

McPherson

one of most  
important  
MPs in  
Ottawa

Doug Roche:  
p. 14

Trudeau's  
climate plan  
worth  
fighting for

Sheila Copps: p. 9

Environment  
lobby  
heats up

p. 6

Michael  
Harris

p. 10

Susan  
Riley

p. 15



# THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR, NO. 2109

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024 \$5.00

NEWS

## Liberals' federal riding associations out-fundraised Conservatives by \$2-million in 2022

BY ABBAS RANA &  
PETER MAZEREEUW

While Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals currently trail the Conservatives in national fundraising, at the riding level the party out-raised its principal opponents by \$2-million across the country in 2022.

According to a *Hill Times* analysis of 2022 annual statements filed with Elections Canada—the most recent publicly-available data—Liberal electoral district associations nationally raked in \$5.6-million that year, and their Conservative counterparts raised \$3.6-million.

All riding associations will file their 2023 statements with Elections Canada by May 31.



**Top 10 riding association fundraisers:** The ridings represented by Liberal MPs Charles Sousa, top left, Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly, Salma Zahid, George Chahal and Shafqat Ali; and Conservative MPs Melissa Lantsman, above left, Ed Fast, Glen Motz, Michael Barrett, and Anna Roberts raised the largest amounts of money in their respective parties in 2022.

*The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade, Sam Garcia, Stuart Benson, and courtesy of Facebook

NEWS

### Ministers' letters, advertising, and lobbying: advocates make final requests as 2024 budget process nears its end

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

Ensuring that a budget request stands out from hundreds of others requires a multi-pronged approach, whether through targeting caucus, ministers, or the wider public with a topical issue that can garner support, according to a former adviser to the Liberal government.

"Every budget process has hundreds of hundreds and hundreds of submissions that will be made, and hundreds and hundreds of stakeholders that are going to be competing for time on the schedules of staff in the PMO and finance," said Tyler Meredith, the former lead economics adviser to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) and his finance ministers. "The process inside government, which is actually what this is all aimed at—trying to influence the decisions that the government and the finance minister and the prime minister will take—really happens in the space of November to March or April."

Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) will deliver the 2024 budget on April 16. But that budget has taken months of planning, as

Continued on page 24

Continued on page 26

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Mike Lapointe

## Heard On The Hill

# The race is on: candidates lining up to run in Tory MP Ed Fast's Abbotsford, B.C., seat



Conservative MP Ed Fast, left; Mike Murray, who worked as Fast's executive assistant; and Steve Schafer, vice-president of the Langley-Aldergrove riding association. Fast recently announced he will not run in the next federal election campaign. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade, photographs courtesy of Facebook

Conservative MP **Ed Fast**, who has served in the House of Commons since 2006 and who was the international trade minister under prime minister **Stephen Harper** from 2011 to 2015, has announced he will not seek re-election.

The race is now on for his party to find a replacement to run in the solidly Conservative riding of Abbotsford, B.C., that Fast has won decisively in the past six elections.

The first candidate to throw his name in the ring was **Mike Murray**, who's worked as Fast's executive assistant.

**Steve Schafer**, vice-president of the nearby Langley-Aldergrove, B.C., Conservative riding association, has also thrown his hat into the ring.

In a statement, Fast said "it has been more than 18 years that I have served as Abbotsford's representative in Parliament, and it's now time for the next generation of leader to step forward and represent the residents of our community."

"I have asked our party leadership to begin an open and fair process to choose that leader," said Fast, as reported by *The Abbotsford News*.

## 'Pierre doesn't care': Housing Minister Fraser slams Poilievre in new attack ad

Housing Minister **Sean Fraser** has come out swinging against

Conservative Leader **Pierre Poilievre**'s approach to tackling Canada's housing affordability crisis in a new video released March 16.

"Pierre Poilievre pretends to care about you helping to find a home," said Fraser. "The truth is he doesn't listen to the way he talks about starter homes for young people in this country."

"A tiny little shack," said Poilievre, as the video pans to a white house.

The video then cuts to the woman who lives there.

"He called it a shack. A shack. That was a little embarrassing also, because it's not," the unidentified woman said.

"What's more alarming than what is in his plan is what's missing," said Fraser.

"There's no mention of students, no mention of seniors, no mention of the most vulnerable, and not a single measure designed to help you own a home," said Fraser. "Pierre's plan isn't going to solve the housing crisis because Pierre doesn't care about the people that it impacts most. Pierre doesn't

care about your community. Pierre doesn't care about building more homes."

"The thing that Pierre cares about most," said Fraser, before panning to a number of shots with Poilievre saying "when he's prime minister"... "is Pierre," said Fraser.

## Richard Fadden, PM's ex-national security adviser, to discuss new geostrategic framework

**Richard Fadden**, who served as national security adviser to the prime minister from 2015 to 2016, and as deputy minister of national defence from 2013 to 2015, will speak at an event entitled "The New Geostrategic Landscape and the Need for an Integrated Approach to Foreign, Defence, and Security Policy" in Ottawa on March 26.



Housing Minister **Sean Fraser** recently released a new video online attacking Conservative Leader **Pierre Poilievre**'s position on housing. Photograph courtesy of X

The in-person event, scheduled for March 26 at 5:30 p.m. at the Delta Hotels by Marriott Ottawa City Centre, is open to everyone. Tickets cost \$50 for the public, \$30 for Canadian International Council members, and \$20 for students. After registering, people will receive a confirmation email.

## Stephen Maher details Trudeau's reign in *The Prince*

Veteran Parliament Hill journalist **Stephen Maher** has turned his attention to Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s government in his forthcoming book *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*.

Publisher Simon & Schuster is pitching the book as the "first comprehensive biography" of Trudeau as prime minister, and "an honest, compelling story of his government's triumphs and failures, based on interviews with over 200 insiders and Trudeau himself."

"Through hundreds of interviews with political insiders, [Maher] describes how Trudeau—a Canadian prince—had the famous name, the political instincts, the work ethic, and the confidence to overcome errors in judgment and build a global brand, winning in the boxing ring and on the debate stage," the publisher's description states. "And then things changed as key people left the Trudeau team and the government lost direction."

Maher wrote on X (formerly Twitter) on March 20 that he started work on the book 16 months ago.

*The Prince* goes on sale on May 28.

## Former Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff to talk democracy

Former Liberal Party leader **Michael Ignatieff**, who served in the party's top job from 2008 to 2011 and is now rector emeritus of Central European University, is scheduled to give a talk on March 27 in Ottawa titled, "What if Democracy's Greatest Enemy is Democracy Itself?"

"Democracy is a 'promiscuous legitimizer': it is used to legitimize frankly authoritarian regimes, majoritarian democracies and liberal democracies alike," reads the event description.

The event will be chaired by **Marie-Eve Desrosiers**, chairholder of the International Francophonie Research Chair in Political Aspirations and Movements in Francophone Africa, and associate professor at the University of Ottawa, and will be moderated by **Nic Cheeseman**, professor in the Democracy, International Development Department at the University of Birmingham.

This event is part of the "What the rise of authoritarian middle

powers means for global politics" workshop hosted by the University of Ottawa on March 27 at 12:30 p.m. ET. Learn more at [cips-cepi.ca](https://cips-cepi.ca).

## CP reporter Dylan Robertson wins 2024 R. James Travers Foreign Corresponding Fellowship

Canadian Press reporter **Dylan Robertson**, who covers international affairs with the media organization's Ottawa bureau, has been awarded this year's \$25,000 R. James Travers Foreign Corresponding Fellowship.

Carleton University's **Susan Harada**, who works in the School of Journalism and Communication, alongside **Ben Travers**, who are co-chairs of the Travers Fellowship Steering Committee, made the announcement on March 20.

The fellowship is administered by Carleton, and annually supports a significant foreign reporting project by Canadian journalists or journalism students, according to a release.

"Robertson's multi-platform project will examine a number of Commonwealth countries in Africa whose human rights are supported by Canada, but whose laws and regulations around 2SLGBTQI+ rights are rapidly shifting," according to the release. "The series would show Canadians what impact they have on some of the most vulnerable 2SLGBTQI+ people, and how our government and grassroots actors can safely advance support."

Hard said the project "will come at a key moment for 2SLGBTQI+ rights around the world. According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, 2023 was a particularly bleak and unpredictable year for LGBT and gender-diverse people."

Travers added that "Robertson's project is a vital investigation that promises to bring global stories together into a picture of the progress—and troubling headwinds—for 2SLGBTQI+ rights."

Robertson will visit Ghana, Cameroon, and Kenya as part of the project. "In each country, there are trends that threaten the safety of gender and sexual minorities, but there are also stories of people winning their rights and asserting identities that existed before colonization," he said.

The Canadian Press will publish the work from Robertson's project in both English and French "via hundreds of newspapers, broadcasters and magazines, and will also be housed permanently on CP's website," according to the release.

The fellowship was established in 2011 in honour of **Jim Travers**, a former editor, political columnist, and foreign correspondent who deeply believed in the value of international journalism.

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The Hill Times



# Mulroney's lying in state: a contemplative, Canadian tribute

Two *Hill Times* reporters queued on Wellington Street for Brian Mulroney's lying in state on March 20. This was our experience.

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY &  
CHRISTINA LEADLAY

PARLIAMENT HILL—Spring officially started as us two *Hill Times* reporters queued on Wellington Street for Brian Mulroney's lying in state on March 20. By Ottawa spring standards it was pretty nice—dry roads, overcast and 1C—not bad conditions to join the 100-odd people already lined up to pay their respects to the former prime minister and his family.

This was the second of two days that Mulroney lay in state in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, the wonderful Beaux-Arts structure built in 1930. The day prior, Ottawa's political dignitaries were among the close to 1,000 people who offered their condolences to the family—wife Mila, daughter Caroline, sons Ben, Mark, and



Late prime minister Brian Mulroney's casket is carried from the Sir John A. Macdonald Building to a waiting hearse in Ottawa on March 20, 2024, after lying-in-state. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Nicolas, and Mark's wife Vanessa—and to sign the half-dozen condolence books.

On this day, for a few hours between breakfast and lunch, the regular folks got

their turn to say goodbye before Mulroney's casket and his family made their way to Montreal for further lying in repose ahead of the weekend state funeral.

Ottawans are used to seeing Wellington Street closed in recent years. What was

Continued on page 27

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## News

# Cabinet confidences not ‘black or white’ says former Privy Council Clerk in House Ethics Committee study of SNC-Lavalin affair

Wernick’s testimony leaves more questions than answers at hearings happening over five years after the scandal, said Democracy Watch co-founder Duff Conacher.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A former clerk of the Privy Council spoke against a “black or white” interpretation of cabinet confidentiality during a House Ethics Committee meeting last week where MPs questioned if privileges against disclosing certain cabinet details could have impeded an RCMP assessment of the Liberal government and the SNC-Lavalin affair.

Speaking with *The Hill Times* following the meeting, committee member and Liberal MP Parm Bains (Steveston-Richmond East, B.C.) said: “I think we’ve heard many times now from multiple witnesses, whether it’s the ethics commissioner and others, how cabinet confidences are there to protect the interests of Canada.”

“If there’s an issue of criminality, they have to submit it to the RCMP, and we heard that from the commissioner of the RCMP, as well. I think really, there’s mechanisms in place and if there’s something where we need to explore further, then we’re happy to do it,” said Bains.

Former clerk Michael Wernick testified before the House Ethics Committee on March 19 as the committee continued a study of an RCMP decision not to pursue a criminal investigation in regards to the SNC-Lavalin affair.

Wernick served as clerk in 2018 when then-attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould said she felt pressure from within the government, including from the Privy Council Office and the Prime Minister’s Office, to intervene in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, a Quebec-based engineering firm. In January 2023, the RCMP released a decision not to pursue a criminal investigation into the matter on the grounds there was insufficient evidence to do so after reviewing all publicly available data. During the assessment, the RCMP did



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has consistently denied any wrongdoing either on his part, or on the part of senior officials in his government since the SNC-Lavalin affair first made headlines in 2019. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

request access to confidential cabinet documents, which was denied by the Privy Council Office, according to records made public on Oct. 16, 2023, by Democracy Watch.

The decision not to disclose certain cabinet information to the RCMP was made by Ian Shugart, who assumed the role of Clerk of the Privy Council following Wernick’s resignation from the role in April, 2019. Shugart—who was appointed to the Senate in September 2022—died on Oct. 25, 2023, after a lengthy illness.

During the meeting, NDP MP Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.), his party’s ethics critic, asked Wernick about whether cabinet confidences provide a shield against oversight for criminal accountability.

“It’s never that black or white. The onus should be to disclose as much as possible to formal legal processes like the police and the courts, but there may always be cases where redaction is appropriate,” said Wernick. “We’re having a discussion now about the location of documents involved in Chinese intelligence activities within Canada. It would be a very bad idea to simply turn over all the documentation without redaction.”

Wernick told the committee that the Privy Council clerk makes decisions regarding what information is redacted in documents. Green asked if the prime minister could waive cabinet confidence at any time, despite recommendations by the clerk and by legal advisors, and Wernick told the committee that would be “a discussion between the clerk and the prime minister,” but ultimately the final decision rests with the clerk.

Later in the meeting, Conservative MP Michael Barrett (Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ont.), his party’s ethics critic, asked Wernick his thoughts on cabinet confidences “being used to hide wrongdoing and shield members of the executive from effective investigation by police.”

Wernick responded that it would depend on what the cabinet confidences in question were, and what they would have led to.

When Barrett said that waiving cabinet confidences in this case would have led to charges against Trudeau, Wernick said “that’s your hypothesis.”

Barret said the prime minister used his power to shield himself from effective investigation by police, and referred to Wilson-Raybould being “kicked out of cabinet” as an example of the “heavy hammer the prime minister was able to carry.”

Wernick responded that was one narrative.

“Another narrative would be that the maximum pressure put on the attorney general was to provide reasoning and rationale why she declined to use the tool—an entirely legal tool—that was provided by cabinet, the deferred prosecution agreement, which was made available for certain cases” he said. “Deferred prosecution agreements are not an illegal act. They are a legal tool.”

SNC-Lavalin, which rebranded as AtkinsRéalis as of Sept. 13, 2023, was charged in February 2015 with criminal offences that allegedly took place between 2001 and 2011. However, under a remediation deal also called a deferred prosecution agreement, the criminal charges could have been deferred or suspended.

Wilson-Raybould claimed that, in a conversation with Trudeau on Sept. 17, 2018, and with Wernick in attendance, the prime minister told her they need to “find a solution” for SNC-Lavalin to avoid job losses. Wilson-Raybould later resigned from cabinet in February 2019.

Then-ethics commissioner Mario Dion released the Trudeau II report on Aug. 13, 2019, which found that Trudeau violated the Conflict of Interest Act by trying to influence Wilson-Raybould, who resigned from cabinet on Feb. 12, 2019.

The scandal encompassed several additional resignations in 2019, including Gerald Butts, then-principal secretary to Trudeau, who resigned that same month, and Jane Philpott, then-president of the Treasury Board and minister of digital government, who quit cabinet that March.

Since the SNC-Lavalin affair first made headlines, Trudeau has consistently denied any wrongdoing either on his part, or on the part of senior officials in his government.

At the committee meeting, Wernick also testified that he had not been interviewed by the RCMP during their assessment into whether to pursue a criminal probe into Trudeau and the SNC-Lavalin affair.

“The question of obstruction of justice, which is a criminal offence, was raised with respect to the prime minister’s involvement in the SNC-Lavalin scandal. This is, of course, events in which you were involved. Most Canadians would have expected that you would have been interviewed on that subject. Do you think you should have been interviewed in the RCMP’s pursuits with respect to obstruction of justice concerns, or allegations about prime minister Justin Trudeau?” asked Barrett at the meeting.

“I have no view on that,” responded Wernick. “It’s up to the police who they decide to interview.”

Following the committee meeting, Duff Conacher, the co-founder of Democracy Watch, said in an emailed statement to *The Hill Times* that Wernick’s testimony left “many serious unanswered questions.”

“While Mr. Wernick committed to disclosing some secret records to the committee, and the committee may also demand disclosure of more secret records from the Cabinet, given the Cabinet will likely resist disclosure and that the RCMP is still hiding thousands of pages of records, likely a full public inquiry will be needed to determine exactly what happened and who was involved in all the very questionable actions and decisions at the time,” said Conacher in the emailed statement.

“The fact that the committee is holding these hearings more than five years after the scandal, and that the hearings have revealed how much remains secret and how many questions remain unanswered, shows how dangerous it is to have negligently weak and delayed investigations by key watchdogs and the police into scandals.”

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The Hill Times



Conservative MP Michael Barrett said ‘the question of obstruction of justice, which is a criminal offence, was raised with respect to the prime minister’s involvement in the SNC-Lavalin scandal.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



# As Atlantic Canada's largest newspaper chain falters, some media experts want more support for entrepreneurs looking to fill the gap



Canadian Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge is responsible for programs like the Online News Act and Local Journalism Initiative. Some MPs and media experts in Atlantic Canada are not convinced these are the solutions for a changing media landscape in the region. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

'When I do any kind of public announcement in my riding ... noticeably absent is media,' said N.L. Liberal MP Churence Rogers. 'There's hardly anybody ever in the room.'

BY IAN CAMPBELL

**S**T. JOHN'S, N.L.—With the future of one of Atlantic Canada's largest digital news outlets in question, there remains a need for reliable reporting and good storytelling, say MPs and media experts in the region—but not everyone is convinced Ottawa's current efforts to help fund journalism have hit the mark.

On March 11, SaltWire Network Inc.—Atlantic Canada's largest newspaper chain—filed for creditor protection. The same day, Fiera Private Debt Fund—a private equity firm which is owed tens of millions of dollars by SaltWire—initiated insolvency proceedings against the company.

The news comes only a few months after Ottawa reached a deal with Google for it to inject \$100-million into the Canadian news industry under the Online News Act—the largest share of which will go to print and digital publications. The federal government has also sought to help the news industry with programs like the Local Journalism Initiative, which provided funding to news organizations

including SaltWire to hire reporters to produce civic journalism for underserved communities. That program's future was in question as recently as last month, as it approached an end-of-March expiry date, but on March 1, Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge (Brome-Missisquoi, Que.) announced \$58.8-million in funding to extend the program for another three years.

SaltWire emerged as Atlantic Canada's largest print and digital media company in 2017, when the owners of the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* purchased 27 other publications operating in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador, including three other large dailies—*The Telegram* in St. John's, N.L., *The Guardian* in Charlottetown, P.E.I., and *The Cape Breton Post* out of Sydney, N.S.—as well as numerous publications in smaller communities.

Since acquiring these publications, many of the smaller newspapers were merged together into weekly regional publications. For example, in 2018, four publications in central Newfoundland—*The Beacon*, *The Advertiser*, *The Pilot* and *The Nor'wester*—were folded into a single weekly publication called *The Central Voice*, which is now known as *The Central Wire*.

Despite this downsizing, several former journalists and media experts based in Atlantic Canada said if SaltWire were to fold or be significantly reduced in scope, the loss would be felt in the region's media landscape.

Peter Walsh, who teaches television and documentary production in Memorial University's Stage and Screen program, and is also a journalism instructor at the St. John's campus of the College of the North

Atlantic, described SaltWire as a "major player" in the Atlantic news industry.

"SaltWire maintained a network of on-the-ground local reporters," said Walsh, who spent more than a decade with the CBC, and then wrote for *The Telegram* a few years before it was purchased by SaltWire. "So you had actual people in small communities gathering local news—which the television networks and the radio private networks were already out of. ... So there still is a presence in local Atlantic communities, which is now in jeopardy."

If SaltWire were to fold, Walsh said the impact would be that "certain small communities would simply not have a local reporter" while larger centres "would have one less voice, and that will lessen competition."

"And competition in the free press is a good thing," said Walsh. "It pushes reporters to break stories and do a better job of stories. And it gives news consumers just some choice. If they're interested in the story, they can read two or three versions of that story. They can get original journalism because people want to break stories."

Walsh said this would lead to "a major setback in terms of quality information which ultimately absolutely affects the strength of our democracy."

