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THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR, NO. 2101

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2024 \$5.00

NEWS

Oliphant's leaked private conversation could have a 'chilling effect' on MP-constituent relationships, say some Liberal MPs

BY ABBAS RANA &
MIKE LAPOINTE

The leaked audio recording of Liberal MP Rob Oliphant's private conversation with a constituent on the government's response to the Israel-Hamas conflict, reported by CBC News, will have a detrimental effect on MPs' willingness to hold candid conversations with constituents on issues that affect them on a daily basis, say some Liberal MPs.

"It does create a chilling effect where MPs will be more hesitant to be candid in conversations with constituents and stakeholders and just people who they speak with on a regular basis. It will have a chilling effect in the intermediate term," said Liberal MP Sameer Zuberi (Pierre-fonds-Dollard, Que.) in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "In the long term, it can create awareness that it's an important reminder that what we say in private has to also be considered whether or not it'll go into the public. So it creates a chilling effect."

In a leaked phone call with a constituent, Oliphant (Don Valley West, Ont.), parliamentary secretary to Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartier, Que.), reacted to the geno-

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NEWS

Number of threats, death threats against ministers increased during pandemic: Privy Council Office data

A security assessment for last year's Canada Day celebrations noted that conspiracy theories and grievances over the pandemic, immigration, multiculturalism, gun control, and 2SLGBTQI+ rights 'are fuelling violent extremist propaganda and incitements to violence.'

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

The number of threats against federal ministers increased throughout the first three years of the COVID-19 pandemic,

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NEWS

Canadians' economic anxieties have 'blown past' pandemic concern benchmark, according to Proof Strategies CanTrust Index

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

Anxiety over economic and affordability issues has now easily surpassed concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Proof Strategies' 2024 CanTrust Index released earlier this month.

The index, which examines Canadians' trust in institutions, leaders, and organizations, found only 34 per cent of respondents felt economically satisfied—down from 2021's level of 40 per cent.

Bruce MacLellan, founding president and CEO of Proof Strategies, said "the pandemic gave us a new benchmark for high anxiety."

"But we've just blown past that on economic anxiety, so we were very surprised," he said.

MacLellan said there was a "big jump" observed in comparing the anxiety from one experience to the current one—46 per cent with the pandemic in the 2022 survey, and 67 per cent with the economy in this year's index.

"It's a massive difference, and a real clear signal for leaders and

Continued on page 4



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, top left, Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault, Public Services Minister Jean-Yves Duclos, Housing Minister Sean Fraser, Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne, above left, Treasury Board President Anita Anand, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland and Northern Affairs Minister Dan Vandal have had threats. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



Mike Lapointe

Heard On The Hill

Amnesty International Canada granted request to deliver arguments in multi-billion-dollar Black class action lawsuit against feds



Ketty Nivyabandi, secretary general of Amnesty International Canada's English-speaking branch, left, and Nicholas Marcus Thompson, one of the representative class members in the class-action lawsuit against the federal government. *Dave Chan photograph courtesy of Ketty Nivyabandi, photograph courtesy of Twitter*

In a multi-billion-dollar lawsuit brought against the government on the part of Black federal public servants alleging discriminatory hiring and advancement practices within the public service, Federal Court Associate Chief Justice **Jocelyne Gagné** has granted

Amnesty International Canada's request to deliver arguments in the case where workers are seeking \$2.5-billion in compensation.

A statement of claim for the lawsuit was first filed with the Federal Court in Toronto in early December 2020 with represen-

tative plaintiffs initially seeking \$900-million in damages on behalf of public servants employed in the federal government since 1970.

"Canada's duty to uphold federal workers' rights goes beyond the Charter and domestic

employment equity legislation," said **Ketty Nivyabandi**, secretary general of Amnesty International Canada's English-speaking section. "As we will stress to the court, Canada has clear obligations under international law to promote equity, counter racism, and provide an effective remedy when people are subjected to systemic discrimination."

"There has been a de facto practice of Black employee exclusion from hiring and promotion throughout the Public Service because of the permeation of systemic discrimination through Canada's institutional structures," reads a key passage in the group's statement of claim, according to an Amnesty release.

According to the release, Amnesty International Canada has until April 12, 2024, to file its written arguments to the Federal Court, and that Amnesty will support its submission with an oral presentation at a court hearing to decide whether the Black Class Action case will be heard on its merits. A date for the hearing has not been set.

Liberal MP Kirsty Duncan's fingers dance across the keys once again

Liberal MP **Kirsty Duncan**, who continues to document her fight against cancer on social media, updated her followers with a photo of herself at her piano.

"Wishing everyone goodness and kindness to start your week," wrote Duncan on Feb. 20. "While cancer and treatment is hard, I am grateful for the tireless work of doctors, researchers, nurses and healthcare professionals who make each step forward possible."



Liberal MP Kirsty Duncan at her piano as she continues her fight against cancer. *Photograph courtesy of Kirsty Duncan's X.*

"I can play my piano again!" Duncan has represented Etobicoke North, Ont., since 2008, served as deputy leader of the government in the House of Commons from 2019 to 2021, and has most recently served as science minister and minister of sport and persons with disabilities.

Political cartoonist Michael de Adder kicks off a new cartoon strip

Michael de Adder, the long-time political cartoonist whose work has appeared in multiple publications including *The Washington Post*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Halifax Chronicle Herald*, as well as *The Hill Times*, is embarking on a new project.

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Monday's photo

Into the spotlight

Antonio Utano, a director general at the Canada Revenue Agency, left, and Cameron MacDonald, an assistant deputy minister at Health Canada, the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee on Feb. 22, 2024. The two top civil servants were called before the committee to answer questions about the ArriveCan app contract, which was supposed to cost the government \$80,000, but ended up costing \$59-million. Both previously worked together at the Canada Border Services Agency.

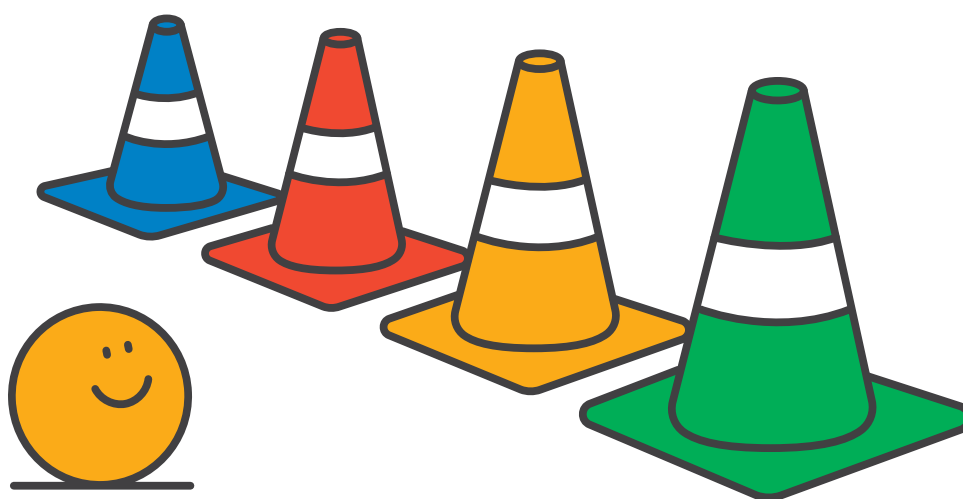
The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Michael de Adder is embarking on a new project, a cartoon strip called 'THE deEP STATE.' *Image courtesy of Michael de Adder's X*

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News

Canadians' economic anxieties have 'blown past' pandemic concern benchmark, according to Proof Strategies CanTrust Index

Millennials scored highest in the economic anxiety category at 71 per cent, with boomers coming in at 64 per cent. Women are feeling stress and anxiety more acutely than men.

Continued from page 1

policymakers that there's a great deal of economic anxiety in the country, and people need to be responding to that with actions and empathy, support and understanding," he said.

According to the survey, two-thirds of Canadians say the economy has increased anxiety and stress in their lives, with only 18 per cent reporting the economy has done the same in the past but they're OK now, and 15 per cent saying the state of the economy has not affected their anxiety or stress at all.

Millennials scored highest at 71 per cent, with baby boomers coming in at 64 per cent. Women felt stress and anxiety more acutely, at 73 per cent, compared to men at 59 per cent.

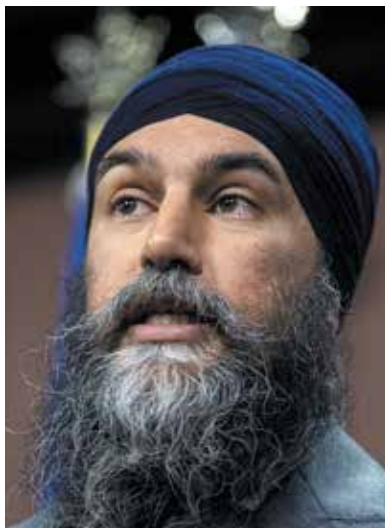
"The anxiety with Canadian women is incredibly high, and should be a major concern for businesses and government," said MacLellan, which is "also really striking when you consider the central role that women play in many households as well as in the workforce."

The report also found that only 48 per cent trust the employment insurance system, 41 per cent trust the Canadian financial markets, and 39 per cent trust the immigration system.

Cam Holmstrom, founder of Niipaawi Strategies and a former NDP staffer, said "it's not the big economy, it's the everyday economy for people" that was causing concern. He noted that, even with inflation numbers coming down, "people who were already paying a lot at the grocery store are still paying a lot at the grocery store."

Even with inflation coming down, prices are still going up, said Holmstrom, and added that he understands why affordability is so high on people's radars.

"It's all this tangential stuff directly in front of you every single day," said Holmstrom.



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, left, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre. Poilievre and Singh are now tied for the most trusted party leader by Canadians. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Drop in trust not unique to Canada, says former Tory staffer

Amanda Galbraith, principal at public strategy and communications firm Navigator and a former Conservative staffer, said public trust in politicians and public institutions is down around the world, including in the United States and in Britain.

"This is not a phenomena that is unique to Canada by any stretch of the imagination," said Galbraith in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "We saw an uptick [in trust] slightly during the pandemic, which makes sense, as people wanted to trust their politicians in that they were doing the right thing."

But given where the country is within an election cycle, and

perceptions of how the government is responding to Canadians, Galbraith said "Canadians do not feel that the government is actively responding fast enough to what is their chief concern, which is economics."

"Other parties are clearly taking advantage of that, and I think you see that, particularly with the Conservative Party, who have been driving this message for a lot longer than the Liberals," she said.

Galbraith reiterated that there's both a global phenomenon afoot, as well as a government that's "long in the tooth" here in Canada, which is driving Canadians to look elsewhere to see who they can trust.

"I think the other piece, too, is that [people are looking to] channel their anger, fury, and frustration which is a really tough thing for our government to do because they're technically responsible, so they can't be mad at themselves," said Galbraith, adding that Canadians are looking for someone to say "you get how I feel right now, and I think you might fix it."

"And I don't think the prime minister has been able to do that, or his finance minister," she said.

On the federal political front, the report finds that trust in Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) has dropped by 21 per cent since 2016, and has decreased in all regions across Canada since 2020, particularly in British Columbia, Ontario, and Atlantic Canada.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) are now tied for the most trusted party leader by Canadians.



Former Conservative staffer Amanda Galbraith says 'Canadians do not feel the government is actively responding fast enough' to the economic situation. *Photograph courtesy of Twitter*

John Delacourt, senior vice-president of Counsel Public Affairs in Ottawa and a former Liberal Hill staffer, said he thinks that economic anxieties "almost transcend a shift in any political sensibilities right now."

"The U.S. and Canada's economies are rebounding, and defying expectations in terms of how they're rebounding," said Delacourt. "But if there is a general sense, and a micro-segmentation of media consumption, a lot of the stories that are out there in these segments are telling an entirely different story."

Transcending silos is the challenge that the Liberals face right now, said Delacourt.

"It's almost an adjustment in tone, too, in the same way that Poilievre is intuiting that angry, pessimistic, cynical tone, and notably, I think that responds really



Proof Strategies founder and CEO Bruce MacLellan says there is 'incredible stability' in the trust in media category surveyed in Proof's report. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

well to men under 45 [years old] in this country," said Delacourt.

Trust in the media remains steady from 2023 to 2024

Trust in the media remained steady at 43 per cent from 2023, up from 35 per cent in 2022 and 28 per cent the year prior.

In terms of perceived sources of reliable information, traditional media continued to lead when it comes to trust at 56 per cent, compared to 52 per cent with consumer reviews, internet searches, and word of mouth, respectively.

MacLellan said there was "incredible stability" in this category, with more than half of Canadians identifying the traditional news media as their most trusted source for reliable information.

"I think that's a fantastic endorsement of the news media and its importance in society, and how much Canadians continue to look at," said MacLellan. "These numbers are strong for Canadians of all ages in all regions."

MacLellan called the news media "unique" in that it's the "only institution that is regularly attacked as being dishonest and fake, and yet shows no sign of trust erosion."

"It's a real credit to the durability of media trust when they are routinely attacked by various politicians as untrustworthy, and yet continued to be on the top is the most trustworthy in the eyes of Canadians," he said.

Trust level in government to deliver affordable housing drops

The report also looked at perceptions around housing and the government's stewardship of the file that has made considerable headlines in the last year. Trust in the federal government to deliver affordable housing declined by six per cent.

"Part of it is, frankly, three decades of lack of government policy in getting housing built in this country," said Holmstrom. He said that although most of the movement on the housing file has occurred in the last six months, even if the government had been working on the file for the last eight years, it's questionable whether it would reverse the trend from the previous 22 years.

"It wouldn't have solved the problem, that's for sure," said Holmstrom. "That's where that anger is going to fall."

"That is what is going to consume your mind. How are you paying the bills? How are you going to keep a roof over your head? And how are you going to try to get through whatever other challenges you're dealing with? Because everyone has different things they are looking at," said Holmstrom. "And they're not seeing a whole lot of help from government when it comes to it."

"And even what this government has done on its own of its own volition has not been great or well communicated," he said.

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The Hill Times



All food production has environmental costs, and marine aquaculture, which absorbs carbon and mitigates climate change, is considered by many experts as a responsible way forward, write Chief Terry Walkus and Cyrus Singh. Photograph courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Flickr

Our food source is our livelihood: a First Nation's plea for sustainable salmon farming

For First Nations like Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw, aquaculture is the bridge between poverty and prosperity.

Chief Terry Walkus & Cyrus Singh

Opinion



For too long, the British Columbia salmon farming debate has been drowned out by fearmongering. Environmental activists paint aquaculture as a plague, demanding its immediate closure. Their cries ignore facts, silence First Nations like us, and threaten our very survival.

The truth? At least 10 government studies show B.C.'s marine aquaculture poses minimal risk to wild salmon. While activists push a doomsday narrative, they neglect site-specific analysis and emerging technologies that can actually help wild stocks thrive. Worse, they ignore the harsh reality of remote First Nations like Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw.

We depend on salmon farming. After being forced onto barren land in 1964, it became our lifeline, providing food security and funding critical services. Our ancestral home on 20 per cent of B.C.'s coast was burned to keep us from returning. We face real hunger; aquaculture is the bridge between poverty and prosperity.

But it's not just about us. All food production has environmental costs, and marine aquaculture, which absorbs carbon and mitigates climate change, is considered by many experts as a responsible way forward. A safe path exists in B.C., one that respects our territory and our right to economic self-determination.

We, the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw, are not asking for handouts. We've always protected our marine environment, implementing stricter measures than any government regulation at our five farms.

It was an honour to host Fisheries Minister Diane Lebovitch this past December. We discussed a sustainable pathway with a nine-year license renewal to invest in cutting-edge technology and co-manage the industry with government. We will be in Ottawa on Feb. 27-29 to meet with Parliamentarians and government officials on this issue.

Abruptly closing our farms would be devastating. For decades, we were excluded from commercial fisheries that took \$1.2-billion from our territory without permission. Shutting down our only source of empowerment wouldn't erase that exclusion. It would slam the door on hope, plunging us back into darkness.

This is about economic reconciliation, not handouts. We owe it to our children and ancestors to chart a different course.

A nine-year license renewal will allow us to invest in technology, conduct research, and partner with the government to implement best practices and co-manage the industry. This aligns with our ongoing treaty negotiations with Ottawa and B.C.

We have every right to determine what happens in our waters, as recognized by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Salmon aquaculture is not just about salmon. It's about justice, opportunity, and a future where First Nations thrive. To the activists: stop the scare tactics and engage with reality. To the government: listen to our voices. Let Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw chart its own course to a vibrant future.

Chief Terry Walkus is an elected chief of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, advocating for their rights and advancing

initiatives in governance, culture, and community development. Cyrus Singh is CEO of the K'awat'si Economic Development Corporation, which guides economic growth for Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations through strategic partnerships and stakeholder engagement. He has been recognized for expanding opportunities for the Nations and building prosperity with respect and meaning.

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News

Loblaws and Walmart's 'brick wall' on grocery code of conduct spurred cross-party unity at Agriculture Committee, says chair

MPs on the House Agriculture Committee want two grocery giants to adopt a new code of conduct, but haven't yet seen the full text of the code themselves.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

The House of Commons Agriculture Committee has taken an all-party stand against two grocery giants that are resisting signing off on a new code of conduct, but MPs on the committee have not yet seen the full text of the code themselves, and the committee chair admits the move won't be a "silver bullet" when it comes to high grocery prices.

Liberal MP Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, N.S.), who chairs the agriculture committee, known as AGRI, told *The Hill Times* that the committee reached its unanimous decision to send an open letter to the CEOs of Loblaws and Walmart last week—calling on them to adopt the code despite their present opposition to doing so—because members felt they had "hit a bit of a brick wall" in their efforts to bring all of Canada's major grocery retailers on board to the new code. The letter also states that AGRI would "not hesitate to recommend that the federal and provincial governments adopt legislation to make it mandatory" if not adopted voluntarily.

The proposed code, which has been in the works since July 2022, is an effort to regulate the relationships between grocery retailers and their suppliers, particularly in relation to large fees that grocery chains charge suppliers in exchange for purchasing and selling their products.

The website for the Office of the Adjudicator for the Grocery Code of Conduct states that a group "made up of executives from different segments of the grocery supply chain, has been pivotal in shaping the Code in its entirety." The website provides some information about the proposed code on a 'frequently asked questions' page. However, the actual text of the code has not been publicly released. *The Hill Times* sent a series of questions



On Feb. 16, members of the House of Commons Agriculture Committee, including Liberal MP Kody Blois, left, NDP MP Alistair MacGregor, and Bloc Québécois MP Yves Perron, sent an open letter to the CEOs of Walmart and Loblaws calling on those companies to adopt a grocery code of conduct. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Aidan Chamandy

about the code to the organization's interim board of directors, but did not receive a reply.

Blois said it is important for large grocery chains to adopt the code, but he wants to be clear about what its potential impact would be.

"I think we have to be a little bit tempered in explaining to Canadians what this will do and what it won't," said Blois. "This is not going to solve for higher food prices as a result of a variety of factors of what's happening around the world—with higher input costs and climate change—there's a lot of things that go into food pricing. Grocery Code of Conduct isn't going to be some silver bullet perfect solution. This is about really one key element."

A key reason Blois is supporting the code of conduct is because he believes it will help small- and medium-sized food producers, in places like his Nova Scotia riding, by giving them more power in their dealings with grocery chains when it comes to negotiating fees.

"I don't worry about Procter and Gamble at night. I don't worry about Coca Cola or Pepsi," said Blois. "This is about giving farmers in my riding, or elsewhere in the country, something to hold onto. This is about small- and medium-sized enterprises in the agri-food supply chain to have something that they can point to in a situation if there's allegation[s] of unfair dealing."

NDP MP Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, B.C.), his party's sole member on AGRI, said it was "quite remarkable" that the committee reached a unanimous decision to send its public letter.

MacGregor said several factors led to this decision, pointing to "a general sense of frustration from committee members" about the behaviours of key players in the grocery sector who were resisting adopting the code, combined with the fact that a "vast majority" of players in the sector were supporting it. For example, three other large chains—Metro, Sobeys, and Costco—support implementing the proposed code.

MacGregor said he does not necessarily expect to see the code lower prices, but that it would "put a little bit more stability into the prices that consumers see."

Bloc Québécois MP Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, Que.), one of the committee's vice chairs, was more optimistic. He told *The Hill Times* that, based on other jurisdictions where similar codes have been implemented—such as Australia and the United Kingdom—he believes the code may lower prices, or at least "slow the speed they are raising at."

Perron pointed to the importance of protecting small suppliers under the code to ensure they "have a fair price for the product that they are selling ... and they will stay in business for the next years."

He also said he supports its adoption because of the large number of industry players that have been involved in its development.

"We were happy to see that the industry was creating a code of conduct that would reach consensus between every player in the industry," said Perron.

However, the MPs on the committee have not yet seen the full text of the code themselves, despite their letter calling for it to be adopted either voluntarily or through legislation.

Blois, MacGregor, and Perron all confirmed that they had not seen the full text, but said they felt comfortable making these calls for its adoption. MacGregor added that he would want to see the full text before voting on any legislation that would make the code mandatory.

The MPs said their comfort with having made these calls, despite not having seen the text, came from extensive testimony at AGRI meetings and in-camera sessions, with MacGregor noting that MPs had "seen snippets" of the code, and Perron adding that committee members had a "global understanding" of what it contains from this process.

All four Conservative MPs on the committee, including Conservative agriculture critic John Barlow (Foothills, Alta.), either declined requests to be interviewed, or did not reply.

Like consumers, suppliers are at 'the whims of retailers': competition advocate

Two experts interviewed by *The Hill Times* were also supportive of the code's adoption.

Sylvain Charlebois, a professor at Dalhousie University's School of Management and director of its Agri-Food Analytics Lab, said he supports the adoption of the code, and the idea of legislating its uptake if some large chains will not voluntarily sign on.

