


Truth and reconciliation

on the Hill p. 27

Zoo bill
needs work:

Sen. Plett p. 12

Infrastructure policy briefing
pp. 13–21


AI affray
p. 4

Les Whittington
p. 9

Unlocking USMCA
p. 6



THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR, NO. 2065 CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2023 \$5.00

NEWS
Muslim group demands apology, nuance from Trudeau after condemning 'parental rights' protest

BY STUART BENSON
The Muslim Association of Canada is calling on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to apologize for what it says was a condemnation of Muslim parents who participated in recent protests centred on gender and sexual education in schools as "uniformly" homophobic or transphobic. The group says it wants him to acknowledge the legitimate concerns of parents, while LGBTQ+ and Muslim advocates call for more nuance from progressive allies to avoid veering into Islamophobia as they stand up for the rights of queer and transgender students, while also recognizing the tension for those with intersecting identities.
On Sept. 20, dozens of "1 Million March For Children" rallies were held in cities across Canada

Continued on page 22

NEWS
'Lack of direction': delayed release of mandate letters raises questions over government's plans

BY NEIL MOSS
With updated cabinet instructions still missing in action more than two months after the July 26 shuffle, questions loom over the Liberal government's future plans.
It's been 70 days since the cabinet shuffle, and updated mandate letters have yet to be released—amounting to the longest the federal cabinet has gone without being given new directions from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) following a major changeup. After the last shuffle following the 2021 election, mandate letters were issued after 51 days. In 2018, cabinet instructions were released 41 days after a major shuffle. In 2017, it took 22 days. When Trudeau's cabinet was first formed in 2015, it only took

Continued on page 24



Cabinet ministers are still working off of 2021 mandate letters as they wait for new instructions to be released following the July 26 shuffle *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS
Pressed for space: Hill scribes have mixed views on continued closure of National Press Theatre

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT
It's been more than three years since the National Press Theatre

shut its doors and was replaced by an interim space outside the National Press Building, and while some Hill reporters are ea-

ger to see it reopened, others say they're more concerned whether politicians actually use press theatre spaces, interim or not.

Located in the National Press Building at 150 Wellington St. across from Parliament Hill, the National Press Theatre (NPT) has

a more than 50-year history of use by the Parliamentary Press Gallery.
While reporters scrum politicians daily when Parliament is sitting, and press conferences can take place in a range of spaces on the Hill—including the foyer

Continued on page 25



Mike Lapointe

Heard On The Hill

Parliament has spoken: Liberal MP Greg Fergus takes over as new Speaker of the House



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, right, 'drag' newly elected Speaker of the House Greg Fergus to his chair in the House of Commons. Screenshot courtesy of CPAC

Election of the Speaker

Élection à la présidence

After a tumultuous week for Parliament's referee and months of rancorous debate during Question Period, Liberal MP **Greg Fergus** has been elected as the 38th Speaker of the House of Commons, the first Black Canadian to hold the job.

"Respect is a fundamental part of what we do here. We need to make sure that we treat each other with respect, that we show Canadians the example, because there can be no dialogue unless there is a mutual understanding of respect," said Fergus in his address to MPs following his election on Oct. 3.

Fergus, who represents Hull-Aylmer, Que., was first elected to Parliament in the 2015 election, and most recently served as parliamentary secretary to both the Treasury Board president and health minister.

The Liberals had the most names in the rare mid-session race to elect a new Speaker, including Quebec MPs **Alexandra Mendès**, the incumbent assistant deputy speaker; parliamentary secretary to the citizens' services minister **Stéphane Lauzon**, who withdrew from the race as soon as it properly began on Oct. 3; Quebec MP and former parliamentary secretary **Peter Schiefke**; and Prince Edward Island MP **Sean Casey**, who took the opportunity to wish his mother an early happy birthday on the national stage.

Two others on the ballot with experience directing traffic in the House included Conservative Nova Scotia MP and deputy speaker **Chris d'Entremont**, as

well as NDP Ontario MP and assistant deputy speaker **Carol Hughes**. Green Party Leader **Elizabeth May** rounded out the list. May acknowledged that her candidacy was a long shot, as she was unable to travel to Ottawa for the vote due to having suffered a stroke this past summer, and instead addressed the Chamber virtually from British Columbia.

Former Speaker **Anthony Rota** stepped down on Sept. 27 following a flurry of controversy after he invited constituent **Yaroslav Hunka** to the House, where he received a pair of standing ovations during Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy's** Sept. 22 visit to Ottawa. It later emerged that the 98-year-old Hunka fought for the Nazis during the Second World War.

The Speaker earns \$92,800 per year on top of the base MP salary of \$194,600, according to the government. Members who "occupy certain offices and positions are entitled to additional remuneration" in accordance with the Parliament of Canada Act.

Fergus said he will soon be meeting with Parliament's table officers, as well as with the deputy speakers, "in order to decide how we are going to proceed in the coming months in order to make sure Parliamentarians follow the rules of the House of Commons."

"I hope I will have the opportunity to speak with each one of you to get to know you better," said Fergus. "And in this way, we will really set an example for all Canadians."

Toronto's Albany Club to host Harper Economic Forum



Former prime minister Stephen Harper delivered the keynote address for the opening day of the Canada Strong and Free Networking conference in Ottawa on March 22. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The Canada Strong and Free Network is set to present the Harper Economic Forum on Oct. 5 at the Albany Club in Toronto, which will include a fireside chat with former prime minister **Stephen Harper**. The forum kicks off at 9 a.m.

This year's theme is "Does The 'New Math' Add Up?" and will cover less subsidization, Canada's innovation and technology ecosystem, as well as the country's resource and manufacturing economies.

Other speakers on the schedule include president and founding shareholder of Questerre Energy **Michael Binnion**, former head of mission and consul general to the United States based in New York City **John Prato**, president of the Coalition of Concerned Manufacturers and Businesses of Canada **Catherine Swift**, and co-founder of Eirene **Mallory Greene**.

First Indigenous Supreme Court justice wins University of Ottawa's Alumna of the Year

Supreme Court justice **Michelle O'Bonsawin**, the first Indigenous person to serve on the top court following her appointment on Sept. 1, 2022, has won Alumna of the Year award as part of the 2023 University of Ottawa Awards of Excellence.

Previously, O'Bonsawin served on the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in Ottawa following her appointment there in 2017. She also worked as general counsel for the Royal Ottawa Health Care Group for eight years.

Other award winners this year include Canadian executive and philanthropist **Ian Telfer**, who won the Meritas Tabaret Award for Alumni Achievement; financial services leader and philanthropist **Duane Green**, who won the Commitment to the University award; and **Myrtha Lapierre**, who took home the Award for Community Service for helping "over a thousand francophone immigrants succeed in the province's educational and health-care systems," according to the university's website. **Mattieu Gamache-Asselin** won the Young Alumni award, and professor of medicine and rheumatology Dr. **Sibel Aydin** was recognized as an honorary member of the Alumni Association.

Feds recognize Black Loyalist Richard Pierpoint with new plaque

In an Oct. 1 plaque-unveiling ceremony in Fergus, Ont., Parks Canada recognized **Richard Pierpoint**, a Black Loyalist in Upper Canada who lived from 1744-1838.

Enslaved for 20 years before he freed himself by fighting for the British in two wars, Pierpoint

"petitioned for Black settlers to be given land separate from those of white people to foster a sense of community" as well as telling stories in the West African oral tradition, according to the government.

Liberal MP **Lloyd Longfield**, who represents Guelph, Ont., made the announcement on behalf of Environment and Climate Change Minister **Steven Guilbeault**, whose portfolio includes responsibility for Parks Canada.

"Thank you Parks Canada for commemorating Richard Pierpoint as a person of national significance—fighting in the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 as an enslaved man, storyteller and leader among Black Loyalists in Upper Canada," said Longfield on X (Twitter) on Oct. 1.

Conservative MP **Michael Chong** was also on hand for the commemoration, as was Ontario Senator **Rob Black**, who is a member of the Canadian Senators Group.

Parliamentary Press Gallery veterans get their mugs

Full-time members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery came together during a Sept. 29 social luncheon, also called a "mugging," where a number of folks with multiple decades of experience between them in covering federal politics were recognized for their work with traditional press gallery mugs.

Former Cable Public Affairs Channel (CPAC) senior producer **Dan Fonda**, who stepped down after nearly three decades with the network, was given a mug, as was former CBC journalist **Chris Hall**, who spent a number of years at the helm as the network's national affairs editor as well as host of *The House* on CBC Radio.

CTV stalwart **Heather Carson**, who was a gallery member from 2012-2022, and longtime CPAC camera operator **Paul Wilson**, who worked in the role for 25 years were also presented with mugs.

Veteran Hill reporter **Joan Bryden**, who spent just short of 35 years covering Parliament Hill and federal politics before retiring from *The Canadian Press* in February 2022, and **Terry Pedwell**, who is currently a reporter-editor on leave from CP, were presented with lifetime membership certificates.

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The Hill Times



Former CP reporter Joan Bryden speaks to Bob Rae, left, at a 2015 event in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* file photograph

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

If you ask Canadians what is keeping them awake at night, most will say the housing crisis, or economic uncertainty.

Canada's need for more housing is critical, with CMHC estimating the country needs to build 3.5 million additional homes above and beyond what is currently projected to be built by 2030. The country is also in the throes of a serious construction workforce shortage. The sector simply will not have the workers required to meet our projected building needs. Add to that inflation, rising interest rates, affordability, and Canada's deteriorating foundational infrastructure and it becomes clear that Canada is in dire need of a holistic and long-term strategy to get us on track.

The federal government has launched various programs, such as the Express Entry program to target immigrants with high-demand skills as well as several initiatives under the National Housing Strategy to fast track the building of new homes. These measures are welcome, but they are short-term solutions to problems that require consultation, partnership and long-term planning.

The Canadian construction industry can and should be an important strategic partner for the federal government. Construction employs 1.6 million people in Canada and contributes about \$151 billion to the economy annually, accounting for 7.4 per cent of Canada's GDP and creates a ripple effect of expansion in other sectors like engineering, manufacturing, agriculture, technology, and retail. Construction builds infrastructure — water, electricity, telecommunications and transportation — which underpins economic growth, job creation and global trade.

We can't have a solid Canadian economy without a strong and healthy construction sector.

A strong foundation for a stronger Canada

For Canada to prosper and address the key issues facing our country, the federal government needs to make substantial changes around infrastructure investment, workforce development, and procurement modernization. For these changes to be effective, they must be part of a comprehensive plan that is developed in consultation with private-sector partners and stakeholders and aligned with provincial governments.

This is why the Canadian Construction Association (CCA) and our 18,000 member firms are making the following recommendations:

- **Commit to comprehensive, long-term infrastructure investment:** The federal government should advance the implementation of the National Infrastructure Assessment and develop, jointly with industry and all orders of government, a 25-year plan for infrastructure investment that includes housing and trade enabling infrastructure.
- **Address the workforce shortage:** The federal government should quickly address ongoing industry-wide labour shortages by modernizing the existing immigration policy and points system to better reflect the workforce needs of the Canadian economy.
- **Modernize procurement processes:** Existing procurement processes need to be improved. They should be reviewed by the Auditor General and industry should be engaged to ensure practices better balance risk-sharing between public contracts and the private sector, reduce red tape, and accelerate approvals for critical projects.

Canada needs more than just a few more houses. This is not the time for band-aid solutions. It is the time to build ***a strong foundation.***

Construction leaders from across Canada will be in Ottawa on November 7 for CCA's Annual Hill Day. I strongly encourage you and all parliamentarians to meet with us to discuss how the construction industry can play a critical role in building a prosperous and resilient nation.

Canada's strength as a nation is linked to construction. We can be the partner that helps you build ***a strong foundation for a stronger Canada.***

Regards,



Mary Van Buren
CCA President



News

‘The devil’s in the details, and we don’t have any’: critics, civil liberties groups decry feds’ lack of clarity on changes to privacy and AI bill

NDP MP Brian Masse calls the wait for the full text of the government’s amendments to Bill C-27 ‘disrespectful’ and an example of the ‘laziness’ that has been the Liberals’ ‘mortal and systemic weakness.’

BY STUART BENSON

The Liberals’ failure to produce details on suggested changes to their privacy and artificial intelligence legislation before the start of a House committee is “the worst thing they could have done” if the government is serious about quickly passing its latest attempt to update Canada’s privacy laws and regulate the emerging technology, says NDP MP Brian Masse.

And while civil liberties groups say they are encouraged by the government’s willingness to make its proposed improvements, they say they do not go far enough and are calling for the artificial intelligence (AI) component to be “withdrawn, reworked, and reintroduced” as a separate piece of legislation.

On Sept. 24, Innovation, Science, and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Que.) appeared before the House Industry and Technology Committee



NDP MP Brian Masse says Champagne’s lack of details on proposed changes to Bill C-27 is disrespectful to committee members. Screenshot courtesy of Parlvu



Innovation, Science, and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne says details on changes to Bill C-27 will come at the end of the House Industry Committee’s study, and will include recognizing privacy as a fundamental right, among other amendments. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to provide a verbal summary of the suggested amendments to Bill C-27, which would repeal parts of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) and enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act (AIDA). The legislation is also the Liberals’ second attempt to amend PIPEDA, after Bill C-11, the Digital Charter and Implementation Act, died on the Order Paper following the dissolution of Parliament ahead of the 2021 election.

While Champagne did not provide written details of the amendments, he told the committee they will include the recognition of privacy as a fundamental right, and the obligation to protect children’s personal data online; strengthen and clarify the role of the proposed artificial intelligence and data commissioner, as well as enabling it to share information and co-operate with the privacy commissioner and Competition Bureau; and define specific obligations for “high-impact” generative systems, as well as general purpose ones like ChatGPT.

Champagne initially told committee members the text of the amendments would not be provided until after the legislation reaches the clause-by-clause review stage at the committee, which will take place after the committee has completed witness testimony.

While opposition MPs on the committee responded incredulously to the suggestion they and committee witnesses are expected to seriously study the legislation without more details on the “substantial amendments”

Champagne had announced, his office later said it was aiming to publish the amendments within the coming days. However, late on Sept. 29, Champagne’s office said it will not be providing the full text of the amendments until the study is complete, and will instead provide a letter outlining the changes.

In response to emailed questions from *The Hill Times* as to why the full text of the amendments was not ready before the committee began its study of the bill, Audrey Champoux, Champagne’s press secretary, did not directly answer, but said the letter outlining the changes would be provided to committee in the coming days, and would focus on areas of improvements identified during debate in the House of Commons and consultations with stakeholders and experts.

“These include specific changes that members in the committee proposed they would put forward during the study. The government is proactively welcoming these improvements,” Champoux wrote. “While we have presented our intent, we are making sure to hear from the various witnesses invited at committee and welcome their opinions on Bill C-27.”

In an interview with *The Hill Times* on Sept. 25, Masse (Windsor West, Ont.), his party’s innovation critic, said that while he is appreciative of the government’s willingness to change a “significantly flawed piece of legislation,” he was “a little bit shocked” that Champagne did not provide any details before the committee began its study.

In comparison to the changes the proposed amendments would

make to the bill, Masse said that the legislation is “significantly hollow” and that the committee—alongside the more than 90 experts, stakeholders, and witnesses invited to appear before it—would be unable to provide a “responsible, educated response” without greater detail on what the final piece of legislation will ultimately look like. The committee is currently scheduled to hold 13 meetings to study the legislation, with up to five witnesses or stakeholder groups attending each.

“If the government’s intent is to move fast on this, the worst thing they could have done is to not come to committee prepared to present the actual amendments,” Masse said. “It’s disrespectful to all the groups and organizations that have to spend their time and money to come and give their thoughts based upon basically a 10-minute speech.”

As for why he believes the government did not have amendments ready for the committee’s study, Masse said that despite Champagne being a “very hard worker” who has put a lot of personal time and energy into the file, “the mortal and systemic weakness of the Liberals has always been laziness.”

Masse said it is “baffling” that while the Industry Committee had ramped up its work during the spring to finish two studies and clear up its schedule to better focus on C-27, the Liberals weren’t able to use the summer to prepare at least some of the amendments before the fall.

The elements of the current legislation dealing with privacy and competition will be easier to fast-track through the committee,

Masse said, but the complexity and novelty of AI technology would significantly hamper the study without more details of the government’s proposed changes.

“Champagne lived up to some of the changes that he said he was going to make, which is good, and I give him credit for that,” Masse said. “But we still need the amendments to move this along.”

Artificial Intelligence and Data Act should be its own bill, say civil liberties groups

Daniel Konikoff, interim director of the privacy, technology, and surveillance program at the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), described his reaction to Champagne’s appearance at the committee as a “mixed bag.”

“[The CCLA] is pretty thrilled that our first key recommendation on recognizing privacy as a fundamental human right is something that Champagne came right out the gate to say the government is going to include that amendment,” Konikoff told *The Hill Times*, adding that while he had been encouraged by the government’s willingness to make the changes it suggested, “the big caveat is the question of process.”

“Introducing a bunch of amendments that possibly aren’t even written up and only showing this willingness essentially right before witnesses are set to testify has really thrown a wrench into that process,” Konikoff explained. “The devil is in the details, and we don’t have any details for the kind of minute and rigorous attention that these amendments merit.”

Tim McSorley, national co-ordinator of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (CLMG), told *The Hill Times* that despite the amendments proposed by Champagne at the committee, CLMG’s view that AIDA needs to be “withdrawn, reworked and reintroduced” as a separate piece of legislation from C-27 has not changed.

On Sept. 25, the CCLA and CLMG, alongside more than 40 other Canadian civil liberties organizations, experts, and academics, released an open letter addressed to Champagne outlining their main concerns with the current draft of AIDA. Specifically, the signatories say they are concerned that “shoe-horning” AI regulation into Bill C-27 will not allow for adequate study of the AIDA, and will take time and attention away from the bill’s privacy provisions. The signatories also provided “bottom-line” changes to AIDA they believe will be needed, including recognizing privacy as a fundamental human right; a commitment to more active consultation with stakeholders “beyond industry leaders”; expanding AI regulation to apply to both the public and private sector, including government security agencies; and removing AI regulation from Innovation, Science, and Economic Development (ISED) Canada’s sole jurisdiction.

Continued on page 23

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News

Too early for proposals for North American trade pact review, says GAC official, as experts push for proactive plan

‘Relitigating’ NAFTA renegotiation could jeopardize ‘opportunity’ of six-year review, says senior trade official.

BY NEIL MOSS

Three years out from a review of Canada’s most important trade deal, the federal government has yet to “put pen to paper” on proposals, as some fear a return to the chaotic days of the NAFTA renegotiation.

Before the mandated review takes place in 2026, all three countries party to the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) will go through elections that will lead to at least one new government in place, as Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is term limited and can’t run for re-election. Both Mexico and the U.S. will go to the polls in 2024. Canada will have an election in or before 2025.

A potential return of U.S. president Donald Trump to office has some recalling the turbulence of the rocky NAFTA renegotiations in 2017 and 2018, which the federal government called at the time an “existential threat” to Canada. Concern over what may happen during the first six-year review has some calling on the Canadian government to be proactive.

Senior Global Affairs Canada (GAC) trade official Aaron Fowler indicated it’s too early to lay out proposals for the CUSMA review, but said when the time comes, Canada will have to bring forward those ideas.

“We’ll need specific proposals in certain areas that we’re ready to kind of bring forward. I don’t think, in 2023, we’re really at the stage yet in putting pen to paper on proposals ... we will get to that,” said Fowler, associate assistant deputy minister for trade policy and negotiations, at a Sept. 26 panel hosted by the Canadian Global Affairs Institute (CGAI) and Brookings Institution think tanks.

“What we are trying to make sure is that we have the structure in place and the people in place and the conditions in place that we can be successful when we get to that point,” he said, remarking that Canada is at a similar position preparing for the reviews as its North American counterparts.



International Trade Minister Mary Ng, right, pictured with U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai in May 2022, faces a distant, but looming, review of the federal government’s North American trade pact in 2026. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Fowler said the agreement is “generally viewed as positive” in both the U.S. and in Mexico.

He suggested Canada will use the review as an “opportunity” to deal with issues that have arisen under CUSMA, and issues that weren’t being thought of during the NAFTA renegotiations that have since emerged, but won’t relitigate aspects that Canada failed to have included during the past talks.

