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NEWS

**Grit MP
McDonald says
he's rebuffed
Conservatives'
overtures
three times,
but won't rule
out crossing
the floor or
sitting as an
Independent**

BY ABBAS RANA

Three-term Liberal MP Ken McDonald, who has voted against his own party twice on the carbon tax, says he has rejected Conservative Party overtures to cross the floor three times, and although he is happy in the Liberal caucus, he won't rule out the possibility of joining the Conservatives or sitting as an Independent if the need arises down the road.

McDonald, who won the last election with 50.1 per cent of the vote, has not fulfilled the Liberal Party's conditions to run as a candidate without going through the nomination process.

"I don't think anyone would rule out the possibility, but it will take a lot for me to stand up and say, 'Listen [I'm leaving the caucus],' said McDonald (Avalon, N.L.) in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "After voting the way that I have, it has shown me that you can still get across your point and still be a Member of [Parliament for] the Liberal Party, and I don't know of any other party that would allow me to do that twice, and there'd be no reprimand for [me]."

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NEWS

Liberals look like a 'party on autopilot' headed for 'a car crash,' say political players

BY ABBAS RANA

With the Liberal Party's public support dropping like a stone, political insiders say it appears the governing party is headed "for a crash," and that it urgently needs to press the reset button yet again to try to change this trend, while others say the Liberals have "already crashed," and the question has turned to whether and how they can recover from this slide.

"This looks like a party on autopilot moving towards a car crash," said Nik Nanos, chief data scientist for Nanos Research, in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

"Assuming that he [Justin Trudeau] wants to be the leader



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre. The federal Liberals are tied with the NDP in national polls, and still are not bottomed out. With these numbers, Trudeau is losing leadership amongst progressive voters, says pollster Nik Nanos of Nanos Research. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

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NEWS

**Liberals join
social media
skirmish as
attacks on
Poilievre
target
battleground
Ontario**

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

After spending much of the year using its social media advertising spending to reinforce the government's record, the Liberal Party unleashed a series of attack ads in November targeting Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's voting history, and connecting the opposition leader to the politics of former U.S. president Donald Trump.

"They've always contrasted [Prime Minister] Justin Trudeau to the leaders, but what I think we're seeing with these ads is a huge increase in volume, and that's going to continue to grow as we get closer to 2025," said Laura D'Angelo, a former staffer in Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) PMO, and current vice-president at Enterprise. "They're really trying to highlight Pierre Poilievre's record, standing with people wearing 'straight pride' shirts, voting against Ukrainian free trade, the things he's said... I think that's what you're going to see a lot more of."

The English-language ads, which ran from Oct. 18 to Nov. 22, were seen almost entirely by Ontarians, with just over half aged 65 and over. The breakdown of audiences on Meta's Ad Library shows that between Oct. 28 and Nov. 26, the party's ads targeted

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Mike Lapointe

Heard On The Hill

'Incredibly entertaining': Chrétien, Trudeau, Liberals celebrate MacAulay's 35 years on the Hill

More than 100 people came out to celebrate Agriculture Minister **Lawrence MacAulay's** 35th anniversary as an elected MP two weeks ago on the Hill. Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**, former prime minister **Jean Chrétien**, Public Safety Minister **Dominic LeBlanc**, new Senator **Rodger Cuzner**, Halifax Mayor **Mike Savage**, and many more showed up. Former Ontario Liberal MPP and cabinet minister **Eleanor McMahon**, who worked as a press secretary on the Hill back in the day for **Herb Gray**, **John Turner**, and **Chrétien**, posted photos and a writeup on Facebook about the party. She told **HOH** that the speeches were "incredibly entertaining" and that Trudeau "was relaxed and very funny." But she said **Chrétien**, her former boss, stole the show, "as always."

Said McMahon: "It was a great celebration of Lawrence—and what a trip down memory lane! Great to see Mr. Chrétien who was in fine form. We shall celebrate his 90th in January."

Anja Karadeglija starts gig at The Canadian Press

Reporter **Anja Karadeglija**, who recently left the *National Post*, is starting a six-month position at The Canadian Press' Ottawa bureau this week.



Anja Karadeglija is starting at CP this week. Photograph courtesy of Anja Karadeglija

"I'm excited to switch things up from my long-standing beat and focus on more general political reporting, including late-breaking news and copy editing," wrote Karadeglija on X on Nov. 24.

Before joining *The Post*, Karadeglija was the editor of *The Wire Report*, owned by Hill Times Publishing.

The Logic reporter **David Reevely** sent congratulations her way, as did former *Hill Times* reporter and now CBC Nunavut's reporter **Emily Haws**, as well as *The Toronto Star's* **Raisa Patel** and **Mark Ramzy**, and CBC's **Elizabeth Thompson**, **Alykhan Velshi**, reporter **Rachel Gilmore**, **James McLeod**, **David Christopher**, **Sarah Andrews**, **Tara Deschamps**, Global News' **Alyssa Julie**, **Veronica Chung**, and **Howard Fremeth**.



Eleanor McMahon, left, and former prime minister Jean Chrétien. 'It was a great celebration of Lawrence, and what a trip down memory lane! Great to see Mr. Chrétien who was in fine form.' Photograph courtesy of Eleanor McMahon

Leslie Stojsic is leaving Global News

Veteran journalist **Leslie Stojsic**, who used to work in Ottawa, is leaving Global News in Vancouver at the end of the year, she announced on Twitter last week. Stojsic has been working as executive producer for *Global National* for six years, and then as managing editor of Global News' current affairs program *The New Reality*.

"Those who know me—will know: this is bittersweet," wrote Stojsic on X.

"Looking at all of my time at Global, from the dawn of the Trudeau government to Brexit, from the Trump administration to the pandemic, and everything since, it has been quite a ride," wrote Stojsic. "And it's my affection for the people at Global News that has kept me here for so long."



Leslie Stojsic is leaving Global News at the end of the month. Photograph courtesy of Twitter

"Those who know me—also know: I love working with promising young journalists to help them strive for excellence and realize their potential. I love working with grizzled senior journalists to help them find a gear even they never knew they had. I will miss that the most," she wrote.

NDP MP Green toasts his Hamilton Centre staffers

NDP MP **Matthew Green**, who represents Hamilton Centre, Ont., toasted his three staffers during MPs' statements in the House last week, including his legislative assistant **Tyler 'Coach' Crosby** "who, from day one, has provided me with the sage advice and wisdom he has attained through his 16 years of policy and parliamentary support here on the Hill," said Green.

He also singled out **Trudy Morris**, "who, having come off of the factory floor as a proud USW trade unionist, has given us 19

years of improving the material conditions of our constituents through her remarkable tax-filing program and her ability to track down the benefits that have been cut off from our most vulnerable families, seniors and residents."

He also congratulated **Rose Marie McAleer** who also has an impressive 19 years of service. "Her expertise in immigration, family reunification and her general case work is an embodiment of the spirit of our community and the perseverance that we in Hamilton Centre hold dear," said Green.



NDP MP Matthew Green, who represents Hamilton Centre, Ont., celebrated his staffers last week in the House during MPs' statements. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Leslie Church to host fundraiser at Métropolitain

Former Liberal staffer **Leslie Church** is back in Ottawa on Dec. 4 to host her "Church on Monday" fundraiser for her campaign for the federal Liberal nomination in Toronto-St. Paul's, which she launched on Oct. 29. "I moved to Toronto over 20 years ago and fell in love with this community. This is where I started my career, where I studied law, and where Sheamus and I started our family," Church tweeted on launch day, referencing her husband **Sheamus Murphy**, a partner at Counsel Public Affairs. Church studied law at the University of Toronto, worked at a big Toronto law firm, and then ran communications for Google Canada. Church first worked in Ottawa from 2008-2011 under then-Liberal leader **Michael Ignatieff**, and since 2015, she's held a variety of chief-of-staff roles for a handful of Liberal ministers, ending her stint on the Hill in the office of Deputy Prime Minister **Chrystia Freeland**. Church's fundraiser will take place on Dec. 4 at 6 p.m. at the Métropolitain Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr.

—Christina Leadlay



Fire Chiefs thank all who supported the Fire Sector in 2023

What's needed for 2024:

- Increase Volunteer Firefighter & Search and Rescue Tax Credit
 - See Petition e-4594 with over 15,000 signatures
- Modernize Training and Equipment
 - See new data in Fire Census 2023
- Initiate a National Fire Administration
 - See New Report Towards a National Fire Administration
- Fund FireSmart™ in all Communities

Visit www.cafc.ca

MPs, Senators invited to Fire Chiefs' Reception Dec. 5 @ 5:30.
RSVP to mlogan@summa.ca

Food insecurity has no place in Canada.

1 in 4 children in Canada live in a home that struggles to put food on the table.

Almost 7 million Canadians are now food insecure, including 1 in 4 single working age adults.

Food bank usage has increased almost 80% in the last two years.

50% of Canadians who are food insecure live with a disability.

This is our collective failure as a society.

Good food is essential to health, economic empowerment, education and human dignity. We stand behind the will of Canadians calling for governments to act. It means establishing a strong social safety net that no one can fall through.

As a first step, we call on the federal government to set a target to reduce food insecurity by 50% by 2030, then work with governments, industry and civil society to accomplish it together. We can do this!



Arrell Food Institute, University of Guelph	Disability Without Poverty	Guelph Community Health Centre	Nourish Leadership	Sprott Foundation
BCG Canada	Edmonton's Food Bank	Haggerty Holdings	Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA)	summerlunch+
BMO Capital Markets	Feed Nova Scotia	Harvest Manitoba	Ottawa Food Bank / La Banque d'alimentation d'Ottawa	Takeda Canada Inc.
Breakfast Club of Canada	Feed Ontario	Isaac Operations	Pattison Food Group	The Arrell Family Foundation
Centre for Studies in Food Security, Toronto Metropolitan University	Food Banks BC	Le conseil de la transformation alimentaire du Québec	Peter Gilgan Foundation	The MULTIVAC Group
Community Food Centres Canada	Food Banks Canada	MakeWay	President's Choice Children's Charity	Thomas, Large and Singer Inc.
Conestoga Cold Storage	Food Banks Mississauga	Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security	Prosper Canada	Trellis Canada
Cortland Credit	Food First NL	Maple Leaf Foods	Public Inc.	Uber Canada
Daily Bread Food Bank	FoodShare Toronto	March of Dimes Canada	Purolator	Unilever Canada
Definity Insurance Foundation	Fred Victor	McCain Foods Limited	Riverdale Poultry	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW Canada)
Deloitte Canada	Greater Vancouver Food Bank	Moisson Rive-Sud	Riverside Natural Foods Ltd.	Windsor Essex Food Bank Association
	Greener Village	Next Plumbing and Hydronics Supply Inc.		

News

Grit MP McDonald says he's rebuffed Conservatives' overtures three times, but won't rule out crossing the floor or sitting as an Independent

The three-term Newfoundland and Labrador MP did not meet the March deadline of nomination conditions to run as his party's unopposed candidate for the next election.

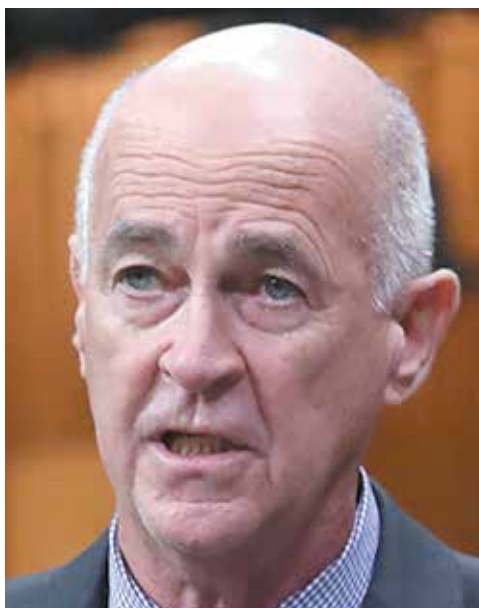
Continued from page 1

The carbon tax has been one of the key issues that has dragged down the Liberal Party's public support in Atlantic Canada, a key bloc in the party's red wall. McDonald has broken ranks twice with his own party in the Commons and voted against carbon pricing. He's the only one out of 158 Liberal MPs who voted with the Conservatives on this issue.

Other Liberal MPs from the Atlantic provinces have also pushed their government internally to make adjustments to the government's policy to help out their constituents. In late October, the federal government finally bowed to this pressure and exempted home heating oil from the carbon tax for three years, doubled the rural supplements rebate program, and announced other programs to help rural Canadians transition to electric heat pumps.

The party under leader Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) carried all 32 Atlantic seats when they first came to power in 2015. This number was reduced to 26 in 2019, and 24 in the 2021 election.

McDonald said that before he voted against his government, he got a call from the Prime Minister's Office's Atlantic assistant, urging him to reconsider his decision. Chief Government Whip Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) also held an in-person meeting with McDonald, but was unsuccessful in convincing him to change his mind. McDonald said that he did not feel any pressure from either of the meetings, and has not faced any consequences. He's still the chair of the House Fisheries Committee.



Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal MP Ken McDonald, left, will make a decision in June if he wants to seek re-election. Like the rest of the caucus, McDonald said, he will leave it up to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, right, as to whether he wants to lead the party in the next election. Photograph courtesy of Ken McDonald and The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

After his vote, McDonald said, he has been approached three times by three different Conservative MPs on different occasions to ask him to cross the floor, but he declined each time.

"They just thought that I might be interested because of the way I was voting," said McDonald with a chuckle, describing the Conservatives' overtures without mentioning the names of MPs.

"There was no discussion [about] 'We'd like to do this for you or that for you,' [or anything] like that. It was just because of the way I voted, they assumed that would be right for [me to join the Conservative caucus]," he said. "But no, I'll stay, I'm happy where I am, I've got a great lot of friends around me in the House of Commons, and I have friends on the other side as well. So it has enabled me to make a lot of friends, actually."

But he has not ruled out the possibility of crossing the floor or sitting as an Independent if a situation were to arise where he felt he has to take that step. McDonald declined to share any possible scenario under which he would take that step. He has also not met the conditions set by the Liberal Party for incumbent MPs if they want to be acclaimed as candidates for the next election. The rules were announced in November 2022, and the deadline was March 1, 2023.

According to these rules, if an MP wants to be acclaimed without a nomination challenge, they would need at least 65 per cent of

the anticipated expense limit in their electoral district association bank account by March 1; have at least 40 more Victory Fund members compared to the number they had on July 1, 2022; and attempt to knock on at least 3,500 doors or make 7,500 phone calls together with their team of volunteers. McDonald's reasoning not to meet these conditions is that he has not made a decision whether he wants to seek re-election. McDonald will make a decision one way or the other by his 65th birthday in June. He said that he wants to meet with his extended family to make that decision.

"I will have a good sit down with my family, and have a good discussion about it, and that's not just my wife and children. It would be my extended family, my brothers, my sister, my sister-in-law, and even my mother-in-law, because none of us are getting any younger," said McDonald. "I'll be 65 in June. I don't know if I want to spend another four years flying back and forth to Ottawa, because I think, if you run, you've got to be committed to staying for whatever the term that is—whether it's a two-year term or a four-year term, you have to be committed to that. And for me to do that, it'll take some good conversation to convince me to run. And it may take some good conversation to convince me not to run."

McDonald won by a margin of 38 per cent of the votes in 2015, 15 per cent in 2019, and 16 per cent in 2021. But the Liberals are now running far behind the Conserva-

tives in national public support. His riding is one of 34 Conservative to Liberal defector ridings that were with the Conservatives in 2011, but went Liberal in 2015 and stayed there through to 2021. But, according to a recent poll by Innovative Research, the Conservatives are leading by 10 points in these 34 ridings.

A Nanos polls suggested last week that the Liberals are 19 points behind the Conservatives nationally. This poll suggested that the Liberals were in third place behind the Conservatives and the NDP. The Conservatives were at 40 per cent, the NDP 27 per cent and the Liberals 25 per cent.

And an Ipsos poll released last week suggested that 72 per cent of Canadians and 33 per cent of Liberal voters want Trudeau to step down. In comparison, 91 per cent of Conservative supporters want Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) to lead the party in the next election, and 78 per cent of NDP voters want Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) to stay on as party leader.

McDonald, however, said he's not worried about his seat. Based on his interactions in his community, he said, people support him, and he has been getting a lot of "accolades" for standing up on the carbon tax issue.

"I'm pretty secure," said McDonald. "If I decide to run again, I will win that election. People that I bump into now, at events, some will come up to me and say you've got nothing to worry about

in the next election. I actually had a lady at an event tell me that if my boot ran for election, it would win."

But McDonald conceded that the Liberal Party nationally is not as popular as it was in 2015, and if an election were to happen now, they would likely lose.

In early November, McDonald was heckled by the Conservatives on a vote in the House to exempt all home-heating fuel from the federal carbon tax. In that vote, the Avalon MP voted with his own party and when he stood up to vote, he made a gesture with two fingers on the side of his head, in the midst of heckling, that Conservatives interpreted as giving a middle finger to Canadians. But McDonald told the House and told *The Hill Times* that he was scratching his head with two fingers, adding it is up to the Conservatives however they want to interpret that. He denied that he was flipping the bird to anyone.

The next election will be the fourth consecutive time that Trudeau will seek a mandate to govern the country. In Canadian history, only two prime ministers have achieved this feat, and the last time it happened was more than a century ago.

Most people expect Trudeau to make a decision in the next 90 to 120 days to make a decision about whether he wants to lead the party in the next election or not. McDonald said that like other members of the caucus, he would leave it up to Trudeau to decide if he wants to run again.

"Everybody goes through that as a leader of a party, especially a governing party," said McDonald. "People call it the best-before date, I suppose to some degree, but the prime minister still has got a lot left to give and he seems very energetic, very supportive and very committed to the role as prime minister."

Other Liberal MPs interviewed about the party's tanking polling numbers and whether the prime minister should stay on said it will be Trudeau's decision and they will respect that.

"That's his prerogative," said Liberal MP Sean Casey (Charlottetown, P.E.I.). "And that's his decision to make."

Casey said that he's concerned about the drop in popularity for the Liberals, but he pointed out that before the 2015 election, the NDP was in first place and the Liberals in third. After the election, the Liberals ended up with a majority government, marking the first time in Canadian history that a party would leap from third to first place in the span of one election. He said that the more Canadians see Poilievre, the less they will like him. He predicted that Poilievre would make mistakes like those made two weeks ago as he comes under the spotlight.

"He's probably our best hope," said Casey. "Turning his back on Ukraine, and jumping the gun based on something that he heard on Fox News, we didn't cause that."

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The Hill Times

Tackling the health system’s carbon footprint: when part of the problem becomes part of the solution



Kathleen Ross

Opinion

As temperatures plunge in Canada and snowy conditions move into many parts of the country, more than 400 forest fires continue to burn. They’re the holdovers of a devastating summer that broke records for its fiery destruction. As a result of climate change, there will probably be more record-breaking in the years ahead.

The health system is one of Canada’s biggest employers, and it is time to review its climate impact. Our health system is at great risk due to climate change. Nearly half of our health-care facilities were built more than 50 years ago, making them especially susceptible to climate change. Wildfires can affect hospital ventilation, increase admissions due to smoke-related health issues, and threaten hospital infrastructure. The supply chain for essential hospital resources can also be disrupted. Just a few months ago, the 100-bed Stanton Territorial Hospital in Yellowknife, N.W.T., had to evacuate because of wildfires. With resources already spread thin, patients and providers are ill equipped to face these environmental challenges.

It’s timely that the United Nations’ COP28 climate change event in Dubai on Nov. 30–Dec. 12 will feature its first-ever day dedicated to health, putting a spotlight on how climate change and health are inextricably linked.

