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THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR, NO. 2081

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2023 \$5.00

NEWS

Partisan
clashes cloud
implementation
of revised
Ukraine trade
bill as experts
pan Tories'
carbon tax
complaints

BY NEIL MOSS

With a bill to implement a revised Canada-Ukraine trade deal moving through the House amid partisan mudslinging, experts are lambasting the Conservatives for elevating a domestic political dispute to the international arena.

Bill C-57, to implement the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, passed clause-by-clause consideration at the House International Trade Committee on Nov. 28, with support from all parties except the Conservatives.

The Conservatives are falsely alleging that the bill implements a carbon tax, whereas the language of the bill has a non-binding measure to "promote carbon pricing" and to "address impacts and risks associated with climate change through adaptation measures."

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NEWS

Protesters vow continued 'civil disobedience' until feds issue call for permanent Israel-Hamas ceasefire

BY STUART BENSON

Amid a temporary pause in hostilities in Israel's war on Hamas and the agreed-upon release of hostages, organizers behind a protest that disrupted a big-ticket Liberal Party fundraiser last week are vowing to keep up the pressure around the country until they hear "an unequivocal call for an immediate ceasefire" from the federal government.

However, one MP says some of those calls and acts cross the line, and they've become concerned for the safety of their staff when demonstrations take place at constituency offices.

On Nov. 27, Israel and Hamas agreed to extend their original four-day truce for an additional two days in exchange for further releases of Israeli hostages being held in Gaza and Palestinian pris-

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Thousands of protesters rallied on Parliament Hill and marched through the streets of downtown Ottawa on Nov. 25 to demand the federal government call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas conflict. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS

'Penny wise, pound foolish': interparliamentary group chairs decry decision to reject funding boost

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Citing Canada's current financial climate, the House Board

of Internal Economy recently shot down a request to boost funding for interparliamentary associations for the first time in

five years. But as associations reduce delegation sizes and the number of trips to make do, group chairs say the "foolish" un-

derfunding of their work means missed opportunities for Canada to play a larger role on the world stage.

"If MPs [want to] choose to marginalize themselves, then I guess this is a great way to go about it because these associations become more and more important as the threat environment keeps expanding and multiplying," said Liberal MP John McKay (Scarborough—

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Christina Leadlay

Heard On The Hill

Tory MP Raquel Dancho welcomes new member of Conservative caucus



Conservative MP Raquel Dancho, right, with husband Scott Gurski and baby Elizabeth, who was born Nov. 20. Photograph courtesy Raquel Dancho's X account

Manitoba Conservative MP **Raquel Dancho** has given birth to her first child.

"Scott and I are overjoyed to announce the birth of our daughter, **Elizabeth Eden Gurski Dancho**" Dancho announced on X (formerly Twitter) on Nov. 20, posting photos of the remarkably well rested-looking trio at Winnipeg's Saint Boniface Hospital. "Both baby and mama are healthy and well. We are truly blessed and are blissfully in love with our beautiful baby girl."

Best wishes flooded in on social media from Dancho's parliamentary colleagues from all sides of the House, as well as from members of the press gallery.

Her party's public safety critic, Dancho, age 33, and her husband **Scott Gurski** were married in 2021.

Local brewery looks to be newest Hill watering hole

There's a new venture in the Parliamentary Precinct that's not only just in time for holiday shopping, but also could diversify the options for thirsty Hill denizens. On Nov. 28, Ottawa-based Kichesippi Beer Co. opened its pop-up shop at 187 Sparks St., a building owned by Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Brewery owner **Paul Meek** confirmed to **HOH** on Nov. 27 that Kichesippi's arrival downtown is part of a two-phase plan: "The Pop Up is run off of a Special Occasion Permit [...] which only permits us to provide customers with a small sample of our products. So, for this phase, it is just like going to a farmers market."

"We will have a large selection of beer, wine, cider, and spirits, and many of these will be products not currently available in the LCBO," said Meek, confirming



The storefront at 187 Sparks St. was refit ahead of Kichesippi Beer's Nov. 28 bottle-shop opening. Photographs courtesy of Paul Meek

that opening hours are Tuesdays to Saturdays from 12-7 p.m. until Dec. 23.

Phase 2 will see the shop close Dec. 24 and transform into a 20-seat taproom and eatery sometime in spring 2024. "Our hope is that customers will stop in for some drinks and a small bite, and then purchase some bottles and/or cans to go before they leave," Meek said. "We envision more lunch crowd opportunities on Sparks Street and also more of a consistent after work crowd than we have in Bells Corners," which is where the 13-year-old brewery has been since 2018.

"We have been in search of a downtown location as a second spot for quite a while and have been looking into Sparks Street options since March 2023." Details like taproom hours are TBD, said Meek, who also remains coy about whether the brewery will celebrate its new South of Parliament location with a new brew. "That is something we are working on, but don't have anything finalized at the moment."

Pearson Centre hits play on new podcast

If you are looking for something new to listen to on your commute or while working out, the Pearson Centre think tank has joined the podcast sphere.

President and CEO **Scott Simms** told **HOH** on Nov. 27 the centre's been developing its podcast idea since last spring, and with the help of Pop-Up Podcasts, released its first episode of *The*

Pearson Centre Presents...In Conversation—its working title—last week on YouTube, featuring Simms chatting with journalist **John Ibbitson** about his new book.

While the Centre has been producing live webinars for a few years, Simms explained, the new podcast will run in parallel. "We found there is more uptick on our recorded material," said the former Liberal MP who's been running the Pearson Centre since this past March.

Simms said he wants the podcast to provide listeners with background on the day's key issues. "We're aiming to produce two [episodes] a month," he said. And while he is the main host, other Pearson Centre associates, like former Ontario Liberal MPP **Indira Naidoo-Harris**, will also be involved.

Simms confirmed the next episode will be "the origin story of the notwithstanding clause," but he couldn't yet confirm a release date.

Senator Judy White joins PSG

Newfoundland and Labrador Senator **Judy White** joined the Progressive Senate Group (PSG) on Nov. 21.

"I chose PSG because it's made up of like-minded individuals, inspired by the Algonquin word, 'Mamidosewin,' (Ma-mee-doe-se-win) which means meeting place and walking together," White told **HOH** on Nov. 24.

"While Senators are free to champion their individual goals, the Progressives recognize the value of working together with a shared purpose. There is also a balance of long serving and newer Senators within the PSG," said the Mi'kmaq Senator, who was appointed to the Red Chamber on July 6.

According to her Senate biography, White is an award-winning human rights lawyer who previously served as assistant deputy minister of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation in the Newfoundland and Labrador government.

With White's addition, the number of Senators in the PSG now totals 12, making it the fourth-largest grouping in the Upper Chamber behind Senate Conservatives with 15 members, Conservative Senators Group at 16, and the Independent Senators Group with 39.

Longtime CTV Hill reporter Norman Fetterley has died

Former CTV parliamentary correspondent **Norman Fetterley** died on Nov. 24, aged 74.

"He was a true journalist and one of the best in the city," former CTV producer **Alyson Fair** posted last week on the news of his death. "A great storyteller who had a hell of a laugh," she added. Ottawa radio personality



Tributes poured in online following the death of former CTV parliamentary correspondent Norman Fetterley. Screenshot courtesy of CTV News Ottawa

Stuntman Stu posted on X that Fetterley was "a consummate professional and always nice to the rookies."

According to a 2013 CTV story marking his retirement after a 45-year career in journalism, Fetterley "didn't go to university," but was "a bookworm and a history buff with a sparse writing style."

Fetterley was a teenager when he began working in journalism at Niagara Falls' CJRN Radio in 1967. He stepped in front of the television camera in Thunder Bay, Ont., in 1972, and reported across Canada until he settled at CJOH (later CTV) in Ottawa where he covered Parliament Hill happenings from the time of **Pierre Elliott Trudeau** up until **Jean Chrétien**'s time in the Prime Minister's Office. He then hosted the long-running weekly political analysis segment *Gallery Talk*.

Fetterley is survived by his wife **Elizabeth**, and daughters **Jessica** and **Emily**. His funeral will be held Dec. 2 at Christ Church Cathedral, 414 Sparks St., at 11:30 a.m.

Champagne fêted as EV industry champ

Electric Mobility Canada (EMC) presented Innovation Minister **François-Philippe Champagne** with an award at its annual conference in Edmonton on Nov. 15.

"I am honoured to accept the Al Cormier Award, presented by @EMC_MEC in recognition of our government's efforts in the field of electric vehicles," Champagne wrote on X that day.

"Champagne has been a real champion of the EV industry," EMC president and CEO **Daniel Breton** said in a press release. "Through his leadership, he and his government are literally saving the Canadian auto industry while helping to create well-paid sustainable Canadian jobs and fighting climate change."

According to EMC's website, the award is named after Cormier who founded industry association in 2006, "one of the first known organizations focused on advancing electric mobility anywhere in the world."

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News

Newest India assassination claims validate expansion of public inquiry beyond China, says Thomas Juneau

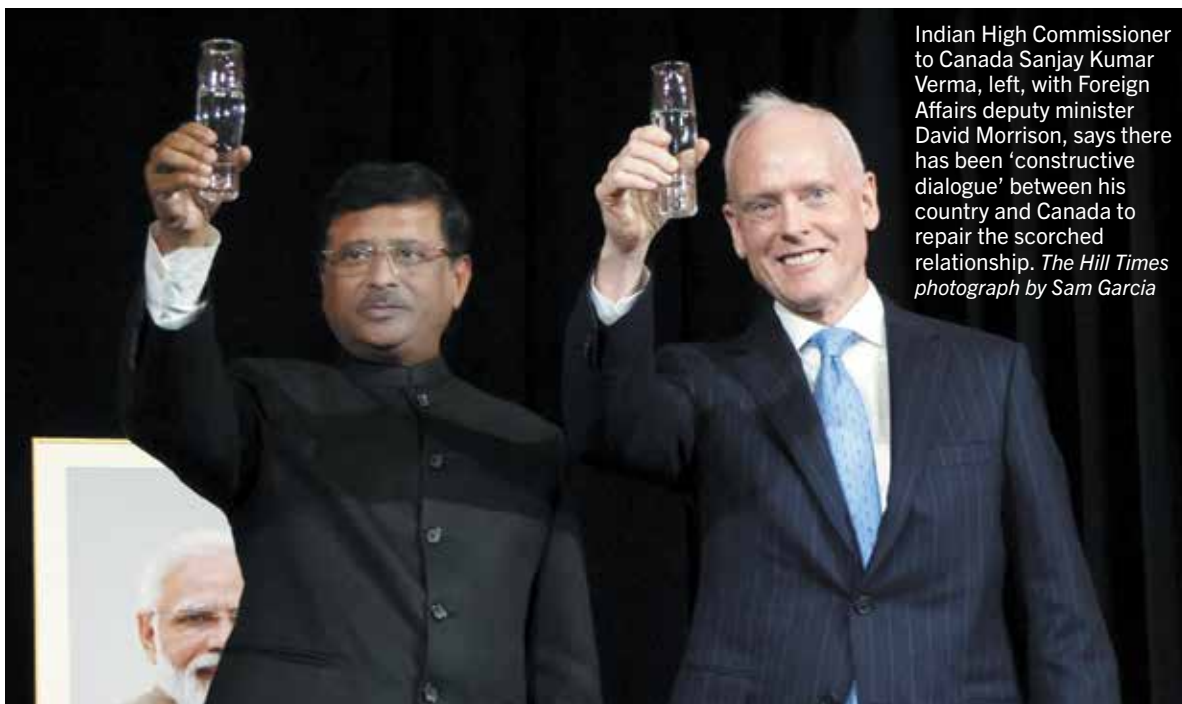
Explicitly mandating an examination of India would be another 'poke in the eye' to a strategically valuable trading partner, warns former national security and intelligence adviser Vincent Rigby.

BY STUART BENSON

National security expert Thomas Juneau says recent allegations of the Indian government's involvement in a foiled assassination attempt on American soil are a validation of Canada's decision to expand its public inquiry into foreign interference beyond China's election meddling. But as the country's relationship with an integral part of its Indo-Pacific strategy seems to finally be on the mend following the prime minister's House of Commons revelation that Canada possessed "credible allegations" of India's involvement in the murder of a Canadian citizen, a former top national security and intelligence adviser says explicitly mandating the commission to examine India would be like poking the eye of an already cornered tiger.



Former DND analyst Thomas Juneau says the inquiry into foreign meddling may not have the time to seriously examine the kind of interference in which countries like India and Iran are often implicated. Photograph courtesy of X



Indian High Commissioner to Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma, left, with Foreign Affairs deputy minister David Morrison, says there has been 'constructive dialogue' between his country and Canada to repair the scorched relationship. The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia

On Nov. 22, the *Financial Times* reported that United States authorities had thwarted a conspiracy to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a dual American-Canadian citizen who is general counsel for Sikhs for Justice, part of the so-called "Khalistan" movement that pushes for an independent Sikh state.

Pannun is also a close associate of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the Canadian in whose murder Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) implicated India with the revelation of "credible allegations" from the floor of the House of Commons on Sept. 18. The *Financial Times* also reported that U.S. President Joe Biden raised the matter with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the G20 summit in New Delhi that same month. The U.S. National Security Council confirmed to the outlet that alongside the diplomatic warning between U.S. and Indian officials "at the senior-most levels," federal prosecutors have also filed a sealed indictment against at least one alleged perpetrator in a New York district court.

While India has rejected Canada's allegations as "absurd," the *Financial Times* reports that Washington shared details of the Pannun plot with a wider group of allies following the allegations made by Trudeau, which created concern of a possible pattern of behaviour by New Delhi.

In contrast to the Nijjar allegations, India said the "inputs

pertaining to [the] nexus between organized criminals, gun runners, terrorists and others" shared by the U.S. are a "case of concern" and decided to "take the necessary follow up" and have the case "examined by relevant departments."

Juneau, an assistant professor at the University of Ottawa's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, told *The Hill Times* that he took the reporting "with several grains of salt," adding that he isn't questioning *The Financial Times'* reporting but rather the assumption that it is "just the tip of the iceberg."

"We have no idea what's actually beneath the water," explained Juneau, a former strategic analyst with the Department of National Defence, adding that what could be seen above the surface seemed to validate the government's decision to not limit the mandate of the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions to only election meddling by the Chinese government.

However, while he agrees with the decision to allow for the commission to examine the activities of other governments like Russia, India, or Iran, the commission only has so much time within that mandate.

Led by Quebec Court of Appeal judge Justice Marie-Josée Hogue, the public inquiry will take place over two phases

beginning in early 2024, with the first phase focused on "any interference that China, Russia, and other foreign actors may have engaged in, and any impact it may have had on the 2019 and 2021 federal elections," as well as an examination and assessment of information flow within the federal government related to the issue.

The second phase of the inquiry, scheduled for fall 2024, will examine the capacity of the federal departments, agencies, institu-



Vincent Rigby, a former national security and intelligence adviser to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, says it would be risky to explicitly name India as a subject of the public inquiry at a time when the two countries are working to put the Nijjar dispute 'if not behind them, back behind closed doors.' The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

tional structures, and governance processes that detect, deter, and counter foreign interference.

The commission is required to submit an interim report by Feb. 29, 2024, with its final report due by Dec. 31, 2024.

"The timelines are very tight, and how the commission will manage these timelines will be up to them to decide, but I wish them luck," Juneau said, adding that the explicit inclusion of India would also mean changing what kind of foreign interference the commission is tasked with examining.

Among those asking for an expansion of the inquiry's mandate to specifically include India was NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.), who wrote to Hogue directly on Sept. 19, following Trudeau's House announcement.

"India mostly interferes in Canada in the form of transnational repression, much more than in the form of electoral meddling," Juneau said, adding while the contexts and methods are completely different, the inclusion of transnational repression would also require a greater focus on Iran, pointing to a recent exposé by Global News on the extent of Iran's government repression and the reach of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Canada.

Either way, Juneau cautioned against hoping that the public inquiry by itself would be enough to catalyze the reform of Canada's national security policies and processes, and address all of the concerns that people like himself have been raising for years.

"The government has been very slow to catch up to the actual threat of foreign interference," Juneau explained. "Even if you have the most optimistic date that the government will implement whatever recommendations the commission makes, it's not going to happen overnight."

Vincent Rigby, Trudeau's former national security and intelligence adviser, said the newest reporting is especially interesting since it provides an opportunity to see how India reacts to the allegations, and highlights the contrast between its differing reaction to the American and Canadian allegations.

"I think, from the beginning, India has seen Canada as a medium-sized player at best, and they had limited patience with a country like that accusing them of direct complicity," said Rigby, who was Juneau's co-author on the 2022 University of Ottawa report, *A National Security Strategy for the 2020s*. "It really backed them into a corner."

India's differing response may also have been prompted by the U.S. not publicly presenting its allegations by having Biden make a public address from the White House or floor of the Senate.

Rigby said despite Trudeau's language around "credible allegations" relating to Nijjar's death, he doesn't believe India views them as only allegations, pointing to a recent CTV interview with India's High Commissioner to Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma.

Continued on page 25

Global Affairs missed target of having nearly half of Canadians back diplomatic efforts: department report

With a target of ‘at least’ 46 per cent, a recent internal GAC report suggests that 40 per cent of Canadians are satisfied with the country’s international engagement.



Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly and Global Affairs Canada are in the midst of a foreign service review, with some calling for a broader foreign policy rethink. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

BY NEIL MOSS

A recently released internal report by Canada’s foreign ministry found that the department missed its target of having the support of fewer than half of Canadians for Ottawa’s international engagement.

The data released as part of Global Affairs Canada’s (GAC) 2022-23 departmental results found that for the second year in a row, 40 per cent of Canadians are “satisfied with Canada’s international engagement.” The department set a target of “at least” 46 per cent.

Prior to the 2021-22 departmental results, the only fiscal year in which the question was assessed was in 2018-19 when the result was 46 per cent.

The 2022-23 departmental results offered no information for the missed target. But the previous 2021-22 report found that “Canadians’ satisfaction on most international engagement issues significantly decreased in 2021 compared to 2018 when the survey was last administered.”

According to a GAC spokesperson, the data was compiled through an online survey of 3,059 adult Canadians conducted from Jan. 16 to Feb. 5 in both official languages.

“The results can be considered representative of the Canadian general public,” the official said, noting the survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 1.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The spokesperson didn’t directly answer why the target was set to be “at least” 46 per cent.

Carleton University international affairs professor David Carment, who produces an annual report card of Canada’s foreign policy, said he anticipates

approval of Canada’s international engagement breaks along partisan lines.

“It’s probably Liberal Party supporters, plus maybe a few NDP people who are enamoured with the progressive trade agenda and so on,” said Carment, editor of the *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*. “That number may reflect attitudes [towards] the Liberal government more than anything else.”

He added that the figure is more likely a reflection of how Canadians view the performance of the Liberal government as opposed to the effectiveness of its diplomats.

“You can be critical of the government’s foreign policy, but it doesn’t mean you’re being critical of the diplomatic community,” he said.

He remarked that the level of satisfaction Canadians have with Ottawa’s international engagement might have further eroded as a result of how it has responded to the Israel-Hamas war.

Carment said there are questions about why GAC chose a target of “at least” 46 per cent.

“Is that a reflection of the political environment? Possibly,” he said. “Or is it unreasonable to expect a majority of Canadians to support any diplomatic initiative?”

He said a more accurate understanding of how Canadians feel about the government’s foreign policy could be found by probing their feelings about specific global challenges instead of their view on whether they support Canada’s international work on a broad basis.

“In the abstract, the results can be meaningful, but they’re not all that tied to what is really going on,” he said.

Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville,

Que.) launched a foreign service review in the spring of 2022. The Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade will also soon release a report on the machinery of Canada’s foreign service.