“If we focus on relitigating issues that we already went through, then this opportunity would become a moment of jeopardy for the agreement and the three countries and the industries that rely on this instrument,” he said.

Fowler added that some issues with the agreement may be worked out through committees and discussion groups before the 2026 review.

CUSMA mandates a review occur six years after the agreement comes into force, and during that review all three countries can agree to add a new 16-year term to the agreement. If that decision isn’t reached, it will expire after 16 years in force or in 2036. If a decision is made in 2026 by a party of the pact not to continue with the agreement, the countries will meet every year for the next decade to conduct a joint review until it expires. During those annual reviews, the three countries can, once again, decide to extend the agreement for a 16-year term.

Fowler said that at the moment the review is “not really defined.”

“There has been ... a very preliminary discussion between ministers this year at the third Free Trade Commission, as to what [the review] will look like in practice,” he said. “There are

some pieces that will need to fall into place before we will be in a position to really elaborate specific proposals. That will also be a function of what the political environment is in the three countries. What are their preoccupations and their trade policies at the point of time? And more broadly, what is the geopolitical environment in which we are all operating?”

“The way we see our relationships with each other in many respects is going to be function of how we see our place in the world. That is very different in 2023 than it was in 2018,” he said. “And I would expect it would be very different in 2026 than it is in 2023.”

Right now, Fowler indicated that Canada needs to put the right communications and advocacy teams in place in the U.S. and Mexico.

The proposal mirrors the so-called “charm offensive” that Canada put in place during the NAFTA renegotiations to trumpet the importance of the integrated North American trading relationship.

Carleton University professor Meredith Lilly, a former trade adviser to then-prime minister Stephen Harper, said it is “great to hope” that the review will be an “opportunity,” but suggested Canada take a more “realistic” approach and prepare for a “complete and total disaster.”

“This is what happened with NAFTA renegotiations. Canada had this idea—it’s all going to be about modernization, we’re going to keep it slim and quick, and we’re all going to hug and its going to be great—and of course the Americans had a very different idea,” said Lilly during the CGAI panel.

“We should go forward with an opportunity, but make sure we’ve got our bulletproof vest,” she said.

Steve Verheul, who served as chief negotiator during the NAFTA renegotiations, said during the panel discussion that preparation is “the key.”

“You have to game out every single scenario, by sector, by chapter, by virtually every issue that could come up or might come up [to] have your position, your fall back, all your offensive interests, all your defensive interests. All of that, all in a roadmap, so that you are ready to go whichever way the wind starts to blow when we get closer to this,” said Verheul, who has since retired from GAC.

“The preparation is the foundation of all of this. So, you have more knowledge, you’ve thought more extensively about these issues than the other side has been thinking about them. That’s always the key,” he said.

Verheul said efforts should be made to see how the three countries can get ahead of the review, indicating a role for the business communities in the three respective nations, remarking that trade negotiators can only go so far with counterparts to map out a potential review. He added that business communities can start to set the agenda.

“That would have a powerful influence,” he said, noting that governments could then pick up on that advice.

CGAI vice-president Colin Robertson, a former trade negotiator and moderator of the Sept. 26 panel, said while Canada doesn’t know what will happen in 2026, it should be preparing now, by setting up a working group. He said advocacy and communi-

cation work in the United States should be unfolding now to ensure Canada knows what works down the line.

“When you go to Americans with creative solutions, I always find them very receptive,” said Robertson.

Former diplomat Louise Blais, who served as Canada’s consul general in Atlanta, told *The Hill Times* that CUSMA’s renewal is the priority, not advancing specific proposals.

“We’re hoping for a very smooth rollover of the agreement as opposed to arriving with a list of things to change or improve,” said Blais, now a senior special adviser with the Business Council of Canada.

She said renewing the agreement will create certainty, adding that, in the meantime, there needs to be continued engagement with the Americans, in particular, to outline the benefits of the agreement with both Democrats and Republicans.

She said she is “cautiously optimistic” that all three sides will decide to move forward with an extension to the agreement.

International trade lawyer Lawrence Herman said Canada’s focus should be on ensuring that, in 2026, there is a contained review that doesn’t see the whole agreement come under the microscope.

“The important thing is to ensure that this review is properly managed or it could go off the rails,” he said. “If there isn’t an agreement among the three parties, the three governments, as to the issues to be addressed in the review, it could lead to a process that is undisciplined and uncontrolled and would lead to an opening up of the entire [trade deal], which is to be avoided.”

Herman said the three governments need to come to an understanding on the issues and provisions that need to be adjusted.

Herman said that before their respective elections take place, the three countries should be working on a pathway towards the review to help depoliticize it.

Bloc Québécois MP Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot, Que.), his party’s international trade critic, said he doesn’t see any of three sides making a decision whereby the North American market wouldn’t have free trade coverage.

He said he wants to see both the oft-troubled softwood lumber dispute be addressed in the 2026 review, as well as the countervailing and dumping of aluminum from outside North America.

Savard-Tremblay added that he would like to see the Canadian government present more information regarding the review to Parliament.

“We should have the [House] International Trade Committee push for more transparency because there’s always a horrible lack of transparency when Ottawa is negotiating deals,” he said. “We’re going to push to have more information.”

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POLICY BRIEFING INNOVATION

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CSG Senator Pamela Wallin argued that “you can’t spend your way out of inflation,” and that Canada is in need of a robust innovation strategy, in an op-ed published in The Hill Times on June 12. What could the federal government do as part of a strategy to support innovators in Canada?

What are the challenges for Canadian businesses in turning innovative ideas into intellectual property? Is the Canada Innovation Corporation the answer?

A report by the Boston Consulting Group released in June found that, while private investment in the clean-tech sector has increased four-fold since before the pandemic, only 17 per cent of climate-tech investor dollars remain in Canada, with the vast majority flowing into the United States. What is the situation facing clean-tech innovation in Canada, and how can the federal government help?

The report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System, released in March 2023, argued that the “current support for graduate students, the researchers of tomorrow, is at a breaking point.” What are the pressures facing Canada’s students, and how can the federal government support university research and help students contend with high living costs?

What are some of Canada’s strongest industries when it comes to innovation? What are some of the challenges facing those industries?

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Editorial

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Editorial

Government secrecy allows historic wrongs to wreak modern havoc

Once upon a time, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised that his government would be “open by default.” And much like other fairy tales, this proved to be fantasy, as anyone who attempts to squeeze water from this particular stone knows all too well. Tight-lipped ministerial offices and the infamously rigid and, at times, downright adversarial access to information system are just the tip of the iceberg, despite the “improvements” the Liberals said they were making and then tortuously fumbled. In recent weeks, the Canadian government’s long-held (yes, long before the 2015 election ballots were counted) commitment to secrecy has been put on display, allowing the incredibly embarrassing and shameful consequences to take their moment in the sun. Amid the fallout from the double standing ovations for a former SS-division soldier by those assembled in the House Chamber on Sept. 22 for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s address has been a renewed call to open the long-sealed government records about just how many Nazi soldiers were admitted into Canada after the Second World War. The report on the 1985 Deschênes Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals redacted identifying information on suspected Nazis who had emigrated to Canada, allowing them to comfortably

live their post-war lives (notably, the commission did not find *prima facie* evidence of war crimes for those involved, but also highlighted the lack of a mechanism to prosecute said crimes in Canada). More of that inquiry’s report needs to be unsealed “so that we can go forward in terms of pursuing justice, and not having situations like what occurred in the Canadian Parliament, where we inadvertently end up indulging the falsity of history,” former Liberal justice minister and Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights chair Irwin Cotler told CTV’s *Question Period* on Oct. 1. Meanwhile, Canada’s special interlocutor for missing children and unmarked burials is in a constant state of battle with the feds to get access to records so she can do her job. As Kimberly Murray told *The Toronto Star*’s Raisa Patel, as much as the government claims it’s unacceptable that residential school denialism is on the rise, it’s actively standing in the way of putting a stop to it. “But what are they doing about it? They’re not doing anything about it. They continue to hide records,” she said. History is ugly, embarrassing, and shameful for those who hold power. But that’s no reason to hide it, especially not when doing so continues to harm people today. *The Hill Times*

Letters to the Editor

Canada’s hypocrisy and enabling of Nazism on full display, says letter writer

When it comes to Canadian hypocrisy, what immediately springs to mind is the standing ovation given by Canadian MPs to a Second World War Ukrainian Nazi veteran (brought to you by Canada’s wilfully blind obedience of United States foreign policy). Could you have ever imagined this happening in the Canadian Parliament? If you’ve been paying attention to Canadian politics for the past few decades, the answer is “yes,” as per the “wilfully blind” statement above. Because of this despicable scene, Jewish groups demanded, and rightfully received, a public apology (along with typical Canadian political finger-pointing and denial). But what happens when Canada enables current Nazi attacks on an ethnic group? As per Canadian foreign policy, it depends on the ethnic group, followed by Canadian politicians turning to their American bosses to determine their public reaction and, even more importantly, their continued action. For decades, Canada has declared a specific ethnic group expendable and has notoriously pursued a policy aimed at its eradication. That group is Macedonians. Following Canada’s full support for Greece’s and Albania’s anti-Macedo-

nian actions (including, but not nearly limited to the forced renaming of Macedonia into the highly derogatory “North Macedonia,” and terrorist attacks and murder of Macedonians, much with a very public Nazi element), Canada now supports Bulgaria’s demands on Macedonia: to renounce the existence of the large Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and the existence of the Macedonian nation, identity, language, history, and culture as a whole; the revision of Macedonian history to deny that Bulgaria was an ally of Nazi Germany and occupied Macedonia during the Second World War, and committed mass murder and heinous war crimes against Macedonians including the expulsion of more than 7,000 Macedonian Jews to the Treblinka death camp in Poland; and that Bulgaria be referred to as a “liberator” instead of an occupier of Macedonia—all for Bulgaria to lift its veto of Macedonia’s European Union-membership bid and for the sake of “Euro-Atlantic integration” (read: to secure further U.S. hegemony). Where is Canada’s apology to Macedonians, and more importantly, change in policy? **Bill Nicholov
President, Macedonian Human Rights
Movement International
Toronto, Ont.**

Tories should reference carbon-pricing section of their own climate plan, says Alberta reader

Re: “Conservatives already have a climate plan,” (*The Hill Times*, Sept. 25, p. 4). Robert Sopuck wants us to ignore the Conservative Party’s current lack of an actionable, effective climate plan in favour of two things: remembering how the Conservative Party once had a climate plan, and vilifying the effectiveness of the current party’s carbon-pricing policies. Sopuck spends a fair portion of his opinion piece claiming that those who opposed the Conservative Party’s previous environmental plan (Secure the Environment - 2019) had simply not read

the thing. He references the document not as “a” plan, but as “our” plan. It’s curious, then, that he questions the effectiveness of carbon pricing when his plan had the following to say about it: “We recognize that the most efficient way to reduce our emissions is to use pricing mechanisms.” If Sopuck wants proof of the effectiveness of carbon pricing that is “free of virtue signalling,” he should simply reference back to his own previous climate plan on the subject. **Mark Taylor
Calgary, Alta.**



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Legacy media is failing Canadians for the sake of war absolutism

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—Let's check into how Canadian media are doing with the fact they shit the bed on one of the most important stories of the year. Again.

One would think that the Canadian media establishment would take a moment, buckle down, and learn something about the history they are avenging after the colossal embarrassment that was Canadian Parliamentarians giving a standing ovation to Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka, and the subsequent resignation of now-former Speaker of the House Anthony Rota.

One could only hope.

Within days, Canadian legacy news outlets doubled down in their group think, which excuses everything Ukrainian in order to market the war in Ukraine effectively. Let me be clear: as someone who has lived through the media

beating the war drum during the invasion of Afghanistan, and how western media effectively made the case for the invasion of Iraq on a lie, I am always skeptical when I hear those media promoting war as the only option. War is ugly and has unintended human and geopolitical consequences, yet we don't hear the anti-war perspective from our legacy media. Instead, we are treated to historical revisionism to fit the marketing and branding of this conflict. Remember that our enthusiasm to save Afghanistan resulted in generations of trauma and destruction for the Afghan people, only to be back where we started. I also have questions about how the case for Ukraine has been marketed in the Canadian press. Let me be clearer: I think Russian President Vladimir Putin is as dangerous as you do, and no, there is no justification for invasion of self-determined peoples. So, before y'all call me a Russian spy or what I write Russian disinformation, please note that I have yet to be wrong in these pages.

Canada's legacy media and political class failed to show the proper humility and regret for

embarrassing every person living in this colonizer-crested country called Canada. Instead, they are sanitizing Ukrainian involvement in Nazi war crimes. For example, Canadian legacy media have dictated that we cannot call a Nazi a Nazi, instead, they're "Nazi-linked." The Canadian Press wrote a whole article engaging in the bothsidesism of a Nazi-linked Nazi: "Jurij Klufas says the veteran is being treated unfairly and that countries, including Canada, have cleared his division of war crimes." Prominent voices in media have written whole Substack entries about how war is complicated, no one really knows, and the SS Galicia division was cleared by the Deschênes Commission. This political reporter does not reveal that much of that report was censored, as David Pugliese did in the *Ottawa Citizen*: "The federal government has withheld a second part of a 1986 government commission report about Nazis who settled in Canada. In addition, it has heavily censored another 1986 report examining how Nazis were able to get into Canada. More than 600 pages of that document, obtained by this newspaper and other organizations

through the Access to Information law, have been censored." Much of the analysis of legacy media voices are tacitly disinfecting the white supremacist genocidal acts, rather than centring their mainly Jewish victims.

Politico, which should know better, ran a column that promotes the viewpoint that war is complicated, Hunka had no choice, and questioned whether we really know if the SS Galicia actually committed war crimes, and if they did, did Hunka? All of this philosophizing to excuse antisemitism is mind-boggling. Politico allowed this author to pollute its pages by equating the statements of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center with Russian disinformation, saying their statement of crimes against humanity in the Second World War "doesn't seem to have any more substance than the accusation by Russia."

Even our public broadcaster decided to participate in the sanitization of white supremacist war criminals. CBC News wrote a sympathetic article about the Hunka family having to escape and go into

hiding in North Bay, Ont., which I'm sure are better circumstances than that of his Jewish victims and he will receive a much better fate, at that. This must be what CBC bosses mean when they talk about diversity and inclusion; the inclusion of Nazis does expand the diversity of white supremacists.

It is not surprising that with the weak state of Canadian news media they would sell out their democratic duties of challenging power for a buck and an extra click. And given the threats from the Conservatives to defund the CBC, it's not surprising the institution is bending over backwards to appease the right of the political spectrum. *The Guardian* reminds us that Associated Press sold its soul to the Nazis for the same reason: "AP was only able to retain its access by entering into a mutually beneficial two-way co-operation with the Nazi regime." At least AP used their own funds to promote Nazi sympathy; in Canada, CBC News is using taxpayers' dollars to do so.

Nazis are evil and should be prosecuted for their attempts at genocide. I don't see why this should be controversial, yet in today's Canada, this statement is up for debate as media continue to whitewash white supremacist war criminals. This is who we are.

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

The Hill Times

Right-wing rage-farming attacks on LGBTQ kids not a worthwhile import

The anger-generating wedge issue of school pronoun policy has suddenly become a *cause célèbre* among many of Canada's conservatives.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—At least it's not as bad as Texas, where local governments are trying to figure out how to use the law to block women from passing through on their roads to obtain an abortion in a neighbouring state. But Canada's right-wingers are still lining up to import whatever they can from the culture wars that American Republicans have put at the forefront of their political strategy.

The anger-generating wedge issue of school pronoun policy has suddenly become a *cause célèbre* among many of Canada's conservatives. Federal Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre initially laid low on the issue on Sept. 20 when thousands of "parents' rights" advocates marched in Ottawa and other cities to protest LGBTQ-inclusive education policies in schools—protests met by counter-demonstrations denouncing what they see as attacks on LGBTQ human rights.

But Poilievre got on board two days later with a tweet reupping his backing of parental rights and accusing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of "demonizing concerned parents," adding: "Parents should be the final authority on the values and lessons that are taught to children. Trudeau should butt out and let parents raise their kids."

It came after Trudeau's remarks following the Sept. 20 demonstrations. The prime minister, who has said that anti-LGBTQ hatred is spreading to Canada from the United States, stated: "Transphobia, homophobia, and

biphobia have no place in this country. We strongly condemn this hate and its manifestations, and we stand united in support of 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians . . ."

Conservative leaders at the provincial level—including New Brunswick's Blaine Higgs, Ontario's Doug Ford, Saskatchewan's Scott Moe, and Manitoba's Heather Stefanson—have bought into the growing chorus of parental rights rhetoric. But none of them have gone so far as to accuse the prime minister of demonizing parents in his support of LGBTQ rights.

But we will likely hear a lot more of that kind of provocative language. In the U.S., the movement to amplify controls over public education with an eye to limiting teaching about sex, gender, and racial history has been building for decades. But it exploded into a major, intolerance-laced force in recent years with the growth of the political power of social conservatives, the anti-public school movement, and the backlash against masks and school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Across the U.S., Republican legislators are promoting hundreds of proposals to push back on LGBTQ rights, with transgender residents a chief focus of the legal clampdown. Under pressure from a few right-wing interest groups, for instance, more than 15 states have passed laws restricting or banning gender-affirming care for transgender minors. And following Florida's lead, other states are gearing up to enact so-called "Don't Say Gay" rules banning the teaching of sexual orientation or gender identity.

In Canada, Higgs brought this kind of thing into the open in New Brunswick with a policy change requiring the province's students under the age of 16 to get consent from a parent before teachers can informally use a chosen name or pronoun. But it became a heated national controversy after Moe declared his intention to use the Constitution's notwithstanding clause to impose a regulation similar to the New Brunswick rule in Saskatchewan's schools. This came in reaction to a court injunction temporarily blocking implementation of the rule.

Court of King's Bench Justice Michael Megaw ordered the injunction until a constitutional challenge can be heard in court. "I am satisfied that those individuals affected by this policy, youth under age 16 who are unable to have their name, pronouns, gender diversity, or gender identity, observed in school will suffer irreparable harm," Megaw wrote in his decision.

The judge cited expert opinion asserting that the Saskatchewan pronoun policy could, in effect, "out" gender-diverse students and that it cannot be assumed that parents will react to such children in a supportive way. "It is important to emphasize that it is not being transgender, per se, that increases the likelihood of self-harm and suicide, but rather cultural and social prejudice that does the damage," according to a submission cited by Megaw from Simon Fraser University professor Travis Salway.

Moe labelled the injunction judicial overreach and promised to move ahead with his government's pronoun policy using the nuclear option of the notwithstanding clause.

Commenting on the emergence of this issue nationally, British Columbia Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender called the anti-LGBTQ marches "hate-fuelled," and said, while peaceful demonstrations protect democracy and generate debate, the human rights of the trans and LGBTQ community "is not up for debate."

As far as it goes, the concept of parental rights is generally unassailable. At the same time, it's obvious that political leaders need to strive for a balance in school practices to protect the very small percentage of trans and gender-diverse students rather than blowing a small problem into a major rage-farming issue in order to keep social conservatives and the far-right base energized.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

Comment

Canada's top general needs to apologize for honouring a Nazi SS soldier

Even if one gives Gen. Wayne Eyre the benefit of the doubt for applauding in the moment, once the story broke, it became incumbent upon him to apologize for his misplaced tribute.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—The dust has yet to settle on Canada's blunder of honouring a Second World War Ukrainian Nazi soldier with two standing ovations in the House of Commons on Sept. 22.

Described by Australian media as a "catastrophically stupid" mistake, what made this incident worthy of international headlines was the fact that the salute to Yaroslav Hunka was made on the occasion of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's official visit to Canada.

Zelenskyy is Jewish and a number of his relatives were killed by Nazis during the Holocaust, and yet he dutifully rose to his feet for both standing ovations to thank Hunka "for his service."

When recognizing Hunka as his special guest in the gallery, then-House Speaker Anthony Rota identified him as a Canadian veteran "from the Second World War who fought for Ukrainian independence against the Russians."

To anyone with even a basic understanding of Second World War history, this should have set off alarm bells immediately. If Hunka was fighting against the Russians, that means he was fighting for Adolf Hitler's Nazis.

Canada was allied with the Soviet Union during those dark days

to liberate Europe from the Nazis. If some Members of Parliament were indeed that ignorant of this chapter in our history, they can be forgiven for being unwittingly duped into applauding a man described by Rota as "a Ukrainian hero and a Canadian hero."

