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THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR, NO. 2100

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2024 \$5.00

NEWS

Turkish earthquake victims call on the feds to clear a path for immigration, access to health care amid uncertainty a year after disaster

BY IREM KOCA

Turkish earthquake survivors in Canada are asking the federal government for a clear

immigration pathway forward and increased support for health care and language lessons as they navigate life in uncertainty, one year after a devastating

earthquake struck their home region.

Feb. 6 marked the first anniversary of the 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck southern Turkey and

which killed more than 60,000 people and rendered millions homeless in the country and neighbouring Syria.

In the aftermath of what was recorded as one of the deadliest

disasters in Turkey's history, Canada introduced special immigration measures, granting some

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NEWS

Palestinian Canadians losing hope, taking drastic measures as Gaza visa program fails to bring loved ones to safety

After weeks without a response from IRCC, Wesam Nofal says her parents travelled to Egypt on Feb. 18 to try and cross into Gaza ‘to take their children out or die trying.’

BY STUART BENSON

Palestinian Canadians with family trapped in Gaza say they are running out of hope after six weeks of waiting to hear if their applications for the special visa program to bring them to safety have begun processing. And as Israel threatens to launch a military operation into the border city where more than one million Palestinians have sought refuge from the war by Ramadan, some applicants have given up on waiting

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Wesam Nofal says her parents, Mohammed, left, and Intisar, booked a ticket and flew to Egypt to try and get their children out of Gaza themselves after months of unsuccessful attempts to do so through the regular immigration processes and the most recent temporary resident visa program. Photograph courtesy of Wesam Nofal

NEWS

Canada and Indonesia face hurdles to finalize trade talks, putting end-of-year pledge at risk

BY NEIL MOSS

Nearly half a year ago, Canada and Indonesia vowed to conclude negotiations on a free trade pact by the end of 2024. But

that timeline might be in jeopardy with much still to be dealt with at the negotiation table, despite both sides trumpeting progress.

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NEWS

Plug pulled on some virtual committee witnesses due to headset rules, prompting call for more consistency

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Strict rules requiring the use of an approved microphone headset to participate virtually in House and Senate proceedings are posing new challenges

in arranging witness testimony at committees.

Implemented roughly one year ago to better protect the health and safety of

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Christina Leadlay

Heard On The Hill

Prolific author and Senator David Adams Richards put into focus of new film



Author and CSG Senator David Adams Richards in a still from the film *The Geographies of DAR*, directed by Monique LeBlanc. Image courtesy of the National Film Board of Canada

New Brunswick Senator and prize-winning author **David Adams Richards** is the subject of a new film to be screened in Ottawa on Feb. 27.

Titled *The Geographies of DAR*, the 75-minute-long black-and-white film features Richards in his hometown of Miramichi, N.B. In his own words, Richards offers a personal account of his life, from his premature birth to how he knew as a teen that he'd be a writer, to his addictive personality, and how the people and the place where he's from have inspired his writing.

Director **Monique LeBlanc**, a fellow New Brunswicker and award-winning filmmaker, told **Heard on the Hill** it was the rich characters and setting in Richards' works that "motivated" her to make this film.

"I grew up in a village called Richibucto situated a short 30-minute drive away south of the Miramichi [River]," explained LeBlanc in a Feb. 16 email. "I could identify with the moral dilemmas his characters faced. But what most interested me about David Adams Richards was his integrity, his willingness to walk his own walk and talk his own talk."

LeBlanc had only briefly met Richards once prior to pitching the film idea to him six years ago, around the time he was appointed to the Senate.

"I was approached by Monique—who I had heard of before—and said that I would be interested in doing a film about my life and work," Richards told HOH last week. "I had a short documentary done about my work after I won the Governor General's Award for English fiction, but this film would be more extensive,



Poster for the film *The Geographies of DAR* by Monique LeBlanc. Image courtesy of the National Film Board of Canada

and Monique would bring her own artistic understanding of my work to bear."

"This was followed by two phases of development during which time I read—and in some cases reread—everything David Adams Richards published," said LeBlanc, for whom this film is her fourth feature documentary and fifth collaboration with the National Film Board of Canada.

"It was essential for me to read David's entire corpus because he is a writer whose ideas, fundamental beliefs, and experiences are deeply woven into his creative works."

Excerpts from a variety of Richards' works punctuate the film, read often in gritty settings by Canadian writers including **Vanessa Moeller**, **Allan Cooper**, **Jean-Philippe Raiche**, **Danny**

Jacobs, **Sonya Malaborza**, **Robin Anne Ettles**, and the director herself.

The Geographies of DAR a beautiful and somewhat melancholy piece, part artwork, part homage to a writer who struggles with materialism, classism, and humanity's duty to the poor.

While LeBlanc began filming some material in 2021, the production officially got underway in April 2022, wrapping up in August 2023.

"Being in front of the camera can be rigorous and time consuming, but Monique is a great filmmaker and I got along with everyone well," said Richards, who is a member of the Canadian Senators Group.

LeBlanc explained the Miramichi River's dominant presence in the film: "That was a creative choice of mine. Water is the flowing element on which the film is constructed and moves forward, it is that which holds David's life story and the core of his works. It is, in its treatment, a poetic thread through place and time."

"I think she did an incredible job," said Richards, noting that DAR is how he often signs off in letters to his friends and publishers.

On that note, the Senator confirmed that he has a new novel coming out in 2025 by Doubleday Random House.

When HOH asked whether the filmmaker was related to federal Public Safety Minister **Dominic LeBlanc**, the film's publicist **Madeline Blanchard** said "there is an incredible number of LeBlancs in New Brunswick! They take up most of the phone book."

The Geographies of DAR will screen at the ByTowne Cinema, 325 Rideau St., on Feb. 27 at 7 p.m.

And in other Senator-related news...

The Progressive Senate Group has a new leadership team.



Senator Pierre Dalphond is the Progressive Senate Group's new leader. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

On Feb. 13, the 14-member group elected Senator **Pierre Dalphond** to take over as leader from **Jane Cordy**, who has held the role since December 2019.

Senator **Judy White** was acclaimed as deputy leader, succeeding Dalphond in the role; and Senator **Amina Gerba** was acclaimed as caucus chair/deputy liaison, taking over from Senator **Brian Francis**.

These new roles come into effect on Feb. 27.

Senator **Wanda Thomas Bernard** remains in her role as



PSG Senator Amina Gerba is her group's new caucus chair/deputy liaison. Photograph courtesy of the Sen. Gerba's X account

liaison, which she's been since last February. The PSG is tied for the third-largest group in the Senate, along with the Conservatives.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Senate Group welcomed a new member on Jan. 30, with recently appointed Nova Scotia Senator **Réjean Aucoin** joining the ranks, bringing their total number up to 17. The largest group in the Red Chamber is the Independent Senators Group with 39 members. As of Feb. 16, there are 13 non-affiliated Senators, and eight vacancies.

Stop the presses: uOttawa moves publishing house to downtown storefront

The next time you're on Albert Street by the bus stop outside the Sun Life building, you'll notice a new window display of books. It's the University of Ottawa Press' new "Studio" space, which opened its doors to the public on Jan. 31.

The 2,000-square foot Studio is a quiet venue featuring a decent selection of books from the university's bilingual press. Pretty much all items are for sale.

HOH visited the storefront last week, and was impressed by the friendly space where a small team of uOttawa publishing professionals staff the location set up as part publishing house, part bookstore/boutique and event space.

"We needed a larger space to showcase the work of our authors and of our staff to a broader public, to be wheelchair accessible, and—perhaps most importantly—could be used both as an event space, which is something we'd never had before," uOttawa media relations officer **Paul Logotheitis** told HOH on Feb. 20.

With space constraints on campus, "it made sense to move downtown, close to the epicentre of the federal government, national organizations, and other stakeholders who rely on quality data and analysis to make important policy and other decisions," he said.

"We're interested in developing partnerships and designing events that will be interesting and useful," said Logotheitis. "Parliamentarians and diplomats might consider the Studio as a venue for small events of up to 60 people."

The University of Ottawa Press is the oldest French-language



The University of Ottawa Press' new Studio space at 99 Bank St. *The Hill Times* photograph by Christina Leadlay

university press in Canada, the only French-language university press outside Quebec, and is one of the largest publishers in the region.

The Studio at 99 Bank St. is open to the public weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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CORRECTION: *The Hill Times*, Feb. 19 issue

Re: "Poilievre's testy exchanges with Hill reporters 'a tactic to appeal to a certain group,' says veteran journalist McGregor, calling targeting of individuals 'inappropriate,'" (*The Hill Times*, Feb. 19, p.15). This article incorrectly stated that Yaroslav Baran ran the Conservative Party's federal campaign in 2021. Baran worked on communications for the Conservative Party's 2022 leadership race. *The Hill Times* regrets the error.



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News

AI bill ‘democratically illegitimate’ and litigation ‘likely’ without proper consultations, say AFN, civil society orgs

Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne calls Bill C-27 a ‘work in progress,’ and promises additional opportunities for consultations.

BY STUART BENSON

As the House Industry and Technology Committee wrapped up witness testimony on the federal government’s privacy and artificial intelligence legislation, former BlackBerry executive Jim Balsillie added his voice to the growing chorus calling for it to be sent “back to the drawing board,” alongside the Assembly of First Nations, which says the lack of nation-to-nation consultation could land the government in court over the bill.

On Feb. 14, the committee held its last scheduled meeting to hear from witnesses on Bill C-27, which the Liberals introduced in 2022 to repeal parts of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), as well as enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act (COPA) and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act (AIDA). The legislation is the Liberals’ second attempt to amend PIPEDA after the former Digital Charter and Implementation Act died on the Order Paper following the 43rd Parliament’s dissolution before the 2021 election.

The committee will begin its clause-by-clause study of Bill C-27 following the Easter Break, with the deadline for the submission of briefs on March 1. Committee members will have until March 14 to submit any proposed amendments to the bill.

However, Balsillie, former co-CEO of Research in Motion and founder of the Centre for Digital Rights, told *The Hill Times* that a lack of public consultation and an overreliance on discussions with industry over civil society organizations make the bill “democratically illegitimate.” Because of those flaws in the process and substance of the AIDA, he said it requires a “complete restart” and

needs to be severed from the rest of the legislation.

Balsillie told the committee on Feb. 14 that passing the “seriously flawed legislation” would only deepen Canadians’ fears of artificial intelligence as “AIDA merely proves that policymakers can’t effectively prevent current and emerging harms from emerging technologies.”

Balsillie told *The Hill Times* that the industry has been “gas-lighting” Canadians over potential “existential harms” that he said are as “unquantifiable, indeterminate, and unidentifiable” as the “overstated” potential economic benefits of moving forward quickly with the legislation.

In contrast, Balsillie also highlighted some of the “countless” forms of well-documented harms those systems already pose, including cases of housing and employment discrimination, or recommending longer prison sentences for racialized people.

While he said that AI innovation will certainly have its benefits, Balsillie said innovation is not an excuse for rushing the legislation forward.

In an October 2023 brief submitted to the committee, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) said it wasn’t consulted on the legislation before or after its introduction.

“The minister did not hear First Nations, does not understand First Nations, and it shows in the legislation,” the AFN wrote, adding that litigation is “likely” if the government doesn’t meet its obligation to consult as the bill infringes on the rights of First Nations, including on data sovereignty.

The assembly also voiced its concerns about the potential harms of AI technology, including as a new avenue for racial profiling in banking, health care, criminal justice, and in its dealing with government officials.

“Imagine the potential for such abuse to continue or even worsen when biased and prejudiced individuals and organizations are building AI systems that will implicate First Nations,” the AFN wrote, adding that the bill in its current form does little to assuage those concerns.

“This legislation cannot stand as it is. The best solution is for the minister to meet his obligation to Nation-to-Nation consultations with First Nations and obtain their free, prior, and informed

consent,” the AFN wrote. “Failing that, the minister must clarify that the Act cannot be interpreted or applied in such a fashion as to derogate from First Nations rights.”

The AFN did not respond to *The Hill Times*’ request for comment by publication deadline.

Asked for comment on the AFN’s letter, Innovation, Science, and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champplain, Que.) told *The Hill Times* he takes their concerns “very seriously,” and that there will be additional opportunities for consultations, calling the legislation a “work in progress.”

“We can always do more, and we can do better,” Champagne said on Feb. 15. “We’re very committed to reconciliation and making sure that we consult with First Nations’ leadership and communities ... we’re looking forward to engaging with them, and certainly, we’ll be reaching out.”

However, Champagne rejected the idea that the legislation needs to be redrafted, pointing to the calls to act urgently to adopt the legislation from witnesses like Yoshua Bengio, a member of the United Nations’ Scientific Advisory Board for Independent Advice on Breakthroughs in Science and Technology and the co-director of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research’s Learning in Machine and Brains program.

On Feb. 5, Bengio, also the scientific director of Quebec’s Mila AI Institute, told the committee that Canada “urgently need[s] agile AI legislation,” and that he believes C-27 “is doing that, and is moving in the right direction.” He also said that while he broadly supports AIDA, its framework should be strengthened through regulations, and early provisions should become applicable as soon as the law is adopted.

