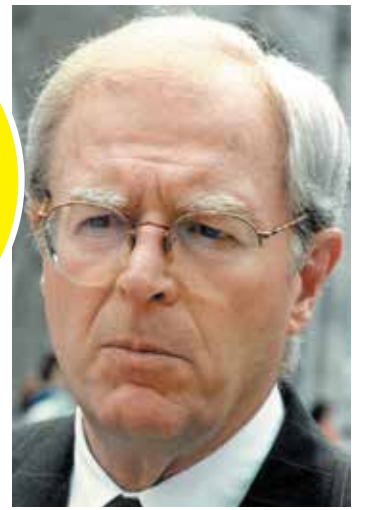


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THE HILL TIMES

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CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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NEWS

Trudeau internally announces provincial campaign co-chairs for next election, Liberal sources say

BY ABBAS RANA

The next federal election is 18 months away, but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has already internally announced the names of provincial election campaign co-chairs.

According to Liberal sources, Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) has recently appointed Government House Leader Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.), Liberal MPs Mark Garretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Ont.), and Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Ont.) as Ontario co-chairs. Gould currently is on parental leave, and Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) is serving as the government House Leader.

Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) and long time Liberal Serge Paquette are the campaign co-chairs from Quebec. Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjit Sajjan (Vancouver South, B.C.) and Liberal MP Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, B.C.) represent British Columbia.

Former senior cabinet ministerial staffer Catherine Moar, who now works as a principal at public affairs firm Navigator, has been appointed as co-chair for Alberta; Sandy Chahal, chief operating officer at Lawton Wealth Management, for Manitoba; Mac Hird, a former cabinet ministerial

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OPINION

Our cabinet government is on life support, and it needs a reboot, stat

Canada should commit to limit the size of cabinet to 20, and to bring all important government decisions before cabinet. Give more power to cabinet and stop using it as a focus group. This would also help to bring cabinet government back and reallocate some of the savings to MPs and parliamentary committees. **See Donald Savoie's column on p. 12.**



She's got the power: Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland is the most powerful minister in the prime minister's 39-member cabinet. But Donald Savoie argues that Canada's cabinet is little more than a focus group today, and much too big. British prime minister Winston Churchill, for instance, had a 15-member cabinet in 1942 during the Second World War, and Canada should have a smaller cabinet today. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

NEWS

'Not used to them this early and this aggressive,' says MP Ashton of Manitoba wildfires as communities evacuated

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

The ferocity of the fires that forced the evacuation of northwest Manitoba communities has not been seen so early in the year before, says the area's NDP MP Niki Ashton as she called for solidarity and support for her constituents in the face of another challenging wildfire season.

"We're used to forest fires in the summer, but we're not used to them this early and this aggressive," Ashton told *The Hill Times* in a phone interview. Her Churchill-Keewatinook Aski, Man., riding has a population of about 80,000. "For [the fires] to have moved so quickly due to drought and wind conditions, for there to be this many people evacuated at this stage as early as it is in the season, this is something we haven't seen to this extent before."

About 550 people were evacuated from Cranberry Portage, Man., which is approximately 585 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg, as a fire burns close to the town. WE010, as the fire is known by the Manitoba Wildfire Service, burned through at least 31,600 hectares as of last week, including within 1.5 kilometres of Cranberry Portage.

Another fire, dubbed WE011, is burning south of the town

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Mike Lapointe
Heard On The Hill

Live, from Parliament Hill! It's the cutest pets photo contest



This is your 15 minutes, animal folks: Molly, top left, Stella, Gaston, Justin (the cat), bottom left, Moose Tracks (the cow), and Annie, the horse. Photographs courtesy of the Canadian Animal Health Institute

The most important election of the year is here. From now until early June, Hill dwellers have the sacred task of determining whom among us has the cutest pet.

The Canadian Animal Health Institute's second annual "Cutest Pets on Parliament Hill Photo Contest" is now live, and everyone can vote for their favourite in three categories: Dog, Cat, and Other. The latter category includes a few horses, hamsters, rabbits, a duck, a chickadee, wild turkey, and one really cute cow.

If looks alone aren't enough to sway your vote, each of the contenders has entered a policy platform—by which we mean biography—about their connection to the Hill, their personalities, and why they deserve your vote.

The CAHI calls it the "hottest vote in paw-litics," and said it received more than 100 entries from parliamentarians, staffers, and Hill reporters. It narrowed the final list down to 10 finalists for each category. Vote at CAHI's website: cahi-icsa.ca. The winner will be announced on June 11 at its "Pet Gala."

"This annual contest serves as a platform to celebrate the joy and companionship that pets bring to our lives, while also emphasizing the importance of access to essential veterinary medicines for pet owners and veterinarians across the country," said President and CEO **Catherine Filesjki** in a statement.

Wachtel's favourite desert island book? *The Stories of Alice Munro*

Eleanor Wachtel, the illustrious host of CBC Radio's *Writers and Company*, *Wachtel on the Arts and Ideas*, tweeted that if she had only one book to take to a desert island, it would be *The Stories of Alice Munro*.

"There is so much there that you can read + reread + always find more. I can't remember when she wasn't in my life or through her writing, revealing things to me about my life. Her loss is huge," Wachtel tweeted on May 14, noting that one of her favourite Munro books is *Friend of My Youth*.

Alice Munro, one of Canada's finest authors and the master of the short story, died last week at the age of 92. She won the Man Booker Prize International Prize for lifetime achievement in 2009, and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013.

Angus subpoenaed to testify on death threats against him

NDP MP **Charlie Angus** has published the subpoena he's received to attend court related



NDP MP Charlie Angus. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to death threats he alleges were made against him, as well as his staff and local police.

The subpoena, posted to X (formerly Twitter) states that Angus must attend court in Kirkland Lake, Ont., on May 31, June 21, and June 28 to give evidence in a case in which a defendant faces two charges of uttering threats-cause death or bodily harm.

"This is face of democracy in Canada in 2024," Angus wrote in the tweet. The Member for Timmins-James Bay, Ont., who is not reoffering at the next election, has spoken frequently about the tactics of intimidation and harassment affecting MPs' abilities to work. He wrote in a column for *The Tyee* on May 10 that photos of his daughters and where they worked have been posted online, while others threatened to go after his family.

Ex-CSIS head Reid Morden dies, aged 82

Reid Morden, a one-time director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and former diplomat, has died. He was 82 years old.

Morden's family noted in an obituary that he died on May 7 in Toronto. A career diplomat, Morden joined what was then known as the Department of External Affairs in 1963. During his career, he was appointed to diplomatic posts in New York, Karachi, Geneva, and Tokyo. He was director of CSIS between 1988 and 1992, followed by posts as deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, and president of Atomic Energy of Canada.

ISG Senator **Peter Boehm**, himself a former diplomat, wrote on X that Morden was "a great public servant. Smart, dedicated and calm, he advised leaders, ministers and junior officers alike. I was honoured to serve as his director when he was G7 Sherpa and learned a lot from him. May he rest in peace."

Drouin pays tribute to long-time public servant Lennox Hinds

Liberal MP **Francis Drouin** paid tribute in the House on May 10 to Dr. **Lennox Hinds** who worked at the Canadian International Development Agency, as well as at Fisheries and Oceans Canada as a fisheries specialist and senior adviser during his 35-year career. Hinds, who lived in Drouin's Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Ont., died at the age of 85 in January.

Drouin called Hinds "an outstanding public servant" who believed in political engagement. A Liberal, Drouin said he knew Hinds for over 25 years and was just a young adolescent when he first met him.

"He always proved to be a friend who provided sound advice," said Drouin. "Sometimes I would have to go to his door last during elections because he would always want to have a drink and chat about politics. My sincere condolences to his wife, **Marjorie**, and his family. He will be missed."



Liberal MP Francis Drouin paid tribute to long time public servant Lennox Hinds, pictured, who recently died at the age of 85. *Photograph courtesy of Beechwood Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Services*

Hinds' obituary described him as a fine arts collector, gourmet cook, promoter of democracy and political engagement, and someone who has "left his mark and made this world a better place."

Lyft Canada hires Allaham as a public policy manager based in Quebec



Maria Allaham is joining the team at Lyft Canada as a public policy manager based in Quebec. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Maria Allaham, who spent a number of years on the Hill including as a former senior adviser to Environment Minister **Steven Guilbeault**, will be joining the team at Lyft Canada as a public policy manager based in Quebec.

Allaham also worked as a policy adviser and regional adviser for Quebec in the office of the minister of women and gender equality from December 2018 to December 2019. Following her time in government, Allaham worked as a senior adviser for government affairs at Bombardier. She holds policy undergraduate and master's degrees from Concordia University.

IRPP to host talk on how to fix the housing crisis

The Institute for Research in Public Policy will host a policy discussion on May 21 on how Canada can come to grips with the ongoing housing crisis.

The panel, which includes policy analyst **Cherise Burda**; **Jim Dunn**, associate dean of research at McMaster University's faculty of social science and director of the Canadian Housing Evidence Collaborative; and **Carolyn Whitzman**, adjunct professor at the University of Ottawa's department of geography, environment and geomatics, will focus on the intersecting challenges of the housing crisis in this country, emphasizing "the urgent need for affordable and accessible housing for low-income and vulnerable populations, alongside the integration of sustainable and climate-resilient, future-ready community housing infrastructure."

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Parties should ‘govern themselves’ but must better regulate nominations and voter data, says former candidate Maddeaux

Digital privacy expert Colin Bennett says complaints of improper use of Conservative voter lists in the York region riding contest offer a ‘real-life example’ of the problems with parties self-regulating their nomination races.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Former high-profile Conservative nomination candidate Sabrina Maddeaux says she is not yet calling for stricter rules governing federal party nomination races or handling of voter data but—depending on the outcome of her recent complaint to the party—it may be the best way forward.

“I definitely think how nomination processes are run needs to be looked at,” Maddeaux told *The Hill Times*, saying this is one of the reasons she chose to go public with concerns about the Conservative nomination process in the riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Ont. “But I would still like to see parties find a way to be able to govern themselves.”

However, she added, “if parties ultimately refuse to reform or regulate themselves then maybe we do need to talk about another organization engaging in some more oversight.”

Maddeaux is a former *National Post* columnist who left that role to seek the Tory nomination in the Toronto-area riding earlier this year. At that time, her announcement was widely regarded as Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre’s (Carleton, Ont.) team attracting a star candidate with the potential to be an asset in government. She was also facing stiff competition for the nomination against former MP Costas Menegakis, who held the seat between 2011 and 2015.

However, on May 9, Maddeaux posted a video and lengthy thread on the social media platform X stating that she was withdrawing from the race over what she described as a “corrupted process” with “no evidence that a promised internal investigation is actually



Then-Conservative nomination candidate Sabrina Maddeaux, second from right, canvasses with members of her team in the riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Ont., while seeking her party’s nomination there. Photograph courtesy of X

underway” despite her filing a complaint with the party. Many of Maddeaux’s concerns centred around access and use of voters’ personal data.

Party rules state that only green-lit nomination candidates are to receive a copy of the current membership list for their riding—a vital asset in getting out the vote to win a nomination race. Maddeaux alleges that a rival campaign received an updated list in advance.

She bases this on a claim that voters to whom she sold memberships were receiving emails from a rival camp before the completion of the green-lighting process. She added that the emails were sent from the name “Norman McDaniel” who turned out not to be a real member in the riding—something she says the party confirmed “after some pressure.”

“Multiple members told me they felt harassed by this unknown sender, didn’t feel secure voting, and were concerned about both their data being compromised and the integrity of the election,” wrote Maddeaux on X. “It was obvious why they might feel intimidated. An unknown entity had their confidential personal information and was attempting to aggressively influence their vote.”

She added that the York region constituency is one of the 13 ridings alleged to have been the target of foreign interference in 2021.

However, Conservatives have pushed back against Maddeaux’s claims.

Fred DeLorey, who previously served as the party’s national campaign manager and as director of political operations, said he oversaw at least 1,000 nominations in that time.

“What I’m seeing here is someone who knew they were going to lose and looked for a way out, and decided to go out in the most

blaze-of-glory way possible,” he said.

Some reports have said Maddeaux had only sold 50 memberships, but DeLorey said even if Maddeaux had sold 200 memberships—the number she claimed in an interview on CBC’s *Power and Politics*—that would still not be nearly enough to be competitive in a GTA riding.

Maddeaux responded that some nominations only see a few hundred voters turn out, and that she had also identified thousands of other supporters who were already members—something which DeLorey said raised questions about how she could have done this before receiving the membership list.

In a statement posted on X, Conservative Party Communications Director Sarah Fischer said the allegations were “completely false.”

“It’s common for the party to receive complaints from nomination candidates about their competitors over suspicions of wrongdoing and the use of lists,” wrote Fischer. “In fact, we received a complaint about Ms. Maddeaux’s campaign sending out an email to current and former members of the party when she should not have had access to a membership list.”

Maddeaux said in her thread that some of the members who received emails had also filed complaints with the federal privacy commissioner’s office and Elections Canada.

The privacy commissioner’s office told *The Hill Times* that because political parties are not covered under federal privacy law, its office “is not in a position to accept or investigate complaints about matters that fall outside of its jurisdiction.”

The office pointed to past comments by federal Privacy Commissioner Philippe Dufresne in which he has called for greater oversight.

“Political parties should be subject to privacy requirements that are grounded in legislation, that conform with internationally-recognized privacy principles, and that include recourse to an independent third party,” said Dufresne at a May 2023 appearance before the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

A spokesperson for Elections Canada said complaints about the activities of candidates and their campaigns should be directed to the Commissioner of Canada Elections, which is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Canada Elections Act.

That office said it could not comment on specific complaints, but noted “the regulation of nomination contests falls mostly to the parties themselves” and that its jurisdiction “is limited to areas of political financing, primarily as it relates to reporting of expenses.” It added that not all complaints received by the office result in an investigation.

Maddeaux told *The Hill Times* that since posting her thread on X, she has not received any further communication from the Conservative Party about whether it will launch an investigation.