To be fair, the mainstream media covering this event also collectively failed to grasp what it meant for Hunka to "fight against the Russians," and they reported the standing ovations to 98-year-old Hunka as a "moving moment."

Ivan Katchanovski, a Ukrainian-Canadian professor of political science at the University of Ottawa, burst that bubble shortly thereafter.

Within hours, Katchanovski was tweeting out photos and translated text that clearly identified Hunka as a member of the 14th Waffen Grenadier (Galicia) Division of the SS. This was a volunteer SS unit stood up in 1943 with members taking an oath of allegiance to Hitler.

Once that shocking detail began to circulate, Members of

Parliament could not distance themselves fast enough from the honour they had bestowed upon Hunka.

Rota claimed to have not known of Hunka's SS service, but the fact that the official recognition was bereft of any rank or unit mention suggests otherwise.

However, as the howls of indignation magnified, Rota took full responsibility for this colossal failure of judgement and he resigned as Speaker of the House.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau dodged the issue for three days, and then made a formal apology on behalf of all members of the House of Commons.

To date there has been no official apology to Zelenskyy, specifically, and very few of the MPs in attendance at that event have personally apologized to their constituents for inadvertently paying respect to a Nazi.

Without a doubt, the true nature of Hunka's wartime service would not have come as a shock to all Parliamentarians present for the ovations. In particular,

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland is of Ukrainian descent, and she has long prided herself on her detailed knowledge of Ukraine's history.

Also present for the ovation was Canada's chief of defence staff, General Wayne Eyre.

As Canada's top soldier, Eyre represents every serving member and veteran in the country. It is unthinkable that a career officer of Eyre's rank would be so ignorant of military history as to not realize that Hunka must be a Nazi soldier. However, even if one gives Eyre the benefit of the doubt—perhaps he was distracted by an important text message when Rota read the citation—once the story broke, it became incumbent upon him to apologize for his misplaced tribute to a Waffen SS soldier.

Eyre recently did an interview with the CBC wherein he reflected upon his experience as a young officer in Croatia. It was in reference to the 30-year anniversary of the Battle of the Medak Pocket.

Eyre was still emotional at having witnessed the ethnic cleansing committed by Croatian soldiers against Serbian civilians during that battle.

For him to rise to salute Hunka, whose SS formation committed similar slaughter in Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, can be forgiven as an error.

However, now that the truth is out, Eyre needs to retract his tribute publicly and officially.

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

The Hill Times

Justin Trudeau can't be taken for granted

The prime minister has time to turn things around, most likely by leading with his strengths and shoring up his weaknesses.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—Any-one writing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's political obituary might want to pause and reassess. While the Liberals continue their dive to seeming oblivion, I think pundits predicting Pierre Poilievre will be the next prime minister should reconsider.

Yes, 2023 has been the *annus horribilis* for Trudeau and the Liberal government, with inflation, rising interest rates, increased deficits, difficult relations with India and China, a purported Nazi in the House, and skepticism among our NATO allies and Five Eyes partners as to our commitments. And leading the way has been a prime minister seemingly unsure of his every move.

But domestic politics is rarely affected by such things as international intrigue or financial missteps. And while I have been very critical of the prime minister in the past, I think he should never be underestimated. As someone who first met him when he was three years old, and many times in later years, I think he is a decent person, with a greater sense of himself than many give him credit.

For example, I took my 16-year-old daughter to meet the Liberal caucus at their annual

Christmas party after the election in 2008. She had expressed great cynicism about politics.

As I knew some of the new MPs, I introduced her to them. Most said, "Oh, spend a day with me and I will show you politics is about helping people." When we bumped into Trudeau, he said, "So you are skeptical about politics, Emily?" When she replied "Yes, I am," he said, "Well come and spend a day with me in my constituency, and ... you will be more skeptical!" We all laughed, and it was obvious he was capable of self-deprecation to appeal to a young person.

As a politician, this ability to relate to people is the sign of an effective campaigner. He also benefits from instant recognition as a world celebrity. In monetary terms, this is worth millions of dollars in advertising. The Conservatives spent \$3-million to introduce Poilievre. The Liberals don't need to spend a cent. And given Trudeau's capacity to

prepare for a debate, I'm not sure Poilievre will have an easy time when they face off.

As prime minister, Trudeau has directed the cabinet according to his will, as Jody Wilson-Raybould and Bill Morneau discovered. He was the face of the government during the pandemic. He has ensured significant benefits for childcare, and his determination to support Indigenous people has brought him respect in a significant community.

In Quebec, his refusal to intervene on the province's new language law and his endorsement of the new federal Official Languages Act won him no friends in the anglophone community. However, it may cut into Bloc Québécois support and win votes in eastern Ontario and the Maritimes. As the MP for working-class Papineau, he is seen in Quebec as *un gars de chez nous* (one of us), despite his family name.

While his casual approach to deficits may have made him a pariah on Bay Street and the Rideau Club, for Canadians who rely on government funding, he has opened the faucet. And that wins votes.

Finally, having lived a life in the public eye, and as the child of divorce, his marital tribulations will be observed with compassion. Any lack of access in the

past is now understandable, and he is a sympathetic figure, especially in the wake of the convoy Neanderthals carrying "Fxxk Trudeau" flags.

I believe the next election will be squarely between Trudeau and Poilievre; NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh has lost any claim to being above the fray by keeping the Liberals in power with the supply-and-confidence agreement.

For those who suggest Poilievre is a sure bet, I remember John Turner leading Brian Mulroney in the polls in 1988, only to lose that election. In 2015, Tom Mulcair was the man to beat, but lost to Trudeau. History is littered with "sure thing" politicians who ended up as "never was."

Trudeau has time to turn things around, most likely by leading with his strengths and shoring up his weaknesses. Former U.K. prime minister Harold Wilson famously said, "A week is a long time in politics." If that's true, imagine what two years could be like.

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

The Hill Times

The Rock's crumbling support for the Liberals should be a wake-up call

A recent Abacus Data survey found the federal Conservatives had a nine-point lead over the Liberals in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—Something fascinating is happening with the federal political landscape in Newfoundland and Labrador. Anecdotal, for months, many have been suggesting that seas are changing—long a deep red sea plentiful with Liberal good fortune, it was felt the ocean's colour was shading back to blue. A rare occurrence, if true.

Well, the speculation is now borne out in some fresh data from our polling

company, Abacus. We polled 500 people in Newfoundland and Labrador from Sept. 19-25, and found a new current. Based on our representative online survey, the federal Conservatives had a nine-point lead over the Liberals. Specifically, the horse-race standings were Conservatives at 42 per cent, Liberals at 33 per cent, and the NDP at 23 per cent.

As our analysis piece accompanying the poll pointed out, compared to the 2021 elections results, this represents a 15-point drop for the Liberals, a nine-point gain for the Conservatives, and a six-point gain for the NDP. To put this into historical context, the last time a federal conservative party won the popular vote in Newfoundland and Labrador was in 1984 during Brian Mulroney's historic victory.

Now, before the Conservatives get too ahead of themselves and plan a Toronto Maple Leafs-like victory parade, there is still a long time between now and the next federal election. People from my province have been known to switch preferences later in the game, too.

Nonetheless, if you are a Liberal MP, staffer, supporter, or inclined voter, your concern should not be diminished because voting day is not close, or because you passionately believe the Canadian electorate

will see Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre as you do come election day. Living on a wing and a prayer is false hope, not a recovery plan.

Why are the Liberal numbers so bleak in this long-held stronghold? Well, not unlike the other parts of the country where dissatisfaction exists for the Liberals, they are recipients of mass public anger around the cost-of-living and affordability issues. When asked which factor is most to blame for the rising cost of living, 36 per cent blamed companies charging more than they profit, 31 per cent blamed decisions by the federal government and Justin Trudeau, 16 per cent blamed the COVID-19 pandemic, while only three per cent blamed decisions by the federal government. At the national level, the Trudeau government has tried to present the CEOs of grocery companies as evil villains, in the eyes of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians—at least in this survey—they are fellow tyranny travellers.

The cost of living is such an acute political problem in Newfoundland and Labrador for the Liberals because so many residents in our research indicated they are either living paycheque to paycheque, or falling behind. Astoundingly, 77 per cent of respondents identified as being in either of those categories. Only

23 per cent felt they were getting ahead and were able to save money month to month. Climate rebate cheques, grocery rebate cheques, rent subsidies, and lots of feel-your-pain language are doing—as we say out east—shag all to move the political dial for Team Trudeau.

To use another local reference, the arse is not entirely out of her for the Liberals back home. In our sampling, both Liberal ministers from the province—Labour and Seniors Minister Seamus O'Regan and Rural Economic Development Minister Gudie Hutchings—were more popular than their boss. And, in O'Regan's case, he still had a positive rating. Hutchings had a low negative. In this climate, if you are a Liberal elected official, you might take that as a win.

If this poll were to become a trend in the region—and that is a big if—massive change could be afoot in the province at the time of the next federal election. And that change would not be confined to Newfoundland and Labrador. If you are the Liberals, it is hard to imagine that staying the course is your best game plan.

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

The Hill Times

BOARD APPOINTMENTS



Governor Stefan Ingves, Chair, and Babak Abbaszadeh, CEO, Toronto Centre for Global Leadership in Financial Supervision, are pleased to announce the board appointments of Governor Timothy Antoine and Deputy Governor Elsie Awadzi.



Timothy N. J. Antoine
Governor, Eastern Caribbean Central Bank

Mr. Antoine, a national of Grenada, assumed duties as the third Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) on February 1, 2016.

Mr. Antoine is an economist and development practitioner

by training, experience, and passion. He holds a BSc degree in Economics with Management from the University of the West Indies and an MSc degree in Social Policy and Planning in Developing Countries from the London School of Economics.

From November 2005 to November 2007, Mr. Antoine served as Advisor to the Executive Director for Canada, Ireland, and the Caribbean in the World Bank Group and was based in Washington, D.C.

At present, he is the Chairman of the Eastern Caribbean Home Mortgage Bank, the Chairman of the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange, and the Chairman of CCRIF SPC.



Elsie Addo Awadzi
Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana

Mrs. Addo Awadzi has over 27 years of professional experience working in various capacities in Ghana and internationally in law, finance, policy and regulatory reforms, financial sector regulation, sustainable

development, and public financial management, among others. She is the Second Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana, a position she has occupied since February 2018. She is the second woman to occupy the Office of Deputy Governor in the Bank of Ghana's 66-year history.

Before her appointment as Deputy Governor, Mrs. Addo Awadzi was Senior Counsel of the Financial and Fiscal Law Unit of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Previously, she was a Commissioner of Ghana's Securities & Exchange Commission for six years and worked as an independent consultant for the World Bank, IFC, DfID, Commonwealth Secretariat, and USAID.

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Established in 1998, Toronto Centre was founded by the Government of Canada (Finance Canada, and then CIDA), and the World Bank Group. It is an independent multilateral not-for-profit organization that promotes financial stability and financial inclusion by strengthening the capacity of financial supervisors and regulators, primarily in emerging markets and developing countries. Toronto Centre is an implementation partner of the Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS), International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), and the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS). The Centre is primarily supported by Global Affairs Canada, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the IMF, and other valuable international partners.

Opinion

Jane Goodall Act: are good intentions good enough?

In its effort to phase out bad zoos, the legislation threatens to sweep up some of Canada's great accredited zoos in the process.

Conservative Senator Don Plett

Opinion



Since its 2022 reintroduction in the Senate by Progressive Senator Marty Klyne, the Jane Goodall Act (Bill S-241) has garnered a fair amount of interest. Some of this is undoubtedly due to the fact that Jane Goodall herself has endorsed the legislation, but it is also reflective of the growing public interest in the welfare of non-domestic animals in human care.

Bill S-241 seeks to amend federal legislation in order to give greater protection for animals held in captivity in Canada. Writers have used adjectives like

“landmark” and “global leader” to describe the legislation, and Humane Society International has called it “some of the strongest legislation for wild animals in captivity and wildlife protection in the world.” There’s no question that, if passed, this bill would radically alter the landscape for zoos and non-domestic animals held in human care in Canada.

Currently, exotic wildlife in captivity in Canada fall into three categories: accredited zoos, non-accredited zoos, and private ownership. Bill S-241 would dramatically change this framework by effectively removing the right to keep exotic animals in either roadside zoos or private residences. The legislation would make it illegal to own, have custody of, import, or breed more than 800 species of non-domesticated animals unless the animal care organization is deemed by the environment minister to “meet the highest standards of animal care.”

The problem is that the bill doesn’t define what it means by “the highest standards of animal care.” It leaves that job to the minister, and instead gives a pass to the seven Canadian zoos which are accredited through the American-based Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) by “deeming” them to be eligible an-

imal care organizations. In other words, they get a pass, but zoos which are accredited by Canada’s Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) don’t get equal treatment.

This selective categorization suggests that the AZA has superior standards to CAZA, and yet much of the evidence points in the opposite direction. The AZA is on record as vociferously opposing the current Canadian standards, and yet S-241 makes them the benchmark for the proposed higher standards—with which AZA also neither agrees nor complies. The hypocrisy is disturbing.

By targeting zoos accredited through CAZA, Bill S-241 threatens the exceptional conservation work currently being carried out by these institutions. For example, African Lion Safari in Ontario has been successful in breeding 30 species that are considered endangered, and 20 species that are considered threatened. They are renowned for their research and conservation efforts involving giraffes, Asian elephants, blue-throated macaws, Eastern Loggerhead shrikes, barn owls, bald eagles, and rhinos. Parc Safari in Quebec also focuses on the conservation of endangered species through reproduction and reintroduction. They have successfully reintroduced cheetahs to Africa that were born at the Parc.



There’s no question that, if passed, Bill S-241 would radically alter the landscape for zoos and non-domestic animals held in human care in Canada, writes Sen. Don Plett. *Unsplash photograph by Jackie Park*

But while both of these institutions are accredited by CAZA, they are not accredited by AZA, which means that Bill S-241 threatens their survival (along with more than 15 other CAZA-accredited zoos) and the conservation work which depends on them.

The bill goes on to unilaterally dictate that elephants should not be held in human care in Canada. This flies in the face of expert scientific opinion as noted by the International Elephant Foundation, which states that “elephants in North America are important ambassadors for effective conservation education activities and fundraising programs to protect the habitat and animals in range countries.” While few animal-care organizations are equipped to properly care for elephants, some are, including African Lion Safari which has a herd of 16 elephants and maintains one of the most successful conservation programs for Asian elephants in North America. As noted by the Elephant Managers Association, Bill S-241 “will effectively discontinue

the ability of organizations like African Lion Safari to continue their important work.”

Regrettably, we don’t have space to get into the question of constitutional issues (animal welfare falls in provincial jurisdiction), or the fact that radical animal rights groups are salivating because the bill will empower them to represent animals in court. The implications of both of these need to be examined at length.

In spite of its good intentions, Bill S-241 is a clumsy effort at a noble cause which is going to have more negative impacts than positive ones. In its effort to phase out bad zoos, the legislation threatens to sweep up some of Canada’s great accredited zoos in the process. The bill should be withdrawn and a better one drafted by the government after proper consultations with zoos, provincial animal welfare authorities, and stakeholders.

Conservative Senator Don Plett represents Landmark, Man., and is the critic of Bill S-241.

The Hill Times

Canada needs an inquiry into COVID-19’s lessons

The coronavirus pandemic was the most tectonic event in generations. If that doesn’t prompt a national soul-searching to examine what we have learned and what needs to change, what will?

Kathleen Finlay

Opinion



Two years ago, I proposed a royal commission to examine what we’ve learned from the pandemic, and especially its impact on Canada’s most vulnerable. A year-long inquiry into the United Kingdom’s

handling of COVID-19 has already filed its report. Australia just announced a similar commission. Canada’s inquiry is still nowhere to be found. This is a puzzling display of inaction in a country where elderly long-term care (LTC) residents accounted for 81 per cent of all reported COVID-19 deaths, compared with an average of 38 per cent in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Lightly dust the surface of the pandemic’s devastation and you will quickly discover the fingerprints of income disparity and social inequality.

Communities marginalized by socio-economic status bore a greater burden of infection and death from the virus. Long-known divergences in health-care access and outcomes for racialized populations, frequently rooted in discrimination, were allowed to grow wider with predictably dire results. A succession of reports and warnings about the vulnerability of LTC residents went unheeded.

Canadians struggling with income insecurity, if not outright poverty, were brutally attacked

by the pandemic. Yet the moral imperative of creating a liveable floor of support in the form of a guaranteed annual income has been on and off the public agenda since the 1970s.

People who were homeless, and always susceptible to the worst health outcomes, died from the virus at five times the rate of the housed population. Indigenous communities were disproportionately affected, with fissures in housing, employment, health-care access, and mental health services becoming even more pronounced. Opioid-related fatalities were well on the rise before the pandemic. They soared to record levels as the coronavirus spread.

Canada needs to know why well-trodden knowledge paths about these and other high-risk groups did not galvanize governments into faster action, and why the long-standing barriers to a decent life for too many have not yet been dismantled.

Confidence in Canada’s health-care system also took a big hit during the pandemic. Many Canadians faced life-shortening delays in surgeries and needed

procedures. Loved ones were left to die alone because family members were not permitted to be with them. Well-established practices that recognize the value of family caregivers in contributing to better patient outcomes were thrown out the door by hospitals and long-term care facilities. Health-care workers faced warlike conditions involving stress, burnout, and PTSD symptoms that will last for years. Conflicting and unclear messaging from those in charge made it difficult for Canadians to have confidence in pandemic decisions.

Trust in our health-care system continues to be a casualty of COVID-19, yet no proposal to restore it has moved into the frame of public attention. And no plan has been prepared for the next pandemic, whatever form it takes.

I am more persuaded today about the urgency of a national inquiry than when I began my call two years ago. Why? Because even though pandemic lessons abound, there are troubling signs that the federal government—the biggest actor in this long national drama—didn’t get the memo.

In the summer of 2021, and while numerous public health measures were still in place, Ottawa decided it was the ideal time to claw back Guaranteed Income Supplement payments from 90,000 of the lowest-income seniors who had previously received the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. The payments were restored following months

of advocacy, and only after a series of horror stories involving elder evictions, phone disconnections, and emergency hospitalizations came to light.

The pandemic posed one of the biggest challenges ever to the mental health of Canadians. But the federal government won’t roll out 988, the new national suicide prevention hotline I pushed to introduce to Canada four years ago, until the end of November. Its plan to deal with the epidemic of loneliness that began with the lockdowns is nowhere to be found. Canadians living with disabilities—so often the last to be considered—face a further 18-month delay in long-promised disability benefit reforms.

In so many areas, Ottawa has shown a striking tone-deafness when it comes to the exercise of moral imagination and the call for compassion. It seems to be singing the same discordant song when it comes to the lessons of the pandemic. That needs to change.

Since Confederation, Canada has had some 450 royal commissions and commissions of inquiry. The COVID-19 pandemic was the most tectonic event in generations. If that doesn’t prompt a national soul-searching to examine what we have learned and what needs to change, what will?

Kathleen Finlay is founder of the Compassion Innovation Lab and CEO of the Center for Patient Protection.

The Hill Times

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INFRASTRUCTURE



Consider more than just the environment when examining climate-resilient infrastructure, say experts p. 14

Canada's freshwater: a call for proactive climate-ready infrastructure investment p. 18

The private-side sewer infrastructure deficit in Canada is a climate change disaster p. 19

**Who can address Canada's infrastructure needs?
p. 20**

**It's time for a radical rethink on Canada's infrastructure planning, but who will have the courage to lead?
p. 21**

Infrastructure Policy Briefing

Consider more than just the environment when examining climate-resilient infrastructure, say experts

Climate adaptation in Canada and around the world is ‘chronically underfunded,’ according to a recent Canadian Climate Institute report on climate adaptation infrastructure.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Ensuring Canada’s infrastructure is more resilient in the face of increasing climate disasters will require reframing the issue beyond the readily apparent environmental impacts, according to an expert at a national climate adaptation research centre.

“The curve is upwards on what [climate change is] costing us, in terms of catastrophic events. The urgency is a financial one as much as it is an environment one. And a health one, because we are often looking at what are the impacts in terms of material damages, but it’s actually damaging people’s health and safety,” said Joanna Eyquem, the managing director of climate-resilient infrastructure at the University of Waterloo’s Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation. “I think that is a key thing that we need to crack if we want to have more available money for this. Ultimately, the private sector is benefiting from adaptation, because it’s key for business continuity and supply chains.”

