

The North
policy briefing

pp. 13-25

Who's buying
Poilievre's
pitch to
workers?

Les Whittington
p. 10

Time for
action on
gendered
violence

p. 4

Tim
Powers

p. 6

Hill
Climbers

p. 28



THE HILL TIMES

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CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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NEWS

Former
Parliamentarians
Association
seeks cash
injection to
boost presence,
establish
mentorship
program

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

The Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians is lobbying for a federal cash injection after years of making do with less than \$30,000 in guaranteed annual funding.

But amid a cost-conscious Parliament, representatives from the association were recently sent back to the drawing board for a second time by the House Board of Internal Economy (BOIE).

Association president and former Liberal MP Matt DeCoursey says he's aiming to return in the new year with a revised proposal largely focused on two elements that got the most traction among BOIE members: boosting organizational capacity, and establishing a mentorship program aimed at helping MPs make the difficult transition both in and out of political office.

Continued on page 12

NEWS

CUSMA and friends? Costa Rican trade minister makes pitch to join North American pact

BY NEIL MOSS

With momentum building south of the border, Costa Rica's top trade official has brought his pitch to join Canada's North American trade deal to Ottawa.

In December 2022, Costa Rica signalled it was looking to apply to the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), known as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) below the 49th parallel.

The bid has received an additional boost after a Republican and Democratic Senator teamed up to put forward a bill to give the White House congressional trade promotion authority to expand the pact, which came into force

Continued on page 27

Costa Rican Foreign Trade Minister Manuel Tovar is hoping to increasingly bring his nation into Canada's trade orbit. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



NEWS

Environmental advocates push back against 'loopholes' and 'false solutions' at UN climate conference

BY KEVIN PHILIPUPILLAI

As oil and gas industry representatives and their political

allies make their presence known at the COP28 United Nations climate conference in Dubai, environmental advocates and other

civil society representatives are warning about language intended to dilute agreements to phase out the use of fossil fuels.

Tzeporah Berman, chair of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative and international program director at Stand.earth,

told reporters in Dubai on Nov. 30 that "fossil fuels have finally been dragged centre-stage" at COP28 after being kept out of the final text at the 27 previous COP summits.

She said the decades-long refusal to name fossil fuels as a direct cause of climate change at

Continued on page 26



Christina Leadlay

Heard On The Hill

Senate mulls covering social media subscriptions



CSG Senator Larry Smith at the Senate Internal Economy Committee on Nov. 30. Screenshot courtesy of SenVu

A Senate subcommittee recently floated a recommendation to have the Red Chamber pick up the tab for Senators' social media subscriptions—but there's a catch.

The idea of enabling Senators to be reimbursed for the cost of subscriptions to social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) through their office budgets was included in a report presented to the Senate Internal Economy, Budgets, and Administration Committee (CIBA) by its Subcommittee on Communications on Nov. 30. As explained by subcommittee chair CSG Senator Larry Smith, it was suggested in recognition of the fact that "paying for social media can give you advantages that a free account does not ... more people see your posts if you pay, and you get some extra functionality, too."

"Since social media can serve Senators in their parliamentary functions, your subcommittee is of the view that it would be appropriate to amend [the Senators' Office Management Policy] to permit reimbursements," said Smith, noting that subscriptions to X, LinkedIn, and YouTube Premium, for example, would together cost about \$570 per year. But he cautioned that doing so would require Senators to potentially change how they use social media, as the rules dictate that Senate resources can only be used for parliamentary functions. "That means some types of partisan activity, like fundraising and commercial activity, would not be permitted if the Senate pays for your social media."

The proposal sparked concerns among CIBA members, largely over the idea of the Red Chamber policing Senators' social

media accounts and where the line would be drawn in deciding what constitutes as partisan.

Asked how the Other Place handles the matter, a representative from the Senate administration said they'd have to follow up to confirm for certain.

Ultimately, CIBA agreed to return to the recommendation at a future meeting.

The Hill Times confirmed that MPs are allowed to charge the cost of social media subscriptions to their office budgets, but with a similar caveat: that content be related to their parliamentary functions.

—by Laura Ryckewaert

Senate staffers stand in solidarity against hate

Fed up with the political divisions stirred up by the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, two Senate

staffers in Ottawa recently decided to show a united front.

On Nov. 23, **Mehk Noorani** and **Michael Milech**—who work for CSG Leader **Scott Tanas** and for non-affiliated Senator **Patti Laboucane-Benson**, respectively—invited Muslim and Jewish parliamentary staffers to gather for a group photo to show that respect and tolerance can triumph over differences.

"With antisemitic and Islamophobic rhetoric and acts on the rise, our photo was meant as a statement that we value each other as colleagues and fellow Canadians, and that we support the right of each other's communities to enjoy peace and security in Canada," Milech told **HOH** on Dec. 1. "It was an important opportunity for the staffers in the photo to affirm our mutual support to each other, and to demonstrate publicly that we stand together against hate."

The Canadian Senators Group shared the group photo on social media on Nov. 28.



Jewish and Muslim Senate staffers displayed their mutual support on Nov. 23. Photograph courtesy of Michael Milech

Ex-senator Diane Griffin is UPEI's new chancellor

Retired senator **Diane Griffin** will be taking over as chancellor of the University of Prince Edward Island in the new year.

"This great opportunity—to serve as chancellor—was unexpected. I am so very honoured to serve my alma mater in this way," she said in a Nov. 30 press release. An award-winning conservationist, former provincial deputy minister of environmental resources, and town councillor, Griffin was



Former senator Diane Griffin will start 2024 as chancellor at the University of Prince Edward Island. *The Hill Times* photograph by Cynthia Münster

appointed to the Senate in 2017 by Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**. She represented her home province of P.E.I., and was part of the Independent Senators Group until her mandatory retirement in 2022.

At UPEI, Griffin will succeed **Catherine Callbeck** who has been in the role since 2018. According to the university, chancellor is a volunteer, titular role that

presides over convocations and confers degrees, diplomas, and certificates.

David R. Samson wins Balsillie Prize

The Writers' Trust of Canada announced that anthropologist **David R. Samson** has won the 2023 Balsillie Prize for Public Policy for his book *Our Tribal Future: How to Channel Our Foundational Human Instincts into a Force for Good* (St. Martin's Press) on Nov. 28. "This important contribution to our public policy toolkit explains why trust is declining across our society and why our public spaces increasingly feel hostile rather than welcoming," reads the jury citation.

The three-person jury of **Samantha Nutt**, **Taki Sarantakis**, and **Scott Young** chose Samson's book from among a short list, which included *Power and Prediction: The Disruptive Economics of Artificial Intelligence* (Harvard Business Review Press) by **Ajay Agrawal**, **Joshua Gans**, and **Avi Goldfarb**; *Truth Telling: Seven Conversations about Indigenous Life in Canada* (HarperCollins Publishers) by **Michelle Good**; *Booze, Cigarettes, and Constitutional Dust-Ups: Canada's Quest for Interprovincial Free Trade* (McGill-Queen's University Press) by **Ryan Manucha**; and *The Compassionate Imagination: How the Arts Are Central to a Functioning*



David R. Samson has won the 2023 Balsillie Prize for his book *Our Tribal Future*. Photograph courtesy The Writers' Trust of Canada

Democracy (Cormorant Books) by **Max Wyman**. Each finalist receives \$5,000.

Now in its third year, the \$60,000 prize—named for its patron **Jim Balsillie**, the businessman and philanthropist—recognizes the year's best nonfiction book that "advances and influences policy debates on a wide range of social, political, economic, or cultural topics relevant to Canadians," according to the Writers' Trust website.

Let there be light! Winter lights route begins Dec. 7

December's nights are long and dark, but Canadian Heritage will brighten things up for a bit starting Dec. 7 with its annual Winter Lights Across Canada display. Along Confederation Boulevard, thousands of bulbs will be lit up each evening until Jan. 7, 2024.

The department's media relations confirmed to **HOH** that there won't be an opening ceremony—there hasn't been one for the past couple of years—but encouraged folks to check out the online Pathway of Lights map which shows the loop of sites and

monuments being illuminated this holiday season. Starting in Confederation Park on Elgin at Laurier Streets, the route goes north to the War Memorial, west to Parliament Hill, by the Supreme Court, over the bridge to Portage Park in Gatineau, along avenue Laurier to Jacques-Cartier Park, and back over to Ottawa to the Peacekeeping Monument on Sussex Drive. While you're there, check out the National Capital Commission's lights in Major's Hill Park.

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Opinion

Remembrance is not enough: action needed to address gendered violence in Canada

The federal government is not adequately funding the work needed to tackle gender-based violence across the country.

Nicole Letourneau

Opinion



Each year, on the National Day of Remembrance, Canadians recall the shocking events of Dec. 6, 1989, when a gunman murdered 14 young women and wounded 14 more at École Polytechnique de Montréal *because they were women*. While significant strides have been made in Canada to address gendered violence, the problem persists, as noted in the federal government's own National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.

Recent data paint a harrowing picture.

The province of Ontario witnessed 30 femicides in 30 weeks between November 2022 and June 2023. Femicides increased 27 per cent in 2022, compared with 2019; girls are twice as vulnerable as boys to family violence. That's



Continued infrastructure funding for the Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence has not been prioritized as Women and Gender Equality Minister Marci Ien and the government implement the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, writes Nicole Letourneau. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

just the tip of the iceberg as many femicides and incidents of gendered violence go unnoticed by the authorities or media, especially among Indigenous Peoples.

The federal government is not adequately funding the work needed to tackle gender-based violence across the country.

After the "Montréal Massacre," the federal government invested \$3-million to address public policy, education, legislation, and applied research on violence against women and children, especially girls. In 1992, this investment resulted in the establishment of seven centres of excellence across Canada called the Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence.

Over the intervening 30 years, the Alliance centres have conducted more than 400 stud-

ies, many employing community-based research methods; raised more than \$50-million for research; and trained nearly 2,000 scholars in gender-based violence who have seeded institutions across Canada and the globe.

The centres link university researchers, policymakers, and community agencies delivering services to women and families affected by violence. Since their inception, the involvement of stakeholders at every level in addressing the problem of gendered violence has been key to the Alliance centres' success.

The centres' combined research and advocacy have contributed significantly to address violence and adversity affecting girls and women in Canada, from Statistics Canada's landmark 1993 Violence Against Women Sur-

vey, to the more recent National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan, and Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability.

Alliance centre research has influenced training for shelter workers, counsellors in programs for children exposed to gendered violence, and facilitators for men's behavioural change programs. They have designed programs to prevent gendered violence by working with fathers that have flourished across Canada and globe.

Alliance centre leaders have also taken part in various commissions and death reviews focused on gendered violence, such as the Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission after the horrific events of 2020, in which a gunman assaulted his intimate partner before posing as a police officer and murdering 22 people.

Today, the centres lead the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Alliance against Violence and Adversity, and are training the next generation of scholars to work with community partners to address gendered violence.

But their funding is now in jeopardy. They must not be allowed to fail.

After the initial federal government investment, funding to support the centres' infrastructure has been derived mostly from charitable foundations. But funding for three of the seven centres will cease in 2024, leaving all three Prairie provinces out in the cold. This poses a significant loss as the Prairies, where violence

rates are highest in Canada, will then no longer be represented in the Alliance nor contribute to national dialogues.

Ironically, these infrastructure funding challenges come at a time when Women and Gender Equality Canada is working to implement the national action plan via bilateral talks with provinces to address gendered violence across Canada. The Alliance centres have been on the periphery of these discussions and their continued infrastructure funding has not been prioritized.

The Nova Scotia commission perhaps frames the need best, stating, "funding related to preventing and effectively intervening in gender-based violence has been inadequate for many years and endangers women's lives," and recommending "epidemic-level funding to address this under-investment in safety."

Another recommendation states a gender-based violence commissioner be appointed whose mandate would include "assisting to co-ordinate a national research agenda and promoting knowledge sharing."

There's no need to reinvent the wheel. The Alliance centres offer the perfect opportunity to fulfill these recommendations. It just needs robust government funding.

Now is not the time to squander the Alliance centres' successes and hard-fought gains in addressing gendered violence in Canada. Have we learned nothing from the past? Remembrance is important, but it is clearly not enough to address the issues of gendered violence today that remain.

Nicole Letourneau is a professor and Research Excellence Chair in Parent and Child Health at the University of Calgary in the faculty of nursing, and Cumming School of Medicine. She is scientific director of RESOLVE Alberta, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Alliance against Violence and Adversity Training Platform. *The Hill Times*

A lost opportunity for 'pragmatic diplomacy'

Canada has flunked an early test by failing to attend as an observer a major meeting of states party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last week.

Paul Meyer

Opinion



Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly sounded a welcome note on diplomacy in an Oct. 30 speech, but Ottawa's excuse that participation in a recent nuclear disarmament event would violate NATO obligations rings hollow, writes Paul Meyer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam García

that the world has become more dangerous.

If Canada is going to do more than merely lament this turn of events it will need to pursue an active diplomacy. Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly sounded a welcome note in an Oct. 30 speech in which she promised a "pragmatic diplomacy" that would recognize the imperative to engage not only with the like-minded, but also crucially those with whom we disagree. In the global arena, progress is not going to be possible unless states reach out to those with differing views and values in the interest of finding common ground.

Regrettably, Canada has flunked an early test for "pragmatic diplomacy" in failing to attend as an observer a major

Unless you have been living on an ice sheet in Antarctica for the last couple of years, you will be aware of a major deterioration of the international security environment. The initia-

tion of aggressive war against a sovereign state, coercive threats to use nuclear weapons, and the dismantlement of existing arms control agreements that imposed some basic level of restraint

on nuclear weapon states have all contributed to a "strategic instability" unknown since the heights of the Cold War. A recent Ipsos poll had 86 per cent of the Canadians surveyed believing

Continued on page 29

Urgent Appeal from Brewery, Beer Retail & Distribution Union Workers: Cancel the 4.7% Federal Beer Tax Increase to Protect Canadian Jobs

AN OPEN LETTER TO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER & MINISTER OF FINANCE CHRYSTIA FREELAND

Dear Deputy Prime Minister Freeland,

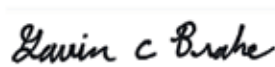
We, the representatives of thousands of unionized brewery, beer retail & distribution workers, urgently call for the cancellation of the scheduled 4.7% federal beer tax increase slated for April 1, 2024. At a time when Canadians are grappling with the highest cost of living increase in decades, compounded by escalating interest rates, food prices, and transportation costs, it is inconceivable that the government would consider imposing an above-inflation tax hike on one of Canada's most beloved products.

Amidst lingering economic challenges, beer sales continue to lag below pre-pandemic levels, instilling anxiety among brewery workers regarding job security. **The impending 4.7% federal beer tax increase poses a significant threat to the stability of the brewery industry, jeopardizing the livelihoods of unionized workers. We implore you to consider the profound impact this tax hike will have on workers and their families.** Now, more than ever, it is crucial for the government to stand in support of the Canadian brewing industry, particularly the thousands of unionized brewery workers who rely on it for their livelihoods.

Deputy Prime Minister Freeland, **we urgently request your intervention to prioritize the well-being of beer sectoral workers and consumers alike** by cancelling the upcoming tax increase. Your attention to this matter is crucial in preserving Canadian jobs and supporting middle-class families during these challenging times.



David Bridger
President SEIU 2
President Canadian
Brewery Council



Gavin C. Brake
President,
Union Executive
FFAW Unifor



**Rob
Edgecombe**
President
NBU Local 362



**Walter
Moscrip**
President
Local 250 A



Gaurav Sharma
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Canadian Union of Brewery
and General Workers



John Nock
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UFCW Canada
Local 12R24



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Drink Workers
UFCW LOCAL 361



John Locke
President
Branch Local 300
SEIU Local 2



**Lucia Flack
Figueirido**
President
UFCW Local 1400



Patrick Turcot
President
SST de la
Brasserie Labatt



Preston Grant
President
Local 288



Comment

Spread the word of 988 to save a life

Having a place like the new national suicide crisis help line, 988, where you can call or text when your mind is a desperate inner hell will be akin to providing immediate CPR to a person in cardiac arrest.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—In this column and in other places in this fine platform, we are often critical, cynical, even occasionally jaded. Sarcasm even creeps in from time to time. But today is mostly about sunshine.