Fisher did not reply to questions from *The Hill Times* about the status of an investigation, or whether the situation pointed to a need for greater oversight of nominations or the handling of voter data.

A ‘real-life example’ of the problems with self-regulation: Bennett

The disagreement comes at a time when the issue of oversight for political parties—both in terms of how they manage nomination races and govern voter data—have been hotly debated, including in court.

The foreign interference inquiry has raised questions about whether party nominations are too open to such influence. Meanwhile, proposed reforms to the Canada Elections Act and an ongoing court case in British Columbia have raised questions about whether the privacy laws governing Canada’s federal political parties—often described as a self-regulatory approach—are too loose.

Digital privacy expert Colin Bennett said the controversy over Maddeaux’s nomination race is “a real-life example” of the issues at stake with self-regulation. It demonstrates how having a third-party oversight process could help, he said, such as granting the federal privacy commissioner the power to launch an investigation.

“It would enable us to get to the truth,” said Bennett. “Without that, it’s difficult to see how the truth of the situation could come out ... There’s just claim and counterclaim in the media without any independent arbiter looking into the situation.”

However, DeLorey said “there’s nothing new here” on voter data issues raised by the case.

“Lists are closely guarded as best as possible,” he said. “But at the end of the day, it’s not always possible to do that.”

He also made the case that parties should be free to govern their own nomination processes.

“It 100 per cent should be the party, not Elections Canada,” said DeLorey. “This is a private group, a private club, that’s how the courts look at it. The party and the membership should determine the process. And that’s exactly what’s happened here.”

DeLorey said that while he personally disagrees with non-citizens being allowed to vote in a nomination process—something that the federal Liberals currently allow—he said it is that party’s business to make the call.

“And that’s maybe why I’m not a Liberal,” said DeLorey. “Political parties get to determine their own way of choosing candidates.”

Maddeaux said she chose to go public with her concerns in hopes of “starting a larger conversation, and building on what had already been discussed in recent headlines.”

“[Nominations] are such a crucial part of our democratic process,” she said. “Not a lot of people participate in nomination contests, but they impact who actually ends up on the ballot for the parties, who ends up being the MP, and then potentially future cabinet ministers or even party leaders.”

She said how the Conservative Party handles her complaint may shape her view on whether more regulations are needed in areas such as nominations and the use of voter data.

“When there are existing rules within party bylaws and constitutions, they should be enforced,” she said. “If political parties prove over and over again that they are not willing to do that, then maybe we do have to have some larger conversations about reform.”

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News

Changes to Lobbying Act unlikely before 2025 federal election, says lawyer

Chances to improve Canada's lobbying regime were missed in 2017 and 2022.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Any changes to the rules governing lobbyists that may result from a long overdue review of the Lobbying Act are unlikely to have time to come into force before the late 2025 deadline for a federal election, according to a regulatory advocacy and advisory lawyer.

"In terms of the timeline to achieve and complete a review before the next election, there's certainly time, if a committee gets underway with this, for that to be done," said Timothy Cullen, a partner at McMillan LLP who advises clients in matters relating to government. "I think the very important unknown is whether any recommendations that would arise from that review could be implemented by Parliament. That's where the time crunch seems to come in."

The House Ethics Committee is overdue to review the Lobbying Act, which is mandated to occur every five years. Lobbying Commissioner Nancy Bélanger appeared before the House Ethics Committee on April 16 and reminded the committee members that the last review was conducted in 2012, and that opportunities to improve Canada's lobbying regime were missed in 2017 and 2022. She urged the committee to prioritize a review of the Lobbying Act without further delay.

"I will continue to identify and pursue improvements that could enhance the transparency, fairness, clarity, and efficiency of the federal lobbying regime, but most of the regime's identified deficiencies can only be addressed through legislative amendments," Bélanger told the committee.

Later in the meeting, NDP MP Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.), his party's ethics critic, said that he fully supported a review, and that he intended to bring forward a motion at a later time to initiate one.

Such a motion has yet to be put forward.

A review of the Lobbying Act can be initiated through an order of reference to do so from the House of Commons, or as a result of a motion from a member of the House Ethics Committee.

Cullen told *The Hill Times* that he's surprised that the period for conducting a review of the Lobby-



Lobbying Commissioner Nancy Bélanger appeared at the House Ethics Committee on April 16 and urged the committee members to prioritize a review of the Lobbying Act without further delay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ing Act has been missed twice. He said that if a review isn't initiated prior to the House rising for the summer, that would only leave a handful of months for a review to be conducted, and for a legislative process to be carried through to royal assent before the next federal election, which will take place on Oct. 20, 2025 at the latest.

"That's not to say a government post-October 2025—whoever that may be—couldn't pick up...the prior Parliament committee's recommendations and move forward at that time. But there's more than just a committee undertaking the review that's going to have to happen before you're actually going to see any change to the Lobbying Act occur," said Cullen. "There's just a lot to have happen there in a year when there's a lot of other things that people want to have happen. Parliament's got infinitesimal time to deal with issues, and so that's where I see the issue potentially coming up."

In April, Bélanger told the committee that one issue with the rules currently is that "there's too much lobbying that does not require registration," and she is considering amending an existing interpretation guidance from her office in regards to the "significant part of duties" test.

Bélanger released a list of 11 recommendations for changes to the act in February 2021, which included a call to eliminate the act's "20 per cent rule," also known as the significant-part-of-duties test. The current rule allows businesses and organizations to forgo registering if the collected lobbying activities of individuals do not constitute what would be 20 per cent or more of the duties of a single, full-time employee. Her

recommendation was to replace the 20-per-cent rule with a simpler requirement that all lobbying activities should be registered by default unless an exemption is granted.

Cullen said that the longer Parliament delays in a review of the Lobbying Act, the more likely the lobbying commissioner will take action herself.

"That is not to suggest that the commissioner is acting outside the scope of their authority. I'm absolutely not suggesting that, but she made it very clear that she's currently considering ... amending the existing interpretation guidance from her office on the significant-part-of-duties test," said Cullen. "I'm not convinced that's the best way for changes to the way we regulate lobbying to be done. It would be better if the committee has the opportunity



Timothy Cullen, a partner at McMillan LLP, says "there's more than just a committee undertaking the review that's going to have to happen before you're actually going to see any change to the Lobbying Act occur." *Photograph courtesy of Timothy Cullen*

to study the legislation and make recommendations, and then Parliament can consider those."

In terms of how businesses should prepare for the possibility of changes to the Lobbying Act, Cullen recommended engaging in "compliance monitoring."

"Businesses should have in place tracking mechanisms, whether it's as simple as an Excel spreadsheet [if they are] doing enough lobbying to trigger the requirement to register under the current framework. And if they don't have tools in place like that, it's possible that they would reach the threshold to register and not be aware that they have," he said. "We know the commissioner is certainly favourable to reducing—or perhaps even eliminating—the threshold for registration and ... the commissioner may in the interim take steps by reinterpreting the meaning of 'significant part of duties' to lower that registration threshold. [That's] all the more reason you should have systems in place now to monitor the frequency of your lobbying activity so that you are ready to register whenever you hit the threshold, whatever it may be."

Cullen added that it is also a good time for businesses to take a look at the commissioner's preliminary recommendations from 2021, which he said "will surely be given due consideration by the committee in a review."

Megan Buttle, president of the Government Relations Institute of Canada and also the principal leading the digital strategy practice at Earncliffe Strategies, told *The Hill Times* that an update to the Lobbying Act is important because of how the government-relations environment has evolved in the last decade.

"How are we using AI? How does it interact with our lobbying efforts? Does that have a role to play?" she said. "How people are engaging in certain types of communication has evolved, and obviously, the Lobbying Act provides guidance around types of communications, and that's as simple as requests for information from certain individuals, to also campaign work and ... digital tools to reach Canadians, and ask[ing] them to engage in advocacy activities such as letters, petitions, [and] online social media content. All of those things have changed quite a bit since the Lobbying Act was last looked at."

Buttle said GRIC has prepared for a review of the act, which is "really important for our members."

"I think a review is important just from a governance perspective of making sure that, even if nothing changes, that we went through the due diligence of doing a review, [and] the consultation process associated with it," she said. "Maybe there are elements that we don't need to change, but we need to have time and space to look at that, and evaluate that appropriately."

Duff Conacher, the co-founder of Democracy Watch, told *The Hill Times* that the delay in conducting a review of the Lobbying Act shows that MPs "don't care about stopping secret, unethical lobbying."

Conacher argued there have been scandals in recent years involving lobbying activity that has contributed to an atmosphere of mistrust among Canadians. As an example, he cited Facebook, which in 2018 announced it would join Canada's registry of lobbyists after NDP MP Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, Ont.) raised questions with Bélanger about whether the social media giant was following the rules when it comes to lobbying the government.

"Who knows what's happening now in terms of unregistered lobbying? That usually comes to light later, if it comes to light at all," said Conacher in an interview on May 14.

Conacher argued that "the biggest loophole" in the current lobbying regime relates to the 20-per-cent rule. Lobbyists are currently not required to register and disclose their lobbying activities, emails, texts, or other written communications in monthly communication reports if they are not paid to lobby, or under other conditions such as if they are lobbying about the enforcement of a law or obtaining a tax credit, according to Conacher.

"Those huge loopholes must be to be closed, or rampant secret lobbying will continue to undermine and corrupt federal policy-making processes," said Conacher in an emailed statement on May 14. "If MPs don't work together to introduce and pass a bill before the next election closing all the loopholes in the law that allow for secret, unethical lobbying, they will only increase the mistrust and cynicism many voters have about federal political parties and politicians."

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Ottawa Centre MP Naqvi says 'no consensus' on return-to-office issue from constituents following Treasury Board's decree

A number of Ottawa-area mayors wrote to the Treasury Board president with their major concerns that the government's back-to-office decision will have on their local economies and the environment.

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

Following Treasury Board's decree that federal public service workers would have to return to the office three days a week and executives expected to return four days a week, Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi, who represents Ottawa Centre, Ont., says "there is no consensus on the issue" from his constituents.

Canada's federal public service unions have been fiercely against the plan to bring workers back into the office three days a week, and have launched a legal challenge against the federal government. Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) national president Chris Aylward warned the federal government during a May 8 press conference that it should be prepared "for a summer of discontent."

The unions, including PSAC, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada and the Canadian Association of Professional Employees have filed a policy grievance and a labour complaint against the Treasury Board to the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board.

Most people want to work in hybrid workplaces, Naqvi told *The Hill Times*, noting that since he ran federally in 2021, he had emphasized that hybrid work was here to stay.

Naqvi has spearheaded the Downtown Ottawa Revitalization Task Force, which unveiled a comprehensive report back in January. According to the report, in the city's downtown, there are more than 30,000 residents and more than 600 businesses who together generate the most tax revenue for the city.

The report was released on Jan. 11, and recommends that signatories to the project work together "to develop and implement immediate and long-term solutions" to transform downtown, focus on solving



Downtown Ottawa Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi says most people want hybrid workplaces. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

long-standing economic and social issues "that are hampered by political and policy conflicts," imagine a "different downtown" that prioritizes economic, social, cultural and environmental change, and invest in resources and expertise in line with municipal and joint action plans.

"Downtown accounts for over \$150-million in property taxes to support all of Ottawa" with the downtown wards, including Somerset, Kitchissippi, and Rideau-Vanier accounting for over \$350-million or about 20 per cent of the city's over \$1.5-billion in property taxes revenue (in 2019), according to the report.

According to the report, "Downtown is Ottawa's 'front door,'" the location of most of the city's major attractions, and the first impression for 11 million annual visitors, "who contribute enormously to its economy and tax base, generating \$2.2-billion in visitors spending each year and amounting to \$755-million in taxes to all three levels of government, including reducing the burden on Ottawa taxpayers by about \$1800/household."

"I think things are moving in the right direction," said Naqvi. "The feedback that I continue to receive, both from businesses and residents, is that they are seeing a positive improvement, and they're happy that there is a really proactive conversation that is taking place in terms of recognizing that downtown requires revitalization."

Naqvi said the steps taken by businesses and different levels of government are ensuring that people are coming back to downtown.

"And that has to take the form of people coming back to work, people coming to downtown to

live, and people coming to downtown to visit. So all those three elements needs to be present," said Naqvi.

"Whether it is just general cleanliness around the downtown core, around affordable housing, conversion of buildings, more ways to attract tourists. On all those elements, there's a lot of alignment in many conversations that are taking place, and action as a result of it," said Naqvi.

During his visit to Ottawa in late March, Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced a 'new deal' for Ottawa that offers up to \$543-million over 10 years from the province to the city for housing, travel, and public safety, among other line items.

Speaking at the mayor's breakfast event on March 28, Ford said "as the largest employer in the city, the federal government needs to do its part to help rebuild the city's economy."

"I know a lot of people love working at home and that's fine, but we need the federal government to get government workers back into the office—even a few days," Ford said.

The number of federal public servants in the National Capital Region hit 127,440 in 2023, according to the government, up from 119,331 the year prior and up from 113,701 in 2021.

Recent budget 'really moved the yardstick' on land use, says Naqvi

The most recent federal budget included the government's intention 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.

Naqvi said the budget has "really moved the yardstick in favour of allowing for more use of public lands and buildings, including conversion of vacant buildings from commercial to residential, that significantly, in a positive way, impact my community of Ottawa Centre and downtown Ottawa."

The Hill Times reached out to a number of other Ottawa and Gatineau-area MPs, including Liberal MPs Mona Fortier (Ottawa-Vanier, Ont.), Francis Drouin (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Ont.), Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Ont.), Chandra Arya (Nepean, Ont.), Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Ont.); Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.); Minister of Families Jenna Sudds (Kanata-Car-

leton, Ont.); and House Speaker Greg Fergus (Hull-Aylmer, Que.). None were available for an interview, or did not respond to interview requests. Treasury Board President Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.), who was in Chicago and Washington, D.C. last week, was also unavailable.