He said he does not expect the code to lower prices, but that the key impact of implementing the code would be to reduce price volatility. He said under current practices, when grocery retailers charge their suppliers increased fees, this leads to suppliers raising prices that retailers pass on to consumers. He expects the code would make these fees more predictable for suppliers, thereby reducing volatility.

Charlebois said there could also be more long term benefits when it comes to enhancing competition.

"You just want the Canadian market to be attractive," said Charlebois. "And right now, it's not attractive. Nobody wants to come to Canada because it's a tough market to develop."

He said one reason new retailers may view the market as unattractive is the considerable power of the large grocery chains that currently dominate it. By diminishing their power, said Charlebois, this code could make Canada more attractive to new players looking to enter the space.

Keldon Bester, executive director of the Canadian Anti-Monopoly Project, said legislation is an essential part of implementing the code because "industry-led codes tend towards re-playing the relationship that existed before."

He does not expect it to quickly impact prices, but said there are some longer-term upsides that may benefit consumers.

"In terms of, let's say, 'prices today, prices tomorrow,' this is not where the code is focused," said Bester. "The code is focused on is creating the conditions where small, medium, and large suppliers can run and grow their businesses, and continue to offer new, innovative products, without being totally at the whims of retailers."

"So how it matters to consumers," he added, "is more about them having a wide range of choices and options, and new products in the grocery space by evening the playing field so that a more diverse market can flourish."

He said the need to offer this protection to suppliers through a code of conduct points to the extensive power of the large retailers, and that both suppliers and consumers pay the price for this market consolidation of large retail chains.

While this code is focused on suppliers, he said the issue of consolidation should remain a topic of public discussion, and more work needs to be done to reduce its impacts on consumers as well.

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Editorial

Threats against MPs are a danger to us all

Another year, another slew of stories about parliamentarians facing heightened threats and requiring greater levels of security.

We're approaching the 10th anniversary of the 2014 shootings at Parliament Hill, and it's been five years since then-Privy Council clerk Michael Wernick expressed fear that someone was "going to be shot," given the state of public discussion in this country.

Security has been beefed up in the Parliamentary Precinct since then, but MPs and Senators, staffers, and senior public servants remain vulnerable in their constituency offices, homes, and online.

The issuing of panic buttons and the expansion of police details to more politicians is a Band-Aid on the problem, and those measures are unlikely to be the last to be implemented. Anyone within 10 kilometres of downtown Ottawa during U.S. President Joe Biden's visit last year saw the small army brought along to guard that sole representative. Is that what we want here?

If the answer to that is "no"—and it had better be—then we need to get serious about stemming the flow of hate and conspiracy theories making their way into the public square. That needs to happen now, not in the wake of an "unforseeable" tragedy.

That means shutting down nonsense on your own side of politics that paints other leaders as traitors. Make it clear to

people who are even remotely suggesting wishing harm on your political opponents—or making the most ridiculous allegations against them—that there is no room for that behaviour in your political movement.

That doesn't mean we need to turn the House of Commons into a circle of friends who spend their whole day singing each other's praises—but policy needs to take priority over personality.

It also means doing your utmost to ensure that the institutions on which the entire country functions are above reproach, and are also seen to be. In government, that means transparency and good governance—even the appearance of cronyism or corruption must be eliminated. In opposition, it means ensuring you don't burn down the entire fabric of trust in institutions in order to get ahead politically.

Threats to politicians aren't going away, especially in a global environment where authoritarians and aspiring authoritarians are increasingly emboldened in jailing, persecuting, and even murdering their political opponents. Bad actors online aren't going away, either, and continue seeking to whip up discontent via conspiracy theories.

But their attempts at disunity can be mitigated, and it is imperative that every parliamentarian ensure that they do not succeed. Before it's too late.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Grateful to Prime Minister Trudeau's government for its handling of the pandemic: Tom McElroy

Re: "ArriveCan could sink the Libs," (*The Hill Times*, editorial, Feb. 19). Events lose their urgency with the passage of time. The memory of past political situations dulls as well, and inaccurate statements can be taken up as truth. The auditor general appears not to factor in the value of the app in protecting Canadians by limiting a deadly disease crossing our border. In 2020, we witnessed the arrival of COVID-19, the likes of which Canada had never seen. Every traveller was suspected of carrying the infection across the border.

The arrival of the pandemic put everyone at panic stations, government officials even more than most. It was a crisis. Possibly the worst one since Second World War. There was a desperate need to move people and trade goods safely across the border. As a former government scientist, I know only too well how difficult it is to get even minor purchases through the acquisition process in the public service. I'm not surprised that the records and some of the decisions made had a little of the Wild West to them, and not enough formal 'backup.'

The need was great, the timeline was more than urgent, the development of the code for ArriveCan definitely needed to be written at a pace vastly faster than that of the Phoenix dog the



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured Jan. 31, 2024, on the Hill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Harper government produced at a vastly greater cost. Trudeau did a marvelous job keeping the country together, and making funds available to individuals and businesses to try keep them afloat. I haven't heard many complaints about the unorthodox methods used to get millions of dollars into the hands of Canadians who needed it. (Admittedly, it did lead to some necessary 'cleaning up' after the fact.)

We should be grateful to the Trudeau government for its handling of the pandemic. If the United States, under Donald Trump's stewardship, had embraced the Canadian program, more than half a million Americans would not have died. Compared to the Phoenix debacle—or even some mundane military procurements—it wasn't a lot of money, and it was badly needed. Think about it.

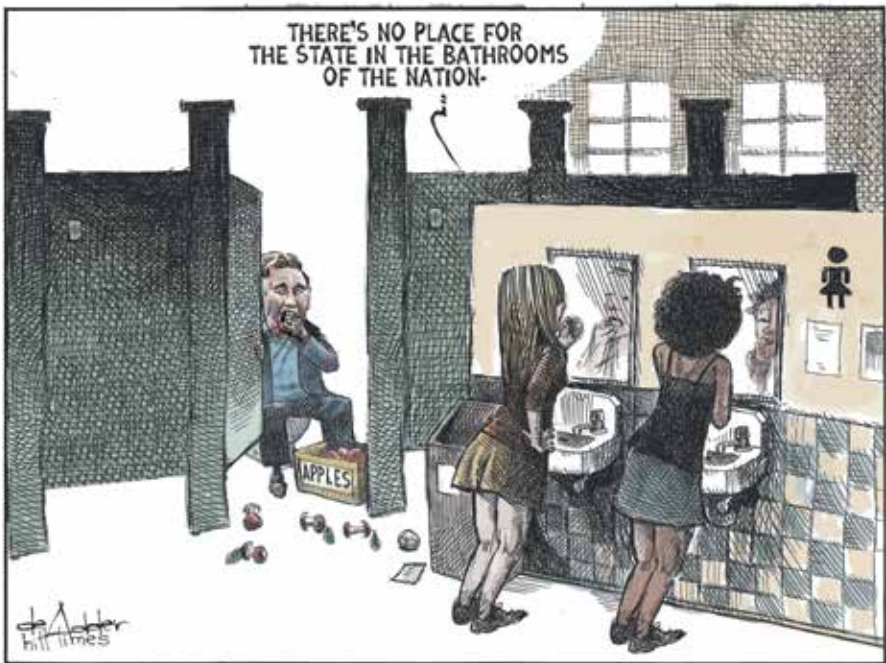
Tom McElroy
Toronto, Ont.

Guaranteed basic income would break cycle of poverty, writes Ottawa reader

A guaranteed liveable basic income for all would break the cycle of poverty, and ensure everyone has what they need to live with dignity. The current system isn't working. Poverty costs the government an estimated \$72-billion to

\$86-billion every year—primarily in costs attributed to health care, social services and the criminal justice system. A basic income would invest in families upfront.

JoAnn Mallory
Ottawa, Ont.



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Poilievre's curt response to Navalny's death raises eyebrows

The Conservative leader's recent weak reactions have some people wondering whether he is really ready for prime time.

Sheila
Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is usually not one to mince words. Why say something in a minute when you can do it in 15, and have your social viewing audience grow exponentially?

That's why Ottawa was abuzz last week with his curt reference to the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. While most world leaders were fulsome in their condemnation of Russian President Vladimir Putin's role in the sudden death of his fiercest critic, two North American politicians were parsing their post-mortem comments.

Poilievre claims he has nothing in common with former U.S. president Donald Trump, but the pair were the only voices that failed to condemn Putin absolute-



'Brief' is the only way to describe Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's reaction to the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, writes Sheila Copps. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ly in the imprisonment and death of Navalny.

The following was Poilievre's statement: "Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has died in prison. Putin imprisoned Navalny for the act of opposing the regime. Conservatives condemn Putin for his death."

"Brief" is the only way to describe Poilievre's reaction which was posted on X.

Compare that to the reaction of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. In a post on the same site, Trudeau said: "Reports of Alexei Navalny's death are tragic and horrifying. An unwavering advocate for Russian democracy

and freedom, his courage was unparalleled. To be clear: He should never have been imprisoned to begin with. Let this be an important reminder that we must continue to promote, protect, and defend democracy everywhere. The consequences of not doing so are stark. I'm sending my deepest condolences to Alexei Navalny's family—and to all those around the world who had championed his pursuit of justice. Canada remains committed to holding Putin responsible for his actions."

Trudeau continued to condemn Putin in multiple media interviews, while the Poilievre family's main social presence was selling

T-shirts following a dustup in the House of Commons where the opposition leader posed a question using the initials "W.T.F." To Poilievre, it supposedly means "where's the funds."

Ignoring the bad grammar, Poilievre's spouse, Anaïda, was flogging the shirts in social media at the same time the world's focus was on the aftermath of Navalny's death, and the horrific arrests of Russian mourners.

Trump was also busier shilling than condemning in the days following Navalny's death. As for the Russian opposition leader, Trump found a way to compare his death to Trump's own domestic troubles. In a Fox media interview, this is how he framed the situation: "It's happening in our country, too. We are turning into a communist country in many ways. And if you look at it, I'm the leading candidate, I got indicted ... I got indicted four times. I have eight or nine trials ... all because of the fact that I'm in politics."

Trump then pivoted quickly to announce the launch of his new US\$400 golden running shoes at "Sneaker Con" in Philadelphia. Along with the shoes, Trump introduced a line of cologne, entitled "Victory." The runners were launched the day after a civil fraud trial judgement where Trump was ordered to pay out \$350-million in interest and damages.

Both politicians were notoriously quiet following Navalny's

death, even when his widow was publicly calling on the world to seek justice for her late husband.

Three days after her husband died, Yulia Navalnaya vowed to continue his fight. "In killing Alexei, Putin killed half of me, half of my heart and half of my soul," Navalnaya said on social media. "But I have another half left—and it is telling me I have no right to give up."

While Navalnaya vows to continue her husband's brave battle in opposition to Putin, Ukraine passed the two-year anniversary last week of its unwavering response to Putin's illegal attack.

Once again, Trump and Poilievre share the same vision. With Trump's blessing, Republicans have been blocking or reducing war funding for Ukraine, just as Poilievre voted against Canadian funding in the House of Commons.

Conservatives in Canada keep saying they have nothing in common with Trump, but the actions of both men in the past week seem to mirror each other.

Poilievre may think that most Canadians vote on pocketbook issues, not foreign policy. But 1.2 million Ukrainian-Canadians are not happy with his refusal to support Canadian funding for Ukraine.

Strangely, then the leader of the opposition came out against proposed legislation to limit internet hate speech before reading it. Instead, he reminded us of Trudeau's blackface history.

Poilievre's recent weak reactions have some people wondering whether he is really ready for prime time.

Sheila Copps is former Jean Chrétien-era cabinet minister, and a former deputy prime minister. *The Hill Times*

The politics of anxiety

Pierre Poilievre doesn't have to spend effort convincing voters they should feel anxious about the economy because they already do. All he must do is fan the flames of that discontent, and point the finger of blame at Justin Trudeau. Easy-peasy.

Gerry
Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OAKVILLE, ONT.—To paraphrase Charles Dickens, we're not living in the best of times, nor are we living in the worst of times, but it sure seems like we're living in the most anxious of times.

And it's not hard to see why. Over the past four years, global pandemics, ongoing economic problems, cultural and social strife, political polarization, and the outbreak of wars have all combined to fuel our collective sense of stress.

Not a fun time. Yet, as any student of politics understands, such a climate of gloom and doom can also provide an excellent opportunity for politicians since public anxiety can almost always be exploited for political gain.

Certainly, for instance, in the last federal election, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau exploited the public's anxiety about COVID-19 to good political effect.

Recall how in that election he basically suggested his chief opponent, then-Conservative Party

leader Erin O'Toole, had irresponsibly sided with anti-vaxx fanatics which risked plunging Canada back into a viral abyss.

As a political tactic, it worked.

Of course, Trudeau can't rely on COVID anxiety in the next election, but perhaps he can rely on another fear: Donald Trump.

Indeed, Trudeau is already trying to capitalize on public fears about the controversial American politician by arguing that current Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre is basically a Trump clone, a man who will import a dangerous right-wing populist agenda into Canada.

Of course, linking Conservative leaders to American politicians in this manner is a time-honoured Liberal ploy.

Back in the 2006 federal election, for example, when the Liberals were trying to degrade then-Conservative leader Stephen Harper, they put out an attack ad saying "A Harper victory will put a smile on George Bush's face. At least someone will be smiling, eh."

Mind you, that strategy didn't work for the Liberals then, and it might not work for the Liberals now.

After all, playing the Trump card is a two-step operation: first, the Liberals must convince Canadians that Trump-style populism is a top-priority threat, and second, they must convince Canadians that Poilievre is a Trump-style populist.

That second part might be the most difficult, since while Poilievre and Trump might share certain elements of a right-wing populist agenda, the two men also have vastly different political personas.

While Trump comes across as a reckless, unpredictable brawler, Poilievre—while tough and aggressive—seems to possess the message discipline it takes to stay focused on issues that matter to Canadians, which gives him an aura of reasonableness.

And speaking of Poilievre, like Trudeau, he, too, will seek to whip up public anxieties in the next election, but he'll have an easier time of it.

I say that because, according to the annual CanTrust Index

published by Proof Strategies, "two-thirds of Canadians say they currently are feeling anxiety and stress" mainly due to worries related to potential economic pain, such as recession and unemployment.

As Proof Strategies chair Bruce MacLellan noted, "We were surprised to see how high the anxiety has gone. ... If people don't feel like they're getting a fair deal, if people are feeling like they're not advancing or getting ahead or taking care of their families, they start to lose trust."

In other words, Poilievre doesn't have to spend time and money convincing voters they should feel anxious about the economy because they already feel anxious.

All Poilievre must do is fan the flames of that discontent, and point the finger of blame at Trudeau.

Easy-peasy. So, the upshot to all this is, if you're currently feeling anxious, don't expect our politicians to make you feel any better.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant. *The Hill Times*

Opinion



Though pundits suggest Prime Minister Justin Trudeau hand over the reins to a new leader, the Liberal Party has had broad experience with leadership changes that didn't work, writes Michael Harris. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Changing leaders will not save the Liberals

If Justin Trudeau were to step down now, it would not only look like the worst kind of expediency, it would likely doom his successor to a short, unhappy political life.

Michael
Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—Ask not for whom the polls toll, they toll for thee.

That is the message Canadians are giving these days whenever they are surveyed about their views of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government.

Abacus found that just 14 per cent of Canadians think the Liberals deserve to be re-elected. Nearly six in 10 respondents disapproved of the prime minister's performance in office. If an election were held today, the latest seat projections from 338Canada mirror the dire polling for the Liberals. Not only would the Conservatives win a solid ma-

jority government, with as many as 208 seats, the Liberals would hold just 64.

It is not surprising, then, that so many informed observers are now saying that the only thing between the Liberal Party and electoral disaster is a change in leadership.

There is an argument to be made for that position. In our leader-centric system, leaders have become something akin to the lead singer of a rock band. They have become the party's identity.

When they are popular, the party gets the benefit of their charisma, as the Liberals did in 2015 from the guy with the famous name. But when they become unpopular, as Trudeau currently is, the entire party wears it.

But can a change in leaders right a ship that is listing as badly as the Liberals are right now? That is not as certain a proposition as proponents of a leadership change might imagine. The classic case in Canadian politics of changing leaders in order to avoid a crushing defeat at the polls is the Brian Mulroney to Kim Campbell handoff.

After eight years in power and numerous scandals, Mulroney and the Progressive Conservatives knew that he had worn out his welcome with Canadians. Their calculation was that, by having Mulroney step away and making Campbell Canada's

first female prime minister, voters might be mollified.

It was an epic miscalculation. With Campbell at the helm, the Progressive Conservatives were nearly wiped out in the 1993 election, winning just two seats.

The result was not a reflection on Campbell. It was a passionate rejection of a leadership change made for purely strategic reasons, rather than a new vision for the party. It was the deepest form of cynicism. Voters knew it, and expressed their rage.

The Liberal Party has had broad experience with leadership changes that didn't work. Faced with growing unpopularity, then-prime minister Pierre Trudeau resigned shortly before the federal election in 1984. He was replaced by John Turner.

As a strategic move, it didn't work. Turner was soundly defeated by Mulroney, who won the largest majority government in Canadian history. He would go on to win back-to-back majorities. The same thing happened to the Liberals when Jean Chrétien resigned in December 2003. Chrétien was not only facing a leadership review, he was mired in the Ad Sponsorship scandal.

Paul Martin had just over two years in office as prime minister, but could not shake off public disgust over of the Ad Scam Affair, particularly after the Gomery Inquiry showed how truly awful the scandal was. In the end, Martin wound up wearing Ad Scam, de-

spite calling a public inquiry. He was defeated at the polls in early 2006 by Harper.

With Harper in office for what would turn out to be three terms, the Liberals started to change leaders in an effort to revive their flagging fortunes. With the right lead singer, they thought they'd be on top of the charts again.

There was Stéphane Dion, whose brief leadership lasted just a year. Party grandees decided that they needed someone with charisma to replace the ineffectual professor.

Their choice to replace Dion was Michael Ignatieff. He won the Liberal leadership in 2009 with 97 per cent of the vote at the Vancouver convention. Ignatieff was an academic superstar, a television presenter on the BBC, author, and a Harvard human rights professor. Party brass liked to refer to him as the "bionic liberal."

Ignatieff's short stint as Liberal leader came to a crashing end in 2011. The man who was supposed to save the party led the Liberals to their worst defeat in history. The "natural governing party" won just 34 seats. Adding insult to injury, Ignatieff lost his own seat.

Jack Layton and the NDP became the official opposition that year, and Harper won his first and only majority government. The disgrace was total, and Ignatieff quickly resigned.

Bob Rae became interim leader until Justin Trudeau won

the permanent job in 2013, with 80 per cent support at the party's Ottawa leadership convention.

Which brings us back to the current dilemma facing the Liberal Party with respect to a leadership change.

History makes a good case against the view that an 11th-hour change at the top can save a political party. As both Mulroney and Chrétien have shown, when a leader steps down to avoid a political reckoning, it can bring the opposite result.

If Trudeau were to step down now—which he insists he won't—it would not only look like the worst kind of expediency, but it would also probably doom his successor to a short and unhappy political life.

There is simply not enough time for anyone to set a new agenda or tone for the party before the next election. And that might well come sooner than later if the supply-and-confidence agreement between the NDP and the Liberals falls apart.

The scandals facing the government at the moment—ArriveCan and the Green Fund—might well persuade NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh that this is not the time to be seen propping up the Liberals.

And there is another problem that a Trudeau resignation would present. How could the party attract a "star" candidate like Mark Carney, when all indications suggest that becoming Liberal leader is a ticket to becoming leader of the opposition, not prime minister?

After nearly three terms in office, the Liberals have entered rock-and-hard-place territory. Looking for a new "shiny pony" late in the day won't shield the party from having to face the consequences of their record: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Canadians want elected officials to take responsibility for legacy radioactive waste, writes Lynn Jones

Recently, in the House of Commons, Liberal MP Marc Serré, parliamentary secretary to the minister of Energy and Natural Resources, said that Canadians want the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) to decide on the licence for the Near Surface Disposal Facility (NSDF), a giant mound beside the Ottawa River for one million tonnes of radioactive waste. The dump was given the green light for construction last month by the CNSC.

It might be time for Serré and Minister Jonathan Wilkinson to recalibrate their public opinion radar screens. Everyone I've interacted with over eight years of fighting this diabolical dump wants elected officials who are accountable to the Canadian public to take responsibility for this decision.

Serré and his minister might want to get up to speed on how nuclear waste decisions are made in other OECD countries. The document *The Regulatory Infrastructure in NEA Member Countries*, shows that in every OECD country other than Canada elected officials play a role in decisions about nuclear waste facilities.

It would also be a good idea for Serré and Wilkinson to review the text of House of Commons ePetition 4,676, which garnered more than 3,000 signatures in 30 days over the recent holiday season. Petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to issue a directive to the CNSC to request an international peer review of the NSDF, and not make any decision on licensing until Canada's UNDRIP obligations are met. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' principle of free, prior, and informed consent has not been met in the case of the NSDF. Ten out of 11 Algonquin First Nations that have lived in the Ottawa River watershed for millennia say they do not consent to the NSDF on their unceded territory.

Canadians want their elected officials to take responsibility for Canada's legacy radioactive waste, and manage it in ways that will protect Canadians and the environment both now and in the future. They also want the Government of Canada to respect the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Lynn Jones
Ottawa, Ont.

The letter writer is a volunteer with two groups that advocate for responsible management of radioactive waste in the Ottawa Valley: the Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County and Area, and the Ottawa River Institute.