Champagne said the government would continue to listen to voices like Bengio’s, as well as those of the AFN to strike the right balance, but said that Canada needs AIDA’s framework in order for the country to move “from fear to opportunity.”

“We need to build trust, and the way to do that is to have a framework,” Champagne said.

Liberal MP Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Ont.), Champagne’s parliamentary secretary, defend-

ed the consultation process at committee, pointing to the more than 300 meetings and consultations ISED had conducted, and that there would be “two years’ worth of consultations” on the regulations that stem from the bill in the future.

However, Balsillie cited a submission by Andrew Clement, the information policy research program co-ordinator at the University of Toronto, examining those consultations. In his Dec. 6, 2023, submission to the committee, Clement noted that of the 314 listed consultations submitted to the committee by Champagne, 253 were with academic (28), business (216), and civil society stakeholders (nine), with the rest conducted with government officials (39), individuals (six), and 15 “questionable” consultations with organizations he views as not relevant to C-27, not a stakeholder, or not constituting a “consultative meeting.” Additionally, the first of those consultations began on June 23, 2022, more than a week after the legislation was first tabled in the House of Commons.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Clement said he doesn’t think the list of meetings constitute “legitimate public consultations,” and seem “more oriented toward trying to get business inside” rather than “good governance and public interest.”

“Civil society and the people who are ostensibly going to be the most affected and need protection have been completely left out of them,” Clement told *The Hill Times*, attributing the over-representation of industry stakeholders to a product of the “structural conflict of interest” between the need to regulate the industry and ISED’s mandate to promote it.

“To craft this regulation, [ISED] had to think outside of their institutional box, and they haven’t demonstrated the ability or inclination to do that,” Clement said. He added that he doesn’t believe there had been any mal-intent behind the overemphasis on industry stakeholders during the consultations, but it was instead a matter of ISED going for the “low-hanging fruit” of stakeholders with whom they were already in regular contact.

“The main thing to redo this properly is to broaden the range of people contributing to its development to reflect better who’s

actually going to be affected by it,” Clement said.

The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG) said its concerns with AIDA have only been strengthened and reinforced by the testimony heard during the committee’s study.

Tim McSorley, the ICLMG’s national co-ordinator, told *The Hill Times* he doesn’t consider his organization’s Aug. 25, 2022, meeting with Surdas Mohit, ISED’s director of AI and data policy, at which the organization raised its concerns after the bill had been tabled, to be a legitimate consultation.

“Consultation isn’t putting out a bill and getting a reaction,” McSorley said. “Consultation is doing outreach with stakeholders before you table the legislation so you can have an open conversation about what it should contain. That simply didn’t happen.”

While he said that he appreciates that the government proposed its own amendments to the legislation, he doesn’t believe those changes would effectively address the concerns with AIDA, and that the government could have spent that effort “rethinking its approach and engaging in real consultation.”

“We’ve said from the beginning that AIDA is not fit for purpose and couldn’t be salvaged in committee,” McSorley said. “It needs to be severed from Bill C-27 and brought back to the drawing board for consideration outside of not just industry, but with other stakeholders and other government departments.”

McSorley said he agrees with Clement’s assessment that the consultations’ bias toward industry stakeholders demonstrates a conflict of interest at ISED.

McSorley said that the ICLMG is still pushing for members of the committee to “do what they can” to amend the legislation and make the strongest possible recommendations to improve AIDA, and failing that at committee, attempt to do so again at third reading or vote against it.

“We think that it’s up to the committee to act,” McSorley said, noting that the Liberals do not have a majority on the committee. “Right now, there’s an opportunity to fix this process and stop [the legislation] before it moves forward and becomes law to ensure that AI oversight and regulation in Canada is done properly.”

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Innovation, Science, and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne says he takes the Assembly of First Nations’ concerns ‘very seriously,’ and his office will be reaching out to ensure proper consultation on Bill C-27 with First Nations communities.
The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Pay-to-play only works when the value for money is airtight



While many decry the expectation of free news, a model whereby the financing of journalism was downloaded from advertising dollars to consumer dollars was unsustainable, writes Erica Ifill. *Unsplash photograph by Priscilla Du Preez*

Local and/or niche news publishers show that people are willing to pay for journalism that aligns with their values and principles, and stories in which they can see themselves represented.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



CALGARY—Once hailed as the antidote to dwindling revenues, particularly for the now-tattered newspaper business, the subscription model is also failing in its promise.

Companies with subscription models charge their customers a recurring fee to deliver goods and/or services at a constant rate. These models sell the convenience of continual, uninterrupted access to the customer, and it smooths out monthly or yearly revenue variability for businesses. The subscription model can also decrease total customer acquisition costs, and marginal acquisition costs by relying more on customer referrals. Earned media—content relating to a person or group, which is published by a third party without any payment—can also lower marginal acquisition costs. Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram are earned-media factories that encourage users to highlight published stories in their videos. For the benefit of the companies using these models, they have the option of building relationships with customers and providing data about customers to pinpoint what is popular and what sells.

Subscriptions boomed during the pandemic as (a specific class of) people built up savings by living below their means and were more reliant on media products since their days were mostly spent indoors. Tech companies like Apple added subscriptions to their hardware offerings. It makes sense: the company already had

an ecosystem of technical products that connected to each other. Adding services to that system was manna from heaven for an already-groomed customer base. Netflix is another prime example of a model that—used to—charge less than \$15 a month for an array of movies, television shows, and documentaries. Meal kits send ingredients and recipes for dinner each week. Home gym companies, like Peloton, offer a subscription that replaces a trainer in a workout class. Spotify Premium offers streaming music and podcasts with unlimited skips for a monthly fee. Subscription services like Birchbox send sample beauty products for a monthly fee.

According to the Angus Reid Institute, “more than four-in-five Canadians (85 per cent) say they subscribe to at least one streaming service. A majority (65 per cent) of Canadians subscribe to more than one, including two-in-five (40 per cent) who subscribe to three or more.” Let’s look at the cost of three subscription services by estimating a representative bundle: Netflix, Spotify, and *The Globe and Mail*. Netflix (standard) costs \$16.49 per month; Spotify is \$10.99 per month; and *The Globe* is \$7.96 per month. Adding these up results in spending approximately \$35.44 per month. After 52 weeks, *The Globe and Mail*’s year-long introductory price rises to \$7.99 per week, which increases our bundle to approximately \$59.44 per month. And therein lies the problem: most of us subscribe to more than three streaming services and the bundles are not cheap (I didn’t include video game subscriptions). The subscription model is that commodification of the attention economy where each good is not competing with rivals within a similar industry, they are competing for time across all leisure-based industries. And in today’s affordability crisis, many are choosing to reduce discretionary spending to keep their heads above water. “One-third (32 per cent) of Canadians tell the Angus Reid Institute they have cancelled at least one streaming service in the last six months.” And it’s only going to continue as consumers are squeezed by inflation.

Therein lies a fundamental problem for the news industry and journalism. While many decry the financial escape of password-sharing, and having the expectation of free news, a model whereby the financing of journalism was downloaded from advertising dollars to consumer dollars was unsustainable. There was no

way for national broadcasters and national newspapers to make money off the backs of readership alone. The crumbling of the

news media industry exposes the results of bad decisions and assumptions that were made by the same upper management who get to keep their jobs. Reuters Institute’s report on the willingness to pay for news, *Paying for News: Price-Conscious Consumers Look for Value amid Cost-of-Living Crisis*, found that in addition to cost, “we did find some other factors at play in the [United States], including dissatisfaction with the brand’s political views or a specific editorial decision.” Why should I pay for a month of access to a newspaper I’ll only read one article from in that time period? Is that value?

However, there is journalism people are paying for, and it’s usually local and/or niche. News publishers like *The Breach*, *The Maple*, and various Substacks show that people are willing to pay for journalism that aligns with their values and principles, and stories in which they can see themselves represented. They will also pay to support podcasts, like *Bad + Bitchy*, that have a particular lens on what’s going on in the world. Instead of seeing the industry as bleeding readership, it could be that the industry is sorting itself to appeal to smaller, niche audiences. Distinctive and quality content and perceived value that is not easily replicated in the marketplace represent value.

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

The Hill Times

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Comment

The road to climate hell is paved with muddled messaging

None of us is winning—and the planet certainly isn't—when commentary veers all over the climate road.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—Last week wasn't a great one on the climate change front. If, like me, you know climate change is real, and recognize that one of the biggest remaining threats is a public discourse that educates, reinforces its legitimacy, and helps build consensus towards solutions, then last week was an epic fail. Ironically, a bulk of the failure came from the Liberal Party, which—to be fair—has tried to advance what is intended to be constructive climate policy.

Let's start with the newly rebranded Canada Carbon Rebate, the new name for the Climate Action Incentive Payment.

Neither one of those names burning you up with enthusiasm? It's no surprise that changing the name of the program, and now highlighting that Canadians get a rebate or payment from government, comes too late. When the Trudeau government brought in carbon pricing and originally announced the "incentive payments," they basically gave up informing people, and started lecturing them on "why" action was needed as opposed to making people comfortable with a major policy change. In the interim, along came a pandemic, multiple challenges on multiple fronts to affordability, and major shifts in public opinion about carbon pricing. These Liberal messengers can scream "rebate" from the rooftops, but for now, that howl of desperation is likely to fall on deaf ears.

Speaking of messengers, Environment and Climate Change Minister Steven Guilbeault metaphorically had his tires flattened on the climate change highway last week. His mishap started with a report in the *Montreal Gazette* when he suggested on Feb. 12 the federal government was getting out of the business of building new roads. Multiple clarifications later,

Guilbeault claimed he was speaking about a specific piece of road infrastructure in Quebec. Meanwhile, the prime minister and Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan, seeing the smoldering political wreckage that Guilbeault's comments represented, were quick to say the federal government was staying in the road-building business. Everyone knows it's hard to buy votes if you can't pave roads—everyone but Guilbeault.

As many more observers familiar with infrastructure and climate policy have pointed out, Guilbeault may not have been entirely out to lunch making the argument about the future of road-building investment. As the son of a road builder, I can't even countenance such a thing. Nonetheless, the reaction to the minister's comments and multiple retakes on what he said is another acknowledgement that the government's main climate messenger is either dismissed as a messianic nut or politically naive. Neither of those things help to advance a sensible, solution-oriented climate-change discourse.

The Liberals weren't alone in climate calamities. Former Newfoundland and Labrador Progressive Conservative Party leader Ches Crosbie, appearing as a private citizen before the Senate Energy, the Environment, and Natural Resources Committee studying the Atlantic Accord, said climate change caused by humans was

"bogus." Crosbie was quickly disavowed by the party he once led and heavily criticized by senior members of the Trudeau government. Crosbie, a Rhodes scholar and accomplished lawyer, has been increasing his involvement of late with the federal Conservative Party. They wouldn't have been impressed with his ill-timed words.

Like or dislike Crosbie, it doesn't help advance a constructive dialogue on climate change when someone of his stature screams planetary warming is "bogus." Full disclosure, Crosbie is a cousin of mine, and while he certainly has a right to his view, I'd love to know what he studied to come to the conclusion he did.

None of us is winning—and the planet certainly isn't—when commentary veers all over the climate road. The road to hell was paved by good intentions. We may not be going to hell if Guilbeault has his way on roads, but if we all intend to do better on climate, then we need to up our game.

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



The reaction to Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault's road-building comments demonstrates that the government's main climate messenger is either dismissed as a messianic nut or politically naive, neither of which help advance a sensible, solution-oriented climate-change discourse, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

A trip to Sicily is a reminder of our sacrifice

As our world becomes more and more dangerous, do those that followed the 'greatest generation' have the strength to endure a terrible conflict like the Second World War?

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



PALERMO, SICILY—The last time a member of my family came to Sicily was July 10, 1943. My father, Philip "Pip" Caddell, and several thousand Canadians arrived on the shores of Pachino to liberate Italy. It was the greatest wartime assault on a coast ever, even greater than D-Day.

Luckily, thanks to intelligence operations like "Operation Mincemeat," the Germans believed the invasion force would come to Sardinia. So, by the time the Canadians disembarked, they waded on shore, and as my father recounted it, "a gruff old sergeant sitting at a card table handed me a ticket and told me to move on."

A few days before, he had watched helplessly as three ships were sunk by German U-boats in the Mediterranean Sea. They were carrying troops and equipment from his Royal Canadian Artillery, First Anti-Tank regiment. Dozens died. It was Pip's 30th birthday.

Arriving in Sicily, they encountered little opposition from the Italians, and within two weeks, then-prime minister Benito Mussolini had been forced from office and jailed. Meanwhile, Italian troops were surrendering in significant numbers to the Allies, and it appeared as if the invasion of Sicily would be a cakewalk.

Instead, Adolf Hitler took control of Italy, and crack German troops who retreated to the high ground of this mountainous island took up the fight. It was a brutal battle for four more weeks until the Germans escaped to the mainland in August.

