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# THE HILL TIMES

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NEWS

## 'This is a time of a lot of uncertainty': Freeland's fiscal update inches on affordability, housing

The fall economic statement, tabled in the House of Commons on Nov. 21, included no mention of the agreement between the Liberals and NDP to act on pharmacare by the end of 2023, which could lead to much larger spending plans.

BY KEVIN PHILIPUPILLAI

This year's fall economic statement looks to highlight the government's efforts to address affordability for the middle class and build new homes across the country—but it is a relatively cautious spending plan by this government's previous standards.

Many of the affordability measures highlighted in the Nov. 21 economic and fiscal update have already been rolled out, and its headline housing announcement—\$15-billion in low-interest loans to finance the construction of new rental homes—will not kick in until the 2025-26 fiscal year, likely after the next election.

There was no mention of the agreement between the Liberals and NDP to act on pharmacare by the end of 2023, which would, if pursued in its most ambitious variation, lead to much larger spending plans.

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Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, left, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau hold a photo-op before the government's Fall Economic Statement is tabled in the House of Commons on Nov. 21. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS

## Conservatives in no rush to pick at Liberal-NDP anti-scab legislation

BY STUART BENSON

Two weeks after the Liberal government's big political play to shore up its pro-labour bonafides with the introduction of its anti-replacement worker legislation, the Conservatives have remained tight-lipped on where they stand on Bill C-58. And while Tory strategists say the party will have a difficult time "threading

the needle" between its long-standing relationships with Canadian business interests and its more recent attempts to woo labour unions and middle-class workers, Summa's Daniel Perry says whichever play it makes will be a major determinant of the party's positioning in the next election.

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NEWS

## Operational shortcomings, aging equipment, and culture in crisis: new DND report a 'depressing reading' of state of military, say MPs

BY NEIL MOSS

A recent report sheds new light on the disarray in the readiness of Canada's military, which is unable to meet its con-

current operations requirements as key equipment continues to age, and personnel shortage pains persist.

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Christina Leadlay

## Heard On The Hill

# ‘Trailblazer’ MP Kirsty Duncan honoured at science policy conference



Liberal MP Kirsty Duncan, second from right, received an award at the Canadian Science Policy Conference on Nov. 15. Mehrdad Hariri, CEO of the Canadian Science Policy Conference, left, fellow Liberal MP Lloyd Longfield, and House Speaker Greg Fergus were in attendance. Photograph courtesy of Kirsty Duncan's office

Former science minister and past chair of the House science committee Liberal MP **Kirsty Duncan** received a trailblazer award at the Canadian Science Policy Conference at Ottawa's Westin Hotel on Nov. 15.

"Thank you #CSPC2023 for a wonderful night of celebration, friendship, and inspiration! I am profoundly touched to receive a trailblazer award," Duncan tweeted. "Thanks to all those who work in science and policy to make a better Canada and future for all," she continued, including a pic of House Speaker **Greg Fergus** and Liberal MP **Lloyd Longfield** with her at the event.

According to the Canadian Science Policy Centre's website, "The CSPC Trailblazer Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated novelty and creativity through leadership, vision, courage, and commitment, and positively and significantly impacted the Canadian Science, Technology and Innovation ecosystem." There are, in fact, three categories of trailblazer award bestowed annually: Policy for Science (which Duncan received), Science for Policy, and Innovation Policy.

Hosted annually by the Canadian Science Policy Centre, the two-day conference featured a long list of participating scientists and experts, including chief science adviser **Mona Nemer**, and France's Ambassador to Canada **Michel Miraillet**. An MP since 2008, Duncan, a former university professor, has been on leave since this past spring due to a cancer diagnosis.

## Boris Johnson to take centre stage at Toronto political affairs event

Billing itself as the "best political affairs conference in Canada," the Power House conference, hosted for the past 10 years by the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA), is slated for Nov. 28 in Toronto.

But it's not just certified realtors gathering to chew over housing policy and hot real estate trends. "This is a conference for fans of politics and real estate," **Jean-Adrien Delicano**, OREA's media relations manager, told HOH.

Its focus is decidedly Ontario-based—there's nary a federal politician in sight—with the slate of speakers including Premier **Doug Ford** and his housing minister (and ex-MP) **Paul Calandra**, Ontario NDP Leader **Marit Stiles**, interim Ontario Liberal Leader **John Fraser**, and Ontario Green Party Leader **Mike Schreiner**.

But the main headliner is former United Kingdom prime minister **Boris Johnson**, who will be on hand to chat with OREA's CEO **Tim Hudak** (himself a former Ontario PC leader and provincial cabinet minister) about "all things politics, housing, and his role at reforming U.K. housing regulations to get more homes built and bring the dream of homeownership to more British families," said Delicano.

Meanwhile, Abacus Data CEO **David Coletto** will share some great slides analyzing Ontario's housing affordability crisis and its political implications. Register at [oreapowerhouse.ca](http://oreapowerhouse.ca).

## Raitt and McLellan talk economy in Edmonton

Former cabinet ministers **Anne McLellan** and **Lisa Raitt**, now co-chairs of the Coalition for a Better Future, will be speaking in Edmonton on Nov. 27 at an event hosted by that city's Chamber of Commerce.

According to **Marci Surkes**, the Coalition's interim executive director—herself a former PMO policy head—this event is part of the group's "regular Podium Series programming where the co-chairs speak directly with



Lisa Raitt, left, and Anne McLellan, co-chairs of the Coalition for a Better Future will be the featured speakers at an Edmonton Chamber of Commerce event on Nov. 27. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade, and photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Coalition members and citizens from across the country about how to strengthen the economy," she said.

McLellan and Raitt were both recently in Ottawa for the Oct. 31 Net Zero Leadership Summit hosted by Canada 2020, and prior to that they both testified at a House Finance committee on Sept. 25 as it held its pre-budget consultations.

The new year looks to be busy for the coalition, which has a campus event planned in early February at the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business in Vancouver, and more Podium Series discussions in the works. The organization's annual Scorecard Report, revealing "how Canada has fared in the past year when we compare our economic performance against 21 internationally recognized metrics," will be released in March 2024, according to Surkes. Learn more about the Nov. 27 event at [edmontonchamber.com](http://edmontonchamber.com).

## Santa Claus is coming to Sir John A on Dec. 9

Parliamentary Press Gallery members have until Nov. 24 to sign up for an extremely serious and important event happening on Dec. 9 in the Sir John A. Macdonald building featuring a tall, smiling man who is always game for a photo with young people.

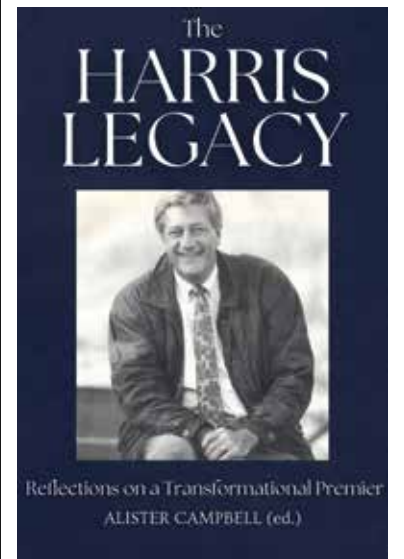
That's right: **Santa Claus** will be holding court for PPG members' children aged 10 and under at the annual Press Gallery Children's Christmas party starting at noon next Saturday.

*The Hill Times'* executive editor **Peter Mazereeuw** has been bringing his family to the party since 2016. "My kids seem to like it," he told HOH, noting the big decorated tree, and entertainment. "They have a troupe of bilingual magicians that have performed every year I've gone." *HT* editor-in-chief **Kate Malloy** recalls bringing her then-young daughters many years ago when the event was held in the Centre Block Reading Room: "It was really great, lots of people, a Santa Claus, presents for all the kids," she recalls. "It was packed with members of the press gallery and their families. Very fun for the little ones," she said.



A traditional holiday buffet of (checks notes) hot dogs and pizza will be served. Press Gallery members can email the name, age, and gender of each child they will be accompanying to **Philippe Perrier**, keeper of the "nice" list.

## Mike Harris defied pundits, says Tory MP Williamson on eve of book launch



*The Harris Legacy: Reflections on a Transformational Premier*, edited by Alister Campbell. Image courtesy of Sutherland House Books

Ahead of *The Harris Legacy's* official publication on Dec. 5 by Sutherland House Books, publication editor and former Ontario Progressive Conservative staffer **Alister Campbell** was in Ottawa Nov. 21 for "an ideas exchange" hosted by Conservative MP **John Williamson** in the Valour Building. "Alister and I worked on the federal Progressive Conservative 1997 election platform. I had no involvement with the book he edited," Williamson told HOH on Nov. 20.

As previously reported in HOH, Campbell has collected analyses on the legacy of his former boss **Mike Harris**, who was Ontario's premier from 1995-2002, written by a varied cast of advisers, academics, and experts into a book entitled *The Harris Legacy*. "My personal connection to the subject matter was volunteering locally on the 1995 Ontario election in Toronto and professional was subsequently writing *National Post* editorials on the Harris government and its re-election in 1999," Williamson explained.

"[Harris] won on big policy ideas, implemented his platform, and won again—defying the pundits at every step. Many of his key policies remain today and his legacy endures."

Campbell and some of his contributors will officially launch *The Harris Legacy* at the Toronto Albany Club on Nov. 22. Preorders of the book can be arranged through [sutherlandhousebooks.com](http://sutherlandhousebooks.com).

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The Hill Times





## Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of CCSEP: Looking Back and Looking Forward

**A** Canadian young man studying in China fell in love with Xiangsheng, a traditional Chinese comedy, and became a student of two prominent Chinese Xiangsheng masters. He eventually became a household name in China and was appointed as "Goodwill Ambassador to China". Similarly, a Chinese woman who graduated from an art academy in China went to Canada, ultimately obtained a PhD in computer sciences. Committed to the integration of interactive media technology and art, she founded the Canada China International Film Festival, which has been held for eight consecutive years.

These two individuals share a common bond - they both benefit from the Canada-China Scholars' Exchange Program (CCSEP).

Fifty years ago, Chinese and Canadian governments agreed to establish the CCSEP to enhance mutual understanding. Through this program, professionals from higher education institutions, governments, media, and cultural organizations of both countries are provided with government funding support to study and conduct research in each other's countries.

The first year of the program saw nine Chinese scholars embark on their academic journey in Canada, as well as 20 Canadian scholars pursue their studies in China. This marked the beginning of student and scholar exchanges between China and Canada. Over the past five decades, more than 1,100 students and scholars have studied or conducted research in China or Canada, while nearly 380 Canadian students and scholars studying in China since the beginning of the 21st century alone. Upon returning to Canada, these Canadian recipients have been actively engaged in such fields as government, academia, media, business, art, etc., with some becoming leading figures in their respective industries. These alumni have become bridges for China-Canada exchanges in their fields thanks to their deep understanding of China, contributing their part to bilateral friendship and cooperation.

Starting the earliest and lasting the longest, the CCSEP is the most influential, and highest-level talent cultivation and scholar exchange program between the two countries sponsored by the

two governments. It stands as a testament to the development of people-to-people exchanges between China and Canada.

Nowadays, China has become the world's second-largest economy, with its education and scientific research levels moving towards the forefront of the world. According to the China National Academy of Educational Sciences, China's Education Superpower Index ranked 23rd globally in 2022, a rise of 26 places compared to 2012, making it the country with the fastest progress. Additionally, the World Intellectual Property Organization's Global Innovation Index identifies 24 Science and Technology clusters in China this year, with three of them ranking among the top five worldwide. The development has laid a solid foundation for educational exchanges between China and Canada, creating a pressing need for further collaboration.

China remains committed to opening up the education sector to the world, continuously forges new patterns of international cooperation and exchanges in education, and comprehensively enhances the level of international education cooperation. These approaches enable China's education system to confidently and proactively step onto the global stage with an open mindset.

We hope more Chinese and Canadian students can gain great insights and understanding of each other's history, culture, and socio-economic development through the CCSEP. This will enrich their lives, foster their professional growth, and establish a solid foundation of public support for improving and developing China-Canada relations. More Canadian students and scholars are welcome to come to China, where they will be impressed by the hospitality of the Chinese people, meet the diligent Chinese students, and see the vibrant Chinese society. We hope they will return to Canada with cherished memories of their time in China.

We eagerly look forward to the next successful and fruitful 50 years of the Canada-China Scholars' Exchange Program.

**H.E. Chinese Ambassador to Canada Cong Peiwu**

**For more information please visit:**

**<https://www.educanada.ca/scholarships-bourses/can/ccsep-peucc.aspx?lang=eng>**



Top Left: Xiangsheng (a form of traditional Chinese crosstalk comedy) performance in 1990 in Shanghai with his mentors by Mark Rowsell, CM (first on the right), better known by his Chinese stage name Dashan, CCSEP alumnus 1988 from Canada.

Top Right: Closing ceremony of the 8th Canada China International Film Festival (Montreal, 2023), founded and directed by Dr. Miao Song (centre in silver dress), CCSEP alumna 2011 from China





## News

# Making a mark: Speaker Fergus' bid to improve decorum in the House



House Speaker Greg Fergus in his second-floor West Block office on Nov. 15, seated in front of a stylized portrait of the Commons Chamber by Anthony Batten. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

The Speaker recently circulated a draft proposal outlining how existing House rules around parliamentary recognition will be applied, which could be released as soon as this week.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

New House Speaker Greg Fergus has hit the ground running in his campaign to improve decorum in the Commons, with one set of guidelines already laid out and further discussions in the works around how he'll apply the rules that govern recognition in the Chamber, both for MPs to speak and for noting the presence of special visitors.

Improving decorum is not only "the right thing to do," said Fergus, but it's also what MPs want, and was a "top-of-mind issue" many MPs raised "proactively" in discussions as he weighed whether to throw his hat in the ring to become Speaker.

Elected to the chair on Oct. 3, Fergus, 54, is the 38<sup>th</sup> Speaker of the House of Commons, and is not only the first Black Canadian to hold the role, but, he noted,

the first Black person to hold a Speaker chair in the G7.

Sitting down with *The Hill Times* in his West Block office on Nov. 15, Fergus said he's been "touched" by the reaction his election has garnered, and he's eager to make a "substantive" mark beyond "being the first." That mark, he hopes, will be raising the bar for decorum overall in the Chamber.

"I've had a number of people come up to me from all backgrounds and say, 'you know, my kids saw you, and all of sudden now my kid is thinking that they can do this, they do that; they can become Speaker, they can become prime minister, they can become a Member of Parliament,'" he said. "Politicians say this all the

time: it's humbling. Sometimes they don't mean it, but it actually is ... It makes me realize how important this is for other people, and how important it is to do something with it in a way that it doesn't just become an issue of being the first, but it becomes an issue of, 'well, he might have been the first and he also did something substantive.'"

In his Oct. 3 pitch to become Speaker, Fergus campaigned on a promise to improve decorum—something he's said he's noticed deteriorate in the House over his years as a "keen follower of parliamentary proceedings."

Two weeks after his election, Fergus took the first step on that journey, delivering a statement on decorum on Oct. 18 that outlined

how he, as chair of the Chamber, would go about his "dogged" pursuit of "improving the overall decorum."

"Excessive interruptions must be curtailed," he said. While "latitude in expressing one's point of view will be given," personal attacks, "questionable language, and unnecessarily provocative statements will no longer be tolerated."

The Speaker has both the responsibility and "authority to enforce rules of debate to maintain order and decorum," Fergus reminded MPs, and there are "a number of options" for recourse the Speaker can turn to if an MP refuses to come to order, withdraw unparliamentary language, stop interrupting MPs who have

the floor, or "cease irrelevance and repetition in debate," including refusing to recognize a Member to speak in the House until they retract "offending remarks" and apologize.

The speech got off to a rocky start, interrupted by points of order from Conservatives upset at the fact its delivery delayed Question Period. Still, Fergus said he thinks his message was heard.

"It's really quite funny: Members, even those who didn't want me to take the time to do it at that particular moment, have quoted my statement back to me, saying, 'You said this ... does this apply here?' So they're working with it, they're taking it, they're adapting it. And I find that of the number of days that I've been in the chair ... maybe two-and-a-half days were a little rough, but otherwise I think Members have improved their game," he said. "There's more work to be done, but I'm pleased."

Fergus is optimistic, but more than once since his election the House cameras have watched as he's called a rowdy Chamber to order and stood stoic, waiting for quiet to come. During those moments, Fergus said he's weighing his next steps. "There are tools which I have available" as Speaker to deal with unruly MPs—as outlined on Oct. 18—"and so what's going through my head is just wondering: have we reached that point?" In his view, the best way to restore decorum is for MPs to exercise restraint on their own. "Sometimes they just need a little time to cool down," he said.

In presiding over the Chamber, it's the Speaker's prerogative to recognize an MP to rise to speak or ask a question. While not a rule, it's become a long-standing practice for the leadership of each recognized party in the House (namely, the whips) to give the Speaker a list of the names and order of MPs who will ask questions during Question Period each sitting day.

The Speaker is under no technical obligation to use such lists, and the idea of doing away with or otherwise deviating from the practice is one that's been floated as a possible route to improve exchanges and decorum overall by not recognizing misbehaving MPs, or undercutting choreographed partisan regurgitation.

When asked about it, Fergus said the lists are "a habit that we've fallen into."

"That's something that really I have to give some serious thought to: does this lead to more decorum in the House, or does it not?" he said. "That's one of the questions which I'm thinking about, and I'm certainly going to be talking about it with House [leaders]."

Beyond the Speaker's current powers, plenty of other ideas have been bandied about for how to improve decorum, including the suggestion of amending the Standing Orders' strict rules around camera angles, which generally mean that only the head and torso of whichever MP is currently speaking is shown, with reaction, split screen, and cut-



Newly elected House Speaker Greg Fergus enters the Commons Chamber as part of the Speaker's Parade for the first time on Oct. 3. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued from page 4

away shots not permitted. The idea is that if MPs are shown to be heckling—rather than doing it safely out of frame—it could help discourage over-the-top behaviour. Asked his thoughts, though, Fergus sounded less than convinced, but said it's something MPs would need to "consider themselves."

"If there's more reaction shots, does that improve behaviour? Or would that lead to more playing up to the cameras? I don't know," he said.

The practice of recognizing the presence of visitors to the House Chamber is another subject Fergus said he's been discussing with House leaders.

The Speaker's chair opened up because of backlash over the decision by Liberal MP Anthony Rota (Nipissing-Timiskaming, Ont.) to formally recognize the presence of one of his constituents, Yaroslav Hunka—a Ukrainian veteran who fought against Russia with the Nazis during the Second World War—in the House during Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Sept. 22 visit. Rota subsequently took full responsibility for both inviting and recognizing Hunka in the Chamber, and resigned as Speaker on Sept. 26.

As has been reported, existing House rules should have precluded Hunka from being recognized in the first place—if they'd been applied. As part of the reckoning that's happened since, Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.), for one, has suggested the administration institute a two-person sign off requirement to ensure current guidelines are applied for recognition in the Chamber in the future.

Fergus told *The Hill Times* he believes "the rules as they stand are sufficient,

we've just fallen out of practice," and that a draft paper on the subject is currently circulating among House leaders. Already, he said, he's gotten "some important feedback" that he's now "integrating" into a statement that could be released as early as this week.

"There are a lot of things which ... we sort of drifted away from the rules as they're written out, and sometimes that's fine on occasion, but we should always remind ourselves, 'what was the purpose behind those rules?' And so with the document that I've been working on, it will be one which respects the rules and I think lays out a very common sense approach of how we should proceed," he said.

Politics entered Fergus' bloodstream at a young age.

Growing up in Montreal, he became captivated by the 1980 Quebec independence referendum debate that gripped the country when he was 11 years old. "Everybody was talking about it," at grocery stores, school pick-ups, or between neighbours on driveways, recalled Fergus. "You couldn't help but then sort of turn your head to it." If word of mouth was the hook, watching the passion with which then-Liberal prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau and then-Quebec premier René Lévesque squared off in televised debates was the sinker.

"Trudeau was more appealing to me; I felt it [his arguments] corresponded more to my reality, corresponded more to an invitation to be part of it all," said Fergus.

At age 14, he subscribed to Hansard, receiving printed copies in the mail. (Today, his second-floor West Block office is lined with bookshelves, surrounding him with a century's worth of bound copies of Hansard from 1870 up to the early 1970s.)

