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THE HILL TIMES

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NEWS

Pro-Palestinian student protests on university campuses further complicate electoral calculus for left-of-centre parties, say Liberal MPs

BY ABBAS RANA

The ongoing pro-Palestinian protests at university campuses across the country are making the electoral calculus even more complicated among left-of-centre parties, but especially for the Liberals as a vote divide on the left gives an automatic advantage to the Conservatives, say MPs, pollsters and political insiders.

"It seems to be more of an issue in the progressive political side of the equation than it is for the conservative side of the equation. The conservative side of the equation, as to the extent it's declared itself, tends to be more pro-Israeli," said Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "On the progressive side, it's much more divided, I would say. It really seems at the moment to be confined to downtowns, and particularly downtowns with universities. So those places don't tend to vote Conservative. They tend to be more on the progressive side of the equation. The NDP and the Liberals will split those seats."

For weeks, students at different universities in the United States, Canada, and Europe have protested—and in some cases encamped—demanding their

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NEWS

Heyman issues 'tsunami warning' about potential Donald Trump 2.0 effect on Canada

Barack Obama appointee Bruce Heyman says Canada must prepare for multiple challenges that 'could happen all in the first few months' of a second Donald Trump presidency.

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

Former U.S. ambassador to Canada Bruce Heyman says that a victory for Donald Trump in his country's presidential election later this year would not herald a repeat of his first four years in office, warning that the presumptive Republican nominee's rhetoric and campaign promises could create greater challenges for the bilateral relationship.

"For the U.S.-Canada relationship, I think if Donald Trump wins re-election, then this is Canada's tsunami warning," said Heyman in an interview with *The Hill Times* on May 5. "You can sit on the beach with a tsunami warning, order another pina colada, and just hope it goes well, or



Former U.S. ambassador to Canada Bruce Heyman, left, says Canadians should not expect a potential second term for former U.S. president Donald Trump to be the same as the first. *The Hill Times* file photograph and photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

you can go to higher ground and prepare yourself. If the tsunami doesn't come, I'm sure you'll say, 'Why did I go to higher ground? I lost my time at the beach.' On the other hand, if it does come, you'll be really thankful you did."

Heyman, who served as ambassador from 2014 to 2017 was appointed by Trump's predecessor Barack Obama, has been outspoken in his criticism of the presumptive Republican presidential candidate. Ahead of Trump's potential return to the White House,

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NEWS

Poilievre calling lobbyists 'useless' provides roadmap for approaching Conservatives, says GR professionals

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Recent public statements from Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre criticizing "useless and overpaid" lobbyists could also be beneficial for providing insights into what to do—and what not to do—when engaging opposition MPs, according to some lobbyists.

Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) set his sights on the lobbying culture in an op-ed published by the *National Post* on May 3 in which he encouraged businesses to fire lobbyists and instead "go to the people." He specifically named the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council of Alberta, and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), arguing those organizations hold "pointless luncheons and meetings," and said that, if he were elected prime minister, businesses "will get nothing from me unless they convince the people first."

Poilievre also slammed corporate lobbyists as "utterly useless" in a speech to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade on March 8, adding that corporate leaders have for too long seen their role as "simply to write a policy statement, and expect it to be implemented."

Dan Kelly, president and CEO of the CFIB, told *The Hill Times* that he didn't find Poilievre's op-ed remarks shocking, and that

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Mike Lapointe

Heard On The Hill

‘Like a breath of fresh air,’ Shaila Anwar officially steps into top Senate job



Top job: Shaila Anwar started her new role as clerk of the Senate and clerk of the Parliaments on May 6. Photograph courtesy of the Senate of Canada

Senator Marc Gold, the government’s representative in the Senate, officially welcomed **Shaila Anwar**, who first started in the Senate in 2007, as the new clerk of the Senate and clerk of the Parliaments on May 6.

Although not the first female to serve in the role—as **Nicole Proulx** served as interim clerk from July 2017 to January 2018—Anwar is the first female permanent clerk.

“Ms. Anwar is no stranger to the Red Chamber,” said Gold, noting that for more than 15 years, she has held positions ranging from procedural clerk to principal clerk, and is also a highly respected parliamentary expert.

“Those in this Chamber who have been here much longer than I have and who sat on committees of which she was the committee clerk tell me that they always knew they were in good hands,” said Gold, adding that she was “always well prepared and familiarized herself with the witnesses and the needs of all committee members.”

“Although this may be her first Senate sitting day in this new role, Shaila—as has already been mentioned—is no stranger to this institution, nor is she a stranger to anyone here,” said Conservative Senator **Don Plett**, noting that Anwar joined the Senate as a procedural clerk 17 years ago. He remarked that Anwar has been a part of the Red Chamber’s operations for longer than most Senators themselves have been, with the exception of maybe four Senators.

CSG Senator **Scott Tananas** said “like a breath of fresh air, we finally and warmly welcome a full-term clerk of the Senate. For many years, the Senate has had a series of interim holders of this position—until now.”

Michael Byers and Aaron Boley win prestigious \$60,000 Donner Prize for the year’s best public policy book

Co-authors of *Who Owns Outer Space? International Law, Astrophysics, and the Sustainable Development of Space* **Michael Byers**, an international lawyer, and **Aaron Boley**, an astrophysicist, have won the 2023 Donner Prize for the best public policy book penned by a Canadian.

The book identifies and explores the challenges of human-

ity’s rapid expansion into space, with Boley and Byers proposing “actionable solutions” and explaining the essential aspects of space science, international law, and global governance in a fully transdisciplinary and highly accessible way, according to a release.

Both authors teach at the University of British Columbia, and will split the \$60,000 in prize money.

The other titles nominated for the prize will each receive \$7,500, and include *The Legal Singularity: How Artificial Intelligence Can Make Law Radically Better* by **Abdi Aidid** and **Benjamin Alarie**, *Pandemic Panic: How Canadian Government Responds to COVID-19 Changed Civil Liberties Forever* by **Joanna Baron** and **Christine Van Geyn**, *The Privacy Fallacy: Harm and Power in the Information Economy*, by **Ignacio Cofone**, and *Wrongfully Convicted: Guilty Pleas, Imagined Crimes, and What Canada Must Do to Safeguard Justice* by **Kent Roach**.

Joyce Napier named Canada’s ambassador to the Holy See

Joyce Napier, former parliamentary bureau chief for CTV News, is heading to the Vatican as Canada’s ambassador to the Holy See.

Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly** said Napier was someone she deeply respected as a journalist who has left her mark on Canada for over 40 years.

Napier will be tasked with working at the Vatican to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples including confronting the legacy of the residential school system.

Napier, who speaks English, French, and Italian, began her career as a print journalist in Montreal in 1981. She has worked for *The Globe and Mail*, *The Canadian Press*, *La Presse*, CBC Television, and Radio-Canada.



Who Owns Outer Space? co-authors Aaron Boley, left, and Michael Byers won the Donner Prize on May 8 in Toronto. Handout photographs



Former parliamentary journalist and bureau chief for CTV News Joyce Napier has been appointed ambassador to the Holy See. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

She has covered the Middle East for Radio-Canada while based in Jerusalem, and has served as the agency’s Washington bureau chief. She is also the only person to have ever served as a bureau chief for both an English- and a French-language Canadian news network.

From the elections of Canadian prime ministers and American presidents, the Quebec referendum, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the 2008 banking crisis, and former U.S. president **Barack Obama**’s acceptance of the U.S. presidency in Chicago’s Grant Park, Napier has seen her fair share of history unfold.

In her new role, Napier will be replacing **Paul Gibbard**, who has served as Canada’s representative since September 2021.

Former NDP MP Cullen has medical emergency on early morning flight



“What are the odds?!?” Doctor Tina Webber, left, and B.C. MLA and former NDP MP Nathan Cullen. Photograph courtesy of X

Former NDP MP **Nathan Cullen**, who represented the riding of Skeena-Bulkley Valley, B.C., from 2004 until 2019 and is now a provincial cabinet minister, detailed a medical episode he experienced on an early morning flight departing from Victoria, B.C., on May 3, and his luck in sitting next to a doctor on the plane.

“Well—I guess I had me a little medical episode today,” wrote Cullen on X on May 3. “To all the folks on the 8 a.m. Air Canada flight out of Victoria—apologies (again) for the delay. For the emergency room doctor sitting beside me—eternal gratitude for the help. To the firefighters,

paramedics, to the good people at Saanich Peninsula hospital thanks for the diagnosis (I’d never heard of vasovagal syncope).”

“All’s well that ends well. I’m feeling better, more heart check-ups next week but remain in awe & gratitude for our medical system,” wrote Cullen, who is the province’s minister of water, land and resource stewardship.

A day later, Cullen wrote “what are the odds?!?” noting that he bumped into Tina Webber, the emergency doctor who by “incredible luck” was sitting beside him on the plane the morning he blacked out.

Top strategist Byrne to take part in Tory campaign manager webinar

Just Campaigns, an organization founded by veteran Canadian political campaigner **Steve Outhouse** to help “good people navigate the unique world of campaigning,” will be hosting veteran Conservative strategist **Jenni Byrne** on the next Right Recruiter webinar.

“While the federal campaign may be a year away, it IS an election year in BC, SK and NB. If you are one of the 200+ conservative campaign managers leading a local campaign this year, this interview is for you!” wrote Outhouse on X on May 4.

The event is scheduled for May 30 at 7 p.m. EST. You can register at rightrecruiter.ca/jenni, and for those who can’t participate live, everyone who registers gets the webinar link sent to them to watch on demand.

Liberal Party holding Campaign Colleges to gear up for next election

The Liberal Party of Canada has recently been hosting Campaign Colleges to prepare for the upcoming election.

“The Team Trudeau Colleges provide in-depth and role-specific campaign training while highlighting innovative campaign tools and best practices,” according to the website description. “From coast to coast to coast, we’re building a campaign focused on the real progress **Justin Trudeau** and the Liberal team are making to strengthen the middle class and build a better future for all Canadians.”

Justice Minister **Arif Virani**, who represents Parkdale-High Park, Ont., wrote “great to be with Team Virani and so many energized [Liberal Party] members from Toronto and across the GTA today for the Campaign College” on May 4. “Thank you to everyone who joined in today for the informative sessions!”

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Politics and the Pen 2024

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News

Unions, experts, call into question feds' move to divest 50 per cent of property holdings while also calling for back-to-workplace policies

Stephanie Ross, an associate professor of labour studies, called the strategy 'obviously contradictory' in that less office space 'means poorer and less effective working conditions for people when they come to work.'

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

The government is looking to divest half of its property holdings at the same time as it tries to accommodate workers who have already been dealing with space issues over the last couple of years during the pandemic, according to public service unions.

"Had there been any proper consultation, the government would have understood the challenges our members face every day," said Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) vice-president Sean O'Reilly in a May 8 press conference along with fellow union colleagues.

From inadequate meeting spaces, to insufficient workstations, and the "absurdity" of traveling to an unassigned workplace "only to attend virtual meetings all day," these issues "fly in the face" of any of the benefits of an increased physical presence in the workplace, said O'Reilly.

He added that attempting to book a seat for the week is "like trying to get tickets to a Taylor Swift concert," where staying up late on a Sunday night to ensure you can secure the best seat is expected.

"What do we expect with a further reduction of 50 per cent in the number of federal buildings? This is unacceptable," said O'Reilly.

When asked by *The Hill Times* about its stewardship role as to how the process will roll out, Public Services and Procurement

Public Services and Procurement Canada has tapped more than 100 Crown-owned properties across the country for disposal, and is 'working diligently to increase the supply of properties to be leveraged for housing outcomes and other community needs.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Canada (PSPC) said the department "continuously assesses how efficiently we use public funds, and the effectiveness of our programs and services," which includes management of office space for more than 270,000 federal public servants from more than 100 departments and agencies.

"The shift to a hybrid work environment permits more effective use of space that was not possible before the pandemic when desks were assigned to public servants on an individual basis," said Olivier Pilon, spokesperson for PSPC. "We are developing a long-term office portfolio plan to optimize the space under our responsibility, lower operating costs, and dispose of surplus federal assets ... as announced in Budget 2024, the government proposes to provide \$1.1-billion over 10 years, starting in 2024-25, to PSPC to reduce its office portfolio by 50 per cent."

PSPC will "continue to provide sufficient office space to support federal departments and agencies to deliver on their programs and mandate," according to Pilon. "We will continue to work with client departments and agencies to

establish their long-term office accommodation plans to inform our future plans. PSPC's office portfolio reductions will continue to be aligned with Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat direction on prescribed presence in the workplace."

PSPC also told *The Hill Times* that the government has already identified several ways to optimize space—both leased and owned—including renovating existing PSPC buildings, reviewing leased inventory needs, working with landlords to ensure that portfolio meets future requirements, and identifying properties for immediate and potential disposal.

PSPC has identified that more than 100 Crown-owned properties across the country for disposal, and is "working diligently to increase the supply of properties to be leveraged for housing outcomes and other community needs."

A team is in place that will lead to an "increased supply of assets that can be (re)developed for housing," according to PSPC.

At the same time, the government has announced a directive

to increase the number of public servants are required to work in the office from two days per week to three. The requirement is due to take effect in September.

Unions representing federal workers have promised a "summer of discontent" to dissuade the government from moving to the three day per week minimum, including through legal action. The unions argue that their members have worked well remotely since they were first required to do so upon the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic more than four years ago.

"With a moment's notice, the government asked thousands of federal employees to work remotely on a full time basis," said Nathan Prier, president of CAPE. "They maintain the same level of productivity and the same level of quality service for the millions of Canadians who depended on them they delivered."

'This strategy is obviously contradictory'

Stephanie Ross, an associate professor specializing in labour

studies at McMaster University, called the strategy "obviously contradictory," in that less office space "means poorer and less effective working conditions for people when they come to work."

Ross said there was little evidence that hot desking actually improves effectiveness, and "instead introduces all kinds of chaos into office life, especially in settings where working effectively in teams is really important."

"Once you move to hot desking and virtual meetings, you really have to wonder why people are being required to physically come to the office," said Ross. "I think one aspect of the pandemic that has not yet been fully examined is how staying home revealed to people how much commuting to work was costing people, both financially, in terms of mental health, in terms of their ability to care for family, and in terms of their work effectiveness. Remote work is an equity issue."

Ross said that in the aftermath of last summer's strike, in which tens of thousands of public service workers took to the picket lines, "this move contradicts what I understood has been bargained as a result of the strike of 2023—that remote work and modifications to those arrangements would be subject to consultation with the unions, and that a blanket policy is not appropriate for all the various kinds of work done in the federal civil service."

Political science professor Barry Eidlin, a comparative historical sociologist interested in the study of class, politics, inequality, and social change at McGill University, said "the individual and policy grievances that are going to be filed, or have already been filed will be enormously labour-intensive to deal with. The employer also has to consider whether this move is worth the loss of employee good will."

It's the same issue and the same sticking point during negotiations last year, almost exactly a year ago, said Eidlin.

On April 29, Liberal MP Mona Fortier (Ottawa-Vanier, ON) told the House that the 2024 budget "takes a big step toward revitalizing the downtown core, including the Byward Market, by committing to reduce the federal government's office portfolio by 50 per cent over the next decade."

"In Ottawa, the sale of these office buildings will free up space for all kinds of new uses. These buildings will make room for a new dynamic, mixed-use community, with some offices being converted to residential buildings, creating the new housing that Ottawa needs. Other buildings will be redeveloped for various other sectors, from small business to arts and culture, in order to inject new energy into the downtown core," said Fortier.

"Ottawa's core, from downtown to the Byward Market, is an important part of our city, with lots of untapped potential. Revitalizing this area and unlocking this potential have been a key priority for the 12 members of the Liberal national capital region caucus."

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Ocean temperature: the mother of all climate feedbacks?

There are about a dozen potential environmental tipping points that we do know about, but there may be a few still to be discovered.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—“Just like this year, last year the heat wave extended from parts of India to Bangladesh and Myanmar, and all the way to Thailand. This year it went further east, into the Philippines. So, it’s the same pattern,” said Prof. Krishna AchutaRao of the Indian Institute of Technology. “I do not particularly buy into this idea that El Niño is the cause.”

That is the burning question not just for South and Southeast Asia, but for the entire world. A heat wave is a random phenomenon that comes and goes in certain seasons for a period of some days. A climate feedback is forever.

April to June, before the monsoon arrives, is always the hottest part of the year in South Asia, but now it’s breaking all bounds.

On May 6, the Indian Meteorological Department reported: “Yesterday, maximum temperatures were 44-45°C over Telangana, interior Karnataka, and north Madhya Pradesh; in the range of 42-44°C in southeast Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Coastal Andhra Pradesh.” Crazy hot all over the place, in other words.

The actual numbers are lower in regions farther from the equator, but the average global temperature for each of the past 11 months has been the hottest the world has ever experienced in that month.

So, obviously, something big is happening—but what? Is it just a big El Niño (a heating of the surface waters of the eastern Pacific that happens every three to seven years)? That would be nice because it would mean it’s cyclical and will go away again in due course.

Or is it confirmation of climate scientist James Hansen’s claim that the average global temperature is going to jump half a degree Celsius. He says that new rules on pollution are cutting back hard on the sulphur dioxide emissions that used to reflect a lot of incoming sunlight back into space and, therefore, cool the planet.