"That space then will get filled in by scrolling on social media with really completely unreliable information," said Walsh. "I think we're seeing the impact already with a lot of discourse maybe not even based on fact."

## MPs already seeing the impact in their ridings

Two Atlantic MPs representing rural ridings said they are already seeing the impact of a shrinking media presence in their communities, and that the departure of SaltWire would accelerate this.

Continued on page 18

## THE HILL TIMES CAREERS



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## News

# Environment lobby in February focused on plastics pollution, oil and gas emissions cap

Ottawa will host the fourth International Negotiating Committee in April, featuring representatives from U.N. member states to discuss a global treaty addressing plastic pollution.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Environmental advocacy dominated in February as organizations reached out to the federal government with concerns including the strength of upcoming draft regulations for Canada's oil and gas emissions cap, and international meetings to discuss plastic pollution.

"Plastics generate pollution from every stage of their lifecycle, from the mining of fossil resources, through production, use and disposal," said Ashley Wallis, associate director of Environmental Defence Canada, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "Canada is a significant user of plastic. We also mine a lot of fossil oil and gas, which is used in plastic production. Our hope is that Canada will move forward with aggressive measures that would reduce plastic production use and therefore, as a result, disposal."

For the second consecutive month in 2024, "environment" led as the most popular subject matter listed for discussion in federal lobbying, appearing in 712 communication reports in February. Environmental Defence Canada took point as the organization that filed the most overall communication reports for the month (43), as well as for filing the most reports specifically related to the topic of the environment (32).

Last month Environmental Defence's discussions with the federal government included the issue of plastic waste, in advance of the fourth International Negotiating Committee (INC-4), according to Wallis.

INC-4, which will be held in Ottawa from April 23-29, will bring together representatives from United Nations-member states to discuss development of an international treaty addressing plastic pollution.

"We know that, disproportionately, Indigenous and other racialized communities often are on the forefront of plastic pollution,



Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault said that 'the world needs to do more collectively to tackle the triple crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and plastic pollution,' in an Environment press release on March 1. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

whether it be from landfill or recycling or incineration facilities, or at the very birth of plastics where we're mining fossil oil and gas for use in plastics production," said Wallis. "We are trying to advocate for actions that would lead to a strong treaty, from our perspective."

Plastic pollution was also discussed during the recently held sixth session of the UN Environment Assembly in Kenya between Feb. 26 and March 1. The event, which also covered climate change and biodiversity loss, included representatives of 190 countries. During the event, Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.), on behalf of International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen (York South-Weston, Ont.), announced the allocation of \$107-million to Canada's Partnering for Nature initiative, which will invest in projects with nature organizations, including Canadian partners, to help protect and conserve nature in some of the world's most vulnerable regions, according to an Environment press release on March 1.

"We know the world needs to do more collectively to tackle the triple crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and plastic pollution," said Guilbeault in the press release. "Canada looks forward to welcoming country delegations, partners, and stakeholders from around the world to Ottawa in April 2024 for the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee to continue the ambitious work needed to achieve this united goal."

Other topics discussed by Environmental Defence in February included Canada's oil and gas emissions cap, according to Wallis.

A framework for a cap on greenhouse gas pollution from

the oil and gas sector was released on Dec. 7, 2023. According to the framework, the fossil fuels industry will need to cap emissions at 35 to 38 per cent below 2019 levels by 2030.

Draft regulations of the oil and gas emissions cap are expected to be released in mid-2024, according to Environment Canada.

In a statement posted on Jan. 23, 2024, Aly Hyder Ali, Environmental Defence's program manager for oil and gas, said that the emissions cap framework is a step in the right direction, but is not perfect. The framework includes concerning elements, including a weak target to reduce emissions, a delayed timeline, and "many loopholes that allow oil and gas companies to skirt their responsibilities," according to Hyder Ali in the statement.

On Feb. 29, Environmental Defence representatives were also on the Hill, along with firefighters and Indigenous health experts, for a lobby day to seek federal action regarding per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS), according to Wallis.

Environmental Defence is urging the federal government to list the entire class of PFAS chemicals as toxic under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, she said.

"PFAS is linked to a range of human and environmental health harms, and PFAS is commonly found in 98 per cent of Canadians' blood due to exposure through consumer products, drinking water, etcetera," said Wallis. "If the federal government can restrict the use of PFAS and restrict its presence in products, it would reduce exposure for a variety of Canadians."

Last month, Environmental Defence communicated with Lib-

eral MPs including Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Ont.), parliamentary secretary to Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.), on Feb. 13; Sherry Romanado (Longueuil-Charles-LeMoyne, Que.), parliamentary secretary to Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjat Sajjan (Vancouver South, B.C.); and Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Ont.), parliamentary secretary to Health Minister Mark Holland (Ajax, Ont.), on Feb. 28.

The organization is represented on the federal lobbyists registry in-house by executive director Tim Gray, as well as by consultants Brian Klunder, Tamiore Awonusi, and Ujwal Ganguly of Temple Scott Associates.

Following close behind, in terms of environmental lobbying in February, was the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE).

Last month, CAPE, a group that advocates on environmental issues as they relate to human health, filed 30 communication reports, all of which listed the environment as a subject for discussions.

Bethany Ricker, a family physician in Nanaimo, B.C., and CAPE spokesperson, told *The Hill Times* that February discussions included the emissions cap framework, which she argued, "falls short" of what it needs to be to achieve its goals.

Robb Barnes, CAPE's climate program director, argued that the proposed cap is not enough to protect people's health, in a statement released on Dec. 7, 2023.

"Earlier this week, CAPE revealed that a fair oil and gas emissions cap of 45 per cent below 2005 levels—in line with the broader Canadian target—could prevent 4,800 premature deaths

in Canada in a decade. This new announcement is less than half of that level, thereby putting lives at undue risk," he said in the statement.

Ricker said physicians see the significant effects of increasing emissions on people's lives and health.

"We see kids developing asthma ... more and more frequently. We see the impacts of the warming climate as a result of emissions causing increased deaths and increased admissions for heat exhaustion and related diseases," she said. "I do just want to highlight that we aren't trying to centre out the oil and gas industry as a big bad guy, or require anything more of them than the targets that we're placing on other sectors."

CAPE communicated with Housing Minister Sean Fraser (Central Nova, N.S.), and Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.) on Feb. 14.

CAPE is represented on the registry by Anjali Helferty, its executive director, by Barnes, and by Dakota Norris, its fossil fuel extraction campaign manager.

In terms of overall lobbying, the organization that filed the second-most number of communication reports in February, 41, was Aerospace Industries Association of Canada (AIAC).

Mike Mueller, president and CEO of AIAC, told *The Hill Times* that about 70 of the organization's representatives were on the Hill on Feb. 7-8 for a lobby event to discuss development of a comprehensive aerospace strategy for Canada. Mueller said that there is a demand for another 40,000 aircraft in the next decade.

"Right now, we don't have a strategy, and that's leading to where there's a lack of policy alignment across a whole host of departments," said Mueller. "With an industrial strategy for Canada, in partnership with the government, that's really going to allow us to capitalize on that projected demand, and enable us to grow, attract the talent, that innovation, the investment in sustainable aviation technologies, [and] to really position us as a choice of manufacturing aircraft for right around the world."

Mueller said an aerospace strategy would need to encompass civil aviation, defense and space, and better align policies, investments and opportunities across the aerospace industry.

"Everywhere we see across the world, countries have strategies aligning all the different government programs and priorities into an area that makes sense for the industry, and we're really lacking that long term planning and predictability for aerospace," he said.

Representatives of AIAC communicated with Transport Minister Pablo Rodriguez (Honouré-Mercier, Que.) on Feb. 1, and with Innovation Minister Champagne on Feb. 7.

The AIAC is represented on the registry by Mueller, and by consultant William Yetman of Yetman Consulting.

jcnockaert@hilltimes.com  
*The Hill Times*



# Liberals ‘between the devil and the deep blue sea’ on carbon tax and caucus fissures on Mid-East war, say political players

Without pausing the upcoming carbon price increase on April 1, it's hard to find a way to get the Liberals out of their public support slump, says pollster Greg Lyle.

BY ABBAS RANA

The governing Liberals are stuck between a rock and a hard place on hot-button issues like the coming rise in the carbon tax and the caucus fissures on the Israel-Hamas war, giving yet another political opening to the Conservatives who are already enjoying an enormous amount of public support across the country, say political players.

"This is a big problem for the Liberals," said Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "It's a gift for the Conservatives. They must be dancing right now."

Introduced in 2019 by the federal government, the carbon tax is aimed to motivate Canadians to make choices for lower emissions and move to using greener forms of energy. On April 1, carbon pricing will rise from \$65 to \$80 per tonne, which is perceived to add pressure to an average Canadian's cost of living, and is one of the key reasons for the Liberals' tanking public support nationally.

The carbon price will continue to rise \$15 every year, until it hits \$170 a tonne by year 2030. However, as part of this pricing system, residents of eight provinces with the federal carbon tax receive tax-free rebate payments every quarter. The provinces of Quebec and British Columbia have their own carbon pricing mechanisms, as does the Northwest Territories.

The federal government says that 80 per cent of Canadians get more in rebates than what they pay in carbon pricing. But pollsters interviewed for this article said that even though an average Canadian is receiving regular rebates, they still do not appear to realize that they are getting back what they pay in carbon tax. The

reason, pollsters said, is it's confusing for people to understand why the government is charging the tax in the first place if they are just going to return it back later.

"When things get complicated, people go to solutions that seem to make more sense to them, particularly when it comes to the credibility of the people who are making the claim," Darrel Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs, told *The Hill Times*. "The government right now is asking Canadians to accept that that's what's happening. And the problem, of course, is Canadians don't have a lot of trust in the government."

Recently, seven provincial premiers—including Liberal Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey—have called on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) to either discard or pause the April increase as it will put more burden on Canadians by further exacerbating affordability issues. Ontario Liberal Leader Bonnie Crombie said last week that if her party were to come to power after the next provincial election, the provincial Liberals would not introduce a provincial carbon tax. In response, the prime minister doubled down on his resolve to proceed with the increase on April 1. He described politicians who are making the demand as "short-term thinkers."

"That's an easy thing for short-term-thinker politicians to say: 'Oh, we'll get rid of the price.' They don't talk about the fact that they're also going to get rid of that cheque, the Canada carbon rebate, that puts more money in the pockets of the vast majority of Canadians," Trudeau said.

Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) also said it's critical that the government goes ahead with the carbon pricing to address the issue of climate change.

"We're talking about our fish stocks disappearing. There's no shrimp in the Gulf of St. Lawrence this summer. We're talking about the province of Alberta having to ration water for residents, for businesses, for the agricultural sector," Guilbeault told reporters in a press conference. "Climate change is real, it's impacting Canadians, and it's costing Canadians, and you'll never hear [Conservative Leader] Pierre Poilievre talk about that."

To take full advantage of this political wedge, Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) is travelling across the country holding his "axe the



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks with reporters before Question Period on Jan. 31, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

tax" rallies which thousands of Canadians have attended. Last week, he put forward a non-confidence motion in the government, calling the carbon tax increase "Trudeau's April Fool's tax hike," and added that he wants the next election to be about the carbon tax.

A day before the motion was tabled, Poilievre and Trudeau had a fiery exchange on the issue in the daily Question Period.

"An election on the price on pollution? We had three—and we won them all,"

Continued on page 25

## Appointment Notice

**Julie Gascon**  
President and CEO



**The Montreal Port Authority (MPA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Julie Gascon to the position of President and CEO.**

Pursuing a remarkable career in the marine industry, Julie Gascon held a number of strategic positions with Transport Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard, including Director General, Marine Safety and Security with Transport Canada and Director General, Operations with the Canadian Coast Guard, as well as President and CEO of the Pacific Pilotage Authority, prior to joining the MPA. Julie Gascon holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Montreal (HEC Montréal) and a Bachelor of Technology in Nautical Sciences from the University College of Cape Breton. She took the helm at the Port of Montreal, Eastern Canada's largest container port, on February 12, 2024.

PORT  MONTRÉAL

# Editorial

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## Editorial

### A reflective time in the House of Commons that ended far too soon

Politicians were unusually reflective—for a while, at least—on March 18. That day was the first in which the House sat for a full day since members learned of the death of two of their forebears: former prime minister Brian Mulroney, and former Liberal MP Kim Rudd. Bookended by a typically rowdy Question Period and a vigorous debate about the ongoing war in Gaza, leaders and senior members of each political party offered thoughtful reflections on Mulroney. Others offered thoughtful reflections on Rudd during their members’ statements. To watch the proceedings was a jarring experience. One minute, the House was a rabble, with insults and accusations flying back and forth. The next minute, you could hear a pin drop during a moment of silent reflection. Listening to the subsequent speeches was to see what the House aspires to be: a place where ideas are contested, but respect is retained. Some of those speaking would doubtless have far less pleasant things to say about Mulroney when he was prime minister, and would have outright opposed many of his policies. But in that moment, MPs, in their own ways, found kind words to say about Mulroney’s legacy. Naturally, the

speeches were all framed in such a way that the speaker could claim some right to Mulroney’s legacy, but it’s also worth noting what was not said. There was no praise for the mastery of a pithy slogan, the use of a flashy photo-op, procedural trickery in the House, nor for how loudly Mulroney could shout during Question Period. The focus was on his achievements. Yet the bulk of the politics we see day-in and day-out is the heckling, the shouting, the slogans, the photo-ops. MPs treat the business like a game, with the full awareness that they, too, will be eulogized in a similar way by their successors with scant mention of the base nonsense that fills up so much of their current days. This isn’t a call for politicians to consider their legacy when taking part in the everyday business of governing, nor is it for a toxic civility politics that obfuscates the truth in favour of respectability. Instead, it’s a mere plea for politicians to consider the gravity of their choices every single day that they spend occupying those chairs on the Hill. Treat your position with the solemnity that you treated that brief hour on a wintry Monday. *The Hill Times*

## Letters to the Editor

### Here’s hoping Americans do a reality check before presidential election: McElroy

Re: “Biden-Trump rematch presents the case for presidential age limits,” (*The Hill Times*, by Michael Harris, March 18). Michael Harris makes a good case for age limits on U.S. presidential candidates. How did they get into this situation? It is a lack of succession planning by the political parties. One of the realities about elections is the importance of name recognition. The best-known candidates are the ones most frequently elected. This happened recently in the Ontario Liberal leadership election, with the well-known Bonnie Crombie starting at the top of the list of candidates, and eventually winning. There were other good horses in the race who were overlooked. Name recognition doesn’t just happen. It takes time and effort to build a legend for a new candidate through planning, promotion, and media exposure. In the contest for president, Donald Trump keeps himself in the news daily with one outrageous statement after another, steadily increasing his likelihood of winning. This may be the most import-

ant element driving the poll numbers quoted by Harris showing the support he gets from his base, compared to the numbers that Joe Biden receives from his supporters. Switching to another candidate at this stage would be very difficult because a new candidate would not have the name recognition needed to dominate the election. The groundwork to build the name of a successor should have been started years ago. This is a failure of planning by party management. The outcome of this lack of planning is that Biden, likely aware of these issues, is concerned that if a well-known candidate like himself is not on the ballot, Trump may well run away with the election. He may also feel—possibly correctly—that a rematch will lead to the same success as in the last election, or other considerations. The best we can hope for is that people do a reality check before they make that ‘X’ on the ballot.

Tom McElroy  
Toronto, Ont.

### Dyer too busy counting aid trucks to see what’s really happening in Gaza: Shapiro

Re: “Israel-Gaza: ‘no boots on the ground’,” (*The Hill Times*, Gwynne Dyer, March 11). There is one condition placed on Israel by the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the European Union permitting it to prosecute the wars inflicted on it by Hamas, and that is it must take care of the people with whom it is at war. Nothing like this has ever occurred in the history of war. There was no pressure placed on the Allies to feed the people of Japan and Germany in the Second World War. None demanded that starving Koreans be fed by the Allies fighting against North Korea and China. Only Gaza receives this treatment. Israel gets the message, and does everything in its power to supply and facilitate aid. It’s not easy.

Much of the aid is hijacked by Hamas that keeps what it needs and sells the rest at inflated prices on the black market. UNWRA, previously tasked with delivering humanitarian aid, depended on Hamas to protect the shipments—basically giving Hamas control over the aid. Israel is working to develop alternate methods of delivering aid using local clans to handle deliveries, but Hamas just murdered an important clan leader, leaving the message that ‘the food is ours’. I’m sorry that Gwynne Dyer is too busy counting aid trucks to construct the narrative of American and Israeli inhumanity to see what is really happening in Gaza.

Larry Shapiro  
Calgary, Alta.



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# Trudeau's climate plan is worth fighting for

It is also worth spending some money explaining to Canadians just what is involved in the fight on climate change.

Sheila  
Copp

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—The World Meteorological Organization had grim news for the globe last week.

In every climate indicator, temperatures were the highest on record in 2023.

And for the past nine years in a row, the planet has been getting hotter.

For the first time ever, Canada's air quality was worse than the United States, largely because of the effect of massive wildfires across the country.

Evidence is mounting for all but the most obtuse that action needs to be taken to reverse the climate crisis. Zombie fires that started last year are still continuing in parts of British Columbia. New wildfires are starting at an unbelievably early time of the year with 90 fires burning there last week.

But the man who would be prime minister, Pierre Poilievre, is running advertisements attacking British Columbia Premier David Eby because he refuses to pile in with other premiers who are attacking the April increase in the price on carbon established by the federal government.

Instead of focusing on climate solutions, Poilievre is trying to bully provinces into reversing the federal action plan to reduce our carbon footprint.

Politicians should be focused on climate solutions instead of reversing our work on climate action.

Eby was not one to be bullied. British Columbia, arguably Canada's greenest province, was the first to adopt a price on carbon. That happened a decade before the federal

government introduced its 2018 plan.

The B.C. experience has been used as a model for other jurisdictions. Their carbon pricing has had a beneficial impact on the environment with little impact on the economy.

Eby characterized Poilievre's "axe the tax" as a "baloney office" campaign. Poilievre responded by accusing Eby of forcing British Columbians to eat baloney because of carbon pricing.

What nobody seems to be including in the discussion is how the country will fight forest fires and floods by abolishing the national climate action strategy.

Poilievre has put nothing in the window in his axe campaign, and is deliberately conflating a world inflationary trend with a made-in-Canada carbon plan.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has made it very clear that the government has no intention to reverse its climate plan, even after Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Premier Andrew Furey joined six Conservative premiers in his

request to cancel the proposed carbon price hike.

Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe has vowed not to collect the carbon price, which could prove rather costly to his residents.

In the national plan, carbon rebates actually go out to approximately 80 per cent of the population based on their reduced carbon footprint.

If Moe refuses to collect, the average family of four in his province will miss out on an annual rebate of \$1,800 according to the federal Department of Finance.

Trudeau is committed to the federal action plan, and vows to keep fighting for pollution pricing, despite the claim by Ontario Premier Doug Ford that the federal Liberals could be "annihilated" in the next election because of the pricing policy.

Ontario Liberal Leader Bonnie Crombie last week distanced herself from her federal counterparts by saying if she were elected, her party would not impose a provincial tax.

The party could fall back on the federal program, but has not committed to doing so as an

internal committee studies the issue.

Suffice to say, across the board, the country is gripped with the issue of climate pricing and nobody is particularly engaged in the challenge of doing nothing.

Poilievre is framing the issue as another Liberal gas tax, and spending millions of dollars to get Canadians on his side.

Meanwhile, the federal government has spent nothing in explaining to Canadians what is actually involved in carbon pricing, and why it is so necessary to help the country fight climate change.

At a heated press conference in Calgary recently, Trudeau said it was not his job to be popular when pressed on whether he should ditch the carbon tax.

But to win elections, and carry out his climate plans, he does need to secure the popular vote.

His climate plan is worth fighting for. It is also worth spending some money explaining to Canadians just what is involved in the fight on climate change.

If the country wants to hang on to the progress we have made on climate change, we need to increase the price on carbon so consumption patterns will change.

We are experiencing the hottest decade in history and we owe it to our grandchildren to push ahead on carbon pricing.