When Fergus made his way to the national capital to study at the University of Ottawa, he signed up to become a House of Commons page with the 1988-89 cohort. His "big plan," he said, was to one day take a seat in the Chamber as a Member of Parliament, but the idea of taking the Speaker's chair was "one of those things" he'd let his thoughts wander to as a young page.

Fergus' "big plan" was realized in 2015, when he defeated NDP incumbent Nycole Turmel to become the MP for Hull-Aylmer, Que.

A former president of the Young Liberals of Canada, Fergus has since served in multiple parliamentary secretary roles, including to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) from 2021 until this past September.

All House Speakers have been elected to the Chamber as a member of a political party, but with partisan veins as deep as his, *The Hill Times* asked Fergus how he now separates the partisan from the person.

"It's actually really easy. I think most Members of Parliament can do it in a snap," he said. "I always saw the role of being a Member of Parliament as being an ombudsman for the folks in my riding, and for Canadians as part of that. It's the same thing, now I'm an ombudsman for Members of Parliament."

Just as it's important for the Speaker to act in a non-partisan way, it's important for MPs to treat the Speaker as such, and asked whether he has concerns in that regard, Fergus said he thinks "the transition has been pretty good."

"Certainly they're always looking to making sure—and that's fair, so they should—and I appreciate any constructive criticism that they can have, but in

the short time that I've been in the chair I think I've already distinguished myself in a way of carrying out, with impartiality, the role," he said.

There are three facets to the job of Speaker, Fergus explained: presiding over the Chamber, diplomatic responsibilities (as No. 5 on the protocol table of precedence, behind the Governor General, prime minister, chief justice, and Senate Speaker), and serving as "CEO of the House of Commons," overseeing some 2,800 employees "from security services to catering services, from cleaning to the Library of Parliament."

Fergus said after he stopped his "legs and knees from knocking," the first few days following his election were "really quite a whirlwind." That first week, he met with members of the House administration and his Senate counterpart, and then jumped straight into diplomatic work, with a pre-planned visit from the speaker of the Albanian parliament, and a visit from the prime minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis who was in town and wanted "to come in and say hello, given the historic role."

The clock is ticking for Fergus to make his mark, with two years—at most—until the next federal election.

"I hope in the short time that I have here as Speaker ... that I will help Parliamentarians and I will help Canadians understand why we have these traditions, what they really come from, and how they can still serve us today," he said.

"The biggest challenge, I think, is to remind people that there are things bigger than each one of us that exist, and that we have responsibilities beyond our own lifetimes to what we're doing."

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## News

# Canada muted as Sudan humanitarian crisis mounts

Canada isn't alone in being accused of ignoring the conflict in Sudan, as much of the world's focus is pulled to the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

BY NEIL MOSS

With thousands of people killed and millions displaced, the seven-month-long conflict in Sudan has largely been ignored by the West—including Canada—amid the recent spotlight on the Israel-Hamas war. But a former ambassador says Ottawa can play a helpful role to curb the ongoing violence.

The conflict in Sudan has been roiling since its outbreak on April 15, precipitated by tension between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) over military integration pushes following the 2021 Sudanese *coup d'état*.

The violence has led to estimated deaths ranging from 9,000 to 10,000 people, amid allegations of ethnic cleansing. There are also more than four million people who have been displaced.

After hostilities broke out, the Canadian government performed a limited evacuation effort of about 550 people—around 400 of whom are Canadian residents—and subsequently closed its embassy in Khartoum. Recalled diplomat Philip Lupul, who began his role as Canada's ambassador to Sudan in January 2022, has since started a new role at Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

GAC recently posted a pair of statements on X (formerly Twitter) about the conflict.

"We are deeply concerned about the escalation of violence against civilians in Darfur, in-



Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly has largely been silent as the crisis in Sudan deepens, with her public comments focused on the Israel-Hamas war. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

cluding reports of ethnic violence committed by the Rapid Support Forces and allied militias," a Nov. 17 post reads. "Civilians must be protected. We continue to urge the RSF to uphold their commitments to IHL [international humanitarian law]."

A previous GAC statement on Nov. 8 said Canada was "seized" by the conflict, noting that it was "disturbed the targeted violence against women and girls in Darfur."

"We strongly condemn these international human rights violations, including the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, and urge all perpetrators to cease these hostile acts immediately," the department's statement read.

Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.) last publicly addressed the conflict during a September event at the New York-based

Ford Foundation. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) hasn't raised the issue with his counterparts since a Sept. 20 meeting with Kenyan President William Ruto on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, according to publicly available readouts. The deteriorating humanitarian situation hasn't been a focal topic of the House of Commons, nor the work of its Foreign Affairs Committee.

The conflict also wasn't discussed in a recent call between Joly and United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken, according to Canadian and American readouts of the Nov. 17 conversation, which highlighted a focus on the Israel-Hamas war—a conflict that has been a constant focus for both governments as the Sudanese conflict has been sidelined.

Former Canadian diplomat Nicholas Coghlan, who served as Canada's first resident diplomat in Khartoum and later its first ambassador in South Sudan, said Canada has gone from being a highly respected secondary player in the region to having no presence as the conflict has grown.

"We have backed off completely," he said, remarking that countries like the U.S., the United Kingdom, and Norway are keeping their eye on the region, with ambassadors removed from the country amid the conflict, but still involved in the region.

"The single thing we've lost, above all, is having a senior point person responsible for Sudan," said Coghlan, citing Lupul's reassignment.

There are reasons Canada should not name a new formal ambassador as it would mean recognizing one of the two factions, but Coghlan said a senior official can re-engage with Canada's partners, at a high-level, on how to address the crisis.

"You can't do this if it's just a desk officer in Ottawa," he said. "You need somebody who is out there, who is able to talk to the American ambassador, to the British ambassador, to talk to people at the African Union, to talk to the people at IGAD [Intergovernmental Authority on Development] to come up with some ideas, and get the ear of the minister back in Ottawa."

He said what's needed is someone at the ambassadorial level who understands how GAC operates.

"That's the single most important thing that's lacking [due to] having closed the embassy and dismissed all the staff," he said. "There's nobody informing head-

quarters about what's going on. There's nobody making recommendations as to how we might contribute."

Coghlan said Canada needs to be in a position to respond far quicker, given the "horrors in Darfur."

A spokesperson for the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner said on Nov. 17 that Masalit residents in West Darfur have suffered from "six days of terror" at the hands of the RSF and their allies, with reports that "hundreds of ethnic Masalit civilians" were killed earlier in November. The UN official said that attacks "may constitute crimes under international law," and included "some victims [being] summarily executed or burnt alive."

Coghlan said a more engaged Canadian role would require persistence and a lot of patience since there isn't a quick diplomatic win to be had.

He said it isn't Canada alone that is being accused of ignoring the conflict, as the U.S. faces those same charges, remarking that the conflict has the potential to bloom to increasingly destabilize the region.

"There's some very gloomy scenarios out there. The most obvious one is that Sudan is going to become another Libya: a fractured country at war with itself," he said. "But it's much bigger than Libya, and it's much closer to the Middle East, and it has the potential for being the focal point in the years for a huge amount of trouble for the region," he said. "It is very much in our interest to refocus on Sudan."

University of Ottawa political studies professor Kon Madut, who emigrated from Sudan in 1989, said the Sudan conflict is a forgotten war in which innocent civilians are the ones paying a high price.

He said Canada's role to address the crisis would be limited, but it could be helpful in building consensus for UN-backed buffer zones and humanitarian corridors, adding that a buffer zone can help protect innocent civilians who are being attacked and killed.

"Creating United Nations-protected buffer zones will help a lot," he said, remarking that a UN mission like the one in South Sudan would be highly beneficial to protect the lives of non-combatants.

At the same time, Sudan has become the latest African nation to call for the end of the UN peacekeeping mission within its own borders.

Madut said Canada can play a helpful role by taking advantage of its relationship with the U.S. to push the Biden administration to increasingly focus on the conflict.

"It is important that the international community, and our government, [keep] it as a priority just as is happening in Gaza and what is happening in Ukraine," he said. "It could be worse than Gaza, what is happening. ... At least in Gaza, people are watching. In Darfur, nobody is watching."

[nmoss@hilltimes.com](mailto:nmoss@hilltimes.com)

*The Hill Times*



Global Affairs Canada, located at the Pearson Building in Ottawa, has released two statements on X calling for international humanitarian law to be followed amid the ongoing war in Sudan. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



# AEROSPACE

**POLICY BRIEFING**

**Publication date: November 29, 2023**

**Advertising deadline: November 24, 2023**

The Canadian Multi-Mission Aircraft (CMMA) project is currently underway with the goal of replacing the Royal Canadian Air Force's Aurora CP-140 maritime patrol fleet. On March 27, the federal government announced that "the P-8A Poseidon is the only currently available aircraft that meets all of the CMMA operational requirements."

What does the completion of this project mean in terms of defending Canada's sovereignty along the coastline? What are the economic and industry implications?

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Is Canada doing enough in regards to the transition to green aerospace technology? What are the challenges and opportunities?

Total revenues in the Canadian space sector dropped 11 per cent to \$4.9-billion in 2020, and remained at that level in 2021, according to the Canadian Space Agency's annual report released in July. In contrast, R&D activities hit peak levels in the same timeframe, reaching \$547-million in investments in 2021. What is the state of Canada's space sector, and how can the federal government help?

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 **THE HILL TIMES**



# Editorial

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## Editorial

### Canada's military paying the price for service

It's not a great time to be the Canadian military.

As Neil Moss reports in the latest *Hill Times*, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are unable to fulfill concurrent operations obligations set out in the Liberal government's 2017 defence policy.

The 2022-23 departmental results report outlines that Canada, "based on overall readiness levels," is "currently unable to conduct multiple operations concurrently per the requirement laid out in" the 2017 policy.

For those keeping score—and as underlined repeatedly in this week's Defence Policy Briefing—that policy is long overdue for an update.

As *Strong, Secure, Engaged* lays out, the military is required to be able to defend Canada, including conducting concurrent domestic operations, fulfill its NORAD tasks, and "contribute to international peace and stability" through two "sustained" deployments of 500-1,500 personnel; one "time-limited" deployment of roughly six to nine months of 500-1,500 people; two "sustained" deployments of 100-500 personnel; two "time-limited" deployments of 100-500 people; a deployment of the Disaster Assistance Response Team; and a "non-combatant evacuation operation."

"Readiness of CAF force elements has continued to decrease over the course of the last year aggravated by decreasing number of personnel and

issues with equipment and vehicles," the departmental results note.

In the wake of the Nov. 21 fall economic statement, the Liberal government is under a great deal of pressure to demonstrate fiscal responsibility while also laying out eye-watering amounts of cash to support Canadians struggling under the weight of concurrent housing and affordability crises.

With a military already stretched threadbare and looking to cut further, it's hard not to see the writing on the wall that making the necessary investments to meet the long-set benchmarks, let alone anything new that may need to come down the pipe, just isn't going to be a priority.

"The current fiscal environment that the country faces itself does require [that] that defence policy update ... recognize [the] fiscal challenges. And so it'll be part of ... our future budget processes," Defence Minister Bill Blair told CBC's *Rosemary Barton Live* on Nov. 19.

This is one of those areas where MPs from multiple parties, including the government, are in agreement. As Liberal, NDP, and Bloc MPs told Moss, the situation is untenable and something has to give.

No one expects Canada to be a mighty military power, but the country should at least be taking care of the people who put on the uniform, and Ottawa should be in a position to at least do the bare minimum requirements it set for itself.

*The Hill Times*

## Letters to the Editor

### Gaza genocide should be a wake-up call, says CJPME letter writer

Re: "On Israel-Gaza, Canada must rise to the humanity of the moment," (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 20, p. 15).

As a person who studied international law at university and who never considered anything more important than human rights, this opinion piece deeply resonated with me as I cannot fathom the genocide in Gaza unfolding in front of our eyes and our government's inaction.

I was often taught that international humanitarian institutions such as the United Nations were implemented after the Second World War to prevent history from repeating itself. I even learned that John Humphrey, a Canadian lawyer and academic, was instrumental in creating

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet, the Bosnian genocide and Rwandan genocide happened—to name only these two—and Canada, multiple times in its history, has failed to live up to its standards both here and abroad as a settler-colonial state that has mistreated its own Indigenous people.

I think that the genocide unfolding in Gaza is our wake-up call to stop seeing and expecting Canada to promote and enforce human rights, and recognize and treat it as complicit in human rights abuses once and for all.

**Fatima Haidar**  
**Canadians for Justice and Peace**  
**in the Middle East**  
**Montreal, Que.**

### One party is responsible for preventing further deaths in Gaza: Williams

Re: "In the Israel-Palestine crisis, preventing mass atrocities is key," (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 15, p. 9).

Farida Deif claims that Canada has "failed to condemn the Israeli government's laws of war violations in Gaza." I am not sure exactly to which violations she is referring. Perhaps it is the phone calls and the dropping of thousands of leaflets into Gaza informing the residents as to when and where bombings will occur so that they can get out of harm's way. Perhaps it is the opening of humanitarian corridors (unfortunately often blocked by Hamas), encouraging residents to move to the south of Gaza. Perhaps it is allowing the delivery of health supplies, bottled water, blankets, tents, and hygiene products to the residents of Gaza. Perhaps it is delivering 300 litres of fuel to Al-Shifa Hospital (only to have it intercepted by Hamas and diverted to their terror tunnels). Perhaps it is the provision of incubators for newborns, baby food, and medical supplies to Al-Shifa Hospital by the Israeli Defence Forces.

It appears to me that Israel cares for and tries to protect the people of Gaza more than their own leaders do. Moussa Abu Marzouk, a prominent member of Hamas' political bureau, has declared the terror group that rules Gaza is not responsible for protecting civilians, and said the vast tunnel network underneath the enclave is only for the protection of

Hamas terrorists. Hamas has dug 500 kilometres of tunnels in the territory it has ruled over since 2007. However, it never built shelters for civilians to hide during bombings, and its cache of arms and tunnels are purposely hidden under hospitals and schools putting their civilians at additional risk.

Any loss of life is a tragedy. But much of the world likes to suggest there is a moral equivalency between the acts of barbarism by Hamas deliberately perpetrated against the Israeli civilian men, women, and children with the inadvertent loss of civilians in a war. There is not.

The responsibility for the deplorable living conditions of the residents in Gaza rests with their leadership, not with anything Israel has or has not done. The facts are indisputable. In 1947, when the United Nations voted to partition the land, one party agreed and proceeded to build a society based on democratic principles, committed to a free society, supporting human rights and justice for all. The other party immediately waged war.

Ms. Deif and I agree that "the lives of Palestinians and Israelis are equally valuable." The difference between us is that she believes condemning Israel will achieve peace. I believe that removing the cancer of Hamas from the Middle East is a necessary first step to both Israelis and Arabs living in peace.

**Alan Williams**  
**Ottawa, Ont.**



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# Fixing Canada's problems will remain an uphill struggle until voters start holding provinces accountable

Les  
Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—In recent months, with the whole country screaming for action on housing affordability, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government has stepped up its engagement with municipalities by offering direct funding for residential construction through the Housing Accelerator Fund.

The initiative—which offers tens of millions of dollars to cities for speedy development and promotes zoning changes to allow for more density—was the federal government's smartest among various programs to address the country's overwhelming lack of housing supply.

The response from the country's premiers? They threatened to pass legislation to bar the federal government from going around provincial governments to work with municipalities directly to get construction moving.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, for one, accused the Trudeau government of jurisdictional creep. "You can't have the federal government going into a certain town or certain city and dumping funding and not even discussing it with the province," Ford said after a premiers' meeting a few weeks ago.

"We need fairness, we need equity and we're not seeing that with the current model," echoed Alberta Premier Danielle Smith.

As with other major issues, the programs brought in by Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland to address the housing problem are being bogged down by a horse-and-buggy federal system that is just not agile, responsive, and action-oriented enough to deal with today's fast-moving, complex issues.

The housing supply mess, which has reached a point where the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation says a whopping 5.8 million more houses will need to be built in six years to ease the demand crunch, has been taking shape for decades.

According to research for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Canada is one of only a handful of advanced economies (along with the United States, Australia, and Belgium) lacking national-level land use planning and policy instruments.

Indeed, a main cause of today's housing crisis is that over the years, city governments across the country have implemented zoning and permitting rules that have systematically held up home construction, and the provinces have been unwilling to

step in and use their authority over municipalities to fix the problem. Now they're worried about being shown up by federal Housing Minister Sean Fraser.

In Ontario, which has the lowest number of housing units per capita of any province, the provincial government, for instance, has committed only modest investments to incentivize house-building while making evictions easier and scrapping rent control on residential units set up after 2018. Even before the pandemic, 56 per cent of renter households in Ontario could not afford the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment. As for homebuyers, the average sale price in Ontario has now reached nearly \$900,000, beyond the reach of 83 per cent of buyers.

The provinces' complaints about direct funding from Ottawa to tackle the housing emergency left cash-strapped mayors shaking their heads. Marianne Meed Ward, mayor of Burlington, Ont., and chair of the provincial big city mayors' caucus, said what's required now is an "all-hands-on-deck" approach. "Federal government has all the money, provincial government has all the power, municipality has to deal with all the issues," she said.

Freeland weighed in, too, saying: "I am really pleased to see the premiers paying attention to municipalities. And given their enthusiasm and their focus on the municipalities of Canada, I would love to see them providing even more support to the municipalities over whom they are proudly asserting their jurisdiction. I think that would be a win-win."

But the politics of it all are as clouded as usual. According to a Leger poll conducted earlier this year, almost half of Canadians nationally lay blame for the housing crisis on the federal government, regardless of the feds' limited constitutional role in this area.

It's a similar story with health care. Despite having constitutional jurisdiction in this field, the premiers went to great lengths last year to shift blame for the country's deteriorating health system on what they called a lack of funding from Ottawa, leading to Trudeau's commitment in February of health transfers to the provinces of \$196-billion over 10 years.

But the campaign to make federal funding the issue on health care came at a time when many provincial governments were just about balancing their fiscal books or running hefty budget surpluses—even as Canadians were confronting shuttered emergency rooms, surgical backlogs, and shortages of health workers. And, except in Manitoba, there's no indication so far that this disingenuous approach is making much, if any, difference.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

# Liberals need to look for realistic wins in wake of fiscal update



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Liberals find themselves where they do in large measure because they have become their own worst enemies, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Success for them now is surviving the next month, not sermons or sanctimony—two things the prime minister and deputy PM need to be leery of as they are prone to both.

Tim  
Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—Of course, the focus of Ottawa this week is the Federal Economic Statement. The focus of Canadians is probably on many different things, including figuring out what they can afford for now and the holidays. Lots of gums are going to flap, keyboards will click, and rhetoric will soar about what the Nov. 21 fiscal update all means to the average Canadian. Victory or defeat will be declared by annoying pundits like me.

But ultimately, will Canadians' lives materially change in the short term? Probably not, yet the so-called FES could influence political fortunes. The Liberals are hoping it will be a positive channel-changer from the litany of bad news that seemingly has been a constant companion of theirs for months on end.

Before Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland delivered the statement, we had already been flooded with "leaks" about its substance. Crackdowns on short-term rental, Airbnb-type providers. Billions of dollars in housing investments. An apparent "Mortgage Charter," words and maybe guidelines that supposedly will assist the legions of Canadians who have to re-up their mortgages in a time of higher interest rates. Some of these items will be welcomed by people, particularly if the details match, or if not, if the spin's potency about the apparent difference they will make is strong enough.

If political polls are key performance indicators of how the Liberals have fared on selling a compelling narrative to Canadians, then it is hard not to conclude the Trudeau government has sucked at this

now for months. They have had self-described reset after reset. From the last budget, to this past summer's cabinet shuffle, to some early announcements at their retreats on housing and affordability. And then there was the home heating oil carbon tax carveout. Again, if polls are the barometer, nothing got better for the Liberals. If anything, they entrenched themselves in a double-digit deficit behind the Conservatives in national horse race numbers.

The Liberals find themselves where they do in large measure because they have become their own worst enemies. They have inflated expectations with almost all their resets. They maintain a lofty, preachy, "society must change" rhetoric at a time when people want help more than sermons. They constantly look like they have not fully game-planned narratives or reactions to many of their announcements.

That said, for their own confidence-building purposes and team unity, they need some kind of win coming around or with the FES. Here is a suggestion: be practical and realistic, and look for some small success. That could be delivering the economic statement and having one or two of the policies be reasonably received, then get to the holiday break in four weeks without more self-generated errors. Keep it simple and don't be stupid—a version of the KISS theory. Tattoo the Hippocratic Oath on every Liberal MP: "do no harm."