Or have we triggered a big feedback in some natural system that we were not aware of? There are about a dozen potential tipping points that we do know about—the collapse of the West Antarctic ice sheet, the melting of the permafrost, a switch from rainforest to savannah in the Amazon, etc.—but there may be a few that we don’t know about yet.

So which is it? It’s very unlikely to be El Niño because this one was not particularly strong. Besides, it peaked in Decem-

ber and has been fading away ever since, while global temperatures go on breaking records.

Hansen’s proposed explanation is a contender because the ‘brown clouds’ that used to hang over big Chinese cities and the ‘ship track’ clouds from the exhaust gasses of 60,000 giant tankers and container ships did reflect enough sunlight to have a significant cooling effect. Cleaning up those emissions was bound to drive up the temperature.

Alas, the dates don’t match very well. The emissions from Chinese factories and ocean-going ships were reduced over a period of about 15 years, whereas the ‘non-linear’ jump in average global temperature began just a year ago. Moreover, some scientists doubt that the amount of cooling that was lost is big enough to explain the scale of the heating.

I say ‘alas’ because this leaves us with the least desirable explanation: the sudden activation of an unknown feedback. And remember how this stuff works. The heating that human beings have already caused carries us across a tipping point we cannot see, and that unleashes a feedback: warming from non-human sources that we cannot turn off.

The likeliest candidate for a new mystery feedback is the world’s oceans. Since we began burning fossil fuels in a big way two centuries ago, they have absorbed around a quarter of the carbon dioxide that humans emitted. More importantly, they have soaked up around 90 per cent of the excess heat.

Now they may be giving some of it back. In the past 13 months, the average sea surface temperature worldwide has soared. According to the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Service, it is now at an all-time global high of 21.09 degrees Celsius.

There was not enough data about the behaviour of the deep ocean currents to put the ocean heat sink on most climate scientists’ list of potential feedbacks. However, many always feared there would be a limit to how much heat the oceans could contain over the long run.

We may be about to find out where the limit is, and it could be the Mother of All Feedbacks. Or maybe it will turn out to be a false alarm this time. The fact that we don’t even know which yet illustrates the depth of our ignorance, and the scale of our peril.

Gwynne Dyer’s new book is *Intervention Earth: Life-Saving Ideas from the World’s Climate Engineers*. Last year’s book, *The Shortest History of War*, is also still available.

The Hill Times

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Tapiriit (formerly A Taste of the Arctic) is an intimate celebration of Inuit culture.

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Ottawa



News

Economists, businesses question timing of capital gains tax hike as Canada faces productivity challenges

There is a strong historic connection between capital investment and increases in productivity, says economist Trevor Tombe.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Some economists are echoing concerns raised by Canadian business leaders about the Liberal government's plans to change the capital gains tax, warning the timing is wrong as the country struggles with weak investment and poor productivity—while others say the impact may be marginal.

On April 16, Budget 2024 announced that Ottawa planned to increase the capital gains tax inclusion rate from one-half to two-thirds for Canadian corporations. Individuals would also see the higher inclusion rate applied to any capital gains earned over \$250,000 in a single year. The inclusion rate refers to what portion of the income is taxable. An organization or individual then pays tax on that income at their marginal tax rate.

Political observers have suggested Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) and the Liberal government are looking to draw Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) into a political battle over the planned changes, and the government's Budget Implementation Act appears to signal their latest strategy on that front. The omnibus bill does not include the proposed changes to capital gains—indicating the Liberals plan to introduce the matter in a separate piece of legislation to force the Conservatives to vote either for or against the measure.

So far, Poilievre has resisted giving the Liberals a direct fight on this issue. Instead, he penned a recent op-ed telling corporate Canada to make the case directly to Canadians if it is opposed to these changes.

Canadian business leaders released an open letter on May 9, appearing to take up that challenge—though their communications are addressed to the finance minister and not the public.



Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland presented Budget 2024 which proposed changes to the capital gain tax inclusion rate. Some business leaders are challenging claims made by the government about the policy's potential impacts.
The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Government's estimate reflects how many Canadians may pay the tax in a year, but not in a lifetime: economist

The letter—which is signed by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the Canadian Venture Capital and Private Equity Association, the Canadian Franchise Association, and the Canadian Canola Growers Association—points to some of the competing claims that are being made about the proposed changes.

Budget 2024 said the changes to capital gains will only affect a small segment of Canadians. “Only 0.13 per cent of Canadians with an average income of \$1.4-million are expected to pay more personal income tax on their capital gains in any given year.”

However, the letter from Canada's business leaders takes a different view.

“The effects of this tax hike will be borne by all Canadians, directly or indirectly,” says the letter.

An earlier version of the open letter claimed that one in five individual Canadians would be directly affected by the change, but the authors later revised their letter after questions by The Canadian Press.

Instead of individuals, it now says that one in five Canadian companies would be directly affected by the tax hike, in addition to raising concerns that all Canadians may be affected by its im-

act on investment and economic growth across Canada.

Trevor Tombe, an economist at the University of Calgary, told *The Hill Times* that the 0.13 per cent figure is “a bit misleading” in the Liberals' communication approach.

“It's certainly true that in any given year that's approximately the number of tax filers who have capital gains in excess of that amount as an individual,” said Tombe. “But the fraction of Canadians that would, at some point in time, have a capital gain in excess of that amount will be a larger number.”

In an email statement to *The Hill Times*, the Department of Finance stood by its figure. The department said it was based on what it described as a microsimulation model based on tax-filer data as well as economic and population projections. The department did not provide additional details in response to follow-up questions about what tax-filer data was used in the simulation, such as what years it was taken from.

Tombe said it is difficult to know exactly how many Canadians might be on the hook to pay more tax without access to the raw data, but noted that there will be Canadians with a gain in excess of that amount perhaps one out of every 10 years, driving up the total number of Canadians directly paying the tax increase over time.

Jack Mintz, an economist and distinguished fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, also questioned the government's numbers, saying the problem with capital gains is that they are “very lumpy.”

Mintz pointed to several examples of where he anticipates some Canadians may be caught in this net with larger capital gains in a single year, such as when it comes to the sale of a business or farm. Mintz said the sale of a farm could be captured because of the large amount of capital equipment and land involved in such a sale.

While he noted the budget does offer an increase in the lifetime exemption on capital gains for the sale of a business—from \$1.02-million to \$1.25-million, which would partly help to offset this—he said it is quite possible the total capital gains on such a sale could still be caught in this for some farm owners, especially because capital gains are not adjusted for inflation.

However, François Brouard, a professor of accounting at Carleton University who specializes in taxation, said the increase to the lifetime exemption offers good protection for small business owners.

He said some would be disadvantaged by the change, but only those who were selling at a very large gain, while those selling at a smaller gain would actually see a benefit because of the lifetime exemption increase.

Timing is wrong to introduce the tax as Canada struggles with poor productivity: Mintz

The open letter to Freeland also addresses broader concerns about the economy-wide impact of the changes on all Canadians, not just those who might directly pay the tax.

“The measure will limit opportunities for all generations and make Canada a less competitive, and less innovative nation,” says the letter. “At a time when we are already urgently struggling to reignite our nation's lagging productivity, increasing taxes on productive investments and throttling Canadian potential will have profound, long-lasting and potentially irreversible repercussions.”

Tombe said an increase to capital gains tax will—by its very definition—have some impact on investment—but the exact amount is difficult to measure.

“Every tax is going to have the effect of shrinking the base—the thing that you are taxing,” said Tombe. “So there will be a modest negative effect at the margin of

this because it does represent an increase in the tax applied to returns on investment.”

Mintz said that, given ongoing concerns about growth and productivity in Canada—including those raised earlier this year by the deputy governor of the Bank of Canada—the change is not coming at a good time.

“If we had a pretty good investment climate, you know, I think we could deal with an increase in the capital gains tax rate,” said Mintz. “But right now, where we've had extremely weak investment, very poor productivity, just the timing of it all is just wrong.”

Mintz said it will disincentivize the risk-taking that Canada needs for growth.

“It discourages risk-taking because the government's here to kind of share the positive things [tax revenues], but they don't really share the losses,” said Mintz.

Capital losses can be deferred to use against capital gains in a future year or some previous years, but they cannot be used against other forms of income.

Tombe said there is a strong connection between capital investment and increases in productivity.

“Since 2000, nearly 90 per cent of labour productivity gains are due to capital-per-worker rising, and that requires investment. So it is appropriate for those who want to think about ways of increasing productivity, to look at measures to boost investment.”

However, he said, the number of investments discouraged by the proposed change may be marginal because the actual increase to taxes paid on capital gains will only be about six per cent on the dollar. That's because—while the inclusion rate is rising from one-half to two-thirds—even at the highest marginal tax rate, that means a change from paying tax on 46 per cent to 52 per cent of the total capital gain, said Tombe.

He said while that may make some projects moderately less attractive, many of them would still remain viable investments.

When the expected legislation is introduced, he said Canadians should keep in mind that capital gains are only one aspect of the overall tax code.

“We should keep in mind that the tax code is more than just the capital gains inclusion rate,” he said. “Reversing this change in the inclusion rate is perhaps not the best way to increase investment incentives.”

Tombe said, in his view, a better method would be to allow accelerated capital cost expensing, so that businesses can deduct the entirety of a capital expense in the year a purchase is made, instead of over several years as a capital purchase depreciates—the same way operating expenses are deducted from revenues.

“Any tax debate, I think, needs to be broad based, and not overly focused on one specific change,” he said. “The tax code is complex, multifaceted, and has many implications for individual and business decisions. And so we should think of it in that broader way.”

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Disinformation, terror, and a summit: what's happening in Ukraine, and what Canada can do to restore peace

This is really a moment of truth for the entire global community. Canada can have a key role in advocating for other states to take part in the Peace Summit, and actively contribute to talks to approve a global vision for peace.

Erik Kucherenko

Opinion



On April 26, National Defence Minister Bill Blair announced that Canada would donate \$3-million to Ukraine for the production of drones by Ukraine's domestic defence industry. This assistance is coupled with an additional contribution of approximately \$13-million to the Czech Republic's initiative to deliver large-calibre ammunition for Ukraine. These announcements come at a crucial time for Ukraine's resistance as Russian forces are stepping up their pressure on the eastern front. To understand the context and implications of these events, let's review the key events that have happened in recent months, and outline the milestones to anticipate.

In recent months, the frontline has not changed significantly. The delay in United States military support for Ukraine—which was finally approved in April and will strengthen the Ukrainian Armed Forces—posed a problem, resulting in the shortage of ammunition and, likely, forcing Ukrainian forces to withdraw from the town of Avdiivka. At the same time, the Russian-invading force was able to achieve these advances at a huge human cost, something that a state caring for its citizens and its military could never afford.

To drum up an increasingly less enthusiastic public support for its unlawful and unprovoked war of aggression, the Kremlin has launched massive disinformation campaigns against Ukraine. On March 22, despite numerous warnings from foreign governments ranging from the United States to Iran, Russia failed to prevent the Islamic State's terror attack in the Crocus City Hall near Moscow, which claimed more than 140 lives. Instead of holding its security services accountable for this apparent failure, the Russian leadership ridiculously accused Ukraine's government of facilitating the attack. Russia's Federal Security Service claimed that the terrorists planned to flee to Ukraine even though a heavily fortified border with Ukraine is perhaps the



Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a press conference in Ottawa on Sept. 22, 2023. Another vital campaign worth noting is an operation aimed at undermining the legitimacy of Zelenskyy. The Russian propaganda never stops. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

last place where terrorists would like to hide.

The Russian propaganda does not stop there. Another important campaign worth

noting is an operation aimed at undermining the legitimacy of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. According to these false claims, after May 20, if presidential

elections are not held, Zelenskyy will no longer be legitimate. Never mind that Ukraine's Constitution explicitly allows him to serve as president until the end of martial law, that Ukraine cannot hold elections precisely because of Russia's terror attacks, that it is Russian authorities that are recognized by the international community as illegitimate.

To reinforce the effect of its propaganda, Russia has recently unleashed a full-scale terror attack on Ukrainian civilians. Each day brings either civilians' deaths or attacks on the energy infrastructure. Only in one region, Zaporizhzhia, 10,000 episodes of shelling were registered in April.

We are coming to a very important point in this war. As Ukraine is receiving the aid eventually approved by the U.S. Congress and is trying to bolster its defences, the country is trying to build a foundation for a diplomatic end to this disastrous war. Zelenskyy's Peace Formula Process—which has seen a number of high-profile meetings since 2023 with an active participation of South Africa, Brazil, India, China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—is expected to reach the level of heads of states with the Peace Summit. The summit is scheduled to be held in Switzerland on June 15-16.

At this summit, heads of state from about 100 countries are expected to engage in detailed discussions and prepare a common vision for the end of the war. Involvement of each country, especially the Global South ones, is key to the success of the endeavour. Of course, after the Summit, there will be some form of interaction with Russia, which will receive a detailed outline of the vision of the international community.

This is really a moment of truth for the entire international community. Canada can have an important role in advocating for the participation of other states in the summit and actively contribute to the discussions to approve a global vision for peace. This will lay the groundwork for searching for a diplomatic solution to the Russian war of aggression—and anchor such attempts in respect for international law and our common values.

Erik Kucherenko is a former Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program intern. Currently, he is doing a master of public policy degree in the University of Oxford in Oxford, U.K.

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Editorial

Foreign interference inquiry needs to take much closer look at nominations

After 21 days of hearings and 66 witness testimonies, Justice Marie-Josée Hogue concluded in her first report that acts of foreign interference did occur in the last two federal elections, but it did not undermine the integrity of Canada's electoral system. At the same time, she found that it's impossible to determine if such meddling had any impact on the number of votes won by each candidate in any of the ridings affected.

Overall, she said she remains confident in the integrity of the electoral process, but also said foreign interference is a serious threat.

For example, based on intelligence reporting that was apparently not firmly substantiated, Chinese international students were reportedly bussed in to support Han Dong for his 2019 Liberal nomination campaign in Don Valley North, Ont., and were provided with falsified documents by a known Chinese government proxy agent to allow them to vote. The students did not live in the riding.

Based on some intelligence after the election, the Chinese consulate allegedly threatened the students by implying their visas would be in "jeopardy" and that there could be consequences for their families back home if they did not support Dong. Dong denies any involvement. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Jeremy Broadhurst, the Liberals' nation-

al campaign manager, decided not to remove Dong because CSIS said it was inconclusive that China was involved, or that Dong knew anything. Dong has since left the Liberal Party, and now sits as an Independent. This has to be further investigated.

"This incident makes clear the extent to which nomination contests can be gateways for foreign states who wish to interfere in our democratic process. This is undoubtedly an issue that will have to be carefully examined in the second phase of the commission's work," the report states.

Hogue's report also found that in the 2019 election in Metro Vancouver, some political candidates perceived as being anti-China were excluded from attending election-related local community events. There were also alleged incidents of foreign interference in the 2021 election and disinformation targets against Erin O'Toole, Kenny Chiu, and Jenny Kwan. All this has to be further investigated, too.

Foreign interference is a serious threat. The commission, which will begin hearings again in the fall and will release its final report by Dec. 31, 2024, needs to dig much deeper into the federal nominations and come up with some solid recommendations on how the can be better regulated.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Canadians ought to thank Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre for recent outbursts, writes Allan Bowman.
 Image courtesy of Pexels



Poilievre a 'name-calling political brat': letter writer

Canadians ought to thank Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre for his recent outbursts. After his attempt to redo his image as the nice, friendly-family guy whom the press gobbled up as though it were not just spin, he met with some low-lives and declared that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is nothing more than a liar. To put the icing on his conspiracy cake, he then went on an unparliamentary rant in the House and got himself kicked out of the Chamber for the day. It is nice when the true colours of a politician are outed, not by the opposition, but by themselves and their own behaviour.

Poilievre has shown that he is grossly unsuitable as a leader, as a prime minister, and that his advisers ought not to

be allowed on Parliament Hill. He has confirmed Canadians' suspicions that he is our own version of Donald Trump. Stephen Harper, the worst Canadian prime minister of all time, fully endorses this guy. Under Harper, Poilievre was just the Conservatives' attack dog.

In his recent attempted makeover, he has demonstrated that he has no actual ideas or solutions, but that he is good at finding problems. People who identify problems are a dime a dozen. It is people offering solutions that a country needs. He is not that. Instead he has proven that he has not grown beyond his attack role and remains simply a partisan, dogmatic, name-calling political brat.

Allan Bowman
 East Gwillimbury, Ont.



Children are most vulnerable group affected by conflict, national disaster: letter writer

Children are among the most vulnerable groups to be affected by conflict and national disaster. From impacts to health care, nutrition, and education, children suffer in fundamental ways, unable to cope and recover on their own. This is a very real and present concern.

With great unrest across the globe, including in Gaza, Haiti, and Sudan, children are being exposed to national conflicts and disasters on a daily basis. The numbers are alarming: according to the United Nations, more children have been killed in over four months in Gaza than in four years of conflict around the world combined.

We must not forget: children are among the most voiceless, yet they are

also among the most innocent and defenceless. This is why I ask that at the G7 in Italy in June, Justin Trudeau must use his power and position as prime minister to stand up for children in emergencies by unequivocally condemning violence against civilians, reinforcing the need for humanitarian access and protection and recognizing the unique needs and rights of children living in emergencies around the world. In this way, Canada will play a vital role in ensuring that the rights and well-being of children in emergencies are emphasized as a crucial priority and will receive the assistance and resources they need.