The directive around back-to-workplace policies for public servants comes into effect in September.

Ottawa ranks last in spending growth year-over-year

According to data from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the City of Ottawa ranked dead last in spending growth year over year from 2019 to 2024, with a -16.9 per cent change as of March 2024. The Chamber monitors spending patterns across Canada, analyzing spending activity in 35 locations throughout the country. Seasonality, inflation, and population patterns are all taken into account.

According to an August 2023 report by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, "new financial realities like inflation, rising interest rates, labour shortages, and rapid legislative changes are further impacting municipal capacity to deliver services and invest in infrastructure."

Consumer spending stagnation after last summer's Bank of Canada interest rate hikes, and real consumer spending growth "running negative on an annual basis" for the same reason is causing concerns for businesses in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia, according to the Chamber's data.

When asked to describe his vision for Ottawa over the next five to 10 years, Naqvi pointed to the expansion of the LRT, which "creates more opportunities from people from our other core of the city coming into the downtown core."

"The big challenge of the model up to 2019 was that it was just 9a.m.-to-5p.m.," said Naqvi. "And I'm working towards creating a more vibrant downtown at all hours."

"I think that's going to be a game-changer for the community," said Naqvi.

'There is a lot of disappointment' in neighbouring municipalities

Nancy Peckford, mayor of North Grenville, Ont., recently

penned an oped in the *Ottawa Citizen* in which she said "are federal public servants living in my town or other communities surrounding Ottawa obliged to shore up Ottawa's economy? I don't think so."

Shortly after things began opening up during the pandemic, "we were getting feedback from residents that they were discovering the local hardware store," for example, said Peckford in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

"It was very quickly after the onset of the pandemic that it became obvious to us that there was an uptick in people learning and forging connections with local businesses in our community," said Peckford.

It's safe to say there are "thousands of public servants" in her town, said Peckford, adding "there is a lot of disappointment" following the Treasury Board's announcement.

Last week, Peckford, along with fellow mayors Mario Zanth (Clarence-Rockland, Ont.), Francis Brière (The Nation, Ont.), Pierre Leroux (Russell, Ont.), Genevieve Lajoie (Casselman, Ont.), and Michael Cameron, (Merrickville-Wolford, Ont.) signed a joint letter addressed to Anand outlining the "significant concerns amongst neighbouring municipalities to the City of Ottawa."

Their primary concerns centred on the potential negative impacts that the Treasury Board's decision may have on local economies, the environment, and their communities, including negative impacts to local economic development, environmental damage from greater carbon emissions, traffic congestion, challenges for working parents, and what they described as a "contradiction with budgetary goals."

"In summary, the call for federal public servants to return to 'in-person offices' in Ottawa appears to be in response to a distressed business community in the nation's capital, and much less about productivity," according to the letter. "Pre-pandemic, certain businesses in the downtown core heavily relied on the good wages of federal employees whose nine-to-five lives were tethered to large office buildings in Ottawa and Gatineau."

With the onset of hybrid working arrangements and less commuting time for local residents, those who were new to local communities as well as long-time residents "were able to contribute to our local economies."

"Clearly, the implications of these more restrictive policies on women and caregivers have clearly not been contemplated, despite the federal government's repeated commitments to gender-based analysis and mental health support," according to the letter, with mayors urging the Treasury Board to reconsider the decision to bring workers back into offices three days a week.

"Flexible work arrangements have proven successful during the pandemic and should be maintained," the letter said.

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News

Federal parties face tighter privacy rules after losing ‘unprecedented’ voter data case, but appeal could delay enforcement

Rapid advancement of technology allows for ‘profiling and micro-targeting voters’ and creates ‘risks of misuse’ that ‘could result in the erosion of trust in our political system,’ ruled Justice Gordon Weatherill.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Federal political parties may face stricter rules on collecting and using voters’ personal data after a landmark British Columbia court ruling in a case the judge described as “extraordinary” and “unprecedented.”

In a decision released on May 15, B.C. Supreme Court Justice Gordon Weatherill ruled that federal political parties are subject to that province’s privacy laws—a much stricter regime than the parties currently face under federal law.

According to concerns raised by the federal Liberals, Conservatives, and NDP throughout the process, following these laws could have a major impact on the way they communicate with voters because of the central role that data has come to play in modern campaigning. They said such rules would decrease engagement in the democratic process.

However, counsel for three private citizens—who went up against the federal parties in the trial which ran from April 22 to May 1 this year—have said the opposite. They argued the rapidly growing use of large-scale data in practices such as micro-targeting actually decreases voter engagement and undermines the democratic process.

The events were set in motion in 2019 when these three individuals used B.C.’s privacy laws to ask the federal parties what data the parties possessed about them. Unsatisfied with the response, they filed a complaint with B.C.’s Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC). That office began to investigate but—when the federal political parties objected to its jurisdiction—OIPC appointed a delegate to determine if it had authority. The delegate ruled in March 2022 that OIPC had jurisdiction.

The federal parties sought a judicial review of the ruling, leaving OIPC’s investigation—and any enforcement actions—on



The parties of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh are now subject to B.C.’s privacy laws, following a May 15 court ruling. The parties have 30 days to appeal. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

pause for several years until the matter reached trial this spring.

The judge was tasked with determining if the delegate’s decision was correct. He found that it was, and ordered the federal political parties to pay costs for the legal proceedings.

In his ruling, Weatherill waded through a series of complex constitutional arguments raised at the trial about the division of powers under federalism, and whether applying B.C.’s privacy laws would frustrate Ottawa’s role in regulating federal elections. He ruled that it wouldn’t. The judge was also asked to determine if the request for judicial review was pre-mature, and concluded it was not. But—at the top of his ruling—he centred the issue of privacy and its impact on the democratic process.

“The ability of an individual to control their personal information is intimately connected to their individual autonomy, dignity, and privacy,” wrote Weatherill. “These fundamental values lie at the heart of democracy.”

“The rapid advancement of technological tools allowing for the harvesting of private information for the purpose of profiling and micro-targeting voters has created risks of misuse of personal information that could result in the erosion of trust in our political system,” he continued.

“The Parliament of Canada has not yet taken any significant action. The Legislature of British Columbia has.”

Connor Bildfell is a B.C.-based lawyer with McCarthy Tétrault who specializes in litigation, including on privacy matters, and was not involved in this case. He told *The Hill Times* that “in a nutshell, the B.C. Supreme Court ruled that provincial privacy laws and federal election laws can live in harmony.”

“Provincial privacy laws aim to address the collection and use of personal information from the perspective of protecting the privacy of people within the province generally,” said Bildfell,

describing the analysis the judge used to reach this conclusion in his 60-page ruling.

“Meanwhile, federal election laws aim to regulate federal political parties’ practices and their need to communicate with voters,” he said. “In this way, the court reasoned, the two orders of government address the same issue through different lenses.”

‘Don’t forget why we’re here,’ says counsel for complainants

The court case ultimately involved a total of six litigant parties with a series of complex and overlapping positions: the federal Liberal, Conservative, and New Democratic parties; the Attorney General of Canada; the Attorney General of B.C.; and the complainants who instigated the process.

The trial presented an unfamiliar scene: the three federal parties in near lock-step agreement on all matters. Lawyers for the Liberal Party of Canada took on the responsibility of making the primary legal arguments, with counsel for the Tories and NDP each spending only a few minutes presenting their remarks after three days of submissions by the Liberal Party’s attorneys.

They argued that the Canada Elections Act demonstrated Parliament’s intent to be the sole authority on all matters related to federal elections.

Young Park, one of the lawyers for the complainants, told *The Hill Times* that he looked to reframe the issue when beginning his arguments.

That’s why he was pleased to see the issue of voter privacy rights at the top of the judge’s ruling. This was the framing he highlighted on his first day of submissions.

“A lot of that has been lost, strategically, in the sort of clinical constitutional arguments that the federal political parties had been making for three days,” he said.

When opening his submissions, Park told the judge the

court should not “forget why we’re here.” That approach, he told *The Hill Times*, “centred the debate” on the complainants and the issues that actually brought the case before the court.

Balsillie wants OIPC investigation resumed, data practices scrutinized

The not-for-profit Centre for Digital Rights has been supporting the legal case of the complainants.

Jim Balsillie—the centre’s founder who is best known for his work with Research in Motion, the makers of the BlackBerry—told *The Hill Times* he is “thrilled” with the verdict.

“This is an important victory for democracy,” said Balsillie in an email. “The lengths to which three federal political parties went to hide their sophisticated surveillance and AI manipulation practices was remarkable, surfacing just how critical these are to their operations. This ruling is a big step towards providing citizens with at least some transparency into these practices.”

In light of the decision, Balsillie said he expects the parties to “respect the law and the court’s decision so the OIPC can resume its investigation.”

“I hope that [the federal political parties’] data management practices finally come under some oversight, just like they are for all other organizations in Canada,” he said.

The ruling means the privacy commissioner’s office can choose to resume its stalled process. However, with the possibility of appeal, it’s not yet clear if it will.

In a statement to *The Hill Times*, OIPC said it was “currently reviewing the decision and consulting with our legal team” to decide if it would immediately resume its investigation of the federal parties.

The spokesperson added that the office is “pleased with the ruling.”

“This is an important ruling because it affirms the British Columbia Legislature’s ability to exercise its jurisdiction in this area to protect British Columbians’ privacy rights, and our office’s role in protecting them,” said the statement.

Appeal likely: Bildfell

Bildfell said “the fight isn’t over yet,” and he thinks an appeal is likely.

The federal political parties have 30 days to decide if they would like to take the matter to the B.C. Court of Appeal. If they do, they would also have the option of filing a motion to stay the lower court’s decision. If granted,

that would take away from OIPC the choice to proceed, and leave the investigation in abeyance for some time to come.

One strategy the parties may take on an appeal is to “argue that the court misinterpreted the Canada Elections Act,” said Bildfell.

The Hill Times reached out to each of the three federal parties about their reaction to the ruling, whether they would appeal, or if the outcome would prompt them to support more robust federal privacy legislation. Privacy experts have said the government’s current electoral reform law, Bill C-65, would not address their concerns with the federal regime.

The Liberal Party and Conservative Party did not reply.

A statement from NDP National Director Lucy Watson said the party “will be reviewing the decision.”

“New Democrats believe in the need for privacy legislation,” said Watson. “It is our position that it needs to be uniformly applied across the country. Allowing provincial bodies to determine how federal political parties operate in different jurisdictions will create a patchwork approach across the country that is unmanageable.”

The Hill Times also reached out to the office of Attorney General Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Ont.), as well as the Privy Council Office (PCO), which speaks for Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) in his role as democratic institutions minister.

Despite being a party in the case, the AG’s office declined to comment, leaving PCO to speak on the matter. In response to past questions about what steps the attorney general was taking to avoid political interference in the matter, the AG’s office has said that PCO was “leading” on the file.

PCO said it was working on a response, but did not deliver one by deadline.

While further court proceedings remain a possibility, privacy advocates have consistently said that their preferred course would be to see the federal Parliament pass a comprehensive privacy regime for federal political parties—which would also have the effect of eliminating the concerns the federal parties have raised about a patchwork of regulations across the country.

Balsillie said he thinks this ruling increases the pressure on the parties to do so.

“This ruling makes it very difficult for [the parties] to continue being so obstinate,” he said. “I would like to see the federal government stop playing legal charades and pass a robust privacy regime that guarantees independent oversight of political parties’ data practices.”

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Editorial

Worrying trend of resignations over toxicity

Politics is not a career for the faint of heart. It takes a thick skin, combined with self-confidence and a fair degree of passion to be able to cut it in the vocation. Nobody goes into this form of public service without understanding this: It's no tea party.

What, then, does it say when seasoned politicians say things have become too toxic to continue?

On May 1, Liberal MP Pam Damoff announced that she will not re-offer at the next election, citing in a letter posted to Facebook "the threats and misogyny I have experienced" as reasons that "I often fear going out in public, and that is not a sustainable or healthy way to live."

The issue is not confined to the federal level of politics. France Bélisle, the mayor of Gatineau, Que., announced back in February that she was leaving the role for her own health. Bélisle said she had received death threats since taking office in 2021. She is not alone: the Union des municipalités du Québec estimated that approximately 800 municipal politicians in the province have resigned in the last three years.

Across the border, Pierre Leroux, mayor of Russell, Ont., east of Ottawa, resigned after 10 years in the role with similar concerns about the political environment.

Politics is an intense environment. Whether you're determining which potholes are filled, or whether to send

troops to war, those elected to serve the public hold a significant amount of power over the everyday lives of their constituents.

With that in mind, there is nothing to be gained by shrinking the pool of potential representatives, which is exactly what happens when people are too frightened to stand for election. In a caustic environment where threats are shrugged off or accepted as part of the routine back-and-forth of a vibrant democracy, imagine all the talented would-be policymakers who think twice about raising their hand.

Not only do such threats of violence lead to fewer candidates, it can also lead to those who do end up serving finding an ever-growing barrier of security guards, police, and checkpoints between themselves and the people they serve.

Events in Europe last week, when Slovakian President Robert Fico was shot multiple times and seriously wounded in an assassination attempt, show the dangers that politicians can face. Those dangers can lead to the ludicrous levels of security such as those seen in Ottawa during U.S. President Joe Biden's visit to Canada last year.

Canada has its own history of shocking acts of political violence. We need to make sure it remains that—history—to ensure diverse, thriving political representation.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

'Crisis of radioactive waste management in the Ottawa River watershed': advocates

We are writing to alert *Hill Times* readers to what we see as a crisis of radioactive waste mismanagement in the Ottawa River watershed. Components of the crisis include:

A giant, above-ground landfill for one million tonnes of radioactive waste at Chalk River Laboratories, less than one kilometre from the Ottawa River. According to the licensed inventory for the facility, more than half of the radionuclides are long-lived with half-lives exceeding the design life of the facility by thousands of years. Experts say the waste is "intermediate level," and should be stored underground. There are concerns the facility will leak radioactive contaminants during operation, and break down due to erosion after a few hundred years.