Canada’s health-care system is not just a victim of climate change, affected by the strain of increased admissions and environmental threats. It is also one of the worst contributors, responsible for an estimated 4.6 per cent of national greenhouse gas emissions, more than aviation and shipping. Medical waste, anesthetics, and an enormous supply chain are just some of the ways the health system has contributed to climate change. If global health care were a country, it would be the fifth-highest carbon emitter in the world.

The health system is meant to improve health, not contribute to harm. It’s essential that governments and health-care leaders work to “green” the health system to help reduce our own carbon footprint. We cannot afford to wait any longer for bold action.

That’s why the Canadian Medical Association is calling for the federal government to create a climate and health secretariat. By linking Environment and Climate Change Canada, Health Canada, Infrastructure Canada, and other federal partners, and working with provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments and partners, a secretariat could develop a pan-Canadian approach to address the health impacts of climate change and create a climate-resilient and low-carbon sustainable health system. This includes building a climate-resilient health workforce—meaning enough staff, capacity, and planning to address climate emergencies.

Other jurisdictions are well ahead of us in greening their health systems. In 2020, England’s National Health Service (NHS) became the world’s first health service to commit to reaching carbon net zero. In a

single year following that commitment, the NHS reported reducing its emissions equivalent to powering 1.1 million homes annually.

While England has a single health service compared with Canada’s 13 provincial and territorial health ministries, the NHS does provide a good example of how climate change mitigation initiatives can be successful when properly funded, staffed, translated into law and regionally delivered. With a co-ordinated, national approach, governments and partners could work toward making Canada a leader in

reducing its health-system-related carbon footprint.

We must act with urgency. Earlier this month, Jerry DeMarco, federal commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, reported that the federal government will miss its 2030 target to cut carbon emissions by at least 40 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. He noted that Canada is the only G7 country not to achieve any emissions reductions since 1990.

“The need to reverse the trend on Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions has grown only more pressing,” DeMarco said. “This is

not my first time sounding the alarm, and I will continue to do so until Canada turns the tide.”

Our health-care system can no longer afford to be part of the problem. To implement effective solutions to clean up its pollution, we urgently need the resources and a solid plan to reduce medical-related emissions.

Canada cannot solve climate change on its own. But we can do our part and live up to our national commitments. Greening our health-care system is one way we can do that. By working aggressively to mitigate climate change here at home while collaborating at the international level, we ensure we’re all working toward the same goal of a healthy, thriving planet for generations to come. We can set an example and lead the way, but we must do so with the same urgency with which we meet our now-annual extreme forest fire seasons.

Dr. Kathleen Ross is a family physician in Coquitlam and New Westminster, B.C., and the president of the Canadian Medical Association.

The Hill Times

ADVERTISEMENT

A CALL TO ACTION: THE CRITICAL PUSH FOR GROCERY CODE ADVANCEMENT

Opinion Editorial by Michael Graydon, CEO of Food, Health & Consumer Products of Canada

As the CEO of Food, Health & Consumer Products of Canada and the Co-Chair of the Grocery Code Steering Committee, I’ve been deeply involved in the development of the Grocery Code of Conduct over the past three years. This journey represents not just a policy shift but a transformative moment for the Canadian grocery industry, one that holds the promise of reshaping it for the collective good.

Over these years, it has become increasingly clear that the imbalance between the handful of corporations that control 80% of Canada’s grocery marketplace and the suppliers that work with them must be addressed. It has long stifled competition and hindered innovation, hurting Canadians and industry as a whole. The protracted and intensive negotiations for the Grocery Code of Conduct, requiring compromises from all sides, reflects our united effort to address and rectify this deep-seated issue.

However, the path has not been without challenges. Some retailers have lost sight or chosen to ignore, the Code’s fundamental intent and have sought amendments that risk diluting its purpose. This resistance is grounded in a desire to retain full control of the retailer/supplier relationship. Their actions perpetuate the very imbalances the Code aims to resolve and in doing so, threatens the mission initially laid down by the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers.

The Code itself is not merely a set of new rules; it represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to correct historical imbalances within our industry. Its development has been a collaborative effort, with retailers like Metro and Sobeys playing a crucial role, showing an understanding of the need for significant change. A successful code requires a cultural transformation across the supply chain, rooted in the desire to create more economic certainty for manufacturers, agricultural producers, and Independent retailers.

A key aspect of the Code is its potential to empower independent retailers. By fostering a more dynamic and competitive marketplace through fair supply, the Code aligns with the

government’s goal of promoting fair competition in all sectors, including grocery retail. There are no foreign-based grocery retailers lined up to enter the Canadian market. If we are to achieve the goal of fostering more competition, a vibrant Independent retail channel is our only answer. We must find ways to make this happen.

The successful implementation of similar codes in the UK and Australia also provided valuable lessons, demonstrating that changes in the dynamics between retailers, suppliers, and consumers can lead to a healthier industry ecosystem without negatively impacting financial stability. We should take confidence from these markets where the code has impacted inflation through consumer price stabilization and created a business environment focused on end-to-end value and efficiencies. That win-win-win scenario drove investment in innovation and created consumer value in multiple ways. Those choosing to focus on the negative implications of the code, are ignoring the obvious and resisting progress to further their own goals.

The advancements made by Metro and Sobeys in supporting the Code are commendable, yet there remains room for further growth. For the Code to be truly effective, it must be based on the principle of full inclusion, applicable to all products, reinforcing the ideal that a supportive code benefits every aspect of a retailer’s business. The treatment of no-food suppliers is the same as their food counterparts. They too need to support the code to manage their relationship with the retailers. This code must be category agnostic and not a pick-and-choose exercise.

Despite our advances, we face the potential setback of a few major players not participating initially. The code will establish retail competitive advantage for those who sign on. Retailers that decide not to join will yield advantage to their competitors. Nevertheless, we remain committed to moving forward. The principles embedded in the Code have the potential to bring considerable benefits to all involved, and we are prepared to work with government to explore regulatory solutions, if necessary, though our preference is for a voluntary, collaborative approach. Accountability is a key factor moving forward. For those who opt out, it’s essential that Canadians and government ask why? Why say no to a proven and transformative solution that promises widespread benefits to retailers, suppliers, and most importantly, Canadian consumers?

The Grocery Code of Conduct is a long-overdue commitment to a more equitable and prosperous grocery sector in Canada. Its time is now - let’s get this done.



News

‘Goodwill’ remains on both sides in pharmacare talks, despite political pressures facing Liberals and NDP, say observers

The NDP doesn’t want to cut talks short ‘just to meet the deadline,’ but remains firm on the issue of universal coverage, says former NDP staffer Mélanie Richer.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Despite recent exchanges in the media between the Liberals and the New Democrats on the status of their pharmacare negotiations, there remains “goodwill” on both sides, and talks are productive enough to warrant going beyond the end-of-year deadline, says a former NDP staffer.

Mélanie Richer, who served as director of communications in the office of the NDP leader at the time when the supply-and-confidence agreement between the Liberals and NDP was negotiated, and is now a senior consultant at Earncliffe Strategies, said given the current progress in the talks, the NDP is more focused on trying to achieve its core vision for pharmacare than it is on the date a deal is reached.

“What I’m hearing from New Democrats is that conversa-



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, and NDP leader Jagmeet Singh pledged in their supply-and-confidence agreement to pass a pharamacare bill by the end of 2023. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

tions are going well, and New Democrats do want to meet the deadline this year, but as those conversations continue to do well you don’t want to cut them short just to meet the deadline,” said Richer. “So if it comes Jan. 8 instead of Dec. 18, I think that’s still

okay, as long as the principles of pharmacare are included, and New Democrats can say we got the best for people.”

The supply-and-confidence agreement between the Liberals and NDP commits the parties to “passing a Canada Pharmacare Act by the end of 2023 and then tasking the National Drug Agency to develop a national formulary of essential medicines and bulk purchasing plan by the end of the agreement.” However, in a Nov. 27 Canadian Press story, NDP spokesperson Alana Cahill said a first draft of that bill from the Liberals “missed the mark” because it didn’t guarantee universal coverage, something her party had been “very clear” about.

“If more time is required, we expect more results for Canadians,” added Cahill in that story.

On Nov. 28, Government House Leader Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.) and Health Minister Mark Holland (Ajax, Ont.) both indicated that they did not expect pharmacare legislation to be passed by the end of the year, but Holland left the door open to a bill being introduced before the House rises in December, calling the conversations to date “fruitful and positive.”

Richer said, with the NDP having made its comments on Nov. 27, the government “didn’t really

have any choice but to answer” publicly. However, she said, it appears that the purpose of these exchanges in the press may be to offer each other some mutual coverage, and to set expectations that the talks will keep going.

“I think folks genuinely are having this conversation in good

faith, and it’s the realistic nature of they’re running out of runway here,” she said.

Both parties must navigate the political pressures they are facing as they sort out a mutually satisfactory policy approach.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) received a clear message from his party base at its October convention. A motion passed that the party should walk away from the deal with the Liberals if the government does not deliver universal pharmacare.

Meanwhile, the Liberal government is facing calls to restrain spending, as well as sagging poll numbers which follow months of high interest rates and persistent inflation—factors that may motivate it to make this Parliament last longer in hopes of more favourable political and economic conditions before going out on the campaign trail.

Former Liberal Hill staffer Muhammed Ali, who is now a vice-president at Crestview Strategy, said these pressures have an impact on both parties.

“For sure [the Liberals] need to keep [the NDP] on side so they can continue to push through their own priorities and legislation,” said Ali. “The thing, though, is that the NDP have as much to lose in some ways, because right now, if an election were held today, based upon polls, there’s a Conservative majority.”

“There’s no room for the NDP to really influence anything in that space,” he added. “So they have as much incentive to make this work because they have an opportunity to get a couple more things through the door ... and they won’t have this level of collaboration and, quite frankly, access to the decision-making that government gets to make under a Conservative [government]. ... So that’s why you’re seeing this sort of tension persist.”

However, said Richer, while she believes the NDP is prepared to offer some leeway on the timeline, when it comes to the universality of the plan, she believes that remains a hard line.

“Universal to New Democrats means universal,” she said. “It doesn’t mean the way that the Liberals have been applying it” in the sense that everybody will be covered, but by a mix of private and public benefits.

Three main policy levers available: UBC prof

When it comes to the details of the policy options the Liberals and NDP may be negotiating, the broadest range of options runs from universal single-payer coverage for every Canadian through to a variety of ‘fill-in-the-gaps’ or means-tested approaches. Each of these options has many varieties for how such a policy could be structured.

Michael Law, a University of British Columbia professor who holds the Canada Research Chair in Access to Medicines, told *The Hill Times* that when it comes to structuring any pharamacare plan, there are three main policy levers to be used: who will be cov-



Mélanie Richer, left, pictured on the Hill on Dec. 2, 2021, with NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh when she was his director of communications. Richer told *The Hill Times* that there’s ‘goodwill’ on both sides of the pharmacare talks. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Former Liberal staffer Muhammed Ali said both the Liberals and NDP have incentives to make their agreement and the current Parliament last longer. Photograph courtesy of Muhammed Ali

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

ered, what will be covered, and how much will be covered.

He said that, generally, a program will be considered universal if, in regards to the first criteria, it offers coverage to everyone living in a jurisdiction. However, even such a universal plan may only cover a small list of medicines or require significant co-payments that could vary by income level. This means there are a range of policy options to be considered that will affect the cost of the program and degree of coverage it will offer.

“If the NDP has sort of drawn a red line around the idea that it must cover everyone, then really what we’re talking about is modifications to the other two dimensions,” said Law.

He added that the NDP’s rejection of the Liberals’ first proposal may indicate the government had tried to present a fill-the-gaps approach.

Danyaal Raza, past chair of Canadian Doctors for Medicare and a family physician with Unity Health Toronto, told *The Hill Times* that he favours a universal approach, and said there are several drawbacks to fill-in-the-gaps.

Raza called universal approaches to medicare, such as the one outlined in the Hoskins Report—commissioned by the Liberal government during its first mandate and delivered in June 2019—“an example of fundamental structural reform” needed at a time when Canada cannot “continue with the status quo in health care.”



UBC professor Michael Law there are three main policy levers that governments have to work with when crafting pharmacare plans. *Photography courtesy of UBC*



Danyaal Raza, past chair of Canadian Doctors for Medicare, said ‘fundamental structural reform’ like universal pharmacare is needed to address the healthcare crisis. *Photograph courtesy of Twitter*

“We have a number of structural issues with medication costs and access in Canada that the fill-the-gaps approach doesn’t address,” said Raza. “We have amongst the highest per capita drug costs in the world and so one of the things that a single-payer universal public plan does—it takes advantage of things like bulk buying, using evidence to make sure we’re paying for only the most effective drugs and not just the ones that are newest with the shiniest marketing campaigns.”

However, Rosalie Wyonch, a senior policy analyst at the C.D. Howe Institute who leads the organization’s Health Policy Council and Research Initiative, said a fill-in-the-gaps approach would “achieve the goal of providing universal coverage” while “not disrupting the part of our drug insurance system that works reasonably well already.”

“Private insurers will spend spend about \$14-billion on prescription drugs in 2022,” said Wyonch. “And moving that \$14-billion from the private market onto government budgets isn’t necessarily the best idea when we’re in a fiscally constrained environment.”

Wyonch argued that a fill-in-the-gaps approach also achieves better outcomes. As an example, she pointed to a program offered by the Ontario government for youth aged 25 and under. That program was initially brought in as the first payer, but changed to be a second-payer after private insurance because some families found they had a harder time accessing medicines when they were required to go through the public payer as their first line of contact. She added that the public formulary in Quebec has access to far fewer drugs than most private formularies which are often also able to acquire new drugs more quickly.

Absence of pharmacare from fiscal update not a concern: Richer

Richer noted that the absence of pharmacare from the recent fiscal update was not a concern for New Democrats, and that the funding does not need to flow right away.

“There actually isn’t any money attached to pharmacare in the supply-and-confidence agreement,” said Richer, noting instead the key piece is establishing the “framework.”

“So the fact that there’s no money there isn’t actually surprising. That wouldn’t come for for a few years still,” said Richer. “Making sure that we get the framework right would be important for the NDP, so that if and when they are elected, and they do bring in a pharmacare program, they have a good foundation to build off of instead of this kind of mismatched approach that the Liberals have put forward.”

Ali suggested the NDP may want to make the current Parliament last longer so that, if a pharmacare program is introduced within this Parliament’s lifecycle, there will be more time for it to become “embedded into people’s psyches,” making it more difficult for a possible future Conservative government to consider reversing.

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A Pivotal Moment to Increase Access to Oral Health Care

Our guiding principles remain the same, that any federally funded dental care program should:

- be compatible with a holistic approach to oral health that acknowledges the interconnection between oral health and general health and well-being;
- promote patient-centred care and a patient’s right to choose their provider;
- prioritize preventative care; and
- support the delivery of care primarily through the existing network of dental offices, supplemented as needed by public clinics.

A critical recommendation was that a federally funded program should not create additional administrative burdens for dental offices which could delay the provision of care. Any patient eligible for a federally funded program should be assessed quickly and easily during a dental appointment. Also, patients should not have to return to the dental office on another day to continue their care due to having to wait for approvals to proceed with their treatment plan. Historically, the administrative aspects of public dental plans have been cumbersome, leading to delays or barriers to care for vulnerable populations. This cannot be the case for CDCP patients. This program should simplify the delivery of care, not complicate it.

Dentists are front-line health care providers in communities throughout Canada, and these dentists need to have their voices heard. The CDA is the national voice for dentistry, representing over 21,000 dentists from coast to coast. Our profession will be asked to deliver treatment and must be partners in this project which has the potential to help millions of eligible Canadian residents.

The CDCP is estimated to cost \$13 billion over 5 years which represents a significant investment of public funding. This investment can reduce the burden on the overall health care system, if done right. Easier access to comprehensive care reduces the risk of painful and costly dental problems. It also lessens the dental patient load in hospital emergency departments, saving costs and reducing the strain on the broader health care system.

A program that allows dentists to focus on what we do best—caring for our patients—provides Canadians with the best value from this historic investment. CDA wants to acknowledge the Hon. Mark Holland, the Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, NDP Health Critic Don Davies, members of the Standing Committee on Health, and all parliamentarians for understanding the importance of oral health and working to remove barriers to accessing oral health care. We believe all those involved want to see this important investment be used successfully for patients in need.

Likely, work will still need to be done and CDA will continue to be a strong partner to the Government of Canada. The dentists of Canada want to see the CDCP work from the time of its implementation and fear the time is running out. Our advice and expertise remain on offer to all stakeholders engaged in the creation of this program. The Government of Canada needs to get this right to ensure good oral health for Canadians.



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Editorial

Dial down the nonsense in the House before it's too late

Politicians don't have to like their political opponents, but they should at the very least acknowledge that they're all in the job for the same reason.

On Oct. 7, Hamas staged a violent surprise attack on Israeli military and civilian targets, murdering, kidnapping, raping, and mutilating their victims. It includes in its founding charter a belief in the obliteration of Israel.

According to Conservative MP Jake Stewart, the NDP supports these terrorists. After NDP MP Heather McPherson and Liberal MP Chris Bittle objected to this assertion, Stewart stood up and said it again.

House Speaker Greg Fergus says that Stewart's words were unparliamentary, and the MP will not be recognized until he apologizes in writing.

On Feb. 24, 2022, Russia launched a massive invasion of Ukraine, eight years into an ongoing war in Crimea and Ukraine's eastern frontier. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine says more than 10,000 civilians have been killed since that invasion started, and refugees have fled across the globe, including to Canada. There have been allegations of kidnappings, and of deliberate targeting of civilians.

After Conservative MPs voted against a free trade deal with Ukraine on Nov. 21, Government House Leader Karina Gould suggested that it was because part of the party's caucus was "pro-Russia and anti-Ukraine."

Is this where we are? Have we decided it is now acceptable to accuse political opponents of support for dictators, murderers, and terrorists if they vote the other way?

From their well-compensated seats, MPs might be comfortable peddling this nonsense, treating these debates as a game for which there are no consequences. But what they are saying to their supporters and to voters is down-right dangerous.

As tired as comparisons to the United States are, one need only look across the border to see the consequences of ludicrous political rhetoric that paints opposing parties as villains. A not-insignificant percentage of that country believes that the party in power is there due to a stolen election, while some even seem to think senior leaders belong to a pedophilic cult.

Every time a charge is made that a Canadian MP supports terrorism, or backs an authoritarian, land-grabbing regime, or is a traitor, a tyrant, or a dictator, the social fabric tears that little bit more.

If this continues, it's only a matter of time before someone who isn't paid almost four times the average salary, who finds themselves in a more precarious financial or social situation, and who doesn't see the rhetoric for the political theatre it is tries to take action when people who should know better tell them that their opponents are a violent threat.

Enough.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Canada doesn't have climate leaders: Bill Henderson

Re: "Will the real climate leaders stand up?" (*The Hill Times*, by Keith Brooks and Aly Hyder Ali, Nov. 27). We don't have climate leaders. Canada has never met its (woefully inadequate) climate targets. We continue to do terrible damage to every future generation and the species with which we share creation.

If we were reasonable and responsible and had leaders with vision, we would have long ago stopped building new fossil fuel infrastructure and began to wind down production, radically reformed farming and forestry, and began a powering-down evolution past a non-sustainable stuff economy.

Leadership would have helped us recognize that climate change was an



Canada's federal Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault, pictured on the Hill. Letter-writer Bill Henderson, who is an environmental activist, says there is no real political leadership on fighting climate change in Canada. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

divisive carbon tax; half measures like the oil and gas cap, foolishness like selling LNG to Asia as a climate solution, SMRs and magical green technology, all useless distractions helping buttress society-wide denial about what we should and need to do. With not a hint of needed leadership in any government in the nation.

Bill Henderson
Gibsons, B.C.