Success for them now is surviving the next month, not sermons or sanctimony—two things the prime minister and deputy prime minister need to be leery of as they can be prone to both. If you can at least do that and feel like you can handle something a bit spicier, then get some contrast ads focused on Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre ready for the NFL playoffs in January, or maybe the later days of the World Junior Hockey championships. Both those sport spectacles get lots of eyeballs and have been political battle plains before.

I fully expect no political party will take my advice, but nonetheless, bruised ego aside, the next four weeks will be interesting to watch. Will the Liberals continue to make their habitual errors and spiral to the bottom of the political toilet bowl? Or will they get themselves slightly unstuck before they get flushed?

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



## Opinion

# The reformed Senate in the eye

The narrative to put pressure on ‘Liberal Senators’ to pass the bill is a nice political line, but the clarion call would result in zero votes as there are no Liberal Senators.

PSG Senator  
Andrew  
Cardozo

Opinion



The Senate has suddenly been thrust into the public eye as it prepares to vote on Bill-234, which would slightly extend the carbon-price exemptions that farmers already have.

The Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing is a creative anomaly, whereby Conservative MP Ben Lobb would have grain-drying equipment added to the carveout that the farmers received in the original carbon price legislation. Creative, because he got the Bloc and the NDP in the House to vote for it, in addition to three Liberal MPs.

So, it comes to the Senate for us to vote on: a bill primarily voted for by the opposition parties and not the government, and that’s all within the rules. Good on Lobb.

The sponsor in the Upper Chamber is the experienced Conservative Senator David Wells.

While this was a bit of a sleeper when it passed the House this past May, after the government’s Oct. 26 announcement of a carveout for those using home heating oil, this bill suddenly gained more attention.

For the record, it is important to note that farmers already get extensive exemptions to the car-

bon tax for diesel and gas, as well as sizeable rebates worth millions of dollars—a fact that neither the Conservatives nor the governing Liberals seem to mention much.

## ‘Liberal Senators’

Now, the new narrative: put pressure on those “Liberal Senators” to pass the bill.

It’s a nice political line, but, ironically, if the request is to have “Liberal Senators” vote for this, the clarion call would result in zero votes as there are no Liberal Senators.

What the Conservatives in the Senate and House are doing is to brand the Senators appointed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as “Liberal Senators.” This is, of course, part of the fad of labelling and name-calling, thus diminishing people you disagree with. It’s an easy political trick, but it diminishes the whole system.

Besides the inaccuracy and unfortunate partisanship, labelling all Trudeau’s appointees may not work to one’s favour. Indeed, one of the Trudeau-appointed independents is Senator Rob Black, from farm country in Ontario, who chairs the Senate Agriculture Committee. He is one of the leading voices for this bill. He’s certainly not a Liberal Party member, so far as I can tell. And there are other Trudeau-appointed Senators who may support this bill. It’s actually a bit complex, or dare I say nuanced, which of course has no place in the world of political blood sport. It will take me more than a bumper sticker to explain this, so bear with me.

## The Senate reforms

Here’s how we are situated in this new independent Senate.

In 2014, as the new party leader, Trudeau removed all sitting Senators from the Liberal caucus, and pledged that as prime minister he would stop appointing partisan Liberals and instead appoint Senators who would sit independent of any political

party. To date, he has appointed some 65 people. In addition, several Conservative Senators left the Conservative Party caucus for various reasons and settled in other groups, such that more than 80 per cent of Senators now sit as independents.

It is worth noting that to get appointed, one applies online to the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments. This board sifts through the hundreds of applications, and gives the prime minister a short list of five names for every vacancy that comes up. It can take longer than two years to be considered.

*The Globe and Mail’s* John Ibbitson has suggested the Senate reform is “one of Justin Trudeau’s finest achievements as prime minister.” The Senate has finally become that Chamber of sober second thought envisioned by the fathers of Confederation. Our role is to review legislation without considerations of partisan interest or upcoming electoral fortunes.

## Groups and parties in the Senate

There are currently five groupings in the Senate (I will use that term to include “groups” and “parties”).

There is the Government Representative in the Senate (GRO) Marc Gold, and two deputies. While these three Senators represent the Liberal government in the Senate, they are neither necessarily Liberal Party members nor ministers in the way the government leader used to be in the olden days.

The next group of 39 members is the Independent Senators Group (ISG) headed by Raymonde Saint-Germain, which was originally formed by independent Senators appointed by Trudeau, along with three former Liberals who joined them when the Liberal caucus disintegrated, following Trudeau’s removal of the Liberal Senators from the national caucus.



Federal Conservatives are trying to brand the Senators appointed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as ‘Liberal Senators.’ It’s an easy political trick, but it diminishes the whole system, writes Sen. Andrew Cardozo. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The Canadian Senators Group (CSG) has 16 members and is headed by Scott Tannas. It was started by several Stephen Harper-appointed Conservatives who split with the Tory caucus, and have since been joined by one former Liberal and a few new independent Senators.

The Progressive Senate Group (PSG) indicates its guiding principles as the Charter of Rights and advancing reconciliation, and was started by some of the former Liberals, of which there is only one remaining. Jane Cordy is the

leader. Eleven members in all, they also have one former Conservative and several independent Senators, of which I am one.

The 15 Conservatives are the only ones to sit as a party, headed by Senator Don Plett, still caucusing with their House colleagues, taking directions from the House leadership, and voting as a bloc. They work on fundraising, party strategy and party outreach, and have openly declared they will not be part of the 2015 reform and if elected to government will go back to partisan appointments only.

When we arrive in the Chamber, we are designated as “non-affiliated,” meaning we have not yet joined a group or party.

There are 13 in the latter grouping, which includes new appointees, the Senate Speaker, as well as Senators who have left other caucuses.

## Difference between groups and parties

So why belong to a group? Well, you join a team with whom you work in a general way. Speaking time in the Chamber and committee seats are apportioned to groupings based on size, while the non-affiliated Senators only get a shot if a group gives them a temporary spot here or there. Of key importance: in the groups, we do not decide how to vote as a bloc, and members do



Senators Raymonde Saint-Germain, left, Scott Tannas, Don Plett, and Jane Cordy lead the Independent Senators Group, Canadian Senators Group, Conservative Senate caucus, and Progressive Senate Group, respectively. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



# of the storm over Bill C-234



not ask Senators to support the legislation they put before us?

When we get up to vote on Bill C-234, and any amendments to it, we will all be furtively casing the joint to see how our colleagues are voting, which is the case for every roll-call vote.

Besides not being told how to vote, as an independent, I do not belong to any political party and do not caucus with any MPs in the House of Commons—although I am open to working with MPs from all parties as needed. No one tells me what to say or what not to say. I do not engage in fundraising with any party, nor use clips from the Senate or otherwise for fundraising purposes. I do not raise funds off of what is happening in the Senate. I do not engage in party strategy planning, for a party, a constituency, or a leadership campaign, or outreach for a party.

Recently, my colleague Senator Percy Downe, a former chief of staff to then-prime minister Jean Chrétien, raised the suggestion that Trudeau should consider stepping down in the months ahead. In coverage of his thoughts, he was referred to as a Liberal Senator. Best as I can explain this is that Downe is lifelong member of the Liberal Party of Canada, and felt he needed to opine on the issue. But he sits as an independent in the CSG. His record of voting is quite pronounced as an independent as it is not unusual for him to vote against the Liberal government's position.

I raise this only because this has caused some confusion, suggesting there is some group of Senate Liberals. There isn't. And I don't think Downe considers himself one. He is, in fact, the only former Liberal in the Canadian Senators Group, which includes seven former Conservatives appointed by then-prime minister Harper.

## Pressure on Senators

Do we get pressure on how to vote? Yes, lots. And it comes from the Canadian public, lobbyists, associations, you name it. And when there is an organized campaign of any kind, we can get hundreds or thousands of emails and letters, and sometimes lots of pressure on social media, some of which can be rather unpleasant, to put it mildly. It is not unusual for Senators to get sexist, racist, or other threatening messages in the wild world of anonymity in social media.

I make it my job to meet with as many people who want to, just as I go out to meet people who may be interested in connecting with me as a Senator.

It was said by one party leader that cabinet ministers have been frantically pressuring Senators to vote against Bill C-234. This makes me feel sad. How come no minister has come my way, frantically or otherwise?

But seriously, we find ourselves in a strange position wherein it seems fine for the world to lobby Senators on a bill of concern, but somehow it is not right for the government and its ministers to do the same. *Au contraire*. It is the responsibility of ministers to explain their views on any and all policies and legislation. It would be an abdication of their responsibilities to see an onslaught from the other side and not speak up from their own perspective. The irony is while the current prime minister has appointed some 60 senators, he and his cabinet have no hold over us once we are appointed. If there is any imbalance of power, it is us Senators who have the upper hand. In my view, it is totally legitimate for them to explain their view and ask for our support on this or any other bill, whether in the Senate Chamber, a committee room, or any other setting—formally or informally—just the way every one else communicates with us.

When it comes to lobbying Senators, with the growth in the number of independent Senators, it becomes more complicated to lobby the Senate. Rather than talking to one person from each group, it is necessary for advocates to make contact with each Senator. The Conservatives will likely vote as a bloc on C-234 and their position is clear at this point. The rest is unclear, and the vote on this bill could be a close one.

## Amending bills in the Senate is normal

First, a few words on trends in amending bills in the Senate. Prior to the reform, the Senate amended on average one or two bills a year that came to the Chamber from the House of Commons. When I began at the Senate a year ago, I heard that we

were amending about one third of the bills, and I thought that was a nice figure—enough to confirm that we were giving close scrutiny to legislation, but not too much that we were overstepping our role. I understand that figure is now closer to 50 per cent.

What is more important is that it seems the House accepts the vast majority of the amendments we send them, more than three quarters. That suggests the elected MPs and government appreciate our scrutiny and advice, and approve of the Senate's role to amend legislation passed by the House. Sometimes, MPs of all parties will ask us to try passing an amendment they were not successful with in their Chamber.

One observation on the current debate around Bill C-234: many Conservatives are chastising independent Senators from the ISG and PSG for introducing amendments, saying we are overstepping our powers. One should keep in mind that over the last year, the Senate Conservatives have put forward well more than 100 amendments on a variety of bills. While many of us may not like the use of these lawful shenanigans, they are there for a reason: for Parliamentarians to be able to improve, defeat, speed up, or delay legislation. These are all tools that make up the checks and balances in our law-making process, and have existed since the Magna Carta.

We would do well to respect each other and refrain from name-calling, yelling, and bullying in any direction during this emotional debate.

## The coming votes on Bill C-234

In the next couple of weeks there will be at least two votes, one of which is on an amendment to Bill C-234, introduced by the very thoughtful ISG Senator Lucie Moncion, and there could be more. Once they are debated and voted on, there will be a vote on the bill itself (as amended or not amended). If the bill is approved in an amended form, it will need to go back to the Commons, as both Chambers must approve the exact same bill before it moves along.

The proponents of the bill understandably do not want it amended, as they fear it will get further delayed or even railroaded in the House. The opponents feel such a bill should get sent back to the House as it is a key aspect of the government's climate policy that slipped through the House once, but may not a second time. Indeed, in a second round there will be greater scrutiny on the NDP and Bloc Québécois, who otherwise position themselves as for climate action and the price on carbon.

not pressure each other to vote in any direction.

And how are we still independent? First and most importantly, by voting independently. No political party tells us how to vote, and there are no consequences for how we vote, as is the case in the House of Commons.

In the upcoming vote on Bill C-234, no one is going to tell me how to vote. And here is the

crux of the Senate reform: it is very risky for the prime minister. When he appointed me, he was clear that he would not be telling me how to vote, and in the year I have been on the job, I have never felt a milligram of pressure from anyone in his government. Do ministers ask for support? Yes, for sure. But it is out in the open, at committees, and it is made to all Senators alike. Why would they



Conservative MP Ben Lobb's Bill C-234 would have grain-drying equipment added to the carveout that the farmers received in the original carbon price legislation. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



## Opinion

# Setting the record straight on the firearms legislation

Canadians concerned about gun violence and the encroachment of American-style 'right to bear arms' attitudes should pay attention as Bill C-21 works its way through the Senate.

Amanda Dale



Opinion

There is no doubt that many things will be said about Bill C-21, An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms), as it makes its way through the Senate this fall. The legislation has been a flashpoint for misinformation, misinterpretation, and hyperbole from all sides.

As a long-time researcher, front-line service provider, and advocate, I'd just like to set the record straight on a few things.

After a great deal of dialogue and deliberation with a variety of stakeholders, we know that



Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc holds a press conference in Ottawa on Sept. 18. Bill C-21 isn't perfect, but it is well worth supporting without amending its interlocking and mutually supporting elements, writes Amanda Dale. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Bill C-21 defines and prohibits military-style semiautomatic firearms; prohibits the import, sale, and transfer of handguns; reduces the risk of dangerous people having access to firearms, including those at risk of suicide or of committing domestic violence; and improves import and border controls.

Other amendments to the Criminal Code close loopholes in relation to the purchase of ammunition, magazines, as well

as the stockpiling and circulation of semi-automatic weapons.

Canada looks on in horror as news item after news item reveals gun proliferation among the general population in the United States. Canadians see ourselves as more peaceable and less gun obsessed.

It turns out, it's the wrong time to be smug.

Investigative journalism has revealed that the American National Rifle Association (NRA)

helped the Canadian Shooting Sports Association set up a political arm that has been fighting this legislation, transforming Canada's relationship to guns.

Canadians concerned about gun violence and the encroachment of American-style "right to bear arms" attitudes increasingly displayed over the last few decades should pay attention to Bill C-21.

The Mass Casualty Commission report into the 2021 mass

shooting in Portapique, N.S., which killed 21 people, called on federal and provincial governments to urgently implement stronger gun control measures, as well as improve protections for victim/survivors of gender-based violence. It also called for better tracking and reporting of assault weapons. (As a point of clarification, the Mass Casualty Commission Report reinforces Supreme Court decisions that a "right to bear arms" is not part of Canadian law or history.)

Many of the Commission's recommendations are reflected in Bill C-21.

From those who oppose the bill, we hear that "law-abiding gun owners" are not the problem.

However, in per capita terms, Canada is now the biggest foreign buyer of American rapid-fire weapons. And fully half the crime guns it traced in 2022 were what authorities call "domestically sourced" weapons. Canada manufactures very few weapons in global terms, so this means most weapons implicated in Canadian crimes were *legally* imported.

Handguns and semi-automatic military-style assault weapons affected by the legislation are not used for hunting or by farmers for legitimate purposes. Following the NRA-backed trail, academics are beginning to trace a clear connection between right-wing and white supremacists groups and the gun lobby, a troubling thread throughout the Mass Casualty Commission's work as well.

Events seared into the Canadian consciousness—the Montreal massacre, the Quebec Islamic Centre, and Dawson College, for example—were all committed with legally acquired firearms.

Others, such as the 2018 Toronto Danforth mass shooting,

Continued on page 31

# Government-sector job growth dwarfs rise in private-sector jobs across Canada

A nearly stagnant private sector can't finance rapid growth in the size of government over the long term.

Ben Eisen



Opinion

Across Canada, headlines suggest the labour market has recovered from the COVID-19 recession. However, a closer look

at the numbers complicates the story. According to a new study, the rate of net job growth in the government sector has exceeded the private sector in all 10 provinces since the onset of the pandemic and the associated recession.

Let's start by looking at the national numbers. Between the onset of the COVID recession in February 2020 and June 2023, the number of government jobs across the country increased by 11.8 per cent compared to only 3.3 per cent in the private sector (including the self-employed).

In other words, recent job creation in Canada is due to a growing government rather than a thriving private sector. In fact, the private-sector rate of net job growth looks even weaker when we consider that Canada's work-

ing-age population has grown quickly during this timeframe.

These statistics raise an important question about the sustainability of recent labour market trends in Canada. A nearly stagnant private sector can't finance rapid growth in the size of government over the long term. Remember, taxpayers ultimately pay for all new government spending, including spending on wages and salaries. This can take the form of higher taxes or new debt that must be either repaid or financed indefinitely by future taxpayers.

The fact that the rate of net job growth in the government has been faster than in the private sector is a pan-Canadian trend. It's true in all 10 provinces, although the extent varies considerably by province.

Consider British Columbia and Alberta. From February 2020 to June 2023, Alberta had the fastest private-sector net job growth in the country (6.2 per cent), dwarfing B.C.'s growth rate (0.3 per cent).

The situation is reversed if we look at government-sector employment, which includes all levels of government. Like all provinces, Alberta saw an increase in the number of government jobs during this period, but the rate was relatively aligned with the private-sector rate. But in B.C., the number of government jobs exploded, increasing by 22.6 per cent.

As a result, the government sector accounted for more than 90 per cent of the job growth in B.C. compared to only 24 per cent in Alberta. Most of the other provinces are between these two extremes. In Quebec, for example,

government-sector job growth (7.6 per cent) was substantially higher than in the private sector (two per cent). Same story in Ontario (11.7 per cent compared to 4.7 per cent).

Taken together, these data illustrate the state of Canada's labour market. Although there's significant variation between provinces, across Canada we've seen a faster rate of job growth in the government compared to the private sector. This raises important questions about the health of Canada's private-sector economy, the effect of a growing government payroll on government finances, and the burden on taxpayers.

Ben Eisen is a senior fellow for provincial prosperity studies at the Fraser Institute.

*The Hill Times*



# Troubles with disinformation? Ukrainians know what to do

Motion 102 outlines the exact steps in which Ukrainian fact checkers can help Canada strengthen its battle against disinformation, and how Canada can help Ukraine take it to the next level.

Artur Koldomasov

Opinion



Sometimes it is important to take a moment in such a fast-paced world and try to figure out what's going on. In 2023, things have reached a new level with wars going on in multiple spots around the globe, and with our natural lust for information being used against us. For many people, the line between what is truth and what are lies has blurred completely, which has affected personal relationships and addressing global challenges.

I came to the Hill to complete my internship at the time when that line became a lifeline. While “spamouflage” spreads through the Canadian political system and a number of people in political offices are trying to figure out what to do with it, Ukraine has been dealing with disinformation since the time the internet became an essential part of every Ukrainian household.

The World Wide Web was created to help unite people and improve their knowledge on many things, but Russia and its propaganda machine decided to turn this goal upside down. It has been trying to divide the Ukrainian nation and create false pretext for its violent aggression, launched first in 2014 and then amplified in 2022. No matter which realm of life it was—politics, language, religion, culture, or media—Russia tried to poison it with various fakes and manipulations. Though “spamouflage” is a relatively novel thing for Canadian politics, Russia implemented similar technology as a part of political interplay in Ukraine, muddying the waters in its favour.

It was a very painful way to learn how to respond to such challenges, especially when disinformation can kill people as efficiently as bombs. Still, there is a silver lining in this situation: Ukraine now has one of the world's most efficient anti-disinformation initiatives. Working in one of them, I have seen how Russia tried to play the card of Canada's support for Ukraine against both Ukrainians and Canadians.

That experience, together with how massive and technologically intricate the scale



Liberal MP Judy Sgro gave notice for M-102, regarding countering disinformation in the House of Commons on Nov. 6. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

of “spamouflage” is in Canada, inspired me to act. With the support of Judy Sgro, who is the Liberal MP for Humber River-Black Creek, Ont., I contributed to M-102, Countering disinformation in Canada and around the world, which outlines the exact steps Ukrainian fact checkers can use to help Canada strengthen its battle against disinformation, and how Canada can help Ukraine take it to the next level.

Ukraine is full of resolute and enthusiastic people who are ready to share their valuable experience with the entire world. They are ready to do it in different ways—starting with op-eds, and ending with projects of a massive scale targeted to improve the media literacy not only in Canada, but also in conflict-affected areas, not only limited to Ukraine.

Media literacy has become a necessity in a modern world. The war in Ukraine proved that hybrid threats are the future of warfare, and relevant stakeholders must finally accept the fact that it is not less important than weapon manufacturing. It is time to unite the efforts and work to guard ourselves for the world in which we live.

Initiatives related to disinformation must become an integral part of reconstruction for Ukraine after the war. Capacity building can help prevent another escalation of the war, as it helps build a more resilient society. There is an opportunity for Canadian policymakers and other stakeholders to leave a legacy that will be recognized by Ukrainians years after the war ends. There are not that many similar historic opportunities, and if this op-ed finds you in a place where you were waiting for a sign to get involved, let this be it.

