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THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR, NO. 2115

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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NEWS

Poilievre's communication record shows corporate lobbyists shouldn't panic, say lobbyists in Ottawa

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

The lobbying record of Pierre Poilievre shows a willingness to communicate with stakeholders, despite recent comments where the Conservative leader slammed corporate lobbyists in Ottawa as "useless," say government relations consultants.

In a speech to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade on March 8, Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.), took aim at lobbyists, and said that for too long corporate leaders have seen their role as "simply to write a policy statement and expect it to be implemented," as reported in *The National Post*. Poilievre said that if he were to become prime minister, corporate Canada will need to convince not only him, but the people of Canada that their policy agenda is a good one, and added that corporate lobbyists in Ottawa have been "utterly useless in advancing any common sense interests for the people on the ground."

Yaroslav Baran, co-founder of the Pendulum Group and a former Conservative staffer who helped the Conservative Party's leadership election organizing committee with communications in 2022, argued that Poilievre's speech reflected "political theatre," and not a war on lobbyists.

Baran told *The Hill Times* that his takeaway from Poilievre's comments in March is that a Conservative government would be "friendly, first and foremost, with workers, [and] not necessarily big business."

"There's reality versus political posturing. That speech was great

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NEWS

MPs, Senators met with Chinese officials in Beijing while Foreign Interference Inquiry underway



NDP MP Don Davies, Independent MP Han Dong, Independent Senator Paul Massicotte, Conservative Senator Victor Oh, and Liberal MP Majid Jowhari met with Chinese officials in Beijing at the end of March. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia; photograph courtesy of Twitter

The group talked trade, environment, and human rights with officials in China's government.

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

A group of three MPs and two Senators met with Chinese government officials in Beijing in late March to push for stronger ties between the two coun-

tries, while hearings on foreign interference in Canada's elections were underway in Ottawa.

The Canadian Parliamentarians opted not to press the Chinese officials about alleged Chinese state interference in Canada's 2019 and 2021 elections during the trip, which was initiated by a parliamentary association but planned by the Canadian government. Part of the week-long trip was spent in Shanghai.

The whirlwind tour included meetings with Chinese municipal officials, Canadian businesspeople, Canadian diplomats including Ambassador Jennifer May,

and senior members of China's national legislature, the National People's Congress. The group met with Zhao Yingmin, the vice-minister of China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment; Lou Qinjian, the chair of the Congress' foreign affairs committee; and Zhang Qingwei, a vice-chair of the Congress, among others, according to an itinerary shared with *The Hill Times* by Senator Paul Massicotte (De Lanaudière, Que.), who led the group.

The Canadian lawmakers spoke to their Chinese counter-

Continued on page 4

NEWS

Poor polling numbers, NDP MPP's rumoured candidacy, and Mideast conflict turns Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., byelection into tight three-way race, say Liberal MPs

BY ABBAS RANA

With affordability issues top of mind for Canadians, poor national polling numbers, the Israel-Hamas conflict ripping apart the Liberals' voter base, and the rumoured federal candidacy of an Ontario NDP MPP, a byelection for the safe Liberal stronghold of Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., could be a competitive three-way race in which any party could win, say political insiders and some MPs.

"If the NDP is able to recruit a high-profile candidate, if the Conservatives put the resources in, it's going to be very competitive. It's going to be one to watch for sure," said David Coletto, CEO of Abacus Data, in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

Coletto said that, according to his January seat projections, this was a Liberal-leaning riding, but the governing party had only a four-point lead over the Conservatives. He said the model does not take into consideration the candidate profile, how a campaign is run, and current affairs issues like the Hamas-Israel conflict, which has sharply divided the Liberal

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Mike Lapointe
Heard On The Hill

Supreme Court's Chief Justice Wagner honoured with France's highest distinction



Chief Justice Richard Wagner received the insignia of Commander of the Legion of Honour in a ceremony at the Embassy of France on April 10. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

In a ceremony that took place at the French Embassy in Ottawa on April 10, Supreme Court Chief Justice **Richard Wagner** was presented with France's highest honour: the insignia of Commander of the Legion of Honour. French Prime Minister **Gabriel Attal** presented Wagner with the distinction.

Created by **Napoleon Bonaparte**—then first consul—in 1802, the distinction rewards outstanding merit acquired in the service of France. The Legion of Honour

comprises three grades, including (in ascending order of importance): Knight, Officer and Commander.

The 18th chief justice to serve, Wagner was appointed to the Supreme Court in October 2012, and was named to court's top job in December 2017. An advocate for more transparency in the justice system, Wagner said "judges and courts must adjust and must explain who they are, what they do and how they do it" at his Supreme Court welcoming ceremony.

'An amazing mentor': John Fraser, first elected House Speaker, dies at age 92



John Allen Fraser was the first elected House Speaker, and served in the role from 1986 until he retired in 1993. *The Hill Times* photograph by Kate Malloy

John Fraser, the first elected House Speaker, died on April 9 at the age of 92.

Fraser, who was the first Speaker elected by secret ballot in 1986, represented the federal riding of Vancouver South, B.C., from 1972-1993. He ran unsuccessfully for the leadership of the Progressive Conservatives against **Robert Stanfield** in 1976, served as environment minister in **Joe Clark**'s short-lived government, and as minister of fisheries and oceans in **Brian Mulroney**'s government, but was forced to resign in 1985 because of the "Tainted Tuna" affair. He served as House Speaker until his retirement in 1993.

Fraser was considered one of the best House Speakers in recent history. In 1995, he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada, and in 2002, he received the Vimy

Award for making a significant and outstanding contribution to the defence and security of Canada, and for the preservation of democratic values.

Former Ottawa mayor **Jim Watson**, who worked as director of communications for Fraser on the Hill when he was House Speaker, tweeted his sympathies on April 10: "Very sorry to hear about the passing of the honourable John Fraser—the first elected Speaker of the House of Commons—I was honoured to work for him as his director of communications. Intelligent, thoughtful, passionate, and a great sense of humour. He was an amazing mentor."

Maclean's names Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow No. 1 political power player



Maclean's May 2024 issue. *The Hill Times* photograph by Chelsea Nash

Justin Trudeau didn't even make the list. *Maclean's* May 2024 issue featured its annual "Power List," a ranking of "100 Canadians shaping the country in 2024."

Maclean's editors divided the list into 10 sections, including sports, education, health care, arts and culture, housing, climate, AI, politics, business, and tech.

The Toronto-centric publication sprinkled federal politicians throughout a few different categories. Notably, Immigration Minister **Marc Miller** topped the education section, for "reining in a runaway international-student market—and making sure a Canadian degree is still worth something."

Quebec Premier **François Legault** took the No. 2 spot in that section, followed by Saskatchewan Premier **Scott Moe**, for "inflaming the parental-rights debate nationwide,"—even though it was actually New Brunswick Premier **Blaine Higgs** who first enacted such legislation.

Health Minister **Mark Holland** was ranked second on the health-care list, behind the CEO of Well Technologies **Hamed Shahbazi**, who wants to privatize Canadian health care.

The housing section was also dominated by Ottawa heavyweights, with Bank of Canada Governor **Tiff Macklem** ranking first, and Housing Minister **Sean Fraser** second.

Conservative Leader **Pierre Poilievre** probably isn't happy about placing second to Toronto Mayor **Olivia Chow** in the politics section, but on the other hand, he must be chuffed that Trudeau didn't even make the cut.

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News

MPs met with Chinese officials in Beijing while Foreign Interference Inquiry was underway

The group talked trade, environment, and human rights with officials in China's government.

Continued from page 1

parts about barriers to business and trade, a lack of flights between the two countries, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, press freedom, and human rights, said Massicotte and NDP MP Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.), both of whom spoke to *The Hill Times* about the visit after their return.

Liberal MP Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Ont.), Conservative Senator Victor Oh (Mississauga, Ont.), and Independent MP Han Dong (Don Valley North, Ont.) also went on the trip. None of them responded to requests for interviews or information about the trip from *The Hill Times*.

The Canadian Parliamentarians did not raise the issue of foreign interference during their meetings with Chinese officials, said Davies.

"Our meetings were set by the [Canadian] embassy. And so we had a very busy, packed week that was pre-set on a number of things. We were there to talk about economic relations between the countries, how to support Canadian businesses, things like a lack of direct flights [with] China," he said.

This was the first time that Canadian Parliamentarians had visited China in five years, said both Davies and Massicotte, who spoke with *The Hill Times* in separate interviews.

"One of our objectives was to get dialogue going between the two countries, and between lawmakers on both sides," said Davies.

Asked why he didn't think it was important to raise the issue of foreign interference during the meetings, Davies said: "That issue is being very well-handled here in Canada. There's inquiries going on. We're in the middle of inquiries and are fact finding. I don't even think that necessarily all the facts are out yet. So we let, I think, the inquiry do its business, and let that process run its course."



Independent Senator Paul Massicotte. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Marie-Josée Hogue is leading the Foreign Interference Commission. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Trade a major focus of the trip

The Parliamentarians undertook the visit in their capacity as members of the Canada-China Legislative Association, one of numerous parliamentary associations and interparliamentary groups, through which MPs and Senators can go on formal visits to other countries. The Canada-China Legislative Association counts 60 MPs and Senators as members, but only five went on the trip in late March. It is not unusual for only a portion of the members of a parliamentary group to participate in its activities.

Massicotte and Dong are the association's co-chairs, which is planning to hold a virtual annual general meeting on April 23.

Massicotte said the association had spent several months organizing the trip with help from the government. He said he wanted to do it to maintain the relationship between Canada and China, which do more than \$100-billion of bilateral trade each year.

"We spent two days talking to Parliamentarians on the other side in China. And we had some pretty frank discussions," he said.

China's National People's Congress is the equivalent of a Parliament in that country, though it is subservient to the Chinese Communist Party.

Massicotte said he and his fellow Canadian Parliamentarians spoke to the Chinese officials about business and trade, including the possibility of increasing the number of flights between the two nations.

Asked why he didn't raise foreign interference during the meetings, Massicotte said he didn't see value in raising it with his Chinese counterparts, because they did not agree with the Canadians about the facts of the matter.

"It's an issue that's important to Canada. It's an issue they've got to resolve," said Massicotte, after noting that foreign interference was currently under review in Ottawa.

He also said that, "We did talk to them about some of the issues, but quickly we learned we're not getting anywhere."

Massicotte said that foreign interference by China "was not a hot issue when we were there" between March 25 and 29.

The Foreign Interference Commission was struck with a mandate to examine and assess foreign interference by China and other foreign actors in Canada, and specifically leading up to the 2019 and 2021 federal elections. The commission held a round of preliminary hearings in late January and early February, and then additional rounds of hearings from March 27 to April 10. It is planning to hold more hearings in the fall.

"What we care about is increased trade, resolving some of the issues that we have. We want our companies to be more successful, reducing the trade deficit. It was quite positive," said Massicotte.

He said the group also raised climate change and human rights issues during their meetings. That included China's mass internment of minority Uyghurs, he said, adding, "we didn't make much progress."

On the environment, Massicotte said Chinese officials assured the group that China would meet its 2050 Paris climate target of a net-zero emission economy. China emits, by far, more greenhouse gases than any other country; it accounted for roughly 29 per cent of the global total in 2022, nearly triple the next-highest emitter, the United States.

"They tried to be very convincing, and we had no reason to

doubt it. They said they will meet the targets," said Massicotte.

Davies said the Canadian business executives whom the group met in China were "thrilled that we were there." The group's itinerary included meetings with the board of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, Rowan Williams Davies & Irwin Inc., and a tour of Canadian retail stores, among others.

"We have a lot of issues between our two countries, primarily economic. And I can tell you... that the Canadian businesses that we met with there were thrilled that we were there," said Davies.

"They told us that the lack of having any kind of parliamentary delegations for this time period has not been helpful for them. And they were ecstatic that we were there, starting to engage in dialogue and getting some discussion going on some of the literally dozens and dozens of issues that are practical, that make a big difference between Canadians."

The issue of foreign interference in Canada, he said, "is an important one, and ... it's being addressed by Parliamentarians and processes now—which the NDP pushed for, by the way, the whole public inquiry was demanded by the NDP. And so that's why that process, we're letting it unfold, and our delegation [had] many other important issues to talk about."

MP Han Dong, another member of the delegation who did not respond to requests sent to his office for an interview about the trip, has been embroiled in controversy since early last year when Global News reported allegations from unnamed Canadian security officials that Dong had met with a Chinese diplomat in Canada, and advised him that China should not free Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, two Canadians whom China's government had imprisoned in retribution for Canada's arrest of Chinese business executive Meng Wanzhou.

Dong has called that allegation false, and has sued Global for defamation. Then-special rapporteur on foreign interference David Johnston reported last year that he did not believe that Dong had advised against the release of Kovrig and Spavor, based on his viewing of secret intelligence information. Dong resigned from the Liberal caucus to sit as an independent MP amidst the controversy last year.

Dong testified about his meeting with the Chinese diplomat before the Foreign Interference Commission. He also informed the commission earlier this month that he had bussed in students from a private high school—whom he believed were most likely international students from China—to vote in a 2019 Liberal Party meeting in which he was elected as the party's candidate for Don Valley North. The national director for the Liberal Party, Azam Ishmael, told the Commission that the party rules allow international students to vote in party nomination contests.

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the financial system
needs an update

66%

of Canadians believe
new technology is key
to improving the system

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Feature

House Health Committee calls for a national breast implant registry

Canada is the only G7 country without a national breast implant registry. March 29 marked the 120-day deadline for the government to respond to the House Health Committee's recommendations for such a registry.

BY MAGDELENE CRESKEY

At the March 21 House Health Committee meeting on the Hill, Bloc Québécois MP Luc Thériault confronted Health Minister Mark Holland about the government's plan to establish a breast implant registry, bluntly asking, "Are you going to do it?"

The minister said "yes."

March 29 marked the 120-day deadline for the government to respond to the committee's recommendations.

'If I had known'

From May to November 2023, the Health Committee met eight times to study breast implant oversight, an initiative spearheaded by Thériault (Montcalm, Que.). The evidence submitted by experts and patients unveiled a troubling pattern of widespread lack of informed consent and regulation.

In her April 30 submission to the committee, patient Nathalie Vaillant wrote, "If I had known ... and if I had been properly informed, I would never have agreed to get breast implants." Her concerns were echoed by dozens of women who submitted testimonies—women battling systemic illness, autoimmune disease, and implant-associated cancers—who have been left to depend on online groups for diagnosis and support. They recalled encountering dismissive doctors, and facing expensive treatments and explant surgery. Many were kept in the dark about implant recalls, partly due to Canada's lack of a national registry for implants.



Health Minister Mark Holland told the House Health Committee last month that he was committed to creating a breast implant registry. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

How many women are affected?

Without a registry or widespread awareness of the risks, it's hard to determine how many women have been affected. Dr. Jan Willem Cohen Tervaert, a professor of medicine at the University of Alberta, told the committee on May 9, 2023, that approximately three to four per cent of women in Western countries have breast implants. Regarding breast implant illness, he said "our studies suggest that one in four women, so 25 per cent, may develop at least three symptoms suggestive of this disease, 10 years after breast implants."

Regarding the rates of implant-associated cancers, the accuracy of current data is also under debate. Dr. Peter Cordeiro, a plastic surgeon in New York, published a study in 2020 arguing that "Existing studies estimating the numbers exposed and at risk may have under-reported cases, and/or lacked comprehensive follow-up." The study found a rate of 1 in 355 cases of breast-implant-related lymphoma (BIA-ALCL) in women with textured implants. In contrast, the Health Canada website currently states that "As of Dec. 31, 2022, the estimated risk of BIA-ALCL in patients with macro-textured breast implants is 1 in 1,475."

Dr. Peter Lennox, a Vancouver, B.C.-based plastic surgeon and former president of the Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons, told the committee on May 4, 2023, that he began tracking rates of BIA-ALCL in 2016 with other plastic surgeons because of what he saw as "a significant gap between the numbers that Health Canada had and that our members were seeing in clinical practice."

During the study, some experts raised concerns about current implant safety research, citing a conflict of interest in studies funded by implant companies. In Dr. Cohen Tervaert's words on May 9, 2023, "Many publications on breast implants are heavily sponsored by the industry... I, myself, was also offered a grant from the industry, but I would have had to sign an agreement that I could never publish anything without their consent... That's not ethical."

At the same meeting, Dr. Lorraine Greaves, chair of Health Canada's Scientific Advisory Committee on Health Products for Women, emphasized that "a registry would finally provide a denominator for calculating risk... which underpins informed consent. This lack of evidence ... supersedes even the strongest consent forms."

Regulatory gaps exposed

Canada is the only G7 country that does not have a national registry, despite breast augmentation remaining the most popular cosmetic procedure in the nation. Plastic surgeon Dr. Stephen Nicolaidis, who said he stopped inserting breast implants in 2021 due to the rising cases of breast implant illness, lamented during his testimony, "I'm removing implants causing illness, while colleagues keep inserting them."

After hearing from advocacy groups and plastic surgeons, and reading dozens of accounts from affected women, the committee tabled a unanimous report in the House on Nov. 30, 2023, calling for the prompt creation of a registry. Additionally, the report urged Health Canada to mandate a standardized informed consent checklist for patients and surgeons. It also called for alignment with the

U.S. Food and Drug Administration in recommending periodic implant monitoring and recognizing breast implant illness, an autoimmune syndrome characterized by fatigue, chronic pain, and nervous system dysfunction. Throughout their testimonies to the committee, experts and patients alike expressed frustration with Health Canada, claiming that it hasn't done enough to warn women about the risks of implants, nor to ensure that private practices provide accurate information. Unlike hospitals, private practices are not required to report adverse incidents.

Dr. Lennox noted on May 4, 2023, that even when colleagues wanted to report incidents, there was no clear path to do it. "They tried to report them to Health Canada, and that was very challenging in terms of the way you could do that," he told the committee.

The traceability issue is further complicated by varying provincial regulations on how long practices have to keep the records—anywhere from five years in Quebec, to 16 in British Columbia. Annie Tremblay, who submitted written testimony on June 1, 2023, described her experience of trying to access her files, only to be informed that they had been deleted, "as if implants were good forever. How can you track a patient or know which implants she has in her body if something goes wrong?"

Left in the dark

The committee's report underscored that a national registry would allow the government to track implants and notify patients about recalls. Many of the women who submitted briefs only found out about the recalls and the risks associated with implants after coming across a Facebook support group founded in April 2016 by B.C. breast implant advocate Nicole Daruda, or seeing a Nov. 29, 2018, episode of the Radio-Canada show *Enquête*. "I have never felt so failed by doctors," Patricia Thompson wrote in her June 1, 2023, committee submission.

One patient, who preferred to remain anonymous, and who, in 2022, heard on the radio that her Allergen implants had been recalled three years earlier, was dismayed by the lack of communication from Health Canada and

her surgeon. She remembered receiving multiple urgent calls from her car dealer about recalled parts, prompting her to wonder, "Why are car parts prioritized over women's health?"

Inequity in care

Patients and patient advocates argue that gender bias in health care has led to a pervasive disregard for women's concerns with their implants. When asked about this at the May 11 committee meeting, Terri McGregor, a patient advocate with the Breast Implant Safety Alliance, responded "we see a patriarchal hierarchy of medicine gaslighting female patients."

In her May 31 submission to the committee, Marie Josée Turgeon described how she saw nine different doctors and specialists trying to find out the cause of her symptoms, which included fatigue, insomnia, joint pain, hair loss and digestive issues. "I was mostly laughed at or was told it was all in my head."

The time is now

"The request for a breast implant registry in Canada dates back over 33 years," said Greaves. Since 2004, two private members' bills aimed at establishing a national breast implant registry were introduced, but neither advanced beyond the first reading.

Paraphrasing an old proverb, Dr. Steven Morris, president of the Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons, remarked on May 9, 2023, "the best time to plant a tree is 30 years ago, and the second-best time to plant a tree is today. It's the same with this registry. Today is the best time. ... We would have excellent data by now."

Luc Thériault agrees. In a response to *The Hill Times* on April 5, 2024, he wrote in French: "I believe the breast implant registry should have been established 30 years ago."

When asked about the impetus for the study and the renewed call for a national implant registry, he responded, "Implants are high-risk medical devices. ... We owe it to all of the victims, and we must also protect women so that they don't become victims of a lack of rigour, proactivity and complacency on the part of Health Canada towards the industry."

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The Hill Times



Exposing the Risks of Breast Implants in Canada

Get a copy of the *Exposing the Risks of Breast Implants in Canada* ebook, published by Hill Times Research, for an in-depth report on the Health Committee's study.



