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THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR, NO. 2044

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

MONDAY, JULY 24, 2023 \$5.00

NEWS

Provinces, territories call for clarity over RCMP contract policing assessment

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

Provincial and territorial leaders and the RCMP union want

Ottawa to provide greater clarity over its plans for the future of contract policing in Canada, while the federal government says the

provinces and territories have been asked for their thoughts on its assessment of the policing arrangements over the past six months.

Brian Sauvé, president and CEO of the National Police Federation (NPF), said the association of approximately 20,000 RCMP

members echoed the provinces and territories' call for clarity and certainty during a press conference on July 18.

"The ongoing speculation and vague language from government representatives, the media, and pundits is demoralizing to our members whose careers, lives, and even families have been built

Continued on page 16

OPINION

The federal public service needs to adapt to a new political reality, and stat

The Canadian public service is an authority-based structure with stringent top-down controls. It is modelled after military formations of the colonial era. Internally, it functions as a tightly-wound hierarchy. Externally, it is steered by the political power of the minister and commands of the PMO. But there is a way out, writes former top federal civil servant **Bhagwant Sandhu**.

Read p. 19.



Yes, Prime Minister: Donald Savoie, the leading expert on public service administration, has called for a royal commission on the bureaucracy. Among many other things, he is concerned about the diminishing policy adviser role of deputy ministers, the increasing amount of power exercised by the Prime Minister's Office, pictured, and bureaucratic bashing by politicians of all stripes. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS

Cabinet shuffle would trigger 'domino effect' on ministerial staffers, parliamentary secretaries, and House committees, say insiders

BY ABBAS RANA

The expected upcoming cabinet shuffle would trigger a major change in the ranks of senior ministerial staffers, parliamentary secretaries, and House committees, say Hill insiders and senior ministerial staffers.

"Political staff are probably at a point where they say, 'Look, I'm either in past the next election, or I get out now,'" said former Liberal MP Joe Jordan, who now is a senior associate with the Bluesky Strategy Group, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "Depending on how many people are physically moved in and out [of cabinet], that would affect committee assignments."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) is expected to

Continued on page 7



Mike Lapointe

Heard On The Hill

Bill Vigars, Terry Fox's confidante, to release 'a once in a lifetime read'; Griffith wants in-person citizenship oath; Proof Strategies grows

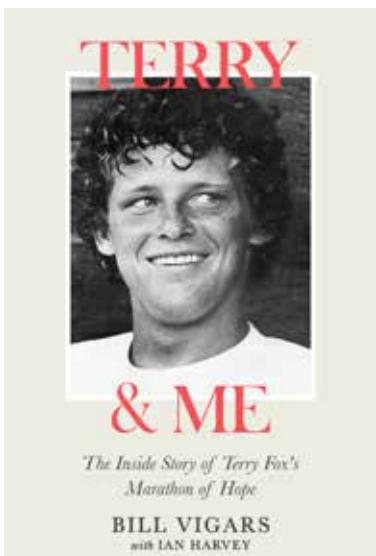
There's a new book coming out about Canadian hero **Terry Fox**, *Terry & Me: The Inside Story of Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope*, by **Bill Vigars** with **Ian Harvey**. Vigars, who was Fox's PR organizer, close friend and confidante, led the campaign to ensure that Canadians were aware that the 22-year-old cancer survivor and amputee was trying to run across the country to raise money for cancer research. Fox set off in April 1980. Vigars, who was the director of public relations and fundraising for the Canadian Cancer Society, was by Fox's side from Atlantic Canada until Thunder Bay, Ont., where his Marathon of Hope was cut short when his cancer returned, and he later died. Fox ran a marathon a day before he was forced to stop his run. He attracted international media attention and became a national Canadian hero. The book, published by the Sutherland House Books, will be released on Aug. 29 in Canada, and on Oct. 12 in the United States and the United Kingdom. Canadian novelist **Douglas Coupland** is calling it: "A grippingly told story by one of the few people on Earth who was actually there. A once in a lifetime read."

Author starts petition against self-affirmation of citizenship oath or 'citizenship on a click'



Andrew Griffith, a former director general for Citizenship and Multiculturalism, has initiated a petition calling on Immigration Minister **Sean Fraser** to "abandon plans to permit self-administration of the citizenship oath" and "revert to in-person ceremonies as the default, with virtual ceremonies limited to 10 per cent of all ceremonies."

Author and former director general for Citizenship and Multiculturalism Andrew Griffith. *Photograph courtesy of Andrew Griffith*



Terry & Me: The Inside Story of Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope, by Bill Vigars. Book Cover Image courtesy of Sutherland House Books

The petition, e-4511, also calls on the government to "focus on administration and processing efficiencies prior to citizenship ceremonies, where most frustrations are," and "explore evening and weekend ceremonies to improve accessibility along with more flexible scheduling management."

Griffith, who has worked for a variety of government departments in Canada and abroad, penned a June 21 article with *Policy Options* writing that the government's plan "would allow the citizenship oath to be taken using a secure online portal without the presence of an authorized person, a departure from the tradition of in-person ceremonies or those held virtually."

As Griffith points out, former governor general **Adrienne Clarkson**, former minister of immigration **Sergio Marchi**, and former Calgary mayor

Naheed Nenshi have all voiced their opposition.

"Ceremonies serve as one of the few positive touch points between the government and immigrants," wrote Griffith, arguing that the government should focus on "streamlining the application and processing procedures instead of diminishing the significance of the ceremony."

Griffith is also the author *Multiculturalism in Canada: Evidence and Anecdote, and Policy Arrogance or Innocent Bias: Resetting Citizenship and Multiculturalism*.

The petition is currently open for signatures until Oct. 10.

Proof Strategies grows teams in Ottawa and Toronto

Proof Strategies announced the expansion of its integrated team of government relations and public affairs professionals based in Ottawa and Toronto.

Katie Feenan joins the organization as a senior director in Ottawa, following her time as the most recent director of policy at the Public Policy Forum.

Amelia Williams, a director based in Toronto, brings "strong Indigenous affairs expertise to the team, having worked in community engagement with TC Energy," according to the release.

Alexandra Valcour, also based in Toronto, joins as a director, public affairs, with a background in consulting. She was previously a senior policy advisor in the office of Ontario's minister of long-term care and other government roles.

Marcus Mattinson, an associate in Toronto, formerly worked as a strategic communications adviser to Ontario's attorney general, as well as director of communications for the Ontario PC Party.

Byelection in Calgary Heritage, Alta., on Monday, July 24



Shuvaloy Majumdar. Handout photograph

Just a reminder: there's a by-election in Calgary Heritage, Alta., on Monday, July 24. The riding opened up after Conservative MP **Bob Benzen** retired from politics in December 2022. Benzen, who won the riding in the April 2017 by-election after former prime minister **Stephen Harper** retired in 2016, was re-elected in 2019 and 2021. Benzen said last October that it was an "honour and a privilege" to be an MP, but didn't want to be a career politician.

Shuvaloy Majumdar, a former long-time Conservative staffer, is running for the Conservatives. Majumdar also works with Harper's international consulting firm and was the foreign policy adviser to both Harper and former foreign affairs minister **John Baird**. Majumdar has said on Facebook that "it's time to unlock clean Canadian natural resources and Calgary's energy ingenuity." The Liberal candidate is **Elliot Weinstein**, owner and president of The Beach YYC, and previously a project manager at Golder Associates. Intergovernmental Affairs Minister **Dominic LeBlanc**

said last month that the government was announcing measures to protect by-elections from foreign interference, and said the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force would be monitoring this one. In the 2021 federal election, Benzen won the riding with 58 per cent, while the NDP and Liberal candidates each won 17 per cent of the vote. This is a safe Conservative seat.

Gerda Hnatyshyn died July 14 at home in Ottawa

Gerda Hnatyshyn, who was married to the late **Ray Hnatyshyn**, a former Brian Mulroney-era cabinet minister and former governor general, died on July 14 at her home in Ottawa, the Hnatyshyn Foundation announced on July 17. Ray and Gerda established the Hnatyshyn Foundation in 2002 "to bring opportunity, encouragement, and practical support to Canada's artists, to allow them to fulfill their dreams and in so doing, nurture the ties that unite Canada as a nation and as members of a wider human family." Gerda was a mother and grandmother and will be remembered as a gracious host, generous friend, and a patron of the arts, the Hnatyshyn Foundation said.

"We know our mother believed the arts could bring people together and inspire hope not only nationally, but internationally. She was our guiding force who made family occasions very special. She was our cheerleader throughout our lives. We will miss her very dearly," said her sons **John** and **Carl Hnatyshyn**.

Ray Hnatyshyn was a cabinet minister in both Progressive Conservative prime ministers **Joe Clark** and **Brian Mulroney**'s cabinets. In Mulroney's government, Hnatyshyn served as government House leader, justice minister, and president of the Privy Council, but was defeated in 1988 by NDP challenger **Chris Axworthy** in Saskatoon West, Sask. Mulroney appointed Hnatyshyn as governor general in 1990. Hnatyshyn was the second Saskatchewan-born GG, and he was one of the first GGs to open up the grounds and Rideau Hall to the public.

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Katie Feenan, left, Amelia Williams, Marcus Mattinson, and Alexandra Valcour will be part of Proof Strategies' expanded integrated team of government relations and public affairs professionals. *Photographs courtesy of LinkedIn*

Working Together to Make Things Right for the PSHCP

Reliable access to health and wellness benefits is core to the support you can expect from us.

During the transition of the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP), some plan members' experience has not met that standard.

Nothing is more important to us than earning the trust of our plan members. We know it's been challenging to reach us. Together with the Government of Canada, we are taking proactive steps to do better:

- We've significantly increased staff** in our Contact Centre;
- We've temporarily extended operating hours** at the Contact Centre; and,
- We're accelerating the enrolment process** so it's easier to access benefits coverage and get claims processed quickly.

For those who have yet to complete their positive enrolment, watch for a letter from us soon with more details.

To learn more, members can visit:
canadalife.com/pshcp.

A sincere thank you to all plan members for your continued patience as we complete this transition. We appreciate your patience during this period, and we're committed to getting things right.

Travailler ensemble pour redresser la situation pour le RSSFP

La fiabilité de l'accès aux protections de soins de santé et de bien-être est au cœur du soutien que vous pouvez attendre de nous.

Lors de la transition du Régime de soins de santé de la fonction publique (RSSFP), l'expérience de certains participants au régime n'a pas été à la hauteur des attentes.

Rien n'est plus important pour nous que de gagner la confiance des participants. Nous savons qu'il a été difficile de nous joindre et, ensemble avec le gouvernement du Canada, nous prenons des mesures proactives pour faire mieux :

- Nous avons considérablement augmenté le nombre d'employés** à notre Centre de services;
- Nous avons temporairement prolongé les heures d'ouverture** du Centre de services; et
- Nous avons accéléré le processus d'adhésion** pour faciliter l'accès aux protections et pour assurer un traitement rapide des demandes de règlement.

Les personnes qui n'ont pas encore procédé à leur adhésion préalable recevront sous peu de notre part une lettre contenant plus de précisions.

Pour en savoir plus, les participants peuvent consulter le site : canadavie.com/rssfp.

Nous remercions sincèrement tous les participants au régime pour la patience dont ils ont fait preuve pendant cette période de transition. Nous leur en sommes reconnaissants et mettons tout en œuvre pour que la situation rentre dans l'ordre.

News

National Police Federation, police chiefs association favour bail reform bill, but advocacy groups wary of bail denial as 'red herring'

Justice Minister David Lametti 'has been clear that Bill C-48 is only one part of a larger picture when it comes to reforming the criminal justice system and keeping people safe,' according to his press secretary, Diana Ebadi.

BY MIKE LAPointe

The federal government's proposed legislation on bail reform has been welcomed by police chiefs and by the RCMP's union, the National Police Federation. But the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the John Howard Society are wary of Bill C-48, and have expressed concerns over the potential effects of denying bail to individuals.

"Law reform is an important part of maintaining and enhancing public safety, but programs, policies and investments are also critical in fostering safer communities," according to the government in their outline of the bill. "This includes investments to enhance bail enforcement, as well as improving access to housing, mental health and addictions supports. All levels of government agree that improved data collection is necessary to fully understand how the criminal justice system, particularly bail, operates."

Brian Sauvé, president of the National Police Federation, called the legislation "a good first step."

"When I say good first step, the feds have started on this legislative framework to modify some reverse onus provisions in the Criminal Code," said Sauvé. "Over to the provinces and territories: what are you guys doing to fix the on-the-ground problems that we are seeing with respect to bail decisions across Canada?"

Back in early May, CBC News reported on several high-profile violent incidents involving individuals out on bail and on probation in Ontario.

Earlier this month, Edmonton Mayor Amarjeet Sohi, a former federal Liberal MP, told reporters that "violent crime is on the rise in



Justice Minister David Lametti, right, and Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino at the Château Laurier in Ottawa on March 10, 2023, after meeting with political leaders surrounding bail reform. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the city, and the governments responsible are not stepping up the way they need to step up," following the stabbing death of 52-year-old Rukinisha Nkundabatware. Jamal Joshua Malik Wheeler, age 27, has been charged with second-degree murder, and was out on bail at the time of the incident, according to *The Edmonton Journal*.

According to CBC News, the bill would amend the Criminal Code so that those charged with a serious violent offence involving a weapon—one with a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment—who were convicted of a similar offence within the last five years will face a reverse onus to get bail.

"Reverse onus" means the accused would have to show why they should be released instead of the prosecution having to prove that they should remain behind bars, according to CBC.

Lametti said he hopes all parties and legislators support the bill, and that "Canadians expect us to act," according to the national news network.

Sauvé pointed out that the Charter protects a person's right to innocence when they're accused of an offence, and the Criminal Code provides that bail hearings must be held expeditiously and in a timely manner.

"So the data and the information that the Crown and defence have to bring before the judge should be accurate and reflect the state of affairs of that

accused that day," said Sauvé. "What is perhaps surprising to many Canadians is that different provinces and territories don't necessarily share their data on people accused of crimes, subject to different privacy pieces and protecting the information of the residents of their provinces and their court systems."

"There is this silo effect," said Sauvé. "There really needs to be a lowering of all these silos and to have accurate, timely information available to all court systems across Canada, regulated by the provinces, so that we can make informed and timely decisions on bail."

In a July 11 statement, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) came out as highly supportive of Bill C-48, which is currently at second reading in the House. The CACP stated that the organization was "anxious to see further progress on this file as well as in the areas of First Nations policing, and gang and gun violence," leading up to the July 10-12 meeting with the Council of the Federation that includes Canada's provincial and territorial premiers. The legislation will amend the Criminal Code on bail reform.

"Chiefs, including myself, welcome the reforms that are working their way through," said CACP president Danny Smyth in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

"It's a balancing act, of course, because we acknowledge and recognize that bail is necessary," said

the denial of bail is simply a red herring when it comes to the real issues that we face, and that we have to grapple with to address the public safety concerns that may exist."

Rahim also noted that, in his view, the consideration stage around bail can often be seen as "an accusation, it is not proof."

"And so I think that's another element that sometimes can get lost in some of the coverage of individual incidents is thinking about the number of people who have never done anything wrong, and who may well be forced to spend years behind bars if we allowed this type of policy to be enacted and to continue to grow," said Rahim.

Catherine Latimer, executive director of the John Howard Society, noted that "the point I like to make is that the proportion of Canadian prisoners that are held in pretrial as a total of overall prisoners is very high, among first world countries" and that "we're sort of an international embarrassment that our numbers are 37 per cent in pre-trial detention."

"The death rates in remand are really high in provincial institutions. People are under a lot of stress," she said. "Many of them are going through withdrawal without appropriate medical intervention or assistance. It's just a very stressful, dangerous place for people to be, and they're there for far too long. When they're there for any length of time, it does erode people's mental well-being."