Artur Koldomasov is a disinformation analyst with *Detector Media*, and a Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program intern in the office of Liberal MP Judy Sgro. *The Hill Times*

# The reformed Senate in the eye of the storm over Bill C-234

Continued from page 11

So, the best bet for Lobb's bill is that the Senate passes it unamended so it can move forward for royal assent, and be added to the significant exemptions that farmers already have. And for that there is a gigantic push coming our way. This Senate vote has become more political than any other in a long time.

## Legislating as a constant balancing act

At the end of the day, as with many bills, legislating is all a balancing act. Do you add to the exemptions that farmers have or not? In the grander scheme of politics, do you support the elected government, or accept that the elected House of Commons, by majority, should overrule the minority government on this issue? Are carveouts a good idea or not? Would this carveout that would help western farmers, be a nice balance to the heating oil carveout, which—relative to their population—helps homes in the East most? If climate change is a big concern, are you concerned that this and perhaps more carveouts might render the overall carbon price policy useless, especially as at least one party wants to scrap it altogether?

Alternatively, could giving in on this part of the policy buy the supporters of the price on carbon some lowered resistance, and perhaps even support for the rest of the carbon policy? Or is that naive? Do the supporters of the bill smell blood and want to move in for the complete kill of the federal climate change policies? Do the supporters of the price on carbon see this bill as one more exception that will lead to the eventual end to this major Canadian climate policy?

## The stakes

Would the passage of this bill cause Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault to resign, or does his line in the sand not include measures beyond the control of the Liberal cabinet? And while a vote in the Senate is not a vote of confidence in the government (that only relates to the confidence of the House of Commons), would passing a Conservative MP's bill be seen as a setback for the government?

In the end, the stakes are high.

As we in the Senate become the focus of some bare-knuckled political gamesmanship, the campaign will be driven by the 15 Conservatives in a Chamber that currently comprises 94 Senators. But they will have

loud support from the outside: partisans, industry lobbyists, and some premiers. And we have received clear letters from Premiers Danielle Smith of Alberta, Scott Moe of Saskatchewan, and Doug Ford of Ontario so far. The ones from Smith and Ford were quite balanced and thoughtful.

The opponents of the bill will have the support of the Liberal government, which has given up its partisan control of the Senate and is in the weird position of, at most, sweetly and nicely asking independent Senators, who have been taking their independence increasingly seriously, to support the bill.

The late senator Ian Shugart delivered a significant speech last spring wherein he cautioned Senators to exercise restraint in what we do. What I would call the Shugart Principle suggests that just because we have the power to amend what comes to us from the House, to agree or disagree with the House or the government, we need to be restrained in our use of these powers, given that we are the non-elected Chamber in Parliament.

## A defining moment

With the stakes being high, this is one of those defining moments in the history of Senate, where we, as independent Senators, also realize with enormous clarity that we are really and truly part of the governance structure of this country. We are independent while still part of an institution called the Senate, a key part of law making in Canada. We are independents, but are still part of Team Senate and Team Canada. We may be independents, and have individual interests and priorities, but we are more than individuals just doing our own thing. Our actions have consequences. Because we are not elected and can serve till age 75, we cannot be voted out, which brings me back to the Shugart Principle: exercise restraint.

This debate and vote, regardless of the outcome, is one for the political science books that will studied and talked about for years to come.

My one hope is that after this donnybrook is over, we return to being the most collegial and constructive legislature in the country, and perhaps the world. I think most people would believe that this is what Canadians want of Parliamentarians, especially those in the Senate.

Andrew Cardozo is an independent Senator from Ontario, a member of the Progressive Senate Group, and a former adjunct professor in public policy at Carleton University.

*The Hill Times*

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## Comment

# The Grey Cup should be a symbol of unity

As more Quebecers play and follow the game, the Alouettes' victory and the CFL will be celebrated across the province. The very least the league could do is treat the French language with respect.

Andrew Caddell

*With All Due Respect*



**M**ONTREAL—The Montreal Alouettes were my football team from the time I was five years old. As a six year old, I would run back kicks against my older brother and his friends, and

dream I would one day play for my home team. I never did, but I followed the "Als" throughout my childhood as they fought mediocrity and never won a Grey Cup from 1949 onwards.

In the fall of 1970, Montreal was in the throes of the War Measures Act. The presence of soldiers on the streets, the kidnapping of diplomat James Cross, and the murder of Quebec cabinet minister Pierre Laporte threw a pall on the city.

Then along came the third-place Alouettes, beating the odds to grind out two unexpected victories and win the Canadian Football League's Grey Cup against the heavily favoured Calgary Stampeders in Toronto. Half a million people came out in Montreal to celebrate as the team paraded through a downtown that had not seen much joy in the previous two months.

The Alouettes won the Cup in 1974, and again in 1977, drawing huge crowds to the Olympic Stadium. The team faded to black in 1987, folding after a series of owners fumbled the team's fortunes, and fans refused to support a losing team. Meanwhile, the CFL struggled as the National Football

League grew in leaps and bounds south of the border. In Quebec, the Alouettes returned in the late 1990s as thousands of francophones began playing the game. Soon there were more Québécois on a winning Alouettes team than on the NHL's Canadiens.

In the past few years, the team's fortunes declined again, and they could not attract crowds or keep an owner, so the league took over. Last winter, top free agents left and things looked bleak until media billionaire and former Parti Québécois leader Pierre Karl Péladeau stepped in. With a management team of Quebecers led by Montreal native Danny Maciocia, the Als became stronger as the season rolled along, winning seven games in a row, the last against the heavily favoured Toronto Argonauts in the eastern final.

The team had been counted out all year, and went into the Nov. 19 Grey Cup as huge underdogs against Winnipeg. The Alouettes' francophone players arrived in Hamilton, Ont., and saw barely a word of French in the signage and publicity for the game.

When the team emerged victorious 28-24 with a last-minute

touchdown, the players let loose in post-game interviews. On the French-language TV channel Réseau des sports, a jacked-up defensive back Marc-Antoine Dequoy ranted, "You look everywhere, and it's all written in English," referring to Tim Hortons Field in Hamilton. "But you know what? Keep your English, because we're taking the Cup," he cried. "We'll take it back to Montreal, we'll take it back to Quebec, and we will lift it at home. Because we are the f\*\*\*ing champions!"

The clip was viewed tens of thousands of times on social media with fans expressing their support or disavowal for the rant. The next day, Dequoy was somewhat remorseful. "For me, what the message was is just ... the CFL is bilingual. The CFL is French and English as Canada as a country is. We just felt that ... French Canadians were not respected, the French language was not respected."

CFL commissioner Randy Ambrosie realized the mistake, saying "We have tremendous respect for our French language colleagues, we have tremendous respect for our French language fans," promising to do better.

It is true, the Alouettes were never expected to get very far, given their struggles early in the year. But the limited expectations had more to do with the Alouettes' record and weak offensive statistics than the 10 Québécois on the team. And the final touchdown was scored on a pass from an American, Cody Fajardo, to a British Columbia native Tyson Philpot. The feeling in Montreal has been much like 1970, with the city revelling in the unexpected win.

That said, the Grey Cup is billed as the sole truly national sporting event in Canada. And with more Quebecers playing and following the game, the Alouettes' victory and the CFL will be celebrated across Quebec. The very least the league could do in return is treat the French language, and the eight million Quebecers who speak it, with respect.

*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*

# Why are other agencies stepping in to protect Canadians from Air Force members?

In a pair of recent instances, the CBSA and the OPP are arresting senior officers in the RCAF on firearms infractions to 'keep Canadians safe.'

Scott Taylor

*Inside Defence*



**O**TTAWA—Glancing through the *Ottawa Citizen* on Nov. 17, I almost skimmed past an article with the headline "RCAF officer charged with firearms offences

after police searches." I initially assumed that this was an update on the bizarre tale out of CFB Trenton that first surfaced in August.

In that saga, Colonel Leif Dahl, the commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force's 8 Wing and by extension the base commander of Canada's largest operational airbase at CFB Trenton, had been charged by Ontario Provincial Police with several firearms infractions.

Witnesses had reported that Dahl was discharging a firearm from a boat on the Murray Canal. This is a narrow waterway that connects the Bay of Quinte with Presqu'île Bay on Lake Ontario.

For those familiar with the Murray Canal, this is not a remote backwoods area, but rather a public waterway with residential properties lining the bank.

Bystanders were also alarmed at the fact that the ducks that Dahl was allegedly targeting are a protected species. With the arrival of OPP officers, Dahl allegedly

dumped a firearm into the canal. Divers subsequently recovered not one, but two weapons at the scene.

As a result, Dahl was charged with the following: obstructing a peace officer, careless use of a firearm while hunting, hunting birds without a licence, and having a loaded firearm in a conveyance (his boat).

Following a search of his residence, the OPP added the charges of possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose, careless storage of a firearm, and breach of firearms regulations for transporting a firearm or restricted weapon.

While none of the charges have yet to be proven in a court of law, the RCAF commander of 1 Canadian Air Division, Major-General Iain Huddleston, permanently removed Dahl's as commander of 8 Wing and CFB Trenton.

Given the similarity in the recent headline, I was surprised to learn that this latest case of firearms offences involves yet another RCAF officer entirely.



A senior officer with the Royal Canadian Air Force has been charged after the Canada Border Services Agency seized various prohibited weapons including handguns, assault rifles, shotguns, ammunition, and magazines in October 2023. *Photograph courtesy of the CBSA*

In a Nov. 15 press release issued by Canada Border Services Agency, it was announced that Major Kendrick Barling has been charged by the Canada Border Services Agency's Ontario Firearms Smuggling Enforcement Team.

Following searches by CBSA investigators, which took place Oct. 19 in Kingston and Oct. 23 in Petawawa, Barling has been charged with the following offences:

- Seven charges under the Customs Act (five for smuggling goods into Canada, two for making false statements);
- Twenty charges under the Criminal Code (nine for importing a firearm knowing it is unauthorized, nine for the unauthorized importing of a firearm, and two for contravention of transportation regulations); and
- Two charges under the Export and Import Permits Act for importing goods without a permit.

The CBSA claim their searches netted a haul of seven hand-

guns, 10 rifles (allegedly including assault rifles), two shotguns, 45,000 rounds of various calibre ammunitions, and hundreds of magazines that allegedly include AR-15 over-capacity magazines. For me, the real kicker in the CBSA press release was the quote from Eric Lapierre, the CBSA Northern Ontario Region's director general.

His statement read in part, "Thanks to their dedication and due diligence, [the CBSA] have successfully taken many dangerous weapons off our streets ... as we work together to keep our communities safe."

The fact is, in this instance the CBSA, and the OPP in the case of Col. Dahl, are the agencies arresting senior officers in the RCAF on firearms infractions in order to "keep Canadians safe." That is almost impossible to comprehend.

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

*The Hill Times*



# DEFENCE

**So much to do and so little time for Canada to up its defence game**

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**Saving the Canadian Armed Forces: a missed opportunity**

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**The significant and existential threat to Arctic sovereignty from climate change**

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**Not so far out, man: Senators urge research into psychedelic-assisted therapy for veterans**

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**Waiting for the new defence policy**

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# Overdue defence policy update must address changing international threats, inflation: defence experts

‘The longer they delay, the further we are behind,’ says NDP critic Lindsay Mathysen of the wait for the now-overdue update to Canada’s defence policy.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

An update to Canada’s defence policy is needed sooner rather than later in order to address changing military threats from Russia and China, domestic deployment issues, and inflation pressures that have increased costs for many goods, say defence policy experts.

“That document now is pushing seven years old, in terms of the actual financing of it, because the costing that underpins that initiative was done in 2016. That was seven years ago, and basically an entire inflation paradigm ago,” said David Perry, president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute think tank. “Even had nothing else changed, I think [the defence policy] was going to need to be updated to deal with significant costs changes.”

The Liberal government is currently working on a much-anticipated update to its defence policy, *Strong Secure, Engaged*, which was released in 2017. An update to the policy, first announced in the April 2022 federal budget, is intended to focus on the size, capabilities, and responsibilities of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), and ensure the military “has the resources required to

both keep Canadians safe and contribute to operations around the world,” according to the budget document.

Perry told *The Hill Times* that if Canada does become involved in a conflict with Russia or China, “we are woefully unprepared.” As an example, he referenced a meeting of the House National Defence Committee on Sept. 28, at which Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre said that no additional rounds of ammunition have been delivered to the Canadian military since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

“We need more of a sense of urgency in this area, but with increasing industrial capacity, we need the contracts that go along with that to be able to produce the ammunition, to get the additional production lines open, etc.,” Eyre told the committee. “We have not produced one additional round of ammunition since February 2022, so yes, this is something that greatly concerns me.”

Perry said Canada’s ability to respond to a changing international environment is “a lot slower than it needs to be.”

“We’ve seen ... personal security implications as well as economic security implications of what Russia could do,” said Perry. “With China, it continues to basically push to upend the status quo in the Indo-Pacific, which is home to about half the world’s economy. They keep showing indications that they’d like to push that envelope as far as possible.”

Aside from military concerns related to other countries, Canada’s defence policy also needs updating to keep up with current costs, argued Perry.

“The costing and the financial basis probably needs to be reset across the board to deal with

defence-specific inflation, and the overall cost of goods,” said Perry. “The military buys all kinds of exquisite weapon systems, [but] it also buys all kinds of the same types of things that most regular Canadians buy—office supplies, food, all those types of things where we’ve seen, of course, real, serious cost increases.”

*The Hill Times* reached out to Defence Minister Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.) to ask for an update on when the defence policy update might be released. According to a Nov. 15 emailed statement from Blair’s director of communications, Daniel Minden, the update will be released “in the coming months.”

“The world has changed since 2017—and we know that we need to do more, especially given Russia’s ongoing war on Ukraine, and security challenges in the Indo-Pacific,” read the statement. “To ensure that we get this right, we have been engaging with allies, partners, Canadians, defence experts, and our industry partners.”

Industry partners Blair recently met with include the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada (AIAC), and the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries (CADSI), according to the email.

Blair attended the 2023 Canadian Aerospace Summit, held by the AIAC Nov. 7-8, and announced that the defence policy update is still being crafted and refined in order to give industry more clarity on long-term spending plans, as reported by Global News.

“We have heard clearly that Canada’s defence industry is looking for additional clarity and certainty about our defence investments—and, in our work to craft the DPU [defence policy update], we are taking this feedback into consideration. We have



Defence Minister Bill Blair’s office says ‘the world has changed since 2017—and we know that we need to do more, especially given Russia’s ongoing war on Ukraine, and security challenges in the Indo-Pacific.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

also received input directly from hundreds of Canadians, including via an online platform that we launched in March 2023, which received over 1,500 submissions,” read the statement from Minden.

NDP MP Lindsay Mathysen (London-Fanshawe, Ont.), her party’s defence critic, told *The Hill Times* that a longer wait for the update’s release is a problem for defence industry partners, including General Dynamics Mission Systems-Canada, a developer and manufacturer of ammunition, and CADSI, which represents more than 900 Canadian defence and security companies who must plan out at least 10 years in advance.

“The longer they delay, the further we are behind,” said

Mathysen. “Whether they’re medium, small, or larger industry groups—or groups like CADSI that represent all of them—they’re all saying, ‘we don’t know where we’re going.’”

Mathysen said she wants to see the policy update include a better outline of the value placed on the CAF’s domestic deployment, which is becoming increasingly necessary in responding to natural disasters amid climate change. Examples could include examining how military personnel deployed domestically are provided with raises, commendations, and promotions, she said.

“When you provide people with service medals, typically it’s for international deployment,” said Mathysen. “I know that a ton of reservists are being called upon to do a lot more, and we don’t provide the same compensation. How are they going to deal with that? More and more is being required of our reservists for what they’re required to do as reserves, but also of what they’re being required to do more and more to fill in some holes.”

Alistair Edgar, an associate professor in the department of political science at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont., told *The Hill Times* that an update to the defence policy needs to be much more explicit in identifying threats from Russia, including cyberwarfare and misinformation campaigns, as well as the threats posed by China, particularly related to “aggressiveness in the South China Sea.” The long-running dispute in the South

China Sea involves conflicting island and maritime claims in the region by sovereign states including the People’s Republic of China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

“I think Canada is a laggard on defence spending,” said Edgar. “We know we’ve got a very small defence industry. We know the days of producing our own aircraft and stuff is long since gone ... [but] if we want [our industry] to be able to support [it], the Canadian Department of Defence needs actual orders. It needs actual money put out.”

a vulnerable U.S. that needs to pay more attention to homeland defence.”

The CAF is facing a shortage of 16,000 members, according to an April 5 report from CTV News. A defence strategy could address the challenges facing Canada’s military, and how best to “deal in cold, hard realities,” suggested Charron.

“We’re down 16,000 personnel. All the other defence policies always assume we have a full complement of personnel. It’s almost mythical in terms of what we can actually achieve,” she said. “We’ve always underestimated how much personnel we

now dedicate to requests for assistance because of natural disasters [or] vaccine rollouts, that’s non-discretionary. And then support to Ukraine and our support to NATO allies, that’s also non-discretionary.”

Darren Hawco, a Conference of Defence Associations Institute board member, told *The Hill Times* that after six-and-a-half years, Canada is “clearly due for an update” to its defence policy.

Hawco is a retired vice-admiral who previously served as head of force development for the current defence policy. According to Hawco, he was responsible for a team that handled investment planning, capability analysis, and which collaborated on the actual writing and editing of the *Strong, Secure, Engaged* document.

“I think it would be perhaps surprising to note that there has not really been—prior to the defence policy of 2017—an articulation of what Canada’s national interests are, at least that I, as a person, am aware of,” he said.

The 2017 defence policy identified Canadian security and prosperity as the country’s primary strategic interests, which are underpinned by factors such as global stability, collective defence, and “the primacy of rules-based international order.”

Hawco said that components of a rules-based international order include adhering to maritime law, freedom of navigation in the seas, a properly regulated aviation industry, and an international trade framework.

He said as a trading nation, Canada’s national security and prosperity—which is tied to global stability—is a national interest. In turn, an update to the defence policy should include a description of Canada’s national interests, argued Hawco.

“Another thing I think would be important to keep in any defence policy is an understanding of the concurrency of oper-

ations. What is the output you expect of the military?” he said. “And then, a transparent and published investment plan so that industry can know what the government intends to do over the next decade or so in terms of major investments.”

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*The Hill Times*

ations. What is the output you expect of the military?” he said. “And then, a transparent and published investment plan so that industry can know what the government intends to do over the next decade or so in terms of major investments.”

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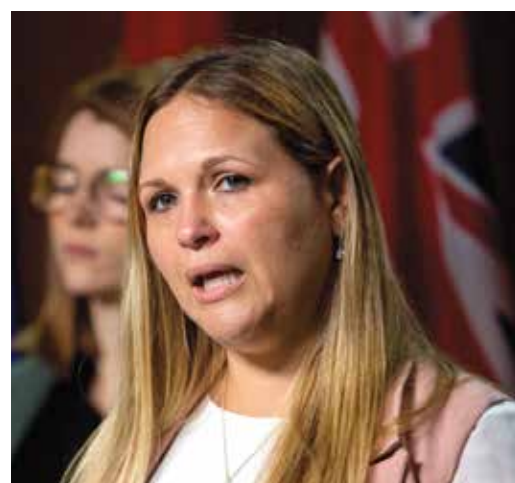
## Stats on public perception of Canada’s Armed Forces

- More than half of Canadians (56 per cent) consider the Armed Forces to be “old and antiquated.”
- About 75 per cent of Canadians either strongly agree or somewhat agree that Canada should increase its military spending to ensure its ability to protect Canadian territory and sovereignty.
- About 71 per cent strongly agree or somewhat agree that Canada should increase military funding so it can “contribute to global peace and stability.”
- More than half of Canadians (51 per cent) agree Canada’s military is adequately funded to defend its interests at home and abroad.
- About 69 per cent of Canadians strongly agree or somewhat agree that modernization of Canada’s military is “held back by mismanagement and political interference.”
- About 71 per cent of Canadians feel more concerned about Canada’s defence because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and about 69 per cent feel more concerned about Canada’s defence because of China’s recent actions in the Taiwan Strait.
- In regard to Arctic security, about 73 per cent of Canadians agree Canada should build military bases in our far north to protect Arctic territories, and about 52 per cent agree the country should acquire nuclear-powered submarines to defend the Arctic.