Feds must delay NSDF proposal: two members of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War Canada

Like the "forever chemicals," per- and poly-fluorinated alkyl substances polluting our environment and found in humans, radioactive isotopes from both nuclear power and nuclear weapons pollute us all. Fortunately, the level of radioactive materials existing in our bodies is currently low since nuclear waste has mostly been kept out of the biosphere. However, this could all change if the plan to store radioactive waste in an above ground setting one kilometre from the Ottawa River materializes. Named the Near Surface Disposal Facility (NSDF), this seven-storey high engineered dump is planned to hold up to a million tons of radioactive waste representing eight decades of operation of the Chalk River Laboratories in addition to radioactive waste from medical facilities. We may as well call the future contents of the NSDF "forever isotopes" as many of these elements will remain radioactive for millennia.

No dump lasts "forever," and in the case of the NSDF on the Ottawa River, it seems likely that it will eventually leak into the drinking water of millions of people downstream. First Nations, local citizens, MPs, and municipalities have expressed concern, and have asked for delays in building the NSDF.

The International Atomic Energy Agency identifies some of the elements to be stored as "intermediate level

waste," instead of "low level waste" for which the NSDF was designed. This questions the decision of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) to license this proposal, and adds concerns that the CNSC is heavily influenced by the nuclear industry.

To outsiders, the CNSC appears to have a vested interest in minimizing the risks associated with nuclear waste, and seems to be expediting its efforts to resolve this extraordinarily difficult—if not impossible—challenge to manage radioactive waste safely. Unfortunately, recent decisions to expand nuclear power into newer types of reactors only exacerbates this unresolved problem of radioactive waste management.

Alternatives to the NSDF are being discussed which include retrievability, no abandonment, and continuous guardianship. We add our voices to those already asking that the Government of Canada delay the NSDF proposal until a careful and independent review is done with health concerns top priority.

John Guilfoyle, MD, CCFP, FCFP,
former chief medical officer of Health for Manitoba; and
Nancy Covington, BSc Physics, MD,
Halifax, N.S.

Both letter-writers are members of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War Canada.

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Opinion



Police remove Freedom Convoy protesters from downtown Ottawa on Feb. 17, 2022. Social polarization, xenophobia, and a growing openness to the use of violence as a means of solving disputes have the ability to undermine our social cohesion, our faith in our political systems and institutions, and—rarely—generate divisive acts of violence. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

It's time to double down on our efforts to counter violence and polarization in Canada

Tackling polarization and xenophobia requires a non-partisan, depoliticized and evidence-based approach.

John McCoy & David O'Brien

Opinion



Three overlapping issues have coalesced and formed a growing threat to democratic countries. Social polarization, xenophobia, and a growing openness to the use of violence as a means of solving disputes together have the ability to undermine our social cohesion, our faith in our political systems and institutions, and—in rare instances—generate divisive acts of violence.

The attack on Edmonton's City Hall last month is an apt example of the volatile results of this trend. Bazhani Sarvar, a 28-year-old man, allegedly entered the building with a rifle and homemade explosives. While we do not yet have the benefit of a full account of his motivations, his social

media posts are revealing. His messages draw together disparate themes: anger over international conflict is mixed with a range of polarizing domestic issues ranging from inflation and immigration to "wokism." Views that are firmly entrenched in polarized public debates and 30-second social media clips.

While these grievances appear muddled, his choice of target was not. Threats directed at public institutions at the core of our democracy are an increasingly common feature of contemporary violent extremism.

Canada faces an uphill battle in addressing these issues in a manner that preserves our commitment to liberal democracy and freedom of expression. Fortunately, this country is well-positioned to cement our reputation as an innovator in preventing and countering hate-motivated or targeted violence. The efforts in recent years from practitioners—e.g., social workers and mental health professionals—researchers and the public services have built a strong evidence base from which progress can continue to be made. Sustained progress will require all orders of government, community-based organizations, and practitioners to double down and scale up current efforts.

At the centre of the made-in-Canada approach is Public Safety Canada's Canada Cen-

tre for Community Engagement and the Prevention of Violence. It has funded research and prevention efforts across Canada since 2017. Its support of programs has resulted in collaborative, evidence-based research projects and effective frontline prevention programs.

Collaboration between human service practitioners, provincial health and social services, and relevant police of jurisdiction has created diversionary programs where individuals coming to the attention of law enforcement, entering probation, or parole can be directed to multi-disciplinary intervention and rehabilitation programs. Through this approach, stakeholders, including law enforcement, can work in parallel to reduce the risk of violence.

These efforts aim to reduce criminality and recidivism, and operate with the understanding that individuals who receive comprehensive psycho-social supports—such as clinical counselling and access to services ranging from addiction supports to vocational training—will experience a commensurate reduction in negative behaviours.

Non-government programs like the Organization for the Prevention of Violence's Evolve program operating in the Prairies, and the Ontario-based ETA program both have an established track record of successful

interventions. In British Columbia and Quebec, the provincial governments are responsible for delivering similar psycho-social supports, such as B.C.'s Shift program. The Canadian Practitioners Network, based in Quebec, has brought academic evidence and national co-ordination of practitioners.

In an era where there are growing expectations that publicly funded projects show outputs and outcomes, the comprehensive data our programs are generating is encouraging. We are demonstrating that efforts to reduce the risk of violent extremism through psycho-social intervention can work. Collectively, the ETA and Evolve programs have served approximately 300 individuals, impacted by violent belief systems, homicidal ideation, and grievances.

The impact of projects designed to prevent the emergence of divisive and hateful attitudes is harder to measure. However, what is clear is that tackling polarization and xenophobia requires a non-partisan, depoliticized, and evidence-based approach.

This particular challenge is deeply embedded in the ways in which Canadians access and process information, technology, and social media. Subsequently, working with technology companies cannot be overlooked in our attempts to address root

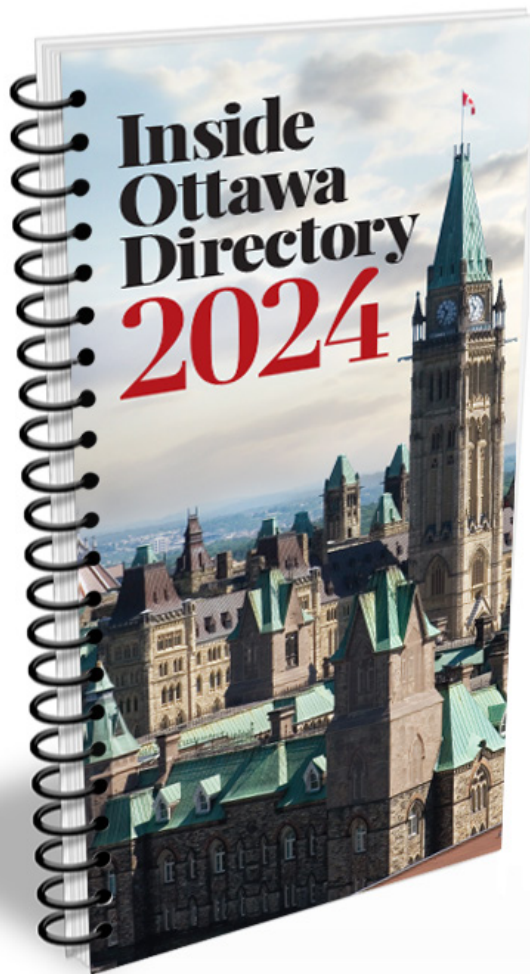
cases. The most productive prevention efforts will likely take place at the municipal level and in schools where there's a need to educate the next generation on how to navigate data and critical thinking in the era of AI, deepfakes, and misinformation. A positive example of current efforts in prevention is CIVIX Canada which has emerged as an innovative non-governmental group creating resources for teachers and students to navigate the online space in a way that evaluates the credibility of information.

While these challenges are complex, Canada is well-positioned vis-à-vis many western democracies. Indeed, there are exportable lessons from our approach with countering hate motivated violence and polarization. The shortcoming remains the scale and sustainability of these efforts. Existing programs require increased resources to address upcoming challenges. The Canada Centre, which funds, co-ordinates, and builds capacity for all the projects referenced above, is an essential component in our success as is increasing collaboration among civil society and public agencies like law enforcement, prosecutors, and probation. Given the demand for this service among stakeholders and participants these programs should be viewed as providing a core function within social and healthcare systems. Modest public investment will support existing evidence-based efforts, and better position Canada to weather the challenges to come.

John McCoy, PhD, is executive director of the Organization for the Prevention of Violence. David O'Brien, CYW, CYC, BA, MACP, MBA, RP, is the director of mental health at Yorktown Family Services.

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Opinion

Our shared vision feels like it is crumbling

As the crisis in the Middle East looms on, there's growing concern whether we should feel so smug about our democratic values after all. Politicians should remember this when out canvassing and fundraising for their parties. Those of us paying attention certainly will.

Aisha Sherazi

Opinion



OTTAWA—Among G7 countries, Canada possesses one of the highest immigration rates. And why shouldn't we? Canada is, after all, a wonderful country to live in. We boast about opportunities, universal health care, an excellent education system, and who could forget our stable, wonderful, democratic political system? As we sit smug on a cold winter's evening draped in red-and-white flags, we smile knowing we have it great.

Lately, though, I confess that I wonder. Since Oct. 7, the brilliant



Protesters in Ottawa call for an end to Israeli bombing of Gaza on Feb. 17, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

facade that we assumed was a shared vision feels like it is crumbling.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stood tall in early February as he lambasted Bell Canada for laying off thousands of employees—including hundreds of journalists, calling it a “garbage decision.”

He wasn't wrong. In a time of misinformation, being able to tell stories from trusted sources is crucial.

Through diplomacy, advocacy, and programming activities, Global Affairs Canada claims to “seek to strengthen key aspects of sustainable democracies,” including ‘independent media,’ and the ‘promotion and protection of human rights.’ Although our PM seemed upset at the plight of journalists in Canada, he has not spoken out much about the perceived

deliberate targeting of Palestinian journalists in Gaza. Worse still, there seems to be no efforts to allow external media to enter Gaza to cover the conflict, either. The democratic right of having a free and open press doesn't feel so free or democratic these days.

Another treasured democratic right that no doubt attracts immigrants to Canada is our ability to assemble and protest, expressing ourselves in a peaceful manner. So many freedoms and rights have been won through peaceful protest.

But as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association points out, “protests are intended to cause disruption and this is protected activity in a democracy. Strong protections for the right to protest are essential to meaningful and informed political debate and

discussion.” Since Oct. 7, we have seen the ability of pro-Palestinian protests dampened, either through the enforcement of bylaws—protesters with loud speakers being ticketed, attempts to ban protests on overpasses—and even some level of turning a blind eye to online doxing.

One group of pro-Palestinian protesters protested outside the Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, and three rogue protesters scaled the building, one waving the Palestinian flag. Trudeau and indeed politicians from all levels of government were quick to condemn the entire group of protesters. “The demonstration at Mount Sinai Hospital yesterday was reprehensible. Hospitals are places for treatment and care, not protests and intimidation,” Trudeau wrote on X. Many who

are somewhat aware of what is taking place in Gaza haven't heard enough about the targeting of hospitals by Israel. By the end of November, 36 hospitals had been bombed in Gaza, many of which included patients, hospital staff, and civilians seeking shelter. Why the selective outrage about access to health care?

An Angus Reid poll recently found that 41 per cent of Canadians believe Israel is committing genocide, and that only 32 per cent disagree. And yet we would be hard-pressed to believe it if we were to rely on our elected officials.

If our politicians no longer represent the will of the people, but instead represent the will of special interest groups and corporations—Canadian companies have built the Israeli Air Force's communications system, components for bombers and helicopters, unmanned drones and maritime patrol aircraft, surveillance systems and body armour; helped build highways used by Israeli settlers that are off-limits to Palestinians, creating what Israeli human rights group B'Tselem have dubbed a “regime of apartheid”—what kind of democracy do we claim to have?

As the crisis in the Middle East looms on, there is a growing concern about whether we should feel so smug about our democratic values after all. Politicians would do well to remember this in elections, when canvassing and fundraising for their parties. Those of us paying attention certainly will.

Aisha Sherazi is an Ottawa educator, writer, and community advocate.

The Hill Times

Just wars that become unjust

It was just that the state of Israel retaliate against Hamas after the terrorists' Oct. 7 assault. It is not just that Israel wage a war of such disproportionate aggression.

Geoff White

Opinion



OTTAWA—There are just wars, and there are just wars that become unjust.

It was just that the state of Israel retaliate against Hamas after the terrorists' Oct. 7 assault.

It is not just that Israel wage a war of such disproportionate aggression.

To employ the maxim: “Well, you know, ‘war is hell,’” cannot be allowed to justify the carnage that is Gaza today.

As a truism, it is a pithy observation, not an excuse, and not one that should be too readily thrown about by anyone not directly suffering the horrors of the conflict.

Historical analogies have been evoked. Eighty years since the Allied invasion of Italy, we are reminded of the bloody battles to free Europe from fascism. Yet the target of that campaign was not the civilian population, but Nazi Germany's Armed Forces.

And one does not need to be reminded that the later firebombing of civilians in Dresden, Germany, is largely seen as an excessive exercise of force, unnecessary for the just and welcome Allied victory.

I pretend to no special knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, no more than anyone who has followed developments there with keen interest, mostly from afar. My direct experience of the region is limited to one visit 40 years ago.

Yet it defies all human empathy not to be appalled by the plight of almost the whole population of Gaza subject to the predatory destruction of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF).

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proclaims that his country's campaign will not end short of the destruction of Hamas. What does this mean? Neither he nor the supporters of his war define who Hamas is as distinct from the whole Gazan population.

Beyond its militias, Hamas runs much of the territory's civic administration. Does the destruction of Hamas entail the destruction of Gaza's infrastructure, and the killing of the people who deliver those services, hospitals, schools, and utilities?

Yes, among those administrative cadres, sympathy for Hamas runs deep, as does hatred of Israel.

Yet to equate Hamas with all Gazans would then mean Netanyahu's sought-after victory would encompass extinction of many and displacement of the rest.

Who cannot but suspect that such is his objective as 1.3 million Gazans are confined to the border city of Rafah that the IDF now advises will be the next target of its ground assault? There are indeed members of Netanyahu's war cabinet who have explicitly advocated displacement.

The belligerent opposition to a ceasefire in Gaza is perplexing—disturbing even—in its lack of the most basic sense of humanity. To make the assertion that to stop the fighting now means that Hamas has won is beyond simplistic. It is a hollow rhetorical device to stop anyone talking about what a peace would look like.

As limited as Canada's influence is, our government is right to support a ceasefire.

The prospects of a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are much further away than ever following Hamas' Oct. 7 attack and Israel's all-out response. Confidence in the possibility of a two-state solution had waned considerably even before this war.

Yet nothing can be solved without dialogue, despite the potential interlocutors' disdain for each other.

Even a prolonged negotiating stalemate under which Gazans and Israelis could resume peaceful lives is an improvement over the current orgy of violence.

In the final year of the Second World War, Albert Camus, writing in the Resistance journal *Combat*, said: “Peace is the only battle worth waging.”

Geoff White is a journalist and retired Canadian diplomat. His memoir, *Working for Canada: A Pilgrimage in Foreign Affairs from the New World Order to the Rise of Populism*, was published by University of Calgary Press.

The Hill Times

TRANSPORTATION



The Hill Times Policy Briefing
February 26, 2024

A big look at supply chains

‘Downstream’
impacts of
electric
vehicles

SECURING CANADA’S
FUTURE IN EV
INDUSTRY DEMANDS
proactive investment
in skilled workforce

CANADA’S
EV BOOM
can go bust if the
ecosystem is not ready

STRATEGIC
COLLABORATION
*driving
decarbonization of
Canada’s heavy-duty
transport sector*

TIME TO REPLACE
VIA’S AGING
long-distance
trains

PARTNERING TO
STRENGTHEN
*Canada’s vital transportation
networks & supply chains*

Transportation Policy Briefing

Supply chain strategy must go beyond transport, says Supply Chain Canada president

A national supply chain strategy will require a holistic understanding of the supply chain itself, which is often misunderstood, according to Martin Montanti, president and CEO of Supply Chain Canada.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Transport Minister Pablo Rodriguez has “opened the door” by establishing an office dedicated to strengthening Canada’s supply chain, but success will depend on understanding that the challenges are broader than the movement of goods, says the president and CEO of Supply Chain Canada.

“Transportation is only one piece of [the] supply chain. Don’t get me wrong. I’m all for the [National Supply Chain] office. This is a great office. They just have to understand that supply chain is greater than just transportation,” said Martin Montanti. “The fruits of that office haven’t come forward yet, but you need to start somewhere.”

Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Que.) announced the launch of the National Supply Chain Office, led by Robert Dick, assistant deputy minister for Transport Canada, on Dec. 1, 2023. The office’s



Transport Minister Pablo Rodriguez said the national supply chain office ‘will enhance the resilience, efficiency, and reliability of our transportation systems,’ in a Transport Canada press release on Dec. 1, 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

goals include supporting the federal government’s efforts in responding to supply chain disruptions—such as those created by extreme weather events or labour disputes—and to support data sharing so goods can move more efficiently. The office will also be responsible for developing and implementing a national strategy to support the supply chain.

A national supply chain strategy will require a holistic understanding of the supply chain itself, which is often misunderstood, according to Montanti. Transportation issues are a key part of the supply chain, but an understanding of the end-to-end link requires looking at other

issues including contracting and purchasing, as well as warehousing, he said.

“Because [Rodriguez is] the minister of transportation, I believe his focus is on transportation, [and] how we can improve the transportation in Canada,” said Montanti. “I just think the government has focused too narrowly on transportation, and not enough on the overall supply chain.”

“It’s not what they’re doing is wrong. It’s just that they’re not understanding that they can leverage the other aspects of [the] supply chain at the same time, and do them at the same time,” he added.

Creation of a national supply chain office was the fulfillment of a recommendation made in the final report by the National Supply Chain Task Force, released on Oct. 6, 2022.

Rodriguez said that the office “will enhance the resilience, efficiency, and reliability of our transportation systems,” in a Transport press release for the launch of the office.

“The strength of our transportation supply chains is directly related to the cost of living,” said Rodriguez in the press release. “This [office] is one of many initiatives by the Government of Canada to reduce congestion throughout the transportation supply chain, benefiting Canadians across the country.”

Supply Chain Canada prepared a report with recommendations for how to address supply chain

challenges, which was released to the supply chain task force in 2023. The report included recommendations for addressing linkage disruptions, such as those caused by extreme weather events, protests or cybersecurity issues, through intergovernmental partnerships. The report recommended introducing an intraprovincial communication channel for proactive messaging to enhance collaboration between provinces and territories on supply chains.

In terms of automation in getting goods to market, Montanti said that Canada is “way behind,” whether it’s artificial intelligence (AI) for unmanned forklifts,

unmanned trucks, or in systems for management of purchasing materials.

“We need to upgrade our automation throughout all of [the] supply chain, whether it’s trucking, [or] whether it’s our materials management systems. We haven’t invested. The technology’s there, we just haven’t invested,” he said. “A lot of AI can actually do what your inventory management should be ... but you’ve got people actually doing those roles in inventory management because they haven’t automated, so they have to manually do the work.”

NDP MP Taylor Bachrach (Skeena-Bulkley Valley, B.C.), his party’s transport critic, told *The Hill Times* that his sense is that Canada’s supply chain has somewhat recovered from the disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, but a lot of vulnerabilities remain. He said crisis events such as the atmospheric river disaster in British Columbia raised questions about the federal government’s plans to ensure a stable supply chain in the face of extreme weather events.

An atmospheric river made landfall in B.C. in November 2021, releasing nearly a month’s worth of rain in less than 48 hours. High levels of water washed away roads and other infrastructure, and displaced more than 3,300 people. Mudslides damaged highways and railways, effectively cutting off the Port of Vancouver—Canada’s largest port—from the rest of the country.

“I think it’s fair to say that current plans are not up to the magnitude of the challenge,” said Bachrach. “What we saw was that the government was really caught flat-footed when extreme weather events took out a huge swath of supply chain infrastructure. We need to see a plan both for increasing the resilience of the infrastructure and responding to severe events when they occur.”

To help modernize Canada’s transportation system, Liberal MP Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Ont.), then-serving as transportation minister, brought in Bill C-33, the Strengthening the Port System and Railway Safety in Canada Act. The bill completed second reading in the House on Sept. 26, 2023, and is currently under consideration by the House Transport committee.

If passed, the bill would address issues identified in the Ports Modernization Review (completed in 2022), the Railway Safety Act Review (completed in 2018), and makes changes to modernize the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992.

Bachrach criticized the bill, arguing that the response from stakeholders to the legislation has been “lukewarm at best.”

“I think that folks focused on the challenges of the supply chain were hoping for something more ambitious, in terms of legislation. That’s the message that we heard at the transport committee,” said Bachrach. “C-33 includes amendments to the Railway Safety Act, and the transport committee issued a report with



Martin Montanti, president and CEO of Supply Chain Canada, says, ‘I just think the government has focused too narrowly on transportation, and not enough on the overall supply chain.’ *Photograph courtesy of Supply Chain Canada*



NDP MP Taylor Bachrach says ‘current plans are not up to the magnitude of the challenge,’ regarding protecting the supply chain against extreme weather events. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued on page 24

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Transportation Policy Briefing

Partnering to strengthen Canada's vital transportation networks and supply chains

Canada's transportation supply chains work well overall, but have faced unprecedented pressures related to the pandemic, severe weather events, geo-political uncertainties and tight global competition.

Liberal MP
Vance
Badawey

Opinion



Efficient and reliable supply chains are the lifeblood of the Canadian economy. They are critical to Canada's economic stability and growth, and their reliability ensures job creation and strong economic fundamentals. The Government of Canada understands this and has devised a strategy to keep our national supply chains efficient, resilient, and reliable so Canada's economy and our global reputation remain that of a steadfast exporter and preferred trading partner.

As part of this strategy, on Dec. 1, 2023, Minister of Transport Pablo Rodriguez established the National Supply Chain Office to support federal efforts in re-

sponding to supply chain disruptions. A function of this office is to identify and rapidly react to emerging transportation-related trade and economic challenges. In effect, this office will assist with answering the question: what can the federal government do to support the marine, rail, and trucking industries?