First, a little darkness. I remember hearing about suicide sometime around the age of 10. My mother was explaining to me about some mental health problems my grandfather was

having. Why he was in the hospital getting some awful-sounding thing called “shock treatment.” To her credit, she did something that was not done at the time: she opened up about my Papa’s health struggles that I couldn’t see. She taught me that although his injury was not in plain sight, it was no less debilitating or painful.

During our conversations about Papa, she told me about the time he was struggling so much he tried to take his own life. She remembered it vividly, because it was on Nov. 22, 1963—the same day then-American president John F. Kennedy was shot and killed. My mother, then living in St. John’s, N.L., with her parents, came home that day to discover her own father had been shot, but by his own hand.

To avoid public embarrassment, the local story became that



Unfortunately, the 988 system will be well used amid tougher economic circumstances, global strife, rising hate, climate worries, and a litany of other things that challenge our mental wellness, writes Tim Powers. *Unsplash photograph by Dustin Belt*

it was an accident. But my mother knew it was otherwise. Thankfully, my grandfather survived and from that day forward, my mother became an early advocate for honest, open dialogue on suicide and mental health. I, and many others, have benefitted from my mum’s courage around what could have become a secret tragedy.

It was great last week to see the Government of Canada and

on suicide rates in Canada don’t hide the challenge. According to Statistics Canada, 4,500 people in this country die by suicide every year—the equivalent of 12 people taking their own lives every day. For every death by suicide, at least seven to 10 people either attempted suicide or grieved the loss of someone who took their own life.

While 988 is not a panacea, it is a big leap forward. Of course,

30-plus organizations launch the new national suicide crisis help line, 988. This project was years in the making and is solid, operationalized public policy. Credit to the Trudeau government for investing \$150-million over three years for this project. Credit also goes to the other parties in Parliament for legitimate ongoing work for mental health wellness initiatives.

This line—which will be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week—is vital. The stats

we need more trained mental health professionals and more specialized mental health places to serve us; all that investment still needs to happen. But having a place where you can call or text when your mind is a desperate inner hell will be, for some, akin to providing immediate CPR to a person in cardiac arrest. The 988 line will not save every life, but it raises the odds for many.

This service is being put in operation at a vital juncture. In normal times, the holiday season can be extremely difficult for many. Unfortunately, the 988 system will be well used amid tougher economic circumstances, global strife, rising hate, climate worries, and a litany of other things that challenge our mental wellness.

Make people aware of this service in your own circles. You may not get any immediate reaction, but you could be helping someone without even knowing it. For plenty of us, a mental health crisis could be lurking around the corner, and 988 has the chance to be a difference maker. So, let’s recognize the tool and properly applaud all those who have made it real.

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

The Hill Times

Opinion

Gun control is a women’s issue

As C-21 progresses in the Senate, it’s important to emphasize that gun recreation must never trump protecting Canadians from the devastating impacts of gun violence.

Suzanne Zaccour & Aja Mason

Opinion



Access to firearms is linked to a more than ten-fold increase in the likelihood that intimate partner violence will be fatal, making gun ownership the single greatest risk factor for femicide. Firearms are also used by men in

the context of coercive control to threaten, dominate, and terrorize female intimate partners. In rural Canada, they are the most common method used to murder an intimate partner or a child.

Bill C-21, an Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms), contains important measures to strip abusers from their guns, and reduce the likelihood that women and children will become victims of gun violence.

Specifically, the bill directs chief firearms officers to promptly revoke gun licences in situations of domestic violence or stalking, and makes anyone subject to a protection order immediately ineligible for a firearms licence while the order is in place. These measures were modified and adopted following direct input from the National Association of Women and the Law, and other feminist organizations.

Despite these women-centric safeguards, some commentators with no expertise in violence against women are spreading myths and stereotypes about

gender-based violence that could torpedo the bill’s progress.

Armchair experts are telling Senators that C-21 will not protect women because it focuses on “law-abiding citizens,” that is, legal gun owners. They are spreading the dangerous rhetoric that if someone has been background checked, they are not a threat. That if someone is a legal gun owner, they are not violent. That the problem is limited to gangs, and street violence, and loose borders.

If only abusers walked around with “I am violent” written on their forehead. But, as the real experts know, domestic violence is far from exceptional. The idea that people who appear law-abiding, who have a particular hobby, or who are not in a gang cannot be abusers is a domestic violence myth. Ask the neighbours of any femicide victim: they’ll swear the killer was just an average Joe.

But the problem doesn’t end with these myths. As if violence against women were a mere inconvenience, witnesses championing recreational shooting inter-

ests have hijacked the narrative in the parliamentary process, at the risk of trivializing women’s evidence-based safety concerns.

Are we really expected to believe that a hobby losing its appeal or a shooting club taking a hit in profits should outweigh the urgency of protecting women from harm, and even death? One would think so when listening to some commentators describe these consequences as if they’re announcing the apocalypse.

Bill C-21 is a delicate dance of competing interests, ensuring discretion where needed without compromising safety. In particular, the bill carves out space for conditional licences in cases in which domestic abusers genuinely need guns to hunt for their subsistence. Subsistence and safety are two justifiable concerns, unlike the supposedly dire consequences that gun advocates are peddling. Amid all the noise, one thing should be clear: gun recreation must never trump protecting Canadians from the devastating impacts of gun violence.

So where are the voices and expertise of those versed in gender-based violence in the gun control conversation? From media commentary to parliamentary witness lists, it seems women—the very group this bill most aims to protect—are being sidelined.

We deserve policy centred on safety, reason, and equality. After a year and a half of study and delay, we have waited long enough. Amid the cacophony of vested-interest statements, it’s time for the Senate to make a choice. The bill is complex, but in the end the question is simple. What matters more: the right to shoot for sport, or the right of every woman to live free from the fear and devastating consequences of gun violence?

With the clock ticking and women’s lives on the line with each passing day, the vast majority of Canadians who support stronger gun control are counting on the Senate to separate fact from fiction and pass this legislation.

Suzanne Zaccour is director of legal affairs for the National Association of Women and the Law. Aja Mason is the executive director of the Yukon Status of Women Council.

The Hill Times

**THIS SIGNAGE WAS UNILATERALLY REMOVED FROM
OTTAWA MACDONALD-CARTIER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE RED RIVER MÉTIS



GOUVERNEMENT NATIONAL DES MÉTIS DE LA RIVIÈRE-ROUGE

**THE MMF WILL DEFEND OUR CITIZENS'
RIGHT TO BE SEEN IN CANADA'S CAPITAL**

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Editorial

Keep the pressure on to ensure CAF misconduct isn't swept under the rug

It may not be as prevalent in the 24-hour news cycle now that the stream of top officials being accused of misconduct has slowed, but the sexual misconduct crisis in the Canadian Armed Forces is still far from resolved.

This was affirmed by the Dec. 5 release of Statistics Canada data stemming from the 2022 Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Among the not-so-highlights was that 3.5 per cent of the military's Regular Force members "reported that they were sexually assaulted in the military workplace or outside of the workplace in an incident that involved Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) or other military members" in the preceding year.

In a statement responding to the data release, Department of National Defence leaders noted their concern over the survey results, saying: "We know that the pain and trauma that sexual misconduct can cause affected persons is significant. Furthermore, it undermines our operational effectiveness, eroding trust, team cohesion and the ability of our members to contribute fully to our mission."

They also made sure to pat themselves on the back somewhat, noting "the number of people reporting that they intervened or took action when they witnessed sexualized and discriminatory behaviours has increased," and that three-quarters of

respondents agreed the culture surrounding sexual misconduct has improved since they joined the Armed Forces.

The survey results indicate that members have positive views of their units, and that a whopping 96 per cent "agreed that it is understood by their unit that sexual misconduct has no place in the CAF."

However, despite—or perhaps because of—the percentage of people who understand that the military is trying to turn a corner, fewer CAF members say they're reporting misbehaviour.

According to the survey, 64 per cent of sexual assault victims didn't report to anyone in a position of authority. The 21 per cent who did report represent a decrease from previous years surveyed in 2018 (25 per cent) and 2016 (23 per cent). The most common reason for incidents going unreported "was the belief that it would not make a difference," which was followed by "fear of negative consequences," and "resolving the incident informally" by themselves.

A widespread focus on stamping out sexual misconduct in the military may very well contribute to higher numbers of people acknowledging and putting a name to the inappropriate behaviour they have experienced. But CAF leadership has to work harder to ensure that the end result isn't just "we all agree this is bad, so don't make it worse for the institution."

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Cashing in voting-reform promise could improve the House, says letter writer

Re: "Are schoolyard tactics really the best MPs can do?" (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 29, p. 8).

The editorial notes that the efforts of some MPs to get things done for their communities and the country "are often overshadowed by those who are determined to be among the loudest and most prominent voices."

This is not new. The Law Commission of Canada noted in 2004 that "Canada's democratic deficit refers to concerns with different aspects of the political system

... including overly adversarial politics in the House of Commons." In its report *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada*, it recommended, "[t]he electoral system should prevent the development of a winner-take-all attitude, one which leaves the governing party blind to other views and the needs of opposition voters."

The 2015 Liberals promised, "We will make every vote count." It's not too late to get started.

Wilfred Day
Port Hope, Ont.

An urgent plea for children in crises

War and conflict inevitably come at a heavy cost: that of human lives. In the past few months, we have witnessed the devastating aftermath of ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises around the world: the numerous bombings between Israel and Palestine, the massacres in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the civil war in Sudan. In many cases, the children—who are left vulnerable and dependent—suffer the most from the violence and destruction left behind by these conflicts.

Right now, the lives and the future of countless children are at stake. According to UNICEF, children in these types of dangerous settings are twice as likely to succumb before reaching the age of five. As homes, hospitals, and schools are being destroyed, we must act quickly to

prioritize and invest not only in children's education, but also in their health, security, and overall well-being.

In anticipation of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) scheduled for Dec. 13-15, I stand in solidarity with the international community and urge International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to invest \$500-million over five years at the GRF to address the urgent needs of these children. These young lives are dealing with more than just surviving; they are also struggling with the trauma of loss, grief, and uncertainty. They deserve a better future—one that includes food, shelter, safety, emotional support, and access to quality education.

Elruma Dixon
Gatineau, Que.

Kissinger's realpolitik: a legacy of strife and misery

The recent death of Henry Kissinger will undoubtedly inspire grand efforts to sanitize his record of cynically fomenting conflict at the behest of United States imperialism.

For example, Kissinger was a key player in exaggerating the Cold War Soviet military threat, assisting Indonesia's 1965 peasant genocide, planning the 1970s carpet-bombing of Cambodia and Laos, advising the brutal Shah of Iran, and helping General Pinochet destroy Chilean democracy in 1973.

For these and numerous other outrages, Kissinger was ever wary of interna-

tional arrest and extradition warrants that could place him before national courts or the International War Crimes Tribunal. Only U.S. power has protected him from prosecution for war crimes and human rights abuses.

Kissinger's so-called peace deals were never designed to create just solutions; rather, he dedicated himself to empowering the powerful at the expense of working people across the globe. His so-called realpolitik has been an abject failure if human dignity counts as a measure of success.

Morgan Duchesney
Ottawa, Ont.



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Opinion

Comment

Shaken, then stirred: wardrobe malfunctions during a natural disaster

When Andrew Elliott felt the earth move beneath his feet, it wasn't just because of how great his new duds looked.

Andrew Elliott

Opinion



KINGSTON, JAMAICA—Nov. 28 marked the fifth time this year that the tectonic plates that crisscross Jamaica shifted enough that people felt it, however it wasn't the most violent. For the majority of the 60 seconds that comprised 10:57 a.m. on Oct. 30, I was seconds away from being only in my underwear. At some point during that minute, a 5.4-magnitude earthquake struck the western portion of Jamaica. Its shallow depth of 10 kilometres magnified the force felt by those affected, which included the entirety of the capital, Kingston. When it hit, the majority of Kingstonians were several hours into their workday as offices, building sites, and roadways shook from the biggest quake to hit the island in years—but I was in a bridal shop, sans pants.

The single-storey concrete building, erected sometime between the 1950s and '70s (no one knew for sure when I asked) has been a fixture of tuxedo rentals for those diplomats and diplomatic spouses who arrived on post without their own black tie. This may seem like a failure to plan, but when your significant other works in the development stream of Global Affairs Canada (formerly the Canadian International Development Agency) black-tie and the ever-elusive white-tie events are few and far between.

Why the need for the monkey suit? My wife and I bought tickets to attend one of our favorite expat events: the United States Marine Corps Ball. They celebrated their 248th birthday on Nov. 10. We attended the event last year here in Jamaica, and when my wife was working for the United Nations in Mongolia, we rocked up to the one in Ulaanbaatar.

Each U.S. Embassy has a contingent of Marines attached to it for security, and every year they honour their founding with a black-tie ball. We like the pageantry and the ceremony, and the excuse to dress up. Also, when you're living abroad, it never hurts to know a few Marines. They also give out party favours emblazoned with the Marines' standard. So far we've collected

coasters, bottle openers, and, this year, a pair of flasks celebrating the auspicious day. Clearly America's tip of the spear hasn't perused Canada's new alcohol consumption guidelines.

So there I was, the linen slacks I arrived in slung over a box while I pulled up a pair of rental tuxedo pants. The seamstress waited on the other side of a thin curtain, in case the waist needed to be adjusted. I clasped the rayon wool blend around my midsection and emerged from behind the partition ready to declare a perfect fit. Then the building began to shake. Softly at first, a sort of rocking. Like a cradle, but without the terrifying reality of the lyrics to *Rock-a-bye Baby*. Then, more violently. The building moved. I watched the door frame through which I had just walked shift. I braced myself by widening my stance. This is not a recommended reaction to an earthquake; that would be to find a table or desk and hide under it. However, the sumo squat that I engaged in really tested those tuxedo pants, and they passed with top marks.

I can't seem to find an official length for the primary earthquake. The dozens of aftershocks, geographic variables, and unique way each and every person perceives time—especially during a disaster—means that it lasted anywhere from 10 seconds to 400 hours. For me, I still have tattooed on my brain the looks of the seamstress and the other employees of the bridal shop as the tremors hit. They play back in a kind of Guy Ritchie slow motion/fast motion editing technique that got kind of worn by his second Sherlock Holmes film.

After the quake, events clear up and become more linear. I remember asking the staff in the back room if they were OK. I then walked the dozen or so steps to the front of the building to ask the staff there if they were alright. Everyone was, and we all looked at the joints of the concrete bungalow to see if there were any interior cracks. When none were discovered, the seamstress remarked on the timing of this *vis major* and that had it been any earlier, all would have seen my Giant Tiger-brand boxers. It was a much-needed moment of levity where I noted that they were a breath away from experiencing two life-changing events in one morning. If you can't laugh at almost dying half dressed, when can you laugh?

Everything in life is a learning moment, the events where you're almost crushed even more so. The lesson from this event? It's time to buy my own tuxedo.

Andrew Elliott has spent two decades hosting radio shows around the world, most recently in Ottawa, and now writes stuff from his home in Kingston, Jamaica.

The Hill Times

Is this the beginning of the end for François Legault?

The Quebec premier was first elected in 2018 on promises of political stability and better economic management, but has since suffered a series of devastating self-inflicted wounds.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



Quebec Premier François Legault was never a skilled politician, and doesn't have the kind of objectivity to look at the track record and fix what's broken, writes Andrew Caddell. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

KAMOURASKA, QUE.—These are not easy times for Quebec Premier François Legault and his Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government. While the premier managed to be seen as everyone's favourite uncle during the COVID-19 pandemic, his avuncular ways have begun to wear a bit thin.

A Dec. 4 Angus Reid poll showed Legault as the least popular premier in Canada, with 31 per cent support. The decline was substantial: Legault was at 47 per cent in September.

There is a long (dirty) laundry list of reasons for this quick decline: the disingenuous promise of a "third link" bridge or tunnel for Quebec City, which was never intended; Bill 15, the new legislation to centralize health care, opposed publicly by the last six Quebec premiers.

But the really devastating self-inflicted wounds were the decision to increase salaries of members of the national assembly by 30 per cent, and the offer of \$7-million to the Los Angeles Kings to come to Quebec City to play a couple of meaningless pre-season hockey games next fall. All this in the midst of ongoing labour negotiations with a union common front.