Canadians should be afraid of radiation: Frank Greening

Re: "We can manage predictable radiation: Canadian Nuclear Society," (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 15, 2023, letter to the editor. The gist of this CNS letter to *The Hill Times* appears to be: we should not be afraid of radiation because it's predictable and we can manage it.

I have to say that when it comes to radiation exposures at nuclear power stations, the Canadian nuclear industry has proven time and again that radiation exposures to workers have often been quite unpredictable and totally mismanaged. As proof of this assertion consider what happened at Pickering Nuclear Generating Station (NGS) in March 1985 and at Bruce NGS in January 2010.

In the case of the Pickering NGS 1985 event, workers involved in the refurbishment of Units 1 and 2 were exposed to airborne beta-active particulate.

Most unfortunately for the CNSC, there is ample evidence that the Bruce alpha exposure event was *not* unforeseen. Indeed, in November 2009, the CNSC reported that a routine survey during refurbishment operations at the Bruce Nuclear Generating Station detected the presence of radioactive alpha contamination in the Unit 1 reactor vault. Nevertheless, both Bruce Power and the CNSC proceeded with the Unit 1 refurbishment.

I would say that Canadians should be afraid of radiation when our very own nuclear industry and the regulatory body, responsible for the safety of nuclear facilities, appear to be incapable of protecting nuclear workers from needless radiation exposures during reactor refurbishments.

Dr. Frank Greening
Hamilton, Ont.



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Good news story gets buried in anti-Trudeau wave

Whatever the Liberals do these days—even if it is groundbreaking, and puts \$100-million into the creation of domestic news stories—they cannot win.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—The government's Google announcement last week should have been met with applause all the way around.

Canada has always been a leader in new ideas and instru-

ments to protect culture, and obviously the survival of local news is a key to spawning more Canadian content.

But whatever the Liberals do these days—even if it is groundbreaking, and puts \$100-million into the creation of domestic news stories—they cannot win.

Pundits variously described the agreement with Google as “dodging a bullet,” a self-inflicted wound, and another cock-up by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Talk about kicking a guy while he is down.

We know the numbers for the Liberals look grim. According to the latest polls, they are running neck and neck with the New Democratic Party. But how that unpopularity can be expanded to include the government's Google agreement is pretty hard to swallow.

The Canadian government has followed the lead of Australia, which was the first country in the world to regulate the social media landscape in an attempt

to secure funding for domestic content.

This is one area where Canadians have a fair bit of experience, and the decision to take on Google, Meta, and the other social media behemoths was a courageous one. Some said the Liberals should just wait to take their lead from the G7 or the OECD. That advice would have meant no action, as the Americans are usually opposed to public intrusion into what they consider their media space.

The European Union has been making its own inroads into taking on big tech. The EU fought Apple in a decision last year as it moved to standardize chargers for smartphones and tablets sold in Europe. Canada announced a similar decision in the last budget, and the European market of 450 million people will receive a standard USB Type-C charging port by the end of next year.

As Europe takes on Apple, Canada goes for Google. One

jaded journalist went so far as to claim the Canadian government was involved in a “shakedown.”

Globe and Mail columnist Andrew Coyne tweeted that there was “no actual legal, logical or moral case for forcing Google to underwrite the Canadian media.” He called the agreement “strictly opportunistic: 1) Google has a lot of money. 2) We want some. 3) Make them give it to us.”

In fact, there is plenty of precedent for content transmitters to chip in on Canadian story development. That model has been used in the television world since the private cable industry was required to establish a fund to support Canadian content.

Their fund morphed into partnership with the government via the Canadian Television Fund, and then into the Canada Media Fund, which currently invests \$366-million annually into media production. That investment triggers \$1.7-billion in industry activity in Canada, providing employment for more than 244,000 people.

As television and streaming collided through the introduction of internet media content creation, it made sense for the Canadian government to require new media players to do their part in the creation of content. As Google traffics in the news, it can also help to pay for local news creation, using a tried-and-true model that will now likely be copied by dozens of other jurisdictions around the world.

The Liberal government should be congratulated as a leader in public policy on the issue of social media transmission. Instead, even though last week's announcement will assist in the survival of local media outlets, there were no kudos for Trudeau.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has already promised to trash the Google deal with the same vision he uses to promise defunding of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The Google story was not big news across the country as it was an inside-the-beltway negotiation, but the outcome of this new investment could be critical for the survival of local media in the next decade.

Most people may not care about the intricacies of public policy when it comes to the creation of Canadian content. But without government leadership, the chance to grow a dying news industry is slim to none.

Last week's announcement should have been met with at least one day of positive coverage. But when the media decides that it is time for a change at the top, nothing—not even a trailblazing move to save media—will kill the main story.

The appetite for political change is fuelled by negative Trudeau stories on a daily basis.

That is not going to change.

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

The Hill Times

Polls as propaganda

If a Conservative Party supporter gets the idea that all the polls are showing his leader is going to win the next election, he'd be more likely to give a big financial donation, since that'd seem like a good investment.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKVILLE, ONT.—As we all know, there's nothing the media loves more than to dissect, analyze, and otherwise discuss the latest in public opinion polls.

Indeed, whenever a poll comes out, it's guaranteed to trigger a



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre. There's nothing the media loves more than to dissect, analyze, and discuss the latest in public opinion polls, writes Gerry Nicholls. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



flood of news stories telling us who's winning and who's losing, while also explaining whether the winners can hold on, or if the losers can catch up.

It's standard “politics of politics” stuff.

But what about political professionals, the people who make campaigns run and who plot a party's communications tactics, i.e., the strategists, consultants, advisers, etc. What's their take on all those polls that get splashed about in the media?

Do they care about them as much as journalists do?

Well, the answer is they do, but in a way you might not expect.

Allow me to explain.

First off, any consultant who is part of a political team that has the resources to do regular internal polling will see public polls as basically an interesting—but superficial—reflection of public attitudes.

After all, the internal polls that political parties commission are usually much more rigorous and dig much deeper into public attitudes than your standard public poll.

And that matters.

For instance, a public poll might show that Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives lead Justin Trudeau's Liberals by a whopping

15 per cent, which, on the surface, is clearly terrible news for the Liberals as it seems to suggest they're doomed to lose the next election.

However, a Liberal-commissioned poll, one that asks more strategic questions than a public poll, might find that, while Poilievre does in fact have a lead over Trudeau, his support also lacks intensity.

In other words, through their own polling, Liberal strategists might find that those voters who say they support Poilievre still harbour some misgivings when it comes to his policies or to his personality, that he has, in short, certain weaknesses that can be exploited, which could then open a path to Liberal victory.

This explains why Trudeau might hang onto his job despite all those terrible polls that have come out recently showing him lagging way behind Poilievre.

It's possible his consultants are telling him, “Forget about those bad public polls. Our internal polls are telling us a different story.”

So, given all that, why do strategists care about public opinion polls?

The answer is they make for good propaganda.

For example, if I was working as part of Poilievre's team, I'd be doing everything possible to publicize and promote all those

public polls showing him in the lead.

I'd mention them in fundraising letters, I'd put them in ads, I'd tout them on social media because I'd want to take advantage of the general desire amongst people to be part of a winning team, a.k.a., The Bandwagon Effect.

So, if a Conservative Party supporter gets the idea that all the polls are showing his leader is a rising star who's going to win the next election, he'd be more likely to give a big financial donation since that'd seem like a good investment.

Meanwhile, any undecided voters out there who want to jump on a moving train might see Poilievre's upswing in the polls and decide they, too, will support the Conservatives.

Now, let me stress that consultants who use public polls as propaganda don't necessarily have to believe they're accurate.

While working on a campaign, I once asked our consultant which public poll I should mention in a fundraising letter.

He laughed and responded, “whichever one makes us look the best.”

And that tells you all you need to know about how consultants view public polls.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

Opinion

Poilievre continues to place Trudeau on Canada's 'most unwanted' list and his strategy appears to be working



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, pictured, has opened a new 'American card' front in his crusade to paint Justin Trudeau as a feckless, spoiled brat, writes Michael Harris. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Pierre Poilievre's usual modus operandi is to take a page from Donald Trump 1.0: the country is going to hell in a handbasket, and it's all the fault of one man.

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre continues to place Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Canada's "most unwanted" list.

Poilievre's usual modus operandi is to take a page from Donald Trump 1.0: the country is going to hell in a handbasket, and it's all the fault of one man. Substitute the name "Justin Trudeau" for "Joe Biden," and it's the same argument as Trump is now making to his deluded followers.

The everything-is-broken mantra comes with a slogan in Canada: "just not worth the cost." Conservative MPs repeat it so much that instead of resembling a

government-in-waiting, they look more like vacuous parrots.

If Poilievre's point is that he cares about the deficit and Trudeau doesn't, there is a small irony here. After two terms of Stephen Harper, the allegedly fiscally responsible Conservatives added \$150-billion to the national debt—all without a pandemic to deal with.

Poilievre's Republican cousins are now in full cry against the debt and deficits south of the border. But these same people cheered on then-president Trump as he added more than \$7-trillion to the national debt in just one term. Poilievre, who now decries the deficit in this country, was part of a government that couldn't keep to the budget, either.

The lesson here? Political parties care most about the deficit when they are in opposition where they use it to shoehorn their way into power. Once in government, they undergo a seachange. The zealous guardians of taxpayers' money become big spenders once they get their sweaty hands on the national credit card.

As for fiscal accountability, the Conservative Party didn't offer much of that while it was calling the shots for nearly 10 years. When Harper was prepared to splurge on Lockheed Martin's F-35 stealth fighter jet—then an experimental aircraft—he wouldn't even tell the House of Commons and Canadians how much it would cost. Nor did the

Harper government seem to know if there was a contract for what at the time was the most expensive military acquisition in our nation's history.

Notwithstanding that, and judging by the polls, Poilievre has convinced a lot of Canadians that Trudeau and his government's policies have put people in breadlines, turned filling the gas tank into a mortgage payment, and made winning the lottery the only way to buy a house or rent an apartment. This is another tried and true political tactic to upend a government.

Negative hyperbole is an opposition party's best friend. It is also intellectually dishonest, and deeply so. Here is what it comes down to.

If a government happens to be in power when the economy is booming, employment is strong, wages are high, and the future looks bright, that government will get the credit. Conversely, if a government is in power during a recession, or a period of high inflation, if jobs are hard to find, and people lock themselves in the basement when they see the oil truck coming, then it will get the blame. Just ask Bob Rae.

But the fact is a great many external factors decide the health of any domestic economy, all the more so since commerce has become globally intertwined. So when times are good, it isn't just because the national government created the prosperity by policy

alone. And when the economy goes south, it isn't only because of poor government policy.

The truth is, getting the credit or the blame as a government is to a high degree based on external factors beyond anyone's control. If, for example, the Saudis decide to cut oil production, gas costs more. When it comes to governments, credit or blame is part illusion either way. The fate of politicians depends more on happenstance than planning. It is serendipity.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect example. No one in government saw it coming, nor its astonishing consequences. According to the World Health Organization, the pandemic killed three million people worldwide, including 52,000 in Canada.

Apart from the dreadful human cost, the pandemic virtually impacted every government in the world in two important ways: massive unforeseen expenditures, and delays in the worldwide supply chain. Without the benefit of a precedent, governments had to engage in major spending—none of it budgeted—to fight COVID. It came down to a judgment call.

The Trudeau government went big. It poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the fight. In retrospect, critics claim the Liberals "wasted" millions on the pandemic, and some have even called for a forensic audit. The critics also claim that pandemic spending was inflationary. What they never mention is what the C.D. Howe In-

stitute reported: the actions of the Trudeau government in responding to the pandemic saved 35,000 Canadian lives.

Was it worth it? It depends on values. Does one view the issue through a human or a fiscal lens? The cynic, as Oscar Wilde brilliantly observed in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, is a person "who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." Sound a bit like someone you know?

Lately, the Conservative leader has opened a new front in his crusade to paint Trudeau as a feckless, spoiled brat, who is ruining the country with his tax-and-spend ways. Call it the American card.

Poilievre has taken to comparing the allegedly moribund Canadian economy to the allegedly buoyant U.S. economy. His proof? Rents are going down in America, but are rising in Canada. The U.S. economy is growing, while ours is stagnating.

What a strange tactic for Poilievre to adopt. One wonders if he has really thought through holding up the U.S. as the good example, and Canada as the bad one.

For starters, Poilievre purports to obsess over the deficit in this country. But the country he holds up as a model is in fact the most indebted country in the world. By comparison, Canada is the ninth most indebted country.

Canada's national debt stands at \$1.43-trillion. The U.S. national debt is \$33-trillion, which is roughly equivalent to the combined economies of China, Japan, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

Interest payments on that debt consume a whopping \$2-billion a day. Washington is also running an annual deficit of nearly \$2-trillion. Poilievre's model country hasn't had a balanced budget since 2001.

Citing "fiscal deterioration" over the next three years, Fitch Ratings downgraded the U.S. credit-rating, from triple-A to AA-plus. Canada's credit rating remains triple-A. Moody's also downgraded the U.S. credit outlook, changing its designation from "stable" to "negative."

And on the social side, Poilievre's model country is closing in on 700 mass shootings for the year. How admirable is that?

Instead of casting the appropriate lights and shadows over the facts for partisan advantage, Poilievre should do some reading. According to multiple sources, including USNEWS, Canada ranks No. 2 in the world as best overall country, and No. 3 as the country with the best quality of life.

That doesn't sound much like Poilievre's endless headline, where the kids don't have warm winter clothes, and no one can afford shelter.

It remains to be seen if Poilievre can ride half-truths, grievances, and personal attacks all the way to 24 Sussex Dr.

If he can, Canada will look a lot more like the America he so admires.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist. *The Hill Times*

How do we create cities where everyone can thrive?



An aerial view of Vancouver, B.C. Civic amenities like parks, roads, housing, transit and community centres can be designed with innovations that serve all citizens, but their needs must first be understood, write Amy Juschka, Tesicca Truong, and Shauna Shortt. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Our call to action for local governments is to find ways to engage more diverse voices and perspectives as they work towards addressing the complex challenges we face.

Amy Juschka, Tesicca Truong & Shauna Shortt

Opinion



At YWCA Metro Vancouver, we grew tired of reflecting on this question and decided to take action. For the last two-and-a-half years, we've been leading YWCA City Shift, a project that calls on local decision-makers to transform our region into a place that has equitable op-

portunities for everyone to live safely and to thrive.

To do this, we need to simultaneously hear from a range of diverse voices at the municipal level, and embrace innovative solutions to the pressing challenges before us. The process isn't straightforward, there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and it will take time. There are, however, tools like gender-based analysis plus (GBA plus) that cities can use to accelerate the process.

YWCA City Shift recommends councils and city staff use GBA plus, or a similar tool, to assess systemic inequalities, and to help decision-makers identify the needs of diverse groups of people. It provides ways for policy leaders to consult the often underserved people they represent, while reflecting on how their own assumptions might be incomplete. Ultimately, it encourages better decisions that lead to more equitable outcomes.

While this tool helps to spotlight and correct the disparity between genders that persist in our society, the "plus" in the acronym acknowledges that this work is about more than just the differences between genders. Rather, it represents our varied characteristics—race, ability, age, socio-

economic standing—that intersect and contribute to who we are collectively, and how we experience life in cities.

Without this awareness, policy decisions often favour the people who make them, and exclude the considerations of those who don't have a seat at the table. Civic amenities like parks, roads, housing, transit and community centres can be designed with innovations that serve all citizens, but their needs must first be understood.

Women, for example, make up more than half the population, yet they remain underrepresented in local government, accounting for less than one quarter of Metro Vancouver mayors, and about 40 per cent of councillors. In eight of Metro Vancouver's 21 municipalities, including larger cities like Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Richmond and Surrey, less than one-third of councillors are women. In places like Vienna, Austria, however, where "gender mainstreaming" has been a priority since the 1990s, dozens of policies have passed that have made it fairer for young girls to enjoy playgrounds, mothers with small children to easily use sidewalks, and for everyone to feel safer walking at night.

Our most recent municipal elections saw some municipalities elect more racialized people and younger candidates, but our council chambers still don't reflect our communities. And people from marginalized groups tend to be even more excluded from traditional decision-making spaces. Until we have better representation, it's even more critical that those in leadership use equity-based tools like GBA plus.

Since we launched YWCA City Shift, we are beginning to see positive outcomes locally. The City of Burnaby, for example, is piloting GBA plus in the revamp of their Edmonds Town Centre Community Plan and public engagement process to incorporate feedback from a broad range of residents. Elsewhere in British Columbia, Port Moody, North Vancouver, Burnaby, and New Westminster put forward a resolution at this year's Union of B.C. Municipalities convention calling on local governments to address systemic inequities in our communities.

At the YWCA, we deliver housing, childcare, and employment and family services that help women and families live free from violence, and to gain financial stability. Women-led households are disproportionately in the lowest income bracket, and they are being significantly impacted by the increasing cost of living. For groups with intersecting barriers, such as Indigenous, racialized and newcomer women, women fleeing violence, women with disabilities, trans women and gender diverse people, these challenges are even more acute. Yet these communities are often overlooked in policy decisions about safe and affordable housing, reliable transit, accessible childcare, and inclusive community amenities.

Despite the challenges before us, we remain optimistic and encouraged. City councils prioritizing equity signals progress towards more inclusive spaces that more people can easily enjoy. They are an important step to addressing the root causes of social inequity and injustice, and they are pointing toward a future that we all want and deserve.

Our call to action for local governments is to find ways to engage more diverse voices and perspectives as they work towards addressing the complex challenges we face. We all benefit when there is diverse representation and a range of voices are heard. Amidst growing inequality, division and polarization, this is a critical time for bold and equitable leadership in Metro Vancouver and beyond.

Amy Juschka is the YWCA director of communications and advocacy. Tesicca Truong is the YWCA City Shift Community Advisory Council Member. Shauna Shortt is the YWCA's City Shift Project Lead.

The Hill Times

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Opinion

It's time for feds to make amends for historical inadequacies of First Nation education

From approximately 1982 to 2016, the federal government was aware that its funding of First Nation schools on reserves was inadequate. When schools were transferred to 'local,' or First Nation, control, many of the education supports and services did not follow the children. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



It is time to repair the damage caused to generations of First Nations students. This can be done, in part, by consulting with First Nations in determining how reparations can best be made.

Senator Mary Jane McCallum & Ron Phillips

Opinion



It is time for the federal government to make amends for the historical inadequacies of First

Nation education. In the December 2011 report from the Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (APPA), entitled *Reforming First Nations Education from Crisis to Hope*, the report states: "For over a century ... Canadian policies have eroded the traditional social and political systems of Aboriginal peoples. ... Once great nations, they have been relegated to reserves too small to sustain their prosperity and way of life. ... The residential school system ... that failed to educate Aboriginal children and deliberately disconnected them from their languages, cultures, and traditions, ripped them from their homes. ... Against this systemic onslaught, Aboriginal peoples were eventually 'welfarized.' And the result is this horrific dilemma that we face today."

The Canadian Constitution Act 1867 and 1982 assigns responsibility for education to both the federal government and to the provinces/territories. The provincial/territorial governments are

responsible for the vast majority of schools that fall within their region, with the federal government being responsible for Indians, (i.e., First Nations), the military (e.g., military bases, Royal Military College), and penitentiaries.

Over time, the provinces and territories developed comprehensive systems of education, including special education. Education laws, standards, and programs were developed, and adequate, regularly updated funding was provided. Schools were provided specialists, consultants, science labs, literacy and numeracy programs, and assessment programs (e.g., preschool screening, and grade level assessments). Students with special needs were identified by qualified specialists, and individual education programs were developed for them. Teachers and administrators had pensions and professional development opportunities.