This question is necessary because, although Canada's transportation supply chains work well overall, they have faced unprecedented pressures over the past few years. The COVID-19 pandemic, severe weather events, geo-political uncertainties and tight global competition have each presented major challenges, and while the supply chains held, these disruptions revealed vulnerabilities in global supply networks that add stress to our own supply and transportation systems.

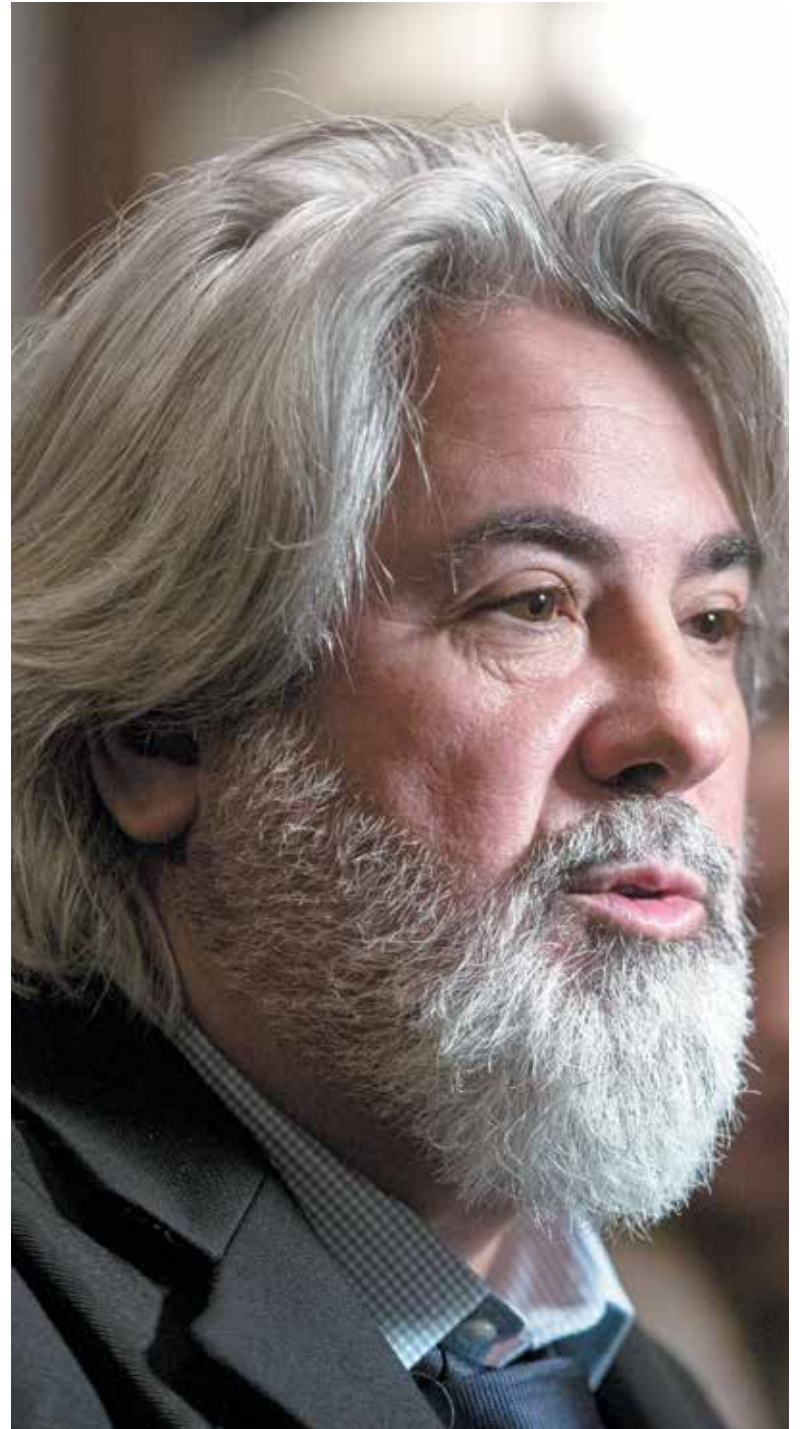
At the same time, shifting global markets bring new and exciting opportunities for Canada. For example, deepening our relationships in the Indo-Pacific region and becoming a supplier of choice for clean energy and technology are now key trade priorities. If we are to be ready to fully leverage these new opportunities, Canada must ensure our transportation supply chains are fortified. Just as many of our trading partners, like the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, are rethinking how they move goods, Canada needs to be competitive and prepared for the future.

Made-in-Canada solutions are essential to our success, and Minister Rodriguez and the Government of Canada are moving quickly and deliberately.

Launching the National Supply Chain Office this past December was a key recommendation from the 2022 National Supply Chain Task Force, which examined a range of supply chain concerns, including capacity and infrastructure constraints, labour shortages, border processes, regulatory uncertainty, and general governance. This complemented the government's Requests for Proposals for a planned 1,000 km high-frequency rail link between Quebec City and Windsor, Ont., that were launched on Oct. 13, 2023. This recognition of the connections between reliable transportation structures and national supply chain stability is just the beginning of efforts to formally recognize and integrate how factors such as water, rail, and road linkages affect travel and commerce, and the way we do business domestically and around the world. An example of this network in action is the strategically located Niagara Ports Trade Corridor along the Welland Canal—a partnership that streamlines logistics through a multi-modal network.

By opening the door to working with private and public sector partners in all modes of transport, we will make our supply chains more efficient and resilient, and stronger in the face of new and emerging challenges. By establishing a facility where supply chains are especially active, the National Supply Chain Office is building a strong on-the-ground presence where it matters most. Their diverse expertise combines with an end-to-end view of supply chains.

The strategy specifically covers all movement of goods,



Transport Minister Pablo Rodriguez established the National Supply Chain Office on Dec. 1, 2023, to support federal efforts in responding to supply chain disruptions. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

both domestic and trade-related, across all modes of transportation. By taking a whole-of-government, (Canada-U.S.) binational corridor approach, engaging stakeholders broadly, recognizing and prioritizing binational regional hubs, and optimizing day-to-day operations while looking for ways to improve performance and resilience to strengthen fluidity, rapid success is possible. While a broad national discussion is still needed around data and digitalization, as well as regulations, legislation, and broader policy issues, progress is already happening. These conversations will lay the groundwork for future success by informing the National Supply Chain Strategy, which will include a plan for investing in long-term transportation infrastructure to add capacity to our multimodal networks, connecting prioritized, binational regional hubs. Fortifying and improving Canada's supply chains will require active and collaborative engagement from industry and governments alike. The National

Supply Chain Office is designed to be a conduit for this approach by working with industry, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, and other partners to identify and implement concrete actions. Minister Rodriguez will meet with provincial and territorial colleagues to discuss other ways we can work together to strengthen supply chains and trade corridors, with future discussion planned on important topics such as the overall performance of the transportation sector to improve the safety, reliability, and resilience of northern, remote, Indigenous and rural transportation networks.

Liberal MP Vance Badawey, who represents Niagara Centre, Ont., serves as parliamentary secretary to the minister of transport. He is also co-chair of the Canada-U.S. IPG Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Group, vice-chair of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group, and member of the House Transport, Infrastructure and Communities Committee.

The Hill Times

Time to replace VIA's aging long-distance trains

Canada should have started the replacement of VIA Rail's long-distance fleet years ago.

NDP MP Taylor
Bachrach

Opinion



In a previous column, I highlighted my grave concern that the Liberal government's High Frequency Rail Project will be a death knell for VIA Rail passenger service in the rest of Canada. Privatizing the corridor that produces some 95 per cent of VIA Rail's current fare revenue will leave VIA with mere crumbs to operate its six long-distance routes in the rest of the country—including in the region I represent. It's simply not tenable.

But the other threat to VIA's long-distance routes is even more pressing: the age of the passenger cars and locomotives on which they rely.



The oldest cars in VIA Rail's fleet were built between 1947 and 1953. As VIA's new CEO Mario Pélouin recent told the Parliamentary Rail Caucus that VIA's mechanics perform miracles to keep these old cars running, something that is becoming increasingly difficult, writes NDP MP Taylor Bachrach. *Photograph courtesy of BRIYYZ, shared under a CC BY-SA 2.0 DEED license*

This past December, I spent six days riding the passenger train home for Christmas. I hopped on VIA's storied Canadian in Toronto, switched in Jasper, B.C., to the affectionately nicknamed "Rupert Rocket," and disembarked in my home community of Smithers, B.C. Along the way, I had a chance to experience both the excellent service of VIA's staff, and the quaint nostalgia of the train's over 70-year-old rolling stock.

The oldest cars in VIA's fleet were built by Philadelphia's Budd Car Company between 1947 and 1953. As VIA's new CEO Mario Pélouin told a recent meeting of the ad-hoc Parliamentary Rail Caucus, VIA's mechanics perform miracles to keep these old cars running—something that is becoming increasingly difficult.

Last year, after VIA discovered corrosion of several of its passenger cars, the transport minister ordered VIA to add empty rail cars behind its locomotives and at the end of its trains to buffer the impact in case of collisions. After tests on some of the coaches, including simulated collisions and inspections of dismantled cars, they were finally cleared for a return to normal service. If they'd failed the tests, the impact on VIA's long-distance routes would have been sudden and severe.

The fact is Canada should have started the replacement of VIA's long-distance fleet years ago. While VIA is still running cars built in the early 1950s, south of the border, Amtrak has already begun the replacement of a fleet that was put into

service in the 1970s. They're a full 20 years ahead of us.

The procurement process takes time. VIA's fleet operates in extreme weather conditions across vast distances which means the cars need to be purpose built. The design process alone will take several years, followed by testing, manufacturing, and commissioning. All this points to the urgent need for government to act.

VIA's own corporate plan indicates its oldest cars won't last past 2035. Work backwards from that date and it becomes clear that the process needs to begin immediately. In order for VIA to be able to attract firms that can design and build the trains we need; the government must provide VIA with a clear mandate. That means a commitment in this spring's federal budget, so VIA's team can get the ball rolling.

Canada invests significantly less in passenger rail than any of our G7 peers. U.S. President Joe Biden, through the Inflation Reduction Act, has invested \$66-billion in Amtrak—the largest investment in passenger rail in the United States in five decades. In the face of a worsening climate crisis, and at a time when rural communities have fewer passenger transportation options than ever, we need a proportionally similar investment here in Canada. And that starts with committing to the renewal of VIA's long-distance fleet.

With apologies to the unknown author of a famous saying, the best time to start building new rail cars was 20 years ago. And the second best time is right now.

NDP MP Taylor Bachrach, who represents Skeena-Bulkley Valley, B.C., is also his party's transport critic and deputy critic of infrastructure and communities.

The Hill Times



There's a lot riding on our wings.



Transportation Policy Briefing

Canada's EV boom could go bust if the ecosystem is not ready



The increasing adoption of electric vehicles presents challenges that can only be overcome with massive investments and creative policy solutions, write HEC Montréal professors Jorge E. Mendoza and Yossiri Adulyasak. Photograph courtesy of Paul Krueger, distributed under a CC BY-NC 2.0 DEED license

off-peak hours by offering dynamic electricity rates. Providers can employ machine learning and optimization algorithms to dynamically arrange charging plans and locations, as well as recommend to EV users the optimum times to charge their vehicles at the most cost-effective rates, thus reducing pressure on the system. To achieve this, it is essential to support utility providers in developing these technologies, while also instilling confidence in their ability to effectively manage the charging of consumers' EVs.

Significant focus and effort must also be directed toward increasing the effectiveness and adoption of EVs in the business and public sectors. Consider, for instance, the implementation of EVs in public transit systems. Electric buses (EBs) are expected to comprise 50 per cent of the global fleet by 2032. However, an EB typically has a range of between 50 and 300 km. At the same time, a Bloomberg NEF report indicates that 75 per cent of buses operating in Europe today travel more than 300 km per day on average. Therefore, replacing diesel-powered buses with electric counterparts may necessitate a complete overhaul of the transit system.

Transport authorities must decide whether to invest in electric buses with huge batteries for charging exclusively at end-of-line terminals and central depots, or choose electric buses with smaller batteries for quick charging during long stops, and, subsequently, adjust timetables to incorporate EB charging operations without affecting service quality.

Similar challenges exist in logistics and on-demand transport systems. The majority of fleet operational planning and scheduling software is not designed to optimize and manage EV fleets, particularly when charging periods, locations, and total range must be considered. Most government incentives primarily target the subsidization of EV acquisitions, whereas the availability of subsidies for operators to enhance and update fleet management, planning, and scheduling systems is rather limited. Addressing these questions is no easy feat.

We need to support our companies not only in acquiring the necessary hardware, but also in fully optimizing their operations to the EV reality.

Jorge E. Mendoza, PhD, is a professor of logistics and operations management at HEC Montréal. Mendoza's research focuses on designing, developing, and applying optimization techniques to various domains, including transportation science, logistics, production planning, and scheduling. Yossiri Adulyasak, PhD, holds a Canada Research Chair in Supply Chain Analytics, and he is also a professor at HEC Montréal. Adulyasak collaborates with Canadian and international firms to leverage advanced analytics and AI in supply chain applications.

The Hill Times

Proliferation of EVs will greatly boost electricity consumption during peak periods. However, more charging stations alone is not a viable long-term solution to meet the increasing demand.

Jorge E. Mendoza
& Yossiri
Adulyasak

Opinion



At the conclusion of COP21, Canada and 195 other parties

signed the Paris Agreement, an international treaty aiming to limit global warming to well below 2°C. To achieve this goal, countries committed to reaching the global peak of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, intending to transition to a carbon-neutral world by mid-century. Canada needs to cut emissions from transportation—which constitute nearly 25 per cent of the country's total—if it wants to keep its promise.

A transition to cleaner fuels and vehicle electrification are the two pillars of Canada's plan to decarbonize transportation, as they are in many other industrialized nations. The latter is arguably the most critical aspect of the strategy. To meet the COP21 objectives, 70 per cent of new road vehicles sold globally must be electric, as opposed to the current one per cent. In 2019, the federal government launched the Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program, a five-year, \$280-million initiative to address the lack of charging and hydrogen refueling stations

across the country. Recently, they established a mandatory target that 100 per cent of new sales of light-duty trucks and passenger cars must be zero-emission vehicles by 2035.

The impact of these programs is beginning to be reflected in the market share of electric vehicles (EVs). Statistics Canada reported that EVs accounted for 10.3 per cent of all new motor vehicle registrations in the first three quarters of 2023, marking a 2.6 per cent increase from 2022 and a five per cent increase from 2021. Despite this remarkable progress, the increasing adoption of EVs also presents challenges that can only be overcome with massive investments and creative policy solutions. The growth of the charging infrastructure, however, may lag significantly behind at this stage, and the negative experience of using electric vehicles due to inconvenience and challenges in accessing charging facilities can hinder this country's ability to achieve its emission reduction target.

Timely adaptation of Canada's power system to manage the widespread adoption of EVs is one of the primary issues. The proliferation of EVs will substantially augment electricity consumption during peak periods. Increasing the number of charging stations alone, however, is not a viable long-term solution to meet the increasing demand. Combining capacity expansion with innovative load management optimization is the most cost-effective way to handle this growing demand.

The latter aspect is often overlooked in public discourse, yet it is a crucial piece of the puzzle. Unlike other energy-intensive processes such as manufacturing or residential heating, the load generated by EV charging is more flexible, and can be shifted to off-peak hours to alleviate the strain on electrical demand during peak hours.

EV charging companies in several European countries have initiated incentives for individuals to charge their devices during

Remember those supply chain woes? Airport cargo hubs do

Nobody wants to talk about supply chains in 2024. But if we don't invest in them, that's exactly what we'll risk.

Monette Pasher

Opinion



Remember those supply chain woes? Airport cargo hubs do. Toilet paper. Baking flour. Bicycles. Used cars. Lumber. Literally anything with a semiconductor in it. By this point, you probably remember what these things had in common a couple of years ago. There was

a time during the pandemic and its aftermath when it seemed like supply chains and the products they weren't moving fast enough were all anyone could talk about.

The pandemic is over, and the threat of running out of toilet paper is no longer real. But supply chains are only slightly less urgent, and still just as important as they were in 2021. The hubs that facilitate the movement of cargo to and from Canada are still critical, and there is still much to do.

COVID was challenging, but so is the new normal. Corporations are still trying to make up for lost profits and lost time. Consumers are more comfortable with digital tools, and more demanding about shipping timelines. Cargo and passenger routes are changing. Climate change is taking on even more urgency. And providers are still catching up on infrastructure investments deferred over the pandemic.

Infrastructure is an especially critical topic for airports, which make a core contribution to Canadian supply chains through goods delivered in the bellies of commercial and dedicated cargo flights—Toronto Pearson alone handled 40 per cent of Canada's air cargo, and supported more than \$40-billion in GDP as recently as 2019. Even as global air travel ground to a halt in 2020, Pearson and other Canadian airports remained open for business, taking on debt and deferring infrastructure upgrades in order to prioritize the movement of key consumer goods, personal protective equipment and vaccines.

Now, these deferrals are being addressed. Runways are being resurfaced. Aprons are being expanded. Cargo facilities are being refreshed. Logistical software is being upgraded. Sustainable fuel infrastructure is being planned and built. Catching up has been no small task for Canadian air-

port authorities which operate as non-profits on land leased from the federal government. That's right: taxpayers don't pay for Canadian airport infrastructure. Travellers do, and the fees they pay have allowed airports to self-finance more than \$30-billion in cargo and passenger infrastructure improvements since the 1990s.

Unfortunately, user-pay financing was a huge liability during the pandemic. While Canada's airports were going into debt and deferring investment, their U.S. counterparts upgraded with US\$40-billion in emergency federal infrastructure funding. American airports, which are municipally run, continue to receive regular federal funding for infrastructure. Just last week, the Biden administration threw in a new tranche of US\$1-billion.

We don't need to throw the baby out with the bathwater: the Canadian airport model works

great in normal economic conditions. But there are still a couple of things Ottawa can do to help this nation's airports modernize their cargo hubs to meet post-pandemic needs.

The first is to recapitalize the National Trade Corridors Fund. The NTCF doesn't provide U.S.-level support, but it has been a vital tool over the past two years, providing \$530-million in investment to accelerate critical airport transportation infrastructure at nine Canadian airports.

The second is to recapitalize the Airport Capital Assistance Program to ensure it meets the growing needs of smaller airports from coast to coast. This federal program is essential for helping community and regional airports meet their safety and security investment requirements, but its funding has been frozen at \$38-million for 20 years. Recapitalizing it at \$95-million annually would be in keeping with inflation and new regulatory requirements.

Nobody wants to talk about supply chains in 2024. But if we don't invest in them, that's exactly what we'll risk.

Monette Pasher is president of the Canadian Airports Council. The Hill Times

Beyond consultations: strategic collaboration is driving the decarbonization of Canada's heavy-duty transport sector

Not only does it make business sense to collaborate, but competitors in the commercial transport value chain have shown that it is entirely possible to do so.

Karen Hamberg

Opinion



In 2019, Canada was the first national signatory to the Global Drive to Zero, a program of clean transportation accelera-

tor CALSTART, and an official campaign of the Clean Energy Ministerial. Since that time, more than 30 countries including the United States have committed to achieving 100 per cent zero-emission new truck and bus sales by 2040, with an interim goal of 30 per cent zero-emission new medium- and heavy-duty vehicle sales by 2030.

Non-binding climate commitments are often subject to climate shaming, or dismissed as a public relations exercise. One distinguishing feature of the Drive to Zero is its support from 40 original equipment manufacturers including Canada's own New Flyer Industries, Lion Electric, Ballard Power, and Effenco who have joined global leaders like Volvo Group, BYD, and Scania to formalize the willingness of industry to collaborate in a highly competitive and highly fragmented commercial vehicle market.

Enhanced, expedited, and cross-sectoral collaboration is widely acknowledged as a key

driver of climate action. It is difficult to find a climate report that does not include a high-level call to action on collaboration. Rarely, however, is there any effort to identify—much less agree upon—what that would look like in practice. At the very least, collaboration must deliver advantages that exceed any investments, and are of more benefit than trying to undertake the initiative alone.

International collaborations like the Global Drive to Zero and the Smart Freight Centre's Sustainable Freight Buyers Alliance are matched by strategic consortiums closer to home including Edmonton Global's 5,000 Hydrogen Vehicle Challenge, and Transport Canada's new Zero-Emission Vehicle Council. The industry itself has moved past a model of stakeholder consultation to one of active collaboration. Not only does it make business sense to collaborate, but also competitors in the commercial transport value chain have shown that it is entirely possible to do so.

Collaboration is a way of working together that makes it possible to share resources, risks, capabilities, and opportunities in a unified way. It is more formal than cooperation, and more focused and results-oriented than consultation. An individual organization can certainly invest and take action by themselves to reduce their transport emissions. Collaboration increases the range of options that are available.

Current examples in the commercial vehicle sector include establishing regional deployment hubs, demand aggregation for zero-emission vehicles, joint purchasing, logistics and route optimization to increase efficiency, co-location of assets, intermodal shifts, and the build-out of semi-public fueling or charging infrastructure. More strategic collaborations include comprehensive pilots which stress test the commercial readiness of the entire operational ecosystem, and involve parties across the value chain. Or an ecosystem model

where multiple actors from different industries jointly work on a topic of shared interest outside of a competitive setting.

There have certainly been bumps in the road. The most successful collaborations have found a way to distribute and share risk, determine costs and contingencies up front, and address competitive considerations around data-sharing and the creation of intellectual property.

The economic, technical, and market barriers to the deployment of medium- and heavy-duty zero-emission vehicles are well-documented and well-understood. It is tempting to want to dissect these challenges in yet another consultation forum with the hope that this time we will find the solutions to accelerate the transition to a zero-emissions transport economy. A candid assessment of potential market catalysts and the shared responsibility of government and industry in driving the decarbonization of this hard-to-abate sector is far more productive.