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) told reporters on Aug. 25 that the federal government needs to re-examine the way it funds infrastructure projects, as Canada was in the middle of its worst wildfire season on record, as reported by CBC News. Since March, a record-setting series of wildfires across all 13 provinces and territories has resulted in the most area burned in Canada’s recorded history, according to data from the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre.

In June, then-emergency preparedness minister Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.), now minister of defence, described the level of wildfire activity as “unprecedented,” adding that



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says the federal government needs to re-examine the way it funds infrastructure projects. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

similar extreme weather events may continue to increase in both frequency and severity across Canada due to climate change, as reported by *The Globe and Mail*.

The House Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities Committee has held six meetings since May to discuss how to adapt infrastructure in the face of climate change.

Eyquem told *The Hill Times* that climate adaptation is often portrayed as an environmental issue, but it might help if adapting infrastructure to better withstand extreme weather were viewed as a revenue stream because of the financial losses that can be avoided.

“Sometimes we see adaptation as a bit of doom and gloom. It’s all about risk. But actually, it’s

a key opportunity to make life better for Canadians,” she said. “If nothing happens after [adaptation measures], that’s a good thing. It’s not that you’re going to get a big win at the end. But the win is that nothing happens, so you don’t have to pay out a lot of money.”

Climate adaptation in Canada and around the world is “chronically underfunded,” according to a May 16 report on climate adaptation infrastructure by the Canadian Climate Institute. More than 90 per cent of climate financing in 2021 was devoted to climate mitigation, compared to about seven per cent that went towards climate adaptation, according to the report.

“We have invested very little on adaptation. Whereas, obvious-

ly, we need to do both. We need to reduce emissions, but we also need to adapt to the unavoidable impacts that we are already suffering,” said Eyquem.

The Government of Canada Adaptation Action Plan, released alongside the National Adaptation Strategy in November 2022, said that “as the costs of climate change mount, it pays to be prepared,” and noted that every dollar spent on adaptation measures in the present can save up to \$15 later, including both direct and indirect economy-wide benefits.

“We somehow haven’t really got the urgency in terms of actually investing on the ground and getting things changed,” said Eyquem. “We need to accelerate our investment—and to see that

really as an investment, rather than kind of a pit of money that we’re throwing at.”

Eyquem appeared before the Infrastructure Committee on May 30, and told its members that “the business case for adaptation is very clear.” She said the national adaptation strategy is “a great start, but the implementation of the actual actions on the ground is what really counts.”

Darren Swanson, a senior associate of the International Institute for Sustainable Development, told *The Hill Times* that Canada’s national adaptation strategy has “painted the big picture” of what needs to be done in Canada in terms of climate adaptation.

“The bad news story of infrastructure is that there’s a long list of weather-related impacts to the infrastructure, but the good news side of that story is that we know what the list is. We know what those vulnerabilities and impacts are to all different types of infrastructure, whether it’s buildings, roads, marine infrastructure [or] stormwater,” he said. “The sectors have all been looking into this over the past decade or more, about what these impacts are and what are the resilience options. The bad news: it’s a long list. The good news is that list is well understood.”

Craig Stewart, the vice-president of climate change and federal issues for the Insurance Bureau of Canada, told *The Hill Times* climate adaptation requires a shift in thinking so that funding is prioritized towards areas at greatest risk in collaboration with the provinces.

“First, [the federal government] needs to undertake a significant risk identification exercise that basically maps which communities are at highest risk, from which perils, given climate forecasts. Not based upon history—what’s happened in the past—but based upon what’s going to happen in the future,” he said.

Public Safety Canada released a National Risk Profile in May 2023 to provide a national picture of the disaster risks facing Canada, and the existing measures and resources to address them.

Stewart argued that a similar study could be conducted that is “more granular,” and identifies specific communities that are at highest risk. The federal government could engage in bilateral conversations with the provinces to focus infrastructure funding in those more prone communities, he said.

“[This would be] very much a top-down approach, rather than a scattershot, bottom-up approach, which has been the case in the past,” said Stewart. “If you have a community rating system, you can then use it to send incentives if a community reduces its risk. [A community] may become more eligible for certain types of insurance, or certain types of disaster relief, or certain types of infrastructure funding.”

Stewart said having a risk rating system at the community level



Joanna Eyquem, managing director of climate-resilient infrastructure for the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, says ‘sometimes we see adaptation as a bit of doom and gloom,’ but actually, ‘it’s a key opportunity to make life better for Canadians.’ *Photograph courtesy of Joanna Eyquem*



Darren Swanson, a senior associate of the International Institute for Sustainable Development, says there’s a long list of weather-related infrastructure impacts, but the good news is ‘we know what the list is.’ *Photograph courtesy of Darren Swanson*



Craig Stewart, the vice-president of climate change and federal issues for the Insurance Bureau of Canada, says the federal government should ‘undertake a significant risk identification exercise that basically maps which communities are at highest risk’ of climate disasters. *Photograph courtesy of the IBC*

Continued from page 14

could be important because of the push to build more homes in Canada in response to the housing crisis.

On Aug. 30, Trudeau announced plans for the federal government to invest nearly \$2-billion to build approximately 16,800 homes across Canada.

The investment, which includes funding from the 2021 and 2022 federal budgets, will go toward creating 4,500 additional affordable housing units by extending the Rapid Housing Initiative, and creating at least 10,800 housing units, including 6,000 affordable units, through the Affordable Housing Innovation Fund, according to a press release from the Prime Minister's Office.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation released a report on Sept. 13 which estimated that Canada will need about 3.5 million additional housing units by 2030.

"If we're going about building three million new homes, supported by publicly funded infrastructure across the country, it becomes really important to determine where to build and how to build, and where not to build. A rating system can inform that," said Stewart. "The tie-in to the housing challenge, we think, is important. We're going to be building a lot of new infrastructure between now and 2030, and it's important to build it in the right way."

NDP MP Taylor Bachrach (Skeena-Bulkley Valley, B.C.), who sits on the House Infrastructure Committee, told *The Hill Times* Canada is experiencing more frequent and more severe extreme weather events every year. He said one priority for Canada to act on would include scaling up a national firefighting strategy.

Currently, nearly all of the wildfire fighting capacity is managed by the provinces which co-ordinate amongst themselves to deploy resources where they're needed, according to Bachrach. A more strategic approach could be to implement a national wildfire fighting force that could be deployed anywhere in Canada they are needed, he said.

"Given that what we're seeing is now a Canada-wide phenomenon, the federal government should really consider taking a national approach to what is a massive risk to the Canadian population," said Bachrach. "One of the specific needs is a water-bomber squadron that's able to be deployed where it's needed. Having a federally co-ordinated approach would have some real benefits over the current situation."

About 60 per cent of the infrastructure in Canada is owned by municipalities, and municipalities lack adequate revenue tools to address the climate risk facing infrastructure, according to Bachrach.

"The federal government needs to rethink the way that it finances climate-resilient infrastructure, so that the burden of the massive change that will be required doesn't fall solely on municipal property taxpayers," he said.

In regard to extreme weather related to climate change in British Columbia, Bachrach cited the atmospheric river that resulted in devastating amounts of rain in November 2021, which prompted a state of emergency in the province. High levels of water washed away roads and other infrastructure, and displaced more than 3,300 people.

"The atmospheric rivers ... took out a significant portion of our transportation infrastructure and brought an important part of the supply chain to a halt. People now understand, in a very visceral way, the importance of improving the resilience of our infrastructure," he said.

Quazi Hassan, a professor in the engineering department at the University of Calgary, told *The Hill Times* that re-exam-

ining Canada's infrastructure to consider climate adaptation requires examining each area historically.

"First, identify the area and then try to look historically at what happened there. If there's flooding, then definitely we need to look into a 100-year flooding scenario. If forest fire is a big concern, then we need to look into that history. We have a very lengthy database in Canada, so we could easily consult those kind of things, and then we can also move focus to the largest ones," he said.

Every province in Canada is different, and the specific weather concerns in each area, and the business sectors, must be factored into consideration for climate adaptation, he said.

"Alberta ... is heavily in the oil and gas industry. On the other hand, if you go to Ontario, then they are more towards the manufacturing kinds of industries," he said. "If you go to Quebec, maybe hydro-electricity, [and] natural resources are much more higher. We need to look into the businesses or the industry within a particular region and their vulnerability ... and then based on those things we need to adapt our policy."

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The Hill Times

Canada climate change statistics

- Natural disasters and extreme weather events are increasing in severity and frequency, and are affecting Canadians and businesses on many fronts. Effects include health impacts due to lower air quality, population displacements from wildfires, flood-induced business closures, and higher energy bills from using fans and air conditioners to stave off the extreme heat.
- From 2018-2021, spending on flood protection infrastructure rose nearly 90 per cent to \$1.7-billion. Over this period, Ontario had the highest expenditures, totalling \$2.5-billion, which is double the amount invested in any other province.
- In contrast, Prince Edward Island had the lowest spending on flood protection infrastructure over the same period, totalling \$11.5-million. However, investments in flood protection infrastructure within the province have been steadily growing, reaching \$5.4-million in 2021, up markedly from \$0.6-million in 2018.
- In 2022, private and public industries in Canada invested roughly \$112,108-million (up \$18,035-million from the previous year) in infrastructure assets.

—Source: Statistics Canada Climate Change Statistics, released on May 16, 2023, and the Infrastructure Statistics Hub

Infrastructure adaptation statistics

- Since 2010, the costs of weather-related disasters and catastrophic events have amounted to about five to six per cent of Canada's annual GDP growth, up from an average of one per cent in previous decades.
- Without adaptation, national costs from permafrost thaw damages to roads could cost up to \$200-million per year in the next decade.
- Flood damage to homes and buildings could increase from \$60-million annually to as much as \$300-million annually by mid-century and tenfold by end of century, with costs as high as \$13.6-billion annually.
- Climate-induced damages slowed Canada's economic growth in 2025 by \$25-billion annually, which is equal to 50 per cent of projected GDP growth in 2025.
- Adaptation measures could reduce net climate-related costs for road repair and replacement by 77-84 per cent by mid-century in a high-emissions scenario, but if emissions are substantially reduced adaptation can eliminate 90-98 per cent of costs by end of century.

—Source: data gathered by the Canadian Climate Institute and presented in the Costs of Climate Change series of reports

There is no net zero without nuclear energy

To achieve our goals and preserve our climate for future generations, we can't afford to ignore any clean energy solution.

Heather Chalmers

Opinion



Energy and Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson speaks at a press conference in West Block on June 15. Investing in nuclear should be the natural choice in achieving our 2035 and 2050 goals, writes Heather Chalmers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The urgent reality of climate change is especially acute in Canada. Despite our major environmental ambitions, which include a net-zero electricity grid by 2035 and net-zero emissions by 2050, our climate is warming at twice the rate of the global average.

To achieve our goals and preserve our climate for future generations, we can't afford to ignore any clean energy solution—especially not one as reliable, trusted, and effective as nuclear.

Canada has a well-established reputation in nuclear, and by no means are we resting on our laurels. We're a Tier 1 nuclear nation. There is active investment in small modular reactor (SMR) projects in Ontario like the four GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy BWRX-300 SMRs planned for deployment at the Darlington New Nuclear project site. There are also refurbishment projects underway. Eight reactors operated by Ontario Power Generation and fellow Canadian Chamber of Commerce Net-Zero Council member Bruce Power are currently undergoing renewal while still providing a third of Ontario's electricity. Additionally, Canada has peaceful use of nuclear materials and technology agreements with countries like Argentina and Australia. And recently, Canada entered into a \$3-billion export development agreement with Romania for two new Candu reactors, a deal involving another fellow Canadian Chamber Council member and Candu owner, AtkinsRéalis.

Strides are being made to maximize our nuclear potential, but they need to be made faster. This is a race after all. We require more new electricity generation capacity in the next 27 years than was built in the previous 150 years. If we can do more now, then we should do more now.

The first step is admitting that we aren't doing enough. SMR and refurbishment projects are essential undertakings, but they alone cannot provide the amount of nuclear power needed to meet increased electricity demand. We need major nuclear projects to help fill the energy deficit.

The good news is the groundwork for building a nuclear-forward future is already laid. Canada has a reputable nuclear industry, a reliable supply chain that employs 76,000 people, a supply of some of the world's highest-grade uranium deposits, and a decades-long legacy of

knowledge and expertise. Building on this foundation will require investment, but it's investment that takes advantage of our domestic skills and resources.

There are key challenges to overcome. As with most every industry in Canada, the nuclear industry is experiencing a labour shortage. Getting the trained and skilled labour needed to support a bright future in the nuclear space will require partnership between governments and the industry in promoting and ensuring the nuclear sector is and remains a great place to grow a career.

A second challenge is the need for regulatory modernization. While due diligence, environmental considerations, and Indigenous consultations will always be a prerequisite, we can't afford to let projects languish due to regulatory standstills. Luckily, regulatory modernization is not an undertaking that will require more money from the government—just the will to make a positive change.

Investing in nuclear should be the natural choice in achieving our 2035 and 2050 goals. It also has the positive side-effect of not only helping us meet our ambitions, but also enabling our allies to do the same, while simultaneously becoming energy independent and secure in a time of greater geopolitical uncertainty.

Nuclear also presents opportunity for further reconciliation and self-determination among Indigenous communities in Canada. Our fellow council member, Electricity Canada, has firsthand experience working with Indigenous communities who are proponents of a nuclear-forward future.

That nuclear-forward future is the one in which we meet our significant electricity needs, achieve our 2050 net-zero emissions goals, and help our allies. But government needs to be an active partner in getting us there through investments in talent, regulatory modernization, and the recognition that there is no net zero without nuclear.

Heather Chalmers is the president and CEO of GE Canada. She also serves as co-chair to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Net-Zero Council.

The Hill Times



CANADA TRADE INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (CTIP) FROM SHOVEL READY TO SHOVEL WORTHY

TRADE IS FUNDAMENTAL TO CANADA’S PROSPERITY, AND IT IS POISED TO GROW

According to 2022 [World Bank data](#), trade generates two thirds of Canada’s GDP, involving more than three million jobs and generating revenues that fund our social programs and other priorities.

Continued growth in the global middle-class will see more than three billion new consumers gain purchasing power to ‘buy Canadian’ and fuel the next generation of trade generated economic growth.

BUT ONLY IF WE CAN RELIABLY DELIVER WHAT WE PRODUCE

Canada dropped from top 10 in 2009 to 32nd (behind Azerbaijan) in the [2019 World Economic Forum’s global ranking of quality of transportation infrastructure](#). If you can’t move it, you can’t sell it.

BOLD ACTION AND A CHANGE IN APPROACH ARE NEEDED

Bold action is needed backed by a thoughtful plan and increased investment.

Canada needs a fundamentally different approach - a long-term trade infrastructure plan, developed jointly by governments and industry, with an unwavering focus on strategic national priorities and return on investment. projects that are *‘shovel worthy’, rather than ‘shovel ready.’*

A [2021 analysis by the European Court of Auditors](#), comparing how Australia, Canada, the EU, Switzerland and the United States manage large transport infrastructure projects, found only Canada lacks coherent, institutionalized long-term coordination and planning.

A LONG-TERM PLAN FOR TRADE CORRIDORS INVESTMENT TO SPUR THE NEXT GENERATION OF ECONOMIC GROWTH



AN ALL-HANDS-ON-DECK PRIORITY

Canadians think this type of plan is needed: 94% agree (including 54% who strongly agree) that Canadian governments and industry need to work together to create a national plan to invest in building and maintaining trade infrastructure; and it is needed now: 94% of Canadians agree (55% strongly agree): given how important trade is to Canada, we need to prioritize making sure that our trade infrastructure can effectively move people to jobs and products to market.

Canada’s provinces and territories are on board. In their July 12, 2023, communiqué, Canada’s Premiers unanimously endorsed the principles of CTIP, and highlighted the essential role of Canada’s strategic infrastructure and ongoing competitiveness in the global economy in the economic prosperity of all provinces and territories.

Canadian businesses are calling for a CTIP. The plan has been publicly endorsed by the Canada West Foundation, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Construction Association, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Civil Infrastructure Council Corporation and the Western Canada Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association, among others.

THE TIME IS NOW

We urge the federal government to immediately convene provincial, federal, municipal, Indigenous community and industry representatives to develop a Canada Trade Infrastructure Plan that delivers:

- An efficient network of trade infrastructure, with gateways and corridors supporting sustained, trade-based economic growth;
- Measurable GHG emission reductions across the entire trade transportation system;
- The infrastructure to support trade diversification, shielding our economy from over reliance on any single market; and
- A restored global reputation for Canada as a reliable trading partner and desirable market in which to invest.

A CANADA TRADE INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (CTIP) IS THE ANSWER

It is essential that governments and industry stakeholders collaborate to develop and implement permanent, long-term planning, a Canada Trade Infrastructure Plan that identifies strategic priorities, follows best-practices, and enables trade to grow the economy and build Canada.

CTIP is about long-term (20+ years) coordination and planning of investments in trade infrastructure (road, rail, air, port and marine assets) along key economic corridors, to enhance their fluidity and reliability, boost Canada’s competitiveness and restore our global reputation.

According to a 2023 Ipsos survey, Canadians are nearly unanimous in saying Canada’s trade infrastructure like highways, ports, railroads and airports are important (95%, with 64% saying they are very important) to Canada’s economy. Yet only 9% of Canadians say, based on what they see, hear or read, that Canada’s trade infrastructure is in good shape.

Both the quality of these trade assets and what they enable are important: economic growth, a greener economy, prosperity and jobs for Canadians in all regions and communities.



JOIN US!

Visit CTIP-PICC.CA to find out how you can support a Canada Trade Infrastructure Plan that identifies strategic priorities, follows best-practices, and enables trade to grow the economy and build Canada!

Infrastructure Policy Briefing

Canada's freshwater: a call for proactive climate-ready infrastructure investment

When a watershed is healthy and maintained, it can minimize climate change risk, support local wildlife populations, clean drinking water, and increase disaster resiliency.

Bonita Zarrillo

Opinion



Once again this spring and summer, Canadians have experienced the extreme and harmful effects of wildfires and flooding due to climate change. It was the longest and worst wildfire and drought season on record, claiming lives, causing loss of homes and crops, and challenging Canada's freshwater security.

It's never been more critical for Canada to proactively invest in climate-ready infrastructure to build climate-resilient communities. The federal government needs to act now.

The costs associated with the climate crisis will continue to rise unless we take a different approach. The adage of "an ounce of prevention equals a pound of cure" certainly applies here so that as a country we are prepared for the next devastating flood, drought, or wildfire.

In British Columbia, the province I call home, the rivers and lakes are the cornerstones of local economies, forests, fish, food crops, quality of life, and cultural memories. Yet, watersheds in B.C. and across Canada face increasing pressures as extreme climate events threaten their stability. When a watershed is healthy and maintained, it can minimize climate change risk, support local wildlife populations, clean drinking water, and increase disaster resiliency.

First Nations, local governments and communities are working every day on the front lines of the climate crisis with limited resources to keep watersheds healthy and secure. Indigenous and western science confirms that healthy watersheds protect against climate

disasters, like drought, wildfire, and floods. Healthy watersheds serve as natural defences against the climate crisis. Wetlands act as natural sponges, purifying water. Streambanks filter polluted runoff and provide shelter for salmon. Mature forests retain water and release it when needed most.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development highlights that natural infrastructure, such as forests and wetlands, can provide the same services at a lower cost compared to built infrastructure. These natural defences are not only cheaper to build, but also more cost-effective to maintain. They appreciate over time.

We need bold federal leadership and investments in natural infrastructure to address the climate crisis in B.C. and across Canada. The watershed sector in B.C. is a major employer and economic driver, generating more than 47,000 indirect and direct jobs and contributing \$5-billion to GDP through activities like restoration, monitoring, technology, and urban and industrial management.

The recent investment of \$100-million by the B.C. NDP government in the co-developed Watershed Security Fund with the First Nations Water Caucus is an important start, but the federal government needs to be at the table with a federal investment.

So where would the federal government find the money needed to invest in the important work of rebuilding our natural infrastructure, namely Canada's watersheds?