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

The Hill Times

# Don't demonize populism

The best way to stop populism isn't to fight it, but to defuse it.

Gerry  
Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKVILLE, ONT.—Apparently, populism—of both the right-wing and left-wing variety—is the mortal enemy of democracy.

Or at least, that's the view of a Swedish political science professor named Nils Karlson who recently spoke on this topic at an event organized by the Institute for Liberal Studies.

I was lucky enough to hear Karlson's talk, and while I understood where he was coming from and even sympathized with some of his arguments, I ultimately disagreed with this basic thesis which is that populism is always a negative force that must be strenuously resisted.



Political leaders should address and allay the anxieties and fears which lead to populist uprisings because if our elites simply demonize populism, it will only make it stronger, writes Gerry Nicholls. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Now before I get into my reasoning on this, let me first go through Karlson's points.

First off, he argues that populists are "hostile to the underlying values and principles of constitutionalism, pluralism, minority rights, and checks and balances."

Then, once he has thoroughly demonized populism, Karlson describes what he considers to be its defining characteristics.

For instance, he argues one such characteristic is that populists tend to advocate what he calls "unserious and ill-founded policies, offering simplistic answers to complex questions."

Next, he says populists deliberately polarize society into an "us versus them" dichotomy to "mobilize support, using narratives that 'construct' the people and their different enemies."

And finally, Karlson makes the claim that populists have autocratic tendencies, i.e. they believe in "limiting opposition through electoral manipulation, thwarting the free press, changing the constitution in their own favor, and circumscribing minority, civil, political, and economic rights."

Consequently, for all these reasons, he says populism is "a

genuine threat to democracy, free markets, and open society."

In a call for action, Karlson says, "The world will not change for the better unless liberals start fighting back."

Okay, I'm sure a lot of people would wholeheartedly agree with Karlson's take.

Heck, all you'd have to do to help prove his case is point to Donald Trump who certainly seems to embody all the negative qualities Karlson associates with populism.

So why then do I resist his conclusion?

Well, first off, the various negative traits Karlson links to populists can also be associated with just about any other political movement on the planet.

In other words, all political parties will use us-vs.-them tactics or offer "simplistic answers to complex questions"; and yes, all political parties can, from time to time, promote what many might consider to be "autocratic policies."

Does that mean they're all evil threats to democracy?

Plus, it's important to keep in mind that Trump didn't invent populism, which is a political

force that's been around for as long as politics has existed.

The simple fact is populism will always emerge whenever a large segment of the population believes the economic or political system as it exists either treats them unfairly, or ignores their needs.

As it happens, sometimes people are actually right to have such concerns which is why populism can bring about positive changes.

For example, in his book, *A Capitalism for the People*, Italian economist Luigi Zingales notes that American populism helped bring about the Bill of Rights, anti-trust legislation and the democratic election of U.S. Senators.

Now, I'm not arguing here that populism is always a benign force; at times its impulses can certainly be manipulated or exploited to promote negative policies.

But I don't think it should be resisted or opposed out of hand.

Rather, political leaders should address and allay the anxieties and fears which lead to populist uprisings because if our elites simply demonize populism, it will only make it stronger.

My point is, the best way to stop populism isn't to fight it, but to defuse it.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times



# Politics

## Being real is still most powerful attribute for politicians, especially today

Years ago, Conservative pollster Allan Gregg asked what would be the most powerful attribute for politicians going forward. The answer: authenticity, the lost art of being real. This brilliant insight still stands up today as we are living in a crisis of credibility.

Michael  
Harris

Harris



**H**ALIFAX—On the face of it, altering a photograph—even if you are a princess—is small potatoes.

With two major wars raging, Donald Trump offering Americans a fascist buffet in the U.S. presidential election, and the planet running a deadly fever while world leaders dither on climate change; manipulating a family photograph does not seem to be the stuff of a viral, global story.



We are living in the midst of a crisis of credibility, a time when most people don't know who or what to trust. Things have grown so desperate south of the border, that a man who wants to suspend the Constitution and preside over a dictatorship is leading in the polls. Never mind that he might also be on his way to jail, writes Michael Harris. *Image courtesy of Pexels*

It would be easy to put the international fuss created by the editing adventures of the Princess of Wales down to the prurient interest of Fleet Street in all things royal.

Who is the heir and who is the spare? Who is sleeping with someone not their spouse? What divorces may be on the horizon? Anybody pregnant? And does someone really squeeze the toothpaste onto King Charles' toothbrush?

But there is another side to this story that rises above the titillation of gutter journalism. And it offers a hint of why Kate Middleton has created a public relations disaster for the Royal Palace that may be impossible to fix.

We are living in the midst of a crisis of credibility, a time when most people don't know who or what to trust. Things have grown so desperate south of the border that a man who wants to suspend the Constitution and preside over a dictatorship is leading in the polls. Never mind that he might also be on his way to jail.

Some context on the origins of the credibility crisis.

Many years ago, legendary Canadian Conservative pollster Allan Gregg looked into the question of what would be the most powerful attribute for politicians going forward. His answer was a little surprising. It was authenticity, the lost art of being real.

It was a brilliant insight. As GOP consultant/guru Arthur

Finkelstein observed, it is very difficult to tell what is true and what is false on the internet. It was easier to wear a disguise online than on Halloween.

Instead of the internet being a boon, Finkelstein believed people would end up knowing more and more about less and less. Rather than being the great liberator, the internet would turn out to be the great manipulator.

Finkelstein was ahead of his time, and he was right. Social media is full of fakes and feints, scammers and schemers, some human and some not. If it was hard to tell what was true or false back in 2011 when Finkelstein made his comments, it may soon become impossible.

Artificial intelligence is developing at a frightening and unregulated pace. It is also headed to a place so terrifying that the leaders of OpenAI, Google Deepmind, and other AI laboratories have gone public with their fears. They recently signed a letter warning that future systems could be as deadly as pandemics and even nuclear weapons. In other words, AI was an existential threat to humanity.

One of the dangers posed by AI is society-wide manipulation. Everyone knows how chatbots work. You press a button and you get automated copy. And it all looks and sounds plausible.

The latest advancements in the "large-language models" that power ChatGPT hold tremendous promise. But they are also tailor-made to disseminate

misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. Some experts fear that AI could put millions of white-collar workers out of their jobs.

This is not science fiction. One of the most prestigious sports publications in the United States, *Sports Illustrated*, has already been caught in an AI scandal.

An investigation by the science and technology news publication *Futurism* found that *Sports Illustrated* published articles by fake authors. According to the report, these bogus sportswriters came with headshots and biographies—all generated by AI. Just weeks after these accusations, the CEO of the sports magazine was fired.

It is getting harder and harder to fact check if the data the public receives is accurate. That's because AI can produce misinformation on an industrial scale. Social media accounts that may or may not be authentic only make matters worse.

Fact-checking organizations are so overwhelmed, as Lydia Morrish reported in *Wired* magazine, they are now having to construct their own AI-driven tools to automate what would otherwise be an insurmountable task. Bottom line? AI is now fact-checking AI.

Then there are the political implications. The potential for AI to play havoc with elections is already on display in the United States, eight months out from the presidential election.

The BBC reported finding dozens of deepfake photos portraying Black Americans as Trump supporters. The co-founder of Black Voters Matter said the AI manipulated images were part of a "strategic narrative" to give the impression that Trump is popular in the Black community.

When confronted by the BBC, the creator of one of the fake photos said: "I'm not claiming it's accurate."

And so back to the Princess and her peccadillo. The issue is not an "inconsistency in alignment of Princess Charlotte's left hand."

Nor is it a fiddled photo of the late Queen Elizabeth II that experts concluded was "digitally enhanced at source."

It is the perception of manipulation and dishonesty, the graphic equivalent of fake news. After all, the altered photo appeared on front pages worldwide.

That's why five news agencies, including Reuters and the Associated Press, have withdrawn the now infamous Mothers' Day photo of the Princess of Wales and family. As the U.K. news agency PA put it in a statement, "we are killing the image from our picture service."

It is one thing for a sports magazine to produce fake stories, or politicians to use the tools of technology to misinform, mislead, and manipulate.

It seems there is a higher standard for a princess.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

*The Hill Times*



There is another side to this story that rises above the titillation of gutter journalism, and it offers a hint of why Kate Middleton has created a public relations disaster for the Royal Palace that may be impossible to fix. *Photograph courtesy of Buckingham Palace/X*



# A remarkable, non-white moment in Britain's leadership

The U.K. has not turned into a colour-blind paradise where everybody lives happily ever after. Far from it. But it's still a remarkable moment.

Gwynne  
Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—Nobody planned it, hardly anybody realized it was happening, and suddenly there it was: done. In the space of less than two years, the entire senior leadership of Great Britain is now non-white.

I'm choosing my words carefully here because the country as a whole is called the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It contains four nations, and one of them, Northern Ireland, still has a white person running the government. She is a Catholic woman, which is a double first, but Michelle O'Neill is indisputably white.

However, on the island of Great Britain—England, Wales, and Scotland—it has been a clean sweep.

Humza Yousaf, a Muslim born in Scotland of Punjabi descent, succeeded Nicola Sturgeon as the leader of the Scottish National Party just a year ago. Since the SNP is the governing party in Scotland, that automatically made him first minister too. ('First minister' is the title of heads of government in the 'devolved' nations.)

Six months before that, Rishi Sunak, a Hindu of Indian heritage born in Southampton, became the prime minister of the whole country. (England contains more than four-fifths of the entire U.K. population, but it does not have an exclusive national government of its own, so Sunak is all England has by way of a national leader.)

Finally, late last week, Vaughan Gething, born in Zambia 50 years ago to a Zambian mother and a Welsh father and brought to Wales at the age of two, became the first minister of Wales. Game, set, and match.

The cherry atop that cake is the fact that ever since 2016, the mayor of London has been Sadiq Khan, a Muslim Londoner of Pakistani heritage. London contains about a fifth of the British population, and Khan is about to be re-elected to a third term by a large majority.

Obviously, there is an element of coincidence in all this. Non-white people make up only 18 per cent of the U.K. population, so there may never again be four non-white people in these four posts at the same time. But it is striking that hardly anybody noticed until the process was nearly complete—and when it did happen, almost nobody was upset.

It's hard to explain why this has happened in the U.K. because, in most respects, it is a political disaster area. The Conservative government led by Sunak knows in its heart that it is going to lose the forthcoming national election by a landslide. Thrashing around in despair, some of the party's leading members have turned very nasty indeed.

The party's former deputy chair, Lee Anderson, gave a splendid example of that last month: "I don't actually believe that the Islamists have got control of our country," he said, "but what I do believe is they've got control of Khan, and they've got control of London. Khan has given our capital city away to his mates."

Some of Anderson's fellow Conservatives defended him by saying that he's not racist, just Islamophobic, as if that excused his behaviour. In the end, he was expelled from the party, but the question remains: how can a party with people like that in it preside over a country that is undergoing such a radical transformation? For Anderson is certainly not alone.

Early last week it was revealed that the Conservative Party's biggest donor, Frank Hester, had declared his undying hatred of Diane Abbott, who 37 years ago was the first Black woman elected to the U.K. Parliament.

She's still in Parliament, and Hester can't stand her: "You just see Diane Abbott



Rishi Sunak, a Hindu of Indian heritage born in Southampton, is Britain's current prime minister. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

on the TV and you're just like, 'I hate'—you just want to hate all Black women because she's there...I think she should be shot." This caused much outrage and uproar, of course.

Sunak eventually said Hester was "racist and wrong"—but refused to reject Hester's money (about \$12-million last year and already another \$6-million this year) because it amounts to about one-quarter of all donations to the Conservative Party, and there is a national election coming this autumn.

And, by the way, Abbott herself is currently suspended by the Labour Party for saying that Jewish, Irish, and traveller people are not subject to racism "all their

lives," whereas Black people are. (No, I don't want to enter that minefield, either.)

The U.K. has not turned into a colour-blind paradise where everybody lives happily ever after. Far from it. The claim that it is the best (or rather, the least bad) place to be a black person in Europe may be correct, but that is hollow praise.

Nevertheless, this really is a remarkable moment, and all the more so for the fact that it was not some officially ordained goal or programme. It just sort of happened.

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

*The Hill Times*

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## Opinion



Mila Mulroney, centre, with her daughter Caroline Mulroney, right, waiting for Brian Mulroney's casket to be brought into the Sir John A. Macdonald Building to lie-in-state in Ottawa on March 19, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# Mila Mulroney was always by Brian Mulroney's side

I look back fondly on those years spent at Mila Mulroney's side. I mourn with her the loss of a great husband and life partner. I shall miss my friend Brian Mulroney and his comforting voice.

Bonnie Brownlee

Opinion



**“Where’s Mila?”** Brian Mulroney must have asked me that question a million times.

Whether he was on his way to the podium to deliver a major address, getting ready for a state dinner, or setting off on a campaign tour, he needed her there. It was a symbol of the unique political and life partnership they forged, one that is worth hearing as we remember the political legacy of Canada’s 18th prime minister. His success was, in every respect, due to and shared with her.

I met Mila Mulroney on a hot August day in 1983 at the Château Laurier. I was there to interview for the job of executive assistant to the wife of the newly elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. As a young party activist, I had supported John Crosbie’s leadership run earlier that summer. When Brian was chosen, he was adamant that party unity would only come if a sincere effort were made to bring together elements of all the campaigns into one cohesive team. I had no illusions about getting the job. Little did I know that my life would never be the same because of that first encounter.

Mila and I hit it off instantly. The first thing I noticed was that their young children Caroline, Ben, and Mark were at my interview—even part of our conversation. Taking their cues from their ever-attentive mother, they were incredibly well mannered and had questions of their own for me: who are you, and why are you here? It was clear to me that nurturing their growth and well-being would be Mila’s priority, no matter what else was going on.

In September 1985, baby Nicolas arrived, and I marvelled at how Mila managed this large public life with four children and a demanding office. She created a happy home at 24 Sussex Drive that was always buzzing with activities. Over the years, I would witness Brian and Mila interrupt

meetings with presidents, prime ministers, kings, and queens if one of their children needed something, or just wanted to come into the den.

In the fall of 1983, a small group of us embarked on a cross-country tour to introduce Brian and Mila directly to Canadians. We stopped in town after town. Barely out of our 20s, Mila and I were learning on the job. Yet, I could already tell she was charting a new path for women in politics, redesigning the role of political spouse even as she played it. Hers would be a partnership of equals, and that would be on display for all voters—especially women—to see firsthand.

In those early days, when the road team would gather at night to discuss the day’s events over a drink, we would try to see who could mimic Brian’s baritone voice the best. Their love and respect for each other was apparent to all of us who were fortunate to be part of that small, tight-knit team whom they always treated with kindness and professional respect. A great many things changed over our time in government. But that never did, despite the demands of the life they’d chosen.

I remember the whirlwind first days in office in 1984 when the Mulroneys greeted Pope John Paul II, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip on separate visits to Canada, and then flew to Washington, D.C., for an

official visit with U.S. president Ronald Reagan. Media reports of the visit spoke of the warm relations between the prime minister and president, and how it set a new tone for Canada-U.S. relations. Behind the scenes, Mila was exhibiting grace and humour, and celebrating the “hard-to-believe moments” we were all experiencing—her authentic manner sparked what would become a life-long, trusted friendship with the Reagans.

Throughout his nine years as prime minister, Brian drew strength from Mila to do the difficult things he believed were right for the country. Waiting in the wings to start a town hall or in the green room before a major interview, he always wanted to know she was close by. Sometimes that was enough on its own. Often, the two would share a private moment ahead of the next public event where Mila would playfully fix Brian’s hair, listen to last-minute changes in his speech, have one of the kids on the phone, and could read the room! Mila was both his anchor and his compass.

Mila redefined the expectations of the spouse of a political party leader, and played an influential role in shaping the cultural landscape of Canada. Having immigrated to Canada from Sarajevo at the age of five, everything Mila did in her personal and professional life generated a welcome feeling of openness and inclusion.

Throughout her time in politics, newcomers to our country sought her out personally because she understood their struggles and their aspirations. Mila’s relationship with the family members of Brian’s caucus and cabinet, international leaders, and the business community are legendary; her warmth and ability to listen having succeeded in bridging many divides over the years.

Mila used her position to advocate for multiple social causes such as cystic fibrosis, which at the time had no profile as a childhood disease and was in dire need of increased financial support to advance research into much needed treatments. She went straight to work and raised million of dollars, creating a space for awareness of this debilitating disease. Today, those afflicted are living longer and healthier lives.

In 1993, the partnership that served Brian and Mila so well in politics became the basis for a life as private citizens filled with happiness. Together, they remained fully engaged in the policy issues of the day, and revelled in the joy that can only come from seeing one’s children thrive and welcoming 16 grandchildren into the world. She has been and will continue to be the ever attentive and loving matriarch who interviewed me all those years ago.

Today, I look back fondly on those early years spent at Mila’s side. I mourn with her the loss of a great husband and life partner. And I shall miss my friend Brian and his comforting voice.

*Television and public affairs executive Bonnie Brownlee was executive assistant to Mila Mulroney from 1983 to 1993.*

*The Hill Times*





Immigration continues to be essential to Canada's growth and prosperity and remains one of our greatest strengths. With strategic management, it can continue to fortify the nation's socio-economic fabric, writes Marwan Ismail. *Image courtesy of Pexels*

# Immigration and housing: navigating Canada's complex crisis

Successful immigration policy is the solution.

Marwan Ismail

Opinion



Canada continues to face a housing crisis, and a recent debate has pointed fingers at immigration rates as a contributory factor. However, immigration alone doesn't account for the housing shortage.

While it's true that in recent years Canada has seen a substantial influx of

immigrants, international students, and migrant workers, it's also worth noting that the country's low birth rates mean immigration is essential for population growth.

A recent Statistics Canada report emphasizes the vital role immigrants played during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when job vacancies in late 2021 surged to 80 percent above pre-pandemic figures, underlining an aging workforce, and reinforcing the necessity of immigration for the labour market.

It's also important to make the distinction between the economic impacts of different types of newcomers. A temporary worker, an international student, and a permanent resident each have unique impacts on the economy with different patterns of spending and contributions to the labour

supply. For example, a Bank of Canada economic progress report, *Immigration, Housing and the Outlook for Inflation*, suggests that international students might boost spending more than the average Canadian while only marginally contributing to labour, in contrast to temporary workers who spend less, but who are key in addressing workforce shortages.

When re-evaluating immigration policies, it is important to strike a balance among factors such as the aging population, labour shortages, and economic development including housing and inflation.

Linking immigration more closely to job vacancies and engaging the private sector would be advantageous. Further, encouraging newcomers to settle in smaller cities and rural areas through initiatives with

local governments could prove beneficial, and help in spreading economic growth and pressures on infrastructure. In fact, many smaller communities are having the opportunity to improve infrastructure such as public transit due to the demand and contributions that come with immigration.

While immigration can be seen as a driver of the housing crisis, it's not its primary cause. It is, in fact, part of the solution.

With a shortfall in housing availability partly due to a lack of construction workers, and a severe trades shortage, targeted immigration policies can help. Restrictive zoning laws, protracted permit processes, developers' delays, and high-interest rates also must be acknowledged. Most of all, overcoming these challenges requires collaborative efforts across all levels of government and advocates—and less finger pointing or blaming of any one particular factor or group.

Successful policy depends on a co-operative approach by governments, developers, financial institutions, and on-the-ground stakeholders.

Immigration continues to be essential to Canada's growth and prosperity, and remains one of our greatest strengths. With strategic management, it can continue to fortify the nation's socio-economic fabric.

Marwan Ismail is the executive director of Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, a charitable, not-for-profit, community-based agency.

The Hill Times

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## Opinion

# Heather McPherson has suddenly become one of the most important MPs in Ottawa



NDP MP Heather McPherson, pictured on the Hill, said of her motion which was passed by the House on March 18: 'Thanks to our motion, Canada is the first G7 country to stop sending weapons to [Israel's] extremist government.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The NDP MP is not just standing up for Palestinians, but for a rules-based order that the world needs reaffirmed at this moment in history, and which too many Canadian politicians are betraying. Why did she work so hard to get her Israel-Gaza motion passed? 'Because 13,000 children have died in this war,' she said.