In two recent foreign policy addresses, Joly highlighted the need to increasingly engage in “pragmatic diplomacy.”

Former Canadian ambassador Deanna Horton, who served as Canada’s top diplomat in Vietnam from 2008-2010, said she doesn’t view the 40 per cent figure as concerning, remarking that it speaks to the level of Canadians’ interest in foreign policy.

“I think, generally, Canadians are not as interested in our activities abroad as we would like,” she said.

“In the past and certainly not in the present, I don’t think the government does enough to educate about what Canada is doing,” she said. “It’s not just the broader foreign policy which people like to think about, which is more in the peace and security realm, but also the whole international assistance portfolio. ... I don’t think many Canadians are all that aware of what’s happening there.”

Former diplomat Colin Robertson, now vice-president of Canadian Global Affairs Institute, said it is tough to assess the result without more transparency around how the department determined the number.

He said the low approval of Canada’s international engagement could be a result of a lack of knowledge of the work that Canada’s diplomats are doing around the world.

The department gave itself passing grades for the percentage of diplomatic activities

which met their objectives, assessing that 81 per cent did so (the target is 72 per cent). That represents an increase from 76 and 73 per cent in the previous two fiscal years.

It also found that for the second straight year, 80 per cent of advocacy campaigns met their objectives (the target is 75 per cent).

No methodology is offered behind the two findings.

The report also found that the number of Canadians who are playing leading roles in international institutions is on the rise. With a target of 18, the number has jumped from 17 in 2020-21, and 20 in 2021-22, to 28 in 2022-23.

The departmental results break down GAC’s performance across five “core” responsibilities: international advocacy and diplomacy; trade and investment; development and peace and security; assisting Canadians abroad; and supporting Canada’s presence abroad.

Carment said he is “troubled” by the methodology of the report, calling the document “opaque.”

“There was really no clear indication how they arrived at their performance indicator assessments,” he said. “So essentially they are ranking themselves, and that in itself is problematic.”

He added that the report suffers by sidestepping some of Canada’s foreign policy shortcomings, including its rocky relationship with India, issues with the COVID-19-inspired app ArriveCan, and the struggle to establish itself as a mediator in a Cameroonian peace process.

“It’s mostly good news written by internal experts evaluating their own performance,” he said. “I don’t know to what extent you

get the same kind of results if you have an external assessment being conducted—probably much more critical.”

Canadians largely satisfied when interacting with GAC services

While a minority of Canadians backed Canada’s international engagements, GAC’s report found that it received widespread support among those who interacted with the department.

The departmental results found that 92 per cent were satisfied with the services they received (the target is 90 per cent) from the trade commissioner service (TCS), which matches the same results from 2021-22 and 2020-21.

But the number of completed commercial deals fell short of the target. There were 1,374 agreements completed in 2022-23 out of a target of 1,500. The GAC report notes that the target was increased prior to the onset of the pandemic and the result had COVID-19 impacts, especially related to travel.

There has also been a decrease in the number of the TCS’s active business clients. With a target of 17,000, the report found that the client base has dropped from 16,882 in 2020-21 and 16,769 in 2021-22, to 16,556 in 2022-23. The report blames the missed target on it being increased prior to the pandemic and being impacted by “COVID-19 disruptions.”

Under the section on help for Canadians abroad, the report suggests that 91 per cent of Canadians “expressed satisfaction” with the services they received (the target is 90 per cent).

The department gave itself a passing grade in responding to consular cases “within established service standards,” finding that it reached its target of 90 per cent on an annual basis, but the annual percentage has dropped from 92 per cent in 2021-22, and 97 per cent in 2020-21.

The government has faced harsh criticism for some of its consular work, including most recently in the Middle East (occurring following the 2022-23 fiscal year covered in the departmental results). Following the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7, Conservative MP Michael Chong (Wellington-Halton Hills, Ont.), his party’s foreign affairs critic, accused the government of “failing at this basic task” of providing consular assistance to Canadians in need.

The results report also found that the department met its “service standards” in processing passport applications. With a target of 90 per cent, GAC found that the standards were met 94 per cent of the time for regular passports, 99 per cent for temporary passports, and 98 per cent for emergency passports.

Just prior to the end of the fiscal year in March, then-families, children, and social development minister Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.) announced the passport backlog had been eliminated.

nmoos@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

News

House Board OKs four Centre Block design decisions, with more to come



Centre Block's Rotunda—also known as Confederation Hall—is currently covered in protective boarding, as seen during a June 22 media tour of the site. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The MP working group has a busy month ahead, with seven sets of decisions to go through in December, which are now expected to be brought to the BOIE for final approval in January.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

The House of Commons' Board of Internal Economy recently knocked four Centre Block design decisions off of its to-do list, with more to come in the new year.

All four items were first presented to members of the Board of Internal Economy (BOIE) on Oct. 26 after being reviewed by the MP working group last June, but Board members had asked for more time to consult with their caucuses and ensure they were up to speed on the project's ins and outs before giving the OK.

Since then, the working group has organized site visits for interested MPs, as well as information meetings to both catch MPs up

and offer a chance for them to weigh in with observations and ask questions, noted Deputy House Speaker and Conservative MP Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, N.S.), chair of the working group, at the BOIE on Nov. 23.

During their October appearance at the BOIE, both d'Entremont and a representative from Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), the department responsible for overseeing the multi-year, multi-billion-dollar project to renovate Parliament Hill, had underlined the importance of timely decision-making by Parliamentarians—something the auditor general has flagged as an “ongoing” and “significant risk” to the project.

The Centre Block rehabilitation project includes both the renovation and modernization of the historic 100-year-old building, and construction of the new underground Parliament Welcome Centre, and is projected to cost \$4.5-billion to \$5-billion to complete by 2030-31.

On Nov. 23, the BOIE gave the green light to all four decisions put to it in October. That includes endorsement of the proposed number, location, and sizes of leadership suites and standard Parliamentarian office units to be included in Centre Block (while noting that office allocation can still be reviewed later), and approval to introduce bench seating to the north and south

public visitors' galleries in the House of Commons Chamber to increase seating capacity while still bringing the galleries up to accessibility code requirements. This will mean that rather than a total of 296 seats, between 424 and 431 will be available. The east and west galleries will also be designed so as to allow for the possible conversion to bench seating if desired in the future, and if later converted, would bring total available seating up 455, including 24 accessible spaces.

The BOIE also approved plans to use the fourth- and fifth-floor levels of the three-storey in-

fill being built atop the Hall of Honour as flexible workspace for both MPs and Senators, and agreed in principle to dedicate a space on the fourth floor for “ceremonial cultural practices.” The top floor of the infill—which will be level with the sixth floor of the building—was already approved as common space for all Parliamentarians.

Board members made a key distinction in giving the go-ahead for the cultural practices space on Nov. 23, indicating the approval was for its general creation—to allow architectural and engineering work to move ahead—with the details around its use still to be hashed out.

The room was originally pitched as a space specifically for Indigenous cultural practices, namely smudging and qulliq ceremonies, but the new, more general moniker of “ceremonial cultural practices” has since been attached to it. Conservatives on the Board have pressed the point that the room should be open for more flexible use when not needed for Indigenous ceremonies.

At the BOIE meeting last week, the debate over the room's use was reshaped, with Bloc Québécois Whip Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry-Suroît, Que.) reiterating her caucus' concerns over whether it would also be open for use for “other religious purposes.” DeBellefeuille explained that the Bloc agrees with the idea of dedicating the space for Indigenous use, but does not want “there to be something that opens the door to the use of that room or others to multid denominational purposes.”

“For the Bloc Québécois, state and church are supposed to be separate, and we want to have the assurance that that room will only be used for that to which it is dedicated, that is to say smudging and qulliq activities,” she explained.

Liberal MP Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Ont.) said she, too, has “issues” with the space, in terms of feeling there should be flexibility in its use, but that it should “specifically be honouring our First Peoples,” and be named to reflect that. “Their access to that room and their need or use of that room should become a priority,” she said.

Conservative Whip Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey-

White Rock, B.C.)—who noted she'd thought “we'd moved past this conversation”—said the room is not “religious necessarily,” and that by characterizing it as a room for “ceremonial cultural practices” it would “open up the space for more than just Indigenous Peoples.”

“There are not reasons why Indigenous people would need use of this space every day of every week of every year, and there are others who would look to [use] spaces such as this, and that by approaching it this way we were not dishonouring Indigenous people—quite the opposite. It is a place where they can go for ceremony as they choose when it's appropriate ... but to have this large space where only one designated group can use it when others could make use of it did not seem reasonable to us,” she explained.

Along with those four design proposals, the BOIE gave approval on Nov. 23 to proposed processes for how art and artifacts will be handled through the renovation, laying out the different steps in the related chains of oversight and approval for artifact displays, the restoration or modification of existing artwork, and the creation of new artwork (including work by the Dominion Sculptor), which ultimately end with the House Speaker.

The MP working group has a busy month ahead, with meetings currently planned for Dec. 1, 8, and 19 to go through seven sets of decisions that are now expected to be brought to the BOIE for final House approval in January.

During his appearance on Oct. 26, PSPC assistant deputy minister Rob Wright had indicated there were “21 key decisions” requiring parliamentary approval that the department hoped to have resolved by December in order to “keep on track,” 14 of which related to Centre Block specifically.

Those hopes have evidently been adjusted, with d'Entremont noting the aim now is for the working group to return to the BOIE in “early January, or the next meeting in the new year” to present the next set of items.

As per the outline presented to Board members on Nov. 23, first on the working group's docket are plans related to accessibility improvements in the Memorial Chamber and Peace Tower, followed by layout plans for the fourth and fifth floors of the infill being built atop the Hall of Honour (including the “cultural ceremonial space”).

Also among the items on the group's December to-do list is approval for updated design plans related to landscaping, circulation, heritage rooms, and the overall design progress, as well as the layout of the lobbies and lobby support spaces. As has been reported (and approved in concept), the government and opposition lobbies that flank the House Chamber are set to be expanded down one floor to become two-level spaces that include washroom and food-service facilities, among other things.

lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Bloc Whip Claude DeBellefeuille says her caucus is concerned the planned ‘ceremonial cultural practices’ room will be opened to use for ‘religious purposes.’ Screenshot courtesy of Par/Vu



Conservative Whip Kerry-Lynne Findlay says along with being used for Indigenous ceremonies, the new infill space should be open for others to use when available. Screenshot courtesy of Par/Vu

A photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in shades of green and yellow, dancing across a dark, starry night sky. Below the lights, a dark, rocky shoreline is visible, with some snow and ice patches. The overall scene is serene and majestic.

The North

POLICY BRIEFING

Publication date: December 6, 2023

Advertising deadline: December 1, 2023

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Editorial

Are schoolyard tactics really the best MPs can do?

It's a painful time to watch Canadian politics. And that's not just because of the front-row seat to real human suffering through myriad crises, like the cost-of-living struggles, rising hate and bigotry, war, and public health challenges. Those things are all bad enough, but then you add politicians into the mix, and somehow it becomes exponentially worse. That's not to paint everyone elected or appointed to serve on Parliament Hill with the same broad brush. There are definitely those who are putting in the work, and moving behind the scenes to get things done for their communities and the country. But their efforts are often be overshadowed by those who are determined to be among the loudest and most prominent voices, and who have Canadians wondering whether remedial kindergarten classes should be a compulsory part of parliamentary orientation. This week, House Speaker Greg Fergus issued a ruling that comments in the House by Conservative MP Jake Stewart, in which he called members of the NDP "Hamas supporters," were unparliamentary, and that Stewart would not be acknowledged in the Chamber until he apologized in writing. Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer wasted no time in asking for the same treatment to be applied to Government House Leader Karina Gould, who earlier that day questioned whether Tory

MPs were "pro-Russia and anti-Ukraine" for their vote against a bill relating to the Canada-Ukraine trade deal. On its face, there's nothing wrong with requiring MPs on all sides of the House be held to the same standards. And if MPs are barred from speaking in the House until they are able to adhere to incredibly simple rules, then we'd all likely be better for it. Perhaps it would give a chance for some more reasonable voices to be heard more often. But this isn't a serious debate that's happening. Instead, it's steeped in hypocrisy, and almost immediately devolves into an "I know you are but what am I" level of discourse, regardless of how many impassioned points of order politicians raise about how wronged they are before they turn around and engage in the exact same behaviour. It's no wonder Canadians are disillusioned (and following suit) when a request to raise the tone in the House and avoid certain stigmatizing words is met by a childish online dive to find an instance in which the person making the request used the same word nearly a decade prior. Politicians spend a lot of their time decrying or defending the state of the country, blaming the other side for whatever ills or divisions are running rampant. Perhaps things would improve if mirrors were installed at all of the Chamber desks.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Officials should seek to lead, not simply 'change things,' writes McElroy

Re: "Liberals need to look for realistic wins in wake of fiscal update," (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 22, p. 9). The Trudeau government has actually done very well. It weathered the disturbing Donald Trump era and also managed the pandemic competently. By my calculations, 600,000 fewer Americans would have died if the Canadian program were in place in their country. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's daily remarks in front of Rideau Cottage were an inspiration to all Canadians. The rapid release of support funds to people and business helped keep the economy, and many ordinary citizens, afloat. And Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland stick-handled the trade issues expertly. But now that we are back to "normal," communications about what the government is doing for us have dried up, leaving a gulf to be filled with unsupported promises by leaders like Conservative Pierre Poilievre. Will we be well served by climate deniers, anti-vaxxers, and right-wing politicians who pander to the wealthy?

No government is perfect, but one thing that disappoints me about the Trudeau government is its failure to remain neutral in the Hamas-Israel conflict. There are issues on both sides that need them, not us, to resolve. We should be seen as a trusted intermediary, not a county choosing sides. Would the Conservatives have done any better? There are a lot of things "broken" in Canada, as there are in other countries, but to blame them all on our government when so many issues are driven from outside forces—particularly the hyper-competitive, "free-enterprise" economy in the United States—is disingenuous. We, however, could expect stronger leadership from the federal government to get the provinces to address climate change. Please think about who will be responsible for governance in our country and who just wants the power to "change things."

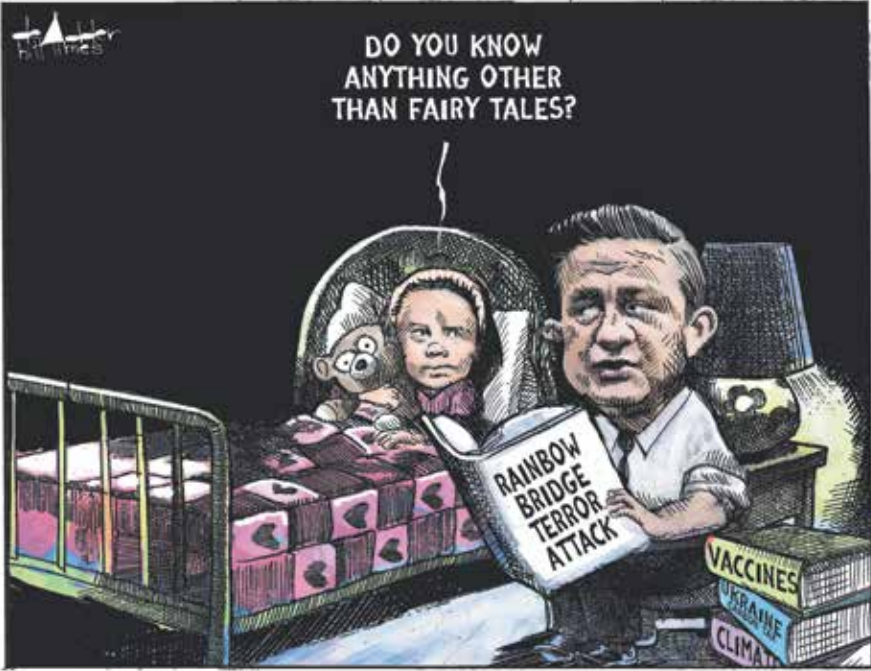
Tom McElroy
Toronto, Ont.

Negotiations in Israel-Hamas conflict must focus on the future: letter writer

Where do the children play? Yusuf/Cat Stevens' refrain runs through my head and tells me that we must look beyond the arguments, the rhetoric, the protests, and the anger. We have to address the needs of those displaced, held hostage, wounded in body and spirit, dying, homeless, unemployed, without income, and those children without parents, food, shelter, schools, or without safe places to play. Talk of war crimes, the right to defend oneself, proportionate force, and minimization of civilian casualties fails to answer these most pressing needs. The agony seen in faces and heard in voices of those harmed by death, destruction, and unbelievably disrupted lives compels us to be compassionate and exercise restraint. Thankfully, the voices urging such restraint have created a space to negotiate for the care and release of hostages, and for a humanitarian ceasefire. These talks are working and must transition into a permanent

peace process to address immediate needs and settlement of longer-term needs, including sovereignty, governance, borders, citizenship, reparations, and rebuilding. With a Marshall-like plan, the international community can help those suffering the horrors of the conflict, the needs of the displaced, including Israelis, the needs of the families of those taken hostage, and the overwhelming needs of those who lack everything. While we wait for Gaza to be rebuilt, the international community should persuade Israel to create a humanitarian corridor and allow those displaced within Gaza to move into Israel where needs for food, shelter, schooling, and medical care can be met. Such a humanitarian safety valve may remain in place for decades. For the sake of the children, no price is too high. Where will the children play?

Peter Kirby
Kenora, Ont.



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circulation@hilltimes.com
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THE HILL TIMES
Published every Monday and Wednesday by Hill Times Publishing Inc.
246 Queen Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E4
(613) 232-5952
Fax (613) 232-9055
Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 40068926
www.hilltimes.com

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The trend to online anonymity is not healthy for democracy

In the internet world, it seems taking responsibility for one's beliefs is anathema, and this movement towards anonymity may eventually undermine our respect for justice and democracy.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—As a councillor in a small town, it's hard to be anonymous. There is always someone who knows me. When I open my mouth and people hear a slight Anglo accent in French, I am easy to spot.

Having been in amateur theatre and made my living as a broadcast reporter, I never shied away from the spotlight. When I ran for office, I became accustomed to seeing my name and face on lawns and telephone poles.

I have always believed one should never fear to express one's opinion. It is one of the reasons I write this column, and put my email address below. As an elected official and a journalist, I have received calls, letters, and emails from people who have disagreed vehemently with me. It goes with the job.

When social media first came along, I naturally put my name on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (now known as X). I was surprised when people using aliases would reply to me. I recently got into a heated discussion on X about the Israel-Hamas war with someone who addressed me by my first name. I objected in the same way I would to a telemarketer who is too familiar. Here was someone attacking me, and I had no idea who they were. When I asked, they refused, claiming a right to privacy.

In researching this phenomenon, I came across a 2022 article in *The Atlantic* magazine by Kaitlyn Tiffany, who connected it to generation Z. She said they "arrived at a new era of anonymity, in which it feels natural to be inscrutable and confusing—forget the burden of crafting a coherent, persistent personal brand. There just isn't any good reason to use your real name anymore."

While there is inestimable value in protecting journalistic sources or ensuring secrecy in espionage operations, I think anyone should give their name when they express an opinion. The use of an alias is, in my mind, a form of cowardice. The great philosophers agreed if one fought established authority, they should be prepared for the consequences. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. willingly undertook civil disobedience, went to jail, and died for their causes.

But when people anonymously informed on their neighbours, tens of millions died in the pogroms in Russia, the Stalinist purges, the Great Leap Forward,

and the Cultural Revolution in China. The Ku Klux Klan wore hoods when they stole Black men from their homes and lynched them. In the Holocaust, Jews in Germany, France, Poland, Holland, and elsewhere were sent to their deaths by informers hiding behind anonymity.