Dena Sharafdin
 Newmarket, Ont.

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Canadians should rightly be leery of a leader who wants to override the Charter

Pierre Poilievre's reference to 'my laws,' is eerily reminiscent of Donald Trump's vocabulary. Laws do not come from one individual, but are introduced by governments, usually under the guidance of the justice minister, and the prime minister.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms may not mean much to those who have grown up under its protection. But if you look to many of the reasons Canadians are respected

around the world, it is because of the way minorities are treated here.

Whether it be gender equality, visible minority treatment, gays, lesbians, or transgendered rights, the 1982 Charter has paved the way for everything from access to abortion to gay marriage.

The fact that several provincial premiers have already moved to ignore those rights by invoking the "notwithstanding" clause included in the Charter has definitely raised a few eyebrows.

But the signal sent recently by Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre should send shivers down the spine of every Canadian who values equality.

At a meeting of the Canadian Police Association, Poilievre made it very clear that he would use the notwithstanding clause to make sure his government's legislation is never overturned by the courts.

"All of my proposals are constitutional. And we will make sure—we will make them constitutional, using whatever tools the Constitution allows me to use to make them constitutional. ... I think you know exactly what I mean."

In explaining what he meant, Poilievre went on to say, "I will be the democratically elected prime minister—democratically accountable to the people, and they can then make the judgments themselves on whether they

think my laws are constitutional because they will be."

Clear as mud. However, for those who do not want to get mired in the constitutional details, it may not matter that a candidate for prime minister foresees the use of the notwithstanding clause under his watch.

For those who think it doesn't affect them, they should be aware that it was the Supreme Court of Canada that legalized abortion after determining that the existing law on the subject was deemed unconstitutional because of the Charter.

It was also the Supreme Court that awarded a pension to the partner of a gay man who was denied pension rights by Canadian law, another Charter violation.

It was the Charter that paved the way for parental leave for fathers. Shalom Schachter secured that leave via a successful Charter challenge after his unemployment claim to three weeks off following the birth of his daughter was denied.

The Charter also paved the way for minority official language education across the country. Before the Charter's introduction in 1982, the majority of provinces refused to educate francophones in their mother tongue.

Charter equality provisions prompted francophone groups

across the country to sue governments, and secure their Charter rights to a full education in their language.

Abortion, parental leave, gay rights, minority language rights, and equality for women are just some of the equality outcomes of Charter challenges.

And those challenges would not have been possible if the federal government, under the leadership of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, had not repatriated the British North America Act from the United Kingdom and amended it to include a uniquely Canadian Charter.

At the time, some provincial governments were less than enthusiastic about the repatriation, so the application of the notwithstanding clause was the only way they would sign on.

No one ever expected that, in future, a national government would override its own legislation.

Perhaps Poilievre thinks he is so far ahead in the polls that now is the time to lay out controversial aspects of his plan for governance.

After all, most Canadians pay very little attention to the Charter, and have no idea what an impact it has made on the shape of our country.

But by signalling his controversial views, Poilievre is continuing to paint a picture of what kind of leadership he would offer were he elected prime minister.

If the courts deem that any law violates the Charter, he will simply apply the notwithstanding clause to override it.

That sounds scarily like the threats emanating from former American president Donald Trump who cares little for what is legal, and makes no secret of the fact that if he were re-elected, he would simply throw out all the laws he doesn't like.

Poilievre's reference to "my laws," is eerily reminiscent of the vocabulary used by Trump. Laws do not come from one individual, but are introduced by governments, usually under the guidance of the justice minister, and the prime minister.

As justice minister, Jean Chrétien was deeply involved in Charter negotiations with the provinces.

The Charter shaped modern Canada.

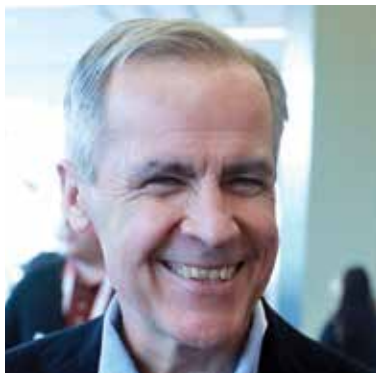
Canadians should be rightly leery of a leader who wants to override it.

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

The Hill Times

Is Carney the Liberals' emergency option?

As journalist Stephen Maher recently put it, 'Trudeau is not likely to be ousted, Liz Truss-style, since he single-handedly built the modern Liberal Party, and there is no rival in his caucus. But if Carney looks like a saviour waiting in the wings, pressure will mount for Trudeau to hit the lecture circuit.'



Mark Carney at the Liberal National Convention in Ottawa on May 4, 2023. The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia

OAKVILLE, ONT.—In case you haven't noticed, the Liberal Party of Canada has developed what might be termed an "in-case-of-emergency-break-glass" leadership strategy.

What do I mean by that?

Well, the Liberals, it seems, always have star leadership candidates waiting in the wings; candidates, who, whenever the party is facing a political emergency, will be summoned from offstage and thrust into the limelight at just the exact right moment to heroically save the party from catastrophe.

The most obvious example of such a star leadership candidate, of course, is Justin Trudeau.

Recall that Trudeau, with his unmatched family pedigree, his affable persona, and his rock-star charisma, was seen as a potential political superstar long before he became Liberal leader.

But the Liberals strategically held Trudeau—who was first elected to the House in 2008—in reserve, as if they were holding him back until his talents were truly needed.

And that time came in 2011.

That's the year the Liberal Party suffered a disastrous electoral loss to the Stephen Harper-led Conservatives.

Indeed, in the political standings of the day, the once-mighty Liberal Party had slipped to third place behind the NDP, and seemed on the verge of political extinction.

Nor did it help matters that a vindictive prime minister Harper seemed determined at the time to kick the weakened Liberals over the edge, and into the abyss.

It was at this point, at the party's nadir, that the Liberals, confronted with a crisis like no other in their history, decided to

frantically break the emergency leadership glass.

So, in 2013 they bestowed their crown to Trudeau.

It didn't matter that he'd only been an MP for a few years, it didn't matter he'd never held a cabinet post, it didn't matter that he hadn't even been part of a government.

If anything, his lack of experience was a plus, as it gave him the aura of a politician who had a fresh voice and as a leader who'd do politics differently.

In fact, in 2015, the Trudeau-led Liberals crushed the Harper Tories, winning a smashing majority government.

Since then, Trudeau has gone on to win two more federal elections.

But all politicians have a limited shelf-life, and perhaps Trudeau is past his best due date as public opinion polls have consistently shown him trailing the Conservatives.

As a matter of fact, if a federal election were held today, it's likely the Liberals would get all but wiped out.

Given this dire turn of events, it's likely many worried Liberals are now wondering if the time

has come to once again break the emergency leadership glass.

After all, they certainly seem to have a potential superstar leadership candidate waiting just off stage.

I'm talking about the former governor of the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England, Mark Carney, who has political ambitions, and who is seen by many as Trudeau's natural successor.

As journalist Stephen Maher recently put it, "Trudeau is not likely to be ousted, Liz Truss-style, since he single-handedly built the modern Liberal Party, and there is no rival in his caucus. But if Carney looks like a saviour waiting in the wings, pressure will mount for Trudeau to hit the lecture circuit."

True, Carney lacks political experience, but as the Trudeau saga has already shown us, that's not necessarily a serious handicap.

Mind you, it's also possible Trudeau still has the skills to turn things around, so maybe this is not the proper time for Liberals to panic.

But when or if they do panic, just watch out for shattered glass.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



Opinion



Former U.S. president Donald Trump, pictured, has turned due process into undue process, gaming the system to avoid any and all accountability in his criminal trials, writes Michael Harris. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Stormy Daniels could be American democracy's only hope

The overwhelming probability is that the Stormy Daniels hush-money case will be the only trial and verdict Donald Trump will face before the presidential election.

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—Can an adult-film actress save the republic from King Donald?

Given what is happening in the U.S. justice system these days, Stormy Daniels and her hush-money case may be the country's best chance to deal out a dictator.

When former U.S. president Donald Trump was slapped with multiple indictments and scores of felony charges, a lot of commentators crowed. They said it was proof positive that no one

was above the law in the United States. That view now looks like second-rate stand-up comedy.

The fact is that Trump has been treated to an astonishing series of breaks in his legal battles expressly because of the position he once held at the pinnacle of the American political system.

If “Joe the Plumber” were on criminal trial here, as Trump is, it would be a whole different ballgame. If Joe the Plumber publicly attacked jurors as “Democrats” and witnesses as “sleaze-bags,” as Trump has, he would be cooling his heels in the slammer. Trump has not only traduced the jury and witnesses in his hush-money case, he has been cited for contempt of court 10 times.

Being in serial contempt of court has earned Trump a laughable fine, \$1,000 for each offense. That’s Diet Coke money for Trump. Judge Juan Merchan has openly admitted that those fines don’t seem to be working. He even hinted that he may jail the defendant if he persists in his obnoxious and illegal behaviour.

The real question is: why that has not happened already as it would in any other case? Merchan himself supplied the answer. He said that the last thing he wanted was to put a former—and perhaps a future—president in jail.

Does that sound like equality before the law to you? And who ever heard of a defendant in the middle of a criminal trial getting a day off from the proceedings to attend his son’s graduation?

What about the bizarre decision by a panel of judges from the New York state appellate division? The panel reduced Trump’s bond in his civil fraud conviction from \$454-million to \$175-million without explanation.

Then there is the sad spectacle going on in Trump’s classified documents case in Florida. On his way out the door of the White House, the former president helped himself to a trove of documents he had no business taking or retaining. No matter how many times he misconstrues the Presidential Records Act, it is a big no-no to appropriate stuff that belongs under lock and key in the National Archives, not strewn around the house like yesterday’s newspaper.

The papers Trump took include sensitive material relating to national security and defence, including America’s nuclear program, and allegedly a plan for a potential invasion of Iran. Trump was given multiple opportunities to return the documents to the National Archives, but demurred.

When FBI agents searched Trump’s Florida home—a full

year after he was advised to give the records back—they found 102 classified documents of which 75 were in an unsecured storage room, and 27 in the former president’s office.

Special Prosecutor Jack Smith charged Trump with the wilful retention of national defence information, false statements, conspiracy to obstruct justice, and corruptly concealing documents.

Enter U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, a Trump appointee.

After making a series of pro-Trump rulings, Cannon overstepped herself. In a ruling that would delay the case, she ordered the appointment of a special master to comb through the documents the FBI seized from Mar-a-Lago.

Trump had launched a lawsuit to stop authorities from using those documents in their investigations. In ordering the appointment of a special counsel, Cannon had the law dead wrong. She had no jurisdiction in the matter, and she got an abrupt and scathing rebuke from the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals:

“The law is clear. We cannot write a rule that allows any subject of a search warrant to block government investigations after the execution of the warrant. Nor can we write a rule that allows only the former president to do so.”

But that didn’t stop Cannon from helping Trump realize his true goal in all of his court cases: delay.

Just weeks before the documents case was about to begin, Cannon announced that the trial would now be delayed “indefinitely.” She explained that the delay was needed in order to resolve “multiple pre-trial issues” before the court. That will allow Trump’s lawyers to proceed with their goal of delaying the trial until after November’s presidential election.

Finally, there is the spectacle of the Supreme Court slow-walking their decision on whether or not Trump’s claim of absolute immunity from criminal prosecution is constitutional. It was Smith who asked the Supreme Court to rule on the matter. He did that to prevent Trump from delaying his criminal trial on election subversion by raising the immunity issue.

Smith expected a quick answer on Trump’s spurious claim of absolute immunity because that claim leads to such preposterous outcomes. Trump’s lawyers even suggested to the Supreme Court that a president might be immune from prosecution if he ordered the assassination of a political rival.

When Justice Elena Kagan asked if a president could be prosecuted for ordering the military to stage a coup, Trump’s lawyer replied that it would “depend upon the circumstances.”

Given the absurdity of Trump’s argument, it is unlikely the Supreme Court will side completely with the ex-president. They will now try to hammer out what is a presidential “official” act, and what is a “private” act. They may conclude in the end that there is a limited form of immunity based on that distinction.

The one thing not to expect is that this very conservative Supreme Court, with three Trump appointees, will rule in a way that will help Smith get Trump’s election subversion trial on a fast track.

With three liberal justice on the court, the more likely outcome is a fractured decision. That could lead to the case being punted back to the lower courts for resolution.

Since that process is subject to appeal, the legal wrangling could go on for years. Trump just needs six more months. Come November, he might just be president-elect again—or is that king? The motley monarch who has promised to do away with the U.S. Constitution, gut the Department of Justice, and toss his political opponents in jail.

Trump has turned due process into undue process, gaming the system to avoid any and all accountability. The overwhelming probability is that the Stormy Daniels hush-money case will be the only trial and verdict Trump will face before the presidential election.

I repeat: can an adult-film actress save the republic?

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

Workin' 9 to 5, that's no way to make a livin'

Sending public servants into action to save a city from decades of bad urban planning is like dispatching the military to fill sandbags, or respond to the latest climate emergency—but with far less tangible benefit. It is no way to save a city, and no way to run a government.

Susan Riley

Impolitic



CHELSEA, QUE.—The stereotypical “Ottawa” bureaucrat arouses as much sympathy with the public at large as a billionaire grocery exec whose yacht gets stuck on a sandbar in some tropical tax haven. Less, perhaps.

Unfair, or exaggerated, as the image might be, it persists: federal public servants—especially the Ottawa variety—have cushy pensions, generous leave provisions, ample salaries, recession-proof employment, union protections, long lunch hours, and work of little—or no—urgency.

Rather than serving as a role model for those unfortunates who toil in retail, long-term care, agriculture, small business, health care, or behind the counter at Tim Hortons, “government jobs” are often regarded with resentment; the preserve of an entitled elite. (Expect this narrative to amplify as Pierre Poilievre continues circling federal departments and agencies, teeth gleaming, like a fox surveying a hen house.)

So, it is hardly surprising there has been little general outcry about a recent Treasury Board dictate that most public servants must report to the office at least three days a week starting in September—or face consequences. The fact that this is an arbitrary, unexplained, backward, and, ultimately, infantilizing, pronouncement will be largely overlooked. So will the fact that no evidence has been produced by govern-



Public Service Alliance of Canada president Chris Aylward during PSAC's picket line in Ottawa on April 19, 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ment to suggest office-bound workers are more productive—indeed, the opposite is likely true, according to some surveys. Then there's the troubling fact that public sector unions were blindsided—even betrayed—by the news.

Last week, representatives of those unions made their displeasure known, promising to pursue legal action, and predicting a “summer of unrest” as public servants “take to the streets” to fight the “unilateral” move to upend thousands of lives. Public Service Alliance of Canada president Chris Aylward said many returning bureaucrats will have trouble finding anywhere to sit, given pandemic-driven shrinkage of office space. And, even now, many spend their forced office days on Zoom calls with colleagues across the country, work that could equally be performed at home.

So why, in the absence of any obvious operational efficiencies, is this mandatory imposition of old-fashioned “face time” happening? It can't simply be the whim of a leadership cadre that has been required to show up at work all these months while their underlings enjoy the benefits of working in their pyjamas. That said, there have been complaints that the present rules—two-to-three days a week at the office—are being applied haphazardly and, sometimes, unfairly. This is understandable, given the shift to remote work only exploded with the pandemic, and everyone is improvising.

But these problems are negotiable and, in fact, Treasury Board promised the major unions, after a general strike last year, that requests for remote work would be considered on a case-by-case basis. That was widely applauded

as an explicit refutation of the one-size-fits-all model of management—which has now, suddenly, been reinstated.

The three-day-a-week rule will affect every level of government employee from lifers, to casuals and students. Many senior executives will now be required to be in the office four days a week to keep tabs on their flock—even to take attendance, as the Treasury Board directive suggests.

That said, three days a week is still preferable to trudging into the office every day; any number of surveys have ranked the hybrid option as the most popular among employees, followed closely by fully-remote work, and trailed by the minority who like to get the fresh office gossip in person every day. In fact, Canada has led the world in this workplace revolution, with 40 per cent of employees working remotely in 2020 compared to seven per cent pre-pandemic.

That number has declined to 20 per cent recently, including those who work strictly from home, and hybrid arrangements. And, of course, it was never practical for many blue-collar workers, nurses, teachers and others who deal directly with the public, or who provide a tangible service. It is largely of benefit to the professional, banking, high-tech class—a floating global city of sought-after expertise.

For those who qualify, the advantages of remote, or hybrid, work are obvious and multiple. Less time wasted commuting—up to two hours a day, and more, in cities like Toronto—and fewer greenhouse gases pumped into the atmosphere. Less stress—or different stress, at least—for the parents of young children, who

are closer by for sudden school closures, illnesses, or child care disruptions. These families, a contingent the Liberals claims to care about, also save money on gasoline, parking, office lunches, clothing, and—if they can move to a smaller town—even housing.