Douglas Roche

Opinion



EDMONTON—Heather McPherson, the NDP's foreign affairs critic who, on March 18, steered through the House a groundbreaking motion banning arms sales to Israel, has suddenly become one of the most important parliamentarians in Ottawa. She got the government to bend to her humanitarian-centred motion to stop these sales and help end the violence in Gaza and, in so doing, took Canada into a G7 leadership position.

In the past decade, Canada has authorized \$170-million in arms exports to Israel, and continued to allow arms sales there during the present Israel-Gaza war. Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly confirmed these sales will now stop, but Global Affairs Canada is trying to wiggle out of the vote on the grounds that contracts are involved.

The language that Joly and the government voted for is clear: "cease the further authorization and transfer of arms exports to Israel to ensure compliance with Canada's arms export regime and increase efforts to stop the illegal trade of arms, including to Hamas." McPherson and her caucus are standing firm that what was voted on—after

tough negotiations—must be implemented.

"Thanks to our motion," McPherson said, "Canada is the first G7 country to stop sending weapons to Netanyahu's extremist government."

In January, McPherson and a small group of MPs travelled to Jordan and Palestine to meet with Palestinian refugees, aid workers, Canadian consular officials, and progressive Israeli activists. She saw first-hand evidence of "the complete failure of the international community to stop the unfolding carnage in Gaza," as she described it to the House.

Backed by NDP Leader Jasmeet Singh, who has expressed alarm at "the rise of antisemitism, anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia" since the start of the war on Oct. 7, 2023, McPherson introduced a wide-ranging motion calling for an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages. The motion also called on the government to "officially recognize the State of Palestine and maintain Canada's recognition of Israel's right to exist and to live in peace with its neighbours."

Although the opposition day motion was non-binding, the government feared a deep rupture in the Liberal caucus between

pro-Israel and pro-Palestine factions. When the Bloc Québécois said it would vote for the motion, the government anticipated that it might pass. Negotiations started for amendments.

To save the heart of the motion—ceasefire, more help for Gaza, no arms sales to Israel, support for the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, continued funding for UNRWA—McPherson gave up the call for Canada to officially recognize Palestine. Canada is not ready to break with its Western allies in the long-held position that the elusive two-state solution must precede the recognition. So she agreed to "water-down" the motion to say that Canada would "work with international partners to actively pursue the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, including towards the establishment of the State of Palestine as part of the two-state solution, and maintain Canada's position that Israel has a right to exist in peace and security with its neighbours."

The amended motion, supported by the Liberals, passed 204-117. Only three Liberal MPs voted no. Several Liberal MPs openly cheered McPherson.

Once again, McPherson showed that co-operation with her political opponents, and a willingness to move away from dogmatic positions can get results. After travelling to Ukraine, she obtained unanimous consent of the House in February to pass a motion calling on Canada to continue to provide military and financial assistance to Ukraine to defend itself against Russia, and also "support Ukraine's future membership in NATO." That motion doesn't sound like the old anti-NATO NDP. But McPherson, an undoubted devotee of the United Nations—not NATO—as the ultimate guarantor of peace, is a pragmatic politician.

McPherson is building a reputation as an effective parliamentarian. During the COVID period in 2020, she obtained unanimous consent of the House for a motion calling on the federal government to provide an additional \$2-billion in funding for affordable childcare programs and back-to-school safety measures. I have never heard of a private parliamentarian, and an opposition one at that, obtaining so much money from the government for a project.

McPherson has multiple interests. She led the fight against coal mining in the Eastern slopes of Alberta's Rocky Mountains. And she journeyed to Hiroshima to see for herself the effects of the atomic bomb. She returned as a strong advocate for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

McPherson, who is 51 years old and married with two teen-aged children, stands out in a sea of blue in Conservative Alberta. First elected in 2019, she ran up her margin in the 2021 election to 60.7 percent of the vote. She brought to Parliament her experience as executive director of the Alberta Council on Global Co-operation. She has a master of education from the University of Alberta, and has taught around the world.

In her valiant work, McPherson is not just standing up for Palestinians, but for a rules-based order that the world needs reaffirmed at this fraught moment in history, and which too many Canadian politicians are ignoring. I asked her why she worked so hard to get her Israel-Gaza motion passed. "Because 13,000 children have died in this war," she said. The world needs to pay attention. "There are children with gunshot wounds to the head and neck, and children so severely malnourished that they are skin and bones. Babies are unable to survive, dying before they even have a chance of life. We have seen two peoples utterly traumatized by violence, death, and terror."

Heather McPherson is a human rights politician. She has earned the respect she receives from all corners of the House. But, she told me, "it's emotionally draining."

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

*The Hill Times*



# There are signs of resistance to the right-wing juggernaut, if you look hard enough

The election of Wab Kinew, the first modern-day Indigenous premier of Manitoba, signals a welcome departure from the usual fed-prov scenario: premiers fighting Ottawa over every bland federal attempt at helping their citizens.

Susan Riley

Impolitic



CHELSEA, QUE.—Lurking somewhere between despair and denial, you can spot tiny glimmers of hope for non-Conservative voters in this country—in what is, admittedly, an otherwise dire and discouraging political landscape. These glimmers may not shine brightly enough yet to stop the righteous armies of vengeance, the daily cavalcade of distortion and insult, the seemingly inevitable decline of a well-meaning—but flawed—prime minister, who has outstayed his welcome.

But, if everyone gives up, we may as well hand over the keys to Rideau Cottage immediately—and resign ourselves to accelerating climate chaos and increasing economic inequality.

Instead, why not look outside the capital? The election of Wab Kinew, the first modern-day Indigenous premier of Manitoba, signals a welcome departure from the usual fed-prov scenario: pre-

miers fighting Ottawa over every bland federal attempt at helping their citizens. In his first months, the new NDP premier has cheerfully accepted \$664-million in federal money for health care, and also welcomed the recent federal mini-pharmacare plan.

And, while Kinew has not defended the federal carbon tax—and the controversial three-cent-per-litre hike coming next month—he has not trashed it, or the prime minister, like some of his provincial counterparts have. Instead, he has talked about devising a made-in-Manitoba climate plan, and, in the meantime—in the name of affordability—dropped the 14 cent provincial tax on gasoline and frozen electricity rates.

This isn't the bold climate action that is desperately needed, but Kinew's previous commitment to developing more clean power, in a province already blessed with abundant hydro-electricity, suggests a different future path from his pro-oil Prairie neighbours. It inspires hope that even if the federal carbon tax dies—the victim of poor salesmanship and a shrill and dishonest propaganda campaign led by Pierre Poilievre—the battle against greenhouse gas emissions will continue in another form.

Overall, Kinew has presented a cheerful, pragmatic and magnanimous face to his province and the country. He is also a compelling speaker—especially his funeral tribute to former federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent, which left progressive voters to ponder, wistfully, how different things might be if the Manitoba premier, rather than NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, were leading the federal team.

Kinew's recent passionate defence of trans rights in the provincial legislature was also a stark and heartening contrast to the dark musings of New Brunswick's Blaine Higgs, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and Saskatchewan's Scott Moe, all of whom have created a non-existent threat to "parental rights"

to court their social conservative base.

Gesturing to his Conservative opponents, Kinew disputed the contention that "people who use different pronouns are something that our children need to be protected from." He continued: "In fact, if my boys show some small measure of the courage, integrity and grace [of Kinew's transgendered colleagues] I will die a happy man, knowing that my work as a father has been successful." He concluded, in words that should resonate with progressive voters across the continent, "the real thing the kids of Manitoba need to be protected from is hatred and bigotry."

Meanwhile, he has followed through on some easier campaign promises including an official Orange Shirt Day, and naming Métis leader Louis Riel as the first honorary premier of Manitoba. He has also initiated a bill to ban replacement workers and solidify union rights.

For all that, Kinew has disappointed indigenous activists for not quickly launching a multi-million-dollar search of a Winnipeg landfill for the remains of murdered indigenous women. He hasn't ruled out such an effort, but the cost and uncertainty of success appear to be complicating the process. Time and events will chip away at his popularity, as always happens, but not yet: in a recent poll, Kinew ranked as the country's most popular premier, with a 63 per cent approval rating.

There are promising rumbles coming from Atlantic Canada, too. New Brunswick Liberals have an energetic, articulate and bilingual new leader in Susan Holt, a mid-40s businesswoman from Fredericton. Since assuming the leadership last year, Holt has been travelling the province, meeting with health-care workers, new candidates and municipal officials—and posting her adventures on X.

Her main focus is affordability, protecting the province's bilingual status, and fixing the lamentably inadequate health



Wab Kinew, pictured Oct. 3, 2023, after winning the Manitoba election. In his first months, the new NDP premier has cheerfully accepted \$664-million in federal money for health care and also welcomed the recent federal mini-pharmacare plan, writes Susan Riley. Photograph courtesy of X/Twitter

care system. Like other provincial leaders, she is calling for a pause on the April 1 carbon tax hike; she also proposes cancelling a clean fuel tax and the provincial tax on electricity bills. While hardly the actions of a climate leader, Holt promises a New Brunswick environmental plan, and, unlike Premier Higgs, to date hasn't joined Poilievre's Axe the Tax rallies. (The truth is that most New Brunswick families now receive more than they pay on fuel taxes through the federal carbon tax rebate—a reality that prompted the province to drop its own tax and embrace the federal system last year.)

Meanwhile, Higgs, arguably the grumpiest of premiers, kick-started a specious campaign against trans kids last year, under the guise of protecting parental rights. While his position plays well to right-wing sentiment in the province, it provoked an open rebellion in his caucus and reportedly irritated pragmatic New Brunswickers more concerned with the cost of living than esoteric moral crusades.

According to one recent poll, Higgs' Conservatives are now trailing the Liberals 34 to 40 per cent, and Holt is the preferred choice as premier among 31 per cent of those polled, compared to 25 per cent for Higgs. If those soundings hold until the October provincial election, Higgs could be off to involuntary retirement with the electoral map of eastern Canada changed once again.

Arguably, more impactful changes are looming in Alberta, with a competitive race to succeed retiring provincial NDP leader Rachel Notley. Along with four certifiably-sane former Notley cabinet ministers (all women), a prominent provincial labour leader and former Calgary mayor, Naheed Nenshi, have entered the race.

The fact that Nenshi, an avowed non-partisan as mayor, is joining the NDP makes him either an interloper and opportunist, or—for some progressive voters—evidence of the party's potential to reach beyond its base and regain power. That said, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith has proven to be a wily operator, a skilled communicator and an attentive servant of her right-wing rural base. Despite her widely unpopular campaign to quit the Canada Pension Plan, her push for a

provincially-financed police force to replace the RCMP, and her apparent hostility to clean tech investors, her UPC party continues to lead the NDP by around 7 points in most polls.

According to early intelligence, Nenshi, more than the other candidates, could challenge that lead. Under his leadership, the NDP would likely become an even more pragmatic, centrist party, that could sever ties with the unpopular federal NDP—or leave it to party members to join one, or both, branches of the party. A Nenshi victory could also open the door to genuine federal-provincial co-operation on climate change, instead of serving—as Smith's government does—as an unpaid cheerleader for the booming fossil fuel sector.

Amid all this churn, there are signs, however belated, that the federal Liberals are finally fighting back—led by their most skilled communicators, including Housing Minister Sean Fraser, and Labour Minister and former broadcaster Seamus O'Reagan. Along with regular, feisty postings on X from cabinet ministers and MPs, the party is finally releasing ads targeting Pierre Poilievre's constant and repeated lies about government policy and intentions.

Instructively, however, it was yet another premier—British Columbia's David Eby, a New Democrat—who recently matched Poilievre slogan-for-slogan, denouncing the Conservative leader's "baloney factory" around the carbon tax. The phrase immediately resonated among voters dismayed by Poilievre's exhausting anger and impulsive nastiness.

Surely, no matter what the polls say, a majority of Canadians want political leaders to work together on serious domestic problems like health care and affordability, to fight climate change, and present an intelligent, pragmatic face to the world? Surely there is light at the end of this dark tunnel.

Or do we have to wait until political leaders die, then look back, in the gauzy light of nostalgia, at the civility and devotion to public service that, in hindsight at least, once animated public life?

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

The Hill Times



## Opinion

# Environmental justice in Canada needs legislative backing now

Environmental racism happens when development, policies or practices lead to more pollution or heightened health hazards in Indigenous or racialized communities, and unequal access to clean water and air, or proximity to green spaces.

Ingrid Waldron  
& Lisa Gue

Opinion



If there weren't already enough reasons to scale up Canada's response to the climate crisis, last

year, people throughout the country faced unprecedented wildfires and floods, devastating extreme weather events, and longer periods of drought. Already this year, some areas have declared an early start to fire season, while others are recording record temperatures—all exacerbated by an ever-worsening climate crisis, driven by our unrelenting dependence on fossil fuels.

An element of Canada's climate policy needing more attention is the indisputable fact that not everyone experiences the effects of the climate crisis equally. Those least responsible for causing the problem experience the worst impacts. This disproportionate impact on marginalized and racialized communities is perhaps the most tragic and unjust element of this global crisis.

While the global dimensions to this injustice are clear, there is no shortage of examples here at home. While most people in Canada are only starting to experience and understand the impacts of a changing climate, increasing pollution, and ongoing nature degradation, Indigenous and racialized communities have been disproportionately harmed

by environmental challenges for decades.

The Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources is currently studying Bill C-226, An Act Respecting the Development of a National Strategy to Assess, Prevent and Address Environmental Racism and to Advance Environmental Justice.

Consideration of this legislation has spanned three sessions of Parliament since first introduced by then-Liberal MP Lenore Zann in 2020. In the current session, it was re-introduced by Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, and passed in the House of Commons with multi-party support in March 2023. The Senate must not allow this historic piece of legislation to stall any further.

Environmental racism happens when development, policies or practices—whether by design or unintentionally—lead to increased pollution or heightened health hazards in Indigenous or racialized communities, and unequal access to environmental benefits like clean water and air, or proximity to green spaces. It's made worse by systemic underrepresentation of affected communities in decision-making.

Addressing and redressing environmental racism is a moral imperative as the consequences it brings for the health and well-being of these communities are severe.

Environmental racism in Canada manifests in the placement of polluting industrial sites and other environmentally hazardous projects near Indigenous and racialized communities, higher levels of exposure to toxic chemicals in certain consumer products marketed to racialized Canadians, and inadequate environmental standards or enforcement for polluting industries and companies operating near racialized communities. This disproportionate burden has been linked to higher rates of cancer, respiratory illness, reproductive diseases and other health issues.

Environmental justice has long been a gap in Canadian law and governance. A 2020 report released by the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxic Waste and Human Rights found "a pattern in Canada where marginalized groups, and Indigenous peoples in particular, find themselves on the wrong side of a toxic divide, subject to conditions that would not be acceptable elsewhere in

Canada." The U.S. established an environmental justice program nearly three decades ago. Canada lacks any parallel requirements or equivalencies.

We need a national environmental justice strategy as proposed by Bill C-226.

If passed, Bill C-226 would help ensure a lasting commitment to advancing environmental justice with an evidence-based approach and accountability mechanisms including regular reports to Parliament. It would require the environment and climate change minister to examine the link between race, socio-economic status, and environmental risk, and develop Canada's first national strategy to prevent environmental racism and advance environmental justice. The bill sets out a two-year timeframe for this study and national strategy development, including consultations.

This important work is long overdue. Canada must confront the impacts of environmental racism and advance environmental justice. The Senate can help by prioritizing its study of Bill C-226 and passing it without further delay.

*Ingrid Waldron is professor and HOPE chair in Peace and Health at McMaster University, and co-founder of the Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice. Lisa Gue is the David Suzuki Foundation's national policy manager.*

*The Hill Times*

# Why two per cent?

Canada can engage in diplomatic efforts to end our reliance on nuclear deterrence. This means signaling to all NATO's members to slow and reverse momentum in supporting a global arms race. Instead, let's increase overseas development and peacekeeping contributions.

Robin Collins &  
Sylvie Lemieux

Opinion



As global spending on weapons and war reaches its

highest level ever—more than US\$2.2-trillion, about twice what it was in 2001—NATO allies such as Canada have been called upon to pay up, including reaching the arbitrary two per cent of GDP that the alliance collectively "agreed" to. The clamour among columnists for Canada to step up is deafening, and we think this noise is misleading.

In 2006, NATO's then-26 members committed themselves to the two per cent to ensure "military readiness," and to enhance the "perception of the Alliance's credibility." This would entail a significant increase for Canada—now at ~1.4 per cent—even while this country is already NATO's seventh largest provider—out of 31 members—in dollar figures, and 14th in a world of 193 states. Some freeloader!

The United States share (39 per cent) and Chinese share (13 per cent) combined are over half of all the world's military spending. Russia (at 3.9 per cent) is far behind. This raises many questions. What is the money being spent on? Is increased military spending in perpetuity the best way to commit to global security, or is it intended to maintain a particular power dynamic?

We face a multitude of global crises that require global coop-

eration. Every dollar spent on weapons escalation will inevitably deprive funding of other important services. Addressing the climate crisis is urgent, and requires immediate attention and huge expenditures. The same goes for pandemic preparedness, international attention to artificial intelligence threats, and increased spending on conflict resolution mechanisms.

But the goal of an arms race is to achieve power superiority over a rival. We need to outspend them and—therefore, logically—they us. Particularly in a multi-polar world, this is a pointless, endless, and dangerous endeavor.

Two per cent for NATO also means cutting back on foreign aid. The rarely-mentioned competing alternative is former Canadian prime minister Lester Pearson's proposal—which made it into a UN resolution in 1970—that States pay 0.7 per cent of their gross national income for overseas development. That would have the advantage of raising the material wealth of the world's poorest countries, and simultaneously reducing the weaponizing mechanisms that lead to violent conflict.

We all have seen how nuclear deterrence both failed to impede Russia's invasion of Ukraine,



Lester B. Pearson, pictured on May 9, 1962 in Toronto. The rarely-mentioned competing alternative is Pearson's proposal that States pay 0.7 per cent of their gross national income for overseas development. Photograph Ashley and Crippen/City of Toronto Archives

and raised the risk of nuclear war, while conventional weapon inventory is quickly depleted in the bloodbath that is still in progress. NATO's strategy, however, is substantially based on costing a reliance on "essential" nuclear deterrence for alliance security. This includes new spending earmarked for modernization of nuclear missile inventories held by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The U.S. Congressional Budget Office, for example, predicts modernization of U.S. nuclear arsenals alone will reach US\$60-billion per year through 2030. While polls show NATO remains popular among many of their citizens, nuclear weapons certainly are not. A strong majority of Canadians—80 per cent—think the world should work to eliminate nuclear weapons, not modernize them.

There is a financial and security relationship between steering away from a global warring framework based on nuclear

threats and military superiority, and shifting spending towards cooperative alternatives that help solve our common problems. While conflicts will continue for the foreseeable future, there are better options available to reduce them than the ones we are being badgered to fulfil.

Canada can engage in diplomatic efforts to stifle and end our reliance on nuclear deterrence. This means also signaling to all NATO's members to slow and reverse momentum in support of a global arms race. Instead, let's increase overseas development and peacekeeping contributions. NATO members could start by agreeing to cut their military spending to 0.7 per cent and increase foreign aid to two per cent. This is a viable trend all nations and the planet will benefit from.

*Robin Collins and Sylvie Lemieux are co-chairpersons of the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.*

*The Hill Times*



# The never-ending story of studying military-to-civilian transition

Over 10 years, the number of recommendations made by the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Defence Committee, the Senate National Defence Committee and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee counts in the dozens—more if you include additional advice from my office, and that of the Veterans Ombudsman. However, the government has acted on very few of these suggestions.

Gregory Lick

Opinion



Last month, I learned that another parliamentary committee was studying the transition from military to civilian life. This time the study is landing back in the House Veterans Affairs Committee (ACVA).