There is a proposal to entomb "in situ" a defunct nuclear reactor less than 400 meters from the Ottawa River at Rolph-ton, Ont. In our view, the proposal flouts international safety standards that say entombment should not be used except in emergencies.

A multinational private-sector consortium is transporting all federal radioactive wastes, including high-level irradiated fuel waste, to Chalk River. These imports are occurring, despite an explicit request by the City of Ottawa in 2021 for cessation of radioactive waste imports to the Ottawa Valley which is seismically-active, and a poor location for long-term storage of radioactive waste.

All of the above is taking place despite the opposition of the Algonquin People on whose unceded territory the Chalk River Laboratories and defunct Rolph-ton reactor are located. This contravenes Canada's United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

In our view, this crisis is a direct result of Canada's inadequate nuclear governance regime under which almost all aspects of nuclear governance are entrusted to one agency, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, which is widely perceived to be captured by the nuclear industry, and to promote the projects it is supposed to regulate. Other concerns include conflicts of interest, lack of checks and balances, and an inadequate nuclear waste policy.

Despite repeated resolutions of concern by the Assembly of First Nations and more than 140 downstream municipalities—including Ottawa, Gatineau, and Montreal—the current government appears unwilling or unable to take meaningful action to address this crisis. We are therefore appealing to the International Atomic Energy Agency and requesting a meeting with its peer review team that is scheduled to visit Canada next month.

**Chief Lance Haymond
 Kebaowek First Nation, and
 Gordon Edwards, PhD
 Canadian Coalition for
 Nuclear Responsibility**



Fight climate change with solar and energy storage: reader

As many Canadians grapple with the high cost of living and the climate crisis, it is worth noting that action on climate change makes sound financial sense, and many ways to reduce emissions also save money. New research published in *Nature* concludes that the cost of environmental damage will be six times higher than the cost of limiting global warming to 2°C. It is important to do all we can starting now. Choosing renewable energy instead of burning oil, gas, or coal leads to more energy security, and protects consumers from price fluctuations in the fossil-fuel market. Renewables such as wind and solar have been

the least expensive forms of electricity for years, and are significantly cheaper than electricity produced by burning gas.

The costs of solar and energy storage have dropped by more than 90 per cent over the past decade. The cost of onshore wind has gone down by more than 70 per cent in the same period. The provinces with the lowest electricity costs are the ones that use the least oil, coal, and gas. Heat pumps are very efficient for heating and cooling, save money and reduce emissions. Canadians should see which way the wind is blowing. Fight climate change.

**Peter Schmolka
 Ottawa, Ont.**

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Trump's poll numbers are actually increasing

Joe Biden is banking on the fact that Donald Trump's daily one-liners will be overshadowed by the substance required to sustain a full debate.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—The next American election doesn't happen until November.

But the first debate will happen on June 27 on CNN.

This historically early showdown was shaped through a social media exchange.

U.S. President Joe Biden launched the debate challenge in a video on X—formerly Twitter—where he accused Donald Trump

of avoiding debates against his Republican challengers.

"Donald Trump lost two debates in 2020. Since then he hasn't shown up for a debate. Now he is acting like he wants to debate me again," Biden said.

"Well, make my day, pal. I'll even do it twice. So let's pick the dates, Donald—I hear you are free on Wednesdays," Biden said, in a not so-subtle reference to Trump's daily criminal court appearances, which don't happen on Wednesdays.

Trump accepted the challenge on his social media platform, Truth Social, with this response. "I am READY and WILLING to Debate Crooked Joe at the two proposed times in June and September." Trump also said he is strongly recommending more than two debates.

The president's decision to launch the challenge is more than unusual.

For the past 37 years, all presidential debates have been managed by a non-partisan Commission on Presidential Debates.

That organization has already announced three debates in

September and October, in Texas, Pennsylvania, and Utah.

But voters can actually cast their ballots as of Sept. 6 in some states, and both candidates think the debates should be held earlier.

Two years ago, the Republican National Committee agreed unanimously to boycott the commission's presidential debates, but Democrats did not follow suit until this week.

There has been disagreement with the commission by the Democrats, who felt the organization broke the rules in allowing Trump and supporters to forego the wearing of masks during a COVID debate in 2020.

Democrats also want a debate without an audience, while Trump is seeking more people in more venues. He even suggested a debate in front of the courthouse where he is currently on trial for allegedly falsifying business records for hush money paid to former porn star Stormy Daniels.

Biden's decision to call for an early debate is not a total surprise, as Democrats have not been happy with the college-based format.

But the fact that he would launch the challenge on social media is surprising.

It signals the importance of social media in the upcoming election race, and also suggests that Trump's positive polling numbers are causing concern in presidential circles.

If the president were firmly in the lead, he would be minimizing the attention paid to debates. Democrats are also anxious to keep third-party candidate Robert Kennedy Jr. out of the ring.

They obviously don't think he can win, but in a tight race, the scion of the Kennedy clan could actually deliver the race to Trump.

The early debate on CNN won't likely include Kennedy, although that decision has not been finalized. That is one big reason why Biden wants to go early.

A second reason is that, notwithstanding Trump's judicial challenges, his poll numbers are actually increasing.

Biden is banking on the fact that Trump's daily one-liners will be overshadowed by the substance required to sustain a full debate.

Whatever happens in the United States, a presidential debate involving Trump will have a spillover effect in Canada.

Trump has been travelling the country bragging about his appointments to the U.S. Supreme Court who have thrown

out women's right to control their own reproduction.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre says he won't touch the abortion issue, but his caucus is rife with those who plan to do just that. He has also promised to use the notwithstanding clause to overturn laws that he doesn't like.

Trump is also saying that he does not support a national ban on abortion, but says the states should make the decision and, once they do, it should be respected.

Democrats would love to run the election on that issue, because they know that the vast majority of women—especially young women—do not want the clock to be turned back on abortion rights.

Liberals would love to have Canadian voters focused on the same issue.

Poilievre hopes to park the abortion question having promised not to reopen the issue. But more than half his caucus members are actively anti-choice.

Poilievre recently joined them in voting against the provision of free birth control medication as part of the rollout of a modified pharma care program.

The more Trump's team campaigns against abortion rights, the more Canadians will wonder if that could happen here.

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

The Hill Times

Poilievre's notwithstanding clause gambit

If Pierre Poilievre keeps his focus on fixing the economy, his side musings about how he might use the notwithstanding clause likely won't raise many eyebrows.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKVILLE, ONT.—Sometimes influential people—dare I say "elites"—will passionately latch onto an issue that nobody else in the country really seems to care about.

One example of such an issue is the notwithstanding clause, which is a section of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Sec. 33) that gives Parliament and provincial legislatures the power to override certain Charter rights.



Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre at a press conference on April 16, 2024. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

For many civil liberty activists, constitutional experts, and columnists this clause is a serious threat to Canadian liberties.

Yet, despite this opposition, for the average Canadian the notwithstanding clause is basically a non-factor.

Of course, politicians know all this.

So, when Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre recently implied in a speech to the Canadian Police Association that he might use the notwithstanding clause to implement certain tough-on-crime measures, he likely knew the kind of reaction it would trigger.

For instance, he likely knew it'd generate negative headlines.

Indeed, within days of Poilievre's speech, alarming headlines such as "The dangerous potential of Poilievre's promise to use notwithstanding clause," and "Pierre Poilievre is coming for your Charter rights" flooded the media.

But Poilievre also likely knew that, despite such a frenzied reaction, his flirtation with the notwithstanding clause wouldn't hurt him politically.

Heck, it might even help him. So, to explain all this, let's dig a little deeper into public attitudes towards the notwithstanding clause.

First off, I'd argue most Canadians have no idea as to what the notwithstanding clause is, or what it means.

Thus, when people see headlines warning about Poilievre possibly using it for nefarious purposes, it simply won't resonate.

Secondly, even for those people who do understand the notwithstanding clause concept, it's still an issue that's unlikely to rouse much interest.

That's because all the debates usually associated with the notwithstanding clause are questions of process, and, generally speaking, people don't much care about process issues.

They don't care about the mechanics of how government works, or how decisions are made, or how we should balance the powers of judicial and legislative branches; they just care about results—they want safe streets, a clean environment, high-quality health care and well-funded schools—stuff that impacts their lives.

Everything else is just noise.

This explains why former prime minister Paul Martin's plan to make scrapping the notwithstanding clause the centrepiece of his campaign in the 2006 federal election fell flat.

Simply put, that was a process issue, and nobody cared about it back then.

Likewise, I'd argue few Canadians care about it now.

At any rate, my point is if Poilievre goes into the next federal

election and tells Canadians he'll use the notwithstanding clause to keep hardened criminals off the streets, a majority of voters will either shrug their shoulders or applaud.

Don't believe me?

Well, please note, in recent times, Ontario Premier Doug Ford, Quebec Premier François Legault and former Saskatchewan premier Brad Wall have all invoked the notwithstanding clause, but none of them suffered any serious political consequences.

And there's one final point to consider.

In these tough economic times, voters care more about the price of lettuce than they do about constitutional theory.

Hence, if Poilievre keeps his focus on fixing the economy, his side musings about how he might use the notwithstanding clause likely won't raise many eyebrows.

For those who think this is a distressing situation, I invite you to ponder the words of American economist Bryan Caplan who once said: "Before you study public opinion, you wonder why policy isn't far better. After you study public opinion, you wonder why policy isn't far worse."

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

Opinion

Yep, Trump did it again

Just when it appeared that Donald Trump couldn't go any further in his systematic deconstruction of American institutions—he did, writes Michael Harris. Photograph courtesy of Flickr



The former president organized a high-level contingent of Republicans to attend his hush-money trial in Manhattan. The group included House Speaker Mike Johnson—whose speakership was recently saved by his Democratic colleagues. Unlike the others, he didn't sit in the courtroom.

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—Just when it appeared that Donald Trump couldn't go any further in his systematic deconstruction of American institutions, he did.

The former president organized a high-level contingent of Republicans to attend his hush-money trial in Manhattan. The group included House Speaker Mike Johnson—whose speakership was recently saved by his Democratic colleagues. Unlike the others, Johnson didn't sit in the courtroom.

The ostensible purpose of bringing in the heavies was to show support for the ex-president. What they really put on display was a sycophancy so sophomoric it was comical. With the exception of Speaker Johnson, most dressed in Trump's classic duds, right down to the signature red tie. But give credit where credit is due. They drew the line at dying their hair orange.

There is nothing wrong with having supporters show up to be by your side in a criminal trial. It is no easy thing to be the subject of a criminal allegation, which if proven, could cost you your freedom. But normally "supporters" means family members: your

spouse, grown children, or close friends.

But Trump didn't have Melania or Ivanka at his side. In his latest attempt to roll over the justice system, he turned to the who's who of the next administration should he retake the presidency.

At one level, it was a Trump loyalty test, as well as an audition for the vice-presidential spot on the Republican ticket. Ohio Senator J.D. Vance, businessman Vivek Ramaswamy, and North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum all want the job.

But they didn't travel to New York solely to advance their political ambitions, or to stand by their man. They were there to help Trump obstruct justice. They were there to attack the judge, the prosecution, the witnesses, and even the judge's daughter.

The ex-president deployed these "supporters" to get around the gag-order imposed on him by Judge Juan Merchan. It was issued expressly to prevent Trump from attacking and abusing witnesses. After finding Trump in contempt of court 10 times, the judge made clear that future violations of his gag-order could end in jail time.

Faced with the choice between silence and jail, Trump chose to clean up his act. But he also played the surrogate card. The choir of GOP trained seals who showed up at his trial repeated many of Trump's egregious calumnies and lies outside the courtroom.

The worst offender was Speaker Johnson, the man who is second in line for the presidency under the U.S. system. Johnson did what Trump couldn't do, at least not without consequences. He tried to dirty the system and the people involved in it. Johnson said, "The crime that they are accusing president Trump of is falsification of business records. But I think everybody knows he is not the bookkeeper for his company. President Trump is innocent of these charges."

In the thick of a criminal trial, Johnson called into question the integrity of the court and the process. Johnson claimed that not only was the hush-money trial politically motivated and unfair, but that the other cases against Trump were also the product of a weaponized Department of Justice. In his zeal to promote Trump's lies, Johnson didn't both-

er to explain how the DOJ could have had a hand in the Stormy Daniels case, which is a state prosecution. Like Trump himself, the servile Speaker offered no proof for his assertions.

Johnson also made clear that he believes that an ex-president who is running again for the top job should not be prosecuted in an election year. This, before the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled on what—if any—immunity a former president has.

Referring to all the trials Trump is facing, Johnson said "They are a disgrace." Just to drive home the ludicrous narrative that Trump is the victim here, Johnson said he was "disgusted" by all legal action that is keeping Trump "off the campaign trail." Off the golf courses would be closer to the mark.

Johnson's blatant use of the Speaker's Office to personally interfere in a criminal prosecution raised some eyebrows. The Lincoln Project put it like this about the man who says the Bible and his faith informs everything he does: "So good of pious Mike Johnson to show support for cheating on your wife with a porn star; paying her hush money to cover it up, and falsifying business records so that America doesn't find out about it before an election."

Liz Cheney, a former member of the Republican House Leadership who voted to impeach Trump, also noted Johnson's deeply hypocritical defence of the former President in a post on X: "I have to admit that I'm surprised that @SpeakerJohnson wants to be in the 'I cheated on my wife with a porn star' club. ...I guess he's not that concerned with teaching morality to our young people after all."

But hypocrisy is the least of the problems raised by Johnson's outrageous performance outside Trump's Manhattan courthouse.

Consider the impact on jurors and witnesses of seeing a contingent of GOP heavyweights sitting in the courtroom dressed like Donald Trump.

Reflect on what they will think of the inflammatory—and false—statements Johnson and others made outside the courthouse.

Will they sleep better knowing they are being trashed by people abusing their public positions and profiles to incite contempt for the very process these citizens are involved in?