In Quebec, the Office Québécois de la Langue Française encourages people to complain anonymously about English signage and service. Bill 96 recently made it an offence to be addressed in English in a store or business. In both cases, substantial fines are the result. The office's annual reports indicate the hundreds of complaints filed annually are the work of a handful of zealots who seek out violators just to make them miserable. Of course, the vast majority of infractions are found in downtown Montreal, the West Island, and Gatineau, where there are many English speakers. That is because zealots seek out the easiest prey.

One of the more egregious examples of this mentality was the promise by Harper Conservatives ahead of the 2015 election for a

"snitch line" for reporting "barbaric cultural practices" to the RCMP. If implemented, anyone could report on a Muslim neighbour without consequences, but with Harper's defeat, it never saw the light of day.

I fear this movement towards anonymity may eventually undermine our respect for justice and democracy. The basis of our legal system is that everyone should be able to face their accuser, and democracy allows anyone the freedom to speak one's mind.

But in the internet world, it seems taking responsibility for one's beliefs is anathema. My anonymous online friend argues "individuals may be subject to unwanted scrutiny, profiling, and monitoring, which can have a chilling effect on free expression and creativity."

Fair enough, but in an open society, that is the sacrifice one makes for having an opinion. And if one doesn't have the courage of their convictions, I don't believe they have earned the right to be part of the public discourse. As then-American senator Harry Truman said, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

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

Message to Conservatives: take a deep breath before firing up the rage machine

If you always plow ahead like a bull in a china shop, you are going to break a lot of glass and leave a mess for everyone.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—Public opinion polls from a variety of well-respected national firms continue to show the Conservative Party of Canada with healthy double-digit leads over the Liberals and the NDP. Most show them dominating in every demographic category, across most regions, and just about any other way you want to cross-tabulate the numbers.

In different parts of the country, it feels like it did in the United States before the 2016 presidential election: that the established interests need to be booted out, and a disruptor was needed in Washington. If you can cast Donald Trump aside for the moment—I'd prefer he'd be politically cast aside in perpetuity—there is a mood in many parts of Canada that wants to shake things up. Right now, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre seems to be seen as that agent of change.

While the polls and the mood are great for the Conservatives and aren't just accidental, like him or not, Poilievre has done some solid political spade work to sit now as Canada's top political choice. But with that ascension must come some new discipline and a more responsible approach to different matters. From the sidelines, it just doesn't seem necessary for the Conservative leader or one of his predecessors to treat every matter as if they are red rags to bulls.

Now, before the Conservative Party of Canada's communications

director fires another salvo my way, hear me out. The latter part of last week exposed some of the organization's vulnerabilities. Working through them and addressing them will be important if the CPC wants to win the next election.

Let us look at some of them. Every time you see a reference to carbon pricing is not a reason to storm the barricades to stop its spread, particularly when you know it isn't contagious. Yes, I am referring to the Conservatives' current opposition to the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade deal that has some fluffy aspirational language on climate policies. A simple truism is neither a Canadian prime minister nor Parliament can make the laws of another nation. Justin Trudeau is not bringing the carbon tax to Kyiv. And when the government of Ukraine calls you out on the BS, it's probably time to find a way out of the mess you created. You already have a domestic audience that is with you on carbon-price change in Canada—the overreach isn't needed.



It just doesn't seem necessary for Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, or former leader Andrew Scheer to treat every matter as if they are red rags to bulls, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Take a deep breath sometimes before firing up the rage machine. Back to the bulls: if you plow ahead like one in a china shop, you are going to break a lot of glass and leave a mess for everyone. So when you have a bunch of different reports about a crash at an international border crossing, wait before you go out and call it terrorism. Look, I know for some people going to a KISS concert is terrifying, but that isn't reason enough for the leader of the opposition to jump up in Parliament to call it something it wasn't.

Poilievre is a more than able orator and could have used more cautious language. Then, when you have erred, just say it and not beat the all-too-predictable path of whacking the mainstream media. Be predictable with solid leadership, not pettiness.

One quick final thing: Conservatives should find a place for Andrew Scheer that isn't in the public light. He may have political skills, but most often he seems to get himself in trouble. Making "wanted-style" posters of Senators who oppose some key legislation and then seeing those Senators get harassed because of that action is not a winning formula. That is the nonsense that killed the old Canadian Alliance under Stockwell Day. Keep the jet ski crap at bay.

Winning is not easy. It takes work. Poilievre is not afraid of work and has shown he can win, but like all of us, the work still needs to be done.

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

Comment

The failures of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Liberals are within the context of an affordability and housing crisis—a nightmare that fuels civil discontent, writes Erica Ifill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Unseasoned Grits: the Liberals aren't beating the charges of lacklustre governance

A heavy reliance on wedge issues, a poor record of passing laws of substance, and a weak stance on the Israel-Hamas conflict all make for an uninspiring movement.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—Remember when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was riding high in April, only to be shot down in May? Well, that's life.

It seems like almost a generation ago when Trudeau was levitated in the polls, riding a

political high from the dark days of the pandemic. Now that Icarus has flown too close to the sun, his wings are getting singed.

While I am not a fan of polls so far out from the election (I doubt anyone is ready for a campaign), one must surmise that the Liberal Party is getting skittish about its electoral prospects. Although Trudeau would love to lead the Liberals into battle against Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives, the polls aren't encouraging. According to the Angus Reid Institute, 57 per cent of Canadians wish Trudeau would step down. Those who voted Liberal in 2021 are more delusional: "Importantly, 2021 Liberal voters are divided, with close to equal numbers saying he should stay on (44 per cent) or leave the party to a fresh face (41 per cent)."

And it's no wonder. One problem is that the Liberals have chosen their wedge issues and have wielded them effectively. When the Liberals put gun control on the ballot in the 2021 election, they made an off-balance Erin O'Toole a flip-flopper as he struggled to define a clear position

on the policy as the Tory leader. During the pandemic, the Liberals alienated vaccine-hesitant voters with their tough administrative measures. It all seems moot now, considering few people wear masks anymore and vaccine take-up has dropped. Global News reported that in terms of the vaccine, "45 per cent said they did not feel it was worth getting one."

Another problem with this Liberal government is that it fails to pass legislation; you know, its job. And when they do attempt to, it blows up in their faces. Once touting the benefits of a "digital government," the Liberals have failed to pass any significant legislation on that file. In addition, their climate policies seem to be going up in flames. Bill C-18 has rendered Canadian media rudderless, as Politico notes: "Facebook and Insta haven't published news for Canadians since the summer." How Canadians are getting their news and which news they have access to have become a burden on the public. Although Canadian media are showing themselves to be unreliable due to their own internal politics and policies

that repel their paltry efforts to expand their audiences.

In addition to the evidence already laid before us, Trudeau himself has been quite weak in leading the country during the Israel-Hamas war. He and his ministers (I'm looking at you, Mélanie Joly) have been gingerly tip-toeing about the war recently, in contrast to their tough stance earlier in the conflict, as Palestinian civilian casualties increase exponentially. For those who are against this war, their democratic voices have largely been ignored by this government.

The war in Ukraine seems to be at a standstill. *Foreign Policy* remarked: "The West has indeed reached the limits of its current strategy ... Ukraine's Western supporters are now at a crossroads." Up to \$9-billion—and no pharmacare—later and that's the best they can do? Every time we turn around we gotta keep our head up, and in the immortal words of Tupac Shakur, "they got money for wars, but can't feed the poor." And that's the unfairness in our political and economic systems that reward the owners

of capital (the modern bourgeoisie) and punish owners of their labour.

All of these Liberal failures are within the context of an affordability crisis, a housing crisis, inflation, and a reality in which many Canadians have to choose between sky-rocketing grocery prices and rising utility costs. It's a nightmare that fuels civil discontent.

And let's be honest, the Liberals aren't beating those charges of being performative without any substance. And really, that is the perfect representation of this country. "Where Mr. Trudeau once charmed, he often now grates." This line from *The Globe and Mail* perfectly encapsulates the mood of the country.

Voters' attitudes about Trudeau don't necessarily translate into confidence in Poilievre, however, and the Conservative Party should be asking themselves why. Angus Reid found: "Fewer than two-in-five (37 per cent) view Poilievre favourably, largely unchanged over the last year. Nearly the same number hold a strongly unfavourable view of him (35 per cent), while about half view him unfavourably overall (49 per cent)." Yikes. Especially given Poilievre's predilection to become undisciplined and rancorous—with every opportunity—unprovoked. We saw this political flaw on display last week, as Poilievre completed his transformation into Donald Trump: picking on female journalists, spreading misinformation, and refusing to be held accountable for any errors he made. To be honest, it was very juvenile behaviour without any policy recommendations as a follow-up.

Those are our choices, Canada. (Don't insult us by bringing in the NDP as a viable choice. That ship sailed a long time ago.) God help us.

Erica Ifill is a co-host of the *Bad+Bitchy* podcast. *The Hill Times*

Missing the point of Freeland's what-have-we-got-to-lose mini-budget

The Nov. 21 economic statement was the implicit recognition of the political reality facing the Liberals in the aftermath of eight years of all-in investment policy.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—While focused on the size of the federal deficit in keeping with decades of right-wing myth-making, people for the most part seemed to have missed the upshot of Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's nothing-left-to-lose fall economic statement.

The overriding message of the Liberal government since 2015 has been: we've got your back; we're the government that cares; we're the government that will spend whatever it takes to lay the groundwork for a better life for Canadians and a stronger economy.

After the newly elected Liberal government's first budget in 2016, which forecast a \$29-billion deficit, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the Liberals had a mandate from Canadians to invest, not cut spending: "The promise I made was to invest in the future of this country. That's what Canadians told me we needed ... and that's exactly what we're doing."

By 2021, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trudeau government was ready to break the bank with a plan to protect Canadians and the economy from the virus, with a cumulative outpouring of federal spending unseen since the Second World War. In all, the Trudeau government spent some \$500-billion to fight COVID and its effects. Along with extensive financial commitments such as on childcare, health care, infrastructure, and incentivizing the future green economy, this has contributed to a doubling of the federal debt to \$1.2-trillion.

So, the striking thing about Freeland's Nov. 21 economic statement was the implicit recognition of the political reality facing the Liberals in the aftermath of eight years of all-in investment policy on behalf of Canadians and the economy.

With interest rates returning to traditional levels as a result of the Bank of Canada's (BoC) move away from near-zero emergency settings during COVID, and with post-pandemic inflation having risen around the world,

Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's, left, fall economic statement signalled that times have changed since 2016 when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the Liberals had a mandate from Canadians to invest, not cut spending, writes Les Whittington. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



the resulting pain for consumers and homeowners has by all indications been disastrous for the Liberal government. In the past year, the Liberals have seen their so-so standing with voters apparently tank in relation to the Conservatives led by Pierre Poilievre, who blames it all on the prime minister.

In that context, the Trudeau government's usual we'll-do-everything-we-can-to-have-your-back strategy suddenly looks strangely irrelevant. Hence, while last week's economic statement contained enough measures to allow Freeland to say the government is committed to helping out with housing and affordability, it was in relative terms a notional shift in the direction of fiscal retrenching. Net new spending in the statement totalled only a historically minor \$13-billion, and a lot of the housing measures won't kick in until 2025. And most of the initiatives on behalf of consumers and homeowners facing cost and mortgage shocks were mainly cut-rate measures to do with regulation and theoretical clampdowns on grocery giants, telecommunications purveyors, and short-term rentals. The new Canadian

Mortgage Charter was only a formalization of guidance from the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada issued last summer.

Freeland—who has to keep pointing out that the economy has actually been better than the media and most Canadians think—said the most important thing now is to prioritize policies that will contribute to a drop in interest rates. She didn't add: since if the polls can be believed, nothing else we've done seems to be connecting with the public.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh certainly got the message. He said what Freeland had delivered was "not even a mini budget. It is a microbudget." Singh added: "It does not meet the urgency of what Canadians are going through."

And the economic statement also signalled that times have changed since 2016, when Trudeau, explaining his government's spending plans, said: "We have incredibly low interest rates right now. Now is the time to be investing in things like transit infrastructure, in social housing ... in the kinds of things we know our society needs." Today, the federal government, like Canadians in general, is be-

ing squeezed by the unexpected interest rate run-up by the BoC in response to post-pandemic inflation.

The federal government has earmarked about \$8-billion a year for the National Housing Strategy, and is rolling out some useful initiatives on a timely basis. But housing affordability is a deeply rooted, complex problem and no one expects the huge shortage of homes to be adequately addressed quickly.

In the meantime, inflation appears to be settling down close to the BoC's preferred level, which could open the way for a gradual reduction in interest rates. Since the media, the federal opposition parties, much of the public, and Freeland herself seem OK with the idea that the federal government—as opposed to the provinces and cities—are responsible for the housing crunch, the sinking-in-the-polls Liberals might as well wait for a break in the form of declining mortgage pain rather than try to use Ottawa's spending power for a massive fix this time around.

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

Spavor's lawsuit raises questions that should have already been examined

One would think that mere curiosity would have led journalists to delve deeper into the two Canadians who were caught up in the middle of what was dubbed 'hostage diplomacy' between the Canadian government and the People's Republic of China.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—Ever since Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig—a.k.a. "the two Michaels"—were first detained by Chinese authorities on charges of espionage in December 2018, there has been a paucity of detailed analysis as to just exactly who these two gentlemen really are.

This remained the case throughout their 34-month detention, and even after their release in September 2021.

The official line was that they were definitely not spies as the Chinese alleged, and they were "arbitrarily" abducted.

The rationale for the two Michaels' arrest was considered to be retaliation for Canada's detention of Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou, daughter of the tech giant's founder, on a United States extradition request. The brief bios of these men

Continued on page 14

Opinion

Continuing the momentum in strengthening international education in Canada

We must look to the future and envision a comprehensive, best-in-class verification system that eliminates any doubts surrounding verified documentation.

Meti Basiri

Opinion



The upcoming changes to Canada's International Student Program from Immi-

gration Minister Marc Miller and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) marks a pivotal moment in the ongoing modernization of international education and student mobility in our country. The significance of this recent announcement cannot be overstated, as it addresses a critical vulnerability within our international student sector: the verification of letters of acceptance (LOAs). This needs to be just the start.

For years, LOAs have played a vital role in the student application process, serving as the bridge between prospective students, institutions, and the Canadian government. However, their susceptibility to fraud has posed a substantial risk to the integrity of Canada's international education sector. We saw this need coming years ago after speaking with sector stakeholders. In response, we developed ApplyProof, a

sector-leading technology that provides secure verification of important documents including LOAs, English proficiency results and proof of funds (GICs).

We hear regularly from students and partner institutions alike. They want trust in the system. They want efficiency. And, these two things do not have to be mutually exclusive.

This recent news from the IRCC, while welcome, cannot be the end of digital transformation within the sector. It is vital to acknowledge that Canada has room to catch up with its global peers in co-ordinating stakeholders and implementing the technology required.

The United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, for instance, have made strides in managing challenges within their international student visa processes. Each country has their own pros and cons, but now is

a time that Canada can take a strong leap forward. LOAs are a start, but we must recognize that there are other documents in the application process that require similar scrutiny and trust. These documents, including proof of English proficiency and financial records, are integral to the assessment of students' qualifications.

Unfortunately, the global education landscape has already witnessed scandals related to fraudulent applications in other countries, such as manipulated English-language proficiency test results, tuition deposit receipts, and other documents. Such incidents create confusion, mistrust, and uncertainty for all parties involved: students, institutions, and government authorities.

Now is the time to move beyond stopgap solutions and short-term fixes. We must look to

the future and envision a comprehensive, best-in-class verification system that eliminates any doubts surrounding verified documentation. The technology and solutions to achieve this are readily available, currently being used worldwide across various sectors and stakeholders. What we need now is co-ordinated collaboration to drive this transformation forward.

The government's initiative to enhance LOA verification came in response to recent incidents involving fraudulent admissions letters. To safeguard students, institutions, and the integrity of Canada's international education sector, we must look two, three, four steps ahead, and not wait for the next incident to take the next crucial step.

Canada is on the right path, and these efforts are commendable. However, we must keep the momentum going, pushing boundaries and setting new standards for international education verification. Let us seize this opportunity to lead the way in building a future where trust, transparency, and integrity are the cornerstones of our international education system.

Meti Basiri is the co-founder and CEO of ApplyBoard, the world's leading international student recruitment platform.

The Hill Times

Questions count when it comes to finding out how Canadians feel about pharmacare

If we want politicians to know what's important, we need to make sure that they hear answers to questions that get at the heart of the pharmacare issue.

Joel Lexchin

Opinion



If we really want to find out how important pharmacare is to Canadians and what kind of a program they want, then we need to ask the right questions.

A Pollara survey released at the end of September makes it seem that people want a fill-in-the-gaps approach.

According to the survey, 71 per cent said that they were very or mostly satisfied with their current level of coverage. The plurality (45

per cent) preferred a new national prescription drug coverage program for Canadians who are not currently covered through some other program, versus 27 per cent who wanted a new national program that would cover all Canadians and replace all existing government and private insurance plans.

But perhaps the responses Pollara received don't tell the whole story. For example, Pollara asked people if they were "satisfied or dissatisfied with the ... plan you currently have." But what aspect of their plan were people satisfied with: the level of deductibles and copays, the range of drugs being covered, or the amount of paperwork involved?

Forty-five per cent opted for a "fill-in-the-gaps" model, but the question didn't explain what kind of coverage or what the out-of-pocket payment would be for the people who were in the "gaps."

Here is another set of questions, and the background as to why they are important that might give us a better idea of how Canadians really feel about pharmacare.

1. Do you favour a government drug plan with either no or minimal copays and deductibles, or

one with copays and deductibles that are set by the private sector?

Research has shown that even minimal copays can deter people from seeking health care. Back in the mid-1960s, the Liberal government in Saskatchewan put in place a copay of \$1.50 for office visits. The result was a 14 per cent decrease in the use of general practitioner services by the poor. Sixty-five per cent of Canadians have private plans that determine their copays and deductibles, and fewer than 40 per cent of private plans cover the full cost of prescription drugs, leaving people in the other 60 per cent to pay variable amounts out of pocket.

2. How important is it to you that a pharmacare plan reduces the overall amount spent on prescription drugs in Canada, even if it means that governments pay more than they currently do?

In October, the Parliamentary Budget Office released a report that said that by 2027-28, a universal national plan would cost the federal and provincial governments an additional \$13.4-billion on top of what they already pay for drug coverage. But at the same time, it would trim \$2.2-billion off Canada's total drug bill.

3. Are you in favour of a drug plan that would have the potential to improve the way that doctors prescribe and the way that patients use prescription drugs, even if it means that government spending on prescription drugs goes up?

The more governments are spending on providing drug coverage, the more incentivized they are going to be to ensure that the money is well spent. Across Europe, where there is universal drug coverage, there are multiple initiatives to enhance prescribing efficiency in ambulatory care.

4. Are you in favour of a pharmacare plan that covers all drugs that are approved for marketing in Canada, or one that only covers drugs that are chosen by experts and patients on the basis of unbiased evidence?

Only about 38-39 per cent of new drugs provide a moderate to major therapeutic advance over existing drugs, meaning that well over half of new drugs offer, at best, only a minor improvement. Eighty-five per cent of private plans cover all prescription drugs, including the 60 per cent that don't do much to improve health.

5. Are you in favour of different drug plans for different groups of people based on their age, employment, or where they live, or a plan where everyone is covered equally, i.e., pays the same amount and has access to the same drugs?

A 66-year-old woman taking three psychiatric drugs and with an annual income just above \$55,000 pays \$350 every three months for her prescriptions if she lives in Manitoba, but if she lives in Ontario, it's less than \$20.

If we want politicians to know what's important to us when it comes to pharmacare, we need to make sure that they hear answers to questions that get at the heart of the issue.

