote** and ending under then-minister **Carla Qualtrough**.

Prior to 2016, Sherban worked for the Ontario Liberals at Queen's Park, starting in 2010 as a legislative assistant to an MPP and ending as a senior adviser to then-Ontario agriculture, food, and rural affairs minister **Jeff Leal**.

When she went on leave, Sherban held the title of both operations director and deputy chief of staff to Ng. Director of parliamentary affairs **Alex Corbeil** was subsequently promoted, adding on the title of deputy chief of staff, which she's set to keep.

Ahead of Sherban's return, **Kenzie McKeegan**, who'd joined Ng's team in December 2021 to serve as director of operations in Sherban's absence, has left the minister's office.

McKeegan has returned to Loyalist Public Affairs as a senior director. She was a senior consultant with the firm before her year in the trade minister's office—her first gig on Parliament Hill.

Cameron Yung joined Ng's team as a policy adviser in November. He comes from Women and Gender Equality and Youth Minister **Marci Ien**'s office, where he'd been a regional adviser for the West and North since the end of 2021. A former assistant to then-Alberta Liberal MP **Kent Hehr**, Yung is also an ex-communications and community liaison to then-Calgary city councillor **Druh Farrell**.



Cameron Yung is now a policy adviser to the trade minister. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

"As a son of immigrants from Hong Kong, I am incredibly proud and appreciative of the privilege to serve on Minister Mary Ng's team and to be lead on the Indo-Pacific Strategy," wrote Yung in a December LinkedIn post.

"A large task and a tricky balancing act, I am ready to work hard as we take a clear-eyed approach, enhance Canada's presence in the Indo-Pacific region, and support Canadian businesses abroad. Just as important, we must continue to address anti-Asian racism here at home and build upon what Canada is known for: our diversity and inclusion," he continued.

In Ng's office, Yung works under policy director **Elise Wagner**.

In other policy staff news, **Chris Zhou**, who was previously a special assistant for communications to Ng, was promoted to policy adviser and issues manager last November. He first joined the trade minister's office—his first job on the Hill—in the fall of 2020 as a special assistant for parliamentary and Atlantic regional affairs. Zhou is also a former adviser and program co-ordinator with Global Vision.

There are three new communications aides on Ng's team.

Mohammad Kamal was hired as a special assistant for digital communications in November, and earlier this month, **Christian Parkinson** and **Erin Quevillon** joined Ng's team as parliamentary and communications assistant, and special assistant for communications, respectively.

From Newmarket, Ont., Parkinson spent the previous four months as a communi-



Christian Parkinson is now a parliamentary and communications assistant to the trade minister. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

cations and public affairs intern with The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. He's also a former intern in Ng's constituency office as the MP for Markham-Thornhill, Ont., and has campaign experience under his belt, including as a volunteer on Newmarket-Aurora, Ont., Liberal MP **Tony Van Bynen**'s 2021 re-election campaign and Van Bynen's predecessor, former Liberal MP **Kyle Peterson**'s successful 2015 campaign.

Quevillon has both a bachelor's and a master's degree in applied linguistics and discourse studies from Carleton University. Last year, she volunteered on Ontario Liberal candidate **Tyler Watt**'s (ultimately unsuccessful) campaign to represent Nepean, Ont., in the provincial legislature.

Alice Hansen is director of communications to Ng, while **Shanti Cosentino** is press secretary.

Along with Parkinson, **George Williams** is a recent addition to Ng's ministerial parliamentary affairs team, having been hired as a special assistant in November. He was previously a parliamentary assistant in Ng's MP office.

Williams, who is from Elmsdale, P.E.I., previously worked for his hometown MP, Liberal **Robert Morrissey**, who represents the riding of Egmont, as both a constituency and communications assistant. In 2020, he



George Williams is now a special assistant for parliamentary affairs in Ng's ministerial office. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

spent roughly six months as a caucus assistant for the Prince Edward Island Liberals.

There are also two promotions to report in Ng's office, including that of senior special assistant for stakeholder relations and Ontario regional affairs **Zachary Nixon**, who is now a senior adviser to the trade minister.

Nixon, who was promoted in September, is a former assistant in Ng's MP office and joined her ministerial team as a special assistant for Ontario regional affairs after the 2019 federal election. He took on his most recent title after the 2021 election. Nixon is also a former assistant to Emergency Preparedness Minister **Bill Blair** as the Liberal MP for Scarborough-Southwest, Ont.