Will they give up looking ahead to the task still in front of them, their duty as witnesses and jurors, in order to look over their shoulder to see who might be there?

Republican Senator Mitt Romney hit the nail on the head about what is really at stake with the antics of Trump's scheme team: "I think it's a terrible fault for our country to see people attacking the legal system—that's an enormous mistake."

As enormous as exchanging the rule of law for the law of the political jungle.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times



Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Gary Anandasangaree. It's the government's legal requirement to uphold the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with the Indigenous Peoples, not with fake groups, writes Rose LeMay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The day Indigenous Peoples took a major step forward in healing

Going forward, mainstream governments need to stop talking to questionable self-proclaiming Indigenous groups.

Rose
LeMay

*Stories, Myths,
and Truths*



OTTAWA—It's been a long time since First Nations, Inuit, and Métis came together.

Before the colonizers broke us apart by demanding that we could only be one of those labels,

I'm quite sure First Nations and Inuit across the Atlantic and the Northwest Territories were pretty close. Cousins, even.

Before the colonizers on the Prairies tried to set First Nations and Métis into war by setting up competition for land, I'm quite sure they were close. How could they not be? It's family. It was colonization that broke apart the old treaties and ties that bind First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

It's been a long time since Indigenous Peoples claimed their sovereignty with such clarity. The weight of genocide and lost family, the repetitive trauma of racism, and inequitable funding for core needs like health and education can weigh a people down. The horizon is close when one is lying on the ground, but one can see further when the weight lessons and you stand up.

Indigenous Peoples took another step forward last week. Chiefs of Ontario and the

Manitoba Métis Federation held the Indigenous Identity Fraud Summit to address the issue of "Pretendians," "Fétis," or fake Métis, and faux-Inuit. Race-shifters.

It was First Nations, Inuit, and Métis coming together, like in the old days, because it was Indigenous Peoples standing up for our sovereignty. Telling the old stories of our heroes, our histories, and our shared struggles. It reminded me of events hosted by Māori on the South Island of Aotearoa—feet firmly in history and the current day, proud to stand next to each other across iwi (family groups), planning a common journey forward.

The event and subsequent declaration against Pretendians—both individual and groups—was a shift, a big step in our healing. It was necessary as a move to protect what is truly Indigenous against what is fakery.

The event also reminded me of a totem pole at the entrance of Algonquin Provincial Park,

allegedly carved by a leader of the Algonquins of Ontario. I come from the West Coast, where totem poles hold a central place in our knowledge systems and artform, and are only carved by artists who have learned from experts on the design and knowledge.

The design of this totem pole lacked, well, design and meaning. It was a Google search mish-mash of "native art" and it does not belong. It turns out that the Algonquins of Ontario have credibility issues. They likely do not belong.

The Métis Nation of Ontario has long had significant issues of credibility. The inside joke was that they would give anybody and their dog an MNO card.

There are now more fake Métis organizations than real ones. How do you know what is a fake Indigenous group? Likely it came to being in the last 10 years, involves a mishmash of Google-searched "native clothing," aggressive, self-proclaimed

elders who really don't know the knowledge from the land, fake shamans, and demands for money or prestige.

Let's refresh a few basic facts: mixed does not mean Métis. An Indigenous community shares economy, governance based on the land and cultural knowledge, shared struggles and heroes, shared history, and agreements and treaties with neighbouring Indigenous communities from the beginning.

If they don't have stories and history with neighbouring Indigenous nations, then they are likely not Indigenous.

Going forward, mainstream governments need to stop talking to questionable self-proclaiming Indigenous groups. It's your legal requirement to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with the Indigenous Peoples, not with fake groups.

It is also your legal requirement to stop doing self-identification of Indigenous staff, and start doing evidence-based HR. There are Pretendians in federal departments, and it's an offense to reconciliation.

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

The Hill Times

Cabinet government is on life support, and it needs a reboot, stat

Canada should commit to limit the size of cabinet to 20, and to bring all important government decisions before cabinet. Give more power to cabinet and stop using it as a focus group. This would also help to bring cabinet government back and reallocate some of the savings to MPs and parliamentary committees.

Donald J. Savoie

Opinion



Canada's national institutions are confronting deep-seated problems. Members of Parliament from different parties are voicing concerns, recently retired federal public servants have become increasingly critical of their old workplaces, former cabinet ministers who write memoirs are identifying important shortcomings; and public opinion surveys reveal that Canadians are losing trust in their

national institutions. The problem speaks to democratic backsliding throughout the Western world, and Canada is not immune from it.

The way ahead is to embrace an ambitious reform agenda designed to breathe new life in our institutions. We need to start with Parliament because MPs are the ultimate guardians of Canada's representative democracy, and because it is the one institution that ties Canadians and their communities together. If Parliament cannot hold the government to account for its policies and spending, no one can. Therein lies the problem. Governments govern and oppositions oppose. While party discipline is necessary in a parliamentary system, Canada has taken it further than other countries operating under a Westminster parliamentary system. If you sit on the government side, you applaud whatever the government is doing, no questions asked, and if you sit on the opposition benches, you oppose whatever the government is doing, no questions asked. MPs are not equipped to ask penetrating questions about the government's

“ Cabinet government is on life support system. I wrote 25 years ago that cabinet was no longer a decision-making body having been turned into a ‘focus group’ for the prime minister. Cabinet has continued to lose standing in recent years.

expenditure budget and government operations. Parliament's expenditure review process has become an empty ritual carried out on an annual basis with zero impact on government spending, and not much more in holding the government to account. The government, no matter the party in power, prefers it that way.

What to do? First, Canadians should appreciate that being an MP is a demanding and thankless job. There are few rewards. Constituency work is draining, and time spent in airports and on airplanes is exhausting. Online abuse is rampant since the arrival of social media. Pay is modest, at least compared to judges and government executives. Family life is extremely difficult and, to become an MP, one has to put other career aspirations on hold. MPs need respect and resources to do their job. Respect because we need to attract highly qualified individuals to serve in Parliament. Resources, because MPs do not currently have access to the resources they need to hold the government to account.



Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Minister Sean Fraser, pictured speaking with reporters before a Liberal caucus meeting in West Block on May 1, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

How, then, can MPs become somebody in Ottawa and in their constituencies? There is a need to lessen the constant jockeying for positions before party leaders to make it to cabinet. Being an MP should be its own reward, and provide opportunities to make meaningful contributions. We can substantially strengthen the hand of MPs in their dealings with party leaders by giving party caucuses the authority to initiate a formal leadership review. In the United Kingdom, four prime ministers were removed from office over the past 35 years not by voters, Parliament, or party members, but by their parliamentary party (caucus). In introducing the approach to Canada, we could ensure stability by requiring that at least one third of MPs in a caucus sign a letter requesting a leadership review before going to a vote.

The chairs of parliamentary committees should enjoy the same salary benefits, resources, staff, and perks as cabinet ministers so that making it as chair of a parliamentary committee should be nearly as rewarding as making it to cabinet. Clerks of House committees should enjoy the same salaries and benefits as deputy ministers. It would attract public servants currently in the executive with an intimate knowledge of how government operates. This can be done at no cost to taxpayers by reallocating resources from the executive to Parliament.

The imbalance between the House and the executive is completely out of sync. The executive—depending on how one counts—is home to anywhere between 150

to 300 organizations, and a staff complement anywhere between 350,000 to 500,000 employees. This is not to suggest that Parliament should have anywhere near the same level of human resources as the executive, for obvious reasons. But a very small rebalancing is in order. The House of Commons has a staff complement of 1,737; the Library of Parliament only has 423 employees and MPs have a staff complement of six to eight staffers between their Ottawa and constituency offices. The constituency office has come to dominate since the role of MP is now more akin to a social worker dealing with immigration, employment insurance, passport applications and the like,

and less about being lawmakers and holding the government to account.

MPs do not have access to the expertise to do the job because, willingly or not, they have delegated much of their responsibility for holding the government to account to officers of Parliament. These officers operate independently from the government and, for the most part, even from Parliament. The Office of the Auditor General (OAG), for example, has an annual budget of about \$130-million, a staff complement of 780, and numerous consultant contracts. It is a large and costly bureaucracy to do what it does, typically producing a few reports a year. Are the reports

and the office worth the expense? I do not think so. The OAG, however, gets a free pass from both MPs and the media. Contrary to years past, when the office limited its work to financial audits, the OAG now carries out value-for-money reviews. These reviews are more subjective than strict financial audits, and they vary in terms of quality, substance and impact. Parliament, through one of its committees, should call for an independent review of these audits. It should also hold hearings on the role of OAG, and ask whether Parliament should limit its mandate to carrying out only financial audits.

Many in government do not want to give Parliament more

resources, arguing that nothing positive would come out of it. They argue that Parliament is little more than a stage for partisan political theatre. Parliament is political theatre in part because MPs have a limited capacity to do much else. This line of reasoning, carried to its logical conclusion, means government by the non-elected working with a handful of powerful politicians and their partisan advisors running the government at will, with a highly limited capacity to hold them accountable. Equip MPs with the knowledge and access to expertise, and they may well be better able to pursue one of their more important responsibilities: holding the government to account. If you want MPs to be somebody, then give them the resources to be somebody and to make a meaningful contribution. If you want MPs to remain nobodies and to see Parliament unable to attract highly qualified individuals, the status quo will do just fine.

Cabinet government is on life support system. I wrote 25 years ago that cabinet was no longer a decision-making body having been turned into a “focus group” for the prime minister. Cabinet has continued to lose standing in recent years. Those who still believe that we have cabinet government need to square the following with how cabinet government should operate: two key decisions regarding Canada's deployment in Afghanistan, one by a Liberal government, one by a Conservative government, were made in the Prime Minister's Office with the help of a handful of political advisers and civilian and military officials. The relevant ministers of national defence and foreign affairs were not even in the room. These are not isolated cases.

Cabinet is now a deliberative body, a focus group, because a 39-member committee can be little else. It will be recalled that then-British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had a 15-member cabinet in 1942 to deal with the war effort and to run the government, in a unitary state, where there were no provinces to deal with education, health care and other responsibilities. A 39-member cabinet may make for good partisan politics, but not for good government. It creates make-work for an army of partisan political advisers roaming wherever they want inside government placing a burden on the public service to meet requests for information. Cabinet ministers require an elaborate and costly infrastructure of partisan resources and parliamentary secretaries simply because they are cabinet ministers.

Canadians should ask aspiring prime ministers, as they develop their electoral platforms, to commit to limit the size of cabinet to 20, and to bring all important government decisions before cabinet. This would help to bring cabinet government back and reallocate some of the savings to MPs and parliamentary committees.



Auditor General Karen Hogan at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on Feb. 27, 2024. 'The [Office of the Auditor General] gets a free pass from both MPs and the media. Contrary to years past, when the office limited its work to financial audits, the OAG now carries out value for money reviews,' writes Savoie. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Liberal MPs Iqra Khalid, Brenda Shanahan, and Jean Yip chat before the House Public Accounts Committee on Jan. 25, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Conservative MPs Marilyn Gladu, left, and Stephanie Kusie at the party's caucus meeting on the Hill on Jan. 28, 2024. 'Canadians should appreciate that being an MP is a demanding and thankless job. There are few rewards. Constituency work is draining, and time spent in airports and on airplanes is exhausting,' writes Savoie. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Conservative MP Kelly McCauley, chair of the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee, on March 27, 2024. Donald Savoie argues that Parliament's expenditure review process has become an 'empty ritual carried out on an annual basis with zero impact on government spending and not much more in holding the government to account. The government, no matter the party in power, prefers it that way.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Donald J. Savoie holds the *Canada Research Chair in Public Administration and Governance (Tier 1)* at the *Université de Moncton*, and is the author of *several award-winning books. This column is based on his forthcoming book *Speaking Truth to Canadians About Their Public Service.** *The Hill Times*

- Savoie's notes:**
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 - Many in government do not want to give Parliament more resources, arguing that nothing positive would come out of it. They argue that Parliament is little more than a stage for partisan political theatre. Parliament is political theatre in part because MPs have a limited capacity to do much else. But MPs need more resources.
 - MPs do not have access to the expertise to do the job because, willingly or not, they have delegated much of their responsibility for holding the government to account to officers of Parliament. These officers operate independently from the government and, for the most part, even from Parliament.

Opinion



Former Liberal MP and cabinet minister Jim Peterson had a life-long and positive influence on Jacquie LaRocque who worked as his d-comms when he was international trade minister. *The Hill Times* file photograph

Jim Peterson: a curious mind who nurtured the best in Parliament, people, and public policy

Jim Peterson, former longtime Toronto Liberal MP and cabinet minister, died on May 10 at the age of 82, but he left a positive legacy behind.

Jacquie LaRocque

Opinion



True to Jim Peterson's love of reading and his probing intellect, one of the last things he did was pick up the newspaper. And news of his death on May 10, 2024, was deeply gutting. His team of loyal followers lost a family member, because Jim and

his wife Heather will forever be our family. He and Heather would get that getaway car for every one of us—for anyone—if it was the right thing to do.

Canadian politics has lost the story of Parliament as seen through the eyes of James Scott Peterson: the ambition for the institution, his belief that solutions are always possible across the aisle, and that the policies debated here—constructive, healthy debate—would serve the residents of the riding of Willowdale, Ont., and every Canadian. Quietly, but firmly, Jim pushed for measures to build a strong economy because, without it, improving the lot of others would not be possible.

He believed in getting out of the Ottawa bubble and talking to people directly—a powerful lesson that should endure today.

He had an extraordinary passion for public service that ran in his family along with his brothers David and Tim, his wife Heather and others.

Jim went about his parliamentary career—including his time in

cabinet—focusing less on getting credit than on getting results. He was known to display sharp wit there, too, as has been widely shared. As chair of the House Finance Committee, he helped launch the annual cross-country hearings to listen to Canadians about their priorities. He was Canada's voice in the fight against money laundering and the financing of global terrorism. An international counterpart said it well: Jim Peterson had the "soul of a statesman, mind of a salesman." At the department of trade, he worked to cement Canada's global ties under then-prime minister Paul Martin with a deep focus on emerging economies, the European Union, and small business. And, of course, our best friend and ally: the United States.