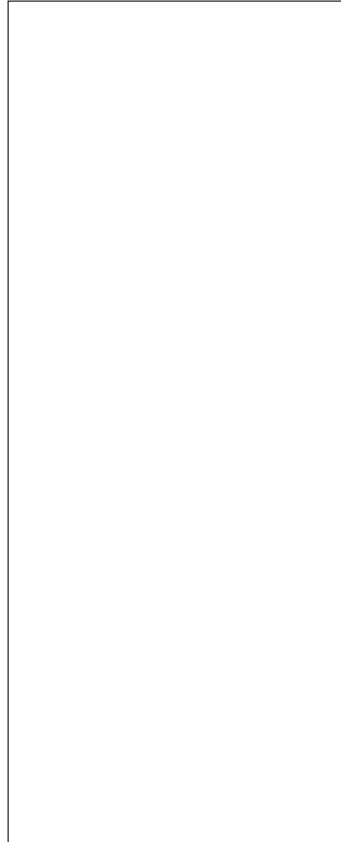
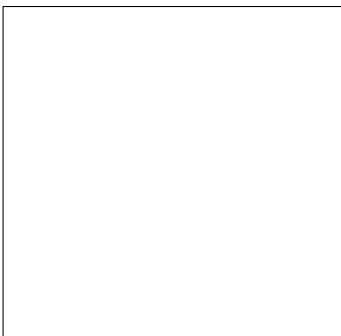
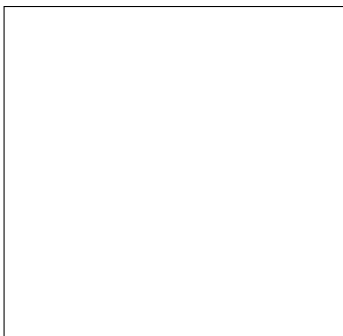
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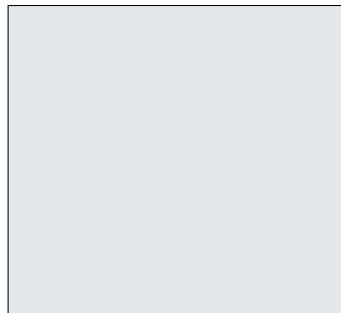
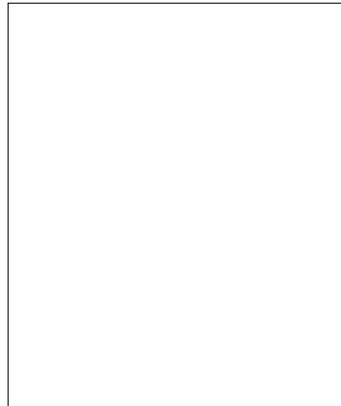
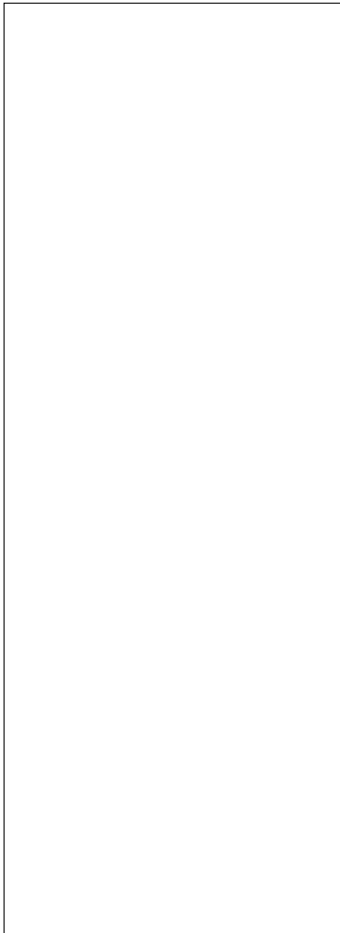
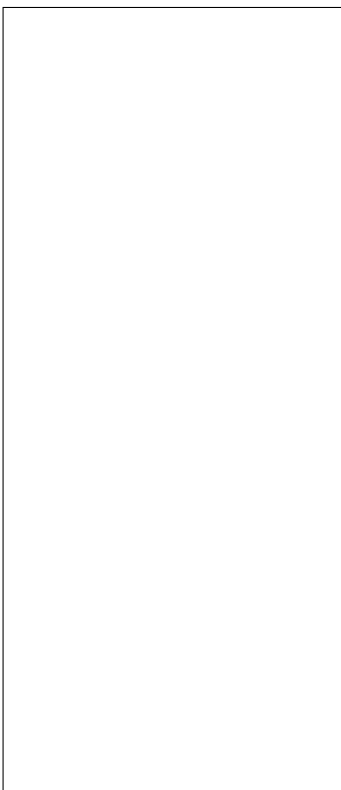
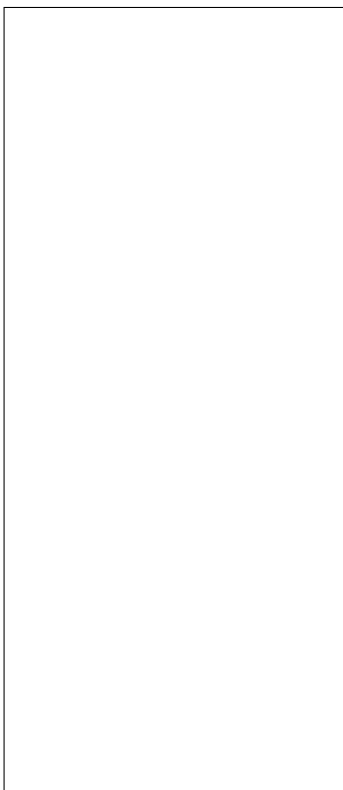


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Editorial

Foreign Interference Commission testimony raises more questions than answers

For the second time in three years, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has fronted a public commission to be questioned on the operation of his office during moments that have captured the public's attention.

In 2022, Trudeau appeared before the Rouleau Commission as it examined the government's invocation of the Emergencies Act earlier that year. Last week, he testified at the Hogue Commission, the public inquiry scrutinizing allegations of foreign—an inquiry that his government fiercely resisted calling for months.

In last week's case, however, what was most interesting was what was not said, or rather what couldn't be said. Questions about how much can be declassified and what could pose a national security risk has dogged the Foreign Interference Commission since its inception, and the prime minister's testimony.

Many documents tendered as part of Trudeau's examination were heavily redacted to the point that the prime minister said he could not confirm he had seen one document owing to how little of its contents were publicly available. Under cross-examination, Trudeau frequently paused and said he was not sure he could answer certain questions, owing to security concerns.

What we did learn is that Trudeau relies more on in-person briefings about intelligence than he does written

documents, noting that he reads reports when he can. That's at odds with what his chief of staff, Katie Telford, told a parliamentary committee last year.

The prime minister also said he did not see solid information during the 2019 election that suggested Han Dong was involved in alleged foreign interference in the Liberal nomination contest that he won for Don Valley North, Ont., nor that there was enough information to strip Dong of the nomination.

As for the release of details about foreign interference to the public, Trudeau, his ministers, and his staffers all described the need for a "high threshold" of credible evidence or context in order to justify the consequences of publicizing such knowledge.

That approach, however, has led to a vacuum filled with leaks, media reports, and speculation, all of which have provoked the very mistrust in institutions that the government sought to prevent through their silence.

The testimony last week shows that, at the end of this commission, we could well be no closer to understanding the full extent to which foreign states have sought to interfere in our elections. It also shows we need to have a serious conversation about the government's approach to keeping information from the public, ostensibly for Canadians' own good.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Why doesn't Michael Harris cry out for Hamas to surrender and release the Israeli hostages, asks letter-writer Alan Williams

Re: "Who can stop Benjamin Netanyahu?" (*The Hill Times*, April 8, by Michael Harris). I want to thank Michael Harris. The double-standard that he and his colleagues around the world apply to Israel has galvanized and united Jews in Israel and around the world as never before. Our eyes are now wide open. Jews know we can count on no one but ourselves.

Mr. Harris' latest biased attack relates to the tragic and accidental deaths of seven aid workers. Israel responded by acknowledging its tragic mistake, apologized, and undertook immediate action. Interestingly, I don't recall any condemnation by Mr. Harris or the world press when, in 2008, U.S. troops killed dozens at an Afghan wedding party—including the bride—or in 2021, when a U.S. drone fired a missile at a truck in Kabul, killing an aid worker and 10 other civilians including seven children. There was no wide spread condemnation when, in 2011, during the NATO intervention in Libya, 13 civilians including ambulance workers were wiped out. I also don't recall any swift, public disclosure of actions taken

or people held accountable for these other fatalities.

Mr. Harris and his colleagues continue to quote death and injury figures from the Gaza Ministry of Health that have been proven to be fake. However, even if Hamas' implausible casualty figures are to be believed, Israel is killing around 1.3 civilians for every combatant—a vastly smaller proportion of civilians killed in warfare than has been achieved by any other army in the world. Mr. Harris also continues to speak of famine when, in fact, 234,000 tons of food have been delivered into Gaza. According to the UN World Food Program, this is enough food to feed the 2.2 million people in Gaza for over a year.

Responsibility for the carnage in Gaza is Hamas' alone. Civilians in Gaza are dying because Hamas knowingly embeds its troops and ammunition within its civilian population, schools, and hospitals. If Mr. Harris is truly concerned about the death toll and the destruction of Gaza, why doesn't he cry out for Hamas to surrender and release the Israeli hostages?

Alan Williams
Ottawa, Ont.



'Simply fictional' that Netanyahu didn't try to protect aid workers in Gaza, says letter writer

Regarding last Monday's editorial cartoon (*The Hill Times*, April 8) by Michael de Adder. Some editorial cartoons are meant to comment on current events, but de Adder's cartoon, depicting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying he never tried to protect aid workers in Gaza, is simply fictional.

Even while Hamas hides behind its own civilians, aiming to maximize suffering, Israel has taken steps unprecedented in the annals of warfare to minimize civil-

ian casualties, including actively warning Gaza before strikes against terrorists take place.

Sometimes tragic accidents happen in war, and Israel apologizes when that happens, but there is one culprit responsible for the suffering of Israelis and Gazans alike: Hamas, and only Hamas.

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

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Poilievre is fundraising and advertising aggressively before next election call and limits set in

With weekly hauls seeking donations of up to \$1,725 and that kind of cash coming in, Pierre Poilievre will be able to keep spending without being subject to the limits on advertising that kick in once an election is called.

Sheila
Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—Pre-budget fever has returned the Liberals to the front pages for the first time in months.

The prime minister and his front bench have been travelling across the country offering

glimpses of what kind of budget the minister of finance will deliver this week.

Liberal themes are broad and deep. The government wants to send a message of real product differentiation.

Unlike the Conservative leader, the Liberals will be reaching out to help those in need—from school lunches for kids, to rental rights for young Canadians who are struggling.

Recent messaging has been strong. But it remains to be seen whether it is too little, too late.

Will the prime minister be able to continue this cross-country blitz once the budget has been tabled?

Or will the Pierre Poilievre bandwagon keep gaining popularity as it rolls along from riding to riding?

The Liberals promised back in 2015 that they would not do government advertising to promote government programs and initiatives.

That promise was a reaction to the multi-million-dollar action plan delivered by former prime minister Stephen Harper, which included signage in the woods to reinforce support with the hunting community.

Trudeau has stayed true to that promise. And it has cost him dearly. In the absence of government messaging, Poilievre has raised and spent millions of dollars to shape his image and promote his messaging in all media.

The Conservative spending on advertising, in social media, and on so-called legacy media has managed to shape an image of the Conservative leader that is quite different from one year ago.

Sans glasses, and sporting muscle T-shirts, with an articulate spouse on his arm, Poilievre is working hard to soften the obvious hard edges.

He is still reaching out to the anti-vaccine and anti-abortion movements, but is making sure that is not the message dominating the mainstream.

Poilievre is fundraising aggressively, as well, with weekly hauls seeking donations of up to \$1,725. With that kind of cash coming in, he will be able to continue to spend in the lead-up to the election without being subject to the limitations on advertising that kick in once an election is called.

The shape-shifting prompted by the Conservative advertising campaign begs the question.

According to the Canada Elections Act, each party is subject to an annual advertising limit. The last reported annual limit was \$2,046,800 in 2019 available to each party.

However, the law states that messages posted for free on social media do not constitute partisan advertising.

That means that a 15-minute video released on X does not need to be included in pre-election, reportable advertising expenses.

As the production costs for most social media videos can be hefty, the cost for the creation of social media videos and messaging should be considered in each party's partisan advertising bill.

If social media costs were factored in, it would not be long before the aggressive Poilievre advertising campaign would exceed the annual limit.

The same law states that advertising is not considered partisan if it "promotes or opposes a political entity only by taking a position on an issue with which the entity is associated." By that definition, an "Axe the Tax" advertising campaign would not be considered partisan.

The onslaught of political advertising by the Poilievre team is producing the desired results.

But perhaps it is also time to take a look at just what constitutes partisan advertising. Tighter limits should be placed on pre-election advertising in the same way that parties are limited once the election is called.

Under current rules, the governing Liberals should start sending out their own political messaging. By leaving the door open to the official opposition, the Liberals have missed an opportunity to remind voters of the differences between the two parties.

Instead, the messaging has focused on all the negatives of the prime minister, with Poilievre blaming him for everything from global inflation to housing shortages to grocery prices.

Even provincial issuance of student visas for post-secondary education is now the federal government's fault.

And with no response from the Liberals in the paid media domain, as they say in French, "les absentes ont toujours tort".

The absentees are always wrong.

Pre-election advertising rules governing social media are not about to change any time soon.

So if the Liberals intend to have even a fighting chance in the next election, they have to start fighting on the legacy and social media networks.

It is their only hope to turn the train wreck around.

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

The Hill Times

The Liberals' time problem

How do you combat wistfulness for the past when you can't offer a better future?

Gerry
Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—Politicians who consider themselves "liberal" currently have a problem with time.

That's to say, unlike conservatives, they don't nostalgically pine for the past; yet, unlike liberals from a previous era, they can't really point to a rosy future.

You might say they're stuck in some sort of temporal no-man's land.

Mind you, before the advent of liberalism in the 19th century, political elites never concerned themselves with questions about past versus future



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the Hill on March 20, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

because the conventional wisdom through much of history was that the world's problems could only be solved by looking backward.

That's because in the ancient world it was generally believed

there once existed a Golden Age, a perfect society, when humanity was morally pure and prosperous.

Yet, the ancients also believed that, over the centuries, their society had suffered a long and steady decline.

In short, society was seen to be in continual decay, meaning yesterday was always considered better than today.

This was certainly the viewpoint of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, who vigorously urged his fellow Athenians to give up their radical ideas about democracy, and re-embrace the old-fashioned values of their forefathers.

Likewise, in ancient Rome, a prominent senator named Cato was widely known for his constant wailing about how the loss of traditional Roman virtues was undermining the empire.

To show his devotion to the past, Cato even dressed in the archaic clothing of Rome's founders.

It'd be like if Donald Trump decided to wear a tricornered hat and powdered wig. (Knowing Trump, he might just do it!)

So, yes, for much of history, nostalgia ruled the day.

In the modern age, however, Enlightenment ideals, the industrial revolution, democracy, and free market capitalism all combined to create a new way of looking at the world.

Simply put, the idea of progress was born.

And the people who believed in progress—who believed in the idea that today was better than yesterday, and that tomorrow will be better than today—were called liberals.

Liberals wanted to cut themselves loose from the dead hand of the past so they could embrace the new ideals of the future, using science and reason to create their own Golden Age.

It's for this reason liberals are always quick to denounce the notion that we should return to "the good old days."

Why move backward, they argue, when we should be moving forward.

For example, after Trump won a key U.S. primary, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau asked, "Do they [Americans] want to be a nation that is optimistic and committed

to the future? Or will they choose a step backwards, nostalgia for a time that never existed?"

Yet, given what's happening in the world right now, it's difficult for liberal politicians to be optimistic about the future.

Consider the words of French President Emmanuel Macron who recently warned his people "we are living the end of what could have seemed an era of abundance ... the end of the abundance of products of technologies that seemed always available ... the end of the abundance of land and materials including water."

Meanwhile, some liberals of the "woke" variety now seem to care more about the present than the future.

As political philosopher John Gray put it, "Rather than aiming for a better future, woke militants seek a cathartic present. Cleansing themselves and others of sin is their goal. Amidst vast inequalities of power and wealth, the woke generation basks in the eternal sunshine of their spotless virtue."

Clearly, all this puts liberal politicians in a quandary.

How do you combat wistfulness for the past when you can't offer a better future?

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

Opinion



Foreign Affairs
Mélanie Joly
speaks with
reporters in
the West
Block on
May 9,
2023. *The
Hill Times*
photograph
by Andrew
Meade

Canada's salute to militarism is sad

Mélanie Joly is heir to some great Canadians initiatives for peace: Lester Pearson on peacekeeping in the Suez Canal, Jean Chrétien in keeping Canada out of the Iraq war, Lloyd Axworthy in building the Landmines Treaty, Brian Mulroney in ending apartheid in South Africa, Joe Clark in bringing Vietnamese Boat People to Canada.

Douglas Roche

Opinion



EDMONTON—Let us lament the decline of Canadian

foreign policy now subsumed into Canada's defence policy. The ambitious diplomatic outreach of Lester Pearson, Jean Chrétien, Lloyd Axworthy, Brian Mulroney, and Joe Clark—all of whom took important foreign policy initiatives—contributed directly to Canada helping build a peaceful world. But Mélanie Joly, the present foreign affairs minister, presents only mush as she defends the \$73-billion increase in this country's defence expenditures over the next 20 years.

The new defence policy statement, announced April 8, makes it clear that a burst in spending on the armaments of war now dominates the political thinking in Ottawa. "Further investments in our military are essential to safeguarding our interests," Joly says. She joins the chorus in Ottawa that says defence spending—which will reach 1.76 per cent of GDP in five years—is but a way-stop on the way to the full two per cent demanded by the NATO leadership.

While defence spending soars, Joly meekly accepts a nearly 20 per cent decline in the spending of Global Affairs Canada from its \$9.2-billion budget in 2022-23. The details of the slash in Global Affairs' spending, as outlined in Neil Moss' article in *The Hill Times* on March 13, reveal that Canada is succumbing to the world-wide loss of confidence in diplomacy as the main driver of peace.

In the new quicksand of militarism as the answer to the world's problems, Canada risks being mired in what the historian Barbara Tuchman called the "wooden-headedness" of governments. This wooden-headedness consists in assessing a situation in terms of preconceived fixed notions while ignoring or rejecting any contrary signs. No experience in the failure of war to bring peace can shake NATO's belief in military dominance as the path to security.

It cannot be said that elements of this country's new defence policy are without value. The investment of \$1.4-billion over 20 years to acquire specialized maritime sensors to conduct ocean surveillance will strengthen Canada's protection of our share of the Arctic. More money to protect our year-round presence and infrastructure in the North will benefit the territories, Indigenous Peoples, and Northern communities.

But it is folly to think that military means alone can ensure that the great sweep of the Arctic—already heavily militarized by the presence of 69 military sites in the five states with Arctic Ocean coastlines—can bring security to the peoples there. No Arctic-centred conflicts are amenable to military solutions, the distinguished Arctic analyst Ernie Regehr writes in an essay, *Military Footprints in the Arctic*, recently published by the Simons Foun-

ation. Noting that the Arctic is warming at four times the global rate, Regehr says the Arctic "is a region that above all requires advances in human security and creative responses to the crises of climate change, economic and social dislocation, and strategic instability, not accelerated military competition and the further accumulations of the destructive technology and paraphernalia of military combat."

Nonetheless, the political thinking that more military hardware in the Arctic will protect Canada's "sovereignty" is but another reflection of wooden-headedness. A fever of militarism has broken out in the world because governments have lost faith in their own abilities to resolve political disputes without violence.

A moment of great hope occurred when the Cold War ended more than three decades ago. The leaders of the UN Security Council met for the first time to chart a course of co-operation that, if not happily harmonious, would at least be dedicated to a rules-based order. The secretary-general at the time, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, issued an Agenda for Peace, which called for a \$50-million peacekeeping reserve fund, a \$50-million humanitarian revolving fund for emergency assistance, and a \$1-billion peace endowment fund. The governments wouldn't listen, and fell into warring factions; the rise of an expanding

and powerful NATO surrounded a re-arming Russia; and the military-industrial complex drove U.S. military spending to new heights.