Joel Lexchin received his MD from the University of Toronto in 1977. He is a professor emeritus in the School of Health Policy and Management at York University, and is a member of the board of Canadian Doctors for Medicare. He is a fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and is among the top two per cent of the world's most highly cited researchers.

The Hill Times

Bill C-27 lacking transparency for private-sector, AI privacy intrusions

The legislative scheme appears to be more about legally permitting continued and expanded AI use with little interest in privacy protection for individuals, and without reference to any internationally recognized standards.

Ken Rubin

Opinion



As it stands, Bill C-27 is data-driven, putting business interests and secrecy first, writes Ken Rubin. *Unsplash photograph by Matthew Henry*

nies could use a lot of personal data without the need for prior consent. That, along with the proposed regulation of personal data collection and use, is far too lax.

Looking at Bill C-27 from a transparency perspective, there are too many exclusions, and throughout its terms, far too much secrecy.

Yet, C-27's preamble claims its proposed basis and regulatory framework is sufficient, and ensures transparency and accountability.

If anything, the terms set out in the bill downplay what needs to be disclosed, and do not live up to the preamble or the claim that all will be set out in plain language.

Part 1 of Bill C-27, setting out how businesses use private data, offers weak protection with no enacted right-to-know requirement for:

- Detailing what personal data each business collects;

- Logging what disclosures/sharing each business makes of personal information, including those that are trans-border transactions;

- Full access to business operational privacy management plans;
- Full access to deidentification and anonymization of personal information that Bill C-27 relies on;

- Full access to new purposes proposed where businesses can use personal data;

- Prior knowledge of what personal data may be approved by governments for social beneficial use;

- Full prior access to what governments are using personal data collected by businesses claimed as legitimate interests;

- Full access to knowing about compilations profiling personal data;

- Full access to consent-needed instructions, notifications to be issued, consent agreements used,

consent-agreement breaches, and any consent withdrawals;

- Full access to audits and risk assessments, and to studies of areas of risk harm and abuse;

- Disclosure of proof of extra protection for children; and

- Fuller disclosure of fraud investigations.

Individual consumer access to their private sector files is limited, as is the individual right to appeal. Knowing that personal data is accurate, not breached, not misused, or false is important, but not guaranteed. The exceptions to consent and to knowing how personal data is collected and used permits widespread secrecy. Whistle-blowers wanting to expose problems are offered little protection.

Part 2 of Bill C-27 reputedly adds a needed enforcement layer through a personal information and data protection tribunal. But a tribunal simply delays appeal outcomes, and takes away from the binding-order powers a privacy commissioner needs. There is no promise that the proposed tribunal will operate out in the open most of the time. Having review outcomes delayed or partly hidden is the worst possible road to ensure timely transparency.

Part 3 of Bill C-27 that outlines an artificial intelligence data setup is very opaque and most damaging to any aspirations for a transparent and accountable AI system for privacy protection.

It is vague, without a full listing of algorithms and AI tools

or their uses. Whole classes of AI listing, such as those used by intelligence agencies, can be excluded.

The secrecy around selection and use of high-impact AI and what is internally prioritized under Part 3 is the most suspect. The determination of lesser- or higher-impact AI uses is hidden, and what uses an AI's output would have still remain largely done behind closed doors. And illegal uses of AI may never be known.

Also proposed is a weak internal officer—a government AI and data commissioner—whose review and sanctioning of compliance agreements would largely to be carried out away from public scrutiny.

The legislative scheme appears to be more about legally permitting continued and expanded AI use with little interest in privacy protection for individuals, and without reference to any internationally recognized standards.

As it stands, Bill C-27 is data-driven, putting business interests and secrecy first.

It creates exceptions where business and government collaborate away from public scrutiny. It is full of intrusive practices that do not protect individual privacy, and that are unaccountable and regressive. It throws the use of AI tools into the mix without much thought or disclosure requirements.

While personal data requires even more protection in a digital age, Bill C-27 does not afford the level of public scrutiny needed or offer any real public interest and transparency-driven regulation of the private sector's collection and use of personal data.

Ken Rubin writes on transparency matters. He is reachable via kenrubin.ca.

The Hill Times

Trudeau government keeps violating self-imposed fiscal rules

There are few signs the Liberals will transform into responsible stewards of public finances and take meaningful steps to control debt and debt interest costs.

Jake Fuss & Grady Munro

Opinion



After the Nov. 21 tabling of the Trudeau government's fall fiscal update, which includes evermore spending and borrow-

ing, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland called it a "responsible fiscal plan." However, upon closer scrutiny, the finance minister has once again abandoned her self-imposed fiscal rules and continues to spend, borrow, and tax at unsustainable levels.

Fiscal rules, also known as fiscal anchors, help guide policy on government spending, taxes, and borrowing. They're supposed to prevent a deterioration in the health of government finances with an eye on ensuring debt is sustainable for future generations.

After taking office in 2015, the Trudeau government announced its fiscal anchor: balancing the budget by fiscal year 2019-20. When the government quickly realized it would not achieve this goal, it dropped a new fiscal anchor: reduce Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio, a common measure of a country's ability to pay back its debt. However, the 2019 fall fiscal

update revealed the government had violated its new fiscal anchor before the pandemic, as debt-to-GDP ticked up slightly from 30.8 to 31 per cent. In other words, federal debt grew slightly faster than the Canadian economy.

Then the government spent and borrowed hundreds of billions of dollars during COVID-19, driving debt-to-GDP up to 47.2 per cent in 2020-21. Afterwards, as the economy rebounded, the ratio levelled off and stabilized at around 42 per cent in 2022-23.

On Nov. 21, Freeland indicated the government will violate its own fiscal anchor at least two more times: debt-to-GDP will increase to 42.4 per cent in 2023-24 then climb higher in 2024-25. Again, federal debt is growing faster than the Canadian economy.

By continually violating their own fiscal anchor, Freeland and the Trudeau government have rendered the rule meaningless

and abandoned the discipline it's meant to impose. There's little direction for federal finances and almost nothing to ensure the government is disciplined with spending and debt growth. In such a scenario, politics—rather than responsible fiscal principles—governs decisions over the public purse.

So, what are the consequences to this wholly undisciplined approach to fiscal policy?

All else equal, a rising debt-to-GDP ratio means that debt interest costs will rise relative to the size of the economy. Spending on rising debt interest costs will divert money away from government programs and/or crowd out any fiscal room for tax relief for Canadian families.

And debt interest costs are rising rapidly. The federal government spent \$20.4-billion on debt interest in 2020-21 when interest rates were at historic lows. This year, interest costs will reach a

projected \$46.5-billion, more than double what they were only three years ago, and will hit a projected \$60.7-billion by 2028-29—double what the government plans to spend on employment insurance benefits that year.

Finally, according to the latest fiscal update, debt-to-GDP will begin to decline after 2024-25, but this should be taken with a huge grain of salt since this government has consistently increased spending and debt beyond its original projections. And there's nothing preventing the government from scrapping these commitments like they have with all their other fiscal anchors. Given the government's clear preference for spending financed by borrowing, our debt-to-GDP ratio will likely continue to grow.

Unfortunately, there are few signs the Trudeau government will transform into a responsible steward of public finances and take meaningful steps to control debt and debt interest costs. And of course, Canadian taxpayers will pay the price.

Jake Fuss is director of fiscal studies at the Fraser Institute. Grady Munro is a junior policy analyst at the Fraser Institute. *The Hill Times*

Opinion

Advancing Canada-Japan co-operation for a free and open Indo-Pacific

I sincerely hope that further Canadian engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and the deepening of Canada-Japan co-operation will contribute to the betterment of the region and beyond.

Kanji Yamanouchi

Opinion



Japanese Ambassador to Canada Kanji Yamanouchi, left, greets Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay at a reception marking the 95th anniversary of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations in Ottawa on Sept. 19. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

much coverage in the media, the Indo-Pacific region is crucial for global stability and prosperity in the medium to long term. In this context, as the Ambassador of Japan to Canada, I deeply value and sincerely respect Canada's contributions to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. I also take pride in the progress of Canada-Japan co-operation based on the "Canada-Japan Action Plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific" announced on Oct. 22.

On this occasion, I would like to share my insights on several significant matters.

Firstly, Canada's military assets deployed in the Indo-Pacific region include three frigates—HMCS Montreal, Ottawa, and

Vancouver—the naval replenishment unit MV Asterix, and the patrol aircraft CP-140 Aurora. In fact, in terms of the deployment of maritime and aerial assets to the region, especially around Japan, Canada occasionally ranks second only after the United States, depending on the timing. Joint surveillance of North Korea's illicit activities and joint exercises between Canada and Japan—along with the United States—have seen a substantial increase. These collaborative activities extend from the Indian Ocean to Australia in the south, Hawaii in the east, and Victoria, B.C., in the north, with the Japanese Self-Defense Forces participating as observers in

the Canadian Armed Forces' Operation Nanook in the Arctic. Co-operation in the field of cybersecurity is also steadily advancing. These activities are playing crucial roles in upholding and strengthening the international order based on the rule of law, and deterring unilateral changes to the status quo by force.

Furthermore, Japan and Canada are actively negotiating the Canada-Japan General Security of Information Agreement. The devil is in the details, but swift progress is expected because once ratified, the agreement will contribute significantly to deepening security co-operation between the two countries.

In the realm of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Canada and Japan share common goals with a close relationship. Amidst the divergence of positions within the United Nations, Canada has constantly joined Japan in co-sponsoring the "Resolution on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons," garnering international attention. Both countries are also co-ordinating their efforts on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. During the G7 Hiroshima Summit this past May, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the only leader to visit the Peace Memorial Museum twice, earned deep respect from the Japanese people for his strong compassion to the victims and commitment to nuclear non-proliferation.

The progress of Canada-Japan co-operation is also evident in the economic sphere. Just a few weeks ago, Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade, and Economic Development Mary Ng used the G7 trade ministers' meeting to lead a 250 member-strong Team Canada delegation consisting of representatives from 160 Canadian companies,

on visits to Osaka and Tokyo. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Lawrence MacAulay, along with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canada Business Council, also visited Japan around the same time, marking the largest business delegation to date. Ministers Ng and MacAulay's discussions with Japanese counterparts were fruitful concerning the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, trade and investment, and economic security. Business representatives energetically engaged with leading Japanese companies and economic organizations. Now it is essential that these meetings and exchanges will lead to specific business projects.

Canada's importance cannot be overstated given the prospects of a net-zero economy by 2050 and the challenging geopolitical realities. The diverse energy, environment, agriculture, high-tech, and critical minerals sectors demonstrate Canada's significant potential and possibilities to all observers. Addressing challenges such as infrastructure development, streamlining excessive regulations, understanding and support for Indigenous Peoples, and close co-ordination between federal and provincial governments, one can look forward to the expansion of trade and investment between Canada and Japan.

Finally, it has been a year since the Canadian government announced its historic Indo-Pacific Strategy. I sincerely hope that further Canadian engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and the deepening of Canada-Japan co-operation will contribute to the betterment of the region and beyond.

*Kanji Yamanouchi is the ambassador of Japan in Canada.
The Hill Times*

Comment

Spavor's lawsuit raises questions that should have already been examined

Continued from page 11

outlined that Kovrig was a former Global Affairs Canada diplomat, and that Spavor was a businessman living and working in China.

Although occasionally mentioned, Canadian media glossed over the part that Kovrig was a retired diplomat then and currently employed by the International Crisis Group, which was founded by billionaire George Soros. It was also scarcely mentioned that Spavor's primary trade client was the North Korean government.

One would think that mere curiosity would have led journalists to delve deeper into the two Canadians who were caught up in the middle of what was dubbed

"hostage diplomacy" between the Canadian government and the People's Republic of China.

However, it seemed at the time that the patriotic thing to do was to simply parrot the official line that the two Michaels were just two random dudes that were arbitrarily picked up by Chinese goons.

It seemed laughable to most Canadians that the two Michaels were alleged to be spies because, well, Canada just doesn't do that kind of thing.

Unfortunately, not everyone is buying into that party line, and it turns out that Michael Spavor is one of them.

On Nov. 18, *The Globe and Mail* reported that Spavor is now

seeking a multi-million-dollar settlement from the Canadian government. According to two unnamed sources, *The Globe* report alleges that Spavor was detained because he "unwittingly" provided intelligence on North Korea to Canada. Spavor's lawyer, John K. Phillips, alleges that his client was arrested by the Chinese because of information that he shared with Kovrig, which was then passed along to the Canadian government and shared with the intelligence agencies among the Five Eyes partnership (the U.S., the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand).

The sharing of the information was done allegedly without Spavor's knowledge or consent.

Of course Global Affairs Canada was quick to deny the allegations, and to repeatedly reiterate the "arbitrary" nature of the two Michaels' arrest and detention.

Coming to Kovrig's defence, Canada's former ambassador to China, Guy Saint-Jacques, told the *National Post* that what the former diplomat had done in China was perfectly above board. According to Saint-Jacques, it was Spavor, not Kovrig, who would have been under intense scrutiny because of his close ties with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un.

Spavor ran a cross-cultural tour company out of the Chinese border town of Dandong. He arranged business, academic, sporting, and

tourist outings into North Korea—including the controversial visit of NBA star Dennis Rodman.

Spavor was a frequent guest aboard Kim's yacht, and the two were known to enjoy jet-skiing together.

No one can deny that the two Michaels' detention was linked to that of Meng—they were released on the same day as a negotiated swap. But these newly released details make their arrest seem less "arbitrary."

Like the classic line from the movie *Casablanca* wherein the French police chief orders the "usual suspects" to be rounded up, in this instance, Kovrig and Spavor fell into that category.

Spavor claims Kovrig was a spy, and Spavor's CV as personal importer to a ruthless dictator would certainly put him on the close watch of Canadian authorities, let alone Chinese.

All very untypically Canadian. *Scott Taylor is the editor and publisher of Esprit de Corps magazine.*

The Hill Times

The Hill Times Policy Briefing | November 29, 2023

AEROSPACE



Does the aerospace industry need a government-led northern star?

Aerospace Policy Briefing

National aerospace strategy needed to ‘tie it all together’ as industry rebounds from pandemic losses, say sector experts

An aerospace industry report released over the summer shows an increase in revenues and jobs, but declining spending on innovation.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Recovery for Canada’s aerospace industry is underway following challenging years during the COVID-19 pandemic, but industry experts say they want to see a comprehensive national aerospace strategy from Ottawa to keep that momentum going.

“We haven’t gotten back to where we were in 2019. We’re trending in the right direction, but in our sector in particular, innovation, research, and development is absolutely key to the long-term growth and trajectory,” said Mike Mueller, the president and CEO of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada (AIAC). “We have really long lead times, and we really need in place that aerospace strategy to leverage all the different things that are happening.”

Mueller told *The Hill Times* he feels encouraged by some recent federal government announcements related to the aerospace industry, but a national aerospace strategy, which could co-ordinate actions from different government departments, is needed to “tie it all together.”



Mike Mueller, the president and CEO of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, says that ‘we really need to reverse that trend’ of declining innovation spending in the aerospace industry. Photograph courtesy of Mike Mueller



Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne announced a \$350-million investment towards an Initiative for Sustainable Aviation Technology on June 19, which he said would help ‘drive and accelerate the green industrial transformation of Canada’s aerospace industry.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The *State of Canada’s Aerospace Industry Report*, released on June 12, indicated that Canada’s aerospace industry is recovering from the pandemic, with an increase in revenues, jobs, and GDP in 2022 for the first time since 2019. However, the report also showed a trend of declining spending on innovation, which Mueller argued puts Canada’s aerospace industry at a disadvantage in terms of international competitiveness. Aerospace industry total research and development (R&D) expenditures in 2020 were \$925-million, but that total dropped to \$780-million in 2021, and dropped again to \$683-million in 2022.

“We really need to reverse that trend,” said Mueller. “Innovation drives commercialization. The more that you’re innovating, the more you’re on the cutting edge of technology that’s coming next year [and] really being a part of the industry in different supply chains.”

Despite the declining spending, the aerospace industry continued to rank first in R&D investments in Canada, with an R&D intensity 2.3 times higher than the manufacturing average, the report showed.

To support innovation in the aerospace industry, Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) announced a \$350-million investment towards an Initiative for Sustainable Aviation Technology (INSAT) on June 19. The INSAT is intended to provide funding to aviation technology R&D projects focusing on hybrid and alternative propulsion, aircraft architecture and systems integration, the transition to alter-

native fuels, and aircraft support infrastructure and operations.

“Our government is committed to making Canada a leader and a strategic partner of choice when it comes to sustainable aviation. Today’s \$350-million investment to support the Initiative for Sustainable Aviation Technology will help drive and accelerate the green industrial transformation of Canada’s aerospace industry, generating high-value jobs while strengthening supply chains and supporting the transition to a net-zero economy,” said Champagne in an Innovation Canada press release.

Mueller said there are huge opportunities for the aerospace

industry to contribute to economic recovery across Canada, but it requires “constant attention from the government.” In 2022, the aerospace industry contributed close to \$27-billion to GDP, and more than 212,000 jobs.

In a strategy, “you’d have government departments working in tandem to support the industry, instead of right now [where] what we have is a sort of transactional approach and not a co-ordinated approach across government,” said Mueller. “You can’t do policy in isolation. You need to ensure that there’s a holistic strategy in place, in particular for the aerospace industry, so, as government is pulling differ-

ent levers, we’re all going in the same direction.”

Mueller said that a national aerospace strategy could re-examine a luxury tax imposed by the federal government which, he argued, is hurting the industry. The Liberal government introduced a Select Luxury Items Tax on the sale and import of certain vehicles and aircraft valued above \$100,000, and certain vessels valued above \$250,000, which came into effect on Sept. 1, 2022.

A report on the potential economic impact of the Luxury Tax, prepared by Jacques Roy, a professor in the department of logistics and operations management at HEC Montréal, was released in November 2022. The report predicted the tax would result in the loss of at least 2,000 jobs representing \$149-million in lost salaries contributing to \$29.9-million yearly in income tax revenues for the federal government.

John Braniff, AIAC senior manager of communications and social media, said in an email to *The Hill Times* that an updated economic impact report for the Luxury Tax is anticipated to be completed in the coming weeks.


Jeff Defoe, an associate professor of mechanical, automotive, and materials engineering at the University of Windsor, told *The Hill Times* that it remains to be seen whether the downward trend in aerospace R&D expenditures will continue, adding that it is “a little early to draw any alarmist conclusions.”

Spending on R&D may have dropped during the pandemic, but

Continued on page 18



Industry stakeholders say a potential aerospace strategy could re-examine a luxury tax imposed by the federal government last year on the sale and import of certain vehicles and aircraft valued above \$100,000. Photograph courtesy of Pexels



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Aerospace Policy Briefing

National aerospace strategy needed to ‘tie it all together’ as industry rebounds from pandemic losses, say sector experts

Continued from page 16

that trend could start to reverse as the pandemic subsidies, according to Defoe.

“R&D is a long-term investment, and when you have uncertain revenue you want to de-risk your investments. I think that a big part of that reduction is likely related to impacts of the pandemic,” he said. “Obviously, I don’t have a crystal ball, but I would imagine that when we see the 2023 numbers they will probably be higher than the 2022 numbers. I’d be very surprised if they’re not.”

In regard to the long-term viability of the aerospace industry, Defoe argued that a national strategy is “desperately needed.” He said that countries like the United States may not need an aerospace strategy because of the guaranteed revenue stream towards the industry by the country’s large military, but that aerospace strategies are integral in other, smaller countries.

Defoe said the INSAT is not an aerospace strategy by itself, but that financial support from the government could support a strategy.