Above all, Jim cared most about the doors he and Heather knocked on, and the people he talked to as the MP for Willowdale.

But in my mind, perhaps the most lasting mark Jim made on our national life came in 1983

alongside then-minister of justice Jean Chrétien. He helped pilot groundbreaking sexual assault legislation that ended the insidious practice of allowing the use of a rape victim's sexual history as evidence in court. "It was a major breakthrough from a very antiquated and harsh law," he told *The Canadian Press* at the time. That remark epitomized the Jim Peterson I and others came to know.

Jim quietly showed us all how to use our skills and experience to make a positive difference for everyone in our personal and professional lives.

Over the years, Jim's sense of loyalty, wisdom, and deep humanity left an indelible imprint on my life. My heart has been warmed every day by memories of his advice, counsel, and abiding friendship. He loved family, friends, and Canada deeply.

Having worked alongside him so closely we often found it hard to square his usually unassuming manner with that of the guy who was the brazen planner of Mikhail Baryshnikov's defection

from the Soviet Union. That's something he never drew attention to, but that was just so Jim.

In his final words in Parliament in 2008, Jim thanked his colleagues in both sides of the House. He said they may have differed on policies, but never over the need to serve Canada with the same dedication and commitment. He struck a tone of civility and collegial respect worth heeding today more than ever.

My career has been shaped by Jim, from learning the communications ropes, to deeply understanding trade and economic growth as a driver for all we want our country to be in the Canada-U.S. relationship. I've taken and used what I have learned from him into every job I've had since. His teachings were formative to my view as an entrepreneur that strong public policy can only be achieved when it is good for Canadians.

Those lessons he shared with me and so many others will live on. Thank you, Jim, for all your not-so-quiet teachings about work *and* about life: the critical importance of loyalty. Mutual respect. Social justice. Building community. Empathy for others. Showing up.

He was always the first to help someone in need, and to celebrate the milestones and accomplishments of those he cared so deeply about.

He raised us all up. Was our champion and our cheerleader.

Jim, I will never, ever forget you. To borrow your own words we all think you are "terrific" and we are sending you "big hugs."

Jacquie LaRocque, CEO of Compass Rose in Ottawa, served as director of communications for trade minister Jim Peterson from 2004-2006.

The Hill Times



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the various leaders of Hamas have spent the past 30 years trying to kill the two-state solution, but it could be on the table again, writes Gwynne Dyer. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Thought experiment: buying the Palestinians out?

Gwynne Dyer responds to a reader asking whether the easiest way out of 'the Middle East problem' would be paying everybody to leave. It's not completely unthinkable.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—Last week a despairing reader asked me if the solution to the 'Middle East problem' might be to throw money at it: just buy the Palestinians out. Offer every Palestinian in the Israeli-occupied territories enough money to settle some-

where else, and the endless wars might finally end.

I dismissed the notion out of hand, asking "Where's the money coming from?" but I owe that reader an apology. He was despairing because he couldn't think of any other way that the conflict could plausibly end except in an ultimate holocaust, nuclear or otherwise.

He had wound up with this outlandish notion of buying the Palestinians out for want of any more plausible outcome, and I had dodged his real question. So here's my real answer, for what it's worth.

First things first. Could money alone ever bring peace to the region?

It would have to be a very large amount of money because the Palestinian population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is around five million people. Direct costs of relocation would be at least \$100,000 per person, given that the cost of housing would soar in other parts of the Arab world if five million people with cash entered the market at the same time.

Add another \$100,000 a head for living expenses because a lot

of these Palestinians would take a long time to find jobs in their new homes, or never find them. And many of them would own property for which they must be compensated for when they leave, so tack on an average of \$50,000 a person for that. That's a cool quarter-million dollars a head.

But you're not finished yet. That covers the cost of relocations and compensation for physical assets, but why would Palestinians want to leave in the first place? Bombs and tanks are excluded from this transaction, so your only way of persuading the Palestinians to leave their homeland would be more money. A lot more.

How about another quarter-million dollars per capita, for a total of half a million each? If the Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip accepted such an offer, then the grand total cost would be just \$2.5-trillion, the equivalent of three years' worth of current U.S. defence expenditure.

Of course, there would be some additional costs. The two million Palestinians who are actually Israeli citizens would have to be made the same offer, and some smaller but still quite significant

compensation would need to be paid to the six million Palestinian Arabs living in the surrounding countries, mainly Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt. Say \$4-trillion total.

From the financial point of view, it's not completely unthinkable. Legally, it could be seen as a more generous version of what happens when the government makes a 'compulsory purchase order,' taking over somebody's property to put a road through but offering full compensation.

Except, of course, that in this case what would be required is the voluntary consent of all the Palestinians, or at least the vast majority of them. Half a buy-out is no buy-out at all, and while some people would take the offer, a great many would refuse no matter how generous it was.

If you doubt that, just try the boot on the other foot for a moment. What would happen if the Arab world tried to solve the problem by buying out the Jewish Israelis? Half a million dollars a head, so a couple of million for the average family and double that for the ultra-orthodox because they have much bigger families.

The Arab world could come up with enough money for that—or rather the rich Gulf states could—just as Israel's Western friends could find the money to pay for the reverse solution. It still wouldn't work.

It's never just about the money. It's about tradition and neighbourhood and a sense of place. For many in this part of the world, it's also about deep religious hatreds and big historical grievances. You can't just buy your way out of all that.

So what are we left with? The very same thing that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the various leaders of Hamas have spent the past 30 years trying to kill: the two-state solution. Nobody ever thought it was a great solution, but the wiser people on both sides understood that it was the least bad solution. In fact, the only viable solution.

The past seven months, horrible as they have been, have vividly demonstrated the truth of that proposition. Despite the vast gulf between the high-tech Israeli forces and Hamas's 28—now severely depleted—underground battalions, neither side can inflict a decisive defeat on the other, so they might as well stop.

Be patient. The two-state solution may be back on the table sooner than you think.

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

Opinion

The current scare-mongering on capital gains is a needless distortion, but that doesn't let Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, pictured, off the hook, writes David Crane. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Innovation will continue with or without capital gains tax hike

It's unlikely that Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, Steve Jobs, or any of their early-stage investors were fixated on the capital gains tax rate when they launched their businesses.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



TORONTO—There is a book that should be read by all those contending that the capital gains tax rate is a critical factor in driving innovation, and that its planned increase announced in Budget 2024 will lead to a massive brain drain, a freeze on funds

to finance emerging tech companies, and a much poorer country.

This book shows that discovery and innovation is a far from simple process with the capital gains tax—at best—of minor importance. The innovation process is much more complicated, and it is doubtful that most of those pursuing deep innovation research and commercialization pay little—if any—attention to what their future capital gains tax might be if they succeed. Innovation is about the relentless pursuit of knowledge, the ambition to solve problems, and the possibility of coming up with a new product or way of doing things.

The book, *Breaking Through*, is by Katalin Karikó. She was born in Hungary in 1955 when the country was under strict communist control. Her family lived in poverty in a one-room house with no running water. Yet she went to school, excelled in chemistry, and was able to go on to university. While still an undergraduate she began studying a new field, mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid), pursuing its potential as an antiviral medicine.

When her funding was canceled she, with her husband and

daughter, moved to the United States where she expected much greater opportunity. That was not to be the case.

While she continued her research for the next three decades she, as a reviewer wrote, “found her work to be consistently undervalued or ignored, her pay poor, her tenure insecure and the family’s domiciliary status always under threat.”

She ended up at the University of Pennsylvania medical school where her research attracted no funding and she was demoted. Even when she and colleague Drew Weissman succeeded in synthesizing a safe form of mRNA, there was no interest.

This only changed in 2013, when her work was recognized by a small German company, BioNTech, where she went to work. Her work helped develop the technology that led to COVID-19 vaccines, and in 2023, she shared the Nobel Prize in Medicine with Weissman in recognition of her role.

This may be a more extreme example of the discovery process—one that led to immense benefits for society and huge capital gains for investors. Yet

it is true that there is something much bigger than the impact of the capital gains tax on discovery and innovation success.

It is doubtful that anyone pays much attention to the capital gains tax implications while working to accomplish something with great potential. It's unlikely that Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, or Larry Page and Sergey Brin—or any of their early-stage investors—were fixated on the capital gains tax rate at the time they launched their businesses.

Duncan Rowland, founder of a Toronto financial services start-up, is among those who reject the contention that a higher capital gains tax will dry up funding for start-ups. Writing in the *Globe and Mail*, he argues that “people don't start companies because of the capital gains inclusion rate. They want to solve a problem or build a great product.”

When the capital gains inclusion rate was cut from 75 per cent to 50 per cent in 1999 there was no great surge in start-ups and, Rowland maintained, if there were a cut in the inclusion rate to 25 per cent today, “I don't think there would be a wave of new companies or new investors.”

The current scare-mongering on capital gains is a needless distortion when the need for investment, innovation-driven productivity, and stronger growth is where our attention should be focused.

This doesn't let Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland off the hook in her Budget 2024 change to the capital gains tax. Her action appears to have been driven by an opportunistic move to find money right away for more pre-election spending without breaking her deficit limit promise, or risking Canada's AAA credit rating and not by a considered review of the tax system.

Our tax system is a framework that has to meet many different and even competing needs: it should encourage economic growth, reward innovation, and foster investment. It should be

an instrument of income redistribution and fairness. It should generate sufficient revenue so that government can meet the various roles we expect government to play. But the tax system should also advance important goals, like the need in the current context to incentivize the transition to net-zero emissions with a green energy system.

Overall, for a tax system to function effectively, there must be a broad consensus that it is a fair system for all and not the instrument of special interests. It must be based on trust.

It's clear that as we move into a world increasingly driven by investment and ownership of intangibles, including intellectual property, with highly disruptive changes in the world of work and the nature of jobs, the growing pressures of an aging society and the urgency of addressing climate change, that we need a fundamental review and overhaul of the tax system.

This is all the more urgent because we need more economic growth and much better productivity performance while also dealing with inequality, social stability, and environmental sustainability. Focusing on the capital gains tax, in isolation from the many other elements of the tax system, will not help us achieve the 21st century tax system for all that we need.

Instead, we need a fundamental review of our tax system, with wide public input, based on the various roles of this system to achieve—with compromise and trade-offs to meet competing needs—a tax system we can all trust and live with as we pursue growth, fairness, and sustainability in a 21st century world of highly disruptive change.

In the meantime, a month after Budget 2024, both the S&P/TSX Composite Index and the TSX/Venture Index are at higher levels than pre-budget 2024.

Doomsters, take note.

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The Hill Times

‘Unfortunate errors’ in Global Affairs contracts were ‘administrative oversight,’ MPs hear

‘There’s nothing in here that signals any kind of wrongdoing, misuse of funds ... nothing to actually indicate that we weren’t able to provide value for money for Canadians,’ says Shirley Carruthers, assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer at Global Affairs.

BY IREM KOCA

The contracting issues found in Global Affairs Canada’s internal audit were a result of “administrative oversight,” and had no indication of “wrongdoing,” according to senior department officials.

Shirley Carruthers, assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer at Global Affairs (GAC), testified at the House Government Operations and Estimates committee on May 15. Natalie Lalonde, chief audit executive, and Daniel Pilon, director general overseeing procurement at GAC, also responded to MPs’ questions.

The senior public servants’ appearance stems from a May 6 motion passed by the same committee which called on deputy

ministers and auditors to testify regarding an internal audit that revealed 26 per cent of the department’s contracts from April 2018 to June 2023 failed to comply with the Financial Administration Act.

“There’s nothing in here that signals any kind of wrongdoing, misuse of funds ... nothing to actually indicate that we weren’t able to provide value for money for Canadians,” Carruthers told MPs in her assessment of the audit’s findings.

The assistant deputy minister described the issues highlighted in the internal audit as “unfortunate errors,” and said the department has the tools and processes in place that would mitigate risks moving forward.

The audit that prompted the testimonies highlighted one case where someone who held “certification authority” in the department had benefited from a transaction. The initial report did not provide further details on this contract. But opposition MPs pressed witnesses for further clarification on this finding.

Carruthers told MPs that the finding refers to a contract for “coaching services” for one of the managers within Global Affairs with the contract valued at under \$5,000 and split over two fiscal years.

“The invoice was scheduled to be paid from her manager’s fund, but in this instance, that manager was acting on behalf of her manager when the invoice came in, and she signed for that contract,” the senior official explained.

Carruthers said the public servant in question “was in the wrong” for not complying with regulations, but argued that the action was not intended to cause

harm, and that the case was “just an administrative oversight.”

Global Affairs signed on 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 auditors also highlighted three instances of contract splitting in their risk-based sample. These contracts were signed between 2020 and 2022, with each valued between \$70,720 and \$79,800.

Contract splitting—which is a buying practice vendors “must avoid” as the Public Services and Procurement Canada guidelines outline—means splitting the requirement into a number of contracts to avoid having to award the contract through competition.

“Who benefited from this corrupt contract splitting... Who are the consultants that benefited? Who got the deal?” Conservative MP Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park-Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.) asked witnesses.

Pilon said the three instances of contract splitting were from the same unit and from the same manager.

“It was a very isolated incident,” Pilon responded, adding that the manager in question was overseeing the department’s administrative distribution centre, and has since moved on from that position.

Pilon told MPs the company that received those contracts was ExcelHR, or Excel Human Resources, an IT contracting, consulting, professional services, and recruitment firm operating across Canada. According to Pilon, the firm was used for “temporary help services.”



Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly might be invited by a parliamentary committee to testify on the findings of a Global Affairs Canada internal audit on government contracting. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Senior officials were unable to confirm whether Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.) was briefed on the findings. Conservative committee members pushed for a consensus to get Joly to appear for questions—which they initially proposed in a motion—but had to settle for senior officials’ testimony first, with the option to summon three ministers of Global Affairs later if necessary. Liberal MPs did not support Joly appearing before the committee, based on the evidence heard so far. Liberal MP and committee vice-chair Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Ont.) said it is not “justified” at this point for the committee to call any ministers for testimony.

Minister Joly, International Trade Minister Mary Ng (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.), and International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen (York South-Weston, Ont.) all oversee Global Affairs Canada. The meeting was adjourned before the discussion came to a conclusion.

Government records show the oldest contract between ExcelHR and the federal government dates back to 2004. Its largest contract, numbered 2B0KBQ0102 with Shared Services Canada for professional IT services, was valued at \$14-million, signed in July 2019, and expires in September 2024.

The firm rebranded in May 2023 and has been operating under the names Altis Recruitment and Altis Technology since then, according to its website.

Altis Recruitment and Technology’s largest contract on record with government is also

for professional services and information technology with Shared Services and is valued \$2.9-million.

MPs agreed to call in the firm’s representatives to provide testimony. The Conservative-led committee questioned more than 50 witnesses on the ArriveCan application debacle, including the consulting firms involved in the procurement of the application.

The Hill Times reached out to Altis for comment, but they did not respond by publication.

The federal government’s contracting processes and taxpayer money spent on outsourcing have been under heightened scrutiny since the unfolding of the ArriveCan app’s controversial procurement. With an estimated cost of \$59.5-million, the app has been embroiled in procurement misconduct allegations prompting a dozen investigations, including one by the RCMP.

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 Office’s estimates for 2023-24.

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Daniel Pilon, GAC director general, left, Shirley Carruthers, GAC assistant deputy minister, and Natalie Lalonde, GAC chief audit executive, testify before a parliamentary committee on May 15. Screenshot courtesy of ParVu

News

Trudeau internally announces provincial campaign co-chairs for next election, Liberal sources say

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told the newly appointed national campaign committee ‘unequivocally’ last week that he will lead the party in the next election, according to Liberal sources.

Continued from page 1

staffer who now is the managing director of AGT Foods in Regina, is the co-chair for Saskatchewan; Liberal MP Joanne Thompson (St. John’s East, N.L.) for Newfoundland and Labrador; Liberal MP Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, P.E.I.) for Prince Edward Island; and Kevin Lavigne, a former ministerial staffer who now is director business development for Goguen Champlain Financial Services Inc., for New Brunswick.

The newly appointed co-chairs are members of the national campaign committee. More names are expected to be added in the coming months.

In November, Trudeau announced the appointment of Tourism Minister Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Que.) and three-term Liberal MP Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Man.) as national campaign co-chairs. The provincial campaign co-chairs will work closely with the national co-chairs in getting the party ready in all aspects of the election campaign, including candidate recruitment, policy development, and strategy for the next federal election.

The provincial campaign co-chairs held their first meeting with the national co-chairs, campaign director Jeremy Broadhurst, national party director Azam Ishmael and other senior party officials on May 15. Prime Minister Trudeau also attended the first half of this hour-long virtual meeting.

In the meeting, Trudeau told the national campaign committee “unequivocally” that he will lead the party in the next election, and said that he was confident that the Liberals will win.

“He was on the call, and was very unequivocal in the fact that he’s staying and absolutely convinced we’re gonna win the election,” said one Liberal source.

Since last summer, the Liberals have trailed the Conservatives by between 15 and 21 points in opinion polling. A



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently announced the names of provincial campaign chairs and co-chairs for the next federal election. More names are expected to be added in the coming weeks. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Nanos Research poll released last week put the Conservative support at 43.1 per cent, followed by the Liberals at 22.7 per cent. The NDP was at 15.8 per cent, the Greens 4.2 per cent, and the People’s Party of Canada at 2.5 per cent. With those numbers, the Conservatives under leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) could win more than 200 of the 343 seats in the House if an election were held today.

The next federal election is scheduled for Oct. 20, 2025, but since the Liberals are running a minority government with the support of the NDP, one could be called earlier. Both parties worked out a deal in March 2022 that, in return for the New Democrats’ parliamentary support, the Liberals would deliver on NDP priorities like dental care and pharmacare. Some political insiders in Ottawa think that once the dental care legislation is passed, all bets will be off as to how long the NDP will continue to support the Liberals.

“The New Democrats have to start distancing themselves from the Liberals, they have to start thinking about that right after the budget is passed,” said pollster Nik Nanos. “And then they have to seriously start looking at distancing themselves from the Liberals. That doesn’t mean that they might not strategically support them on certain votes, but they need to be separate, because right now the NDP fortunes are tied to the Liberal fortunes, and both of those parties are going down in support.”

Some current and former senior Liberals think that the first realistic window for the next federal election is after the next budget, which will likely be in March or April 2025. This is the time when they think the NDP will decouple itself from the Liberals, as they need to offer

themselves as an alternative to the incumbents.

Another variable that political observers are watching closely is whether Trudeau takes another look at his future plans this summer in light of the downturn in public support. He has up to this point been consistent that he has no plans to leave as party leader.

“With this public support, most of the ridings across the country are in play,” said one former senior Liberal. “I’m hearing that Trudeau will take one final look this summer if he should run in the next election, or step aside before that.”

Those who think Trudeau’s plan to run again is final say the next election is winnable. They argue that Team Trudeau is laser focused on addressing the affordability issues that are dragging down the party’s public support.

Also, based on the economic forecasts, they expect the interest rates to start to fall in the coming months and, by next April, the Canadian economy will likely be in a much better shape than it is now. Once there’s improvement in the economy and inflation, these Liberals argue, Trudeau can win. At the same time, these sources predict Team Poilievre will “self-destruct,” and make mistakes that the Liberals will be able to use against the Conservatives in the next election.

They speculate that, should the prime minister decide to stay on, he will need one last reboot that could include a cabinet shuffle and a new bold policy agenda.

Every now and then, given the poor public support numbers, reporters question Trudeau whether it’s a good idea for him to lead his party in the next election. On May 14, at a government funding announcement for an electric vehicle battery plant in Port Colborne, Ont., when asked the same question by the *Globe and Mail*,

Trudeau said his focus on delivering results for Canadians.

“We’re here investing in good jobs for today and for generations to come. The world is in a challenging place, absolutely,” he said. “That’s why for eight years this government has been putting forward investments and a frame that fights climate change, and creates good jobs and economic growth, that understands that if you want to bring in strong investments and great jobs for Canadians, you have to be making investments in things like child care, like pharmacare, like health care, investments in supporting our seniors investments to make sure that young people get the best opportunity as they go off to post secondary education.”

“I know there are lots of folks in Ottawa thinking about process,” he added. “I’m focused on results for Canadians. I’m focused on delivering the kinds of things that are going to set Canadians up for success over the coming decades.”

At the same time, all eyes are on the yet-to-be-called byelection in Toronto-St. Paul’s, Ont., in terms of what low polling numbers will mean for the Liberals when people are forced to make a decision between a Trudeau-led government and a potential Poilievre-led Conservative government. Also, it’s seen as a test as to how the Jewish and progressive vote will land on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Liberals’ vote share. At this time, it appears both Jewish and progressive voters are unhappy with the Liberal Party’s handling of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The riding is seen as a safe Liberal seat, and the governing party should be able to carry it easily.

“If we lose this riding, people will openly start to talk openly what they’re talking behind the scenes [time for change in lead-

ership],” said a veteran Greater Toronto Area Liberal, who in the past served as a senior ministerial staffer in Ottawa.

As of last week, the Liberal Party had nominated only 89 of 156 incumbent Liberal MPs across the country. In November 2022, the Liberal party had set some easy-to-meet conditions for caucus members should they want to carry their party’s banner in the next election without going through divisive nomination contests.

According to the criteria set by the party, each MP had to have at least 65 per cent of the anticipated expense limit in their respective electoral district’s association bank account by March 1, 2023; at least 40 more Victory Fund members than the number they had on July 1, 2022; and attempted to knock on at least 3,500 doors or make 7,500 phone calls with their team of volunteers.

The first deadline for these MPs was March 2023. After this cutoff expired, the party gave another target date of until March 1, 2024, to all who had failed to meet the first. They were told that missing the deadline meant they may have to face nomination challenges.

As of last week, 11 Liberal MPs had announced they won’t reoffer in the next election. Of these, three are former cabinet ministers, and one is a former House Speaker: Helena Jaczek (Markham-Stouffville, Ont.); Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, B.C.); Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Ont.); and Anthony Rota (Nipissing-Timiskaming, Ont.). Other backbench MPs include Wayne Long (Saint John-Rothesay, N.B.); Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Ont.); Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Que.); Ken Hardie (Fleetwoods-Port Kells, B.C.); Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches-East York, Ont.); and Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket-Aurora, Ont.).

From the Conservative caucus, four incumbents have announced they won’t seek re-election. They are: Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, Alta.); Ed Fast (Abbotsford, B.C.); Gary Vidal (Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River, Sask.); and Colin Carrie (Oshawa, Ont.). Now-Independent MP Alain Rayes (Richmond-Arthabaska, Que.), who was elected a Conservative MP, has also said he’s not going to run again. Citing ideological differences, Rayes left the Conservative caucus in September 2022 after Poilievre’s election as the new party leader.

On the NDP side, five caucus members have announced they don’t plan to return to the next Parliament: Randall Garrison (Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke, B.C.); Richard Cannings (South Okanagan-West Kootenay, B.C.); Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay, Ont.); Carol Hughes (Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing, Ont.); and Rachel Blaney (North Island-Powell River, B.C.). Earlier this year, Manitoba MP Daniel Blaikie resigned to take up a new role working with Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew.

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‘Not used to them this early and this aggressive,’ says MP Ashton of Manitoba wildfires as communities evacuated

‘It’s going to take all of us to put a plan in place to get serious about climate change, so we can avoid this hell that many Northern and Indigenous Peoples are increasingly facing,’ says NDP MP Niki Ashton.

Continued from page 1

where fire crews worked to prevent damage to the 90 kilometres of hydro lines connecting Cranberry Portage to The Pas, Man., where most evacuees had been staying. Ontario firefighters were deployed to Manitoba to assist with the firefighting efforts.

Ashton, whose riding encompasses the northern four-fifths of the province, said there were signs that this year’s fire season could be worse than usual. A prolonged drought, below-average snowfall, and high winds have contributed to more aggressive fires starting earlier in the season, she said.

She noted that this past winter had been so warm that the Northern Manitoba Trappers’ Festival in The Pas cancelled its historic dog sled races in January due to inadequate snowfall.

“What’s been reported from those fighting the fires is that the ground has been very dry, which



Hundreds of people have been evacuated from their communities due to wildfires in the Manitoba riding represented by NDP MP Niki Ashton. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

is a major contributor to the fires moving a lot faster. This time of year, normally the ground would be moist,” she said. “Between the drought conditions and the wind, the fires—particularly the one near Cranberry Portage—moved a lot faster than expected, and certainly at a time of year where we’ve never seen this kind of fire activity.”

Hot, dry outlook for Western Canada

Evacuation orders have also been issued to communities in northern British Columbia and Alberta.

More than 6,000 people were evacuated from neighbourhoods in Fort McMurray, Alta., as a wildfire approached the city on May 14. Some of those communities

were devastated by the fire that swept through the city in 2016.

In northeast British Columbia, evacuations have been ordered in Fort Nelson and Doig River.

The Canada Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC), which co-ordinates firefighting resource sharing between Canadian and international governments, upgraded its national preparedness level from two to three—out of a possible five—on May 15. Level three, according to the CIFFC website, indicates that “wildland fire activity is increasing within one or more jurisdictions,” and “the demand for mobilization of firefighters and equipment from other jurisdictions is moderate.”

At least 1,005 fires burning through 336,700 hectares have been reported so far this year, according to the CIFFC, with most

burning in Alberta and British Columbia.

Charts provided to journalists during a May 9 briefing in Ottawa showed a high probability of above-normal temperatures across most of the country between May and July, especially in central British Columbia, and parts of Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada. The charts also showed an east-west split in rainfall in March and April—while much of Eastern Canada received heavy rainfall during those months, drought conditions persisted in Western Canada.

Looking ahead, there is potential for below-normal precipitation in northern Alberta and Nova Scotia, but also the chance for above-average rainfall in the southern Prairies and parts of Ontario.

Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjit Sajjan (Vancouver South, B.C.) said at a press conference following the briefing that all levels of government had worked on improving co-ordination across agencies after last year’s record wildfire season. Eight firefighters died last year, 15 million hectares burned, and more than 230,000 people were evacuated.

“Sometimes, as you know, when it comes to any type of emergencies, you might have the resources, but it may not be at the right place at the right time,” he said. “So one of the key [areas] that we’ll be focusing on is how do we change this?”

The federal government is trialling the use of civilian first responders in British Columbia

and Northwest Territories to assist with wildfire responses, with Sajjan stating that the Canadian Armed Forces, while important, are “not the best resource to deal with a lot of these emergencies.”

The government is expanding the Humanitarian Workforce Program—in which the federal government provides support to non-governmental organizations responding to disasters or emergencies—for this year’s wildfire season.

Sajjan said the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada had approximately 200 volunteers ready to deploy within 72 hours for up to three weeks, while St. John’s Ambulance and the Canadian Red Cross had 10,000 and 5,000 volunteers, respectively, ready to be called up. The Salvation Army will also move assets and supplies to five high-risk areas in British Columbia, and two in the Northwest Territories.

‘Emergency planning on all fronts’ required

Back in northwestern Manitoba, Ashton said this year’s early season and its impacts demonstrated the importance of taking climate change seriously, as well as planning for its effects.

As an example, she pointed to the town of Flin Flon on the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border. The regional centre, to which many evacuees from nearby communities have fled, faced telecommunications outages as a result of fire damage to fibre-optic cables.