Diana Ebadi, Lametti's press secretary, told *The Hill Times* that the minister "has been clear that Bill C-48 is only one part of a larger picture when it comes to reforming the criminal justice system and keeping people safe," in a statement.

"The purpose of Bill C-48 is to target the small, dangerous group of individuals who are repeatedly engaging in serious, violent crime," she said. "This legislative reform was developed through close collaboration with the provinces, territories, and law enforcement, and it has been met with approval by premiers of all party stripes as well as Canada's major police associations."

Abadi said that all levels of government need to continue investing in programs that address the root causes of crime, be that improved mental health and addiction services, affordable housing, or more resources for the criminal justice system.

"To that end, the federal government has provided recent funding to help fight gun and gang crime, and Minister Lametti has been pleased to see several provinces, who are responsible for the administration of justice, step up and provide much needed funding to improve bail enforcement," said Abadi.

"Minister Lametti's priority is making sure we have a justice system that both protects Canadians, and respects the right to reasonable bail. He is confident these reforms will do that," she said.

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Premier Stefanson needs to resign for interfering in the landfill search



Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson. The province has ruled out funding a search for the bodies of two Indigenous women believed to be in a Winnipeg landfill, but won't stop the federal government backing the search. The province's decision is racist, writes Rose LeMay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Elected leaders have dithered on the costs of searching a Winnipeg landfill for the bodies of two Indigenous women. This is what racism looks like. Indigenous people are not worth the cost or the risk. This is exactly what Heather Stefanson said, and she needs to resign.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Marc Miller's study found that a landfill search is feasible. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

OTTAWA—The remains of Morgan Harris and Marcedes Myran, likely along with a third unnamed victim, known as Buffalo Woman, are believed to be buried in the Prairie Green Landfill in Winnipeg. The police suspected this location more than a year ago, but didn't release the information until last December, and, after much handwringing and empty noises, no search was started.

Nobody searched.

Instead, Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson, the police, and city leaders all hummed and hawed, and made up complete crap about why there shouldn't be a

search. It is so shocking and so beyond the pale, that people might have been stunned silent. Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Marc Miller did respond by doing the only thing a federal department can do: throw money at the problem. Hence, a research report to investigate whether a search is feasible.

Let's review what civilized leaders and states do when the evidence of a murder leads to a landfill.

- Folkston, Georgia, U.S., 2009: a child was lost, evidence led to Chesson Island Road Landfill. The police searched the landfill.

chief Keith McCaskill said, "we've got to take every step that we can to recover [the body] for the family."

But what's different this time? The facts suggest there's some old-time racism smacking of the 1950s going on in Winnipeg. If the missing and murdered women were white from Tuxedo or River Heights—the affluent and mostly white neighbourhoods of Winnipeg—it's highly likely the search of a landfill would have started the hour the evidence led to it, with elected leaders saying things like "cost is not important," and "we will do everything in our power."

Instead, elected leaders dithered, and wondered about cost and whether voters will care past next week.

This is what racism looks like. Indigenous people are not worth the cost. Not worth the risk. This is exactly what Stefanson's refusal to fund a search looks like and she needs to resign.

So how many people lost in a landfill is worth the cost? Five? Ten lost souls? Or is it really about the colour of their skin?

It's about the colour of their skin.

This is not an unlikely scenario for a body to be hidden in a landfill, so much so that the U.S. Department of Justice has research and policies on how to do forensic searches of landfills. So Miller's study found that a landfill search is feasible. It's obviously feasible, the kind of obviousness that only needs to be proven for Indigenous Peoples. Miller called her bluff, but Stefanson just doubled down, insisting that the search would be dangerous and refuted the study.

What's next? What else will Stefanson deny for Indigenous voters living in Manitoba? Indigenous People are not worth the cost of public safety or health care? That is precisely the slippery slope down which Stefanson is leading the province. The slippery slope of apartheid. Institutional racial segregation of services equals restricting Indigenous Peoples the right to equitable services from police and justice.

One would hope that Manitobans will rise up and demand justice for the families of Morgan, Mercedes, and Buffalo Woman. One would hope that Canadians demand justice. It's the only thing that will stop Stefanson's brutal response. The premier's refusal to fund the search has effectively interfered in the delivery of policing, and she must resign.

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

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News

Conservative policy resolution wants to bar lobbyists from having a seat on party's most powerful governing body

But Garry Keller, a former senior Tory staffer turned lobbyist, says it would be a mistake to disallow lobbyists to run for the national council.

BY ABBAS RANA

To avoid potential conflicts of interest in making key decisions by the most powerful governing body of the Conservative Party, a proposed resolution for the Sept. 7 policy convention will call for lobbyists to be disallowed from seeking a seat at the national council.

“Already there are exclusions to who can run for national council and this expands the list to others, who are typically more prone to have a personal interest in a matter that could conflict with the broad national interest,” states the rationale by the sponsors of the resolution. “We should want to avoid electing candidates who have to recuse themselves from voting due to a conflict of interest because then the province who elected that candidate will suffer relative under-representation when the matter comes to a vote, without a voice at the table. That further disenfranchises the members in that province. Best to proactively reduce those circumstances as much as possible with the additional filtering criteria for optimizing national council candidates.”

The resolution, “Eligibility to stand for election to national council,” has been sponsored by the Conservative electoral district association (EDA) of Vancouver Centre, B.C.; and co-sponsored by 14 other ridings, including Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, Ont.; Carlton Trail-Eagle Creek, Sask.; North Okanagan-Shuswap, B.C.; Burnaby North-Seymour, B.C.; Foothills, Alta.; Steveston-Richmond East, B.C.; Souris-Moose Mountain, Sask.; Abbotsford, B.C.; Outremont, Que.; South Surrey-White Rock, B.C.; Peterborough-Kawartha, Ont.; Vancouver Quadra, B.C.; Vancouver East, B.C.; and Port Moody-Coquitlam, B.C.

According to the party’s constitution, the number of members each province has on the



The Sept. 7-9 Conservative Party policy convention will take place in Québec City, where thousands of delegates will debate and vote on policy and constitution resolutions, and elect a new national council. This is the first time since 2005 this event has taken place in Quebec. *The Hill Times* photograph by Samantha Wright Allen

21-member council depends on a province’s share of seats in the House of Commons. A province with more than 100 seats has four members on the national council; three members from a province with between 51-100 House seats; two members from a province with between 26-50 House seats; one member from a province with four to 25 seats and one member from each territory. The incumbent party leader is also member of the national council.

Based on this formula, Ontario has four seats on the national council; Quebec has three; British Columbia and Alberta have two each; and Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut all have one seat.

At each convention, party members elect 20 members of the national council who are responsible for all governance issues except for party finances. All national councillors serve on a volunteer basis and can each serve for up to three consecutive terms. The president of the national council, who is also called the party president, is elected by the 21 members of the national council.

Currently, Rob Batherson, the national councillor from Nova Scotia, is the president, but after serving for three consecutive terms, he’s termed out and won’t seek re-election. The newly elected national council in September will elect a successor. Steven Dollansky, the national councillor from Alberta, is also termed out and won’t seek re-election.

Cyndie Paul-Girdwood, the riding association president for Peterborough-Kawartha, said that her riding chose to co-sponsor the resolution to ensure that impartial people are directing the party’s constitution and there’s no possibility of a conflict of interest. She said this is not aimed at any specific person.

“What it does is it sets direction, it provides a framework for us, so that at the EDA level we can say that we have representation, and that we have clear guidelines for how we conduct ourselves,” said Paul-Girdwood in an interview with *The Hill Times*. “It’s really about consistency and fairness.”

Batherson declined to comment on the proposed resolution, saying “specific resolutions are up to delegates to determine through the convention process.”

Garry Keller, a former senior ministerial staffer in Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper’s government who now is a lobbyist, said it would be a mistake to exclude party workers in the lobbying business from running for the national council.

“People who want to serve on national council are there for the betterment of the party policy,” said Keller, vice-president at StrategyCorp, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. “Policy decisions and platform decisions are not made by national council. They’re made by caucus and made by the leader. They’re made by the membership through the convention process. They’re not made by [the council]. That’s a fundamental misunderstanding of national council’s role.”

Keller, who served for 20 years as a Hill staffer, said he personally has no plans to seek the national council position.

For the first time in five years, the Conservative party delegates will congregate in person for a policy convention. The last one took place online because of COVID. This is also the first time a Conservative convention has been held in Quebec since 2005. Delegates are meeting in Québec City, Que., from Sept. 7-9. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s (Papineau, Que.) Liberals, who are in a minority government, will hit the mid-point of their mandate this September, and the coming fall is seen by many political insiders as the start of the pre-writ period where political parties will go after each other aggressively thinking an election could happen at any time. Parliament is due to return for its fall sitting on Sept. 18.

“Conservative Party members are excited to be gathering in person at a national convention for the first time in five years,” said Batherson in a texted statement to *The Hill Times*. “This is an amazing opportunity for Conservatives to hear from our leader Pierre Poilievre, debate policy and constitutional amendments, and elect national council. This is the home region of Pierre Poilievre’s Quebec lieutenant, MP Pierre Paul-Hus, and we have a great committee working on the convention led by national council vice-president, Valérie Assouline.”

After the convention, one of the first important tasks for the newly elected national council would be to review the nomination rules for 121 incumbent Conservative MPs. In March of last year, the party’s national council told caucus members that if they each raised \$15,000 annually and donated a combined \$3,350 to the riding and to the party, they would be acclaimed as candidates without facing a nomination contest for the next election. MPs who fail to meet any of the fundraising and donation conditions would have to go through a nomination process, in which anyone can challenge them. After three consecutive Liberal mandates, the Conservatives believe the next election is theirs to lose, so there could be more potential nomination challenges to incumbent MPs than before, as winning the nomination election could mean being a Member of Parliament and cabinet.

The national council came up with these rules after consultation with MPs through its then-caucus liaison Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, Sask.). Also, a nine-member subcommittee of the national council had made recommendations to all the national council’s members. Stephen Barber, the national councillor from Manitoba, chaired the committee. Other committee members included Shir Barzilay, Matthew Conway, Steven Dollansky, Mani Fallon, Kara Johnson, Judy Manning, and Stewart Kiff. Batherson, as party president, was an ex-officio member of the committee.

The newly elected national council in September will reconsider these rules as this nomination criteria was set before the Liberals and the NDP struck the supply-and-confidence agreement that could allow Trudeau to stay in power until 2025. But, in a minority government, an election is only one vote away on a defeated confidence vote, as opposition MPs outnumber the government. The next election could also be called if Trudeau asks the governor general to trigger an election. The average age of a minority government in Canada is 18 to 24 months.

Another complicating layer in these nomination rules for incumbent Conservative MPs is that the ongoing redistribution process is expected to change the boundaries for most of the ridings across the country. If the next election were to happen after April 2024, all incumbent MPs and candidates would run under the new geographical boundaries. But if the writ is dropped before that, the election will happen based on the current ridings.

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National Council

Pierre Poilievre (Leader)

Rob Batherson (President)

Valérie Assouline (Vice President)

Amber Ruddy (Secretary)

Peter Aarsen (Ontario)

Leona Aglukkaq (Nunavut)

Stephen Barber (Manitoba)

Shir Barzilay (Ontario)

Robert Boyd (British Columbia)

Matthew Conway (Quebec)

Steven Dollansky (Alberta)

Mani Fallon (British Columbia)

Kara Johnson (Ontario)

Stewart Kiff (Ontario)

Danny Macdonald (Yukon)

Ron MacMillan (Prince Edward Island)

Judy Manning (Newfoundland and Labrador)

Emile Mercier (Quebec)

Kevin Price (New Brunswick)

Colette Stang (Saskatchewan)

Tim Syer (Northwest Territories)

Cabinet shuffle would trigger 'domino effect' on ministerial staffers, parliamentary secretaries, and House committees, say insiders

The August cabinet retreat in Charlottetown will be a chance for ministers to hear from Islanders what's on their minds, says former Liberal MP Wayne Easter.

Continued from page 1

shuffle his 39-member cabinet in the coming days. Political insiders are expecting the shuffle to happen before the Aug. 5 long weekend, but some say it could happen as early as this week.

The upcoming shuffle would be the first major one since the 2021 federal election. Some political insiders estimate that as many as one third of the cabinet ministers would either change portfolios or head for the door. If that's the case, depending on the number of backbench MPs getting a promotion to the front bench, it would have a substantial effect on parliamentary secretaries and committee assignments.

The Trudeau government will hit the maximum midpoint of its third mandate in September, though considering that the Liberals are in a minority government, an election could happen at any time. The average age of a minority government is 18 to 24 months. This means, barring some minor tweaks and depending on the timing of the next election, the newly shuffled cabinet would likely be Trudeau's election cabinet.

This shuffle would be an opportunity for senior ministerial staffers, cabinet ministers, and MPs to finalize their future plans. The next federal election will be the fourth time that Trudeau will ask Canadians for a mandate, a serious challenge for any government. The Conservatives are currently polling five to seven points ahead of the Liberals in national public opinion polls. In these kinds of political circumstances, ministerial staffers usually try to find jobs in the private sector while their party is still in power. If they wait until after the election and their party loses, they will not be able to find a position of their choice in the private sector, as their potential employers would want to hire people who are from the incumbent governing party.

"Some [ministerial staffers] might just say, 'Okay, well, now's



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured June 5, 2023, in Ottawa, is expected to shuffle his 39-member cabinet before the August long weekend. If the shuffle is substantial, it could cause major changes in the ranks of cabinet ministerial staffers, parliamentary secretaries and MPs' committee assignments, says former Liberal MP Joe Jordan. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

a good time to leave, that's a clean break," said one senior ministerial staffer in a not-for-attribution-based interview last week. "Others may decide that they want to carry on and go. There'll be a lot of internal movement. So the domino effect on staff will last a while."

For the cabinet shuffle, senior Prime Minister's Office (PMO) staffers, including Katie Telford, chief of staff to the prime minister; Brian Clow and Marjorie Michel, deputy chiefs of staff; senior advisers Jeremy Broadhurst and Ben Chin; and executive director Matt Stickney have been working feverishly behind the scenes for weeks to help the prime minister come up with the new team.

Right before the start of the summer recess, Clow and Michel checked in with all cabinet ministers as to whether they were planning on running in the next election. Last fall, Trudeau and the Liberal Party officials told all their MPs that if they want to be acclaimed candidates without a nomination challenge for the next election, they would have to meet certain conditions—fundraising and memberships—by March of this year. So, by now, the PMO knows which of the cabinet ministers and MPs are not planning on reoffering in the next election.

As a starting point, cabinet ministers not seeking re-election will be moved out of cabinet to bring in backbench MPs who will be running next time. Underperforming ministers will either be demoted or dropped from the cabinet. In the reconfiguration of cabinet, all prime ministers

consider factors like competence, gender, geography, communication skills, and diversity.

Liberal sources told *The Hill Times* that a significant number of MPs from the class of 2015 are considering not running again. In that election, 142 rookie MPs from all parties were elected to the House. Of those, 92 were Liberal, 31 were Conservative, nine were Bloc Québécois, seven New Democrats, and three were Independent. By now, all incumbent MPs who were elected in 2015 have qualified for their parliamentary pensions.

The threshold for an MP to be eligible to receive their pension is six years.



Former Prince Edward Island Liberal MP and cabinet minister Wayne Easter said that the August cabinet retreat in Charlottetown would be a welcome opportunity for senior ministers to hear first-hand what's on the minds of people in the province. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

their future electoral plans with the prime minister until closer to election time.

More than the shuffle, Arnold said, the key part of winning a fourth consecutive mandate will be to come up with exciting new policy ideas and to effectively communicate those to Canadians.