Throughout the years of turmoil, the UN's authority was steadily weakened. Now the present Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is trying again to steer the world away from reliance on arms for peace. A few months ago, he published *A New Agenda for Peace*, setting out a comprehensive approach to prevention, linking peace, sustainable development, climate action, and food security. He laid out 12 recommendations for action, starting with the elimination of nuclear weapons, boosting preventive diplomacy, and developing national prevention strategies to address the drivers of violence and conflict.

One would think Guterres' practical proposals would command the attention of the Government of Canada, and at least be a factor in the new defence policy. But there is not a single reference to the *New Agenda for Peace* in the defence document. The reticence of Joly—who seems content to play second fiddle to Defence Minister Bill Blair in the presentation of the government's policies—is particularly disappointing.

She is heir to some great Canadians initiatives for peace: Lester Pearson on peacekeeping in the Suez Canal, Jean Chrétien in keeping Canada out of the Iraq war, Lloyd Axworthy in building the Landmines Treaty, Brian Mulroney in ending the volatile apartheid in South Africa, Joe Clark in bringing Vietnamese Boat People to Canada.

From Mélanie Joly: a salute to militarism. It is sad. Utterly sad.

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

The Hill Times

We must demand greater accountability from police

If MPs felt the same fear that Indigenous peoples do when they see an RCMP officer, maybe—just maybe—we’d see some urgency.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



OTTAWA—This is your regular six-month public service announcement that the RCMP lacks accountability.

The Yellowknife Women’s Society in the Northwest Territories released its report on the RCMP’s treatment of homeless Indigenous women on April 11, titled *Over-policed & under-protected: Recommendations to improve the relationship between unhoused Indigenous women and the RCMP in Yellowknife*.

Virtually every single Indigenous woman interviewed had either experienced racism and/or physical abuse at the hands of the RCMP, or knew somebody who did: “One of the most prevalent and consistent themes from the conversations was being dehumanized: being met with apathy and indifference from police because of being Indigenous and unhoused. Participants felt that they are seen as ‘less than’ non-Indigenous Yellowknife residents. This bias translates into their problems being taken less seriously, their experiences being treated as less credible, and their bodies being treated with less care.”

This report demands mandatory training for officers, including in cultural competency; the recruitment of Indigenous officers; and effective, independent civilian oversight, among others.

The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission is the so-called independent agency which receives complaints about RCMP officers. If you make a complaint about an officer—let’s say it’s about racism, or abuse of power, or something that might just risk your life—this little agency sends the complaint to the RCMP to investigate and report back to the complainant. Now, is anybody surprised that so little changes in the RCMP?

Kent Roach from the University of Toronto is an expert in police accountability, having written the 2022 book *Canadian Policing: Why and How it Must Change*. Roach said policing in Canada is in a governance deficit—that is, nobody is really watching over it—which leaves us lowly citizens to sue police in the event of their wrongdoing.

Fighting it out in the courts is using only the language of law or breaking it. But we want more from police than just adhering to the law. We want excellent service delivery to all, including Indigenous Peoples. Roach wrote that we want police to be both legal and effective. He goes on to say that we can’t rely on independent oversight to punish all the wrong-doers in police forces.



RCMP Commissioner Michel Duheme. Civilian oversight and accountability of policing is an essential plank of any democracy, writes Rose LeMay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

We also need them to self-regulate to be good humans and officers.

This is where the training comes in, not just in use of force but in judgment, communication, de-escalation, and more. The RCMP training depot in Regina does the basic training for officers in 26 weeks. One can’t work in mental health or communications without at least a four-year degree or more. But one could finish RCMP training in less than six months, carry a 9mm handgun and use it on citizens, arrest people and more.

It’s just delusional that anybody considers a six-month training program sufficient for the complexity of the job of policing.

It’s time that we the people change some things, given that the RCMP is our

child needing of discipline. In other words, civilian oversight and accountability of policing is an essential plank of any democracy.

The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission needs to be rebuilt from scratch, with real authority. The training for policing needs to be rebuilt from scratch to cover the real knowledge, skills and aptitudes that we require from officers to do the work effectively, the work that we as taxpayers pay them to do.

They report to us.

If not, we’ll be back in again in six months having the same conversation. In the next six months there’s likely another 15-25 citizen deaths at the hands of police, some of which would be avoidable with

better training and accountability. In the next six months, perhaps hundreds of Indigenous Peoples will endure racism by officers, all of which could be avoided with better training and accountability.

If MPs felt the same fear that Indigenous Peoples do when they see an RCMP officer, maybe—just maybe—we’d see some urgency.

Rose LeMay is Tlingit from the West Coast, and the CEO of the Indigenous Reconciliation Group. She writes twice a month about Indigenous inclusion and reconciliation. In Tlingit worldview, the stories are the knowledge system, sometimes told through myth and sometimes contradicting the myths told by others. But always with at least some truth.

The Hill Times



Dr. Joel Antel is new Canadian Dental Association President

The Canadian Dental Association (CDA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Joel Antel as CDA president for 2024–25. He is a full-time general dentist at Dr. Joel Antel & Associates Dental Clinic in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In 1979, Dr. Antel graduated with a DMD from the University of Manitoba Faculty of Dentistry, now the Dr. Gerald Niznick College of Dentistry.

Dr. Joel Antel
President
Canadian Dental Association

Dr. Antel is a past president of the Manitoba Dental Association (MDA) and the Manitoba Dental Foundation. He joined the CDA Board of Directors as the MDA Representative in 2017. He has served on boards and committees of many community, educational and professional organizations. He has taught at the dental college and dental assisting programs in Manitoba and presented continuing education programs to dentists, hygienists and dental assistants.

His awards include the 1998 MDA Volunteer Appreciation Award of Recognition and the 2003 MDA President’s Award of Merit. He was the recipient of the 2009 CDI College Dental Assisting Program Practicum Partnership Award. Dr. Antel has been awarded fellowships in the International College of Dentists, the Academy of Dentistry International, and the

Pierre Fauchard Academy. He is also a founding member of the Winnipeg Progressive Dental Study Club, now the Two Rivers Dental Study Club.

Dr. Antel is the author of a book on patient education and a “customer service” approach to dental practice. In 2021, he was part of the Manitoba Vaccine Team, a COVID-19 immunization campaign, for which he was a vaccinator.

Dr. Antel and his wife Bonnie were both born and raised in Winnipeg. They have three children and six grandchildren. In his spare time, Dr. Antel plays guitar and bass for Mandibular Black, a rock music cover band, which has performed at conventions and fundraisers.

A life-long contributor to his community, Dr. Antel has been involved with the Stevenson Britannia Adult Learning Centre and the Winnipeg West Rotary Club, where he was a board member

and a Rotary Club Paul Harris fellow. He served with the Chai Folk Ensemble Orchestra as a guitarist and performers’ representative to the Chai Folk Arts Council Board of Directors, where he became president. He currently serves on the Chai Folk Arts Council Board of Governors.

Dr. Antel will lead CDA in its mandate as the national voice for dentistry, dedicated to the advancement and leadership of a unified profession and to the promotion of optimal oral health as an essential component of general health.



CANADIAN
DENTAL
ASSOCIATION

Opinion



Paul Martin, left, Michael Wilson, Rona Ambrose, Brian Tobin, Frank McKenna, and Navdeep Bains. *The Hill Times* photographs by Jake Wright, Andrew Meade and one handout

How do we attract more businesspeople to public life?

Canada is rich in talent. As the economic challenges facing Canada become more and more pronounced, where are today's Mulroneys, Mazankowskis, Lumleys, Wilsons, and Martins, who can help make Canada more competitive, prosperous, and confident?

Kevin Lynch
& Paul
Deegan

Opinion



The passing of former prime minister Brian Mulroney has led to a re-examination of his legacy. Beyond his policy achievements, there are lessons to be learned from Mulroney's brand

of leadership, which was rooted in being on the ice, rather than in the stands. His example begs the question: Why don't more businesspeople run for office today?

In 1976, Mulroney decided it was time to move from successful labour lawyer and backroom political organizer to political candidate. He ran, unsuccessfully, for the Progressive Conservative leadership in 1976. He then joined the Iron Ore Company of Canada as an executive vice-president, and was quickly promoted to president. In 1983, he ran—successfully this time—for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party, and was prime minister the following year. Through transformational policies, he became one of the most consequential prime ministers in Canadian history.

Mulroney was not the first person to make the leap from a very successful career in business to a very successful career in politics.

In 1968, Don Mazankowski, who ran an automobile and farm machinery dealership with his brother in Vegreville, Alta., won a seat in the House. He served in top cabinet posts—minister of finance and deputy prime minister—in the Mulroney government. He was essentially the chief operating officer of the federal cabinet, and 'minister of everything,' according to Mulroney. He played a key role in the privatization of Petro-Canada and Air Canada,

and was the prime minister's voice when he was absent from the House on thorny issues like free trade and Meech Lake. 'Maz,' as he was known, was arguably the most effective deputy prime minister in Canadian history. In contrast to too many politicians today, "Mulroney's new deputy is by all appearances without personal enemies," *Maclean's* noted in 1986.

Prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau dispatched John Turner and Senator Keith Davey to recruit Cornwall mayor Ed Lumley to run federally in 1974. Lumley, who had become a wealthy young man as a Coca-Cola bottler, emerged as a hard-working MP. Trudeau respected Lumley's business acumen, and his approach to politics—the fact that he put his constituents first. Whether at the cabinet table or with officials in the departments he led, he would always ask, "How is this good for the people of my riding?" If an official didn't have an answer, the idea didn't make it past Lumley's desk. As trade minister, he got limits on Japanese auto imports, and got them to build plants in Canada. He also initiated early talks on free trade with the Reagan administration.

Michael Wilson was executive vice-president of what is now RBC Dominion Securities when he ran for federal office in 1979. Wilson introduced major per-

sonal and corporate income tax reforms. He also replaced the hidden manufacturers sales, which harmed our competitiveness, with the goods and services tax, which taxed consumption. And Wilson was a key player in the free trade negotiations with the United States.

Paul Martin Jr. was president of Canada Steamship Lines before running federally in 1988. Having turned crippling deficits into healthy surpluses, he was one of the most successful ministers of finance in Canadian history, and he went on to become prime minister.

There are also examples of prominent businesspeople making the leap to federal politics who had a bumpier experience. Walter Gordon was a partner at the prominent accounting firm Clarkson Gordon who went on to become federal finance minister before being sent to back benches by prime minister Lester Pearson. Bill Morneau, who was executive chairman at benefit consulting firm Morneau Shepell, also went on to become minister of finance. Like Gordon, Morneau, too, seemed to have trouble in shaping the government's policy agenda and in getting along with the prime minister.

Politics, in Canada and elsewhere, has become less civil and more acrimonious. Social media clips are an important fund-

raising tool when it comes to revving up the base. This deters many people from putting their name on the ballot. The challenge is that government functions best when there is a mix of experiences and competencies around the cabinet table. Elected officials need to come from many walks of life, including law, education, health and social services, science and engineering, and business. It is from the crucible of different perspectives that the best ideas—the bold ideas that may transform Canada—emerge.

Pierre Trudeau, Mulroney, and Jean Chrétien were able to attract businesspeople to run for office. Since then, not so much—with Morneau as a notable exception. How can businesspeople be convinced that the choice of seeking public office is worth it? That politics is a noble pursuit? That service to country is a higher calling than service to the bottom line?

Sadly, the flow of talent between the private and elected public sectors is decidedly one way in Canada. The private sector has been enriched by the talents of politicians turned senior bankers: Ed Lumley, Brian Tobin, and Scott Brison at BMO; Frank McKenna and Rona Ambrose at TD; and the late Jim Prentice, Lisa Raitt, and Navdeep Bains at CIBC.

Canada is rich in talent. If we are to capitalize on this, we need to tap the best and the brightest, including smart young women and men with business experience, to run for public office. As the economic challenges facing Canada become more and more pronounced, where are today's Mulroneys, Mazankowskis, Lumleys, Wilsons, and Martins who can help make Canada more competitive, more prosperous, and more confident?

Kevin Lynch is a former clerk of the Privy Council and vice chair of BMO Financial Group. Paul Deegan is a former public affairs executive at BMO and CN, and he served in the Clinton White House.

The Hill Times

Public money has no party

Investing in government accountability is a prerequisite for democracy, not a side effect.

Sheila Fraser, Michèle Galipeau, Michael Pickup, Denise Hanrahan & Carol Bellringer

Opinion

Audit offices remain one of the most trusted organizations in the democratic system globally. We urge the government to invest in the accountability system.

Legislative audit offices across the country produce reports on audits and other work to provide insight into the management and use of government resources. The



Deputy Auditor General Andrew Hayes at the House Standing Committee on Public Accounts as it continues to study the ArriveCan app on Jan. 25, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

recommendations in these reports are intended to improve the transparency and accountability for the stewardship of public services for the benefit of Canadians.

While the work of the auditor general provides valuable, objective, and non-partisan insight into how groups spending public money are managed, they do not have the mandate to direct government organizations to make change.

This authority is held by elected officials.

More specifically, audit offices rely on the work of public accounts committees made up of elected officials from various

parties in Parliament, or the provincial and territorial legislatures. These committees have the authority to direct government to respond to findings and recommendations in AG reports. For municipalities, the oversight structure varies and, in many Indigenous communities, a comparable and culturally appropriate structure does not exist, despite attempts to establish accountability systems.

This committee operates differently from others in Parliament or the legislatures. First, while its membership includes representation across parties, it is chaired by a member from the opposi-

tion. Second, there are structures in place to steer the committee toward cross-party collaboration to provide clear direction to audited organizations, and finally, it strives for unanimous decisions.

The unique nature of these committees is based on the impetus for elected officials to request adequate funding for the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation—the one organization that has been providing training and capacity development to various public accounts committees across Canada, and expanding its work with Indigenous communities.

In 2022, the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees unanimously passed a motion calling on the federal government to ensure adequate and stable funding for the Accountability Program at the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation.

This program conducts research and provides capacity development for oversight committees in the federal government, provinces, territories, municipalities, and Indigenous communities.

In 2023, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Ac-

counts passed a motion supporting this funding request. This message has been echoed by several committees across the country.

The best way to prevent both deliberate abuse and reckless mismanagement of public funds is to ensure that a rigorous and well-equipped process is in place to scrutinize reports on spending, expose irregularities, and ensure that the necessary changes are made to fix problems identified.

We believe the request from the public accounts committees across the country is an important step and urge the Government of Canada to invest in this key aspect of accountability.

Sheila Fraser is a former auditor general of Canada. Michèle Galipeau is a former auditor general of Montreal. Michael Pickup is the auditor general of British Columbia. Denise Hanrahan is the auditor general of Newfoundland and Labrador. Carol Bellringer is a former auditor general of Manitoba and British Columbia. And here are supporters of this specific opinion piece: Shelley Spence, auditor general of Ontario; Tyson Shtykalo, auditor general of Manitoba; Kim Adair, auditor general of Nova Scotia; Darren Noonan, auditor general of Prince Edward Island.

The Hill Times

School food program should focus on healthy plant-based eating

The National School Food Program announcement is reason to celebrate, especially if it can help the shift to more plant-based consumption. Not only are there are big environmental, economic and health benefits from this shift, but it's a reminder that the health and well-being of humans, animals, and the planet are interconnected.

Colin Saravanamuttoo

Opinion



It will be critical that the program follows the latest dietary and public health guidelines, particularly the Canada Food Guide released in 2019, writes Colin Saravanamuttoo. *Image courtesy of Pexels*

The recent federal announcement of a new National School Food Program is welcome news. As Canada is the only G7 country that doesn't have a national school program or national standards, it is long overdue.

It will be critical that the program follows the latest dietary and public health guidelines, particularly the Canada Food Guide released in 2019. Developed by Health Canada, the evidence-based and award-winning Canada Food Guide has two key tenets: 1) eat more plant-based foods (i.e., a focus on fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and plant-based proteins like legumes and tofu); and 2) choose more whole foods and minimally processed options.

A shift is already underway to increase consumption of plant-based foods. A growing number of Canadians are choosing to eat less meat for a variety of different reasons including health benefits, the environmental impact and animal welfare considerations.

The National School Food Program is also an opportunity to teach children about the environmental impacts of food choices, paving the way for a future where low-carbon diets are the norm. This is not only desirable, but a necessity. Globally, animal agriculture produces 14.5 per cent of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and expert opinion is clear that a significant reduction in the production and consumption of animal-based foods is necessary to meet our

Paris emission targets. Research from the United Nations Environment Program, Chatham House, and the University of Oxford warns of the dire consequences of climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation stemming from our current industrialized food system. If G20 countries shifted towards plant-centered diets, food-related emissions would fall by as much as 46 per cent in those countries alone.

Here in Canada, a report by Navius Research shows that if Canadians were to reduce their meat consumption by 50 per cent, we would cut GHG emissions by 14 megatonnes by 2030 and 33 megatonnes by 2050. This would help move us toward our emissions target, and bridge the significant gap that exists today between our climate commitments and the projected reductions from announced measures. Importantly, Navius indicates that under each meat-reduction scenario the report looked at, Canada's economy would continue to grow at the same rate through 2050.

Beyond the National School Food Program, Canada must acknowledge that animal agriculture is a major contributor to GHG emissions, and take action through policies that promote plant-based diets and curb emissions from this sector. In particular, reducing the size of large-scale industrial animal agri-

culture operations would significantly reduce emissions.

We are not alone in the recommendation to eat fewer animal-sourced foods. Institutions in Canada, including hospitals and universities, have made the decision to procure more plant-based foods for the health and environmental benefits. The Canadian government could adopt a similar policy in federal institutions.

In addition to the health and environmental benefits of more plant-based diets, there are major economic opportunities. As global food demand grows and changes, Canada is well positioned to become a global source of high-quality plant protein and plant-based products. As one of Canada's five global innovation clusters, the plant protein sector is working to seize this opportunity. As a trusted, competitive and reliable supplier of safe, sustainable and high-quality agri-food products, our country is well-positioned to play a leading role in the global plant-based food sector.

The announcement of a National School Food Program is reason to celebrate, especially if it can accelerate the shift to more plant-based consumption. As an animal welfare organization, of course we would like to see people eat less meat. But there are also significant environmental, economic and health benefits from this shift. It's a further reminder that the health and well-being of humans, animals and the planet are deeply interconnected.

Colin Saravanamuttoo is the executive director and Canada country director of World Animal Protection.

The Hill Times

Opinion

Trudeau and Poilievre aren't focused on what needs to be done



Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, pictured on Feb. 6, 2024, will table the federal budget on April 16 at 4 p.m. in the House of Commons. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canada urgently needs a bold growth strategy if we are to face the future with confidence, rather than channelling down into a despairing view that this country is broken and can't be fixed. If we're broken, it will be a self-inflicted fate.

David
Crane

Canada &
the 21st Century



TORONTO—On the eve of Budget 2024, there are many

troubling signs that point to a difficult future. But there are scant indications that either the current government, or the government-in-waiting, is properly focused on what needs to be done.

Canada urgently needs a bold growth strategy if we are to face the future with confidence, rather than channelling down into a despairing view that this country is broken and can't be fixed. If Canada finds itself broken, it will be a self-inflicted fate.

Yet much must be done to repair the damage that has been done. Our dollar continues to stagnate at a lowly US\$0.73-\$0.74 signifying our lack of competitiveness. If we had a strong, competitive economy, we would enjoy the benefits of a US\$0.90 Canadian dollar, we would be richer, and better able to be useful in the world.

Meanwhile, our stock market is the second weakest in the G7. Our GDP is showing little life, in contrast the United States.

Canadian business investment in new capacity and innovation continues to lag our main competitors, and has contributed little to economic growth over the past

decade. Our per capita GDP has been shrinking, not growing. Public and private debt poses a future threat, and limits our potential for new initiatives, or to address future shocks.

Our poor productivity performance means we are not creating the wealth to do the things we need and want to do. We are not building a country for the future, one based on innovation and global reach. And even in areas where our government boasts of leadership—the green energy transition—we remain a nation heavily dependent on the oil and gas industry despite its high level of greenhouse gas emissions.

A recent International Monetary Fund report—*Call of Duty: Industrial Policy for the Post-Oil Era*—warned that “oil exporters are essentially living on borrowed time” as “a conjunction of forces is pushing the world toward a rapid energy transition, away from fossil fuels toward renewables for power generation, transportation, buildings and industry.” Oil and gas exports account for about 26 per cent of our merchandise exports—so what will replace

those exports for Canada? If we do nothing, if we fail to create new industries and new skills, we will be the shrinking attic of North America.

In the lead-up to the federal budget on April 16, the government has been announcing a succession of new initiatives on everything from housing and mental health to artificial intelligence and defence. This is an opportunistic way to ensure the “good news” parts of the budget get more media play since the focus on Budget 2024 will be on the state of public finances, which is not expected to be a good-news story, despite assurances that all is in hand.