The non-francophone community—especially those living on the island of Montreal—soured on Legault's brand of nationalism long ago, which is reflected in his support: the CAQ holds a handful of seats in the Montreal area, but dominates the mostly rural regions, like Kamouraska.

Legault's decline began after an October byelection in Quebec City. Suffering a devastating loss to the Parti Québécois, Legault doubled down on nationalism, calling for increased tuition fees for out-of-province students at English universities. That only drew criticism, and PQ Leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon has now taken the lead in popularity.

Legault began to lose his swagger, saying he was "aware Quebecers are angry with me." Then he made a plea for teachers to return to the bargaining table. "We can't hurt our children, they're the most precious thing we have," he declared. The teachers accused him of "emotional blackmail."

Legault was first elected in 2018 on promises of political stability and better economic management. Here was the founder of Air Transat and a former Parti Québécois cabinet minister promising good government, and no referendum for a decade. The CAQ

was, therefore, a party built on opportunism. The canny Legault saw people were tired of the Liberal-PQ wars of the past. So, without denying his own separatist beliefs, he put them aside to get elected.

But Legault was never a skilled politician. As a PQ hardliner, he had few subtleties to his game. An acquaintance was surprised Legault went into politics as he was the "good time Charlie" who would dance on tables at parties. As for his business acumen, he is worth less than \$10-million and is not on speaking terms with his former partners.

When he invented the CAQ, Legault centralized the party's operations. Candidates were recruited from the party office because there were no riding associations. All financing and organization came from the centre, which allowed election spending and communications to be run without ridings making demands.

This desire to centralize has been a hallmark of Legault's government. Bill 15 is the latest of a series of laws designed to put power in the hands of Quebec City bureaucrats. There has been Bill 40, which sought to eliminate school boards; Bill 23 to control school administrators; Bill 96 took away the rights of English speakers; and Bill 21 removed the right of people who wear religious apparel to work in the public service.

In the early days of his government, when Bill 21 was passed, Legault taped a speech to "the Quebec nation," explaining why the law's blatant discrimination was a good thing. He finished with a dismissive and very colloquial comment that reeked of his arrogance: "Because that is the way we live in Quebec."

While most leaders would look at the track record and fix what is broken, I don't think Legault has that kind of objectivity. He now has three years before the next election to figure that out. If he loses, it will more than likely be to the resurgent Parti Québécois. Which would mean another national unity angst fest.

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

The Hill Times

Comment

Poilievre tests the limits of populist flim-flam with his pitch to Canada's workers

The current version of the strategy is to capitalize on the crushed dreams of middle-class prosperity, and the horrendous income inequality the whole right-wing approach to socio-economic decision-making caused.

Les
Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—Well, you can't say Pierre Poilievre doesn't have a sense of humour.

"When I'm prime minister, I will only do things that workers and consumers have been convinced are good for them," the Conservative leader



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre stems from a conservative tradition that has been striving for decades to reduce the supports and services that help working people and lower-income Canadians achieve better outcomes, writes Les Whittington. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

acceptance of the ultra-elitist billionaire Donald Trump as a champion of their needs, this campaign spearheaded by the United States' super-rich has been successful beyond what must be the creators' wildest dreams. At a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars in ads, media acquisitions, and political campaign spending, this multi-faceted endeavour has convinced millions of average people in North America that promised tax cuts, smaller government, and policies to enrich the corporate sector and the wealthy will somehow help them.

With the spectacular success of this anger-fed hocus-pocus in the hands of Trump, the decades of anti-government propaganda have irremediably changed politics in the U.S., and, by extension, increasingly in Canada. The really striking thing about the current version of the strategy is that it is now capitalizing on the crushed dreams of middle-class prosperity, and the horrendous income inequality this whole right-wing approach to socio-economic decision-making caused.

So you have Poilievre, who has never had much in the way of a private-sector job and has gotten wealthy in the cushy backrooms of Parliament Hill, telling

Continued on page 30

straight-facedly told a Bay Street crowd on Dec. 1.

"So, in the future, businesses that want a policy decision made are not just going to have to convince me that it's the right thing, they're going to have to convince workers and consumers," he went on in a much-anticipated speech to the C.D. Howe Institute.

Presumably, a lot of the people listening to him have heard enough political froth to recognize this kind of talk for what it is: standard populist boilerplate intended to trick non-rich Canadians into thinking that a Poilievre-led Conservative government would protect them from the allegedly uncaring elitists in power in Ottawa.

Any relatively aware Bay Street player would know that this is the essence of the latest version of the right-wing con game that has successfully led the gullible to support economic policies antithetical to their own interests for decades. From the phoney trickle-down theory of the Ronald Reagan years to American workers' incomprehensible

A 'no-Nazi' policy for our military partners should be a low bar to clear

Canada is supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine under the banner of 'shared values,' insisting they vet out Azov extremists is not interfering in Ukraine's sovereignty.

Scott
Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—With the media focused on the violence in Israel and the Gaza strip, the war in Ukraine has been relegated to something of a sideshow.

However, as a nation, Canada remains one of Ukraine's staunchest supporters as that country continues its bloody struggle to oust the Russian invaders.

To date, Canada has donated more than \$8-billion to Ukraine's war effort, with \$2.4-billion of that aid being in the form of weapons and munitions.

There are presently more than 300 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members assisting with the NATO training of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in both the United Kingdom and Poland.

It is estimated that through Operation Unifier—the mission to provide military training and capacity building to Ukraine—the CAF have trained nearly 40,000 Ukrainian recruits since 2015.

Throughout that lengthy period of close co-operation, there has been a recurring issue involving the presence of neo-Nazis within the ranks of some units of the Ukrainian military.

The most prominent among these was the notorious Azov bat-

talion—later regiment, and now a full brigade.

Azov was founded in 2014 as a private militia comprised of soccer fans led by Andriy Biletsky. Hailed as the "white leader," Biletsky has reportedly claimed to be leading the "white races in a crusade against the Jewish *Untermensch* [subhumans]."

By the time CAF instructors began deploying to Ukraine in 2015, Azov had already been absorbed into the official Ukrainian National Guard.

Assurances were given at the time that our Canadian soldiers would not be involved in training Azov battalion members because of their neo-Nazi beliefs. However by October 2021, a report from George Washington University revealed that extremists in the Ukraine military were bragging about their training by Canadians as part of Operation Unifier.

Following that revelation, David Pugliese of the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that Canadian officers met with and were

briefed by leaders of the Azov battalion. Apparently the Canadians were well aware of the Azov leaders' neo-Nazi beliefs, but their only real concern was that the media would expose the fact that the meeting took place.

Unfortunately for them, these officers and diplomats allowed themselves to be photographed with the Azov leaders. Those images were later used by Azov as propaganda.

In 2022, Radio-Canada further reported evidence that Azov soldiers—identified by their unit patches and insignia—had participated in training with CAF instructors in 2020 at the NATO-funded Zolochiv training centre in western Ukraine.

While emphatically insisting to media that all steps were taken by the CAF instructors to identify potential extremists, they also conceded that Ukraine is a sovereign country, and as such, the vetting of recruits is their responsibility.

This, of course, is a total cop out in terms of deflected respon-

sibility. Canada is supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine under the banner of "shared values."

Those who would glorify Nazi ideology and purport to create a racially pure Ukraine in no way represent Canadian values.

The Azov brigade's fanatical—but doomed—resistance against Russian invaders during the siege of Mariupol was heralded as a courageous feat of arms.

However the unit's neo-Nazi ideology cannot be overlooked or forgotten.

We made the mistake in Afghanistan of reinstating the warlords and their militias as the ruling authority because they were anti-Taliban. However, we forgot that the people of Afghanistan had actually backed the Taliban against the warlords because they were seen to be the lesser of two evils.

It is not interfering in Ukraine's sovereignty for Canada to insist on them vetting out neo-Nazis from the ranks of their military. We are not obliged to train these soldiers because Ukraine asked for our assistance.

Not stipulating a "no-Nazi" policy would be an erosion of Canadian values.

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

The Hill Times

CBC taking the crown in corporate shenanigans



CBC president Catherine Tait dropped the bomb on Dec. 4 that the public broadcaster would be cutting 800 jobs at a time when journalism is falling apart, misinformation is on the rise, and the distribution of that journalism is most critical, writes Erica Ifill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The CBC's cuts are another example of Canadian news media companies doing a poor job of expanding their audience, and losing relevance to younger, more diverse, and digitally savvy generations.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—The conundrum of legacy news added a new tragedy to its nexus of pain. On Dec. 4, the partially publicly funded Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) announced a whopping 800 job losses (including 200 unfilled vacancies) across the country. It's a cruel joke to tell people they're going to be out of work—people who are already struggling amidst a housing crisis and an affordability crisis—just before Christmas.

If the workers—as opposed to upper management—bear a disproportionate percentage of the burden of layoffs, that is class discrimination. Adrienne Arseneault interviewed CBC president Catherine Tait on *The National* and asked her whether bonuses will still be paid to executives. Tate's disconnection from the question showed that suspending bonuses never crossed her mind.

The CBC's cuts result from a \$125-million shortfall, yet beyond the hackneyed explanation of tech and competition from foreign entities, one should look a little deeper at why.

Canadian news media companies haven't done a good job of expanding their audience, thereby losing relevance to younger, more diverse, and digitally savvy generations. It's also bad business. As I wrote for McGill's Centre for Media,

Technology and Democracy: "The communities have also evolved over time and have become more diverse in identity and need. This has the effect of expanding the gap between journalistic output and communities' needs and interests." This is not only the plague of our media companies, but it's also particularly Canadian: "Tradition is often justified to uphold old-fashioned approaches, refusing to evolve, and eventually becoming stuck and irrelevant as a consequence."

After the May 2020 murder of George Floyd, and the resulting protests that spread across the country, news media made a promise to us: to diversify their content to meet the needs of an underserved audience, and to diversify their on-air and behind-the-scenes talent. Though half-hearted attempts were made, it seems as though that was just a patina of equity to an otherwise stodgy, white, and male industry. CBC itself lost the first hijab-wearing Muslim woman to anchor a newscast, Ginella Massa, who also platformed a lot of female experts and experts of colour, thereby slowly changing who we view as possessing intellect and expertise. But that's all gone now. Key findings in the Canadian Association of Journalists' 2022 Canadian Newsroom Diversity Survey include: eight in 10 newsrooms have no Black or Indigenous journalists on staff; white people make up 83 per cent of all supervisors; 84.3 per cent of the newsroom executives are white; and 54.3 per cent of newsroom leadership is male. The CBC's own mandate requires it to "reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada" And yet it fails to do so on a digital level.

And therein lies another problem: its digital presence. CBC.ca is wack; the cluttered website with cheap Google pop-up ads is abysmal. Instead of having a home page that is more digitally engaging, the layout of the website looks like blog from 2011. I've seen WordPress sites that look sleeker. I also have to scroll down to the end to get to the television options. What a nightmare of navigation.

Let's move on to its garbage app, Gem. I can't cast to my Samsung Smart TV using the app, only through mobile; again, the navigation is a nightmare; and although the appearance is sleeker, its television options are limited. And the CBC charges

\$5/month for the privilege. You also can't get News Network unless you get a cable package or pay for Gem. And 'round and 'round we go. Don't even let me get into its trash Smart TV app, which is the best method for finding out what happened

three days ago. The whole ecosystem is a jungle rather than a meadow. If the CBC wants to go digital, it must create a digital ecosystem that allows the customer to jump across devices without losing connection to the content they're consuming. (You all should really pay me for digital media consulting advice.)

And let's be honest: the CBC's coverage of this war in Gaza—and from legacy media in general—has further sown mistrust in mainstream media. The 2022 Digital News Report from Reuters Institute found that "trust in the Canadian news media has sunk to its lowest point in seven years." *The Conversation* continues to detail the trajectory of these numbers: "Only 42 per cent of Canadian respondents trust 'most news, most of the time,' a slight drop from last year's 45 per cent."

To be honest, I don't even trust legacy news some of the time, and I'm a journalist. Journalism in Canada tends to focus on a particular class of its potential audience, and that class favours a conservative kind of reporting. Unfortunately, that contrasts with the preferences of the audience they need to engage with and grow sustainably.

As part of their platform during the last election, the Liberals promised to modernize the CBC. The promises included a commitment to "increase production of national, regional, and local news." Instead, the CBC is cutting that critical programming at a time when journalism is falling apart, misinformation is on the rise, and the distribution of that journalism is most critical. Unfortunately, the public broadcaster doesn't seem to be standing on business, as the kids say.

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

The Hill Times

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News

Former Parliamentarians Association seeks cash injection to boost presence, establish mentorship program

CAPF was asked to return to the BOIE with a revised pitch after MPs were reluctant to endorse a four-year plan involving almost \$1.6-million in new funding.

Continued from page 1

There are currently around 1,000 living former Parliamentarians in Canada, meaning there are “1,000 potential resources” right now who aren’t being fully engaged with and leveraged to the benefit of not only current Parliamentarians, but also Canada and Canadian democracy writ large, said DeCoursey. The former MP represented Fredericton, N.B., in the House of Commons from 2015-2019, and became president of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians (CAPF) this past June after first becoming a member in 2021.

“That’s the essence of what we’re asking for here: an opportunity to fully engage the expertise, experience, and value that former Parliamentarians bring,” he told *The Hill Times*.

CAPF began its appeal for new funds in 2022 after fundraising efforts stalled upon the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. New funding is needed not only to help the association boost its operational capacity and restart fundraising, but also to expand its work to better live up to its legislated mandate, including through a proposed new mentorship program, said DeCoursey.

An initial June 2022 letter to the BOIE was followed by a November 2022 committee appearance at which clerk assistant Jeremy LeBlanc presented a proposal to “substantially increase” funding on behalf of CAPF (the few staff assigned by Parliament to work for the association are the administrative responsibility of Parliament’s international and interparliamentary affairs directorate). That proposal lacked details, and BOIE members across party lines asked the association to return with a more fleshed-out pitch.

It did so last month, with DeCoursey appearing alongside past



Members of Parliament take part in an orientation session in the House of Commons Chamber on Dec. 3, 2019, after that year’s federal election. CAPF president Matt DeCoursey says with more funding, the association could do more to help MPs transition in and out of public office. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

president and former Progressive Conservative MP Léo Duguay to present a request to boost funding in phases over the next four years, totalling \$1,565,391.

Since it was enshrined in statute in 1996, CAPF has received modest annual funding from Parliament to support its operations—split 70-30 between the House and Senate—which has sat at \$28,774 per year since 2012-13, when it was reduced by five per cent as part of the Harper government’s strategic operating review. Currently, House administration also allocates one full-time staff member and two part-time staff—who split their time also supporting the Parliamentary Spouses Association (and both of whom are soon retiring)—as well as shared office space in downtown Ottawa.

In the decade leading up to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the 2019-20 fiscal year, the association was able to add roughly \$1.5-million to its books through fundraising. But, as Duguay told the BOIE on Nov. 9, the pandemic brought fundraising to an “absolute halt, and a number of other things have conspired to make all fundraising on a volunteer basis difficult.” As a result, due to lack of funds, the association has since had to give up its executive director, further hampering its efforts.

Without a “fully functioning office,” as DeCoursey described it, the association has also struggled with outreach, both to incoming Parliamentarians and to recently former ones to make them aware of activities, sign them up as members, and offer peer support.

CAPF also gets some money through membership dues: regular membership for former Parliamentarians is \$125 per year, and it’s \$50 for spouses (who register as associate members). But currently, CAPF only has 194 members and associate members.

That number is “significantly lower than what we would be able to drive towards if we had the human resources in place to be able to reach out to members, to be able to follow up with them appropriately after they leave office,” said DeCoursey.

The four-year plan the association presented on Nov. 9 included a request for \$337,682 in funding for “staff support” in the first year—to hire a full-time executive director who would lead fundraising, and other staff to tackle accounting, clerical, and logistics support work—as well as \$193,200 for a public awareness campaign. Year 2 included a request for \$95,719 to hire a full-time co-ordinator to develop and run the proposed mentorship program.

Such a program would be aimed at both helping new MPs transition into Hill life, and helping outgoing MPs transition out of office—in both cases by pairing them up with a former Parliamentarian who could offer experience and perspective, beyond what’s formally offered by the House administration.