“I think that money will probably would be best utilized if there was a clear strategy on what are



University of Windsor professor Jeff Defoe says a big part of the reduction in R&D expenditures in the aerospace industry in recent years is likely ‘related to the impacts of the pandemic,’ and it is ‘a little early to draw any alarmist conclusions.’

Photograph by Jason Jolicœur



Lana Payne, the national president for Unifor, says ‘the biggest challenge facing the [aerospace] sector is the lack of a comprehensive industrial plan that gives aerospace manufacturing in Canada a lot more altitude.’
The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

our priorities, and ... we need to make sure that we are retaining and training talent, whether that is at the engineering level, at the business level, at the manufacturing and skilled trades level—all those things are critical,” he said. “We can have the nicest team of engineers, but if we don’t have people with the specialized skilled trades backgrounds to manufacture things, then we’re not doing as much added-value as we would like to be doing.”

Despite some recent growth in the aerospace industry, economic recovery is happening “far too slowly and remains uncertain,” said Lana Payne, the national president for Unifor, in an emailed statement to *The Hill Times* on Nov. 24.

Payne described the aerospace industry as among a handful of industries that still have not recovered what was lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. As an example, she said the aerospace industry’s contribution to Canada’s GDP is currently about 20 per cent lower than what it was in 2019, and the aerospace industry workforce is 13 per cent smaller than it was 2019.

The aerospace manufacturing sector employed more than 50,000 people in 2019 before dropping to fewer than 45,000 in 2021, according to Unifor data.

“The biggest challenge facing the [aerospace] sector is the lack

of a comprehensive industrial plan that gives aerospace manufacturing in Canada a lot more altitude. Our union has proposed a wide range of initiatives that unlock more government funding, strengthen federal procurement policies to buy Canadian aerospace equipment, and dedicate more resources for training and retaining workers to give Canada’s aerospace industry the course correction it sorely needs,” she said.

Unifor represents more than 11,000 aerospace workers across Canada. On its website, the organization argued a national aerospace industrial strategy is needed to help address priorities including workforce development; expanding available funding to help the air transport sector transition to greener travel; and maximizing the capabilities of Canadian aerospace companies in filling orders for government, military, and emergency response aircraft.

Payne said funding projects like INSAT are important, but only part of the solution.

“Government and industry need to be investing heavily in research and development now and for the long term. There is always an important role for governments to play in supporting research and development funding for industry that helps meet policy objectives,” she said in the email. “The government must

help create the space for manufacturers to invest in research and development. That means building up the sector’s industrial manufacturing and maintenance capacity. It also means expanding the footprint by attracting new investments so that Canada has a strong and resilient domestic commercial and defence supply chain. That’s why an industrial policy is so important.”

Any national aerospace strategy would need to be crafted through collaboration by all stakeholders including workers, industry representatives, post-secondary institutions, and all levels of government, according to Payne. The strategy must also provide details for a comprehensive program of government investments, coupled with strong “buy Canadian” policies through government procurement, she said.

“One important element in any industrial strategy must be supporting the recruitment and retention of a well-trained and dedicated workforce. That means ensuring these are good jobs with fair compensation in an industry that doesn’t degrade working conditions or rely on the practice of contracting-out work, which is on the rise in aerospace workplaces. It also means ensuring that training and apprenticeship opportunities are made available to grow the workforce,” said Payne. “The aerospace industry

can’t recover or grow unless we make it a good place to work with long-term stable employment that’s worthy of the incredible skillset required in these kinds of advanced manufacturing jobs.”

jcnockaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Canadian aerospace industry stats

- Between 2021 and 2022, Canadian aerospace manufacturing revenues increased, marking the start of the sector’s pandemic recovery. According to international independent subject-matter experts, global civil aerospace revenues are forecast to return to pre-pandemic levels by 2024.
- In 2022, the Canadian aerospace industry contributed close to \$27-billion to the GDP, and more than 212,000 jobs to the Canadian economy. This was an increased contribution to Canada’s economy of \$1.8-billion to GDP and 14,400 jobs between 2021 and 2022.
- Aerospace industry total R&D expenditures have shown a downward trend, with the aerospace industry investing almost \$1.2-billion in R&D in 2019, down to \$925-million in 2020, \$780-million in 2021, and \$683-million in 2022.
- Despite declining R&D expenditures, the Canadian aerospace industry maintained its top R&D ranking among all Canadian manufacturing industries in 2022. Aerospace industry investments in R&D in 2022 represented an intensity about 2.3 times higher than the manufacturing average.
- In 2022, the Canadian aerospace manufacturing industry exported close to \$18.7-billion, and actively participated in global supply chains. More than 80 per cent of aerospace manufacturing revenues were export oriented in 2022, of which close to 60 per cent were supply-chain related.

—Source: State of Canada’s Aerospace Industry Report, released by Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada in partnership with the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada on June 12, 2023.

Initiative for Sustainable Aviation Technology (INSAT) info

- On June 19, Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne announced a \$350-million investment, under the Strategic Innovation Fund, to support INSAT. INSAT is intended to co-ordinate and accelerate the development of sustainable aviation technologies in Canada.
- INSAT projects will focus on four key technology areas: hybrid and alternative propulsion; aircraft architecture and systems integration; transition to alternative fuels; and aircraft support infrastructure and operations.
- Pratt & Whitney Canada was the lead applicant for the project, with five industry partners: Bell Textron Canada, Bombardier, CAE, De Havilland Aircraft Canada, and Certification Center Canada. Representatives from these companies will serve on INSAT’s interim board of directors until the election of a permanent board of directors.
- All projects supported by INSAT must be collaborative and include at least one small or medium-sized enterprises to ensure involvement across the supply chain.

—Source: *insat.aero*

An aerospace strategy for Canada is key to unlocking our full potential



Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne's June announcement of the \$350-million investment for the Initiative for Sustainable Aviation Technology was welcome, but a broader plan is needed, writes Mike Mueller. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Without a comprehensive strategy for the aerospace sector, we will continue to undermine Canada's progress and global competitiveness, and see our place in the global aerospace ecosystem continue to erode.

Mike Mueller

Opinion



Did you know Canada is one of the only countries in the world capable of manufacturing an aircraft from nose to tail, and certifying it?

This is a result of Canada's past political leaders deciding that our country should be a world leader in aerospace. The long-term vision held by our political leaders and senior government officials, coupled with deliberate public policy and sustained effort, helped facilitate global trade and commerce, secure our borders, and contributed significantly to economic stability and prosperity for all Canadians. We need more of that vision and long-term strategic thinking now.

Realizing Canada's full aerospace potential requires strategic planning, decisive action, and a real partnership between government and the industry. As we continue to rebound from the challenges of the pandemic, the well-being of our

workforce, our communities, and our nation's economy remains a top priority. By establishing a comprehensive and cohesive national aerospace strategy for Canada, co-designed with industry and government, and inclusive of a consistent regulatory framework for civil aviation, defence, and space-related endeavours, the government can help create a stable environment that is conducive to growth and leads to effective policy implementation across the sector.

An industrial aerospace strategy for Canada would also further enable our country to play a leading role in the transition to more sustainable aerospace practices. This global shift towards sustainability and environmental consciousness demands that Canada invests in and embraces green aerospace technology, including lower-carbon, sustainable aviation fuels. The aerospace industry in Canada is committed to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, but industry cannot take this journey alone. We need leadership from the government to ensure our collective goals are met, and other countries are not leaving Canada behind. Although the signals for upcoming measures in the latest economic statement are appreciated, a specific aerospace strategy is required to ensure we meet our collective goals.

We welcomed the announcement earlier this year by Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne of the investment of \$350-million under the Strategic Innovation Fund to the Initiative for Sustainable Aviation Technology to establish an industry-led, collaborative, pan-Canadian innovation network. This investment is a significant step for Canada's aerospace sector as it works towards building disruptive sustainable aviation technologies and advancing its net-zero objective.

Further research and development (R&D) initiatives will be key to unlocking Canada's full potential, as companies continue to engage in cutting-edge projects

that push the boundaries of aerospace technology. Enhanced funding for space exploration missions, satellite technology development, and space-based research can further stimulate economic growth within the sector.

In addition to support for R&D and more sustainable practices, key government initiatives including the long-awaited defence policy update and ongoing work for procurement modernization offer promising avenues for bolstering the aerospace industry. Yet, there is still a great deal of work to be done to reinforce the urgent need in Canada for an industrial aerospace strategy.

A comprehensive, industrial aerospace strategy for Canada, coupled with clear government initiatives, is the key to sustained growth. In the absence of a clear, consistent, and comprehensive strategy for the aerospace sector, we will continue to undermine Canada's progress and global competitiveness, and see our place in the global aerospace ecosystem continue to erode.

The Select Items Luxury Tax, for example, has the potential for significant and lasting negative impacts on Canada, with more than 3,800 jobs currently at risk and 19 aircraft orders already cancelled, resulting in more than \$1.5-billion in lost revenue as well as implications for our international reputation for economic predictability and fair treatment. This tax is counterproductive to the success and stability of Canada's aerospace, which is why unions like the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers are joining forces with industry to support and amplify the call for its repeal.

Providing employment to more than 212,000 Canadians, our aerospace indus-

try stands as a source of pride and economic opportunity for Canada. In 2022, more than 80 per cent of aerospace manufacturing revenues came from exports, underscoring Canada's role as a supplier of choice for essential aerospace products and services worldwide. Also in 2022, the sector contributed \$27-billion to the Canadian economy, a significant increase from the year before.

During COVID-19, the Canadian aerospace industry faced unprecedented challenges with a significant decline in air travel leading to a sharp decrease in demand for new civil aircraft and services brought on by the pandemic. Despite these challenges, Canada's aerospace sector has demonstrated its ability to navigate the turbulence of the pandemic, not only showing signs of economic recovery, but also significant potential for growth as we emerge from the crisis. We require government to partner with our aerospace industry to advance an aerospace strategy in order for Canada to reclaim its past position and contribute to the economic recovery needed across the country.

It is estimated that in the next decade, the world will require around 40,000 aircraft as well as countless numbers of unmanned aerial vehicles and other aerospace products. Our call to this Parliament and government is to set aside politics and work with us in a non-partisan way to capture our fair share of this work. Political leadership needs a vision for Canada's place in aerospace. The question now is: will this Parliament embrace a strategy for the future?

Mike Mueller is the president and CEO of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada.

The Hill Times



Aerospace Industries Association of Canada
L'Association des industries aérospatiales du Canada

THE VOICE OF AEROSPACE IN CANADA

For Canada's aerospace industry to remain a global competitor, we need an aerospace strategy.



Aerospace Policy Briefing

Canadian aerospace and the supply chain challenge: a structural problem, or just a passing phase?

To make better decisions, the government should step in and enable an environment that permits the exchange of data to extend both supply-chain visibility as well as supply-chain resilience.

John Gradek

Opinion



If we are to believe that the Canadian workforce has changed its expectations of work—a shorter workweek, a remote operating environment, a rebalanced work-life model—it is undeniable that the measures of productivity and efficiency used by industry pre-COVID-19 must be recalibrated to reflect the post-COVID mindset. Alongside this recalibration of workforce metric, supply chain redesign is the new business imperative. This redesign must address the traditional supply chain activities of supplier selection, logistics practices, distribution methods, and inventory management, but now also needs to address risk management, ethics, sustainability, visibility, resilience, and data protection. How ready is the Canadian aerospace sector to deal with this expanded scope of supply chain issues?

The Canadian aerospace domain is incurring severe—and

some say extreme—duress in its abilities to deliver to market expectations. Supply chain disruptions are being touted as the villains by many industry partners, from component suppliers, to airframe builders, to aircraft operators, to aviation support organizations. The level of disruption has been attributed by many to have its genesis in the COVID-19 pandemic, and the innumerable incidents of supply chain incidents involving workforce availability, transportation pauses, and facilitation complexities, among others. Were these disruptions temporary as the world dealt with the pandemic, or are we witnessing a fundamental change in the way work is being performed?

The aerospace supply chain has had its fair share of disruption prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interruptions in compo-

nent supplies were prevalent due to shortages of primary materials, retirements of experienced baby boom-era fabricators, and surging aerospace orders from commercial aviation and defence sources. Post-COVID phenomena such as surges in passenger demand have seen airlines order commercial aircraft that have a projected delivery into the next decade, putting pressure on the airframe manufacturers to increase their production rates, even as they struggle to achieve their traditional production levels.

The challenges facing Canadian aerospace's supply chain are shared by other industrial domains, including automotive, pharmaceutical, and others with long, thin, resource-intensive supply networks. Many of these adjacent supply chains have taken steps to shorten their supply networks by either near- or re-shoring suppliers, increasing the use of technology-focused manufacturing aids, and the sharing and integration of data along the supply chain to improve visibility, reducing stockouts and lowering inventory.

It is this last element of data sharing that would need government support. Today's corporations are loath to share data on their operations and forecasts, data that would be considered as proprietary and of significant competitive rivalry. The world, and certain industrial domains, have embarked on several initiatives

to create data-exchange regimes where supply networks have been constructed with greater visibility of production rates, logistics, and sales forecasts among the length of the network. This repository of data allows the members of the network to better plan their resources, their facilities, and their distribution practices, thereby lowering costs, improving delivery, and operating robust supply networks. The digital supply chain needs this data exchange, and Canadian aerospace must be an active participant to maintain its leading position.

Government needs to step into this by enabling an environment that permits the exchange of data in as neutral a manner as possible, and promote the development of effective and efficient decision-making based on trusted data. Canadian aerospace can most definitely move along this path of data sharing to extend both supply-chain visibility as well as supply-chain resilience as they move to address increasing demand for Canada's high-quality aerospace products. Government action to facilitate and promote the digital Canadian aerospace supply chain is going to be key to its prosperity and, potentially, survival.

John Gradek is a professional engineer and academic program co-ordinator of the Supply Networks programs at McGill's School of Continuing Studies in Montreal.

The Hill Times

Reducing aviation's CO₂ emissions challenging but not impossible

To facilitate the transition to green aviation, government support for industry needs to focus on aircraft and engine manufacturers.

David Zingg

Opinion



For aviation, the path to reduced climate change impact and eventually net-zero carbon dioxide emissions is clear. We must replace fossil fuels with net-zero energy sources, and improve aircraft energy efficiency.

The latter is essential given that future energy sources under consideration—such as sustainable aviation fuel and liquid hydrogen—introduce substantial challenges related to cost and availability. While the path to net

zero is clear, less so is how we will get there.

Responsibility for improving energy efficiency falls on aircraft and engine manufacturers, such as Bombardier and Pratt & Whitney Canada. It is generally acknowledged that a business-as-usual approach to efficiency improvement will be too slow, and therefore government support is needed. In the United States, major government-supported projects are underway involving next-generation aircraft configurations capable of providing a step change in energy efficiency. Bombardier's EcoJet has similar potential for improved energy efficiency, and government support is urgently needed to enable this new configuration to be brought to market in a timely manner.

To facilitate the transition to green aviation, government support for industry needs to focus on aircraft and engine manufacturers. While the recently announced Initiative for Sustainable Aviation Technology is an important step, it needs to be complemented by targeted support for Bombardier, which faces an enormous challenge to improve the energy efficiency of

its products to maintain its global competitiveness, comparable to the support recently received by Pratt & Whitney Canada. Such an investment would support a large number of excellent jobs and contribute to retention of highly qualified personnel in Canada, more so than, for example, investment in a foreign-owned battery production facility.

Aviation's effect on climate change is a global concern. Therefore, in contrast to the support for industry, government support for research at Canadian universities and the National Research Council's Aerospace Research Centre (NRC Aerospace) needs to be less focused on research with direct economic impact in Canada. Given the overall importance of reducing aviation's impact on climate change, Canadian researchers need to work on important precompetitive technologies that have the potential to reduce the climate impact of aviation, even if the technologies are eventually commercialized outside of Canada.

If such research is not adequately supported in Canada, we will be unable to attract and retain talented researchers who wish to help to solve society's

most pressing problems, inevitably leading to brain drain. If a Canadian researcher contributes to a cure for a disease, we do not ask whether the economic impact will be primarily felt in Canada. The same should be true of a Canadian researcher who makes an important contribution to reducing aviation's climate change impact.

The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council funds strategic research through targeted calls for proposals and supports research co-funded by industry through its Alliance program. Research that is neither the subject of a targeted call, nor sufficiently mature to be supported financially by industry is funded through the Discovery program. Unfortunately, grant applications to the Discovery program are increasingly being judged on their strategic importance to Canada and their relevance to Canadian industry. However, research that scores highly on these criteria can be adequately funded through the programs described above. Therefore, it is important that Discovery Grants be provided for high-quality impactful research independent of whether there is

immediate direct economic impact in Canada. As the majority of CO₂ emissions come from aircraft manufactured outside of Canada, a substantial amount of research on sustainable aviation falls into this category and, given the benefit that sustainable aviation will have for Canadians, needs to be better supported. Similarly, although an important part of the mandate of NRC Aerospace involves supporting Canadian aerospace companies, its budget should nevertheless enable NRC Aerospace also to address challenges in sustainable aviation to the benefit of Canadians, even if this does not directly benefit Canadian companies.

Investments in Canadian researchers should enable them to address pressing global problems, while investments in Canadian industry should be driven more by economic impact and should emphasize home-grown companies. In both cases, talent retention will be an important consequence of appropriate investments and will be a key driver of future prosperity.

David Zingg is a distinguished professor of computational aerodynamics and sustainable aviation at the University of Toronto Institute for Aerospace Studies, where he leads the Centre for Research in Sustainable Aviation. He held a Canada Research Chair in Computational Aerodynamics and Environmentally Friendly Aircraft Design from 2001-2015.

The Hill Times

Creating a sustainable workforce for Canada's aeronautics sector

Education that bridges academic disciplines will play a critical role in shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

Suzanne Kearns

Opinion



Canada's aviation sector is facing a critical shortage of talent across the workforce.

In 2018, the Canadian Council for Aviation and Aerospace projected that the industry would need more than 7,000 new pilots by 2025. Today, reports consistent-

ly confirm that the industry struggles to fill those pilot positions.

The same is true throughout the labour market, including manufacturing, operations, maintenance, and administration. Layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic, a wave of retirements, and competition for talent have created an urgent need for skilled workers. With demand on the rise, the strain has become severe across the sector.

In 2022, EY released a report on diversity, equity, and inclusion in Canadian aerospace. Out of 200,000 employees, it found that nearly 70 per cent were men and almost half were over the age of 45 and nearing retirement. The report warns of the risk that a lack of diversity presents to achieving a sustainable workforce and industry innovation.

For aeronautics to thrive in Canada and around the world, we must look beyond traditional models of education to build a diverse and highly skilled work-

force. Creating space for learners who don't often see themselves in aeronautics will expand the talent pool and fuel innovation that will advance the sector's economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Beyond the need for operational professionals, the aviation sector is grappling with new challenges associated with addressing climate change. In the fall of 2022, international aviation agencies synthesized behind the target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Achieving this goal will depend on maturing many practices and technologies that must move from the laboratory to the flight line in the coming decades.

Canada needs a new generation of highly qualified professionals who can deftly combine advanced skillsets from other disciplines, such as artificial intelligence, chemistry, and computer science, with aeronautical acumen and industry intelligence. To address this need, the Waterloo

Institute for Sustainable Aeronautics launched the Collaborative Aeronautics Program (CAP) in September 2022.

The CAP provides aeronautical training to master's and doctoral students enrolled in one of 19 existing graduate programs at the University of Waterloo. Students can apply their research to real-world challenges in partnership with industry mentors. When they graduate, they earn their degree from their home unit, enhanced with an aeronautics designation (for example, "doctor of philosophy in geography-aeronautics").