Frank Graves, president of Ekos Research, said the Liberals did well in managing the pandemic, but now, Canadians want to know what the prime minister's vision is for a post-pandemic Canada. At the same time, the Liberals are dealing with serious issues like inflation, high costs of living, housing prices, and interest rates, and it remains to be seen what their plan is to deal with these challenges.

"Resetting the legislative agenda as a tool to convey, 'here's the big plan, here's what we're going to do to make you, individually, in Canada as a country, safer, more prosperous, diverse,' the kinds of themes they want to emphasize in the future," said Graves. "That would help. The two together [shuffle and a new legislative agenda] would be more powerful, in my view."

Graves said the shuffle would send a strong signal about the government's future direction, and who will be the top players in the Liberal team in the next election.

"So in terms of organization and bench strength [this shuffle] is very important," said Graves. "It's very important for the government to decide what is the team that they want to put forward for the next election, and that can be a make-or-break decision."

Meanwhile, several Liberal sources confirmed to *The Hill Times* that the newly shuffled cabinet would hold its first summer retreat in Charlottetown, P.E.I., from Aug. 21-23, where they will plot their legislative, parliamentary, and political strategy for the fall sitting of Parliament which is scheduled to start on Sept. 18.

Veterans Affairs Minister Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, P.E.I.) was not available for an interview for this article, but former P.E.I. Liberal MP Wayne Easter welcomed the government's decision to hold a summer retreat in his home province. A former cabinet minister who served in Parliament for about three decades, Easter said this would be the first time that a cabinet retreat in a Liberal government is happening in Prince Edward Island.

"I do think that it is good that it is in Charlottetown, they've been kind of holding it across the country over time," said Easter, who did not seek re-election in 2021. "And it gives people an opportunity to be in Prince Edward Island, maybe hear from people out on the ground, if they're dropping into a restaurant or stuff while they're here, or they're staying a couple of days after some of them. That's all good for the P.E.I. economy and good for cabinet ministers to hear what people have to say on the ground."

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The Hill Times

Editorial

Editorial

Time to wake up and smell the smoke: the planet is in a climate emergency

At a Canadian-Australian business conference in Toronto last week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau thanked his counterparts for sending specialist firefighters to help combat Canada's worst wildfire season on record.

The favour will doubtless be returned later this year: an El Niño pattern is expected to persist into the Southern Hemisphere's summer, meaning firefighters who have defended their own homes in British Columbia and Alberta will likely have little time to rest before being deployed to fight what is expected to be a nasty bushfire season in Australia.

Both Canada and Australia are in a similar boat when it comes to the damage that is being wrought by climate change: prone to wildfire, floods, and drought, the two countries that are big on land but small on population also possess substantial natural resources that have exacerbated increased greenhouse gas emissions.

But Trudeau noted that both also have the resources and energy "that a net-zero world will need, and we cannot underestimate the urgency of building that clean economy."

It was the right message, but one that is easier said at an air-conditioned Toronto conference than done, especially when balancing environmentalism with industry, leadership with federal partnership, and response with preparedness.

For all the damage this record wildfire season has done, it is striking how little it has shifted the political conversation about our approach to climate change.

Lines about the carbon tax, climate targets, and affordability—all of which were undoubtedly workshopped well before the first embers began—continue to be repeated at press conferences across the country. That many of those press conferences take place amid a grey-yellow sky seems to have done little to change their content.

It's not like this crisis came as a surprise, of course, but one would think the scale of the disaster would prompt some shift in tone, or even a reset in terms of how we talk about climate change. After all, the records set by this season will probably be eclipsed before too long.

An emergency debate was held in the House on June 5, but that was more than a month and seven million hectares ago. The federal, provincial, and territorial governments appear to be giving this season everything they have in terms of attention, resources, and co-operation, but there's a difference between co-operating in the immediacy of a crisis, and co-operating to ensure we're ready for the next one.

All the while, forests burn, cities are blanketed in smoke, rural communities are evacuated, and firefighters on the front line sacrifice to keep us safe.

The Hill Times

Heavy smoke in Ottawa on June 30. One would think the scale of the disaster would prompt some shift in tone, or even a reset in terms of how we talk about climate change. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



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Letters to the Editor

Wildfires growing this summer, writes Nelson, B.C., reader

While this isn't intended as a book review, if you have ever wondered what it feels like when your urban environment is consumed by wildfire, John Vaillant's *Fire Weather* provides a very clear description of the Fort McMurray, Alta., experience. If you have wondered about taking advantage of any local Fire Smart program, read *Fire Weather*. While we may not appreciate it at the time, the wildfire season is but the consequence of a much larger dynamic system: climate. We seem to be annually engaged

with the consequences. Attending to the actual causes, the conditions set up by a changing climate that facilitate these extreme events, tends to play a secondary role. The consequence is the obvious in-your-face event that required immediate attention. The ultimate cause, however, continues to be left on the back burner and continues to wait for the opportunity for self-expression in a number of ways, with wildfires being one.

Ron Robinson
Nelson, B.C.

Canada must stop being passive in the interest of eradicating TB: readers

With the next United Nations high-level meeting occurring this September, Canada cannot ignore the world's deadliest infectious disease. Tuberculosis (TB) kills around 1.5 million people annually. Centuries ago, TB killed both the rich and poor alike; however, economic inequality has caused it to become a disease of poverty.

With more than 25 vaccines developed for COVID in one year, there has only been a single vaccine developed for TB in over 100 years. The reason? The global north has been ignoring diseases that affect the global south for far too long.

Political motivation and the development of new vaccines are what facilitate

immunization and thus the prevention of death. However, vaccine inequity continues to prevail between nations, leaving poorer nations more vulnerable to diseases such as TB.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau must participate in the UN high-level meeting on TB, and commit 0.15 per cent of Canada's research and development expenditure annually to TB prevention. As a G7 member, Canada must abandon its passive attitude in the interest of eradicating TB and improving global health.

Arianna Ghorbani
and Ridoy Utpal
University of Ottawa
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So what is life, asks Langley, B.C., reader

You will never conquer life as it flickers like a dying light. Life is a matter of pursuit without conquest. A quest and a conclusion. The moment it begins is the beginning to an ending.

You will never know or understand life as it demands the unknown and evolves into a second, a moment, and extinguishes itself within the flicker of the past moving forward. So what is life? It is no more than what we have become. It's a field of dreams and endeavours, and the banquet we all attend. We are all guests who feast on the unknown. We become the chefs of tomorrow's appetizers and devour the desserts that bring us happiness.

So what is life? Is it the fleeting moment that awakens us every day? The moment when our thoughts, our eyes, and our emotions realize we are more than one, and are the coming and goings

of a universality of a gathering? What is life? We all live it. We all are conceived into it. Is it conception? Is it conceived by our actions? Is it infinity in thought as it processes and proceeds into the future? Life is a beggar for answers. It begins with a breathe of air, and ends without ever ending.

Life is kept secret. It is an evolving revelation we live and one we endure. It is Alpha and Omega. It is a journey. It is defined by who we become. It is a process of evolution evolving. Life is neither complex or simple as it defines our endeavours; it becomes an infinite equation of experiences in development. Life is a written subject with matter, and the pages are full of testimony. Life is an affidavit, an affirmation. "Life" is asking what am I? Who is life?

Cran Campbell
Langley, B.C.

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DELIVERY INQUIRIES

circulation@hilltimes.com

613-688-8821

THE HILL TIMES

Published every Monday and Wednesday by Hill Times Publishing Inc.

246 Queen Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E4

(613) 232-5952

Fax (613) 232-9055

Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 40068926

www.hilltimes.com

Please send letters to the editor to the above street address or e-mail to news@hilltimes.com. Deadline is Wednesday at noon, Ottawa time, for the Monday edition and Friday at noon for the Wednesday edition. Please include your full name, address and daytime phone number. *The Hill Times* reserves the right to edit letters. Letters do not reflect the views of *The Hill Times*. Thank you.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40068926
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN
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Poilievre tests drives his makeover

The Conservative leader got the message that softening an image can help a politician achieve their goals. Going glassless won't win over opponents, but could help with voters.

Sheila Copps



Copps' Corner



every politico was photographed wearing a pair of jeans, boots, and a Stetson.

Some looked very natural in their attire, and others appeared somewhat uncomfortable. The verdict on Twitter was predictable.

Liberals thought the prime minister looked natural and the Conservative leader looked awkward: surprise, surprise. Conservatives thought the Liberal leader looked awkward and their leader was the natural.

Poilievre's summer solstice is not just about a stampede getup. He has chosen this time to pursue a personal makeover, ditching his slicked-up haircut and nerdy glasses for some contact lenses and a softer do.

He has also decided to dress down, possibly taking a page from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's relaxed sunny disposition and clothing back in his first successful election.

In the case of Poilievre, the north of the Queensway beltway

has been abuzz with comments about his image makeover.

Some purists think he should never have messed with his image because it simply reinforces the fact that he is a politician just like everybody else.

The reality is that he is a politician. And every politician needs to put their best face forward. If that means taking the pomade out of one's hair, then that is a good thing.

Woe betide the politician who refuses to listen to advice on image.

Sometimes the advice is well-meaning, but difficult. When I was running for the Liberal leadership against Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, one of my supporters wrote a critique about my look, which was quite blunt. It involved changing my wardrobe—which I did—and losing 20 pounds, which I didn't.

It's not that I refused to lose the weight. It was just so diffi-

cult to put in the 16-hour days required on the campaign trail while eating healthy. It was not until I left politics that I shed excess weight, and even now it is an ongoing struggle.

My leadership opponents also made subtle changes that might have passed unnoticed but certainly enhanced their electability. In the case of future prime minister Jean Chrétien, he had his teeth capped, which offered up a much better smile when he was pictured in a jean shirt in the official campaign photographs.

At the time, the jean shirt attire was quite avant-garde. Like the Liberals' policy package, the Red Book, no one had ever launched a campaign in anything less than the blue suit, white shirt and blue tie that was the go-to dress-wear for all successful leaders.

Nowadays, most politicians try to dress down so they don't appear snooty to the voters.

But not every politician is open to advice on their appearance. When New Democratic Party leader Tom Mulcair was nipping at the heels of government, he was advised to shave his beard.

Millions of Canadians wear beards, but for Mulcair, his bushy appearance played into the unflattering narrative of "Angry Tom."

Like it or not, beards make men look fierce, and his refusal to even consider a shave was a mistake. Politics is the art of the possible, and a good politician needs to be flexible enough to change their viewpoint—or appearance—as the situation warrants.

Mulcair's refusal was probably one of the factors that ultimately contributed to his defeat.

When David Peterson was chosen Ontario Liberal leader, he wore glasses and perspired a lot.

He was given early advice to ditch the specs and powder up before he went on air in any television interview.

From a once-bespeckled opposition leader, Peterson used the changes as a springboard to victory.

He was followed as premier by New Democratic leader Bob Rae, who also ditched his glasses at some point in his political career.

The absence of eyewear didn't deliver victory, but it did help to look people directly in their eyes.

Political willingness to soften an image can help a politician achieve their goals.

Poilievre has gotten that message. Going glassless won't win over opponents.

But it could certainly help with voters.

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

The Hill Times

Pundits versus strategists

Pundits like to 'zoom out' for a overview, while strategists will 'zoom in' to focus on the details of what's going on in the trenches.

Gerry Nicholls



Post Partisan Pundit

OKVILLE, ONT.—When it comes to viewing the battlefield of politics, political strategists, and media, pundits tend to take starkly different perspectives.

Pundits like to "zoom out" to take in as wide an overview as

possible, while strategists, by contrast, will "zoom in" to focus on the nitty-gritty details of what's going on in the trenches.

The result of this difference in perspective is that the two sides often don't understand each other.

As Jaime Watt, the executive chairman of Navigator and an experienced political strategist, recently noted in an interview, "when you read these columnists, they have the craziest ideas of what actually goes on in politics. It's actually bizarre what some people write because they've never been in politics, and it's as though they're looking through a glass window and they can't hear anything, and all they can see is a pantomime."

Meanwhile, pundits will tend to regard strategists as cynical, political mercenaries who will brazenly tarnish our cherished democratic ideals through their use of crass and manipulative tactics.

The media, for instance, once dubbed a political strategist

friend of mine as the "merchant of venom."

At any rate, let's examine how these different frames of reference between pundits and strategists will manifest themselves.

First off, the most obvious conflict between the two groups involves the use of "negative" or "attack" ads.

In fact, the punditry class' first reaction to any sort of electoral "attack ad" will almost always be a hostile one. They'll scorn such attacks as "debasing our civil discourse" or as "mean-spirited and divisive."

Again, this is a zoomed-out view of the world.

Political strategists, on the other hand, who are closer to the action, have a totally different perspective on negativity. For them, if their polling data tells them the only way their side can win is to degrade the other side's brand with "attack" ads, then they'll do it without hesitation or compunction. Unlike pundits, strategists

believe it's completely legitimate to aggressively point out their opponent's flaws.

Another pundit complaint is that political messaging is "dumbed down" or too simplified, with campaigns boiling down complex and nuanced issues to "sound bites" or bumper-sticker slogans. The way pundits see it, politicians running for office should offer voters detailed and extensive policy platforms.

Yet for political strategists, who must get their message out in a noisy marketplace, concision is everything. After all, while pundits can convey their views in 800- to 900-word newspaper columns or in 3,000-5,000-word essays, political campaigns usually communicate to voters through radio and television ads, which typically feature scripts of only 80 to 90 words.

Essentially then, it's impossible for a strategist to satisfy a pundit's desire for nuanced and

complex political messaging since to be persuasive, a campaign ad must deliver a message that's both impactful and short. (The "Merchant of Venom" once aired political TV commercials in Eastern Europe that were a grand total of five seconds long. Pundits would hate them!)

One last area of disagreement between pundits and strategists has to do with the tone of political debate. Pundits, with their eyes squarely on the bigger picture, expect debates to be a rational discourse, with an emphasis on facts and logical arguments, as this is the best way to reach a national consensus. Political strategists, however, who believe they are closer to the ground and thus have a more realistic perspective on voter attitudes, tend to rely not on reasoned debate, but on emotional appeals.

Anyway, all of this explains why there's often tension between pundits and strategists.

They look at the exact same situation, but see different priorities.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

Politics

A lot of Americans are tired of democracy, and Trump knows it



The GOP leadership is afraid of major demographic changes, and distrusts every institution that once held the country together, leaving them open to authoritarian options that were unthinkable just a short time ago.

Michael Harris



HALIFAX—It isn't news that Donald Trump is a scumbag.

Anyone who has taken even a token look at his life before politics has known that for a long

time. Sketchy business deals, bankruptcies, divorces, serial gaslighting, and a racist track record just to round out the résumé.

This is the guy whose family didn't want people of colour in their rental buildings. This is the guy who took a full-page ad in the *New York Times* advocating the death penalty for the so-called "Central Park Five." They were, in fact, innocent of the vicious rape with which they were charged. No full-page apology appeared in the *Times* from Trump.

As a politician, and then a president, Trump put his grotesque misogyny on full display. On the *Access Hollywood* tape, he bragged about grabbing women by their private parts, claiming that his "fame" let him get away with it.

Trump has been indicted for paying pornographic film actress Stormy Daniels "hush money" to keep his shabby affair with her hidden from the public while he was campaigning for office. His personal lawyer of the day, Michael Cohen, went to prison for brokering that deal.

A civil court jury recently found Trump liable for sexually abusing E. Jean Carroll in a de-

partment store change room, and then defaming her. Trump asked for a new trial and a reduction in the US\$5-million the court awarded to his victim.

The judge didn't just flatly turn down both of Trump's requests. He also wrote in his ruling that the trial evidence demonstrated Trump did, in fact, "rape" Carroll.