Leaders in Canada's commercial transport sector have found models of collaboration that are accelerating the deployment of medium- and heavy-duty vehicles in pursuit of our emission reduction targets. The stakeholders agree: it is time for collective responsibility and simultaneous action.

Karen Hamberg is a partner and National Clean Technology Leader at Deloitte Canada, and chair emeritus of CALSTART in Pasadena, California.

The Hill Times

Transportation Policy Briefing



Without a steady stream of skilled workers to sustain these factories, Canada risks losing its EV-related manufacturing opportunities, writes Ali Emadi, Canada Research Chair in Transportation Electrification and Smart Mobility at McMaster University. Photograph courtesy of rawpixel.com

Securing Canada's future in EV industry demands proactive investment in a skilled workforce

What will determine the success of these enterprises in Canada is not just natural resources such as lithium and other critical minerals, but human resources.

Ali Emadi

Opinion



Major automakers placed a huge bet on Canada when they committed to building massive factories here to make batteries for electric vehicles.

While Canada certainly helped make those decisions easier with enticing financial incentives, the job is far from over.

The next challenges will be to keep those factories here—two in

Ontario (Stellantis-LG in Windsor and Volkswagen in St. Thomas) and one in Quebec (Northvolt in Montreal).

Even after providing billions of dollars in incentives to attract them to Canada, it will be critical to support the success of those colossal factories and to attract and retain the small and medium-sized companies that supply them.

The result can help Canada reach the long-elusive goals of achieving greater industrial sophistication and independence, including the economic and employment rewards that go with them, while accelerating the move away from environmentally harmful fossil fuels.

This is a turning point, an opportunity that can bear fruit for generations. We have a responsibility to make the most of it.

What will determine the success of these enterprises in Canada is resources: not just natural resources such as lithium and other critical minerals, but human resources.

Those factories will need Canadian-educated people with advanced skills and training to make them work, not as much on

the factory floor, where automation is increasingly taking up less-skilled work on increasingly sophisticated components and systems, but in such areas as planning, design, engineering, programming, and supply-chain management.

Those professionals must be ready for the work of today, and prepared to adapt and continue innovating in a highly competitive, maturing industry that is still just getting off the ground.

Understanding the needs of these businesses and preparing graduates to meet them requires collaboration, practical partnerships, and strong support from government, industry, and academia alike.

At the McMaster Automotive Resource Centre, for example, our students and faculty members are enthusiastic participants in the EcoCAR EV Challenge (U.S. Department of Energy and GM) and the Battery Workforce Challenge (U.S. Department of Energy and Stellantis).

These hands-on programs are meaningful to their business and government partners, and to the schools that are invited to participate.

In broader terms, our engineers, working with students, are in constant communication with their counterparts in industry all working toward similar ends: to create transportation technology that is efficient, sustainable, affordable, and viable, while reducing our dependency on imported materials.

By equipping students with the expertise to thrive in the EV industry, we can also retain talented graduates who might otherwise seek opportunities abroad. Their high-paying jobs will improve the prosperity of their families and communities.

Investing in building a skilled workforce will help Canada move up the value chain to capture higher-value economic activity beyond resource extraction and initial processing. Canada's federal and provincial governments can support these efforts with strategic investments and collaborations in research and education.

Cultivating and retaining skilled workers will also give Canada a stronger voice in decision-making processes within the multinational corporations they serve. As Canadian-educated

professionals rise to executive positions, they will carry with them a profound understanding of Canada's advantages, and influence decisions in favour of the country's interests.

Without a steady stream of skilled workers to sustain these factories, Canada risks losing its EV-related manufacturing opportunities. Failing to invest in training now could lead to the eventual relocation of factories to countries with readily available talent pools, depriving Canada of significant economic opportunities, and undermining its competitiveness in the global market.

Government support for universities is indispensable to ensure they can continue producing the skilled professionals required to propel Canada's automotive industry forward. Likewise, boosting industry collaboration with educational institutions in this period of rapid change and opportunity can ensure that our teaching remains as relevant as possible, and that the skills of graduates are aligned with industry needs.

Securing Canada's future in the EV industry demands proactive investment in a skilled workforce.

By supporting universities and empowering students to take their places as the next generation of leaders in the field, Canada can not only retain its position as a hub for EV manufacturing, but also pave the way for sustainable economic growth and innovation. The time to act is now. The future of Canada's automotive industry hinges upon it.

Professor Ali Emadi, PhD, is the Canada Excellence Research Chair Laureate and Canada Research Chair in Transportation Electrification and Smart Mobility at McMaster University. The Hill Times

Let's not forget the 'downstream' impacts of electric vehicles

Government policies can create the conditions for robust infrastructure and industry for EV battery recycling and repurposing.

James Chan & Melissa O'Rourke

Opinion



In the pursuit of net-zero emissions by 2050, or what it describes as “clean air and good jobs,” the Government of Canada has committed more than \$30-billion towards a nationwide transition to electric vehicles (EVs). This includes \$2.3-billion in subsidies for consumers to purchase EVs, \$850-million for the industry to build out the necessary charging infrastructure, and—most prominently—nearly \$27-billion in construction and production subsidies for three foreign companies to manufacture EV batteries in Canada.

These investments have sparked much debate about this policy's economic merits, including questions on whether this is the best use of public dollars, and what returns Canadian workers and taxpayers can expect from their investment. But what about the environmental part of the equation?

Both critics and early adopters of EVs acknowledge that they are only as green as the electricity used to charge their batteries. Many people also realize that extracting and processing the critical minerals required to manufacture EV batteries have immense environmental impacts and ethical concerns. However, as important are these “upstream” aspects of the EV transition, significantly less attention has been paid to the “downstream” impacts.

What are the environmental implications, for example, when batteries reach their end-of-vehicle-life (EoVL)?

The federal government has mandated that by 2035, all new light-duty vehicles, the SUVs, pick-ups, and cars that are in the majority of our driveways and garages—will be zero-emission vehicles, meaning either a plug-in hybrid, or a fully electric vehicle. This transition will result in a growing number of batteries that eventually need to be recycled or repurposed for secondary uses.

Yet, despite this coming growth, there is currently no comprehensive, national policy regime in Canada that fully considers the economic, regulatory, environmental and technical requirements for the effective management of EV battery waste. There is a window of opportunity now to craft policies that harness the battery repurposing and recycling sector's momentum, and to responsibly scale infrastructure to meet future demands for repurposing and recycling.

While the market is anticipated to manage most EoVL batteries, due to their economic value, it is crucial to establish policy guardrails within which market forces operate. The fast-evolving EV battery repurposing and recycling industry holds immense potential, promising environmental, economic and energy security benefits, but faces many technological, regulatory and economic challenges.

Policies that promote circularity—including the effective, efficient, and safe repurposing and recycling of batteries and their critical minerals—will help ensure the transition to EVs is both economically beneficial and environmentally sustainable. The right policy approach to this issue will influence the speed of decarbonization, the supply of critical minerals, and the viability and environmental impact of Canada's multibillion-dollar investments in battery manufacturing.

Simply put, Canada has a significant opportunity to demonstrate leadership and advance its goals on climate action, sustainable natural resource development, economic growth, and workforce development by developing a robust repurposing and recycling ecosystem for EV batteries.

Given the future growth of EVs, the federal government must act now to ensure



Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault announced Canada's Electric Vehicle Availability Standard on Dec. 19, 2023, with a national target of 100 per cent zero-emission vehicle sales by 2035. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the sustainable management of EoVL batteries. We believe it has both a responsibility and the opportunity to:

- Create enabling conditions for a homegrown, economically viable repurposing and recycling industry, powered by domestic technology and talent;
- Clarify and coordinate policies that provide industry and consumers with adequate and accurate information that informs the best pathway for EoVL batteries; and
- Develop, simplify and harmonize standards and regulations for the safe dismantling, storage and transportation of EoVL batteries that minimizes costs and protects workers.

Repurposing and recycling EV batteries is not only environmentally sound, but can

also be commercially viable if economic, regulatory and technical challenges are addressed through proactive and forward-looking policy planning.

The success of the country's green transition will be influenced by an EV battery's pathway at EoVL. Canada must act now to make a positive charge forward and reap the economic and environmental returns on its investments.

James Chan and Melissa O'Rourke are 2023-24 Action Canada Fellows. As part of this public policy leadership program, they co-authored a paper with four other Fellows: Positive Charge: Maximizing Canada's Electric Vehicle Battery Repurposing and Recycling Ecosystem.

The Hill Times

Moving what *matters*

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Transportation Policy Briefing

Supply chain strategy must go beyond transport, says Supply Chain Canada president

Continued from page 16

33 recommendations regarding rail safety, unfortunately, the minister chose to ignore all of those recommendations in the legislation he tables.”

In May, 2022, the House Transport Committee issued a report covering railway safety, and the effects of railway operations on surrounding communities.

During a committee meeting on Oct. 16, 2023, Bachrach asked why Bill C-33 doesn't reflect the recommendations in the report. In response, Stephen Scott, director general of rail safety for the Department of Transport, said that “about 30” of the recommendations have either been completed, or actions are under way to complete them.

“The legislative powers we currently have under the Railway Safety Act are quite broad. It gives us quite a lot of powers already,” Scott said to Bachrach. “We are moving forward with most of the recommendations in that report.”

Bachrach said the supply chain is a “complex and multi-stakeholder ecosystem with a lot of competing interests,” and Canada needs a minister who is well-informed and able to bring people together around the table to find solutions.

“I remain open minded, but we haven't seen that kind of leadership from the minister yet,” said Bachrach. “I'm not sure [Rodriguez] brings a depth of experience when it comes to specific transportation issues, but I certainly hope that he's getting up to speed and is able to respond to the challenges we face in a more concerted way than the previous minister.”



David Gillen, director for the Centre for Transportation Studies at the University of British Columbia, says ‘the railways don't have to release any data, except through their annual reports. And they're sufficiently opaque that you can't really tell anything anyway.’ Photograph courtesy of David Gillen



Pina Melchionna, president and CEO of the Canadian Institute of Traffic and Transportation, says companies are ‘looking at who their friends are, especially in this era of geopolitical risk,’ which means considering near-shoring or friend-shoring. Photograph courtesy of Pina Melchionna

Bachrach told *The Hill Times* that “a lot of what we've seen on the transport file over the past number of years has been reactive,” and “what we need now is proactive.”

A more proactive role could include measures such as those related to enhanced data sharing and transparency in the national supply chain strategy, according to Bachrach.

David Gillen, a professor emeritus and director for the Centre for Transportation Studies at the UBC Sauder School of Business in British Columbia, agreed that improving data sharing would help ensure a more resilient network.

He said that the limited availability and accessibility of transportation data in Canada is “astonishing.”

“If I look at the United States ... I can download all sorts of information. I can download, for example, data on every transit system in the United States, and I can download it from the U.S. into Canada, and I can do research on it. I cannot get data on a single transit agency in Canada, unless I want to pay a lot of money. And the data sucks. It's absolutely terrible,” he said. “The railways don't have to release any data, except through their annual reports. And they're sufficiently opaque that you can't really tell anything anyway.”

Gillen said he would encourage

Rodriguez “to open up the data vault” to allow researchers to do more analysis.

“I think that Transport Canada is the poster child for withholding as much information as possible,” said Gillen. “If we had more data, if we had better data, we could see where the problems were.”

Pina Melchionna, president and CEO of the Canadian Institute of Traffic and Transportation, told *The Hill Times* that, since the pandemic, many companies are reevaluating the use of the “just-in-time” model of inventory management, where goods are received from suppliers on an as-needed basis.

“One of the things that we are seeing our member companies doing is increasing inventory. It's not that they moved away completely from a just-in-time inventory model, but certainly [are] thinking twice about that being their predominant model,” she said. “Just-in-time works great when you have a functioning supply chain, but when the supply chain is broken, because of a global pandemic, then you don't have inventories.”

Supply Chain Expectations for Business (August 2023)



A Canadian container ship in Halifax, N.S., on Aug. 1, 2018. Photograph courtesy of Flickr

- Nearly one in five (19.2 per cent) businesses expected supply chain challenges of some kind over the next three months, down from the second quarter (22.9 per cent).
- Businesses in retail trade (32.3 per cent) and wholesale trade (29.2 per cent) were the most likely to expect various supply chain challenges over the next three months.
- Among businesses that expected supply chain challenges of some kind over the next three months, 36.1 per cent reported that the challenges they experienced have worsened over the last three months.
- Among businesses facing supply chain challenges, nearly one-quarter (23.2 per cent) expected these challenges to worsen over the next three months, nearly two-thirds (63.4 per cent) of businesses expected the situation to remain about the same, and 13.3 per cent expected the challenges to improve. This is a shift from the previous quarter, when 14.7 per cent expected supply chain challenges to worsen, 65.2 per cent expected challenges to remain about the same, and 20.1 per cent expected the challenges to improve.

Source: Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, third quarter 2023, Statistics Canada

Rodriguez has a reputation as a politician who can fight for legislation and drive things through, and I think that's going to be very important if we're going to get a national supply chain strategy that helps Canada be more resilient in future.”

Pascal Chan, senior director of transportation, infrastructure, and construction for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, told *The Hill Times* that supply chains have largely recovered from the worst of the effects of the pandemic, but many members of the Chamber are still facing disruptions, such as inconsistent supply and inflationary pressures.

“The evolving role of transportation and logistics is critical to Canada's competitive success, but also, our supply chain is really only as strong as our weakest link,” he said. “The challenges and costs that are presented by climate shocks, such as floods [and] wildfires, they've really demonstrated how fragile many of our supply chain systems and structures really are, before you even get into the impacts of blockades and labor disruptions. Key points in our trade corridors have really experience repeated prolonged strikes, which has put more strain on a pretty precarious system already.”

The Chamber is among the organizations calling for a Canada Trade Infrastructure Plan (CTIP), which is also endorsed by groups including the Canada West Foundation, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and the Canadian Construction Association.

The CTIP seeks to devise a long-term plan, for at least 20 years, to coordinate investments in trade infrastructure for road, rail, air, port, and marine assets, along important economic corridors.

“First, define Canada's national trade corridor network to put all levels of government and industry on the same page. That coordination pieces is really big,” said Chan. “Also, bringing the private sector to the table as an ongoing contributor of sophisticated supply chain expertise, and frontline operational experience, to really complement the best features of that public sector policy. And again, that partnership with private sector and people who actually move the goods is very important.”

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The Hill Times

A rapidly changing climate and a glaring political disconnect

Climate change is on the agenda, but only sometimes, as one of several recurring issues. It might crop up when a town burns down, or when a mountainside slides over a highway in torrential rain disrupting the movement of goods.

Susan Riley

Impolitic



CHELSEA, QUE.—A block or so from Parliament Hill, Ottawa's fabled Rideau Canal Skateway has been closed for most of this mild, miserable winter. Last year it never opened at all for the first time in 52 years. It is another daily, observable, inevitable victim of climate change—perhaps not the most significant, but emotionally troubling nonetheless.

Yet, in the nearby legislative chambers, life goes on as always. Climate change is on the agenda, but only sometimes, and only as one of several recurring issues. It might crop up when a town burns down, when a mountainside slides over a highway in torrential rain disrupting the movement of goods, or when the words “carbon tax” appear as an aside in a comprehensive trade agreement with Ukraine. But, all too soon, the crisis is forgotten and attention moves to the pressing issue of who gets to use the women's washroom.

Yet, outside that bubble, Canadians are experiencing a nearly snowless winter in some regions, ski resorts struggle to stay open, record mild temperatures, northern ice roads that are no longer passable, more frequent atmospheric rivers out West, and an earlier-than-ever wildfire season already underway in Alberta. It is depressing, worrying, a source of subliminal national angst.



Long-time NDP MP Charlie Angus introduced a private member's bill that would ban deceptive advertising from the oil and gas sector, but you'd think he had proposed legalizing child pornography, so violent and dismissive was reaction to his bill. It doesn't stand a snowball's chance in Ottawa of surviving, writes Susan Riley. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The paltry snow cover and increasing average temperatures also portend another summer of smoke-choked cities—no running, cycling, or playing outdoors, for days at a time—along

with more costly impacts: thousands of families driven from their homes by fire, the expectation of drought on the Prairies and attendant crop failures, the loss of millions more hectares

of forest and habitat everywhere from Nova Scotia through Quebec and to British Columbia. Everything from insurance rates, to grocery prices, to federal and provincial disaster relief budgets, to the incidence of childhood asthma is in play.

It's impossible to ignore, you would think, but—apart from some individual MPs and Senators, and the odd cabinet minister—the people running our country are looking the other way. Or, in the case of the Conservative opposition, backwards.

When they do talk about climate in the House, the focus is usually Pierre Poilievre's fierce, dishonest and distorted attempt to “axe” the federal carbon tax—an innocuous and not dramatically effective attempt to wean us away from fossil fuels to greener alternatives.

A serious, fact-based critique of the carbon tax would be appropriate—it is, after all, only one important tool in the battle to reduce emissions, and, while it has worked in some jurisdictions, design details matter. But that is not what we have.

Instead, Poilievre blames the carbon tax for inflation, which is currently down to 2.9 per cent and expected to reach the Bank of Canada's preferred two per cent target this year—and which, according to previous central bank statements, is a trivial contributor to inflation. As to the cost of living, grocery prices are a major factor, and climate-related food shortages and corporate price manipulation are more significant drivers of higher costs than the carbon tax.

In fact, as has been pointed out many times, the belatedly re-named Carbon Tax Rebate means some 80 per cent of Canadians who pay the federal tax receive more than they spend on extra fuel costs in refunds.

These are mere facts, though, soon reduced to kindling in the fiery furnace of Question Period. Thanks to Poilievre's successful replay of Stephen Harper's original “tax-on-everything” campaign, and the government's clumsy and bureaucratic rollout, many Canadians have been convinced the carbon tax is the source of all their—very real—financial woes, and that getting rid of it will turn everything around. They are in for an awful disappointment.

And, to be fair, no one can accuse Alberta Premier Danielle Smith of ignoring climate

change—specifically any federal attempt to contain it—by limiting greenhouse gas emissions. Last week, she reacted to an interview Trudeau did with a popular Edmonton podcaster, Ryan Jespersen, accusing the prime minister of calling Albertans “fools,” and “like his father before him, trying to use Albertans as a punching bag to win votes in other parts of the country.”

Trudeau did nothing of the sort, and there is a recording to prove it. He said Albertans were being fooled “by right-wing ideologues” whose refusal to seriously address emissions from the oil sands imperils the future of the industry and the provincial economy. It isn't “eastern bastards” who are the threat, he said, but unnamed oil companies who are betraying their own workers by not preparing for a net-zero future, not investing in decarbonization, and, after scooping up profits while demand lasts, will leave behind “a dirty mess and no jobs.”

As to using Alberta as a punching bag, Trudeau insisted the province would lead the energy transition—then, in the next breath, took credit for buying the TransMountain pipeline (with a final price tag of over \$30-billion) in order to triple the output of Alberta crude to the world.

This is how every discussion of climate ends in this country: with the prime minister defending his signature carbon tax aimed at reducing emissions, while boasting the next day of his support for a pipeline that will massively increase Canada's export of fossil fuels that produce those emissions. And federal Conservatives and western premiers fighting the tiniest attempt at climate responsibility.

Back in Ottawa, there is one lonely MP who appears to notice what is happening outside his office window. Long-time NDP MP Charlie Angus introduced a private member's bill that would ban deceptive advertising from the oil and gas sector, including the Pathway Alliance's velvet-voiced TV spots declaring their commitment to a green future and praising their latest fig leaf: unproven and unscalable carbon capture and storage technology.

The ads are particularly jarring in light of a widespread industry retreat from previous promises to decarbonize. Most fossil fuel CEOs have dropped the pretence of caring about climate, and are frankly pursuing maximum profits for shareholders while supplies last. The ads just haven't caught up.

Still, you would think Angus had proposed legalizing child pornography, so violent and dismissive was reaction to his bill. It doesn't stand a snowball's chance in Ottawa of surviving.

Yet it is more urgent than ever to get their attention—the fools on the Hill—before our intimate relationship with the world we love is forever lost.

Susan Riley is a veteran columnist who writes regularly for *The Hill Times*.

The Hill Times

Global



International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen pictured speaking to reporters before Question Period on Feb. 15, 2024. Canada can play a constructive role in Africa's Sahel region, but the Liberal government nor the Conservative Party are willing to spend the money to do so, writes Bhagwant Sandhu. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

When it comes to foreign aid, Canada fails to be guided by morality

Justin Trudeau and Pierre Poilievre think that morality is contingent on the management of money. Some might call that kind of logic morally bankrupt.

Bhagwant Sandhu

Opinion



OTTAWA—Pierre Poilievre is promising to cut foreign aid if he becomes prime minister. It's

a good vote-getting ploy, except Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has already beaten him to it; and, insofar as Africa's Sahel region is concerned, he has given up on foreign aid all together.

The whole of Sahel is experiencing major political turmoil. The past few years have seen a succession of military coup d'états in Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Gabon, and Mali. Others like Tunisia, Chad, Sudan, and recently Senegal are seeing power grabs and attempts at regime change by the use of coercive legal means, sometimes called a constitutional coup.

Canada can play a constructive role in the region. But the prime minister, International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen, and Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly haven't said or done anything. Perhaps they don't see a political opportunity. Perhaps they want to

outsmart Poilievre to the punch. Or, perhaps they can't comprehend the complexities to determine how Canada's interventions could help stabilize the region.

Assuming it is the latter, they could begin by breaking with our impulse to see Africa as a static homogenous blob. The reality is Africa has the highest amount of ethnic, linguistic, and even genetic diversity on the planet. Thus, we must resist the temptation to conjure up one-size-fits-all solutions, and try instead to gain a contextual understanding of the myriad factors at play.