DeCoursey noted that, as a former junior staffer, he had a bit more “exposure to the Hill” than some first-time MPs when he was first elected in 2015. But he said “even then,” he found that while the administration “does a great job on the technical aspects of the role and of setting up offices,” through its orientation sessions, “what’s lacking is [advice on] things like what sort of people to hire in the Hill office and the constituency office, how to get the balance right between legislative work and constituency work ... what are the options that are available to either buy, rent, or stay in an apartment [in Ottawa]. These types of things are a big worry for a lot of new Parliamentarians.” That’s especially true in

the case of “big-change elections,” when there’s a “whole slew of new folks” coming into office and incumbents are often busy with “their own learning curve[s]” as they take on new leadership roles.

“The lived experience of Parliamentarians can really help,” said DeCoursey.

On the flip side, there’s the often-involuntary transition out of political office, which he said for “many MPs” can be a “dark period; psychology, mentally, some[times] physically, some[times] financially ... it can take a really long time to turn the corner.” The association works to reach out to recently former MPs, but without sufficient organizational capacity, its current efforts are “inconsistent at best,” said DeCoursey, and often—as was his experience after losing his seat in 2019—defeated MPs aren’t ready to talk for a while post-election.

“I see it as incumbent [on us] to follow up with those former members every four or six months, and perhaps after 12 or 18 months they’ll be ready to engage in our activities, and they’ll feel like sharing their experience publicly,” he said. “We want to be a place and a venue through which to do that.”

The House of Commons provides a number of orientation supports to MPs who aren’t re-elected (both those who opt not to run again, and those who are defeated) for 12 months after leaving office, covering “up to \$15,000” for career transition services, training or education, travel, and other eligible expenses, with those transition services focused on things like re-entering “the marketplace,” retirement planning, or help updating resumés and preparing for job interviews.

But there remains a support gap that a mentorship program could help address, said DeCoursey.

Last year, Health Minister Mark Holland (Ajax, Ont.) opened up about his own experience; about the toll political life took on him and his family while in office, and the “desperate spot” he found himself in after he lost his seat in the 2011 federal election, revealing it led him to attempt suicide.

“When I lost, because I had thrown my entire universe into this enterprise at the expense of, unfortunately, a lot of other things that I should have taken better care of, I was in a really desperate spot,” Holland told the Procedure and House Affairs Committee. “My career, my passion, the thing that I had believed so ardently in that was the purpose of my life, was in ashes at my feet. I’m not proud to say that I made an attempt on my life at that moment in time.”

Holland’s testimony was given in the context of the committee’s study on the idea of making the House a permanently hybrid Chamber (something MPs ultimately opted to do), and focused on the importance of enabling a healthier work-life balance for MPs, but it also served to underscore the personal toll election loss can have.

DeCoursey said creating a forum for former members to “publicly share their experience” could also help make it “less of a shock to some folks on their way out, [by] being able to share the psychological, emotional, mental transition that they had to go through.”

The eponymous 1996 bill that created CAPF set out five objectives: leveraging the knowledge and experience of members “at the service of parliamentary democracy in Canada and elsewhere”; providing “non-partisan support for the parliamentary system of government in Canada”; fostering a community among former Parliamentarians, as well as between current MPs and Senators; and protecting and promoting the interests of former Parliamentarians.

Other things outlined in CAPF’s Nov. 9 pitch included funding for a “Parliament to Campus” program involving former Parliamentarians speaking to university classes, an international “Parliament to Campus” exchange in collaboration with former American and European Union legislators, “Goodwill Ambassador Study Tours” (something the association already periodically organizes), and funds to renew its election monitoring program and the Global Democracy Initiative.

Citing the current cost-of-living crunch, MPs across party lines balked at CAPF’s overall almost \$1.6-million ask on Nov. 9. But, as per the board’s suggestion, DeCoursey said he’s now working with the House administration to further refine and whittle down the association’s request to focus more on domestic activities—including the mentorship program.

“They’re operating in a political context. There are realities that they have to live by, and we’re all former Parliamentarians, we get it,” he said.

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The Hill Times

THE NORTH

The Hill Times
Policy Briefing
December 6, 2023

Featuring...

**Liberal MP
Brendan Hanley**
p. 20

Rachel Kiddell-Monroe
p. 20

**NDP MP
LORI IDLOUT**
p. 21

**ISG SENATOR
Pat Duncan**
p. 22

**KEN COATES &
CARIN HOLROYD**
p. 23

Jackie Dawson
p. 25



The North Policy Briefing

Arctic security depends on follow-through on NORAD modernization promises, say defence experts

A recent Senate committee report notes the Arctic has reached an ‘inflection point,’ with the region assuming an essential strategic importance, and more must be done to enhance its security and defence—despite looming federal budget cuts.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Ensuring Arctic sovereignty amid threats from Russia and China, and contending with a slashed military budget, will require a strong defence minister who can follow through on Canada’s plans for modernized NORAD capabilities, according to defence policy experts.

“If I had advice to the [defence] minister, my advice would be simple. You have to set priorities vital for [the] defence of Canada and North America where the Arctic is the centrepiece of this. That is your priority. Move that forward,” said James Fergusson, a professor in the department of



On Oct. 4, Defence Minister Bill Blair told reporters the Liberal government has ‘significant commitments’ to NORAD modernization, and that it is his responsibility to ‘exercise control over spending and make sure that we’re getting true value for every dollar that’s spent.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

political studies at the University of Manitoba, and deputy director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies. “Make sure that the people in National Defence on the civil and the military side recognize this is what we need to do, and we need to do it as quickly as we can.”

On Sept. 28, Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre and deputy minister of defence Bill Matthews revealed that the government is intent on cutting nearly \$1-billion from the Department of National Defence’s annual budget, which would take place over four years. The department’s 2023-24 budget is expected to be \$26.5-billion, according to the main spending estimates.

On Oct. 4, Defence Minister Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.) told reporters the government has made “very significant” investments since 2017 in the defence budget, “significant commitments” to North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) modernization, and that it is his responsibility to “exercise control over spending and make sure that we’re getting true value for every dollar that’s spent,” as previously reported in *The Hill Times*.

Fergusson told *The Hill Times* that Blair will need to “put the cuts aside” and focus on carrying forward plans to modernize NORAD, such as the development of “over-the-horizon” radars,

which will improve the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and NORAD to detect aerospace threats such as hypersonic and long-range cruise missiles.

“The Department of National Defence and [Blair’s] office are dealing with a different issue right now, and that issue is the roughly billion-dollar cuts,” said Fergusson. “While they’re trying to figure this out ... everything else gets put on hold. What the defence minister needs to do is to recognize that this is an issue ... [and say] ‘I’ve got to push other

things forward because everything will start to lag behind.’”

The Army, Navy, and Air Force will each want to move in their own direction related to their own interests, and Blair will need to bring them together and impose a set of priorities related to Arctic security, argued Fergusson.

“If you go back over all the decades of defence ministers, most of them come in as neophytes. They don’t know, and so they need to recognize what the real priorities are and move forward,” said Fergusson. “I’m not trying

to be critical of the new defence minister, but the issue becomes does the defence minister get captured by the department and the department dictates to him, or does the defence minister take a lead and say, ‘let’s move forward on this in this file’? That’s what’s really important.”

Plans to improve Canada’s NORAD capabilities were announced on June 20, 2022, by then-defence minister Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.), who was shuffled to Treasury Board president this past July. Anand announced funding of \$38.6-billion over 20 years which will support building a new Northern Approaches Surveillance system, upgraded radio communications capabilities, and enhanced satellite communications in the Arctic.

The Arctic has reached an “inflection point,” with the region assuming an essential strategic importance, according to a report about Arctic security released on June 28 by the Senate’s National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee.

The committee report acknowledged that the federal government has taken some actions related to enhancing security and defence in the Arctic, including releasing the NORAD modernization plan and publishing its Arctic and Northern Policy Framework in September 2022, but added that more must be done.

Senator Jean-Guy Dagenais (Victoria, Que.) of the Canadian Senators Group, deputy chair of the committee, told *The Hill Times* that the situation in the Arctic is critical, with the region “under the microscope of Russia and China.” He emphasized the importance of the federal government doing more to address a recruitment issue for the Canadian Rangers, a sub-component of the Canadian Army that plays a role in the security and sovereignty of remote, coastal, and northern communities. The Senate Defence Committee report acknowledged barriers to recruitment and retention for the Rangers, including rates of compensation, post-retirement benefit claw backs, and difficulties relating to equipment.

“First of all, recruit Rangers, and after this, modernize the

Continued on page 18



Professor James Fergusson says Defence Minister Bill Blair needs to ‘push other things forward’ while the National Defence Department deals with roughly \$1-billion in cuts. *Photograph courtesy of James Fergusson*



When she was still in charge of the defence file in June 2022, now-Treasury Board President Anita Anand announced funding to improve Canada’s NORAD capabilities. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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A woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue hospital gown, is leaning over a hospital bed. She is looking at a child who is lying in the bed, covered with a white blanket. The woman's hands are clasped near her face, and she appears to be looking at the child with a concerned or loving expression. The room has large windows with white blinds in the background. On the windowsill, there is a small potted plant, a glass of water, and some medical supplies. The overall atmosphere is quiet and somber.

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1. RBC Economic Impact Study, 2023.



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The North Policy Briefing

Arctic security depends on follow-through on NORAD modernization promises, say defence experts

Continued from page 14

infrastructure,” said Dagenais. “We must not forget the population of the Arctic who need supplies. The Arctic, with climate change, will be the future Panama Canal: a coveted route for its natural riches.”

Rob Huebert, an associate professor in the political science department at the University of Calgary and a senior fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, told *The Hill Times* that, in his view, Canada’s top priority for Arctic security should be to “do what we say we’re going to do” regarding NORAD modernization.

Huebert said there are “very real concerns” that the reputation Canada is gaining in international security circles remains a reality: that we are “big on talk, and low on action.”

As an example of slow action, Huebert pointed to the overdue update planned for Canada’s national defence policy. The Liberal government is currently working on an update to its defence policy from 2017, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. The much-anticipated update, intended to provide long-term goals for Canada’s military, was announced in the April 2022 federal budget.

Huebert said it is difficult to offer an evaluation of Blair as defence minister because “it’s hard to see what, if anything, has been done,” and that he has been “seemingly unable to bring forward the defence update that has been promised for a very long time now.”

“To use the metaphor of marking him as a student, my response is, well, I can’t really give this student a mark because there’s been no work that has been submitted,” said Huebert. “Maybe there is a



CSG Senator Jean-Guy Dagenais says that due to climate change the Arctic ‘will be the future Panama Canal’ and ‘a coveted route for its natural riches.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

whole lot of stuff appearing behind the scenes that are not being shared. I acknowledged that that is a possibility.”

To enhance Canada’s defence capabilities, the Liberal government signed an agreement for the purchase of up to 16 Boeing P-8A Poseidon patrol aircraft as part of the Canadian Multi-Mission Aircraft project announced on Nov. 30 by Boeing.

The P-8A Poseidon aircraft will replace Canada’s aging CP-140 Aurora fleet, which, according to the federal government, is set to retire from service in 2030, as reported by CBC News.

Independent Senator Tony Dean (Ontario), chair of the Senate’s Defence Committee, told *The Hill Times* that what is most important in terms of defence and security in the Arctic

revolves around aircraft procurement and upgraded space- and ground-based surveillance technologies. Canada’s satellites are aging out and are “near the end of their useful life,” according to Dean.

“Those satellites need to be replaced as a matter of urgency with new and upgraded technology,” said Dean. “We have a major issue in terms of being able to respond to the new generations of hypersonic missiles that are now in the hands of Russia and China, both submarine-launched and ground-launched and air-launched versions of those missiles that travel faster than anything we’ve had to contend with before.”

In regard to Blair, Dean said he sees a minister who is “seized of the key aspects of the [defence] file.”

“I hear him talking about culture change a lot. I hear him talking about recruitment and retention,” said Dean. “I don’t have any—and I’ve never had any—doubts about this being a good appointment. I think Bill Blair is doing a great job for his government and for the country. He’s

Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) operations in the North

- The CAF maintains a year-round presence in the Arctic, which includes 300 full-time military personnel in the North, alongside more than 1,700 Canadian Rangers, who provide enabling assistance to northern operations and activities.
- The CAF’s permanent presence in the North is anchored by Joint Task Force North (JTF-N) in Yellowknife, along with 440 Transport Squadron RCAF, 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Headquarters, and a company of reserve infantry. Team North has approximately 300 personnel, including two JTF-N detachments in Whitehorse and Iqaluit.
- The CAF’s footprint in the North includes Canadian Forces Station Alert, the northernmost CAF outpost, and Canadian Armed Forces Arctic Training Centre in Resolute Bay, Nunavut, which provides a permanent location for training and operations in the High Arctic.
- National Defence assets used by NORAD include the North Warning System and three Forward Operating Locations in Yellowknife, Inuvik, and Iqaluit, which can accommodate fighter aircraft and other assets supporting NORAD operational requirements and exercises on a temporary basis.

Source: *Arctic Security — CAF Operations and Exercises*, presented to the Senate’s Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs on April 24, 2023.

nothing but supportive of our defence forces, and at the same time I understand that there are some things that need to change and have to change. And he’s talked about the need for those changes to occur.”

David Pratt, a principal of David Pratt & Associates and a former Liberal defence minister, told *The Hill Times* that he sees a need for an integrated air and missile defence capability for Canada that is directly tied into NORAD.

“I think the threats are obvious at this point, based on what we’re seeing in Ukraine and the use of longer-range cruise missiles and hypersonic missiles,” said Pratt. “We are in a privileged position as being the only country with a bi-national command through NORAD with Canada and the United States. And although we’re fully prepared to detect the missiles, we’re not prepared to defend against them, which, to my mind, makes absolutely no sense.”

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The Hill Times

Arctic security information

- The Canadian Arctic comprises 40 per cent of Canada’s land mass, 75 per cent of its coastline, and less than one per cent of its population.
- From March 2022 to April 2023, the Senate’s National Security, Defence, and Veterans Affairs Committee conducted a study of issues relating to security and defence in the Arctic, including Canada’s military infrastructure and security capabilities.
- According to witnesses appearing as part of the Senate committee’s study, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has important consequences for Arctic security and defence. Although they did not feel that there is a direct military threat to the Canadian Arctic at this time, witnesses were concerned about Russia’s military modernization in the region, especially of its Arctic bases.
- Witnesses also discussed China’s goals and activities in the Arctic. The country has called itself a “near-Arctic state,” and has demonstrated that it has strategic and economic interests in the region.
- Witnesses identified climate change as a major concern for the Canadian Arctic and its inhabitants. Climate change compounds security risks in the region and is having significant impacts on Indigenous peoples in the Arctic.
- In June 2022, then-defence minister Anita Anand announced Canada’s contribution to the plan to modernize NORAD, with a funding commitment of \$38.6-billion over 20 years. The funding will be allocated to five areas: surveillance systems; technology-enabled decision-making; air weapons; infrastructure and support capabilities; and research and development.
- Witnesses highlighted the urgency of upgrading defence infrastructure in the Arctic. David Perry, president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, stressed that, because of Russian and Chinese military modernization programs, “Canada needs to act with an urgency [it is] not currently demonstrating to strengthen our Arctic security and defence.”

—Source: *Arctic Security Under Threat*, a report prepared by the Senate’s National Security, Defence, and Veterans Affairs Committee, released on June 28, 2023



ISG Senator Tony Dean says Canada has a ‘major issue in terms of being able to respond to the new generations of hypersonic missiles that are in now in the hands of Russia and China.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



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The North Policy Briefing

Salmon in the Yukon and Alaska is a disappearing way of life

Failing to act now in our northern rivers will only lead to a cascading effect that will threaten salmon stocks all the way down the west coast of North America.

Liberal MP
Brendan
Hanley

Opinion



The Yukon went to Washington, D.C., last month to talk salmon.

The Yukon River Chinook salmon are also known as “king salmon”: the kings of the Yukon River. For thousands of years, these kings have hatched in the many tributaries of the Yukon River, journeying downstream for up to 3,000 kilometres through Yukon and Alaska to the Bering Sea, and returning to spawn several years later, in the longest salmon run in the world.