As president of the United States, Trump shamelessly sucked up to people who embodied the opposite of American democratic values—dictators like Vladimir Putin, Kim Jong Un, and Xi Jinping. He revelled in doing the sword dance with Saudi Arabia's royal family, a hereditary monarchy that owns one of the most despicable human rights records on earth. The oppressors of women, the butchers of *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

At the same time as he hobnobbed with authoritarian thugs, Trump dissed NATO, his own intelligence agencies, and traditional allies including Canada. He called Prime Minister Justin Trudeau a "far left lunatic" who was imposing a woke tyranny on Canada. He mused that Putin's invasion of Ukraine was brilliant.

Trump had zero time for what he called the "shithole" countries who might have benefitted from a helping hand rather than the back of the hand from the world's richest nation.

Oh yes, and twice upon a time as president, Trump was impeached.

The disgrace of Trump's political life continued after his defeat in the 2020 presidential election.

According to evidence gathered by federal prosecutors, Trump schemed with sycophantic enablers to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power to president-elect Joe Biden.

The goal was to stay in office by any means, even though he knew he had lost the election. It is expected he will soon be indicted for his antics leading up to the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol that killed five people, injured scores of police, and eventually sent several of Trump's followers to prison.

Trump already stands indicted of effectively stealing classified documents, including nuclear secrets, and a battle plan developed by the U.S. should it need to invade Iran. He is even refusing to return rare artifacts to Israel,

which he took from the White House, carrying them off to Mar-a-Lago when he left office.

And the beat goes on with his current presidential run. Trump has said publicly that he thinks the U.S. Constitution should be suspended. He has also boasted that, if he returns to the White House, he will change the U.S. system of checks and balances of power between the executive, legislative and judicial branches. He will do that by dramatically expanding presidential powers.

That sound you hear is the U.S. founding fathers rolling over in their graves.

Normally, any part of a rap sheet like Trump's would end a politician's career in a single newscast. But where has being a liar, a racist, a rapist, a thief, a bully, and a narcissistic egomaniac got Trump? To the very top of the list of contenders for the Republican presidential nomination for 2024. He is America's fascist leader in waiting, and no one can quite understand why.

The usual explanation is that the GOP has fallen under the spell of a cult leader. That is partially correct. After a brief outburst against Trump in the wake of the Jan. 6, 2021, riot, the great trio of cowards—Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, and Senator Lindsey Graham—let their souls run out like water through their fingers.

The very men who initially said Trump was responsible for the debacle in Washington and that justice had to be done now parrot Trump's line that it's all a political witch-hunt. Without the slightest idea of the evidence against Trump, they now say that the real culprit is a department of justice and an FBI that are "weaponized" against conservatives.

It would be easy—but mistaken—to lay the entire blame for the debacle of Trumpism solely on what looks like the total cratering of Republican values. As squalid as the GOP leadership looks, they are, after all, politicians. Their interest is in power, not principle, and what Trump's staying power has shown them is that the country they so badly want to run has changed profoundly.

What no one wants to say out loud is that a significant number of U.S. voters is really what makes Trump possible—no matter what he does.

They are afraid of transformative demographic changes on the way, and distrust every institution that once held the country together. And that has left them open to authoritarian alternatives that would have been unthinkable just a short time ago.

The big story here is that a lot of Americans are tired of democracy and Donald J. Trump gets it. The only real question is, how tired are they?

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

Canadians do have a choice: they have the NDP

Getting things done to help Canadians in their struggle to make ends meet is what Parliament should be about. Canadians will evaluate their candidates on that basis. And it's not just between the Liberals and the Conservatives. The choice will include the NDP.

Carl Hager



Opinion

Election speculation has already begun. Will Prime Minister Justin Trudeau call an election before the Conservatives solidify their appeal with Canadians? Yet again, pundits have begun characterizing such an election as a fight between the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Chantal Hébert writes that Trudeau would again make the election a fight between Liberal values and Conservative ones, leaving the New Democratic Party out in the cold. But the hard facts of the current situation is that Pierre Poilievre is not tearing up the country with popularity, making the Liberal scare-mongering about the Conservatives much less credible.

It is no surprise that speculation about an election abounds. The Canadian government is a minority government, vulnerable to the whims of the opposition parties.

Polls show that Canadians are tiring of the Trudeau show. There have been a multitude of gaffes, faux pas and sloppy government decisions: from Jody Wilson-Raybould to Marco Mendicino and foreign interference, to the scandal of the WE organization and holidays with the Aga Khan.

Insiders say that Trudeau wants to take on Poilievre now before he shines his shoes and cleans up his mad-dog act. Canadians find little substance in Poilievre's grievance-laden antics.

As opposition, the NDP has tried to make Parliament work for Canadians. This is in direct contrast in both substance and style to the Conservatives.

The supply-and-confidence agreement reached with the Liberals over a year ago was an exchange of promises. Under ordinary conditions, the NDP wouldn't fold Parliament for the sake of an election if the Liberals agreed to implement some key NDP policies. The national dental plan is a direct result of that agreement: making Parliament work for Canadians.

The NDP has seen a small rise in polling numbers, but if an election were to be called this fall—or in a year from now—its actions would certainly be viewed posi-

tively by Canadians. NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh's stature has risen as a direct result.

In an election, the Liberals would find it less than easy to condemn the NDP, with whom they have been partners. Many political disagreements make the relationship between the NDP and the Conservatives difficult. The stance on women's abortion rights being one of them.

A fall election might see another minority government. If it were a Conserva-

tive one, it isn't expected that it would be hounding the NDP to fold the government for another election.

A Liberal minority government would most likely see a pact develop—again—between the Liberals and the NDP, if one were going to be agreed upon.

Getting things done in Parliament to help Canadians in their daily struggle to make ends meet and helping them achieve their dreams is what Parliament should be about. Canadians will evaluate their candidates on that basis. And it's not just between the Liberals and the Conservatives. The choice will include the NDP.

Carl Hager was born and raised in Montreal. He was a teacher with the Western Quebec School Board and president of the Western Quebec Teachers' Association before his retirement in 2006. He has been on the executive of the Pontiac New Democratic Party since 2012. Currently living in Aylmer, Que., he does volunteer driving for people needing transportation to medical appointments in the Pontiac and writes for the Pontiac Journal.

The Hill Times



NDP MP Jenny Kwan, left, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, and Peter Julian at the House Affairs Committee meeting to question David Johnston, then the independent special rapporteur on foreign interference, on June 6, 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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The Hill Times is a dynamic, twice-weekly newspaper and daily news service dedicated to providing comprehensive coverage of Parliament Hill, the federal government, and federal politics. Our readership includes cabinet ministers, Members of Parliament, Senators, federal public servants, political insiders, lobbyists, foreign diplomats posted to Canada, industry associations, authors, journalists, and academics. We pride ourselves on our unique insider perspective, offering unparalleled insights into federal politics.

Job Description

The internship will include writing news and features in a fast-paced newsroom, where successful applicants will be mentored in a challenging but supportive environment. Interns will be tasked with covering hot topics from an insider perspective, including:

- Breaking political news
- What makes Parliament tick (legislation, MPs, political staff, the PMO, the House, and Senate)
- Finance and budget
- Lobbying
- Public service
- Environment and climate change
- Foreign policy
- Politics and polarization
- Innovation and technology
- Justice and public safety

This internship is a paid, full-time, contract position. Internships vary in duration from three months to one year, depending on the availability of the applicant and the newsroom. Please state your availability on the application, keeping in mind there is a three-month minimum.

Qualifications:

For this internship, we will be considering both candidates who have studied and worked in journalism, and other professionals who have strong writing skills, a passion for politics and governance, and want to take up a career in journalism.

You must have a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, and a passion for journalism. Interns should be enthusiastic, talented, curious, and intelligent.

We are looking for candidates who bring energy, ideas, and new perspectives to Canadian politics and governance. Strong writing skills and the ability to work quickly and accurately are essential.

To apply:

Send a cover letter indicating availability for the internship and resumé, along with two to three examples of your reporting/writing to: jobs@hilltimes.com.

Your application should demonstrate:

With journalism experience:

- A range of reporting, with a strong component of news coverage.
- Proven ability to report thoroughly, write well, synthesize, and organize information.
- Reporting experience outside school assignments and a demonstrated commitment to journalism as a career.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- Life experience that contributes to your development/ability as a journalist.

Without journalism experience:

- Strong writing skills
- A passion for community, politics, or governance.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- Life experience that contributes to your development/ability as a journalist. Please submit a short letter outlining your experience and why you want to become a journalist.

We thank all applicants for their submissions, but only candidates selected for interviews will be contacted.

Opinion

We need federal legislation to fight online hate in Canada

According to Statistics Canada, members of the Jewish community were the target of 55 per cent of all religiously motivated hate crimes, although accounting for only about one per cent of the population.

Richard Marceau



Opinion

Earlier this year, while in Israel's capital for a few days, I posted a short tweet about enjoying my morning run in Jerusalem.

That simple post provoked a veritable avalanche of cyber-hate, with more than a few mentions that I should be sent to Auschwitz.



Richard Marceau, pictured at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Israel, in March 2023. 'Earlier this year, I posted a short tweet about enjoying my morning run in Jerusalem. That simple post provoked a veritable avalanche of cyber-hate, with more than a few mentions that I should be sent to Auschwitz,' he writes. *Photograph courtesy of Richard Marceau*

It was but one example of the hate that—no matter how innocuous the original content—is now hard to avoid on the internet.

This is one of the reasons I attended the Second Summit of the Interparliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Anti-Semitism at the European Parliament in June in Brussels. The first was held in Washington, D.C., in the fall of 2022.

As in Washington, D.C., this conference brought together parliamentarians from around the world, major online platforms, special envoys on combating anti-Semitism, and experts from civil society.

Because the internet is a global network, this kind of comprehensive meeting is essential if we are to find ways to combat a phenomenon that knows neither boundaries nor borders.

But, for Canadian Jews—who are, year after year, the most targeted religious group for hate crimes in Canada—international co-operation, while essential, is not enough. Legislation in Canada is needed.

A national strategy to combat online hate was one of the Liberal Party's commitments in its 2019 election platform. It was also included in its 2021 electoral

program. In fact, legislation to combat online hate was promised to be tabled within the first 100 days of the newly elected Liberal government's mandate.

That minority government is now almost two years old, and the legislation has yet to be introduced.

Yes, multiple consultations were held—with experts, with the tech industry, and with targeted groups. But the time for consultation has passed. Now is the time to act.

According to the most recent data from Statistics Canada, although accounting for only about one per cent of the population, members of the Jewish community were the target of 55 per cent of all religiously motivated hate crimes.

The Center for Countering Digital Hatred (CCDH) found that, on average, 84 per cent of reported anti-Semitic social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube were not removed or otherwise addressed by the hosting platform. In a recent study, CCDH also found that Twitter fails to act on fully 99 per cent of hateful posts by paid Twitter Blue accounts.

In other words, trusting the platforms to tackle the issue has not worked, which was confirmed in the discussions held in Brussels. The European Union understands this, and in response has adopted the Digital Safety Act.

Jews are not the only targets of hate, racism, and prejudice. Members of the Black, Indigenous, Asian, LGBTQ2+, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh communities, among others, know too well the impact of hate, most of which now comes through our screens.

A recent study by Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) found that four in 10 Canadians are exposed to online hate speech on a monthly or even weekly basis.

TMU's Survey of Online Harms in Canada also found that two thirds of Canadians believe the government should require online platforms to reduce the amount of harmful content on their platforms.

Anti-Semitism and hate are on the rise, both in Canada and around the world, abetted by social media companies' apathy regarding their role in protecting vulnerable communities.

It is time for the federal government to table its legislation in Parliament to combat online hate in Canada.

Hate does not wait. We have waited long enough.

A lawyer in both Quebec and Ontario, and a former Member of Parliament, Richard Marceau is vice-president (external affairs) and general counsel at the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

The Hill Times

Momentum builds in Cubans' struggle for democracy—it's time for direct Canadian support, less duplicity

What is the logic of championing human rights and decrying Russia's invasion of Ukraine while propping up their closest ally in the Western Hemisphere?

Orlando Gutierrez-Boronat



Opinion

A reading of recent events in Cuba tells the story. Senior representatives of the island's communist regime visit Russia, praising bonds of solidarity. China is in Cuba, providing elite

military units with specialized training. Iran's president boasts cooperation with counterparts in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba while trumpeting anti-American rhetoric. To top it all off, credible foreign social media and news accounts confirm that troops from the Havana regime's Ministry of the Interior are training in Belarus. Some are even fighting in Ukraine under the highly dubious pretext of being volunteers while coincidentally being bankrolled by the Kremlin. These actions show an assertive regime continuing the Castro legacy of covertly projecting hard power across the globe to achieve its goals.

The outlook is even more distressing when one looks inward into the regime's treatment of the Cuban people. And yet the European Union continues to prop up the island's Communist rulers to the tune of \$155 million per year. The Canadian government is, unfortunately, guilty of the same through taxpayer dollars it contributes to the Club of Paris, an

institution meant to provide loans to developing nations. But the winds of change are blowing, and courageous Cuban voices both at home and abroad are picking up steam.

Last week, I sat down with senior parliamentarians in Ottawa to discuss the profoundly concerning actions of the regime in Belarus and Ukraine, and the presence of China on the island. I expressed my dismay over how Canada and European governments subsidize the Havana dictatorship through the Club of Paris, even forgiving \$8-billion of debt. This message is the same one I recently shared with the Swedish and Lithuanian parliaments, both of which understood the need for change. Both bodies have also spoken in favour of reviewing the EU's Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) with the regime, which is another means of funnelling public money to the island. I am delighted to share that an increasing number of Canadian legislators in Ottawa

understand the need to end the status quo.

Momentum is growing in the area of clear and logical thinking from groups around the world when it comes to communism and Cuba. The EU Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have asked for a review of the PDCA, as have a coalition of more than 100 legislators from across Latin America. Now is the time to ratchet up our efforts and show our support for the Cuban people.

Each day, mothers, students, workers, and other citizens from all walks of life are risking their lives to speak out in response to Cuba's worsening state of human rights. They are the main actors of social change—the protagonists in the drama that is Cuba. They need to hear from us to advance their 64-year-long struggle for justice and freedom from oppression.

"Cubans don't have access to enough food, medicines and electricity, but they are protest-

ing out in the streets to demand freedoms," said Luis Zuñiga, a political prisoner for 19 years and member of the Assembly of the Cuban Resistance. "I am making a desperate call to the government and people of Canada for assistance for the freedom of Cuba."

What is the logic of championing human rights and decrying Russia's invasion of Ukraine while, at the same time, propping up their closest ally in the Western Hemisphere, who is helping them on the battlefield?

The future of Cuba can be extremely bright. Already known for being a resilient and industrious people, imagine what my Cuban compatriots could do with freedom and equal opportunity. Isn't this same promise at the core of the Canadian experience? Continuing to prop up a totalitarian regime defies all logic and rhetoric related to the values and "solidarity" so often championed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The actions of some European nations and the Canadian government are an obstacle to the hopes and dreams of the Cuban people.

I appeal to you, the Canadian people, to help us in our struggle for freedom.

Dr. Orlando Gutierrez-Boronat is the coordinator of the Assembly of the Cuban Resistance, and the national secretary of the Cuban Democratic Directorate.

The Hill Times

Dear government: don't be pressured by the hype from natural gas producers and pipeline owners



Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault. All Canadians have an interest in the setting of the national policy agenda, writes David Crane. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

While the resource industries are naturally frustrated by the challenges of government impact assessment hearings, there is no evidence Canada is undermining the energy security of its allies or that making that fossil fuel industry a national priority is in Canada's or the world's best interests.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century

TORONTO—All Canadians have an interest in the setting of the national policy agenda. But special interests who are employing their power and influence to lobby governments and using their privileged access to the corridors of power should not influence public opinion through false or misleading narratives.