For coup d'états, the best place to start is with the scholarly works of the great South African academic, anti-apartheid activist, and political leader Ruth First. In her 1971 book, *The Barrel of a Gun: Political power in Africa and the coup d'état*, First reminds us that the only system of modern

governance that Africans inherited entirely intact at the time of independence was the colonial bureaucracy and its control of the chief instrument for state-driven coercion: the army. Compared to the army, civil society, tribal groups, and political parties were diffuse and relatively disorganized.

Because of this, the first wave of coup d'états was led by generals and top bureaucrats of the colonial era. They seized power to establish dynastic rule as in Djibouti, Gabon, and Togo. The subsequent waves, First notes, were led by lower-ranking officers who overthrew Western-allied elites to implement haphazard programs of economic nationalism and varying degrees of pseudo-socialism as witnessed in Libya, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

Indigenizing the political or bureaucratic structures is not

a panacea for the coup d'états because while the colonialists have physically left, their desires to secure the minerals buried in the rich terrain of the Sahel have not. Neither have their methods to arm dictators and insurgents and, recently, to fund self-serving projects for transportation routes and loading facilities.

The outcome, as First infers, is the same irrespective of who pulls the strings: the United Kingdom, United States, France, Russia, or China. The economy is mobilized to produce only one or two commodities, the natural progression for societal maturation is replaced with institutionalized corruption and nepotism, and state power is consolidated to a handful of elites. This process is periodically disrupted when the improvised resist against the inequalities. Their struggle usually ends with another coup d'état, and the cycle repeats itself again.

Canada can change things. We can follow Norway's lead, and shift our policies to emphasize capacity building in the Sahel. Like Norway, we could help diversify local economies with agriculture, clean energy, marine products, and stand up a viable middle class to guard against wealth concentration and political turbulence. But this requires money, which Trudeau has categorically refused to spend, except of course in Ukraine.

Trudeau has decided to support dictators and despots like he did in 2022 by voting for Gabon, Togo, and Rwanda to join the British Commonwealth. He is also militarizing the region under the guise of fighting terrorism. It's not working. It turns out military officers trained by Canada and our allies were involved in an astounding 12 military coups, including those in Burkina Faso in 2014, 2015, and twice in 2022; and Mali in 2012, 2020, 2021.

First was assassinated in 1982, but not before observing that arming dictators is big business, development aid is not. Maybe she was thinking of Canada. Since 1970, we have committed to spend 0.7 per cent of our GDP on aid. We have not once met that target in over 30 years. In 2022, we reached a highpoint of 0.37 per cent, only because of Ukraine. For dispensing foreign aid, we rank 18 out of 31 developed countries. Norway is third.

Unlike Canada, Norway views development aid as its moral obligation. Its leaders care about their country's moral standing in the world. Trudeau and Poilievre, on the other hand, think that morality is contingent on the management of money. Some might call that kind of logic morally bankrupt. At any rate, it's not helping our reputation, at least not in the Sahel.

Bhagwant Sandhu is a retired director general from the federal public service. He also held executive positions with the governments of Ontario and British Columbia.

The Hill Times

Silenced no more: we need a survivor-led national strategy to end human trafficking in Canada

Our legislation requires the federal government to maintain a permanent national strategy to combat human trafficking that includes clear objectives and timelines, reviewed every five years, and are trauma-informed.

Conservative Senator Salma Ataullahjan & Conservative MP Arnold Viersen

Opinion



The proposed bills would require Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, pictured, to maintain an update the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking and address the harms caused by human trafficking, write the bills' sponsors Conservative Sen. Salma Ataullahjan and Conservative MP Arnold Viersen. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Human trafficking is profitable, it's brutal, and it's only growing in Canada.

Over the span of 10 years, police-reported cases of human trafficking have increased 400 per cent. Shocking as that may be, this only represents the tip of the iceberg as much of this form of modern-day slavery remains below the radar and unreported across our country.

Sadly, victims, survivors, the frontline agencies that serve them continue to face challenges and barriers—often due to the lack of action by the federal government. While a National Strategy

to Combat Human Trafficking was launched in 2019—almost four years after the previous plan expired—it was missing measurable, a long-term approach, and most importantly, survivor input.

For example, a pillar of the 2019 Strategy contained a promise to establish a Survivor-led Advisory Committee on Human Trafficking. Almost four years later, this important promise made to survivors of human trafficking has yet to be implemented. The voices and lived experiences of victims and survivors are crucial to the success of Canada's anti-human trafficking efforts.

We believe Canada's efforts against human trafficking must be led by survivors, and be trauma informed. The measures must also be measurable, robust, and permanent.

That's why we have introduced Bill S-263 in the Senate and Bill C-308 in the House of Commons to ensure that Canada takes a serious, long-term approach to ending human trafficking. Both bills are called the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking Act.

Our legislation requires the federal government to maintain a permanent national strategy to combat human trafficking that includes clear objectives and timelines, reviewed every five years, and are trauma-informed. The legislation also requires the federal government to table annual reports in Parliament.

This type of approach has already been adopted at the provincial level. In 2021, Ontario—one of a few provinces leading by example—adopted Bill 251 which mandates the provincial government to maintain a strategy to combat human trafficking.

Further, no regulation or legislation related to human trafficking proposed by the Ontario government moves forward unless it been reviewed and approved by the survivor advisory board.

As we drafted these bills, we were deeply grateful to the survivor leaders who reviewed and provided invaluable guidance. We are also thankful for the support of many anti-human trafficking organizations including Timea's Cause, the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, the Joy Smith Foundation, #NotInMyCity, BridgeNorth, Next Step Ministries, Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation, and the International Justice and Human Rights Clinic at UBC's Allard School of Law.

We are also honoured by the support of the All-Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking which is doing great work across party lines.

Feb. 22 is Canada's National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, and we want to encourage all Parliamentarians to support bills S-263 and C-308, and help Canada take a lasting step in the fight against human trafficking.

Conservative Senator Salma Ataullahjan is a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking. Conservative MP Arnold Viersen, who represents Peace River-Westlock, Alta., is co-chair of All-Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

The Hill Times

Skilled tradespeople are essential to solving Canada's housing crisis

Here are three ways to solve the housing crisis through skills training.

Piers Young

Opinion



Canada is facing its worst housing affordability crisis in more than 40 years, putting home ownership out of reach for many young people looking to get a foothold in the market.

Despite federal investments designed to boost housing supply and expedite building approvals, the need for millions of new homes comes with additional challenges. At least as urgent as freeing up land and issuing building permits is the need for skilled tradespeople able to turn blueprints into bathrooms and concepts into kitchens.

Attracting young people to apprenticeship training and supporting their success requires a major rethink in government policy. Wage subsidies under the Canada Apprenticeship Strategy have done little to mitigate the wave of retirements in Canada's construction sector, and less to address poor completion rates in the skilled trades.

To ensure major new investments in housing are effective, we offer three policy recommendations to develop the talented tradespeople so desperately needed to address Canada's long-term housing and broader infrastructure requirements:

1. Support enrollment in pre-apprenticeship and diploma programs

Young people often struggle to convince employers to hire and register them as apprentices without the benefit of previous experience. Pre-apprenticeship and diploma programs in Canada's polytechnics are designed to build foundational trades skills and provide some certainty that apprentices are both work-

place-ready and committed to making a career in the field.

Governments could make these programs more appealing for youth by offsetting tuition in high-demand trades, and linking employer wage subsidies to registering program graduates as apprentices. Bonuses should be applied to employers of record who remain so until the apprentice is certified.

There are a number of polytechnics experimenting with low- or no-cost programs in the skilled trades as a way to attract and engage young people. For example, Humber College in Toronto offers six different tuition-free pre-apprenticeship programs in high-priority trades. Since trades programming is generally expensive to deliver, government and industry support is critical.

2. Extend post-graduate work permits for international trades students

With more than 245,000 construction workers set to retire in the next 10 years, domestic students are unlikely to fill the

gap. Attracting international students to apprenticeship via diploma programs offers a potential solution but only if post-graduate work permits are of a duration that enables the completion of an apprenticeship. This approach stands to attract foreign students to—and retain them in—occupations experiencing acute labour market demand. With a stated desire to reform post-graduate work permits, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada might want to look at skilled trades pathways more closely.

Conestoga College in Waterloo, Ont., has a head start in this area with an impressive new trades training facility, and a track record for enrolling international talent in the skilled trades. The institution provides foreign students with additional resources associated with immigration, travel and housing, easing their transition to life in Canada.

3. Offset the cost of equipment and unlock industry investment

Like many sectors, technology in the skilled trades is chang-

ing at a rapid and challenging pace. To ensure apprenticeship training continues to evolve to meet industry needs, educational providers must provide learners with access to relevant equipment, as well as systems and tools that reflect an ever-changing landscape of environmental and building codes. The federal government should consider offsetting the cost of purchasing new training equipment in high-demand occupations, and encourage industry to do the same through beneficial tax measures.

The scope of what's possible is illustrated by the British Columbia Institute of Technology's recent announcement that 45 different industry partners have contributed a combined total of \$33-million towards a new Trades and Technology Complex expected to house cutting-edge training facilities and equipment across a variety of trades.

The supply and availability of housing is a multi-faceted challenge, one being experienced in every corner of the country. Municipal zoning regulations and expedited building permits will be ineffective in the absence of skilled tradespeople to fill labour needs. Governments working in partnership with industry and Canada's technical training partners can come together to help solve the crisis.

Piers Young is a policy analyst at Polytechnics Canada, a national association of the country's leading polytechnic institutions.

The Hill Times

Opinion

Australian doc provides what-not-to-do lesson for Canadian MPs, and a how-to guide for public broadcasting

There's little that Australia's era of revolving-door prime ministers can offer Canadian politics, but a new, no-holds-barred documentary about that period provides a great example of public interest journalism.

Stephen Jeffery

Opinion



OTTAWA—A centre-left government, swept to power in a wave of optimism, clings to power with the help of a smaller party after being reduced to a minority government.

The opposition is leading in the polls under the leadership of a populist former attack dog of the last conservative prime minister. He's using his two decades in Parliament to try and bring the government down in the House while pitching policy via three-word slogans, most prominently to axe the carbon tax.

As familiar as this may sound, I'm not writing about Canada in 2024, but Australia in 2013. The opposition leader of whom I speak is Tony Abbott, who would become the country's 28th prime minister in September of that year.

He would go on to lead the conservative Liberal Party to victory after six years of Labor government, something Canadian Conservative MPs doubtless discussed with the man when he visited Ottawa back in December.

The similarities between 2013 Australia and 2024 Canada struck me as I watched the first few minutes of *Nemesis*, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) three-part series about the Liberals' next nine years in power. But, for the sake of those Canadian Conservatives who met with Abbott a couple of months ago, let's hope that's where the similarities end.



The terms of Australian prime ministers Tony Abbott, left, Scott Morrison, and Malcolm Turnbull are forensically detailed in ABC documentary *Nemesis*. Photograph courtesy of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

The documentary is the fourth such series that the ABC has commissioned as an in-depth look at a government. The value of these programs comes from both access and candour. With the exception of Abbott, every former Australian prime minister in the last 40 years has participated in these documentaries, sitting down for long-form, frank interviews about their time in office. Accompanying them are both friends and

foes—ministers, backbenchers, factional allies, advisers, senior public servants, state premiers—most of whom belong to the same party.

What follows is a government post-mortem, covering the players' moments of pride, regrets, and jabs at those who betrayed them. Interspersed with stock footage of the suburb-sized Parliament House in Canberra and fog rising from nearby Lake Burley Griffin, men and women—mostly men—sit in front of the camera and unload on their workmates.

Is it edifying? Absolutely not; in many cases it is grotesque and lays bare the self-serving nature of politics. But it is essential for the public to see what those whom they sent to the nation's capital—and paid generously—actually did with the power and privilege they were afforded. It's also a decent case for the value of public broadcasting.

The seeds of the title *Nemesis* were laid in 2015: "dry" conservative Abbott was dumped by his party and replaced by "wet" moderate Malcolm Turnbull, who in turn was swapped out for compromise candidate Scott Morrison in 2018.

The program's predecessor, *The Killing Season*, which covered the Labor governments of Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard, is a package deal with *Nemesis*. Both cover a period in which Australia's highest government office had a revolving door, and that led some paramedics to stop asking concussed patients who

the current prime minister was to determine their lucidity.

For perspective, during the prime ministerships of Justin Trudeau and Stephen Harper, Australia has had eight changes of prime minister, only three of which were due to a change of government at a federal election.

Many Australians remember where they were on those days. But beyond the bare details, we didn't know exactly what went



Then-Australian prime minister Scott Morrison, left, and then-British prime minister Boris Johnson at the G7 Summit in 2021, during which the pair hashed out what became the AUKUS submarine deal with U.S. President Joe Biden. Photograph courtesy of Justin Goff/G7 Cornwall 2021

down until a few weeks ago when *Nemesis* aired.

There's the trivial tidbits, like when Turnbull reveals that Abbott "generally told me to fuck off" after taking his job. Multiple former ministers noted that they reacted with horror and dismay when Abbott reintroduced knighthoods, and granted one to Prince Philip. When a leadership challenge against Turnbull was aborted, one Liberal MP decided to go and play tennis with Labor MP—and current prime minister—Anthony Albanese for the rest of the afternoon.

But beyond the palace intrigue, more substantial information is unveiled. We find out, for example, that when Abbott threatened to "shirtfront" Russian President Vladimir Putin after Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was shot down near Ukraine's border in 2014, he also considered sending in the military to protect the crash site.

Morrison hashed out the AUKUS arrangement with the British prime minister and U.S. president on the sidelines of the G7 summit in 2021, while the French were left in the dark about Australia's cancellation of a \$90-billion diesel submarine deal.

This type of documentary has also its critics. "All of them re-casting themselves as heroes. What a waste of time this boys club inflicted on the country. Games. Egos. BORING. And so damaging," comedian and TV presenter Julia Zemiro tweeted.

There was also the reopening of old wounds over a plebiscite on same-sex marriage that a University of Sydney study found damaged LGBTQ+ Australians' mental health, and on "robodebt," an automated welfare debt recovery system that a royal commission found was unlawful and resulted in a \$1.8-billion class action settlement. That's without getting into the consequences of Australia's draconian, bipartisan response to asylum seekers arriving by sea, also known through Abbott's three-word promise to "stop the boats."

My cynical side believes most participants in *Nemesis* took part as an "if I don't tell my story, someone else will" survival measure. But my more generous side believes that they see the right to know as a public service—that is, after all, what a career in politics is supposed to be.

Now think about the potential for a future CBC program, hypothetically titled *The Trudeau Years*. What information could we glean from those who were in the room when, for example, the SNC Lavalin scandal broke, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, the "Freedom Convoy" occupied Ottawa, or the Conservatives started consistently thumping the Liberals in the polls?

If there's one thing—and I mean only one thing—Canada can learn from Australia's politics in the 2010s it's that reflection is a virtue, and that hindsight is the next-best thing.

Stephen Jeffery is a deputy editor of *The Hill Times*, and is a recovering Australian.

The Hill Times

Former CBSA officials say they are being scapegoated in a ‘coverup’ over ArriveCan

‘The reality is this document is nothing more than a collection of baseless accusations, unsupported by any corroborating evidence, accusations of wrongdoing, supported by cherry-picked emails and calendar entries,’ Cameron MacDonald told the MPs.

BY IREM KOCA

Two public servants who were suspended without pay in connection with misconduct allegations in the \$59-million ArriveCan procurement say they are being scapegoated in a Canadian Border Services Agency “coverup.”

Former Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) employees Cameron MacDonald and Antonio Utano appeared for the second time at the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee on Feb. 22. MacDonald is an assistant deputy minister at Health Canada, and Utano is a director general at the Canada Revenue Agency.

Both have been suspended without pay and have had their security clearance revoked shortly after their first appearance at the same committee on Nov. 7, 2023, in which they accused their former CBSA superiors of providing misleading testimony to the committee.

“The CBSA then expanded hastily to look for anything throughout our entire tenure at the CBSA that could demonstrate a hint of misconduct,” said MacDonald in his opening remarks.

Utano and MacDonald—whose names appeared on contracting documents related to outsourcing work on the ArriveCan application—had previously denied any allegations of fraud, or of having cozy relationships with the vendors that worked on the ArriveCan app.

The public servants told the committee Feb. 22 that the findings of the CBSA’s “preliminary statement of facts,” which presents the findings of the agency’s internal investigation of procure-

ment misconduct allegations, implicates them for wrongdoing by sharing unfounded allegations.

“The reality is this document is nothing more than a collection of baseless accusations, unsupported by any corroborating evidence, accusations of wrongdoing, supported by cherry-picked emails and calendar entries,” MacDonald told the MPs.

The CBSA declined to provide a copy of the evidence to *The Hill Times*, but confirmed that hard copies of the findings were delivered to the committee on Jan. 29, and electronic versions were sent on request on Feb. 1.

“There’s been a cover-up and doubling down, if you will, to try and protect and withhold information from us... Something is going on... This is what is concerning to us,” said Utano, referring to delays with the CBSA’s ability to process access to information requests electronically.

On Feb. 8, 2024, data in 40 CBSA servers was made inaccessible during infrastructure maintenance performed by Shared Services Canada, according to a press release by the agency. The departments have since been working to restore services, the release said.

“We’re not asking for the investigation to go away. We’re asking for an independent investigation because we don’t believe the CBSA is capable of doing one,” said MacDonald, adding that this is why the pair took the matter to federal court. MacDonald and Utano filed a Federal Court application on Feb. 16 for a judicial review of the CBSA’s 360-page statement of facts.

Utano and MacDonald testified that they did not participate in any interviews with the CBSA during their investigation as they have not been provided with more information on allegations prior to invitations. They confirmed having spoken to Auditor General Karen Hogan very late into her investigation, and claimed the CBSA’s findings informed the inquiry.

“We’re not questioning the findings. We’re questioning the inputs. If the auditor general wasn’t given the proper inputs, then she wouldn’t be able to have the proper outputs,” said Utano.

Public servants accuse former and current CBSA officials of misleading MPs

The ArriveCan application was launched in April 2020 for travellers to Canada to submit their travel data, including vaccination

status and COVID-19 test results, at border crossings. The Government Operations and Estimates committee has been investigating how the emergency procurement of the application became a multimillion-dollar expense for the government, and who was behind the decision to award the contract to an IT staffing company called GC Strategies which used multiple subcontractors to develop the app and received millions of dollars in return.

When pressed by opposition MPs about potential misconduct in the ArriveCan procurement process, the public servants said they had not witnessed any wrongdoing. But repeating his testimony from Nov. 7, MacDonald alleged that former CBSA president John Ossowski and the vice president Minh Doan were responsible for choosing to work with GC Strategies for the ArriveCan application. He accused both Ossowski and Doan—as well as Erin O’Gorman who succeeded Ossowski as CBSA president—of lying to MPs for saying they do not know who selected GC Strategies.

“Erin O’Gorman pretended that she didn’t know who selected GC Strategies, yet she [O’Gorman] was briefed on it,” said MacDonald.

Doan, Canada’s chief technology officer, who formerly served as the CBSA’s vice president and chief information officer, testified at the same committee on Oct. 24, 2023, and told the MPs that it was his team who made that decision, but that he was not personally involved.

“That was made by my team. I believe right now, with the current allegations that are under way... I do not know who I would identify that to. That’s part of the investigations that are currently under way,” he told MPs at the time.

“We never had the authority to make the decision. Once the decision was made by the VP, Minh Doan, and the president, to move forward with GC Strategies, we were then told to execute and move forward,” said Utano on Feb. 22.

Procurement Ombud Alexander Jeglic’s investigation into the application, which was released on Jan. 29, also concluded that the practices in the ArriveCan contract threatened the transparency and integrity of the government’s procurement process, and “favoured” GC Strategies.

Both Utano and MacDonald said they had “technical authority” which allowed them to sign off on the scope of the task, and which gave them responsibilities for the

technical delivery and execution of the project. They said they did not have final say on financial components such as invoicing and reconciliation which they said lay within the procurement team and the finance branch.

The auditor general said one of the “most concerning” findings in her report was that the CBSA did not have complete and accurate financial records. Hogan estimated the overall cost of the application to be \$59.5-million, but said the exact cost could not be determined due to a lack of documentation throughout the process. The CBSA had previously estimated that the development and rollout of the app cost \$54-million.

There was never a budget allocated for the application overall, according to MacDonald who told the committee that he delivered “a detailed costing of \$6.3-million” for the first year of application before he moved on to another job. Utano told the MPs that the cost of the actual application would be between \$12-million to \$14-million which includes components such as backend support, data storage, call centres, and so on.

Chicken wings and zucchini sticks

The AG’s report also found situations where CBSA employees involved in the ArriveCan project were invited by vendors to dinners and other activities. According to Hogan, the agency’s code of conduct requires employees to advise their supervisors of all offers of gifts or hospitality regardless of whether the offer or gift was accepted, but the audit found no evidence whether such notification occurred.

When pressed by the MPs on the subject, both public servants confirmed before the committee that they had received dinner invites, some of which they’d attended. The witnesses said that per the CBSA policy, these were disclosed to their supervisor at the time, which was Doan, who MacDonald said was also present at these events.

“We did consume a shared platter. I had a few nachos and a couple of chicken wings, and half a beer,” said Utano.

“I think I had three zucchini sticks and some beer at the same event,” added MacDonald.

MacDonald also told the MPs that a package had arrived at his house holding about five little vials of whiskey, and that he had attended dinners with different vendors over the last three years. Meanwhile, Utano

showed the committee a grey backpack featuring the ArriveCan logo: a souvenir. He said everyone who worked on the application received one, and it was disclosed to the values and ethics office.

“Does this committee really think I can be bribed for a \$17 knapsack?” he asked the MPs.