Within the CAP courses, a cohort of graduate students from multiple disciplines collaborate to tackle pressing aviation challenges. Students bring their expertise into the classroom—from kinesiology to advanced manufacturing to artificial intelligence—and can learn from academic leaders and industry professionals. Recognizing aeronautical sustainability challenges are complex and interdisciplinary, students can apply their academic skillsets to real-world issues within a consulting project. Last month, we proudly celebrated the first graduate of the CAP, and we hope the program will be a pipeline for many more alumni in the coming years.

The CAP offers unique opportunities for highly skilled students to shape a sustainable future for the aeronautics sector.

However, programs like this one require significant resources to launch, and many students require financial support to pursue graduate studies. By investing in collaborative education for these future leaders, and supporting equitable access through outreach programs, we can prepare the sector's next generation of problem-solvers to thrive amid rapid industry change.

Industry trailblazers across Canada have already begun this work by launching several sustainability initiatives within their organizations. Today and into the future, they need a new generation of talent to help them achieve their goals. Focused partnerships between academia, industry, and government will enable Canada to educate the agile and collaborative leaders who will continue to drive innovation in the aeronautics sector.

Our country already has the research prowess and emerging talent to propel the sector through this period of disruption. By strategically combining our strengths, we can accelerate social, environmental, and economic sustainability, and create a bold vision for the future for the millions of Canadians inspired by flight.

Dr. Suzanne Kearns is an associate professor of aviation at the University of Waterloo, and the founding director of the Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Aeronautics.

The Hill Times

Federal government can do more to help aviation industry get to 2050 target

Capital expenditure tax claims like SR&ED could make the difference between an advanced manufacturing facility in aviation being built in Canada or not.

Kimberley Van Vliet

Opinion



Canada's net-zero 2050 target is driving innovation in the aviation industry, but more federal government support—subsidies, tax breaks, and other incentives—is needed for the \$27-billion industry to meet this

ambitious goal. Reinstating the capital expenditures component of the Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) tax claim for advanced manufacturing would be a good place to start.

The aviation and aerospace industry is responsible for between two and four per cent of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, depending on differing calculations. While this is less than vehicle transportation or fossil fuel production, the aviation industry is a very visible industry. That's why our industry has been mobilized and focused on this issue since 2009, just before the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

Contrary to popular belief, the level of understanding and literacy in terms of environmental, social, governance (ESG) sustainability is far more advanced in the industry than one would expect. In fact, it is becoming mandatory.

The International Sustainability Standards Board has now published their S1 and S2

standards, and it is anticipated that Canada will adopt these very soon. Both the United States government and Securities Exchange Commission are working on their ESG disclosures as well. There is also the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive in Europe, which will take between one and three years to implement.

Essentially, ESG reporting in the aerospace and aviation industry will not be voluntary anymore.

The international aerospace and aviation industry, including in Canada, is committed to get to net zero by 2050. This means that all the aircraft manufacturers, engine manufacturers, airlines, airports, and navigation services have a roadmap, not the least of which is sustainable aviation fuel. The industry expects sustainability efforts will accelerate, and actually become an engine for growth as both customers and financiers demand progress on the ESG front.

But building capital manufacturing facilities is not cheap, and the SR&ED tax claim reinstate-

ment would spur innovation even further.

The federal government also has a more hands-on role to play in the aerospace and aviation industry through the Canadian military. While our Armed Forces are not eligible directly for SR&ED claims, Canadian suppliers and defence contractors are eligible.

The *Defence Energy and Environment Strategy 2020-2023* lays out four priority areas: energy efficiency, reduced climate change risks, sustainable property, and green procurement. The major initiative that affects the Royal Canadian Air Force is to create a sustainable aviation fuel supply chain in Canada. This is big work, the first step of which is to develop a supportive strategy for aviation fuels that helps Canada meet its 2050 net-zero goal.

There are significant considerations that make this goal more complex. Any sustainable aviation fuel must meet military standards and be affordable. Blends of sustainable fuels may be considered as well, as long as they again meet requirements, especially those of our allies in NATO.

As a first step, the military will modernize its fuel-tracking system to better track fuel use across its operations. The Air Force also supports Natural Resources Canada's "Sky's the Limit" challenge to see if a sustainable aviation fuel supply could be developed that uses existing fuel infra-

structure without any equipment modifications.

All of these goals need the assistance of contractors, and these contractors need more fulsome SR&ED tax claims.

The federal government has a significant role to play in helping the aerospace and aviation industry meet the 2050 targets. The announcement this summer of a \$350-million investment to support Canada's new Initiative for Sustainable Aviation Technology in Canada will help to support the green transformation of our industry.

Capital expenditure tax claims like SR&ED may sound boring to anyone but accountants, but they could make the difference between an advanced manufacturing facility in aviation being built in Canada or not. Since 2014, only capital expenditures for the acquisition of depreciable property are eligible for a SR&ED claim for advanced manufacturing, which cuts out claims for manufacturing facilities.

Reinstating what we once had just makes sense, especially in the race to 2050.

Kimberley Van Vliet is founder and CEO of WaVv and ConvergeX, as well as a member of the Canadian delegation to the NATO Industrial Advisory Group. She is also a Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference 2022 alumna.

The Hill Times

Aerospace Policy Briefing

The future is bright for aerospace in Canada, but it can be made brighter through increasing public awareness of this vital sector, and providing a sustained and consistent government support for promising aerospace technologies and training centres, writes Fidel Khouli. Photograph courtesy of Pixabay



Growth in aerospace requires tackling the big issues

Is Canada well poised to address emerging challenges like environmental sustainability, international competitors, and worker shortages?

Fidel Khouli

Opinion



Canada has a large aerospace sector that ranks in the top five globally in certain aviation subsegments such as civil aircraft, civil flight simulators, and aircraft engines. Its contributions to the space subsector are well known in the fields of space robotics, satellite systems, and earth observation and monitoring.

In 2022, the aerospace sector contributed \$27-billion in GDP and close to 212,000 aerospace-related jobs to the Canadian economy, with 80 per cent of

aerospace manufacturing revenues being export related. The increasingly important area of aerospace defence constitutes only 12 per cent of Canada's aerospace sector.

While the overall sector is experiencing a strong resurgence following the detrimental effects and disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.

According to the *State of Canada's Aerospace Industry Report*, the global civil aerospace revenues recovery index is projected to return to the pre-pandemic level in 2024, and then continue its upward trend to exceed that level in 2025. Historically, the revenues of the Canadian aerospace sector followed the global trend, if not outperforming it in certain years; therefore, aerospace is projected to continue to play a pivotal role in the growth of the Canadian economy in terms of GDP, employment, export, and national prestige.

Clearly, Canadians and successive Canadian governments—to a varying degree—recognize the importance of this sector to their economy, technological advancement, and international standing. However, sustaining the growth of this vital sector requires addressing and tackling emerging challenges such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, ensur-

ing environmental sustainability, competing with existing and emerging international competitors, and addressing the shortage of trained aerospace engineers and technicians. The questions are then: is Canada well poised to address these challenges, and how will they be tackled?

The bold and ambitious net-zero-by-2050 vision for aviation is complex and multifaceted, which explains the different approaches being explored by aircraft and engine manufacturers. The efficiency and emissions reductions using conventional fuel that can be wrung from the current jet engine are rapidly plateauing, and improvements have become small and incremental. The consensus among aircraft manufacturers and specialists is that for the foreseeable future, battery-electric power will remain confined to small and electric vertical-take-off-and-landing aircraft envisioned for use for short routes and modest cargo capacity.

It simply boils down to the physical chemistry of the aforementioned power source that dictates its energy density-to-weight ratio, which is still far below the one offered by current liquid petroleum. Even green hydrogen-electric—or direct hydrogen—propulsion does not provide the required energy

density-to-weight ratio that would enable regional, domestic, or international flights. Add to that the logistics of carrying such a gas-based power source that must include strong and durable tanks and high-pressure cryogenic storage, which would nullify the emission reduction advantage of such a power source given the increased drag and shortened range of the aircraft. Barring a revolutionary discovery in battery chemistry, we are more likely to see sustainable aviation fuel derived from biomass, such as agricultural waste, as a way forward in the near future.

The aerospace industry in Canada was a visionary in 2012 when Porter Airlines in collaboration with Pratt & Whitney Canada and Bombardier Aerospace, flew a revenue flight from Toronto to Ottawa using biofuel derived from the carinata plant. This innovative test program was proposed to the now-defunct Canadian Green Aviation Research and Development Network in 2010. Unfortunately, the momentum of this program seems to have slowed in all likelihood due to the recent emphasis on battery-electric propulsion. Besides innovations in power sources, novel engine architectures and airframe configurations are equally important for emission reduction and environmental

sustainability. Again, Canadian aerospace companies are cognizant of this as evidenced in the development of Pratt & Whitney's fuel-efficient geared turbofan engine, now in use by various airframers like Airbus and Embraer, and the pursuit of the blended-wing-body airframe configuration by Bombardier.

Our federal and provincial governments, regardless of the parties in power, must ensure that promising nascent and in-development technologies are supported until they reach a mature technology readiness level that precedes commercialization. Few Canadians remember, or know about, the CL-227/327 Sentinel program that was developed in the late 1970s and into the mid 1990s by then Canadair, later Bombardier, as an unmanned, remotely piloted reconnaissance and surveillance aerial vehicle (UAV). Its unique configuration and design made it capable of vertical take-off and landing from different platforms. In my opinion, the CL-227/327 Sentinel program represents another clear example of a home-grown Canadian aerospace technology that was ahead of its time but was not cultivated and nurtured properly by the government, echoing the famous Avro Arrow to some extent. Had this program received further support, Canada would have secured a larger share in the now US\$27-billion UAV market that is projected to grow to US\$70-billion by 2030, and would have established a much bigger foothold in the emerging subsector of urban air mobility.

It is not just the consistent and long-term funding of aerospace R&D in government labs and the private sector that must be ensured; academic research and training of future aerospace engineers and technicians are paramount to the survival and flourishing of this vital sector. Universities and colleges provide the incubator of technologies that the private sector is too busy to investigate or deem far-term for immediate applications. Encouraging strong collaborations between academia, government labs, and the private sector through funding programs and incentives is important and proven in countries like the United States, Germany, and Japan to yield economic growth and technological innovations. Indeed, attracting international talent is important for the aerospace industry in Canada, but so is the cultivation and support of our local talent represented by our current and future students.

The future is bright for aerospace in Canada, but it can be made brighter through increasing public awareness of this vital sector and providing a sustained and consistent government support for promising aerospace technologies and training centres that address the foreseeable challenges.

Prof. Fidel Khouli, PhD, P.Eng, is an associate professor in the department of mechanical and aerospace engineering at Carleton University. Prior to joining Carleton University, he spent several years in the Canadian aerospace industry.

The Hill Times



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, right, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida pictured in Ottawa on Jan. 12, 2023. Japan's priorities align well with Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, write David and George Abonyi. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Implementing Canada's Indo-Pacific economic strategy

There are opportunities in Japan, Thailand, and Bangladesh for Canada to implement the economic priorities associated with its Indo-Pacific Strategy.

David Abonyi & George Abonyi

Opinion



Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy defines key directions for a comprehensive foreign policy for the leading growth region in the global economy. This includes a focus on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and strengthening bilateral interactions with India and Japan. Substantive economic objectives include support for sustainable infrastructure and for resilient supply chains in the region.

To help implement these economic priorities—aligned

with developments in the region—Japan can be an effective region-wide partner, and Thailand and Bangladesh can serve as gateway economies for business linkages with ASEAN and South Asia, respectively.

Japan, the world's third-largest economy, plays an essential role in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in Southeast Asia and increasingly in South Asia. Its key regional priorities focus on investment in high-quality infrastructure and resilient supply chains.

These reflect the transformation of Japan's economy. This has included the regionalization of its industries, particularly in ASEAN. Japanese firms have also repositioned as critical suppliers in global value chains, focusing on higher value-added and higher technology materials such as fine chemicals instead of more visible lower value-added consumer end products such as LCD panels, which use chemicals like critical inputs.

Japan is the largest source of infrastructure finance in Southeast Asia, worth around US\$330-billion in 2022, compared with China's approximately US\$100-billion. The Partnership for Quality Infrastructure, initiated in 2015, followed in 2020 by the Japan-ASEAN Connectivity Initiative, strengthen regional connectivity in ASEAN, and increase links to South Asia.

Japan's priorities align well with Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), providing significant opportunities for new types of regional partnerships for Canadian enterprises. A Canada-Japan regional co-operation agreement could provide a framework for such collaboration.

The IPS's proposed "Canadian Trade Gateway in Southeast Asia" and Canada-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement currently in negotiation are important steps towards more extensive regional engagement. But ultimately it is national economies that provide practical entry points for firms to a region.

Thailand is well positioned in a number of ways to fill that role. It is the second-largest economy in Southeast Asia, with a diversified business sector, regionally leading enterprises, and generally efficient and well-regarded institutions.

Thailand also plays a central role in sub-regional economic co-operation programs such as the Greater Mekong Subregion, which includes Cambodia, Southern China, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam, and the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle. It also links to South Asia through the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

The multi-sectoral Eastern Economic Corridor program, focusing on advanced infrastructure and innovation, is intended to strengthen Thailand as a base for regional business operations. A new generation of young Thai innovative technology entrepreneurs offer ready potential collaborators for Canadian enterprises and investors.

Thailand thus provides considerable opportunities for Canada domestically, and as a gateway to ASEAN. Building on its position as Canada's second-largest trading partner in ASEAN, a Canada-Thailand economic co-operation agreement would provide a framework for business linkages, including for Thailand to serve as a regional base.

The South Asia focus of the Canadian IPS is understandably on India, given its central role in the Indo-Pacific, and its economy's size and importance. It may be useful and productive to take a wider "India-plus" approach to South Asia, also positioning enterprises with respect to the region's deepening connectivity with Southeast Asia.

Bangladesh, with a population of around 170 million people, transformed itself from one of the world's poorest countries at independence in 1971, to one of the fastest growing economies in recent years. It is located on

the Bay of Bengal in the centre of the Indo-Pacific region. With India to its west, China to the north, and Southeast Asia to the east, Bangladesh can serve as a gateway to South Asia, a region with significant growth potential that is only just beginning to follow the development path of East Asia.

Bangladesh can also help deepen economic linkages between South and Southeast Asia, as reflected in a recent World Bank study on the significant potential for such economic integration. Membership in BIMSTEC—which, as noted, also includes Thailand—further strengthens the potential regional role of Bangladesh.

Economic performance is a fundamental priority of Indo-Pacific countries, especially the emerging economies of Southeast and South Asia. Effective economic engagement then serves not only Canada's and the region's interests, it is also an essential element of a more comprehensive foreign policy, supporting Canada's wider strategic goals.

David Abonyi, based in Bangkok, is senior associate with the Global Enterprise Initiative, Schulich School of Business, York University, Toronto, and project director for the "Strengthening Thai-Canada Business Linkages" initiative at the Fiscal Policy Research Institute associated with Thailand's ministry of finance. George Abonyi, resident of Ottawa, is senior research fellow and visiting professor at the Sasin School of Management of Chulalongkorn University, and senior adviser to the Fiscal Policy Research Institute.

The Hill Times

News

Protesters vow continued 'civil disobedience' until feds issue call for permanent Israel-Hamas ceasefire

While respectful of the right to demonstrate, a Liberal MP says their staff have been subjected to intimidating and foul language as well as instances of physical assault during a demonstration inside a constituency office.

Continued from page 1

oners held in Israel. That day, 11 Israeli women and children were returned to Israel in the fourth and final exchange under the original deal, bringing the total number of hostages released by publishing deadline to 51 Israelis and 19 other foreign nationals.

Another 33 Palestinians were also released from Israeli custody on Nov. 27, bringing the total number of Palestinian prisoners released to 150.

Since the Hamas terrorist attack on Oct. 7, which killed more than 1,200 Israelis, according to that country's official count, and the kidnapping of more than 200 hostages, the ensuing war on Hamas has killed more than 14,800 Palestinians, according to the Ministry of Health in Hamas-controlled Gaza. According to recent reporting from *The New York Times*, the



Thousands of protesters blocked Wellington Street on Nov. 25 following a rally on Parliament Hill organized by the Palestinian Youth Movement. Such rallies have become a weekly fixture in Ottawa since the Oct. 7 Hamas terrorist attacks and Israel's bombardment and invasion of Gaza. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

death toll of civilians in Gaza has outpaced those following the United States' attacks in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

After the pause was announced on Nov. 22, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) welcomed the truce as "important progress," and emphasized the need for sustained humanitarian relief access and to take advantage of the humanitarian pause to "redouble our efforts toward a more lasting peace."

However, on Nov. 21 and just hours before the truce was announced, a \$1,700-per-plate Liberal Party fundraising dinner in Ottawa's west end attended by Trudeau, Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne

(Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.), and Families Minister Jenna Sudds (Kanata-Carleton, Ont.) was interrupted by protests both inside and outside the venue.

Photographs and videos of the event show demonstrators inside the Brookstreet Hotel where the fundraiser was taking place, rushing the convention hall, dodging and overwhelming security guards with sheer numbers before taking the stage while chanting "ceasefire now."

Meral Aduli, a member of Allies for Palestine Network who helped organize the protest, told *The Hill Times* that she views the act of "civil disobedience" as a way for the protesters to use "peaceful means" to amplify their voices, and as a call to action for the politicians in attendance to stand against the "Gazan genocide."

"The disruption may have inconvenienced the people who can afford a \$1,700 dinner, but it also served as a means of highlighting the urgency of addressing the injustices faced by the Palestinian people," Aduli said, adding that the demonstration was only one part of a broader strategy of disruptive actions and non-violent civil disobedience.

While Israel and Hamas may have agreed to a temporary pause in hostilities as part of a deal to release Israeli hostages in Gaza, Aduli said that Trudeau's statement on Nov. 22 welcoming the agreement is not sufficient.

"We want an unequivocal call from [Trudeau] for an immediate

ceasefire," Aduli explained, adding that such a call should also come with an acknowledgment of Israel's violation of international law during and prior to the conflict, and noting that many of the women and teenagers being released from Israeli prisons had been held without convictions or trial long before Oct. 7.

Sam Hersh, a member of the Ottawa chapter of Independent Jewish Voices, told *The Hill Times* that demonstrations like the disruption of the fundraiser are meant to serve as a message that "there shouldn't be business as usual when there is violence and slaughter happening."

Hersh, who also participated in a sit-in protest inside Liberal

MP Mona Fortier's Ottawa-Vanier, Ont., constituency office on Oct. 30, said that for a lot of the protesters, "we're sort of at the end of our rope."

"We've written emails and letters, scheduled meetings, and called their offices, and nothing has changed," Hersh said. "At a certain point, there has to be an escalation; if all of those other methods haven't worked, we're going to engage in civil disobedience because we have no other option."

Hersh added that the current "extended humanitarian pause" is not strong enough language, and that Canadian government officials need to "grow a spine and say the words that they should be saying." He added that Canada should also be taking a "heavier-handed" approach to the wider conflict, including the rise of violence in the West Bank.

On Nov. 20, Global Affairs Canada issued a statement strongly condemning reports of extremist settler violence against Palestinians, and saying it is "gravely concerned" by reports of Palestinian communities being forcibly removed from their lands in the West Bank. It called on the government of Israel to take immediate action to stop further violence "protect the Palestinian population, and hold those responsible for the violence accountable under the law."

Hersh said Canada needs to go beyond calling for "half measures" and instead threaten to impose sanctions or a trade embargo of military goods to further pressure Israel to comply with international law.

In 2022, Canada exported \$21.3-million in military goods to Israel, with nearly half (\$10.4-million) of that related to the country's space program and one quarter (\$4.9-million) related to military aircraft, according to Global Affairs Canada's 2022 report on exports of military goods.