Sadly, the Government of Canada refused to uphold their treaties, and failed in honouring

their constitutional educational responsibility to First Nations' children attending a federal (i.e., First Nation-managed) school on a First Nation/reserve. This inequity started to change in 2017.

From approximately 1982 to 2016, the federal government was aware that its funding of First Nation schools on reserves was inadequate. When schools were transferred to 'local,' or First Nation, control, many of the education supports and services did not follow the children. Many First Nation students with special needs were denied identification, assessment and programming support, and were often forced to move back to a provincial school to better meet their special needs. This meant attending a school outside of their home reserves.

The federal government required First Nation schools to provide the provincial standard of education programs and services, but refused to provide those schools with the provincial levels

of funding. No one has explained this inequity.

The funding shortfall has been estimated to be between \$3,000 to \$5,000 per student, per year. This shortfall had deleterious consequences for First Nation students and schools.

There was a constant turnover of teachers and administrators as they moved to provincial schools with higher salaries, pensions, and professional development opportunities.

Textbooks were not up to date. Technology, such as internet and computers, were difficult to obtain. School buildings were in need of major repair or replacement.

Not surprisingly, many First Nation students were not successful in school. Many of those who did graduate found that their Grade 12 certificate did not prepare them academically for post-secondary schooling. Many of the students who had to attend Grade 10 outside the reserve found that they did not meet the Grade 9 proficiency.

In 2018, the OECD secretary-general wrote "education is the cornerstone of individuals' progression through life. No one would refute that every child, every human being, deserves the same opportunities to gain skills and progress through society regardless of their gender, socio-economic, ethnic, or cultural background. Equity is indeed one of the fundamental values on which so many countries around the world have chosen to build their societies."

Unfortunately, the Canadian government denied First Nation children attending a First Nation school the same opportunities as other Canadian children. For decades, the federal government knowingly underfunded First Nation schools. This was despite the federal government owning reports and data, including a report from the Senate of Canada on First Nation education, highlighting the funding shortfalls for band schools.

Through this history of inadequately funding First Nation schools, billions of dollars were saved. It is time to repair the damage caused to these generations of First Nations students. This can be done, in part, by consulting with First Nations in determining how reparations can best be made.

This falls in line with the aforementioned APPA report, the second recommendation of which states: "The cost—in lost opportunities—is unacceptably high, both for First Nations and for Canada. This is a Canadian issue, not an Aboriginal issue, and we must all shoulder our responsibility as Canadians. This is an urgent matter in our shared history."

Senator Mary Jane McCallum is non-affiliated Senator for Manitoba, appointed to the Upper Chamber in 2017. Ron Phillips is an associate professor in education at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ont. His area of research is First Nation education.

The Hill Times



A forest fire in Mistissini, Que., on June 12, 2023. Canada is burning: the equivalent of five million footballs fields. This is the year that the lines between provincial wildfire firefighting and local structural firefighting blurred, write Ken McMullen and Tina Saryeddine. Photograph courtesy of Cpl. Marc-André Leclerc/DND

A burning platform for a national fire administration

Creating a Canadian Fire Administration could be one of the most consequential policy tools in the history of fire and emergency management in Canada. Fire chiefs are willing to help make this happen. We hope policy leaders will take our advice seriously.

Ken McMullen & Tina Saryeddine

Opinion



When the United States established its National Fire Administration in 1974, it was in response to the fire devastation

observed and then documented in a report called *America Burning* that was commissioned by then-president Richard Nixon.

Now Canada is burning: the equivalent of five million footballs fields. This is the year that the lines between provincial wildfire firefighting and local structural firefighting blurred; when the same individuals who might deploy to help elsewhere were needed at home; when volunteer firefighters relied upon for all hazard fire and emergency response locally were sought out by provincial wildland agencies; and firefighters had to choose between volunteering and attending to their day jobs, often paying out of pocket to volunteer.

This is also the year that we lost 9,000 experienced firefighters each with an average of 10-12 years of experience with them. Over half the country's fire departments deferred major equipment purchases for more than two years due to fiscal pressures; a quarter of fire departments reported using self-contained breathing apparatus and personal protective gear more than 15 years old, or having no dedicated washing machine or extractor from which to remove the equipment's toxic chemicals.

As far back as 2006, long before the worst wildfire season on record, the pandemics, and the tragedies at Fort McMurray, Alta.; Lac Mégantic, Que.; Île Verte, Que.; or Elliot Lake, Ont., fire chiefs noted that the technical complexity of events facing the fire service was changing so significantly that Canada needed a national fire administration. Two decades later the need has intensified, and the resolution seems prophetic.

Like other countries, many of Canada's positive and important federal policy directions—from climate adaptation to rapid housing development, to the transportation of dangerous goods, to innovation and building codes, changes in the explosive regulations, to electric vehicles, wildfire policy to firefighter wellness—are set by multiple departments within the federal government.

However, unlike comparator countries ranging from the U.S. to the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan, there is no single office department or administration that has a pulse on how all of these interact from a fire and emergency management perspective.

Fire and emergency response are usually focussed on what

happens on a policy or practice decision's "worst day." It doesn't matter how well-informed and well-intentioned the policy development process may have been. Whether it is the failure to recognize electric vehicle fires aren't extinguishable with water, or knowing how a new building code change affects radio signals between first responders, or that proposed explosive regulations are at cross-purposes to wildfire precautions, or even that some environmental efforts are wildfire hazards, accidents happen because of what was unknown or in a blind spot.

On a regular, systematic and national basis, Canada needs to be able to recognize, address, and co-ordinate fire and emergency management considerations across all federal policy departments as we move into the future. It may have been a good idea before, but it now essential.

However, a fire administration is not just about giving advice to federal departments. It's also about ensuring that the country's fire departments are prepared for the future. Particularly where the federal government has an explicit role related to fire—from firefighter mental health and cancer, to the transportation of dangerous goods,

to building codes, wildfires and other areas of practice—a national fire administration is needed. Similarly, a national fire administration can help fire departments stay apprised of policies and issues that will impact the sector. This is what other countries do.

The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre is a shining example of the art of the possible and a potential building block; however, of the two million fire and emergency-related calls, wildfire is only one of many hazards.

If you've read this far, you're hopefully thinking 'this is reasonable, but how do we get from here to there while optimizing the possibilities and minimizing the pitfalls?' On Dec. 5-6, fire chiefs from across the country will be on Parliament Hill to present their latest reports, *Towards a National Fire Administration*, and *The Great Canadian Fire Census 2023*.

To address the more immediate issues of volunteer retention and equipment, they will be asking the federal government to increase the volunteer firefighter and search and rescue tax credit; to bring back the former Joint Emergency Preparedness Program, and to fund FireSmart™, a program to help increase wildfire resilience.

The establishment of a Canadian Fire Administration could be one of the most consequential policy instruments in the history of fire and emergency management in Canada. Fire chiefs from across the country are willing to help make this happen. We hope policy leaders will take our offer and advice seriously.

Ken McMullen is president of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, and is the fire chief in Red Deer, Alta. Tina Saryeddine is executive director of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, and is an adjunct professor at the Telfer School of Management at the University of Ottawa.

The Hill Times

Opinion

Transitioning to a low-carbon world is one of the great game-changing challenges of our generation, but Liberals have failed to sell it

In the absence of blood-sweat-and-tears leadership, there is a dangerous gap emerging between what's needed and what we will achieve. It's not too late to succeed. But without broad public support, it's hard to succeed.

David
Crane

Canada &
the 21st Century



TORONTO—In setting out for the world climate change summit in Dubai, Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault was quick to portray Canada as a world leader in fighting climate change, boasting of an array of successes.

"Canada is successfully bending the curve on emissions that fuel climate change through a comprehensive, economy-wide set of solutions that include pollution pricing, historic investments include clean industry, clean electricity, less polluting transpor-

tation, cutting methane emissions and the first National Adaptation Strategy for dealing with the impacts of extreme weather," he declared in a Nov. 27 statement.

Canada, Guilbeault said, had made "significant advances in domestic climate action" including "strengthening carbon pollution pricing nationwide while returning all proceeds to Canadians, ensuring that most families get back more than they pay," and "building a clean electricity grid by 2035 through significant investment and prosed new regulations." At the same time, he boasted, Canada was "building a world-leading Canadian electric vehicle supply chain."

If this were an accurate description of where we stand, it would give us reason to be proud of our role in the global fight to avert catastrophic climate change, with all the devastating impacts that would follow—in food security, human health, access to water, climate migration, natural disasters, the loss of biodiversity, and huge impacts on coastal cities.

Sadly, Guilbeault's messaging is misleading. To be sure, the Trudeau government has been ambitious in its goals, bold in making carbon pricing a law, and generous in the level of public subsidy—with some accomplishments to which it can point. But overall, it has fallen short of its ambitions, reflecting both a failure of leadership, and a poor record in implementation of its policies and adequate transparency.

So while Guilbeault boasts about this nation's ambitious

carbon pricing plan, Canadian support for the carbon tax has fallen 11 percentage points since 2021. Just 45 per cent of Canadians support carbon pricing today, compared to 56 per cent in 2021, according to Angus Reid pollsters. Interestingly, 51 per cent of women and 39 per cent of men support carbon pricing, while 54 per cent of Canadians aged 18-34 support it, compared to 42 per cent of those aged 35-54, and 43 per cent of those 55 years or older, Angus Reid reports. Support is highest in Quebec at 59 per cent, and lowest in Saskatchewan at 30 per cent, with 42 per cent support in Ontario.

Should Pierre Poilievre lead the Conservatives to victory in the expected 2025 federal election, he has promised to "axe the tax," and pursue a policy much more favourable to the oil and gas industry, Canada's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions (28 per cent of emissions, with transportation accounting for another 22 per cent). In 2025, the price of carbon will add 21 cents to a litre of gasoline, compared to 14 cents in 2023, making it an even bigger target for opponents.

Since climate change is a key legacy ambition for the Liberals, what is remarkable is how little the Trudeau government has done to address public concerns and take on the critics. In provinces where the federal government provides rebates of the tax (all provinces except Quebec and British Columbia, which have their own carbon pricing systems), only 17 per cent of Canadians say they are satisfied with



Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault, pictured recently in a Hill scrum. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the rebate even though all the taxes collected are returned to taxpayers. According to Angus Reid, 34 per cent feel they pay more than they get back, 24 per cent aren't sure they received a rebate or know the amount, and 25 per cent say they have not received a rebate.

Clearly, pressures on household budgets and carbon pricing is a hard sell. But the Trudeau government has been lazy in explaining the rebate system or the big picture implications of climate change. The result is a broad pushback on climate action in this country. A recent article in *The Economist* magazine cited a poll from the Pew Research Centre in the United States showing that among 12 advanced economies, Canadians were third lowest in agreeing that climate was a "major threat" to their country while another poll it cited—by Ipsos—found that Canadians ranked 15th out of 16 countries in their willingness to pay more tax to help prevent climate change. Clearly, the Trudeau government has failed to build public support among the population on the critical importance of addressing climate chain, as well as failing to demonstrate how its various policies would or did generate results.

A recent report from Jerry DeMarco, Canada's commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, concluded that the federal government was "not on track" to meet its 2030 target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, with a 34 per

cent reduction feasible (but not assured). DeMarco found that just 45 per cent of climate programs had implementation deadlines, and did not target for expected emission reductions from almost all of its programs. In 2021, emissions were 659 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. To meet the government's 2030 target they would have to be cut to 439 megatonnes, a major challenge. In 2016, emissions amounted to 705 megatonnes.

In too many other instances the federal government has been extraordinarily slow in implementing promised measures, including the much-needed cap on emissions by the oil and gas industry, the details of the tax credit for carbon capture and storage, and the strengthened fossil fuel methane regulations. In other cases, the federal government has failed to explain how major initiatives will be financed, such as the clean electricity requirements.

Transitioning to a low-carbon world is one of the great game-changing challenges of our generation. This is disruptive, painful and—at the first round—expensive. The goal is essential. But in the absence of blood-sweat-and-tears leadership there is a dangerous gap emerging between what's needed, and what we will achieve. It's not too late to succeed. But time is not on our side and without broad public support it's hard to achieve success.

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



Climate scientist James Hansen has returned to tell us that it's bad news when it comes to how much warming we will get in the long run from doubling the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Photograph courtesy of Chris Bentley/Flickr

COP28 and climate science

Climate scientists are unanimously terrified by the speed at which things are moving, but also relieved that the crisis is finally getting some serious attention from both the public and the governments.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—At the opening of the United Nations' COP28 global climate summit, here are some thoughts about the state of climate science.

I have interviewed at least 60 leading climate scientists in a dozen countries over the past three years. They are unanimously terrified by the speed at which things are moving, but also relieved that the crisis is finally getting some serious attention

from both the public and the governments.

What might be useful at this point is a review of how the science has developed because it can be seen as a play in three acts. In the first act, beginning in the 1980s, global warming was identified as a potentially serious problem, but not one that required an emergency response.

Yes, greenhouse gases of human origin were warming the atmosphere, but it could be dealt with by modest reductions in emissions (five per cent) by the biggest-emitting countries. Developing countries could emit as much as they liked: it wouldn't be enough to do any harm.

That was the 1990s. Twenty years on, in 2015, things had changed a lot. The early support for the notion that "something must be done" had been undermined by a powerful campaign of climate change denial largely funded by the oil, gas, and coal industries.

At the same time, the emissions of the "developing countries" had soared as their economies shifted into high-speed growth. The biggest emitter is now China, not the United States, and India holds third place. Scientific understanding of how the atmosphere will react to a huge input of carbon dioxide and other

warming gases has expanded enormously.

It has also become clear that the climate can change abruptly as well as gradually. As the climate warmed up when we emerged from the last Ice Age, it made sudden leaps when various "tipping points" were crossed. Our warming is starting from an already much warmer climate, but we will almost certainly cross some tipping points, too.

We have to stay below those points at all costs because we would have no way of turning them off once they got going. Johan Rockström, the director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research that did most of the work on tipping points, sees our experience as a kind of journey.

"Thirty years of climate science has given us so much understanding, and what I now see very clearly as a red thread during that entire journey is that the more we learn about the Earth System, the more reason for concern we have ...

"In 2001, you see the best assessment of the risk of crossing catastrophic tipping points, of destabilizing the biosphere, is estimated to lie somewhere between +5°C and +6°C of warming.

"Then for every new assessment the level of average global temperature at which the risk of crossing tipping points gets serious just goes down, down,

down—until 2018, when the assessment is somewhere between +2°C and +3°C.

"People think we raise the alarm because human pressures are increasing, but that's not the case at all. It's just that we are learning how the planet works, and the more we learn the more vulnerable she is."

So here we are in 2023, and James Hansen, the climate scientist who delivered the original wake-up message to the U.S. congress in 1988, returns to tell us that he has used new data to work out the "equilibrium climate sensitivity" (ECS). The news is bad.

The ECS—how much warming we will get in the long run from doubling the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere—is much higher than we thought. We were expecting an extra three degrees; we will get five.

In the short run, we also have an urgent problem from the opposite direction. Hansen reckons that all the visible pollution we put into the sky has been cooling the planet by reflecting incoming sunlight back into space. About three degrees worth of cooling, so we would be in the deepest trouble imaginable without it.

But we are rapidly cleaning it up, because it's bad for people's lungs. In the past 10 years, China got rid of 87 per cent of the sulphur dioxide in the "brown cloud" that used to hang over Chinese cities, a brilliant success—but events like that mean we are rapidly losing our protective global sunscreen.

In 2020, the International Maritime Organization ordered all 60,000 giant container ships that carry 90 per cent of the world's trade to clean up their fuel. The permissible level of sulphur dioxide was cut from 3.5 per cent to 0.5 per cent, and the "ship tracks"—cloud cover that followed the ships like marine contrails—virtually disappeared.

Hansen suspects these changes have lost us one degree's worth of cooling. And in terms of average global temperature, a degree of lost cooling is just as bad as a degree of extra warming. It may be time to start taking this climate stuff seriously.

Gwynne Dyer's new book is *The Shortest History of War*.

The Hill Times



King Charles III, centre, attends the opening day of COP28 in Dubai on Nov. 30. Photograph courtesy of Paul Kagame/Flickr

The Big Photo

The Big Photo

Canadian Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge, centre, flanked by Liberal MP Taleeb Noormohamed, left, and Liberal MP Lisa Hepfner, right, in the Commons Foyer on Nov. 28, 2023, confirming Google and the federal government had reached a deal over the Online News Act. Google will continue to share news online and in exchange it would make annual payments to news companies, estimated at \$100-million. Said *The Hill Times*’ photographer Andrew Meade: “When Canadian Heritage Minister St-Onge to come out to speak on the recent developments around Google and C-18 with a large group of MPs, things got very crowded, both in the Foyer and in the frame. While I did take photos of the whole scene, space on the page is limited so I chose to make a picture focused on the minister and her gestures to add some movement to an otherwise static moment.”



The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Opinion

McPhedran, May, McPherson, Davies defy government, attend UN meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Senator Marilou McPhedran will use her experience to engage her Senate colleagues in special dialogues. Green Leader Elizabeth May says she's 'more committed than ever to advocate for nuclear disarmament as the only way to a secure world.' NDP MP Heather McPherson wants to develop a nuclear disarmament caucus in Parliament.

Douglas Roche

Opinion



EDMONTON—Three women parliamentarians, responding to an International Red Cross call for the world to display “the dictates of public conscience” against nuclear weapons, have become the conscience of the Canadian Parliament. Non-affiliated Senator Marilou McPhedran, Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, and NDP MP Heather McPherson defied the Government of Canada by attending a meeting of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons held last week at the United Nations in New York.

The government refused to attend, even as an observer, because it feared the wrath of the United States and NATO headquarters. Both the U.S. and NATO have taken a hostile position against the treaty—which has so far been ratified by 69 states—because it outlaws the possession of nuclear weapons.

Three NATO states—Germany, Norway and Belgium—did attend as observers at the weeklong meeting, which the top UN disarmament official, Izumi



Non-affiliated Senator Marilou McPhedran, left, Jennifer Simons, president of The Simons Foundation, NDP MP Don Davies, Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, and NDP MP Heather McPherson at the UN in New York City last week. Photograph courtesy of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Nakamitsu, called “more important than ever” because of growing geopolitical tensions. These three states showed more courage than Canada, which calculated that the cost of attending would be greater in incurring the displeasure of NATO than the cost of not attending and incurring merely the disappointment of the domestic nuclear disarmament movement.

The Canadian women told me they attended out of a sense of obligation not only to protest Canada’s absence, but to better equip themselves to push this government to live up to its promises and obligations. McPhedran is a non-affiliated Senator from Manitoba; May represents Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.; and McPherson represents Edmonton-Strathcona, Alta., and is the NDP’s foreign affairs critic. The three parliamentarians have previously staked out leadership stances against nuclear weapons and are trying to rally their colleagues. This time, NDP MP Don Davies, who represents Vancouver-Kingsway, B.C., joined them at the New York meeting. As May put it to me: “We went to press for Canada to be on the right side of

history in signing and ratifying the Prohibition Treaty.”

The right side of history: that’s an interesting perspective. Where is nuclear disarmament going in today’s world? With both the U.S. and Russia shredding previous agreements and treaties, the nuclear disarmament architecture is collapsing. It’s true that the number of nuclear weapons, currently about 12,500 held by nine states, is considerably down from the high of 70,000 in the 1980s. But all the nuclear states are modernizing their arsenals, and intend to keep them for the rest of this century.

The U.S. Congressional Strategic Posture Commission recently recommended that the U.S. increase its number of deployed warheads, as well as increase its production of bombers, air-launched cruise missiles, ballistic missile submarines, non-strategic nuclear forces, and warhead production capacity. The Federation of American Scientists excoriated the report for ignoring the consequences of a new nuclear arms race with Russia and China. Both countries are now enlarging their nuclear weapons capacity

to counter what they see as a constant U.S. build-up.