Now the kings are struggling to survive. A run of what used to be hundreds of thousands of fish is now barely in the thousands.



The Yukon River Chinook salmon are struggling to survive, and we need a bi-national effort towards a long-term conservation approach, writes Liberal MP Brendan Hanley. Photograph courtesy of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Many tributaries of the Yukon River have not spawned salmon for years.

In response to the crisis, no one is fishing. First Nation fish camps are empty, coming to life only when the sockeye salmon from northern British Columbia are flown in so that at least some contact with salmon can occur.

Salmon in the Yukon and Alaska is more than a food source. Salmon is a culture, a way for people to gather, to harvest together, to celebrate, to learn their language, to remember their history.

Salmon is a way of life; one that is disappearing at an alarming pace.

It was with this in mind that I led a small delegation of Yukoners

to knock on American Senate and Congress doors in Washington this past November.

Our delegation was made up of one Yukon First Nations chief—Little Salmon Carmacks Chief Nicole Tom—plus two members of the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, and Yukon Senator Pat Duncan.

During our first foray into Washington to engage, advocate, and inspire people to act to save our salmon, we met with congresspeople, including Alaska’s Democratic Rep. Mary Peltola; with Alaska’s Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski; as well as with Canadian Embassy staff; and with the Sierra Club.

Our goal was to encourage United States lawmakers to en-

gage with Canadian counterparts towards a Yukon River Restoration Plan: a plan that would be grounded in Indigenous direction and leadership, and would work to see salmon once again reach sustainable levels through the entire Yukon River.

The effects of climate change, warming seas and tributaries, changing water levels, decades of commercial fishing and ocean bycatch, and probably many more factors have contributed to the salmon’s decline.

The decline of the Yukon River salmon requires urgent and ongoing action. Failing to act now in our northern rivers will only lead to a cascading effect that will threaten stocks all the way down the west coast of North America.

During our meetings in Washington, one participant, Cheyenne Bradley, a young First Nation biologist and member of the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, said: “I have already come to the conclusion that I will not be able to harvest Chinook in my lifetime. What I want is that my children, or my grandchildren will get that chance.”

Our forests, our salmon, the river itself all depend on bringing back the salmon.

While Canada is now embarking on a restoration plan for the Canadian side of the Yukon River, an Indigenous-led bi-national effort is likely our only chance for success. We need to co-operate towards a long-term conservation approach that will likely take at least two to three salmon spawning cycles—a time horizon of up to 20 years.

Our meetings in Washington served well to begin raising the profile of the critical state of Yukon River Chinook. Building on some of the excellent conservation work already underway in Canada and joining in partnership with Indigenous leaders in both Alaska and Yukon, we may yet be able to see the kings return to sustainability, if not to abundance.

Perhaps one day, proud First Nation youth will once again harvest Chinook salmon from the Yukon River, and the stories around the fire will tell of this revered species’ heroic recovery.

But like the mighty Chinook themselves, we must be prepared for a long upstream journey.

Liberal MP Brendan Hanley has represented the electoral district of the Yukon since Sept. 20, 2021.

The Hill Times

The tuberculosis crisis in Canada’s North is a social justice issue

In addition to the work addressing the housing crisis and food insecurity, intergenerational trauma caused by TB sanatoriums must be acknowledged as a social determinant of health in Nunavut.

Rachel Kiddell-
Monroe

Opinion



Health Minister Mark Holland and Health Canada should adopt promising health-care technology from other countries that currently don’t exist in Canada, and implement a national TB surveillance program, writes Rachel Kiddell-Monroe. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Three hundred times. That is how much higher the rate of tuberculosis (TB) is among Inuit compared to non-Indigenous people who are born in Canada.

It’s a staggering statistic, especially in a country that prides itself on having one of the best health-care systems in the world, and where this ancient and cur-

able disease has been eradicated for decades in most regions.

Yet, in Indigenous communities, especially among Inuit, TB outbreaks remain a public health crisis. People still die from the disease in Canada, including 15-year-old Ileen Kooneeliusie, who died on an evacuation flight from her Nunavut community to Ottawa in 2017.

In 2018, the federal government pledged to cut TB rates among Inuit in half by 2025, and to fully eliminate the disease by 2030. We are far from achieving that goal. In 2021, twice as many people were diagnosed with TB as the previous year. Three communities in Nunavut are currently grappling with outbreaks, and the infection numbers are rising.

Canada must step up its efforts to address this humanitarian crisis in the North by focusing on its root causes, including

the intergenerational trauma caused by colonial policies, and by supporting community-led solutions.

SeeChange, the organization I founded in 2018 to reimagine humanitarian action by supporting community-driven health responses, is working with Inuit communities to find solutions for the TB crisis. Community members and health workers I have met in Nunavut tell me the same story: tuberculosis is not just a medical problem; it is a social justice issue.

The bacterial infection that causes TB has been widely associated with poverty. A 2019 study in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* found that living in poor housing conditions is a factor in the disproportionately high rates of tuberculosis among Inuit.

I have seen the poor quality of housing in Nunavut with its inadequate ventilation, rusting pipes, cracked walls, and crumbling floors.

Thirty-five per cent of homes do not have enough bedrooms for their occupants, compared to five per cent nationally, accord-

Continued on page 24

Indigenous Peoples are bearing the brunt of the North's sky-high cost of living

Inflation has hit Nunavut harder than anywhere else, and the Liberal government must do better and invest more in housing and infrastructure.

NDP MP
Lori Idlout

Opinion



Indigenous Peoples have lived and thrived in Inuit lands since time immemorial. Despite the area's harsh conditions, Inuit have hunted, fished, and provided for our families. We built homes, boats, and dog sleds, just to name a few inventions. We raised children and passed on a culture filled with rich traditions through countless generations. We were guided by the stars, sun, and the moon, and taught the patterns of the environment so Inuit could govern themselves for generations.

When settlers arrived on our lands, the territory now known as Canada, they began a multi-century process of genocide and forced assimilation. Through racist and colonial legislation like the Indian Act, Indigenous Peoples were marginalized, forced onto reserves, and sent to residential schools. Our language and culture were beaten out of us, and the intergenerational trauma continues to impact our communities to this day.

Colonialism did not end with the closing of the last residential school in 1996, and systemic racism persists in many ways. Nunavummiut suffer from a persistent lack of investment in housing. According to Statistics Canada, more than 50 per cent live in overcrowded housing, and almost a third of dwellings need major repair. The NDP has been fighting for more funding and secured a \$4-billion (over seven years) for-Indigenous-by-Indigenous Urban, Rural, and Northern housing program in the 2023 budget. Even with this victory, so much more investment is needed.

The Federal Housing Advocate's (FHA) Nov. 27 report echoed the injustices. The National Housing Strategy Act, passed in 2019, affirmed that all Canadians have a fundamental right to



Housing Minister Sean Fraser speaks to reporters in the West Block on Nov. 29. All Canadians have a fundamental right to housing, but a recent Federal Housing Advocate report makes it clear the Inuit right to housing is being violated, writes NDP MP Lori Idlout. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

housing. It is clear from the FHA report that the Inuit right to housing is being violated. The report highlights communities that are suffering from the highest rate of tuberculosis in the country due to mouldy, overcrowded homes. There is such a pervasive lack of resources that some Inuit have resorted to using duct tape to repair crumbling infrastructure. People have to sleep in rotation in cramped houses, and there is no space for children to do their homework.

None of these findings are news to Nunavummiut, who have experienced chronic underfunding from successive Liberal and Conservative governments for decades. In 2022, the public housing waitlist in Nunavut sat at more than 3,000 names. In a territory of fewer than 40,000 people, this means one in every 13 people is on a public housing waitlist. Some have been waiting for decades.

Construction needs to be ramped up quickly because people are quite literally dying as they wait for a home. I have spoken of a story I heard recently about a young pregnant Inuk woman in my riding who died by suicide. Facing the reality of years-long waiting lists for housing, she did not see a future for herself or her baby. Stories like these are part of a larger, more disturbing trend. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami estimates the suicide rate in Inuit Nunangat is five to 25 times higher than in the rest of the country. Nineteen Nunavummiut took their lives in the first half of 2023, most of them youth.

Young people feel hopeless, with few economic opportunities and a lack of access to even basic mental health services. Housing and mental health are inextricably linked, and both must be addressed concurrently.

These issues are exacerbated by the sky-high cost of living in the North. Inflation has hit Nunavut harder than anywhere else. The price of groceries in Nunavut are astronomical, despite millions spent on the Nutrition North

program which is supposed to subsidize groceries, but instead is a subsidy going to for-profit corporations like the Northern stores. At North Mart in Iqaluit, a bottle of orange juice costs \$24. A can of Chunky soup is \$10. For years, Inuit have been ignored when they demand improvements to the subsidy. A study by University of Toronto Mississauga found that for every dollar given to grocery retailers by Nutrition North, only 67 cents are passed

on to consumers. The government trusts these corporations to pass on the subsidies. While Nunavummiut struggle to put food on the table, grocers like North Mart, which are owned by southern companies, are getting richer. It is clear the system is broken, and that is why the NDP has been calling for a reform of Nutrition North. Subsidies must be going to the families that need them, not lining the pockets of rich CEOs.

Canada's colonial policies continue to marginalize Indigenous Peoples. Inuit were used in the name of sovereignty and forced to Grise Fiord and to Resolute. The High Arctic relocatees are still underserved. The lack of infrastructure stands in the way of better airline services. One airline does not have enough pilots who can land in Grise Fiord, and as such, flights are severely limited. Since health care is so limited, many Nunavummiut are sent south for medical appointments. Pregnant women are sent to Iqaluit for confinement, leaving their families for up to a month, and sometimes longer. Boarding homes in places like Iqaluit, Ottawa, and Winnipeg are always over capacity. Elders are sent to Ottawa for long-term care. Having already experienced great injustices like dog slaughters, TB treatment in southern facilities, and residential schools, elders are exiled to southern venues. The needs in the Arctic are great. This government must do better and invest more in housing and infrastructure like sharing costs to have health centres renovated or built. This government must reform the Nutrition North program so that it reaches its intended target of alleviating the poverty that is so pervasive in Nunavut.

Lori Idlout is a Canadian politician who has served as an NDP MP for the riding of Nunavut in the House of Commons since 2021. Before her election, Idlout practiced law in Iqaluit with her own firm, Qusagaq Law Office. *The Hill Times*



The Kyak family from Tununiq on board the CGS C.D. Howe at Grise Fiord (Qikiqtaaluk), Nunavut, in 1958. Back row: Moses Kyak, left, Lazarus Kyak, Mary (née Panigusiq) Cousins, Letia carrying Elizabeth in the amauti, and Leah. Front row: David, left, Carmen, Timothy, and Lily. Canada's colonial policies continue to marginalize Indigenous Peoples, such as the Inuit who were used in the name of sovereignty and forced to Grise Fiord, writes NDP MP Lori Idlout. *Photograph courtesy of Library and Archives Canada*

The North Policy Briefing

Reflections on the 125th anniversary of the Yukon Act

An appreciation of the territory's background is a key element to understanding its current status within Canada, and part of the Yukon framework for moving forward.

ISG Senator
Pat Duncan

Opinion



The Canadian Constitution recognizes the provinces individually. Unlike the provinces, the Yukon is recognized through an act of Parliament, the Yukon Act, which was given royal assent on June 13, 1898.

In celebration of the Act's 125th anniversary, in my capacity as the Yukon Senator, representing my region and providing "sober second thought" to legislation, I offer some thoughts on this important anniversary of the Yukon Act—a historic milestone in the Yukon and Canadian story.

An appreciation of this background is a key element to understanding our current status within Canada, and part of the Yukon framework for moving forward as we work with First Nations on ensuring infrastructure for our citizens; developing our natural resources, including critical minerals; engaging in the fight against climate change; and continuing to protect the vast wilderness that has been home to First Nations for millennia.

The Yukon was launched onto the world stage with the discovery of gold in 1896. Few are aware, however, that the discovery is credited to a party of three, including Shaaw Tláa, or Kate Carmack as she was known, a Tagish First Nation woman; her brother; and common-law husband.

The discovery and mass influx of those seeking their fortune led to Dawson City, Yukon, becoming the largest city north of San Francisco and west of Chicago by 1897. Many of those seeking their



Dawson City, Yukon, looking south showing hospital buildings, circa 1898-99. The Yukon Act was driven by an assertion of Canadian sovereignty and the desire to regulate the liquor consumption in the territory, writes Senator Pat Duncan. Photograph courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

fortune crossed the Canada-United States border by climbing the Chilkoot Pass as seen in that iconic black-and-white photo with a long line of adventurers climbing a steep snow-clad mountain.

Canada's response to this influx of people was to assert Canadian sovereignty by posting the North West Mounted Police on the Chilkoot Pass. The officers ensured that every individual had enough provisions to survive the trip to the goldfields and the winter, specifically 2,000 pounds of provisions. That assertion of Canadian sovereignty, and the desire to regulate the liquor consumption in the territory, were the motivations behind the Yukon Act.

Initially, the Yukon was governed by a territorial council that advised the commissioner who reported directly to Ottawa. The 125th anniversary of the Yukon Act affords an opportunity for Yukoners to share a perspective on the changes to the Act and our place within today's Canada.

The first of three key historical matters to reflect upon is discussions between the commissioner of the Yukon, the duly elected territorial council, and the Government of Canada in 1899.

The commissioner's role since 1898 has been one of Ottawa's territorial administrators. In 1966, the territorial council—which since 1953 was in Whitehorse

when it became the capital—adopted a motion calling for a larger council, provincial status within 12 years, and an executive committee with full cabinet powers. The motion was disallowed. It did lead to negotiations and, eventually in the 1978 elections, there were three political parties elected to a 16-member Legislative Assembly, with 11 Progressive Conservative, two Liberal, one New Democratic, and two independent members. Ione Christensen was Yukon's commissioner in 1979, and was later the Yukon senator from 1999-2006.

The change to Yukon's governance structure came in the form of a letter to Christensen from then-minister of Indian affairs and northern development Jake Epp. He wrote: "I hereby instruct you to accept the advice of the Council in all matters in the said [Yukon] Act which are delegated to the Commissioner in Council, provided that those matters meet the requirements of Section 17 of the said Act [powers to legislate could not exceed those granted to provinces] and excepting Section 46 of the said Act [all lands remaining vested in Her Majesty in right of Canada]." In other words, the duly elected members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly started to become somewhat the masters of our own house, albeit without financial means or control over land and resources. These financial arrangements changed in 1985 when Canada provided

the Yukon and the Northwest Territories with Territorial Formula Financing arrangements, similar to equalization payments to the provinces.

The control over land and resources has two key elements, the first of which was the signing by the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Government of Yukon, and the Government of Canada of an Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) between the parties in 1993. The UFA is the framework within which 11 of the 14 Yukon First Nations have signed land claim agreements, enabling their self-governing agreements. The Yukon and First Nations have government-to-government relations, and meet in the Intergovernmental Forum to share the challenges and opportunities before the territory.

The Yukon was able to achieve the devolution transfer agreement with Canada with the support of the Council of Yukon First Nations. The devolution transfer agreement which gave the Yukon authority over lands and resources was signed in 2001. The required changes to the Yukon Act occurred in 2002.

This background is key to understanding how and why critical infrastructure such as bridge reconstruction, the building of fibre internet connections, and resource development occur in the Yukon. The formula financing gives the duly elected territorial government the ability to plan and budget for capital infrastructure, and to participate as full partners in programs such as the National Housing Strategy designed to rebuild housing in Canada. Resource development and rebuilding critical infrastructure also require environmental and social impact assessment.

The UFA included provisions for a Development Assessment Process to be overseen by a board composed of Canada, Yukon First Nations, and the Yukon Government. The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act is the federal legislation for this process.

The Yukon Act was amended as recently as this past June with Bill C-47, which allowed for transfer of the management of a contaminated site via a signed transition agreement from the Yukon back to the federal government, which has responsibility for the cleanup.

Knowledge of this background is key to understanding the relationships between the Government of the Yukon and Yukon First Nations, and the roles of the Senator and Member of Parliament of the Yukon. It is knowledge necessary for all Parliamentarians not only in relation to the Yukon Act, but also other federal legislation that comes before us in the House of Commons and the Senate. It is an evolving, fascinating story of the Yukon, part of Canadian history that I am honoured to be a part of and share with you.