Replacing Nixon on the Ontario desk is **Charlie Skipworth**, who was previously assistant to Ng's parliamentary secretary, Ontario Liberal MP **Arif Virani**.

Jason Easton is chief of staff to Ng.

Staff exits for ministers Hussen, LeBlanc

Housing, Diversity, and Inclusion Minister **Ahmed Hussen** is in need of a new director of communications following **Daniele Medlej**'s departure.

Medlej marked her last day working for Hussen on Dec. 23, and on Jan. 23, she embarked on a new job as a senior consultant with Navigator's Ottawa office.

She brings roughly six years of experience working on the Hill to her new job. Medlej started out as a 2016 summer intern in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s office and in January 2017 was hired as a special assistant for social media to Chagger as then-small business and tourism minister. She later worked in Chagger's office as then-government House leader, starting as a special assistant and ending as press secretary.



Daniele Medlej is now working for Navigator. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Medlej began working for Hussen at the end of 2020 as a senior communications adviser in his office as then-families, children, and social development minister. She was promoted to communications director there over the summer of 2021 and followed Hussen to his current portfolio after the cabinet shuffle that followed that year's election.

In between working for Chagger and Hussen, Medlej was press secretary to then-science and sport minister **Kirsty Duncan** and then-associate finance and middle class prosperity minister **Mona Fortier**.

Brittany-Anne Hendrych is a special assistant for communications to Hussen, filling in as press secretary since **Arevig Afarian**'s exit in November. **Hursh Jaswal** is chief of staff to the minister.

Earlier this month, Infrastructure, Communities, and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister **Dominic LeBlanc** bade farewell to his senior adviser for Ontario, **Meredith Caplan Jamieson**.

Caplan Jamieson first joined LeBlanc's office as then-Privy Council president and minister for intergovernmental affairs in December 2020, after almost five years as a senior public affairs associate with Compass Rose.

A former municipal councillor for the Bonnechere Valley Township in Ontario, before getting into the family business (politics—her mother is former Ontario MPP **Elinor Caplan**, her brother was the late Ontario MPP **David Caplan**, and her husband, **Rob Jamieson**, works for Public Safety Minister **Marco Mendicino**) Caplan Jamieson worked in the entertainment industry, and throughout the years, multiple short films and movies she helped produce were nominated for Genie Awards (one short film she served as producer for, *I Shout Love*, won for best live action short film in 2001).

Caplan Jamieson is now working off the Hill as executive officer of public affairs for the Renfrew County District School Board.

Jamie Innes is chief of staff to LeBlanc, supported by deputy chief **Kevin Lavigne**.

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The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to news@hilltimes.com by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.



Yulia Kovaliv, Ukrainian ambassador to Canada, will take part in a webinar hosted by the Victoria branch of the Canada International Council on Wednesday, Jan. 25. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Ambassador Kovaliv talks Canada-Ukraine ties at Jan. 25 event

MONDAY, JAN. 23—
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 25

Cabinet Retreat—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, his cabinet ministers, and their chiefs of staff will attend a cabinet retreat from Jan. 23-25, in Hamilton, Ont.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 25

House Not Sitting—The House has adjourned for the Christmas break and is scheduled to sit 26 weeks in 2023. It will resume sitting Monday, Jan. 30, 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).

Bank of Canada to Announce the Overnight Rate—The Bank of Canada will announce its decision on the target for the overnight rate, as well as publishing the Monetary Policy Report on Wednesday, Jan. 25, at 10 a.m. EST. Details: bankofcanada.ca.

Ukraine Envoy Participates in Webinar—Yulia Kovaliv, Ukrainian ambassador to Canada, will take part in a webinar hosted by the Victoria branch of the Canada International Council. Kovaliv will discuss Canada and Ukraine's diplomatic and economic relations, past and present, the current situation in Ukraine including the Canadian government's support to Kyiv, and her thoughts about the support coming from Canadians and the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada. This event will take place online on Jan. 25, at 1 p.m. EST. Details: thecic.org.