The Canadians travelled up the boot of Italy over the next two years, in fierce fighting that took place in devastating heat, bone-chilling cold, and slogging through mud in the wet Italian spring and fall.

The war in Italy ended in February of 1945. My father was permitted leave the next month. He came home to Montreal on March 21, and two days later, married my mother. They had not seen one another since October of 1939.

In 1996, I was living in Switzerland, and my father came to visit. Joined by his British cousin, we drove to Italy and stopped in Ortona, Cassino, and Florence. Places he remembered well.

Ortona was the site of one of most brutal battles in the war. Dubbed "Little Stalingrad," it involved house-to-house fighting with the Germans.

As a result, the largest Canadian war cemetery in Italy is in Ortona. It is the last resting place of about 1,500 Canadians. At the time, my father asked me if Leo Bédard, a comrade from his regiment, was buried there. I looked in the cemetery records and couldn't find anything.

Almost 28 years later, I found myself at another Canadian war cemetery in Italy, in the mountainous central region near the hilltop town of Agira. At a spectacular hillside location, lie 490 Canadians killed in Sicily. Surrounded by the mountains, I could see how difficult the fighting must have been.

Looking through the list of the dead, I came across "Gunner Leo Bédard of Ville of La Salle, Québec." I then looked at a photo my father left me, of the first Canadian artillery troops in England in 1940.

There is Pip, a lance bombardier, at the end of one row, and gunner Bédard, in another. They were two Montreal boys: my dad from Lachine and Leo from neighbouring La Salle. They would have trained together through three years in England, spent time together, and fought until Bédard's war ended on Aug. 5, 1943.

It struck me as remarkable that my father remembered Bédard more than half a century later. He might have been the first, but he was not the last of his comrades to die, of the almost 6,000 Canadians who perished in Italy.

My father and his friends were not exceptional people, although they had experienced the Great Depression, and nothing in life was easy. They volunteered for war in the first wave to go to the United Kingdom, "because they needed us," as Pip later recalled.

We have read and seen much of the tributes of these disappearing heroes, whom we refer to as "the greatest generation." Their sacrifice strikes home in places like the cemeteries in Agira and Ortona.

As our world becomes more and more dangerous, I have to wonder if the generations that followed have the strength to endure a terrible conflict like the Second World War, whether our military has the means to fight as our parents and grandparents did, and if our leaders have the courage to lead us in a similar conflict.

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

Turkish earthquake victims call on the feds to clear a path for immigration, access to health care amid uncertainty a year after disaster

Canada's special immigration measures for Turkish earthquake victims provided immediate relief for those fleeing the 2023 disaster, but advocates say ineligibility for benefits like health care and education, and a lack of a plan from the Canadian government, has left hundreds wondering where to turn.

Continued from page 1

earthquake victims the opportunity to live and work in Canada for three years.

While hundreds of Turkish citizens benefited from the special measures, a year after the earthquake, some say they face additional challenges such as continued ineligibility for health care and language classes funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)—which are available to permanent residents and conventional refugees—and find themselves in uncertainty due to lack of a clear plan from the Canadian government, advocates say.

"This was a huge humanitarian move on Canada's part, and it helped hundreds of people, but it quickly evolved into a poorly conceived and mismanaged process. There's an urgent need for a clear plan for the future of these individuals at both the provincial and federal levels so they can follow a pathway to permanent residency," Alper Kirtil, a Toronto-based immigration consultant working with Turkish clients, told *The Hill Times* in an interview.

Under the temporary special measures, often referred to as TS2023, the IRCC issued 9,357 "temporary resident applica-

tions"—including for both Turkish and Syrian natives—between March 29 and Dec. 31, 2023, said departmental spokesperson Matthew Krupovich.

According to Krupovich, the special measures were offered to Turkish and Syrian nationals in Canada with valid temporary resident status, and made it possible for those already in Canada to stay and support themselves while the region recovered. The measures were originally set to expire on Sept. 25, 2023, however, they were extended by Immigration Minister Marc Miller (Ville-Marie-Le Sud-Ouest-Île-des-Sœurs, Que.) until Jan. 3, 2024.

The TS2023 measures were originally meant to assist students and temporary workers in Canada who couldn't return home due to the destruction in their home countries, having lost their family members and access to funds. The measures also allowed Turkey- and Syria-based earthquake victims who also had visitor visas to Canada to come and live with their family members in Canada and work here for three years.

Turkish temporary residents, including those who wish to leave after the three years are up, are also asking for broader access to health care, such as what's available to Ukrainians, *The Hill Times* was told. Normally, visitors to Canada aren't covered under public health care, but Ukrainians who fled Russia's invasion and arrived under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel can get public health care depending on the province in which they live, according to the IRCC.

The department did not respond to *The Hill Times'* questions on whether it is working on a special immigration pathway that would allow the earthquake victims to remain in Canada longer than three years, or whether the federal government has had any discussions with provincial counterparts on ways to grant these temporary residents access to health care.

"We cannot speculate on future policy decisions," said Krupovich.

By the time this three-year-long permit expires, eligible Turkish citizens with any valid temporary resident status—such

as visitors, students, and workers—will still be able to apply to become permanent residents, but according to observers, the issue is that many of those who fled the earthquakes may not have the educational background, English skills, or additional funds to support their application for permanent residency.

"The one thing I can say is that there seems to be a policy gap here that needs fixing; that was my impression after discussions with representatives of the federal government. People need to be able to have access to basic needs like health care and education—that is what we are working towards. We have met with some MPs in Ontario. We are calling for federal and provincial governments to work together to make it possible," said Sima Acan, president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations (FCTA), an umbrella organization of the Turkish Community of Canada.

FCTA shared photos of their Feb. 4 meeting with Mental Health and Addictions Minister Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Ont.) on social media in a post that said the community leaders "discussed the situation of Turkish earthquake survivors in Canada."

"She actually met with the organization in her role of MP for York Centre. She and her constituency team met with organizers and constituents to discuss referrals to other service organizations that could help. So it was very much in the context of supporting her constituents who need help, and not in her role as minister," Alex Fernandes, Saks' press secretary, told *The Hill Times* in a Feb. 14 email.

Miller's office did not respond to a request for comment and the office of Health Minister Mark Holland (Ajax, Ont.) was unable to provide a response by publication deadline. Health critics from opposition parties also did not respond to *The Hill Times'* requests for comment.

"I believe there's been an issue in planning of this measure overall, leading many to Canada without an adequate support system, family members here, or financial resources. Consequently, we might witness distressing circumstances, with some individuals potentially having to return to

Turkey due to the challenges cited" said Burcu Akyol, a regulated Canadian immigration consultant based in Toronto.

Ottawa never guaranteed permanent residency for these individuals, which is normal, said Acan, who advocated last year for the IRCC to establish the special measures. She added that the biggest oversight in the implementation of the program is that while three years provides ample time for individuals to settle in Canada and apply for immigration if they meet the qualifications, these were people fleeing from a natural disaster.

"This is just a vicious cycle. Earthquake victims come from Turkey with whatever money they have to cover basics like food and shelter. But, with the currency exchange rates, their money's not stretching as far," Acan said. As of Feb. 8, C\$1 equals 22.79 Turkish liras.

"And, they're also facing language barriers. So, getting a full-time job is a real challenge. And without a job, they can't afford language classes or even get access to health care through [the Ontario Health Insurance Plan]. It's rough, especially for pregnant women, and families with little kids. Some of these people come from levelled cities," she said.

In late January, the federal government announced plans to restrict work visas for partners of international students, effective Sept. 1, 2024, except for those enrolled in graduate programs. The move will likely affect Turkish families in Canada who were considering extending their stay through student visas, further limiting their options, according to immigration consultants.

Some people who wanted to guarantee their stay in Canada chose to seek asylum, thinking that they otherwise wouldn't have access to free English lessons, explained Kirtil, who said that such access would have assisted with some of the earthquake victims' job search.

"In Ontario and British Columbia, eligibility to access health care seems to be tied to having a full-time job; in Alberta, holding a work permit appears to suffice," said Kirtil. *The Hill Times* independently verified that individuals holding the TS2023 visa are considered ineligible for

OHIP coverage until they get a full-time job. Ontario Health did not respond to *The Hill Times'* inquiries regarding how the eligibility process works for these individuals.

"I can't pursue private English lessons. ... I mean, we lost everything in the earthquake, my parents are alive but our home is completely destroyed. We pulled my uncle under the rubble. I lost so many of my relatives and friends. Some suggest seeking asylum but that means we can't go back to Turkey, and after what we have been through, with our families still suffering back home I can't not see them. What if something happens again and they need us?" said Mehmet Ali Kafaoğlu, 29, who came to Canada from Antakya, one of the hardest-hit areas in the earthquake. He said he was able to secure a full-time job as a line cook in Toronto, thanks to his entry-level English, but says he needs help to pursue a job in his field of health institutions management, for which he needs an excellent command of English. He recently received a 10-month-long access to OHIP, six months after his arrival, but it took exceptional help from his employer and recommendation letters, he said.

"I'm not sure if we are handling things right, inviting these individuals to Canada and asking them to jump through hoops just to stay. There are also highly educated people with decent language skills who are also exploring ways to extend their three-year permit, but ... many of these individuals are severely traumatized," said Kirtil.

"Given the enormity of the disaster, it will take years for the worst-affected communities to fully recover," said Kevin Hamilton, Canada's ambassador to Turkey, in an email to *The Hill Times*. Hamilton paid a visit Adiyaman and Malatya, which was organized by the IFRC and humanitarian group Turkish Red Crescent.

"But I came away deeply impressed by the resilience of these communities, and by the dedication displayed by local NGOs and national relief agencies, such as the Turkish Red Crescent, who are working tirelessly, and on a daily basis, to help people across the affected region rebuild their lives and their livelihoods," he said.

"Many families are still in temporary accommodation in containers, life is certainly not back to normal [in the quake-hit areas]. Our focus is on supporting people to return to normal but that normalcy is still months and years away, in terms of the recovery," said Jessie Thompson, the head of delegation with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in Turkey.

"I'm proud of the impact that we've been able to have, in many ways thanks to the generous support of Canadians. The Canadian Red Cross, and the Canadian government have been instrumental in supporting our efforts. But there's still so much more work that needs to be done here," said Thompson.

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The Hill Times

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Editorial

Selling the climate plan requires more than a new name

It's not exactly a state secret that the incumbent Liberal government is on shaky footing. So it's at times like these that unforced errors are especially painful. Unfortunately, that's exactly what Environment and Climate Change Minister Steven Guilbeault did last week when his comments to a Montreal audience that the government was going to get out of the road-building business took off.

"I should have been more specific in that conference that I gave last week in Montreal. I was referring specifically to projects like [Quebec's third link]," Guilbeault said on Feb. 14, his second crack at clarifying what the *Montreal Gazette* had reported.

By that point, opposition MPs and premiers of varying partisan stripes had already weighed in on the gaffe, moving to make political hay out of the minister's misspeak, and further brand him as "out of touch" and a "radical."

Meanwhile, the main environmental message the Liberals were attempting to disseminate—the rebranding of the carbon price rebate—was overshadowed. But, let's not kid ourselves: that was never going to be the slam dunk the Liberals were hoping for.

"The previous name was a bit difficult to understand," Guilbeault said of the quarterly payment formerly known

as the Climate Action Incentive. "We're working with financial institutions to make sure that it's labelled properly so that people actually know what it is. In many cases, it was very difficult for people to actually see that they were getting it."

Granted, that's not great. But the Liberals lost the messaging plot on the carbon price years ago. Even people who are in favour of the initiative may tend to refer to it as a "carbon tax" instead of the government's preferred nomenclature of "carbon price," thanks to successful opposition efforts.

The rebranded Canada Carbon Rebate isn't going to fill the messaging and information vacuum that has existed essentially since the program was launched in 2018, and that has allowed Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre to hold "Axe the Tax" rallies in British Columbia, where the federal carbon price doesn't apply. In this current political climate of "make it a meme, put it online, profit," playing catch-up doesn't work.

The carbon price pause on home heating oil arguably weakened the public's perception of the entire system, and the lack of conviction and elements of confusion in messaging certainly don't help. The future of the planet is too important to leave to a milquetoast PR exercise.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Israel and Hamas cannot coexist, says Jewish Federation of Ottawa rep

Re: "Dyer's column should be read in Washington, Jerusalem, and Gaza: Tom McElroy," (*The Hill Times*, Feb. 12, p. 8).

In his letter to the editor, Tom McElroy beseeches Israel and Hamas to "move slowly toward a peaceful co-existence," and that "the search here should not be for victory, it should be for peace."

Is McElroy really promoting coexistence with Hamas?

Hamas is a genocidal Islamic terrorist organization; a demonic death cult that celebrates the murder, rape, and torture of innocent people, and that explicitly states it will never rest until Israel is destroyed, and replaced with an Islamic State-style caliphate.

With such an actor as Hamas, there can be no peace; only victory or defeat.