A new nuclear arms race is under way. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, appealed to the Prohibition Treaty meeting not to let the world “lose sight of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that any use of nuclear weapons—be it strategic or tactical, offensive, or defensive—would have.”

The leaders of the Prohibition Treaty are trying to stem the new nuclear surge, but they can hardly be heard in today’s warring atmosphere. Nonetheless, they are persevering and deepening scientific work showing how the world would totally collapse in the event of nuclear war.

So where is the technological build-up of nuclear warfare capacity really taking the world? Towards doomsday or to a new age of humanitarian enlightenment? One would think that Canada would want to make an impact on the development of nuclear history. But no, our country dodges its responsibilities in the misguided notion that

its NATO obligations constrain it from joining the new march of history.

In New York, McPhedran, May and McPherson signed a statement issued by 23 parliamentarians from 14 countries promising to take this fight to the policy-makers of the nuclear states. At home, they pledged themselves to shake up the Canadian establishment. They are brave politicians. They have stuck out their necks.

McPhedran intends to use her experience to brief and engage her Senate colleagues in special dialogues. May says she is “more committed than ever to advocate for nuclear disarmament as the only way to a secure world.” McPherson wants to develop a nuclear disarmament caucus in Parliament.

Will they actually get Canada to move to the right side of history? Who knows, but, as McPherson said, they “felt compelled to be present.”

Former Senator Douglas Roche’s latest book is *Keep Hope Alive: Essays for a War-free World* (Amazon).

The Hill Times

Catalyzing the opportunity of the North Pacific Green Corridor

The North Pacific Green Corridor presents a unique, sustainable model for future growth in green transport and trade that other jurisdictions can learn from and replicate.

Ian Anderson

Opinion



The world is undergoing fundamental shifts as a result of climate change and evolving geopolitical realities. Many governments, including our own, are rightfully responding to these shifts by implementing policies to build towards our net-zero goals along existing and trusted trade corridors. This means

bolstering trade security with key global partners, and prioritizing a co-operative approach towards decarbonization which we are seeing as Canada continues to strengthen ties with our allies, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

To advance real action on these priorities, a number of Canadian and international industry leaders are building the North Pacific Green Corridor (NPGC). Our collective goal is to decarbonize the entire value chain of low-carbon products like critical minerals and metals between the Canadian Pacific Coast and key trade partners in Asia with the ultimate goal of being fully net zero from producer to shipper to customer by 2050.

Unique in its approach, the NPGC represents a sustainable model for future growth in green transportation and trade that other jurisdictions can learn from and replicate. It is no surprise that with strong trading relationships and shared climate action goals, Canada, Japan, and South Korea are well-positioned to lead the world in developing one of its first green trading corridors.

Last year, Canada launched its Indo-Pacific strategy where one of its key objectives is to strengthen trade of critical minerals, hydrogen, and clean energy sources. This policy positions our country as a responsible and reliable energy security partner for Japan and South Korea's increased demand. Furthermore, Transport Canada released its Green Shipping Corridors Framework which outlines commitments to support the marine sector and related industries' move to zero-emission shipping. This is precisely what the NPGC will enable while also supporting Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Canada is rich in the natural resources that are fundamental for the green transition including copper, zinc, and steelmaking coal. As examples, zero-emission electric vehicles can use up to four times as much copper compared to an internal combustion engine car. Similarly, zinc coatings play an important role for clean infrastructure—like solar panels—by extending the life of the steel used in their manufacture. Lastly, 100 tonnes of steelmaking coal are required to build a single wind turbine.

The NPGC's key activities in Canada will include aligning on domestic fuel pathways for utilization and export; facilitating synchronized investments in sustainable marine fuel production, retrofitted, or new-built alternative fuel vessels; fuel storage and bunkering; low-carbon locomotives, and vessel efficiency improvements; and later implement further decarbonization initiatives such as carbon capture and sequestration.

As an important founding partner of the NPGC, Canada's rail sector has a role in both the transportation and use of clean energy, as well as the development of the infrastructure and vessels needed to transport clean energy. Locomotive fleets will be powered by low-carbon fuels, transitioning to ammonia and other hydrogen fuel forms. This transition is already beginning with Teck having a first of its kind agreement with a rail partner to pilot hydrogen locomotives for its bulk movements. Looking to the marine sector, shipping by ocean vessel is a significant contributor to global carbon emissions. The NPGC represents an opportunity to modernize these vessels to lower

emissions, and build a reliable ecosystem and strong distribution networks that support innovative zero-emission marine transportation.

As many actors re-imagine what a more resilient supply chain will look like in Canada, the NPGC is an ideal test case for zero-emission shipping with significant and stable volumes, longstanding commercial relationships, and low complexity routing and shipping modalities.

Founding members are making significant investments in the consortium so that the NPGC is well-capitalized to advance decarbonization, clean energy security, and supply-chain resilience for trade between Canada, Japan, and South Korea.

This summer, Canada's minister of transport invited Teck to Japan to speak to G7 colleagues specifically about the NPGC initiative. Having mobilized the private sector both in Canada and abroad, the NPGC consortium is now looking to government for additional collaboration in order to enable this world-leading opportunity for greening critical value chains between Canada and our closest Indo-Pacific partners. We look forward to continuing these exciting discussions with the Government of Canada and bringing more partners into the consortium.

Ian Anderson is senior vice-president and chief commercial officer at Teck Resources Limited, a Canadian and global critical minerals leader.

The Hill Times

Who cares for the carers?

Across Canada, people count on a stable charitable sector to support their emotional, physical, and economic well-being.

Owen Charters & Aline Nizigama

Opinion



It's no secret that people across the country are feeling stressed out. While inflation and interest rates fluctuate, many are holding their breath, awaiting relief from high food and housing costs. The uncertainty of meeting day-to-day needs and getting through another cold winter is anxiety-inducing. Essential costs are piling up, from new winter boots for the kids to heating costs to climbing rents. Few are immune: even

among working people, financial stress is up by 20 per cent year-over-year to a total of 37 per cent.

In these times of uncertainty and stress, more than one in four Canadians are turning to charitable organizations, particularly community service groups, for support and care. Women are the engine of our workforce, making up 77 per cent of our staff, which is also 47 per cent newcomer and 35 per cent Indigenous and racialized, while Friendship Centres employ majority Indigenous people, especially Indigenous women and youth.

The charitable sector serves alongside government to provide critical services. With life's basics now unaffordable for so many, there are increasingly complex and severe needs. We support diverse community members with mental health and substance use health; family violence; child-care; housing and homelessness; settlement and skills training; and provide programming for women, youth, and seniors; and much more. But what happens when the charitable sector that our communities count on is struggling itself?

As a Coalition of National Service Federations providing and supporting front-line services

through 315 member organizations that reach 10 million people annually across the country, we are sounding the alarm.

While community needs remain beyond pre-pandemic levels, the charitable sector is struggling under the pressure of workforce shortages. Charities are reporting increasing levels of absenteeism, burnout, and mental health challenges among their staff. YMCA WorkWell's 2022 workplace well-being report found that 30 per cent of non-profit employees were considering leaving their current organization within the next six months. Given current economic uncertainty, losing staff has serious repercussions for the communities we exist to support.

The majority of our workforce remains devoted, agile, and willing to do more to ensure community needs are cared for despite seemingly endless challenges. Statistics Canada data show the workforce is highly educated despite "significantly lower" compensation in community-based groups, where wages are below the economy-wide average. High inflation hinders community organizations' ability to purchase supplies, operate programs, recruit and retain staff, and compete with other sectors

that can afford higher wages. It's no wonder workers are suffering burnout from personal financial stress while giving their mental and physical energy every day to support people facing similar struggles. It's neither fair, nor sustainable.

This untenable situation demands immediate action. We are calling on the Government of Canada to collaborate with us on sustainable solutions. Our sector is essential to meeting immediate community needs that the federal government has prioritized, from childcare, skills training, emergency preparedness, safety, housing stability, and other essential community supports. The charitable sector is also the backbone of Canada's economy, contributing 8.3 per cent to our GDP, which exceeds contributions made by construction, transportation, and agriculture.

Our sector has the expertise to work with government in crafting the solutions that will allow us to maintain and expand our immense societal value from coast to coast to coast. The \$400-million Community Services Recovery Fund, announced in the 2021 federal budget, is a strong example of such collaboration. Today, we know that a federal labour force

strategy will go a long way to address the sector's current talent recruitment, training, and retention crisis that threatens the continuity of critical community services.

A co-developed labour force strategy could create pathways to careers within the community services sector, support the mental health and well-being of workers, and harness the potential of untapped talent, including youth and newcomers. It would also pay dividends in building more equitable communities and access to opportunities so everyone can meet their full potential.

It's clear: across Canada, people count on a stable charitable sector to support their emotional, physical, and economic well-being. It's imperative that the sector's immense social and economic impact is recognized by government in the 2024 budget—and beyond—so we can continue supporting our communities and economic prosperity.

Let's care for our carers.

Owen Charters is with BGC Canada, and Aline Nizigama is with the YWCA Canada. The other authors who contributed to this piece were: Dan Clement (United Way Centraide Canada), Peter Dinsdale (YMCA Canada), Margaret Eaton (Canadian Mental Health Association), Jocelyn Formsma (National Association of Friendship Centres), and Jill Zelmanovits (Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada).

The Hill Times

News

RCMP commissioner to testify as House Ethics Committee probe into SNC-Lavalin decision begins

The House Ethics Committee will study the RCMP's decision to not pursue a criminal investigation into the prime minister regarding his involvement in the SNC-Lavalin affair in 2019. Bloc MP René Villemure says he's glad the committee will study the scandal, but doesn't agree that the prime minister should be called to testify.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A study by the House Ethics Committee to get to the bottom of the RCMP's decision to not pursue a criminal investigation into the prime minister regarding his involvement in the 2019 SNC-Lavalin affair is expected to begin next week, providing an opportunity for Canadians to have "the whole information," according to the Bloc Québécois ethics critic.

"The angle I had for the motion was basically one of obstruction of justice. I wanted to make sure that we have all the information pertinent to us being able to make a decision," said Bloc Québécois MP René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, Que.) in an interview with *The Hill Times* on Nov. 28.

RCMP Commissioner Michael Duheme and Staff Sgt. Frédéric



In January 2023, the RCMP reached a decision not to pursue a criminal investigation into Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, following an assessment of whether or not he broke the law in 2018 by applying pressure to then-justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould to stop the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Pincince, who was in charge of the investigation into SNC-Lavalin, are scheduled to speak to the House Ethics Committee on Dec. 11 in the first of two planned meetings for the committee's probe.

Villemure's motion for the committee to undertake this study was moved and approved on Oct. 30. The study is to begin following the conclusion of the committee's current study into the use of social media platforms for data harvesting.

The RCMP began an assessment in 2019 into whether Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau Que.) broke the law in 2018 when he applied pressure to then-federal justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould to stop the prosecution of the Quebec engineering and construction firm then known as SNC-Lavalin. The firm rebranded as AtkinsRéalis on Sept. 13, 2023. The prime minister has consistently denied any wrongdoing on his part or senior officials in his government.

In January 2023, the RCMP reached a decision not to pur-

sue a criminal investigation into Trudeau and the SNC-Lavalin affair, stating that there was insufficient evidence to do so after reviewing all publicly available information.

On Oct. 16, 2023, Duff Conacher, the co-founder to Democracy Watch, released more than 1,800 pages of records shared with the organization by the RCMP under the Access to Information Act, providing details about the assessment. Conacher argued in an Oct. 16 press release that the RCMP conducted a "very superficial investigation," because the Liberal government denied a bid by the RCMP during the assessment to obtain confidential cabinet communications relating to the matter. The RCMP decided there was "insufficient evidence to obtain production orders or search warrants," according to the documents.

In the press release, Conacher argued the assessment didn't go far enough because, according to the records, the RCMP only spoke with three witnesses regarding the allegation of obstruction of justice: Wilson-Raybould; Jessica Prince, who was Wilson-Raybould's chief of staff at the time; and former deputy minister of justice Nathalie Drouin, who became deputy clerk of the Privy Council Office on Aug. 23, 2021.

During the committee meeting when Villemure put forward his motion, he said a study into the RCMP decision is a "very important matter" which has been reported on extensively by the media, and is raising public questions.

"I'm not going ahead thinking the prime minister is guilty. I just want to make sure we have everything on the table," Villemure told *The Hill Times*. "Maybe there's

nothing. Maybe there's a valid reason, but we'll all know, and the public will know, and Canadians will feel at least that they had the whole information."

"We have to look at every story, and see if the story is valid or not. I just want to make sure that people are not under a false impression, and they have enough evidence to make up their own mind," he added.

Other witnesses who will be requested to appear as part of the committee study will be interim Ethics Commissioner Konrad von Finckenstein, former ethics commissioner Mario Dion, and former Privy Council clerk Michael Wernick.

The SNC-Lavalin affair rocked the Liberal government in 2019 and dominated the news agenda for months leading up to that year's federal election. The scandal encompassed the resignation of Wilson-Raybould, Wernick, and Gerald Butts, then-principal secretary to Trudeau. Jane Philpott, then-president of the Treasury Board and minister of digital government, also resigned in 2019.

"I must abide by my core values, my ethical responsibilities and constitutional obligations," said Philpott in a written statement posted on X (then known as Twitter) on March 4, 2019.

On Aug. 13, 2019, the Trudeau II Report was released by the federal ethics office, in which Dion concluded that Trudeau did violate the Conflict of Interest Act by improperly applying pressure to Wilson-Raybould in her decision regarding SNC-Lavalin.

The list of witnesses for the study was debated by the House Ethics Committee members during the Oct. 30 meeting. Liberal MP Pam Damoff (Oakville North-Burlington, Ont.) said she

supported testimony from RCMP representatives, but that the committee "should bear in mind that the RCMP is independent," and so hearing from witnesses who probably don't have any bearing on the RCMP decision could "blur what we're talking about."

Liberal MP Iqra Khalid (Mississauga-Erin Mills, Ont.) argued that the committee should be "bringing in witnesses who actually do have things to say or contribute to the matter that is addressed in this motion."

"For example, Mr. Dion has said in the past, when he was asked, 'Seriously, I have no opinion on that.' I don't know how it would be beneficial to our committee for us to have a witness who has proactively said, 'I don't have an opinion on that,'" Khalid told the committee. "We can say that this decision was made by the RCMP, and it should be the RCMP that comes forward to explain why they made that decision. We should not include people who had no impact on that decision."

NDP MP Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.), his party's ethics critic, responded to Khalid's comments by arguing that having or not having an opinion is not the same as being able to provide facts.

Conservative MP Michael Barrett (Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ont.), his party's ethics critic, also proposed calling for Trudeau to testify before the committee in an earlier notice of motion he gave to the committee on Oct. 16.

Villemure told *The Hill Times* he chose not to include the prime minister on the list of witnesses in his motion because of the difficulty that would be involved.

"I thought that bringing in the prime minister, first of all, is very hard, and I didn't want this to drag on forever," he said. "I think that Mr. Barrett's suggestion, that the prime minister comes over, will be met with nothing. I just didn't want to ... throw things on the wall just to see if it sticks."

The Hill Times reached out to Barrett to ask about the committee study and the list of witnesses, but did not receive a response by press time.

Conacher told *The Hill Times* in an emailed statement on Nov. 27 that a "key question" for Wernick will be why the Liberal government decide not to give the RCMP access to certain Cabinet confidence documents.

"Of course, it would be good to have Trudeau answer the ... question that Michael Wernick will be asked, but Wernick was there and involved in all the decisions, so he will be able to provide at least a partial answer," said Conacher in the email. "Finally, it is important to note that when the committee decided to hold the hearings, they all agreed that if the hearings raised more questions then they were open to holding more hearings and calling more witnesses to testify. I expect that the hearings will raise more questions, and so I hope there will be more hearings."

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Bloc Québécois MP René Villemure says he is 'not going ahead thinking the prime minister is guilty,' but he wants 'to make sure we have everything on the table.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Tenants describe ‘dramatic erosion’ of existing affordable housing, call on feds to take action

A House Human Resources Committee report called for a fund to help non-profits acquire affordable housing. The Nov. 21 fiscal update did not include such a fund, but advocates call for one to be created in the next federal budget.

BY KEVIN PHILIPUPILLAI

Following warnings from researchers and a House committee that the country is losing far more affordable housing units than it is creating, long-term tenants in two of Canada’s fastest growing cities are describing what it looks like when large landlords look to ‘reposition’ older rental buildings by moving them further upmarket.

According to Statistics Canada, rent prices are among the fastest growing components of the consumer price index. While the overall year-over-year inflation rate slowed to 3.1 per cent in October, rent prices increased by 8.2 per cent in October, and 7.3 per cent in September.

Long-term tenants Tanya Burkart and Marcia Bryan told *The Hill Times* on Nov. 17 and Nov. 20, respectively, about their experiences with these rising rents. Burkart and Bryan are both members of ACORN Canada—the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now—a national organization of low- and moderate-income people. Many of its members are tenants in purpose-built rental buildings from the 1960s and 1970s which form a major component of Canada’s stock of affordable housing.

Burkart said units at her townhouse complex in Brampton, Ont., are now being listed for rent at almost twice what they were listed at five years ago. “I rented my townhouse for \$1,500 in 2018,” she said. “The same three-bedroom townhouse is now renting for \$2,600.”

Her eight-building townhouse complex was acquired in April 2022 by an Alberta-based, publicly traded real estate investment trust (REIT) named Boardwalk REIT that owns more than 33,000 residential suites across Canada.



Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, left, and Housing Minister Sean Fraser speak to reporters on Nov. 28 about the rollout of new measures announced in the government’s fall economic statement. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Bryan has lived in the same apartment building in Mississauga, Ont., for more than 30 years. She said she is currently paying \$1,300 for a two-bedroom apartment while new tenants in the building are paying between \$1,700 and \$1,900 for a one-bedroom apartment, and up to \$2,800—plus utilities—for a two-bedroom unit.

Her building was acquired in November 2020 by one of the largest landlords in Canada—Starlight Investments, a privately held global real estate and asset management firm that owns more than 73,000 multi-residential suites, and more than 8-million square feet of commercial property space.

Researchers such as McMaster University professor Steve Pomeroy have warned about a “dramatic erosion” of existing affordable housing units as older rental buildings are redeveloped, or as landlords increase rents. Pomeroy told the House Human Resources Committee on June 9 that Canada lost more than 550,000 low-end rental units between 2011 and 2021, while adding only about 70,000 units through new builds. That represents a net loss of approximately eight existing units for every new one added.

ACORN has called on the federal government to take steps to protect existing affordable housing, including by establishing an acquisition fund to help nonprofit and co-operative housing providers purchase rental properties when they go on the market.

The Human Resources Committee’s Oct. 26 report on the financialization of housing—defined as “the treatment of housing as a financial commodity and an asset for profit”—highlighted the loss of affordable rental housing

and called for the establishment of an acquisition fund.

Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland’s (University—Rosedale, Ont.) Nov. 21 fiscal update did not establish such a fund, and advocates are now calling for one to be included in the next federal budget.

Financial reports lay out strategies for repositioning low-rent buildings

Burkart and Bryan said large corporate landlords are actively working to “reposition” selected older rental properties at higher price points. They described a range of approaches, many of which frustrate long-term tenants living in rent-controlled apartments.

Burkart said landlords or property managers looking to reposition a building might ignore maintenance or repair requests in favour of “cosmetic” improvements to facades or common areas. She also described buyout offers of \$10,000 or \$15,000 to vacate a unit, no-fault evictions, and the use of above-guideline rent increases to cover regular upkeep.