While Ottawa and the provinces do not have a debt crisis today—in contrast to what the Chrétien government inherited from the Mulroney government—debt will be a challenge going forward, and one much more difficult to address with a sluggish and low-productivity-growth economy.

But the real question—the one that matters most to Canadians—is the growth question. How are we going to raise the potential growth rate of our economy,

the rate of growth that can be pursued without pushing inflation to a level that forces a slamming on the economic brakes? This is the speed limit for the economy. The key factors in determining the economy's potential growth rate are the rate of growth in the working age population, and their skills, and productivity growth from innovation. For Canada, as we age, that means more innovation.

Canada's potential growth rate has been stuck at between 1.8 and about two per cent, which is too low to meet our future needs. Raising the potential growth rate to three per cent would deliver big benefits. At two per cent it takes almost 35 years to double output and deliver real per capita gains; at three per cent it takes just 23 years, or 12 years less, to achieve the same result. So to put the challenge in one sentence: we need to raise our potential growth rate, our economy's speed limit for sustained low-inflation growth.

The Bank of Canada's senior deputy governor, Carolyn Rogers, recently generated headlines by declaring this country's poor productivity performance “an emergency.” If this helps focus attention on the issue, that will be a good thing. But poor productivity and weak innovation have been real concerns for well over a decade or longer. And despite Rogers' speech, the Bank of Canada and its economists have been missing in action on productivity issues over the past 10-15 years. Inattention has been an Ottawa disease.

As Rogers did acknowledge, while productivity growth has strengthened in the U.S., “it hasn't happened here. In fact, the level of productivity in Canada's business sector is more or less unchanged from where it was seven years ago.” Moreover, Canadian productivity in 1984—the year that launched the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement—was 88 per cent of the U.S. level. By 2022 it was just 71 per cent of the U.S. level. (One of the leading promises made by proponents of that trade deal was that the remaining productivity gap with the U.S. would be reduced if not eliminated.)

But productivity, while it is about working smarter and about investing in innovation, education and infrastructure, also depends on creating new or reformed institutions. As one example, we want Canadian pension funds and mutual funds to invest more in building up home-grown companies. But that will require innovative changes in the incentives and institutions in financial markets.

So the real test of Budget 2024 will not be how many goodies it hands out to Canadians, but whether it can deliver real confidence in a better Canada, based on a credible growth strategy that is also sustainable and fair. We need a higher speed limit—a potential growth rate of three per cent, not two per cent.

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

The Hill Times



Liberal MPs Sukh Dhaliwal, left, and Chandra Arya. Arya has expressed support for India, lobbying against Dhaliwal's motion M-112 with the argument that its adoption could negatively impact Canada-India relations. Arya contends that Hindu-Canadians are in favour of maintaining strong ties between Canada and India. *The Hill Times* photographs by Cynthia Münster and Sam Garcia

India's eroding democratic values questions its reliability as an ally to Canada

Given the escalating dangers facing the Rohingya and other Muslim refugees, it is critical for the international community, including Canada, to demand accountability from India.

Aiden Alexio

Opinion



Following the Canadian government's acknowledgment of credible allegations that link the June 2023 killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar to the Indian government, Liberal MP Sukh Dhaliwal recently brought forward motion M-112 in the House of Commons. The motion raises questions around India's democracy, given the decline in democratic principles within that country, and whether it is a trustworthy ally. However, MPs must extend their focus beyond the immediate concerns of foreign interference in Canada to also consider the deteriorating state of democracy in India.

Since 2017, the government led by India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been actively targeting the expulsion of Rohingya refugees leading to widespread arrests and detentions. According to human rights

groups, between 2017 and April 2022, 16 Rohingya individuals were forcibly repatriated to Myanmar, facing significant dangers upon return. The Indian government's recent request to the Supreme Court to accelerate the deportation of additional Rohingya refugees underscores a troubling pattern of discrimination against religious minorities. Despite possessing United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees refugee cards—which are not recognized by India because it is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention—the government asserts that Rohingya Muslims do not possess an inherent right to live and settle within its borders.

The targeting of Rohingya refugees is indicative of a larger policy direction reflecting India's hardening stance against its Muslim citizens and refu-

gees from surrounding nations, which is eliciting increased concern from the international community. This criticism arises from various governmental policies and actions that appear to systematically marginalize Muslim communities, and to deny refuge to Muslims fleeing persecution.

In particular, the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) on March 11, 2024, has sparked widespread backlash from international human rights groups like Amnesty International for contravening the core principles of equality and religious non-discrimination. Aakar Patel, chair of the board at Amnesty International India, has condemned the CAA as a "bigoted law" that not only legitimizes religious discrimination, but also disregards the widespread criticism from various sectors within the country and the international community.

The CAA provides a fast track to naturalization for non-Muslims fleeing religious persecution from India's Muslim-majority neighbours—Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh—while deliberately omitting Muslim refugees from the same nations. This selective provision has raised alarms about the Indian government's potential agenda to remodel the nation's secular framework towards a Hindu-centric ideology by marginalizing Muslim citizens who represent the nation's largest religious minority group. Home Minister Amit Shah explained that when combined with the proposed national citizenship verification process through the National Register of Citizens and the establishment of Foreigners Tribunals, the CAA is part of a larger government plan aimed at systematically identifying and excluding irregular immigrants. Shah's controversial characterization of Muslim illegal im-

migrants as "termites," and his assertion that they would be systematically removed underscores a governmental stance poised to disproportionately impact Muslims, rendering them stateless, and vulnerable to detention and deportation.

Given the escalating dangers facing the Rohingya and other Muslim refugees, it is critical for the international community, including Canada, to demand accountability from India. Canada must take a leading stance in advocating for the protection of religious minorities within India, particularly those adversely affected by the CAA. The Indian government's disregard for international refugee conventions should prompt Canada to scrutinize such actions as a breach of the human rights principles integral to our foreign policy and bilateral relations, principles to which Prime Minister Trudeau's administration has committed.

Liberal MP Chandra Arya has expressed support for India, lobbying against motion M-112 with the argument that its adoption could negatively impact Canada-India relations. Arya contends that Hindu-Canadians are in favour of maintaining strong ties between Canada and India. However, Arya's perspective disregards the pressing concerns related to human rights abuses in India, especially against religious minorities. His approach undermines Canada's historical human rights-based foreign policy, and places diplomatic relations ahead of addressing fundamental human rights issues.

Canada has a vital role in supporting Indian civil society organizations that are legally contesting the CAA. These groups represent a critical voice within the country, striving to uphold constitutional values and protect the rights of all citizens, irrespective of their religious identity.

Intensifying its involvement with UN entities to safeguard religious minorities against state-sanctioned discrimination must also be a priority for Canada. The prejudicial measures adopted by India towards its Muslim citizens and refugees not only challenge the country's commitment to its foundational values, but also raise questions about its standing in the international community.

Canada needs to re-evaluate its foreign policy towards India and other international partners engaging in similar practices. Holding these actions accountable is not just about diplomatic relations; it's about standing firm on the principles of justice, equality, and human rights that Canada once championed on the world stage.

Aiden Alexio is a lawyer, and serves as a human rights policy analyst for Justice for All Canada, a not-for-profit human rights organization advocating for persecuted Muslim, Indigenous communities, and other religious and ethnic minorities facing oppression.

The Hill Times

Part Three of Three-Part Series

Hard to see the ‘big picture’: Canada must improve how budget and estimates are presented, say public finance experts

Many experts say the budget should be presented before the main estimates, possibly on a fixed annual date. Liberal MP John McKay says MPs must ‘mine for the gold’ in the current system, while Tory MP Stephanie Kusie says the entire process must be ‘completely overhauled.’

BY IAN CAMPBELL

When the federal government rolls out the federal budget on April 16, much of the promised spending will be presented in a way that makes it difficult to follow that money through to the spending estimates cycle and, ultimately, the public accounts once those dollars are spent—but it doesn't have to be that way, say public finance experts.

Already, in the lead-up to the budget, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) and his ministers have announced billions of dollars in new spending commitments—including \$1-billion over five years for a new national school food program, \$6-billion Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund that will flow on a yet-to-be-defined timeline, and \$2.4-billion on investments in artificial intelligence.

Canada's first parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page, who held the role from 2008 to 2013, said the current process makes it nearly impossible for individual MPs, let alone private citizens, to follow those commitments from an initial announcement in the budget

through to the final accounting of the dollars.

The third part of *The Hill Times*' series on the budget and estimates processes looks at concrete ways for improving these systems. Part one explored the problems that presently exist, and part two looked at previous attempts at reform—including recent efforts by then-Liberal Treasury Board president Scott Brison in a pilot that ended after two years.

Marie-Soleil Tremblay is a Canadian-based researcher for the International Budget Partnership (IBP), a United States-based think tank that evaluates budget processes around the world. She said there are positive aspects to Canada's process, but concrete steps the government can take to make it better. Tremblay has served as the lead researcher for the IBP's surveys of Canada for several years. She is an accountant, and a professor at École nationale d'administration publique.

"All of the information is out there, which is why we score high usually on transparency," Tremblay told *The Hill Times*. "It's more about how it's organized."

Tremblay said creating a citizens' budget is one tool that could help show "the big picture in a very, very simple manner." It is generally a short, pages-long document that presents key information to a general audience. It is written in accessible language, and often includes visual elements.

Canada's current process is difficult to follow, requiring people look at "many different things to be able to get the big picture," said Tremblay. Having a clearer summary would help citizens be more involved in democracy, and law-makers understand the government's finances.

Tremblay said another key way to improve public communications about the budget is taking a different approach to funding commitments made over multiple years—a practice seen in many of the recent pre-budget announcements.

Over time, she said this practice "leads to a sort of distortion for citizens," as well as parliamentarians, because even though an announcement may be for several years, the legal approval to spend the funds is only ever given for the portion to be used in that fiscal year. In later years, governments can make large new announcements, while dropping the latter parts of some other previous multi-year funding announcements that had not yet been spent. By not clearly showing this, it can leave questions about how the government has the fiscal room for new announcements, she said.

"Governments should make sure that people understand when they're talking about something, the implications for the current budget year [are stated] distinctly from the future," said Tremblay. "Because that's what the accountability should be based on."

For example, she said, in a case when a \$10-million multi-year funding announcement includes \$1-million for the first year, "the reality is they're just spending \$1-million, even though they're say-

ing \$10-million, legally, what they can spend is \$1-million, and what they've been authorized to spend is \$1-million. And so the following government—or even the same government—has no obligation or accountability for the \$10-million. The only accountability is for the \$1-million, which is why it gets confusing."

A related issue is that the budget is an accrual-based accounting system (tracks money based on when revenues and expenses occur), while the estimates are on a cash-based accounting system (tracks money based on when cash actually flows in and out). This discrepancy has been explored by past parliamentary studies, and Tremblay said would also be helpful to address.

Timing of budget a key concern

Many experts have pushed for the budget to be presented in advance of the main estimates, and possibly on a fixed date to ensure it happens each year. In the past 15 years, the budget has only been presented in advance



Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux said having the budget presented before 'the mains'—the main spending estimates—is 'probably the single biggest way' of improving the system. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



Treasury Board President Anita Anand, left, and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, who will present the 2024 budget on April 16. Public finance experts say there's room to better organize that data and integrate it with the estimates, which are Anand's responsibility. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

of the main estimates five times, including during Brison's two-year pilot.

Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux said addressing this is "probably the single biggest way" of improving the system.

"Having a budget much earlier in the cycle, so that what's in the budget gets reflected in the mains—for which department committees and Parliamentarians have more time to debate," said Giroux. "So that Parliamentarians have a better idea of where the government is going, which they don't in the mains right now."

Dealing with this timing is part of the reforms that were attempted by Brison. Giroux said that if such reforms were attempted again, enough time still needs to be left to review the main estimates, as well.

"A good approach would be to ensure that the budget gets tabled a solid, I'd say, three or four weeks ... before the mains," said Giroux. "So either by having a fixed window for budget tabling, or ensuring that the mains are tabled by Standing Order three weeks after the budget, so it would align these two documents more clearly."

Giroux said the impact of designing the process this way would be that whenever the government decides to table its budget, Treasury Board officials would have enough time to reflect the spending decisions in the mains.

"They won't be able to include all the spending measures contained in the budget in the mains for various reasons, but at least they will be able to include much more than nothing," said Giroux.

Two MPs split on whether system needs to change

While many experts have pointed to troubles with the current system, one of the few MPs to speak with *The Hill Times* for this series, long-serving Liberal MP John McKay (Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont.), said he believes the current system is fine. He said the solution to the problem is for MPs to do more with the information they're provided.

"It only works as well as the effort MPs are willing to put into looking at the system, and looking at the disclosure documents," said McKay. "It's been my observation that the MPs ... don't use the opportunities that are available to them to do serious



Liberal MP John McKay said MPs do not make use of opportunities to 'do serious scrutiny of the numbers.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

scrutiny of the numbers that are available."

McKay said "there's a lot of gold in the current system," and "it's just that the people who mine for the gold don't seem to know where to look." He added the PBO is always there to help, if needed.

However, Conservative MP Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, Alta.), who serves as her party's Treasury Board critic, takes a different view.

"Absolutely [it has] to be completely overhauled," said Kusie. "It's evident to me that Canadians do not know where their money is going. And I think that must be incredibly frustrating for Canadians who care about paying all these taxes every year, and not really having a finite understanding of where their money is going."

She said more time is needed for reviewing estimates at committee than the six-minute question-and-answer cycles that MPs normally have with a minister or deputy minister over the course of an hour or two.

"How can you possibly critically evaluate? You couldn't even get through a single cost centre, maybe a couple line items in six minutes," said Kusie.

Kusie suggested that revisions to the Accountability Act and adding a cabinet subcommittee on line-item review as an element of the estimates process could also be solutions.

Despite the fundamental role that MPs have to scrutinize spending in a Westminster parliamentary system, numerous other MPs contacted by *The Hill Times* over the course of this three-part series declined to comment.

The Hill Times reached out to every member of the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee, but Kusie was the only member of the committee to agree to an interview. The other four Conservatives, five Liberals, and the single members for the NDP and Bloc Québécois all either did not reply, or declined to comment.

In a statement to *The Hill Times*, Treasury Board President Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.) said the government had made changes to the spending estimates process in the past based on feedback from Parliamentarians.

Anand did not comment specifically on questions about the concerns raised by Page that the current process makes it too difficult to follow the money, or about



Conservative MP Stephanie Kusie said more time is needed for reviewing estimates at committee. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

what lessons could be learned from the previous reforms attempted by Brison.

Anand pointed to an ongoing study by the Senate Finance Committee as something the government would review, but did not commit to focusing on any specific areas of reform or indicate that the issue is a priority.

"We are always looking at ways to increase the transparency and accountability about our government spending and will review the recommendations from the Senate finance committee," said Anand.

IBP's Tremblay said this remains an important issue, and she hopes the citizens' budget becomes a reality to help "focus conversations in a more meaningful way."

"We're not speaking about theoretical numbers in five years, but talking about what's actually being voted right here, right now, today." She called transparency "one of the pillars of democracy."

"In Canada, we have a lot of transparency," she said. "But if we want people to be involved in public debates, I think that they need to understand where the money's coming from, where it's going."

This is the final instalment of a three-part series on the federal budget and estimates process. Part one looked at the issues that exist with the current system. Part two explored lessons learned from previous attempts at reforming it. icampbell@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Budget and Main Estimates Dates

Year	Budget Date	Main Estimates Date	Days budget presented in advance of estimates
2024	April 16	Feb. 29	-47
2023	March 28	Feb. 15	-41
2022	April 7	March 1	-37
2021	April 19	Feb. 25	-54
2020	No budget*	Feb. 27 Sept. 30	N/A
2019	March 19	April 11	24
2018	Feb. 27	April 16	49
2017	March 22	Feb. 23	-28
2016	March 22	Feb. 23	-29
2015	April 21	Feb. 24	-57
2014	Feb. 11	Feb. 27	17
2013	March 21	Feb. 25	-25
2012	March 29	Feb. 28	-30
2011	March 22**	March 1 June 6	-21 -3
2010	March 4	March 3	-1
2009	Jan. 27	Feb. 26	30
2008	Feb. 26	Feb. 28	2

*Due to COVID-19, no budget and two sets of main estimates were presented in 2020
**The government was defeated on its March budget, and returned to present a new budget after the federal election

One of the most common suggestions for how to improve the budget and estimates process is to have the budget presented in advance of the main estimates, possibly on a fixed date. In the past 15 years, the budget has only been presented in advance of the main estimates five times. Source: Library of Parliament

Opinion



Wildfires won't be the last disaster Canada faces. If the Global Evidence Commission's work these past few years has taught us anything, it is that we are more effective at using evidence to inform advisory and decision-making processes than in the previous 30 years. *Photograph courtesy Cpl. Marc-André Leclerc, 2023 DND-MDN Canada*

Why wait for disasters to strike to draw on research evidence?

We need to strengthen the evidence-support system by taking stock of what we already have and building on these strengths. Political staffers from all parties and public servants have key roles to play in these efforts.

John Lavis & Kerry Waddell

Opinion



As Canada experienced unprecedented wildfires last year and the country became engulfed in smoke, governments scrambled for ways to protect the health of communities across the

country. Behind the scenes, senior officials in the Public Health Agency of Canada called upon staff to find out the most effective approaches to protect people from the health effects of smoke and air pollutants. Staff, in turn, reached out to evidence suppliers—in this case, us at the McMaster Health Forum—who bring together existing research to inform government decision-making. Within a few days, we provided a 'rapid evidence profile' summarizing what is known, and gaps in the available evidence that may require additional research. The agency incorporated that evidence into their publicly available and evidence-backed guidance, and used it to inform the federal health response.

This is an example where the system that supports the use of evidence by governments—what we refer to the 'evidence-support system'—worked. Since the evidence is publicly available, the transparency of the response meant it also reduced chances of duplication (for example, that another government would pay for the same request). The work also helped to identify gaps in the evidence base as Canada heads into what is expected to be another severe wildfire season.

In the past three years, we've seen many breakthroughs in

better use of evidence to address emergent and long-standing issues. At the Global Commission on Evidence to Address Societal Challenges—formed in 2021 as a grassroots effort to improve the use of research evidence in routine times and during global crises—we document these breakthroughs, most recently in our annual report, *Update 2024*. Based in Canada, and with an Implementation Council spanning 18 countries, the Global Evidence Commission has seen that crises compel action, including in sourcing the best evidence. But if we want government advisory and decision-making processes to be informed by the best evidence every time—both 'big bang' decisions and the 1,001 smaller decisions policymakers make every day—then we recommend four areas for action.

First, scale up the types of new evidence products and processes to the specific needs of decision-makers. Research has sadly earned its reputation of being too slow and far removed from the practical needs of decision-makers. Now, ultra-rapid evidence-support units can identify, quality-assess, and map existing domestic and global evidence, in its many forms, typically within days or weeks. Increasingly, these units can draw on 'living evidence

syntheses,' summaries of the best evidence addressing a given question that are updated—increasingly artificial intelligence-enabled—as the context, issue and evidence evolve.

Second, build up the skills of 'general contractors' to source the best existing evidence, and create flows of new evidence. Like with home renovations, rather than hiring for each trade, homeowners—or in this case decision-makers—may turn to a general contractor to bring in the right mix of evidence at the right time. These individuals understand the many forms of evidence available—from data analytics to evaluation to behavioural insights and beyond—and that each form has a role in answering different policy questions. While this could be a role for external partners, there are prospective candidates working in government who would benefit from skill enhancements—for instance, evaluators, behavioural/implementation scientists, librarians, and policy analysts.

Third, leverage the expertise of science advisers and expert panels in ways that make it possible to judge their accuracy. We have a term for most advisory processes: GOBSATT, or 'good old boys sitting around the table talking.' We suggest approaches that leverage expertise effectively. For exam-

ple, if convening an expert panel, ask panel members to share the evidence—ideally drawn from evidence syntheses—on which their input and recommendations are based, as well as the methods used. Similarly, many science advisers are selected based on their past scientific contributions, or their relationships with senior government officials. Instead, governments should select science advisers based on their ability to find, contextualize and communicate diverse forms of evidence, and to sustain a high-performing evidence-support system in their sector.

Fourth, formalize and strengthen the evidence-support system. Too often, reliance on best evidence is dependent on individual champions and centres of expertise. An evidence-support system should reliably get whatever forms of evidence are needed to answer a given question into the hands of those who need it, when they need it, with any required caveats about its recency, quality and local applicability.