The federal NDP suggests it can be done through a reformed Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB). It is time for the Liberals to make the CIB a public bank with a public purpose and invest in the B.C. Watershed Security Fund, giving First Nations, and provincial and municipal governments the resources needed for better planning and decision-making, rebuilding natural infrastructure, and bolstering collaborative monitoring.

As the federal government develops the Canadian Water Agency, we can look to B.C.'s co-developed watershed security strategy and fund as a model for the rest of Canada.

It's past due for Canada to be putting public interest ahead of private profit. Protect watersheds—nature's infrastructure—and use the CIB for good.

Bonita Zarrillo is the NDP MP for Port Moody-Coquitlam, B.C., and her party's critic for infrastructure and communities.

The Hill Times

Address the climate crisis through sustainable infrastructure and mitigation, adaptation finance

Independent Senator Rosa Galvez

Opinion



The climate crisis is a looming catastrophe, intensifying as carbon emissions surge and climate-related disasters wreak havoc globally. The destruction of critical infrastructure, homes, and businesses due to extreme weather events is affecting the health and safety of millions of people. Climate change is a systemic issue that affects everyone, everywhere, albeit not in the same manner. We are all navigating the same storm, but we are not in the same boat.

The 2016 Fort McMurray, Alta., wildfire, which as of 2022 was the most expensive natural disaster in Canadian history, resulted in \$3.7-billion in insured losses. This year at Fort Chipewyan, Alta., approximately 300 kilometres north of Fort McMurray, about 1,000 people were evacuated, again due to forest fires, which affected three Indigenous communities. Data released by the Insurance Bureau of Canada reports \$3.1-billion in insurable losses resulting from the impacts of extreme weather in 2022, while research from global professional services company GHD reveals that total GDP losses due to water risk in Canada could reach \$139-billion by 2050. The destruction of critical infrastructure due to extreme weather events conflates with Canada's long-standing infrastructure gap and limited public funds for addressing this gap.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, of which Canada is signatory with 187 other nations, identifies the resilience of critical infrastructure as a key component for disaster risk reduction in line with Goal 9 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, there remains much work to be done at all levels of government if Canada is to realize the intent of the Sendai Framework.

The Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB), with a mandate to invest in infrastructure that benefits Canadians, was established in 2017 and aims to "attract and leverage private sector and institutional investment." Unfortunately, the CIB saw slow portfolio growth during its initial three years, and as of March 2023, had only committed \$9.7-billion of its \$35-billion investment capital to a mere 46 projects, attracting only \$8.6-billion in private and institutional financing.

While the 2023 federal budget brought investments in critical transportation infrastructure, committed to engage with prov-

inces and territories to revise procurement policies to ensure they benefitted Canadian workers, and committed to building resilient supply chains, what hasn't yet been met is the need to not only close the infrastructure gap, but also to assume the costly reconstruction of infrastructure destroyed by the impacts of planet warming. Adequate federal infrastructure investments can help to take financial pressure off provinces, territories, and municipalities affected with massive funding shortfalls in addressing their infrastructure concerns.

Canada must follow in the path of the United States, which in 2021 and 2022, passed two major infrastructure investment acts: 1) The Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), which should help lessen inflationary pressures as well as strengthen supply chains and aims to "rebuild America's roads, bridges and rails, expand access to clean drinking water, ensure every American has access to high-speed internet, tackle the climate crisis, advance environmental justice, and invest in communities that have too often been left behind"; and 2) The Inflation Reduction Act, which marks the most significant action on clean energy and climate change taken by the American Congress in the nation's history.

From Sept. 17-24, New York hosted Climate Week ahead of COP 28 where climate finance, including loss and damage funding, was at the centre of the debate and discussions. Adaptation finance is critical for helping communities adapt to climate hazards. However, it will not work in and of itself if equal attention is not given to mitigation finance, something my bill, the Climate-Aligned Finance Act, does by putting both goals on the same footing, as does the Paris Agreement.

Climate mitigation to reduce greenhouse gases is one side of the coin. The other side involves developing strategies for resilience and adaptation to protect both people and nature. We need our economy and our infrastructure to be more resilient, and timely implementation is of the essence. While there may be no singular solution for climate resilience it is imperative for world leaders, climate advocates, and sustainability champions to call for a massive increase in funding for climate resilience and adaptation, particularly to protect the poor and vulnerable from the devastating impacts of climate-related disasters.

Rosa Galvez is an environmental engineer, a professor at Laval University, and has served as an Independent Senator in Canada for the province of Quebec since 2016.

The Hill Times



All Canadians stand to save trillions of dollars in averted costs and reduced flood risk with the implementation of simple best practices to resolve our private sewer infrastructure deficit, writes Barbara Robinson. *Unsplash photograph by Marco Bicca*

The private-side sewer infrastructure deficit in Canada is a climate change disaster

The federal government can help educate the public around preventing sanitary sewer flooding, and could establish standards for the construction of new sewers at the national level.

Barbara Robinson

Opinion



As most Canadians are aware, there is a serious infrastructure deficit across the country. This article will focus specifically on sewer systems. Public sewer infrastructure has not been replaced at the rate necessary to keep our systems operating in good condi-

tion. To simplify: if sewers last 100 years, we need to replace approximately one per cent of the system every year, and we aren't even close. Leaking sewers eventually collapse, but this is not the primary reason that this is a problem (being a relatively rare phenomenon in public systems).

Sewer pipes in poor condition (generally older sewers, but not always) leak badly, allowing rain water and groundwater to get in, filling our sewers with clean water that should not be there. This reduces the design life of the sewer; uses up capacity in our pipes, at pumping stations, and at wastewater treatment plants; and leads directly to basement flooding and overflows to receivers. It's a climate change nightmare.

But there is an even bigger infrastructure deficit that is never acknowledged. Fully 50 per cent of the length of our sewer systems exists on the private side of the property line, via the lateral pipes that go from each building to the municipal property line. It is acknowledged by engineering experts across North America that about 60 per cent of the rain water and groundwater leaking into sewers is getting there from

private property. These pipes are never maintained because residents have no idea that they need to maintain them, and houses do not come with a sewer operating and maintenance manual.

It is time that we educated residents across Canada about the importance of maintaining their own private sewer. I speak extensively to lay audiences about sewers in general and their private lateral, in particular. I explain that if their own lateral is in poor condition, it increases the risk of flooding on their own property, as well as at their neighbours'. I recommend that every property owner get their sewer lateral inspected by CCTV *today* (a plumber can do this for about \$300) and repeat every five years. I recommend that before buying any house, new or otherwise, that they include this inspection as a condition of sale. A sewer lateral that is about to collapse is likely to cause a basement backup or flood—I simply recommend that homeowners maintain their lateral ahead of time and skip the flood. Canadians are desperate for this kind of information on how to reduce their own flood risk, and to do what they can

for climate change. This single concept can and will substantially reduce the clean water in our sewers.

An equally big concern is that new subdivision sewers are frequently leaking when they are accepted by municipalities. New subdivision sewers are built by developers and include two distinct systems: private-side sewers (governed by building codes), and public-side sewers (governed by municipal codes). This is a complex issue.

There are substantial gaps in our National Plumbing Code (and therefore provincial codes such as the Ontario Building Code) as they relate to private-side sewer materials, construction, testing and acceptance. In the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), building departments have moved to inspecting "only 10 per cent" of the private-side sewers, though this is clearly not permitted by the Ontario Building Code. This leaves municipalities with even fewer protections against leakage.

And, the inspection, testing, and acceptance procedures that are required on the public side are not always being followed. Incredibly, the construction inspector who is on site to ensure conformance with these procedures is working directly for the developer, not the municipality—a clear conflict of interest. We all learned how powerful developers are with the recent Greenbelt fiasco in Ontario. Developers also have substantial influence over the national and provincial plumbing and building codes.

The import of this is that developers build sewer systems that do not conform to the standards under which they were approved, walk away with their profits, and leave existing residents to pay for this leakage in the sewers in perpetuity. With all the rapid

construction around the GTHA, all Canadians need to be very concerned about this.

Happily, there is a simple solution to ensure that new sewers are performing as required: flow monitor all new subdivisions. This allows municipalities to take a data-based approach to ensure conformance with the *mandatory* allowable leakage values in our provincial specifications (such as the Ontario Provincial Standards). This solution neatly side-steps some of the complex issues that underlie the reasons for the leakage in the first place.

How does this relate to the federal government? The National Plumbing Code is federal, while sewers are regulated provincially and delivered at the municipal level. Municipalities need help in addressing this massive private side infrastructure deficit. Existing practices are clearly not working. Public education about private-side sewers is desperately needed.

All Canadians stand to save trillions of dollars in averted costs and reduced flood risk with the implementation of these simple best practices to resolve our private side infrastructure deficit. All three levels of government have a role to play. The federal government can help educate the public around preventing sanitary sewer flooding, and could establish standards for the construction of new sewers at the national level.

We can address the infrastructure deficit on the private side now, with little investment, by enforcing the standards we already have, updating the codes to better protect sewers, and educating our public about best practices to reduce flooding in their homes.

Barbara Robinson, M.A.Sc., P.Eng., is the president and founder of Norton Engineering Inc. *The Hill Times*

Infrastructure Policy Briefing

Who can address Canada's infrastructure needs?

The federal government's 'peace, order, and good government' emergency powers need to be invoked because surely the current infrastructure deficit, combined with the climate crisis, qualifies as an emergency.

Mariana Valverde

Opinion



Serious policy discussions about Canada's housing needs are happening at all levels of

government and in virtually all municipalities, not just big cities. Some politicians want to facilitate any type of new housing, a position that favours developers of the most profitable forms of housing: suburban single-family detached homes, and, in urban centres, tall buildings of tiny condo units. Others, like Toronto's new Mayor Olivia Chow, put the emphasis on affordable housing rather than trusting that the private sector will provide not only for people currently in Canada, but also for the hundreds of thousands of newcomers that federal immigration plans envisage.

But housing is not the only infrastructure needed. Downtown Toronto is dotted with numerous billboards warning potential new residents that there may not be schools for their children nearby. Similarly, mayors in suburban and rural municipalities in Ontario's Greenbelt have said that even if Premier Doug Ford's government changes the rules of the game to allow housing in protected land, housing cannot be built in many of those parcels because there is no plan

to extend to those areas municipal sewer, water, roads, and electricity.

Like many other countries today, Canada faces a serious infrastructure deficit. One cannot easily quantify that deficit in large part because there is no consensus about the technical standards needed to survive the climate disasters that have already caused havoc, and that will only get worse. But pothole-ridden roads and streets are everywhere, not to mention homes built on flood plains, as well as dams that can withstand 19th-century weather events, but not those of the 21st century. And then there's the vast network of what used to be called "the welfare state" and now goes by "social infrastructure": the networks of parks, schools, community centres, daycares, and all the "social" goods and services that are as necessary as housing.

Who should and could address the infrastructure crisis? The key problem is experts tell us that more than 60 per cent of Canada's current infrastructure is municipal. The federal gov-

ernment can pull a few levers to make the building of affordable housing easier, as they did in the days when the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation facilitated the building of urban housing co-operatives. But the federal government owns very little infrastructure. Even major airports and ports are run by arms-length public corporations that make their own decisions. It is difficult to find federally owned infrastructure in Canada—other than the Rideau Canal and the Trent Canal, which cannot be downloaded because their federal status is written into the 1867 BNA Act.

The provinces own and control much infrastructure: most of the roads and highways, several large electricity providers, and most of what has come to be known as "social infrastructure." Plus some transit systems, though most transit is the responsibility of cash-strapped municipalities, which is why it's more expensive and less efficient than in other countries. In Ontario, the province has worsened an already-bad situation by cutting the development charges that municipalities need to build parks, schools, and other essential amenities.

If Canada cannot overcome the jurisdictional obstacles that lie in the way of providing both housing and other necessary infrastructure, a dire future

awaits. Newcomers, who generally choose big cities as landing spots, will unwittingly drive up residential rents and real estate prices. Thousands of international students may be forced to live in illegal basement conversions for years, which, on top of being forced to work in the black market to pay their astronomical fees, will only embitter future citizens.

What is to be done? Only strong federal action resembling the United States' "New Deal" of the 1930s and 1940s can save us. Federal governments have chipped in billions of dollars for infrastructure projects chosen by municipal or provincial authorities (and/or the private sector). That is a dereliction of duty. The "peace, order, and good government" emergency powers that are exclusive to the feds need to be invoked. They were invoked in 1940 to justify creating federal Unemployment Insurance, because Depression-era unemployment was an emergency. Surely the current infrastructure deficit, combined with the climate crisis, qualifies as an emergency. Premiers will grumble, but only Ottawa can implement a Green New Deal.

Mariana Valverde is a professor emerita at the University of Toronto. Her latest book is *Infrastructure: New Trajectories in Law* (Routledge, 2022).

The Hill Times

Setting net-zero goals is one thing, delivering on them is another

A Concordia University project will offer a blueprint for cities elsewhere in Canada and around the world to develop and test scalable decarbonization solutions that meet their own local targets.

Graham Carr

Opinion



Soon I'll be going to work every day in a laboratory. As a historian by training and a longtime university leader, you might think I'd be nervous about this change, but I couldn't be more excited. Let me explain.

This past April, Concordia University launched PLAN/NET ZERØ, an ambitious project to tackle our main source of carbon emissions: the 80 buildings on our two campuses. To encourage multi-sector stakeholders to work together, we'll transform our campuses into open "living labs" focused on achieving net-zero emissions.

As a first step, we issued a request for proposals for a deep retrofit of one of our main buildings in downtown Montreal. Working with industry collaborators, Concordia will overhaul its systems to reduce energy consumption, measure energy efficiency, and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Although my downtown office happens to be in this building, we're beginning here because it's a microcosm of campus activities. Connected to the Metro, the building combines offices, classrooms, student services, restaurants, and retail spaces. This mixed use and physical integration into the city's core make it an exceptional testbed from which we, and others, can learn.

PLAN/NET ZERØ is Concordia's first giant step toward achieving carbon neutrality

by 2040. Because of its unique scale, the project will also offer a blueprint for cities elsewhere in Canada and around the world to develop and test scalable decarbonization solutions that meet their own local targets.

Setting net-zero goals is one thing; delivering on them is another. Perhaps the biggest infrastructure challenge to achieving decarbonization is getting a handle on how to retrofit the massive, diverse ensemble of existing buildings in every city and community in the country. For example, it's estimated 70 per cent of buildings standing today will still be in use as of 2050. This statistic underscores that much of our collective decarbonization challenge is about retrofitting existing buildings, not just new construction.

It's here that the scale of PLAN/NET-ZERO becomes critical. Serving tens of thousands of students, faculty, staff, and visitors each day, Concordia's building infrastructure supports a huge range of activities: academic, administrative, sports, research, performance, and much more. Our campuses—one in the heart of downtown and the other in a residential neighbourhood—

are home to buildings from almost every phase of Montreal's architectural history over the last 150 years.

Our goal is to work with partners to design and implement a comprehensive strategy that will maximize savings and resilience. By integrating the energy grids of each campus—which will be a major accomplishment in itself—we can reduce consumption, store surplus power, and then channel energy into surrounding neighbourhood grids at peak times.

With world-class research expertise in electrification, net-zero energy building design, and smart, resilient cities, Concordia and our partners are well positioned to deliver a decarbonization project of this magnitude. Last April, the Government of Canada supercharged sustainability research at Concordia with a \$123-million grant from the Canada First Research Excellence Fund to lead a seven-year project on Electrifying Society.

We believe PLAN/NET ZERØ has unique potential, and not just in terms of engineering or technological innovation. It's also an opportunity for financial

institutions to collaborate with our business school and District 3 incubator to seed startups in the green-tech sector, as well as to create baselines for evaluating risk and structuring funding for the major green-energy projects that are destined to become the new normal.

Getting to a new normal won't be easy. We must recognize that it means fostering social acceptance and adaptability, both in terms of adopting novel technologies and new patterns of energy consumption. Municipal governments—indeed, all levels of government—need to develop evidence-informed policies to incentivize and support the green revolution.

Very soon, I hope to be co-writing op-eds with some of our partners from inside one of PLAN/NET ZERØ's living labs.

More importantly, as a university leader and believer in higher education, I hope the experiments that Concordia is leading now will produce real solutions to one of the greatest challenges of our time, including through innovative academic programs geared to sustainability and tomorrow's needs.

And let's hope that, one day, all Canadians can enjoy going to work in intelligent buildings designed with beating climate change in mind.

Graham Carr is president and vice-chancellor of Concordia University in Montreal.

The Hill Times

Despite obvious linkages and necessary interdependencies among all types of infrastructure, managing infrastructure effectively has become a jurisdictional hot potato, writes Ashleigh Weeden. *Unsplash photograph by Jamie Street*



It's time for a radical rethink on Canada's infrastructure planning, but who will have the courage to lead?

Canada's outdated, siloed approaches to infrastructure management have resulted in fractured, mismatched programs and policies across different ministries and orders of government.

S. Ashleigh Weeden

Opinion



Most people only notice infrastructure when it breaks or fails. Otherwise the critical physical and social systems and structures that enable everything about our daily lives tend to be taken for granted. In the last year alone, many have discovered that

the infrastructure they count on is actually quite precarious and no longer fit to purpose in a rapidly changing climate.

For rural and remote regions, chronic underinvestment and, in some cases, active disinvestment in critical infrastructure has made many communities extremely vulnerable to environmental or economic shocks. If there is only one road in or out of your community, or no roads at all, emergencies and infrastructure failures become an entirely different type of existential threat. As many Canadians faced one of the worst wildfire seasons on record, others struggled with floods, and still others faced drought, it has become impossible to ignore the fact that we must radically rethink the way we design, plan, and fund infrastructure at all scales.

At the federal and provincial level, most infrastructure is largely funded through lottery-style or application-based programs, rather than through long-term, needs-based, or holistic planning. This poor approach to such a critical portfolio has resulted in significant inequity. Communities with the time and resources to

pursue the latest funding program benefit, while those most in need go without.

Canada's outdated, siloed approaches to infrastructure management have resulted in fractured, mismatched programs and policies across different ministries and orders of government. Further, very few programs are ever meaningfully or tangibly evaluated once in place. This is compounded by a worrying trend in government communications about policy and funding announcements, which are increasingly opaque and make it difficult to determine whether such announcements represent "new" money or are simply a repackaging of prior commitments.

Most concerning, it is almost impossible to determine whether, when, and how a given budget allocation was actually spent without significant investigation, sometimes to the point of filing Freedom of Information requests to multiple orders of government. Though perhaps not maliciously crafted to be so confusing, the complexity and lack of transparency in how Canadian governments, at all levels, manage and fund critical infrastructure makes

it difficult to determine whether the investments being made are actually happening at the right time, at the right level, and to any meaningful or tangible benefit to communities.

Despite efforts to improve asset management planning at the municipal level, most infrastructure planning remains limited to outdated ideas about what counts as infrastructure. For example, green infrastructure—which includes everything from parks to rivers to urban bioswales—is often excluded, despite its critical importance for adapting to climate change. Similarly, broadband and energy are often set aside and not integrated into broader infrastructure planning. The same goes for housing infrastructure, which is a major factor in producing the current housing crisis.

Despite obvious linkages and necessary interdependencies among all types of infrastructure, managing infrastructure effectively has become a jurisdictional hot potato. It remains unclear whether any order of government is prepared to take responsibility and accountability for the mess we find ourselves in today. Doing

so will require a good hard look at whether the people responsible for these critical portfolios actually know what they're doing.

If Canadian communities are going to survive—let alone thrive—in the coming decades, all orders of government are going to have to stop pointing fingers at each other for their collective failure to appropriately manage the infrastructural networks that make up the nervous system for our social, economic, and environmental existence. Our governments must also stop referring to dollars announced or spent as if that is the most important metric; it does not matter how much money is spent if it is not the right amount, on the right thing, at the right time. It is critical that infrastructure policy and programming undergo a rigorous examination and evaluation that focuses on whether anyone is actually any better off.

Canada is a large, geographically challenging country. Ensuring that everyone, regardless of where they live, has access to the same quality of life as enabled through high-quality infrastructure requires governments to understand that a changing world requires different types and levels of investment. It will require decision-makers to exercise that rarest of qualities: leadership. It's long past time for a radical rethink of Canada's infrastructure—who will have the courage to lead the way?