Source: Ipsos poll of 1,000 Canadians aged 18+, conducted between June 19-20, 2023, on behalf of Global News, and released on Aug. 4.



David Perry, president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, says Canada’s ability to respond to a changing international environment is ‘a lot slower than it needs to be.’ Photograph courtesy of David Perry



NDP MP Lindsay Mathysen says the longer the federal government delays the defence policy update, ‘the further we are behind.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Andrea Charron, associate professor of political studies at the University of Manitoba, says Canada needs a defence strategy that ‘takes into consideration the new threat environment.’ Photograph courtesy of Andrea Charron



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## Defence Policy Briefing

# So much to do and so little time for Canada to up its defence game

Chronic underfunding of defence, diplomacy, and development have left us on the geopolitical margins, unable to bring influence to bear when needed.

Liberal MP  
John McKay

Opinion



What threat do foreign powers, such as China and Russia, represent to Canada, and how can we protect ourselves? The question is virtually impossible to answer.

A short list of risks includes cybersecurity threats, economic espionage, influence operations, military aggression, geopolitical marginalization, and economic coercion.

The problem is that the list is not exhaustive, and we have yet to figure out how to protect ourselves from what we know—or what we think we know—when malign actors direct significant resources against Canada's well-being.

Our greatest strength is that we are a "relatively open society." Our greatest weakness is that we are a "relatively open society."



Maj.-Gen. Darcy Molstad, deputy commander, Canadian Joint Operations Command, left; Jonathan Quinn, director general, Continental Defence Policy; and Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre attend a House National Defence Committee meeting on March 7. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The truth of the matter is that we really haven't figured out how to protect ourselves in part because we don't fully recognize the risks. We are brilliant at recognizing risks when it's too late, but not so good at recognizing what could be a risk. We play checkers while the Communist Party of China and—to a lesser extent—Russia plays chess. As one security expert said to me, "Canadian security is easy to penetrate and it's cheap."

Cybersecurity threats have been well documented. However, when it comes to protection, Canadian companies find that it's expensive, hurts the bottom line, and that they may never be in a position to know whether it's effective.

For instance, the City of Toronto is looking to purchase subway cars. It may well be that a non-Chinese option will have to be taken because Toronto cannot afford the risk that control systems will be built and potentially hacked or manipulated by China to the great risk of commuters.

Economic espionage is generally defined as stealing intellectual property in order to gain competitive advantage. We will probably never know the full extent of the Winnipeg high-security lab story other than the fact that Chinese scientists with connections to the Communist Party of China were summarily invited to leave by the RCMP due

to concerns "relating to possible breaches in security protocols."

Influence operations work to disrupt, sometimes for no particular reason other than to simply sow discord. Currently there is an inquiry by Justice Marie-Josée Hogue of the Quebec Court of Appeal on the effect of Chinese government operatives on the 2021 federal election, among others. Manipulating public opinion, particularly in diaspora communities, has the goal of having votes cast in the best interest of Beijing or some other nation's interest rather than Canada.

In 2017, *The Washington Post* adopted a motto: "democracy dies in darkness." Disinformation and misinformation campaigns are designed to confuse and mislead citizens and voters so that they make poor decisions.

While Canada is not under immediate military threat from Russia or China, a future threat is not beyond the realm of possibility, especially as climate change literally opens up vulnerabilities that were once firmly frozen. China and Russia regularly and routinely conduct probing exercises in the Arctic just to see our response times, and what assets get deployed.

While we might like to live in a fantasy world of isolation under the security umbrella of the United States, the pressures to "up our game" are upon us. Chronic underfunding of defence, diplomacy, and development have left us on the geopolitical margins, unable to bring influence to bear when needed.

The phrase that "the world needs more Canada" may be true, but when we are not at the tables where we need to be, it's a phrase that rings hollow. It's a pity because we have so many diverse communities that might be able to bring perspective, resources, and energy to bending the narrative to what's in Canada's best interest.

When considering what foreign powers represent to Canada, the quote by former U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld comes to mind: "There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know that there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we know we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know."

It's hard to know if Rumsfeld is being profound or perplexing, but in the fog of war, possibly both.

The following is a partial list of the things we are doing, but could be doing better: strengthening our cybersecurity; enhancing counter-intelligence efforts to prevent espionage; protecting critical infrastructure; developing stronger military alliances; promoting media literacy among the public; diversifying our trade relationships and reducing dependence on any single country; reviewing foreign investments, particularly in sensitive sectors; and strengthening laws related to national security, economic espionage, and cybercrime.

So much to do and so little time in which to do it. Canada needs to up its game and get the resources to do so.

*Hon. John McKay is the Liberal Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont., chair of the House of Commons Committee on National Defence, and the Canadian co-chair of the Canada-U.S. Permanent Joint Board on Defence.*

*The Hill Times*

## Saving the Canadian Armed Forces: a missed opportunity

The government has had many years to restructure the CAF, but instead, on the domestic level, we are currently left with an underfunded, ill-equipped, and demoralized military.

Bloc MP  
Christine Normandin

Opinion



The Trudeau government has been in power since 2015. It has had numerous opportunities to shine in the eyes of NATO, but nearly eight years after the famous declaration that "Canada is back," the government is still unable to deliver on the commitments made to its allies. One only has to recall the promise to establish a Rapid Response Force, made in 2017 and reiterated in 2023, with an objective for delivery in 2026. This commitment is clearly far from being realized.

The government has also had many years to restructure the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), but instead, on the domestic level, we are currently left with an underfunded, ill-equipped, and demoralized military.

Unfortunately, Canada fares poorly in terms of military spending, allocating only a meager 1.3

per cent of its GDP to defence, while NATO set a target of two per cent of the national GDP per member country nearly a decade ago.

The war in Ukraine, now entering its second year, has harshly reminded us of our long-standing failure to fulfill our military commitments. It has also brought attention to the more than urgent need to protect our territorial integrity, starting with the Arctic. The war, along with a spotlight put on a more-than-ever-deficient capability to monitor the great North and our territorial waters, has led to a new public support for increased defence investments. Not too long ago, this same population might not have been as inclined towards such investments, preferring taxpayer



Members of the Canadian Armed Forces Talon Company conduct a live-fire exercise at Camp Adazi, Latvia, during Operation Reassurance on April 14. The war in Ukraine has led to a new public support for increased defence investments, which the government squandered, writes Christine Normandin. *Photograph courtesy of the Canadian Armed Forces*

money go to programs that contribute to maintaining our social safety net. We could hear in our ridings calls for an increase in

support and adequate financing of the defence sector.

Continued on page 20



# The significant and existential threat to Arctic sovereignty from climate change



We need to invest in our frontline of defence in the Arctic by increasing funds to our Canadian Rangers, Coast Guard Auxiliary, and for the well-being of Arctic communities, writes Lindsay Mathyssen. DND photograph by Master Sailor Dan Bard

*Strong, Secure, and Engaged* had no new initiatives to increase natural disaster fighting capabilities, leaving the women and men in the Armed Forces without meaningful investments in the training and equipment required to combat this growing threat.

NDP MP  
Lindsay  
Mathyssen

Opinion



Without the long-promised, long-delayed defence policy update, Canadians are left to piece together a vision for our 21<sup>st</sup> century Armed Forces through snippets of statements, committee appearances, and, occasionally, leaked documents to the media. But piecing these together as a cohesive vision is a struggle.

In October 2022, Chief of Defence Staff General Wayne Eyre appeared at the House Standing Committee on National Defence on our study toward Arctic security. Interestingly, Eyre said clearly: “I see no real threat today to our territorial sovereignty; nor do I see one in the near future.”

He told us about other challenges to our Arctic posed by climate change, particularly the increase of commercial activity in and through the Northwest Passage by foreign countries.

Vice-Admiral Angus Topphee, the commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, told us about the important holistic approach necessary to deal with this increase in traffic. He said that the

CAF is working with territorial governments and Indigenous partners to build Canada’s capacity, from unauthorized vessel detections to Search and Rescue.

In the same study, we heard from national security and intelligence adviser Jody Thomas that more than 40 per cent of Canada’s territory and more than 75 per cent of its national coastlines are the Arctic. She stated: “the Arctic is fundamental to Canada’s identity and its sovereignty. Rapid and enduring climate change is making the region more accessible. New commercial and military technologies are connecting the North to the rest of the world and eroding the region’s historical isolation from geopolitical affairs.”

Taking all of this into account, as the NDP critic for national defence, I find it clear that climate change poses a significant and existential threat to our Arctic sovereignty. So, the NDP has demanded that our federal government deliver real and meaningful action to combat climate change. We need to invest in our front-

line of defence in the Arctic by increasing funds to our Canadian Rangers, Coast Guard Auxiliary, and for the well-being of Arctic communities.

It is imperative that our federal government treats climate change as the national security threat that was outlined by all these officials. This past summer alone, 45.7 million acres of forest in Canada burned and released the equivalent of 1.7 billion tons of carbon dioxide emissions. The Forces were deployed to assist in these fires. In fact, since 2017 when *Strong, Secure, and Engaged* was released, the CAF’s domestic deployments combatting natural disasters has significantly increased, actually doubling since that time. In *Strong, Secure, and Engaged* there were no new initiatives announced to increase natural disaster fighting capabilities, and this has left the women and men in the Canadian Forces without the meaningful investments in training and equipment they require to combat this growing threat.

After a record-crushing wildfire season and a year of

warnings about the existential threat of climate change, I saw a shocking news story from the *Ottawa Citizen*: “Russia and China at War with Canada, says Gen. Wayne Eyre.”

After a year of reassurance that our territorial sovereignty is not at threat, the chief of defence staff declared that he considers China and Russia as our main threats, while almost entirely neglecting climate change.

In the *Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept* paper, he states “Russia and China do not differentiate between peace and war.”

Instead of mentioning climate change, the concept paper focuses on materializing hypotheticals like the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in combat against adversaries. Beyond the duress from this sudden declaration of war, the federal government has not scratched the surface of ethical and regulatory implications around the application of AI in war. As a proud signatory of the Parliamentary Pledge against Killer Robots, I know the deep implications of introducing machine learning to combat.

This tone comes at a time when Canadian voices for peace and de-escalation are much needed. American President Joe Biden’s meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, vowing to reopen communication cables, is promising, and yet Canada is nowhere near to having those or similar conversations. The call for a ceasefire now in Palestine is desperately overdue from this Liberal government; Canada’s unfair application of international law, human rights, and a rules-based order is hypocritical and we cannot continue to pick and choose whose rights we decide to uphold. The second meeting of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in New York provides a clear opportunity for the world to work towards a more peaceful future, and it is unacceptable that Canada has not played a leadership role and signed this treaty. Canada’s diminishing contributions to United Nations peacekeeping is a relationship I am sad to see end. And a growing consensus around a holistic, global approach to combatting climate change is something in which Canada must also play a key part.

Without the minister of national defence providing leadership through the promised defence policy update, Canadians are left in a state of anxiety around our place in the world. There is a moral responsibility to come out with a clear mandate to all voices in Canada’s defence community to declare what all Canadians feel: now is the time to build peace and fight climate change, before it is too late. Canada’s Armed Forces and our country’s place in the world are at a precipice. We have a clear choice to make, and history will judge us accordingly.

NDP MP Lindsay Mathyssen, who represents London-Fanshawe, Ont., is her party’s critic for national defence.

The Hill Times



## Defence Policy Briefing

# Not so far out, man: Senators urge research into psychedelic-assisted therapy for veterans

A large-scale research program on psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy is a moral imperative to help former soldiers affected by PTSD.

CSG Senator David Richards & Conservative Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu

Opinion



It is easy—too easy—to dismiss the therapeutic value of psychedelic drugs.

Whether it's outrage at the notion of taxpayers funding recreational drug use or sardonic witticisms about hippie medicine, too many people are prepared to overlook treatment that has shown great promise in helping veterans heal from debilitating mental illnesses acquired through their service to Canada.

It's time to change those attitudes and—to quote the title of the latest report from the Senate's Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs—*The Time is Now*. Our subcommittee undertook a sober examination of the issue, and concluded that a large-scale



The mental injuries some soldiers receive are in a class by themselves, and shed light on why it is so difficult to get successful results from conventional treatment, write Senators David Richards and Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu. *Unsplash photograph by Priscilla Du Preez*

research program on psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy is a moral imperative.

Read our report and you'll agree—it's no laughing matter.

Kelsie Sheren served as an artillery gunner in Afghanistan. After she was exposed to intense fighting and experienced the death of a friend, she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Conventional medications proved useless; she was medically released in 2011.

"I was suicidal, angry, hurting, and lost," she told our subcommit-

tee. "I was 21 years old, and on 11 different pharmaceutical drugs. Nothing was working."

"The words that [Veterans Affairs Canada] said rang in my ears for years: 'You'll never work again.'"

As a last resort, she tried psychedelic-assisted therapy. It required international travel—funded by a non-profit organization—until she was finally able to take part in a Canadian clinical trial.

In her case, the results were profound.

"Psychedelic-assisted therapy is the only reason I can be a

present mother, wife, and value to society," she told us.

"Psychedelic therapy is the only reason I am alive."

Conventional PTSD treatment is a slow and painful process that is too often ineffective.

Retired Colonel Rakesh Jetly, the former chief psychiatrist of the Canadian Armed Forces, told us how the patient is required to relive traumatic events in the therapy room "again and again and again until you desensitize and habituate."

It's gruelling. The drop-out rate is high, and, in Jetly's view, it

fails to take into account the guilt that some veterans feel about the actions they are required to take on the battlefield.

"If you're [feeling] guilty, talking about it ... actually might make it worse," he said.

In fact, former senator and retired Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire described the mental injuries some soldiers receive as "moral injuries." He illustrated his point with the story of a sniper who had not hugged his own children in the five years he'd been home because, in combat, he had been ordered to "take out" children being used as suicide bombers.

"Everything that they live by has been attacked," Dallaire said.

These sorts of injuries are in a class by themselves, and shed light on why it is so difficult to get successful results from conventional treatment.

At the same time, it is important not to overstate the case for psychedelic-assisted therapy. One doctor warned against turning too quickly to these substances given the small amount of data available, and the fact that the long-term effects of psychedelics like ecstasy, psilocybin (magic mushrooms), and ketamine remain poorly understood.

The status quo, however, is a death sentence.

Veterans die by suicide much more often than any other group of Canadians: the suicide rate is 50 per cent higher for male veterans than the general population—250 per cent higher for male veterans under the age of 25—and 200 per cent higher for female veterans.

Each one of these people chose to give themselves—body and soul—to protect us and our values.

Psychedelic-assisted therapy may help them. A large-scale research program could provide live-saving data.

We owe it to our veterans to explore every possibility.

CSG Senator David Richards is chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, and represents New Brunswick in the Senate. Conservative Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu is deputy chair of the subcommittee, and represents the La Salle division of Quebec.

The Hill Times

## Saving the Canadian Armed Forces: a missed opportunity

Continued from page 18

One might have thought that the government would seize this voter support for increased investments—support confirmed by various polls—to boost military spending. This was not the case. It was indeed quite the opposite. Canada's response was to cut nearly \$1-billion from an already

lean military budget. Even before these cuts take effect, their impact is felt: many military personnel, in different meetings I have had with them, mentioned that these cuts add to their sense of being neglected. While they already have to juggle the hardships of postings, for example, and the removal of financial benefits that make the civilian job market

more attractive in comparison, and hence drain the Forces of its members, militaries fear that these cuts will also affect their level of operational readiness, impair their ability to conduct frequent and adequate exercises, and lower the quality of the equipment and infrastructure they work with. In short, nothing to contribute to troop morale.

And as if the picture weren't bleak enough, you must add to it a slow, inefficient, and costly procurement system. The replacement of the F-18 fleet is a sad example: government indecision contributed to wasting a tremendous amount of time before the replacement fighter jet was finally chosen, increasing the costs per flight hour of the CF-18s year after year, and putting additional pressure on the few remaining technicians who must ensure increasingly demanding maintenance.

In summary, for both the image it projects internationally and for its local repercussions, the recently announced defence

cuts hurt. The government will have missed an opportunity to capitalize on public support to reinvest in defence, though, in our opinion, such reinvestment has to go hand in hand with a revision of the procurement system. As a reflection of the population, there is consensus amongst Parliamentarians on the importance of not further cutting an already beleaguered defence apparatus. That may be why some still dare to hope that it is not too late to correct course.

Christine Normandin is the Bloc Québécois MP for Saint-Jean in Quebec. She is her party's defence critic and deputy House leader.

The Hill Times





NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, left, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in July 2019. Canada needs to take this new NATO defence industrial agenda seriously, though there is little evidence this is the case, writes Nicolas Todd. Photograph courtesy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Flickr

# NATO's new strategy and the Canadian defence industry

The least Canada could do to contribute to collective security is step up in a meaningful way and help NATO meet its industrial production goals.

Nicolas Todd

Opinion



“Without industry, there is no defence, no deterrence and no security ... Our security relies on our technological edge and our defence industry.”

So said NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in a recent speech.

The alliance has undergone a major shift in its collective defence strategy since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. One key element has been a recognition, reflected in Stoltenberg's remarks, that the defence industries of all NATO states—Canada included—are now vital to Ukraine's victory, NATO's mandate, and the security of its members in a way not experienced since the end of the Cold War.

In practical terms, this means these defence industries—with the support of their governments—must produce munitions and defence technologies at a rate and in quantities not witnessed in a generation. The days of peacetime defence industrial planning, production, and purchasing are over as far as Brussels is concerned.

A new defence industrial posture is required for three reasons: to supply Ukraine with what it needs to win; to replenish the depleted stocks of NATO members states, including Canada, which have donated (and continue to donate) munitions and defence equipment to Ukraine; and to beef up the arsenals of NATO members to provide the deterrence necessary to curb any future Russian aggression.

This has resulted in the NATO Defence Production Action Plan (DPAP), agreed to by member states this past July. The DPAP aims to increase munitions and defence technology production across the defence industries of every alliance member, better co-ordinate that production, and aggregate demand. A new NATO body called the Defence Industrial Production Board has also been established with a mandate to provide advice on how to increase defence industrial capacity, surge potential, and improve planning, procurement, and supply chains.

Canada needs to take this new NATO defence industrial agenda seriously, though there

is little evidence this is the case. General Wayne Eyre, chief of the defence staff, recently told the House Standing Committee on National Defence that the Canadian Army has a couple days' worth of ammunition. Shockingly, the government has not ordered a single additional 155 mm shell—used by the thousands daily on the battlefield in Ukraine—since war broke out 18 months ago. Meanwhile, Washington, D.C., has invested more than \$1-billion in Canadian munitions production facilities to increase output for the United States military.

Canada's standing in NATO today must be near its lowest ebb since the alliance was formed 75 years ago. Ottawa—under both the Harper and Trudeau governments—steadfastly refused to meet the two per cent of GDP spending pledge both governments signed. At less than 14 per cent, Canada is also well below the 2014 Wales and 2023 Vilnius commitments to allocate at least 20 per cent of its military spending on equipment and research and development.

Therefore, the least Canada could do to contribute to collective security is step up in a meaningful way and help the alliance meet its industrial production goals. If not, defence production will become another commitment on which Canada falls short. Canada cannot and should not rely on allied defence industries for all its needs given the key capabilities and capacity resident here.

Anyone who thinks NATO is not that important for Canada and that our importance within the alliance has never mattered much is wrong. Without the collective defence NATO provides, countries like ours—which have grossly under-invested in their own national defence for generations—would be seriously exposed and vulnerable in today's unpredictable international security environment.

It is worth remembering our history. Canada was present at NATO's creation, which was the product of ideas first incubated in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty, authored by Canadian diplomats Lester Pearson and Escott Reid, is euphemistically known as the “Canadian Article.” It states that NATO members “will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them.”

NATO's new industrial agenda fits squarely into the philosophy of Article 2 and the Treaty that Canada's best and brightest authored three-quarters of a century ago.

Nicolas Todd is vice-president of policy, communications, and government relations with the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries. The association represents the interests of more than 700 defence, security, and cybersecurity companies across Canada.

The Hill Times

## Waiting for the new defence policy

So much more could have been done to provide Canadians with a clearer roadmap of defence and security issues as well as our place in the world in the time it has taken to produce the defence policy update.