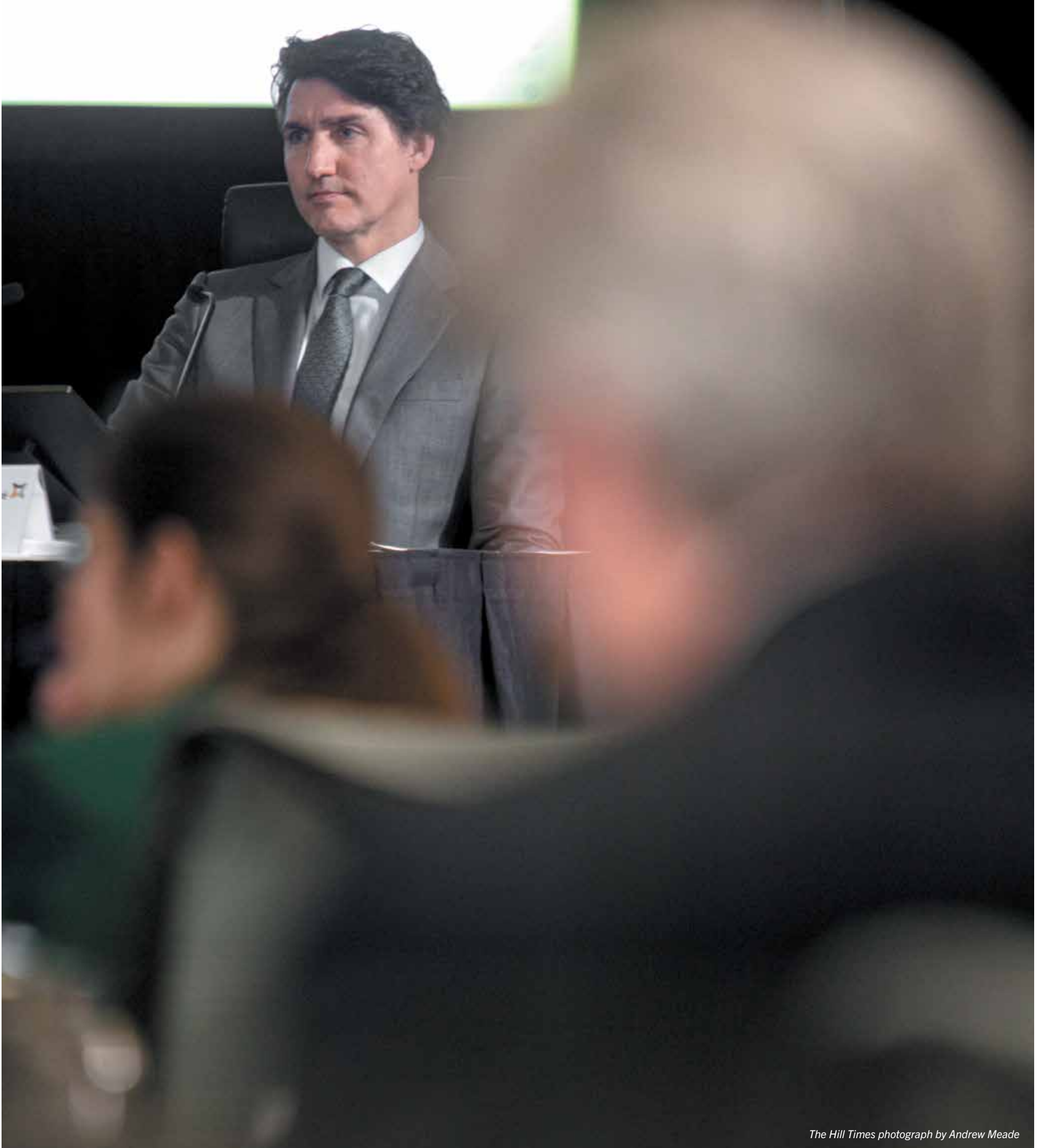
Wildfires won't be the last disaster Canada faces. If our work at the Global Evidence Commission these past few years has taught us anything, it is that we are more effective at using evidence to inform advisory and decision-making processes than in the previous 30 years. What we need now is to strengthen the evidence-support system by taking stock of what we already have and building on these strengths. Political staffers from all parties and public servants all have key roles to play in these efforts.

John N. Lavis is co-lead and lead report writer for the Global Commission on Evidence to Address Societal Challenges and Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Evidence-Support Systems. Kerry Waddell is the scientific lead for evidence synthesis and support at the McMaster Health Forum.

The Hill Times

The Big Photo

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured April 10, 2024, testifying before the Foreign Interference Commission in Ottawa. *The Hill Times*' photographer Andrew Meade on taking this shot: 'When the prime minister appeared at the Foreign Interference Commission it was a long throw from the back of the room to where he was sitting, so I thought it would be useful to use the lawyers sitting between as a foreground element to add some context to the picture and fill up the space with a useful component in the frame.'



The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

News

Senate's committee system 'does not work': Senators consider cutting membership and dropping a day

Having more than nine members often means there are a few 'free-riders' who don't do the work, says Progressive Senator Diane Bellemare, while nine is the 'optimal number.'

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT ALLEN

Senators are contemplating reducing their membership numbers on most Senate committees because many say they feel short-changed with their time to question witnesses, the status quo keeps "free-riders" in the mix who don't do the work, and all groups don't have enough members to properly populate the committees.

Twelve committees currently have more than 11 members, but during an April 9 presentation before the Senate Rules, Procedures, and the Rights of Parliament Committee, Senators heard that six to nine members would be most efficient.

If the Senate Rules Committee recommends a change it would not apply to this session, and would come into effect during the next Parliament. At the April 9 meeting, Senators also considered the separate issue of the committee schedule, and will discuss whether to enact a pilot this session that could see them remove Monday meetings and rejig the Tuesday-to-Thursday schedule.

Those discussions are still preliminary, with Senators yet to vote on whether to work on a report recommending new numbers or the scheduling pilot, but during the discussion last week there seemed broad agreement that change was in order.

Progressive Senator Diane Bellemare (Alma, Que.), who chairs the Senate Rules Committee, said a 2002 study showed the "optimal number" was between six and nine Senators per committee, and that when the numbers climb higher than nine it's likely there will be "free-riders—those that sit on the committee but don't do their work."

Though the Upper Chamber holds 105 seats, full capacity has



Independent Senator Ratna Omidvar, left, Conservative Denise Batters, and ISG Senator Diane Bellemare sit on the Senate Rules Committee. Omidvar says the Senate committee schedule does not work. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade, courtesy of Senate's Government Representative Office

not been reached in recent years. With more, smaller groups making up the modernized Senate, noted Bellemare, that can add to the workload of a few Senators spread across many committees. It also makes it difficult to find alternatives to fill in should a Senator be unable to make a meeting. It's also a challenge when four committees sit with a dozen members apiece, meaning 48 Senators are needed to populate them all, Bellemare noted.

The 2002 report by the Rules Committee offered similar conclusions even before the 40-person Independent Senators Group (ISG), 14-member Progressive Senate Group, and 17-member Canadian Senators Group joined the mix. The Conservative Party, which represent the official opposition, has 14 Senators in its caucus, which will drop to 13 after the April 14 mandatory retirement of Senator Percy Mockler. Currently, there are 97 people appointed to the Senate, including the Speaker, three government representatives and eight non-affiliated Senators.

"The central immediate challenge to Senate committee effectiveness is the tension between rapidly expanding committee workloads and the finite time of a constitutionally limited number of Senators," the 2002 report said. "Workload problems are especially severe for the official opposition, as a result of the declining number of opposition Senators in recent years."

Currently, there are six committees each with 12 members, and four with 11. There are two

committees with 15 members, including the Rules Committee that is studying the proposed changes. Two committees have nine members, two have eight, and two have six Senators.

Independent Senator Ratna Omidvar (Ontario) chairs the 12-member Social Affairs, Science, and Technology Committee, which—along with the Banking, Commerce, and the Economy Committee—is the most popular pick for its profile and work.

"It is extremely difficult to give Senators a fair time," Omidvar said. "Second rounds are almost impossible. So once you make that spread [of 12], you don't get depth."

"Regardless of what you try and do, Senators are sometimes quite upset that they did not get their fair time."

It becomes extremely difficult to satisfy everyone, she said, calling nine members a "distinct advantage," but choosing that route must be tied to the numbers held by the recognized parties and parliamentary groups in the Chamber.

"We can't just change the numbers without also addressing proportionality," she said.

ISG Senator Yuen Pau Woo (British Columbia) echoed the chair's assessment that the group was "getting close to a consensus," and called nine a "quite compelling" number while not having to be uniform across all committees.

Conservative Senator Denise Batters (Saskatchewan), who is deputy chair of the Rules Committee, called it "a little early to declare consensus," and, in

perhaps a hint of future debates, she and Woo briefly went back-and-forth on the question of proportionality by group, and the place of the official opposition determining the numbers.

ISG Senator Hassan Yussuff (Ontario) said shrinking membership could make for some unsatisfied Senators if they're competing for fewer spots on desirable committees.

"I think it will be problematic to get the leaders [to agree]. We can get any recommendation we want here, but I'm being realistic," he said. "You're going to have to convince leaders to go convince their group that this is a good thing for the Senate."

Progressive Senator Jane Cordy (Nova Scotia) said nine members is ideal, and she'd like the committee to come to a decision, and bring it before the Senate as a whole before the end of June.

Cordy noted the chair at Social Affairs has "tried everything under the sun" to grant equal time, but follow-up questions are nearly impossible especially when facing an insufficient response.

"And that's just the reality. That's not anybody's fault," she said.

Monday committee meetings 'very prohibitive,' says Senator

Independent Senator Pierrette Ringuette (New Brunswick) who presented the topic of a scheduling change, noted Monday meetings can be "very prohibitive for many Senators," mainly for those who travel to sit in Ottawa.

Senators were given a potential schedule to review, which removed Monday meetings as well as Tuesday evenings. It also dropped some meetings while lengthening others. So, some committees that meet twice a week for two hours would instead meet once for three hours.

It would not only create efficiencies for Senators, said Ringuette, but also for the administration, which allocates resources, interpretation, and staffing to each meeting, even the ones cancelled at the last minute when the Senate sits late, which she called offensive and "undignified" for its impact on witnesses expecting to appear.

Conservative Senator Michael MacDonald (Cape Breton, N.S.), who sits on the 12-member Foreign Affairs steering committee, predicted the proposal "is not going to be very well received and with due cause," but he would consult with them.

"That's the purpose," replied Ringuette, telling Senators to consult with their committees and groups ahead of the next meeting's discussion. She noted there hasn't been a review of committee mandates and schedules during the 21 years she's sat in the Chamber.

Cordy said the idea of a pilot is a good starting point. "It would iron some things out," but may mean some Senators would no longer sit on their current committees.

Additionally, non-affiliated Senator Marc Gold (Stadacona, Que.), the government's representative in the Red Chamber, has a motion before the body calling for it to adjourn at 6 p.m. on Thursdays for the remainder of the current session of Parliament, as long as there is no further government business to be covered. Government Motion No. 132, first introduced the motion in the Senate chamber on Oct. 18, remains on the order paper.

If there is agreement on the new committee schedule, Ringuette recommended a pilot project could start in September, with a review in May 2025.

Batters said dropping Mondays and Tuesday evenings would leave very long days of back-to-back meetings when Senate sittings, caucus and group meetings, and the committees are all factored in. She also questioned whether the Senate had the resources to televise four meetings at the same time, when it currently seems to be a problem.

Shaila Anwar, a clerk at the Senate Committees Directorate, agreed the proposed schedule likely needed to be "tweaked and negotiated" between Senate groups.

"It's a choice. It helps to alleviate the Monday committee issue," said Anwar, who takes on her role as the new Senate Clerk on May 6.

Omidvar said Senators must accept that no proposal will meet all needs, but it's worth finding a solution.

"Suffice it to say that the system we have now does not work."

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Liberals lose, Conservatives gain in new riding boundary breakdown of 2021 electoral results

Election Canada's transposition of vote analysis will help federal parties determine the battleground ridings for the next election, says pollster Greg Lyle.

BY ABBAS RANA

If the new riding boundaries had been in effect in 2021, the Liberals would have won fewer seats and the Conservatives would have had greater numbers in Parliament, according to a new Elections Canada transposition of the vote analysis of the most recent election results. That breakdown comes at a time when

seat projections are being closely monitored with polls showing the Liberals trailing the Conservatives by double-digit margin for the past few months.

According to the analysis released April 9, the Liberal Party would have won 157 seats, the Conservative Party 126, the Bloc Québécois 34, the New Democratic Party 24, and two for the Green Party. This means the Liberals would have lost three ridings compared to the seats secured in 2021. The Conservatives, meanwhile, would have gained seven electoral districts, followed by two gains for the Bloc, one lost riding for the New Democrats, and the Greens staying the same with two. In 2021, the total House seats up for grabs was 338, but the newly drawn electoral map increases that number by five, bringing 343 MPs to the next Parliament.

Of the 338 House seats in 2021, the Liberals won 160, the Conservatives 119, the Bloc 32, the NDP 25, and the Greens two.

Of the five new seats added to the new electoral map, Alberta is getting three more, while Ontario and British Columbia each gain one seat. With the addition of these new ridings, Alberta will have 37, Ontario 122, and British Columbia 43.

Currently, Ontario has 121 MPs in Parliament, Quebec 78, British Columbia 42, Alberta 34, Manitoba and Saskatchewan 14 each, New Brunswick 10, Nova Scotia 11, Prince Edward Island four, Newfoundland and Labrador seven, with Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut each sending one federal representative to Ottawa.

Canada's constitution requires a review of electoral boundaries every 10 years to reflect population changes in federal electoral riding boundaries across the country. In 2013, when the last redistribution took place, the country's population was about 35.1 million, according to Statistics Canada. Currently, the population is about 41 million. Independent and non-partisan commissions in all provinces helped to redraw the geographical boundaries.

According to Elections Canada, if the next election were to be called after April 23, it would happen under the new boundaries. But if one were to be called prior to that, it would take place with the existing ridings. With that deadline only two weeks away, it's expected that an Oct. 20, 2025, election will occur under the new riding borders.

Of the current 338 ridings, only 48 remain unchanged under



The Pierre Poilievre Conservatives could stand to benefit in the new electoral boundaries if everyone were to vote in the next election the way they did in 2021, according to the newly released analysis by Elections Canada. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the redistribution, while 290 have undergone updates in boundaries and population. Depending on the movement of population, a riding may have undergone minor tweaks, or major changes where a riding's name, geography, and population have been altered. The change in riding boundaries could range from a minor tinkering to a whole constituency completely disappearing.

For the transposition of vote analysis, Elections Canada took results from the individual polling stations from the 2021 election and mapped these onto the newly redrawn ridings.

This analysis says that the Liberals would have dropped seats in Quebec, Ontario, and Alberta. The full seat count puts Liberals in six out of seven seats in Newfoundland, four out of four in P.E.I., eight out of 11 in Nova Scotia, six out of 10 in New Brunswick, 33 out of 78 in Quebec, 77 out of 122 in Ontario, four out of 14 in Manitoba, one out of 14 in Saskatchewan, one out of 37 in Alberta, 15 out of 43 in B.C., and one seat each in Yukon and Northwest Territories.

In comparison, in the 2021 election, the Liberals had actually won 24 out of 32 seats in the four Atlantic provinces, 35 in Quebec, 78 in Ontario, four in Manitoba, two in Alberta, 15 in B.C. and one each in Yukon and Northwest Territories.

The Conservatives, according to Elections Canada analysis, would have seen gains in Ontario, Alberta, and B.C., while dropping a seat in Saskatchewan. Their 126 seats broke down to eight out of 32 seats in the four Atlantic provinces, 10 in Quebec, 40 in Ontario, seven in Manitoba, 13 in Saskatchewan, 34 in Alberta, and 14 in British Columbia.

In 2021, the Conservatives had won eight seats in Atlantic Canada, 10 in Quebec, 37 in Ontario, seven in Manitoba, 14 in Saskatchewan, 30 in Alberta and 13 in B.C.

The Bloc Québécois won 32 seats in Quebec in 2021, but

would have held 34 under the transposition analysis.

The NDP, based on this analysis, would have won one riding in Quebec, four in Ontario, three in Manitoba, two in Alberta, 13 in British Columbia, and one in Nunavut. That's identical to the 2021 results, save for a seat lost in Ontario.

The Greens, according to Elections Canada analysis, would have taken one seat each in Ontario and Quebec. They won the same number in 2021.

National public opinion polls currently place the Conservatives far ahead of the Liberals said Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, and the new riding boundaries are giving the blue party even more advantage. He said the transposition of vote analysis will help all federal parties determine the key battlegrounds for the next election.

"When we redo this work using the new boundaries, it's going to make the Tory lead even stronger," said Lyle.

Based on Lyle's most recent seat projections in the 343 redistributed ridings, the Conservatives could win 225 seats, the Liberals 54, the Bloc 40, the NDP 23, and the Greens one.

In 2021, the Liberals won 5.5 million or 32.6 per cent of the votes; the Conservatives 5.7 million or 33.7 per cent; the NDP three million or 17.8 per cent; the Bloc Québécois 1.3-million or 7.7-million; the Greens 396,988 or 2.3 per cent; and the People's Party of Canada 840,993 or 4.9 per cent.

The Trudeau Liberals won the last two elections with the lowest popular vote in Canadian political history by only 32.6 per cent and 33.1 per cent, respectively. And prior to that, the lowest margin was when the Joe Clark Progressive Conservatives won a minority government with 35.9 per cent of the votes in 1979.

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Comparison of seats won in 2021 and transposed results based on 2023 riding boundaries

Seats	Liberals	Conservatives	Bloc	NDP	Greens	Total
Seats won in 2021 election	160	119	32	25	2	338
Estimated seat wins under 2023 boundaries	157	126	34	24	2	343
Difference	-3	+7	+2	-1	0	+5

Source: Elections Canada

News

Thousands of border security workers heading towards strike votes

Strike votes have commenced, and are running from April 10 to May 15 across the country.

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

Strike votes have commenced for more than 9,000 border service workers employed by the federal government as of April 10, as a group that declared an impasse in bargaining with the government in September 2023 after the Canada Border Services Agency “refused to budge on key issues like wages in line with other law enforcement agencies, better job security, access to telework, and protections from contracting out,” according to a release.

Customs and Immigration Union president Mark Weber said “we’re looking for closer parity to what we see in other law enforcement,” and that “we’re using the kind of RCMP salary as a basis for that.”

Strike votes are running between April 10 and May 15 across the country, said Weber.

CBSA also has a retention problem, according to Weber, who noted that there is a shortage of 2,000 to 3,000 officers across the country.

“So I think getting us closer to what other law enforcement gets paid would really help with that issue,” said Weber. “And right now with short staff as we are, the CBSA is increasing their ability to hire and retain more staff, they’re looking at short-term filling things with 90-day contract work.”

Larry Savage, a Brock University professor and chair of the department of labour studies, said “it could be déjà vu all over again.”

“It sounds like a lot of the outstanding issues from the last round of bargaining are still hot topics this time around,” said Savage.

“But I can’t imagine a scenario in which, you know, the workers don’t authorize the strike vote, given how long negotiations have dragged on, and the outstanding issues that are at play,” said Savage.

Savage said if a negotiated settlement is still not achieved as a result of a positive strike vote, “then I do think that folks should expect the union to use the right to strike in a very strategic way

Treasury Board President Anita Anand. The federal government says it is committed to reaching an agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada that ‘is fair for employees and reasonable for Canadians.’
The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



CIU president Mark Weber, left, says ‘we’re looking for closer parity to what we see in other law enforcement.’ *Photograph courtesy of X*



Brock University professor Larry Savage said ‘it could be déjà vu all over again’ when referring to potential strike action by border service employees. *Photograph courtesy of Larry Savage*

that would be designed to build additional pressure on the Treasury Board to reach a negotiated settlement.”

“And that might include a work-to-rule campaign, or rotating strikes in particular regions that are designed to have the greatest impact on border services,” said Savage, noting that he was a “border kid” who grew up in Niagara Falls, Ont.

“Crossing the border was a weekly event for us. And so, I know firsthand Border Services officers have a great deal of discretion in their jobs. And that discretion could certainly be used

to slow down the system,” said Savage.

According to the Treasury Board, the government is committed to reaching an agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) that “is fair for employees and reasonable for Canadians.”

“The best agreements are reached at the bargaining table. As we move into an important stage of the bargaining process, it is disappointing to see that PSAC has chosen to call a strike vote for employees from the Canada Border Services Agency (Border Services FB group),” according to the a media release.