Pat Duncan is the Senator for the Yukon. She has previously served as an MLA and Yukon's premier.

The Hill Times



The Yukon was launched onto the world stage with the discovery of gold in 1896 by a party that included Shaaw Tláa, or Kate Carmack as she was known, left; and her common-law husband George Washington Carmack. Photographs courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

Policy Briefing **The North**

The Scandinavian North has assumed Arctic leadership, with Tromsø—the self-proclaimed ‘capital’ of the European North—a prosperous, innovative, and creative city with the best university in the circumpolar world. Photograph courtesy of Tomislav Medak/Flickr

Canada playing catch-up with northern technological futures

As a northern nation, Canada lags far behind its Arctic peers in technological and entrepreneurial development.

Ken Coates & Carin Holroyd

Opinion



In decades past, Canada was a true leader in northern innovation, capitalizing on scientific discoveries and technological developments to improve economic and social opportunities in our vast northland. The country led in the development of bush planes, celebrated the snow machines built by Bombardier, and made impressive improvements in northern communications. The country was proud of its Arctic regions and collectively impressed with Canadian efforts to expand its presence in the North.

This work was underpinned by a long-term commitment to Arctic

science, innovations in mining and transportation, and steady efforts to improve economic and societal opportunities. From the 1950s to the 1970s, spurred on the Roads to Resources program of then-prime minister John Diefenbaker's government, Canada developed experimental communities like Inuvik, built substantial company towns from Labrador to the Yukon, explored for oil and gas in the Far North, and attracted global attention for its Arctic economic developments.

The resource economy remains central, with mining development expanding but oil and gas exploration abating. Most of the Arctic company towns have been shuttered; several have been dismantled. In contrast, Norway and Russia identified and exploited vast Arctic oil and gas reserves, sparking a rapid growth of the North's population. Norway's oil-based sovereign wealth fund, with more than \$1.5-trillion in investments, underpins the country's world-leading social welfare system. Northern Norway's general prosperity is a sharp contrast to the socio-economic challenges in the Canadian North.

Northern Scandinavia surged ahead. Major universities opened in Oulu, Finland; Luleå, and Umeå in Sweden; and Bodø and

Tromsø in Norway. The University of Alaska's system is more than a century old, with large research campuses in Fairbanks and Anchorage. In contrast, Canada's first university north of the 60th parallel opened in the Yukon only a few years ago, and the small network of northern colleges is dwarfed by the impressive Scandinavian institutions.

The Scandinavian North has assumed Arctic leadership. Svalbard, in northern Norway, is one of the most science-intense communities in the Far North. Tromsø, the self-proclaimed “capital” of the European North, is a prosperous, innovative, and creative city with the best university in the circumpolar world. Northern Sweden hosts an important space research centre in Kiruna, a major battery factory in Skellefteå, and a data-centre industry in Luleå. Oulu in Northern Finland suffered through the collapse of Nokia, the cellphone company, but re-emerged as an impressive centre for technology-based commercial innovation.

This pattern of contemporary development expanded further. The Faroe Islands are economically creative and culturally vital. Greenland has improved its commercial fishing operations and made large investments in

transportation infrastructure to support a rapidly growing tourism industry. Alaska's economy rests on a still-strong fossil fuel sector, and a large and robust military presence. The steady improvement of regional services and infrastructure has modernized the circumpolar cities, provided a solid base for entrepreneurship, and improved regional well-being.

The Soviet Union (later Russia) also expanded aggressively in its Arctic regions. The authoritarian state made massive investments in the region, launched initially with the construction of a large number of internment camps for political prisoners. Unfettered by environmental or ethical standards, or concern for Indigenous people, Russia has, in recent decades, made major investments in Arctic development.

The Russian effort is not desirable and has had drastic ecological consequences. While Canada dithered on improving infrastructure in the High Arctic, Russia opened a series of commercial ports along the Northeast Passage, and developed a floating nuclear power plant to support aggressive resource development plans. These economic efforts were more than matched by mas-

sive military investments, strategic commitments that Canada has also avoided.

At present, the three territorial capitals—Iqaluit, Yellowknife, and Whitehorse—are state-dominated centres, with strong local economies and considerable growth pressures. The smaller settlements, unlike their Scandinavian counterparts, experience severe housing shortages, often inadequate infrastructure, extremely high costs, and limited economic development beyond occasional mineral developments. The gap between general Canadian prosperity and northern realities grows larger, not smaller, and northern communities struggle to build sustainable futures beyond dependence on government.

Northern Canada struggles against a wide variety of geographic and economic hurdles. While Indigenous governments' economic development corporations have enjoyed considerable success and manage substantial funds from land claims settlements and resource revenue agreements, the constraint on commercial innovation remains extremely strong. The Yukon has the greatest potential. Whitehorse is recognized as one of the best cities in Canada in which to do business. Yukon Premier Ranj Pillai just released a comprehensive innovation strategy that recognizes the territory's need to grow beyond its dependence on government spending and to promote private sector growth. The commitment is impressive, even if the barriers to success are real and substantial.

Northern Canada is not without its impressive achievements in technological innovation and commercialization. The most prominent examples can be found in the mining sector, long a Canadian strength, where improvements in drone-based exploration, remote mining operations, environmental sensors, and new extraction methods are among the best in the world. But Canada's leadership in circumpolar innovation has faded in recent decades, an illustration of the country's inability to embrace its northern responsibilities and capitalize on Arctic opportunities. As a northern nation, Canada lags far behind in technological and entrepreneurial development.

Ken Coates is a professor of Indigenous governance at Yukon University, and formerly the Canada Research Chair in Regional Innovation in the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. He is also a distinguished fellow with the Macdonald-Laurier Institute in Aboriginal and Northern Canadian Issues. Dr. Carin Holroyd is a professor of political studies at the University of Saskatchewan and holds degrees from universities around the world, including Sophia University in Japan. She has a long-standing interest in Japan-Canada commercial relations and the dynamics of international trade and investment, focusing on Japan and East Asia.

The Hill Times

The North Policy Briefing

Traditional knowledge usurped by politics: a missed opportunity

As displayed at a recent House committee meeting, politicking and parliamentary procedures epitomized how far we still have to go if we want to meet in the middle on the path towards reconciliation.

Susan Kutz

Opinion



A month ago, I was a witness for—and witness to—a failed hearing by the House Standing Committee on Science and Research. The topic of the Nov. 6 hearing was: “how best to integrate Indigenous traditional knowledge and science into government policy development; how to resolve conflicts between the two knowledge systems.” It’s an important response to calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and a topic dear to my heart after more than 30 years of working around wildlife health issues with northern Indigenous communities.



Susan Kutz, left, and fellow witnesses Natan Obed and Marjolaine Tshernish were left in the wings when a Nov. 6 House Science Committee meeting on traditional knowledge was derailed by a Conservative motion seeking to probe Sustainable Development Technology Canada. Screenshots courtesy of ParliVu

Following our five-minute opening statements (along with co-witnesses Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami president Natan Obed, and Marjolaine Tshernish, executive director of the Institut Tshakapesh), we were scheduled to spend the rest of the hour in dialogue with the committee. However, the meeting was derailed when an MP opened the discussion period with an unrelated motion. As per parliamentary procedure, this motion had to be openly debated and the hearing was put on hold. Eventually, as it became apparent there would be no time left for discussion on traditional knowledge and policy, we witnesses were dismissed.

As I watched the Canadian parliamentary process unfold—dismayed by the apparent lack of respect both for the topic at hand, and the time and effort invested by the witnesses to prepare and appear for the hearing—I reflected on what I had wanted to share with the committee.



I wanted to share a few (of many) examples of how traditional knowledge and science are integral to our understanding of the natural world:

- How traditional knowledge—also known as *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ) in Inuit Nunangat—had identified and characterized the epidemiology of a major disease epidemic in muskoxen that was entirely missed by science;
- How IQ, documented in 2003, had forecast the decline of the Dolphin and Union caribou herd, a herd that now numbers fewer than 4,000, down from 40,000, and is now considered endangered; and
- How IQ had identified the emergence of new diseases in caribou and muskoxen, including zoonotic diseases that can spread to people.

I wanted to share how the emergence of infectious diseases in these two important species, and their simultaneous population declines, had affected food



safety, food security, and the socio, economic, and cultural health of Inuit.

I wanted to share that when we sit down and listen, we learn, and through this we can bridge IQ and western scientific ways of knowing to develop better policy. For example:

- IQ is informing public health messaging and adaptive hunting and butchering practices in response to emerging disease risks from handling and consumption of wildlife;
- IQ, which is alive and evolving, is inspiring better informed wildlife census protocols; and
- IQ, a knowledge that extends many generations deep, has redrawn the range maps and described the critical habitat and ecological needs for the endangered Dolphin and Union caribou herd.

I wanted to share that we should not be afraid when IQ and western science disagree. Apparent disagreement happens

regularly both among the western scientists, as well as among IQ knowledge holders. We should embrace these conflicts, recognizing that it usually means that there is something more to learn.

I wanted to discuss how we need a paradigm—and system—shift. Rather than trying to fit, or integrate, Indigenous knowledge into western institutions and processes, we need to listen to the voices of respected Indigenous leaders such as Mi’kmaw Elder Albert Marshall, who put forward the guiding principle of Two-eyed Seeing in 2004: “... learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing ... and learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all.”

We should also be listening to Yukon First Nation Elder Joe Copper Jack, who described the Knowledge Stream Tree as a story of how multiple knowledge systems and worldviews could function collaboratively side-by-side, without one trying to dominate the others.

I know that my Indigenous co-witnesses had richer and more eloquently presented reflections to bring to the table for those who were ready to listen. But, regrettably, very little of this came to light.

Canada is making progress on responding to the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and we are on a good path towards reconciliation. However, politicking and parliamentary procedures truncated what had promised to be an interesting and informative discussion, and epitomized how far we still have to go if we want to meet in the middle.

Dr. Susan Kutz is a professor at the University of Calgary faculty of veterinary medicine in Alberta, and is Canada Research Chair in Arctic One Health: Healthy Animals and Healthy Communities in a Changing Arctic.

The Hill Times

The tuberculosis crisis in Canada’s North is a social justice issue

Continued from page 20

ing to a 2020 report by Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. Overcrowding and poor housing conditions allow the disease to spread more easily.

Food insecurity in Nunavut is four times the national average in Canada. The lack of affordable healthy food makes many Inuit even more vulnerable to TB. Studies show that with good nutritional support for TB patients and their contacts, the incidence of all forms of TB can be reduced by 40 per cent.

Aside from these physical hardships, there is the legacy of colonialism and systemic discrimination which has led

to widespread distrust in the health system. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recognized in 2015 that gaps in Indigenous health outcomes are a result of racism and colonization. This includes previous government policies of sending Indigenous people to residential schools and TB sanatoriums. From the 1940s to the 1960s, one in seven Inuit were sent without consent or understanding to TB sanatoriums in the south.

This summer, SeeChange co-organized a historic healing journey of a group of TB sanatorium survivors and Inuit youth to Hamilton, Ont., where 1,200 Inuit TB patients were

once treated. As in residential schools, abuse in the TB sanatoriums was systematic, and the Elders shared heart-breaking stories from their long stays as unaccompanied children. “For years, I felt like there was an ice dagger on my back,” survivor Meeka Newkingnak told me after the visit. “Now I feel like it has finally melted.”

The survivors’ trauma from this experience still runs deep and has been passed on to the next generations. To turn the tide on this crisis will require a concerted focus on addressing the underlying causes of TB.

In addition to the work already undertaken to address the housing crisis and food insecurity,

intergenerational trauma caused by TB sanatoriums must be acknowledged as a social determinant of health in Nunavut. Canada should provide funding for more healing journeys of survivors. Time is running out, as most of them are in their 70s and 80s.

Trauma-informed models of care must be designed with the community. SeeChange’s work has shown that by co-designing responses with affected communities, health and social determinants of health can be addressed simultaneously.

Health Canada should also investigate other successful health-care solutions adapted to Indigenous cultural realities, such

as the Nuka system of care in Alaska, a community-owned and community-focused health-care model.

Finally, Health Canada should also adopt promising health-care technology from other countries, such as innovative TB diagnostics and child-friendly TB formulations, which currently don’t exist in Canada, and implement a national TB surveillance program.

Canada is an important donor for worldwide efforts to end the global TB epidemic, which kills about 1.5 million people every year. It must now take bold steps to make sure its own citizens in the country’s North are not being left behind.

Rachel Kiddell-Monroe is the founder and CEO of SeeChange, a social purpose organization that works in the Canadian North and globally to support community-led responses to health crises.

The Hill Times



As the world gathers in Dubai for COP 28 to discuss how our global community can steady warming levels, we must also press on with appropriate adaptation measures that support economic resilience, writes Jackie Dawson. Photograph courtesy of Paul Kagame/ Flickr

What do pandemics and climate change have in common? They disrupt supply chains

We absolutely need climate-resilient infrastructure and climate-resilient supply chains to prepare for climate change and extreme climate events.

Jackie Dawson

Opinion



It is not just global pandemics that have a major effect on supply chains; increasingly, climate change is wreaking havoc on the global distribution of goods.

We are no longer in the business of predicting future climate-change risks; those impacts are already upon us. Just a few weeks ago, we momentarily sur-

passed the 2 C warming threshold that, as a global society, we have identified as a major tipping point, and one that we should not permanently cross. We are experiencing extreme events, such as wildfires, hurricanes and tropical storms, tornadoes, floods, and droughts. These events are occurring at accelerated rates, and are expected to cost us trillions of dollars in infrastructure damages.

The fires that occurred in the Northwest Territories last summer caused mass evacuation down a single highway due to the remoteness of the Arctic region and the limited transportation infrastructure there. The rapid mobilization of significant resources to deal with the extreme fire this past summer is just one example of what is to come in Canada.

As the Arctic warms at four times the rate of the global average, the region as a whole is expected to both attract billions of dollars in infrastructure investments related to natural resource extraction, tourism, and fisheries, and to simultaneously create billions of dollars in infrastructure damage as a direct impact of climate change.

Permafrost thaw will present major challenges for rail and road-based transportation infrastructure, and sea ice reductions will increase maritime shipping accessibility. Indeed, climate change may finally make British explorer John Franklin's dream of accessible global trade through the Northwest Passage in Canada's Arctic a reality.

Any delay in the full accessibility of the Northwest Passage for global trade is mainly related to the dynamic import of thick multi-year ice that is breaking up in the Central Arctic Ocean—due to climate change—and is flowing into the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. This makes major infrastructure development in the region risky. However, external factors—such as global economic trends, geopolitical tensions, innovations in ship design for ice breaking and propulsion, political will, and major droughts in the Panama Canal that have reduced canal transits there by 33 per cent—are likely to heighten the need to invest in Arctic transportation infrastructure sooner rather than later.

To prepare for climate change and extreme climate events, we absolutely need climate-resilient infrastructure and climate-resilient supply chains. These two things are reliant upon each other. You cannot have one without the other.

Our typical per-capita model for funding infrastructure will not work in Arctic Canada where the population base is incredibly low, but where the potential for geopolitical tensions and economic opportunity is so incredibly high. We need to be innovative in this regard.

Many view the Canadian Arctic as relatively undeveloped compared to other global Arctic regions. It is also, from a governance perspective, a region that is arguably the most advanced in terms of devolution and legislated rights for First Peoples—mainly Inuit—through several settled land claim agreements. This combination of factors puts us in an admirable position for the future—meaning we have an opportunity, and the right structures in place, to develop resilient infrastructure and resilient supply chains in the region in innovative, equitable, self-determined, and

sustainable ways that place “climate resilience” at the forefront.

We must base our planning and investments in a climate resilient Arctic on sound science and world class “loss-and-damage” estimates to ensure the investments we do make, do not soon after get destroyed by climate-related hazards. What we lack currently though are enough relevant studies focused on climate change risk and residual risk, for supply-chain resilience.