Bryan added that tenants also complain about elevator breakdowns, frequent water shutoffs, flooding caused by neglected plumbing, out-of-order trash compactors leading to a build-up of garbage and pests, loss of electricity, and the introduction of new or higher fees for lockers and parking.

Affordable housing advocates say financial reports from publicly-traded landlords lay out a broad strategy to increase rental revenues by acquiring low-rent buildings and repositioning them

further upmarket to appeal to higher-income tenants who have been shut out of home ownership.

Boardwalk’s most recent quarterly report includes sections on “brand diversification” and a “suite renovation program” that describe a process of “repositioning and rebranding” its existing rental portfolio in order to increase rental revenue, and therefore maximize returns to investors.

The financial report breaks down Boardwalk’s rental properties into three tiers based on price. The “affordable value” group currently makes up 49 per cent of the overall portfolio. The “enhanced value” group makes up 45 per cent. And the “affordable luxury” group makes up six per cent.

Boyd Belisle, vice president of community and culture at Boardwalk REIT, said in a Nov. 27 statement to *The Hill Times* that “the sole purpose of our investments is to improve the living experience of our Resident Members.” He added later that “these improvements can require adjustments in pricing.”

“We do not support or practice renovations,” added Belisle. “Any suggestion to the contrary is categorically false. There is no strategy whatsoever to replace current Residents.”

Belisle added that Boardwalk supports “all strategies that will increase affordable housing supply, including an acquisition fund to help non-profit and co-op housing providers purchase existing rental properties from private landlords.”

Executives for publicly-traded REITs such as Boardwalk say their business practices are unfairly singled out for scrutiny because their financial reports

are open to the public. Advocates say they have a point, and that Starlight and other privately-held real estate firms are able to keep their financial reports private, despite following similar repositioning strategies.

Mississauga activist describes ‘revolving door’ of new tenants paying high rents out of desperation

Bryan said many long-term tenants are “fed up” with conditions in her Starlight Investments building in Mississauga. “Those who can move, move,” she said, while others are “digging their heels in” because they cannot afford a new place, or because “this is where their families grew up.”

“If I move, where would I go?” she asked, referring to the much higher rents she would have to pay if she gave up her rent-controlled apartment. “You’re stuck in a situation whether you like it or not.”

Despite describing what repositioning can look like in buildings where landlords think they can attract higher-income tenants, Bryan said that’s not necessarily what is happening in her building. Instead, she said, vacancies are largely filled by new immigrants who agree to pay higher rents because they are desperate to find a home quickly.

She described “a revolving door” where these new tenants “get fed up and leave” in a matter of months because the conditions in the building don’t match the “exorbitant rent” they are paying, but where there is always a supply of prospective tenants.

Bryan said that along with setting up an acquisition fund, she also wanted to see the federal government introduce regulations to stop banks, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and public sector pension funds from financing corporate landlords that purchase affordable rental buildings “with the intent to increase rents and displace people.”

Penny Colomvakos, vice-president of residential operations for Starlight Investments, told *The Hill Times* in a Nov. 28 statement that Starlight is “one of the most active developers in Canada,” and that it is committed to building homes and “increasing the supply of high-quality attainable rental housing suites on the market.”

In response to the specific concerns Bryan raised about her apartment building in Mississauga, Ont., the statement said Starlight has invested more than \$2.2-million in capital improvements to the aging building “to maintain its structural integrity and for environmental energy savings.”

Colomvakos’ statement, delivered through the public affairs firm Crestview Strategy, added that residents who are having trouble paying their rent because of financial difficulties can apply for rent relief on an individual basis.

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News

Google ‘outplayed and outmanoeuvred Ottawa’ on Online News Act deal, ‘outsourced’ problem of how to divide funding, say observers

In the new deal between Google and the feds, ‘the contentious part’ will now be ‘who gets what and how much do people get,’ said media transformation expert Alfred Hermida.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

The deal between the federal government and Google on the Online News Act saw the tech giant get “effectively everything it wanted” while leaving open the question of who would be the winners and losers within the Canadian news industry, says a media expert at the University of British Columbia.

Alfred Hermida, a journalism professor at UBC who researches transformation of media, told *The Hill Times* that Google had “outplayed and outmanoeuvred Ottawa” to reach a deal with the government, but that it was still a better outcome for Canada than to see Google start blocking links when the law comes into force on Dec. 19.

“In some ways, this is good news both for journalism and for Canadian news consumers because the threat of news disappearing off Google and its services would effectively mean that news had vanished from the internet, given Google’s dominance in search. And that was a scenario that nobody wanted,” he said. “I don’t think Google wanted that. Certainly none of the news outlets wanted it. The government didn’t want that. And it would have been terrible for news consumers if news disappears effectively from the internet. So it’s good that there has been a resolution.”

On Nov. 29, Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge (Brome-Missisquoi, Que.) announced a framework where Google will contribute \$100-million in financial support annually to a fund that will be divided between Canadian



On Nov 29, Canadian Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge announced the government had reached a deal with Google that would see it pay \$100-million annually to the Canadian news industry, and avert the tech giant removing news links from its search results before a Dec. 19 cut-off. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

media organizations based on the number of full-time equivalent journalists engaged by those outlets. The fund will be indexed to inflation, and if Google negotiates terms in other countries that are more favourable, it must reopen discussions with Canada. The deal allows Google to negotiate with a single entity, and puts a firm cap on the amount of funding it may be required to provide under the Online News Act—two key criteria Google had sought in the talks.

Based on the formula in its draft regulations for the Online News Act released on Sept. 2, the federal government had indicated it was hoping to see Google contribute about \$172-million annually.

Not only is the total amount to be paid by Google lower than the figure the federal government had sought, several observers interviewed by *The Hill Times* noted that this deal will also likely replace individual agreements for undisclosed sums of money Google had with some publishers already, decreasing the net total to be injected into the Canadian media industry by the deal.

‘A poison chalice’

Hermida said that not only has Google secured a relatively small

financial contribution, it has “outsourced the problem about who’s going to get what.”

“You can see that the contentious part here is going to be: who gets what and how much do people get, especially if it’s based on the number of full-time journalists,” he said. “I think, in some ways, this is a poison chalice, because the body representing newspapers and digital took a different approach than the body representing broadcasters.”

The federal government will release its final regulations for the Online News Act this month. It will contain details on how journalists will be defined in the formula, and how the money will be divided.

In its Oct. 2 submission to the Canadian government regarding the draft regulations for the Online News Act, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) proposed this should include any employee that “spends at least 75 per cent of their time engaged in the production of original news content, including filming, recording, writing, editing, video-editing, audio-editing, designing, [or] assembling” news.

Following the announcement of the deal, CAB president Kevin Desjardins told *The Hill Times* his

organization continues to support “a definition that accounts for the people who helped to compile and produce news within broadcast newsrooms.”

The Hill Times reached out to Paul Deegan, president and CEO of News Media Canada, to ask his organization’s view on the definition proposed by the CAB. Deegan did not directly address that, but said in an email that “the impact of this regulatory framework for the news publishers is dependent on the final regulations, which are essential to ensuring our publishers receive fair market value for their news content.”

On Dec. 1, Torstar, one of the major print and digital publishers that will be affected by the deal, called the agreement a “disappointment,” and said it could not support it.

There is also contention about whether CBC, as a public broadcaster that already receives government funding, should receive a share of the money from Google. Desjardins said the CAB’s position is that it should not.

Chris Dornan, a Carleton University journalism professor, said there are compelling arguments for and against CBC receiving a share of the funding.

“If the intention of the law was to aid news media enterprises that are indeed failing otherwise, well, the CBC is not failing—the CBC may be politically threatened, and it may be underfunded, but as long as it’s got its billion-dollar parliamentary grant, it’s secure, it’s not failing,” said Dornan. “On the other hand, if the deal is to compensate or reward companies that actually produce journalistic content that flows over Google’s search engine, then the CBC should be eligible because it produces a great deal of journalistic content that’s available to Canadians.”

Hermida said that however the money is cut up in the end, the issue of transparency would also be key—an issue that has played out in Australia under similar legislation.

“One of the big critiques of what happened in Australia was ... nobody knew how much Google was giving to different organizations, and so some of the larger corporations were able to bargain for millions, and some smaller organizations got pennies out of that,” said Hermida. “And so the critique there being, ‘well, if this is part of a government policy, we should know who’s getting what and why.’”

‘Not a solution to the problem that the news industry faces’: Dornan

Dornan noted that while the deal is “a resolution of the standoff that the government was having with Google, it’s not a solution to the problem that the news industry faces.”

There are particular concerns about whether the agreement will serve smaller start-ups that are seeking to establish new business models.

Michael Geist, a University of Ottawa law professor who holds the Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-Commerce Law, said many of these outlets may be “breathing a sigh of relief” a deal was reached, but at the same time are concerned that the deal is “entrenching legacy players.”

“If links on Google were going to be removed from the search index, that would have been completely catastrophic, I think, for many of them. It’s really an existential issue,” said Geist.

However, Geist said the overall approach of the Online News Act always appeared to favour traditional media outlets.

“Rather than focusing on how to ensure more journalism, [the government] focused on a potential shakedown from a couple of tech companies to the benefit of some of the large legacy companies who are better positioned to lobby for that kind of money,” he said.

Dornan shared a similar view.

The deal “doesn’t explicitly support nascent journalistic enterprises—like new business models,” said Dornan. “In effect, it supports the status quo. It rewards the existing players. And the bigger the players, the greater their share of the pie.”

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Opinion



China's President Xi Jinping, left, and U.S. President Joe Biden, right, at the annual APEC meeting in San Francisco on Nov. 15, 2023. Photograph courtesy of @POTUS

Lessons from Canada's IPEF absence

Canada needs to worry less about not being in the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, and to worry more about the upcoming North American trade pact review and potential renegotiation.

Carlo Dade

Opinion



CALGARY—Last month in San Francisco, in the margins of the annual meeting of the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders' summit, some significant things happened, including a critical meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and China's President Xi Jinping. Improved relations between Canada's two largest export markets is good news.

More significant is what both did and did not happen: the United States concluded parts of the Biden Administration's cornerstone trade initiative with Asia—the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)—without Canada. There is a lot of handwringing in this country about our exclusion. While much—but not all—of it is misplaced, understanding what happened, and what it means for Canada and especially the four provinces responsible for two-thirds of Canada's exports to the Indo Pacific, is important.

The first key point is that the U.S. did not sign a new trade agreement with Asia. The IPEF is a workaround to not being able to get traditional trade agreements with things like tariff cuts through Congress.

If a traditional trade agreement were a steak dinner, the IPEF is the sides without the meat.

The Americans are, unsurprisingly, hyping this as an improvement. Instead of worrying about what we missed, we should be taking advantage of what we have that the Americans continue to lack which is a real trade agreement with Asia in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

A related point is that in the IPEF, the U.S. has not even been able to put together a full course of side dishes. Only one agreement—on supply chains—under the IPEF framework of agree-

ments was signed in San Francisco. Negotiations were concluded on a clean economy agreement, on establishing a permanent body to oversee the agreement, which would also consider applications to join IPEF, and an anti-corruption 'Fair Economy' agreement. On trade, work on a digital trade agreement was thwarted by the United States following a call from 13 Democrat Senators. Other Democrats in the U.S. Senate are calling for discussions on any trade topic to be abandoned entirely. So, the IPEF's limited success shrinks the list of potential Canadian worries.

The Biden administration pushed hard, but failed to have negotiations concluded and ready for signing with maximum domestic press coverage in San Francisco. With the full-scale election season about to kick off south of the border, it is extremely unlikely that the current U.S. administration will be able to complete negotiations. What is clear is that according to Donald Trump, his administration would rescind anything a Biden administration negotiates on day one back in office. Since IPEF agreements are not approved by Congress, cancelling them can be done easily. So, while there is apparently little for Canadian business to worry about now with IPEF, there may be even less a year from now.

The lesson here for Canadian business and governments is to worry less about not being in the IPEF, and to worry more about the upcoming North American trade agreement review and potential renegotiation. If the Biden administration

could not get an agreement done that does not have to be signed by congress (because there are no tariff cuts), and Trump is promising to kill even a non-trade deal, then keeping our current North American trade agreement may be more difficult than we think. There is also a bird-in-the-hand lesson of needing to pay more attention, and devote more resources to the CPTPP than chasing American desperation.

A final lesson is one reason Canada is not part of IPEF: it brings headaches—not help—for the Americans in Asia. The IPEF produces economic benefits that the U.S. does not need to share with an economic competitor like Canada, and we are not much of a security ally. Our reputation in Asia of showing up to lecture trade partners and of almost killing the CPTPP agreement by demanding at the last minute that it be renamed makes us a liability—not an asset—in Asia. The Americans, and their Asian collaborators, see no value in Canada's approach. In fact, the Americans managed to make needed progressive gains, including a First Nations provision in the IPEF supply chain agreement, without Canada and our lecturing approach.

The lesson here, as Canada as it takes over as chair of the CPTPP Commission in 2024, is that there are better ways to advance our trade and progressive objectives in Asia.

Carlo Dade is director of the trade and trade infrastructure centre at the Canada West Foundation.

The Hill Times

Opinion

Our government is failing Canadians regarding their end-of-life rights

Minister of Justice Arif Virani, pictured at a Hill presser on Oct. 5, 2023, is the minister responsible for Canada's MAID legislation. MPs should legalize advance requests for those with a diagnosis of a serious or incurable medication condition, disease, or disorder leading to incapacity, write Norma Greenaway and Sherry Moran. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The feds should move quickly on advance requests for medical assistance in dying, allowing us to set out the circumstances under which we would want to receive MAID in the future.

Norma Greenaway & Sherry Moran

Opinion



Norma's dad was a man of few words. But his seven children knew his idea of hell on earth would be to lose his ability to move, speak, eat or, to be honest, sip a martini.

There was no such thing in Canada as medical assistance in dying (MAID) in 2000 when, at the age of 82, he suffered a cata-

strophic stroke that landed him in a Toronto hospital paralyzed and unable to speak for himself.

But he had prepared for this day as best he could at the time. He had left a detailed living will that said he did not want any extraordinary measure taken to keep him alive. In particular, according to his living will, he rejected the idea of a feeding tube.

The doctors pushed back. They said he would not regain much if any movement but that he could live for weeks, months, and possibly years if they inserted a feeding tube.

At this point, each of the siblings shared with the doctors their views on why their father, a Second World War veteran and successful businessman, would not want to end his rich life journey that way. As hard as it was, they told the doctors they wanted to honour Dad's wishes and let him go.

They knew his wishes reflected the experience of watching his own father wither away and die at the age of 93 after a debilitating stroke.

He also watched his wife's mother suffer from dementia for almost two decades. As the

disease progressed, she didn't recognize her children or her grandchildren. She lost all interest in food—even her once loved desserts—and was unaware of the world around her. She finally died at the age of 92, weighing just 78 pounds.

The way her father chose to live and die fuels Norma's support for broadening Canada's MAID legislation to allow advance requests for those of us who choose to exit when we no longer have what we deem to be an acceptable quality of life.

Under the current legislation, some people with dementia can access MAID, but in fairly rigid circumstances. They must meet the eligibility requirements, including being in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability, and suffering intolerably as a result. They must then select a date, and possibly sign a waiver of final consent, all while they still have capacity to make these decisions.

Needless to say, this results in people with dementia having MAID earlier than they might otherwise wish.

This option is not even available to those who are left brain

damaged by stroke or accident as they immediately lose their capacity to make medical decisions.

An advance request, on the other hand, would allow us to set out the circumstances under which we would want to receive MAID in the future. The formal request for MAID would be made with the intent it would be acted upon when we reached the point of what we had described as intolerable suffering even if we were no longer capable of voicing our wishes.

Advance requests could be allowed with or without a diagnosis of serious and incurable illness, disease, or disability that could lead to loss of capacity.

We know the number of people being kept alive for years after they have lost capacity will only increase. There are currently more than 600,000 Canadians living with dementia, of which Alzheimer's disease is the greatest cause. Researchers say the figure will increase to almost one million by 2030.

In addition to the care they receive in institutions, they receive more than 470 million hours of care provided by family and

friends—the equivalent of 235,000 full-time jobs.

These statistics influence our wish to be able to make an advance request to access MAID.

Many others agree. A recent national Ipsos poll said 82 per cent of those surveyed supported advance requests for those diagnosed with a capacity-eroding disease.

A special joint committee of Parliament recently studied, among other things, the possible extension of MAID to include advance requests. The Medical Assistance in Dying Committee reported on Feb. 15 of this year. After hearing testimony from clinicians and ordinary Canadians about the potential risks of permitting advance requests for MAID, and about possible safeguards and limits on the scope of the request to mitigate these risks, the committee recommended the federal government amend the MAID legislation to: "allow for advance requests following a diagnosis of a serious and incurable medical condition, disease, or disorder leading to incapacity."

Although this does not address the concerns of those who have no diagnosis but fear losing capacity through a stroke or accident, it is an important first step.

Unfortunately, the government responded to the committee's recommendations by kicking any amendment to allow advance requests far down the road.

On June 13, the government replied that: "the issue is complex and that significant work, including further consultation and study would be needed before any further expansion could be considered, particularly given provinces and territories would be implicated in any implementation of advance request regimes."

So, the government is deliberately ignoring the concerns and wishes of more than 80 per cent of Canadians. Even the Alzheimer Society supports the recommendation of the parliamentary committee to allow advance requests for those who have had a diagnosis of dementia, and implores the federal government to act quickly to legislate for advance requests, and the provinces and territories to work quickly and collaboratively to implement the legislation.

If you are among the 80 per cent of Canadians who support this change, please write, phone, or visit your MP, and ask them to call upon the government to move quickly to legalize advance requests for those with a diagnosis of a serious or incurable medical condition, disease, or disorder leading to incapacity.

Norma Greenaway is retired following a journalism career in the Middle East, Washington, D.C., Ottawa, Toronto, and Saskatchewan, as well as teaching at Carleton University's School of Journalism. Sherry Moran is a retired lawyer and public service executive who has served on many charitable and non-profit boards of directors over the past 25 years, including that of Dying with Dignity Canada.

The Hill Times

POLICY BRIEFING

ENVIRONMENT

Publication date: **December 11, 2023** | Advertising deadline: **December 6, 2023**

The Green Budget Coalition, with a membership of 22 Canadian environmental and conservation organizations, called on Canada to scale up funding in order to meet its climate goals, in a list of recommendations released on Nov. 8 for the 2024 federal budget. How is Canada doing in terms of achieving its climate targets? What more should the federal government be doing?

Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault said in a recent statement that Ottawa is “strongly considering an appeal” of a Federal Court decision on Nov. 16 that overturned Canada’s ban on single-use plastic. What are the issues with Canada’s single-use plastic ban? What are the environmental concerns surrounding plastic-manufactured items?

What are some examples of innovations in green technology that will become more important in the near future? How can Canada take advantage of these technologies?

Is Canada prepared to support the expansion of the electric and zero emissions vehicle industry? What should the federal government be doing to make sure Canada is prepared?

How can the federal government better align Canada’s financial system with action on climate change? How can Canada attract investments to support the transition to a net-zero economy?

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 **THE HILL TIMES**

News

Liberals look like a ‘party on autopilot’ headed for ‘a car crash,’ say political players

The Trudeau government is focused on delivering results for Canadians and not worried about the fluctuating polls, says Tourism Minister and national campaign co-committee chair Soraya Martinez Ferrada.

Continued from page 1

in the next election, the only thing that he could do to make the Liberal government look new is to turn over the leadership around him, and I would hazard to say that would include cabinet, staff, everyone, that’s the only reset that’s realistically left,” he said. “He has to decide who are the people that he needs around him to give him the advice that he needs to win the next election, not to rule, but to win the next election. And then who are the cabinet ministers that he needs around him in senior positions who are going to inject some energy and vigour to fight the next election.”