Indeed, Nancy Peckford, the mayor of North Grenville, Ont., near Ottawa, worries that the forced march back downtown will smother a revival of local business and community volunteer efforts in her municipality. In her view, North Grenville residents who work for the federal government shouldn't be required to shore up downtown Ottawa's economy.

There are also many reasons that reversing—or even stunting—remote work is a bad idea. First, in a competitive job market, the brightest and most ambitious young people are opting for employment with companies—law firms, architects' offices, tech shops, designers, consultants, and many others—that prefer their employees to work remotely, at least half of the time. The arrangement saves the firm office costs, and there is, so far, no evidence that remote work discourages productivity. (If anything, it blurs the line between work and personal space to the detriment of the employee.)

It is possible that the Trudeau government's real motivation—rather than promoting “effective collaboration, [seamless] on-boarding new talent, and building a culture of performance consistent with the values and ethics of public service”—is more sketchy. It is, in fact, to revitalize Ottawa's fading city core, a misguided and doomed urban redevelopment scheme.

It would be interesting to get Treasury Board President Anita Anand's take on all this, but she has been curiously circumspect, perhaps because the decision seems off-brand with what we know about her. As Canadian Association of Professional Employees president Nathan Prier argues, the decision “directly contradicts (this government's) climate and housing goals.” Some of those emptying office towers, which could now be pressed back into service, were intended for conversion to housing.

Aside from infuriating the 60 per cent of federal employees who work at 1,600 locations outside the national capital, this notion that bringing some workers back downtown will spawn a rebirth of Ottawa commerce is legitimately wacko. Downtown Ottawa is increasingly becoming a dead zone, with the newly-visible drug and homelessness problems that plague so many cities, but in-spide retail, mediocre restaurants, limited and unreliable transit, and expensive parking all pre-date the pandemic.

The core has never exactly hopped after 5 p.m., especially in the long winter, and, apart from offering a lifeline to some borderline businesses, it is unlikely to pick up post-September. Does anyone go into a bank branch any more? How many shoppers still buy clothes at expensive boutiques? And why search local stores—often fruitlessly—when there is Amazon?

The most lively parts of the city—Westboro, the Glebe, even the struggling ByWard Market—mix housing and accessible—often unique—retail, and exist at a distance from the tunnel-like, sunless streets of undistinguished office towers that make up the city core.

Despite all this, there were suspicions that Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe and Premier Doug Ford successfully leaned on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to order his workers back to their airless cubicles, however Sutcliffe denied discussing the issue with the prime minister at a recent meeting they held at City Hall. The mayor did say he was pleased by the announcement, however.

Ford was explicit on a rare recent visit to Ottawa: “It's all about revitalizing the downtown core here in Ottawa,” he said. He predicted a “massive surge in transit” use, although that assumes a reliable and complete transit system, and the city's fledgling LRT has been anything but.

As someone who works in the vicinity, Trudeau will have himself witnessed the decline. But sending public servants into action to save a city from decades of bad urban planning—and worse architecture—is like dispatching the Canadian military to fill sandbags, or respond to the latest climate emergency—but with far less tangible benefit.

It is no way to save a city. And it is certainly no way to run a government.

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

The Hill Times

Opinion



Premiers Danielle Smith, left, François Legault, Doug Ford, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Trudeau is facing pushback from provinces in many areas including carbon taxes, inadequate support for health care and housing, more unconditional transfers for infrastructure funding, write Kevin Lynch and Paul Deegan. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

It's time to turn federal-provincial confrontation to co-operation

Federalism works best when it's based on shared economic and social visions of the future. It's time to turn battles over short-term irritants into cooperation over long-term policies that will pave the way to a more sustainable, prosperous tomorrow.

Kevin Lynch
& Paul
Deegan

Opinion



Perusing the media these days would seem to suggest uniquely divisive battles on many

fronts between Ottawa and the provinces. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau—the only first minister from 2015 still in office—is facing pushback from provinces in many areas, including carbon taxes, inadequate support for health care and housing, more unconditional transfers for infrastructure funding, and more support to deal with surging immigration and asylum seekers. While the specific issues change, the dynamics of federal-provincial confrontation tend to run in cycles, and depend on the economy, social tensions, and local and national politics.

There has always been a natural tension between the federal government and the provinces—indeed, it is inherent in federated structures, and Canada is one of the most decentralized in the world. Historically, poor communications across a vast and sparsely populated land were blamed and, yet, as telecommunications, broadcasting, railways, and airlines—all federal responsibilities—have connected us, perceived “injustices” between Ottawa and parts of the country continue to fester.

As former prime minister Brian Mulroney once said, “This is

a difficult country to govern.” The gulf has been caused by several factors. First, the provinces feel that the feds have far greater revenue-raising capacity while they have responsibility for the delivery of programs that impact most directly with Canadians—namely health care and education. This gives rise to depressingly regular battles over the size (and conditionality) of federal transfers for health and social services as well as equalization payments. Left unsaid by the provinces is that it is politically easier—but less accountable—if another level of government does the tax raising and debt issuing, and simply sends a cheque. Second, at any point in time, the economies of various parts of the country can be in quite different shapes, depending on commodity prices, or the state of the American economy, for instance, and this creates perceived imbalances. And third, the elections cycle in Canada is not synchronized, so it's good politics for provincial parties to rail and run against the feds during their own elections.

So, while today's confrontation is hardly unique, how do we turn it into tomorrow's co-operation?

First and foremost: stay in your lane—unless the lanes merge for shared responsibilities. A federal school meal program has its virtues, but it is a lane deviation. Housing is mostly a provincial and municipal purview except for the recent immigration-driven surge in demand. Alberta's Bill 18, which requires provincial entities to obtain prior approval from the provincial government before entering into, amending, extending, or renewing an agreement with the federal government, is a major provincial lane deviation. Quebec has also swerved into federal territory on several programs, including infrastructure and aspects of language.

Second, the provinces need to recognize that their deficits and debt are their own responsibility. The reality is that financial markets and credit rating agencies are the essential arbiters of each province's fiscal situation, along with provincial taxpayers—not the feds, and nor can the feds be viewed as a fiscal backstop. For perspective, the combined deficits of the provinces for 2024-25 are \$28-billion, or about 70 per cent of the federal deficit of \$40-billion.

Third, regular federal-provincial meetings are the essence of a mature federation. The meetings themselves also demand maturity: they do not work if the only issue that unites the provinces is more money from the feds; neither do they work if the feds offer “take it or leave it” partnerships. If the European Union—which encompasses 27 sovereign countries—can have productive meetings of heads of government on a frequent schedule, why can't a single nation like Canada do the same?

Fourth, conditionality is not a bad word—it is a standard feature of most commercial contracts and agreements. More health-care cash for reforms, statistics and national priorities worked for the Chrétien and Martin governments

and the provinces—why is it impossible today? Increases in the federal child benefit under Jean Chrétien were tied to provincial promises not to offset by reducing their spending—why was something similar not introduced for the new federal disability grant? The feds should be more willing to offer opt-in agreements with willing provincial partners rather than opt out agreements with cash compensation.

Fifth, find the shared lanes that pave the way for a better future without running each other off the road. Productivity and long-term economic growth should be priority No. 1 for both levels of government. Blaming each other is neither a solution, nor a viable political strategy. Reducing the regulatory burden and interprovincial trade barriers is low-hanging fruit. Wicked problems like the long-term transformation of our economy from fossil fuels to renewables cannot be solved by either federal fiat or provincial fiat, and certainly not without public buy in. “My way” or “no way” simply doesn't work in a country whose constitution has created shared highways.

Chrétien once said, “Canadian federalism is more than a form of government. It's also a system of values that allows different people in diverse communities to live and work together in harmony for the good of all.” Federalism works best when it is based on shared economic and social visions of the future. It's high time to turn confrontation over short-term irritants into cooperation over long-term policies that will pave the road to a better, more sustainable, and prosperous future.

Kevin Lynch is a former clerk of the Privy Council, and vice chair of BMO Financial Group. Paul Deegan is CEO of Deegan Public Strategies, and he served in the Clinton White House.

The Hill Times

Oil and gas emissions on the rise again: a federal emissions cap is our best chance to rein them in

Canadians are doing their part to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions; it's time for the oil and gas sector to do the same.

Steven Haig

Opinion



The latest national inventory report shows that greenhouse gas emissions in Canada's oil and gas sector are still rising, now accounting for 31 per cent of the country's total. While emissions in the rest of the economy have fallen by 13 per cent since 2005, emissions from oil and

gas production have gone up by 11 per cent. The data leaves no doubt that more must be done to address emissions from our highest emitting sector if we hope to reach the national target of 40-45 per cent emissions reduction by 2030. The only question for policymakers, then, is not whether to tackle oil and gas sector emissions, but how. A cap on emissions, such as the one proposed by the federal government, is the best solution on the table.

The oil and gas sector has argued that emissions reductions can be achieved by voluntary commitments backed by substantial public subsidies. To this end, research by the International Institute for Sustainable Development shows the federal government has recently committed at least \$9.1-billion in subsidies and support for carbon capture and storage (CCS) projects to help reduce emissions in the sector, while provinces have already spent at least \$3.8-billion on CCS subsidies of their own. This is in addition to the billions of dol-

lars in support that industry has received from government-funded infrastructure, clean electricity supplies, and reduced royalties. However, emissions keep rising and recent cash flow analysis suggests that Canada's major oilsands companies—all of which have committed to net-zero emissions by 2050—are achieving record profits without achieving overall emissions reductions. As the national inventory report's stark figures suggest, rapid decarbonization in the sector will not be driven by voluntary measures and subsidies alone.

To meet 2030 climate targets and to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we need immediate emissions reductions. Recognizing this, the federal government has committed to implement a regulatory cap on oil and gas emissions. This policy will set an upper limit on emissions in the sector for 2030 that would gradually reduce toward net-zero emissions by 2050. Through this system, oil and gas companies will have the opportunity to trade

permits for their emissions, encouraging cost-effective reduction measures and providing a competitive edge to those with lower emission levels. By mandating emission reductions for businesses, the emissions cap serves as an incentive for oil and gas producers to invest in emission-reducing technologies. Climate change has always been a cost of doing business in the oil and gas industry, but an emissions cap would ensure the costs are borne by the emitters, not the public.

A federal regulatory framework also provides industry with certainty. Oil and gas production is a long-term operation, so to make efficient investments, firms need to know how much they will be permitted to emit in the years to come. By setting an ambitious yet feasible cap on emissions, with a clear trajectory toward net-zero, the government is offering industry the information it needs to efficiently align private investment with national climate targets. Supporting this logic, the Canadian Climate

Institute recently estimated that the government's emissions cap would be one of the most impactful federal climate policies between 2025 and 2030. If designed effectively, an emissions cap could ensure the oil and gas sector fulfils its part of Canada's overall climate solution.

Regulating this country's oil and gas emissions is ultimately a question of fairness and effectiveness. The industry must decarbonize if we are to have any chance of meeting our climate targets, and a federal emissions cap would ensure that the sector's emissions begin to move in the right direction. Elsewhere in the economy, electric vehicle sales are at record highs—increasing eightfold between 2017 and 2023; public transit ridership is trending upwards after the pandemic; and homeowners are investing in climate-friendly heat pumps more than ever before. Canadians are doing their part to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions; it's time for the oil and gas sector to do the same. The sector has already received billions in subsidies to reduce emissions and yet emissions have only increased; it's time to move forward with policy measures like the emissions cap to ensure meaningful reductions by 2030. There is no time to lose.

Steven Haig is a policy analyst for the International Institute for Sustainable Development's Energy Program.

The Hill Times

India-Canada row and the diaspora

To move forward, both governments need to be sensitive to each other's concerns and diaspora, holding violators of our sovereignty to account as per law.

Rajesh C. Shukla

Opinion



OTTAWA—In a significant development, the RCMP recently arrested three main suspects in the June 2023 killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, B.C. This is a welcome news with some international ramifi-

cations as Nijjar is believed to have been killed for his political opposition to the Indian state. To be sure, neither extraterritorial killing nor the use of violence for political purposes can be morally legitimized, and both need to be condemned without equivocation. Such acts of violence are attacks on human life and dignity, and no civilized society should have to philosophize about them. Yet, Canada and India continue to be at odds on this issue.

Since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau rose in the House last September to inform Canadians that there were "credible allegations" that agents of the Government of India were involved in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, many Canadians have felt deeply concerned about this brazen act. Responding to Canadian accusations, India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar denied India's involvement in Nijjar's killing, and has speculated about potential reasons that could have led to his death. "We have actually been badgering the

Canadians. We have given them a lot of information on organized crime leadership which operates out of Canada. There are terrorist leaders who have been identified. There is an environment out there," he said. After these recent arrests by the RCMP, Jaishankar repeated these concerns in New Delhi.

It is shocking for most Canadians to be spoken of sheltering transnational gangs, extremists, terrorist leaders and criminals—never mind the international calculations involved in such allegations. Some in India went further, blaming the Trudeau government for being soft on criminals and extremists due to "diaspora vote bank," refusing to act despite more than 27 extradition requests from India. Canadians have been equally dismissive of Indian claims, asking India to co-operate in the ongoing murder investigation, and to hand over relevant information in its possession.

This tit-for-tat approach has practical consequences in terms of trade, travel, visa, and con-

sular services in both countries, and has started hurting Indian diaspora in Canada. It is also very unfortunate because democratic countries should not be doing what has accused in the present context: the killing of a Canadian citizen. As a result, the Indian diaspora here find themselves in the middle of a diplomatic row where their country of origin and their adopted homeland are engaged in a war of words and competing narratives, not willing to engaging each other in substantive ways.

I would also argue that the governments of Canada and India have different institutional priorities, and do not quite appreciate each other's dominant concerns. For the Indians, terrorism is a live problem, waiting to detonate, but for the Canadians it is an aberration, not a regular part of their psyche even in a turbulent world. Canada is blessed to be a peaceful and welcoming country, not plagued by internal conflicts or sectarian strife. This also explains partly why Canada is one of the most prized destinations in global migration, taking almost 1.10 million newcomers last year alone.

This massive intake of newcomers is justified on the basis of positive images of immigrants and diasporas, creating a national consensus on multiculturalism in this country, making Canadians averse to reflecting on the fault lines of diaspora politics. Such reflections, we fear, will not only

provide fodder to the cynics, but also blemish our national consensus on immigration and minorities. Moreover, a public criticism of diaspora—even, if necessary—can be easily confused with anti-immigrant rhetoric and dog-whistle politics. Hence, I call on diaspora groups themselves to honour Canadian consensus by upholding peace in this country and beyond.

India and Canada have historical Commonwealth bonds, and strong people-to-people ties. Both countries share in the ideals of cultural diversity, equality of persons, religious freedom, and robust democratic institutions. Speaking at the Diaspora, Diversity, and Immigration Conference on April 24, 2024, at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, India's High Commissioner to Canada, Sanjay Kumar Verma, seemed keen to emphasize the above areas of convergence. To move forward, both governments need to be sensitive to each other's concerns and diaspora, holding violators of our sovereignty to account as per law.

Dr. Rajesh C. Shukla is an associate professor at the faculty of philosophy at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, and also chair of the Diaspora, Diversity and Immigration 2024 conference. His research focuses on the ethics of immigration and diaspora, citizenship and secularism, and friendship and justice.

The Hill Times

Opinion



Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland released the 2024 federal budget last month. The venture-capital industry and tech companies argue her tax measures will lead to a decline in capital available to aspiring tech firms. So far, they have offered little hard evidence that Freeland's plan would discourage investment, writes David Crane. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Freeland should find a better way to achieve tax reform

Chrystia Freeland's tax changes smack much more of poetical expediency or desperation, dressed up as a campaign to single out the richest for not paying their 'fair share,' in order to finance a pre-election budget. More research is needed.

David
Crane

Canada &
the 21st Century



TORONTO—The challenge that all political parties face is that Canadians apparently want sustained and improved public services, but also want low taxes.

It's called having your cake and eating it, too. The problem is that it doesn't compute—despite the efforts by our politicians to pretend that somehow it can. It's even more difficult in the current fiscal environment. This helps explain the fumbled message on taxes in Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's 2024 federal budget.

While the need for a review of the tax system to make it fairer while also accommodating the need to encourage entrepreneurship, investment, and innovation is long overdue, the problem in the 2024 budget is that Freeland's efforts for tax fairness seem more an exercise in short-term political expediency than a set of well-considered measures to achieve a better tax system. They are designed to create room for pre-election spending while staying within promised deficit and debt ceilings. And by formulating the measures as simply initiatives to make the richest pay their fair share, the efforts are unnecessarily divisive.

Anxious to keep on spending—largely in measures that Freeland hopes will help the Liberals win back voter support before next year's federal election—while staying within her fiscal limits and not risking

a downgrade to Canada's triple AAA credit rating, Freeland has come up with a plan to collect some \$21.9-billion in additional tax revenue over the next five years by “ensuring the wealthiest pay their fair share by introducing a top tax bracket of 33 per cent for the wealthiest Canadians,” and by raising the level of capital gains taxation, reiterating that “the government is asking the wealthiest Canadians to pay their fair share.” Her target, she says, is simply the top one per cent of the population in what she presents as a tax-the-richest budget. This is her version of having your cake and eating it, too.