As much as McElroy, like most of us, wants to see fighting stop, our expectations have to be based in fact, not fantasy. There was a ceasefire in place before October 7, which Hamas broke when it attacked Israel. And a future ceasefire would be no different.

As long as Hamas remains in power, and a potent threat to Israel, there will be no peace; Hamas has made that clear. The best case for peace is Hamas' defeat, and the best guarantee for perpetual war is Hamas' survival.

Jodi Green
Communications and advocacy specialist,
Jewish Federation of Ottawa
Ottawa, Ont.

South Africa's case against Israel is what's 'obscene,' writes Alan Williams

Re: "Canada was right to affirm ICJ's authority, would also be right to accept its conclusion: John Dirlik," (*The Hill Times*, Feb. 12, p. 8).

John Dirlik and I have completely different perspectives as to what is and what is not obscene with respect to the Israel-Hamas war. The claim that Hamas is to blame for the deaths of Palestinians is not, as Mr. Dirlik states in his letter to the editor, obscene, but rather to the point. Hamas broke the ceasefire on Oct. 7, 2023, gleefully killing babies, gang raping women, and butchering families. It knew full well it was a war it could not win, and one that would inflict immense suffering on its own people. Thankfully, Israel is not succumbing to German historian Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil" by acquiescing to these vilest of horrors. Instead, it is honourably and forcefully attempting to rid the world of this cancer called Hamas.

Conversely, it is the charge put forward by South Africa to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that is politically motivated (as Mr. Dirlik admitted), baseless, and obscene. It is Canada's support for the authority of the ICJ that is obscene. In 1948, there were about 1.4 million Palestinians living in Palestine. Today there are approximately 5.35 million Palestinians living in Palestine. If Israel was committing genocide, the Palestinian population would not have increased fourfold. If Israel was committing genocide, it would not be warning Palestinians to vacate upcoming war zones, would not be putting its soldiers at risk or allowing humanitarian relief. Israel is not killing Palestinians indiscriminately. It is focused on destroying Hamas. In reality, it is Hamas—a terrorist organization dedicated to the elimination of Israel—that should be brought before the ICJ.

Alan Williams
Ottawa, Ont.



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DELIVERY INQUIRIES

circulation@hilltimes.com
613-688-8821



Published every Monday and Wednesday by Hill Times Publishing Inc.

246 Queen Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E4
(613) 232-5952
Fax (613) 232-9055
Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 40068926
www.hilltimes.com

Please send letters to the editor to the above street address or e-mail to news@hilltimes.com. Deadline is Wednesday at noon, Ottawa time, for the Monday edition and Friday at noon for the Wednesday edition. Please include your full name, address and daytime phone number. *The Hill Times* reserves the right to edit letters. Letters do not reflect the views of *The Hill Times*. Thank you.

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Canadians must take a closer look at the populist-themed juggernaut that's leaving the Liberals behind

As practiced in Canada, populism thrives on persistent expressions of alarm about the state of national affairs, and policies don't really count.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—Perhaps the most memorable—and portentous—comment on former United States president Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural address was George W. Bush's remark: "That was some weird shit."

Standing on the steps of the U.S. Congress in the quadrennial celebration of the smooth transition of national executive power (something Trump himself would not honour in 2021), the incoming president had delivered a speech

focused on "American carnage" that some have compared to a stylization of a *Mad Max* dystopia.

In the years since, Trump has failed to convert his early success into more political victories. He has run up a seemingly endless docket of alleged criminality, wallowed in his disdain for the legal guardrails of U.S. democracy, and pandered unapologetically to racists and the hate-world. Nonetheless, he is back as the next presumptive Republican presidential candidate with a solid chance of being re-elected.

What does this mean for countries like Canada? It tells us that the transformative power of the populist revolution that has swept through much of Europe and the Americas in the past decade or so is now an established fact of political life.

While its electoral successes ebb and flow, populism's fundamental concepts, messaging, and strategies have been fully defined and put into effect on a wide basis from Budapest to Rio de Janeiro to Washington, D.C.

This historic development is ushering in a very significant shift from the Canadian politics of the last half-century. For all their faults, problems, and failures, prime ministers from Pierre Trudeau

through to Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau have had one thing in common: a basic commitment to a relatively coherent view of the issues before Canadians at any given time. And there was, by and large, a respect for public institutions and a belief in settling on preferred governing policies through interest accommodation in line with the choices of voters and stakeholders.

Today, as these fundamental motivating commitments appear to be lapsing, Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberals seem to be operating in a political arena that may soon be a relic. In recent years, the overall approach of former Toronto mayor Rob Ford, and more recently his brother Ontario Premier Doug Ford, helped bring populism into the modern mainstream in Canada. And there's no doubting the influence here of Trump's eight years of deconstruction of democratic norms next door. And populism has gained powerful momentum with the election of Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and, more importantly, the choice of Pierre Poilievre as Conservative leader.

Not surprisingly, then, as this style of politics has gathered steam in Canada, it has emerged—particularly at the federal level—very much in keeping

with the standard practices of other populist movements.

Like other examples, populism—as practiced in Canada—thrives on persistent expressions of alarm about the state of national affairs (Poilievre's claim that Canada "is broken," which is much the same as Trump's "American carnage" and MAGA refrains). It is overwhelmingly anti-elitist and buttressed by the claim that the uncaring, corrupt elite is harming the people, and only the populist leader can repair the situation. And it is anti-institutional (e.g., attacks on the Bank of Canada and CBC).

As in other countries, Canadian populists' reliance on disinformation and rage-farming creates widespread political polarization, which undermines co-operation and trust in the electoral process, in government, and, in a wider sense, the public's commitment to the common good.

Also, Poilievre's approach is typical of this political playbook as used elsewhere in that it is thin on policy—what one political scientist called "the empty heart of populism." With populism, policies don't really count. In the U.S., Trump is known as the champion of the average person. But his government passed a massive corporate tax cut (mainly benefiting the rich);

refused to set workplace rules to protect workers during COVID; tried to undermine health-care support for low-income Americans and seniors; blocked an attempt to better control toxic chemicals; made it harder for workers to qualify for overtime pay; stacked the courts with anti-labour judges; attempted to eliminate food subsidies for the poor; and cut back opportunities and protections for minorities.

In Ontario, Premier Ford—another self-described defender of the average voter—has among other things chopped \$17-million in support for women's shelters and victims of violence; scrapped a planned increase in welfare spending, and tossed out the previous government's basic income pilot program; presided over a health-care system that has become increasingly less helpful to the average patient; cut legal aid by 30 per cent; postponed a planned hike in minimum wage until it became a pre-election plank; reduced planned mental health spending; ended rent control for new units; and cut student grants and funding for universities and colleges.

In the divisive national political environment that has emerged since the pandemic, it is clear that Canadians have tuned out the Trudeau Liberals and are—at least for the moment—fully engaged in the populist campaign being waged by Poilievre. Experience with this kind of thing around the world makes it imperative in the months ahead for the Canadian public to have a very close look at what people are actually buying into and why.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

Defence Minister Blair redefines the word 'urgent'

Canada has not had any air-defence capability whatsoever since 2012, and buying two new systems first announced more than a year ago is hardly moving with haste.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—On Feb. 15, Minister of National Defence Bill Blair used the occasion of a NATO ministers' meeting in Brussels to announce Canada's acquisition of two new air-defence systems for the Canadian Armed Forces.

The total combined value of these two procurements is estimated at \$273-million, and in both cases, delivery is expected to be "later this year."

According to the official announcement, CAF "members deployed to NATO's Canada-led battle group in Latvia will soon have two new defensive capabilities that are being acquired on an urgent basis. This new equipment will strengthen the defence capacity of the battle group as a whole, further adding to the deterrence capabilities of soldiers from all contributing nations."

Now keep in mind that I did not add the underline to "urgent basis"—that was actually part of the official correspondence. Which begs the question: just what is the yardstick that DND uses to define the word "urgent"?

Canada has not had any air-defence capability whatsoever since 2012. At that juncture, Canada had completed a 10-year combat mission in Afghanistan, and although our troops had by no means won that conflict, our soldiers could

consider themselves experienced veterans of modern counter-insurgency warfare.

As the primitive Taliban forces had no aircraft or drones from which to threaten our soldiers with aerial attack, Canada focused on such capabilities as countering improvised explosive devices, and investing in heavy lift helicopters to transport troops without exposing them to the deadly roadways. Thus, air defence was not deemed a priority, and the Canadian Army simply let this capability lapse.

Fast-forward to June 2017. In response to the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine and the potential threat of further Russian aggression, NATO launched Operation Reassurance. Answering NATO's call, Canada stepped up and volunteered to be the lead nation for a multi-national brigade, which was to be forward deployed into Latvia.

At this juncture, the threat of potential all-arms combat against a near peer in the form of the Russian military should

have resulted in Canadian Army commanders pounding on their minister's desk to demand they be equipped and trained on modern air-defence systems on an "urgent basis."

Instead we heard not a peep from the military brass nor any of the other armchair generals and Colonel Blimp tub-thumpers who were just delighted to be back into the familiar rhetoric of the Cold War era.

Conveniently forgotten was the fact that during the Cold War, Canada did have tactical low-level air-defence systems, and lots of them. The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery had entire air defence regiments, and combat arms units had shoulder-fired missiles. But I digress.

In February 2022, when Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his country's invasion of Ukraine, the world was shocked. Everyone thought that the vaunted Russian military machine would easily crush the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the avid speculation was on where Putin would invade next. The fact that Russia was using combat helicopters and fighter jets should have again caused our commanders in Latvia to demand air-defence systems on an "urgent basis."

However, it was not until January 2023 that Canada realized

that air-defence systems were necessary to defeat Russia's drones and combat aircraft over the modern battlefield. As such, it was announced that Canada would procure the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAM) for Ukraine's military. The NASAM deal is worth \$406-million, and is considered a foreign sales purchase directly from the United States government.

When this acquisition for Ukraine was made public, opposition defence critics quickly pointed out that the Canadian Army themselves possessed no such vital tactical capability. As a result, more than a year ago, the Liberals quietly tendered bids for a low-level air-defence system for the Canadian Army, on an "urgent basis." Blair's announcement last week was simply the result of that months'-long competition.

For the record, the \$406-million NASAM air defence package purchased for Ukraine in January 2023 has yet to be delivered. Which makes one wonder what exactly is meant by an "urgent basis."

I mean, it's not like there's a war on.

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

The Hill Times

News

Plug pulled on some virtual committee witnesses due to headset rules, prompting call for more consistency

To comply with a 2023 Labour Program ruling, the Translation Bureau mandated the use of approved microphone headsets for virtual participants to receive interpretation services.

Continued from page 1

parliamentary interpreters, the Translation Bureau has made it mandatory for virtual participants to use a microphone headset from a list of models deemed to sufficiently meet ISO standards to receive interpretation services, and therefore—given the legislature's official bilingual status—take part in proceedings.

The requirement has since led to the cancellation of multiple witness appearances at House and Senate committees, prompting some frustration from witnesses and Parliamentarians alike.

Ontario ISG Senator Peter Boehm, chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, raised his committee's experience with the new rules at a recent Senate Internal Economy, Budgets, and Administration Committee (CIBA) meeting, saying that the requirement—while important—is affecting the group's work.

It's an issue Boehm said he first highlighted in a letter to the bureau in March 2023, not long after it mandated the use of approved headset models to comply with a Feb. 1, 2023, Labour Program ruling.

That ruling was the result of a February 2022 complaint filed by the Canadian Association of Professional Employees, which represents staff interpreters, arguing the bureau violated its health and safety obligations under the Canada Labour Code by failing to take appropriate steps to protect interpreters from the extra strains and poorer sound quality associated with remote interpretation work. Virtual participation in parliamentary proceedings became prevalent amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2022, a parliamentary interpreter was sent



A parliamentary interpreter works during a press conference in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building in Ottawa on Feb. 16, 2021. Interpreting remote participants puts an added strain on interpreters, and has led to increased reports of injuries. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to hospital after being exposed to “dangerous levels of toxic sound” during a Senate Environment Committee meeting at which two witnesses were allowed to testify without then-recommended microphone headsets.

Today, the House of Commons continues to function as a fully hybrid Chamber. The Senate returned to in-person proceedings in the fall of 2022, but committee witnesses are still able to appear remotely, as they were pre-pandemic.

Boehm raised his concerns again at CIBA on Feb. 8 during an appearance by officials from the Translation Bureau—including the bureau's new chief executive officer, Jean-François Lymburner—noting “problems persist,” and that the rules regarding headsets have been “quite restrictive for witnesses.”

“I really care about occupational health and safety; I think we all do,” said Boehm. “However, some of the requirements are difficult. We have had to deny witnesses who are willing to appear because it's very difficult for Amazon to deliver a headset in Sudan. We wanted some witnesses from Jerusalem in the context of the current crisis and could not do that. I fear this impacts the effectiveness of our committee. It's a bit embarrassing, too [to cancel on witnesses], and there are reputational issues as well.” The witnesses in question had been set to appear before the committee in late November as part of meetings looking into the humanitarian situations in Sudan and Gaza.