MPs call for another independent investigation

The MPs agreed on a motion put forth by Conservative MP Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park-Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.) that asked the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner to investigate all the allegations of wrongdoing relating to the ArriveCan application, and report to the house by Oct. 1. The commissioner investigates wrongdoing in the federal public sector, and helps protect from reprisal whistleblowers and those who participate in investigations.

Both the House Public Accounts Committee and the Government Operations and Estimates Committee have been investigating how ArriveCan became a nearly \$60-million government expense for more than a year. The procurement ombudsman and the auditor general have also conducted their own investigations into the government’s procurement of the app.

Hogan’s Feb. 12 report concluded the federal government “repeatedly failed to follow good management practices in the contracting, development, and implementation of the ArriveCan application.”

“The RCMP has not launched an investigation into the ArriveCan app at this time,” RCMP spokesperson Jennifer Goodings told *The Hill Times* in a Feb. 20 email, adding that the Sensitive and International Investigations branch of the RCMP’s Ontario Division is “currently assessing the available information, and would be responsible for conducting an investigation, if one is required.”

Goodings added: “Each government department is responsible for investigating misconduct or mismanagement of procurement processes. The RCMP would only launch an investigation if evidence indicates that there may be criminality involved.”

In November 2022, Amir Morv and Ritika Dutt, the co-founders of Botler AI, raised allegations of procurement misconduct with the CBSA for whom they worked on a separate AI project. Botler and its co-founders were never contracted to work on ArriveCan, nor have they worked on ArriveCan, Morv told *The Hill Times* in a Jan. 29 interview. But both Morv and Dutt have been individually named as resources on a task authorization which was part of a contract between the CBSA and a joint venture that included Dalian, which GC Strategies was subcontracted in, according to Morv who said this contract was also used in the development of ArriveCan.

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The Hill Times

Heard on the Hill

Political cartoonist Michael de Adder kicks off a new cartoon strip

Continued from page 2

“So for the first few weeks I will be sharing “THE deEP STATE” cartoon strip with everyone. Eventually it will go to paid supporters first. Then regular supporters. Then social media. It is available through Substack and Patreon,” wrote de Adder on social media platform X. “Choose either Substack or Patreon, it will be the same content updated at the same time. Forgive any start up issues. Feedback wanted,” he said. de Adder is no longer under contract with *The Washington Post*.

Russian Embassy tells Canada to ‘stop interfering into our internal affairs’

The Russian Embassy has made it clear: Canada should stay out of the country’s business. “Every death is a tragedy. But the death of a Russian citizen is strictly Russia’s matter,” according to the Russian Embassy’s social media account X in a Feb. 16 post. “Thus, we urge Canada to stop interfering into our internal affairs.” The post was followed by a repost of Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson **Maria Zakharova**, noting that the “instant reaction of NATO leaders to the news of **Alexey Navalny**’s demise in the form of direct accusations vs Russia is self-exposing.”

“No forensic medical examination data IS available, yet the West has already voiced its ‘conclusions,’” according to the post. Navalny was Russian President **Vladimir Putin**’s most vocal critic for years, and was pronounced dead earlier this month at an Arctic prison where he was serving a three-decade prison term following his return to the country in 2021. “The death of Alexei Navalny has us all reeling,” Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** said in an interview on Feb. 16 with CBC News in Winnipeg. “It’s something that has the entire world being reminded of exactly what a monster Putin is.” “There is no question that Alexei Navalny is dead because he stood up to Putin, he stood up to the Kremlin. He stood for freedom and democracy and the right of the Russian people to choose their future, and that was something that Putin was deeply afraid of, as he should be,” said Trudeau, as reported by the CBC.

‘Simple pleasures’: Liberal MP Rob Oliphant makes a big ol’ pot of chicken soup

It’s February, it’s cold, and the rough and tumble world of politics these days sometimes



Chicken soup warming up on parliamentary secretary Rob Oliphant’s stove. Photograph courtesy of X

necessitates a step back and some indulgence in some of the simpler things: a pot of chicken soup, for example. Parliamentary secretary to the foreign affairs minister **Rob Oliphant** took exactly that route early last week. “With the ups and downs of a life in politics, there is something nice about coming home and making chicken soup,” wrote Oliphant, posting a photo of an orange-and-white pot on his stove. “Simple pleasures.” A veteran politician, Oliphant, who is also a United Church minister, was first elected to Parliament as the MP for Don Valley West from 2008 to 2011, and was re-elected in 2015.

Oliphant has recently made headlines following a leaked recording of a phone call with a constituent where he disagreed with his government’s decision to defund the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, a UN agency tasked with providing aid to Palestinian refugees.

Toronto Star columnist Susan Delacourt’s social media account hacked

Veteran *Toronto Star* journalist **Susan Delacourt**’s X account was hacked, prompting the paper’s Ottawa bureau chief to broadcast a message. “Delacourt’s account has been hacked. You can read her column via @TorontoStar and ignore the fake material that some creep is now duping people with on this platform,” wrote *The Star*’s Ottawa bureau chief **Tonda MacCharles** on the platform. Former Liberal Party staffer **Greg MacEachern** wrote “Hello @x? Looks like this person has [Toronto Star] columnist Susan Delacourt’s account and taken it over as their own. And given her their old account and changed their handle” on Feb. 19. A day later, MacEachern wrote “So @x and @Support someone can just take over a journalist’s (the @TorontoStar’s Susan Delacourt) account and nothing is done? The social media version of squatting?” “A hacker has taken over the account of a Canadian journalist with over 100K followers. @X has known about this for 24 hours @lindayaX and despite the police being contacted @x and @support have done absolutely nothing to shut it down,” he wrote.

Prime Minister Trudeau meets and greets at PWHL hockey game



In the back row: Sophia Prentice, Sarah Howell, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. In the front row: Abby Glandon, Zoey Dupuis. Photograph courtesy of Zoey Dupuis

The arena at TD Place in Ottawa played host to a recent Professional Women’s Hockey League game between Ottawa and Boston, and amongst those who came out for the match was Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**, who caught up with some AA players taking in the action. Some of those spectators included members of *The Hill Times* publisher **Leslie Dickson**’s daughter’s hockey team—the Ottawa Jr. AA 67s—who were in attendance, some of whom got to get a selfie with the prime minister. *The Hill Times* sponsors the U22 team, mostly made up of women aged 18 or 19. The team is 17-37-3 on the season so far.

Ex-Philippines, Indonesia envoy Peter MacArthur joins Canada-Australia forum

Diplomat **Peter MacArthur** has been named executive director of the Australia-Canada Economic Leadership Forum, an organization that promotes ties between the two countries’ public and private sector leaders. MacArthur was most recently Canada’s ambassador to the Philippines from 2019 to 2022, and ambassador to both Indonesia and Timor-Leste from 2016 to 2019. He has also been Canada’s senior official at the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation; trade commissioner in Hong Kong, Moscow, and Mumbai; and director general of Global Affairs’ South, Southeast Asia and Oceania Bureau. On the Australian front, MacArthur was seconded to the country’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra. The Australia-Canada Economic Leadership Forum is co-chaired by former foreign affairs minister **John Baird** and ex-Australian foreign affairs minister **Julie Bishop**. The forum’s 2023 event in Toronto featured Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**, Innovation Minister **François-Philippe Champagne**, Ontario Premier **Doug Ford**, and Saskatchewan Premier **Scott Moe**. mlapointe@hilltimes.com *The Hill Times*



Monday’s photo

Black History Month

Treasury Board President **Anita Anand**, pictured Feb. 21, 2024, just before holding a press conference at the Canada School of the Public Service in Ottawa to announce new initiatives as part of the government’s ongoing work to deliver an action plan for Black public servants.

The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

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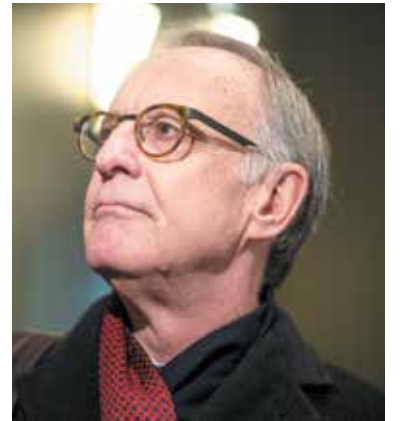
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News

Oliphant's leaked private conversation could have a 'chilling effect' on MP-constituent relationships, say some Liberal MPs



Pollster Greg Lyle says that the leaked recording of Rob Oliphant, pictured, is an uncalled-for mistake, and given the Liberals' low popularity in national polls, MPs must show more discipline or forget about winning the next election. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Unforced errors like Rob Oliphant's leaked audioteape will make it harder for the Liberals to win the next election, says Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research.

Continued from page 1

cide allegation brought against Israel at the International Court of Justice, and criticized Canada's decision to defund the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), according to the CBC.

The story reported that Oliphant said the conversation, recorded on Feb. 1 without his knowledge, was with an unnamed constituent upset over the crisis in Gaza and who has been calling for a ceasefire.

"We have half a million people at starvation levels. We're going to have cholera. We're going to have all kinds of things in Gaza. We need an immediate ceasefire," said Oliphant, CBC News' Evan Dyer reported.

The Liberal MP also reportedly said "do I believe there's genocidal activity on the part of Israel?" he said on the call. "Probably, yes, from what I have seen," but stressed that he's not a legal expert, and was giving his own view independently from the government, according to CBC.

The recording came in addition to another video circulated on social media in which Oliphant on Jan. 13 was in conversation with two individuals in which he called two of his caucus colleagues—Liberal MP Iqra Khalid (Mississauga-Erin Mills, Ont.) and Liberal MP Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Ont.)—"arrogant" for calling on Canada to back South Africa's claim that Israel was committing genocide, as reported by the *National Post*.

"I would never declare genocide unless I was in a court of law

and I have all the evidence," said Oliphant, according to the report. "I disagree completely with some of my colleagues who are so arrogant."

Two other Liberal MPs interviewed for this story said that the leaked Oliphant recordings are an important reminder that in the age of smartphones and social media, Parliamentarians have to choose their words very carefully, especially on sensitive issues like the Middle East conflict where people hold strong positions. Also, at the same time, they said that sometimes constituents misinterpret what they say and use it against them on social media.

"I try to answer constituents' questions to the best of my ability and candidly, but we have to be very careful what we say and how we say because sometime people take things out of context," said one Liberal MP who agreed to speak only on not-for-attribution basis given the sensitivity of the issue and to offer their candid views.

The Israel-Hamas war has caused sharp divisions within the Liberal caucus where MPs, especially among MPs from major urban centres representing constituents of Muslim and Jewish faiths. At the same time, progressive voters are also divided on this issue, creating a challenge for the Liberal government on how to deal with this political hot potato.

The latest iteration of this conflict that has a decades-long history started on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas militants stormed into Israel from the Gaza Strip, opening fire on Israeli communities and taking more than 250 people hostage. More than 1,100 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed. As reported by *The New York Times*, Palestinian militants fired rockets into Israel, including into Tel Aviv, with heavy retaliation quickly following from Israeli forces.

Since then, following Israel's response to the October 2023 attack, nearly 29,500 Palestinians have been killed, with children and women disproportionately represented in the dead.

Time magazine recently reported that as Israel prepares a ground invasion of the Gazan city

of Rafah, "where more than half of the Strip's 2.3 million people are sheltering," many Western capitals are calling for a ceasefire in the region—including Canada, Australia and New Zealand, who penned a joint statement to that effect on Feb. 15.

Canadians on both sides of the issue are pushing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) government to take a clear stand.

On Feb. 22, CBC News reported an open letter by the National Council on Canadian Muslims and several prominent mosques calling on MPs to back an immediate ceasefire in the region needed to protect civilians sheltering in Rafah and beyond, demanding the government reinstate funding for UNRWA, and denouncing Israel's "war crimes." The letter also called on the government to oppose the flow of arms and military equipment to Israel's government, and stand in defence of civil liberties, "including the right of Canadians to express solidarity with the Palestinian people without fear of reprisal."

"If you cannot publicly commit to all of the above, respectfully, we cannot provide you with a platform to address our congregations," according to the letter. "Ramadan is about humanity. This Ramadan, more than ever, only those MPs who share in our commitment to humanity will be welcome to address us in our sacred spaces."

Liberal MP Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* that she's been following events unfold in the region very closely since Oct. 7, and emphasized calls for "an immediate ceasefire so we can put an end to the killing of innocent people in Gaza."

Zahid said she has been having thousands of conversations with her constituents and with people across Canada who are also reiterating calls for a ceasefire.

"I've been talking to many people who have families there," said Zahid. "And many Canadians have lost their loved ones—immediate family, extended family—and they are very concerned about their loved ones being stuck there."

When asked about the tone of the conversation within the Liberal Party at the moment, Zahid said the party "has a very big tent" with caucus members representing different communities and geographical regions.

"Different caucus members bring different perspectives to the table. And we have been having important debates among our caucus members on this issue," said Zahid.

"I've been raising the concerns which I've been hearing from my constituents and by community members with my other colleagues in the caucus, and since day one, we have been having important debates on this," said Zahid.

The Liberal MP was first elected in the 2015 federal election, winning handily over Conservative candidate Roxanne James. Zahid was easily re-elected in her riding in 2019 and 2021.

Frank Graves, founder and CEO of EKOS Research, said with the Israel-Hamas war, "most well-meaning, intelligent people look at this and feel extraordinarily conflicted."

Canadians are sympathetic to both Palestine and Israel, and the numbers are about the same, and most people are somewhere in between, said Graves, noting that this has been a feature of political opinion for a long time.

"They're sympathetic to Israel, they're sympathetic to Palestine, and they think it's a big bloody mess and they're not sure how it's going to be fixed," said Graves. "This is so incredibly complex, and so deeply rooted in forces that have been unfolding to at least the end of the First World War."

Graves also said he sees considerably greater sympathy towards Palestine from those who are under the age of 35 in Canada, which is also true in the United States.

"But most Canadians would say it's time for a ceasefire, and that it was time for a ceasefire three months ago," said Graves. "And I think the older, more conservative voters are much more sympathetic to Israel."

"But I'm also finding that young people are preoccupied by other things other than geopol-

itics—they're more concerned with pocketbook issues and housing and affordability, so I don't know if [the conflict] will be motivating enough to be a ballot box issue for them," said Graves.

Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, said that, based on his own research and other polling companies, it appears at this time that the next election will likely be a change election. According to some seat projections, if the current trends do not change, the Conservatives could win more than 200 seats. If that turns out to be the case, the main reason for this change would be issues like cost of living, affordability, inflation and housing. In this environment, the Middle East conflict is unlikely to be a key factor determining the outcome of the next election, Lyle said.

"There's a big tide moving in this country," said Lyle.

"When you have a campaign of movement when we're talking about 100 seat swings in terms of the outcome for the Liberals in the Tories, it's really hard to know where the battleground seats are going to end up being, let alone what's gonna get you that extra 100 votes to go over the top we don't know yet."

Lyle, however, expressed surprise at Oliphant's comments, saying that as parliamentary secretary, he should have been more careful. Lyle said that had Oliphant been a backbencher, he could have said anything he liked, but once an MP accepts the position of parliamentary secretary, they have to show discipline. These kinds of unforced errors, Lyle said, will make it harder for the Liberals to win the next election.

Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs, said that unless there's something specific that drags Canada into the Middle East conflict, it appears unlikely to be a major factor in the next election. However, he said that ongoing Israel-Hamas war could become an issue in individual ridings with high Muslim, Jewish, and progressive voters.

"It's basically downtowns and some suburbs," said Bricker. arana@hilltimes.com
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The Hill Times

Number of threats, death threats against ministers increased during pandemic: Privy Council Office data

A security assessment for last year’s Canada Day celebrations noted that conspiracy theories and grievances over the pandemic, immigration, multiculturalism, gun control, and 2SLGBTQI+ rights ‘are fuelling violent extremist propaganda and incitements to violence.’



Two people have been charged with uttering threats against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in the last six months. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued from page 1

according to Privy Council Office (PCO) data, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland the most common targets.

Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) received 29 death threats in 2022, seven in 2021, and six in 2020, according to statistics from the PCO’s Crisis Management Cell (CMC), which co-ordinates the office’s emergency situations response.

The document, obtained by *The Hill Times*, was released via an Access to Information disclosure in November 2023 after a request for all statistics and data related to death threats against Trudeau. The document notes that Trudeau had received at least 13 death threats so far that year. It contains two tables: death threats targeting federal ministers from 2020 to 2023, and generalized “threats” to cabinet members during the same period.

The document notes that, prior to 2019, the CMC “was mostly processing ‘threat letters’” toward the prime minister, but was asked in that year to also process “threats” to both the prime minister and other ministers.

The cell recorded 110 death threats in total during the covered period, just over half of which were received in 2022. That was also the year in which the greatest number of ministers were targeted, with 15 cabinet members named. They included Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (University—Rosedale, Ont.), who was targeted in 10; Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec, Que.), who was health minister at the time, in three; and Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne

(Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Que.) and Northern Affairs Minister Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Man.).

Compared to the previous year, 2022 also saw general threats more than double, with 91 recorded against 23 ministers. Trudeau and Freeland were once again the main targets, with 25 and 16 threats respectively, followed by Duclos and Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, Que.) with six each; and five each targeting then-public safety minister Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Ont.) and then-transport minister Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Ont.).

By comparison, there were 40 threats recorded against ministers in 2021, and 27 in 2020. The data provided for 2023 showed 40 threats, of which Trudeau and Freeland were targeted in 11 each, and Mendicino in seven.

Mendicino did not respond to an interview request from *The Hill Times* before deadline, but he has spoken in the past about death threats he received on social media in 2022. The Canadian Press reported in June of that year the then-public safety minister had received death threats on Instagram after he introduced a gun control bill into the House.

Late last month, the RCMP charged a 30-year-old Montreal man with uttering threats, and alleged that he threatened to kill Trudeau on social media platform X (formerly Twitter). The charge has not yet been tested in court.

That followed the arrest of a 25-year-old Saskatoon, Sask., woman on the same charge in October. Marly Dansereau was given a conditional discharge over the

offence on Jan. 10, according to SaskToday.

Such threats were not just reserved to ministers, however, with MPs from all parties going public in recent years about the harassment and threats they have received.

As *The Hill Times* reported in November 2022, Liberal MPs Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Ont.) and Judy Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Ont.), NDP MP Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, Ont.), Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, Alta.), and Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, B.C.) had all been subjected to threats and harassment.

In May last year, Liberal MP George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Alta.) tweeted a series of voicemails left at his constituency office that included death threats against him and his family, as well as homophobic and racist slurs.

An Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre threat assessment for Canada Day celebrations in 2023 noted that “threats and threatening behaviour” over vaccines and public health mandates during the pandemic were “diversifying and have normalized violence targeting elected officials as a means to express dissent.”

The assessment, which was published by the PCO after an Access to Information request in December 2023, found that while pandemic narratives continued, conspiracy theories and grievances over topics such as immigration, multiculturalism, gun control, perceived government overreach, and 2SLGBTQI+ rights “are fueling violent extremist

propaganda and incitements to violence.” It ultimately noted that there were no indications ahead of the Canada Day celebrations of a violent extremist threat, but that such narratives could compel an individual to carry out a violent act of opportunity with little planning or premeditation.

Members of Parliament were issued with “panic buttons,” or mobile duress alarms in June 2022, which officials can press to immediately alert the Parliamentary Protective Service or local police if they are threatened.

More recently, *The Canadian Press* noted that NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) and Conservative deputy leader Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, Ont.) have been seen surrounded by police protection, as have Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic—Cartierville, Que.) and Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjit Sajjan (Vancouver South, B.C.).

CBC News reported on Feb. 20 that Senators were offered panic buttons in the fall, more than a year after the devices were offered to MPs.

During a Feb. 6 debate about the Senate Internal Economy,

Budgets and Administration report on the Red Chamber’s 2024-25 budget, Independent Senator Lucie Moncion (Ontario) said funding had increased for security, and seven new full-time equivalent positions “for initiatives related to the security of Senators” had been allocated for 2024-25.

Responding to a question from Senator Percy Downe (Charlottetown) of the Canadian Senators Group about budget increases over the past decade, Moncion noted that in addition to salary and cost increases, “there are security issues now that we did not have 10 years ago. There are security elements that are part of the budget now that weren’t there before.”

Concerns about threats to politicians pre-date the PCO statistics provided. In February 2019, then-clerk of the Privy Council Michael Wernick told the House Justice Committee that he was worried about the state of political discourse in the country.

“I worry about the rising tide of incitements to violence when people use terms like ‘treason’ and ‘traitor’ in open discourse,” he said at the time. “Those are the words that lead to assassination. I’m worried that somebody is going to be shot in this country this year during the political campaign.”

Wernick later added that he also worried “about the trolling from the vomitorium of social media entering the open media arena. Most of all, I worry about people losing faith in the institutions of governance of this country.”

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The Hill Times

Death threats against ministers					
Minister	2023	2022	2021	2020	Total
Justin Trudeau	13	29	7	6	55
Chrystia Freeland	1	10	1	2	14
Steven Guilbeault	1	1	2	0	4
Jean-Yves Duclos	0	3	1	0	4
Catherine McKenna	N/A	N/A	1	3	4
Dan Vandal	0	2	1	0	3
Sean Fraser	1	1	0	N/A	2
François-Philippe Champagne	0	2	0	0	2
Marc Garneau	N/A	N/A	1	1	2
Bill Morneau	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2
Seamus O'Regan	0	1	0	0	1
Omar Alghabra	0	1	0	0	1
Marie-Claude Bibeau	0	1	0	0	1
Marco Mendicino	0	1	0	0	1
David Lametti	0	1	0	0	1
Kamal Khera	0	1	0	N/A	1
Mark Holland	0	1	0	N/A	1
Carolyn Bennett	0	0	1	0	1
Pablo Rodriguez	0	0	1	0	1
Randy Boissonnault	0	0	1	N/A	1
Navdeep Bains	N/A	N/A	0	1	1
Patty Hajdu	0	0	0	1	1
Diane Lebouthillier	0	0	0	1	1
Carla Qualtrough	0	0	0	1	1
Harjit Sajjan	0	0	0	1	1

Source: Privy Council Office, November 2023

Feature

‘It defines the nation’s capital and community’: Ottawa MPs celebrate Rideau Canal reopening, but lament shorter seasons due to climate change

Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi says the canal is a great public space during winter where ‘you can see the incredible diversity of our country represented.’