Over the last decade, the number of recommendations made by ACVA, the House National Defence Committee, the Senate National Defence Committee, the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, and others count in the dozens. If



Defence Minister Bill Blair, pictured on the Hill. My near six-year tenure as ombudsman concludes July 2024. It is my hope that my successor will carry the torch and continue to push for the government to implement many of these committees' recommendations, writes Gregory Lick. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

you include additional recommendations made by my office, and the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, that number increases.

However, the Government of Canada has acted on very few of these recommendations, despite “accepting” a number of the suggestions in their responses to these reports.

## Different wording: same message

Many of the recommendations resemble each other.

Take, for example, advice related to which government department should determine whether an illness or injury that a military member sustains is attributable to their service. In May 2016, my predecessor, Gary Walbourne, in his report *Determining Service Attribution for Medically Releasing Members*,

recommended that “the CAF determine whether an illness or injury is caused or aggravated by that member’s military service and that the CAF’s determination be presumed by VAC to be sufficient evidence to support an application for benefits.”

This advice directly aims to alleviate the burden on the member, and help eliminate backlogs for adjudications at Veterans Affairs Canada. As he stated then, and still true today, these backlogs are a process issue, not a people issue. If it were a people issue, the hundreds of VAC employees that the government has hired to address the backlogs would have done so by now. They haven’t.

Exactly two years later, ACVA made a similar recommendation in its May 2018 report *A Seamless Transition to Civilian Life for All Veterans: It’s Time for Action*. “That the Government of Canada make

the Department of National Defence responsible for the decision to attribute the cause or aggravation of an injury or illness to military service.” The suggestion made by both Walbourne and ACVA were rejected by the government with a smokescreen of bureaucratic language offering many reasons to reinforce their decision.

Fast forward to the November 2023 report by the House National Defence Committee, *Canadian Armed Forces Health Care and Transition Services*. The committee recommended “That the Government of Canada ensure that a determination of injury applicable to service from a CAF doctor or specialist be deemed sufficient for the purposes of Veterans Affairs Canada and that the veteran not require additional screening to access treatment, benefits, or supports.”

That’s three similar recommendations, and no action. The

Defence Committee is awaiting the government’s response to its latest report, which is due March 25, but I expect that the government’s answer will—once again—be disappointing.

Another example includes the recommendation in Walbourne’s September 2016 report *Simplifying the Service Delivery Model for Medically Releasing Members of the Canadian Armed Forces*. In it, my predecessor recommended “that the Canadian Armed Forces retain medically releasing members until such time as all the benefits and services from the Canadian Armed Forces, Veterans Affairs Canada, and the Service Income Security Insurance Plan have been confirmed and are in place.”

In response, initiative 28 of the government’s 2017 Defence Policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged* states the following: “Ensure all benefits will be in place before a member transitions to post-military life.”

This should have done the trick. But instead, the CAF was still releasing members before receiving their adjudications from Veterans Affairs Canada. This caused financial, medical, and emotional stress on transitioning members and their families.

In June 2018, the No. 1 recommendation that the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs made in its report *From Soldier to Civilian: Professionalizing the Transition* was: “That the Canadian Armed Forces ensure that no member is released from the Canadian Forces until all benefits and services from all sources, including the Canadian Forces pension and Veterans Affairs benefits and services, are in place.”

As I write, this recommendation has still not been fully implemented. Some of the bureaucratic resistance to this advice surrounds the CAF having to wait for the member’s application to escape the process backlog at VAC. This is ironic considering the previously mentioned recommendation on the CAF determining service attribution would slash the backlog considerably.

Many suggestions like this float in the ether: recommendations echoed from Chamber to Chamber, ombudsman to ombudsman, one interested party to another. Some of this advice have even had the full endorsement of the government, on paper. But they are still not implemented.

My near six-year tenure as ombudsman concludes July 2024. It is my hope that my successor will carry the torch and continue to push for the government to implement many of these recommendations.

It is also my hope that this “Never Ending Story” of studies on transition is put to an end, and that the government starts doing the business it’s been asked to do. As for the House Veterans Affairs Committee, it’s time to study and make recommendations on other topics of concern to the veterans community.

Gregory A. Lick is the National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces ombudsman. His term as ombudsman concludes July 2, 2024.

*The Hill Times*



## News

# As Atlantic Canada's largest newspaper chain falters, some media experts want more support for entrepreneurs looking to fill the gap

Continued from page 5

Liberal MP Churence Rogers (Bonavista-Burin-Trinity, N.L.) said there is a marked change from the scope of local media coverage from when he was first elected in a byelection in 2017 compared to the present—noting some of the publications that used to exist before they were folded into *The Central Wire*.

“Right now, when I do any kind of public announcement in my riding ... noticeably absent is media,” said Rogers. “There’s hardly anybody ever in the room. I’ve probably seen one or two journalists in the last two years in the Clarendville area [the largest centre in his riding, with a population of around 7,000] when I’ve done announcements. So it’s been a huge vacuum in terms of the media.”

Rogers said that even when making major funding announcements in Clarendville, there has sometimes not been any media there to cover it.

If there is a major tragedy, like a fishing accident, he said CBC reporters based in one of the larger centres outside of the riding—such as St. John’s or Gander—may come to cover it, but this still leaves a major gap when it comes to covering any good news happening in the community.

This has an impact on political and community engagement, he said.

“We’re missing that now,” he said. “I seldom see a news story that’s happening in even my major towns—like Bonavista, Clarendville, Marystown, Grand Bank and so on. There’s no good news, or it’s being promoted very little. ... That saddens me.”

Rogers said it appears that the steps taken by the federal government to date to help local media have not been enough.

“Obviously, what we’ve been doing is having some impact. But I don’t know if it’s enough,” he said. “The challenge, I think, for a lot of the local newspapers throughout Atlantic Canada is to generate revenue.”

Rogers said if the CBC were to base even one reporter in his riding in Clarendville, that could make a real impact.

“I’d love to see CBC provide more local coverage,” he said. “There was a time when they had more local journalists.”



Liberal MP Churence Rogers, pictured with fellow Newfoundland Liberal, federal Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan, said 'what we've been doing is having some impact. But I don't know if it's enough.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

However, given recent cuts announced by the public broadcaster, he said he is not optimistic.

“I don’t know where CBC is going, quite frankly,” he said. “Certainly they’re not expanding, in fact they’re reducing services to many parts of the country. And usually what happens, of course, is the more rural areas of the country, small regional entities, are the ones that get negative things [like experiencing cuts].”

Conservative MP Chris d’Entremont (West Nova, N.S.) shared a similar view of the impact a shrinking media footprint was having on rural communities, but he was more critical of the programs undertaken by the government to date, and what role the CBC could play in filling the gap.

D’Entremont said the shrinking presence of local media “makes it difficult” for MPs, provincial legislators, and other organizations “to be able to get their message out, and the stories that they need to be telling about their issues.”

“It’s going to create a bit of a void” if SaltWire is lost, he said.

D’Entremont said federal programs like the Online News Act have been detrimental to organizations like SaltWire, and Ottawa needs to “get out of the way” to allow new business models to emerge.

In particular, he said Meta’s decision to block news on its platforms in Canada in response to the Online News Act has been a blow to the kinds of small rural publications operated by SaltWire, and may stunt new models from emerging.

“I really do think that it has worked against rural newspapers,” said d’Entremont. “They need to put [the Online News Act] aside so that local stories can be viewed again on Facebook, because the same people that were actually taking that paper and actually reading it, you know, they have adapted, I believe, to Facebook but they haven’t adapted to Twitter ... or any of the other online opportunities.”

Meta has not indicated whether it would restore news to its platforms if the Online News Act were repealed, and has been blocking news in a growing number of countries.

D’Entremont said he does not believe CBC would fill the gap for rural communities.

“I’ve seen a tremendous expansion by online CBC and those kinds of things, which don’t tell stories in rural Canada anymore,” he said. “They don’t have journalists working in rural Nova Scotia anymore, you know, they’re Halifax-centric. Whatever the topics that they seem to be interested in, they’re not, you know, what’s happening down in my neck of the woods.”

D’Entremont said he prefers to see new business models emerge.

## Journalism professors point to entrepreneurship as a way forward

Several journalism professors in the region said there remains

a need for reliable information, and that means journalism has a future in Atlantic Canada—even if it looks different than SaltWire.

Terra Tailleir, a University of King’s College journalism professor who specializes in digital news, said SaltWire was a “dominant player” in the region, though its shrinking rural presence was already being felt. However, she noted, there are some successful new models coming out of Atlantic Canada.

One publication, *allNovaScotia*, uses a subscriber-based model which it has successfully expanded to other parts of the region and across the country, launching *all-NewfoundlandLabrador*, *allNew-Brunswick*, and *allSaskatchewan*.

The outlet covers business and politics, seeking to provide in-depth and exclusive information to readers with an interest in these topics.

“If you look at the real successes out here, those outlets are the ones that have convinced people to pay for the product, but also the service,” said Tailleir.

She pointed to publications such as the *Halifax Examiner*, which she said had done a good job of making a case to readers for why their news costs money.

The *Examiner*’s publisher would go on social media to explain “why he needed to hire a lawyer for a particular series or piece, what that costs, and how he spends subscriber money,” said Tailleir.

Brian Daly, a journalism professor at the University of King’s

College, said building these kinds of personal relationships with readers was key to success, and “we are going to need to see a greater entrepreneurial spirit” going forward.

“We’re now 30 years into this digital age. It’s not really that new,” said Daly. He said legacy outlets across Canada, including SaltWire, have been “far too slow to change their revenue model.”

“We do live in a free market, and anybody who can’t survive in a free market is going to die if they don’t adapt,” he said.

Daly said new publications should not rely on government programs to survive.

“I don’t think [it’s] reliable to ... lean too heavily on governments, especially since you have changes of government both ways. And then programs suddenly are gone,” said Daly.

“The government already funds the CBC to a substantial amount,” he added. “What we need to see is competition. It wouldn’t be a good thing if in a large swath of Canada, the CBC was the only game in town. You need to have private citizens who believe strongly in journalism, and are willing to either fund it in some way or get out there and do it themselves.”

Daly said in smaller Atlantic communities, one model going forward may be individuals or small groups of community journalists using a not-for-profit model and seeking private donors, while also offering a mix of free and subscriber content—a practice he is aware of some recent King’s graduates already undertaking.

Daly said it is important these efforts be reported, as much as media layoffs, because the next generation of journalists needs to be encouraged to enter the field.

Walsh, who now runs his own production company in addition to teaching, had a similar message.

“There is hope,” he said. “Maybe there aren’t broadsheet newspapers anymore, but there’s always going to be a place for good stories.”

Walsh said “democracy isn’t free,” and it was important to make the case for why reliable information costs money—whether it is paid for in the form of subscriptions or through tax dollars to fund the CBC. He said both are good value for money.

Tailleir said she “would love to see more support for entrepreneurial” initiatives going forward.

“One of the issues that we have out in Atlantic Canada [is] we’ve had these family-owned businesses, these dynasties that owned a lot of industries, like in New Brunswick, it was the Irvings—the Irvings owned the newspapers. They produced the journalism in that province,” she said, noting those publications had recently been purchased by Postmedia.

“One of the things I think Atlantic Canada really needs is help for those who want to start their own media, journalism-related, or journalism-adjacent start-ups.”

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**Inside  
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Feature

# Ottawa says one last goodbye to Brian Mulroney

*The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



The cortege of cars, including the hearse carrying former prime minister Brian Mulroney's casket, arrives in Ottawa on March 19, 2024.



RCMP officers walk up Wellington Street and past Nicolas Mulroney, Brian Mulroney's youngest son, and Andrew Lapham, Caroline Mulroney's husband, to bring Mulroney's casket into the Sir John A. Macdonald Building where the former prime minister would lie in state for two days.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stands outside the Sir John A. Macdonald Building as the casket is brought into the Sir John A. Macdonald Building.



Mila Mulroney, Caroline Mulroney, followed by Mark Mulroney and his wife Vanessa, and Andrew Lapham, and Nic Mulroney, in the rear.



Ben, Nic, Mila, and Caroline Mulroney in Ottawa. Brian Mulroney's funeral was held on March 23 in Montreal.



Ben and Nic Mulroney, on March 20, stand by to watch the casket being put back into the hearse" with "Ben and Nic Mulroney watch their father's casket being placed into the hearse on March 20 in Ottawa.



## The Big Photo

Late prime minister Brian Mulroney's casket is carried away from Sir John A. Macdonald Building by RCMP officers in Ottawa on March 20, 2024, after laying-in-state for two days. Mila Mulroney, Mulroney's widow, and his daughter Caroline Mulroney can be seen directly on the other side of the casket.



The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



## News

# Liberals wanted softer language on arms embargo against Israel: McPherson

NDP MP Heather McPherson says her party walked away from talks with Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly as late as 6:30 p.m. on the night the motion on the war in Gaza passed, but Joly chased after her into the opposition lobby to agree on a deal.

BY CHELSEA NASH

The days and hours leading up to the March 18 House vote on a non-binding NDP motion on the war in Gaza were filled with political negotiations and emotional conversations for MP Heather McPherson, who was leading her party's efforts as foreign affairs critic.

The motion was amended by the Liberals at the last minute, watering down some of its more controversial clauses like acknowledging a State of Palestine. The amendment earned the support of the Liberals' front bench, enabling the motion to easily pass 204-117. Three Liberal MPs, one Independent, and all Conservatives voted against it. NDP MP Niki Ashton (Churchill-Keewatinook Aski, Man.) did not vote because she disagreed with the amendment, her office said.

McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, Alta.) couldn't put a number on the number of times she went back and forth with her Liberal counterparts, including Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.), but her eyes widened as she said it was "absolutely exhausting."

"I just feel like they just kept trying to slip away," McPherson said. "We would say, 'Send us what you've got,' right? [And they would say], 'Well, what would be language appropriate for you?'"

And we would say, 'What we gave you! That's what's appropriate for us.'"

The NDP walked away from negotiations multiple times after the Liberals came back with language that wasn't strong enough, McPherson said. In particular, she said they walked away over watered-down language on imposing an arms embargo against Israel, and softening the motion's language on supporting the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

"That was a red line for us. And it should have been for them, too, because, frankly, Canada should always stand with the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court," she said.

The last time the NDP walked away from negotiations was at 6:30 p.m. Monday evening. The vote was scheduled to take place one hour later.

"Ultimately, at the end, we walked away, we said 'no,' [and] we went into our lobby," McPherson said. "And the minister [Joly]

actually chased us into the opposition lobby to make it happen."

Joly's office did not dispute McPherson's version of events.

At 7:10 p.m., after hours of debate and 20 minutes before a scheduled vote on the motion, Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) introduced the amendment. The NDP agreed to it, while some disgruntled Liberal and Conservative MPs—including Liberals Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Ont.), Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Que.), and Conservative Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, Alta.) raised points of order objecting to the amendment because, in their view, it fundamentally changed the motion they had spent all day debating.

The House was suspended while the amendment was translated into French, and while debate paused, MPs' emotions were laid bare. Shouts were exchanged across the aisle between Mendicino and NDP MP Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.), who told Mendicino it was his own party

who was responsible for such a last-minute amendment, not the NDP.

"I'm stating the obvious, bro. I'm not a Liberal," Green yelled.

Meanwhile, Liberal MP Rob Oliphant (Don Valley West, Ont.) went up to MacKinnon and Joly, kissed both of MacKinnon's cheeks, and gave Joly a big hug.

Oliphant, who is the parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs, was in hot water back in February after one of his constituents leaked a secretly recorded phone call in which he was critical of his government's position on the war, and told the constituent he was considering quitting his role as parliamentary secretary.

The day after the vote, Oliphant was not keen to speak about the motion, saying only he was "glad we got an almost all-party solution."

The original motion called on the government to demand an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages; impose a military arms embargo on Israel; reinstate and ensure continued funding

Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly negotiated with the NDP on March 18 to come to an agreement on a motion calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, an arms embargo against Israel, and more. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA); support the prosecution of violations of international law; demand unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza; lift the cap on the number of Gazans who can apply to come to Canada; impose sanctions on Israeli officials who incite genocide; and officially recognize a State of Palestine.

The latter two were where the Liberals drew their line, McPherson said.

Liberal MP Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* he was planning on voting in favour of the motion either way, but the wording around sanctioning Israeli leaders and "unilaterally" officially recognizing a State of Palestine were items he wasn't comfortable with.

The amendment added a call for Hamas to lay down its arms, reworded the clause about the arms embargo and about providing funding to UNRWA, removed wording about imposing sanctions on Israeli officials, changed "lift" the immigration cap to "expand," and softened the language about recognizing a Palestinian state, instead stating Canada would work towards establishing a State of Palestine.

"There was a sense of relief from many caucus members," Turnbull said. "I won't say all, but I think for the most part, the vast majority ... I think the pending vote on the NDP motion made us all feel slightly uncomfortable."

The government was always going to allow a free vote for the Liberal caucus on this motion, and several Liberal MPs had already stated their intention to vote in favour of the original motion.

Even so, and with the support of the Bloc Québécois and the Greens, McPherson said the motion still would have failed without the Liberal government coming on board.



NDP MP Heather McPherson scrums next to NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, left, after her motion on the war in Gaza passed in the House after being amended by the Liberal government on March 18. *The Hill Times* photograph by Chelsea Nash





Ultimately, McPherson said the final amendment the Liberals came back with was better than having the whole thing amount to nothing. She said her party had been communicating with community groups throughout the negotiations, and while they still want to see sanctions imposed on Israeli leaders who incite genocide, and they want the government to recognize a State of Palestine, they still felt they managed to “force” the Liberals to go further.

“Honestly, I was on a call with a member of the Palestinian Canadian community [who] was in tears, like, ‘just give us something,’ like ‘we want the headline tomorrow not to be the Parliament of Canada doesn’t give a shit.’”

Stephen Brown, CEO of the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), told *The Hill Times* his organization was one of the ones in touch with McPherson and the NDP throughout the negotiations, which began over the weekend and carried on all day on March 18.

McPherson said her party was also working with JSpace Canada, a pro-Israel, pro-peace, Zionist advocacy organization that supports a two-state solution; and experts like Mark Kersten, a human rights professor at the University of Fraser Valley in B.C.; as well as doctors who had been on the ground in Gaza.

Asked what clout her party was using to pressure the Liberals to come to an agreement, McPherson said she didn’t think

her party had leverage, but the advocates and community members across the country did.

“They’re a transactional party. And I don’t necessarily believe that the Liberal Party does things for the right reasons. But I do think that they don’t like that they weren’t invited to attend mosques. I do think that fundraising from within the Muslim community influences their decisions,” she said.

Ahead of Ramadan, the NCCM along with hundreds of other community leaders, including mosques, signed an open letter to Members of Parliament stating they would not be permitted to address their congregations unless they called for a ceasefire.

Brown said his team had been in touch with all parties—except the Conservative Party—in the lead

up to the vote on the motion. He confirmed the Liberals’ red lines were to remove the wording on sanctioning Israeli leaders and recognizing a State of Palestine, and so the NDP pushed for movement on the arms embargo and affirming support for the ICC and ICJ. He said the removal of the wording on sanctions and a State of Palestine was “unhelpful,” but said he would continue working with Parliamentarians on those fronts.

Turnbull said he was motivated to vote in favour of the original motion because of what he was hearing from his constituents. He said he is empathetic to Israel’s right to defend itself and that what happened on Oct. 7, 2023, was “devastating,” but “I think the world is sort of looking at what’s happening, and specifically the

response from Israel that is claiming a lot of civilian lives. ... I think that’s unacceptable,” he said.

## Dissent in Liberal caucus

Before the amendment was tabled and the vote took place, Housefather was seated on the opposition side of the aisle, chatting and laughing with Conservative MPs Rempel Garner, and deputy leader Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, Ont.).

When the motion was tabled, Housefather was back on the Liberal side of the House sitting with Mendicino. Both Liberal MPs stood to argue the amendment was out of order because it substantively changed the motion.

“This was tabled after the entire debate had concluded. How can you have such a substantive amendment that nobody had the chance to see or debate at all? It offends my privileges and the privileges of the people of Mount Royal,” Housefather said, earning applause from the Conservative benches.