David Pratt

Opinion



It is 19 months and counting as Canada awaits the release of the new updated version of *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, which was originally announced in Budget 2022. The Canadian Forces, Parliamentarians, the defence industry, our allies, and the media will be watching closely when it is eventually released—which is now expected early in 2024. Most observers would agree that the update is late; as a matter of fact, very late.

While it is eagerly anticipated in many quarters, it is unlikely to create much of a stir within the general public since defence issues rank very low when it comes to public policy matters. Inflation, jobs, housing, health care, and the environment typically are front and centre for Canadian families as they grapple with their day-to-day challenges.

Arguably, one of the reasons for this lack of attention to foreign and defence policy issues can be traced to a lack of a “national security culture” in Canada. As historian Jack Granatstein has observed, as a population we have been sheltered and protected by three different empires: the French, the British, and the American. The last time we faced any serious threat of invasion was after the American Civil War with the Fenian raids, and before that the War of 1812.

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## Defence Policy Briefing

# Canadians deserve equitable access to psychedelic-assisted therapy

Supporting our veterans requires research and immediate investment to improve the lives of those who served on our behalf and the millions of people suffering from treatable conditions.

Ben Lightburn

Opinion



Health Minister Mark Holland speaks to reporters in Ottawa on June 21. Advancements in clinical trials clearly demonstrate the promise of psychedelic medicines as an effective therapeutic treatment, writes Ben Lightburn. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Two of the CIHR's clinical trials are using a natural psilocybin drug candidate developed by my team. While this investment is promising, greater funding is necessary to expand clinical investigations by our world-class research institutions. We have the opportunity to lead the approval of off-patent psychedelic drug candidates that are unlikely to see investment or research by traditional pharmaceutical players. Let's not leave life-saving solutions on the table.

Supporting our veterans—and by extension, the general population—requires research and immediate investment to improve the lives of those who served on our behalf and the millions of people worldwide who are suffering from treatable conditions. Advancements in clinical trials clearly demonstrate the promise of psychedelic medicines as an effective therapeutic treatment.

I hope the Senate subcommittee's report leads government to the conclusion experts already know: psychedelic medicines can help solve the mental health crisis. The evidence of psychedelics' effectiveness is too promising to ignore.

As Conservative Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu, deputy chair of the subcommittee articulated: "For most veterans struggling with PTSD and serious mental health issues, traditional therapy methods are slow, painful and often ineffective. The evidence increasingly shows that psychedelic drugs—when paired with psychotherapy—can offer hope."

*Ben Lightburn is the CEO of Filament Health, a clinical-stage natural psychedelic drug development company.*

*The Hill Times*

Canada will personally experience a mental health condition by age 40, and about 50 per cent of the population will have or have had a mental illness.

Canadian veterans are at the forefront of this crisis. According to the subcommittee, it's estimated that approximately 10 to 15 per cent of Canadian veterans have been diagnosed with PTSD and other physical and mental health issues that can accompany the diagnosis.

It's obvious we need to encourage new approaches to address this crisis, especially as it becomes more apparent traditional pharmaceuticals and therapies have proven to be ineffective for many. For too long, psychedelics have faced precarious regulatory landscapes, antithetical perspectives, and strict ethical guidelines, stunting meaningful research into life-saving therapies.

Psilocybin, the psychoactive compound found in "magic mushrooms," is proving to be incredibly promising when used for psy-

chedelic-assisted psychotherapy (PAP). Countless clinical studies demonstrate the effectiveness of these treatments. For example, a New York University study of patients with life-threatening cancer found 80 per cent of participants prescribed psilocybin produced substantial and sustained decreases in depression and anxiety six months following treatment.

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs has conducted clinical studies to understand if PAP is a viable solution for veterans experiencing severe, treatment-resistant symptoms, and Australia has authorized PAP in the treatment of depression and MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for the treatment of PTSD.

Governments around the world are starting to make significant investments in research to better understand the effectiveness of psychedelic medicine. This results in innovative drug candidates, new therapeutic approaches, and a growing clinical-stage psychedelic drug

development landscape that is delivering results for those who urgently need it.

Through Health Canada's Special Access Program, Canadian patients are granted one of the only legal pathways to PAP in the world, but it can be an arduous process that is incumbent on physicians as sole proprietors to explore. As the primary supplier of psilocybin for this program, our team sees the real benefit to Canadians daily. Research on natural psilocybin drug candidates pioneered by my team for treatment of various mental health conditions is also underway at leading Canadian institutions, including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the University of British Columbia.

Canada can be a global leader in psychedelic-assisted therapy. We have the infrastructure and the expertise; we now require the investment to expand it.

This year, the federal government made a significant investment of \$3-million to study

## Waiting for the new defence policy

Continued from page 21

We don't feel threatened or insecure. The world's trouble spots are thousands of kilometres away, and, as a consequence, politicians have been reluctant to invest in our defence and security infrastructure, and doubt the political benefits of engaging Canadians in a substantive conversation about foreign policy and our place in the world. Former United States House of Representatives Speaker Tip O'Neill's famous phrase about "all politics is local" has become *modus operandi* and an article of faith of successive Canadian governments.

The invasion of Ukraine, the current conflict in Israel and Gaza, China's aggressive posture in the South China Sea and with Taiwan, and the impact of climate change should have forced the Canadian government to reassess and recalibrate its foreign, defence, and security policies on an urgent basis.

While it is no doubt too late for a course correction, so much more could have been done to provide Canadians with a clearer roadmap of defence and security issues as well as our place in the world in the time it has taken to produce the defence policy update. For starters, a foreign and defence policy review should have been

undertaken so that Canadian diplomacy and our soft power could be combined with the necessary hard power. It should have been unthinkable to not undertake a foreign policy review alongside a defence policy review.

But in addition to defence and foreign policy reviews, it would have been very beneficial for the government to review national security writ large. This touches on many issues such as cybersecurity, intelligence, foreign interference, radicalization, natural disasters, and the effects of climate change. How we mobilize ourselves as Canadians to mitigate the effects of a changing climate with floods, forest fires, and

extreme temperatures is something that has affected many communities. It could focus the minds of Canadians to think more about security, and how local events are directly affected and connected to policies and decisions taken at an international level.

While the Canadian Forces have been mobilized to address floods and fires, there is an opportunity to engage civil society in a meaningful way to assist Canadian communities that are under threat. The Forces should be a last resort in these situations rather than the first on the scene.

Returning to the defence policy update, the expectations are high. The update will have

to address many issues: defence procurement, institutional issues, recruitment, NORAD renewal, export permits, the strength of the Canadian defence industrial base, budget cuts, the two per cent NATO commitment, as well as new capabilities and maintaining old platforms such as Halifax class frigates, the CF-18s, and the Griffon helicopters to name a few. How we equip our Enhanced Forward Presence commitment in Latvia and our continued commitment to Ukraine will present further challenges. Defence Minister Bill Blair definitely has his work cut out for him.

*David Pratt is a former minister of national defence under then-prime minister Paul Martin, and is the principal of David Pratt & Associates.*

*The Hill Times*



A CC-177 Globemaster arrives in Resolute Bay, Nunavut, on Feb. 13, 2016. The rapid pace of climate change means that mounting threats other than Russia and China need urgent attention, writes Erika Simpson. DND photograph by MCpl Louis Brunet



# Arctic disputes won't all be solved with more arms

There are less militaristic and less costly ways to assert sovereignty over Canada's North and enhance world peace.

Erika Simpson

Opinion



Canada's commitment to modernize NORAD, outlined in *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, through the *Roadmap for a Renewed Canada-U.S. Partnership*, and the *Joint Statement on NORAD Modernization*, explains the government intends to invest \$3-billion over six years, starting in 2022-23, into a new continental defence modernization plan. With total planned funding of \$38.6-billion over the next 20 years, there could be a significant upgrade to Canadian NORAD capabilities at a significant cost to future generations of taxpayers and Canada's Arctic.

Canada will invest in a new Northern Approaches Surveillance system that expands the Canadian Armed Forces and NORAD's situational awareness of who and what is entering Canadian airspace from the North. The new Northern Approaches system will replace Canada's existing North Warning System, which was not designed to detect modern weapons or delivery

systems such as long-range cruise and hypersonic missiles.

A new Arctic Over-the-Horizon Radar system will provide early-warning radar coverage and threat tracking from the Canada-U.S. border to the Arctic Circle, over and beyond the northernmost approaches to North America, including the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.

The risk is that NORAD will increasingly mesh with a potential United States Ballistic Missile Defence system in the Arctic at the top of world, to which the Canadian government's 2017 defence policy review refrained from committing. The Canadian government has yet to announce whether it will participate in the American project, and any new defence review must consider Canada's options.

Meanwhile, Canada recently committed through NORAD to develop a complementary system with the U.S. called Crossbow—a network of sensors with classified capabilities, distributed across Northern Canada—as another layer of detection. But there are less militaristic and less costly ways to assert sovereignty over Canada's North and enhance world peace.

In the wake of the 1969 Manhattan Voyage, then-prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau passed the 1970 Arctic Waters Pollution Act, and endorsed the 1973 claim that the waters of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago are internal waters. The emphasis in the 1970s was on preventing and reducing marine pollution from vessels in ice-covered areas, and preventing major harm to the Arctic's delicate ecological balance.

Canada also used international law in 1986 when it drew straight baselines capturing the archipelago. A more peaceful northern strategy would submit continental shelf claims for international arbitration, and use international law to declare Canada's Arctic a potential nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Arguably, nuclear weapons on submarines operating under Arctic ice contribute to enhancing strategic deterrence. However, too many countries are deploying submarines, like China, India, Russia, Poland, the United

Kingdom, and the U.S., leading to the greater likelihood of nuclear accidents under Arctic ice.

Instead, drones that ceaselessly survey Canada's Arctic would be safer, inexpensive, and might augment Aurora aircraft that occasionally fly over Arctic territory. Combined with trawlers, coast vessels, and fast boats that belong to our Coast Guard, Canada's Inuit could continue to reinforce sovereignty by being paid to walk over the snow.

However, without much fanfare or public consideration, the Liberal government committed in March 2022 to buy F-35 fighter jets, currently the world's most expensive single-engine—not dual-engine—aircraft. The \$19-billion deal means more peaceful defence options will be jettisoned because the Liberals committed to buy equipment that future generations will have to pay for.

The F-35 is highly unsuited for Canada's needs, and signals the ongoing defence-spending spree the Trudeau Liberals needed to end in 2021.

Although Germany decided to buy F-35s to replace its aging Panavia Tornados, Lockheed Martin's F-35 Lightning II will be an unwise choice because it is a single-engine fighter tasked with patrolling North American airspace—including the vast, unforgiving climate of the Arctic—in co-ordination with the U.S. Notably, the U.S. fields twin-engine F-22 stealth fighters in Alaska. If the F-35 engine fails, nothing can prevent a crash in Canada's High Arctic. Furthermore, the expensive purchase incurs the danger of further creeping continentalism, and possible entrapment in U.S.-led proxy wars.

The rapid pace of climate change, with Arctic ice cover down by millions of square kilometres since 1979, means that mounting threats other than Russia and China need urgent attention. For instance, studies by Canadian and Norwegian scientists show that the Far North is a dumping ground for highly toxic pesticides, DDT, lead, mercury, and radioactive waste.

Moreover, the Arctic contains 44 trillion cubic metres of natural gas and 90 billion barrels of oil, representing 30 per cent of the world's remaining undiscovered gas resources, and 13 per cent of the world's remaining oil resources. The main routes for shipping oil and gas, like the Northwest Passage, are contentious due to differing claims among eight circumpolar countries that disagree on shared borders, equi-distances, and 200-mile zones.

The diesel-electric submarines Canada bought second-hand from the British were never refurbished for Arctic surveillance, only for use in Atlantic and Pacific waters. The EH-101 helicopters were cancelled, as they were too expensive and useless for search and rescue.

Now Canada should cancel the F-35 contract; buy more drones and better-suited Super Hornets; and allocate more resources to legal battles among multilateral institutions.

Future environmental and legal disputes pertaining to the Arctic will not be ameliorated by threatening the use of improved surveillance, and a potential missile defence system, further equipped with fighter jets and nuclear submarines.

Erika Simpson is a professor at Western University; president of the Canadian Peace Research Association; and the author of *Addressing Challenges Facing NATO and the United States Using Lessons Learned from Afghanistan and Ukraine*; *NATO and the Bomb*; and *Addressing Challenges Facing NATO Using Lessons Learned from Canada*.

The Hill Times

“Canada should cancel the F-35 contract; buy more drones and better-suited Super Hornets; and allocate more resources to legal battles among multilateral institutions.”



## News

# Music Canada CEO says CRTC regulatory update shouldn't put 'artificial dome' over Canadian content

As the CRTC begins three weeks of public hearings, endangered Canadian content creators need urgent regulations to stave off predatory foreign streamers, says CAB president Kevin Desjardins.

BY STUART BENSON

With the clock already ticking down on the long-awaited public hearings to determine how much online streaming services will be required to contribute to Canadian and Indigenous content as part of the government's effort to update industry regulations for the digital age, the heads of Canada's major broadcasting and music recording associations hope the process will proceed urgently to meet the needs of the sector while there's still one to save.

However, law expert Michael Geist says that the government's decision to leave the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) with most of the regulatory heavy-lifting is to blame for much of the delays, and, despite an "authoritative suggestion," he said the feds have not assuaged concerns over the potential regulation of user-generated content.

The CRTC began its first set of public hearings related to the government's Online Streaming Act on Nov. 20, and over the course of the next three weeks will hear from more than 120 industry stakeholders to discuss how the proposed contribution framework will apply; to whom it will apply; and how much applicable online streaming services like Netflix, Spotify, and YouTube will be required to pay to support Canadian and Indigenous content.

During the first week, the commission is scheduled to hear from more than 45 stakeholders from Canada's music, television, and film industries, including Québecor Média, the Canadian Media Producers' Association, the Motion Picture Association-Canada, Google, and Music Canada.

On Sept. 29, the CRTC released its first two decisions on which online streaming services



Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge says 'time is of the essence' to complete the process of updating the regulations governing online streaming giants and the contributions they will need to make to Canadian producers as part of the Liberals' Online Streaming Act. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

will be asked to provide information on their activities and the conditions for them to operate in Canada. Online streaming services are now required to provide the CRTC with information related to content and subscribers, and prohibit those services from being tied to a specific mobile or internet service. Additionally, streaming services earning \$10-million or more in annual revenue must register with the CRTC by Nov. 28. The commission also clarified that while social media and platforms that distribute podcasts will be required to register as well, users will not be required to register, nor will video game or audiobook services.

On Nov. 14, the federal government released a policy direction instructing the CRTC to consider both "established and emerging means of discoverability" to promote Canadian content and minimize the need for changes to algorithms or presentation of programming in making regulations or imposing discoverability requirements. The federal direction also instructed the commission not to impose regulatory requirements on social media creators, individual podcasters, and video game services.

The definition of what counts as Canadian or Indigenous content is something the CRTC will define through the current hearings, with further sessions on how to best support Canadian music and audio-visual content, local market access and competition, as well as protecting Canadian consumers expected to

run into early 2024. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) is hoping the questions of "who pays, how much, and where those funds go" will be answered with more urgency.

CAB president Kevin Desjardins told *The Hill Times* that this first set of public hearings—at which Desjardins will appear on Dec. 7—will need to ensure Canadian media companies, and especially Canadian broadcasters, aren't left with the entirety of the regulatory burden to help support Canadian content creation in Canada.

"We want to make sure that there is built in, on the front end, some equitable treatment of



Kevin Desjardins, president of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, says he believes the concerns over the regulation of user-generated content have always been a 'canard' to further delay Bill C-11. *Photograph courtesy of Kevin Desjardins*

Canadian players versus foreign players," Desjardins explained. He said CAB members are currently required to compete for viewers and advertisers in a media ecosystem with foreign streaming giants that have completely disrupted it to their own benefit.

"They've blown away all of the pre-existing business models, but they haven't replaced it with a new one that makes sense," Desjardins said, adding that he was encouraged to see the government's policy direction address the inequities created by those foreign streaming giants' unfettered access to the Canadian market.

Despite giving credit to Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge (Brome-Missisquoi, Que.) for her efforts to shepherd the regulatory process forward expeditiously, with almost 130 intervenors scheduled over 15 days of public hearings, Desjardins said he is concerned that determining the answer to "who pays and how much" may stretch on too long to meet the urgent needs of Canada's struggling entertainment sector.

In a recent interview with *The Globe and Mail*, St-Onge echoed Desjardins' concerns, as she said "time is of the essence" to ensure "we still have creators and a system to save" at the conclusion of the regulatory process. St-Onge also blamed "the games and the obstruction Conservatives played in the House" for delaying the legislation's passage into law. First introduced in the House on Feb. 2, 2022, Bill C-11 did not complete third reading in the Senate until exactly a year later.

Desjardins told *The Hill Times* that it is important there aren't any further delays, and that the commission approaches its work with urgency. He said he also appreciates that the policy directions from both the CRTC and the government have indicated that user-generated content would not be regulated.

"Most of the discussion around user-generated content was a canard," Desjardins said, adding that he views that issue as having been dealt with in the legislation, and believes those who suggested otherwise were simply looking for reasons to further delay the bill.

"I feel a level of empathy for creators and producers on those platforms because I feel as though they were spooked and misled as a tactic to help disrupt the legislative process," Desjardins explained, "but I don't think that there's any intent to ever include that sort of content."

However, Geist, a law professor and Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law at the University of Ottawa and one of the legislation's loudest critics, views the government's policy direction as confirmation of the concerns raised by himself and other content creators, and said he doesn't believe the door is completely shut on the subject.

While the government may have argued that it wasn't regulating user content, the need to direct the CRTC not to regulate it confirms that the current legislation as written could potentially include that, argued Geist, adding that the policy direction does not carry the same weight as amending the legislation as he and members of the Senate had suggested.

Though the CRTC will no doubt consider the Liberals' policy direction, Geist said the commission isn't bound to those instructions as it would be if that language were included in the actual legislation.

"It's an authoritative suggestion, but it's pretty clear that the CRTC will do what it thinks is appropriate," Geist explained. "The CRTC is an independent body and makes decisions based on the evidence before them, but anyone who has spent any time reading telecom policy directions ... it feels like the commission takes it seriously, and at times, it feels more like lip service. So, I'm hoping that they take this one seriously."

In a statement to *The Hill Times*, St-Onge's office pushed back on the possibility that the CRTC may disregard the government's final policy direction.

"We were clear since the beginning that this direction would ensure the CRTC cannot regulate the content of social media creators," the minister's office said. "The direction is binding under the Act. The Broadcasting Act, as the name suggests, only applies for broadcasters and online streaming platforms, not users or creators."

Geist said when he appears at the hearings on Dec. 5, his comments will focus primarily on

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## News

# Conservatives in no rush to pick at Liberal-NDP anti-scab legislation

Tory pundit Jordan Paquet says that so long as Conservatives can keep the affordability ball in the Liberals' court, they can box out the Grits' latest political wedge play with Bill C-58.

Continued from page 1

On Nov. 9, flanked by the heads of Canada's largest unions and labour organizations like Unifor, the Canadian Labour Congress, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and NDP MP Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie, Que.), Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South-Mount Pearl, N.L.) announced the tabling of Bill C-58, which would prohibit the use of replacement workers during contract disputes in federally mandated industries, including banking, ports, telecommunications, and aviation. The legislation would also impose penalties of \$1,000 per day for employers found breaking the new rules on replacement workers.

The bill sets out a new process for agreements on continuing maintenance activities during a strike, forcing unions and employers to agree within the first 15 days of a notice on which services will be allowed to continue during the strike. If an agreement cannot be reached within that time, the decision would be referred to the Canada Industrial Relations



Board to make a determination within 90 days.

"When we say the best deals are made at the table, we mean it," O'Regan said at the press conference to announce the bill's tabling, one of the key demands the Liberal government needed to fulfill by the end of 2023 to uphold its end of the supply-and-confidence agreement with the NDP. "Today is about keeping parties focused on the table and providing more stability and certainty to the economy."

While the Bloc Québécois has already indicated its support for the legislation, with leader Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil-Chambly, Que.) calling on the Liberals to scrap the 18-month waiting period for the ban to take effect following royal assent, the Conservatives were more circumspect.

At a Nov. 13 press conference in Vancouver, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) told reporters his party is going to be studying the legislation, and that he never takes a position "before I have had a chance to actually look at what's written down on paper."

Despite not taking a position on the bill, Poilievre indicated his empathy for Canadian workers while laying the blame for their struggles with the cost of living directly at the feet of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.).