A quick search of the word “infrastructure” in the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group II report reveals that the word appears a little more than 2,000 times in a document that is more than 750,000 words in length. The phrase “supply chain” occurs just 170 times. When reviewing the chapter on Polar Regions, “infrastructure” appears just 68 times, and “supply chain” occurs just once out of a total 12,500 words. As a scientific community, we must absolutely and urgently adapt our research agendas to ensure real-world relevance of our assessments for key economic sectors. This will enable our world leaders to make more effective investment decisions that support climate-resilient infrastructure and climate-resilient supply chains, so that what is built today isn't destroyed tomorrow by the next extreme fire, flood, or hurricane.

As the world gathers in Dubai for COP28 to discuss how our global community can keep warming levels below 2 C through mitigation efforts, we must also press on with appropriate adaptation measures that support economic resilience. After all, a resilient supply chain is good in the face of rapid climate change, and is also good in the face of a global pandemic.

Jackie Dawson is a full professor and Canada Research Chair in the Human and Policy Dimensions of Climate Change at University of Ottawa, and scientific director of ArcticNet.

The Hill Times

News

Environmental advocates push back against ‘loopholes’ and ‘false solutions’ at UN climate conference

Tzeporah Berman from the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative says there is significant momentum behind the call to phase-out fossil fuels, but that she is watching for wording that would dilute that commitment if it makes it into the final text of COP28.

Continued from page 1

previous conferences—despite research showing that 86 per cent of the emissions trapped in the atmosphere today come from oil, gas, and coal—was “a result of the billions spent on lobbying and public relations” by industry.

Berman said 80 countries called for a fossil fuel phase-out to be included in the final text at COP27 last year, but that they were defeated “by a vocal minority and a reluctant [Egyptian] presidency.” She said the momentum behind a fossil fuel phase-out is even stronger this year, but that she would be keeping an

eye out for “loopholes” and “false solutions” that would dilute such a commitment.

As examples, she described language that singles out coal and ignores oil and gas, language that focuses only on power generation, language that uses “loopholes like ‘unabated’ and ‘inefficient,’” and language that ignores the need to end further expansion of fossil fuel production.

Caroline Brouillette, executive director of Climate Action Network Canada, echoed Berman’s concerns at the Nov. 30 press conference. She pointed out that when Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, Que.) speaks about a fossil fuel phase-out, he tends to qualify it with the word “unabated.”

When used as part of a promise to cut down on fossil fuel emissions, the word “unabated” opens the door to the use of carbon capture and related technologies that critics say have never been proven at scale, but which have been the focus of billion-dollar tax credits from the federal and Alberta governments.

“Will Canada push for an outcome riddled with loopholes that leaves its powerful fossil fuel lobby off the hook, and leaves the rest of Canada to pick up the slack?” asked Brouillette.

Julia Levin, associate director of national climate for the advocacy group Environmental Defence, has said that the term “efficient,” when used as part of a commitment to phase-out fossil fuel subsidies, is a poorly

defined “weasel word” that allows countries to decide for themselves which subsidies to maintain.

Berman and other environmental advocates were speaking in anticipation of major announcements from COP28 organizers of which they were skeptical.

On Dec. 2, COP28 president Sultan Al Jaber, also the head of the United Arab Emirates’ state-owned oil company, unveiled an Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter signed by companies representing 40 per cent of global oil production. The pledge was presented as part of a series of landmark initiatives aimed at “rapidly scaling the energy system of tomorrow,” “decarbonizing the energy system of today,” and targeting non-carbon greenhouse gases such as methane.

More than 320 civil society organizations signed an open letter from the environmental group Oil Change International that rejected the decarbonization charter, calling it an effort “to greenwash the fossil fuel industry” by introducing “another in the long succession of voluntary industry commitments that end up being breached.”

The letter adds that the voluntary charter, also referred to as the Global Decarbonization Alliance, focuses on reducing oil and gas companies’ operational emissions while ignoring the fact that 80 to 90 per cent of overall emissions come when customers burn the final product.

David Tong, global industry campaign manager for Oil Change



Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault has hinted that he will release a framework for a domestic oil and gas emissions cap while attending the COP28 conference in Dubai. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

International, said in a Dec. 2 statement that the charter is “a Trojan horse” for big oil and gas companies and “a dangerous distraction from the COP28 process.”

“Bundling up the Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter with a renewable energy commitment appears to be a calculated move to distract from the weakness of this industry pledge,” added Tong. “Voluntary pledges cannot be a substitute for a formal negotiated outcome at COP28 for countries to address the root cause of the climate crisis: fossil fuels.”

The conference is scheduled to run from Nov. 30 to Dec. 12. The first weekend saw a flurry of joint pledges from governments: to triple renewable energy by 2030, to double energy efficiency by 2030, and to triple nuclear energy by 2050.

Guilbeault followed these up on Dec. 4 by announcing draft regulations to address methane emissions from the oil and gas sector. At COP26 in Glasgow two years ago, Canada became the first and only country to promise to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas sector by at least 75 per cent (from 2012 levels) by 2030.

Guilbeault is a veteran of these conferences, and he has been joined in Dubai by Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Que.). Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, B.C.) and Bloc Québécois MP and environment critic Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Que.) are also attending COP28.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe, who have both opposed the federal government’s climate agenda, arrived in Dubai in recent days to make the case for their respective oil and gas industries. Provincial delegations are generally invited to be part of the Canadian delegation and may participate in programming at the Canada pavilion, but Saskatchewan has chosen to purchase its own pavilion this year to accommodate programming for more than 55 businesses and other organizations.

Environmental groups welcomed Guilbeault’s Dec. 4 announcement on methane emissions, calling this one of the quickest and most cost-effective ways to limit warming since methane causes more than 80 times more warming than does carbon dioxide, in the short-term.

But they also pushed Guilbeault to move ahead with a more contested announcement: an emissions cap for the oil and gas sector. The federal government has pushed back its timeline for releasing draft regulations for a cap, and is instead promising a framework by the end of 2023.

Guilbeault told reporters in Ottawa on Nov. 29, before heading to Dubai, that it was “a safe assumption” that the government would announce the framework for an oil and gas emissions cap at some point during the two-week-long conference.

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The Hill Times

CUSMA and friends? Costa Rican trade minister makes pitch to join North American pact

‘There seems to be good consensus that Costa Rica, like no other country in Latin America, can fit in this agreement,’ says Manuel Tovar of joining the North American deal.

Continued from page 1

in the summer of 2020 after years of rocky renegotiations on the preceding North American Free Trade Agreement.

“We haven’t received from any member [of the CUSMA] an expression of any opposition,” Costa Rican Foreign Trade Minister Manuel Tovar told *The Hill Times* during a Dec. 4 interview in the West Block.

The accession request was an agenda item for his Dec. 4 meeting with International Trade Minister Mary Ng (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.), Tovar said.

“We hope that our rationale will be heard and understood,” he said.

A Global Affairs Canada readout of the meeting noted that the two “explored avenues for greater co-operation in key areas,” which included empowering women and Indigenous entrepreneurs. Costa Rica’s accession request wasn’t directly referenced.

Shanti Cosentino, a spokesperson for Ng, said that currently CUSMA doesn’t include mechanisms to allow for other countries to accede.

“We remain focused on the implementation of the agreement and particularly a well-functioning dispute settlement system,” she said.

Costa Rica has trade deals with Canada, the U.S., and Mexico, but it hopes to update its trade coverage with the three nations through inclusion in the CUSMA. The Canada-Costa Rica free trade deal came into force in 2002. Canada-Costa Rica merchandise trade totalled nearly \$915-million in 2022, the vast majority of which was Costa Rican exports to Canada.

Tovar said Costa Rica has “evolved” as an economy since its three trade deals were signed with CUSMA partners, noting that it has recently joined the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in 2021.

“We feel that Costa Rica needs a looser jacket,” he said, remarking



International Trade Minister Mary Ng, pictured, met with Costa Rican Foreign Trade Minister Manuel Tovar on Dec. 4. Tovar says CUSMA accession was on the agenda. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

that its trade deal with the U.S.—the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR)—has “become a little too tight.”

“For the type of country we’ve become, CUSMA is a better fit for us,” he said, noting that Costa Rica holds the same position as Nicaragua under CAFTA-DR. Canada has imposed sanctions on more than 35 Nicaraguan officials for “gross and systematic human rights violations.”

Since the announcement that Costa Rica was seeking to join the pact, Tovar said it has created “some noise” that has cultivated support in the U.S.

Republican Louisiana Senator Bill Cassidy and Democratic Colorado Senator Michael Bennet co-sponsored a bill to expand the CUSMA to cover other Western Hemisphere nations. The pair have pitched the initiative as creating a “compelling alternative” to increasing Beijing investment in Latin America.

“There seems to be good consensus that Costa Rica, like no other country in Latin America, can fit in this agreement,” Tovar said.

He said with the fast-approaching 2024 U.S. presidential election, he doesn’t expect any decision in the short term, but remarked he hopes that afterwards there will be “an atmosphere” for increased discussions.

While there isn’t an accession protocol laid out in the CUSMA, Tovar said that can come after a political agreement is reached.

“First we have to find the political will from the members [of the deal], then we’ll find the way,” he said. “When there’s a will, there’s a way.”

He said the 2026 review of CUSMA would be a “good moment” for Canada, the U.S., and Mexico to look at opening

the agreement to include more countries.

CUSMA sets out that the three parties will review the agreement after it is in force for six years. It provides the ability to add a new 16-year term to the trade deal, but if one or more parties choose not to continue with the pact, it starts a 10-year process with reviews occurring annually, which could result in the expiry of the pact if an agreement isn’t reached.

In late September, senior GAC trade official Aaron Fowler said that it was too early to put forward proposals for the review.

Asked about the potential for Costa Rica to join the trade pact, Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance executive director Michael Harvey said future expansion is “an interesting idea,” but that the priority for Canada should be to make sure it is “well prepared” for the 2026 review.

Christopher Sands, director of the Washington-based Wilson

Center’s Canada Institute, said Costa Rica’s bid to join will be complicated by the slew of trade priorities with which CUSMA countries have to deal.

“It’s more of a question of bigger fish to fry,” he said, remarking that Costa Rica’s accession request is justified with increasing concerns of U.S. protectionism, and a worry that its internal market can’t be self-sustaining.

He said when adding another country, the partners have to balance a desire to deepen or widen the pact, adding the more countries that are part of the agreement, the more challenging it will become to strengthen and grow the trade deal, as it is one more country with whom consensus needs to be built.

That consensus building could also be an issue with CUSMA governance, as the group has a ministerial commission and a number of committees at which decisions are reached.



Costa Rican Foreign Trade Minister Manuel Tovar is hoping Costa Rica’s CPTPP accession can be dealt with before more politically sensitive applicants. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

There is an open question, Sands said, about how easy it would be to bring Costa Rica into that fold as it doesn’t have the history of working together in the way that Canada, the U.S., and Mexico do.

He said one option would be to create a CUSMA-plus agreement to bring other countries into a pact that would have a relationship with the North American deal. Another option, Sands said, would be for individual countries to strive for CUSMA-consistent bilateral deals with Costa Rica.

Costa Rica also seeking to join Canada’s Pacific Rim trade pact

While hoping for CUSMA inclusion, Tovar said he’s also eyeing a speedier accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

The United Kingdom recently completed negotiations with CPTPP members to become the first country to accede to the pact. The ratification for the U.K. to become the 12th party of the deal remains ongoing. China, Taiwan, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Ukraine have also applied to accede to the agreement.

While in Ottawa, Tovar was scheduled to hold a meeting with CPTPP ambassadors. Costa Rica has trade deals with seven of the 12 CPTPP signatories, including the U.K.

Tovar pitched a faster Costa Rican inclusion than some of the other applying countries, remarking that there are “no economic or political sensitivities” in his country. He added that he is hopeful that CPTPP members advance discussions for applicants who are “willing and ready” before making a decision on the cases of China and Taiwan.

“Hopefully, they’ll find a way to advance with those that hold large consensus or no reservations as Costa Rica [does], at the same time, find a way to deal with those other candidacies that’s challenging,” he said.

Tovar remarked that Canada has been “supportive” of Costa Rica’s ambition.

“I really hope that [Ng] can steer and take the bloc where she wants to go in terms of hopefully opening up to those economies that have something to bring,” he said.

“All the members have had no rejection, but some of them are more enthusiastic,” he said, adding that Canada’s presidency of the CPTPP in the new year will be a “good window of opportunity.”

Cosentino said Canada and all CPTPP members support expanding the pact with those that are “willing and able to comply with the CPTPP’s high standards,” and “have a demonstrated history of compliance with existing trade commitments.”

Advancing discussion on accession requests will be among Canada’s priorities as the CPTPP commission chair in 2024, she said.

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Laura Ryckewaert Hill Climbers

A look at Labour and Seniors Minister Seamus O'Regan's team

O'Regan currently has a number of acting directors in his office, including acting policy director Lhori Webster, and acting parliamentary affairs director Jonathan Robinson.

Labour and Seniors Minister **Seamus O'Regan's** office is now 19-staff strong, and post-shuffle changes include director of communications **Jane Deeks'** elevation to the added role of deputy chief of staff.

O'Regan, who has been minister of labour since 2021, added on responsibility as minister for seniors with the July 26 cabinet shuffle.



Jane Deeks is now deputy chief of staff and communications director to Minister O'Regan. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Deeks has been O'Regan's communications director since the fall of 2022, and previously did the same for then-employment minister **Carla Qualtrough** and then-fisheries minister **Bernadette Jordan**.

Deeks began working in federal politics after the 2015 election, and spent her first two-and-a-half years as a constituency assistant to Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., Liberal MP **Carolyn Bennett**. Deeks came to work for Bennett on the Hill over the summer of 2018, after which she was hired as Bennett's press secretary as then-minister for Crown-Indigenous relations. In 2020, Deeks moved over to Jordan's fisheries office, starting as a press secretary before being promoted to communications director in 2021. She joined Qualtrough's office after that year's federal election.

As previously reported, **Paul Moen** is chief of staff to O'Regan.

Also working to tackle communications for the minister's office are: **Hartley Witten**, press secretary and senior communications adviser; **Mohammad Kamal**,



Hartley Witten is press secretary and senior communications adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

strategic communications adviser and assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP **Terry Sheehan**; **Gabriel Mezzari**, who is an adviser for communications, parliamentary affairs, and Quebec regional affairs; and **Mark Whelan**, who is an adviser for communications as well as Atlantic, West, and North regional affairs.



Gabriel Mezzari is an adviser for communications, parliamentary affairs, and Quebec regional affairs. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Witten has been press secretary to O'Regan as labour minister for the past year starting in November 2022, and added on the title of senior communications adviser in October. A former consultant with Blackbird Strategies, prior to working for O'Regan, Witten spent most of 2022 working in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** office (PMO) as executive assistant to then-director of communications **Cameron Ahmad**. His past jobs also include short runs working for New Brunswick Liberal MP **Wayne Long** and British Columbia Liberal MP **Joyce Murray**, and as an online media and research analyst for The Pearson Centre for Progressive Policy.

Kamal has been working for O'Regan since April of this year, and before then had been a special assistant for digital communications to Trade Minister **Mary Ng**. Originally hired as a strategic communications adviser, he's now taken over

parliamentary secretary assistant (PSA) duties from Mezzari, who has added on the role of communications adviser.

For his part, Mezzari has been working for O'Regan since the start of 2021, starting as a legislative assistant. He was promoted in 2022, adding on the titles of PSA and Quebec regional affairs adviser, and took on his most recent tri-part title post-shuffle. Mezzari is also a former intern to then-Liberal MP **Will Amos**, and to then-Treasury Board president **Jean-Yves Duclos**.

Whelan is a former aide to O'Regan as the MP for St. John's South-Mount Pearl, N.L., and joined his office as labour minister in 2022 as an Atlantic regional affairs adviser. Post-shuffle, he's picked up responsibility for the West and North regional desks, as well as for communications.

Previously, **Stefany Sorto** was O'Regan's regional adviser for the West and North. Sorto joined Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Minister **Marc Miller's** office earlier this fall as a regional adviser for the West.

Victoria Dempster is currently acting as director of operations to O'Regan, covering for **Crystina Dundas**, who is on maternity leave.



Victoria Dempster is acting director of operations. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Dempster joined the senior and labour minister's office in October and was previously working for Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister **Dominic LeBlanc**. First hired as a policy and Atlantic regional affairs adviser to LeBlanc as then-minister for infrastructure and intergovernmental affairs in early 2022, she added "senior" to her title at the start of this year—a role she continued in for the first few months following the July shuffle before leaving to work for O'Regan.