Turnbull said he “sensed a little bit of a ruffle” in terms of Housefather and Mendicino’s vocal disagreement with the Liberal-amended motion. But: “I think where we landed, the majority of caucus is fairly comfortable with it,” he said.

Housefather told reporters on March 19 that he was “reflecting” on his future with the Liberal Party.

“I truly felt last night that a line had been crossed when my party members got up and cheered, and gave a standing ovation to Heather McPherson and the NDP. I started reflecting as to whether or not I belonged.” He told reporters he’s still in caucus “for the moment.”

“Obviously, there’s still caucus members that are upset about wording here or there,” Turnbull said. “And I think that matters to them. So I don’t want to sound insensitive to that, I think we have to take those concerns seriously, as well. And hear them out. So I think that’s what will happen in the coming days.”

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*The Hill Times*



Stephen Brown, CEO of the National Council of Canadian Muslims, says his group had been in touch with the NDP and “all parties” except the Conservatives in the lead up to the March 18 vote on the NDP motion. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Liberal MP Anthony Housefather told reporters on March 19 that he was considering his place in the Liberal caucus after the majority voted in favour of a motion that he felt crossed a line. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



## News

# Liberals' riding associations out-fundraised Conservatives by \$2-million in 2022

'It's all about relationships,' says Ontario Liberal MP Charles Sousa, whose riding association raised the largest amount of money of all Liberal EDAs nationally in 2022.

Continued from page 1  
The fundraising numbers for riding associations stand in contrast to those at the national party level, where the Conservatives have been setting fundraising records under leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.), and the Liberal Party has been lagging far behind.

Last year the Conservatives brought in \$35.3-million at the national level, according to data released by Elections Canada. The Liberals took in just \$15.6-million; the New Democrats \$6.9-million; the Bloc Québécois \$1.8-million; the Greens \$1.9-million; and the People's Party of Canada \$1.6-million.

In 2022, the Conservatives raised \$23-million at the national level; the Liberals \$14.9-million; the NDP \$6.9-million; the Greens \$2-million; and the Bloc and the People's Party \$1.5-million each.

Liberal Party spokesperson Parker Lund attributed his party's riding-level fundraising success to the Liberal Victory Fund through which Liberal supporters can sign up to send \$5 or more to the federal party and their local riding association each month.

"Local fundraising has been a significant success story for the Liberal Party of Canada over the course of the last number of years, with local Liberal teams stepping up their engagement efforts and grassroots fundraising to out-perform their CPC counterparts—which makes an important difference in close races whenever an election eventually arrives," Parker wrote in a statement to *The Hill Times*.

The Conservative Party did not respond to a request for comment on the electoral district-level fundraising results.

Both parties regularly transfer money back and forth with electoral district associations for a variety of reasons. In 2022, the Conservative Party transferred a net total of \$9,414,440 to its local associations, far more than the net \$99,673 transferred by the Liberal Party to its ridings.



The riding of Vancouver Granville, B.C., represented by Liberal MP Taleeb Noormohamed, left, raised \$66,129 in 2022. *The Hill Times* photograph by Samantha Wright Allen

## MP Charles Sousa tops for Grits in 2022

The 10 Liberal riding associations that raised the most in 2022 are: Mississauga-Lakeshore, Ont.; Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.; Scarborough Centre, Ont.; Calgary Skyview, Alta.; Brampton Centre, Ont.; Markham Unionville, Ont.; Edmonton Centre, Alta.; and Burnaby North-Seymour, B.C.

The Mississauga-Lakeshore riding association raised \$184,026 in 2022, more than any other across the country for the Liberals. Mississauga-Lakeshore was represented by two different Liberal MPs in the year 2022. Sven Spengemann held the seat until May 27th of that year, when he resigned. Charles Sousa was officially announced as the Liberal Party's candidate in the riding in November, and won the byelection there on Dec. 12.

Sousa said that fundraising and winning support from constituents is all about building relationships, and sharing common cause with them.

"In my case, it's very centric [ideologically]. I'm not extreme left or right. I'm just trying to do what I think is important to promote and improve our economy, and provide social programs that are sustainable through economic growth, and provide unity across the country. That's what I've been doing all along."

Sousa said that he's always done well at raising money. A former Ontario Liberal finance minister, Sousa and national campaign co-chair Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Man.) hosted a fundraiser on March 15 at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto that is said to have been attended by about 100 people. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.)

was the chief guest at the fundraiser. Sousa declined to share with *The Hill Times* how much money was raised or to confirm how many people attended. According to a Toronto Liberal, the attendees paid the maximum donation limit of \$1,725.

Sousa, who represented the provincial riding of Mississauga-Lakeshore while he served as Ontario's finance minister, said that when he left provincial politics in 2018, the riding association had \$140,000.

"What matters in politics, it's always local, and people want to believe in the purpose, and the leader, and the cause," said Sousa. "And if you show unity and strength around the ground, it matters, too."

Liberal MP George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Alta.), whose riding raised the fourth-highest amongst Liberal MPs, said that he's humbled that he's raising relatively large amounts of money in a region that is the bedrock of the Conservative base. He said that he and his team work with the party's grassroots members and the community to address their issues, and to advocate for those at all levels of government.

Chahal said that on top of the riding-level fundraising, he also held a barbecue fundraiser in July 2022 for the party that was attended by Trudeau, and raised \$118,000 for the national party.

"I have a lot of relationships in my city and in my community, and I've been very privileged where people have offered to support me," said Chahal. "And I'm happy to share how they can do so, and in which ways they can support me. They've stepped up and attended many events that I hold. I haven't had, for myself, an official fundraiser yet. A lot of it is

through just my personal interactions within the community."

Liberal MP Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, B.C.) agreed: "You have to be willing to talk to people. You have to put the time in, and you have to build relationships and remind people that we are working towards something that is in everybody's interest, and a big part of that is making sure we have the financial support to do it."

Liberal MP Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Ont.), whose riding raised the fifth-most in the country, said that he's been working in his community for about 20 years, and whenever he has asked for support, funds, or volunteers, people have provided that support.

"That's the whole idea of being elected: When we go for votes [to people] we tell them that [we] will be your voice [in Ottawa]," said Ali. "And if you become their voice, you don't have an issue to get support. And that's what I do, and that's what I believe in."

On the Conservative side, the 10 ridings that raised the highest amount of money in 2022 are Thornhill, Ont.; Calgary Heritage, Alta.; Abbotsford, B.C.; Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner, Alta.; Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ont.; King-Vaughan, Ont.; Regina-Qu'Appelle, Sask.; Sherwood Park-Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.; Carleton, Ont.; and Edmonton West, Alta.

Both the Liberal and Conservative parties have given specific fundraising targets that caucus members must meet if they want to be shielded from nomination challenges in the next federal election.

The Liberal Party set out these conditions for its MPs in November 2022. Each MP had to have at least 65 per cent of the anticipated expense limit for the forthcoming election in their respective electoral district association's bank account by March 1, 2023. They also had to have at least 40 more Victory Fund members than the number they had on July 1, 2022; and to have attempted to knock on at least 3,500 doors, or made 7,500 phone calls with their team of volunteers.

The first deadline for these MPs was March 2023. A few months ago, the party extended the deadline to March 1, 2024. MPs were told that missing the deadline would mean they may have to face a nomination challenge. As of early March, 89 of 156 Liberal MPs had their nominations to run in the next election approved.

In every general election, Elections Canada fixes spending limits for national parties and individual ridings. They base those limits on a calculation that takes into account the population of a riding, the length of the campaign, the geographical size of the riding, and a cost of living adjustment. According to estimated spending limits on Elections Canada, all the riding limits range between \$111,000 to \$180,000. That means MPs will have to raise somewhere between \$72,000 and \$117,000 to hit their 65 per cent target.

The Conservative Party also set a condition on nominations for their MPs in 2022, one that was much easier to meet than the Liberal Party's targets. Conservatives who want to carry their party's banner again without going through a divisive nomination process must raise \$15,000. They also have to make a maximum-level personal donation to each their riding association and the national party, which together totals \$3,350.

The deadline for Conservative MPs to meet that target was December 2022. According to a senior Conservative, 12 of 117 MPs have failed to meet those criteria. According to this source, five of these 12 MPs are from Quebec, two from Ontario, and the rest are sprinkled throughout the rest of Canada, mostly in Western provinces. Some of those MPs may not be seeking re-election.

In 2022, the maximum individual donation limit was set at \$1,675 annually for contributions to a registered party; \$1,675 to a riding association; and \$1,675 to a leadership contestant. Now, the maximum donation limit is \$1,725 each for a party, riding association, and leadership contestant.

Gary Keller, a former senior ministerial staffer in the Harper government, said that he is not surprised by high fundraising totals in ridings like Calgary Heritage, the hub of the Conservative Party base, which has been represented by elder party statesmen including Stephen Harper and Preston Manning.

The Calgary Stampede, one of the biggest events in the country, also happens in this riding, which makes it easier to raise money. In 2022, the riding was represented by then-Conservative MP Bob Benzen, who stepped down in December that same year. Last July, he was succeeded in a byelection by Shuvaloy Majumdar.

Keller said that he's been impressed with fundraising numbers posted by MPs including Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, Ont.), a first term MP who represents a Greater Toronto Area battleground riding, and who raised the sixth-most on the Conservative side nationally.

"Not surprised by some of the names, but pleasantly surprised by someone like Anna Roberts, the first term MP in obviously a battleground riding, a key battleground for the Conservatives, and being on that top 10 list. Good for her," said Keller. "That's a real feather in her cap."

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# Liberals 'between the devil and the deep blue sea' on carbon tax and caucus fissures on Mid-East war, say political players



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre addresses his national caucus on the Hill on March 20, 2024. Last week the party put forward a no-confidence motion against the government on the carbon tax, but lost the vote. The price is going up 23 per cent on April 1. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued from page 7

Trudeau shot back. Poilievre responded that, if that was the case, the prime minister "shouldn't be afraid to have one more."

As expected, the non-confidence motion was defeated, as the NDP and the Bloc Québécois voted in support of the government.

Five-term Liberal MP Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, B.C.) said that addressing the issue of climate change is the right thing to do, and the Liberals should proceed with the carbon price increase. She said she's not worried about low level of public support



Five-term Liberal MP and former cabinet minister Joyce Murray is not seeking re-election. In an interview with *The Hill Times* last week, she did not rule out the possibility of stepping down from her seat before the next election. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

at this time as the next election is scheduled for October 2025, and that the political landscape could change significantly by then.

"I can't predict what's going to happen in the election, but I know that it is important for us just to be true to our values as we develop our platform and our plan going forward," said Murray, a former cabinet minister and five-term MP. Murray is not seeking re-election, and could step down from her seat before the next election is called.

"I am not in favour of putting a pause on climate action because our kids cannot afford that we do that. It has already taken Canadian society too long to be taking action, and we can't afford to slow this down," she said.

Lyle said that, from a purely strategic point view, a sensible way to get out of the tricky political quagmire would be for Trudeau to pause the carbon tax for now with the reasoning that he does not further want to burden the life of Canadians.

"If they pause it, they change the nature of the debate," said Lyle. "So what a pause does is that it recognizes that times are tough, and that at this point, given what's going on in the world, and what's going on in Canada, that was the right thing in the long run. We can't go at the original pace in the short run, and that's reality knocking on the door and them answering."

Lyle said that could happen when the Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale,

Ont.) presents the federal budget on April 16. Other than halting the increase, he said, it's hard to think of anything that could help the Liberals out of their current public support slump.

"They're dead right now," said Lyle. "The question is whether they can find a way to come back to life, and it's very difficult to see a way that brings them back to life that doesn't involve pausing—at least pausing—the carbon tax."

But, Bricker said, it's highly unlikely that the Liberals will back down on this signature policy issue because if they do, it will

be perceived they were wrong all along.

"[Liberals are] between the devil and the deep blue sea," said Bricker. "They're in a situation where they've got to try and change the minds of Canadians, or they just lose the issue. And changing the minds of the public when they set it up is a very, very hard thing to do."

In addition to the carbon price, adding more political headaches for the Trudeau Liberals are the fissures within the Liberal caucus on the Middle East conflict. On an opposition day motion on this

subject that was heavily amended before voting, three Liberal MPs voted against their own government, including Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Que.), Marco Mendicino (Eglinton-Lawrence, Ont.) and Liberal MP Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Man.). After the vote, Housefather said publicly that he's looking at his options on whether he should stay in the Liberal caucus, and did not rule out the possibility of crossing the floor.

The motion, which was significantly watered down, first called on the Trudeau government to recognize the "State of Palestine," but later was reworded asking the government to work towards that objective as part of a two-state solution.

Murray, who was interviewed before the voting on the motion, said that it was up to each MP to decide how they would want to vote. She, however, voted in support of the motion.

Since its latest iteration began in early October, the Israel-Palestinian conflict has caused sharp divisions within the national Liberal caucus, especially among MPs from major urban centres representing constituents of Muslim and Jewish faiths. In addition, progressive voters are also divided on this issue, creating a tricky situation for the Liberal government.

The Muslim community and progressive voters are key parts of the Liberal voting coalition that brought them to power in 2015, and who voted for them again in 2019 and 2021. But they are now unhappy with Trudeau government's handling of the conflict, in which more than 1,200 Israelis and more than 31,000 Palestinians have died. In the most recent Durham, Ont., by-election, according to Greater Toronto Area-based Liberal sources, one reason why the Liberals lost by a whopping 35 per cent margin is that the Muslim community did not show up to vote for the Liberals. The riding until last year was held by former Conservative Party leader Erin O'Toole. The outgoing Conservative leader won the 2015 and 2019 election by a 10 per cent margin, and the 2021 election by a 19 per cent margin.

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Liberal MPs Marco Mendicino, left, and Anthony Housefather, pictured at Canada's Rally for Jewish People on Dec. 4, 2023, both voted against the NDP motion on the war in Gaza. Housefather, who represents one of the country's safest Liberal seats, says he's not ruling out the possibility of crossing the floor. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



## News

# Ministers' letters, advertising, and lobbying: advocates make final requests as 2024 budget process nears its end

The third or fourth budget in a government's mandate is when a party needs to show progress on its commitments ahead of a coming election, says former economic adviser Tyler Meredith.

Continued from page 1

well as input from hundreds of stakeholders, the Liberal caucus, and ministers.

One of the most public avenues to determine what stakeholders are requesting is the House Finance Committee's pre-budget consultations, which typically run through the fall and have in recent years resulted in a report in mid-winter.

As *The Hill Times* reported last week, the House committee received 858 written submissions for its pre-budget study, the largest number ever received. The committee also included 359 recommendations for the federal government to consider in its development of the budget, which was also the greatest number since the Liberals came to power in 2015.

Meredith said with so many recommendations and submissions for decision-makers to consider, the committee process is just one of many inputs that inform the budget's development, and one that is particularly good for influencing members of the governing party's caucus.

"Those members of FINA will then take from some of that process things that they would like to champion as caucus members," he told *The Hill Times*. Reaching the ear of opposition committee members is also important, Meredith said, as the finance minister would consult their critics on the process as well.



Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland will deliver the 2024 budget on April 16. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"Even in our first mandate, when we had a majority, the finance minister would still sit down with his critics just to hear what they would like, because, on occasion, you can pick up a few ideas," he said. "In the last couple of years, there's been a few different private members' bills that the government's budget has signalled, 'We're going to take that idea and just fold it into the budget bill.' That doesn't happen a lot, but it does happen."

What is more important, Meredith said, is not the committee process itself, but in creating a system where groups submit detailed requests that could then be proposed to other decision-makers during the budget preparations.

"That gets those stakeholders into a routine of producing a submission that they will then take and market around to different interested parties, whether that's a sponsoring minister who might put it into their budget request directly, whether it is the finance department officials or the minister's office, or even the Prime Minister's Office," he said.

"So that's actually what matters under this process. The challenge is that when you've got 300-and-some recommendations that come from the FINA

report, it doesn't so much matter what's in the report or what's not in the report. It matters the extent to which that has enabled the process for stakeholders to engage with decision-makers in government."

Other organizations, such as the Canada Media Fund (CMF), have taken a different strategy, and have approached the government directly with an economic case for funding measures.

Canadian Heritage announced \$60-million over three years to the CMF to support equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives in Canadian film and television in April 2021. With that funding due to sunset on March 31, 2024, the CMF has requested that it be extended.

To bolster its case, the CMF produced a document outlining the economic impact of that funding. Approximately 57 per cent of funding went into the fund's Pilot Program for Racialized Communities, which provided support to productions from companies owned and controlled by Black people and people of colour. That program contributed to projects with combined production budgets of \$152.7-million which, in turn, contributed \$176.4-million to GDP, 2,208 full-time equivalent positions, and \$322.3-million in total economic output.

"This now is a clear demonstration of actual outputs that are measurable," said CMF president and CEO Valerie Creighton. "If you have statistics, regardless of what they are, then you can start to make different kinds of decisions about where any money that you have—whether it's public or private—should be spent, in terms of the mandate of this organization in particular, but also the mandate of the government and of what the country needs."

Creighton said that economic argument also contributed to a broader discussion about the cultural importance of such initiatives.

"I think that there's a demonstration that that investment of \$60-million over three years has returned spades in terms of identity, culture, jobs, storytelling, and economic impact on the GDP in the country," she said. "A lot of other really important areas in the country need attention, but I think this is a sector that can contribute to the overall economic engine of the country. It's not often looked at that way, but I think the stats are in now."

Other groups, such as Beer Canada, have taken a mix of political lobbying and public advertising to seek additions to the budget.

The organization, which represents brewing companies in Canada, had a single recommendation in its pre-budget submission to the finance committee: "That the government freeze federal beer excise duties at the 2023 rates for fiscal year 2024, and until CPI inflation returns to the Bank of Canada's target of 2 per cent."

The request was in response to an expected excise increase on beer, wine, and spirits of 4.7 per cent on April 1. The industry group followed up its pre-budget submission with an advertising campaign featuring sketch characters Bob and Doug McKenzie calling for the government to "take off the beer tax hike."

A similar campaign last year, when the excise would have increased by 6.3 per cent, resulted in the federal budget unveiling plans to limit the increase to two per cent. This year, Freeland announced on March 9 that the excise would continue to be capped at two per cent for the next two years.

Meredith, a founding partner at Meredith Boessenkool Policy Advisors, said many of the ideas that are considered from the budget come from ministers, which means it is important for any stakeholders to ensure their ideas are compelling to those offices.

"There's obviously space to be able to take in additional ideas that people think are politically important, either because a caucus member has raised it or because the minister's office thinks that it's hit that unique kind of thematic that they're interested in wanting to talk about, or it's just a really topical thing," he said. "You're going to have a higher degree of success if multiple points in that system are willing to sponsor the idea. So to back that up, you've got to get into the minister's budget letter."

Potential success in influencing the budget can also depend on the Parliament's lifespan. A government's first budget after an election win, for example, is going to be far more focused on mandate-letter commitments and the party's winning platform, Meredith said.

By year two, things are less pre-defined. "Those actually end up being years in which you will focus more on the internal priorities at, say, Finance, or within the government itself, because there's less downside to taking time to spend on things that may be less electorally significant," he said.

By years three and four—if a government reaches the end of a full mandate—the focus on a nearing election takes greater priority.

"That's really when you actually start to need to focus on what are the things that are going to get you re-elected, and what you need to show progress on and completing by the time you go into an election cycle," Meredith said. "So if stakeholders can situate themselves against those different kinds of expectations that decision makers have, they will do well."

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## Opinion

## Feature

# Where there is WIL, there's a way



Employment and Workforce Development Minister Randy Boissonnault. The federal government has an important role to play, and was right to set an objective of having a work-integrated learning opportunity for every student who wants one by 2029, writes Charlene Marion. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Why Canada is—and should remain—the global leader in post-secondary work-integrated learning.

Charlene Marion

Opinion



For students at Canadian post-secondary institutions, work-integrated learning (WIL) is often a foundational part of their education.

From co-op placements to practicums to clinicals, WIL programs benefit students, employers, communities, and education institutions alike by ensuring students emerge from their programs of study equipped to hit the ground running in the workforce.