BY JONAH GRIGNON

The Rideau Canal Skateway, the “world’s largest skating rink,” is on thin ice after it closed on Feb. 21 at 10 p.m. for the second time this year after briefly reopening for the Family Day long weekend.

It’s been a dodgy season for the historic canal, which opened for only four days in January. In 2023, for the first time in its 52-year history, the canal stayed closed all winter.

The Rideau Canal is an icon of Ottawa’s community in the winter, and a neutral public space for politicians, residents and tourists to gather. But shorter or nonexistent skating seasons pose a threat to its survival.

Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Ont.) whose riding encompasses the Rideau Canal, said he is disappointed by the mild winter season.

“I think it defines the nation’s capital and community in so many ways,” Naqvi said. “We for-



People skate on the Rideau Canal Skateway in Ottawa on Feb. 21. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

get often that we’re a capital city of a northern country. Winter is part of our lives.”

“This year when it was first announced that it’s going to get open only for a few days, there was a real thrill and excitement,” he said.

Naqvi said that the canal serves as a connection point for much of the city.

“The fact that the Rideau Canal just sort of cuts through so many parks, so many neighbourhoods, Old Ottawa South, Old Ottawa East, the Glebe, Centretown, is another accessibility piece that I often talk about, that it allows for people to be able to come from all directions and be able to use it,” he said.

Liberal MP Mona Fortier (Ottawa-Vanier, Ont.) said she’s disappointed that she didn’t get the chance to get out for a skate yet.

“I haven’t had a chance this year to go, unfortunately, and it saddens me because it’s such a great opportunity,” Fortier said. “It’s a highlight of our city, being able to skate or even to walk, and I find that it’s more and more accessible and great for people to come and discover.”

The canal has played host to many events since its inaugural skating 1971 season, including horse-racing, ice-carving, hockey and curling. Fortier and Naqvi both spoke about its status as an Ottawa icon.

Fortier said she saw the skateway as a destination for both locals and tourists.

“I know that many people from the region enjoy it,” she said. “Many people coming to Ottawa enjoy going out on the canal. [It’s important to get] people from all ages to experi-

ence the Rideau Canal, and of course, experience the Rideau Canal with a Beavertail [pastry]. I mean, they go together.”

In 2023, the National Capital Commission (NCC) spent nearly \$1-million trying to reopen the canal, but record warm temperatures kept it closed.

Fortier lamented the toll climate change has taken on the skateway’s health.

“I understand it’s weather related. It’s not that people don’t try or don’t put the effort in. I know the NCC puts all of the effort in to get it done, but if Mother Nature doesn’t collaborate ... [it’s] kind of hard to be able to offer the opportunity to go out and skate.”

Naqvi said it was a blow to him and many of his constituents to see the canal closed for an entire season.

“It was really evident to me last year when the canal did not open how many people were disappointed,” he said. “They were not able to enjoy the beauty of the canal and the opportunity to skate on it.”

“It felt like there was one less place for community to gather,” he added. “I think what amazes me is that you can see the incredible diversity of our country represented, and when you take it away, there’s one less thing to do in the winter months.”

Naqvi said he also recalled explaining to his children that the canal would not open in 2023, telling them “we’ll do all other activities, but not that particular one.”

The Rideau Canal is also a major part of Ottawa’s Winterlude festival, which has drawn crowds to the capital since 1979. Fortier commended Canadian Heritage’s ability to adapt and retain enthusiasm during last year’s fluctuations.

“Heritage Canada had to find innovative ways to continue Winterlude, and I think they did a great job to make sure that people had an opportunity to participate,” she said. “But they have to innovate and find ways to make sure the activities are held.”

Beyond just being a communal rink, the Rideau Canal also represents a sort of politically neutral territory in the heart of the capital. Ottawa resident and avid canal skater Marc Lepage called it “probably the most neutral place in Ottawa, or Canada.”

“We’ve noticed the last several years that we’re getting more people from different communities that are learning to skate,” Lepage said. “They might be coming from Africa or Asia, and they come over here and their faces just light up.”

Naqvi said he sees the canal as a unifying territory.

“It’s the accessibility piece, right?” Naqvi said. “I’m a big fan of public spaces because they don’t distinguish between people. And people of all backgrounds and of all means can use it,” he said.

Fortier said she felt similarly.

“We don’t have to talk about politics all the time,” she said. “We have to find ways to encourage people to enjoy the outdoors and enjoy the fact that we have great amenities, great destinations.”

The Hill Times



The Rideau Canal opened for only four days in January. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The canal has played host to many events since its inaugural 1971 season, including horse-racing, ice-carving, hockey, and curling. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Beyond being a communal rink, the Rideau Canal also represents a politically neutral territory in the heart of the capital. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canada needs its own productivity commission



Hello governor: Former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney, pictured in Ottawa on May 4, 2023, is an unlikely future prime minister, writes David Crane, but has the disciplined mind and broad experience needed to set a far-reaching research agenda and impose high standards for analysis. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

We need to build a new economy where innovation and productivity make real increases in per capita well-being in income and wealth generation to address the demands of health care, achieving net-zero emissions, education, and more defence spending.

David
Crane

Canada &
the 21st Century



TORONTO—Canada has been increasing the size of its economy by bringing in many people from other countries, not

by increasing our capacity for innovation, productivity, and wealth creation. This has created the illusion of growth. Many of these new arrivals have been crucial in meeting our country's many daily needs.

But on a per capita basis, immigration has created the illusion of growth; however, per capita GDP is shrinking so much on a per capita basis that we are less well off than we were a few years ago.

The reality is that Canada faces huge challenges in restructuring our economy, building a new economy where innovation and productivity generate real increases in per capita well-being in the form of rising incomes and in wealth generation to address the competing demands of health care and an aging society, the transition to a green economy with net-zero emissions, investments in education and skills training, and the demands for rising spending on defence and national security.

There are many reasons for Canada's failure to advance to a new economy, one where innovation and productivity will enable us to meet our future needs for sustained well-being in a way that is sustainable and equitable.

But a fundamental reason is a serious lack of objective analysis of where we are today, the kind of future challenges we face both domestically and globally, and what we need to do for a better future.

At the political level we lack informed debate, and are fed, instead, aspirational wishful thinking that we are already world leaders, or get transactional policies that are unrelated to any serious articulation of a national strategy. We have wishful thinking that we can have low taxes and high-quality public services at the same time, avoiding hard choices.

One answer, I believe, is to create some form of national productivity commission that can provide the independent and expert analysis of what we need to do, and how. Here, we can learn from the Europeans, though their experience shows that implementation of good advice also requires politicians brave enough to take the advice. As one former European leader once remarked, "we know what we have to do, but how would we get re-elected?"

In 2016, the European Union urged member countries to establish national productivity boards, stressing that enhancing

economic growth to sustain a widely shared decent standard of living would ultimately depend on improving output performance. Since then, 21 member-states have established such boards, the latest being Sweden, which established its Swedish Productivity Commission last year.

The problem for Europe was that innovation and investment had slowed while the competitive environment worldwide had intensified. Canada faces the same issues, perhaps even more so. The purpose of national productivity boards is to inform the national debate by tracking developments in competitiveness, investment, innovation and output, and conducting unbiased research by top experts with recommendations on ways to improve economic performance and competitiveness. All this work would be publicly available. To be effective, national productivity boards have to be independent.

The Swedish Productivity Commission is one part of an ambitious *Strategy for Sweden's Trade, Investment and Global Competitiveness* unveiled late last year. The document outlines in broad terms the issues, priorities, and opportunities Sweden faces—the kind of report that's

completely absent in Canada. The report also does something else we don't see in Canada. The strategy's objectives are to be achieved by 2030, and it promises that by 2026 there will be an evaluation of progress, and analysis of what remained to be done.

We need to have our own productivity commission, one that would provide the tracking and analysis of where we stand, and what needs to be done. For example, the world of artificial intelligence and where Canada fits in is an obvious area in need of much greater exploration and understanding.

A report from Goldman Sachs late last year on the impact of AI on geopolitics and world power warned that "generative AI marks a transformational moment that will influence the course of markets and alter the balance of power between nations." The biggest impact would be on economic growth, with generative AI potentially raising global GDP by seven per cent or almost US\$7-trillion. Generative AI is a paradigm-shifting innovation, the Wall Street bank analysts said, with ChatGPT the fastest-adopted technology in history.

Today there are two AI superpowers: the United States and China. But they are not the only countries shaping the AI future. The Goodman Sachs report pointed to what it called non-great powers with the capacity in AI, and increasingly the will to assert themselves on the world stage, naming in particular Britain, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, South Korea, Taiwan, and India as key players.

Surprisingly, given our boasting that we are a world leader in AI, Canada was not mentioned. While we excel in AI in our university training and research, it may be that our role has been largely to train talent and do fundamental research that benefits other countries. Canadian-trained talent can be found working in AI centres around the world. And while we can boast of homegrown AI patents, many of these are owned by multinationals using our talent in Canadian-based R&D branch plants.

A productivity commission could provide us with the kind of AI roadmap we need, and show how AI could be used build Canadian firms with AI products and services that can compete in world markets.

One potential candidate to start it off with high standards is Mark Carney. He is an unlikely future prime minister. But the former governor of the Bank of Canada—and Bank of England—has the disciplined mind and broad experience needed to set a far-reaching research agenda, and to impose the necessary high standards for analysis. We need a more successful Canada rather than fading away as the tired old man in a North American attic. Productivity achieved sustainably with the benefits shared fairly is the answer.

David Crane can be reached at crane@interlog.com.

The Hill Times

The Big Photo

Right down to the brass tacks: The north hallway on Centre Block's fifth floor where the Parliamentary Cafeteria was located, pictured Feb. 7, 2024. The Centre Block is undergoing a \$4.5-billion to \$5-billion renovation and revitalization project, and is not expected to reopen at least until 2032.



The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Inside Centre Block’s big renovation

The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade & Laura Ryckewaert



The Senate Chamber. All photographs were taken on Feb. 7, 2024, inside the Centre Block, which is undergoing a \$4.5-billion to \$5-billion renovation and revitalization project. The massive project is supposed to be finished in 2031.



A worker involved in slab replacement work is seen on the first floor in the general vicinity of the old Charles Lynch Room, 130-S Centre Block.



Caution tape crosses an opening leading to the Parliamentary Restaurant on Centre Block’s sixth floor, marking it as an area with heritage assets.



Doors to the Official Opposition Leader’s Office on the fourth floor.



Two steel piles, which have been drilled and capped off, on the sub-basement level. They are two of a cluster of four which will serve as one of many points onto which the building load will be transferred ahead of excavations underneath Centre Block.



The Parliamentary Restaurant on the sixth floor of Centre Block has—like the vast majority of the rest of the building—been stripped back to bare bones, with much of that work having taken place between June and December of last year.



Laura Ryckewaert
Hill Climbers

International Development Minister Hussen adds policy adviser to team

Plus, there are a few staff changes to note since Hill Climbers' last update on Justice Minister Arif Virani's office.

International Development Minister **Ahmed Hussen** recently grew his policy team by one with the addition of new policy adviser **Manraj Khurana** in January.

Khurana graduated with a juris doctor degree from the University of British Columbia last year, and is a former 2022 summer law student with the Sachdeva Milne Law Group in Brampton, Ont. While at UBC, he was active with the Law Students' Legal Advice Program. Khurana is also a former director at large of B.C. Artistic Swimming, and holds a bachelor of science degree with a specialization in integrated science with biology from Western University.



Manraj Khurana is now a policy adviser to Minister Hussen. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Khurana's addition brings Hussen's policy team up to four staff total. Led by director **Olga Radchenko**, the unit currently also includes senior policy adviser **Adam Gordon**, and policy and outreach adviser **Isa Topbas**.

The international development minister's office is now 14-staff strong, with **Mike Maka** at the helm as chief of staff. Along with the policy team, Hussen's office includes **Hursh Jaswal**, deputy chief of staff; **Pierce Collier**, director of issues management and parliamentary affairs; **Izzidine Al-Mufti**, parliamentary affairs adviser and issues manager; **Jordan Wilson**, director of operations; **Aliya Deria**, special assistant for operations; **Ladan Nur**, special assistant for outreach; **Olivia Batten**, press secretary and communications assistant; and **Geneviève Lemaire**, digital communications adviser.

There are some updates to report in Justice Minister **Arif Virani's** office, which **Hill Climbers** last checked in with at the beginning of October. Since then, three staff have joined the minister's team, bringing the total office roster up to 21-staff long.

In December, **Hafsah Asadullah** joined Virani's office as a communications adviser after roughly two years doing digital communications work for Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly**.



Hafsah Asadullah is a communications adviser to Minister Virani. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Prior to joining Joly's team after the 2021 election—which she spent as a digital strategist for the Liberal campaign—Asadullah spent most of that year as a communications assistant to Hussen as then-families, children, and social development minister. She's also a former constituency assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Adam van Koeverden**, a past director of communications for Ontario the Young Liberals of Canada, and former member of the board of directors for the Canadian Women's Foundation, amongst other past experience.

Press secretary **Chantalle Aubertin** was promoted to deputy director of communications to Virani in November, adding



Justice Minister Arif Virani speaks with reporters outside the House of Commons Chamber in the West Block on Jan. 30, 2024. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen speaks with reporters in the House of Commons foyer in the West Block on Feb. 15. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Chantalle Aubertin is now deputy director of communications and press secretary to the justice minister. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

that title to her existing one. She's been working for the justice minister since 2021, starting as press secretary to then-minister **David Lametti**, and added to senior communications adviser to her title after the cabinet shuffle last summer.

A former constituency assistant to now-Ontario Liberal MP **Yasir Naqvi** during his time at the provincial legislature, Aubertin has been working on the Hill since 2018 beginning as an aide to then-environment minister **Catherine McKenna**. She's since also been a communications and issues adviser, and later press secretary to McKenna as then-infrastructure minister.

David Taylor remains director of communications to the justice minister.

Also in November, **Mélanie Le Bouédec** was hired as a special assistant for judicial affairs. As such, Le Bouédec plays a role in helping with the federal judicial appointment process, of which there is currently a backlog.

In May 2023, the Chief Justice of Canada wrote a letter to Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** calling the backlog's impact "untenable," and warning of fears of a "crisis" in the justice system as a result. On Feb.

13, the Federal Court of Canada issued a set of declarations stressing the need for judicial appointments to be made "within a reasonable time of the vacancy," and the expectation that the current list of vacancies "will be materially reduced within a reasonable time."

Le Bouédec is a former articling student with Donnelly Law in Toronto, and a past judicial clerkship intern with the

Ontario Court of Justice in Windsor, Ont. She has a juris doctor degree from the University of Windsor, and a bachelor's degree in political science, history, and literature from the University of Toronto.



Mélanie Le Bouédec is a new judicial affairs assistant to Minister Virani. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

François Giroux continues as a judicial affairs adviser.

Maha Jawass is also now working in Virani's office as executive assistant to chief of staff **Lisa Jørgensen**, having been hired in October.

Jawass was previously working at Queen's Park for a member of the provincial legislature. Ahead of the 2022 provincial election, she was a volunteer co-ordinator for then-Liberal candidate **Karim Bardeesy** in Parkdale-High Park, Ont., who ultimately came second to now-NDP MPP **Bhutila Karpoche**. Jawass also has experience as a communications specialist with Family Service Toronto, among other things.

Banafsheh Shamdani is executive assistant to the minister.

In addition to those already mentioned, currently working for the justice minister are: **Seth Pickard-Tattrie**, deputy chief of staff and director of parliamentary affairs; **Tania Monaghan**, director of rights implementation; **Morgan MacDougall-Milne**, director of litigation; **Alicia Castelli**, director of operations; **Jessica Spindler**, director of policy; **Dahlia James**, senior policy adviser; **Keith Torrie**, senior policy adviser; **Isabelle Laliberté**, policy adviser; **Lindsay Jean**, policy and Quebec regional affairs adviser; **Chris Knipe**, senior operations and Ontario regional affairs adviser; **Anna Lisa Lowenstein**, issues manager and parliamentary affairs adviser; **Chantal Tshimanga**, special assistant for parliamentary affairs and West and North regional affairs; and **Charlie Skipworth**, Atlantic regional affairs adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP **James Maloney**.

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The Hill Times

Parliamentary Calendar

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

Champagne to speak at Ottawa Mayor's Breakfast on Feb. 27 at Ottawa City Hall



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 on Thursday, Feb. 29, at 7 a.m. ET at Ottawa City Hall. *The Hill* Times photograph by Andrew Meade

MONDAY, FEB. 26

House Sitting Schedule—The House is scheduled to sit for a total of 125 days in 2024. The House 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 Nov. 15. It resumes again on Nov. 18, and is scheduled to sit from Nov. 18-Dec. 17, and that will be it for 2024.

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 kmcmlin@nimbus.ca.

MONDAY, FEB. 26

NACCA Parliamentary Reception—The National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association—along with MPs Jamie Schmale, Daniel Blaikie, Jaime Battiste, and Sébastien Lemire—invite all MPs, Senators, and staff to join us for a reception to showcase Indigenous entrepreneurship and success. Monday, Feb. 26, 5-7:30 p.m., 310 Wellington Building. Please RSVP to Shawn Driscoll at Shawn@sandstonegroup.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—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.

Roundtable: 'Global Perspectives on Gender Parity'—The Global Centre for Pluralism, Women Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Ottawa, and 14 Senators from across party lines will host a roundtable on "Beyond Numbers: Global Perspectives on Gender Parity." In 2023, the Senate of Canada attained gender parity. Parliamentarians are invited to explore the key questions and broader implications surrounding the impact of striving for gender parity, and the work needed in achieving gender parity and equality. A reception will follow. Tuesday, Feb. 27, at 5:30p.m. ET at the Global Centre for Pluralism, 330 Sussex Dr. RSVP: holly.patterson@pluralism.ca.

Bellemare to Discuss Bank of Canada Act—PSG Senator Diane Bellemare will take part in a discussion on "Why is it Necessary to Review the Bank of Canada Act?" hosted by the University of Ottawa. This conference will present in more depth how the Bank of Canada Act could be revised for adapting monetary policy to this new context while preserving its independence. Tuesday, Feb. 27, at 11:45 a.m. ET in FSS 4004, 120 University Priv., University of Ottawa. Details online: cips-cepi.ca.

TUESDAY, FEB. 27—WEDNESDAY, FEB. 28

Minister MacAulay and MPs to Attend CFA's AGM—Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay, NDP Agriculture Critic Alistair MacGregor, Bloc Québécois Agriculture Critic Yves Perron, and Conservative Agriculture Critic John Barlow will attend the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's Annual General Meeting taking place from Tuesday, Feb. 27, to Wednesday, Feb. 28 at the Delta Hotels Ottawa City Centre, 101 Lyon St. N. Call 613-366-4721.

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/npsia.

Minister Valdez to Deliver Remarks—Minister of Small Business Rechie Valdez will deliver remarks on "Small Business Re-Wired: Supporting Canada's small businesses through an accelerating digital transformation," hosted by Canada 2020. Wednesday, Feb. 28 at 12 p.m. ET at the Canada 2020 Studio, 3rd floor, 35 O'Connor St. Details online: canada2020.ca.

Chief of Defence Staff Eyre to Deliver Remarks—The Canadian International Council hosts a lecture by Canada's Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre who will speak on "Canadian Armed Forces Readiness in a Complex Security Environment." Wednesday, Feb. 28, at 4 p.m. PT at SFU Harbour Centre Campus, 515 West Hastings St., Vancouver, B.C. Details online: thecic.org.

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.

Black History Month Closing Ceremony—Elevate International hosts its Black History Month Closing Ceremony, "Black Excellence," recognizing and celebrating Black women's leadership

and contributions in our society. Participants include senior leaders from all sectors, ambassadors, high commissioners, and community builders from all cultural backgrounds. Thursday, Feb. 29, at 5:30 p.m. ET in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, Parliament Hill. Details online via Eventbrite.

SATURDAY, MARCH 2

Italy's Prime Minister in Toronto—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will welcome Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, on her visit to Toronto. Contact media@pmo-cpm.gc.ca.

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

Byelection in Riding of Durham, Ont.—A federal byelection will take place in the Ontario riding of Durham today.

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 11:45 a.m. ET at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel. Register at events.economicclub.ca.

TUESDAY, MARCH 5

Webinar: 'How Women are Reinventing Our Future'—For International Women's Day, the Canadian Association for Business Economics hosts a webinar: "Shaping Our Worlds: Perspectives on How Women are Reinventing Our Future," featuring Marci Surkes, former executive director of policy and cabinet affairs in the PMO, now with Compass Rose; Vicky Saunders, founder of Coralus (formerly SheEO); and Dawn Desjardins, chief economist, Deloitte Canada; who will share their experiences from the private and public spheres of economic decision-making. Tuesday, March 5, at 1 p.m. ET taking place online: cabe.ca/events.

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. Details online: afn.ca.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

Dialogue on and with Women in International Relations—To celebrate International Women's Day, uOttawa's Centre for International Policy Studies and the International Women's Forum host roundtable discussion on women in international relations. Participants include Ambassador of Costa Rica to Canada Adriana Solando Laclé; Ambassador of Argentina to Canada Josefina Martínez Gramuglia; Ambassador of Kuwait to Canada Reem Alkhaled, and Sheri Meyerhoffer, Canada's ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise, among others. Wednesday, March 6, at 5:30 p.m. ET in DMS 12102, 55 Laurier Ave E, University of Ottawa. Details online: cips-cepi.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.

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