Rethinking Canada's Competition Policy in a Digital Economy—The Centre for International Governance Innovation hosts a workshop on "Rethinking Canada's Competition Policy in a Digital Economy." The federal government's recent consultation on the future of competition policy is an opportunity to examine the implications of digital data for markets and to rethink the policy frameworks that underpin those markets. Canada can learn from how other countries are rethinking and

restructuring their competition policy. Wednesday, Jan. 25, 2-4 p.m. For information, visit cigionline.org.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 25—
THURSDAY, JAN. 26

Threads Cultural Conversations—Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion Ahmed Hussen will take part in the third annual Threads Cultural Conversations from Jan. 25-26. Hussen will join Ali Abukar for a conversation on "Journeys from Somalia: Putting Down Roots in Communities." This event is happening online. Register at sods.sk.ca.

THURSDAY, JAN. 26

Report Release—The Council of Canadian Academies will release *Fault Lines*, a report on the socioeconomic impacts of science and health misinformation on the public and public policy in Canada. The report details the impacts of misinformation on individuals, communities, and society; what makes people particularly susceptible; and how to improve societal resilience. The report also estimates the health impacts and hospitalization costs associated with COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in Canada, and the role misinformation played in contributing to this hesitancy. Visit cca-reports.ca.

Canada's Game: Violence, Misogyny, and Racism in Hockey—Simon Fraser University hosts a webinar, "Canada's Game: Violence, Misogyny and Racism

in Hockey." Canada's sports minister says there is a "systemic problem" of sexual violence and toxic masculinity in Canada's hockey culture. Sports journalist Laura Robinson and Courtney Szto, assistant professor of kinesiology and health studies at Queen's University, will discuss the Hockey Canada scandal as a jumping off point to interrogate the damaging culture at the heart of hockey in Canada. Thursday, Jan. 26, 4-5:30 p.m. PST. Register via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, JAN. 27

Seminar: 'Invoking the Emergencies Act'—The Canadian Study of Parliament Group hosts a seminar, "Invoking the Emergencies Act: One Year Later," featuring practitioners and academics who will examine the Emergencies Act, its invocation, and lessons from 2022 for government, Parliament, and beyond. This event will take place on Friday, Jan. 27, in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., at 9 a.m. EST. Tickets via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, JAN. 27—
SATURDAY, JAN. 28

Liberal Caucus Retreat—The national Liberal caucus will meet for its winter retreat, Jan. 27-28, in Ottawa.

MONDAY, JAN. 30

House Resumes Sitting—The House of Commons will resume sitting on Monday, Jan. 30, and will sit for three straight weeks (Jan. 30-Feb. 17).

Nation Builder of the Year Award—The Empire Club of Canada hosts the 2022 Nation Builder of the Year Award, recognizing Canadians who have made a positive, timely and lasting contribution to Canadian Society. This year's recipient is Dr. Hayley Wickenheiser, Canadian Olympic ice hockey player, assistant general manager of the Toronto Maple Leafs, and resident physician. This hybrid event will happen on Monday, Jan. 30, 11 a.m. EST. Details: empireclubofcanada.com.

Minister Champagne Delivers Remarks—Innovation, Science and Industry Minister François-Philippe

Champagne will deliver remarks at a luncheon event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. He will be joined by Thierry Breton, commissioner for Internal Market, European Commission. This event will take place at the Marriott Château Champlain, 1050 De la Gauchetière St. W., Montreal. Monday, Jan. 30. 11:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. To register, visit corim.qc.ca.

TUESDAY, JAN. 31

Conference: 'Canadian Agri-Food in a Hungry World'—The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, Canadian Global Affairs Institute, and the Canadian Agri-food Trade Alliance host "Canadian Agri-Food in a Hungry World," a one-day conference featuring leaders from across agri-food, security, foreign affairs and trade. The intersection of farming and food production with trade, security, and diplomacy can give Canada a new and exciting role in the world, if we are willing to take it on. This event will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 31, at Westin TwentyTwo, 22nd Floor, 11 Colonel By Dr., beginning at 8 a.m. EST. Register via Eventbrite.

Webinar: 'Race, Nostalgia, and the Politics of Loyalty'—Toronto Metropolitan University hosts a webinar on the book *Uncle: Race, Nostalgia, and the Politics of Loyalty*. TMU assistant professor Dr. Cheryl Thompson will discuss her book and how, from martyr to insult, "Uncle Tom" has influenced two centuries of racial politics. This event will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 31, online. 12:30 p.m. EST. Register via Eventbrite.