Students in particular benefit from WIL by incurring less student debt, performing stronger academically, seeing improved employability outcomes—especially for students from equity-deserving groups—and earning more money in the job they choose.

Paid WIL contributes to economic development through student salaries, the development of full-time jobs, and a 2:1 ratio of economic gains for employers. WIL truly is a win-win-win: students develop in-demand skills, and employers gain access to talent, all while supporting economic growth.

March is National Co-op and Work-Integrated Learning Month in Canada, and this year's theme is the future of WIL. As the world's economies evolve and shift, how are we adapting the ways we teach and train students in Canada to ensure our workforce is globally competitive?

The world is changing faster than ever before. Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence are changing the way that people live and work, and no industry will be left untouched. Old norms of what a career should look like are being disrupted and turned upside down every day. The rise of hybrid work has broken down geographic barriers and changed traditional conceptions of a workday. Meanwhile, Canada struggles with its oft-discussed productivity gap and it lags in global competitiveness. Against this backdrop, a

growing share of working-age Canadians hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

As the national, lead organization for such programs, Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL) has a unique vantage point from which to assess how Canada's workforce will be poised to meet these challenges.

The answer has never been clearer: we need to create more and better-quality work-integrated learning opportunities for post-secondary studies of every stripe. The federal government has an important role to play here, and was right to set an objective of having a WIL opportunity for every student who wants one by 2029. CEWIL is proud to have contributed to delivering on a variety of work-integrated learning programming over the last number of years, but there can be no resting on our laurels. If our elected leaders of all political stripes are serious about preparing young Canadians for the workforce—and they should be serious about this—then ongoing prioritization of work-integrated learning should be higher up on everybody's agenda.

It's in everyone's interest to make sure Canadian workers have the real-life skills and experience employers need. As peer countries around the world move to place an increasing emphasis on work-integrated learning in their postsecondary education systems, recognizing its value in building a competitive workforce, it is critical that Canada keep pace. Students who participate in WIL are more likely to benefit from higher earnings and more employment opportunities, be employed in fields more closely related to their studies, and develop technical and work-ready skills sought after by employers.

CEWIL is the critical nexus connecting post-secondary institutions and employers, ensuring the creation of hundreds of thousands of work-integrated learning experiences every year. We have the knowledge, the experience, and the unmatched capacity to power even more WIL opportunities in every corner of this country. To do this, we've successfully collaborated with all levels of government, and it is critical that this work continues.

There is no silver bullet solution to addressing Canada's competitiveness and productivity challenges. But we have always known that our country's greatest asset is our people. By investing in them, we have the best chance of engendering economic growth, attracting investment, and leading the world in the many industries in which Canada excels.

Charlene Marion is the executive director of CEWIL Canada

*The Hill Times*

# Mulroney's lying in state: a contemplative, Canadian tribute

Continued from page 3

new this time as we turned the corner from Bank Street was the snaking queue, formed by metal fencing running halfway up the road like an airport security line. Heavy trucks blocked the road at Bank Street and again at Elgin Street, while police cars lined the street up at the O'Connor Street intersection.

Light flurries started as we lined up behind approximately 100 others wishing to pay their respects. Young and old, anglophone and francophone, gathered. Some were dressed for a downtown office job, others were better dressed for the weather. Some who would not have been born when Brian Mulroney ran the country joined those who likely voted in the 1984 and 1988 elections—now perhaps retired—for the slow shuffle through the gates where security admitted groups of around 15 people at a time in approximately 10-minute intervals.

There was even a dog ahead of us in the line, though we didn't get to see whether the canine was permitted into the building. Only one person got discouraged by the wait and left.

The mood was neither solemn nor sad, but more contemplative and peaceful. Soft murmuring could be heard through the crowd as, on either side of Wellington Street, staffers, a handful of demonstrators for a cause we couldn't make out, and politicians went about their business. Some of those in the queue talked amongst themselves, others chatted to people in front of or behind them in line. At the front of the queue, people joked with the Parliamentary Protective Service officers about the weather, and hoped that the clouds would break as the minutes ticked over from winter into spring.

After a brisk 45 minutes outside, we moved forward with a dozen or so others into the Sir John A. Macdonald building. Our press passes granted the two of us exemption from security, but we resumed a shorter queue with about 40 other people in a lobby waiting to enter the room where Mulroney lay.

Cellphones had to be switched off or silenced, and photos were not allowed—with one exception, nobody needed to be told twice. Slowly, we filed into what was once the main hall of the Bank of Montreal, and now the venue for many parliamentary receptions.

Inside, the lights were dim; red lights lit up the stately walls. A red carpet had been laid upon which mourners were instructed to remain. The family formed a receiving line in the centre while the casket rested perpendicular to the group. It was draped in a Canadian flag, and topped with a black velvet pillow of medals representing

a life of awards through public service. White and green flowers surrounded both the casket and to the left was the former prime minister's official portrait. An honour guard of four soldiers stood sentry at each corner of the casket, heads bowed.

The scene was neither ostentatious, nor understated. It felt like a very Canadian way of farewelling a leader: suitably solemn and tasteful without sliding into extravagance. The only thing that looks slightly out of place is the massive CBC camera crane, beaming the proceedings to well-wishers and mourners in every corner of the country.

We made our way onto a red carpet and slowly approached the family. Some people shook their hands, briefly paying their respects before moving on. Others embraced them. Some were old friends, some were strangers. All of them, however, had a story to tell.

We, in due course, offered our condolences as well, shaking their hands one by one. We noted Mulroney's role as "our" first prime minister—having been PM when the newspaper first published in 1989—and that we had come to acknowledge that legacy. They graciously received us, and we had a short chat—about the paper, about the media, about political life in Ottawa—just as they had conversed with hundreds of people before us.

For these two reporters, the moment was fleeting, but for the family, they had spent hours doing this—greeting hundreds, maybe thousands of strangers sharing in a small part of their own grief. Despite hours on their feet, all the family looked remarkably calm and rested that day, as if they'd walked into the room only minutes before. Perhaps they were feeding off energy from the stories of their dearly departed, perhaps they were aware that the man so dear to them had also touched so many others, and that their private grief was one shared by strangers.

After pausing at the casket, we were ushered behind a black curtain to the back of the room, where a bank of half a dozen condolence books stood on plinths in front of a row of Canadian flags. On behalf of *The Hill Times*, we left a small note, similar to what we'd told the family.

And with that, we were guided down the stairs, and out onto a snowy Sparks Street.

A couple of hours later, Mulroney's casket was moved out of the building and into a hearse to take his final journey to Montreal for his funeral on March 23.

His time in the capital of the country that was forever changed by his leadership had come to an end.

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## News

# ‘The mainstream is still trying to be civil, but we’re getting beat’: political cartoonist de Adder delivers 2024 Kesterton Lecture

Political cartoonist Michael de Adder, who has lost four jobs, has won a National Newspaper Award for editorial cartooning, seven Atlantic journalism awards, a gold Innovation Award for news animation in 2008, as well as the Order of Canada for his ‘artistic contributions and pointed commentary.’

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

When Michael de Adder was three years old, he could draw a full train, complete with some intricate and rough details for each train car. It was impressive stuff for a three-year-old. But he was so absorbed in his work that he’d poop his pants. Years later, his now late-mother would tell the poop-pants story over and over again, including to guests at one of her son’s art installation event before he could run across the room to stop her.

Today, de Adder is one of Canada’s best political cartoonists. He’s won countless newspaper awards for his wry, artistic, and pointed takes on the political world today. In Ottawa on March 20, de Adder was the guest of honour at the Wilfred Kesterton Lecture, organized by Allan Thompson at Carleton University’s journalism school.

Headlined “How To Not Get Cancelled,” de Adder is the first cartoonist to be featured as part of the lecture series. He said he’d “try not to be the last,” and said “I’m surprised you guys are here. You didn’t get the memo: I was cancelled.”

“I really am cancelled on the other side, on the non-progressive solitude, but no one here knows it,” said de Adder.

On stage with Nahla Ayed, host of CBC Radio’s *Ideas*, de Adder was honest, funny, and, at times, a bit scattered. Over the course of a long evening inside



De Adder’s lay of the land:

Nahla Ayed, left, host of CBC Radio’s *Ideas*, and Michael de Adder, pictured March 20, 2024, on stage at Carleton University’s Wilfred Kesterton Lecture 2024 in Ottawa. Photograph courtesy of L. Manuel Baechlin/Carleton University

the glorious Dominion Chalmers Church on Cooper Street in Ottawa’s Centretown neighbourhood and before a crowd of about 350 people, de Adder talked about his professional career, and about today’s media and political landscape.

He talked about how he’s lost his job at least four times, including from the *Brunswick News* in July 2019 for an infamous cartoon about former U.S. president Donald Trump playing golf next to the bodies of two migrants who had drowned in the Rio Grande while trying to cross into Texas, and most recently, from the *Washington Post*. But he also talked about why he’s drawn to political cartooning.

Influenced by *Mad* magazine as a child, and later by *Montreal Gazette* cartoonist Aislin (Terry Mosher), de Adder first studied to be a painter, and was attracted by “big canvases” and “big paintings.”

But he later realized more people were drawn to a massive cartoon strip he did early on. So he dove into the world of political cartooning.

De Adder began his career in Halifax working for alternative weekly, *The Coast*, which led to freelance jobs at Halifax’s *Chronicle Herald* and *The Hill Times*. He’s also drawn political cartoons for *The Toronto Star* and most recently, for the *Washington Post*, where his tenure ended ear-

lier this year. De Adder has been drawing for *The Hill Times* for decades.

“Ultimately, a lot of good comes from a lot of people becoming aware of something they were not aware of before, or see a perspective that they didn’t see before,” said de Adder in his remarks to the audience.

The cartoonist has won a National Newspaper Award for editorial cartooning, seven Atlantic journalism awards, plus a gold Innovation Award for news animation in 2008. De Adder also received the Order of Canada for his “artistic contributions and pointed commentary” in January 2024, according to CBC.

## If Poilievre stopped attacking reporters, ‘I would tone it down... a little bit’

In his conversation with Ayed following his opening remarks, she said “we live in this age where opinion reigns supreme, and it’s the currency of the moment. Opinion is everywhere.”

“You’d think that at a time like this, political cartooning would be thriving,” said Ayed.

De Adder respectfully disagreed, and said he thinks what’s thriving right now is opinion that everyone agrees with.

“They just do not accept any opinion that disagrees, and even the left side—we’re all just as guilty for that,” said de Adder. “We do not listen to the other side, and they do not listen to us.”

But de Adder said “they’re playing a different game—the mainstream is still trying to be civil, but we’re getting beat because we’re still trying to be civil.”

De Adder has taken issue with Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre’s (Carleton, Ont.) past treatment of the media, telling *The Hill Times* earlier this year that the new state of political affairs in this country “is going to bring a whole bunch of nastiness to Canadian politics when we already have enough nastiness, and it’s just going to embed it.”

“Pierre Poilievre can go fuck himself,” said de Adder during the event on March 20. “Because he keeps saying...all this garbage about being paid by the mainstream media.”

“Like...shut up,” said de Adder.

“So if Pierre Poilievre just stopped attacking reporters and stopped behaving like that towards the press, I would tone it down...a little bit,” said de Adder.

“When you see someone who could be prime minister behave in a way that’s unbecoming of a human being, it’s hard not to just draw 10 cartoons against the guy,” said de

Adder, who has started a new cartoon strip called “THE deEP STATE” that he posts to platforms including Substack and Patreon.

## ‘This has been a trip, a bit of journey’ into de Adder’s mind, says Allan Thompson

“I just want to thank you. This has been a trip, and a bit of a journey, I think, into the mind of Michael de Adder,” said Allan Thompson, director of Carleton University’s School of Journalism and Communication, as the night came to a close before people headed into the reception.

“It’s been an evening of firsts: our first political cartoonist, our first Kesterton lecturer talking about his poop pants,” said Thompson. “I think we have surpassed Wilf Kesterton’s record for f-bombs in the obscenity lecture,” adding that he found the way de Adder layered things into his work was noteworthy.

In a follow up interview with *The Hill Times*, Thompson said de Adder put into words what many political cartoonists have done in caricature for decades.

Noting the “interesting exploration of political cartooning, the issues around editorial control, and the pressures that cartoonists work under within the industry,” Thompson said he was “really glad that we had him there, because as I discovered, we haven’t had a political cartoonist, and this is a really important niche in Canadian political journalism, and opinion, and commentary.”

“And [de Adder’s] really good at it,” said Thompson.

“I guess that those who don’t like him probably don’t like him even more after hearing him speak, but just look at his body of work,” said Thompson. “Some of the commentary from there is really powerful, and I’m just glad I got a chance to hear him speak.”

Thompson said the school has been holding the annual Kesterton lecture since 2000, and that when he was a journalism student at Carleton in the 1980s, the man for whom the lecture was named “was a still a force to be reckoned with.”

Born in Saskatchewan, Kesterton was a newspaperman and Second World War veteran when he became one of the earliest graduates of Carleton’s new bachelor of journalism program in 1949, according to the university’s website.

“His newspaper background and exceptional academic achievements led to his appointment, upon graduation, as the School of Journalism’s second full-time faculty member,” where he would go on to become a leading figure at the school for four decades, specializing in media law and journalism history, according to the website.

Carleton journalism’s signature annual public event, the lecture honours Kesterton’s pioneering contribution to journalism education in this country.

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Stuart Benson

## Party Central

# Pints of plain at the Irish ambassador's St. Patrick's Day house party

Ireland's ambassador welcomed foreign dignitaries, politicians and Ottawa's Irish-Canadian community to his residence on March 20 for a night of strong drinks, delicious food, and good music.

Diplomats, politicians, Ottawa's Irish-Canadian community, and those who wish they were Irish gathered for a belated St. Patrick's Day Céilí at the Irish ambassador's official residence on March 20 to toast the Emerald Isle's national day with plenty of pints of plain and tumblers of whiskey.

As **Party Central** arrived just before 6 p.m. and crossed over the emerald threshold into the residence's central foyer, the surprise resignation of Ireland's Taoiseach (prime minister) **Leo Varadkar** earlier that day did not dampen the celebrations of Ireland's national day in Ottawa. While harpist **Pat Marshall** had returned to her post near the front door, plucking out traditional folk songs, her performance fought a losing battle over the din of the revelry.

Unfortunately, **Party Central** was late to the festivities because a House of Commons vote had delayed the start of a House Citizenship and Immigration Committee meeting, and missed the chance to say hello to the night's hosts, Ambassador **Eamonn McKee** and his wife, **Mary McKee**, who had been greeting guests as they arrived at the door. That meant most of the nearly 250 guests had already staked out a spot in the residence's west wing to listen to the ambassador's speech.

From the back of the room, **Party Central** couldn't hear most of McKee's speech, nor what was said when he was joined by **Gina St-Amour**, executive director of the Ottawa Rotary Home Foundation, and Ottawa firefighters Cpt. **Pierre Brisson**, **Tim Ruddy**, **Martin Seguin**, and **Evan McCloskey**—though they were presumably promoting the station's fundraising efforts to support the foundation's home in Findlay Creek mentioned in the pamphlets being handed out at the door. Mercifully, however, after a long day on the Hill and with most of the guests' attention elsewhere, the table pouring pints of Guinness—compliments of Brigid's Well Pub—was free of a line and provided a useful vantage point for people-watching.

With a draft of Irish champagne in hand to wash down the skewers of glazed back bacon cubes, **Party Central** was able to spot several familiar faces, including Liberal MPs **John McKay** and **James Maloney**; Bloc Québécois MP **Andréanne Larouche**; Dr. **André Levesque**, deputy chancellor of St. John Ambulance in Canada; retired Canadian general **John de**

**Chastelain**, Ottawa city councillors **Theresa Kavanagh**, **Steve Desroches**, **Rawlson King**, **Ariel Troster**, **Riley Brockington**, **Marty Carr**, and **Wilson Lo**; Montreal city councillor **Sterling Downey**; **Bryan O'Gallagher**, Ireland's recently appointed honorary consul to Quebec; and **Kevin Page**, Canada's first parliamentary budget officer. There was also a large cohort of the diplomatic corps present, including U.S. Ambassador to Canada **David Cohen**, Lithuania's Ambassador **Darius Skusevičius**, Japan's Ambassador **Kanji Yamanouchi**; Belgium's Ambassador **Patrick Van Gheel**; Indonesia's Ambassador **Daniel Simanjuntak**; Latvia's Ambassador **Kaspars Ozolins**; Colombia's Ambassador **Carlos Lopez**; El Salvador's Ambassador **Ricardo Cisneros Rodriguez**; Mexico's Ambassador **Carlos Joaquin Gonzalez**; Pakistan's High Commissioner **Zaheer Janjua**; and **Gaia La Cognata**, the Italian Embassy's head of mission.

Once the speeches concluded, dancers from the **Sue Fay Healy School of Irish Dance** took to the floor while much of the crowd headed to the residence's east wing to form a queue for the buffet provided by the **Aulde Dubliner & Pour House**. Thanks to the headstart afforded by being near the back of the room, **Party Central** was able to make it across the residence before a significant line had formed, and composed a healthy plate from the untouched charcuterie board of assorted cheeses, crackers, and salted meats; mini fully-loaded baked potatoes; green-, orange-, and yellow-food dyed deviled eggs; Scotch-Irish eggs; mini-shepherd's pies; and a mini-pint of Guinness-infused chocolate mouse topped with a pistachio cream foam. There were also wee baskets of fish and chips being served, but **Party Central** was never quite fast enough to acquire one before the platters were cleared mere moments after leaving the kitchen.

While searching for a place to stand and eat without dropping crumbs on the good hardwood, **Party Central** also bumped into **Algonquin Elder** and University of Ottawa Chancellor **Claudette Commanda** and **Patricia Saulis**, executive director of **Maliseet Nation Conservation Council**.

After a quick chat to get **Commanda** and **Saulis**'s thoughts on the Liberal government's recent record on reconciliation—they at least had a lot of nice things to say about former Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister **Marc Miller**—**Party Central** was again drawn into the east wing by the unmistakable squawk of Irish bagpipes as the **Rideau Ramblers** began to perform.

After one final glass of **Jamieson** whiskey, which by that point was being poured with several extra ounces of Irish generosity, **Party Central** called it a night just before 8 p.m. for fear of repeating the mistake a certain other press gallery reporter made last year when they may or may not have absconded into the night with an entire bottle.

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Indonesian Ambassador **Daniel Simanjuntak**, left, Ambassador of Lithuania **Darius Skusevičius**, Irish Ambassador **Eamonn McKee**, and Ambassador of Belgium **Patrick Van Gheel** toast St. Patrick's Day at McKee's residence on March 20.



Ambassador of Lithuania **Darius Skusevičius**, left, and Ambassador **Eamonn McKee**.



Japan's Ambassador **Kanji Yamanouchi**, left, and Irish Ambassador **Eamonn McKee** and his wife **Mary McKee**.



Ambassador of El Salvador **Ricardo Cisneros**, left, Colombia's Ambassador **Carlos Morales**, his wife, **Betty Leon Ossa**, and Mexico's Ambassador **Carlos Joaquin Gonzalez**.



Dancers from the **Sue Fay Healy School of Irish Dance** perform while the **Rideau Ramblers** keep time.



Ottawa city councillor **Rawlson King**, left, Dr. **André Levesque**, Ambassador **McKee**, and Ottawa city councillor **Steve Desroches**.



**Katie Gauthier**, left, wee **Arthur Patterson**, **McKee**, and **Aaron Patterson**.



Ottawa Fire Captain **Pierre Brisson**, centre, and senior firefighter **Tim Ruddy**, left, of **Station 32-Leitrim**, promote their fundraising efforts on behalf of **Ottawa Rotary Home Foundation's** residence in **Findlay Creek**.



Latvia's Ambassador **Kaspars Ozolins**, left, Irish Ambassador **Eamonn McKee** and his wife **Mary McKee**.



Ambassador **McKee** speaks about the historic relationship between **Canada and Ireland**.