“At a time when middle-class Canadians are struggling to get ahead, when their hard work isn't paying off, the government is improving the fairness of the tax system. We are asking the wealthiest Canadians to contribute a bit more, so that we can make investments to ensure a fair chance for every generation.” In other words, the money will come from the wealthiest—and they can afford it! The issue, Freeland insists, is simply one of fairness and “Canada's tax system should be fair.”

The reason for targeting capital gains, she argues, is that people who rely on capital

gains—for example from selling shares on the stock market—are taxed at a lower rate than those whose income comes totally from their paycheques. “The wealthy are currently able to benefit from tax advantages that middle-class Canadians and, especially, younger Canadians are rarely able to benefit from.” Only about five per cent of Canadians under the age of 30 in 2021 had any capital gains at all.

Freeland illustrates this by comparing the marginal tax rate of a nurse in Ontario earning \$70,000 with the marginal tax rate of a wealthy individual in Ontario with \$1-million of income. The nurse, Freeland said, would face a marginal tax rate of 29.7 per cent on her income while the millionaire would face a top marginal tax rate of 26.8 per cent on his. “Differences in taxation rates between income earned from wages, capital gains, and dividends currently favour the wealthiest among us,” Freeland said.

But is this a true reflection of how the system works and who pays taxes? Fred Riordan, former assistant of appeals at Canada Revenue Agency and now national tax policy leader at EY Canada, argues Freeland's example is only true in a very narrow technical sense. If both the nurse and the millionaire only had salary income, the millionaire would have had a top marginal tax rate of 53.53 per cent, compared to 29.7 per cent for the nurse. If both had paid capital gains taxes, the rate would have been 14.83 per cent for the nurse and 26.76 per cent for the millionaire. In fact, according to 2021 tax data, the 29,260 tax filers that represented the top .01 per cent of tax filers had an average income of \$2,086,100 and paid an average of \$911,600 in income taxes, with an average tax rate of 43.7 per cent.

To be sure, the capital gains tax looms large in what Freeland has proposed. The capital gains tax is the closest thing Canada has to an estate tax or a wealth tax. Freeland proposes to expand the share of capital gains subject to taxation to 66.7 per cent of the gain, compared to 50 per cent now, while allowing taxpayers to have their first \$250,000 of capital gains each year tax-free. Under the capital gains tax system there is deemed realization at death so Freeland's plan would also raise the taxes beneficiaries would have to pay on inheriting family cottages, rental real estate, shares and other inheritances—but in principle this is not necessarily a bad thing. Most countries have an estate tax.

This has led to much pushback from the venture capital industry and tech companies, arguing Freeland's measures will lead to a decline in capital available to aspiring tech firms, and hence slow Canada's innovation ambitions. So far, they have offered little hard evidence that Freeland's plan would in reality discourage investment in promising opportunities. Instead, they have engaged in fear-mongering. More research is needed.

But the much bigger concern is that Freeland's tax changes are not an exercise in careful research and public discussion designed to produce a much better tax system for our knowledge economy. Instead, they smack much more of poetical expediency or desperation, dressed up as a campaign to single out the richest for not paying their “fair share,” in order to finance a pre-election budget. This is not the way to achieve the tax reform we need and which is also widely accepted.

David Crane can be reached at crane@interlog.com.
The Hill Times

Chinese Canadians are capable of making their own decisions

The fact that great proportions of Chinese Canadians voted the same way as Beijing liked does not mean they were puppets. Casting that independent decision by many as a mindless action at a foreign government's bidding is an insult to our intelligence.

Andi Shi

Opinion



The interim report on foreign interference in federal elections settles some questions and leaves others hanging. One of the lingering questions is to what extent Chinese Canadians were influenced by the Chinese government.

To some in the media that was a forgone conclusion. The host and the entire panel of senior journalists on one of the nation's leading Sunday political shows aired during the inquiry readily accepted that Kenny Chiu and other Conservative candidates lost their seats in the last federal election because of Chinese interference, assuming thousands and thousands of Chinese Canadians voted the way they were told to by the Chinese government. The influential commentators never questioned whether that narrative held any water.

As a Chinese Canadian who has some knowledge of the Chinese diaspora community, I can say without a doubt that it does not. Chinese Canadians have brains to think for themselves. They, too, are capable of making their own independent decisions.

I live a stone's throw away from Markham-Unionville, a riding where over half of the residents are of Chinese descent. During the 2015 federal election, the Liberals swept the Greater Toronto Area, except Markham-Unionville, a lone blue di-

amond in a sea of red. All my Chinese-Canadian friends in that riding voted for the Conservative candidate Bob Saroya, who is an Indian immigrant, rather than the Liberal candidate, who is of Chinese descent. That tells you how strong the Chinese Canadian support was in that riding for the Conservative Party.

Surprisingly, Saroya won both the 2015 and 2019 elections, but lost his seat in 2021 to his Liberal rival when support for Justin Trudeau had slid significantly.

What happened? To understand this seemingly implausible upset, one has to go back to the social and political atmosphere of 2021. When COVID-19 hit Canada in 2020, it triggered a wave of anti-Chinese racism which continued through the 2021 election. Many Chinese Canadians were attacked, harassed, blamed, and discriminated against in a variety of ways. People in the Chinese community felt very vulnerable and threatened. Then-Conservative leader O'Toole and some other party candidates did not speak out to support Chinese Canadians. On the contrary, much of their rhetoric fuelled anti-Chinese sentiments. That's the real reason that many Chinese Canadians abandoned the Conservative Party. Saroya was simply a victim of his own leader and his colleagues' anti-Chinese rhetoric.

It's not a secret that many Chinese Canadians within the Conservative Party fiercely criticized O'Toole and others for offending the Chinese community, causing the collapse of the Chinese votes.

In a 2023 commentary, Mark Johnson, a Conservative candidate in the 2021 election, observed that "In 2021, the Conservative Party offended large portions of the Chinese-Canadian community." He regretted that "some Conservative MPs had been too strident in their language, came across as obsessively anti-China, and brushed the line of intolerance," which sowed "mistrust towards an ethnic group."

"Being informed and discerning citizens, they voted accordingly," concluded Johnson. "We Conservatives can't blame meddling by China for our losses."

Johnson also warned that "when we create fears of an 'enemy within', that Canada is rife with Chinese spies in our universities, businesses, and governments, then we run the risk that innocent Canadians of Chinese descent fall under suspicion and become the victims of prejudice. The Chinese-Canadian community is rightly troubled by the recent rise of anti-Asian



Foreign Interference Commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue. One of the lingering questions from Hogue's report is to what extent Chinese Canadians were influenced by the Chinese government, writes Andi Shi. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

incidents. Alarmism on this issue only worsens the problem."

The notion that the Chinese government can influence enough Chinese Canadians to change the election results in many ridings is never a tenable thesis. The fact that great proportions of Chinese Canadians voted the same way as the Chinese government liked does not mean they were puppets. Ten-thousand independent minds could make the same logical decision. Casting that independent decision by many as a mindless action at a foreign government's bidding is an insult to our intelligence.

Political leaders and journalists carry considerable influence on what kind of society we cultivate. It's important that those with power and influence conduct themselves responsibly in accordance with the values of truth, fairness and objectivity.

Andi Shi is the executive director of CPAC, a multi-dimensional organization that is an association of internationally educated professionals, a career and skills development service provider, and a developing think tank that provides research-based support for the understanding and elimination of systemic racism and barriers to equity, diversity and inclusion. He has been involved in equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives throughout his career, and has an Executive Education Certificate in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion from the University of Cambridge. He is a founding member of the Asian Canadians Together to End Racism network, and has been a speaker and panelist on EDI issues on numerous occasions both locally and nationally.

The Hill Times

Panel Announcement: STRATEGIZING FOR SUCCESS: CRAFTING YOUR ELECTION ADVOCACY

Join a panel of experts for an in-depth exploration of pre-election strategy, where they will break down the key components of a successful campaign, and practical advice for the stages before, during, and after an election.



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News

Heyman issues 'tsunami warning' about potential Trump 2.0 effect on Canada

Barack Obama appointee Bruce Heyman says Canada must prepare for multiple challenges that 'could happen all in the first few months' of a second Donald Trump presidency.

Continued from page 1 the 2016 election. Trump has also been indicted in Florida, Georgia, and the District of Columbia on charges related to election interference and the mishandling of classified documents.

Despite those legal troubles, a Trump victory against incumbent President Joe Biden is far from a remote possibility. Polling aggregate published in *The Hill* on May 8 showed both Biden and Trump neck and neck nationally at 44.8 per cent each.

In a two-way race against Biden, Trump leads in the five states that he won in 2016, but lost in 2020. He also leads in those states when pitted against both Biden and independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Heyman said Canadians should not expect a potential second Trump term in office will be the same as the first Trump presidency.

"They think, 'Well, we got through one, so we'll get through two, and it'll be okay,'" he said. "Sure, you're going to get through it, but without the appropriate preparation and thinking through what he's proposing, and gaming it out and developing strategies, I think that you may be overwhelmed if all of this happens at once."

Rob Goodman, assistant professor at Toronto Metropolitan University, a former U.S. congressional speechwriter, said a second Trump presidency would be one in which the leader would lean into the more authoritarian tendencies displayed during his first term in office.

"Out of power, he's developed a much more detailed agenda with a much more co-operative group to put plans into action much more quickly, say, around things like deportations, that I think are just absolutely going to shock people's consciences," he said.

Policy impacts

During the 2024 presidential campaign, Trump has promised

Donald Trump, pictured at a 'Save America' rally in Florence, Arizona, on Jan. 17, 2022. Photograph courtesy of Flickr/Gage Skidmore



to use the Justice Department to pursue opponents, deport millions of undocumented immigrants living in the United States, impose 10 per cent across-the-board tariffs on imports, and let Russia do "whatever the hell they want" to NATO allies who do not meet defence spending guidelines.

Among those NATO member states is Canada, and Trump's promise is just one of multiple issues this country may have to contend with in the first 100 days of his re-election. On the defence side, Trump is also expected not to commit to further funding for Ukraine's war against Russia, which has implications for nearby European states, including NATO allies.

"If Donald Trump backs away from NATO, what will Canada do as a NATO member on this side of the ocean, and what role will Canada play?" Heyman said. "Canada, I think, has tremendously benefited from being in alliance with the U.S. in the post-World War Two period, regardless of party ... so what role will Canada play in a world where the U.S. becomes inward-looking, not outward-looking, more authoritarian, less focused on liberal democracy, and more focused on what's in it for us?"

Beyond defence and trade considerations, Trump's domestic policies could also have a flow-on effect to Canada, Heyman said. Since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion in 2022, several states have imposed abortion bans. Heyman said that, in the event of a Trump presidential win, and Republican wins in the country's House of Representatives and Senate, the party may attempt to implement a nationwide abortion ban.

"If that's the case, then instead of women running from red states

to blue states seeking coverage, they are going to have to seek care elsewhere," he said. "That strikes me as a significant impact that could eventually hit Canada."

Plans to deport undocumented immigrants could also affect Canada if those affected seek support north of the border, Heyman said.

"I would just suggest Canada take this moment seriously because all this could happen at once. Everything that I listed and more could happen all in the first few months of a Trump administration," he said. "It's challenging enough to tackle any one of these issues if it actually comes to bear, but how are you going to tackle two, three, four, five, six major impactful events that take place [at once]?"

Ahead of this year's election, the government has launched a "Team Canada" effort to help protect the relationship with the U.S. against any potential shocks. Innovation Minister François Philippe-Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.), Interna-



Rob Goodman said Donald Trump has developed a more detailed agenda during his time out of power, and has more willing participants than during his term as president. Photograph courtesy of Simon & Schuster Canada

tional Trade Minister Mary Ng (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.), and Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. Kirsten Hillman are leading the efforts.

A similar "Team Canada" approach was taken when renegotiating the free trade agreement between the U.S. and Mexico in 2018.

Short-term or long-term problem?

Asked whether this uncertainty and effect on the U.S.-Canada relationship would continue in subsequent elections, Heyman said Trump was "a unique person and a unique personality."

"I truly believe sitting here that even though Donald Trump looks to be the nominee this time and has been the nominee of the Republican Party for three consecutive times, I don't believe it will be a fourth," he said. "I am optimistic that we will reorient ourselves back to the center in democracy and in the Republican Party in particular, but hope isn't a good strategy. We'll have to work hard at building bridges among those of us who, in the United States, just can't talk to people with different views."

Goodman, however, was not so sure.

"This is, in my view, not going to be a passing problem, it's going to be a generational problem, it's something to take really seriously," said Goodman. "In my experience working in politics there, I think there were a lot of moments that served as sort of warning signs."

Those warning signs included the backlash to the passage of the Affordable Care Act, also dubbed "Obamacare," the mainstreaming of "xenophobic and Islamophobic" rhetoric by Trump that was turned

into policy through bans on immigration from some Muslim-majority countries, and the U.S. Supreme Court's upholding of an iteration of those policies.

"The fact that this was mainstreamed in the U.S., not just with the support of President Trump and the Republican Party, but with the complicity of the Supreme Court, that makes me think that our institutions in the U.S. are sicker than a lot of people give them credit for."

Goodman has written about these observations in the 2023 book *Not Here: Why American Democracy is Eroding and How Canada Can Protect Itself* which was shortlisted for this year's Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing. Goodman told *The Hill Times* that Canada would not necessarily follow the same path as the U.S., but that it would be naïve to expect the direction of American politics to have no influence on its neighbour.

"Ultimately, democracies fail from within. I think that if there's a risk to Canadian democracy it will come from a lot of the same factors that provoke risks to democracies elsewhere," he said, referring to "struggling to grapple with multiculturalism, struggling with the remains of a social safety net and a welfare state that used to be a lot much more a lot more robust, and struggling with the personalized politics, that I think erodes a lot of traditions of parliamentary government."

At the same time, Goodman said Canada benefitted from "stickier" safeguards than those in the U.S. Those included a relative lack of sense of a "real people" that exclude the "other," a rejection of charisma and founder worship, and memories of a resilient social safety net.

"By no means are we exempt from or immune to what's happening," he said. "There's a reason—or at least I hope there is—that democratic erosion hasn't proceeded so far here as it has in the U.S. and in many other democracies... I was interested in writing this book and investigating what might be some of the reasons for that. If we can identify them, can we help isolate them and build on them?"

Another problem lies in what Goodman described as the increased framing of democracy with the politics of the Democratic Party as the Republican Party adopts more authoritarian tendencies. He pointed to the crackdown on college protesters by armed police as an example of incidents in Democratic cities during a Democratic presidential administration that had not received enough scrutiny.

"I don't think countries with strong, healthy, robust democracies handle dissent and the way that was handled in the U.S. though [the last month]," he said. "Elections are very important, questions about the future of U.S. democracy are on the ballot, but regardless of what happens in the election... this is not simply going away if enough people show up and vote for the blue team."

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A closer look at the proposed foreign influence transparency registry



Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc introduced Bill C-70, Countering Foreign Interference Act, in the House on May 6. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The concept of a foreign influence registry has cross-party support, but whether that translates into the quick passage of the government's proposal remains to be seen.

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

In response to foreign government attempts to interfere in Canadian elections, a special rapporteur investigation, an ongoing federal commission of inquiry, explosive media coverage, and years of requests from diaspora groups and political parties, the government has introduced a bill to create a foreign influence registry.

Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) introduced Bill C-70, Countering Foreign Interference Act, in the House on May 6.

Included within the bill is the creation of a new Foreign Influence Transparency and Accountability Act, which would require those acting on behalf of foreign governments in Canada—with some exemptions, including diplomats—to register with the federal government.

Here's what the bill says about the government's proposed registry.

What's the proposed registry?

The publicly accessible registry, similar to the federal lobbyists' registry, would show those who have acted in some way on behalf of a foreign power in Canada's governmental or political processes. The registry would detail the people, companies, or other entities who have an arrangement with a foreign power, as well as the activities they carry out.

A foreign influence transparency commissioner would be created to oversee the registry, as well as investigate compliance of requirements. The commissioner would be appointed by the governor-in-council for seven-year terms after consultation with the leaders, facilitators, or representatives of the government, opposition, and every other recognized party and group in the Senate, and the leaders of every recognized party in the House of Commons.

Who would need to register?

The bill requires those who have entered "into an arrangement" with a "foreign principal" to register within 14 days of that agreement. That arrangement includes working under the direction or in association with a foreign principal to communicate with public office holders, communicate or disseminate information about political or governmental processes, or distributing money or other "items of value," providing a service, or the use of a facility.

As for the meaning of "foreign principal," it can include foreign states or groups of foreign states, a foreign government or a political faction or party seeking power in another country, a state-owned business, or a person acting on behalf of any of the above.

The bill also goes into greater detail about what would count as a "political or governmental process." It could be anything from a parliamentary or legislative proceeding to the development of bills, amendments to policies or programs, the awarding of contracts, decision-making by either public office holders or government bodies, the holding of elections or referendums, and the nomination of party candidates or development of party policies.

Its application would not just apply to federal politics; the bill proposes to require registration for involvement in provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous government, as well.

Who is exempt?

Diplomatic staff operating in Canada would be exempt from the registration requirements, including those holding valid diplomatic, consular, official, or special representative acceptance issued by Global Affairs.

The registry would also not apply to employees of a foreign principal who are acting openly in their official capacity.