A good example today is the attempt by natural gas producers and gas pipeline companies to pressure the government into policies that would boost their own revenues. However, they cannot hope to gain much public support if they come out and say that's what they want. Hence the need for a false or misleading narrative—in this case, to persuade Canadians that our government is undermining our allies, ignoring their calls for help and undermining the West's energy security by failing to make exports of LNG a national priority.

At the recent LNG 2023 conference in Vancouver, Enbridge CEO Greg Ebel pushed hard on this theme. "The Germans, Japanese and South Koreans came to Canada looking for more energy, and we've turned them down," Ebel said. He was not alone. Think tanks and business lobby groups claim Canada could

become an LNG superpower if the Trudeau government stopped blocking the way.

For example, the Business Council of Canada, which lobbies for our largest corporations, earlier this year in a report titled *Innovate, Compete and Win*, called on Ottawa to "clearly articulate its intention to have Canada make a significant contribution to global energy security," by outlining "specific measures it will undertake to expedite the approval of

further development of Canadian LNG." Doing its bit to build a compelling narrative, the council said "we believe there is both an economic and a moral imperative for Canada to use its resources to help allies in their time of need."

It claimed that "Canada could have been in a position to help its European allies with responsibly produced LNG" contending that "in August 2022 German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Canada with that request. But our failure to get government and industry alignment on building East Coast gas infrastructure has meant that the Chancellor went home empty-handed. Most Canadians would agree that we have a moral obligation to help our allies."

But are these claims right? While Scholz did ask Canada to increase its LNG shipments to Europe, he recognized there was currently a lack of infrastructure and an unproven business case for doing so. Further, Scholz did not go home empty handed. Canada and Germany signed a joint declaration of intent to establish a hydrogen alliance with the intent of establishing a transatlantic Canada-Germany supply corridor by 2025.

While Ebel claims there are "viable commercial proposals" for LNG projects on Canada's East Coast, it's not clear what they are. Nor is it evident such projects would be viable without significant government support. Natural gas would have to be piped all the way from Alberta to an East Coast terminal, major investments in port infrastructure and the LNG terminal itself would be needed, and no project could succeed without major long-term uptake contracts for any project to attract investors. Moreover, it's unlikely—even with a green light now—that any deliveries could begin before 2027-28. Yet Europe's strategy is to reduce natural gas consumption by 30 per cent by 2030. Any such project would cost billions of dollars. Who would pay?

Nor are we leaving Asian customers in Japan, Korea, and elsewhere empty-handed. The LNG Canada project, led by Shell, but with significant Japanese, Korean, and Chinese investment, as well as a \$250-million subsidy from Ottawa, will begin delivering natural gas to Asia in 2025. The Woodfibre LNG, also on

Canada's West Coast—a project led by a Singapore group, but with Enbridge a partner—expects to begin deliveries in 2027.

But there are limits to how many LNG plants can be built without escalating greenhouse gas emissions. A report earlier this year from the Pembina Institute, a respected clean-energy think tank, showed that aspirations to make Canada a West Coast LNG superpower are inconsistent with British Columbia's climate policy. The report, *Squaring the Circle*, warned that "the production and export of LNG is an emissions-intensive process," with emissions generated not only upstream, where the natural gas is produced, but also through the midstream, where gas is processed and carried by pipeline, and at the terminal, where it is liquefied and exported.

The British Columbia government requires the oil and gas industry to cut emissions 33-38 per cent by 2030 from 2007 levels. The Pembina Institute's research showed that to grow LNG exports while abiding by the B.C. government's emissions limits, there would need to be an extensive electrification of LNG terminals and upstream processes. As it is, in order for B.C. to meet its gas emissions' reduction target, it will need to build significant new electricity generation to electrify LNG terminals and upstream natural gas production facilities."

Noting that other industrial sectors and households will also require clean electricity, Pembina argues that British Columbia must prioritize electricity in a way that best benefits future economic growth. "Devoting large amounts of clean energy to LNG could drive away investment in growing clean energy industries such as critical minerals and green hydrogen production." Critical minerals and green hydrogen probably offer better clean growth potential.

At the same time, "global demand for fossil fuels, including LNG, is expected to decline in the years ahead, while demand for clean energy sources will grow," the Pembina study says, citing the International Energy Agency's 2022 World Energy Outlook finding that its "current longer term projections indicate a diminished role for natural gas overall and particularly in developing Asia." The IEA has also rejected the idea of natural gas as a "bridge fuel" between coal and renewables. In its 2023 World Energy Report, the International Gas Union also warns that future European and Asian LNG demand may be overstated.

While the resource industries are naturally frustrated by the challenges of government impact assessment hearings, there is no evidence Canada is undermining the energy security of its allies or that making that fossil fuel industry a national priority is in Canada's or the world's best interests.

David Crane can be reached at crane@interlog.com.
The Hill Times



Canada's Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, pictured on the Hill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

News



Families Minister Karina Gould announced the opening of public consultations to gather input about a national school food policy, which was held between Nov. 16 and Dec. 16, 2022. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Food insecurity for schoolchildren among top issues for first half of 2023: lobbyist registry

The Breakfast Club of Canada is pushing for follow through on a Liberal promise to invest \$1-billion over five years towards a national school nutritious meal program.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Advocacy in the first half of 2023 was led by a call for the federal government to follow through on a promise to help ensure schoolchildren across Canada have access to a nutritious breakfast in a lobbying campaign that is just getting started.

"We are hoping to maintain that rhythm for the rest of the year," said Judith Barry co-founder and director of government relations for the Breakfast Club of Canada. "What we've been discussing so far, since January, is really the need for the federal government to not only advance the development of a national school food policy, but invest in the ... program implementation for that policy."

The Breakfast Club of Canada, which co-ordinates approximately 3,500 school nutrition programs across the country, took the top spot as the most active organization in federal lobbying between January and June. During that time, the club filed 228 communication reports, based on a search of the federal lobbyists'

registry on July 20. That number of communication reports nearly reaches the club's total for all of 2022, which was 233.

Driving the heavy lobbying activity for the club is a push for the federal government to follow through on a promise to implement a pan-Canadian policy to help more children receive nutritious food at school. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) made a commitment in the 2021 federal election campaign to invest \$1-billion over five years towards a national school nutritious meal program, but the Liberals "still haven't invested anything," according to Barry.

"Following budget 2023, we were greatly disappointed because not only was there no investment for the program, but [there was] no follow-up — no mention whatsoever related to that important program," said Barry.

The club was also the most active lobbying organization in June, and filed 72 communication reports for the month, the registry shows. Barry told *The Hill Times* that the high-level of June engagement was because of the club sharing the results of its omnibus survey with designated public office holders.

A public opinion survey by Maru Group, conducted on behalf of the Breakfast Club of Canada, gathered input from more than 1,500 Canadians between May 24-25. The survey found that more than 40 per cent of Canadians believe that food insecurity is the most critical social issue impacting the overall welfare of Canadian children, and that 77 per cent of respondents are "upset and disappointed" that the federal government has not delivered on the promised funding for the school food program.

About 1.8 million children in Canada—or one in four—experienced food insecurity in 2022, increasing from the 1.4 million in 2021, according to the omnibus survey results which Barry shared with *The Hill Times*.

Last month, the Breakfast Club of Canada communicated with four cabinet ministers, including Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) on June 14, and Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec, Que.) on June 16.

To get the ball rolling on a national school food policy, Families Minister Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.) announced the opening of public consultations which included a questionnaire available online between Nov. 16, 2022, and Dec. 16, 2022.

"Every child should have access to the healthy food they need to grow and learn. I am looking forward to hearing Canadians' diverse views on what they want and need out of a school food policy. A national approach to school food has the potential to improve the overall health of our children as they learn, leading to better futures for them and for Canada," said Gould in an Employment and Social Development Canada press release.

The Breakfast Club of Canada is represented on the registry in-house by Barry and President and CEO Tommy Kulczyk. The club is also represented by Chad Rogers, a partner with Crestview Strategy.

Following second behind the Breakfast Club of Canada in terms of lobbying activity for the first half of this year is the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). Between January and June, the CLC, which represents more than three

million workers across Canada, filed 137 communication reports.

Of those communication reports, 132 related to a lobby day the organization held on Feb. 7, where hundreds of workers and labour leaders were on Parliament Hill to discuss issues including high inflation and stagnant wages, according to a CLC press release. CLC representatives also met with senators in February to discuss Bill C-228, the Pension Protection Act, which later received royal assent on April 27.

"With ERs overflowing and surgery wait times through the roof, our loved ones can't access the care they need. Meanwhile workers' rights are under attack as wealthy CEOs prioritize profits over workers' well-being, and communities are still grappling with the effects of climate change," said CLC president Bea Bruske in the press release. "As they meet with workers from ridings across the country today, parliamentarians are encouraged to remember that unions have deep roots in communities everywhere, and the gains that unionized workers make benefit every worker. Canada's economy is powered by those workers."

During the February lobby event, CLC representatives communicated with public office holders including Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South-Mount Pearl, Nfld.), Inter-governmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.), and Employment Minister Carla Qualtrough (Delta, B.C.).

The CLC is represented on the registry by Bruske, as well as by executive vice-presidents Larry Rousseau and Siobhán Vipond.

Third-most active for the first half of 2023 was Environmental Defence Canada, which filed 133 communication reports in that time frame.

Julia Levin, the organization's associate director of national climate, told *The Hill Times* that priorities for Environmental Defence in June included discussing carbon emissions from the oil and gas sector, and a Liberal government plan to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. Other issues discussed by Environmental Defence's representatives include Canada's clean electricity and zero-emission vehicle (ZEVs) sales regulations, which require that at least 20 per cent of new light-duty vehicles sold in Canada be ZEVs by 2026, increasing annually to at least 60 per cent by 2030, and 100 per cent by 2035.

"Part of the reason we're so active is because the federal government has an incredibly ambitious environmental agenda across all of our campaign areas," said Levin.

Last month, Environmental Defence communicated with Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) on June 5, June 13, June 14, and June 21. Among the topics discussed was the federal government's planned oil and gas emissions cap, according to Levin. The cap will hold the fossil fuel sector accountable for its emissions, and will be in-line with climate commitments outlined in the 2030 Emissions Reduction

Plan, according to Environment Canada.

"This is a really, really significant climate policy. We can't hit our climate commitments without the oil and gas sector doing its fair share, as Canada's most polluting sector and the fastest growing source of emissions," said Levin. "Getting those draft regulations right is really critical. We were there making sure that the oil and gas sector is held responsible for doing its fair share. We expect the same level of emissions reductions from the oil and gas sector as other parts of the economy."

Environmental Defence Canada is represented on the registry by Tim Gray, the organization's executive director, and consultant Brian Klunder of Temple Scott Associates. *Jcnockaert@hilltimes.com*

The Hill Times

Top Lobby Organizations (January to June 2023):

Client, Organization or Corporation Name	Communication reports
Breakfast Club of Canada	228
Canadian Labour Congress	137
Environmental Defence Canada	133
Canadian Pacific Railway Company	130
Canadian Canola Growers Association	108
Canola Council of Canada	106
Canadian Cattle Association	102
Chicken Farmers of Canada	96
Canadian Chamber of Commerce	95
National Council of Canadian Muslims	95

The above table shows the organizations which filed the most communication reports between Jan. 1 and June 30, 2023. Information courtesy of the federal lobbyists' registry.

Top Most-Lobbied Ministers (January to June 2023):

Minister	Communication reports
Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne	123
Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson	116
Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault	75
Tourism Minister Randy Boissonnault	69
Transport Minister Omar Alghabra	59
Agriculture Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau	52
Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland	50
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Marc Miller	46
Minister of Northern Affairs Dan Vandal	46
Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan	43

The above table shows the federal ministers which are listed in the most communication reports between Jan. 1 and June 30, 2023. Information courtesy of the federal lobbyists' registry.

ACORN Canada calls on federal government to support alternatives to predatory loans



Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's March 2023 budget included a promise to lower the criminal rate of interest from 60 per cent to 35 per cent annually. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The government should work with Canada's big banks to provide fair credit options to borrowers who would otherwise have to turn to bad actors, say advocates.

BY KEVIN PHILIPUPILLAI

As Finance Canada implements changes to the Criminal Code intended to crack down on predatory lending, a group representing low- and moderate-income Canadians is calling on the federal government to work with the big banks to provide a low-cost alternative for people who need emergency loans.

A June 29 report from the Canadian branch of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) says there is "a very limited number of low cost or fair credit options for low- and moderate-income people," and that the options that do exist are not widely accessible.

It calls on the federal government to create a Fair Credit Benefit, through which the government would provide funds that would then be loaned out by banks to low- and moderate-income borrowers.

"We're asking for the federal government to provide the

funding, and then the banks just distribute it," said ACORN leader Donna Borden. She said a seven- or eight-per-cent interest rate from a well regulated bank, while still steep, would mean vulnerable borrowers are "not going to be ripped off like they are" by the much higher rates they are currently paying to predatory lenders.

Borden is co-chair of the East York (Toronto) chapter of ACORN Canada. She has previously told *The Hill Times* about her own experience paying \$24,000 over six or seven years to service an initial \$10,000 instalment loan, only to be told she still owed \$7,500.

The ACORN report summarized the responses from an online survey of 623 of its members across Canada. Approximately 40 per cent of respondents said they would fall into debt if faced with an unexpected expenditure of \$500, and 30 per cent said they needed to borrow money on a monthly basis in the past year.

More than half the respondents said they had had to borrow money in the past 12 months, with 36 per cent of these relying on a credit card, 18 per cent saying they turned to a family member or friend, 17 per cent saying they turned to a bank, and 22 per cent saying they had to go to a payday lender or an instalment lender.

"The report showed that things were a lot worse off than what we thought," said Borden, explaining that 87 per cent of respondents "were not even aware of any low-cost alternatives to predatory lenders."

"A lot more people than we thought were taking up high-cost

loans in the last 12 months," said Borden.

In the absence of an official definition of fair credit, said Borden, the ACORN Canada report defined borrowing costs of up to nine per cent as "low-cost financing," 10-20 per cent as moderate, 21-30 per cent as medium, 31-45 per cent as high, and anything beyond that as extremely high.

Payday loans are provincially regulated loans of up to \$1,500 that must be paid back within a few weeks, along with a combination of interest rates and fees that can add up to more than 400 per cent if calculated on an annual basis. Instalment loans are federally regulated, can be for



ACORN leader Donna Borden says a recent survey of the group's members across Canada showed that "a lot more people than we thought were taking up high-cost loans in the last 12 months," with almost 90 per cent of respondents unaware of alternatives to predatory lenders. *Photograph courtesy of ACORN Canada*

major banks to collaborate to provide alternatives to high-cost loans, the Department of Finance highlighted its work to lower the criminal rate of interest, but did not comment on possible additional measures.

"Predatory lenders can take advantage of the most vulnerable people in our communities, including low-income Canadians, newcomers, and seniors—often by extending very high interest rate loans," a department official said in a July 17 email. "That is why the federal government has changed the Criminal Code to lower the criminal rate of interest to 35 per cent APR [annual percentage rate]."

The reduction to the criminal rate of interest, first promised in this year's federal budget, became law in June when the Budget Implementation Act received royal assent.

Anti-poverty advocates have generally been supportive of the government's steps to lower the criminal rate of interest from 60 per cent to 35 per cent annually, although Borden said on June 30 that she would like to see it lowered further to 30 per cent "or even 20 per cent."

"We're also asking that even if it's 35 per cent, we'd want that to include associate costs," added Borden, referring to insurance fees and other miscellaneous costs that are often tacked on to the base interest rate.

Borden also called for a clearer complaints and enforcement process for installment loans, saying the lenders that provide these larger loans have "free rein" at present because complainants have nowhere to go.