*The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia



**Algonquin Elder Claudette Commanda**, right, addresses the crowd.



The **scotch eggs** and **mini fully-loaded baked potatoes** were the first snacks to be picked bare, and the **baskets of fish and chips** were consumed as fast as they could be taken from the fryer.





Laura Ryckewaert  
**Hill Climbers**

# Development Minister Hussen recruits comms director from Trade Minister Ng's team

Plus, there are staffing updates to report in the offices of Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, and Public Services and Procurement Minister Jean-Yves Duclos.

After a months-long search, International Development Minister **Ahmed Hussen** has found a new director of communications, with **Shanti Cosentino** hired straight out of Trade Minister **Mary Ng**'s office to take on the role.



Shanti Cosentino is now communications director to Minister Hussen. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Cosentino officially started in Hussen's office on March 18, ending a more than two-year-long run working for Ng as minister for trade, export promotion, small business, and economic development.

A former consultant with National Public Relations, Cosentino was first hired by Ng as a special assistant for digital communications and social media in January 2022—her first gig on the Hill. That fall, she was promoted to press secretary and digital communications adviser to the minister. Cosentino recently stepped in as acting director of communications to Ng from October 2023—when **Alice Hansen** exited to become communications director to Employment Minister **Randy Boissonnault**—up until this past January, when **Giulia Doyle** was hired as Ng's new communications head.

Hussen has been without a communications director since **Alex Tétreault** left the role—and the Hill—at the end of December.

Now in the international development minister's office, Cosentino will be working closely alongside press secretary and communications assistant **Olivia Batten**—who joined Hussen's team in mid-December—and digital communications adviser **Geneviève Lemaire**.

**Mike Maka** is chief of staff to Hussen, supported by deputy chief of staff **Hursh Jaswal**.

Meanwhile, in Ng's office, the minister has already promoted a new press secretary, **Huzaif Qaisar**, who until recently was a special assistant for communications in



International Development Minister **Ahmed Hussen**, left, recently scooped up International Trade Minister **Mary Ng**'s press secretary to serve as his new communications director. The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade

her office. Qaisar also marked his first day in his new role on March 18.

Qaisar has been working for Ng since April 2023, and is a former assistant to Prince Edward Island Liberal MP **Bob Morrissey**. He's also been president of the Ontario Young Liberals since 2021, having been re-elected to the role last year. Qaisar's past experience also includes time spent as a research assistant with both the Canadian Defence and Security Network (where he also tackled communications work) and the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, as well as past internships with both then-Ontario Liberal MP **Andrew Leslie** (through the Liberal Summer Leadership Program in 2019, after previously volunteering in Leslie's office), and with the United Nations Association in Canada, among other things.

Qaisar reports to Doyle, who in turn reports to Ng's chief of staff, **Kevin Coon**.



Huzaif Qaisar is now press secretary to Minister Ng. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

## Freeland bids policy aide farewell, Duclos adds two to team

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister **Chrystia Freeland**'s policy team was recently reduced by one with the departure of senior policy adviser **Blake Oliver** in mid-February.

Oliver had been working for Freeland since July 2022. A former analyst and consultant with Crestview Strategy in Ottawa, she first began working for the Trudeau government in the portentous month of March 2020, starting as a policy adviser to then-transport minister **Marc Garneau**. She continued in the transport office after Liberal MP **Omar Alghabra** took over the portfolio in January 2021, but exited a few months later in April to become a senior

Bock is already well familiar with his once-again boss, having previously worked for Duclos during his turns as both Treasury Board president and health minister.

Bock has spent the last two-and-a-half years working for the federal health minister, starting as director of policy to then-minister Duclos, who held the portfolio from October 2021 until the cabinet



Jean-Sébastien Bock is once again working for Minister Duclos. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

shuffle last July. At the end of 2022—under Duclos—Bock was promoted to the added title of deputy chief of staff. After **Mark Holland** took over the portfolio following last summer's shuffle, Bock stayed on as deputy chief of staff, dropping the role of director of policy to the minister (which was taken over by **Eshan Naik**, who'd worked for Holland in his previous capacity as government House leader).

Bock landed his first job on Parliament Hill in March 2016, starting as a special assistant and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to then-national revenue minister **Diane Lebouthillier**, after almost five-and-a-half years working for Montréal International, last as co-ordinator of funding and private partnerships. He worked for Lebouthillier until January 2018, ending as a policy adviser and special assistant, and went on to spend most of the year as a Quebec regional adviser to then-employment minister **Patty Hajdu**.

In September 2018, Bock was hired as Quebec regional affairs and operations adviser to then-finance minister **Bill Morneau**, for whom he worked until December 2019—ending as a policy adviser—when he left to become a senior policy adviser to Duclos as then-Treasury Board president. He was promoted to director of policy there in early 2021, and followed Duclos to the health portfolio after that fall's federal election.

Also new to the public services minister's office is **Dianne Watkins**, who was hired as assistant to Duclos' chief of staff, **Anthony Laporte**, as of Jan. 22.

Altogether, they bring Duclos' office to 17 staff total, including directors: **James Fitz-Morris**, director of parliamentary affairs and deputy chief of staff; **Mary-Rose Brown**, director of policy; **Elisabeth d'Amours**, director of operations; and **Marie-France Proulx**, director of communications.

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Blake Oliver has left Minister Freeland's office. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

policy adviser to then-natural resources minister **Seamus O'Regan**.

That fall, O'Regan was shuffled out of the portfolio and named minister of labour, with current Energy and Natural Resources Minister **Jonathan Wilkinson** replacing him as resources minister. Oliver once again stayed on through the post-shuffle turnover, and worked for Wilkinson until the summer of 2022, when she left to work for Freeland.

**Bud Sambasivam** remains director of policy to Freeland, and continues to oversee senior policy advisers **Christophe Cinqmars-Viau**, **Yash Nanda**, **Douglas Wong**, and **Mathew Hall**; policy advisers **Hannah Wilson** and **Nicholas Mahoney**; **Tyler Norman**, senior Pacific regional affairs adviser and policy adviser; and **Cassie Millar**, special assistant for policy.

**Andrew Bevan** is chief of staff to Freeland.

Over in Public Services and Procurement Minister **Jean-Yves Duclos**' office, there are two staff additions to report, including **Jean-Sébastien Bock**'s hiring as a senior adviser to the minister as of March 4.



Public Services and Procurement Minister **Jean-Yves Duclos** speaks with reporters on his way into a Liberal cabinet meeting in the West Block on Feb. 27 alongside press secretary **Oliver Pilon**, left. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



# Ng to lead two trade missions to Asia



Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development Mary Ng is leading Team Canada trade missions to Malaysia and Vietnam from March 24-29. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

## SUNDAY, MARCH 24—FRIDAY, MARCH 29

**Minister Ng to Lead Two Trade Missions to Asia**—Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, and Economic Development Mary Ng will lead Team Canada trade missions to Malaysia and Vietnam from March 24-29. Contact Shanti.Cosentino@international.gc.ca.

## MONDAY, MARCH 25

**House Sitting Schedule**—The House is scheduled to sit for a total of 125 days in 2024. It breaks for two weeks on March 25, and returns again on Monday, April 8, when it will sit 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.

**What is the Future of News Media in Canada?**—This in-person roundtable, hosted by Senator Andrew Cardozo, Liberal MP Mona Fortier, and Senator Hassan Yussuff, will look at the news media in Canada and the rapidly changing world and layoffs from traditional news media. Monday, April 8, at 11:30 a.m. (meet and greet) followed by the roundtable discussion. Senate of Canada Building, 2 Rideau St., Ottawa, Room B-45. Simultaneous French/English translation and a light lunch will be provided. Contact Sharon.Fernandez@sen.parl.gc.ca.

**Catherine McKenna to Deliver Remarks**—Former Liberal cabinet minister Catherine McKenna will deliver remarks on “Where Change Comes From: My Time in Politics, the Paris Agreement and the Future of Climate Action,” hosted by the University of Ottawa. Monday, March 25, at 3 p.m. ET at the University of Ottawa, FSS 4006, 120 University Priv. Details online: cips-cepi.ca.

**Greece’s Prime Minister to Deliver Remarks**—Greece’s Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis will deliver a keynote address hosted by the Economic Club of Canada. Monday, March 25, at 11:45a.m. ET at the Hilton Toronto, 145

Richmond St W. Details online: events.economicclub.ca.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 26

**Richard Fadden to Deliver Remarks**—The Canadian International Council hosts a conversation with Richard Fadden, former national security adviser to the prime minister, on “Integrated Approach to Foreign, Security and Defence Policy.” Tuesday, March 26 at 5:30p.m. ET at the Delta Ottawa City Centre, 101 Lyon St. Details online via Eventbrite.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

**Michael Ignatieff Talks Democracy**—Former Liberal Party leader Michael Ignatieff, now rector emeritus of Central European University, will give a talk on “What if Democracy’s Greatest Enemy is Democracy Itself?” hosted by the University of Ottawa. Wednesday, March 27, at 12:30 p.m. ET, happening online. Details: cips-cepi.ca.

**Lecture: ‘Social and Digital Media Polarizing Public Opinion’**—McGill University hosts the 2024 Eakin Lecture, “Social and Digital Media Polarizing Public Opinion in Canada,” with former reporter Raphaël Melançon who will discuss how the internet and social media has, in the past two decades, contributed to amplifying social tensions, polarizing public opinion, and radicalizing political discourse in Canada. Wednesday, March 27, at 4:30 p.m. ET at 3450 rue McTavish. Details online: mcgill.ca/misc.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 28

**Ontario Premier Ford at Mayor’s Breakfast**—Ontario Premier Doug Ford will be the special guest at the Mayor’s Breakfast hosted by Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, the *Ottawa Business Journal*, and the Ottawa Board of Trade. Thursday, March 28 at 7:30 a.m. ET at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Details online: business.ottawabot.ca.

**Webinar: ‘Canadian Political and Trade Implications of the U.S. Election’**—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts a webinar on “Canadian Political and Trade Implications of the United States 2024 Election.” Participants include The German Marshall Fund’s Bruce Stokes; Canadian Chamber of Commerce CEO Perrin Beatty, Future Borders Coalition executive director Laura Dawson, and former Canadian ambassador to the United States Frank McKenna. Thursday,

March 28, at 11a.m. ET happening online: cgai.ca.

## THURSDAY, APRIL 4

**Former Bloc MP St-Hilaire to Deliver Remarks**—Former Bloc Québécois MP Caroline St-Hilaire, now administrator for the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, will deliver remarks in French at the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Thursday, April 4 at 11:30 a.m. at the DoubleTree by Hilton Montréal, 1255 Jeanne-Mance St., Montreal. Details online: corim.qc.ca.

## FRIDAY, APRIL 5

**Rand Debate 2024**—Augustine College and the First Freedoms Foundation hosts the 2024 Rand Debate, inspired by former Canadian Supreme Court Justice Ivan Rand, who said, “Logic must yield to common sense as well as to justice.” Wilfrid Laurier University’s David Haskell will argue in favour of the resolution “Be it resolved that, as Wokeism destroys the West, the first responsibility of government is to foster a virtuous society, rather than protect individual liberty,” while Queen’s University’s Bruce Parly will argue against. Friday, April 5, at 7 p.m. ET at Augustine College, 152 Metcalfe St., Ottawa. Details online via Eventbrite.

## MONDAY, APRIL 8

**Panel: ‘The Fight for Liberal Democracy’**—McGill University hosts a panel discussion on “The threat to civility and the fight for liberal democracy,” the inaugural event of the series “Conversations: sponsored by Charles Bronfman.” The CBC’s Nahlah Ayed will moderate the discussion featuring Rosalie Silberman Abella, retired Supreme Court of Canada justice and human rights law expert; Vikas Swarup, former Indian high commissioner to Canada; and Luís Roberto Barroso, president of the Brazilian Federal Supreme Court. Monday, April 8, at 7 p.m. ET at Théâtre Symposia, Centre Mont Royal, 2200 Mansfield St., Montreal. Details online: mcgill.ca/misc.

## TUESDAY, APRIL 9

**Virtual Pink Tea with Justice O’Bonsawin**—The Famous 5 Foundation hosts a virtual Pink Tea with Justice Michelle O’Bonsawin, the first and only Indigenous Justice on the Supreme Court. Tuesday, April 9, at 2 p.m. ET taking place online via Eventbrite.

**Paramedic Chiefs Parliamentary Reception**—Please Join the Paramedic Chiefs of Canada and co-host

Conservative MP Todd Doherty on Parliament Hill for their evening reception. Paramedic chiefs from across the country are looking forward to sharing their priorities and experiences with Parliamentarians at this event. Tuesday, April 9, 5:30-7:30 p.m. ET in Room 228, Valour Building.

**National Public Safety Awards**—The Union of Safety and Justice Employees hosts its annual National Public Safety Awards. Members of Parliament, Senators, and staff are invited to this catered reception featuring local cuisine and a prestigious awards ceremony celebrating the outstanding work undertaken by Canada’s federal public safety and justice employees. Tuesday, April 9, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in Room 310, Wellington Building, 180 Wellington St. RSVP: miya@kitpublicaffairs.ca.

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

**Panel: ‘A Better Digital Future for Canadian Transportation’**—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts a panel discussion on “Imagining a Better Digital Future for Canadian Transportation.” Shauna Brail, Institute for Management and Innovation, University of Toronto Mississauga; Jean-Sébastien Langelier, Infrastructure Canada; and Catherine McKenney, CitySHAPES, will discuss the policies needed to realize the benefits of “the new mobility era” in a way that is equitable, efficient and effective. Tuesday, April 9, at 12p.m. ET at the Delta Ottawa City Centre, 101 Lyon St. N. Details online: irpp.org.

**AFN Dialogue on Transport and Storage of Used Nuclear Fuel**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts the first in a four-part series, “Regional Dialogues on the Transportation and Storage of Used Nuclear Fuel,” from April 9-May 22, to advocate for First Nations’ active involvement in decisions about used nuclear fuel, management, and transportation across Turtle Island. Tuesday, April 9, at 8a.m. PT at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 655 Burrard St., Vancouver, B.C. Details online: afn.ca/events.

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10—FRIDAY, APRIL 12

**The Progress Summit**—The Broadbent Institute hosts its annual Progress Summit from April 10-12. Speakers include Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow, and Fae Johnstone, executive director of Wisdom2Action. This event will take place at the Delta Hotel City Centre, 101 Lyon St. N. Details online: broadbentinstitute.ca.

**Canada Strong and Free Conference**—Canada Strong and Free hosts its two-day networking conference on the theme: “Leading with Conviction.” Confirmed speakers include Conservative MPs Michael Chong, Melissa Lantsman, and Shannon Stubbs; former United Kingdom prime minister Boris Johnston; and former Saskatchewan cabinet minister Tim McMillan, among others. Wednesday, April 10, to Friday, April 12, at the Westin Hotel Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details: canadastrongandfree.network.

## THURSDAY, APRIL 11

**Canada Growth Summit and Annual Testimonial Dinner**—The Public Policy Forum hosts the Canada Growth Summit 2024. That evening, its Annual Testimonial Dinner will take place, honouring five distinguished Canadians who have made outstanding contributions to public policy and good governance, including former cabinet minister Marc Garneau, and former Privy Council clerk Janice Charette. Columnist Paul Wells will also receive the Hyman Solomon Award for Excellence in Public Policy

Journalism. Thursday, April 11, at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Details: ppforum.ca.

**CGAI’s International Trade Conference**—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts its annual conference on international trade. Speakers include Canada’s former chief trade negotiator Steve Verheul; Karina Häulsmeier, deputy head of mission, Embassy of Germany; André von Walter, head of trade, EU Delegation to Canada; Marie-France Paquet, chief economist, Global Affairs Canada; and Vincent Rigby, former national security and intelligence advisor to the prime minister. Thursday, April 11, at 9 a.m. ET event at KPMG, Suite 1800, 150 Elgin St. Details online: cgai.ca/events.

**OEA/CABE 2024 Spring Policy Conference**—The Ottawa chapter of the Canadian Association for Business Economics hosts its 2024 Spring Policy Conference on the theme “Navigating Economic Crossroads in Canada.” Former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge will deliver the lunch keynote address. Thursday, April 11 at 8:15a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details online: cabe.ca.

## FRIDAY, APRIL 12

**Justice O’Bonsawin to Talk Mental Health**—Supreme Court Justice Michelle O’Bonsawin will take part in a conversation about mental health in the workplace, “Mental Health: We Have Come a Long Way, But Are We There Yet?” hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Friday, April 12, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York, 100 Front St. W. Details online: empireclubofcanada.com.

## SATURDAY, APRIL 13

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

## TUESDAY, APRIL 16

**Minister Freeland to Table Budget**—Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland will table the 2024 federal budget on Tuesday, April 16 at 4 p.m. ET in the House of Commons. The Department of Finance will host an embargoed reading and press conference for media prior to the tabling.

## FRIDAY, APRIL 19

**Minister Miller to Deliver Remarks**—Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Minister Marc Miller will deliver remarks in French to the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Friday, April 19, at 11:30 a.m. ET in Montreal. Details online: corim.qc.ca.

## SUNDAY, APRIL 21—THURSDAY, APRIL 25

**Minister Ng to Lead Trade Mission to South Korea**—Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion and Economic Development Mary Ng will lead Team Canada trade mission to South Korea from Sunday, April 21 to Thursday, April 25. Contact Shanti.Cosentino@international.gc.ca.

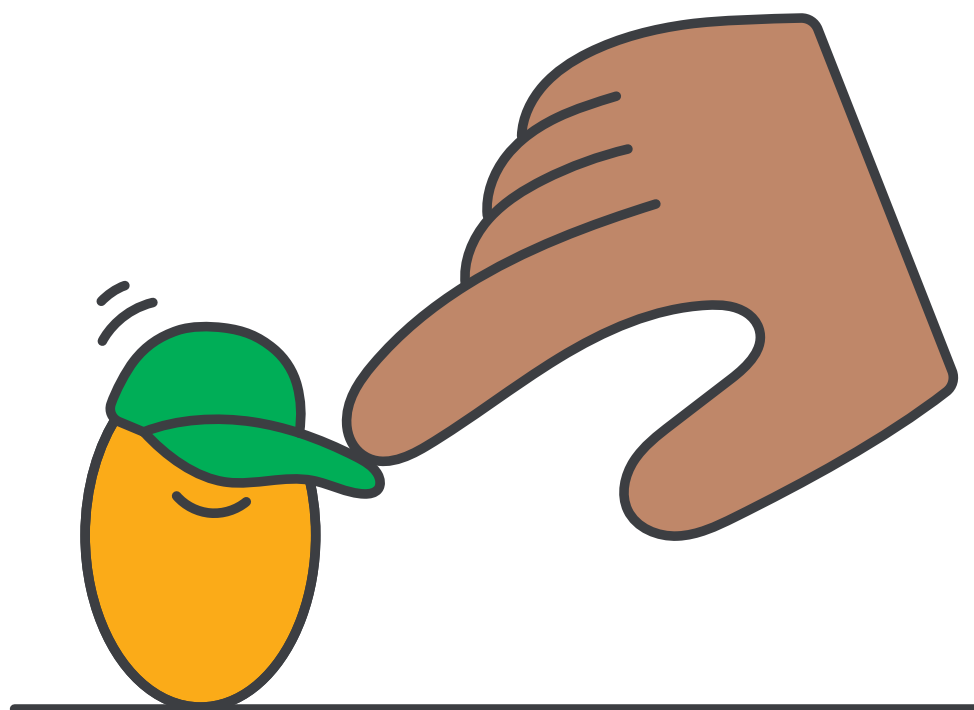
## TUESDAY, APRIL 23

**AFN Dialogue on Transport and Storage of Used Nuclear Fuel**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts the second in a four-part series, “Regional Dialogues on the Transportation and Storage of Used Nuclear Fuel,” from April 9-May 22, to advocate for First Nations’ active involvement in decisions about used nuclear fuel, management, and transportation across Turtle Island. Tuesday, April 23, at 8a.m. AT at the Crowne Plaza Fredericton, 659 Queen St., Fredericton, N.B. Details online: afn.ca/events.

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



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