The bill also gives the governor-in-council the ability to create regulations excluding groups of individuals who could also be made exempt from the registration requirements.

What are the penalties for breaches?

The bill proposes, if there is a conviction or indictment, a maximum prison term of five years and a fine of up to \$5-million. For a summary conviction, an offender would face a fine of up to \$200,000 or up to two years in prison.

Penalties would be considered if someone failed to register within 14 days of entering an arrangement with a foreign principal, did not update any data on the registry as it changed, or knowingly provided false or misleading information to the commissioner. There is an exemption for those who did not register in time, but exercised due diligence to try and prevent that offence from happening.

When will it come into effect?

The bill was introduced to the House on May 6, and has not yet been debated at second reading. The bill will need to pass third reading in both the House of Commons and the Senate, and the related committee meetings, before receiving royal assent.

In order for the bill to become law before the next election, it must receive royal assent within the next 15 months. At this point, the next election must be held by Oct. 20, 2025. If Bill C-65, the Electoral Participation Act, is passed, the last possible date for the election would be pushed back a week to Oct. 27, 2025, so it does not clash with Diwali and municipal elections in Alberta.

What are the bill's chances of passing?

The concept of a foreign influence registry has cross-party support. Prior to the bill's introduction, a press conference calling for such a registry was held on April 29 with diaspora groups, as well as Liberal MPs Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Ont.) and John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Ont.), Conservative MP Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, Alta.), Bloc Québécois MP René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, Que.), NDP MP Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, B.C.), and Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, B.C.).

Whether this version of a foreign influence registry is acceptable to all parties, however, remains to be seen. One other bill proposing to establish a registry, Bill S-237, introduced by Conservative Senator Leo Housakos (Quebec) in February 2022, remains at second reading in the Senate. Villemure noted at the April 29 press conference that the Bloc Québécois had a draft bill ready to introduce if the government did not introduce Bill C-70.

An earlier attempt at introducing a foreign influence registry came in the last Parliament when then-Conservative MP Kenny Chiu introduced Bill C-282 in April 2021. The bill died on the Order Paper when the election was called later that year. Chiu was defeated in his re-election bid for Steveston-Richmond East, B.C., and he has since alleged he was subject to a campaign of election meddling by the Chinese government.

Which other countries have registries?

The United States has had a Foreign Agents Registration Act since 1938. It includes a publicly available database of all registrants, including historical files for 801 Canadian entities, starting with Montreal's Canadian Advertising Agency Ltd. in July 1942.

Australia created its own registry in 2018 with the passage of the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act. That country's registry has specific reporting requirements for former cabinet ministers, some of their staff, and senior public servants. Like the U.S., Australia has a publicly available database of registrants, 19 of whom are related to Canada.

The United Kingdom is in the process of setting up its Foreign Influence Registration Scheme, following the passage of the National Security Act in 2023. The registry will have two tiers: the first focuses on political influence activities, while the second includes "registration of a broader range of activity where a person is acting at the direction of specified foreign powers or entities that have been assessed as posing a potential risk to U.K. safety or interests."

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News

Pro-Palestinian student protests on university campuses further complicate electoral calculus for left-of-centre parties, say Liberal MPs

To protest peacefully is a constitutionally protected right, but hate speech or making someone feel unsafe is unacceptable, says Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi.

Continued from page 1

respective universities divest from any organizations with ties to Israel. In some cases, faculty members are also showing up to support for these protests.

Some Jewish students held a press conference on the Hill last week to say that they are feeling harassed and unsafe by pro-Palestinian protesters. The House Justice Committee has now initiated a study about antisemitism in Canadian universities.

"My friends who used to wear kippot on campus instead now wear baseball caps," said Nati Pressman, founder of the Canadian Union of Jewish Students, at the press conference organized by Liberal MP Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Que.), who is a member of the Justice Committee. "This is not because we are any less proud to be Jewish, but because our universities have fostered and create an environment where being openly Jewish could be a threat to our physical and emotional safety."

The pro-Palestinian rallies by the general public and students started after the most recent iteration of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on Oct. 7, 2023, when Israel launched a full-scale invasion of Gaza in retaliation to an assault by Hamas on Israel in which 1,200 people were killed. In addition, around 252 Israelis were abducted, of which 133 people are still believed to be in captivity, according to Israeli numbers. During this ongoing episode, more than 34,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to Palestinian health officials.

Cindy McCain, executive director of World Food Program, recently warned that northern



The ongoing pro-Palestinian student protests are making the electoral math more complicated for Liberal Party and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured, says Ipsos Public Affairs CEO Darrell Bricker. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Gaza is experiencing "full blown famine" which is gradually spreading to the south.

The Israel-Hamas war has caused sharp fissures within the Liberal caucus, where MPs, especially from major urban centres, represent both Muslim and Jewish constituents. On top of that, progressive voters are also divided on this issue, creating a challenge for the Trudeau government.

Bricker said that, depending on how long the conflict continues, and if this is still an issue by election time, a significant chunk of the progressive voters who voted for the Liberals in the last election could move to the NDP.

Bricker said that, so far, the issue is limited to downtown areas where universities are located. But, depending on how this issue evolves, it could become a voting-relevant issue in car-commuting suburbs like in the Greater Toronto Area, Metro Vancouver, Montreal, and Calgary. He said that members of the public and students who are taking part in protests are diverse progressives who support a number of causes, including Indigenous rights, climate activists, and the LGBTQ+

community, in addition to being pro-Palestine.

"It's less about the kind of the ethnic diaspora and more about the struggle against global oppression that particularly left-wing academics and students have made a big issue ... All the big protests are not taking place in Vaughan," said Bricker. "Or they're not taking place in Ancaster, or they're not taking place in Milton, they're taking place in downtown Toronto. The area that's been occupied is the University of Toronto, the people living around the University of Toronto aren't overwhelmingly people who come from the Islamic faith."

Bricker said that upcoming federal byelections in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba could provide us a preview of how this dynamic will play out in the general election.

The three ridings where byelections will be taking place are Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont.; LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que.; and Elmwood-Transcona, Man. All three opened up earlier this year, and the byelections could all be called at the same time. After a riding opens up, the incumbent prime

minister has six months to call a byelection.

Bricker also said that the Middle East conflict will be one of several other factors in Canadians' decision how to vote, including affordability, inflation, and housing, among other issues.

"If [protests are] really visible, very animated, and very disruptive, it could play a role," said Bricker.

In interviews with *The Hill Times*, some Liberal MPs said that it appears at this time that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be an issue in the next election, and these MPs see these student protests as a subset of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"Gaza is going to be a factor, [student protests are] another data point in that," said a Liberal MP.

A second MP said that the conflict would be a factor in how the progressive voters cast their ballots, but a lot will depend how the conflict comes to an end. At the same time, they said left-of-centre voters will have no option but to choose the Liberals as they are the only option to form government other than the Conservatives.

"The choice is between us and the Conservatives," said the MP. "If you're on the left on this issue, if you're in the centre on this issue, there's no way in hell you're voting Conservative if this is your issue."

A third Liberal MP said that, based on their interactions with young Canadians, especially those under 25 years old, this is a black-and-white issue where an overwhelming majority is pro-Palestinian.

"They are so clear it's not even a debate point," said this MP.

Federal Economic Development Agency Minister Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas, Ont.) said in a statement to *The Hill Times* that the peaceful right to protest is a Charter-protected right, but at the same time, no-one should feel unsafe.

"The tragic events in the Middle East are having a deeply painful impact on many people here at home," said Tassi, whose riding includes McMaster University. "Post-secondary institutions, like McMaster University, are meant to be places where students can learn and innovate as well as engage in thoughtful dialogue and debate. Universities also must be spaces where everyone on campus feels safe. Effective learning can't take place when students do not feel safe. Our government will always protect the Charter guaranteed right to freedom of speech and expression. We will also protect the safety and security of Canadians. Postsecondary institutions fall within the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. However, we will continue to monitor this situation closely."

Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Ont.) in a telephone interview echoed the same view.

"It's a constitutionally-protected right, but it has to be peaceful, and it cannot be hateful speech," he said. "So students can protest for their political views for the cause of Palestine, but it has to be peaceful, and they should not engage in any hateful speech. That is not acceptable."

Pollster Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, described these protests as a "distraction," adding the impact depends on how disruptive they are. He said that the number of students participating in these protests is very limited, as most students are either working their summer jobs or vacationing with their families. Lyle predicted that for most Canadians, the deciding factor for the next election will be affordability.

"This is not the equivalent of the Coastal GasLink protests or the convoy protests where a significant number of people were impacted, and there was significant economic impacts," said Lyle.

According to a Leger poll released last week, 48 per cent of Canadians are against the encampments at universities, while 31 per cent support them. The poll found that 45 per cent of people between the age groups of 18 to 34 support these encampments. The same poll also suggested that 44 per cent of Canadians saw the encampments as a safety issue, while 23 per cent saw them as a form of freedom of speech.

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Poilievre calling lobbyists 'useless' provides roadmap for approaching Conservatives, says GR professionals

Conservatives are looking for public policy changes that will appeal to voters, according to Josie Sabatino, a senior consultant at Summa Strategies.

Continued from page 1

they are similar to statements he's heard from the Conservative leader during private meetings over the last decade.

"I actually think it was, in many ways, useful for him to put out what's important to him in determining how his government will make decisions," said Kelly. "He has made very clear that it's not through luncheons and receptions. It's not even going to be through one-on-one meetings. It's going to be by groups trying to get the public to echo their concerns through individual people, individual Canadians."

Poilievre has not met with representatives of the CFIB since



Megan Buttle, the president of the Government Relations Institute of Canada, says 'I think what's being registered is [to] go and talk to people.' Photograph courtesy of Megan Buttle

he assumed office as leader of the Conservative Party on Sept. 10, 2022, although he communicated with the organization on 12 occasions between Feb. 7, 2013, and March 16, 2021, according to the federal lobbyists' registry.

Kelly argued that Poilievre wants the public to view himself and his party as willing to make decisions "for the average person," rather than as "the plaything of the business community."

"I think what [Poilievre has] done is he's laid out a helpful roadmap for those of us that are keen to influence public opinion as to how to do it," said Kelly. "Did I love the fact that he was critical of my organization, specifically? No. But did he lay out a roadmap by which he's going to make decisions, and that will be ... instructive to those of us that care about these things? Yes, he did. And in those terms, I'm happy about that."

In the op-ed, Poilievre also argued that some corporate lobbyists might work against their company's interests to "curry favour within the Liberal government to win future career gigs for themselves."

Kelly said that it should be kept in mind that it isn't easy remaining non-partisan for an organization engaging in advocacy with the federal government, calling it a constant tightrope walk.

"I don't think people appreciate just how challenging that can be to work with politicians every day, develop relationships with them, and at the same time try to be scrupulously non-partisan," he said. "The reason I'm not panicked by this is that I've been down this road before, and I suspect if the government were to change and Pierre Poilievre becomes prime minister, it'll take a little bit of time, but I suspect relations will normalize very fast."

Megan Buttle, president of the Government Relations Institute of Canada and also the principal leading the digital strategy prac-

tice at Earncliffe Strategies, told *The Hill Times* that Poilievre's message in the op-ed wasn't new. The key takeaway from the op-ed for the lobbying community is the critical importance of talking to Canadians, which government relations professionals already understand, according to Buttle.

"I think what we've heard from members is that there is this strong belief that going to Canadians, and having public policy that's informed by them, is part of advocacy right now. I think the membership does see things like public opinion researchers [and] digital marketing professionals as a way to reach people and hear them," she said. "I think what's being registered is 'go and talk to people.'"

Josie Sabatino, a senior consultant at Summa Strategies and a former director of communications in the office of then-Conservative leader Erin O'Toole, told *The Hill Times* that what's been missing from the conversation since Poilievre's op-ed was published is that the Conservative leader is preparing for the federal election, which will take place either on or before Oct. 20, 2025.

"What he says and does will be under intense scrutiny, specifically around his platform policy commitments," said Sabatino. "I think what he is asking stakeholders to do is to take that same scrutiny when you're asking or requesting something of a Conservative Member of Parliament, and that should be seen as an opportunity, not as a barrier."

The takeaway for lobbyists from Poilievre should be to do their homework, according to Sabatino.

"The thing that we should all take away from this is that we really do need to present a well-thought-out plan, and that means thinking about this in the same way that local MPs do because all politics truly is local," she said. "I think this is an opportunity, and this isn't [Poilievre] saying to lobbyists or corporate Canada, 'Don't



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre criticized 'useless and overpaid' lobbyists in an op-ed published on May 3 by the *National Post*. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

come to me.' It is saying ... 'You need to frame your policies, and make sure that they're backed up by data, and that they have the support of a work base for you.' I think that's really what the Conservatives are looking for as they gear up towards putting out a policy platform," said Sabatino.

Ginny Roth, a partner at Crestview Strategy who previously worked at Queen's Park as an organizer for the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, told *The Hill Times* that when she first read Poilievre's op-ed, her first thought was that people would be surprised by it, but only if they haven't been paying close enough attention.

"To me, it was just an articulation of what good, effective advocacy is, which is, if you want political support for your project, you need to build political support, which means building support among regular Canadians," she said.

Roth said the comments in Poilievre's op-ed could be disheartening, but only for lobbyists prioritizing the Liberal government, which she said is ineffective lobbying.

"If you're interested in doing what I consider to be effective advocacy—building public support for the kind of change you want to see—then you shouldn't be disheartened at all," she said. "I don't think many of the clients we represent were disheartened because I think, ultimately, they see opportunity in telling their stories, and convincing Canadians and politicians that the change they want to see is worthwhile."

Poilievre's comments about lobbyists also were the focus of discussion during an episode of *The Bridge* with Peter Mansbridge podcast on May 3, which included Bruce Anderson, chief strategy officer and partner at Spark Advocacy, and journalist and political commentator Chantal Hébert.

"The point [Poilievre] is making that I find really interest-

ing, and which I believe is blunt but solid advice on at least one level is: if you want to win battles against changes in legislation or policy, you need to win over people to pressure politicians. Politicians do not react to lobbyists or business lobbyists in the way that they react to voters," said Hébert during the podcast.

Anderson said that what first occurred to him in reading the op-ed is that Poilievre exaggerates and uses colourful language to land his point, which he said could be effective politics.

"The second thing that occurs to me, though, is that [Poilievre] is essentially saying 'if it's not popular, I'm not going to do it,' because not everything rises to the level where corporate Canada will say 'if the government made this particular policy change, we would have more success in this area which would be good for Canada,'" said Anderson during the podcast. "And if [Poilievre's] answer is going to be 'Well, you need to run advertising campaigns so that millions of Canadians become familiar with that and decide that they want that,' that's not good government, in my view, and it's not, practically speaking, reasonable advice."

Anderson argued that Poilievre would not be able to operate an effective government "with the description that he put into that op-ed," even with a majority.

"It's unbelievable to me that anybody would imagine that you could run an effective government without all those kinds of contacts, whatever baggage they bring with them," said Anderson during the podcast. "Government would make a lot more big mistakes if it wasn't stress-testing its ideas, if it wasn't hearing from people about ideas that they have that might make government better. That dynamic is as important as anything in our political life and in terms of the effectiveness of our public policy."

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News

MPs to probe Global Affairs contracts after internal audit finds one-quarter broke the rules

The department signed more than 8,000 consulting service contracts totaling \$567-million in the last five fiscal years to support the delivery of its programs, the records show.

BY IREM KOCA

Deputy ministers at Global Affairs Canada are being called to testify before a parliamentary committee following an internal audit that revealed 26 per cent of the department's contracts did not comply with the Financial Administration Act.

The House Government Operations and Estimates Committee (OGGO) adopted the Conservative MP Kelly Block's (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, Sask.) motion on May 6 calling deputy ministers to appear, as well as the auditors responsible for the internal report. The Conservative-led committee has been investigating the Liberal government's contracting practices, including the emergency procurement of the ArriveCan application and the multimillion-dollar contracts awarded to consulting firm McKinsey and Company.

The internal audit that prompted the move looked at consulting service contracts signed by Global Affairs—including headquarters and missions. The audit covers the period between April 2018 to June 2023.

"In the statistical random sample, 72 contracts fully complied with the requirements of the FAA



Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly might be invited by the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee to testify on the findings of an internal audit on government contracting. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

[Financial Administration Act] while 19 contracts did not," reads the report.

The department signed more than 8,000 consulting service contracts totalling \$567-million in the last five fiscal years to support the delivery of its programs, the records show.

The audit highlighted that in one case, a person who held certification authority benefited from the transaction, but did not provide further details on this contract. Certification authority occurs before a department pays the contractor and certifies that goods or services have been provided.

In seven cases, individuals approving transactions or certifications did not have the required authority to do so, according to the internal audit. While some did not have authority over the funds used, others approved contracts with amounts that exceeded their authority limit.

In six cases, the same people exercised both transaction and

certification authority, which is against the Treasury Board's directives, according to the report.

In another six instances, the signed contracts were not provided and, therefore, it was not possible for the auditors to determine whether they complied with the requirements. In three contracts—which were recently signed—the certification authority could not be verified as services had not been yet rendered, the report said.

The Hill Times reached out to Global Affairs for comment on the findings of the internal report, but did not hear back by publishing deadline.

Conservative MP Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.) criticized the government for its approach to contracts.