The Senate, like the House, arranges to send approved microphone headsets to scheduled witnesses ahead of their testimony (or reimburses witnesses for the cost of acquiring them,

up to \$250). Pre-meeting sound checks—which additionally test for things like internet connectivity—are also required in advance.

Speaking with *The Hill Times* on Feb. 14, Boehm said part of the challenge, in his view, has been the evolving nature of the list of headsets approved for use, which has presented something of a “moving” target.

In addition to not being able to hear from witnesses who did not receive approved headsets in time or otherwise did not get a green light following pre-meeting tests, he said there have been cases of “a high-profile witness who does not want to use the equipment necessarily, or may have had a previous headset that is no longer approved ... and then wondering why they should get another one.”

There's an “opportunity cost of losing your witnesses, of obviously all the people working on the meeting itself, and the need to reschedule,” said Boehm.

Amid COVID-19, the House and Senate both enabled hybrid proceedings in 2020.

On the Senate side, virtual participants were recommended to use wired headsets with attached boom mics in the fall of 2020, and by the start of 2021, the Senate began providing virtual witnesses (and Senators) with a list of six specific models recommended for use—five of which remain on the current list of 10 approved microphone headset models established by the Translation Bureau in February 2023.

During CIBA's meeting, Conservative Senate Leader Don Plett (Landmark, Man.) noted that committee witnesses were able to testify remotely pre-pandemic—without headset requirements—and questioned why there's a difference now. Labour Program

ruling aside, in seeking to address Plett's question a committee clerk noted that, pre-pandemic, witnesses appearing virtually “wouldn't appear from home,” and would instead be asked to “go to a city downtown where there was a studio that met our standards for quality,” and sound checks would be done at that location in advance of a meeting.

House committees have experienced similar challenges.

In September, Tom Keatinge, director of the Royal United Services Institute's Centre for Financial Crime and Security Studies, was set to testify before the House Foreign Affairs Committee as part of its review of Canada's sanctions regime. The United Kingdom-based Keatinge noted he had returned from holiday at midnight in order to participate in the meeting that day, and as a result, hadn't received an approved headset. Despite having gone through pre-meeting tests, when it was his turn to speak, Keatinge was informed that the years-old Logitech headset model he had was not on the approved list, and he therefore would not be able to participate (a Conservative attempt to allow him to testify in English without interpretation was nixed by the Bloc Québécois). In response, Keatinge questioned why he had been given the OK “less than an hour” prior, referring to the situation as “shambles.”

“If the clerk wants to get in touch with me and invite me back, we can figure something out, if I can be available,” said Keatinge. “Needless to say, this has not been a good experience with a fellow ally across the Atlantic on one of the most important topics that we face right now in international security.”

In response, Conservative MP and committee vice-chair Michael Chong (Wellington-Halton Hills, Ont.) called the situation “deeply embarrassing,” and expressed “hope that we don't end up in this situation again.” Chong was not available for an interview with *The Hill Times*, nor was committee chair Liberal MP Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Ont.).

Last week, a similar situation unfolded at the House Transport Committee.

On Feb. 15, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance chair David Lepofsky was set to testify before the committee about disability barriers for airline passengers, but his appearance was cancelled at the last

minute because the Sennheiser headset model he had wasn't on the approved list. In a subsequent press release, the alliance noted Lepofsky had “spent almost an hour” doing pre-meeting testing two days prior and was told his headset was fine. “Today, another House of Commons IT official said that Lepofsky's headset is a different Sennheiser model than the one approved by the House of Commons. Yet he used the same headset on both occasions,” reads the release.

“Members of the public who volunteer their time at the House of Commons' request to provide evidence at a standing committee deserve better treatment,” it continues.

In response to questions from *The Hill Times*, Mathieu Gravel, director of outreach and media relations for the House Speaker, said confirming whether a witness has an approved microphone headset is “part of the onboarding testing” process, but that in the case of the Feb. 15 meeting, “it would appear ... there was human error during the onboarding process.”

“During the pre-check minutes before the meeting, regretfully, the witness was refused because of [a] non-approved headset,” said Gravel. “In that circumstance, the witness did not have the opportunity to test with interpretation because they did not meet the requirements of having an approved headset.”

Asked for the current list of approved microphone headsets, and about changes to that list since the House first recommended use of a Plantronics model in the spring of 2020, a list of eight headset models was provided—two fewer than are listed by the Translation Bureau.

Gravel said the House's list has not changed “much” since first being established in March 2023, with a Logitech Zone H540 model removed, a Logitech H540 model added, and a different Jabra model (the SE version) swapped in. Prior to the mandatory order, the House's recommended headset model “evolved over time,” with a second Plantronics model replacing the first (which had been discontinued) in the fall of 2020. In the spring of 2021, a Sennheiser model was instead chosen as the standard headset, and in 2022, following more testing of different models, a Jabra model became the new standard.

Liberal MP Ken Hardie (Fleetwood-Port Kells, B.C.), chair of the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations, said his committee has had one instance of having to cancel testimony from a witness from the United States who did not have an approved headset.

For his part, Boehm said he's satisfied with the response he got from the Translation Bureau at CIBA on Feb. 8, and that ultimately, “all that we ask for is some consistency in approach.”

“I received reassurances in that meeting by the head of the Translation Bureau that they're looking at ways to improve and have a standardization so the goal posts don't move again,” he said.

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Upholding the integrity of Canadian sport requires meaningful change

There must be leadership and investments made by the federal government to make the culture of Canadian sport more equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible.

Richard Norman

Opinion



History has proven that sports can be a powerful, unifying force for bringing people of all backgrounds together with one common goal: enriching lives through team-building and a love of the game.

While this remains true, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, national sports organizations (NSOs) have faced a reckoning in recent years. Media attention brought to light allegations of abuse, sexual assault, and financial malfeasance that have drawn the attention of the federal government and Members of Parliament, and subsequently sparked a national conversation.

As part of this discussion, the role and mandate of NSOs has also been called into question. In response to the crisis of confidence facing Canadian sports organizations, then-minister of sport Pascale St-Onge announced several measures to help improve governance of federally funded NSOs, enhance safe sport practices, and amplify the role of athletes in decision-making.

Curling Canada has welcomed these changes to create a more accountable system in which the well-being of athletes is at the heart of decision-making.

As an NSO, we strive each day to work with communities from coast to coast to ensure our sport grows even stronger and more sustainable. Curling clubs have made progress to foster inclusive policies and programs to ensure all participants are protected, feel welcome, and can enjoy the experience, safe and free from discrimination.

We are also working with community clubs to highlight how unconscious bias(es) may contribute to individuals making quick assessments about different social groups, which can create significant barriers for people coming into the facility, and in turn, derail any “good measures” instituted on their road to greater inclusion. By challenging stereotypes and breaking down biases, our curling community is better prepared to expand the reach of curling into communities we want to be part of this great game.

Our mission to foster an environment and system that allows all Canadians who

choose curling to achieve their personal goals is not antithetical to the Canadian Sport Governance Code, which aims to improve organizational performance through upgraded governance practices and structural mechanisms.

The practical reality, however, is that NSOs have a varied and complex set of objectives to achieve as part of their mandate, and now have additional directives not only from Sport Canada, but also from the minister’s office.

For example, Curling Canada has focused much of its attention over the past several years on sustainability and how to attract new members while dealing with pressing concerns such as volunteer burn-out, and addressing the challenges of aging club infrastructure.

There is also the reality of increasing the visibility of the sport through media engagements and corporate sponsorships, and complying with technical and legal requirements. Add in compliance requirements from Sport Canada to obtain federal funding, and this creates capacity challenges for NSOs to deliver on their mandate. NSOs are overstretched and under-resourced, limiting our ability to deliver on fundamental priorities and responsibilities.

While Curling Canada is actively taking steps to align itself with the Code, Sport Canada is seeking institutional change without providing the mechanism for NSOs to deliver on this mandate. There is much more work we need to be doing to ensure sport is safe, inclusive, and accessible. However, NSOs have become incredibly lean, and don’t have the necessary resources or capacity.

Canadians are right to expect that NSOs are taking appropriate measures to protect their children, especially those who are historically marginalized and under-represented in the sport.

But for meaningful change to occur and for the culture of Canadian sport to be more equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible, there must be leadership and investments made by the federal government. This investment will solidify a partnership with NSOs that will see the necessary capacity and resources dedicated to making imperative improvements to the foundation of sport in Canada.

For our part, Curling Canada will continue to step up, with intention and compassion to confront the challenges facing our sport and our society. We are committed to doing the hard work necessary to ensure that every Canadian feels accepted when they walk through the doors of a curling facility and become a valued addition to our curling community.

Dr. Richard Norman, a dedicated researcher and futurist, is director of community futures and innovation at Curling Canada.

The Hill Times

The battle of the memes

Political memes are stubbornly shaping our perceptions of party leaders.

Éric Blais

Opinion



In the coming federal election, we’re likely to see two dominant memes arise in the race for prime minister: ‘he was never ready,’ for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, and ‘he’s too angry,’ for Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, writes Éric Blais. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and photo illustration by Neena Singh

Following American President Joe Biden’s disastrous Feb. 8 press conference in response to Special Counsel Robert Hur’s report, David Axelrod, former Obama adviser and CNN senior political analyst, remarked to Anderson Cooper: “the most damaging things in politics are those that reinforce a meme already hurting you. And for the president, it’s this issue of age. It’s a significant barrier.”

Memes, though not new, have evolved. Coined in 1976 by Richard Dawkins, a British evolutionary biologist, the term meme (from the Greek *mimema*, or “imitated”) originally referred to cultural units like stories and ideas that change as they spread through a culture. The internet—especially social media—has vastly amplified their impact.

In their paper *Memeing Politics: Understanding Political Meme Creators, Audiences, and Consequences on Social Media* published last October, Audrey Halversen and Brian Weeks describe memes as both democratic and polarizing agents. They note that while memes facilitate quick discussion of political issues, their often-inflammatory nature can incite politically oriented anger and cynicism, especially towards government leaders.

Memes are notably sticky. As Axelrod observed, once established, they are reinforced by events, whether or not they’re within a politician’s control.

The special counsel’s characterization of Biden as “a sympathetic, well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory” played into an existing narrative, demonstrating how memes thrive and gain influence both online and offline.

Consider former United States president Donald Trump: more a meme than a politician. Inflammatory, cynical, and anger-fueled, he’s either the infallible “orange Jesus” to supporters, or a dangerous provocateur to detractors. Essentially, he embodies a meme of a politically disruptive celebrity.

Turning to Canadian politics, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s dwindling popularity, as reflected in polls, seems linked to a meme originating from the Harper Conservatives’ attack ads painting him as “just not ready” for the prime minister’s role. This meme, echoing shortcomings and unfulfilled promises, has stubbornly persisted.

For the “F-Trudeau” group, this meme offers a simple, resonant critique.

But Trudeau’s time to counter this narrative with demonstrable competence and fulfilled promises is running short. His reputation as a more-effective campaigner than leader could further cement the “never ready” meme.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, on the other hand, faces a different meme: “anger.” As *Maclean’s* magazine’s April 2022 headline “Why is Pierre Poilievre so angry?” highlights, this meme is rooted in Poilievre’s confrontational political style. It appeals to those frustrated with the status quo, but risks alienating voters preferring a more conciliatory approach.

This brings us to a Canadian voter meme: politeness and a preference for measured, collaborative politics, in stark contrast to the confrontational nature of U.S. politics.

As we look ahead, unless Trudeau opts out, we’re likely to see two dominant memes: “he was never ready” and “he’s too angry” to be prime minister.

Éric Blais is president of Headspace Marketing in Toronto.

The Hill Times

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News

Palestinian Canadians losing hope, taking drastic measures as Gaza visa program fails to bring loved ones to safety

After weeks without a response from IRCC, Wesam Nofal says her parents travelled to Egypt on Feb. 18 to try and cross into Gaza ‘to take their children out or die trying.’

Continued from page 1

and have begun taking matters into their own hands to save their families.

Wesam Nofal, a hospital pharmacist in Toronto who previously spoke with *The Hill Times* before the special temporary resident visa program opened on Jan. 9, said she has yet to receive a code for either of the two applications she submitted for her brother and brother-in-law’s family.

Initially announced on Dec. 21, 2023, by Immigration Minister Marc Miller (Ville-Marie-Le Sud-Ouest-Île-des-Soeurs, Que.), the program offers temporary resident visas to extended family members of Canadians and permanent residents, including spouses and common-law partners, children and grandchildren regardless of age, parents, grandparents, or siblings. On Jan. 2, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) published the text of the policy, revealing that the program would be limited to the first 1,000 accepted applications, and would close after a year if that quota was not met.

Palestinian Canadians raced to apply to the program when it finally opened on Jan. 9, but fewer than 1,000 codes have been issued to applicants to begin the multi-stage security screening process that can only be completed once they cross the border into Egypt.

As of Jan. 22, IRCC said 915 applications had been provided codes to begin that process, with none having been finalized. As of Feb. 20, that number had increased to 976 applications in processing.