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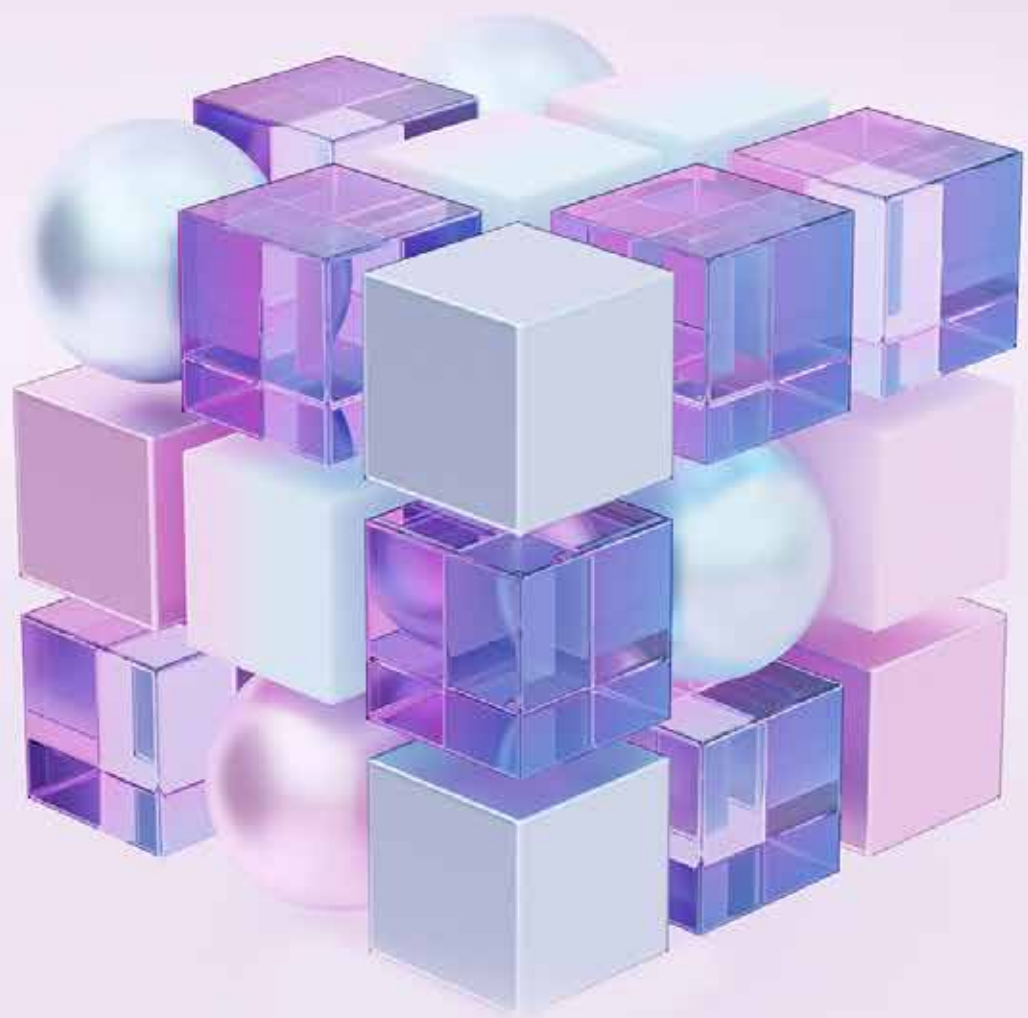
How does the innovation economy factor into Canada's economic growth? How might innovation in Canada be impacted by a likely recession in 2023, and how can the federal government help weather the storm?

The Liberal government announced the Blue Economy Regulatory Review on Dec. 14, 2022, to look at how regulation affects ocean innovation. What opportunities for innovation are there for Canada in the "blue economy?" What regulatory practices could be improved to promote innovation in the blue economy?

This briefing will explore what the federal government can do to promote innovation in artificial intelligence (AI). How can Canada ensure a strong AI ecosystem with a sufficient talent pool and competitive companies?

What are the opportunities for innovation in the cleantech sector? How can the federal government support the electric vehicle sector or cleantech startups?

How successful have federal government initiatives, such as Innovative Solutions Canada or the Innovation Superclusters Initiative, been in supporting innovation in Canada? Are there weaknesses in these programs that should be addressed?



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