"Conservatives are 100 per cent on the side of workers—union and non-union—who are fighting for pay hikes," Poilievre said. "I don't blame the workers who are voting for strikes right now."

Conservative MP Chris Lewis (Essex, Ont.), his party's labour critic, did not respond to *The Hill Times'* request for comment by publishing deadline.

While the labour unions Conservatives have recently sought to woo have rejoiced over the introduction of the legislation, the voices representing the business interests with which the Tories have long been friendly have similarly been unified in their condemnation of the bill.

In a statement following the bill's introduction, the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses (CFIB) called the legislation "terrible news for small business," and accused the government of not learning any lessons from the most recent British Columbia port strike.

settlements by "[putting] its thumb firmly on the scales" in favour of unions.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Chamber president and CEO Perrin Beatty said there "could not be a worse time" to further destabilize labour relations than in a year that has seen several major disruptions to the economy and supply chains due to strike actions.

"What we need more than anything is stability, and what the government has done by choosing to intervene on behalf of the unions is to create instability and to create an incentive for more labour disruptions," Beatty explained. "The job of the government is to represent the interests of Canadians as a whole, not just one party to a labour dispute."

Beatty said that removing the "check-and-balance system" available to employers through replacement workers would leave those businesses with no other recourse but to completely shut down operations, and remove any incentive for unions to consider a settlement.

"At some point, the government needs to focus on where the national interest lies," Beatty said. "And it doesn't lie in creating higher prices and depriving Canadians of the services they rely on, or damaging Canada's international reputation as a reliable supplier."

Jordan Paquet, a senior consultant with Bluesky Strategy Group, called the legislation an obvious "political play" on the part of the Liberals who are falling further and further behind in the polls with nearly every segment of the population that brought them to power in 2015, particularly middle-class blue-collar workers.

"They're watching all of that support slipping away, so now they're trying another wedge issue against the Conservatives," said Paquet, a former staffer to Conservative MPs Peter MacKay and Rona Ambrose. "Everything they've done so far hasn't worked, and they just kind of keep sliding."

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In announcing the so-called anti-scab legislation, Bill C-58, Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan said the bill "is about keeping parties focused on the [bargaining] table and providing more stability and certainty to the economy." *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre and his caucus have remained tight-lipped on whether or not they will support Bill C-58, and won't be taking a position until they've had more time to study the legislation. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"If passed, this bill could prolong the duration of strikes and increase their frequency," wrote Jasmin Guénette, CFIB vice-president of national affairs. "There's a reason why similar bills were always voted down in the past. They put too much power in the hands of large unions, and they are a threat to the economy as a whole. It looks like this bill is introduced for political reasons and not because it's necessary."

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce also accused C-58 of having the potential to "destroy [the] balance" between employers and unions at the bargaining table and discourage negotiated



Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan, left, greets NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh before a Nov. 9 press conference ahead of the tabling anti-scab legislation Bill C-58, a major milestone in the two parties' supply-and-confidence agreement. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



# Operational shortcomings, aging equipment, and culture in crisis: new DND report a 'depressing reading' of state of military, say MPs

For the first time, Canada's Armed Forces is revealing its inability to fulfill its concurrent operations obligations set out in the Liberal government's 2017 defence policy.

Continued from page 1

The report also found that nearly a quarter of members of the Armed Forces self-identify as victims of harassment, and more than 15 per cent as victims of discrimination.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, the Liberal government has emphasized the need to retool and strengthen Canada's defence, including a 2022 budget commitment to produce a still-awaited update to the defence policy. Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) said more than 18 months ago that "Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also reminded us that our own peaceful democracy, like all democracies of the world, depends ultimately on the defence of hard power."

But the recently released 2022-23 Department of National Defence (DND) and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) departmental results show that Canada's military is in as dire a situation as ever.

For the first time, DND publicly revealed in its departmental results that Canada, "based on overall readiness levels," is "currently unable to conduct multiple operations concurrently per the requirement laid out in" the 2017 defence policy.

"It's going to get worse until it gets better," said Liberal MP John McKay (Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont.), chair of the House National Defence Committee. "The problems are deep-seated and they're endemic, and the environment is getting evermore serious. And I think [the report] makes for pretty depressing reading."

"The trendline on the report is definitely not in the right direction, and the threats are much greater over last two years," he said, citing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the challenge to Taiwan's sovereignty, and the risk



Defence Minister Bill Blair says he recognizes more investment is needed in the Armed Forces. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

of the Israel-Hamas war becoming a regional conflict, which he remarked would become a drain on American resources. Such a situation could leave Canada with vulnerabilities that it doesn't currently have, McKay said, which could include leaving an Arctic flank that is "severely exposed."

McKay said Canada can no longer afford the luxury of underinvestment in its defence, development, or diplomacy.

"I just don't know when the penny drops for the Canadian public," he said. "This can't continue, not if we expect to have a force that is able to defend us."

As laid out in 2017's *Strong, Secure, Engaged* policy, the military is required to be able to defend Canada, including conducting concurrent domestic operations, fulfill its NORAD tasks, as well as "contribute to international peace and stability" through two "sustained" deployments of 500-1,500 personnel; one "time-limited" deployment of roughly six to nine months of 500-1,500 people; two "sustained" deployments of 100-500 personnel; two "time-limited" deployments of 100-500 people; a deployment of the Disaster Assistance Response Team; and a "non-combatant evacuation operation."

Canada's largest military presence abroad is in Latvia, where it has around 1,000 troops leading a NATO mission, which is planned to rise to 2,200 by 2026 as the battle group is upgraded to a brigade. But Canada has rebuffed calls to join or lead a multilateral force to address the humanitarian crisis in Haiti. Ottawa still has yet to pledge a 200-member quick reaction force for United Nations peacekeeping—a promise it had initially made in 2017. Currently, it has 52 personnel deployed across seven UN peacekeeping missions.

The department gives itself an "actual result" of 40 per cent in fulfilling its concurrent operation-

al deployment obligation. A DND spokesperson said the figure "speaks to the percentage of the total number of various concurrency scenarios that could be supported based on the readiness of available forces to fulfill the direction in" the 2017 defence policy.

Previous iterations of departmental results going back to 2018-19 show that 100 per cent of operations were capable of being conducted concurrently. The 2022-23 results note that the metric was "updated to provide a more accurate assessment of the current realities the department faces."

"Readiness of CAF force elements has continued to decrease over the course of the last year aggravated by decreasing number of personnel and issues with equipment and vehicles," the departmental results note.

Defence Minister Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* that he recognizes that there are "challenges" with the military's readiness.

"It's important to recognize—and we do—that we have to continue to make investments in the Canadian Armed Forces so they have the resources, the people, and the capacity they need to respond to many challenges at home and abroad," he said during a Nov. 20 scrum.

As Canada has faced domestic and international pressure to spend more on defence, DND is facing a \$1-billion cut as the federal government reins in spending across all departments, according to a CBC report.

"I'm delighted that people actually read the departmental results report this year," Blair remarked. "We've had a number of those reports, and I invite you to go back to look at them."

*The Hill Times* previously reported on fleet readiness concerns outlined in the 2021-22 departmental results and in the preceding 2020-21 report.

In the most recent findings, the percentage of the Armed Forces that are ready for operations is 61 per cent, a decrease from 71 and 71.7 per cent in the two previous fiscal years (the target is 100 per cent by March 1, 2025).

The readiness of the land, sea, and air fleet continues to deteriorate or stagnate, as 56 per cent of the land fleet is serviceable to meet training and readiness requirements (the target is at least 60 per cent), 51.2 per cent of sea fleets meet their readiness requirements (the target is at least 60 per cent), and 43.8 per cent of air fleets fulfill their needs (the target is at least 85 per cent).

The report notes the Army's land fleets missed their serviceability target due to "several key fleets parts obsolescence and ageing issues." The Navy's Halifax-class fleets and Kingston-class vessels fulfilled their requirements, but the Victoria-class submarines and the Harry DeWolf-class Arctic Offshore Patrol ships did not. The Air Force fleets did not meet their requirements due to "ongoing personnel shortages, introduction of new fleets, and ageing fleets and inadequate maintenance infrastructure."

Bloc Québécois MP Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, Que.), her party's defence critic, said the readiness issues send a bad message to Canada's allies, as well as to Canadians domestically.

"With personnel readiness at such a low level, it's kind of impossible to have missions that are attractive. The less attractive missions you have, the less recruitment you can make. The less recruitment [you have], the less attractive missions you can have. It's really a vicious circle," she said.

Normandin said the planned cuts will have an additional negative impact on the "problematic" results.

"Even before there's cuts, it does have a negative impact. I've heard a lot of soldiers telling me, 'We feel like we're neglected.' It doesn't help on the recruitment issues," she said.

The recently released document also sheds light on the personnel crisis, noting that an attrition rate of 12 per cent in 2022-23 is outpacing recruitment amid an applicant crisis, which has "hindered" attempts to grow the Armed Forces. The results show that 70 per cent of occupations within the military have "critical shortfalls" (the target is five per cent or less).

Retired major-general Denis Thompson, a former commander

of Canada's special operations forces, said the Armed Forces must be made relevant with modern equipment to fix the readiness and personnel crises.

"If you build it, they will come," Thompson said. "At this point in time, it doesn't appear that we're serious about doing it."

"Unless you make the investments, the Canadian Armed Forces will just get smaller and become less and less capable, and become less and less relevant on the world stage," he said. "We need to understand that it's one of the elements of government power that gets us a seat at the table. We're not the middle power we used to be. We seem to be sliding further and further into irrelevancy because we don't invest—not just in the Canadian Armed Forces, but in Global Affairs, and other departments that have international reach. We're just not serious anymore."

## Nearly a quarter of CAF members victims of harassment: report

As efforts continue to reform the culture of the Armed Forces, the departmental results show that more needs to be done to fix the situation, said NDP MP Lindsay Mathysen (London-Fanshawe, Ont.), her party's defence critic.

"I hear a lot of stories and the on-the-ground feeling—people tell us their experience—but when you are hit with those numbers [in the report], it's even more stark," she said. "You can't ignore that."

The report found that 24 per cent of CAF members self-identify as victims of harassment (the target is 11.9 per cent or less), an increase from 20.8 per cent in 2021-22, and 15.5 per cent in 2020-21. The report notes that increases "do not always indicate an increase in instances," asserting that it could be a sign of more people having increased trust in the system and coming forward.

It also found 15.7 per cent self-identify as victims of discrimination (the target is 9.2 per cent or less), a slight increase from 14.8 per cent in 2021-22, and 14.5 per cent in 2020-21.

There were 443 reported incidents of sexual misconduct in the CAF in 2022-23, compared to 444 in 2021-22, and 431 in 2020-21.

For civilian members of DND, 14 per cent self-identified as victims of harassment, and eight per cent as victims of discrimination.

Mathysen said despite missing the targets, they aren't rigid enough to stamp out harassment and discrimination in the military.

"[The targets] are still too high," she said, but remarked that systemic change is a process that will take longer. "But, the fact that even though they're too high, they're still not meeting them, my heart sinks a bit. And it just means we have to double down and work harder and invest in the solutions, [and] put forward the changes we know we need to see."

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*The Hill Times*



## News

# ‘This is a time of a lot of uncertainty’: Freeland’s fiscal update inches on affordability, housing

The fall economic statement, tabled in the House of Commons on Nov. 21, included no mention of the agreement between the Liberals and NDP to act on pharmacare by the end of 2023, which could lead to much larger spending plans.

Continued from page 1

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) told reporters on Nov. 21 that the foundation of this year’s update is “our responsible fiscal plan,” and added that “in the face of global inflation, our government has reduced the deficit faster than any other G7 country.”

“This is a time of a lot of uncertainty,” Freeland said, “and in this time of uncertainty, there is no country better positioned than Canada to thrive.”

The fiscal update lists a deficit of \$40-billion for the current fiscal year, with the total federal debt listed at approximately \$1.2-trillion, or 42.4 per cent of GDP. In the absence of specific targets for balancing the budget or reducing deficits, the fall economic statement instead sticks to the government’s chosen fiscal anchor: “reducing federal debt as a share of the economy over the medium term.”

The deficit is projected to decrease to \$38.4-billion and \$38.3-billion in the next two fiscal years before dropping more dramatically. The government acknowledges a great degree of uncertainty in its five-year projections, however, with the deficit decreasing by \$5.2-billion a year in an “upside scenario” or increasing by \$8.5-billion a year in a “downside scenario.”

Budget 2023 unveiled \$67-billion in net new spending over five years, according to TD Bank, and projected a federal deficit of \$40.1-billion,



Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland holds a press conference before tabling the fall economic statement on Nov. 21. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

or 1.4 per cent of GDP, for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Major spending items included an increase in health transfers to the provinces, clean energy incentives, dental care, and affordability measures such as a doubling of the GST rebate for lower income households.

## Building ‘thousands upon thousands upon thousands of new homes across the country’

Presenting the fiscal update in the House, Freeland said it was designed around two key objectives: addressing affordability for the middle class, and building “thousands upon thousands upon thousands of new homes across the country.”

The government announced an additional \$15-billion starting in the 2025-26 fiscal year for the Rental Construction Financing Initiative, now renamed the Apartment Construction Loan Program. These low-interest loans are intended to help finance the construction of 30,000 new homes across Canada.

Freeland told reporters that “our government really understands that housing is an urgent concern of Canadians,” and “that is why our focus is supply, supply, supply.”

Housing advocates have called for more affordability conditions to be attached to housing investments, such as grants and low-interest financing delivered to developers by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to prevent public funding going to the building of luxury housing.

The new \$15-billion announcement comes with two affordability criteria. Developers will have to show in their applications that the loans will allow them to offer rental rates that are 10 per cent lower overall than what they would be able to offer otherwise.

And, for the first 20 years after the buildings are completed, 20 per cent of the units in each building must be rented out at or below rates that are pegged to average income in the area.

The fall economic statement also lists \$1-billion starting in 2025-26 to help non-profit, co-op, and public housing providers build more than 7,000 new homes by 2028. This is a top-up to an existing program that provides funding for the construction or repair of affordable housing. This funding will not support the acquisition of existing properties.



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh told reporters on Nov. 21 that he wants to see action to bring down the price of groceries, rent, and mortgages. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

But only \$369-million of that \$1-billion announced in the statement is new funding. The remaining \$631-million represents funding that was left unused from an earlier one-time top-up to the Canada Housing Benefit.

Along with these measures, the government also announced it was removing the GST from the construction of new co-op rental housing, following up on a previous exemption for new rental housing built by other kinds of providers.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) told reporters earlier during the day before the fall economic statement was released that he wanted to see action to bring down the price of groceries, rent, and mortgages.

“If there are any measures that this government announces that take on the CEOs, that bring down the price of groceries, that invest in affordable housing, it will be because of our pressure,” said Singh.

Beyond references to previous affordability announcements—such as initiatives on Old Age Security, the Canada Pension Plan, child care, dental care, and rental and grocery rebates—the fall economic statement introduced a range of smaller measures such as crackdowns on anti-competitive tactics or “junk fees” used by large corporations, and lifting the GST and HST on counselling and psychotherapy services.

Following criticism that the government has not moved quickly enough to roll out various clean energy tax credits announced in recent budgets, the fall economic statement also includes timelines for delivering all of these in 2024. First on the priority list is the investment tax credit for carbon capture technologies and “clean technology,” which will be covered by legislation tabled before the end of the fall sitting of Parliament.

Legislation for clean technology tax credits for hydrogen, manufacturing, and electricity will follow in fall 2024, following consultations in the summer.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer told *The Hill Times* last week that the government has been slow to implement this year’s budget. A Nov. 16 PBO analysis of Supplementary Estimates B says the government has so far only sought parliamentary approval for 60 per cent of proposed spending from Budget 2023, compared to November 2022 when it had sought parliamentary approval for 90 per cent of proposed spending from Budget 2022.

Canada’s year-over-year inflation rate, as reflected by the consumer price index, slowed to 3.1 per cent in October, according to Statistics Canada. That’s down from 3.8 per cent in September, and down from a high of 8.1 per cent in June 2022. Statistics Canada added in a Nov. 21 release that the most recent decrease was largely a result of a 7.8 per cent drop in gasoline prices in October. But mortgages, food prices, and rent all pulled in the opposite direction and were the largest contributors to rising prices.

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# Conservatives in no rush to pick at Liberal-NDP anti-scab legislation

Continued from page 26

While it remains to be seen whether this attempt at a wedge issue to win back that support will be more successful than any of the Liberals' previous tries, Paquet said he doesn't believe this time will be any different.

"I think [Poilievre] and his team have been quite smart about not diving right into the debate on the pros and cons of the bill," Paquet explained. "They spun it instantly back to Trudeau and really made it again about the cost of living spiraling out of control."

On Nov. 15, Abacus Data released polling indicating the Conservatives' lead over the Liberals had grown to 16 points, up three points from its previous polling a week prior, while the government's approval has dropped by four points to 26 per cent approval and 58 per cent disapproval.

So far, Poilievre has managed to stay on message throughout the numerous strikes

that have occurred since becoming Conservative leader, attempting to balance taking the sides of both employer and worker while laying the blame for the labour disruptions squarely at the feet of "Justification." Perry, a consultant with Summa Strategies, said Poilievre and the Conservatives won't be able to "sit on the fence" once the legislation comes up for a vote.

"The Conservatives are going to have to thread this needle very carefully," Perry said. "They're going to have to try to balance the interests of business on one hand, but also they're going to want to look like they support workers."

While neither Perry nor Paquet could be certain how the Conservatives would vote on the legislation, they said they aren't convinced the Conservatives will put up much opposition to it, nor will they need to.

"Whether they support it or not, there are risks either way... so they're going to be walking a tightrope," Perry said. "I think they're going to have to do calculations internally, but I think in terms of 'what's right for Canadians,' supporting the legislation makes sense."

In the meantime, Perry said he expects the Conservatives to continue to undermine the Liberals' pro-labour bonafides, pointing to the recent reporting on Stellantis' potential plan to hire approximately 1,600 foreign workers as it constructs an electric vehicle battery "gigafactory" in Windsor, Ont., in a joint venture with LG Energy Solutions. Earlier this summer,

the federal and Ontario governments announced \$15-billion in performance incentives for the construction of batteries over the next 10 years.

On Nov. 20, Poilievre called for a public inquiry into the contract to determine exactly how many jobs would be going to temporary foreign workers.

Conservative MP Rick Perkins, his party's innovation, science, and industry critic, called for Trudeau to "come clean and release the contracts" with Stellantis and the other international auto manufacturers with which the government has inked similar contracts.



Summa Strategies' Daniel Perry says Conservatives will need to 'walk a tightrope' to balance the interests of their longstanding relationships with big business alongside their increasing attempts to woo workers. Photograph courtesy of Daniel Perry

"[Trudeau] must guarantee that Canadian tax dollars won't fund jobs unless they are for Canadian workers," Perkins (South Shore-St. Margaret's, N.S.) wrote in a Nov. 17 statement following the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report indicating that the subsidy for the three contracts between Stellantis, Volkswagen, and Northvolt may total as much as \$43.6-billion, near-

ly \$6-billion more than the government's original estimate.

Unifor president Lana Payne also criticized the allegations of Stellantis' use of temporary foreign workers, which she called an "exploitative hiring program," and said she would be closely monitoring the hiring process, but that statements from the company had "alleviated some of our union's immediate concerns."

Paquet also said that as the official opposition, and due to the fact the legislation will most likely pass thanks to the Liberal-NDP supply-and-confidence deal—boosted by the Bloc's apparent support—the Conservatives can afford to take a step back from making a firm commitment on whether they will support the bill. Instead, they can continue to find ways to put the ball back in the Liberals' court on issues like the Stellantis contract or cost-of-living anxiety, and let their opponents continue to fumble.

However, Perry said he believes when Conservatives do decide whether or not to support the bill, it will be a major determining factor for how the party plans to position itself for the next election.

"If the Conservatives do decide to support the workers on this, I think it's going to play very favourably to their narrative and help shake the sense they're a big corporate-interest-only party," Perry said. "I think there's a play there."

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# Music Canada CEO says CRTC regulatory update shouldn't put 'artificial dome' over Canadian content

Continued from page 24

the implications of the CRTC deciding to go ahead with regulating user content and podcasts like the one he produces, as well as the consequences of regulating algorithms and discoverability. He also said he expects to offer a counterbalance to some of the stakeholders he is sure will still be pushing for greater carveouts for regulation of that content despite the policy direction.