“There is ample room to reach a fair and reasonable agreement with PSAC for members of the FB group. To assist in this, on April 10 and 22, 2024, the employer and PSAC are attending Public Interest Commission (PIC) hearings at the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board. Following these hearings, the PIC, a third-party body that includes a union nominee, will make recommendations to the employer and PSAC to help reach a settlement,” according to the government.

“The PIC is a crucial step in the bargaining process that can effectively bring parties together

to reach negotiated agreements. Last year, PIC recommendations formed the basis for new agreements for approximately 120,000 public servants,” according to the release. “In the interest of reaching an agreement for their members at the earliest opportunity, we call on PSAC to commit to the collective bargaining process, including the PIC process.”

“As of April 2024, the Government of Canada has reached agreements with 17 bargaining units covering 80 per cent of represented employees in the core public administration, with an established pattern on pay increases and lump-sum payments. The government’s latest offer to PSAC for the FB group is fair and consistent with these agreements.”

“[The government] is committed to reaching an agreement with PSAC as quickly as possible that is fair to FB group employees and reasonable for Canadians,” according to the release.

‘A replay of [...] the PSAC strike last year’

McGill University sociology professor Barry Eidlin, who studies class, politics, social movements, and institutional change, told *The Hill Times* that the current situation “a replay of a lot of the stuff we saw with the PSAC strike last year, where there’s a Treasury Board that’s been dragging its feet, and not really addressing issues.”

“And in this case, they’ve been stuck in bargaining for two years. And it’s important to understand that’s almost invariably the result of employer foot-dragging,” he said. “Then the workers and the unions do not want to go two years without a contract. And so the strike mandate is an effort to ratchet up the pressure on management, to get them back to the bargaining table, and get them more serious about actually negotiating.”

But Eidlin said that something different this time is Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre’s (Carleton, Ont.) leadership, and its relationship to unions and labour relations.

“They sort of are trying to appeal to the blue collar, little guy,” he said. “Part of that, unlike in the U.S., where it’s purely a performative kind of thing, they have been trying to actually put some policy to those appeals.”

He said that could be seen in the Feb. 27 passage of the Liberals’ anti-scab legislation, Bill C-58, at second reading in the House with the support of the Conservatives.

“It’s also conceivable that [Poilievre]’s not just reflexively anti-union all the way down, so I wouldn’t be surprised if there were some efforts to provide some benefits to at least some groups of workers,” said Eidlin. “I could see that with groups like these in a border security, where it’s tied to national security and law enforcement, the idea that Poilievre would try to track those groups of workers and bring them into his political coalition.”

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Environmental groups urge an end to fossil fuel subsidies in two reports outlining Canada's oil and gas financing

The government gave at least \$18.553-billion in financial support in 2012 to fossil fuel and petrochemical firms, including \$8-billion worth of loan guarantees for the TransMountain pipeline, \$7.339-billion in public financing through Export Development Canada, and over \$1.3-billion for carbon capture and storage projects, according to the reports.

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

Two environmentalist group reports have shone a spotlight on federal subsidies for fossil fuels, finding that Canada has provided billions of dollars in support to companies already pulling in billions of dollars in profits.

According to a report released last week from Oil Change International and Friends of the Earth United States, G20 governments and the multilateral development banks provided \$142-billion in international public finance for fossil fuels between 2020 and 2022, which was almost 1.4 times their support for clean energy in the same period, at \$104-billion.

The top fossil-fuel financiers were Canada at \$10.9-billion per year, South Korea at \$10-billion per year, and Japan at \$6.9-billion per year.

The report also notes that at the end of 2022, Canada fulfilled its commitment to the Clean Energy Transition Partnership (CETP) to end international finance for fossil fuels, and is under pressure to meet a separate pledge to end their much larger domestic export credit agency fossil fuel financing in 2024.



The top fossil fuel financiers between 2020 and 2022 were Canada at \$10.9-billion per year, Korea at \$10-billion per year, and Japan at \$6.9-billion per year. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

According to Canadian-based Environmental Defence's report from March, the government provided at least \$18.553-billion in financial support in 2023 to fossil fuel and petrochemical companies. That figure included \$8-billion worth of loan guarantees for the TransMountain expansion pipeline, \$7.339-billion in public financing through crown corporation Export Development Canada, and over \$1.3-billion for carbon capture and storage projects—with the report noting that subsidies for carbon capture are "likely to increase in 2024."

The report also notes that government support for the oil and gas industry over the last four years was at least \$65-billion—and that oil and gas extraction firms saw \$270-billion in total revenue and \$63-billion in profits in 2022 (the most recent year available).

The report calls for Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) to include "immediate steps" in the 2024 budget "to eliminate all of its financing to the oil and gas industry, as was promised back in 2021."

The government released a framework for eliminating inefficient fossil fuel subsidies in July 2023.

Pressed by NDP environment critic Laurel Collins (Victoria, B.C.), who said that Canada "currently has the worst air quality in North America" and that the Liberals are "acting like it is business as usual, breaking climate

promises while handing out billions to Canada's biggest polluters," Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, Que.) replied that "we are the first country, the only country, in the G20 to have phased out fossil fuel subsidies, two years ahead of everyone else."

"We are the only country that has committed to eliminating public financing for fossil fuel subsidies. We have the best performance of all G7 countries in terms of greenhouse gas reduction between 2019 and 2021. We are working to fight climate change. We are working to improve air quality all across the country," said Guilbeault.

"Our government has done more than any other government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and it's in many different areas," said Liberal MP Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Ont.) in a press conference on March 22. "We are doing much work on many fronts. Our government is very ambitious on this. But as we learned ... in our discussions with other members and academics and activists, there is more that can be done and we're open to those conversations, we need to keep the fight going and we're committed to doing that."

'I wish I was surprised, I wish I was shocked,' says Elizabeth May

Green Party Co-Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf-Islands,

B.C.), said "I'm not surprised, I wish I was surprised, I wish I was shocked," about Canada's position as a lead subsidizer of fossil fuels.

The federal government has spent \$34-billion on the Trans Mountain Pipeline. May said that she was "fearful of what the pipeline could do to Canada's emissions and environmental damage on our coasts."

"Because people tend to forget, it's not just a pipeline, although clearly, when you look to the international advice from all the major agencies is like to meet any kind of 1.5 degree commitment, governments have to stop building fossil fuel infrastructure, period. No more, nothing," said May. "Even with that advice, the people of Canada are paying for building a pipeline that will drive up greenhouse gas emissions."

She said she was also concerned about the oil's transportation by sea.

"The material being shipped in the pipeline is still that, and it can't be cleaned up at all, in the marine environment, and this just kind of gets lost over time. And I'm so fearful as a representative of communities all along the Salish Sea and the Indigenous community, if there's a tanker accident, which is more 'when' than an 'if,'" said May.

Claire O'Manique, public finance analyst at Oil Change International, said "while rich countries continue to drag their feet and claim they can't afford to fund a globally just energy

transition, countries like Canada, Korea, Japan, and the U.S. appear to have no shortage of public funds for climate-wrecking fossil fuels," demanding that "they move first and fastest on a fossil fuel phaseout, to stop funding fossil fuels, and that they pay their fair share of a globally just transition, loss and damage and adaptation finance."

In a follow up interview with *The Hill Times*, O'Manique said "we're, in a climate emergency, as we know," and that "with every passing day, the need to transition off fossil fuels only grows and is greater."

O'Manique said the organization's research focused on international public finance, as it has an "oversized impact on our energy systems," and "could be playing this really pivotal role in the build out of clean energy and the situations that we need, but instead it's using this role that it could play to support fossil fuels and to support fossil fuel infrastructure that we don't need."

'Canada remains one of the worst culprits'

Julia Levin, associate director of national climate at Environmental Defence, said "it's incredibly disappointing to see that year after year, Canada remains one of the worst culprits when it comes to providing financing to oil and gas companies."

But Levin also said the government already has a strong policy regarding international public financing. That needs to expand to include domestic public financing, she said, and to capture the "full range of Crown corporations and agencies in Canada providing financing to oil and gas companies."

Levin said the upcoming budget is an opportunity to lay out what fiscal policy looks like in Canada moving forward, given that subsidies continue to flow to the fossil fuel sector.

"Our expectations don't change regardless of whatever political stripe," said Levin. "We know that Canadians care about the climate crisis, we know the climate crisis is displacing tens of thousands of families, destroying livelihoods already, and we know that it's going to get worse year over year."

"So it is incredibly important that whoever is in Ottawa governs it in a way that ensures we can have a safe and healthy future. And there is a big difference between an election and governing," said Levin.

"This financing is fueling the climate crisis, the climate crisis that's devastating Canadian families and families around the world. The number one thing you do when you're in a hole, stop digging," said O'Manique. "And instead the government keeps making the problem worse by providing gigantic levels of support to a sector that we need to be winding down in order to ensure a safe and healthy future."

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News

Feds, provinces and territories prepare as projections warn wildfire season could 'be more explosive' than 2023's record fires

Dry conditions continue across much of the country, and above average temperatures are expected this spring, while modelling for rainfall is less certain.

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

The federal government is in talks with other countries about how to better share firefighting resources as dry conditions and forecasts for above-average temperatures threaten another severe wildfire season.

"We did update our agreement with the Americans quite recently. And, of course, the Americans have been enormously helpful partners for us to make it easier for us to actually exchange things," said Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver, B.C.) at a press conference on April 10. "I don't want to get ahead of myself in terms of announcements to come, but I would say stay tuned in terms of perhaps some other agreements."

Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjit Sajjan (Vancouver South, B.C.) said at the same press conference that government officials would meet with their counterparts in the European Union in the coming months to "look at next steps, and look at how we can best support, as well."

"We have also looked at making arrangements in South America... but one of the key things is also learning from one another," he said. "When we supported Australia, they'd looked at our predictive model, and what I also saw was they took our predictive model, and digitized it in a way that's very useful, that we utilize now."

Approximately 5,500 international firefighting resources from 12 countries assisted their Canadian counterparts in last year's record wildfire season. Eight firefighters died during the 2023 season, in which more than 15 million hectares burned, and more than 230,000 people—including the entire city of Yellowknife and 82 First Nations communities—were evacuated. Just over 2,100 defence personnel were deployed across 18 requests for federal assistance from British



Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjit Sajjan says 'we can expect that the wildfire season will start sooner and end later and potentially be more explosive.'

The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

sooner and end later, and potentially be more explosive," Sajjan said.

When asked at the technical briefing whether that early start and late end would affect Canada's mutual aid firefighting arrangements with other countries, especially those in the southern hemisphere, the officials said longer fire seasons were also affecting the rest of the world, and it was important to ensure firefighting was adequately resourced everywhere.

Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Chile typically send firefighters to support Canadian efforts during the northern fire season, while Canada reciprocates during the southern season. Australia's Bureau of Meteorology has warned that changes that are "at least partly attributable to human-caused climate change" are generating more extreme conditions in the southern summer, and an earlier start to the bush-fire season in the highly populated southern and eastern areas of the country.

The Canadian officials said that the seasonality remained a key indicator of how aggressive wildfires would be in any given month, even if the wildfire seasons begin to overlap in both hemispheres.

Alberta declared its wildfire season just over a week earlier than its usual start date, and its provincial budget included funding for more firefighters. Quebec's agency for wildland fire is planning a hiring blitz ahead

Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Alberta, Quebec, Ontario, and Nova Scotia.

Officials from the federal environment, natural resources, and Indigenous services departments told journalists at a briefing on April 10 that much of the country can expect above-average temperatures this spring and summer.

There was greater uncertainty over the amount of rainfall that can be expected during those months, but the officials warned of early and increased fire risk in western Canada, eastern Ontario, and southern Quebec in April, and higher fire risk across the

Prairies, eastern and southern British Columbia, northern Ontario, and western Quebec in May.

The Canadian Drought Monitor showed that, as of March 31, the Western provinces, much of the Northwest Territories and northern Ontario, and Labrador were in drought, while parts of eastern Ontario, western Quebec, and southern Newfoundland were abnormally dry. Those conditions followed below average snowpack through the winter across much of the country.

"With the heat and dryness across the country, we can expect that the wildfire season will start

of this year's season, according to CBC News, while Nova Scotia is using federal funding to replace its fleet of helicopter water bombers.

The federal government and 11 provinces and territories have signed an agreement for a firefighting equipment fund, for which the federal government will share up to 50 per cent of provincial government costs, and up to 75 per cent of territorial government costs. The government also signed agreements with nine Indigenous communities, and with the International Association of Fire Fighters to train more than 600 new firefighters and 125 Indigenous guardians.

Sajjan also said discussions were continuing on updates to the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA), which is the federal government's support mechanism for provinces and territories after a large-scale natural disaster.

The current guidelines, which came into effect in January 2008, are due to end on March 31, 2025. An expert advisory panel recommended in 2022 that updated arrangements pay greater attention to disaster resiliency and mitigation works, rather than on repair work.

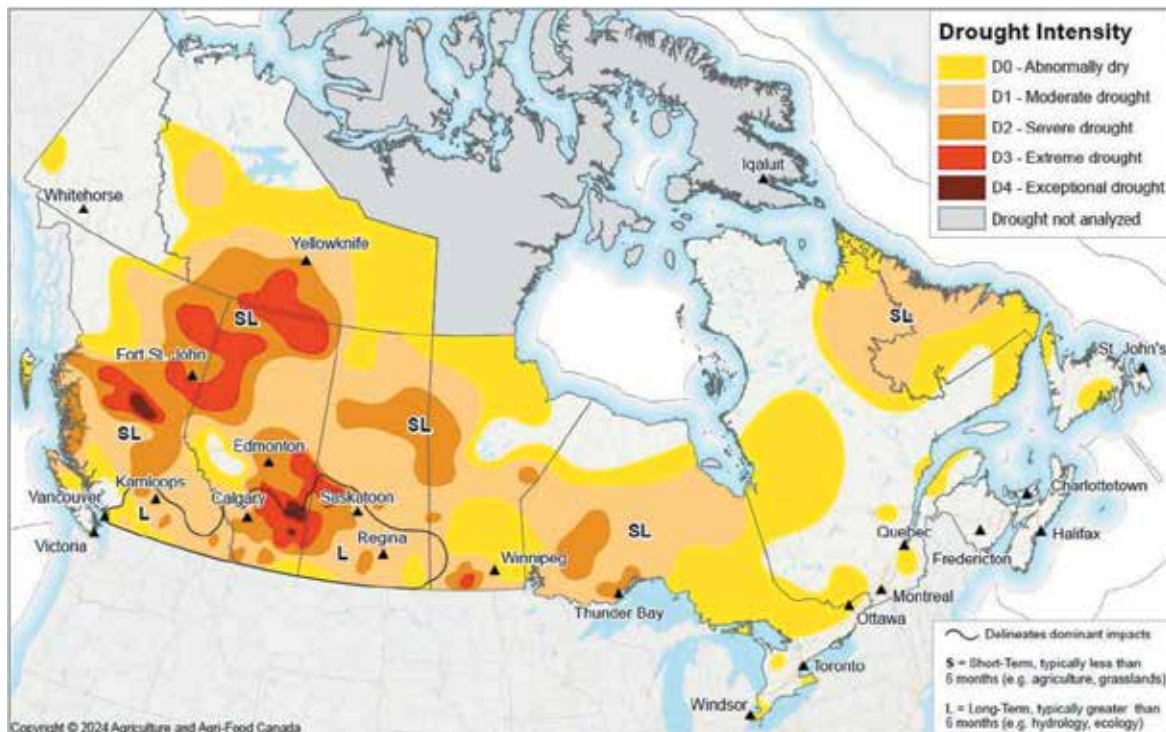
"We've got to work with different provinces to make sure that there's a good transition in place," he said. "[The DFAA] was designed for supporting provinces when the capacity was beyond theirs... but the thing is, you can only rebuild what was broken, or what was burned down. What we need to do, as most of the communities and the mayors that I spoke with, is we want to get into preventative [measures]... so the cost is not going to change, but the percentages on the prevention piece is going to go up."

The 2024 budget, due to be tabled on April 16, is expected to double the tax credit available to volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers from \$3,000 to \$6,000. An increase to the credit has long been promoted by the NDP, with MP Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni, B.C.) introducing a private member's bill in December 2022 that would boost the credit to \$10,000.

Shortly after the announcement, members of the Climate Action Network called for the measures to be enacted in concert with emissions reduction actions, including quickly enacting an oil and gas emissions cap.

"We desperately need to address the source of the problem - greenhouse gas emissions. And we urgently need an emissions cap to limit and reduce greenhouse gas pollution from Canada's largest source—the oil and gas industry," said Aly Hyder Ali, oil and gas program manager at Environmental Defence, in an April 10 press release. Environmental Defence is a member of the Climate Action Network alongside groups such as the David Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace Canada, and the Canadian Health Association for Sustainability and Equity.

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Drought conditions across Canada as of March 31, 2024. Graphic courtesy of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Poilievre's communication record shows corporate lobbyists shouldn't panic, say lobbyists in Ottawa

Pierre Poilievre took aim at 'utterly useless' corporate lobbyists in a speech in March, but some lobbyists argue this is 'political theatre.'

Continued from page 1

for the troops. It's great to send the message that we are out for these workers, not big business. I think that was the real intent of his speech," said Baran. "But if anybody's panicking saying, 'Oh, my god, a Poilievre government is going to stop communicating with stakeholders.' Well, that's just not at all realistic."

Baran argued that Poilievre's comments about corporate lobbyists are not too different from statements from former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper prior to his election in 2006.

"I recall Mr. Harper saying similar things before he was elected, [such as] 'We're going to bypass the lobbyists and work directly with businesses, or people or workers,' or whatever it may be, right? It sounds good. It's great political fodder," Baran said. "Now, in reality, when he was governing, Mr. Harper and his staff had all kinds of conversation with stakeholders because you need to have conversations with stakeholders."

Kathleen Monk, president of Monk + Associates who is also an election campaign strategist and former top political NDP staffer, told *The Hill Times* that Poilievre's speech didn't indicate he was going to take on business lobbyists, but rather that he wants them to make their case to him.

"If I was a corporate lobbyist for a big oil and gas firm right now, I would not be quaking in my boots," said Monk. "[Conservatives] try to court workers and use rhetoric that they feel will, in fact, connect with workers, but their policies are written by corporations ... and their policies are ones that help corporations."

Monk argued that Poilievre's history with lobbyists shows he is still business first.



Speaking to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade on March 8, 2024, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre criticized corporate lobbyists in Ottawa as 'utterly useless in advancing any common sense interests for the people on the ground.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Yaroslav Baran, co-founder of the Pendulum Group, says if anyone is panicking saying, 'Oh, my god, a Poilievre government is going to stop communicating with stakeholders,' that is 'just not at all realistic.' *Photograph courtesy of Pendulum Group*

Poilievre has appeared in 50 communication reports on the federal lobbyists' registry between Sept. 10, 2022, when he assumed office as leader of the Conservative Party, and April 9, 2024.

Of those reports, 16 were for communications involving corporations. These included communications with Cenovus Energy on Dec. 10, 2022, and on Nov. 7, 2023; with Imperial Oil Limited on May 9, 2023; with Enbridge Inc. on



Kathleen Monk, president of Monk + Associates, says 'If I was a corporate lobbyist for a big oil and gas firm right now, I would not be quaking in my boots.' *Photograph courtesy of Kathleen Monk*

Feb. 1, 2023; and with Rio Tinto Aluminum on Feb. 26, 2024.

Monk also pointed to Poilievre's lobbying record prior to his time as Conservative leader as an indicator of his willingness to communicate.

During the Harper government, Poilievre served as parliamentary secretary to then-transport minister Denis Lebel, and he was listed in 10 reports for communicating with Merit Canada



Ashton Arsenault, vice-president at Crestview Strategy, says the 'gold standard' for lobbyists is to outline the value of a pitch or a policy change 'and make it clear that it will have real beneficial impacts on the ground.' *Photograph courtesy of Ashton Arsenault*

in 2012, according to the registry. Poilievre also communicated with Merit Canada twice more on May 17, 2016, and on May 1, 2017, the registry shows.

Merit Canada, which refers to itself as the national voice of Canada's open shop construction sector, exists "to ensure that Canada's one million open shop construction workers have the ability to work in their chosen trade, without forced affiliation

with a labour union," according to the organization's LinkedIn profile.

"When [Poilievre] says that he's on the shop floor talking to workers, it's just not true," said Monk. "To me, it's all rhetoric, and his record and his policies prove the opposite."

Ashton Arsenault, vice-president at Crestview Strategy and a former ministerial staffer in the Harper government, told *The Hill Times* that he doesn't find Poilievre's comments regarding corporate lobbyists to be particularly unnerving.