The Finance Canada spokesperson said the department has launched consultations with businesses, consumer groups, and provincial and territorial regulators on possible further measures, "to better understand how it can best protect Canadians from predatory lending practices."

The ACORN report also calls on the federal government to support postal banking as another option to provide people with low-cost loans in case of financial emergencies. This approach would make use of Canada Post's existing infrastructure to provide loans in small and rural communities where banks and credit unions don't have branches.

Canada Post and TD Bank launched a nationwide program last October to provide loans between \$1,000 and \$30,000 to customers who do not have a bank account and who do not have an established credit history. But the program, which was extended to roughly 6,000 post offices across the country, was paused indefinitely a few months later.

Borden said she was excited when the program was first introduced because it seemed to meet high demand from its target audience, and that it was unclear why it was stopped. *The Toronto Star* reported in November that TD said it had detected an apparent cyber attack by "bad actors."

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The Hill Times

News

Provinces, territories call for clarity over RCMP contract policing assessment

Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino's office says provinces and territories have been engaged in the review, with all but one providing submissions so far.

Continued from page 1

around service to their communities, large and small," he said. "Our members are not pawns, they are people, and proud Canadians who care deeply about their jobs, their families and their communities. They deserve respect and certainty in their future."

Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino (Eglinton-Lawrence, Ont.) was tasked with conducting an appraisal of contract policing in his December 2021 mandate letter from the prime minister. The assessment should be done in consultation with provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous partners and stakeholders, according to the letter, which also asked Mendicino to work with contract policing partners to "better connect the RCMP with community social support workers."

An open letter from the NPF to British Columbia Premier David Eby on July 18 noted that "it's our understanding that the purpose of the current contract policing assessment is to engage with contract partners and stakeholders this summer to explore opportunities to optimize policing contracts in the future by establishing cost certainties, reducing cost variances, and filling vacancies. These engagement sessions would conclude with a 'What we heard' report that would be released this fall."

The assessment is underway, but provincial and territorial leaders have expressed concern about the federal messaging on the topic.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith said the federal government had sent "a mixed message" about the future of contract



Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino, left, with Tricia Geddes, associate deputy minister of Public Safety, at the House Affairs Committee on June 15, 2023. His department is conducting an assessment of the future of contract policing in Canada. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

policing during a press conference following the Council of the Federation meeting in Winnipeg, Man., on July 12.

"We are expanding our sheriffs in anticipation that they [the federal government] may not want to continue expanding the service," she told reporters. "We're hopeful they'll be a little more clear, because when you see all the vacancies we have ... that almost looks as if the force is being wound down just through attrition."

If the intention is to wind down the service, Smith said that needed to be made clear, as "the provinces who do rely on the RCMP have to develop other services, have to do more training, have to do more recruitment, and that takes time to do all of that."

Eby said British Columbia, which has the largest RCMP contract force in the country, required certainty about the future of the system.

"We have officers that have to work extended shifts, that are increasingly strained and stressed, then going off on leave," he said. "We don't see a clear path from the federal government about filling those vacancies."

Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson, meanwhile, said the contract costs were also rising.

With the exception of 11 municipal services and the Manitoba First Nation Police Service, the RCMP is responsible for policing in the province.

"The federal government is responsible for negotiating the contracts. We don't have a say in that, but the costs are escalating as well," Stefanson said. "One of the other challenges is the vacancy rate, which is significant certainly in Manitoba and in other jurisdictions across the country. We want to make sure that they're very clear about what their plan is moving forward with respect to policing, and they need to come forward sooner rather than later when it comes to that."

But Alexander Cohen, director of communications to Mendicino, told *The Hill Times* in an emailed statement on July 17 that Public Safety Canada has engaged every province and territory on the assessment over the last six months, and "received feedback from all but Nova Scotia thus far."

"Law enforcement remains a provincial and territorial responsibility—provinces and territories have the option to leave the contracts under the process stipulated in them, and make alternative arrangements for police services," the statement said. "It's important to note that using the RCMP

under contract offers significant benefits to provinces and territories. Contracting the RCMP provides them with police services that are affordable, flexible and predictable."

With respect to staffing issues, Cohen said the federal government's efforts "are led by the recently established Recruitment Modernization Team, which is working to ensure that RCMP's recruitment practices are attracting the volume and quality of applicants that the force needs to serve Canadians. The coming year will see the roll out of new Recruitment Evaluation Centres nationwide, enabling the RCMP to better assess candidates through simulations, exercises, fitness testing and interviews and more."

Cohen noted that the RCMP would also bring 32 racialized young people to the Depot for a three-week targeted recruitment initiative. "By 2027, the RCMP aims to have 30 per cent women, 24 per cent members of visible minorities and 10 per cent Indigenous Peoples represented in regular member positions," the emailed statement said.

Police services agreements for the RCMP are in place in every province and territory except Ontario and Quebec, which have

dedicated provincial police forces. Those contracts are negotiated by the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Under the agreements, the provinces and territories pay 70 per cent of the costs, while the federal government pays the remaining 30 per cent.

There are also direct contracts with approximately 150 municipalities, with a variable cost-sharing model based on the population serviced, as well as when the municipality first signed the contract. There is a 70 per cent municipal and 30 per cent federal cost share if the population is lower than 15,000, and a 90 per cent municipal and 10 per cent federal cost share if the population is higher than 15,000. Municipalities that are being policed by the RCMP for the first time must pay the full cost.

The current agreements are due to expire in 2032, but some jurisdictions have mulled moving away from the contract policing system in favour of local police services. Alberta's governing United Conservative Party has raised the idea of a provincial police service replacing the RCMP, but it did not campaign on the proposal during the election which took place on May 29.

British Columbia Solicitor General Mike Farnworth, meanwhile, announced on July 19 that the City of Surrey, B.C., must continue to transition to a municipal police service rather than reverting to the RCMP.

The Surrey Police Service was formed in 2020 under then-mayor Doug McCallum, with both the service and RCMP managing a phased transition since late 2021. But during the city's 2022 mayoral election, winning candidate Brenda Locke promised to disband the municipal service and revert back to the RCMP.

After Farnworth's announcement, Locke released a statement criticizing the minister's decision as "disappointing, misguided and based on inaccurate assumptions." She said that she "will be meeting with my council colleagues and city staff to explore our options. I will also be asking for a face-to-face meeting with the minister to understand how he intends to compensate the significant tax burden that will be placed on Surrey residents and businesses as a result of his decision to continue with the Surrey Police Service."

The British Columbia announcement was made days after the *Toronto Star*, quoting federal sources, reported enthusiasm within some government and senior policing circles for the RCMP to move away from frontline policing to national security, cybercrime, and organized crime.

During the July 18 press conference, Sauvé said the RCMP already fulfills similar functions. "We already are the FBI of the north," he said. "We're actually the FBI, the DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration], the ATF [Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives], Homeland Security, as well as the U.S. Marshalls and the Secret Service."

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"Denialism involves not only the complete denial of the existence of residential schools [...] but it also involves attempts to [...] deny basic, established facts about survivors and accounts," said PSG Senator Brian Francis, chair of the Senate's Indigenous Peoples Committee. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Senate committee calls for hearing to get answers about withheld residential school records

An interim report by the Senate's Indigenous Peoples Committee lists several government and religious institutions that have not released records on Canada's notorious Indian residential schools system.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Representatives of groups that have yet to release records relating to Canada's Indian Residential Schools system will be asked to speak at a Senate committee hearing this fall so they can "explain themselves."

"What we're hoping to accomplish in 2023, in the fall, is to find some answers from these entities as to why they have not released this information to date," said PSG Senator Brian Francis (Prince Edward Island), the chair of the Senate's Indigenous Peoples Committee. "This information should be passed to the rightful people ... to allow them to continue to do their sacred work to find answers about the children from our Indigenous communities that never returned home."

The committee released an interim report on July 19 pertain-

ing to the work of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), and the Office of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites Associated with Indian Residential Schools.

A list produced by the NCTR included in the report identifies institutions that have not released records "that could shed light on what happened to the children who attended residential schools and never came home," according to a committee press release. Organizations on the list include the Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and some provincial and territorial governments. The list also includes religious institutions such as the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas in Manitoba, and the Sisters of Charity.

The committee report calls for a hearing to be held with representatives from the listed groups, and also calls for Ottawa to expedite the transfer of all federal records related to residential schools to the NCTR.

"We're all human beings and we all have loved ones, and it's hard to imagine people that have spent their lives trying to find out what happened to their children, or their aunts or uncles, or ... whatever the case is," said Francis, who is Mi'kmaw from Lennox Island First Nation. "It's so important that this sacred work be done effectively and meaningfully."

The report includes an overview of the history of residential

schools in Canada, which were operated between the late 1800s and the 1990s by the federal government and several Christian churches. More than 150,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were forcibly removed from their families and forced to attend Indian residential schools where many were forbidden to speak their languages or practise their cultures, and where they experienced poor health care, malnutrition, and emotional, physical and sexual abuse, according to the report. It's estimated 3,200 children died while at the residential schools, mostly from disease, but former Truth and Reconciliation Commission chair justice Murray Sinclair has said that the



Stephanie Scott, executive director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, says recommendations in a Senate committee report will help ensure the government "rectifies its earlier failures to disclose all of the relevant records pertaining to residential schools." *Photograph courtesy of the NCTR*

total number of deaths could be five or 10 times higher than that estimate.

Stephanie Scott, NCTR's executive director, told *The Hill Times* that the recommendations in the committee's report will help to ensure the federal government "rectifies its earlier failures to disclose all of the relevant records pertaining to residential schools."

"I can tell you, for some of those organizations, it really was not their priority until public opinion started to force the action," said Scott. "In order for [NCTR] to continue to do that work, those entities have to move forward [and] send the information. We've heard everything from 'We don't have money. We don't have resources. We don't have capacity.'"

Scott said it is of the greatest importance to the NCTR's work that they secure all records relating to the residential school system.

"We will continue to use all means necessary and hope to have those further dialogues with the provincial and territorial governments to transfer further records to us. I look forward to a hearing to find out why records have been withheld—or what is the delay and why—by the various entities and organizations," she said. "We are losing survivors daily, and that's really what is the driving force behind our work—they need to have some further truth and understanding of what truly happened to ... their brothers, sisters, aunts, [and] uncles, who died. That's where our passion comes from."

Library and Archives Canada said it is committed to fulfilling its obligation of expediting the transfer of all records related to residential schools to the NCTR, and providing the Senate committee with a progress report by December 2023, according to an emailed statement sent to *The Hill Times* on July 20 by Richard Provencher, the LAC's chief of media relations.

"Library and Archives fully recognizes the importance of providing access to records found in our collection pertaining to Indigenous children. We are ready to support the Senate in any way in its ongoing work on this matter," reads the statement.

Current work by LAC related to providing access to historical records relating to Indigenous Peoples includes digitizing six million records from day schools that were not part of the Residential Schools Settlement, according to the email.

"We are in active discussions with the NCTR for their progressive transfer. For a number of years, LAC has had a working agreement with the NCTR to ensure residential schools' information and materials are preserved and shared," the emailed statement reads.

LAC is working with the special interlocutor for missing children and unmarked graves to ensure availability of records and to facilitate access for communities, and is also an active participant in the Indian Residential Schools Documents Advisory Committee, which will present the federal government with a plan on identifying and transferring outstanding documents relating to residential schools to the NCTR, according to the email.

The Hill Times reached out to Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada to ask about the Senate committee's report and the call for a hearing, but a response could not be arranged by deadline.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada found that one-third of student deaths in the residential schools were not recorded by government or school administrations, that cause of death was not recorded for half of the students who died, and that residential school children died at a higher rate than non-Indigenous children, according to the Senate committee's press release.

Other recommendations in the interim report include a call for the federal government to provide "adequate, predictable, stable and long-term funding" to NCTR so the organization can fulfil its mandate, and for the government to "take every action necessary to combat the rise of residential school denialism."

"Denialism involves not only the complete denial of the existence of residential schools or their lasting impact, [but] it also involves attempts to ... deny basic, established facts about survivors and accounts," said Francis. "For people to deny it is almost a form of violence itself. We have to combat that at every chance we get."

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Feature

Jake Cole: the man behind annual list of 'best federal agencies and departments to work for'

'I'd like to see the PSES become a key element for positive change in our public service, not just a box to be checked off and then shelved,' says former long-time public servant Jake Cole.

BY MIKE LAPOLTE

The Public Service Employee Survey takes stock of how employees in Canada's largest employer feel about their jobs, their workplaces, their leadership and their management, with the most recent iteration providing a glimpse into which departments and agencies rank high in terms of "best" organizations to work for, and which those fall to the bottom of the list.

The *Hill Times*' Mike Lapointe spoke to Jake Cole, a former federal public servant who worked for more than three decades in six different federal agencies and departments, and who keeps a close eye on where federal departments and agencies rank within a lengthy list in terms of employee satisfaction.

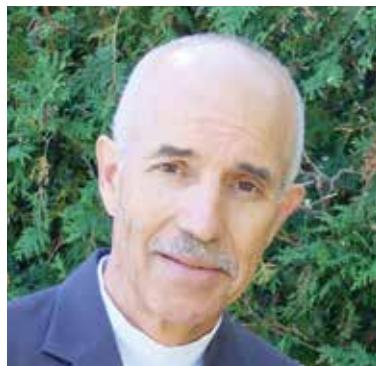
In both email and phone exchanges with *The Hill Times*, Cole discussed his findings, his methodology, and why the survey matters.

Taking a look at your data, I see that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Correctional Service Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency, Global Affairs Canada, and the National Film Board did not score well. Conversely, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada scored toward the top of the list. Why do certain departments and/or agencies score higher or lower in terms of which are the "best" to work for in Canada?

"Some of the ones you have just mentioned that are at the bottom of the list have been at the bottom over the last several surveys.

"One reason for two agencies—border services and correctional services—is that those are tough areas to work at. The work that they do is not always easy or predictable.

"But I've looked into some of the equivalent organizations in



Jake Cole, a former federal public servant, keeps a close watch on where federal departments and agencies rank within a lengthy list. *Photograph courtesy of Jake Cole*

other countries, particularly the United States, and down there are some of those agencies that appear to really have a highly engaged and motivated workplace.

"So it's not as if just because it's a hard job that everyone's going to be dissatisfied and disengaged at work. They seem to recognize that it's a hard job, but they pull together as employees and say, 'Let's make the best of this. Let's do the best we can, given this tough job and difficult people that we're dealing with.'

"But right now, I am guessing that the word from those organizations is just this: it's a tough job, people are not happy, and that's just the way it is."

You note that Canada's federal public service has been surveying its employees over the last 20 years, and that you have been reporting on the results of these surveys since 2008. Can you describe your rationale and some aspects of the methodology behind your ratings?

"Way back in 2004, I was the departmental representative from Fisheries and Oceans Canada working with a number of similar representatives from a number of other federal departments. Our collective role was to create an overall 'official' response to the latest PSES [Public Service Employee Survey] at that time.

On our own, a few of us got together as a subgroup to create an engagement index that would be similar to the Gallup organization's index that measured employee engagement at the many government and other agencies that Gallup dealt with using its fairly well known Q12 surveys (still used today).

"We thought that by using this index for reporting the PSES results, we could create a relative ranking on a best-to-worst basis that would better tell the real status of the various reporting

agencies based on employees' level of engagement at work. We also thought that by openly publishing these ranked results, the PSES would provide a useful means to create a more visible and challenging instrument to drive improvement in the workplaces of our federal government.

"Our 'unofficial' subgroup collectively presented our index idea to the Treasury Board, but it was turned down. We never got a formal explanation as to why it was turned down, but assumed that senior executives were uncomfortable having that information out there and would be worried about the negative impact it might have on them personally and professionally. So it died then.