Monalisa Ghadban, a Palestinian Canadian who attended the fundraiser protest on Nov. 21 as well as a Nov. 25 rally on Parliament Hill, said that while she was born and raised in Montreal, she has been all too aware of the violence perpetrated against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza for most of her life. But rather than allow those images of violence to radicalize her, it has only deepened her desire to strengthen her sense of Palestinian identity.

However, as the protests calling for a ceasefire and an end to Israel's siege of Gaza have grown both in size and persistence, Ghadban said she believes more and more people are "waking up to the fact it's no longer just a Palestinian-Israeli issue; it's a human rights issue."

Ghadban said that the goal of the protests—particularly the regular Saturday rallies on Parliament Hill—is not to inflame tensions or antagonize individuals, but is rather meant to replicate the 2018-19 "Great March of Return" Gaza-Israel border protests held against Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip by land, air, and sea. During those

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly spoke with reporters before the Liberal caucus meeting on Nov. 22 following news that Israel and Hamas had agreed to a four-day truce in exchange for the release of hostages. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Independent Jewish Voices' Sam Hersh says many of the protesters are 'at the end of their rope' with calls, emails, and meetings to politicians not working. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Continued from page 24

protests held each Friday from March 2018 until late December 2019, a total of 223 Palestinians were killed, and more than 9,000 people were wounded by Israel Defense Forces.

“[The protests are] meant to replicate those calls for freedom and to mimic that resilience,” Ghadban explained. “We’re going to keep going until you hear Palestinian voices.”

Despite the growing number and increasing volume of calls for a ceasefire, Ghadban said they still are not being heard by those meant to represent them in government.

While a significant majority (59 per cent) of Canadians approve of the government’s position on supporting Israel, according to a recent survey from Mainstreet Research released on Nov. 7, more than seven in 10 (71 per cent) respondents support calls for a ceasefire to allow for humanitarian aid, though a larger proportion (80.8 per cent) believe a ceasefire can only begin with the return of the hostages.

A parliamentary e-petition sponsored by NDP MP Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont–La Petite-Patrie, Que.) calling on Canada to demand an immediate ceasefire received more than 286,000 signatures in the month it was open from Oct. 24–Nov. 23, making it the most successful petition since the practice was created in 2015.

As for those who believe that a call for a ceasefire from Canada would be largely symbolic, Ghadban said that while she disagrees with that characterization, symbolic gestures can still have meaningful impacts, pointing to the recent call for a ceasefire



Demonstrators gathered outside Kanata’s Brookstreet Hotel on Nov. 21, blocking traffic entering the hotel parking lot and distributing pamphlets highlighting their calls for a ceasefire before allowing drivers to proceed. Photographs courtesy of Allies of Palestine Network

from French President Emmanuel Macron.

“We saw a shift when Macron called for a ceasefire; it shifted the political climate in Europe, and people’s attention shifted because a world leader acknowledged that there’s a problem,” Ghadban explained.

Liberal MP says staff assaulted, intimidated during demonstration inside constituency office

One Liberal MP whose constituency office has been the target of disruptions told *The Hill Times* that contrary to the protesters’ stated request for dialogue, their office’s responsiveness only translated to a greater intensity of protests.

After responding to a number of groups that had contacted their

office and conducting several virtual meetings to hear their concerns, the MP—who spoke on a not-for-attribution basis out of concern of further inflaming community tensions—said their constituency office experienced a sit-in in early November and other rallies.

“I don’t mind protests, I don’t mind rallies as long as they are peaceful, they’re not disruptive, and they are not violent,” the MP said in a Nov. 27 interview, alleging that the demonstration resulted in staff being physically assaulted as demonstrators forced their way inside before being removed by police.

Additionally, the MP said that due to the repeated vitriol and intimidation, their staff has been instructed to begin screening voicemail messages rather than answering phone calls directly.

Despite the increasing protests, the MP said it has not shift-



ed their opinion on the conflict or agreement with the government’s official stance, reiterating Canada’s call for the immediate release of all hostages held by Hamas; a humanitarian pause in hostilities; a humanitarian corridor to deliver humanitarian aid and essentials to Gaza, including the \$60-million in aid promised by the federal government since the war began; and to continue to secure passage for the remaining Palestinian Canadians still in Gaza.

As to why they did not personally support calls for a more permanent ceasefire, the MP pointed to previous comments from Defence Minister Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.), who said he had “no expectation a terrorist organization would respect international law or any calls for a ceasefire.”

The MP said that in a democracy, it is a protester’s right not

to support any politician they believe is not sufficiently representing their interests, but added that simply because their precise words are not being echoed by elected officials does not mean they aren’t being heard or respected.

“But they also have to understand that we are representing a huge community of diverse interests, and the issue before us is extremely complex,” the MP said, adding that constructive dialogue on such complex issues requires listening on both sides.

“I just ask them to listen to their leaders and hear us as well; so let’s continue the dialogue but with respect to non-violence and love in our hearts; it’s the only way that we are going to get past the divisiveness and find a solution.”

sbenson@hilltimes.com
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Newest India assassination claims validate expansion of public inquiry beyond China, says Thomas Juneau

Continued from page 4

On Nov. 26, Verma told *Question Period*’s Vassy Kapelos that the “criminal terminology” of asking India to co-operate was interpreted as “you have already been convicted, and you better co-operate,” adding that the use of the word was viewed as “humiliating.”

Verma added that if any specific evidence or relevant information is ever provided to the Indian government, it would look into it, but said that had yet to occur, including during current national security adviser Jody Thomas’ nine-day trip to the country in late August/early September.

Verma said that in contrast to the lack of “specific and relevant facts of the case” provided

by Canada, U.S. officials had provided actionable information that could be legally presented to begin a criminal investigation, but said he did not have the specifics on what those were.

While Rigby told *The Hill Times* that he doesn’t personally share Verma’s reading of Trudeau’s comments, he finds the use of the term “credible allegations” instead of “intelligence” peculiar.

“Whether you saw it as an allegation, or more than an allegation—i.e., ‘we know you did it’—for the prime minister to have gone out publicly, you know that he must have had pretty solid intel,” Rigby said, adding that it would be unlikely to be the kind of “smoking-gun” evidence he would expect Trudeau to want before

making the allegation if it only relied on pure intelligence.

Verma said that there had been “constructive dialogue” between the two countries to repair the damage to the Canada-India relationship caused by the public allegations, and Rigby cautioned against jeopardizing those efforts with too great of a focus on India during the public inquiry.

“If the mandate of the commission is expanded to explicitly mention India, that will be akin to poking the Indians in the eye again,” Rigby explained, adding that he would be surprised if the government chose to amend the commission’s mandate to specifically include India.

“The dispute has simmered down quite a bit since September, and the Indians have pulled back

some of the rhetoric,” Rigby continued. “So for Canada to include India, and explicitly, would be very risky.”

Rigby also said he expects the government is “breathing a sigh of relief” now that the dispute has tapered off, and doesn’t expect it to have any desire to reignite the embers with one of Canada’s most important trading partners and a linchpin of the U.S. and Canada’s respective Indo-Pacific strategies.

“They’re going to want to keep improving the relationship, and, if not put this dispute behind us, put it back behind closed doors,” Rigby explained. “The last thing [the government] wants to do is make a public spectacle of this again by amending the commission’s mandate.”

Rigby also shared Juneau’s concern that expanding the commission’s mandate beyond foreign interference in elections would be “opening up a can of worms the commission just doesn’t have time to deal with.”

“China and Russia are the two big players [in election interference], but opening it up to extrajudicial killings, that’s going to change the whole tenor of the commission and make it much more unwieldy,” Rigby said.

However, Rigby said he is concerned the inquiry may be too focused on China and foreign election interference while missing the bigger picture of the national security threats facing Canada.

“There’s so much else going on when it comes to foreign threat actors and what foreign states are doing in this country, if you’re going to expand the mandate a little bit, just open it completely,” Rigby explained. “Drop the commission and do a full-scale review of our national security policies. That’s what I think we need at the end of the day.”

sbenson@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

News

‘Penny wise, pound foolish’: interparliamentary group chairs decry decision to reject funding boost

‘It is absolutely vital and critical that we continue to be able to be part of these very important international meetings,’ says Liberal MP and Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association chair Julie Dzerowicz.

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Guildwood, Ont.), co-chair of the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group, and a vice-chair of both the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (CANA) and the Canada-U.K. Interparliamentary Association. “It’s sort of penny wise, pound foolish.”

Representatives from the Joint Interparliamentary Council (JIC)—which oversees Parliament’s 13 multilateral and bilateral associations and four interparliamentary groups—appeared before the House Board of Internal Economy (BOIE) on Oct. 26 seeking approval for a temporary budget top-up of \$430,050 for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 fiscal years, a 10 per cent increase to JIC’s annual budget. The request would have seen funds reallocated from within the existing House and Senate budgets, with no increase to Parliament’s bottom line.

Funding for JIC is split between the two Chambers, with the House covering 70 per cent, and the Senate 30 per cent. It’s been static at \$4.3-million annually since 2018-19, and hasn’t received any new funding since the 2017-18 fiscal year. In June, JIC agreed to an effective moratorium on the creation of any new interparliamentary associations until additional funding is approved.

In his appeal, JIC co-chair Conservative MP Chris d’Entremont (West Nova, N.S.) highlighted the combined, detrimental effect rising travel costs and multilateral association membership fees are having on activities.

Though spending levels were similar to 2018-19—the most recent non-election, non-COVID year—associations’ travel activities were down by close to 25 per cent in 2022-23, and the number of delegation participants was down by roughly 15 per cent, said d’Entremont. JIC also decided that associations not hold annual general meetings this year “due to difficulties in accessing the resources needed,” he added.

While down significantly since the end of the COVID-related travel moratorium, virtual activities continue, but are hampered by Parliament-wide constraints on support resources—namely interpretation—which limits the number of virtual or hybrid meetings that can be held simultaneously in the precinct, “often to the detriment of associations,” said d’Entremont.

The “majority of association activity expenses are transportation costs,” and since 2018-19 there’s been “an even higher rate of inflation for air travel at 27.2 per cent,” he noted.

As detailed in its annual reports, JIC spent almost \$3.9-million in 2018-19, which funded 83 “travel activities” by associations and groups—72 of which were abroad—with 404 participants overall. By comparison, the almost \$3.8-million it spent in 2022-23 enabled 63 trips by associations—54 of which were abroad—with 344 participants total. Contribution fees related to Canada’s membership in associations at the international level totalled just under \$1.6-million in 2022-23, a 9.5 per cent increase compared to 2018-19.

“Associations have had to reduce the size of the delegation in addition to reducing the number of activities they can undertake within the confines of the existing budget. This directly impacts the number of votes Canada may be allocated at international annual meetings, and limits the number of contacts Canadian Parliamentarians may have. It can also prevent Canadian delegates from participating in certain committees, and therefore, fully carrying out their mandates,” d’Entremont told the BOIE.

“There has been a return to in-person activities worldwide, and Canada must play an active role,” he said.

Clerk assistant Jeremy LeBlanc, director general of the international and interparliamentary

affairs directorate, noted the example of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, which he said hasn’t been able to participate fully in committee meetings at the international level. “They’ve had to reduce the size of the delegations they send to those meetings, which means that Canada doesn’t have as many votes at the assembly as it might otherwise,” said LeBlanc, adding “that’s true” as well of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

The BOIE typically operates by consensus, and ultimately Conservative and NDP members shot down JIC’s funding request, citing the current financial climate.

“I understand the important work that these associations do. I believe in parliamentary democracy,” said Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina-Qu’Appelle, Sask.). But, in “the current climate, I just don’t believe that we can support this type of increase. I think there are a lot more priorities that the Government of Canada collectively and Parliamentary collectively have to focus on in terms of finding savings and efficiencies for taxpayers to bring down inflation.”

Lapsed dollars are returned to the federal consolidated revenue fund, Scheer confirmed, noting that means “it goes back to taxpayers.”

NDP House Leader Peter Julian (New Westminster-Burnaby, B.C.) similarly agreed that “international meetings can often be very important,” but highlighted JIC’s less-than-full budget usage rates in stating that he “can’t support this initiative.”

In 2022-23, JIC used 88 per cent of its total budget, compared to 91 per cent in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

D’Entremont noted using the whole budget has “always been difficult” because of the advance planning and booking that’s required for activities. LeBlanc also highlighted that “in many cases,” funds are leftover as a result of trips or delegate participation “that’s cancelled at the last minute with whips,” which is part of the “reality of a minority government.”

For its share of funding, the Senate Internal Economy, Bud-

gets, and Administration Committee took its cue from the BOIE in declining JIC’s request.

JIC co-chair Independent Senator Raymonde Saint-Germain (De la Vallière, Que.) told *The Hill Times* that while she’s a “great believer in interparliamentary diplomacy,” she also believes “in the current economic context,” the decision not to approve the budget increase is a “well-founded” one.

“It is not ideal, it is far from being ideal, but it is still manageable,” she said. “There are alternatives, and I see that many associations—by themselves—have decided to implement some measures to cope with this situation,” including sending smaller delegations or travelling “at the lowest rates available.”

Association co-chairs and vice-chairs who spoke with *The Hill Times* about the decision were slightly less understanding.

On one end of the spectrum, McKay slammed the decision as “foolish.”

“Because they’re not travelling, and because they’re not interacting with fellow legislators and others, [Parliamentarians] are woefully uninformed about the various conflicts around the world and the viewpoints of others,” said McKay. “There is nothing like being physically present, interacting with colleagues from other countries, and understanding the truth of matters.”

“If you got yourself elected for the purposes of playing partisan games and making a fool of yourself, well, good for you. I think many of the rest of us, however, would like to actually participate fully in parliamentary diplomacy and the access to these associations and the ability to interact with other foreign legislators ... is an opportunity lost,” he said.

Liberal MP Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Ont.), chair of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas (CPAM) and a member of JIC itself (along with three other groups), said from a fiscal perspective, he understands why the decision was made, noting “the timing of this request wasn’t good.” But he said with what’s going on in the world more broadly, Canada is “missing out on an opportunity to play a much larger role on the world scene by utilizing the parliamentary associations.” He noted these groups are the main avenue for Parlia-

mentarians outside of cabinet to get involved internationally with legislators from a range of political parties.

“A lot of the work at the ground level is done with Parliamentarians from all political stripes, and this is the advantage here that I don’t think people understand,” said Serré. “The world really needs more dialogue, the world needs more of Canadian delegations going out and brokering. And actually I’m hearing that ... when I speak to Caribbean countries or American countries, they want us to get more involved.”

He noted as an example that past Canadian ParlAmericas chairs have served as president of the group at the international level, but that would be “difficult” to do “now because of the [budget] constraints, because now the plane tickets are more expensive.”

Liberal MP Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Ont.), chair of CANA and vice-chair of CPAM (and a member of 13 other groups), called the BOIE’s decision “very disappointing,” as interparliamentary groups are “critical in helping to build relations with other countries, with other Parliamentarians, and in understanding what is truly happening in the world.”

“It’s particularly important these days when you have disintermediation of the media and you aren’t always quite sure of the facts, and it’s also particularly important when we have a literally global fight now between your authoritarian and your democratic countries,” said Dzerowicz. “It is absolutely vital and critical that we continue to be able to be part of these very important international meetings.”

Dzerowicz confirmed CANA doesn’t “go to any of the [international NATO Parliamentary Association] committee meetings,” because of budget constraints, “but we go to all the big ones,” including the spring and fall sessions and meetings of the main standing committee, at which reports from its five committees are discussed and voted on.

“Say one of the committees is looking at Arctic security, there’s actually a group that goes to the Arctic and actually gets firsthand information from people,” she said. “We don’t do those meetings [or travel], but if there is a statement [or paper] that comes forward it will be debated at big meetings.” Still, that means missing out on information gathering, “relationship building,” and generally “understanding the situation,” said Dzerowicz.

Both Serré and Dzerowicz noted there’s “demand” to create new interparliamentary groups. Dzerowicz said she personally wants to see ones formed related to Ukraine and Mexico, and suggested the existing roster should be reviewed every five years to determine which are still “priorities to fund.”

bryckewaert@hilltimes.com
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News

Partisan clashes cloud implementation of revised Ukraine trade bill as experts pan Tories' carbon tax complaints

While the Conservative stance is a 'betrayal of common sense,' the Liberals have also blown things out of proportion with their rhetoric on the trade deal, say observers.

Continued from page 1

Conservative MP Kyle Seeback (Dufferin-Caledon, Ont.), his party's international trade critic, told the House Chamber on Nov. 20 that "for the first time ever, the government has decided to put a carbon tax into a trade agreement with a country in the middle of a war."

The Ukrainian Embassy has pushed back on claims that the trade bill would enact carbon tax obligations, telling *The Globe and Mail* that the trade deal "does not include any specific instruments on decreasing carbon footprint, including specific taxation instruments."

At second reading, Bill C-57 was supported by all but members of the Conservative Party, who voted against the implementation bill. The vote was a departure for the Conservatives, as, even in opposition, the party has criticized how the Liberal government negotiated trade deals, but always voted to implement them.

During clause-by-clause consideration at the House Committee, the Conservatives attempted to amend the bill to remove the carbon pricing language, but the push was defeated.

In turn, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) and the Liberals have accused the Conservatives of being inspired by "American MAGA-influenced thinking," which he remarked last week has led to them turning their "backs on something Ukraine needs in its hour of need."

Trade experts told *The Hill Times* that the push by the Conservatives to spotlight non-binding language on carbon pricing is "immature and ideologically driven," and without merit.

"The Conservative position on this agreement is appalling, taking a darkly partisan position on a matter of national and international interest and concern," said



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, right, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attend a press conference during the war-time leader's Sept. 22 visit to Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

international trade lawyer Lawrence Herman, remarking that the approach is "clearly aimed at scoring a few political points," but is "untenable and incomprehensible from a legal perspective."

"It's a case of ideology trumping common sense," he added. Herman said the language around carbon pricing is "clearly not a legal commitment to apply any particular pricing measure."

"The Conservative stance is not only ridiculous, it's a betrayal of common sense and a denial of mature thinking," he said.

He added that the Conservative position gives little confidence about Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's (Carleton, Ont.) positioning on the trade file.

"It doesn't give great confidence that the Conservatives have a well-thought-out position on trade matters, [given] their position on this deal," he said. "To vote against a critical update of an important trade agreement given the geopolitical context, to me, is simply immature and untenable."

Trade consultant Eric Miller, president of Rideau Potomac Strategy Group, said the current squabble is another example of Canadian politicians confusing the international with the domestic.

"This is a case where domestic issues don't necessarily trump international issues, but political leaders don't always see that," he said.

"You have a case here where the Conservatives took this vote, not because they're inherently hostile to Ukraine or inherently hostile to the trade agreement, but because they felt it would

be good politics and they could argue that Justin Trudeau was extending the carbon tax abroad," he said. "That line of argument didn't work."

Miller said that in turn, the Conservatives have opened themselves to allegations that they are not fully in support of Ukraine.

Despite those attacks, the Conservatives have largely been in lock-step with Canadian support for Ukraine, and at times have called for additional aid beyond what the government has provided. It was also the previous Conservative government that negotiated the first version of the Canada-Ukraine trade deal before it was implemented in the early years of the Trudeau government.

Former Conservative staffer Adam Taylor, now partner at

NorthStar Public Affairs, said the "charged political environment" on the carbon tax is playing out in the trade agreement.

"I don't think ultimately it's going to have a big impact on this trade agreement to get through Parliament at the end of the day," said Taylor, a past director of communications for then-trade minister Ed Fast (Abbotsford, B.C.).

He said the language around co-operation on carbon pricing has led to the Conservative attacks asserting there is a "backdoor imposition of a carbon tax on Ukraine."