For months, poll after poll has suggested that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s (Papineau, Que.) Liberals’ popularity is tanking.

According to a Nanos Research poll released last week, the Liberals and the NDP were tied in a statistical dead heat at 22 per cent support. The Conservatives were at 41 per cent, the Greens 5.5 per cent, and the People’s Party of Canada at two per cent.

This is the first time since the Liberals came to power in 2015 that their support has dropped to the low 20s, and has reached the same place as the third-place NDP.

Nanos said that he would be put out seat projections based on his polling in the coming weeks.

But according to Polling Canada and Abacus Data, if an election were to happen now, the Conservatives could win more than 200 seats. If this were to happen, this would be the third time in Canadian history—alongside the Progressive Conservative governments of John Diefenbaker and Brian Mulroney—that a political party would hit the 200-seat threshold. The next



Tourism Minister Soraya Martinez Ferrada is the co-chair of the Liberal Party’s national campaign committee. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

election is scheduled for October 2025, and it remains to be seen if the Conservatives can maintain their momentum for the next two years.

An Innovative Research poll released recently also showed the Liberals and the NDP were only four points apart in their popularity. The poll found that among decided voters, the Conservatives had a 14-point lead over the Liberals nationally. The Conservatives were at 38 per cent, the Liberals 24 per cent, the NDP 20 per cent, the Bloc Québécois seven per cent, the Greens five per cent, and the People’s Party of Canada at four per cent.

The Conservatives were leading in all regions of the country except for Atlantic Canada and Quebec. In Atlantic Canada, the Liberals and the Conservatives were tied at 34 per cent; and the New Democrats were at 21 per cent. In Quebec, the Liberals were trailing the Bloc Québécois by six points, with 32 per cent and 26 per cent support, respectively. The Conservatives were at 21 per cent, the NDP 11 per cent and the Greens five per cent.

For this poll, the Innovative Research divided all 338 ridings across the country into different clusters, including CPC strong (Prairies); CPC strong (non-Prairies); Conservative Party-Liberal Party swing (Ontario); Conservative Party-Liberal Party swing (non-Ontario); Conservative Party to Liberal Party defectors; Liberal Party strong; Consistent NDP; swing NDP; Montreal Bloc Québécois-Liberal Party swing; regions Bloc Québécois-LPC swing; National Capital-Chaudière-Appalaches, and Green/Other.

Among the swing ridings nationally, according to this poll, if an election were to happen now, the Conservatives would win a vast majority of the 61 swing seats.

Of these 61, 30 are in Ontario—home to more than one third of the House of Commons—and 31 are outside of Ontario. Of these 31 non-Ontario ridings, British Columbia has 12, Atlantic Canada has 10, Alberta and Manitoba have four each, and Yukon has one.

The Innovative Research Poll suggested that the Liberals are 10 points behind the Conservatives in the Ontario swing ridings, and 18 points behind in ridings outside of Ontario.

In the CPC-LPC swing Ontario ridings, the Conservatives were at 40 per cent, the Liberals 30 per cent, the NDP 17 per cent, the Greens eight per cent, and the PPC was at four per cent. In CPC-LPC swing non-Ontario ridings, the Conservatives had the support of 42 per cent of Canadians, the Liberals 24 per cent, the NDP 22 per cent, the Greens seven per cent and the People’s Party four per cent. Even in strong Liberal ridings the Conservatives are only three points behind the Liberals, with 32 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively. The NDP was at 21 per cent, and the Greens and the PPC were each at five per cent.

The online poll of 3,500 Canadians was conducted between Oct. 5 and Oct. 31, and released last week.

The Hill Times reported two weeks ago that amongst the 34 CPC-LPC defector ridings—the ridings that voted Conservative in 2011, moved *en masse* to the

Liberal column in 2015, and have largely stayed red—the Conservatives were 10 points ahead. The Liberals won 32 of these 34 in 2021, and 34 out of 34 in the 2019 and 2015 elections.

“They’ve crashed,” said Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

“They’re going to drag their coalition partners down with them: the NDP look like they’re losing seats as well, and the only party that stands to benefit from this other than the Conservatives are the Bloc.”

Senior cabinet ministers interviewed for this article last week said they’re not distracted by the national polling numbers, and are keeping their focus on delivering results for Canadians in their respective portfolios.

“People right now are feeling very anxious and there’s a lot of emotion for many reasons,” said Tourism Minister Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Que.), co-chair of the national Liberal campaign committee, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. “And as a government, we have to stay focused and we have to stay focused on delivering what Canadians need and that will we’ll continue to do.”

Housing Minister Sean Fraser (Central Nova, N.S.) echoed the same view.

“In all honesty, I focus on trying to advance policies and ideas that are going to help people. I don’t spend too much time reviewing what the national polls say,” Fraser told *The Hill Times* last week. “I’ve seen over the course of eight years them going up and down repeatedly. But my sense is if I remain focused on the policies that help my neighbours,

they appreciate it. So I’m still focused on the same things I was focused on when I got elected: good paying jobs, making sure people have a chance to support themselves and their families, regardless of their income level, protecting the environment, making sure Canada plays a role on issues important on the world stage. And my expectation is that if we continue to remain focused on what people are focused on, then we’ll do okay.”

Nanos said that the fact the Liberals and the NDP are tied in popular support is a “massive psychological shift” as the Grits present themselves as leaders of the progressive voters. But when they have the same public support as the New Democrats, the Liberals lose the leadership of these voters. This dynamic gives an advantage to the Conservatives as when the two left-of-centre parties have the same level of popularity, this causes vote splitting which gives an opening to the right-of-centre party, which is now the government in waiting. Nanos said that this is the “dream scenario” for the Conservatives, and the same one in place when then-Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper won a majority government in 2011.

Nanos said that the Liberals have attempted several resets in the last two years—the most recent one was the major cabinet shuffle in the summer—but nothing has worked so far.

The coming 90 to 120 days will be critical for Trudeau’s legacy as, if he wants to leave to spend time with his family, the prime minister will have to make a move sooner than later, or it will be too late.

“The next 90 to 120 days are going to be the fork in the road for Justin Trudeau,” said Nanos. “It will basically set the stage for whatever his legacy might be—will his legacy be that he led the Liberal party that won three elections, that he moved files forward on diversity, equity and inclusion, and focused on reconciliation and things like that? Or will he be the leader who took the Liberal Party from third place [to first place], and left the party in third place?”

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Housing Minister Sean Fraser says his government’s focus is on delivering results for Canadians, not on the polls. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Liberals join social media skirmish as attacks on Poilievre target battleground Ontario

In new ads, the governing party has accused the Conservative leader of 'importing far-right American-style politics here to Canada.'

Continued from page 1

postal codes in Oshawa, Uxbridge, and surrounding areas.

The ads accuse Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) of seeking to "import" right-wing politics from the United States.

"Pierre Poilievre wants to make cuts to programs that support Canadians, and import far-right American-style politics here to Canada," one ad states. "We can't let him take us backward."

The ad includes a six-part list of "Pierre Poilievre's priorities," stating that he wants to "cut investments for the middle class, put assault weapons back in our communities, roll back our climate action, promote volatile crypto-currencies that would hurt our economy, restrict access to abortion, [and] promote American-style politics."

Another stated that "Pierre Poilievre's record speaks for itself," then lists that he voted against "\$10-a-day child care, the Canada Child Benefit, dental care for kids, middle class tax cuts, [and] increased support for seniors."

The Liberals have also sought to connect Poilievre to former prime minister Stephen Harper. In an ad with footage from a convention at which Poilievre says, "thank you, Stephen Harper... thank you again, Stephen Harper," a graphic appears with "Stephen Harper and Pierre Poilievre's record" of "cut taxes for the wealthy and services for Canadians, raised the retirement age from 65 to 67, denied climate change, attacked labour unions, [and] closed nine Veterans Affairs offices."

A contrasting ad shows a list with the Liberals' plan to "cut red tape and lower prices, help cities build homes faster, [and] remove the GST to speed up rental construction."

Parker Lund, the Liberal Party's director of communications, told *The Hill Times* in an email on Nov. 30 that "since becoming the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada over a year ago, Pierre Poilievre has been pushing for deep cuts that would gut our



The Liberal Party launched a series of attack ads targeting Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, pictured, throughout November. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

middle class and importing far-right American-style politics here to Canada."

"In our communications, advertising, and digital engagement, the Liberal Party of Canada will continue to contrast Pierre Poilievre's priorities that would take Canada backward with our positive plan to make life more affordable and build an economy that works for all Canadians," Lund said.

The targeted postcodes are in the ridings of Liberal MPs Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Ont.) and Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering-Uxbridge, Ont.), and Conservative MPs Philip Lawrence (Northumberland-Peterborough South, Ont.), Jamie Schmale (Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Ont.), and Colin Carrie (Oshawa, Ont.).

It also includes the riding of Durham, held by former Conservative leader Erin O'Toole until his resignation from Parliament on Aug. 3. A byelection for his replacement must be announced by Jan. 30, 2024. The Tories have held the seat since its most recent iteration was contested in 2006.

O'Connell, who has held her riding since 2015, won by a 10.8 per cent margin in the 2021 election. However, as reported in

The Hill Times last week, Pickering-Uxbridge is among the 34 ridings listed in an Innovative Research poll as "Conservative to Liberal defector" seats from the 2015 election that were at risk of returning to the Tories. At least 22 contenders are considering seeking the Conservative nomination for the seat, as *The Hill Times* reported on Nov. 6.

An Abacus Data poll published on Nov. 26 suggested that 41 per cent of Ontarians would vote for the federal Conservatives, 27 per cent for the Liberals, 21 per cent for the NDP, six per cent for the People's Party of Canada, five per cent for the Greens, and the remainder for others.

For comparison, during the 2021 election, the Liberals secured 39.3 per cent of the votes and 79 seats in Ontario, followed by 34.9 per cent and 37 seats for the Conservatives, 17.8 per cent and five seats for the NDP, and 2.2 per cent and one seat for the Greens.

"I don't think it's a secret that elections can be won or lost in the 905," D'Angelo said, adding that polling provided a good sense of the outcome in Western Canada, and a fairly good sense of the results in Quebec and Atlantic

Canada. "I think that ethnic communities, and the 905 in particular, are really going to be the battleground in 2025."

Given the Conservatives' massive fundraising war chest in comparison to the Liberals, D'Angelo said the governing party would need to be strategic in its advertising and campaigning between now and the next election.

D'Angelo said the latest ads would target voters across Canada more generally, particularly those who feared the polarization seen in the United States during and after Trump's presidency. The ads will try to tie that fear to Poilievre. She said she was not sure that she agreed with the assertion that Poilievre was like Trump, but that there had been a notable growth in polarization in Canadian politics during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's not outside the realm of possibility to have that adjustment to something that polarized [in Canada]," she said. "I think they're trying to get Canadians to understand that one of the great things about our system is that there's a lot of parties, there's a lot of grey area in Canada, and generally it's not black and white. So I think they're trying to get everyone to think long and hard about if they want to vote for someone who's going to bring a more polarized view to Canadian politics."

Nationally, the Abacus poll showed Conservatives had the support of 39 per cent of Canadians, the Liberals 24 per cent, the NDP 20 per cent, the Bloc Québécois eight per cent (or 35 per cent in Quebec), and the Greens five per cent.

The 'T' word

In the United States, polling aggregator FiveThirtyEight shows former president Trump is

projected to win the Republican presidential primary with 60 per cent of the vote, while he is competitive in a hypothetical rematch of the 2020 presidential election against incumbent President Joe Biden.

In addition to his attempt to win a second term in the White House, Trump is expected to remain in the headlines through 2024 as he fights 91 felony counts in three states and the District of Columbia.

The Liberals' attempt to tie Poilievre to Trump-style politics has not been limited to the party's advertisements. The former president's name has rarely been used, but his campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" or "MAGA" has been alluded to.

Last week in the House, Liberal MP Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Ont.), accused Poilievre of "importing MAGA-brand, American-style politics into Canada, something that is not welcome in our country," while Trudeau accused the opposition leader of "watching too much far-right American TV" and used the term "MAGA Conservatives" to describe those opposed to climate action.

During a debate in the House on a Conservative motion urging Senators to support private member's bill C-234 on Nov. 28, O'Connell pondered whether the party was "learning lessons from January 6 in the United States and the MAGA Republicans" in the pressure Conservatives have been placing on lawmakers in the Red Chamber.

The day before, during a debate on the government's bill to introduce anti-scab legislation, Liberal MP Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East-Cooksville, Ont.) said Poilievre "is, unequivocally, an anti-labour-union proponent, aligning himself with extreme right-wing, MAGA politics."

Liberal MP Ken Hardie (Fleetwood-Port Kells, B.C.), meanwhile, apologized for a Nov. 27 post on X (formerly Twitter) that questioned whether there was a link between Poilievre and a shooting in Winnipeg that left four people dead the weekend before.

After mentioning that the shooting was "beyond troubling," the post asked "might it be the anti-social 'burn everything down' far-right attitude we're seeing creeping in from the US? And the 'creep' on the Canadian side? Pierre Poilievre?"

The Canadian Press reported on Nov. 28 that Hardie initially refused to apologize, but he later posted a follow-up that afternoon stating that "it was unacceptable on my part to leave any suggestion of a direct link to the tragedy in Winnipeg. There was not. For that, I apologize."

Conservatives expressed outrage at the post, while Government House Leader Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.) told reporters that the tweet was "absolutely inappropriate, and that's not something that anyone should be suggesting from any political party."

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Liberal MP Jennifer O'Connell's riding was among those targeted by the party's most recent ads against Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Laura Ryckewaert
Hill Climbers

A tour of Tourism Minister Martinez Ferrada's team

Senior staff to the minister include director of policy Sandenga Yeba and director of parliamentary affairs Béatrice Lavallée.

Tourism Minister **Soraya Martinez Ferrada**, who's also responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, has a 13-member ministerial team in place, with deputy policy director **Christiana Agustin** among the most recent additions.



Christiana Agustin is deputy director of policy. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Agustin is former policy adviser to International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business, and Economic Development Minister **Mary Ng**. Agustin left the Hill in September 2022 to pursue a master of public policy degree at the University of Oxford—studies she wrapped up earlier this fall, according to her LinkedIn profile. She was also recently busy as a research assistant with the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law, and Armed Conflict, focused on research related to “accountability for crimes of aggression and mass atrocities in Asia, including China.”

After interning in the Liberal Research Bureau (LRB) over the summer of 2017, Agustin was hired as a constituency assistant to now-Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister **Gary Anandasangaree** as the MP for Scarborough-Rouge Park, Ont. She went on to work as an outreach and operations assistant in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s office over the summer of 2018 and 2019, in between which she was a monitoring, evaluation, and learning officer with The Center for People and Forests. All this happened while she was completing her undergraduate studies in international development at the University of Toronto, and after she



Tourism Minister Soraya Martinez Ferrada, who is also the minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, is pictured recently on the Hill. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

graduated in 2020, Agustin was hired as an outreach adviser in the LRB. She's since also been a policy adviser to then-families, children, and social development minister **Karina Gould**.

Sandenga Yeba is now director of policy to Martinez Ferrada. He was previously deputy director of policy to then-health minister **Jean-Yves Duclos**, whose office he first joined as a senior policy adviser at the start of 2022. By the end of the year, Yeba had been promoted to deputy policy director to Duclos.

Yeba is also a former senior policy and Quebec regional affairs adviser to then-agriculture minister **Marie-Claude Bibeau**, a past economic and commercial development adviser in the office of Montreal Mayor **Valérie Plante**, an ex-aide to then-Quebec deputy premier and economic development minister **Dominique Anglade**, and a former international organizations co-ordinator for Montréal International.



Sandenga Yeba is director of policy. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Also currently tackling policy for the tourism and Quebec economic development minister is adviser **Iyad Kaghad**. Prior to joining Martinez Ferrada's team in October, he spent almost two years working then-sport and Quebec economic development minister **Pascale St-Onge**; starting right after the 2021 election as executive assistant to the minister and her chief of staff, he was promoted to policy adviser in 2022. Kaghad is also a former policy adviser to the Quebec Health Insurance Board's head of legal affairs, and an ex-intern to Quebec Liberal MP **Joël Lightbound**.



Iyad Kaghad is a policy adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

As previously reported, **Alex Corbeil** is chief of staff to Martinez Ferrada. Prior to the shuffle, Corbeil had most recently been deputy chief of staff and director of parliamentary affairs to Ng (where she would have worked alongside Agustin, among others).

Béatrice Lavallée is now director of parliamentary affairs to the minister. Lavallée first landed on the Hill as an assistant to Martinez Ferrada as the MP for Hochelaga,



Béatrice Lavallée is director of parliamentary affairs. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Que., after the 2019 election, which saw Martinez Ferrada elected to the House for the first time, with Lavallée having been part of her boss' ultimately successful campaign team. Lavallée similarly was part of Martinez Ferrada's successful 2021 re-election bid, after which she joined then-government House leader **Mark Holland**'s team as a parliamentary affairs adviser. She left the House leader's office shortly after the July shuffle, ending as a senior parliamentary affairs adviser. She was originally hired as a senior parliamentary affairs manager to the tourism and Quebec economic development minister.

Gregory Frame is an issues manager and assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP **Annie Koutrakis**. Before joining Martinez Ferrada's team in November, Frame had been an assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Marcus Powlowski** since this past May. According to his LinkedIn profile, he's also previously worked as a health policy analyst with Ward Health, a research and policy analyst with 3Sixty Public Affairs, and has been a market access intern with Bristol-Myers Squibb, and a research and public policy intern with Innovative Medicines Canada, among other things.

Kimberly Luce is director of operations. Luce was previously a Quebec regional



Gregory Frame is an issues manager and assistant to the parliamentary secretary. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Kimberly Luce is director of operations. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Hill Climbers

Continued from page 28

affairs adviser to then-sport minister St-Onge since January 2022, and before then, since 2017, she'd been an assistant to now National Revenue Minister Bibeau as the MP for Stanstead, Que.

Covering the Quebec regional affairs desk for the minister is adviser **Simon Boucher**, who spent the last almost two years working in Martinez Ferrada's constituency office. Boucher also previously interned in Transport Minister **Pablo Rodriguez**'s office as Quebec lieutenant over the summer of 2021.

Jose Villagra, who spent the last two years running British Columbia Liberal MP **Parm Bains**' office, is now a regional affairs adviser for the West to Martinez Ferrada.

Alex Cohen is now director of communications to the tourism and Quebec economic development minister. He previously did the same for then-public safety minister **Marco Mendicino**. Cohen first began working for Mendicino in the fall of 2020, starting as press secretary in Mendicino's office as then-immigration minister. He followed the minister to the public safety portfolio after he was shuffled following the 2021 federal election, at which point he was promoted to director.



Alex Cohen is director of communications. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Cohen has been working for ministers on the Hill since 2018, beginning as a special assistant for communications to then-health minister **Ginette Petitpas Taylor**. He was later promoted to issues management and communications adviser, and then to press secretary to Petitpas Taylor, and is also a former press secretary to then-economic development and official languages minister **Mélanie Joly**.

A former director of communications for the Ontario Young Liberals and former vice-president of communications for the Young Liberals of Canada, Cohen also has past experience at Queen's Park, having interned in then-Ontario Liberal transport minister **Steven Del Duca**'s office over the summer of 2015, and then-agriculture, food, and rural affairs minister **Jeff Leal**'s office over the summer of 2016.

Marie-Justine Torres is press secretary to Martinez Ferrada. Hired by the minister



Marie-Justine Torres is press secretary. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

in October, she was previously working as a business intelligence consultant with Quebec's Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie.