"I think, overall, it's very, very consistent with what a Poilievre government will look like. I actually wasn't shocked at all," said Arsenault. "For lobbyists, I think, the gold standard now should be rooted in the question of, 'How can I outline the value of a project or a pitch or a policy change and make it clear that it will have real beneficial impacts on the ground?'"

When asked if the Conservatives under Poilievre have a good relationship with lobbyists, Arsenault said he thinks so, adding that Poilievre is "doing things his own way."

"When it comes down to brass tacks, I don't think Poilievre's relationship with lobbyists matters much at all," said Arsenault. "It's not what [lobbyists are] doing on behalf of your clients, necessarily. It's what your clients potentially are able to do on behalf of Canadians, and the two aren't necessarily all that far apart at times. I think it's just a different perspective on how you have to make that approach and how you ultimately have to make that pitch."

Theo Argitis, managing director for Compass Rose Group and former Ottawa bureau chief for Bloomberg News, said that Poilievre's speech to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade was "first and foremost political narrative," but also warned that doesn't mean his comments shouldn't be taken at face value or "do not reflect something substantive or real," in an opinion piece published by digital news outlet *The Hub* on March 19.

Argitis argued in his op-ed that Poilievre "doesn't want to be saddled—any more than he has to—with a growing stockpile of Liberal policy initiatives he'll want to reverse." Companies have a duty to work with the current Liberal government, but they also know that many policies may not last long if Poilievre is elected, which places corporate Canada "in a squeeze," according to Argitis.

Daniel Tisch, president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, responded to Poilievre's speech in March with an op-ed in *The Toronto Star* on March 14, in which he argued business and political leaders "need to reset their relationship."

Tisch argued that Canada needs "political and business leaders to work together in a spirit of goodwill, reflecting the shared interests of businesses, workers and communities."

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News

Poor polling numbers, NDP MPP's rumoured candidacy, and Mideast conflict turns Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., byelection into tight three-way race, say Liberal MPs

However, even though a number of factors are currently against the government, it appears unlikely the Liberals would lose the Toronto-St. Paul's byelection, says Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research.

Continued from page 1

voting coalition. By adding these three factors into the mix, the safe Liberal riding is in play, and any of the three major parties could win, said Coletto.

"It could be very, very close," he Coletto.

The most recent dynamic change that has made the byelection contest even more exciting is the rumored federal candidacy of Jill Andrew who represents the area in the Ontario legislature for the provincial NDP. In a brief phone interview with *The Hill Times*, Andrew did not offer a clear answer to the rumours that she could seek her party's federal candidacy in the byelection.

"I don't want to be interviewed on rumours and gossip. I'd prefer if the media reached out to talk about affordable housing and all the issues that are impacting us here in St. Paul's," said Andrew. "But if I had anything to share, the first person who would know would be Marit Stiles, the leader of the Ontario NDP. So have a great day. Thank you for calling me all the way from Ottawa."

The provincial and federal riding boundaries are identical. Andrew has won twice provincially, in 2018 and 2022, albeit with a margin of less than three per cent each time.

If Andrew does decide to run federally, she will have to step down as an MPP. But, if she becomes a federal MP, she would get an annual salary bump of \$86,600 compared to her Queen's Park paycheque. Also, after six years of parliamentary service, federal MPs become eligible for a pension. Ontario MPPs do not get any pension.

The annual salary of an Ontario MPP is \$116,500, while a federal backbencher earns \$203,100. In



Former Liberal MP and cabinet minister Carolyn Bennett represented the riding of Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont. for about 26 years. She now is Canada's ambassador to Denmark. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

addition to their salary, MPs get compensation for boarding and lodging when they're in Ottawa. The premier of Ontario makes \$208,974, \$5,874 more than the base salary of a federal MP.

So far, only the Conservatives have nominated their candidate in the riding. The party has chosen Don Stewart, who works for the Canadian Investment Regulatory Organization.

The Liberals have not yet scheduled a nomination contest, but Leslie Church, former chief of staff to Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) is the clear front-runner, and has been campaigning in the riding for months. The NDP has

not yet nominated a candidate, either.

Since last summer, the Conservatives have led in the national public opinion polls by mid to high double-digit margins.

An Abacus Data poll released April 11 suggested that the Conservatives had the support of 44 per cent of Canadians, followed by the Liberals at 24 per cent. The NDP was at 17 per cent, the Bloc Québécois six per cent, and the Greens five per cent.

According to Innovative Research's monthly poll tracking, the Conservatives had the support of 41 per cent of Canadians, the Liberals 25 per cent, the NDP 17 per cent, the Bloc seven per cent,

and the Greens five per cent. Seat projections indicate the Conservatives could win 225 seats, the Liberals 54, the Bloc 40, the NDP 23, and the Greens one.

Toronto-St. Paul's has been a safe Liberal riding since 1993. It opened up this past January after the resignation of nine-term Liberal MP and former cabinet minister Carolyn Bennett, who has since been appointed as Canada's ambassador to Denmark. She resigned from her seat after representing the riding for 26 years. With the exception of the 2011 federal election, Bennett won all elections by double the number of votes of second-place candidates. The 2011 was the worst election in the Liberal Party's history, when it was reduced to third place in the House, but still it carried Toronto-St. Paul's.

Prior to 1993, then-Progressive Conservative cabinet minister Barbara McDougall represented this riding for nine years, but did not reoffer in the 1993 election. Liberal Barry Campbell bested Progressive Conservative candidate Isabel Bassett in that election, which returned his party to power. Campbell did not seek re-election in 1997, opening the door for Bennett's candidacy.

Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, said that even though the Liberals are down in the polls, they should

be able to win this seat, as it's part of the Liberal base. If the Liberals were to lose, then this could likely be the end of Justin Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) time as party leader and prime minister, Lyle said.

He added that if the NDP is able to make significant gains in the number of left-of-centre votes, it could open the door for the Conservatives to pick up this seat.

"If you had a stronger than average NDP vote, chipping away at the left flank, then it makes it plausible that the Tories could pull off a surprise," said Lyle.

"If you have a strong ground game and a motivated vote, and the Liberals have a weak ground game and an unmotivated voter base, and the centre-left vote splits with a strong NDP, and maybe ideally a strong Green effort. If all that came to pass, then the Tories could potentially win on a vote split."

Besides polling numbers and Andrew's potential candidacy, two other factors are complicating the Liberal re-election in this riding. Both progressive and right-of-centre voters are unhappy with the government's response to the Hamas-Israel conflict. The riding of Toronto-St. Paul's has the fifth-highest number of Jewish Canadians in the country, according to Elections Canada. According to Liberal insiders and MPs, most of the Jewish voters are moving to the Conservative side.

Similarly, the Muslim community is disappointed with the government's response to the conflict. Liberal insiders claim this was one of the key reasons why their party lost the Durham byelection on March 4 by a 35 per cent margin. They say it was always known that they were going to lose this riding, but were shocked by the margin. Even under Erin O'Toole, the former party leader, the Conservatives carried this riding between 10-17 percentage points.

Making matters more complicated for the Liberals are affordability issues, including inflation and the cost of housing, that are negatively affecting the party's popularity across the country.

"It's a competitive riding now," said one Liberal MP. "This should have been a safe Liberal riding. Not anymore."

As of last week, the prime minister had not called a byelection for the Toronto-area riding.

After a seat in the House opens up, the prime minister has six months to call a byelection. The minimum writ period is 36 days and the maximum is 50 days.

In addition to Toronto-St. Paul's, the ridings of Lasalle-Émard-Verdun, Que., and Elmwood-Transcona, Man., are also now open. The Quebec riding opened up after the resignation of Liberal MP and former cabinet minister David Lametti, and the Manitoba one following the resignation of NDP MP Daniel Blaikie. Prime Minister Trudeau could call byelections in all three ridings at the same time.

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Leslie Church, left, pictured with *Toronto Star* journalist Susan Delacourt, is seeking the Liberal nomination in Toronto-St. Paul's. Church served as a senior cabinet staffer between 2015 and 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

HEALTH

POLICY BRIEFING

Publication date: **Monday, April 29**
Advertising deadline: **Tuesday, April 23**

Health Minister Mark Holland introduced Bill C-64, the Pharmacare Act, on Feb. 29, outlining a proposed first phase towards implementation of national pharmacare. What are the challenges as Canada begins this transition towards a universal, single-payer pharmacare model?

What are the workforce challenges facing Canada's health-care sector?

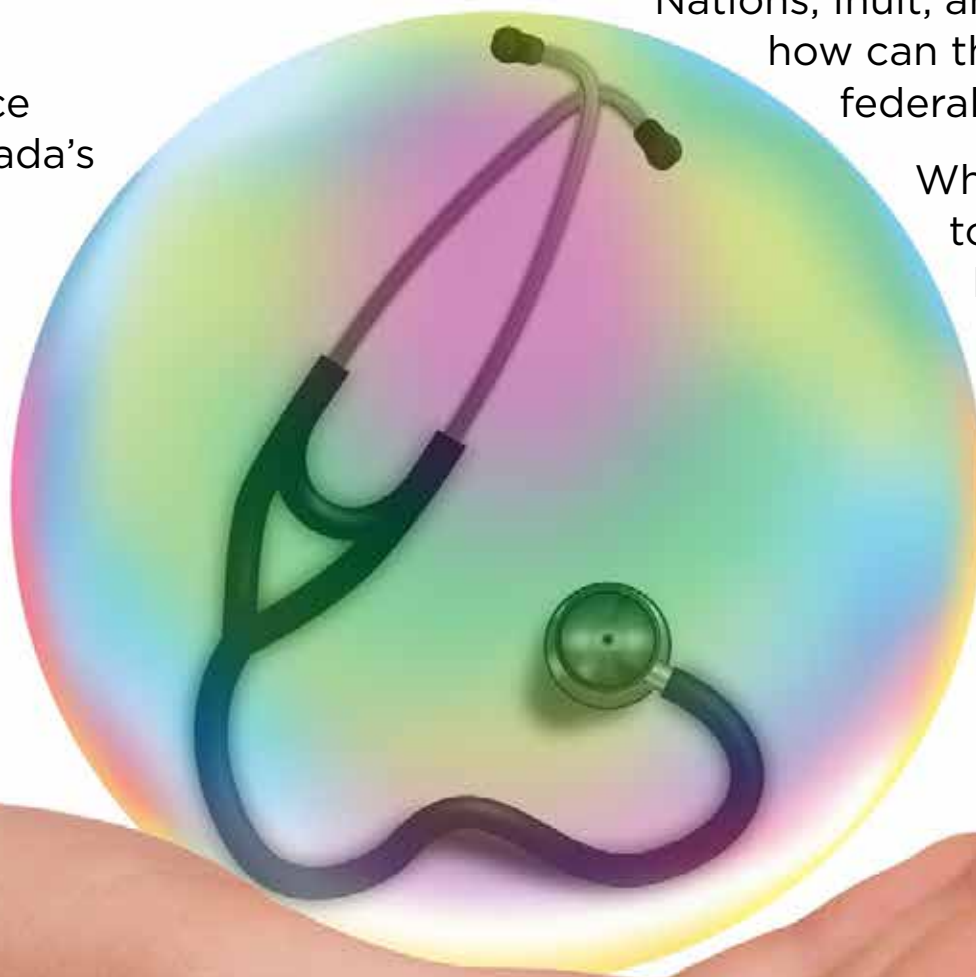
What can be done to increase the number of available doctors, nurses, and other needed workers?

What can be done to address mobility of health-care providers across Canada?

How well is the federal government supporting health research? Are there sufficient resources devoted to health research in Canada?

What is the health gap in Canada facing First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and how can this be addressed by the federal government?

What innovations are poised to change Canada's health-care system, and what can the federal government do to support them? What is the potential for artificial intelligence in health care?



Reach the political decision-makers who will receive this report by reserving ad space with us today!

Heard on the Hill

Macleans' names Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow No. 1 political power player

Continued from page 2

Macleans' editor-in-chief Sarah Fulford explained the decision to place Chow on the top of the politics list in her editor's note, describing how Chow's quick, decisive action to raise property tax, and "extract" \$1.2-billion from the feds for housing have meant she's had a bigger impact on the city in 10 months than her predecessor did in 10 years.

Former B.C. lieutenant governor Iona Campagnolo dies at 91

The first woman to be appointed as British Columbia's lieutenant governor—as well as Canada's first federal minister for fitness and amateur sport—Iona Campagnolo died on April 4 at the age of 91.

Campagnolo was also the first female president of the Liberal Party, as well as the founding chancellor of the University of Northern British Columbia.

In a statement, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau noted that Campagnolo received numerous awards and accolades, including honorary degrees, Indigenous honours, and the Order of British Columbia. She was also named a Member and then an Officer of the Order of Canada.



Former B.C. lieutenant-governor and federal cabinet minister Iona Campagnolo has died at the age of 91. Photograph courtesy of X

"On behalf of Canadians, I offer my deepest condolences to Mrs. Campagnolo's loved ones and all British Columbians," said the prime minister. "Canada has lost a trailblazer. Her passion to create a better Canada—and world—will continue to inspire us for generations."

U.K. High Commissioner Ralph Goodale and long-time federal cabinet minister wrote "this is really sad news!" on social media platform X. "A political star by any measure—a federal cabinet minister, a university chancellor, and a lieutenant governor—Iona was also a wonderful friend," noting that they first met when they were both elected to federal office 50 years ago this summer.

Liberal MP Leah Taylor Roy called Campagnolo "a trailblazer for women."

"She was someone that I saw and admired as a young woman showing me that there was a place for women in politics, wrote Taylor Roy. "Today, I aspire in a small way to do the same. Thanks Ms Campagnolo and rest in peace."

Donner Prize announces its shortlist

After reviewing more than 80 books submitted by 32 publishers, the Donner Canadian Foundation announced its shortlist for the 2023 Donner Prize, the award recognizing the best public policy by a Canadian, on April 11. The winner will be awarded \$60,000, and the four others will each receive \$7,500.

Here's the list: *The Legal Singularity: How Artificial Intelligence Can Make Law Radically Better* by Abdi Aidid and Benjamin Alarie (University of Toronto Press); *Pandemic Panic: How Canadian Government Responses to COVID-19 Changed Civil Liberties Forever* by Joanna Baron and Christine Van Geyn (Optimum Publishing International); *Who Owns Outer Space? International Law, Astrophysics, and the Sustainable Development of Space* by Michael Byers and Aaron Boley (Cambridge University Press); *The Privacy Fallacy: Harm and Power in the Information Economy* by Ignacio Cofone (Cambridge University Press); and *Wrongfully Convicted: Guilty Pleas, Imagined Crimes, and What Canada Must Do to Safeguard Justice* by Kent Roach (Simon & Schuster Canada).

The 2023 Donner Prize will be presented at a gala dinner in Toronto on May 8.

CAF member Capt. Sean Thomas presumed killed in avalanche

On leave from an operational deployment, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) member Capt. Sean Thomas went missing in an April 1 avalanche in Switzerland, and is presumed dead.

Thomas, an infantry officer who was part of the Canadian Training Assistance Team in Jordan, was on leave in Riffelberg, Switzerland, from Operation IMPACT in the Middle East. No other members of the CAF were in the area at the time.

Deployed in November 2023, Thomas joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 2018 and was a member of the Royal Highland Fusiliers of Canada, a Reserve unit under 31 Canadian Brigade Group. He was scheduled to return to Canada next month.

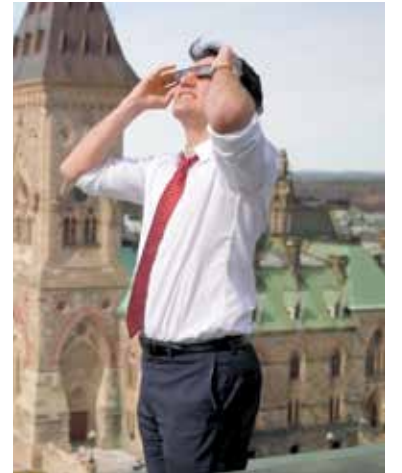
National Defence Minister Bill Blair said "we join all Canadians to extend our condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Capt. Sean Thomas who is pre-



Canadian Armed Forces member Capt. Sean Thomas is presumed to have been killed in an avalanche in Switzerland. Photograph courtesy of the Department of National Defence

sumed to have lost his life in a tragic avalanche in Switzerland," in a statement. "Canadians will remember the dedication and sacrifices made by him and his family, as he proudly served our country."

People flock to Parliament Hill for solar eclipse



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured on April 8, 2024, watching the solar eclipse. Photograph courtesy of X/@JustinTrudeau

The skies slowly darkened and the air got noticeably cooler as thousands of onlookers flocked to Parliament's front lawn in front on the afternoon of April 8 to take in the rare celestial event that was the highly anticipated solar eclipse.

Despite a light cloud cover, the crowd—including besuited staffers, politicians, and the general public, most of whom were wearing special glasses preventing eye damage—were treated to a good show.

Given that the city was not privy to a full total eclipse, Ottawa Public Health warned that there was no safe time to look at the sun without eye protection, as reported by CTV News. The maximum coverage of the sun by the moon in the nation's capital hit approximately 99 per cent for two to three minutes, peaking at 3:25 p.m.

NDP MP Alistair MacGregor wrote "pretty good skies for the viewing of the solar eclipse in Ottawa this afternoon," on social media platform X.

Conservative MP Michael Kram, who represents Regina-Wascana, wrote that he took a few minutes in the afternoon to watch the solar eclipse on Parliament Hill.

"The path of totality did not include Ottawa, but it was close," he wrote. "Still a very memorable sight! #Eclipse2024."

And as editor of PressProgress Luke LeBrun pointed out, "the convoy people" (there weren't many) spent the entire solar eclipse heckling Prime Minister Justin Trudeau outside of the Prime Minister's Office. The prime minister took in the event on the roof of the building.

For Scott Reid, former director of communications and senior adviser to former prime minister Paul Martin, he simply wrote: "BREAKING: I can't see shit."

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Monday's photo

PMO staffers testify:

Katie Telford, chief of staff to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left; Brian Clow, deputy chief of staff to the prime minister; and senior PMO policy adviser Patrick Travers on their way into testify at the Foreign Interference Commission in Ottawa on April 9.

The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia



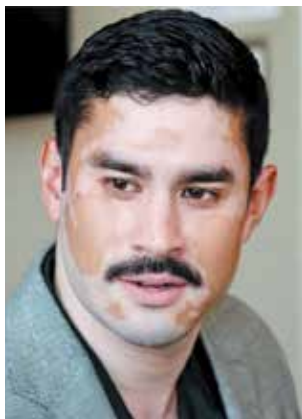


Laura Rycckewaert
Hill Climbers

Director-level changes for ministers Ien, Petitpas Taylor

Katherine O'Halloran is back from leave and has returned to her post as director of operations to Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor.

Women, Gender Equality, and Youth Minister **Marci Ien** has an opening for a new director of communications following **Riyadh Nazerally's** recent exit.



Riyadh Nazerally is no longer communications director to Minister Ien. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Nazerally left Ien's office near the end of March, and noted his decision to leave in a recent LinkedIn post highlighting the subsequent job opening on the minister's team, and directing interested applicants to send their resumés to chief of staff **Dunerci Caceres**.

"After three wonderful years in politics, I will be leaving Parliament Hill," he wrote. "Being able to take my social justice/

activist life and marry it to my day job has been such an honour and I want to thank everyone that pushed me to make the leap from public service to politics."

A former senior communications adviser with Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada's media relations team, Nazerally landed his first job in a minister's office in the spring of 2021 when he was hired as director of communications and issues management to then-diversity, inclusion, and youth minister **Bardish Chagger**. Following the post-2021 election cabinet shuffle, he moved over to Ien's office as communications director.

With a new communications head still to be hired, press secretary **Nanki Singh**, and digital communications and social media manager **Hannaan Hassan** are splitting Nazerally's old duties, supported by **Angie Ruter**, communications assistant and executive assistant to chief of staff Caceres.

For now at least, Ien's office is currently 16-staff strong, and also includes: **Griffin Kelly**, director of policy; **James Christie**, senior policy adviser; **Emmaleigh Munro**, policy adviser; **Samar Khan**, policy adviser; **Alice Zheng**, policy adviser; **Roxane Cyrenne**, director of operations; **Charmain Tulloch**, regional adviser for Ontario; **Nathanielle Morin**, regional adviser for Quebec; **Meron Cheway**, regional adviser for the West and North; **Nyagua Chiek**, director of parliamentary affairs and issues management; **Sarah Thomas**, special assistant for parliamentary affairs and issues management; and driver **Malcolm Victor Blake**.