S. Ashleigh Weeden, MPA, PhD is an award-winning rural futurist whose work focuses on the way people, place, and power dynamics are reflected in, and affected by, policymaking, particularly in rural contexts. She earned her PhD in rural studies from the University of Guelph and currently serves as a research associate with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (Ontario office).

The Hill Times

News

Muslim group demands apology, nuance from Trudeau after condemning 'parental rights' protest

Lack of nuance from LGBTQ+ allies on gender identity protests veer into Islamophobia, allowing the 'parental rights' slogan to become a 'bludgeon' against the community, say transgender and Muslim advocates.

Continued from page 1

to protest gender and sex education curriculums and their right to "opt out" of classroom activities and school events related to Pride month in accordance with their personal and religious beliefs. A large number of those rallies were organized and attended by Muslim parents, who say their children are being forced to participate in school activities related to Pride and sexual or gender education.

Those protests were also met with large numbers of counter-protesters who showed up in support of those policies and what they view as an attack on LGBTQ+ students and gender-inclusive policies in schools. NDP

Parental rights protestors gathered on Parliament Hill on Sept. 20 for one of the '1 Million March for Children' rallies held across Canada, opposing teaching about gender and sexual identity in schools and in support of parents' rights to decide their children's moral and social upbringing. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*



Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) and several members of his caucus also joined the counterprotesters in Ottawa.

While the protests remained overwhelmingly peaceful despite tense interactions between protesters and counterprotesters, the protests did feature a number of troubling instances of hate directed towards the LGBTQ+ community, including videos of children and young protesters stomping on rainbow flags, or one child

calling gay people "psychopaths" and "disgusting" in front of a large crowd of cheering adults.

Later that day, Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), Women and Gender Equality and Youth Minister Marci Ien (Toronto Centre, Ont.), and Diversity, Inclusion, and Persons with Disabilities Minister Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Ont.) spoke out in support of the LGBTQ+ community and condemned the rise in hate targeting it.

"Let me make one thing very clear: Transphobia, homophobia, and biphobia have no place in this country," Trudeau wrote in a social media post. "We strongly condemn this hate and its manifestations, and we stand united in support of 2SLGBTQ+ Canadians across the country – you are valid, and you are valued."

In response, the Muslim Association of Canada (MAC) condemned those remarks, singling out the statement made by Trudeau, as well as various remarks made by school board and union officials.

MAC said that characterizing the protests as hateful "unjustly demonize[s] parents and alienate[s] countless students," while increasing "the potential for those students to face bullying and harassment in schools, both by educators and peers."

"Civil rights organizations and Muslim organizations across the country have documented numerous validated accounts detailing situations where children have been coerced into activities that contradict their faith, or where parents teaching religious values to their offspring have been unfairly attacked," reads MAC's statement. "We call on politicians and school boards, beginning with Prime Minister Trudeau, to retract their deeply inflammatory and divisive comments and issue

an apology to the thousands of Canadian parents hurt by these comments."

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) quickly latched onto the statement, re-posting it on social media and expressing his agreement. "Trudeau should retract, stop dividing, drop his radical agenda & butt out so parents can raise their kids," Poilievre said on X.

Summeiya Khamissa, a youth network project co-ordinator at the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity and founder of the Queer Muslim Network Toronto, said while parents may be concerned about their children being exposed to concepts of gender identity at school without their consent, the absence of those concepts didn't stop Khamissa, who identifies as genderfluid and transgender, from realizing their own identity.

"Queer people and queer children are already around you, and they may be someone in your own family," Khamissa said. "You can either choose if you want them to remain Muslim and part of your family or not, because that's the only thing they have a choice over. I choose to be one, and I'm grateful for that. But it's a hard choice, especially with the community that is actively pushing me out and actively telling me that I don't belong here."

While MAC declined a request for an interview with *The Hill Times*, Nabil Sultan, the association's director of communications, agreed to respond in writing to clarify its position and highlight that the concern of the majority of Muslim parents who attended the protest is centred on "the rights of parents to have a say in their children's education, especially when it intersects with religious beliefs, and for children to have the right to opt out of activities without consequences."

"In light of the prime minister's recent statement and those of other influential figures regarding the protests, MAC felt it was important to stand up for thousands of parents who felt compelled to voice their concerns about children being coerced to participate in Pride activities, punished for opting out, and children being told their parents don't matter and your religion doesn't matter," Sultan wrote.

Sultan agreed it is important for leaders like Trudeau to condemn any form of prejudice when it occurs, noting that MAC had distanced itself from the protests in a previous statement on Sept. 18 due to its unfamiliarity with the organizers and concern over potential participants seeking to incite violence while advising legal and "morally responsible" behaviour from those who did choose to participate. However, he said Trudeau's statement contained no such nuance.

Sultan said that while the "overwhelming majority of these protesters, across various cities, were parents genuinely concerned about their children being subjected to harassment in schools and facing an educational environment that is exclusionary

Continued on page 23



Protests have been largely painted as the product of far-right activism, but they also featured thousands of Muslim parents and students who say they are being forced to participate in school activities related to Pride and sexual or gender education without the option of not participating on grounds of religious freedom. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Continued from page 22

and unsafe,” Trudeau’s statement uniformly condemned all of the protesters as homophobic and transphobic.

“The prime minister should have distinguished between the actions of a few and acknowledged the sincere concerns of the majority,” Sultan wrote, adding that it is “entirely possible to provide inclusion in a manner in which the rights of one group do not infringe upon or diminish the rights of another.”

Sultan said that instead of fostering an atmosphere of understanding and inclusion, Muslim students and parents have been met with “indoctrination,” pointing to reported instances of Ottawa elementary school children being made to participate in classwork centred around an online resource entitled “I’m a Muslim and I might not be straight,” or the response to those parents and students who declined to attend classes during Pride month.

In June, a video circulated online that allegedly showed an Edmonton, Alta., public school teacher verbally reprimanding Muslim students for skipping school in order to avoid attending Pride events at the school. In the audio recording, the teacher is heard making comparisons to Uganda’s move to penalize homosexuality with a sentence of life in prison and telling the students that “you don’t belong here.”

Sultan told *The Hill Times* that rather than dismissing Muslim parents as bigoted or misinformed, “what is needed today is for the government to unequivocally acknowledge the legitimate concerns of parents who were protesting across the country and reaffirm the protection of religious rights of children in schools.”

When asked for comment, the Prime Minister’s Office referred *The Hill Times* to Khera’s office. Her office did not respond to *The Hill Times* by publishing deadline.

Advocates veering into ‘blatant Islamophobia’ in response to school board protests, says Queer Muslim Network Toronto founder

Khamissa described the current friction between the two often intersecting communities as another front of the burgeoning “culture war” permeating Canadian politics which has arisen previously in periods of economic instability.

“Oftentimes, in those moments, people have tried to make a common enemy and split people, and that’s what I’m seeing now,” Khamissa explained, pointing to fearmongering during the AIDS crisis or so-called “Satanic Panic” targeting gay men in the 1980s.

Currently, the disinformation is primarily targeting the transgender community. However, Khamissa, who identifies as genderfluid and transgender, said dismissing all of the concerns as originating on the far right isn’t entirely accurate.

“I think that a lot of people, regardless of where they fit politically, can get fearful of transgender people,” Khamissa explained, noting that much of the misinformation they have seen online is aimed at immigrant parents in general.

Khamissa added that the response to the protests overemphasized the participation of members of the Muslim community, noting that while there was a sizeable number of Muslim participants at the demonstration they attended in Toronto, there was also a large portion of participants from across South Asian diaspora communities.

While Khamissa is confident that the progressive voices who care about protecting the rights of all children outnumber the voices of those who would prefer to see those two communities in conflict with one another, they are concerned by some of

the responses from progressives that have veered into “blatant Islamophobia.”

“I’ve seen a lot of queer people being a lot more comfortable expressing their Islamophobia,” Khamissa explained, adding that the progressive side has to find a better balance in standing up for the human rights of queer and transgender students without violating the rights of Muslim students.

To those members of Khamissa’s community, as well as the signatories of MAC’s statement, Khamissa appealed to another “old tradition” among many Muslim children they knew growing up, regardless of sexual or gender orientation: hiding things from your parents.

“That’s a very uniting part of being a Muslim child,” Khamissa explained. “We change when we get to school, or we don’t tell them who our boyfriends and girlfriends are, and that isn’t new.”

‘When it becomes a slogan, it becomes a bludgeon’: Fae Johnstone

Fae Johnstone, executive director and co-owner of consulting firm Wisdom2Action and president of Momentum Canada, said the conflict between Canada’s queer and Muslim communities is “right out of the far-right playbook of pitting marginalized communities against each other,” but that while there may have been examples of transphobia and homophobia, it’s also important to condemn the Islamophobia that exists within the queer community itself.

“We don’t always do justice when different communities have different understandings of themselves and the kind of world we want to live in,” Johnstone said. “But at the same time, I think all of this has been weaponized by far-right groups that have historically channeled their support to anti-Muslim Islamophobic policies as well as anti-queer ideologies.”

Johnstone added that the misinformation peddled by those far-right groups has weaponized the broader public’s lack of familiarity with the queer and transgender community against it, but cautioned that LGBTQ+ advocates can’t lose sight of the fact that the fight for their rights is one shared with the Muslim community.

“The far right is gonna be happier and happier as they move forward with policies that will threaten all of our freedoms and rights while we’re distracted fighting each other,” Johnstone explained.

Ensuring that the discussion remains nuanced and balanced between the rights of both communities is something Johnstone said has been lacking in some of the responses to Muslim students and parents who attended the protests, or who have sought to opt out of Pride month-related events or from gender and sexual education classes.

“I believe that every kid deserves access to comprehensive sexuality education because that helps them be the healthiest and make informed decisions, but in other contexts, there are reasonable cases for an exemption,” Johnstone said. She noted that those instances of overreach in response to Muslim students and parents, including the response from politicians like Trudeau, only contributes to framing the discussion around the reductive slogan of “parental rights.”

“When it becomes a slogan, it becomes a bludgeon,” Johnstone added. “A lot of the fear and anxiety being weaponized here isn’t actually because folks have a nuanced understanding of the existing policies, and instead they have these examples of our community or individuals not being good to Muslim folks around this conversation.”

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The Hill Times

‘The devil’s in the details, and we don’t have any’: critics, civil liberties groups decry feds’ lack of clarity on changes to privacy and AI bill

Continued from page 4

While McSorley said he understands why AI regulation would be included in the innovation minister’s portfolio, the concerns civil liberties groups have with its current formulation are a symptom of the conflict between ISED’s mandate to promote industry, and the mandate to regulate it.

That conflict is one of the reasons those groups have called for AI regulation to be removed from ISED’s sole jurisdiction, and for the proposed AI and data commissioner to be kept at “arm’s length” from the department and given independent powers of investigation and enforcement, rather than being appointed and having those powers delegated by the minister.

Konikoff added that while he doesn’t begrudge ISED and Champagne their focus on spurring Canadian innovation in the AI sector, that focus overemphasizes the interests of private business.

“Having some sort of external, independent body that isn’t under the ISED banner would be able to shift that emphasis ever so slightly away from those private interests,” Konikoff said, pointing to the elements of the legislation dealing with “legitimate interest,” which he says provides excessive leeway to private business to regulate themselves regarding when they can collect or use personal information without a user’s knowledge or consent.

Code of conduct a ‘good first step’ in nurturing evolution of Canada’s AI industry: Ksenia Yadav

Ksenia Yadav, an adjunct professor at Carleton University and director of data engineering and AI/machine learning (ML) at Enablence Technologies, said while it is important to strike a balance between the new technology’s powerful benefits and its very real potential for harm, it is critical to ensure any proposed regulatory or oversight framework doesn’t stifle innovation at a crucial moment in the technology’s early evolution.

It’s important to responsibly guide the deployment of AI systems to align them with Canadian values, as well as competition and privacy laws, said Yadav, but it’s also crucial the government not stand in the way of the important research happening in both academia and the technology sector to support the deployment of AI systems and nurture their development.

Yadav pointed to the government’s recently unveiled voluntary AI code of conduct on the use of advanced generative AI systems, which Champagne has said will complement Bill C-27 and promote the safe development of the systems in Canada. Signatories to the code of conduct—which already includes Canadian tech companies like Telus and BlackBerry—agree to abide by several principles surrounding accountability, safety, human oversight and monitoring, and transparency regarding how they collect and use personal information, as well as implementing methods to remove bias from the systems they develop or deploy.

Yadav said the code of conduct was a “very good first step,” noting it’s important that it remain voluntary. “If you start making it mandatory, that slows everything down and makes it a bureaucratic process and that would dangerously stifle innovation.”

Fortunately, that balancing act between innovation and regulation is not new or unique to AI technologies, Yadav said, noting that the responsibility of developers to ensure the ethical development of AI mirrors the accountability required of engineers to uphold similar standards of reliability and quality across various technological domains. Furthermore, Yadav said the suggested amendment to require “high-impact” systems to have human oversight when making financial or employment decisions is an important step in catching those instances of bias before any harm can be done.

While Yadav said she understands the concerns about the lack of details regarding the final text of those amendments, she noted that the willingness to adapt to the rapidly changing environment is more important than having details that might not be relevant by the end of the committee’s study.

“Technologically, the development of AI/ML is so rapidly evolving that if we were to have this conversation two months from now, it would have a completely different context,” Yadav said, explaining that the technology’s implications on society and the government’s response to it would need to adapt just as rapidly.

“This cannot be a bill that takes care of all of those potential evolutions at this point,” Yadav continued. “This is a start, and our government will need to evolve their solutions and recommendations to grow with the technology.”

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News

‘Lack of direction’: delayed release of mandate letters raises questions over government’s plans

The more than two-month wait so far in publicly releasing mandate letters is the longest delay following a major cabinet shuffle since the Trudeau Liberals took power in 2015.

Continued from page 1

eight days for ministers to receive their mandate letters.

The only shuffle in which it took longer than the current delay for mandate letters to emerge was the 136-day wait following the resignation of Bill Morneau for then-new Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) and Inter-governmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) to receive “supplementary” mandate letters along with all other cabinet ministers.

A PMO spokesperson referenced the 2021 mandate letters when asked about new cabinet instructions being released.

“Current mandate letters were published in accordance with the beginning of the mandate in December 2021, and remain available online,” Alison Murphy said in an email, remarking that there is “nothing new to confirm at this time.”

When appearing in front of the House Defence Committee on Sept. 28, new Defence Minister Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.) was asked whether he had been given a new mandate letter, and he replied that he had not.

“I’m acting on the mandate letter that was provided to my predecessor Minister [Anita] Anand,” said Blair.

That mandate letter was written before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which the government has suggested has led to a change in Canada’s defence landscape.

The 2021 mandate letters also don’t cover new Citizens’ Services Minister Terry Beech (Burnaby North-Seymour, B.C.), who was shuffled into a post that didn’t exist prior to July 26.

Asked about a mandate letter for Beech, Murphy said she had nothing to add.

A spokesperson for Beech confirmed to *The Hill Times* that he has yet to receive a mandate letter.

When the Trudeau Liberals came to power in 2015, the gov-



Citizens’ Services Minister Terry Beech has yet to receive a mandate letter for his newly created cabinet post. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ernment broke tradition by publicly releasing mandate letters, which outline key policies and initiatives that the prime minister expects his cabinet ministers to work on.

Former NDP staffer Cameron Holmstrom said the delay in releasing the new mandate letters spotlights the reason cabinet was shuffled in the first place.

“This was not a shuffle they necessarily intended on making,” said Holmstrom, now principal at Niipaawi Strategies. “This was more out of necessity than desire to do so.”

He said the extended period of time it’s taking to release the mandate letters shows a lack of forethought in creating a governance plan with the shuffle.

“It was more reactive than being proactive on their part,” said Holmstrom, remarking that releasing mandate letters shouldn’t take a long time.

He said if the shuffle was made in response to a certain need or problem, then cabinet instructions are needed to show the government’s new plan of action.

“The fact that you’re not releasing [the letters] almost undercuts the effectiveness of trying to say, ‘Look, we’re working on it,’” he said.

Without cabinet instructions, Beech’s appointment could seem to cynics as simply putting someone in a seat, as opposed to addressing a specific need, Holmstrom said.

“The best way to disprove that and quiet those critics would be to have that letter, but the fact that it isn’t there tells me that this is much more of a reaction to something and maybe more of

a communications exercise than actual governance,” he said.

Conservative commentator Rodolphe Husny, a former Hill staffer who ran for his party’s leadership in 2020, said mandate letters are “crucial to provide clarity on expectations.”

“Delay [in their release] is symptomatic of [a] lack of direction of this government,” he said. “How can a newly appointed minister, especially in a new portfolio, issue directions without it? It’s the equivalent of navigating without a map or a compass, and means they are just in a reactive, transactional approach to governing.”

Husny remarked that a lot has changed for the Canadian economy and geopolitics since the Liberal government last re-

leased mandate letters in December 2021. He added that, during his time on the Hill, they were a “helpful document” for ministers when instructing bureaucrats, and for ensuring co-operation between other ministers and departments with shared responsibilities.

Former senior civil servant David Zussman said he is “worried” and “concerned” that at least two cabinet ministers (or their offices) have indicated that they have not yet received a mandate letter.

“With the absence of mandate letters, we really don’t know what each and every individual minister is expected to do,” said Zussman, who served as assistant secretary to cabinet for program review and machinery of government during the government of then-prime minister Jean Chrétien. “It’s very possible that they themselves don’t know what the prime minister wants them to accomplish in the remaining months before the next general election.”

He said the priorities of the government are really only revealed in mandate letters, calling the instructions a “very useful management tool and accountability tool for the government.”

Zussman was puzzled as to why the cabinet instructions have yet to come out.

“I’d like to think they consider the mandate letters to be important,” he said, remarking that even before mandate letters were made public, they were an “important device in getting the government started in the right direction.”

The mandate letter is a “perfect time and opportunity” for the government to make clear to the

public what Beech will try to accomplish in his new cabinet post, Zussman said.

“It may be a missed opportunity. It does surprise me, given the experience of the Prime Minister’s Office,” he said.

Former Liberal staffer Elliot Hughes said he expects the cabinet instructions will come out shortly, but remarked it would have been ideal if they had been released to align with the return of Parliament last month.

“But I think it’s pretty clear what everyone and all cabinet ministers need to be working on, based on what’s going on in Canada and globally—so housing, affordability, and so on. So, while I think it would be helpful for the mandate letters to come out, I also don’t think it’s impeding or stopping the government from following through on what it needs to be doing,” said Hughes, now a senior adviser with Summa Strategies.

He suggested the delay is likely due to the government going through a process to assess what it needs to accomplish over the next two years.

“That is a bit complex and complicated to determine,” said Hughes. “You’ve got a lot of different factors [to deal with], including the economy, the deal with the NDP, what kind of issues and policies they want to focus on for the rest of the mandate to the lead-up to the next election.”

“My sense is it’s taking a bit longer than normal because they want to make sure they get it right, and that they lay out very clearly what their priorities are going to be over the next couple years. With a lot of factors influencing that, that takes some time and deliberations,” he said. “I think it’s probably going to come out in the next couple of weeks.”

In the case of Beech, Hughes said the new minister has probably been told what is expected of him, but remarked that having additional specificity of what expectations are for him will be “very helpful.”

Former Privy Council clerk Michael Wernick downplayed concern over the delay in releasing refreshed mandate letters.

“In most cases, ministers can just take the baton from their predecessor and work on the to-do list in previous mandate letters and deal with issues as they come up,” he said. “No one is sitting around wondering what to work on.”

But Wernick said it does lead to an “interesting case” for Beech, as it “isn’t clear where his role fits in with that of Treasury Board President [Anita] Anand, who has all the real power and levers in how government works.”

Wernick said the public mandate letters help in holding the government to account by providing a list of what it indicates will be a priority, and help to clarify the boundaries between ministers and “sort out traffic control on big files” by indicating who is leading and who is supporting work on different files.

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New Defence Minister Bill Blair says he is relying on Anita Anand’s 2021 mandate letter. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Pressed for space: Hill scribes have mixed views on continued closure of National Press Theatre

The NPT hosted its last press conference on March 16, 2020. Initially shuttered in part due to physical distancing concerns, it remains closed because of accessibility issues.

Continued from page 1

outside the House of Commons Chamber, and in multipurpose rooms throughout the precinct—the press theatre is a formal venue for such interactions.