He said partisan politics are being played on both sides, with the Conservatives now seeing that opposing the carbon tax is leading to electoral gain. On the flip side, Taylor said, the Liberals are also inserting aspects in trade deals that have "very little to do or nothing to do with trade," citing the addition of inclusive chapters that typically were not part of traditional trade deals.

"So, the Liberals are playing politics in some of these trade negotiations, too, and I think now that the Conservative have decided to jump in, too, and now here we are," he said.

Taylor suggested that trade policy under a potential Poilievre government would involve a focus on the trade basics of lowering tariffs and non-tariff barriers as opposed to inserting "narrative issues" into trade agreements.

Carlo Dade, director of the trade and investment centre at the Canada West Foundation, said there are legitimate questions to ask about non-trade measures

being included within a revised trade agreement.

"You're kind of scratching your head going, 'Yes, these things are important, but what does it have to do with trade and why did you stick it in this agreement?'" he questioned.

"The Conservatives have a larger point that the trade agreements should deal with things directly or at least tangentially associated with trade," he said, but noted that within the text of the agreement there isn't evidence that it is enacting a carbon tax.

Former senior Liberal trade staffer Julian Ovens, now a partner at Crestview Strategies, said it is "pretty unfortunate" that Bill C-57 is being politicized, noting that on international trade files there typically has been more collaboration and less posturing.

He said he is concerned that Conservatives will move to mirror the American Republican approach of becoming more isolationist and moving away from being fulsome backers of Ukraine's efforts.

He added that the Conservative vote at second reading is telling about how the trade file will be handled under a Poilievre government.

"I have not heard a lot of forward-looking policy positions from Pierre Poilievre [and] his office around trade," said Ovens, a former chief of staff to two Liberal international trade ministers. "I think this is not something that will be a priority for them, certainly new agreements [and] adding inclusive elements to them."

He defended the inclusive elements that have been a large component of the Liberal trade agenda, remarking that they counter anti-trade populism that was seen in the United States and elsewhere.

"We need to have more trade agreements that have tangible elements that address the needs of traditionally trade-disadvantaged groups," he said.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' Stuart Trew, who appeared in front of the House International Trade Committee during its subject matter study for Bill C-57, said both the Liberals and Conservatives are "hamming up" the legislative process.

While the Conservatives are spotlighting non-binding language on carbon pricing, the Liberals are "blowing the importance of this treaty to Ukraine completely out of proportion to where it sounds like it is essential to the national security of Ukrainian people," he said.

"I think both the Liberals and Conservatives are being fairly unhelpful if the goal is to understand what is in this agreement and how it might or might not benefit Ukraine," Trew said. "The rhetoric they've taken and the positions they've taken ... suggesting that anyone who could possibly oppose this deal is somehow helping [Russian President Vladimir] Putin, those are unhelpful positions."

nmoos@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



The Conservative Party, led by Pierre Poilievre, has accused the Liberal government of inserting a carbon tax in Canada's updated trade deal with Ukraine. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Politicos party with Taiwan

The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia



Harry Ho-Jen Tseng, the representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada, and his wife Yu-ling Lu feed the lions at Taiwan's national day party at the Château Laurier on Oct. 4.



Bloc Québécois MP Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, left, and Tseng.



Senator Marilou McPhedran, left, Tseng, and Lu.



NDP MP Lindsay Mathyssen, left, Tseng, and Lu.



Conservative MP Garnett Genuis, left, Tseng, and Lu.

Switzerland throws backyard bash



Hungarian Ambassador Maria Vass-Salazar, left, and Swiss Ambassador Olaf Andreas Kjelsen at Switzerland's national day reception at the official Swiss residence on Sept. 13.



Guests lined up to try raclette, a popular Swiss dish of melted cheese on boiled potatoes.



American Ambassador David Cohen, left, Kjelsen, and his wife Carine Kjelsen.



Panamanian Ambassador Romy Vasquez, left, greets Kjelsen.

Nepal marks Constitution Day



Rojina Tamrakar, chargé d'affaires at the Embassy of Nepal, right, welcomes Myanmar Ambassador U Hau Khan Sum to Nepal's Constitution Day reception at the Westin Ottawa Hotel on Sept. 20.



Kiran Yadav, husband of the Nepalese chargé d'affaires, left; International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen; and Tamrakar.



Marie-Louise Hannan, director general of Global Affairs Canada's South Asia Division, left; Liberal MP Salma Zahid; Liberal MP and Canada-Nepal Parliamentary Friendship Group chair Sonia Sidhu; Tamrakar; and Conservative Senator Victor Oh.



Conservative MP Harold Albrecht, left, and Tamrakar.



Laura Ryckewaert
Hill Climbers

Taking a gander at Veterans Minister Petitpas Taylor's 13-member office

Plus, Defence Minister Bill Blair recently hired Diana Ebadi as his new press secretary, and House Speaker Greg Fergus has a new director of outreach and media relations.

Veterans Affairs and Associate Defence Minister **Ginette Petitpas Taylor's** 13-member office includes just four staff who worked for her portfolio predecessor, now-Agriculture Minister **Lawrence MacAulay**.

Director of policy **Sarah Cozzi** is among those four, and has been running policy for the federal minister for veterans affairs since September 2020. She first joined the veterans office in early 2018 as a legislative assistant and issues manager to then-minister **Seamus O'Regan**, and has since also filled the roles of special assistant for commemorations policy, and senior policy adviser. Cozzi is also a former assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Vance Badawey**.

Abigail Garwood continues to work under Cozzi, now as a senior policy adviser. Garwood was a policy adviser to then-minister MacAulay prior to the July 26 cabinet shuffle. She first joined the office as a policy and Ontario regional affairs adviser in early 2020, but dropped her regional desk duties after the 2021 federal election. Garwood previously worked as a special assistant for parliamentary affairs to then-democratic institutions minister **Karina Gould**, and is also a former constituency assistant to then-Toronto Liberal MP **Michael Levitt**.

Richard Léger has followed Petitpas Taylor to her new office, taking on the title of senior adviser. Léger had previously

been director of policy to Petitpas Taylor as then-minister for official languages and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) since she took over that file following the 2021 federal election. During the 43rd Parliament, Léger worked for then-official languages and economic development minister **Mélanie Joly**, starting as a senior policy adviser and ending as director of policy. A former lawyer with Vincent Dagenais Gibson LLP and Caza Saikaley LLP, he's been working for ministers on the Hill since the spring of 2019 when he was hired as a policy adviser to then-public services and procurement minister **Carla Qualtrough**.

As previously reported, **Guy Gallant** is chief of staff to Petitpas Taylor. Prior to the shuffle, he ran her office as then-minister for official languages and ACOA.

The other two holdovers from MacAulay's team as then-veterans affairs minister are **Michael Unsworth**, special assistant for West and North regional affairs, and **Jon Wiseman**, special assistant for Ontario regional and Indigenous affairs.

Unsworth has been filling the same role in the veterans office since 2021; he interned in the office over that summer,



Veterans Affairs Minister **Ginette Petitpas Taylor** has brought a number of staff from her old office to her new team, including her chief of staff and director of parliamentary affairs. *The Hill Times* photograph by **Andrew Meade**

and after the fall election, was hired on full time. Unsworth has been a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, and as an infantry corporal with the Governor General's Foot Guards has previously stood as a sentry at the National War Memorial in Ottawa.

Wiseman joined the office under MacAulay in January 2022 after two years as an assistant to then-Toronto Liberal MP **Adam Vaughan**. He's also a former assistant to then-Nova Scotia Liberal MP **Bill Casey**.

Shawn Lawlor is director of operations to Petitpas Taylor, and also covers the Atlantic region for the minister. Lawlor was hired as operations director to Petitpas Taylor as official languages and ACOA minister earlier this year after a little more than two years working as a director in the ministers' regional office (MRO) in Halifax—one of 16 regional offices in Canada that support ministers across cabinet and include a mix of political and departmental staff. Lawlor has also previously been national manager for all MROs, ministerial responsibility for which currently falls to Deputy Prime Minister **Chrystia Freeland** (through the Privy Council Office; previously, these offices fell under Public Services and Procurement Canada and the respective minister).

From 2005-2017, Lawlor worked for the Nova Scotia Liberals, including as executive assistant to now-N.S. Liberal Leader **Zach Churchill** during his time as both then-natural resources minister and then-municipal affairs minister. He's also a former aide to then-federal minister of state for ACOA **Gerry Byrne**, among other past jobs.

Audrey Lévesque-Aubut is a parliamentary and Quebec regional affairs adviser. She comes from Petitpas Taylor's official languages and ACOA office, where Aubut-Lévesque had been a parliamentary affairs adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary since May 2022. She's also a former manager of communications and public relations for the Young Bar of

Montreal, a non-profit that both promotes the interests of its members (those being members of the Montreal section of the Quebec Bar) and provides pro bono legal advice and information, and an ex-assistant to Quebec Liberal MP **Stéphane Lauson**.



Danielle Boyle is manager of operations and executive assistant to the veterans minister. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Danielle Boyle is both manager of operations and executive assistant to Petitpas Taylor. She, too, comes from the minister's old office where Boyle had been manager of economic development since early 2022. Boyle's past roles on the Hill include serving as office manager and executive assistant to then-public safety minister **Bill Blair**, office manager and executive assistant to Petitpas Taylor as then-health minister, and executive assistant to the chief of staff to then-health minister **Jane Philpott**.

Also coming from Petitpas Taylor's official languages and ACOA office is director of parliamentary affairs **Nathaniel Mullin**. He's been working for the minister since the 2021 federal election; after starting as a senior adviser, he was promoted to lead parliamentary affairs work this past February.

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Richard Léger is a senior adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Michael Unsworth covers the West and North regional desks. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Jon Wiseman covers Ontario and Indigenous affairs. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Audrey Lévesque-Aubut handles parliamentary affairs and the Quebec desk. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Nathaniel Mullin is director of parliamentary affairs. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

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Mullin worked as an aide to then-Ottawa City councillor **Mathieu Fleury** from 2010-2015. After the 2015 election, he was hired as an assistant to Nova Scotia Liberal MP **Darrell Samson**. Mullin landed his first ministerial gig in 2017, when he was hired as a policy adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to Joly as then-heritage minister, later becoming an issues manager and Atlantic regional adviser. He stepped away from the Hill between the fall of 2018 and early 2020 to work as a communications and media specialist for the Ottawa Community Housing Corporation, before returning as a senior Atlantic regional affairs adviser to then-families minister **Ahmed Hussein**. Mullin has since also been a policy adviser to Joly as then-economic development and official languages minister.

Mikaela Harrison is now director of communications to the veterans affairs minister. She was last busy as a senior communications adviser to then-infra-structure and intergovernmental affairs minister **Dominic LeBlanc** since the 2021 election. A cabinet staffer since the spring of 2019, spending most of her first two years working for LeBlanc through his various cabinet portfolio iterations, including as special assistant for communications and issues management during his time as minister for intergovernmental and northern affairs and internal trade; special assistant for parliamentary affairs and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to LeBlanc as then-Privy Council president; and legislative assistant

to LeBlanc as then-intergovernmental affairs minister and Privy Council president. She started 2021 with a new job: press secretary to Hussein as then-families minister—a role she held until the cabinet shuffle that followed that year's election.

Tabea De Vries is a special assistant. She was recently a student guide employed through Veterans Affairs Canada at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in Hauts-de-France, France. De Vries was also previously a House of Commons page with the 2021-22 cohort. According to her LinkedIn profile, she's currently in the midst of studying for a bachelor's degree in conflict studies and human rights at the University of Ottawa.

Finally, **Filippo Urbisei** is currently Petitipas Taylor's ministerial driver.



Tabea De Vries is a special assistant. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

New staff for Minister Blair, Speaker Fergus

National Defence Minister **Bill Blair** has found a press secretary for his office, recently hiring **Diana Ebadi** under the full title of press secretary and communications adviser.



Diana Ebadi is now press secretary and communications adviser to Minister Blair. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Ebadi comes from Justice Minister **Arif Virani's** office, where she's been busy as an issues manager and communications adviser since the July 26 cabinet shuffle. Ebadi first joined the justice office at the start of 2022 under then-minister **David Lametti** as a special assistant for digital communications. She stepped in as acting press secretary to Lametti at the beginning of this year (up until he was shuffled out of cabinet). A former House of Commons page with the 2016-17 cohort, Ebadi is also a former assistant to Manitoba Liberal MP **Terry Duguid**, among other past roles.

In Blair's office—where **Taras Zalusky** is chief of staff—Ebadi reports to director of communications **Daniel Minden**. Also currently part of Blair's comms shop is

communications adviser and speechwriter **Samriddha (Sam) Chaudhury**.

Meanwhile, House of Commons Speaker **Greg Fergus** recently hired **Mathieu Gravel** as director of outreach and media relations.

Gravel was most recently working as director of strategic initiatives for Inter-task Conferences. From 2014-2022, he worked for the City of Ottawa, largely as director of issues and outreach in the office of then-mayor **Jim Watson**. Gravel is also a former communications assistant to then-Liberal Senator **James Cowan**, and an ex-organization co-ordinator for the federal Liberal Party. Like his new boss, Gravel is also a former House of Commons page, having been part of the 2003-04 cohort.



Mathieu Gravel recently joined the Speaker's office. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

In the Speaker's office, Gravel works closely with communications director **Amélie Crosson**.

As recently reported, **Tommy Desfossés** is now chief of staff to the Speaker.

lyckewaert@hilltimes.com
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Parliamentary Calendar

Tory Leader Poilievre to give C.D. Howe's inaugural Hugh and Laura MacKinnon luncheon address on Dec. 1

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 29

House Sitting—The House will sit for four weeks, until Dec. 15. It's scheduled to return on Monday, Jan. 29, 2024.

Defence Procurement Conference—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts its annual Defence Procurement Conference. Among the working themes are "Reinvigorating Canadian industry's relationship with Defence," "The NATO Defence Production Action Plan and the Implications for Canada," and "The Defence Procurement Review." Wednesday, Nov. 29, at 8 a.m. ET, on the 4th floor, Westin Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details online via Eventbrite.

Stephen Poloz to Deliver Remarks—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a lunch presentation featuring former Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz, now special adviser at Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP. Wednesday, Nov. 29, at 12 p.m. ET, at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details online: cdhowe.org.

Lisa LaFlamme to Deliver Remarks—The University of Ottawa hosts the Alex Trebek Distinguished Lecture Series. uOttawa alumna and journalist Lisa LaFlamme will deliver remarks entitled "Issues facing women in the media in journalism, democracy, women in Afghanistan." Wednesday, Nov. 29, at 6 p.m. at the Shaw Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr. Details online via Eventbrite.

Lecture: 'Prime Ministers in Foreign Policy'—Toronto Metropolitan University hosts a lecture by its own political science professor Dr. Patrice Dutil who

will speak on "Canada's Prime Ministers in Foreign Policy: Who's Been Naughty, and Who's Been Nice?" Wednesday, Nov. 29 at 6:30 p.m. at ENG 103, Vari Engineering Building, 245 Church St., Toronto. Details online: torontomu.ca.

Book Launch: 'Who Gets In'—Library and Archives Canada and the University of Regina Press host the launch of Norman Ravvin's new book: *Who Gets In: An Immigration Story*, an eye-opening account of the Jewish immigration experience in the 1930s, and one man's battle against antisemitic immigration policies. Wednesday, Nov. 29, at 7 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St. Details online via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 29—THURSDAY, NOV. 30

CORD's Fall Conference—The Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders will hold its fall conference, "Canada's Rare Disease Network: Top-Down, Bottom-Up and Coast-to-Coast." Speakers include Jennifer Grandy, director of governance and bilateral agreements, Health Canada; Dr. Graham Sher, CEO, Canadian Blood Services; and Suzanne McGurn, president and CEO, Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health. Wednesday, Nov. 29, to Thursday, Nov. 30 at the Delta Calgary Downtown. Register online: raredisorders.ca.

THURSDAY, NOV. 30

COP28—COP28 will take place from Thursday, Nov. 30, until Tuesday, Dec. 12, in the United Arab Emirates. Details to follow.

Minister O'Regan to Deliver Remarks—Minister of Labour and Seniors Seamus O'Regan will deliver an economic update, "The State of Labour Relations and What It All Means for Business," hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Thursday, Nov. 30, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York, 100 Front St. W., Toronto. Details online: empireclubofcanada.com.

FRIDAY, DEC. 1

Conservative Leader Poilievre to Deliver Remarks—Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will be the featured speaker at the inaugural Hugh and Laura MacKinnon Roundtable Luncheon hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Friday, Dec. 1 at 12 p.m. at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details online: cdhowe.org.

SATURDAY, DEC. 2

Ontario Liberal Party Leadership Results—The Ontario Liberal Party will host an in-person gathering to announce the results of the party's leadership election. Candidates include Liberal MPs Yasir Naqvi and Nate Erskine-Smith, Ontario MPP Ted Hsu, and Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie. Saturday, Dec. 2 at 12:30 p.m. ET at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (South Building), 222 Bremner Blvd., Toronto. Contact cbrownlee@ontarioliberal.ca.

MONDAY, DEC. 4

Church on Monday—Former longtime Liberal staffer Leslie

Church hosts "Church on Monday," a fundraising event in support of her campaign for the Liberal nomination in the southern Ontario riding of Toronto—St. Paul's. Monday, Dec. 4 at 6 p.m. ET at the Metropolitan Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr. RSVP to info@lesliechurch.com. Details via Eventbrite.

Peter Mansbridge to Discuss New Book—Former CBC chief correspondent Peter Mansbridge and co-author Mark Bulgutch will discuss their new book of first-person stories, *How Canada Works: The People Who Make Our Nation Thrive*, hosted by the Ottawa International Writers' Festival. Monday, Dec. 4, at 7 p.m. ET at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, 275 Elgin St. Details online: writersfestival.org.

N.S. Premier Houston to Talk Health Care—Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston will deliver remarks on "The Time to Act — Bringing Back Confidence in Canadian Health Care" hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Monday, Dec. 4 at 11:30 a.m. at Arcadian Court, 401 Bay St., Simpson Tower, 8th Floor, Toronto. Details online: empireclubofcanada.com.

Party Under the Stars—Join the Road Hammers' Jason McCoy and Ottawa's who's who to raise funds for PTSD wellness for our veterans and frontline responders. The event features an open bar, great food, a silent auction, and prizes. Tickets are \$40. Monday, Dec. 4, 6 p.m. ET, at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave W. Details: contact

tothestanandback1@gmail.com or get tickets via Eventbrite.

MONDAY, DEC. 4—TUESDAY, DEC. 5

2023 Indo-Pacific Strategy Forum—Australian High Commissioner to Canada Scott Ryan, Japan's Ambassador to Canada Yamanouchi Kanji, South Korean's Ambassador Lim Woong-soon and the Philippines' Ambassador Maria Andrelita S. Austria will take part in the 2023 Indo-Pacific Strategy Forum hosted by the Institute for Peace and Diplomacy. Monday, Dec. 4, to Tuesday, Dec. 5, at the Westin Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details online via Eventbrite.

MONDAY, DEC. 4—THURSDAY, DEC. 7

Chiefs on the Hill 2023—The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs will hold its Government Relations Week, "Chiefs on the Hill," from Monday, Dec. 4, to Thursday, Dec. 7. Fire chiefs will meet with Members of Parliament and other elected or senior officials to discuss key issues in the fire service, our pre-budget asks, and engage in relationship building and education on Parliament Hill. Details online: cafc.ca. Call 613-324-1078.

TUESDAY, DEC. 5—THURSDAY, DEC. 7

AFN's Special Chiefs Assembly—The Assembly of First Nations will elect a new national chief during its hybrid Special Chiefs Assembly from Dec. 5-7. Voting for national chief will be conducted online using a digital ballot. Tuesday, Dec. 5, to Thursday, Dec. 7 at the Shaw Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr. Details online: afn.ca.

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



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