Veterans Affairs and Associate Defence Minister **Ginette Petitpas Taylor** welcomed **Katherine O'Halloran** back to the post of director of operations last month, and bade farewell to **Shawn Lawlor** in the process.



Katherine O'Halloran is once again operations director to Minister Petitpas Taylor. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

A former Atlantic regional affairs adviser in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** office, O'Halloran was originally hired as director of operations to Petitpas Taylor as then-minister for official languages and the Atlantic Canada Opportunity Agency after the 2021 federal election.

O'Halloran went on maternity leave in early 2023, at which point Lawlor was plucked straight from the ministers' regional office in Halifax—one of 16 MROs across Canada that help support all of cabinet and include a mix of political staff and public servants—to fill in as operations director to Petitpas Taylor. Last July, during O'Halloran's roughly year-long absence, Petitpas Taylor was shuffled into the veterans affairs portfolio.

Now back from leave as of March 4, O'Halloran returns to a new office, but once again holds the title of director of operations to Petitpas Taylor.

Stay tuned for any update on where Lawlor has landed. Prior to joining Petitpas Taylor's team, he'd spent roughly six years working in the Halifax MRO, ending as director of the office. Lawlor also previously



Shawn Lawlor has exited Minister Petitpas Taylor's office. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

spent more than a decade working for the Nova Scotia Liberals during the provincial party's time in government, among other past jobs.

As noted, prior to being hired by Petitpas Taylor, O'Halloran previously covered the Atlantic desk in the PMO from the start of 2018 until the end of 2021.

Originally from Prince Edward Island, O'Halloran is a former office manager and scheduling assistant in then-interim Liberal leader **Bob Rae's** office. She went on to be executive assistant to then-Liberal Party national director **Jeremy Broadhurst** between 2013 and 2016, after which she joined then-infrastructure minister **Amarjeet Sohi's** team as a senior special assistant for Atlantic regional affairs. In 2017, O'Halloran joined then-public services and procurement minister **Judy Foote's** office as national manager for the ministers' regional offices, which at the time fell under the organizational purview of the minister for public services and procurement (oversight of the MROs was transferred from PSPC to the Privy Council Office in 2020).

Petitpas Taylor has a 13-member office overall led by chief of staff **Guy Gallant**. In addition to O'Halloran, the team currently includes: **Sarah Cozzi**, director of policy; **Abigail Garwood**, senior policy adviser; **Richard Léger**, director of parliamentary affairs and senior adviser; **Audrey Aubut-Lévesque**, parliamentary affairs and Quebec regional affairs adviser; **Jon Wiseman**, special assistant for Ontario regional affairs and Indigenous affairs; **Michael Unsworth**, special assistant for West and North regional affairs; **Mikaela Harrison**, director of communications; **Isabelle Arseneau**, press secretary; **Tabea De Vries**, special assistant; **Danielle Boyle**, executive assistant to the minister and manager of operations; and **Filippo Urbisci**, driver.

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Stuart Benson

Party Central

Boris Johnson and Tony Abbott open the Canada Strong and Free Networking Conference

Over 1,000 guests including Conservative MPs, strategists and staffers attended the keynote panel and opening reception on April 10.

Politicians, columnists, politicos, and some of the biggest names in “Movement Conservatism”—both big and small C—descended on the Westin Hotel on April 10 to kick off the 2024 Canada Strong and Free Networking Conference, also known as #CSFN24.

Arriving just after 4 p.m. to check in and grab a good seat for the opening keynote, featuring former Australian and British prime ministers **Tony Abbott** and **Boris Johnson**, **Party Central** had plenty of time to get in some light reading, courtesy of the free copies of Michael Walsh’s book *Against the Great Reset* to get in the proper headspace. Featuring a collection of 18 essays by the likes of **Douglas Murray**, **Conrad Black**, **Janice Fiamengo**, and **Harry Stein**, the book takes on the World Economic Forum and its “Great Reset Agenda” of “equity,” “sustainability” and “social justice” which the inside jacket description describes a “repackaging of totalitarianism in the service of a ruthless and insatiable elite who use new crises and fresh rhetoric to keep citizenry pacified, divided, alienated, and grateful for their circumscribed standard of living.” Additionally, after suffering through two weeks of the lukewarm mud water being served at the Foreign Interference Inquiry which the Library and Archives claimed was coffee, the complimentary Starbucks in the media room was a welcome luxury.

Just before 6 p.m., **Party Central** followed the rest of the excited attendees up to the fourth floor Confederation Room for the opening keynote featuring Johnson and Abbott, and moderated by British political commentator and president of the Danube Institute, **John O’Sullivan**.

While it may be a bad habit for a political reporter to have a favourite politician, **Party Central** must admit to having a particular fascination with Johnson. Like a classically trained **Doug Ford**, he masterfully performs the character of rapsallion everyman, yet cannot help betraying his Eton-educated pedigree, including invoking French mathematician **Blaise Pascal**, or using the Latin *cum* in a sentence without a hint of vulgarity.

So effective is his political jiu-jitsu that, during a segment of the keynote which started as a ‘bash-the-Boris’ over his commitment to “net-zero” during his tenure as prime minister, he was able to get a laugh-line out of Abbott’s admission that “mankind might be making a difference” in the changing climate.

However, Johnson’s performance wasn’t without a few awkward moments, including when he suggested that Canada has been “fantastic so far” in its support for Ukraine, which may have sounded too much like praise for the current Liberal government.

Following the speeches, the nearly 1,000 guests headed next door for a some brief socializing and networking in the Bistro Room, and while the open bar stocked with domestic beer and wine was a welcome sight after a long day, the complete lack of music and full brightness overhead lights dampened the party vibes.

While the majority of the guests either returned to their hotel rooms for an early night, or headed out to more exclusive gatherings in the ByWard Market, the post-reception still drew a couple of hundred attendees.

Party Central spotted Conservative MPs **Michael Barrett**, **Rachael Thomas**, **Stephen Ellis**, **James Bezan**, **Andrew Scheer**, **Chris Warkentin**, and **Scott Aitchison**; Conservative candidate **Aaron Gunn**; Independent MP **Kevin Vuong**; CPC director of communications **Sarah Fischer**; columnists **Adam Zivo** and **Rupa Subramanya**; Macdonald-Laurier Institute’s **Aaron Wudrick**; and a gaggle of strategists including Pendulum Group’s **Yaroslav Baran**; Greenshield’s **Rob Rosenfeld**; Compass Rose Group’s **Theo Argitis**; Crestview Strategy’s **Ashton Arsenal**; and Earncliffe Strategies’ ‘blue team’ consisting of **Cole Hogan**, **Sean Murphy**; **Laura Kurkimaki**, **Shakir Chambers**, **Liam O’Brien**, **Nicko Vavassis**, and **Dan Bernier**.

By just after 9 p.m., there was only a handful of stragglers who had not yet gotten an invite to a better party, or called it a night, primarily **Party Central**’s fellow journalists, including the *National Observer*’s **Natasha Bulowski**, CPAC’s **Cameron Ryan** and **Emily Haws**, and Politico’s **Nick Taylor-Vaisey**, enjoying their well-earned post-file beverages.

However, in the spirit of responsible conservatism, **Party Central** also called it an early night so as not to be completely shattered the next day for the first panel of the day at 8 a.m. on parental rights.

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The Hill Times



Former Australian prime minister Tony Abbott, left, former British prime minister Boris Johnson, and British political commentator John O’Sullivan open the Canada Strong and Free Conference on April 10 at the Westin Hotel in Ottawa.



Kenzie Potter, left, chief of staff to Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer, right.



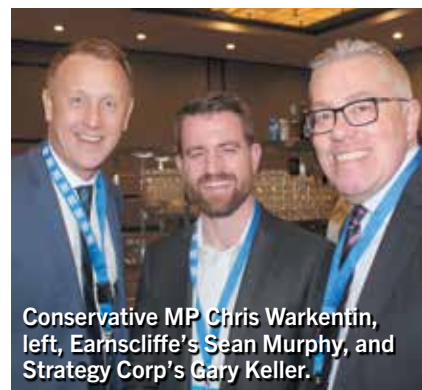
Conservative MP James Bezan, left, Alex Partridge and Jennifer Blakeney, British High Commission; and Cross Smalley, special assistant to Bezan



CPAC’s Cameron Ryan, left, and Emily Haws, and National Observer’s Matteo Cimellaro.



Conservative MP Scott Aitchison, left, and Boyden’s Brent Cameron.



Conservative MP Chris Warkentin, left, Earncliffe’s Sean Murphy, and Strategy Corp’s Gary Keller.



Kyla Canzanese, legislative assistant for MP Adam Chambers; Hill & Knowlton’s Daniel Perry, and Bruce Power’s Candace Johnston.



Sarah Fischer, left, Conservative Party director of communications; Unite Now’s Grant Woods; Conservative North Island-Powell River candidate and *National Post* Columnist Aaron Gunn, and Jacob Burdge, Gunn’s staffer and videographer.

The Hill Times photographs by Stuart Benson



Abbott, left, and Johnson.



Party Central’s media pass and free copy of Michael Walsh’s book *Against the Great Reset*, provided to each attendee of the 2024 Canada Strong and Free Networking Conference.

Freeland releases budget Tuesday, April 16, at 4 p.m. in the House



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. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

MONDAY, APRIL 15

House Sitting Schedule—The House is scheduled to sit for a total of 125 days in 2024. The House 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.

Canadian Chamber of Commerce Hill Day—The Canadian Chamber of Commerce hosts its annual Hill Day on April 15-16, bringing together their members to engage with government decision-makers on critical issues affecting Canadian businesses and the economy. Attendees will participate in thematic meetings focused on policy areas including environment and natural resources, innovative economy, international policy and trade, reliable supply chains, stronger communities, and industry competitiveness. A networking reception will take place the evening of April 15, providing attendees, parliamentarians, and parliamentary staff with the opportunity to connect with our country's business leaders. For details and to RSVP, contact info@chamber.ca.

MONDAY, APRIL 15—THURSDAY, APRIL 18

AFN's Water Symposium and Trade Show—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its annual Water Symposium and Trade Show on the theme "Bridging the Gap: First Nations Water and Wastewater Equity" featuring panel discussions, plenaries and exhibits on addressing important water-related issues facing First

Nations. Monday, April 15, to Thursday, April 18, at the Hilton Lac-Leamy in Gatineau, Que. Details online: afn.ca

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.

Post-Budget Reception—Earnscliffe Strategies and *iPolitics* host a post-budget reception. Tuesday, April 16 at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Métropolitain Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr. Details online via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

Minister Sudds to Take Part in Post-Budget Breakfast—Families, Children, and Social Development Minister Jenna Sudds will take part in the Post-Budget Breakfast hosted by the Ottawa Board of Trade and the *Ottawa Business Journal*. Other participants include Heather Scofield, senior vice-president of strategy, Business Council of Canada; Gavin Miranda, regional tax leader, MNP; and Huw Williams, president, Impact Public Affairs. Wednesday, April 17, at 7 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details online.

Lecture: 'Canadian Studies in Turbulent Times'—Carleton University's School of Canadian Studies will hold its annual Vickers-Verduyn Lecture, featuring four notable Canadians: Adrian Harewood, associate professor, Carleton University School of Journalism and Communication; Dr. Jane Philpott, director of the school of medicine, Queen's University; ISG Senator Yuen Pau Woo; and Frank Graves, founder and president, EKOS Research Associates Inc. Wednesday, April 17, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Teraanga (Residence

Commons), Rooms 272-274. Register by April 12 online at carleton.ca.

THURSDAY, APRIL 18

Denise Chong Book Launch—Library and Archives Canada, the Ottawa International Writers Festival, and the Ottawa Public Library host the launch of Denise Chong's new book: *Out of Darkness: Rumana Monzur's Journey through Betrayal, Tyranny and Abuse*, a tale of power and political influence, and of the Bangladeshi woman whose irrepressible spirit found light in sudden darkness. Thursday, April 18, at 7 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St. Details online: library-archives.canada.ca.

FRIDAY, APRIL 19

Seminar: 'Legislatures as a Workplace'—The Canadian Study of Parliament Group hosts a bilingual seminar, "Legislatures as a Workplace," exploring the often-difficult realities of the parliamentary workplace, considering issues such as harassment and violence, unionization of legislative employees, and the legal context in which parliamentary work occurs. Friday, April 19, at 9 a.m. ET in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St. Details online via Eventbrite.

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.

Digital Empires: The Global Battle to Regulate Technology—The University of Ottawa hosts a public lecture by Columbia Law School professor Anu Bradford on her most recent book, *Digital Empires*. Bradford will discuss regulatory approaches governing the digital economy and how governments and technology companies navigate inevitable conflicts. Friday, April 19, at 12 p.m. at uOttawa's Social Sciences

Building, 120 University Pvt., Room 4007. Details online: cips-cepi.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.

MONDAY, APRIL 22

Economic Lookahead Dinner With Mark Carney—Canada 2020 hosts an evening conversation, "A Time to Build," with former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney who will explore our country's economic outlook and what governments, innovators, and economic leaders can do to build growth for all. Monday, April 22, at 6:30 p.m. ET at the The Omni King Edward Hotel, 37 King St. E, Toronto, Ont. Details online: canada2020.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 8 a.m. AT at the Crowne Plaza Fredericton, 659 Queen St., Fredericton, N.B. Details online: afn.ca/events.

Canada Infrastructure Bank CEO to Deliver Remarks—Ehren Cory, CEO of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, and Brian J. Porter, chair of the board of the Ontario Infrastructure Bank, will take part in a discussion on "Accelerating Growth with Infrastructure Banks" hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, April 23, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto, Ont. Details online: cdhowe.org.

TUESDAY, APRIL 23—MONDAY, APRIL 29

UNEP's International Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution—The UN Environment Program's International Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution will take place from Tuesday, April 23 to Monday, April 29, at the Shaw Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr. Details online: unep.org.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24

Minister St-Onge to Deliver Remarks—Canadian Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge will deliver remarks in French at a lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Wednesday, April 24, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Le Reine-Elizabeth, 900 Blvd René-Levesque W., Montreal, Que. Details online: corim.qc.ca.

SATURDAY, APRIL 27

Senator Pate in Panel Discussion—ISG Senator Kim Pate will take part in a panel discussion on "Elusiveness of a Just Society in Canada: Causes and Solutions." Other participants include People's Party of Canada Leader Maxime Bernier, Carleton University journalism professor Adrian Harewood, CUPE economist Angella MacEwen, Iman Syed Soharwardy, Rev. Alexa Gilmour, and Youth Ottawa's Ryan Banfield. This event will take place in the Horticulture Building, 1525 Princess Patricia Way, Lansdowne Park. Details online via Eventbrite.

SUNDAY, APRIL 28

Panel: 'Free Speech, Ethics, and Democracy in Canada'—The Ottawa International Food and Book Expo hosts a panel discussion on "Free Speech, Ethics and Democracy in Canada." Participants include author and broadcaster Andrew Lawton, managing editor of True North; Dr. Julie Ponesse, author

of *My Choice: The Ethical Case Against Covid-19 Vaccine Mandates*; Thomas Quiggin, author of *Eyewitness to Deceit* following his intelligence role in Freedom Convoy 2022; and former Ontario MPP Randy Hillier. This event will take place at the Horticulture Building, 1525 Princess Patricia Way, Lansdowne Park. Details online via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, APRIL 30

Canadian Intelligence Conference 2024—Liberal MP John McKay and Conservative MP James Bezan, respective chair and co-chair of the House Defence Committee, will take part in the 2024 Canadian Intelligence Conference hosted by the Canadian Military Intelligence Association. Other participants include Daniel Rogers, deputy national security adviser to the prime minister; and Norway's Ambassador to Canada Trine Jeranli Eskedal. Tuesday, April 30, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Ottawa Conference and Event Centre, 200 Coventry Rd. Details online via Eventbrite.

NDP Leader Singh to Deliver the Bell Lecture—NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh will deliver the Bell Lecture hosted by Carleton University. Tuesday, April 30, at 7 p.m. ET at the Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre, 355 Cooper St. Details online: carleton.ca.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1

Economic Club's Health Care Summit—The Economic Club of Canada hosts its annual health-care summit, "Healthcare Horizons: Navigating the Future of Canadian Wellness." Industry executives, policy-makers, and key government officials will provide an in-depth look at the health-care landscape in Canada as it pertains to the economy, innovation, and the health and well-being of our labour force. Wednesday, May 1, at 8:45 a.m. ET at the Hilton Toronto, 145 Richmond St. W., Toronto, Ont. Details online: events.economicclub.ca.

Panel: 'Pillars of Arctic Resilience'—PSG Senator Dawn Anderson, ISG Senator Pat Duncan, NDP MP Lori Idlout, and Jackie Jacobson with the Arctic Research Foundation, will take part in a panel discussion, "Pillars of Arctic Resilience," exploring the Arctic National Strategy and Canada's path to prosperity in the North. Wednesday, May 1, at 5:30 p.m. ET the Sir John A Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St. Details online via Eventbrite.

Flora's Walk for Perinatal Mental Health—The Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative hosts Flora's Walk on Wednesday, May 1. Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Ya'ara Saks will be speaking, along with Liberal MP and parliamentary secretary to the minister of foreign affairs Pam Damoff, Conservative MP Karen Vecchio, NDP MPs Don Davies and Heather McPherson, and Green Leader Elizabeth May. Opening ceremonies begin at 9 a.m. ET, in Room 228, Valour Building, Parliament Hill. Details via Eventbrite.

Rogers CEO to Deliver Remarks—The Canadian Club of Toronto hosts a lunch event with Tony Staffieri, president and CEO of Rogers Communications, who will deliver remarks on "Investing in Canada and Canadians." Wednesday, May 1, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York, 100 Front St. W., Toronto, Ont. Details online: canadianclub.org.

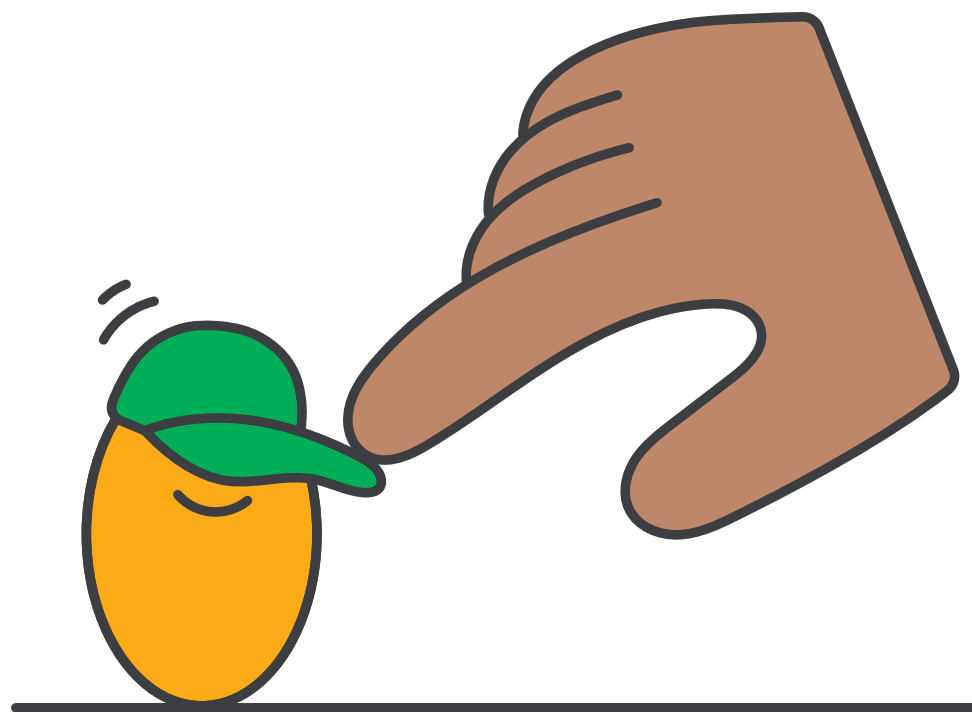
Public Forum: Canada's Nuclear Future—Renaissance or Relic? Hosted by Seniors for Climate Action Now (SCAN! Ottawa), this hybrid event will take place on Wednesday, May 1, at 6 p.m. with a reception, followed by the forum at 7-9 p.m., St. James United Church, 650 Lyon St. S., and online: not-the-nuclear-lobby.ca.

THURSDAY, MAY 2

World Press Freedom Day Luncheon—American journalist Margaret Sullivan will deliver a keynote speech at the World Press Freedom Canada Luncheon. Thursday, May 2 at 11:30 a.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St. Details online.

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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