On Feb. 13, Miller told reporters that while Canada had not yet gotten people out of Gaza through the program, he remains “flexible” on the cap. He said he has begun looking at other parameters of the program “through a humanitarian lens, given what’s happening in Rafah,”



Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Marc Miller told reporters he remains ‘flexible’ on the visa program’s cap, and would ‘move quickly’ to ensure the program aligns with the ‘obligation to get the family of Canadians out as quickly as possible.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to see whether they are consistent with Canada’s obligation to get the family of Canadians out as quickly as possible.

While Miller wouldn’t provide specifics about which other components of the program are being reviewed, he said that as the situation evolves on the ground and the emergency increases, any change to the program “is something that we’ll move quickly on.”

However, IRCC told *The Hill Times* that before determining the next steps, it would need to process the existing TRV applications to see if any of those people will be able to get out of Gaza.

Nofal said that the pace of the program is not moving fast enough, and she views Miller’s comments as just more “lip service without any good faith or good intention toward Canadians with Palestinian heritage.”

“Nothing is moving; nothing is mobilizing,” Nofal told *The Hill Times*, noting that she had submitted her family’s application within hours of the program opening.

“We have been asking since October, and between Global Affairs and IRCC, we are getting nowhere,” Nofal explained, noting that in her previous attempts to acquire a temporary visa through the normal pathway following Israel’s invasion of Gaza in October, she was bounced back and forth between the two departments each time she called for information on the applications.

However, after months of pleading with them not to do so, Nofal said that her parents,

Mohammed and Intisar, gave up on waiting and went behind her back to purchase tickets to Egypt in order to travel to the Rafah border crossing and attempt to enter Gaza “to take their children out or die trying.” In January, Nofal’s parents, both Canadian citizens, applied as anchors for her brother, his wife, and four children, as well as her mother and brother-in-law, his wife, and their five-month-old daughter.

Originally from Gaza City, both families’ homes have since been destroyed after they evacuated from the capital city in October, and they are now living in Deir al-Bahl alongside more than 100 other Palestinians sheltering in a single home.

“No one on Earth can prevent a parent from trying to save their children,” Nofal told *The Hill Times* on Feb. 14, just two days after she had learned her parents had booked their flight to Egypt. Previously, Wesam said her parents had been considering taking out a US\$30,000 loan in order to pay for the bribes to get their family across the border.

Nofal said that her parents, who are both in their 70s, left via Toronto Pearson International Airport on Feb. 18 with nothing but the clothes on their backs and a small carry-on between them, and travelled to the Canadian Embassy in Egypt the following day.

“If the embassy tells them they will not help [my parents] to get the children out, they will go to Gaza,” Wesam said.

Jihan Qunoo, a finance officer for a non-profit organization in Ottawa, previously told *The Hill Times* that she received a code on Jan. 11 for one family—for her brother Ahmed, his wife, and their five children—but has yet to receive application codes for her remaining three siblings or mother. Since then, her brother’s application has failed to progress past the completion of his background check as he awaits his chance to cross the border for a biometric scan in Egypt.

Originally from Gaza City, Qunoo said her family was forced to relocate from their home near Al-Shifa Hospital after Israel ordered the evacuation of the city on Oct. 15, heading to the south to a friend’s apartment in the Nuseirat refugee camp. However, the family was forced to evacuate once more to the Rafah border crossing on Dec. 23, where they now shelter in a makeshift tent.

Fortunately, Qunoo said she got a chance to get her mother out of Gaza and safely into Egypt thanks to her uncle’s Turkish citizenship. She said that her uncle had also been trying to evacuate her mother—his sister—and their family since the beginning of the war, and finally managed to do so on Feb. 12, thanks to the help of the Turkish Embassy placing her mother on that country’s evacuation list. Unfortunately, her uncle was unable to evacuate the remainder of her family as Turkey was only accepting direct family members and their children under the age of 18.

Now that her mother is finally safe, Qunoo said she feels like she can finally breathe for the first time in months.

“We are happy; it’s at least something,” Qunoo told *The Hill Times*, adding that the living conditions inside the tent her family is sheltering in had been especially hard on her 70-year-old mother.

For the rest of her family, Qunoo said she is growing increasingly worried, particularly after the Israeli military operation into Rafah the night before her mother escaped on Feb. 12, when the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) conducted a series of airstrikes on the area in co-ordination with a special operation to rescue two Israeli hostages. The health ministry in Hamas-controlled Gaza reported nearly 100 people were killed in the strikes.

As the threat of a larger incursion by the IDF grows more imminent, Qunoo said she is hoping for good news from anywhere on

the potential of a humanitarian pause or more permanent cease-fire, and is happy to see Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s (Papineau, Que.) statement on Feb. 14 calling for just that.

The joint statement, issued alongside the prime ministers of Australia and New Zealand, called for “an immediate ceasefire,” the release of the hostages, and the rapid, safe, and unimpeded flow of humanitarian relief to civilians. The statement also said a military operation into Rafah would be “catastrophic,” and urged Israel “not to go down this path.”

“There is simply nowhere else for civilians to go,” the statement reads, urging Israel to “listen to its friends” and the growing international consensus that “the protection of civilians is paramount and a requirement under international humanitarian law. Palestinian civilians cannot be made to pay the price of defeating Hamas.”

The statement also said a sustainable ceasefire is necessary and cannot be one-sided, reiterating their condemnation of Hamas for triggering the conflict.

On Oct. 7, Hamas militants launched a terrorist attack on Israel, killing nearly 1,200 people and taking about 250 hostages back into Gaza. In response, Israel declared war on Hamas and launched an invasion of the Gaza Strip it controls. Since then, Gaza health authorities say more than 29,000 Palestinians have been killed, with nearly 70,000 injured.

The statement joins similar warnings from other western allies, including every European Union country except Hungary, and United States President Joe Biden, who said Israel must not move ahead with the military operation without a “credible” plan to keep civilians safe.

However, on Feb. 18, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to “finish the job” in Gaza as progress towards a hostage-release deal stalled, and has said that the hostages’ release “can be achieved through strong military action” as well. On the same day, a member of Netanyahu’s War Cabinet, retired general Benny Gantz, threatened that an invasion of Rafah to release the hostages could begin by the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan on March 10.

Qunoo said she hopes the pressure from Canada and other countries could lead to a positive change on the ground, but isn’t hopeful for good news anytime soon, and that there are growing fears among her community and those in Gaza that a larger military operation would force the closure of the border crossing, leaving them trapped.

Qunoo said that members of her community have been organizing protests for the next two weeks to call on the government to take action before that happens.

“We need to get our families out before it gets worse,” Qunoo said. “We might only have this chance for the next few weeks while the border is still functioning.”

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Canada and Indonesia face hurdles to finalize trade talks, putting end-of-year pledge at risk

Canadian and Indonesian officials are publicly optimistic that a trade deal can be completed this year, but a closed-door briefing for stakeholders last fall painted a less-rosy picture.

Continued from page 1

Trade talks with Indonesia are one of the four major negotiations on the government's docket, and the only one with a finish line in sight. Talks with India and the United Kingdom are paused, and negotiations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—a bloc of 10 countries, which includes Indonesia—are expected to take more time. A Global Affairs Canada (GAC) spokesperson described an agreement with Indonesia as a “key component” of Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy.

However, a delay for an improved Indonesian offer on market access for goods, and an unwillingness from Jakarta to attach enforceability to labour and environmental provisions, as well as slow progress negotiating investment protections, pose challenges at the negotiation table.

On the margins of the ASEAN Summit on Sept. 5, 2023, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) met with Indonesian President Joko Widodo, commonly known as Jokowi, and committed to conclude trade negotiations by the end of 2024 “at the latest,” according to a PMO readout of the meeting.

In a “general statement” on advancing negotiations released the same day, the two sides agreed to “sustain intensive engagement to maintain momentum, with a goal of substantively concluding [the trade deal] by the end of 2024.” The statement highlighted that the two leaders instructed their officials to have a round of negotiations “approximately every two months, if possible.” That did not happen, as there will be a five-month gap between the last round and the start of the scheduled next round March 4-8 in Semarang, Indonesia.

Publicly, Canada and Indonesia are both stressing that progress is being made towards a 2024 completion.

“Everything is very good—good vibe, good atmosphere. The two sides understand the importance of this to be concluded,” Indonesian Ambassador Daniel T. S. Simanjuntak told *The Hill Times* during an interview at his country's Parkdale Avenue embassy.

“I'm very optimistic that the conclusion will be on time based on the discussions made by the two leaders,” he said.

GAC spokesperson Jean-Pierre J. Godbout told *The Hill Times* in a statement that “negotiators are making steady progress and working collaboratively towards the target for conclusion in 2024, as set out by Prime Minister Trudeau and President Jokowi.”

“Both sides realize the importance of reaching a high-quality agreement that works in the interests of both Canadians and Indonesians, and as such, we will take the time necessary to reach the right deal,” Godbout added.

Canada and Indonesia's public optimism seemingly clashes with the challenges high-



International Trade Minister Mary Ng, right, has heavy lifting ahead of her to meet Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's commitment to complete a free-trade pact with Indonesia by the end of the year. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

lighted by a GAC official in a closed-door briefing with stakeholders last fall.

After the most recent round of negotiations, progress was mixed across several chapters, with much work to be done on others. The two teams of negotiators were far apart on market access, technical barriers to trade, investment dispute settlement, and inclusive trade, while progress was being made on rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and temporary entry, according to information obtained by *The Hill Times* about the GAC briefing to stakeholders last November.

Stakeholders were told that the 2024 target set out by Trudeau and Jokowi would be a challenging one, especially as they didn't expect a better offer on market access for goods until after this year's Indonesian election. The new president won't be inaugurated until October. Indonesia's most recent offer on market access didn't cover the agreed-upon target of modalities, according to the information obtained by *The Hill Times*.

Early results from the Feb. 14 election peg the controversial Prabowo Subianto as Indonesia's next leader, but results are not yet official. The former general was once banned from entering the United States, and has faced allegations of human rights violations. A GAC official didn't respond to a question regarding whether the results of the election would affect trade negotiations.

According to the information obtained by this newspaper, Jakarta has been reluctant to speak in detail with Canadian negotiators about an investment-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism, which is typically in all of Canada's free trade pacts (except for when it was removed during the renegotiations of the North American trade deal).

ISDS provisions allow for foreign investors to sue a contracting country through arbitration—instead of in domestic courts—in case a change to their laws alters the business environment. Critics have accused ISDS of curtailing a country's sovereignty and undermining public policy initiatives.

An Indonesia Embassy official said that substantial elements of dispute settlement will be dealt with at the later stages of negotiations.

Canadian negotiators have also received opposition to attaching enforceability measures to labour and environment provisions, according to information from the fall briefing obtained by *The Hill Times*.

However, the text on sanitary and phytosanitary measures is basically completed, with the exception of dispute settlement. More than half of the issues related to temporary entry have been finished.

An Indonesian Embassy official told *The Hill Times* that two chapters have been

“substantially concluded”: one on transparency, anti-corruption, and responsible business conduct; and another on good regulatory practices.

Economic modelling suggests that a free-trade pact could boost Canada's GDP by \$328-million, and increase exports to Indonesia by \$447-million, according to information revealed when Canada's trade objectives for Indonesian negotiations were tabled in the House of Commons in 2021.

Simanjuntak said he isn't sure how many more rounds would be needed before a deal could be completed, remarking that what is most important is the quality of discussion. He said there is time for a number of rounds to take place before the end of the year.

The Indonesian ambassador said no matter the results of his country's election, all candidates will support advancing work towards a trade pact.

“I'm very optimistic [that] this issue will be taken up positively in Indonesia,” he said.

Canadian Labour Congress senior researcher Elizabeth Kwan said Canada cannot finalize a trade pact that doesn't enforce labour and environment standards, remarking that the lack of progress on labour and the environment is a “real concern.”

“Any of our free-trade agreements that hurt Canadian workers, we should walk away from it. We should not be negotiating, and basically negotiating down our labour rights and protections,” she said.

“Canada's unions are looking for progressive trade agreements that would have strong and enforceable labour chapters,” she said, adding that if it's not included, than a Canada-Indonesia deal wouldn't be considered a progressive trade pact.

“Then it would be harmful to workers, and quite frankly, harmful to the environment. Something in there isn't good enough. It has to be enforceable,” she said.

Kwan said if Canada doesn't include enforceable measures, it will be acting against its own commitments.

In its trade objectives that were tabled in Parliament in 2021, the government indicated it would seek to negotiate a deal that includes “comprehensive and enforceable commitments” on both labour and the environment.

Kwan said the negotiators should be working towards the right deal, and not a rushed deal to meet the deadline set out by Trudeau and Jokowi.

“Do it right,” she said. “Do not give us a bad deal that is going to hurt workers here and hurt workers in Indonesia.”

A GAC spokesperson didn't respond to a question regarding whether Canada will insist on the deal including enforceable labour and environment provisions.