"We have seen across this NDP-Liberal government so many examples of outrageous contracting irregularities, and taxpayers are now coming to see the pattern through which their money is wasted," Genuis said.

"There is so much in the way of savings to be realized and value to be created by improving the system."

Liberal MP and committee vice-chair Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Ont.) supported the motion calling on deputy ministers to answer questions in response to the internal report. Jowhari also highlighted that the audit looked into "low-dollar value contracts," which he said are not overseen by ministers responsible for Global Affairs, but by senior officials. MPs have decided that ministers tied to the department may be invited to appear before the committee if deemed necessary. The motion was also amended to name three ministers, rather than just Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly, who was singled out in the initial proposal.

Joly (Ahuntsic—Cartierville, Que.), International Trade Minister Mary Ng (Markham—Thornhill, Ont.), and International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen

(York South—Weston, Ont.) all oversee Global Affairs Canada.

According to the report, the department generally complied with applicable authorities and "maintains the integrity of the process," but "improvement is required regarding compliance with the Financial Administration Act".

The FAA establishes the general financial management framework for the government, and defines commitment, transaction, and certification authorities.

"Significant improvement is needed," the report states, to ensure compliance and promote fair, open, transparent procurement processes.

The audit also concluded that for 1,486 contracts, the department complied with the proactive disclosure requirements that kick in for contracts valued at over \$10,000.

The report made two recommendations for Global Affairs. First, it called on the relevant public servants to review processes to ensure compliance with the FAA. An official with Global Affairs told *The Hill Times* that this review has been completed. Second, it urged the department to establish procedures to ensure contract information is readily accessible, preserved, and maintained to comply with regulations, and to promote fair and transparent procurement practices.

The federal government's contracting process has been under heightened scrutiny since the unfolding scandal surrounding the \$59.5-million ArriveCan application procurement, which the RCMP is investigating due to misconduct allegations.

Another contracting controversy surfaced when Procurement Ombud Alexander Jeglic's April 15 report found that federal departments altered procurement strategies to enable McKinsey and Company, a multinational management consulting firm, to secure millions of dollars worth of contracts, which the ombud said created a "strong perception of favouritism" towards the firm.

Ottawa has long pledged to rein in spending on consulting and professional services, which total a record \$21.6-billion, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's estimates for 2023-24.

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The House Government Operations Committee is chaired by Conservative MP Kelly McCauley. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Conservative MP Garnett Genuis says there are many examples of 'outrageous contracting irregularities' overseen by the Liberal government. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Liberal MP Majid Jowhari says ministers are not responsible for the 'low-dollar value contracts' analyzed in the internal audit. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Liberal MP Carr says it's hard to reach voters in current media landscape, while Tory MP Rempel Garner welcomes the changes

'There is an onus and a responsibility' for voters to 'go out and seek some of that information,' says Liberal MP Ben Carr, but he also believes that many citizens are coming to 'rapid determinations' about issues, and those views 'are solidified very quickly.'

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Liberal MP Ben Carr says the changing media landscaping is making it harder than ever for him to communicate with constituents, while Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner is welcoming the chance to speak directly with voters.

Carr, who was first elected in June 2023 in a Winnipeg South Centre, Man., byelection, wrote in a recent op-ed that no matter how much he tries to publicize his positions on issues, many people in his riding are asking him why he hasn't spoken about topics that concern them.

"It is becoming more and more common for me to speak with a constituent who asks why I have not said something about a particular issue. Almost always, it turns out that I have, but it can't be found on a TikTok feed or in the abyss of an X (formerly Twitter) scroll, which is where they are looking," wrote Carr in an April 17 op-ed published in the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Carr told *The Hill Times* he believes he has tried just about everything to break through in the current media and information landscape. He regularly does interviews with traditional media, writes op-eds, and posts across several social media platforms, but he said his constituents seem unaware of what he—or the prime minister—have said on a range of issues.

"This is where I push back with constituents sometimes to say, 'It's not solely my responsibility to get things to you.' I am as open and transparent as a Member of Parliament comes," said Carr, who was named chair



Liberal MP Ben Carr, left, says it's hard to keep voters informed about his work as an MP, while Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner says she can circumvent traditional media and use her own channels to reach supporters. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia

of the Procedure and House Affairs Committee this week, and also serves as a member of the Agriculture and Agri-Food and Indigenous and Northern Affairs committees.

"There is an onus and a responsibility as well on the part of voters to go out and seek some of that information."

Carr, a former teacher and school principal, said he's concerned that public education is not providing the digital literacy training for voters to navigate the current information landscape, and he worries about a lack of professional standards for accuracy when it comes to content that new media creators post online.

"A pillar of democracy is the way in which we apply an ethical standard and code to how we produce and consume information," he said. "There are virtually no universally applied ethical principles or codes in what passes as journalism or media in an amateur form, and this is having a huge impact."

He said he believes many citizens are coming to "rapid determinations" about issues, and those views "are solidified very quickly." Once that happens, he said, it appears that "anything that does not almost as quickly reinforce that view or that narrative" is not noticed by individuals, even if their MP is actively communicating about the matter.

However, Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, Alta.) recently posted a thread on X saying new media platforms were allowing her to reach a larger audience than ever before—and to communicate the message on her terms.

"My last Substack piece was read 110k times (unique views). My last long-form video had

almost 500k views across YouTube and FB," wrote Rempel Garner, who was first elected in 2011 and won by a 35 per cent vote margin in the 2021 election.

Rempel Garner shared those numbers as part of what she called "a thread, with predictions" about the trajectory of traditional media outlets, and how this would change the coverage of politics.

Her jumping-off point was to note the success of subscription-based models like *The Free Press*, a California-based digital media company founded in 2022 by former *New York Times* writers Bari Weiss and Nellie Bowles.

The outlet describes itself as "a new media company built on the ideals that were once the bedrock of American journalism," offering "debates, scoops from trusted reporters, provocations from those thinking outside the lines, and live events that bring people with different views together into a truly diverse community."

A November 2023 *Wall Street Journal* article said, at that time, *The Free Press* had 520,000 total subscribers, including 75,000 paid subscriptions. The outlet currently has over 240,000 followers on X, and over 78,000 followers on TikTok.

"Canadian legacy print media has spent the last 5 years myopically focused on lobbying for rent seeking policies like C18 [the Online News Act] as opposed to transitioning to wildly profitable subscription models like @theFP has built," wrote Rempel Garner.

She predicted that, going forward, long-form newsletters and blog posts on Substack, vertical videos on TikTok and Instagram, and long-form YouTube videos are the formats where the most talented journalists will create their work.

Rempel Garner said she prefers to communicate on these platforms herself because it gives her more control over her message. Her Substack presently has more than 76,000 subscribers, and she has previously described it as somewhere she can "provide context for issues" and "be authentic."

Jesse Brown, publisher for the digital media company CanadaLand, replied to Rempel Garner's post. He said she was advocating for politicians to use these mediums as a way to avoid talking with journalists whose coverage they do not like, and thereby avoid accountability.

Rempel Garner responded that "If I've screwed up I expect to be held to account," but that these changes mean she can "select who I'll talk to based on if I think they're fair or not. And I have a way of presenting my own position no matter the circumstance."

"Legacy MSM [mainstream media] is not the audience gatekeeper it once was, even when I was first elected," she wrote. "Covering politics has changed. It will continue to change. Those who can adapt will thrive. Others won't."

Carr and Rempel Garner are speaking to different audiences: Dornan

Christopher Dornan, a Carleton University journalism professor, said Carr and Rempel Garner are "both right" about the changes they are observing, and in some ways are getting at two different aspects of the same issue.

While Dornan sees Carr trying to "impart information" particularly to constituents who may not have voted for him, he noted that Rempel Garner is describing

success when it comes to communicating with supporters.

"Carr's complaint is that he wants to communicate to members of his constituency. He needs to tell them what they otherwise wouldn't know," said Dornan. "[Rempel Garner] wants to form bonds with the people who did vote for her."

He said Carr is trying to reach people who may not be receptive to what he has to say, "or don't have the patience or the inclination to wade through information that is not pushing their buttons."

Dornan said these trends suggest a "future of journalism looks a lot like its past, before the rise of an ethos of objectivity" that came about following the Second World War.

However, he said, as difficult as it is in the current media landscape, it remains essential to have outlets that focus on delivering accurate information as their first priority.

"There has to be a space of some common ground because otherwise you don't have a community at all," he said.

Dimitri Pavlounis, director of research for CIVIX—an organization that trains and supports schools and educators on how to teach civic literacy—said Carr is correct that citizens have some responsibility to make an effort to become more informed. However, there are also limits on the degree of expertise that is realistic for members of the public to master on detailed policy issues while living busy lives.

He said the education system has come a long way in the past decade by adding digital literacy training to school curriculums to help citizens wade through what they see online.

The challenge remains that the digital media landscape is rapidly changing, and not everyone is still in school.

"At the end of the day," he said, "the fundamental questions we want students to ask and think about are the same: who's putting out the information or the messaging, what's the evidence they're providing, what other viewpoints are out there, and how can I learn more about them?"

A future positive step would be to have training available to adults to better navigate online information, and he said resources from organizations like CIVIX could be offered through partnerships with community groups as a way to support that broad effort. Polling by Abacus Data has found that adults who recall their civics education are more likely to vote and to feel comfortable discussing challenging issues.

Pavlounis said there is room for traditional and new media to help too—by providing "context-rich content that really puts these issues into context for the public"—though he understands there may be challenges to delivering this under a model often driven by clicks.

"There's only so much you can do to hope that people will be attracted to that kind of information, but we need to just build a culture where that type of information is valued again," he said.

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Stuart Benson

Party Central

Politics and the Pen gets heated, but don't blame *Fire Weather*

This year's gala raised \$530,000 for the Writers' Trust of Canada, and awarded the \$25,000 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing to John Vaillant for his book *Fire Weather: The Making of the Beast*.

Journalist **John Vaillant's** *Fire Weather: The Making of the Beast* won 2024's Shaughnessy Cohen Prize For Political Writing at the annual black-tie Politics and the Pen gala on May 7, but while there wasn't a hazy orange sky hanging over this year's festivities, one author in attendance

refused to let the swanky occasion be an excuse to forget that with the great power of the pen must also come great responsibility to make the powerful uncomfortable.

Hundreds of politicians, politicos, pundits, journalists, authors, and writers of all stripes descended upon the Château to mingle, munch on free appetizers, and to honour some of the best in non-fiction political writing. This year's sold-out, 500-seat gala dinner raised \$530,000 to support the Writers' Trust, smashing past last year's \$350,000 fundraising total, and placing the event—now in its 24th year—well on its way to a grand total of \$6-million raised for the organization's literary programs.

The annual event presents the \$25,000 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing, named in honour of the popular Liberal MP for the Ontario riding of Windsor-Tecumseh who sadly died after collapsing from a cerebral hemorrhage in the House in 1998. Each year, the prize is awarded to "an exceptional book of literary

nonfiction that captured a political subject of relevance to Canadian readers."

Alongside the validation that comes with this award, Vaillant had also learned just hours before the event that his book had also been nominated for a Pulitzer prize, and announced that evening that paperback copies of *Fire Weather* had sold out. That will certainly make the copy Green Party Leader **Elizabeth May** hoped to get signed quite the gem, as she was overheard planning to gift it to Emergency Preparedness Minister **Harjit Sajjan** whom she said definitely needed to give it a read.

While Vaillant won the big-money prize, the other four finalists didn't go home empty-handed, with each author receiving a respectable \$2,500, and a free plug of their book in **Party Central**.

The other four finalists selected for the judge's consideration were **Rob Goodman**, Toronto Metropolitan University assistant professor of politics and public administration, and former U.S. congressional staffer for his book *Not Here: Why American Democracy is Eroding and How Canada Can Protect Itself*; **Benjamin Perrin**, a former legal adviser to former prime minister **Stephen Harper**, for *Indictment: The Criminal Justice System on Trial*; **Donald J. Savoie**, the Canada Research Chair in Public Administration and Governance at the Université de Moncton, for *Canada: Beyond Grudges, Grievances, and Disunity*; and documentary filmmaker **Astra Taylor**, for *The Age of Insecurity: Coming Together as Things Fall Apart*.

The five finalists were selected from a long list of 46 books by this year's jury which featured 2022's prize winner **Joanna Chiu**, author of *China Unbound: A New World Disorder*; 2023 finalist **Dale Eisler**,

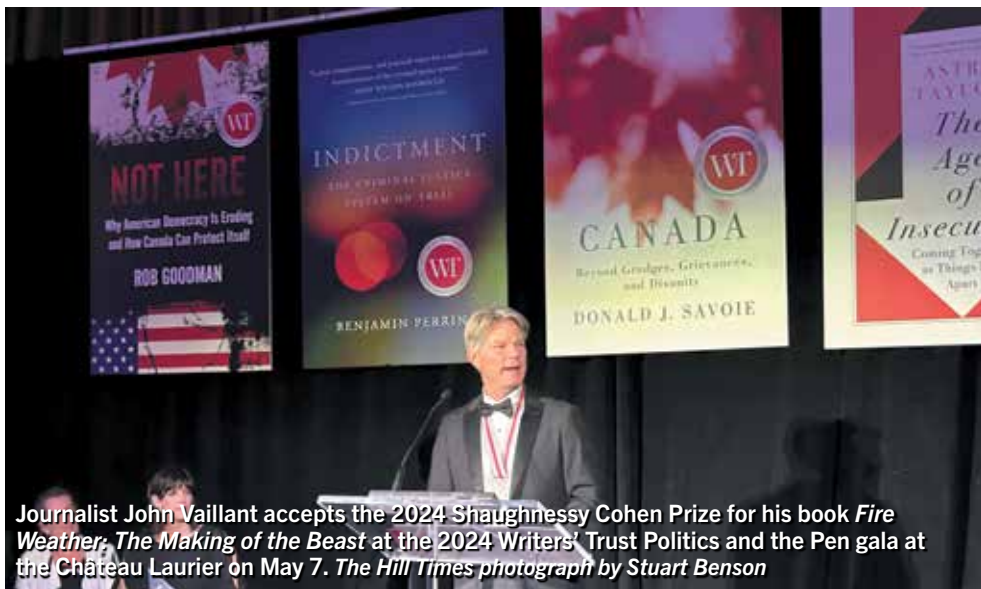


author of *Saskatchewan's Political and Economic Transformation*, and former Ontario premier **Kathleen Wynne**.

Yet, while the award wouldn't be announced until nearly 10:30 p.m., the night began over four hours earlier as **Party Central** arrived at the Château Laurier just after 6 p.m. following a quick pre-reception pint at D'Arcy McGee's with *The Hill Times*' crew, including **Kate Malloy**, **Charelle Evelyn**, **Samantha Wright Allen**, **Andrew Meade**, **Chelsea Nash**, **Christina Leadlay**, and **Tessi Sanci**, as well as **Abbas Rana**, **Irem Koca**, and publisher **Anne Marie Creskey** who joined up with the gang at the reception. *The Hill Times* is a media partner of the Politics and the Pen.

Fortunately, unlike last year's reception, which was kept indoors due to wildfire smoke which turned Ottawa's skies orange, this year's attendees were let loose on *La Terrace* to enjoy the open bar and appetizers with the sun on their faces.

Party Central won't even attempt to name all of the notable attendees spotted mingling at the reception, but there were over a dozen cabinet ministers, two to three dozen Liberal and Conservative



Journalist John Vaillant accepts the 2024 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for his book *Fire Weather: The Making of the Beast* at the 2024 Writers' Trust Politics and the Pen gala at the Château Laurier on May 7. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



Guests mingle for the cocktail hour before the Politics and the Pen gala at the Château Laurier in Ottawa on May 7, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The Hill Times' Irem Koca, left, and Samantha Wright Allen. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, left, and her husband John Kidder. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Rubicon Strategy's Don Newman, left, and former health minister Jane Philpott. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Liberal MPs Darren Fisher, left, and Marco Mendicino. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Party Central



Guests mingled while enjoying complimentary beer, wine, and appetizers on the Château Laurier's La Terrace. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

before the pair could take the stage, an unscheduled speaker took the microphone.

Following opening remarks from House of Commons Speaker **Greg Fergus** and Assembly of First Nations National Chief **Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak**, and before either realized what was happening, **Kagiso Lesego Molohe**, an award-winning South African-Canadian author and playwright, approached the microphone.

Molohe had been standing on stage while Fergus and Nepinak delivered their remarks, but the atmosphere quickly soured in the room once she began speaking about the rising death toll in Gaza due to Israel's war on Hamas.

There were several angry heckles from the crowd throughout Molohe's speech, including several shouts of "free the hostages," and cheers when Molohe remarked that she most likely wouldn't be invited back next year.

While there were some in the audience who were more receptive to Molohe's speech, with scattered applause as she finished speaking, before she had returned to her seat a pair of security guards were following close behind to escort her from the premises.

Outside of the ballroom, **Party Central** managed to catch up with Molohe as she was being escorted out to get her reaction to the angry reception to her speech.

Molohe explained that upon returning to her seat, she was approached by security and told to go with them. When she asked if she was being kicked out, she said the response she received was to collect her things as they had been "asked to lead you out of this event, and you know why."

However, Molohe didn't seem too upset at being shown the door, explaining that she would only "break bread with people who believe that children should not be dying of malnutrition."