The NPT was last used on March 16, 2020, when five ministers, chief public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam, and deputy chief public health officer Dr. Howard Njoo appeared to speak about new measures being implemented to try to slow the then-burgeoning spread of COVID-19 in Canada. The press conference was split into two panels—one with the ministers, one with Tam and Njoo—“because of the advice to keep social distance,” as Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) explained at the time.

Still, the image of five ministers—Freeland, then-public safety minister Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.), then-transport minister Marc Garneau, then-health minister Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay-Superior North, Ont.), and then-Treasury Board president Jean-Yves Duclos



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks with reporters about the SNC-Lavalin scandal in the National Press Theatre on March 7, 2019. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

(Québec, Que.)—sitting almost shoulder-to-shoulder as they discussed COVID measures and the importance of social distancing clearly underlined the NPT’s limits. Physical distancing was also an issue for interpreters, reporters, and press gallery staff in the NPT, with its narrow entrance, smaller footprint, and auditorium-style seating.

While COVID-related distancing concerns initially closed the space, accessibility issues have kept it shut. Along with tight entranceways, the use of stairs is required to reach any seats beyond the bottom row (where photographers often crouch to snap pictures), and the theatre’s systems are outdated and unable to host virtual press conferences.

And so, in the summer of 2020, the House administration decided to close the National Press Theatre.

Room 200 in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building next door was subsequently designated as the interim press theatre. In the next week or two, the interim press theatre will be relocated to Room 325 in the Wellington Building.

As in the NPT, press conferences in the interim press theatre are moderated by a member of the press gallery.

All three buildings are owned by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) and leased to the House of Commons. But, unlike the Sir John A. Macdonald and Wellington buildings which are managed by the House, management of the National Press

Building, and specifically the NPT, is given to the Press Gallery Secretariat.

When it was open, use of the NPT wasn’t limited to elected officials; any group with a connection to federal work could ask the gallery to use it. While the gallery similarly determines the rules of engagement for the interim press theatre, the venues in the Sir John A. Macdonald and Wellington buildings are multipurpose rooms that are also open for use as House of Commons spaces.

Given the reasons for its closure, the National Press Theatre requires renovations before it can be reopened.

The Press Building as a whole is set to be renovated as part of PSPC’s multi-stage project to revamp the Parliamentary Precinct (known as the Long-Term Vision

and Plan, or LTVP), but timing for when that will happen is still unknown.

Renovations to Centre Block are currently the main focus of work, and the redevelopment of “Block 2”—the city block bordered by Wellington and Sparks streets, and Metcalfe and O’Connor streets—is starting to get underway (an architectural and engineering services contract for the project was awarded this past May). The National Press Building sits within “Block 3” of the precinct, which also includes the already-renovated Wellington and Sir John A. Macdonald buildings.

“At this time, there is no target date for the full restoration and modernization of 150 Wellington Street,” said Michèle LaRose, media relations for PSPC, in a Sept. 20 email to *The Hill Times*, adding there are no plans to close areas of the building for work in advance of its full renovation.

“In the meantime, PSPC is conducting regular maintenance and repair work” to keep the building in “operating order,” she said. Scaffolding is currently erected on the exterior to allow PSPC to “carry out required condition assessments and investigations on the building’s envelope to ensure any health and safety concerns are addressed and the integrity of the building envelope is maintained,” LaRose explained.

‘When people come here, they come in our space’

The closure of the NPT has come at a distinct time: Canada’s news media landscape itself is shrinking, attacks on press freedoms are on the rise (globally and at home), and spaces throughout the Parliamentary Precinct are being revamped, creating anxiety about ensuring the gallery’s presence on the Hill is preserved—both in terms of physical spaces reserved for gallery use (like Centre Block’s Hot Room), and the spaces reporters are allowed to access.

The future of the National Press Building itself is a point of concern. Media occupancy of the building has dwindled over the years as newsrooms have cleared out due to a mix of factors, including rent hikes, prompting calls for a new vision for the space.

Speaking with *The Hill Times*, some reporters noted benefits to the interim press theatre space that’s been used in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, which was renovated in the 2010s, including improved air quality and desks for reporters to use during press conferences.

But while the interim theatre offers more modern functions, it’s outside the press gallery’s traditional turf.

“There’s a slight difference” in using the interim press theatre, said *Politico Canada*’s Zi-Ann Lum. “The difference is agency. If you’re a politician entering a space that is governed by journalists, I think that’s a different mental space to walk into.” That difference, though, is tied to the “physical space,” she noted, as today’s post-COVID virtual press



Then-public safety minister Bill Blair, left, then-transport minister Marc Garneau, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, then-health minister Patty Hajdu, then-Treasury Board president Jean-Yves Duclos, and gallery moderator Bruce Campion-Smith during the March 16, 2020, press conference at the National Press Theatre. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued on page 30

Opinion

The Online News Act must protect access to credible news on prominent platforms



Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge speaks to reporters in the House foyer on Dec. 13, 2022. A blackout of credible news on prominent platforms, because of a regulatory dispute, is not only counterproductive but a dangerous misstep, writes Saad Hammadi. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Further negotiation with the tech giants is critical to end the standoff and support the news and journalism industry.

Saad Hammadi

Opinion



People in Canada have found themselves hostage to the ongoing spat between the federal government and Meta over the sharing of revenue with news companies. Meta has restricted access to news contents on Facebook and Instagram in Canada in response to the federal government's newly introduced Online News Act, a mandatory compensation law that will come into effect in December.

Federal officials estimate that Google and Facebook will have to pay a minimum of \$234-million in annual compensation to Canadian news organizations for news that is shared on their platforms. In response, Meta argues that news is not a significant source of its revenue, and that posts with links to news articles make up less than three per cent of what people see on their Facebook feeds.

As a result of the standoff, Facebook users in Canada have lost access to news on the platform since August. When the law takes effect, Google says it will remove links to Canadian news from its search, news, and other platforms. Unquestionably, there will be a detrimental effect on people's right of access to the free flow of credible information on prominent platforms in Canada.

The news ban, a month after Meta's enforcement, has had little impact on usage of Facebook. It nonetheless gives rise to serious concerns. When people don't have easy access to credible news, they are exposed to unverified and unsubstantiated information on social media. At a time when the federal government should do all it can to protect people from the harms of disinformation, a blackout of credible news on prominent platforms, because of a regulatory dispute, is not only counterproductive but a dangerous misstep.

The consequences will be even worse if people cannot independently analyze, compare, and verify information on Google, where links to news are a critical resource. This will affect the work of scholars, researchers, journalists, and people from a wide range of professions and background. You cannot promote freedom of information and put restraints on it at the same time.

Access to credible and verifiable information is critical for people to take informed decisions. Any limitation placed on this critical access is a violation

of fundamental human rights. The sharing of news links by users on social media platforms and their availability on a search engine should not be curtailed by a revenue sharing dispute.

News media have been hit hard by the shift of advertising from media outlets to platforms like Google and Facebook, which together earn 79 per cent of all digital advertising revenue in

Canada. Meta's news blackout, even before the law takes effect, is a show of the power tech giants wield over data and people.

Tech giants should be held accountable for many reasons including transparency in their business models, their use of recommendation algorithms, their policies regarding data protection and the privacy rights of users, and their contribution

to the economy and society. Google is presently on trial before a federal court in Washington, D.C., in an antitrust case that the United States government filed three years ago. That case targets Google's monopoly in the online search market through its business partnerships. Canada, too, should have laws and regulations that provide safeguards to businesses and the general public.

The government's intervention is critical to protect the news and journalism industry. However, a compensation formula that pays news companies based on the number of full-time journalists they employ gives little protection to small news organizations that rely on freelancers and content from other sources. The proposed regulatory framework benefits only a handful of large media conglomerates.

The public broadcaster, CBC, which is already heavily subsidized, will likely be the biggest beneficiary of this regulation as it is the largest employer of journalists in Canada. Meanwhile, small news outlets fear that the elimination of a significant source of traffic for digital publications could prompt more layoffs and shutdowns.

The federal government should sit down with small media companies and take their concerns into consideration. Further negotiation with the tech giants is critical to end the standoff and support the news and journalism industry. Further law reforms must make it clear that tech giants and news businesses both have a public interest obligation to ensure access to credible news on the platforms.

Saad Hammadi is a global governance fellow at the University of Waterloo's Balsillie School of International Affairs and a human rights advocate. His X handle is @saadhammadi.

The Hill Times



As a result of the standoff, Facebook users in Canada have lost access to news on the platform since August. *Unsplash* photograph by Annie Spratt

Remembering the children

The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia



Parliament Hill's lawn was a sea of orange on Sept. 30 as hundreds gathered for an afternoon ceremony marking the third National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.



Governor General Mary Simon, left, was among the dignitaries, along with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami president Natan Obed.



The Remembering the Children event was hosted by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, in partnership with the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, and the Algonquin Nation.



A red banner containing the names of children who didn't make it home from residential schools makes its way through the crowd.



Chief Dylan Whiteduck of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation delivers remarks on Sept. 30.



Whit Fraser, left, and his wife Simon greet attendees.



Stephanie Scott, executive director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, delivers her speech.



Residential school survivor Dr. Wilton Littlechild addresses the crowd.



Algonquin Elder and University of Ottawa chancellor Claudette Commanda, left, Scott, Simon, and Fraser participate in a smudge.



Attendees were invited to place shoes, symbolizing those who didn't make it home from residential schools, at the front of the stage.

Opinion

The proliferation of new technologies is accelerating faster than any point in our history and the harms of this reality require immediate action, particularly for children and youth, writes Keith Jansa. *Unsplash photograph by Kelly Sikkema*



We need stronger online protections for children in the digital age

We are overdue for new, more substantive laws to protect kids and youth from the online harms they confront daily.

Keith Jansa

Opinion



Now that MPs have returned to Parliament, one of their first tasks should be to prioritize the review of Bill S-210, An Act to restrict young persons' online access to sexually explicit material, which makes it illegal for organizations to make sexually explicit material available to children and youth online.

As the parent of three children who use the internet and

web-based applications every day, I see Bill S-210 as a step in the right direction. But exposure to online porn is just one of the many health and safety risks in the digital world that keep many parents up at night.

Sexually explicit content infiltrating kid-friendly gaming platforms, virtual reality apps attracting sexual predators, and live streaming showing disturbing real-time abuse is but the tip of the iceberg. Online ads targeting children with harmful content are on the rise, and chat spaces often lure vulnerable kids into indecent acts. Viral "challenge" videos on social media have even led to tragic outcomes for children. A recent report showed that sexual internet luring of Canadian children has increased a whopping 815 per cent over the past five years. The effects of this lawless online environment are proving to have devastating impacts, exacerbated by the pandemic, which forced an entire generation of children into an online world that was not yet safe for them. The report noted an astronomical 51 per cent of Canadian children have indicated feelings of

depression, 39 per cent of whom also experienced anxiety. Self-harm among Canadian children increased 7.4 per cent in one year alone, a rate that continues to increase. In a similar survey that asked parents their top concerns regarding the health of their children, 66 per cent indicated their children's use of social media, 62 per cent said internet safety, and 57 per cent of parents expressed worry about their kids experiencing depression or suicidal thoughts. These statistics are both shocking and devastating. The short- and long-term realities of the world our children face are new territory not just for families, but also for public policymakers. Addressing these digital dangers to protect our youngest generation's well-being is of the highest priority.

This is a public health crisis requiring urgent action. Our solutions must be designed for no less than the contemporary world our children face. Tabling new legislation protecting children from online harms they confront daily is long overdue. We would be following leading jurisdictions in developing laws that are more

substantive in reducing the risks and ensuring the safety of children and youth online.

As an example, the European Union's proposed Artificial Intelligence Act points to the protection of children's rights as one of its guiding principles. It includes a ban on AI applications that manipulate or exploit the vulnerabilities of children, such as technologies that make content more "sticky" and are known to increase sleep deprivation, anxiety, and social disconnection in younger users. The Act also sets out due diligence requirements for high-risk AI systems that are likely to be used by children, which would support their right to the protection of their privacy and personal information.

The AI Act and other emerging online safety laws around the world are using a modern legislative framework for the digital age. Along with legislation and regulation, they recognize safety standards and certification that inform and validate how digital technology is to be developed and used.

Our country's economic prosperity wouldn't have been

possible without standards and certification to support public trust and confidence. The more our economy is powered by digital technology, the more we need strong governance tools to ensure that technology is safe and trustworthy.

Here in Canada, we have a growing body of standards designed specifically to address the development and use of digital technologies, fit for global use, and collaboratively developed by domestic experts across the public, private, non-profit sectors, and civil society in an open and transparent way. Today, the Canadian government already references hundreds of standards in public health and safety regulations that directly affect consumers. There are also certification programs that can be validated and recognized by government to support public policy needs. This approach can reduce costs for governments in having to establish and maintain their own systems for verifying conformity.

These standards and certification programs—Canadian-made, globally fit—could easily be adopted as a flexible and scalable solution.

No society bears a greater responsibility than protecting its young people. Safeguarding children and youth online is an issue that transcends party lines, even in the United States, where a recent study found both Democrat- and Republican-voting parents united in their concerns about their children's social media use—and their belief that government has a significant role to play in solving the problem.

Industry has a role to play here, as well. Technology companies and social media giants have a responsibility to implement solutions that strengthen public trust. An enforcement mechanism that provides the necessary flexibility for product and service delivery innovation, within appropriate guardrails, will help to make this possible.

Canada's progressing on its path to meeting its international commitments to protect the rights of children, but we have some ways to go. The good news: we have tools within our grasp to provide online protections with the rigor they need to be effective.

The proliferation of new technologies is accelerating faster than any point in our history, and the harms of this reality require immediate action, particularly for children and youth. Mental and physical well-being is plummeting at an alarming rate. The digital world is presenting increasing dangers to children through luring and exploitation. Parents are desperate for solutions and policymakers are beginning to scratch the surface of what these children face. So, what are we waiting for?

Keith Jansa is the chief executive officer of the Digital Governance Council, a member-led organization dedicated to providing Canadians with confidence in the responsible design, architecture and management of digital technologies.

The Hill Times



Laura Ryckewaert
Hill Climbers

Nineteen staffers confirmed in Justice Minister Virani's office

Post-shuffle changes in the office include Seth Pickard-Tattrie's promotion to deputy chief of staff and director of parliamentary affairs.

New Justice Minister **Arif Virani** has 19 ministerial aides confirmed in his office, including **Jessica Spindler**, who's been promoted to director of policy.

As previously reported, **Lisa Jørgensen**, who had been policy director to former justice minister **David Lametti**, is now chief of staff to Virani.

Spindler's been working for the federal justice minister since early 2022, starting as a policy adviser under Lametti. She was promoted to senior policy adviser early this year, and after the July shuffle, on Aug. 24, was promoted again to lead Virani's policy shop. Spindler is a former director of legal affairs and compliance for the federal Liberal Party, and before joining Lametti's office in 2022, had most recently been a resource and resolution adviser and in-house lawyer for Winnipeg's Red River College.

Seth Pickard-Tattrie has been promoted to deputy chief of staff and director of parliamentary affairs since Virani took over the justice portfolio. Pickard-Tattrie held only the latter title in the office under Lametti. He first joined the minister's office in early 2019 as a special assistant for operations, and was promoted to parliamentary affairs director by the start of 2021. A former Liberal staffer at Nova Scotia's provincial legislature, on the Hill, Pickard-Tattrie has also been a special assistant for operations to then-Treasury Board president **Scott Brison**.

Morgan MacDougall-Milne is director of litigation to Virani. A staffer in the justice minister's office since 2020, MacDougall-Milne started out as a special assistant for parliamentary affairs.

Tania Monaghan continues as director of rights implementation. A member of the Cree Nation of Wemindji, Eeyou Istchee,



Justice Minister Arif Virani, centre, speaks with reporters in the West Block on Sept. 19, alongside his senior communications adviser and press secretary Chantalle Aubertin, left. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Monaghan has been in the role since August 2021, starting under then-minister Lametti. She's a former senior legal adviser for the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, an ex-senior policy analyst with the Assembly of First Nations, and a former analyst with the Grand Council of the Crees.

Currently working under Spindler on Virani's policy team are: senior policy advisers **Dahlia James** and **Keith Torrie**, policy adviser **Isabelle Laliberté**, and policy and Quebec regional adviser **Lindsay Jean**.



Lindsay Jean is a policy and Quebec regional affairs adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Jean is the only one of the four who worked in the justice minister's office prior to the July 26 shuffle, having been hired by Lametti in her current role this past February. Before then, she'd been an associate with Lavery Lawyers in Montreal.

James marked her first day on the job in Virani's office on Sept. 27, returning to the Hill after roughly five months as senior adviser for policy with the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities. She previously spent close to two years working for Northern Affairs Minister **Dan Vandal**,

firm in his hometown of Toronto where he'd previously been an articling student.

Laliberté is a new staffer on the Hill, having completed a master of law degree at Cambridge University earlier this year. She started on the job in Virani's office on Aug. 8. Laliberté previously clerked at the Supreme Court of Canada between 2021 and 2022, and is a former lawyer with Juristes Power Law in Montreal.



Isabelle Laliberté is a policy adviser to Minister Virani. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

François Giroux continues as judicial affairs adviser to the justice minister, as he's done since May 2018, starting under then-minister **Jody Wilson-Raybould**. A longtime staffer, Giroux has previously worked for the federal justice department, and for past-Liberal justice ministers **Anne McLellan**, **Martin Cauchon**, and **Irwin Cotler**.

Alicia Castelli remains director of operations in the justice office. Castelli first joined the team under Lametti as a Quebec regional affairs adviser in February 2019, later adding operations manager to her title before being promoted to director. Before then, she briefly worked as a Quebec adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to then-border security and organized crime reduction minister **Bill Blair**. Castelli is also a former assistant in Lametti's office as the Liberal MP for LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que., and an ex-aide to then-Quebec senator **Dennis Dawson**.

Chris Knipe was hired to work in Virani's office as a senior operations and Ontario regional affairs adviser as of Sept. 11, having previously been an Ontario regional adviser to **Dominic LeBlanc** as minister for infrastructure and intergovernmental affairs (LeBlanc is now minister for public safety, intergovernmental affairs, and democratic institutions). A former assistant to Virani as the Liberal MP for Parkdale-High Park, Ont., Knipe has been a ministerial staffer since the 2021 election, starting as Ontario regional adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to then-housing, diversity, and inclusion minister **Ahmed Hussen**.



Chris Knipe is now a senior operations and Ontario regional adviser to Minister Virani. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Also currently tackling parliamentary affairs in Virani's office are: parliamentary affairs adviser **Anna Lisa Lowenstein**,



Tania Monaghan is director of rights implementation. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Keith Torrie is a senior policy adviser to the justice minister. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Hill Climbers

Nineteen staffers confirmed in Justice Minister Virani's office

Continued from page 29

special assistant for parliamentary affairs **Chantal Tshimanga**, and parliamentary affairs assistant **Charlie Skipworth**.



Chantal Tshimanga is a special assistant for parliamentary affairs. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Lowenstein was hired to the office under Lametti in the fall of 2022, and before then was an associate with the public relations and communications services firm Hamilton Place Strategies in Washington, D.C.

Tshimanga joined Lametti's justice office after the 2021 election, fresh from roughly two years working as a special assistant in the human resources unit of the Prime Minister's Office. She's also a former constituency assistant to now-Citizens' Services Minister **Terry Beech** in his capacity as the Liberal MP for Burnaby North-Seymour, B.C.

Skipworth is a new addition to the office under Virani, and started on the job on Sept. 14. He was previously working for International Trade Minister **Mary Ng**. First hired as assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretary—Virani, at the time—Skipworth became an Ontario regional affairs adviser near the end of 2022.

David Taylor continues as director of communications to the justice minister. A former reporter and foreign news editor for CTV, Taylor has been working for the Trudeau government since the start of 2017, beginning as communications director to then-justice minister Wilson-Raybould. After the 2019 election, he moved over to then-infrastructure and communities minister **Catherine McKenna's** office to run her communications shop. Taylor returned to the justice office under Lametti—once again as director of communications—in September 2020.



David Taylor remains director of communications to the justice minister. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Chantalle Aubertin has been promoted under Virani, adding senior communications adviser to her existing title of press secretary to the minister.