Soy Canada executive director Brian Innes said he believes there is a pathway for an agreement to be finished this year.

“I believe where there's a will to conclude, there's an ability to conclude,” he said. “What I see is real opportunities between Canada and Indonesia to grow our economies, and I see that there is will to have significant discussions towards an agreement.”

Soya beans are Canada's second largest agricultural export to Indonesia, totalling nearly \$170-million in 2021, 9.2 per cent of Indonesia's imported market.

Innes said having a timeline in place is “really important” for the negotiators to focus on arriving at an agreement.

“However, we must have an agreement that meets the best interest of Canada,” he said, remarking that from a soya-bean perspective, that means targeting non-tariff barriers that relate to “seed technology” and “crop protection technology,” as well as sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

He said there is a lot that can be accomplished within 10 months.

“There is a ways to go, but there is certainly engagement, direction, and potential to reach that timeline,” Innes said.

Trevor Kennedy, the Business Council of Canada's vice-president of Indo-Pacific, said he is optimistic a deal can be completed by the end of the year.

“We remain hopeful that the two governments can stick to their planned timeline,” he said. “With any trade negotiation, there are unforeseen challenges and obstacles to overcome. Hopefully, there's nothing too significant.”

Kennedy said Canada shouldn't be concluding an agreement just for the sake of finalizing one, but remarked that it is possible to wrap up “the best deal for Canada” within the timeline.

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Laura Ryckewaert Hill Climbers

PMO staff moves: advertising manager exits, new deputy comms director promoted

Plus, there are some staffing updates to note in Defence Minister Bill Blair's office.

There have been a handful of recent staff moves in Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office, including Darrell Dean's exit as manager of advertising after roughly a year and a half.



Darrell Dean is no longer working in the PMO. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

A former director of creative and content for the 2021 federal Liberal campaign, Dean was first brought on board in the PMO in August 2022 after a few months working as a freelance digital strategy consultant.

Dean previously worked for consulting and advertising agency Data Sciences for roughly four years between 2018 and 2022, starting as head of experience and ending as vice-president of digital and creative. From 2014-2018, Dean worked for the federal Liberal Party, going from senior designer to director of digital creative. He was creative lead for the 2015 national Liberal campaign, and in the 2019 race, he wore the title of director of digital and creative.

Deputy director of communications and climate adviser Astrid Krizus also recently bade farewell to 80 Wellington St. after more than five-and-a-half years.



Astrid Krizus is now working for TD Bank in Toronto. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Krizus left the top office in January, and is now manager of environmental, social, and governance communications with TD Bank in Toronto. A former intern through the Parliamentary Internship Program and an ex-assistant to Toronto Liberal MP Ali Ehsassi, she first joined Trudeau's team as a speechwriter in 2018. Krizus was made lead speechwriter in 2020, and climate adviser in 2022, and last September, she

added deputy director of communications to her title.

Following Krizus' exit, strategic communications adviser Michelle Johnston has been promoted to deputy director of communications in the PMO.



Michelle Johnston is now PMO deputy director of communications. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Johnston was first hired to the PMO in October 2022, arriving there after one month shy of a year working as director of communications to Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan (who, as of July 2023, is now labour and seniors minister). Prior to her time with O'Regan, Johnston spent a year as communications director to then-infrastructure and communities minister Catherine McKenna—her first federal ministerial gig.

A former government strategy and innovation consultant with Equifax Canada, Johnston worked at Queen's Park between 2013 and 2018, with her most recent jobs at the legislature being that of policy adviser to then-Ontario economic development and growth minister Brad Duguid and senior policy adviser to the province's status of women minister (to both then-ministers Indira Naidoo-Harris and Harinder Malhi).

There's another promotion within the PMO communications team to report: Mohammad Hussain's elevation to lead press secretary. Previously, Ann-Clara Vaillancourt held this title, but, as has been reported, she was promoted to director of media relations last fall.

Hussain first joined Trudeau's office as press secretary in February 2023, after a little more than a year doing the same for then-families, children, and social development minister Karina Gould. A former program co-ordinator with Jack.org, Hussain first landed on the Hill as an assistant to Ontario Liberal MP Adam van Koeverden after the 2019 election, and has since also been a special assistant for parliamentary



Mohammad Hussain has been promoted to lead press secretary. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

affairs to then-innovation minister Navdeep Bains.

In December, Allysia Pierre-Louis was hired to the PMO as a new special assistant for communications. A former global communications co-ordinator for CAE (formerly known as Canadian Aviation Electronics), in January Pierre-Louis also became a global fellow with the 1834 Foundation, and a fellow with the Black Wealth Club. She's previously done internships with Bombardier and in the office of then-official languages and Atlantic Canada Opportunities minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor through the Liberal Summer Leadership Program. Pierre-Louis graduated from the Université de Sherbrooke with a bachelor's degree in political science and international relations last year.



Allysia Pierre-Louis is a special assistant for communications. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Max Valiquette is executive director of communications in the PMO, working closely with director of communications Vanessa Hage-Moussa and Vaillancourt as director of media relations. Also still working in the communications and research unit are: press secretary Jenna Ghassabeh, strategic communications adviser Nikki Johal, digital communications co-ordinator Jordan Collacutt, lead co-ordinator of digital and creative content Riley Lange, manager of research Hilary Martin, research and advertising analyst Jacques German-Doucet, lead photographer and manager of visual communications Adam Scotti, special assistant (photographer) Lars Hagberg, videographer Akshay Grover, and lead speechwriter Alexandre Gravel.

Outside of the communications team, there are a few more PMO staff changes to report.

Charlotte Blaiklock was hired as a new correspondence writer in December. She graduated with a bachelor of arts degree—majoring in global development, and minoring in Indigenous studies—from Queen's University last year.

That same month, Jean-Luc Marion, who has overseen the correspondence team in Trudeau's office since late 2015, was elevated from senior manager to director of correspondence. Marion previously served as manager of correspondence in then-prime minister Paul Martin's office, and between 2006 and 2015 tackled corporate relations for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Along with Blaiklock, he currently oversees correspondence writer Ariane

Abainza, senior writer Adam Garisto, and co-ordinator Mirjeta Ahmeti.

Luka Vujic has been hired as a new special assistant for public appointments. Vujic has been off of the Hill since exiting as press secretary to Rural Economic Development Minister Gudie Hutchings in 2022 to pursue a juris doctor degree at the University of Windsor. His LinkedIn profile indicates he's still in the midst of working toward that degree and is expected to graduate in 2025.

A former intern to past Liberal MP Bob Bratina and current Liberal MP Marco Mendicino, prior to being hired as Hutchings' press secretary in January 2022, Vujic was an assistant to Ontario Liberal MP Vance Badawey.

The appointments team is led by directors Anne Dawson and Nadia Khaiati, and also currently includes advisers Daniel Gans, Lola Dandybaeva, and Mahamat Djalal, and assistant Amen Ben Ahmouda.

Finally, Ahmed Absiye has joined the PMO as a special assistant for operations and outreach. Absiye was most recently working as a parliamentary assistant to P.E.I. Liberal MP Robert Morrissey.

Jeff Valois is director of operations and outreach in the top office, supported by deputy director Udit Samuel.

Katie Telford remains chief of staff to Trudeau.

Jumping to National Defence Minister Bill Blair's office, Samuel Gruchy was added to the team in November, taking on the role of Atlantic regional affairs adviser.

Gruchy last working as a constituency assistant to Halifax West, N.S., Liberal MP Lena Metlege Diab, and up until December was organization chair for the riding's federal Liberal association. He's also a former part-time security guard with Commissionaires Nova Scotia, and a former infanter with the Canadian Armed Forces' Princess Louise Fusiliers primary reserve regiment, amongst other past experience.



Samuel Gruchy is Atlantic regional affairs adviser to Minister Blair. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Other staff currently overseeing regional desks in Blair's office include: Danielle Kyei, senior regional affairs adviser for the West and North; Andrew Green, senior regional adviser for Ontario; and Ezechiele Nana, who, as recently reported, joined the defence minister's team as Quebec regional affairs adviser in November.

Also in November, Larysa Lubka-Lewycky was hired as a senior policy adviser to Blair. She's a former policy adviser to then-public safety minister Mendicino and previously spent roughly two-and-a-half years—between 2019 and 2022—working at the Australian High Commission in Ottawa. Lubka-Lewycky is also an ex-assistant to then-Liberal MP Michael Levitt, among other past jobs.

Manel Menouar is deputy chief of staff and director of policy to Blair, whose policy shop also currently includes advisers Hilary Hendriks and Malia Chenaoui, and intelligence policy analyst Jonathan Salna.

Taras Zalusky is chief of staff to the defence minister.

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Neil Moss

Diplomatic Circles

‘We want Canada to be on the ground’: Cypriot envoy calls for Ottawa to reopen high commission

Canada has been without an embassy in Cyprus since 1970, and is the only G7 country without a diplomatic presence on the island nation.

As Cyprus remembers Canada’s peacekeeping past on the island nation, its top diplomat in Ottawa hopes to see Canada reopen its high commission in Nicosia.

Since the outbreak of hostilities over ethnic tensions between the majority Greek Cypriots and minority Turkish Cypriots in the mid-1960s, followed by a Greek-backed coup and the Turkish invasion in 1974, more than 25,000 Canadian troops were deployed to Cyprus between 1964-1993. Twenty-eight Canadians were killed during the conflict.

Sitting in his Metcalfe Street office—surrounded by maps highlighting the geostrategic significance of Cyprus, situated in the Mediterranean Sea between mainland Europe and the Middle East—Cypriot

High Commissioner **Giorgos Ioannides** said he wants to see Canada’s historic presence restored.

“It will help immensely the relationship to further grow when Canada re-establishes or reopens its mission, its high commission, in Cyprus,” Ioannides told *The Hill Times* during a Feb. 7 interview. “This will give a boost to the relationship that is very much in demand by the Cyprus authorities or government.”

Canada is represented in Cyprus by its ambassador to Greece. Ottawa had a resident high commissioner in Nicosia from 1965-1970. It is currently the only G7 country without a full-fledged mission in Cyprus. Canada has embassies and high commissions in more than 100 countries around the world.

“We want Canada to be on the ground to be there 24/7. We want our friends and

allies to be there with us, as we are ourselves here [in Ottawa],” Ioannides said.

He cited the possible evacuation of Canadians from Lebanon to Cyprus (as happened in 2006) as one of the benefits of having a diplomatic presence on the ground. Ioannides said that while Canada and Cyprus struck contingency plans for an evacuation if it ever becomes necessary, all other countries that are working with Cyprus on prospective evacuations have missions on the ground.

The Cypriot envoy said that if a rapid response is required, a high commission in Cyprus is needed.

He added that Canada has indicated its interest in participating in a Cyprus-backed, Israeli-approved maritime corridor to provide aid to Gaza.

“Without having a 24/7 permanent presence there is only so much you can do,” he said.

Ioannides said Canada is “not negative” about putting a high commission in Cyprus, but cited budget constraints.

“They don’t say they don’t want to be [in Cyprus],” he said. “It’s more of a budget decision ... and to find the right way to start having a physical presence in Cyprus.”

Ioannides said that when Cyprus opened its high commission in Ottawa in 2015, there was an expectation and hope that “sometime down the road there would be reciprocity.”

He said the current moment is the right one to look at Canada increasing its diplomatic presence in Nicosia, with 2024 being the 60th anniversary of the start of the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus, as well as 2025 being the 65th anniversary of the start of diplomatic relationships between the two countries.

The Cyprus High Commission is planning a series of commemorative events to mark the peacekeeping milestone.

Ioannides remarked that Canada played a key role defending the Nicosia airport during Turkey’s 1974 invasion.

“The Canadian contingent was responsible for strategic locations in the Nicosia

Cypriot High Commissioner Giorgos Ioannides says that when his country opened its mission in Ottawa in 2015, there was an expectation and hope that ‘down the road’ Canada would follow suit in Cyprus. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



airport, and Canada was one of the few, if not the only country, that ... had a robust presence during the Turkish invasion,” he said. “They resisted. There are at least three places where Canada affirmed and reaffirmed its position.”

On March 13—the anniversary of the day in 1964 when the first Canadian peacekeepers arrived in Cyprus—there will be a ceremony and a wreath laying at the Peacekeeping Monument on Sussex Drive, with Veterans Affairs Minister **Genette Petitpas Taylor** and Canadian veterans who served in Cyprus.

Ioannides said there will also be a photo exhibition highlighting Canada’s peace-

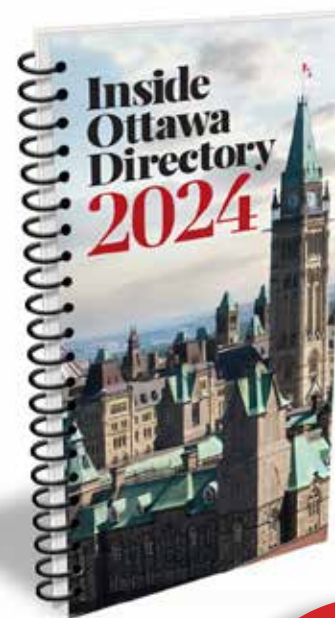
keeping legacy in Cyprus at the Canadian War Museum. He added work is also being done to prepare for local school visits to educate students about the role Canada played in the conflict.