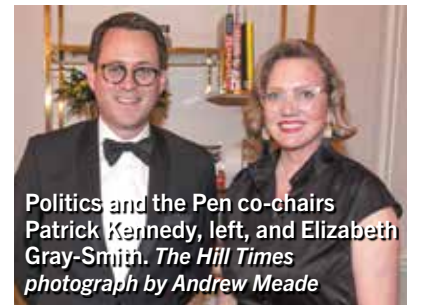
Upon returning to the ballroom, **Party Central** missed the video intro and "thank you" to the corporate sponsors, but managed to catch most of Wynne and Kenney's comedy stylings.

While the general consensus in the room was that the pair were genuinely funny, offering an equal-opportunity roast sparing no partisan target, Kenney may have gotten too blue for even the most blue-blooded attendees with his "Peking Duck" and "Chow Mein" foreign interference euphemisms. However, possibly due to the reception beers having sat in **Party Central's** increasingly empty stomach for the better part of an hour, Kenney's "axe the tax" remix of "eat the meat, throttle the bottle, and get frisky with the whiskey," seemed to win the crowd back.

Mercifully, once the jokes were over, the dinner's main course was finally sent



Gayle McLaughlin, left, Canadian Canola Growers; Hana Sabah, Grain Growers of Canada, and Alex Spence, senior director at Loyalist Public Affairs. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Politics and the Pen co-chairs Patrick Kennedy, left, and Elizabeth Gray-Smith. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



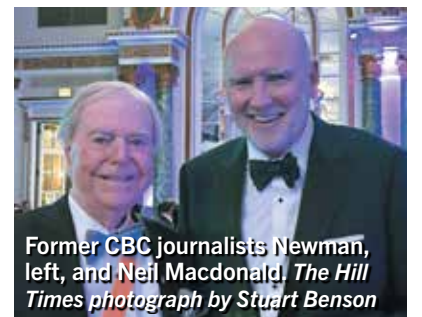
Some of *The Hill Times* party crew: Tessi Sanci, left, Stuart Benson, Abbas Rana, Samantha Wright Allen, Christina Leadlay, Kate Malloy, and Charelle Evelyn. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Party Central's Table 44: Richer, left, 4 Pillars consulting's Reg Rocha, Navigator's Breen Wilkinson, Parliamentary Librarian Heather Lank, former Liberal MP Matt DeCoursey, former diplomat Colin Robertson, former chair of the Parliamentary Centre Maureen Boyd, and Armour. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



Hill & Knowlton's Scott Simms, left; Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan; Sara Power, author of *The Art of Camouflage*; and Stelios Doussis. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



Former CBC journalists Newman, left, and Neil Macdonald. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson

MPs plus Green Party leader **Elizabeth May**, and NDP MP **Charlie Angus**, each with a few staffers in tow; nearly every strategist, lobbyist, and public affairs guru in town, both sides of the Canada-U.S. diplomatic duo **David Cohen** and **Kirsten Hillman**, and tons of journalists including **Stephanie Levitz**, **Jon Ibbiston**, **Nick Taylor-Vaisey**, **Catherine Cullen**, **Vassy Kapelos**, **Mercedes Stephenson**, **Michael Serrapio**, **Elamin Abdelmahmoud**, **Steve Paikin** and Canada's newly appointed ambassador to the Vatican as of May 8, **Joyce Napier**.

After about an hour of pints on the patio and as many of the Korean chicken-and-waffle skewers **Party Central** could get his hands on, the bagpipes sounded, and the attendees with tickets to the actual dinner were invited into the main ballroom. However, while the first blast of the pipes came just after 7:30 p.m., it would take another 15 minutes and two more rounds of bag-pipes to shepherd the slightly tipsy crowd to their seats.

Coupled with her judging duties, Wynne also served as the night's co-host alongside former Alberta premier **Jason Kenney**, but

out to the tables. While awaiting the announcement of the night's award winner, attendees dined on braised beef short rib in a beer jus on a bed of creamed grits and confit Vidalia roots, which helped soak up some of the complimentary beer from the pre-reception nearly two hours in the rear-view mirror. For dessert, there was a pistachio joconde cake with sour cherry compote, Tonka whipped ganache, and pistachio Chantilly cream.

Once the awards were handed out, attendees filed out of the ballroom, with many heading straight to Zoe's, the Châ-

teau Laurier's hotel bar—except for **Kory Teneycke**, who entertained himself in the parking lot by revving his own engine for a bit to show off his expensive sports car.

Finally, while the usual rule is that what happens at Zoe's stays at Zoe's, **Party Central** can't help but report, with some pride, that the gathered attendees did break out in a less-than-impromptu rendition of *Happy Birthday* at the stroke of midnight to celebrate another successful trip around the sun for the CBC's **Raffy Boudjikianian**.

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Gowling WLG's Jacques Shore, left, and Amazon Prime Video Canada's Magda Grace. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Party Central wasn't the only journalist still on the job, as CPAC's Glenn McInnis, right, was still hard at work plucking parliamentarians like Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan from the crowd for interviews. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Immigration Minister Marc Miller, left, and Conservative pundit Kory Teneycke. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



Author Missy Marston, left, and CBC's Raffy Boudjikianian. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Summa Strategies' Jim Armour, left and Elizabeth Gray-Smith. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Conservative MP Scott Atchison, left, and International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



KAN Strategies' Greg MacEachern, left, Earncliffe Strategies' Melanie Richer and Netflix's Stéphane Cardin. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The Gandalf Group's David 'Herle Burly' Herle, left, Joyce Napier, Canada's new ambassador to the Holy See, and the Métropolitain Brasserie's Sarah Chown. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson

Feature

Parliamentary Calendar

Virani to talk about Online Harms Bill on Tuesday at the Empire Club of Canada



Justice Minister Arif Virani will deliver a speech on Tuesday, May 14, at 11 a.m. at the Empire Club of Canada. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

MONDAY, MAY 13

House Sitting Schedule—The House is scheduled to sit for a total of 125 days in 2024. The House is in on break this week, but 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.

Stephen Harper to Deliver Remarks—Former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper will deliver the 2024 Hugh and Laura MacKinnon Roundtable Luncheon hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, May 13 at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details online.

TUESDAY, MAY 14

Justice Minister to Deliver Remarks—Justice Minister and Attorney General of Canada Arif Virani will deliver remarks on “Where Online Harms Have Real World Consequences: The Case for Legislating Against Harm and Hate,” a hybrid event hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Tuesday, May 14, at 11:30 a.m. ET. Details online: empireclubofcanada.com.

Bloc Leader Blanchet to Deliver Remarks—Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet will deliver remarks in French on “A Quebec model of prosperity” hosted by the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal. Tuesday, May 14, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth, 900 René-Lévesque Blvd. W., Montreal. Details online: ccm.ca.

Politics at the Pub with Senator Boehm—ISG Senator Peter Boehm will deliver remarks on “The Future of Canada’s Foreign Service,” part of the Politics at the Hub series hosted by the Canadian International Council’s National Capital branch. Tuesday, May 14, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Heart and Crown Pub, 67 Clarence St., Ottawa. Details online via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

BDC President Hudon to Deliver Remarks—Isabelle Hudon, president

and CEO of the Business Development Bank of Canada, will deliver remarks at a breakfast event, “Development that Matters: Entrepreneurship in Atlantic Canada” hosted by the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. Wednesday, May 15, at 8 a.m. AT at Courtyard by Marriott Halifax Dartmouth, 35 Shubie Dr., Dartmouth, N.S. Details online: business.halifaxchamber.com.

Ministers Blair and Champagne to Deliver Remarks—National Defence Minister Bill Blair and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne will take part in a lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Wednesday, May 15, at 11:30 a.m. ET in a downtown Montreal hotel. Details online: corim.qc.ca.

Lunch: ‘Renewing CUSMA and Perspectives on the U.S. Election’—Canada’s former chief trade negotiator Steve Verheul will deliver remarks on “Table Stakes: Renewing CUSMA and Perspectives on the US Election” at a lunch hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Wednesday, May 15, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details online: cdhowe.org.

THURSDAY, MAY 16

Ambassador Theodore to Deliver Remarks—Nadia Theodore, head of Canada’s permanent mission in Geneva, ambassador and permanent representative to the WTO, UNCTAD, ITC and WIPO, will deliver remarks in a webinar hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, May 16, at 12:30 pm. ET happening online: cdhowe.org.

FRIDAY, MAY 17

Pink Tea with Charlotte Gray—The Famous 5 Foundation hosts award-winning non-fiction author Charlotte Gray for its virtual Pink Tea. Friday, May 17, at 2 p.m. ET, happening online: famous5.ca.

TUESDAY, MAY 21

Panel: ‘How does Canada fix the housing crisis?’—The Institute for Research in Public Policy hosts a panel discussion: “How does Canada fix the housing crisis?” Cherise Burda, Jim Dunn, and Carolyn Whitzman will explore practical solutions to the crisis, discuss practical on-the-ground strategies, and evaluate the impact of current and potentials of policies on environ-

mental sustainability and climate-resilience. Tuesday, May 21 at 12 p.m. ET at Impact Hub Ottawa, 123 Slater St., 7th Floor. Details online: irpp.org.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 22

AFN Dialogue on Transport and Storage of Used Nuclear Fuel—The Assembly of First Nations hosts the fourth 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. Wednesday, May 22, at 8 a.m. ET at the Delta Hotels by Marriott, 2240 Sleeping Giant Pkwy., Thunder Bay, Ont. Details online: afn.ca/events.

SOCAN Parliamentary Reception—The Society of Composers, Authors, and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN) is back on the Hill to host its annual reception that will showcase some of the best in Canadian musical talent. Wednesday, May 22, from 5:30 p.m. (or after votes) to 7:30 p.m. in the East Block Courtyard, Parliament Hill. Details to follow.

An Evening with Joe Clark—The Pearson Centre hosts “An Evening with Joe Clark,” a celebration of the 45th anniversary of Clark’s election as Canada’s 16th prime minister. Wednesday, May 22, at 5:45 p.m. at the Shaw Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Contact info@thePearsonCentre.ca.

THURSDAY, MAY 23

Minister Anand at the Mayor’s Breakfast—Treasury Board President Anita Anand will be the special guest at the Mayor’s Breakfast, hosted by Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, the *Ottawa Business Journal*, and the Ottawa Board of Trade. Thursday, May 23, at 7:30 a.m. ET at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Details online: business.ottawabot.ca.

Breakfast: ‘VIA Rail’s 2030 vision’—The Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal hosts a breakfast event with Mario Pélouquin, president and CEO of VIA Rail, who will deliver remarks in French on “VIA Rail’s 2030 vision: To be at the heart of Canada’s passenger journey.” Thursday, May 23, at 7:30 a.m. ET at Le Centre Sheraton, 1201 René-Lévesque Blvd. W., Montreal. Details online: ccm.ca.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29

Ambassador Hillman to Deliver Remarks—Canada’s Ambassador to the United States Kirsten Hillman will deliver remarks in French at a lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Wednesday, May 29, at 11:30 a.m. at Le Centre Sheraton Montréal, 1201 Blvd René-Lévesque W., Montreal. Details online: corim.qc.ca.

Vote16 Ottawa Summit—Non-affiliated Senator Marilou McPheeran hosts the Vote16 Ottawa Summit, a historic gathering of groups and leaders working towards youth empowerment through democratic reform. Wednesday, May 29, at 2 p.m. the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Details online via Eventbrite.

Vancouver Fraser Port Authority Reception—The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority will be holding a reception. Wednesday, May 29, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Métropolitain Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr., Ottawa.

LAC Scholar Awards—Get ready to honour outstanding Canadians who have left an indelible mark on our country’s cultural, literary, and historical heritage at the 2024 Library and Archives Canada Scholar Awards. Presented by The Library and Archives Canada Foundation and Library and Archives Canada, with generous sponsor Air Canada. Wednesday, May 29, 6 p.m. ET, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa.

Riverkeeper Gala—The 2024 Riverkeeper Gala will take place on Wednesday, May 29, 6-11 p.m. ET at the NCC River House, 501 Sir George-Étienne Cartier Pkwy., Ottawa. Tickets: riverkeepergala.com.

THURSDAY, MAY 30

2024 Economic Reconciliation Summit—Canada 2020 and Indigenous leaders from across the country host the 2024 Economic Reconciliation Summit: “The Indigenous-led Economy.” Explore cutting-edge Indigenous-led economic development projects, the unquestionable value of Indigenous leadership and innovation, and solutions for supporting the sovereignty, wealth, and well-being of Indigenous people and communities now and for generations to come. Thursday, May 30, at 10 a.m. ET the Westin Ottawa Hotel, 11 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Details online via Eventbrite.

Panel: ‘Canada’s Current Economic Landscape’—The Economic Club of Canada hosts a panel discussion, “Examining Canada’s Current Economic Landscape” with former Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz and former federal Liberal finance minister John Manley. Which economic policies should Canada look to apply for the remainder of 2024, what are the options available, and what can be done in the immediate future to ensure the health and longevity of the Canadian economy? Thursday, May 30, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Hilton Toronto, 145 Richmond St. W., Toronto. Details online: economicclub.ca.

Steve Paikin to Launch New Book—TVO host Steve Paikin will take part in the Ottawa launch of his biography on former a prime minister, *John Turner: An Intimate Biography of Canada’s 17th Prime Minister*. He will sign copies of the book, which is included with ticketed entry. A reception will follow. Thursday, May 30, at 5 p.m. ET at Walter House, 282 Somerset St. W., Ottawa. Details online via Eventbrite.

Tapiriit 2024—Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami hosts an intimate celebration of Inuit culture and the traditions that unite us. Enjoy an evening of entertainment and a culinary journey of Inuit country food, hunted and harvested across the four regions of Inuit Nunangat. Thursday, May 30, 6-10 p.m. ET, National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St. Details on Facebook or Instagram. Purchase tickets online: itk.ca.

2024 Ellen Meiksins Wood Lecture—This year’s Ellen Meiksins Wood Prize recipient, economist Dr. Isabella Weber, will deliver the 2024 Ellen Meiksins Wood Lecture. Weber is a leading voice on policy responses to inflation, and has advised policy makers in the United States and Germany on

questions of price stabilization. Thursday, May 30, at 7 p.m. ET at the George Vari Engineering and Computing Centre Toronto. Details online: torontomu.ca.

SUNDAY, JUNE 2

Mexican Presidential Election—Mexico’s presidential election happens on Sunday, June 2.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5

2024 Energy Summit—The Economic Club of Canada hosts the “2024 Energy Summit: Examining Canada’s Energy Landscape.” Details to follow. Wednesday, June 5, at the Hilton Toronto, 145 Richmond Rd., Toronto. Details online: economicclub.ca.

Panel: ‘Canada-U.S. Relations: The Road Ahead’—Former Canadian ambassadors to the United States Gary Doer and David McNaughton will deliver remarks on “Canada-U.S. Relations: The Road Ahead” at the C.D. Howe Institute’s annual Directors’ Dinner. Wednesday, June 5, at 5:30 p.m. ET the Fairmont Royal York, 100 Front St. W., Toronto. Details online: cdhowe.org.

The Walrus Talks Canada’s Creative Power—CBC President and CEO Catherine Tait will take part in a panel discussion “The Walrus Talks Canada’s Creative Power” hosted by The Walrus. Other participants include Leslie Weir, Librarian and Archivist of Canada; Michelle Chawla, director and CEO, Canada Council for the Arts; and Valerie Creighton, president and CEO, Canada Media Fund; among others. Wednesday, June 5, at 7 p.m. ET at the National Gallery of Canada, 380 Sussex Dr. Details online via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5—THURSDAY, JUNE 6

Canadian Vote Summit 2024—The Democratic Engagement Exchange hosts the Canadian Vote Summit 2024, a two-day gathering of policymakers, civil society organizations, journalists, and election administrators to tackle threats to Canada’s Democracy. The two keynote speakers are former Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi and author David Frum. Wednesday, June 5, to Thursday, June 6, at Toronto Metropolitan University, 350 Victoria St., Toronto. Details online via Eventbrite.

THURSDAY, JUNE 6—SUNDAY, JUNE 9

Federation of Canadian Municipalities Annual Conference—The FCM will hold its annual conference in Calgary, June 6-9.

THURSDAY, JUNE 13—SATURDAY, JUNE 15

G7 Summit—The 50th G7 Summit will take place in Putignano, Puglia, Italy, from Thursday, June 13, to Saturday, June 15.

TUESDAY, JUNE 25

Tom Kierans Lecture 2024—Former Conservative cabinet minister James Moore, now a senior adviser with Dentons, joins University of Toronto professor Janice Gross Stein for the annual Tom Kierans Lecture 2024 on “Polarization, Geopolitics, and Corporate Partners: The New Global Economy” hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, June 25 at 5:30 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details online: cdhowe.org.

FRIDAY, JULY 5—SUNDAY, JULY 14

Calgary Stampede 2024—Politicians from all political stripes will likely be attending the 2023 Calgary Stampede.

TUESDAY, JULY 9—THURSDAY, JULY 11

NATO Summit—Heads of state and government of NATO member countries will gather to discuss key issues facing the Alliance, and provide strategic direction for its activities. Tuesday, July 9, to Thursday, July 11, in Washington, D.C. Details: nato.int.

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.