Aubertin has been working for federal ministers since 2018, starting as an aide to then-environment minister McKenna. She followed McKenna to the infrastructure portfolio after the 2019 election, becoming a communications and issues adviser, and was subsequently bumped up to press secretary to the minister at the start of 2020. Aubertin first joined the justice office under Lametti as press secretary in May 2021 (she took leave from the role between January and June of this year to complete a master's degree in social work). Among other past jobs, Aubertin is a former constituency assistant to now-Liberal MP **Yasir Naqvi** during his time as a member of Ontario's provincial legislature.



Chantalle Aubertin is now senior communications adviser and press secretary. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Diana Ebadi, who'd filled in as press secretary during Aubertin's absence, is now issues manager to the justice minister, having been promoted as of Aug. 24. Ebadi has been in the office since the start of 2022, previously as a special assistant for communications. She's also a former assistant to Liberal MP **Terry Duguid** and a former House of Commons page.



Diana Ebadi is now an issues manager. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Rounding out the list of staff confirmed so far in Virani's office is new hire **Banafsheh Shamdani**, who's filling the role of executive assistant to the minister and his chief of staff. She previously spend the summer of 2022 as an intern at Liberal Party headquarters in Ottawa, focused on field organization, after which she landed a job as an assistant to Liberal MP **Majid Jowhari**, where she worked until this past June. Shamdani marked her first day in the justice minister's office on Sept. 11. According to her LinkedIn profile, she's also currently working towards a bachelor's degree in history and political science at the University of Ottawa.

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News

Pressed for space: Hill scribes have mixed views on continued closure of National Press Theatre

Continued from page 25

conferences mean reporters aren't always in the room to ask politicians questions.

"You are crammed in more shoulder-to-shoulder with your peers [in the NPT], but there's a kind of camaraderie to being squeezed in, packed in like sardines with your colleagues while you're all interested in getting fulsome answers from politicians," said Lum. "That's kind of irreplaceable."

But ultimately, Lum said that while having the press theatre in the actual press building "helps," she's not overly concerned by the continued use of interim press theatre spaces. More top of mind, she said, is whether government and opposition parties are "actually holding those press conferences."

"There's no use having a space if you don't have interested parties also willing to enter that space and take questions on the public record," said Lum.

Asked about the press gallery executive's conversations on the matter, president Guillaume St-Pierre, a reporter with *Le Journal de Québec*, said the executive is keeping a close eye on Hill renovations, including through meetings with PSPC, to ensure "we do not lose spaces." But when it comes to the NPT, he said the main concern is whether politicians are holding press conferences at all.

Whether it's "the press gallery theatre or another room in West Block, the important thing for us is to have somewhere that the PM can do a press conference. And—by the way—he hasn't had one in a long time, so that is the kind of thing we're pushing for," said St-Pierre.

While Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) has spoken with reporters coming in and out of meetings or the House Chamber in the West Block, or during other media availabilities off the Hill (for government announcements etc.), Trudeau hasn't used the interim press theatre in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building since June.

"We've seen that space less and less in use, and that's more of a concern for me," said St-Pierre.

St-Pierre agreed "the National Press Theatre has a certain something about it ... it's ours, and we really feel that when people come here, they come in our space and we're a bit more kind of in control."

"But we'll see with time. The temporary spaces are going to be used for years to come, so let's see how that goes. It takes a certain [amount of] time to make a place yours," he said.

Dylan Robertson, a reporter with The Canadian Press' Ottawa bureau and full-time gallery member since 2015, said his concerns with the continued closure of the NPT "are much more symbolic" than logistical in nature, save for one aspect: admittance to the buildings.

Access to the Sir John A. Macdonald Building and Wellington Building is

overseen by the Parliamentary Protective Service (Hill pass holders have to scan their cards and visitors have to go through security screening). The National Press Building has a different security posture, and while a non-PPS security officer is posted at the entrance, scanning is not required to access the building.

That difference made the NPT more accessible for journalists who are not gallery members (from student newspapers or other community or issue-focused outlets that don't need daily access to Parliament Hill and are therefore not gallery members), or for others using the theatre, like Indigenous groups, suggested Robertson.

While it's still a colonial building, "[the NPT] is a bit of a more welcoming space," he said.

"I think there's a big anxiety among a lot of people in the press gallery that our space is sort of shrinking, metaphorically and physically. We saw a lot of outlets leave the National Press Building itself in the floors above the press theatre because the rent didn't make up for what the outlets could afford," he said.

That said, Robertson noted the NPT was a "totally impractical" space, and the newer interim press theatre "is inherently better" to use. Given the worrying trend of attacks on press freedoms worldwide, Robertson said he'd "feel more comfortable if there was an actual space that was called the National Press Theatre, even if it's in a different location."

Dale Smith, a longtime freelance gallery member, said the interim press theatre has a "very temporary feel to it, which," in his view, "is basically sending the message that we do not take up space as a press gallery in the precinct. Because this is a multipurpose room, everything is temporary from the stage to the ... translation booths."

"That kind of says that we're guests, or we're imposing our presence in there, as opposed to having a space of our own where it's our space and we can control it," he said.

Smith said getting the NPT renovated sooner, ahead of the full rehabilitation of 150 Wellington St., is something he thinks "we, as a gallery, should be discussing, in terms of how do we reclaim our space in the most expeditious way possible ... that's something we should be more seized with than we are currently," he said, suggesting it should be raised at the gallery's next annual general meeting.

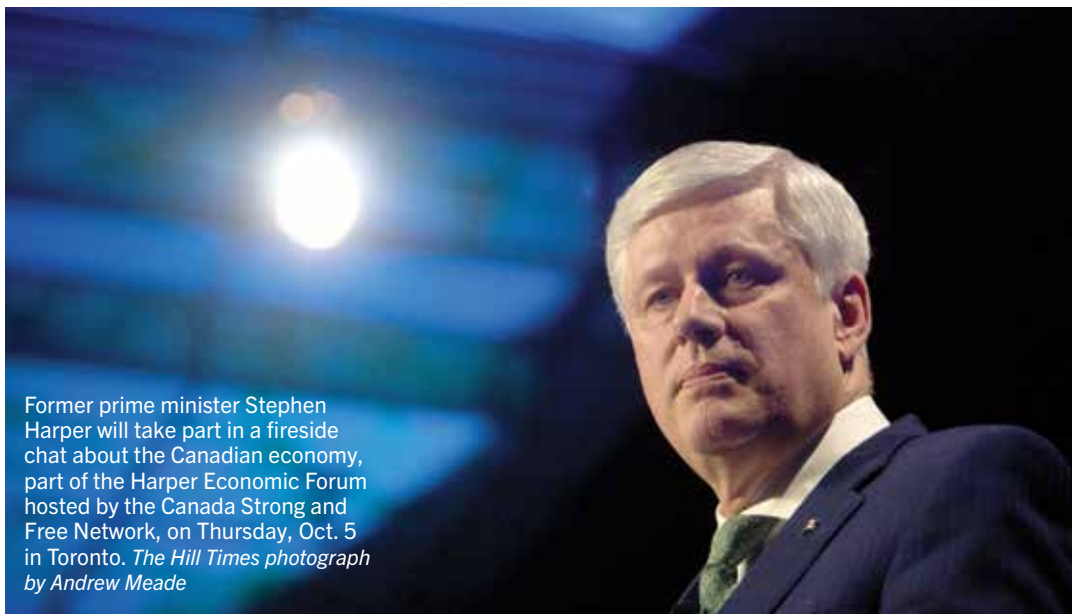
Global News' chief political correspondent David Akin, a longtime gallery member, said for him, "wherever we go ... the fundamental and most important part is that these are press conferences run by journalists," be it in the NPT or the interim press theatre.

Akin said he's generally "neutral" on the matter, but noted he'd personally prefer the NPT be in use given its "cultural and historical significance."

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Parliamentary Calendar

Former PM Harper delves into Canadian economy at Oct. 5 fireside chat



Former prime minister Stephen Harper will take part in a fireside chat about the Canadian economy, part of the Harper Economic Forum hosted by the Canada Strong and Free Network, on Thursday, Oct. 5 in Toronto. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

TUESDAY, OCT. 3—WEDNESDAY, OCT. 4

Energy Storage Canada Conference—Energy Storage Canada will hold its eighth annual conference. This year's theme is "Charging Net Zero," exploring the critical role of energy storage in enabling (or charging) Canada's ability to reach its ambitious net-zero targets. Tuesday, Oct. 3, to Wednesday, Oct. 4, at the InterContinental Hotel, Toronto. Details: canplaninc.ca.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 4

House Sitting—The House is sitting this week 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.

Bell Canada CEO to Deliver Remarks—The Halifax Chamber of Commerce hosts a lunch event with Mirko Bibic, president and CEO of BCE and Bell Canada, who will deliver remarks on "Seizing Opportunities to Grow Businesses and Communities." Wednesday, Oct. 4 at 11:30 a.m. AT at The Westin Nova Scotian, 1181 Hollis St., Halifax. Details online: business.halifaxchamber.com.

Canadian Cattle Association Fall Barbecue—The Canadian Cattle Association welcomes parliamentarians back with their annual barbecue on the Hill. This year's menu features CRSB Certified Sustainable brisket. Wednesday, Oct. 4, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. ET, East Block Courtyard. Parliamentarians and staff are welcome. RSVP through Eventbrite at bit.ly/2023cca-bbq.

Webinar: 'Cybersecurity'—The Canadian Chamber of Commerce hosts a webinar on 'Cybersecurity', part of its Executive Summit Series. Participants will explore the changes needed in co-operation amongst the private and public sector, and discuss the advocacy needed for policy and regulatory

frameworks that promote security and economic growth. Speakers include Caroline Xavier, chief of the Communications Security Establishment. Wednesday, Oct. 4, 1-3 p.m. ET, online. Details and register at chamber.ca.

Launch of Kim R. Nossal's New Book—The Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History hosts the hybrid launch of Queen's University professor emeritus Kim Richard Nossal's new book, *Canada Alone: Navigating the Post-American World*. The book sketches the more dystopian future that's likely if the illiberal, anti-democratic, and authoritarian MAGA movement regains power. Wednesday, Oct. 4 at 12 p.m. at the Campbell Conference Facility, Munk School, 1 Devonshire Pl., Toronto. Details online: billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca.

Webinar: 'AI Untamed'—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a webinar, "AI Untamed: Managing its Risks to Democracy, National Security and Humanity," featuring Yoshua Bengio, computer science professor at the Université de Montréal. Wednesday, Oct. 4 at 1 p.m. ET happening online: cdhowe.org.

National Police Federation Hosts Reception—The National Police Federation, the sole certified bargaining agent for regular members and reservists of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police below the rank of inspector, is hosting a reception. Tuesday, Oct. 24, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Métropolitain Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr. RSVP to bceraemard@nfp-fpn.com.

Chief Nursing Officer to Deliver Remarks—Chief nursing officer Leigh Chapman will be the keynote speaker at the Canadian Nurses' Association's awards ceremony. Wednesday, Oct. 4, at 12 p.m. taking place online: cna-alc.ca.

Hydrogen Parliamentary Reception—The Canadian Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Association is hosting a parliamentary reception to showcase hydrogen technologies and advancements across the supply chain in advance of National Hydrogen Day. Come by the Westin Hotel (22nd floor) in downtown Ottawa on Wednesday, Oct. 4 from 5:30-9:30

pm ET. To RSVP, please email clansley@globalpublic.com.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 4—THURSDAY, OCT. 5

Indigenous Consultation & Engagement Atlantic—Liberal MP Jenica Atwin will deliver a special message at the seventh annual Indigenous Consultation and Engagement Atlantic Conference hosted by the Canadian Institute from Wednesday, Oct. 4, to Thursday, Oct. 5. The conference will also include speakers from the Departments of Justice, Environment and Climate Change, and Natural Resources Canada. This event will take place at the Atlantica Hotel Halifax. Details online: canadianinstitute.com.

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.

THURSDAY, OCT. 5

Champagne to Attend Competition Summit—Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne will take part in Canada's Competition Summit, hosted by the Competition Bureau. Other speakers include CSG Senator Colin Deacon, and Tim Wu, former special assistant for Competition Policy to the U.S. President. Thursday, Oct. 5 at 8:30 a.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St. Details online: ised-isde.canada.ca.

Harper Economic Forum—Former prime minister Stephen Harper will take part in a fireside chat about the Canadian economy, part of the Harper Economic Forum hosted by the Canada Strong and Free Network. The theme is "Does The 'New Math' Add Up?" Other participants include Michael Binnion, president and founding shareholder of Questerre Energy. Thursday, Oct. 5 at 9 a.m. ET at the Albany Club, 91 King St. E., Toronto. Details online: canadastrongandfree.network.

AFN's Justice Speaker Series—The Assembly of First Nations hosts a Justice Speaker Series featuring four virtual sessions with a panel of experts. The series builds off the discussions from the National Forum on Justice to explore four key themes with panels that represent a range of perspectives. Thursday, Oct. 5 at 3 p.m. ET happening online: afn.ca. The next panels will take place Oct. 12, 19, and 26.

FRIDAY, OCT. 6

Scott Brison Roast Night—Nova Scotia Liberal MP Kody Blois hosts a roast for his predecessor, Scott Brison. Celebrating Brison's 20+ years of outstanding public service and his immeasurable contributions to Nova Scotia and Canada. Veteran national broadcaster and former chief of staff Laurie Graham will emcee an evening of friendship and fun, featuring a roster of reputable roasters, including Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan, Frank McKenna, Rodger Cuzner, Anne McLellan, Mike Savage, and Stephen McNeil. Friday, Oct. 6 at 5:30 p.m. AT the Old Orchard Inn, Wolfville, N.S. Details: brisonroast.ca.

SATURDAY, OCT. 7

Canada Leadership Summit—The Canadian Congress on Inclusive Diversity and Workplace Equity hosts the day-long Canada Leadership Summit featuring discussions on enhancing Canada's national image. Participants include ISG Senator Bernadette Clement, non-affiliated Senator Mary Jane McCallum, former senator Don Oliver, former Liberal cabinet minister Jean Augustine, and lawyer Courtney Betty. Saturday, Oct. 7 at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Hilton Toronto Airport Hotel. Details online: canadiancongressondiversity.ca.

MONDAY, OCT. 9

House on Thanksgiving Break—Parliamentarians are in their constituencies from Oct. 6-13. They will return to Ottawa on Monday, Oct. 16 until Friday, Nov. 10.

TUESDAY, OCT. 10

Japanese Envoy to Deliver Remarks—The Montreal Council on Foreign Relations hosts a bilingual hybrid lunch event on the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Québec's delegation in Japan featuring Kanji Yamanouchi, Japan's ambassador to Canada; and Chénier La Salle, Québec's general delegate to Tokyo. Tuesday, Oct. 10 at 11:30 a.m. ET at Sofitel Montréal, 1155 Sherbrooke St. W. Details online: corim.qc.ca.

Minister Boissonnault to Deliver Remarks—Employment Minister Randy Boissonnault will deliver remarks on "The Future of Canada's Workforce - Competitiveness in a Changing Global Economy," hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Tuesday, Oct. 10 at 11:30 a.m. ET at 401 Bay St., Simpson Tower, 8th Floor. Details online: empireclubofcanada.com.

In Conversation with Ed Broadbent—Former NDP leader Ed Broadbent will discuss his new book, *Seeking Social Democracy*. Part memoir, part history, part political manifesto, the book explores a life spent fighting for equality in Parliament and beyond. Tuesday, Oct. 10 at 7:30 p.m. ET at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, 154 Somerset St. W., Ottawa. Details online: writersfestival.org.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 11

Presentation on Centre Block's Renovation—The Ottawa Chapter of Construction Specifications Canada hosts a presentation on "The Centre Block rehabilitation: Exploring the heritage construction site." Project superintendent Justin Houle and structural lead William Coleman from the joint venture of PCL and EllisDon will discuss the challenges of this massive multi-year project to develop a new underground visitors' centre, while modernizing the existing structure to current

seismic and functional standards and maintaining the heritage elements and sight-lines. Wednesday, Oct. 11, at 10 a.m. ET at the Canadian Museum of History, 100 Laurier St. Details online. Register via Eventbrite.

Minister Joly to Deliver Remarks—Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the Economic Club of Canada. Wednesday, Oct. 11 at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Omni King Edward Hotel, Toronto. Details online: economicclub.ca.

Fasken Hosts Webinar on Committees—Fasken holds a free webinar on "When Parliamentarians come knocking: tips, strategies and tactics for dealing with parliamentary investigations." Guy W. Giorno, Fasken partner and leader, political law; and Kyle Morrow, associate, will provide an overview of investigations conducted by parliamentary committees in the House and Senate. Details and registration: fasken.com.

National Online Campaign School—Equal Voice hosts the start of its eight-week National Online Campaign School designed to equip women and gender diverse individuals with the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to run for political office in Canada. Wednesday, Oct. 11 at 7 p.m. ET, happening online: equalvoice.ca.

THURSDAY, OCT. 12

Minister Joly to Deliver Remarks—Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly will deliver remarks in French at a lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Thursday, Oct. 12, at 11:45 a.m. ET at Omni Mont-Royal, 1050 rue Sherbrooke O. Details online.

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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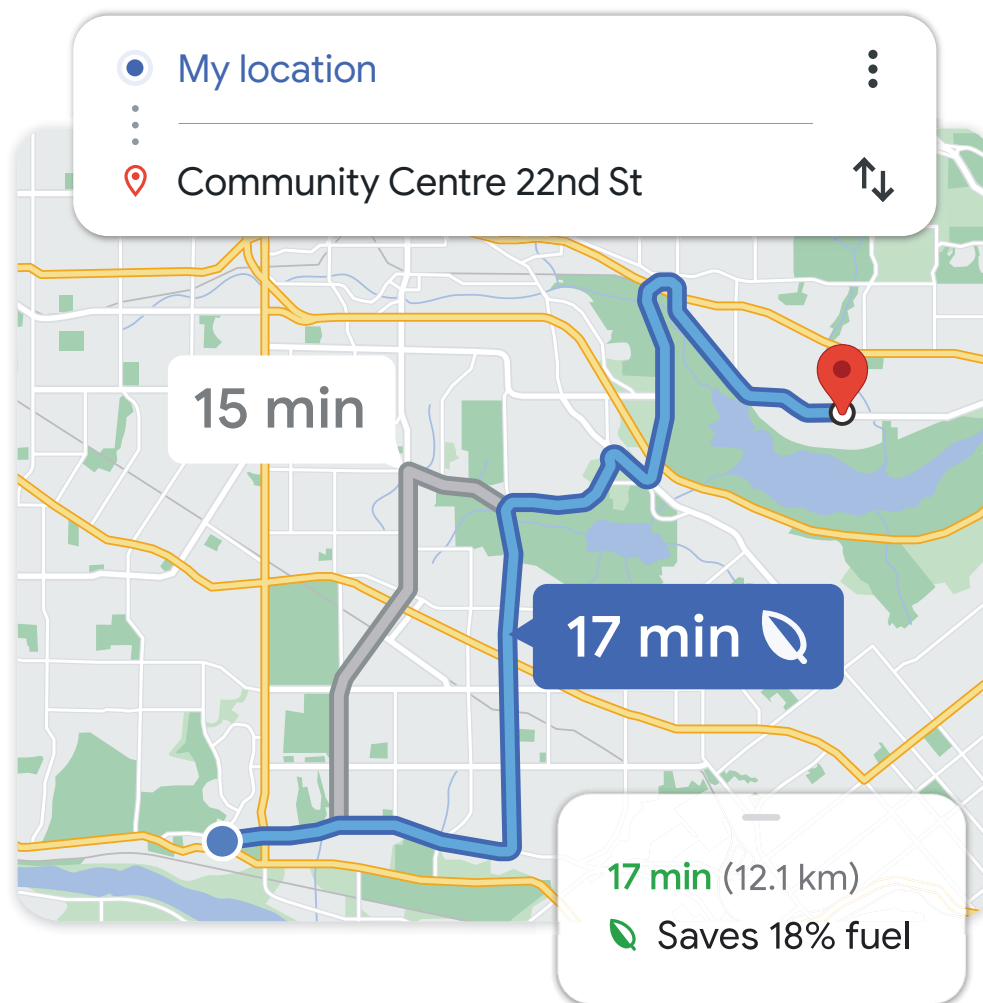


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The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to news@hilltimes.com by Wednesday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

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*Source: 2023 Google Environmental Report. sustainability.google/reports/google-2023-environmental-report (pg.5; Endnote 3)