"But it got surreptitiously resurrected.

"I retired from the federal government in 2006. When the next PSES came out later, I contacted that group of representatives mentioned earlier and with their help, we did use that index and we did develop the ranking of the federal agencies based on that engagement index that we created earlier. Since I was then retired, I took it upon myself to publish the results and did so for the first time with *The Hill Times* newspaper.

"I've been doing it ever since.

"There is nothing magical in the methodology itself. One could use just a very few key questions from the survey to come up with a fairly accurate measurement of the relative ranking of employee engagement in each agency. The unique part is providing that ranking of the some 65-plus major agencies on a best-to-worst place to work basis that follows from the relative ranking of employee engagement at each place.

"In my opinion, such a relative ranking could drive the momentum to actually improve the workplaces in the federal government, and their efficiency and effectiveness. As it is, the PSES exercise seems instead to be one of 'let's just get it over with,' so senior executives can say that they regularly survey all their employees.

"So much more than that could be done to improve Canada's public service. Using the PSES results in the style of my rating and report could eventually help, and in a positive manner, that to become a reality someday. So I keep trying."

Can you describe the importance of conducting the PSES survey in and of itself as a valuable source of governmental information? What was your main takeaway from the results of the most recent PSES survey?

"I think there's such a story to be told here. And it's just not getting the airplay it should. The results indicate that many employees are just not as satisfied as they could be with several aspects of their workplace. There's solid information there that proves that point. However, there are some real easy fixes that can be done to improve on that.

"I've kept at this over the years because I'm just looking for something positive to be done with the survey, something that identifies the many workplace concerns, and then takes positive action to fix them."

What are your thoughts on how the public service is contending with return-to-the-workplace policies?

"I hope the government recognizes the value of it, because it's been proven for many years—well before the pandemic—that people working on a from-home basis are typically more efficient, more effective, more engaged, and altogether happier.

"To me, it's a win-win deal. Certainly the fact that people are going on strike in support of the concept shows that employees themselves really do appreciate it. As for me, I have not seen any particularly strong argument for not doing it.

"It may be that it's harder for bosses to justify their roles without having real bodies to manage every workday. That may be part of it.

"And there's another element. I'm pretty sure that those people who own the real estate that's involved, and those who provide food and other services, well, they don't want it changed because that's their livelihood."

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

"I have always had the idea that we should be encouraging our public servants to become healthier. A health promotion initiative, right across the whole public service, could be the key to make that happen. Why not add an optional, health risk assessment (HRA), to the public service survey? This would be a selected group of questions aimed at assessing an employee's current state of health, his/her diet and lifestyle, and providing recommendations to maintain and improve their health. Such HRAs are already used quite regularly in the U.S. where employers cover the health costs of their employees.

Our own Ottawa Hospital Research Institute has a model that could be adapted for such a purpose. Adding an HRA could be a well accepted and useful

addition to the survey. I'd like to see that happen.

"Summing up, I'd like to see the PSES become a key element for positive change in our public service, not just a box to be checked off and then shelved. Let's find out what makes the top-ranked agencies such good places to work. Let's encourage the others to adopt some of those same principles for their employees. Let's see if we can turn our public service into the best that it can be. Let's use the results of the PSES to make that journey a good one, where everyone contributes to the ride."

The Hill Times reached out to the departments that finished in the bottom five of Cole's rankings.

"The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) thanks all employees who took the time to share their feedback, and continues to engage to address employee concerns," according to Guillaume Bérubé, manager, media relations with the department.

"Our employees' well-being is extremely important to us and the results of the survey will help us develop and take concrete actions towards a healthy, respectful, safe and inclusive workplace," he said.

Nayeli Sosa, in media relations and public affairs with the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), told *The Hill Times* the organization is "proud of its consistent success in the Public Service Employee Survey."

"CSE is routinely named as one of the best places to work among Canada's major federal agencies. Based on the latest PSES, 90 per cent of CSE employees are proud of the work they do and 92 per cent feel their ideas and opinions are valued," according to Sosa. "CSE has also been recognized as a top employer in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, as well as one of Canada's top employer for youth for the past seven years in a row."

"CSE values the results provided by the 2022 PSES," said Sosa. "As we addressed in our 2022-2023 Annual Report, we are proud that CSE's employees see their work environment in such a positive light, with results that are consistently better than the public service average. We are also fortunate that many talented people choose to work with us. Each year CSE receives on average," she said, noting that 10,000 to 15,000 applications from applicants with diverse skill sets and cultural backgrounds have come in.

"That said, we do recognize we can always strive to be better and are addressing areas we feel are crucial to our employees' well-being, such as fighting harassment, discrimination, and work-related stress," said Sosa. "The first principle of CSE's EDI framework is 'CSE is a work in progress'. The data the 2022 PSES provided is invaluable feedback to help us identify areas where change is needed."

Global Affairs and the National Film Board of Canada did not respond before press deadline.

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The Hill Times



Treasury Board President Mona Fortier. Internally, the public service functions as a tightly-wound hierarchy. Externally, it's steered by the political power of the relevant minister and commands of the PMO, writes Bhagwant Sandhu. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The federal public service needs to adapt to a new political reality, stat

Senior leadership should stop lamenting what was, and start adapting to what is, trading deference for critique and creativity, and old hierarchies for mission-driven teams.

Bhagwant Sandhu



Opinion

OTTAWA—Former heads of the public service usually issue parting suggestions for public ser-

vice reform. The ideas range from reclaiming eroding values to the use of technology and tweaking of the bureaucratic machinery. Obsolescence of the structure itself is rarely discussed. Former clerk of the Privy Council Michael Wernick compiled a list of challenges in managing the public service: outsourcing, dealing with poor performers, pay scale of senior managers, etc. Wernick's replacement, the newly-retired Janice Charette, suggests more digitalization is needed, because as she sees it, the public service is stuck in the analog age. She doesn't elaborate much, but her point is that things need to change.

Ministers, meanwhile, are busy blaming the flow of information for their own missteps. Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino pegged his mishandling of the Paul Bernardo file on glitches in bureaucratic briefings.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau did the same to rationalize his inaction on foreign interference. As did Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly to deflect opposition attacks when a Global Affairs officer attended a Russian Embassy event in 2022. Joly now plans to overhaul the entire department to make it "fit for purpose."

Donald Savoie, the leading expert on public service administration, has called for a royal commission on the bureaucracy. Among many other things, he is concerned about the diminishing policy adviser role of deputy ministers, the increasing amount of power exercised by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), and bureaucratic bashing by politicians of all stripes.

These reactions are focused on the symptoms, not the root causes of why things go sideways. They scratch only the surface. In response, a few ad-hoc fixes get put

in, like Joly's planned re-organization exercise at Global Affairs, and probably a renaming to go with it, too. But the symptoms always reappear. This is because the fixes fail to recognize that when the system malfunctions, it's not a one-off. It is the result of structural conditions.

The Canadian public service is an authority-based structure with stringent top-down controls. It is modelled after military formations of the colonial era. Internally, it functions as a tightly-wound hierarchy. Externally, it is steered by the political power of the minister and commands of the PMO.

Faced with modern labour practices, globalization, equity, inclusion, social media, and the internet, the structure has become unwieldy. While briefing notes no longer end with "I am, sir, your humble servant," the edifice that demands that servility still stands, stifling speed and creativity.

There is a way out. But first a few nascent realities must be accepted. The centralization of power within the PMO, for instance, is here to stay; the old principle of ministerial responsibility is pretty much dead; the number of political staffers will keep growing; rank-and-file public servants will demand more work-life balance and autonomy; and the idea of ministers seeking policy advice from deputies will die a slow death. These trends have taken root in the public imagination and with the political class. They will not be reversed.

Governments stopped looking to the bureaucracy to generate great big policy ideas quite a while ago. They now have their party platforms, compiled via opinion research and data-mining techniques. In fact, ministerial mandate letters generated by the PMO do not invite feedback, they direct the deputy to action.

From this vantage point, the bureaucracy is essentially viewed as a delivery channel to implement government programs, advance the government's plans and priorities, and to speed up service provision. Operational dexterity—not policy capacity—is effectively the top accountability item for deputies.

Unlike the private sector where the profit margin acts as a feedback loop to compel structural changes and adaptation, the public service must look to political trends. The task at hand, then, is to find the sweet spot where three emergent trajectories intersect: autonomy for frontline workers, rapid execution of government policies, and political cover for ministers.

The latter is easy. It requires public servants to build new guardrails to better demarcate the professional and the political domains of responsibility. The former two are harder. They require replacing top-down hierarchical controls and titular authorities with well-paid and empowered work places.

One noticeable lesson coming out of the COVID-19 crisis is that the hard work of service delivery is not done by the top-heavy executive cadre. It is done by unionized staff who process payments, clear passport applications, and attend to long lines at airports. This is where the intellectual energy should go.

The status quo of any organization is fed and sustained by the collective ethos of its leadership. Real structural change, as such, requires that the next generation of public service executives get promoted because they possess contemporary skills and savvy, not because their resumes check off some arbitrary boxes designed during the colonial era.

Put differently, senior leadership should stop lamenting what was and start adapting to what is, by trading deference for critique and creativity; and old, exhausted hierarchies for flat, mission-driven teams.

Bhagwant Sandhu is a retired director general from the federal government. Between 2002-21 he held senior roles in several departments, including Fisheries and Ocean Canada, Infrastructure Canada, the Treasury Board Secretariat, and Public Works Canada. He has also held executive positions in the governments of Ontario and British Columbia.

The Hill Times

Another look inside Centre Block's massive renovations

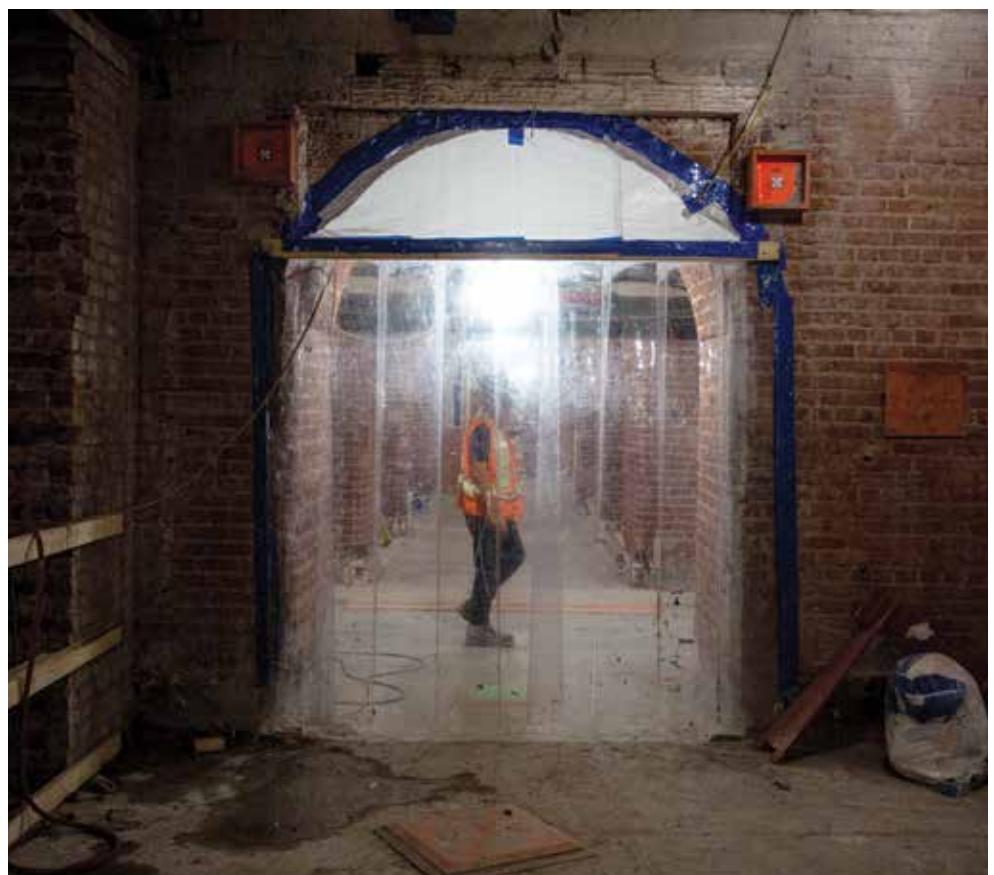
The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade



The ceiling in the MPs' entrance to the Commons Chamber. All photos were taken during a media tour on June 22, 2023. Centre Block was closed in 2018 for a massive renovation and revitalization project which will cost an estimated \$5-billion. It won't be done until at least 2031.



The majestic Rotunda, also called the Confederation Hall, inside the Centre Block.



A worker walks past a doorway on the first floor of the Centre Block.



A gargoyle in the Senate Chamber.



A north hallway of Centre Block, it's right down to the red bricks.



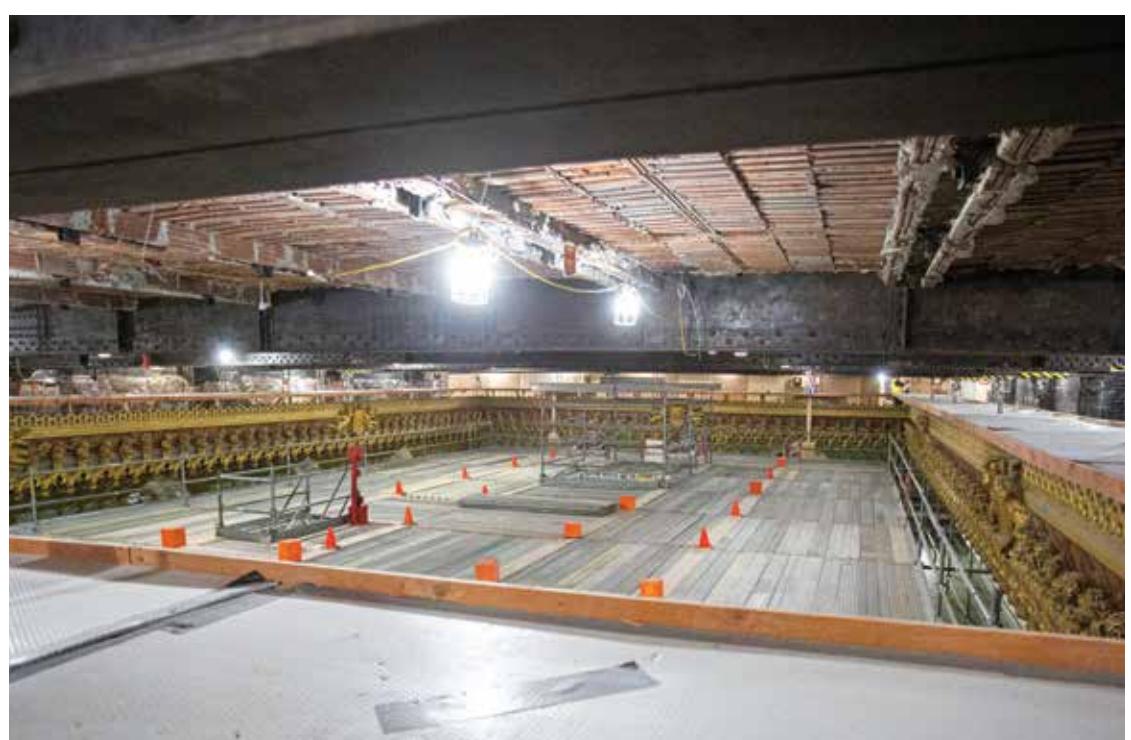
The extraordinarily massive pit in front of Centre Block where the future visitors' centre will be built.



The door to what's known as the Hot Room, former home to freelancers and news agencies from across the country. Room 350-N, on the third floor, north hallway of the Centre, was the Parliamentary Press Gallery room.