Mathieu Mélix is a digital communications adviser. Prior to joining the tourism and Quebec economic development

minister's office in August, he'd been working as a special assistant for communications to then-revenue minister **Diane Lebouthillier** since April of this year. Mélix is also a former communications specialist with Excellence Sportive Outaouais.

Finally, **Antonia Levy** is executive assistant to the minister and her chief of staff. Levy is new to the Hill and was last working for Skills Ontario as a young women's initiatives program co-ordinator in Toronto. lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Cabinet communications list

Minister	Portfolio	Chief of Staff	D. Comms	Press Secretary*	Main Office #
Trudeau, Justin	Prime Minister	Katie Telford	Vanessa Hage-Moussa	Mohammad Hussain, Jenna Ghassabeh	613-992-4211
Freeland, Chrystia	Deputy Prime Minister, Finance	Andrew Bevan	Alex Lawrence	Katherine Cuplinskaskas	613-369-5696
Anand, Anita	Treasury Board	Monique Lugli	Emelyana Titarenko	-	613-369-3170
Anandasangaree, Gary	Crown-Indigenous Relations	Shaili Patel	Joanna Sivasankaran	Matthieu Perrotin	819-997-0002
Beech, Terry	Citizens' Services	Ryan Cotter	Erik Nosaluk	-	-
Bibeau, Marie-Claude	National Revenue	Frédérique Tsai-Klassen	Marianne Dandurand	Simon Lafortune	613-995-2960
Blair, Bill	Defence	Taras Zalusky	Daniel Minden	Diana Ebadi	613-996-3100
Boissonnault, Randy	Employment, Workforce Developent, and Official Languages	Elliott Lockington	Alice Hansen	Farrah-Lilia Kerkadi	819-654-5546
Champagne, François-Philippe	Innovation, Science, and Industry	Ian Foucher	Laurie Bouchard	Audrey Champoux	343-291-2500
Duclos, Jean-Yves	Public Services and Procurement	Anthony Laporte	Marie-France Proulx	Olivier Pilon	819-997-5421
Fraser, Sean	Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities	Savannah DeWolfe	Matt Dillon	Micaal Ahmed	343-644-9948
Gould, Karina	House Leader	Rheal Lewis	Mark Kennedy	Olivia Batten	613-995-2727
Guilbeault, Steven	Environment and Climate Change	Jamie Kippen	Oliver Anderson	Kaitlin Power	819-938-3813
Hajdu, Patty	Indigenous Services, Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario	Katharine Heus	Simon Ross	—	819-956-5388
Holland, Mark	Health	Cyndi Jenkins	Alex Maheux	Christopher Aoun	613-957-0200
Hussen, Ahmed	International Development	Mike Maka	Alex Tétreault	Geneviève Lemaire	343-203-6238
Hutchings, Gudie	Rural Economic Development, ACOA	Allie Chalke	Kevin Lemkay	—	613-941-7241
Ien, Marci	Women and Gender Equality, Youth	Dunerci Caceres	Riyadh Nazerally	Nanki Singh	—
Joly, Mélanie	Foreign Affairs	Peter Wilkinson	Emily Williams	Isabella Orozco-Madison	343-203-1851
Khera, Kamal	Diversity, Inclusion, and Persons with Disabilities	Helen Gao	Alisson Lévesque	Laurent De Casanove	819-654-5533
LeBlanc, Dominic	Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs	Jamie Innes (Inter & Demo), Cory Pike (PS)	Kelly Ouimet	Jean-Sébastien Comeau	343-644-9905
Lebouthillier, Diane	Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard	Faizel Gulamhussein	Gabriel Bourget	Jérémy Collard	613-992-3474
MacAulay, Lawrence	Agriculture and Agri-Food	Matthew Mann	Annie Cullinan	Francis Chechile	613-773-1059
Martinez Ferrada, Soraya	Tourism, Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	Alex Corbeil	Alex Cohen	Marie-Justine Torres Ames	343-291-2844
Miller, Marc	Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship	Mike Burton	Aïssa Diop	Bahoz Dara Aziz	613-954-1064
Ng, Mary	Export Promotion, International Trade, and Economic Development	Kevin Coon	—	Shanti Cosentino	343-203-7332
O'Regan, Seamus	Labour and Seniors	Paul Moen	Jane Deeks	Hartley Witten	819-654-5348
Petitpas Taylor, Ginette	Veterans Affairs, Associate Defence	Guy Gallant	Mikaela Harrison	—	613-996-4649
Qualtrough, Carla	Sport and Physical Activity	Kelly Bryant	Dilys Fernandes	John Fragos	819-934-1122
Rodriguez, Pablo	Transport, Quebec Lieutenant	Miled Hill (Transport), Geneviève Hinse (Que.)	Jacques Martineau (Que.)	Laura Scaffidi (Transport)	613-991-0700
Sajjan, Harjit	Emergency Preparedness, President of King's Privy Council, Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada	James Cudmore	Emily Heffernan	Joanna Kanga	—
Saks, Ya'ara	Mental Health and Addictions, Associate Health	Sarah Welch	—	Alexander Fernandes	613-948-3265
St-Onge, Pascale	Heritage	Jude Welch	Shane Mackenzie	Ariane Joazard-Bélizaire	819-997-7788
Sudds, Jenna	Families, Children, and Social Development	Chris Evelyn	Margaret Jaques	Soraya Lemur	819-654-5611
Tassi, Filomena	Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	Jenn Kuss	Chelsea Kusnik	Edward Hutchinson	1-866-593-5505
Valdez, Rechie	Small Business	Angad Dhillon	Nadine Ramadan	Madeleine Roberts	343-550-1307
Vandal, Dan	Northern Affairs, Prairies Economic Development Canada, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency	Kathy Kettler	Kyle Allen	Carson Debert	819-953-1153
Virani, Arif	Justice, Attorney General	Lisa Jørgensen	David Taylor	Chantalle Aubertin	613-992-4621
Wilkinson, Jonathan	Energy and Natural Resources	Claire Seaborn	Sabrina Kim	Carolyn Svonkin	343-292-6096

* Not all staff listed in this category hold the exact title of press secretary, but serve in this function.

Heard on the Hill

Bloc MP Simard celebrates Jonquière college football win

Continued from page 2



Block Québécois MP Mario Simard, right, on the Hill with Bloc MPs Luc Desilets, left, and Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, centre, on Sept. 15, 2022. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Bloc Québécois MP **Mario Simard** is a football fan, and he celebrated Cégep de Jonquière Gaillards' winning Québec's coveted Bol d'Or college football championship on Nov. 25 in the House last week.

"For a diehard football fan like me, it was something to be very proud of. I want to acknowledge the incredible determination of the players, who had a perfect season this year, winning not six or seven of their games, but all 11. They did not lose a single game in 2023. The Gaillards are undefeated. They are the world champions," Simard said, pointing out that football player No. 17, **Émile Duceppe**, is the grandson of Bloc Québécois leader **Gilles Duceppe**.

Dhanraj takes on CBC News primetime post

Travis Dhanraj has been announced as the new host of CBC News Network's primetime program. He will start in January.

Dhanraj will host *Canada Tonight* in its recently expanded format from 7-9 p.m. ET. He replaces **Ginella Massa** as the permanent host, who announced her decision not to return to the network in July after taking maternity leave. She is currently a part-time journalism instructor at Toronto Metropolitan University.

During Massa's leave, *CBC Toronto News at Six* host **Dwight Drummond** filled in as a temporary host for *Canada Tonight*.

Dhanraj was most recently co-host of investigative consumer affairs program *Marketplace*, and has previously worked for the CBC as senior parliamentary reporter, and a general assignment reporter in Edmonton and Toronto. The Calgary-born reporter also worked at CP24 and CTV News, and became the Queen's Park bureau chief for Global News before returning to CBC in 2021.

Travis Dhanraj will become host of CBC's 'Canada Tonight' in 2024. Photograph courtesy of CBC Media Centre



In other changes at the broadcaster, **Marianne Dimain** will host the CBC News Network on Saturday and Sunday mornings, and contribute to breaking news coverage on *Morning Live* between Monday and Wednesday, and senior education reporter **Deana Sumanac-Johnson** will take on hosting duties at the network on Saturday and Sunday evenings.

Telcos host holiday reception in Ottawa



Robert Ghiz, left, with Global Public Affairs' Wayne Critchley and Janssen's David Côté. *The Hill Times photograph by Cynthia Münster*

We've finally made it to December, which means that holiday parties are replacing receptions across Ottawa's downtown venues in the sprint to the 2023 finish line.

The Canadian Telecommunications Association, however, is combining the two. The organization, which represents telco giants like Bell, Rogers, and Videotron, is hosting a "holiday cocktail reception" at Riviera on Dec. 5. **Robert Ghiz**, president and CEO of the Canadian Telecommunications Association, will be hosting the holiday cocktail reception.

Conspiracy theorist accusations fly

Never one to hide his true feelings, NDP MP **Charlie Angus** made no exception when responding to a Conservative attack ad accusing the federal government's climate transition plan as being part of a "woke globalist agenda."

Conservative MP **Shannon Stubbs**, her party's natural resources critic, published a seven-minute video on X (formerly Twitter) on Nov. 30, titled "They're proud socialists."

"The Just Transition is a part of the woke globalist agenda," Stubbs wrote above the video. "This is about centralized government control, five-year plans, and socialism. And I have the proof."

"Woke" is a term derived from African-American vernacular English meant to alert to racial prejudice and discrimination, but in recent years has been used as a pejorative by conservatives for policies perceived as being socially liberal.

Responding to the video about two and a half hours after it was published, Angus tweeted, "This person is on [Conservative Leader] **Pierre Poilievre**'s front bench. Seriously. This is his so-called cabinet in waiting made up of tin foil hats and conspiracy ranting."

mlapointe@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Opinion

'Without Rosalynn Carter, there would have been no President Carter'

The most moving eulogy was the presence of former president Jimmy Carter, which was the greatest tribute of all. Frail and confined to a wheelchair at age 99, he was with his wife until the end.

Arthur Milnes

Opinion



Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter kiss at the Democratic National Convention in New York City, 1976. *Photograph courtesy of Picryl*

the waiting room before we went on stage," he said. "And one day after debating seven other children or offspring of candidates for president, I called my mother and told her how nervous I got, and she told me something that I have used a thousand times since: She said 'Chip, you can do anything for 20 minutes except hold your breath.'"

Mrs. Carter's grandson, Jason, a politician in his own right, recalled how his grandmother's indomitable spirit never faltered, even towards the end.

"She had her own physical limitations that made it hard for her to walk. She had to practice," he said. "She was ready to go on one of these walks, she picked up this cane and I looked at the cane. She looked at me and she said, 'You know it's not a cane.' She said, 'It's a trekking pole.' She said, 'It's the exact same kind that those women use when they go to the South Pole.' I watched her walk down that hall with that trekking pole and I followed her. And I just pray that we never lose sight of that path."

For my wife and I, the most moving eulogy was not delivered in words. Instead, it was the presence of President Carter, the greatest tribute of all. Frail and confined to a wheelchair at age 99, he was with his wife until the end. "She'd smile and birds would feel that they no longer had to sing," he wrote years before in a poem.

Of her husband, Mrs. Carter once said this: "And then along came Jimmy Carter, and my life's been an adventure ever since."

And for us, who had the privilege of knowing Mrs. Carter for many years, we recalled our love for her throughout our trip. But most important of all, we remembered—and always will—that the greatest part of loving her was the comfort and strength you received in knowing that she loved you back.

And in that, we are joined by the millions of others from all walks of life whom Rosalynn Smith Carter also touched in America, Canada, and around the world.

Kingston's Arthur Milnes, who has been contributing to The Hill Times since the early 1990s, is the author of this year's 99 Reasons to Thank Jimmy Carter, and 2011's Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter: A Canadian Tribute.

The Hill Times

Nova Scotia Premier Houston to deliver speech at Empire Club of Canada in Toronto on Dec. 4



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, in Toronto. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

MONDAY, DEC. 4

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

Church on Monday—Former long-time 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.

CAHR Conference—The Canadian Association for Healthcare Reimbursement hosts a day-long conference on issues impacting the market access industry regarding policy, drug pricing, biomanufacturing, and more. Speakers include former Privy Council clerk Michael Wernick; Thomas Digby, chair of the PMPRB; and Suzanne McGurn, president and CEO, Canadian Agency

for Drugs and Technologies in Health; as well as a pundit panel featuring political strategists. Monday, Dec. 4 at 8:30 a.m. ET at Ottawa Marriott Hotel, 100 Kent St. Details online: cahr-acrss.ca.

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 Andreilita 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 on Parliament Hill. 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. 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.

TUESDAY, DEC. 5

Minister Hussen to Deliver Remarks—International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen and Liberal MP Mona Fortier will take part in panel discussion on "Building Women's Leadership for Governance Roles" hosted by the Forum of Federations. Tuesday, Dec. 5, at 6 p.m. at 131 Queen St. Details online via Eventbrite.

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples' Parliamentary Reception—Congress of Aboriginal Peoples' representatives from across the country will convene in Ottawa for their annual board meeting. They will engage in discussions with Parliamentarians about how CAP, as a representative organization for Indigenous peoples, can join forces with the government to ensure that all Aboriginal voices are heard in our shared pursuit of reconciliation. Tuesday, Dec. 5, 5-7 p.m. ET, Room 310, Wellington Building. RSVP to: Shawn@Sandstonegroup.ca.

CAFC Parliamentary Reception—The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs hosts its annual parliamentary reception. This year's devastating wildfire season demonstrates how the Canadian Fire Service must keep adapting to the

increasing threats posed by extreme weather and climate change. As the voice of the country's fire departments, the CAFC welcomes the chance to engage with Parliamentarians on public safety issues, and share its most recent data on the state of the sector and implications for ridings all over the country. Tuesday, Dec. 5, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Delta Hotel, Ballroom A, 101 Lyon St. RSVP to rsvp@summa.ca.

Canadian Telecommunications Association Holiday Cocktail—Robert Ghiz, president and CEO of the Canadian Telecommunications Association, hosts a holiday cocktail reception. Tuesday, Dec. 5, at 5 p.m. ET at Riviera, 62 Sparks St. Contact: rsvp@canadatelcoms.ca

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 6

Webinar: 'Policy Evaluation in the Era of COVID-19'—McGill University hosts a webinar, "What Did We Learn? Policy Evaluation in the Era of COVID-19." Practitioners and academic experts in the field of policy evaluation will present institutional, national, and disciplinary perspectives, with insights drawn from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United Nations. This webinar launches the open-access publication of the 2023 book, *Evaluation in the Era of COVID-19*. Wednesday, Dec. 6 at 10 a.m. taking place online: mcgill.ca.

Panel: 'Climate-Smart Agriculture'—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a lunchtime panel discussion on "Climate-Smart Agriculture" moderated by Vidya Shankar Narayan, assistant deputy minister, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Wednesday, Dec. 6 at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details online: canadianclubottawa.ca.

The Regent Debate—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts the fifth Regent Debate. Arguing in favour of the motion, "Be it Resolved: Canada's Immigration Levels Are Too High to Support the Economic Well-Being of New Immigrants, or That of the Broader Population," are former Alberta premier Jason Kenney and former Ontario Liberal cabinet minister Mitzi Hunter. Arguing against the motion are former Toronto mayor John Tory and former Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi. Wednesday, Dec. 6, at 5:15 p.m. ET in downtown Toronto. Details online: cdhoweregntdebate.org.

THURSDAY, DEC. 7

The Year Ahead 2024—The Canadian Defence and Security Network host "The Year Ahead 2024" featuring expert forecasting of upcoming security and defence challenges for Canada at home and abroad. Thursday, Dec. 7 at 9 a.m. ET at The Collaboration Centre, 150 Elgin St., Floor 8. Details online via Eventbrite.

Panel: 'Dismantling the Disinformation Economy'—Big tech is helping fund the disinformation economy. What role can Canada play in dismantling this economy so ad dollars can be redirected towards journalism and trusted media? Join FRIENDS and *iPolitics* for an insightful conversation with three experts. Thursday, Dec. 7, 5 p.m. ET, at the iPolitics Live Event Space, 17 York St., Suite 201, Ottawa. RSVP via Eventbrite by Nov. 30.

Rick Mercer to Discuss New Book—The Ottawa International Writers' Festival hosts comedian Rick Mercer who will discuss his new book, *The Road Years: A Memoir, Continued...* telling the inside story of the success of his show *Rick Mercer Report* filled with political satire and Mercer's patented rants. Thursday, Dec. 7, at 7:30 p.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details online: writersfestival.org.

Winter Lights Across Canada—Canadian Heritage will officially illuminate thousands of winter lights in the capital region. Follow the pathway along Wellington Street from the War Memorial down to the Supreme Court, across to Gatineau in Portage Park and Jacques-Cartier Park and up to the

Peacekeeping Monument. From Thursday, Dec. 7 to Sunday, Jan. 7, 2024. Details: canada.ca.

FRIDAY, DEC. 8

Jody Thomas to Deliver Remarks—Jody Thomas, national security and intelligence adviser to the prime minister, will take part in a discussion on "Navigating the Future of National Security" hosted by the Centre for International Governance Innovation. Friday, Dec. 8, at 10 a.m. ET happening online: cigionline.org.

TUESDAY, DEC. 12

Chief Nursing Officer to Deliver Remarks—Longwoods hosts a virtual breakfast event, "'You Can't Recruit Your Way Out of a Crisis': Why Retention is Critical to Today's Health Workforce Challenges in the Context of a Global Nursing Shortage" featuring Canada's Chief Nursing Officer Leigh Chapman, and Canadian Nurses Association CEO Tim Guest. Tuesday, Dec. 12, at 8:30 a.m. ET taking place online: longwoods.com/events.

THURSDAY, DEC. 14

Speaker Fergus at the Mayor's Breakfast—House of Commons Speaker Greg Fergus will be the special guest at the Mayor's Breakfast event, hosted by the Ottawa Board of Trade and the *Ottawa Business Journal*. Thursday, Dec. 14, at 7:00 a.m. ET at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Details online: business.ottawabot.ca.

Stephen Poloz to Deliver Remarks—Former Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz will take part in a webinar entitled, "Why is economic forecasting getting so hard?" hosted by the Canadian Association of Business Economics. Thursday, Dec. 14, at 1:00 p.m. ET taking place online: cabe.ca.

FRIDAY, DEC. 15

Bank of Canada Governor to Deliver Remarks—The Canadian Club of Toronto hosts Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem who will give his final public address of the year. Friday, Dec. 15, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York, Toronto. Details online: canadianclub.org.

TUESDAY, JAN. 16, 2024

Peter Stursberg Foreign Correspondents Lecture—Carleton University hosts the 2023 Peter Stursberg Foreign Correspondents Lecture. Ukrainian journalist Veronika Melkozerova from Politico Europe will deliver remarks entitled "Conflicted: a Ukrainian journalist covers her country at war." Tuesday, Jan. 16, 7 p.m. ET., Canadian War Museum, 1 Vimy Pl. Register via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, FEB. 6—THURSDAY, FEB. 8, 2024

Arctic360 Annual Conference—Themed "Prosperity, Community, Security: It's Time to Meet the Challenge," this conference will bring together Arctic state leaders, northern and Indigenous governments, institutions, and corporations; financial institutions, critical minerals, innovation, and other industry leaders; and Arctic experts from Canada and around the circumpolar North to discuss and foster action for building a sustainable, peaceful, and prosperous Arctic region Feb. 6-8, 2024, at The Faculty Club, 41 Willcocks St., Toronto. To register and for sponsorship opportunities go to: arctic360.org.

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2024

Parliamentary Press Gallery Dinner—The Parliamentary Press Gallery hosts its annual gala dinner. Journalists, together with political leaders, diplomats, and other distinguished guests will gather for an evening of high spirits and satire that puts the spotlight on media's crucial role in our democratic ecosystem. Saturday, April 13, at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building.

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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