Later this year, a trip is planned for 100-200 Canadian veterans and their families to visit Cyprus and the sites where they served.

“They are very moved when they talk about Cyprus, especially those who were there in ‘74,” Ioannides said. “They are very proud—emotional and proud—of what they have achieved.”

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Feature

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.

Tory MPs dive into the future of conservatism in Canada on Feb. 22



Conservative MPs Adam Chambers, left, Melissa Lantsman, and Shuvaloy Majumdar will take part in a panel discussion on the future of Canadian conservatism, hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto on Feb. 22. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade, and photograph courtesy of Facebook

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 21

House Sitting Schedule—The House is scheduled to sit for a total of 125 days in 2024. The House is on a one-week break through Feb. 23. It returns for one week (Feb. 26-March 1), and breaks for two weeks (March 4-15). The House comes back again on March 18 and sits for a week until March 22. It breaks for two weeks on March 25, and returns again on Monday, April 8, and sits until April 19. It takes a one-week break (April 22-26), returns on April 29, and will sit for two weeks (April 29-May 10). The House returns on Tuesday, May 21, after the Victoria Day holiday, and will sit for five straight weeks until June 21. The House resumes sitting on Sept. 16, and will sit for four weeks from Sept. 16-Oct. 11, but take Monday, Sept. 30 off. It breaks Oct. 14-18, and resumes sitting on Oct. 21. It sits Oct. 21-Nov. 9, and breaks on Nov. 11 for Remembrance Day Week until November 15. It resumes again on Nov. 18, and is scheduled to sit from Nov. 18-Dec. 17, and that will be it for 2024.

Parliamentary Budget Officer to Deliver Remarks—Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Wednesday, Feb. 21 at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details online: cdhowe.org.

Sheila Copps to Discuss Future of 24 Sussex Drive—Former cabinet minister Sheila Copps will take part in a panel discussion, "24 Sussex Drive: From Residence to Reticence," hosted by Carleton University, Heritage Ottawa and Historic Ottawa Development Inc. The prime minister's residence has been allowed to deteriorate to the point where there is serious discussion of demolition. But that may be premature. Other participants include Marc Denhez, president of Historic Ottawa Development Inc.; Mark Thompson Brandt, TRACE architectures inc; and Patricia Kell, executive director, National Trust for Canada. Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 6:30 p.m. ET at Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre, 355 Cooper St. Details online via Eventbrite.

Panel: 'Mongolia-Canada Partnership'—Mongolia's Ambassador to Canada Sarantogos Erdenetsogt and former Canadian ambassador to Mongolia Gregory Goldhawk will take part in a discussion on "Mongolia-Canada Partnership in Northeast Asia and Beyond," hosted by the Canadian International Council. Wednesday, Feb. 21 at 5:30

p.m ET at uOttawa's Telfer Centre for Executive Leadership, Suite 200, 99 Bank St. Details online via Eventbrite.

Book Launch and Talk: Reasonable Cause to Suspect—This event, on the obstacles preventing the repatriation from Northeast Syria of more than two dozen detained Canadian Muslim men, women, and children, will take place on Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 7 p.m. Featuring author Sally Lane, whose son, Jack Letts, has been illegally detained in NE Syria for almost seven years; author and activist Monia Mazigh (*Hope and Despair: My Struggle To Free My Husband Maher Arar*); Alex Neve, senior fellow, University of Ottawa's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and member of a NE Syria August 2023 Delegation; and Matthew Behrens of Stop Canadian Involvement in Torture. Taking place at Fellowship Hall, First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, 30 Cleary Ave. Contact tasc@web.ca or 613-300-9536.

THURSDAY, FEB. 22

Minister Champagne to Deliver Remarks—Innovation, Science, and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne will deliver remarks in French at an event hosted by the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal. Thursday, Feb. 22, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Le Centre Sheraton, 1201 René-Lévesque Blvd. W., Montreal. Details online: ccm.ca.

Conservative MPs on the Future of Conservatism—Conservative MPs Adam Chambers, Melissa Lantsman, and Shuvaloy Majumdar will take part in "A Glimpse into the New Federal Conservative Movement and its Impact on Canada," hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. They will be joined by Conservative candidate Sabrina Maddeaux. Thursday, Feb. 22, at 5:30 p.m. ET at Malaparte, 350 King St. W., Toronto. Details online: canadianclub.org.

Webinar: 'Implications of COP28'—The Aga Khan Foundation Canada and the International Institute for Sustainable Development host a virtual event entitled "Advancing Action on Adaptation: Implications of COP28," exploring the advancing global action on adaptation and the implications of COP28's adaptation-related outcomes. Thursday, Feb. 22, at 10:30 a.m. ET happening online. Register via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, FEB. 23

Seminar: 'Reconciliation and Legislatures'—The Canadian Study

of Parliament Group hosts a seminar on "Reconciliation and Legislatures," exploring the developments so far and offering perspectives on what remains to be done for legislatures as part of the broader work of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Friday, Feb. 23, at 11 a.m. ET in Room 425, 180 Wellington St. Details online via Eventbrite.

Conference: 'Two Years of Russian War Against Ukraine'—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts "Two Years of Russian War Against Ukraine: What the World Went Through and the Path Forward" featuring welcome remarks by Ukraine's Ambassador to Canada Yulia Kovaliv, a keynote address by Maj.-Gen. Gregory Smith, and a panel discussion featuring Andriy Zagorodniuk, Ukraine's ex-minister of defence. Friday, Feb. 23, at 9:30 a.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St. Details online: cgai.ca.

MONDAY, FEB. 26

Speaker Fergus to Host Launch of Dr. McCurdy's Memoir—Speaker of the House of Commons Greg Fergus will celebrate the publication of *Black Activist, Black Scientist, Black Icon: The Autobiography of Dr. Howard D. McCurdy*. Former Canadian poet laureate George Elliott Clarke, who worked with McCurdy and helped to finish his memoir, will deliver remarks. ISG Senator Mary Coyle will be master of ceremonies. This event will take place in the Speaker's Office, Parliament Hill. Contact kmcmul@nimb.ca.

MONDAY, FEB. 26—THURSDAY, FEB. 29

WTO Ministerial Conference—The World Trade Organization hosts its 13th Ministerial Conference. Ministers from across the world will attend to review the functioning of the multilateral trading system and to take action on the future work of the WTO. Monday, Feb. 26, to Thursday, Feb. 29, in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Details online: wto.org.

Rare Disease Day—Rare Disease Day: replace this whole event with the following: "This year, Rare Disease Day falls on Feb. 29 occurring one in 1,741 days—a rarity—just like the rare diseases that affect so many Canadians. MPs, Senators, and staff are invited to join the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders (CORD) for a breakfast event to mark Rare Disease Day from 7:30-9 a.m. in Room 306, Valour Building, 151 Sparks St. At 10:30 a.m.,

CORD and members of the rare disease community will continue celebrations at the Centennial Flame, Parliament Hill. Contact info@raredisorders.ca.

TUESDAY, FEB. 27

AFN Languages and Learning Forum—The Assembly of First Nations hosts an in-person forum on First Nations Education and Languages focusing on bringing together First Nations education leaders, post-secondary education co-ordinators, and language leaders to share best practices and promote change in First Nations lifelong learning and language revitalization through agreements and models. Tuesday, Feb. 27 at the Westin Calgary Airport Hotel. Details online: afn.ca.

Canada Revenue Agency Commissioner to Deliver Remarks—Bob Hamilton, commissioner of the Canada Revenue Agency, will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, Feb. 27, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details online: cdhowe.org.

Documentary on Senator Richards—The National Film Board of Canada hosts a screening of *The Geographies of DAR* by Monique LeBlanc. It is visually stunning film on acclaimed author and Senator David Adams Richards and his connection to one of Canada's most overlooked, yet breathtaking, regions. Tuesday, Feb. 27, at 6:30 p.m. ET the ByTowne Cinema, 325 Rideau St. Tickets online via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 28

Webinar: 'Black History Month Perspectives from the Foreign Service'—Carleton University hosts a webinar, "Beyond Borders: Black History Month Perspectives from the Foreign Service." Participants include Canada's Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia Anderson Blanc; Frédérique Delaprée, counsellor (Economic Affairs), Canada's Embassy in France; and Canada's Ambassador to the African Union Ben Marc Diendéré. Wednesday, Feb. 28, at 11 a.m. ET taking place online: carleton.ca/npisa.

THURSDAY, FEB. 29

Minister Champagne at the Mayor's Breakfast—Innovation, Science, and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne will be the special guest at the Mayor's Breakfast, hosted by Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, the Ottawa Board of Trade, and the *Ottawa Business Journal*. Thursday, Feb. 29, at 7 a.m. ET at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Details online: business.ottawabot.ca.

Canada's Ambassador to Ukraine to Deliver Remarks—Natalka Cmoc, Canada's Ambassador to Ukraine, will provide a briefing on the state of the war and future bilateral relations at a webinar hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, Feb. 29, at 12:30 p.m. ET taking place online: cdhowe.org.

NAWL Anniversary Party—The National Association of Women and the Law hosts its 50th anniversary reception and awards ceremony. Members of Parliament and Senators, as well as partners from the feminist and social justice sectors, will gather to mark NAWL's milestone anniversary, and to celebrate the invaluable contributions to NAWL's work by countless academics, lawyers, law students, and activists since 1974. Thursday, Feb. 29, on Parliament Hill. Details at nawl.ca.

PM's Ex-Security Adviser Fadden to Deliver Remarks—Richard Fadden, former national security adviser to the prime minister and former director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, will deliver remarks on "Canada's threat environment: China, Russia, and the U.S. Election," part of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute's 2024 Speaker Series. Thursday, Feb. 29, at 12 p.m. MT at the Calgary Petroleum Club, 319 Fifth Ave. SW, Calgary. For details, visit cgai.ca/2024_speaker_series.

Lecture: 'Does the 'Truth' Matter Anymore?'—Carleton University hosts its 2024 Discovery Lecture entitled

"Misinformation and Ideology: Does the 'Truth' Matter Anymore?" featuring Timothy Caulfield, Canada Research Chair in Health Law and Policy, and a professor of law and public health at the University of Alberta. Caulfield will explore what the available evidence says about how and why ideology is used to spread misinformation, why demonstrably false beliefs are embraced by so many, and what we can, if anything, do about it. Thursday, Feb. 29, at 7 p.m. ET. at 227 Teraanga Commons (Fenn Lounge), Carleton University. Details online: science.carleton.ca/events.

SUNDAY, MARCH 3—WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

PDAC 2024 Convention—The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada hosts its 2024 convention. Sunday, March 3, to Wednesday, March 6, at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Details: pdac.ca/convention.

MONDAY, MARCH 4

Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew to Deliver Speech—Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew will deliver a speech at the Economic Club of Canada on Monday, March 4, at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel at 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. ET. Register at events.economicclub.ca/investinmanitoba.

TUESDAY, MARCH 5—THURSDAY, MARCH 7

AFN's National Emergency Management Forum—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its second "National Emergency Management Forum: Floods, Wildfires, Severe Storms, and Pandemics: Are First Nations Ready?" Featuring discussions on culturally relevant emergency management, presentations and networking, and updates from First Nations emergency management practitioners. Tuesday, March 5, to Thursday, March 7, at the Hilton Lac Leamy, 3 Blvd. du Casino, Gatineau, Que. Details online: afn.ca

THURSDAY, MARCH 7

Canada's Envoy to the EU to Deliver Remarks—Dr. Ailish Campbell, Canada's Ambassador to the European Union, will deliver remarks on "EU Opportunities for Canada: Reflections on a Steadily Deepening Partnership" at a webinar hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, March 7, at 12:30 p.m ET, taking place online: cdhowe.org.

THURSDAY, MARCH 7—FRIDAY, MARCH 8

Ministers Blair and Sajjan at Security Conference—National Defence Minister Bill Blair, Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjit Sajjan, and Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre will deliver remarks at the Ottawa Conference on Security and Defence hosted by the CDA Institute. Thursday, March 7 to Friday, March 8 at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details at cdainstitute.ca.

SUNDAY, MARCH 17

Russian Presidential Election—Russia's presidential election happens on Sunday, March 17.

TUESDAY, APRIL 9

Jane Philpott to Discuss Her New Book—Former Liberal health minister Jane Philpott will discuss her new book, *Health For All: A doctor's prescription for a healthier Canada*, with journalist Paul Wells at an event hosted by the Ottawa International Writers' Festival. Philpott is currently dean of health sciences at Queen's University. Tuesday, April 9 at 7 p.m. at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, 154 Somerset St. W. Details online: writersfestival.org.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10—FRIDAY, APRIL 12

The Progress Summit—Hosted by the Broadbent Institute, the Progress Summit will take place at the Delta Hotel in Ottawa.