With regard to the minister's "admonition to move quickly," Geist cautioned against hoping the process will move too fast, and pushed back on St-Onge's suggestion that the opposition is to blame for delaying it.

"The government could have had this thing passed years ago, but it opened up this Pandora's box of regulating [user-generated] content," Geist explained. "This process is going to be a pretty lengthy one, and part of that is driven by the government's decision to leave much of the heavy lifting to the CRTC."

## 'Once-in-a-generation' process, says Music Canada head

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Music Canada's CEO Patrick Rogers said that as the trade association representing Canada's largest music labels—including Sony Music Entertainment Canada Inc., Universal Music Canada Inc., and Warner Music Canada Co.—they have been taking the government's approach to regulate the CRTC's regulatory framework very seriously ever since its first attempt with Bill C-10.

"This is a once-in-a-generation regulatory process; it's a huge deal," Rogers said, adding that while Music Canada itself would not be subjected to that regulation, the music labels it represents and the artists they represent will.

"It's not a big jump between being regulated and having our content being regulated," Rogers explained, adding that his industry is especially sensitive to minor changes to the market, especially where the internet is concerned.

"We're the music industry; our stuff used to be expensive, then it was illegally free, and now people pay money for it again," Rogers said, explaining that the industry is only just now beginning to recover from the rise of illegal pirating of music spurred by the growth of the internet in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

"We know what it is like for small changes to almost wipe out the industry," Rogers said. "We're coming forward because we're really worried about this; this is not hypothetical [to us], so I think we're an industry worth listening to."

Rogers said that after more than 10 years of "free music" following the advent

of internet piracy, the industry pivoted to embrace new technology to deliver music digitally, and invest in new infrastructure and talent. Almost a decade after that, online streaming revenue accounted for nearly 80 per cent of Canada's \$834.23-million total music revenue in 2022, a 10.1 per cent increase from the year before.

As the majority of online streaming's \$521.79-billion market value is due to paid subscriptions (79 per cent), with ad-supported audio (12 per cent) and video streaming (nine per cent) each only providing a small fraction of revenue, Rogers said he appreciates that the CRTC has indicated the new framework will respect the user experience that makes those subscriptions worth paying for.

While Rogers said his concern has never been that users could find more Canadian content in their suggested playlists on streaming services like Spotify, his real concern is the possibility of users getting content they don't want.

"I would be skeptical of anything that was artificially inserted without the best [entertainment] value," Rogers explained, noting that the success of those streaming platforms stems from the perceived value users find in the ability to discover new music they enjoy, Canadian or otherwise.

While Rogers said his concerns that the CRTC may harm those streaming services' "secret sauce" has diminished, the question of who pays and for what is still a significant determining factor to continue producing the kind of content users are willing to pay for.

"We want to make sure that there is a role for our companies to work with Canadians to make the best Canadian content for the Canadian market and the world," Rogers said, adding that the definition of what counts as Canadian content will need to reflect "how modern music is made."

"Record companies aren't entirely in contracts anymore; they're very much à la carte services," Rogers explained, adding that Canada should be encouraging its talent to work with the best possible people, regardless of geographic location, so that they can continue to succeed at home and abroad.

"I think we should be making sure that we're not putting too many limitations on who they can work with and under what circumstances," Rogers continued, noting that the "artificial dome" the CRTC created during the age of radio and television is untenable in the digital age.

"Radio and streaming aren't just different, they're opposites," Rogers explained. "One is finite and linear, and the other is infinite and non-linear, and we need to make sure our regulators understand that; there's no walling up that garden again."

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## Laura Ryczewaert Hill Climbers

# Familiar staff, new office: a look at Minister Boissonnault's team

Post-shuffle promotions include Morgan Breitreuz's elevation to deputy chief of staff, and Riley Schnurr's bump up to deputy director of policy.

Employment, Workforce Development, and Official Languages Minister **Randy Boissonnault** has 17 staff in his office—many of whom come from his previous ministerial shop—including **Morgan Breitreuz**, who is now deputy chief of staff to the minister.

Breitreuz has been working for Boissonnault since he was first sworn into cabinet as then-minister for tourism and associate finance after the 2021 election. Previously director of operations, Breitreuz stepped in as acting chief of staff to Boissonnault for a good chunk of 2022. Breitreuz is also a former regional adviser for Alberta and Saskatchewan to then-special representative for the Prairies **Jim Carr**, and is a past field organizer for the federal Liberal Party in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and in the North.

As previously reported, **Elliott Lockington** continues as chief of staff to Boissonnault.

Leading the minister's policy shop is director of policy **Nadia Kadri**, supported by **Riley Schnurr**, who has been promoted to deputy policy director since the July 26 cabinet shuffle that saw Boissonnault take over the employment and official languages portfolios.



Riley Schnurr is deputy director of policy. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Kadri comes from Boissonnault's old tourism and associate finance team where she'd been policy director since the 2021 election. She previously spent roughly two years working for then-justice minister **David Lametti**, starting as a special assistant for policy in January 2020 and ending as a senior policy adviser; earlier, between 2016 and 2017, she'd worked in Lametti's constituency office as the MP for LaSalle-Énard-Verdun, Que. A graduate of McGill University, Kadri is also a former associate with Davies Howe LLP in Toronto, where she focused on land use planning and municipal law, according to her LinkedIn profile, and has worked at Dentons as an articling student.

Schnurr was previously a senior policy adviser to Boissonnault as tourism and associate finance minister, having joined that office shortly after the 2021 election. Before then, he was a policy adviser for

inclusion and West and North regional affairs adviser to then-diversity, youth, and inclusion minister **Bardish Chagger**. A former WWF-Canada research intern for much of 2018, Schnurr spent all of 2019 working in the Liberal research bureau as a special assistant for LGBTQ2 community outreach, at the same time serving as a liaison to Boissonnault as then-special adviser to the prime minister on LGBTQ2 issues.

Schnurr is also a former assistant to Government House Leader **Karina Gould** as the MP for Burlington, Ont., and an ex-junior policy officer at Natural Resources Canada, among other past jobs.

**Simon Laberge** is now a senior policy adviser to Boissonnault, working alongside policy advisers **Annie Berger** and **Tyler Freeman**.



Annie Berger is a policy adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Prior to the July shuffle, Laberge had been a Quebec regional affairs adviser to then-employment minister **Carla Qualtrough** since February 2022. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in community, public affairs, and policy studies from Concordia University in 2020. Before landing a job in Qualtrough's office, Laberge worked briefly as a complaint co-ordinator with Quebec's Ministry of Transport, an internal policy co-ordinator with Interlinge in Montreal, and as a public affairs and communications adviser for the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters.

Berger comes from **Ginette Petitpas Taylor**'s former team as the minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and official languages, where Berger had worked as a parliamentary affairs and policy adviser prior to the shuffle. Boissonnault picked up the latter file on July 26, while Rural Economic Development Minister **Gudie Hutchings** took over responsibility for ACOA. Petitpas Taylor is now the minister for veterans affairs. A former constituency assistant to Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** as the MP for Papineau, Que., Berger was originally hired as Petitpas Taylor's executive assistant at the beginning of 2022; that fall, she was promoted to parliamentary affairs assistant, and was promoted again to her most recent title earlier this year.

Freeman is another former aide to Boissonnault as tourism minister, having been an Ontario regional affairs adviser there since January 2022 after roughly two years working for then-public services and procurement minister **Anita Anand**, starting as a special assistant to the minister and executive assistant to the chief of staff, and ending as Ontario regional adviser. He's also a former special assistant to Gould as then-democratic insti-

tutions minister, and a former MPP liaison, office manager, and scheduler to then-Ontario seniors minister **Dipika Damerla**.

**Brendon Legault** continues as director of parliamentary affairs and issues management to Boissonnault, having done the same in the minister's old tourism office since the 2021 election. A former public affairs officer for the Alberta Liberal caucus, from late 2015 until the fall of 2018, Legault was a constituency assistant to Boissonnault as the MP for Edmonton Centre, Alta. He subsequently made his way to the Hill as a communications adviser to then-natural resources minister **Amarjeet Sohi**, where he worked until the start of 2021, going on to spend most of that year as an issues manager in Trudeau's office as prime minister.

**Mathis Dennis** continues as an issues manager to Boissonnault, having been hired under the same title in the minister's tourism office this past June, shortly before the shuffle. An ex-lifeguard, he previously spent two years as an assistant to Quebec Liberal MP **Peter Schiefke**, and is a former journalist with VIVA média covering the region of Vaudreuil-Soulanges, Que.

**Luke Guimond** is a legislative assistant in the employment and official languages minister's office. A new cabinet staffer, Guimond was last an assistant to Montreal Liberal MP **Anthony Housefather**. He graduated from the University of Ottawa with a master's degree in political thought this past April, and while in school also worked as an outreach and communications co-ordinator to Ontario Liberal MPP **Lucille Collard**. His other past jobs include a brief contract run as a project co-ordinator for Canada 2020 and as a program instructor with La Cité universitaire francophone in Regina.



Luke Guimond is a legislative assistant. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

**Amber Gillan** is senior operations adviser and British Columbia regional affairs adviser to Boissonnault. Prior to the shuffle, Gillan tackled both the B.C. and Atlantic regional desks along with serving as a senior operations adviser in Boissonnault's office as tourism minister since the 2021 election. She's also a former operations and regional adviser for the North, West, Prairies, and Ontario to then-associate finance minister **Mona Fortier**, a past communications and research co-ordinator for the Victoria Real Estate Board, an ex-communications co-ordinator to then-Ontario Liberal MP **Catherine McKenna**, and a former communications assistant for the Ottawa Festival Network.

Also currently covering regional desks in the office are: **Madeleine Wieler**, senior Ontario regional affairs adviser; **Wyatt**

**Westover**, Quebec regional affairs adviser; and **Justin Mohr**, who covers the Prairies and North regional desks while also serving as an Indigenous adviser to Boissonnault.

Wieler was part of Qualtrough's former employment team, having first been hired to cover the Ontario regional desk, focused on the Greater Toronto Area, in the fall of 2022. She's a former executive assistant to then-public services and procurement minister **Filomena Tassi**, and an ex-constituency assistant to Deputy Prime Minister **Chrystia Freeland** as the MP for University-Rosedale, Ont.



Madeleine Wieler is senior regional affairs adviser for Ontario. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Fun fact: Wieler is cousin to **Hannah Wieler**, director of parliamentary affairs to Indigenous Services Minister **Patty Hajdu**.

Westover has spent the last two years as an assistant to Heritage Minister **Pascale St-Onge** as the MP for Brome-Missisquoi, Que., and six months before that (prior to the 2021 election) as a constituency assistant to St-Onge's riding predecessor, former Liberal MP **Lyne Bessette**. A former flight attendant with Air Transat, he's also currently a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, according to his LinkedIn profile.

Mohr comes from Boissonnault's old tourism team, where he was hired as a Western regional affairs and Indigenous adviser in December 2021. From 2015-2019, Mohr worked in Boissonnault's constituency office, and after the 2019 election (which saw Boissonnault lose his seat), Mohr landed a job working for an Edmonton city councillor, ultimately returning to Boissonnault's employ after helping on his successful 2021 re-election bid.

**Alice Hansen** is now director of communications to the employment and official languages minister. Up until October, Hansen had been doing communications work for Trade Minister **Mary Ng** since July 2020. Starting as a special assistant for communications, Hansen was promoted to press secretary in 2021. At the start of 2022, she added senior communications adviser to her title, and by that fall, she'd been promoted again to communications director to Ng. Prior to joining Ng's office, Hansen was a public policy co-ordinator for the Alzheimer Society of Canada. She also previously worked in Ontario Liberal **Chris Bittle**'s office for almost half of 2018, among other past jobs.

**Farrah-Lilia Kerkadi** is press secretary to Boissonnault. She's been working on the Hill since early 2022, starting as a special assistant for issues management and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to Boissonnault as then-tourism and associate finance minister. This past spring, Kerkadi was promoted to press secretary, a title she took with her when she followed her boss to his new portfolio post-shuffle.

**Ramy Ismail** continues as Boissonnault's executive assistant, as he's been since February of this year. Ismail is a former constituency assistant to Bittle.

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# Setting the record straight on the firearms legislation

Continued from page 12

involved guns that were stolen from legal owners.

On the side of gun control advocates, there have been claims that Bill C-21 doesn't go far enough. This can be confusing.

Some feel that the legislation should list all assault weapons by name: we disagree. Bill C-21 most definitely bans military assault weapons, but arriving at an exhaustive definition gets the legislation into the weeds of a rapid-paced and changing industry. Internationally, there is no agreed-upon definition for military assault weapons, and in Canada, we have successfully used orders-in-council to update the banned weapons as new ones come onto the market, rather than enumerating a list in the legislation itself. We believe this better future-proofs the legislation and leaves out those guns that may technically meet an assault weapon definition, but are reasonably used for hunting because of their affordability.

Bill C-21 is not sudden or new; in fact, it's been a long time com-

ing. Calls for a ban on semi-automatic, military-style weapons date back to the Montreal massacre more than 30 years ago.

Bill C-21 updates those calls, and also contains many of these outstanding recommendations.

How will Bill C-21 help stem the record 869 per cent increase in shootings in Canada? While mass shootings can occur in countries with strict laws, they occur far less frequently. The United Kingdom rarely sees them. The United States had more than 600 in 2021, and has seen more than 250 in 2022, leaving hundreds dead and injured. In 2020, almost 20,000 Americans were murdered with guns.

Despite the common refrain echoing in the Upper Chamber that gun violence is an urban or gang-related issue, Statistics Canada data shows rural rates of gun crime are higher in most provinces. Rates of domestic homicides, murders of police officers, and suicide are also generally significantly higher in rural areas and the West.

Bill C-21 also directly helps tackle the epidemic of gen-

der-based, intimate partner, and family violence—declared a global crisis by the World Health Organization and acknowledged in towns and cities across Canada. The legislation includes revocation of the firearms licences of those convicted of domestic violence, and suspension of licences where charges have been laid.

As those of us who have worked with gender-based and intimate partner violence survivors know, guns are used daily to control and intimidate long before they are used to kill.

Don't get us wrong, this legislation—like any legislation—isn't perfect. But on balance, it is well worth supporting without amending its interlocking and mutually supporting elements.

As debate has moved on this legislation, we recognize and hear the concerns of Inuit, First Nations, and Métis people, especially their ability to hunt on their lands. But while there is a right to hunt for Indigenous people, there is not a right to own a military assault weapon not reasonably used for hunting. We affirm and promote the consultation of Indig-



Independent Senator Hassan Yussuf is the sponsor of Bill C-21 in the Red Chamber. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

enous voices on this legislation, as we are all aligned on how we want to tackle gun violence, and its increased implication in vigilantism, hate crimes, and misogynist killings.

It's been more than 30 years since the femicide mass casualty at the École Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989 that killed 14 women and injured many others and mobilized Canadians to call for stricter gun controls. Bill C-21 has been a long time in the making, with too many lives taken in the intervening decades while we entertain well-funded and ill-researched

interests that would have us stall the hopes of victims, families, and those disproportionately affected by guns and their intended purpose: to intimidate and kill.

*Amanda Dale is fellow, Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa; director, communications and engagement, Canadian Centre for Legal Innovation in Sexual Assault Law; and the strategic engagement specialist, principal author and project lead for the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.*

*The Hill Times*

## Parliamentary Calendar

# PM Trudeau hosts EU leaders in St. John's Nov. 23-24

**TUESDAY, NOV. 21—THURSDAY, NOV. 23**

**Conference: 'Indigenomics on Bay Street'**—The Indigenomics on Bay Street Conference is the largest national Indigenous economy-focused gathering of changemakers, visionaries, innovators, and leadership across sectors to discuss the emerging \$100-billion Indigenous economy. Participants include Cadmus Delorme, former chief of Cowessess First Nation; Bill Lomax, First Nations Bank of Canada; and Ernie Daniels, First Nations Finance Authority, among others. Tuesday, Nov. 21 to Thursday, Nov. 23, at the Westin Harbour Castle, 1 Harbour Square, Toronto. Details at [indigenomicsinstitute.com](http://indigenomicsinstitute.com).

**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 22**

**House Sitting**—The House is 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.

**AFN Water Summit**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its 2023 fourth Annual Water Summit, bringing attention to the urgent and emerging water issues occurring across First Nations. Speakers will include a variety of First Nations and Government of Canada

officials. Wednesday, Nov. 22, at 11 a.m. ET happening online: [afn.ca](http://afn.ca).

**Eakin Lecture 2023**—McGill University hosts the Fall 2023 Eakin Lecture. Derek Silva, associate professor of sociology at Western University, will speak on "The System is Broken: Why Canada Needs a Judicial Inquiry into Harm and Abuse in Sport and Why That's Not Enough." Wednesday, Nov. 22, at 4 p.m. at the McGill Faculty Club, 3450 rue McTavish, Montreal. Details online: [mcgill.ca](http://mcgill.ca).

**THURSDAY, NOV. 23**

**ISED DM Kennedy to Deliver Remarks**—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a lunch event with Simon Kennedy, deputy minister of Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada. Thursday, Nov. 23, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details online: [cdhowe.org](http://cdhowe.org).

**The Walrus Talks Climate**—The Walrus Magazine and the Embassy of Germany in Canada host a virtual edition of The Walrus Talks on "Protecting Biodiversity from the Impacts of Climate Change." Oliver Anderson, communications director to Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault, is among the speakers. Details online: [thewalrus.ca](http://thewalrus.ca).

**THURSDAY, NOV. 23—FRIDAY, NOV. 24**

**Canada-EU Leaders' Summit**—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will host the 19<sup>th</sup> Canada-EU Leaders' Summit from Thursday, Nov. 23, to Friday, Nov. 24 in St. John's, N.L. Participants will include European Council president Charles Michel, and president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.

**FRIDAY, NOV. 24**

**Lecture: 'Paradox of Parliament'**—Queen's University hosts a lecture with Carleton University professor Jonathan Malloy who will discuss his recent book *The Paradox of Parliament*. Friday, Nov. 24 at 12 p.m. ET at Robert Sutherland Hall, Kingston, Ont. Details online: [queensu.ca](http://queensu.ca).

**MONDAY, NOV. 27**

**Anne McLellan and Lisa Raitt to Deliver Remarks**—Co-chairs of the Coalition for a Better Future Anne McLellan and Lisa Raitt will take part in a conversation on inclusive and sustainable economic growth with Canadian Chamber of Commerce head Perrin Beatty, part of a Coalition for a Better Future Podium Series Event. Monday, Nov. 27 at 11:30 a.m. MT at the

Fairmont Hotel Macdonald, 10065 100 St. NW., Edmonton, Alta. Details online: [business.edmontonchamber.com](http://business.edmontonchamber.com).

**Naheed Nenshi at AKFC's Book Club**—Aga Khan Foundation Canada hosts its book club series, "Global Reads," featuring former Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi as the lead discussant with Dan Breznitz, author of *Innovation In Real Places – Strategies for Prosperity in an Unforgiving World*. Monday, Nov. 27 at 4:30 p.m. ET at the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam, 199 Sussex Dr. Details online via Eventbrite.

**Food and Beverage Canada Reception**—Food and Beverage Canada invites parliamentarians and officials to a reception to celebrate Canada's food and beverage manufacturing sector, to meet with our CEO, and to engage with representatives from across the country. Monday, Nov. 27 from 5:30-7 p.m. ET. By invite only. Reach out to kristina.farrell@fbc-abc.com for more details.

**Lunch with Finance ADM Turcotte**—The Ottawa Economics Association hosts a hybrid lunch event with Julie Turcotte, acting assistant deputy minister at Finance Canada, who will take part in a Q&A on the Nov. 21 Fall Economic Statement. Monday, Nov. 27, at 12 p.m. ET at the Department of Finance Canada, 90 Elgin St. Details online: [cabe.ca](http://cabe.ca).

**TUESDAY, NOV. 28**

**Book Launch: *By the Ghost Light***—The Ottawa International Writers Festival co-hosts the launch of R.H. Thomson's new book, *By the Ghost Light*. Thomson offers an extraordinary look at his family's history while providing a powerful examination of how we understand war and its aftermath, touching on areas of military history, art, literature and science to express the tragic human cost of war behind the ceremonial parades, memorials and monuments. Tuesday, Nov. 28, 7 p.m. ET, Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St. Reserve tickets at [writersfestival.org](http://writersfestival.org).

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](mailto:news@hilltimes.com) by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.

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