One staircase leading up to the Commons Foyer.



The actual House of Commons Chamber: it's right down to the brass tacks.



Stuart Benson

Party Central

Pakistani culture and high fashion strut their stuff



Yara Ebaid strikes a pose. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

The High Commission of Pakistan hosted a culture and fashion show on June 19.

Almost 350 Pakistani Canadians, diplomats, and politicos donned their best duds for a night of high fashion and culture hosted by Pakistan's High Commission at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building on June 19.

Arriving just after 6 p.m., **Party Central** was greeted in person by Pakistan's High Commissioner to Canada, **Zaheer Janjua**, who had been shaking hands and getting some facetime with his diplomatic counterparts and members of the public as they arrived for the event. Each guest was offered a complimentary gift bag featuring a number of skincare and beauty product samples courtesy of Shoppers Drug Mart, one of the night's many sponsors.

Declining the goody bag, **Party Central** accepted a few complimentary water bottles and found a seat among the rows of chairs creating the night's catwalk inside SJAM's main hall, welcoming not only the chance to sit down for a change, but also the hall's powerful air conditioning while the night's guests began to mingle. Unlike many of Ottawa's more boozy events, the event was unsurprisingly non-alcoholic, which **Party Central's** liver and future-self writing this column is also thankful for.

Party Central spotted Netherlands Ambassador **Christina Coppolose**; U.K. High Commissioner **Susannah Goshko**; Argentinian Ambassador **Josefina Gramuglia**; Panamanian Ambassador **Romy Vasquez**; Portuguese Ambassador **António Leão Rocha**; South African High Commissioner **Rieaz Shaik**; Brazilian Ambassador **Pedro Borio**; Thai Ambassador **Kallayana Vipattipumiprates**; Moroccan Ambassador **Souriya Otmani**, and Spanish Ambassador **Alfredo Serrano**.

Liberal MPs **Shafqat Ali** and **Salma Zahid**, and **Paul Thoppil**, assistant deputy minister for Asia at Global Affairs Canada, were also in attendance.

While the usual M.O. during these receptions is to make the rounds and mingle with the guests, **Party Central** must admit to having spent most of that time chatting with *Hill Times* colleague **Abbas Rana** to find out what his little birdies had told him about the then-on-again B.C. port strike and possible Parliamentary-recall negotiations, as well as to compare our cabinet shuffle bracket picks.

While the night itself was hosted by the High Commission, the event is an expansion of similar events in Toronto and the United Kingdom featuring Pakistani fashion and jewelry designers, including **Ruba of London**, **Hamna Amir**, **Aisha Imran**, **Purple Haze** by **Rubina Azmat**, **Sophia**, **GOGI**, **Rana Noma**, **Samsara** by **Khadija Batool**, and **Lajwantii** and organized by Corus Entertainment's **Shahla Khan** and Riwayat Ltd. CEO **Adnan Ansari**.

While the event was mostly focused on the fashion show, featuring a variety of extravagant and elegant Pakistani styles and fabrics from one of the largest textile producers in the world, **Party Central** was rather crestfallen to learn there wouldn't be any of Pakistan's delectable food culture on display. Having skipped dinner, by around 7:30 p.m., this reporter would have traded this entire column for some chicken korma.

However, beyond that minor complaint—mostly borne out of a concern **Party Central's** grumbling stomach would get so loud it would even be audible over the excited chatter of the crowd critiquing each new look as the models strutted up and down the catwalk—the night was a great success.

However, as the night wound down and traffic on the catwalk came to a close, **Party Central** headed out into the night in search of a pub and some cheap chicken wings.

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Riwayat models Isabel De La Torre, left, Melanie Renaud, and Yara Ebaid walk the runway at the Pakistan High Commission's culture and fashion show on June 19.



Ebaid walks down the runway.



Netherlands Ambassador Christina Coppolose, left, and U.K. High Commissioner Susannah Goshko.



Argentinian Ambassador Josefina Gramuglia, left, and Panama's Ambassador Romy Vasquez.



Hira Shah strikes a pose.



Shah takes her turn down the runway.



South African High Commissioner Rieaz Shaik, left, Paul Thoppil, assistant deputy minister with Global Affairs Canada, his wife Naina Thoppil, and High Commissioner of Pakistan Zaheer Janjua.

The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia

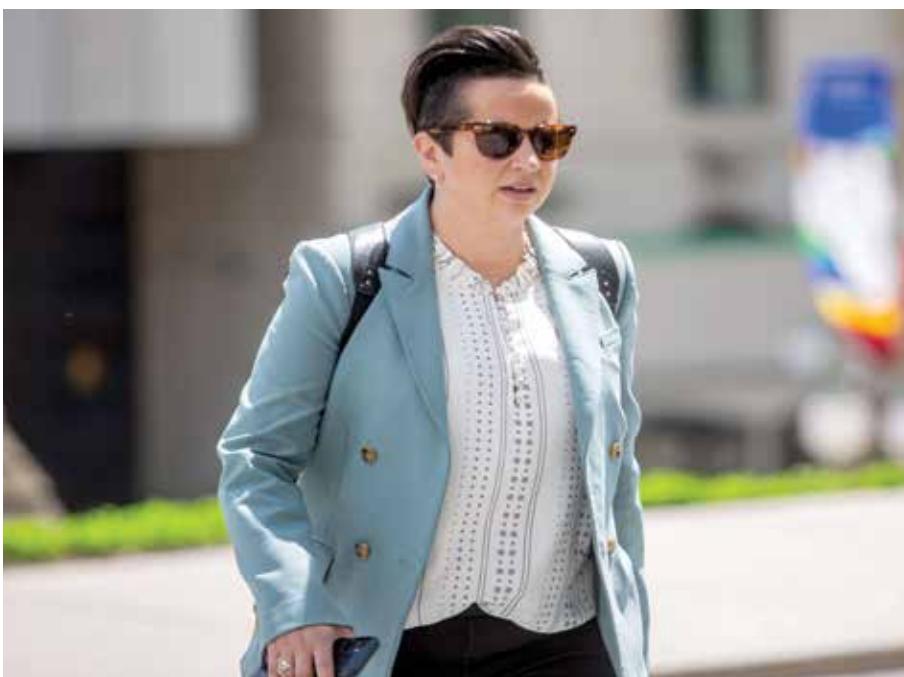


Liberal MP Salma Zahid, left, is greeted by Pakistan's High Commissioner Zaheer Janjua.



Thoppil and his wife Naina Thoppil are greeted by Janjua as they arrive at the High Commission of Pakistan's Culture and Fashion Reception.

Tory MPs Lantsman, Brock to host 'Pints & Politics' gathering on July 26 in Kitchener



Did somebody say beer?
Conservative Deputy Leader Melissa Lantsman will take part in a 'Pints & Politics' gathering on July 26 at 6 p.m. in Kitchener, Ont. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

MONDAY, JULY 24

House Not Sitting—The House has adjourned for the summer and is on break for 12 weeks. It will resume sitting again 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. 13-17) and will resume sitting on Monday, Nov. 20, and will sit for four weeks (Nov. 20-Dec. 15). It's scheduled to return on Monday, Jan. 29, 2024.

TUESDAY, JULY 25

Byelection in Calgary—A byelection will be held in the electoral district of Calgary Heritage, Alta., on Monday, July 24.

TUESDAY, JULY 25

Webinar: 'Indigenous Peoples and the New Economy'—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute hosts a webinar, "Indigenous Peoples and the New Economy." Three new economy Indigenous entrepreneurs will discuss the achievements, needs, barriers and aspirations of Indigenous communities in the global innovation economy. Tuesday, July 25 at 12:30 p.m. ET. Register online via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, JULY 25—THURSDAY, AUG. 3

Webinar Series: 'Long-term and Continuing Care'—The Assembly of First Nations hosts a series of region-specific webinars on "Long-term and Continuing Care" from Tuesday, July 25, to Thursday, Aug. 3. The focus groups' primary objective is to further discussions from the First Nations-led engagements conducted from 2021-2022, funded by Indigenous Services Canada, and to identify existing gaps within both programs. Details online: afn.ca.

THURSDAY, JULY 27

Panel: 'MAiD in Canada'—Cardus hosts the second instalment of its 2023 Summer Series panel discussions: "MAiD in Canada: How We Got Here and Where We're Going." Dr. Sephora Tang, assistant professor of psychiatry, University of Ottawa; Ray Pennings, Cardus' executive vice-president; and Dr. Rebecca Vachon, Cardus' health program director, will provide an assessment of the origins of Canada's euthanasia policy and its expansion. They will also discuss Cardus health's vision for a social system that supports the desire for a natural death, equips social institutions to support patients and caregivers, and develops a continuum of care for those approaching the end of life. This event will take place at Cardus, 45 Rideau St., 8th Floor. Register online at cardus.ca.

THURSDAY, AUG. 10

MP Lantsman to Attend Fundraiser—Conservative Deputy Lead-

er Melissa Lantsman will take part in a fundraiser barbecue event for the Ajax Conservative Association. Thursday, Aug. 10, at 6 p.m. ET, at 4 Pinoak Rd., Ajax, Ont. Details online. Register via Eventbrite.

MONDAY, AUG. 14

MP Barrett to Attend Breakfast Event—Conservative MP Michael Barrett will take part in a summer business breakfast event hosted by the North Grenville Chamber of Commerce. Monday, Aug. 14 at 7:30 a.m. ET at Catered Affairs, 820 Heritage Dr., Kemptville, Ont. Details online. Register via Eventbrite.

THURSDAY, AUG. 17—FRIDAY, AUG. 18

AFN 2023 Youth Safe Drinking Water Summit—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its 2023 Youth Safe Drinking Water Summit from Thursday, Aug. 17, to Friday, Aug. 18, focussing on building and developing a Youth Vision for the Future of First Nations Water through national youth engagement. This event will take place at Le Parc-de-la-Montmorency, Que. Details online: afn.ca.

FRIDAY, AUG. 18

Minister Duclos to Attend CMA Health Summit—Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos will take part in a fireside chat today, part of the Canadian Medical Association's Health Summit: "What Health Care Should Be: Time For Bold Solutions" from Thursday, Aug. 17, to Friday, Aug. 18. Other speakers during the summit include Dr. Alika Lafontaine, CMA president; Dr. Bonnie Henry, British Columbia's Provincial Health Officer; Timothy Caulfield, professor of health law and policy, University of Alberta; and Shachi Kurl, president, Angus Reid Institute, among others. Friday, Aug. 18 at 1 p.m. ET at the Shaw Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr. Details online at cma.ca.

MONDAY, AUG. 21

Summer Cabinet Retreat—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his cabinet are expected to attend a summer retreat from Monday, Aug. 21, to Wednesday, Aug. 23, in Charlottetown, PEI.

TUESDAY, AUG. 22—SATURDAY, AUG. 26

Global Environment Facility General Assembly—Canada will host the Seventh Assembly of the Global Environment Facility in Vancouver, B.C., from Tuesday, Aug. 22 to Saturday, Aug. 26. Details: thegef.org.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 7

Bank of Canada Governor to Deliver Remarks—Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem will deliver an Economic Progress Report, discussing the bank's recent interest rate decision and Canada's economic outlook, hosted by the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. Thursday, Sept. 7 at 11:30 a.m. MT at the Hyatt Regency Calgary, 700 Centre St. S. Details at calgarychamber.com.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 7—SATURDAY, SEPT. 9

Conservative Policy Convention—The Conservative Party of Canada is holding its policy convention Sept. 7-9 in Québec City. Party members will be voting on party policy, training for the next election, and will hear from conservative speakers. Registration opens at 1 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 7. Opening ceremonies are from 7-9 p.m. on Sept. 7, and the hospitality suites will open from 9 p.m.-12 a.m. For information on hotels, flights, and more, go to cpc23.ca.

MONDAY, SEPT. 11—TUESDAY, SEPT. 12

CABE Economic Outlook Conference—The Canadian Association for Business Economics hosts its annual conference from Sept. 11-12 on the theme: "Post Pandemic Economics: What does the 'New Normal' look like?" Speakers include Catherine L. Mann, external member, Monetary Policy Committee, Bank of England; David Dodge, senior partner, Bennett Jones LLP, former Bank of Canada governor; Rupa Banerjee, Canada Research Chair in Economic Inclusion, Employment and Entrepreneurship of Canada's Immigrants; and Armine Yalnizyan, Atkinson Fellow on the Future of Workers, Atkinson Institute. Monday, Sept. 11-Tuesday, Sept. 12 at the Delta Hotel, 1 Johnson St., Kingston, Ont. Details online: cabe.ca.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 12

Gen. Eyre to Deliver Remarks—Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre will deliver remarks as part of a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, Sept. 12, at 12 p.m. ET in Suite 300, 67 Yonge St., Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

Lecture: 'How Can Canada Build More Mines Faster?'—The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade hosts a lunch event, "How Can Canada Build More Mines Faster?" featuring Pierre Gratton, president and CEO of the Mining Association of Canada. Tuesday, Sept. 12, at 11:30 a.m. PT at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, 900 W Georgia St. Details: boardoftrade.com.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 13—FRIDAY, SEPT. 15

IPAC's Annual Conference—The Institute of Public Administration of Canada hosts its 75th national conference from Sept. 13-15, exploring the role of public administration in a time of instability and social change, and addressing issues such as the housing crisis, AI & Chat GPT, digital government, mental health, municipal innovation, immigration, and labour shortages. An Indigenous-led panel will discuss how public servants can collaborate more successfully with Indigenous governments. U.S. Ambassador to Canada David Cohen will deliver remarks. Wednesday, Sept. 13 to Friday, Sept. 15 at the Delta Hotels by Marriott Ottawa City Centre, 101 Lyon St. N. Details: ipac.ca.

MONDAY, SEPT. 18

House Resumes Sitting—The House 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. 13-17) and will resume sitting on Monday, Nov. 20, and will sit for four weeks (Nov. 20-Dec. 15). It's scheduled to return on Monday, Jan. 29, 2024.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 22

Kimberly Murray to Deliver Remarks—Kimberly Murray, independent special interlocutor for missing children and unmarked graves and burial sites associated with Indian residential schools, is among the speakers taking part in a webinar entitled "Leading with Impact: Leadership Insights from Recipients of Ontario's Highest Honour for Public Service," hosted by IPAC. Friday, Sept. 22 at 12 p.m. ET taking place online. Details: ipac.ca.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 26—FRIDAY, SEPT. 29

G78 Policy Conference—The Group of 78 hosts its 2023 Annual Policy Conference from Sept. 26-29 in Ottawa and online. Speakers and panellists will explore peace practices that can effectively prevent or curtail conflict, and inform policies and strategies of intergovernmental bodies, governments and civil society to mitigate violence. Tuesday, Sept. 26 to Friday, Sept. 29. Details: group78.org.

TUESDAY, OCT. 3

CRTC Chair to Deliver Remarks—Vicky Eatrides, chair and CEO of the Canadian Radio-Television Telecommunications Commission, will deliver remarks as part of a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, Oct. 3, at 12 p.m. ET in Suite 300, 67 Yonge St., Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 4—THURSDAY, OCT. 5

Conference: GovConnect Canada—The Canadian Institute hosts GovConnect Canada, an invitation-only event. The theme is "Digitally Transforming the Relationship Between the Public and Public Services." Wednesday, Oct. 4 to Thursday, Oct. 5 in Ottawa. Details: canadianinstitute.com.

FRIDAY, OCT. 13—SUNDAY, OCT. 15

NDP Policy Convention—The federal New Democrats are holding a national policy convention from Friday, Oct. 13 to Sunday, Oct. 15 in Hamilton, Ont. It will be the party's largest gathering in more than three years. Details: convention.ndp.ca.

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