A former PMO correspondence writer, Dempster was O'Regan's executive assistant from the end of 2018 through to the beginning of 2020, starting during his time as then-veterans affairs minister, and continuing through his time as then-Indigenous services minister and then-natural resources minister. For a year starting in February 2020, she was a senior special assistant for Atlantic regional affairs to then-innovation minister **Navdeep Bains**. She's since also been a special assistant for regional affairs in the ministers' regional office—which supports ministers across cabinet—in Fredericton, N.B.

Dundas was promoted to operations director post-shuffle, having recently been acting in the role herself. A former field organizer for the federal Liberal Party, she was first hired as a West and North regional affairs adviser to O'Regan after the 2021 election.

Along with Mezzari and Whelan, also currently covering a regional desk in the labour and seniors office is **Eric Nicol**, the minister's regional affairs adviser for Ontario. Nicol was hired by O'Regan this



Eric Nicol is Ontario regional affairs adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

past June, after roughly a year and a half working for Ottawa Centre, Ont., Liberal MP **Yasir Naqvi**.

Andrew Welsh is now an operations adviser to O'Regan, having been hired in October. Welsh was previously working for Ng as trade minister. Originally hired as a special assistant for policy and Atlantic regional affairs after the 2021 election—his first full-time gig on the Hill—Welsh was promoted to policy adviser to Ng earlier this year. His past jobs include working as an operations co-ordinator and later senior campaign technologist and training specialist for the Nova Scotia Liberal Party.



Andrew Welsh is an operations adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Elizabeth Wong was hired as a policy and operations adviser to O'Regan in September. She's a former executive assistant to the chief of staff, and special assistant for operations and policy to Murray as then-fisheries minister, having been hired by Murray following an almost two-month-long internship this past June, shortly before the summer cabinet shake-up. Murray was shuffled out of cabinet on July 26, and has announced she will not seek re-election.

Lhori Webster continues as acting director of policy to O'Regan while **Julia Van Drie** is on maternity leave. Webster first stepped into the interim role this past



Lhori Webster is acting director of policy. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Hill Climbers

Continued from page 28

May after almost a year and a half as a policy adviser in Trudeau's PMO. A former special assistant with the Liberal research bureau, Webster was a policy adviser to then-health minister **Patty Hajdu** from January 2020 until January 2022. She's also a founder and ex-chair of Kabanga, a national conference for Filipinx-Canadian youth; and of Pinoys on Parliament, a national youth leadership conference; and a past junior policy analyst with both Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Van Drie has been O'Regan's policy director since the start of 2022, having first been hired as a senior policy adviser to then-labour minister **Filomena Tassi** in January 2020. A full-time staffer on the Hill since 2018, she's also previously been an outreach assistant in the LRB, and a special assistant for policy and stakeholder relations to Ng as then-small business and export promotion minister.

Also currently working under Webster are senior policy adviser **Alexander Craney**, and policy advisers **Felipe Alfaro** and **Katya (Ekateryna) Nova**.

Craney has been working for O'Regan since February 2022, and previously spent



Felipe Alfaro is a policy adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

two years as a policy adviser to the federal fisheries minister, starting under Jordan and after Murray took over the portfolio following the 2021 election. Among other past jobs, he's a former government relations and public affairs manager with D2L, creator of the Brightspace online learning platform, in Toronto.

Alfaro has been working for O'Regan since April, and before then was a West, North, and Ontario regional affairs adviser to then-revenue minister **Diane Lebouthillier**. After interning in the United States Consulate General office in Vancouver for the first four months of 2019, Alfaro went on to volunteer on Murray's successful 2019 re-election campaign in Vancouver Quadra. Post election, he was hired as an assistant to B.C. Liberal MP **Hedy Fry**, for whom he worked until the end of 2021, when he joined Lebouthillier's team.

Nova joined O'Regan's team in October fresh from Innovation Minister **François-Philippe Champagne's** office, where she'd been a regional adviser for the West and North since the start of 2022. A former assistant to then-Toronto Liberal MP **Adam Vaughan**, she'd most recently been a project manager with CUZ Tech prior to joining Champagne's team.

Jonathan Robinson is currently acting director of parliamentary affairs to O'Regan, filling in for **Damien O'Brien**, who is on paternity leave.

Robinson is another former staffer to Murray as fisheries minister; hired there after the 2021 election as a senior policy adviser, he was promoted to parliamentary affairs director at the beginning of this year. A former platoon commander with the Canadian Armed Forces, Robinson remains a member of the CAF. He first landed on the Hill as an intern in then-justice minister **Jody-Wilson Raybould's** office in the fall of 2016, and went on to work as an assistant to Fry and to Murray as a B.C. MP before being hired to cover the West and North regional desks for the LRB at the end of 2019.

O'Brien, who went on leave in June, has been director of parliamentary affairs to O'Regan since the end of 2019, starting during O'Regan's time as natural resources minister. Before then, O'Brien was a senior adviser for stakeholder relations to then-natural resources minister **Amarjeet Sohi**. A former Liberal staffer at Queen's Park, on the Hill, O'Brien has also previously been director of strategic research in the LRB.



Connor Fisher is an issues manager and senior special assistant for parliamentary affairs. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Connor Fisher is an issues manager and senior special assistant for parliamentary affairs. A constituency assistant to then-Ontario Liberal MP **Deb Schulte**, he's been working for seniors ministers since March 2020, when he joined then-minister Schulte's office as a legislative assistant. In 2021, he was made a special assistant for Atlantic regional affairs. Fisher continued in the office after now-Diversity Minister **Kamal Khera** took over the office after that year's election, and subsequently added on responsibility as assistant to the parliamentary secretary in early 2022.

Mark Duggan continues as director of issues management to O'Regan. Duggan has been working for O'Regan since 2021, starting as a policy adviser in his office as then-natural resources minister. After the



Mark Duggan is director of issues management. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

2021 election that saw O'Regan made labour minister, Duggan followed, becoming director of issues management and senior Atlantic regional adviser; he dropped the latter title in 2022. Prior to 2021, Duggan spent a little more than 15 years working for Bell, starting in 2006 as a community relations manager and ending as a senior manager for public affairs and government relations. Before then, he worked in federal and provincial politics in Newfoundland and Labrador, including as assistant to the chief of staff to then-premier **Roger Grimes**.

Nicholas Mackiewicz remains executive assistant to O'Regan, while **Naomi Panetta** is executive assistant to the chief of staff, Moen.

A former assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Kirsty Duncan**, Mackiewicz was originally hired as O'Regan's executive assistant as labour minister this past May. Panetta has been assistant to Moen for the last year, and previously worked for Quebec Liberal MP **Angelo Iacono**. According to her LinkedIn profile, she's also currently in the midst of studying for a law degree at the University of Ottawa.

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Opinion

A lost opportunity for 'pragmatic diplomacy'

Continued from page 4

meeting of states party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) during the week of Nov. 27 to Dec. 1 at the United Nations in New York. This treaty, which was concluded in July 2017 and entered into force in January 2021, currently has 93 signatories and 69 ratified parties. The TPNW came about out of frustration with the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament as stipulated under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which, since 1970, has been the principal agreement governing global nuclear affairs with 190 states parties.

The TPNW sets a higher standard for nuclear disarmament than the NPT, prohibiting as it does the possession of nuclear weapons as well as the use or threat of use of these weapons of mass destruction. Importantly, all the states supporting the TPNW are also parties to the NPT, and view the two treaties as com-

plementary. Others, namely the states possessing nuclear weapons and their allies, have opposed the TPNW in light of its explicit stigmatization of nuclear weapons and its challenge to policies of nuclear deterrence that essentially threaten the use of nuclear weapons in certain unspecified contingencies.

A disagreement amongst NPT parties over the best way to fulfil the treaty's common obligation on nuclear disarmament should not in itself be an intractable problem, but it has been made worse by the hostility shown by Canada and many allies to the TPNW and its adherents. Already, when the TPNW was being negotiated at the UN, Canada and most other NATO allies boycotted the meetings under the direction of the United States. Upon the TPNW's adoption, NATO indulged in specious criticism of the treaty to the effect that it was somehow incompatible with the NPT. Once the TPNW had become international law and its first meeting of states parties



Senator Marilou McPhedran was the sole Canadian parliamentary presence at a June 2022 meeting of observers and states parties to Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

was held in Vienna in June 2022, states not party to the TPNW were invited to attend this meeting as observers. Despite their non-adherence to the TPNW, several U.S. allies participated in this meeting

in an observer capacity (Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, and Australia). They recognized the desirability of engaging TPNW supporters in the common interest of strengthening the NPT at a time when the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime was under increasing stress.

No Canadian officials participated in the Vienna meeting, with non-affiliated Senator Marilou McPhedran being the sole Canadian parliamentary presence. Via social media she asked, "Where is Canada?" and many in civil society also wondered why we failed to show up. Ottawa's excuse that participation would violate NATO obligations rang hollow, especially in light of the presence of other allies. NATO members Germany, Norway, and Belgium plus Australia all found their participation in the New York meeting compatible with their allied commitments.

There are diplomatic consequences for Canada once again being a "no-show" at the second meeting of TPNW parties. If we

are ever going to have any prospect of strengthening the existing legal framework for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament when it is under assault from several quarters, we need to engage and not shun other NPT states simply because we differ over the perceived value of the TPNW. Pretending that the TPNW doesn't exist and its adherents not worthy of engaging with is unbecoming of a country that has long seen itself as a bridge-builder in the international system. It is one thing to propose a "pragmatic diplomacy," it is another to practice it consistently.

Paul Meyer is adjunct professor of international studies at Simon Fraser University, and a director of the Canadian Pugwash Group. A former career diplomat in Canada's foreign service, he served as ambassador and permanent representative to the UN and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva (2003-2007).

The Hill Times

Opinion

Dyslexia was my superpower as a staffer on Parliament Hill

In politics, where messages must be concise, impactful, and resonate with a diverse audience, dyslexia became an unexpected asset, says a former OLO staffer.

Brittany Mathison

Opinion



In the fast-paced, meticulously detailed world of political communication, the notion that someone with dyslexia could not only survive, but also thrive might seem counterintuitive. My journey as a Parliament Hill staffer, however, most recently as manager of written products in the Office of the Leader of the Official Opposition, is a testament to the unique strengths that dyslexia can bring to such a demanding role.

Growing up, dyslexia was a formidable barrier. Although I was not diagnosed until I was 18 years old, looking back I can now see how dyslexia touched every aspect of my school life. Writing was tedious and frustrating, and reading often left me feeling like there was something wrong with me. I was behind all my classmates and was picked on as a result. The conventional school system, with its rigid structures, left me feeling isolated and downright stupid. But I now know these early struggles were where my unique abilities were learned.

In politics, where messages must be concise, impactful, and resonate with a diverse audience, my dyslexia became an unexpected asset. Dyslexia, contrary to popular belief, isn't solely about jumbled letters or slow reading. It's a different wiring of the brain that can lead to creative problem-solving, a heightened ability to discern narratives, and a unique perspective on language.

Dyslexia forced me to approach language differently. In crafting speeches, I learned to rely on the rhythm and flow of words, rather than their conventional structure. This often resulted in more engaging, memorable, and persuasive texts. The necessity to simplify complex ideas made my writing clearer and more accessible, a crucial trait in political communication.

Surprisingly, I built my reputation around attention to detail. Since I had to focus so much harder while reading, often reading everything out loud, I would catch the mistakes that everyone else would miss. Although it would take me longer to review products, it became a crucial step in ensuring mistakes were caught before written products left the shop.



In the high-stress environment of politics, where deadlines are tight and stakes are high, the ability to persevere cannot be overstated, writes Brittany Mathison. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The personal struggles I experienced growing up left me with the resilience to overcome the challenges set before me. This became a cornerstone of my professional ethos. In the high-stress environment of politics, where deadlines are tight and stakes are high, the ability to persevere cannot be overstated.

The need to overcome and work harder than anyone else is a toxic yet persistent trait on Parliament Hill. When I look back, I realize that the necessity to overcome a school system built against me prepared me to be thrown into such a harsh environment. Years of struggle to keep up with an undiagnosed learning disability was the unfortunate precursor to success in my career.

Dyslexia, once my greatest hurdle, morphed into my superpower on Parliament Hill. It shaped a unique communicator—one who writes not just with words, but also with empathy, resilience, and creativity. My journey is a reminder that what is often perceived as a weakness can, in the right environment and with the right support, become a profound strength.

When I took on the role of manager of written products, I initially hid my dyslexia from colleagues because I was afraid of the judgement and assumption I would fail. Now, I'm proud to share my story in the hopes that people like me have the confidence they deserve, and others realize what an asset they might be missing out on. Diverse thoughts, ideas, and even brain wiring lead to better outcomes.

And thank God for spellcheck.

Brittany Mathison is a director at Texture Communications, previously serving in communications roles in the Office of the Leader of the Official Opposition for Andrew Scheer, Erin O'Toole, and Candice Bergen; as well as in the 2019 and 2021 Conservative Party of Canada war rooms. *The Hill Times*

Comment

Poilievre tests the limits of populist flim-flam with his pitch to Canada's workers



The effort by right-wing politicians to enlist the support of unionized workers can pay dividends, as Premier Doug Ford has shown in Ontario, writes Les Whittington. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued from page 10

non-rich Canadians that a Conservative government would have the best interests of working people at heart.

This from someone who stems from a conservative tradition that has been striving for decades to reduce the supports and services that help working people and lower-income Canadians achieve better outcomes. In general, the long-term rise in inequality that has transformed North America into a new Gilded Age of gross wealth disparity arose in the 1970s from the move by investors and corporate directors—supported by right-wing political leaders—to reduce the share of business profits distributed to workers. This shift ushered in a long-term decline in the relative gains and improved middle-class living standards of employees that had previously resulted from the shared prosperity of the post-war era. The business realignment was coupled with a 40-year effort by governments—mainly conservative—to transform tax systems in favour of corporations and the rich at the expense of everyone else.

In Canada, from Brian Mulroney to Stephen Harper, conservative governments at the federal level have signed free-trade deals that contributed to the steady rise in earnings and opportunity for knowledge workers versus the opposite for blue-collar employees. At the same time, persistent efforts to chip away at Employment Insurance and other social support programs by right-wing governments in Ottawa, coupled with declining unionization, have undercut the wage negotiating strength of less-skilled workers.

As for social housing, it was the Mulroney government that initiated the federal government's withdrawal from building

affordable residences. In Ontario, it was Mike Harris, who used the same "Common Sense" slogan as Poilievre, who downloaded the affordable housing file on the province's municipalities.

Despite Poilievre's current pro-worker rhetoric, he has been one of the most outspoken anti-union Conservatives during his years in Parliament. He sought to bring in "right-to-work" laws of the kind used to wipe out U.S. unions, and supported legislation intended to knee-cap Canadian labour organizations with impossible public reporting requirements.

Today's affordability issues are no doubt a driving force behind Poilievre's popularity with union members, but, for all the talk about the economy, the appeal of his populist message also owes a lot to the culture wars over progressive policies, LGBTQ rights, nativism, and immigration.

In any case, the effort by right-wing politicians to enlist the support of unionized workers can pay dividends, as Premier Doug Ford has shown in Ontario. However, the seven unions that famously supported Ford in the 2022 election found themselves condemning his government's use of the constitutional notwithstanding clause a few months later to override education support workers' collective bargaining rights.

"Pierre Poilievre has used populist rhetoric to hide away his real agenda," is how Bea Bruske, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, has put it. "But his long track record of attacking workers' rights and siding with profitable corporations over everyday people makes clear the kind of leader he would be if he gained power."

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

The Hill Times

Parliamentary Calendar

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.

Intelligence adviser Jody Thomas talks national security at Dec. 7 panel



Jody Thomas, national security and intelligence adviser to the prime minister, will participate in a panel discussion on 'Navigating the Future of National Security,' hosted by the Centre for International Governance Innovation on Friday, Dec. 8. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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 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 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.

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.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 6

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

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 ShankarNarayan, 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: cdhoweregentsdebate.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



Customer transactions

Banking apps

Financial records

**Financial institutions:
we help keep them safe**

Customer data

Encrypted email

Threat detection



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