“You can imagine when people are dependent on checking in on social media to get information on where the fires are moving, emergency information, to be cut off like that is not just terrifying, but it’s frankly unacceptable,” she said. “I was advised that health facilities and even municipal facilities were relying on Starlink satellites.”

Ashton got in touch with federal ministers, whom she said responded right away. Bell MTS posted on X (formerly Twitter) on May 14 that service was restored to the town after crews laid nine kilometres of replacement fibre.

The incident showed that the federal government and telecommunications companies needed to ensure backups were in place for emergencies, Ashton said. “It absolutely underscores the importance of emergency planning on all fronts.”

“I hope there’s a sense of solidarity to be found in terms of supporting what communities on the frontlines of wildfires are facing, particularly Northern and Indigenous communities that are particularly vulnerable, but also a sense of solidarity around the need for serious action on climate change,” she said.

“This is the way of the future if we don’t get serious about climate change, and it’s going to take all of us—north, south, all political parties—to put a plan in place to get serious about climate change, so we can avoid this hell that many Northern and Indigenous Peoples are increasingly facing.”

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A wildfire burns near Fort McMurray, Alta., on May 15, 2024. *Photograph courtesy of Alberta Wildfire*

News

'I made an error in judgment,' CBSA official says of dining with ArriveCan contractors

'People that admit openly that they've breached the basic code of conduct as civil servants are now being promoted,' said Bloc Québécois MP Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné following the testimony.

BY IREM KOCA

A Canada Border Services Agency official involved in the technical development of the nearly \$60-million ArriveCan application admitted to an "error in judgement" when attending a dinner with the contractors at the centre of procurement misconduct investigations.

Chulaka Ailapperuma, an acting director at the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), told the House Public Accounts Committee that he attended two events with the ArriveCan contractors in 2020, responding to Bloc Québécois MP Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné's (Terrebonne, Que.) questions.

One of these events was the "virtual whiskey tasting," which came to light in previous committee hearings and was heavily criticized by MPs. According to Ailapperuma, both former CBSA officials Antonio Utano and Cameron MacDonald also participated in the whiskey tasting.

The second event was a dinner with GC Strategies co-founders Kristian Firth



Kristian Firth, managing partner of GC Strategies, was admonished by the House Speaker on April 17, 2024. Screenshot courtesy of Parlvu



Chulaka Ailapperuma, an acting director at the CBSA, testified before the House Public Accounts Committee on May 14. Screenshot courtesy of Parlvu

and Darren Anthony, held at a restaurant in Ottawa's Lansdowne Park which took place in spring 2020, said Ailapperuma. The CBSA director testified that he was accompanied by his then-superior Utano and one other contractor. Ailapperuma said he did not inform his superiors about either event.

"I made an error in judgment and I do regret not informing my superiors as well as going to the event," said Ailapperuma, adding that while he "did not specifically inform anyone" that his "superiors were aware" that he was attending the events.

"I don't think it is common practice [to attend events with contractors]," said Ailapperuma. "We were spending long hours working on ArriveCan, and I saw this as a team celebration."

MacDonald, currently an assistant deputy minister at Health Canada, and Utano, now a director-general at the Canada Revenue Agency, have been suspended without pay over misconduct allegations, and had their security clearance revoked as the ArriveCan debacle unfolded.

The pair accused their former CBSA superiors of giving misleading testimonies at the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee regarding who was responsible for choosing to work with GC Strategies for the ArriveCan application.

Speaking of the dinner, Ailapperuma said "I would not say any financial or contractual discussions were had. It was the day-to-day grind of ArriveCan that was discussed." He told MPs that adding that he had a burger and a beer.

Ailapperuma, who has since become an acting director of the CBSA, told MPs that he was not

involved in the procurement or contracting phase of the project. The public servant led the team that delivered the ArriveCan application, and won a Public Service Award of Excellence in 2020, records show.

"What is particularly shocking is... nothing is being done at CBSA," said Sinclair-Desgagné in a May 14 interview with *The Hill Times*. "On the contrary, people that admit openly that they've breached the basic code of conduct as civil servants are now being promoted. That's scary."

CBSA president Erin O'Gorman, who also appeared before the committee on May 14, told MPs that the agency's code of conduct has been recently "refreshed" to "reflect current scenarios and more inclusive language so that all employees can see themselves" in it.

"What hasn't changed are the fundamentals of the code, respect,

integrity, stewardship, and the pursuit of excellence," she said.

The revised version of the agency's rules came into force in April 2024, records show.

The ArriveCan application was launched in April 2020 for international travellers to submit their COVID-19-related information electronically at border crossings. The emergency procurement of the app has been under scrutiny since the fall of 2022 due its soaring price tag and allegations of procurement misconduct involving some of the contractors who worked on creating the application.

GC Strategies was the primary contractor for the procurement of the ArriveCan app, and received an estimated \$19.1-million for its work, which did not involve the app's actual development or maintenance. While the company's co-founders Firth and Anthony deny any wrongdoing, their



Antonio Utano, left, and Cameron MacDonald are former CBSA officials who signed on contracting documents related to outsourcing work on the ArriveCan application. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

two-person IT staffing company has been in the middle of allegations of procurement misconduct. The RCMP is investigating the allegations of misconduct surrounding ArriveCan application and another dozen independent probes into the matter are underway, including an internal audit by the CBSA.

Former CBSA president was paid to testify before committee

O'Gorman also confirmed that she brought in former CBSA president John Ossowski on a "casual contract" before his appearance at a parliamentary committee, in response to Conservative MP Michael Barrett's (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ont.) questions.

O'Gorman told MPs that the former CBSA president "billed" the agency approximately \$500 for "one day's work for his preparation for testimony," during which he was working at accounting and professional services firm PwC Canada.

"It's not uncommon for [former public servants] to be brought back on a casual contract to facilitate their access to the information and the support they need to prepare themselves to testify [before a parliamentary committee] on behalf of the Crown," she said, as MPs pushed for further clarification.

"That's the convention that I was working under when I made that arrangement. If it turns out that that was not required for him to access the information that he needed, I'll take responsibility for that," she said.

O'Gorman told MPs she did not review the documents the former president of the CBSA had access to, but agreed to provide further information to the committee.

"It certainly wasn't an effort to enrich Mr. Ossowski. It absolutely was not an effort to align any stories. He prepared the way he needed to prepare," she said.

Auditor General Karen Hogan's Feb. 12 report into the procurement process concluded the federal government "repeatedly failed to follow good management practices in the contracting, development, and implementation of the ArriveCan application."

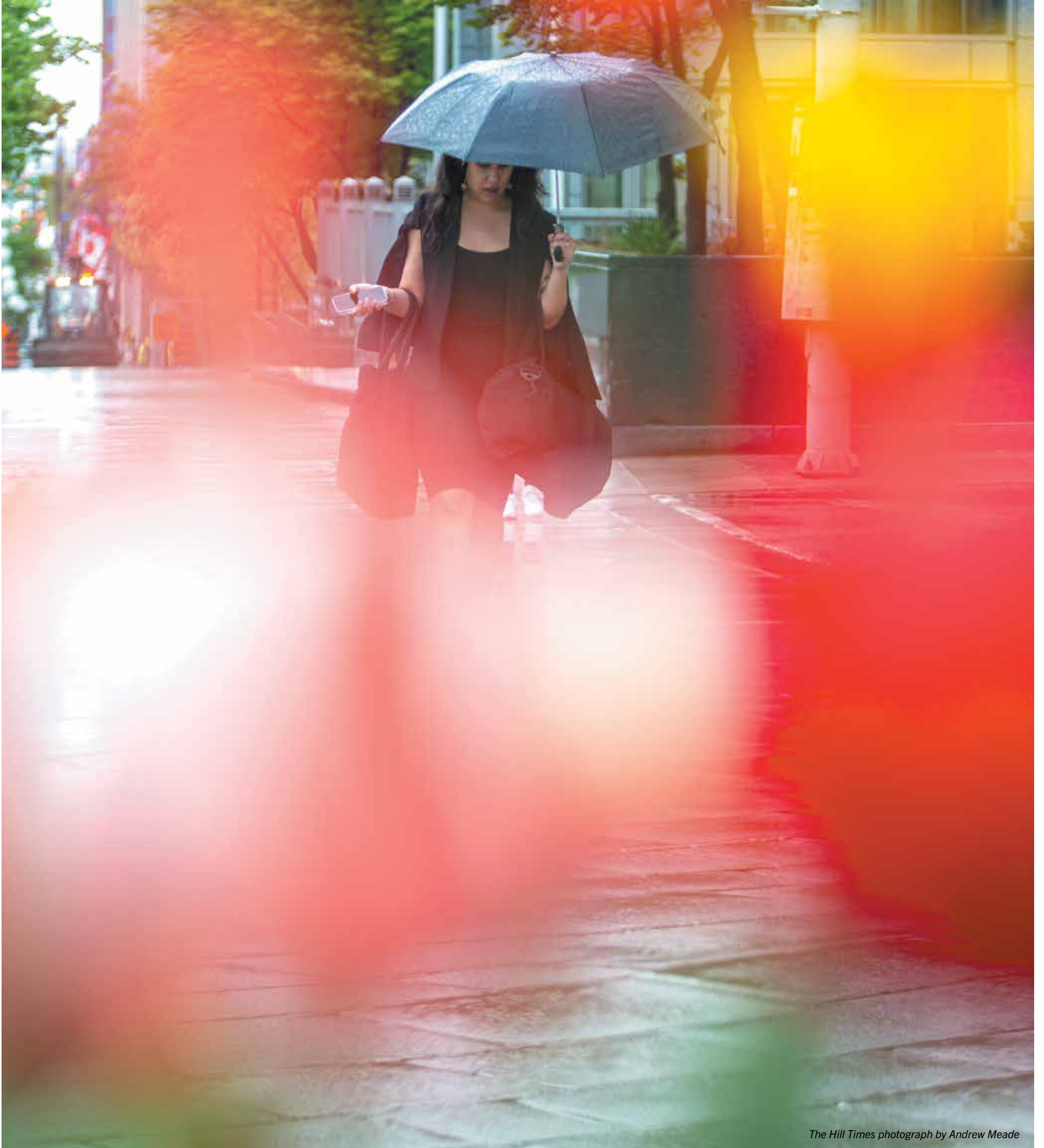
The report had also highlighted situations where CBSA employees involved in the ArriveCan project were invited by vendors to dinners and other activities. According to Hogan, the agency's code of conduct requires employees to advise their supervisors of all offers of gifts or hospitality regardless of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

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

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The Big Photo

It's tulip time: A woman hides from the rain under an umbrella as she walks down Elgin Street in downtown Ottawa on May 14, 2024. *The Hill Times'* photographer Andrew Meade on taking this shot: Rainy days make for easy feature hunting, so while looking for weather photos, I decided to use the vibrant tulips in bloom along Elgin to frame people walking by with umbrellas. After a few minutes of waiting, this woman walked into my viewfinder and my picture was complete.



The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Opinion

High cost for women advocating for Palestinian rights in Canada

The treatment of these women is a sharp reminder that advocating for Palestinian rights and free speech is a perilous endeavour, especially for those who challenge prevailing narratives in public spaces.

Taha Ghayyur & Yaser Haddara

Opinion



In a political landscape marked by division and toxicity fuelled by Israel's war on Gaza, women from Palestinian, Arab, South Asian, and Indigenous communities have stepped up to champion Palestinian rights. They are leading mass protests, spearheading



Actions against Independent Ontario MPP Sarah Jama, pictured, in the provincial legislature demonstrate the punitive measures against those who openly support the Palestinian people, or who speak out against Israel's actions in Gaza, write Yaser Haddara and Taha Ghayyur. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

advocacy campaigns, and driving educational initiatives to draw attention to the plausible genocide in Gaza.

Despite their dedication, they face intense backlash in public arenas that have become increasingly dangerous for women advocating for justice. Research by Princeton University revealed that women in American politics are three times more likely than men to be targets of attacks. Similar research in Canada has found that highly visible female politicians are targeted more heavily than their male counterparts.

A striking example is Sarah Jama, an Ontario legislator who was among the first politicians

to speak publicly on Palestine. In advocating for an end to the occupation of Palestinian land, Jama faced isolation and was targeted by Premier Doug Ford and his caucus. She was expelled from the provincial New Democratic party. Her recent removal from the legislature for wearing a keffiyeh, a traditional Palestinian scarf, demonstrates the punitive measures against those who openly support the Palestinian people, or who speak out against Israel's actions in Gaza.

Amira Elghawaby, the federal government's first special representative on combatting Islamophobia, has faced intense scrutiny for advocating freedom

of expression and the rights of pro-Palestinian Canadians. Media outlets have targeted her with headlines questioning her credibility and attempting to discredit her, labelling her as unfit for office. Opposition party members have also criticized her, with attacks coming from both the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois in the federal legislature.

Another prominent figure, Salma Zahid, the Liberal MP representing Scarborough Centre, Ont., has not escaped the backlash for speaking out on Palestine. Zahid, who recently visited the West Bank, has been a leading voice in Ottawa calling on the government to uphold international law and denounce what is unfolding in Gaza. Her stance has made her a target of vitriol and hate.

Wanda Nanibush, an Anishinaabe curator and artist, has been outspoken about Palestine on social media. In response, a concerted campaign by Israel Museums and Arts, Canada, along with pro-Israel donors, pressured her employer, the Art Gallery of Ontario, to suppress her efforts to raise awareness about Palestinian issues. Nanibush ultimately left the gallery.

NDP MP Heather McPherson has faced hate on social media

for standing up for Palestinians rights.

The treatment of these women is a sharp reminder that advocating for Palestinian rights and free speech is a perilous endeavour, especially for women who challenge prevailing narratives in public spaces. They face not only institutional pushback, but also personal attacks intended to silence them, often by labelling them as "unfit for office" or "antisemitic." The demonization of voices speaking for Palestinian rights is disturbing.

It is appalling that the federal Minister for Women, Gender Equality, and Youth, Marci Ien, has remained silent in the face of concerted efforts to silence women advocating for justice. Similarly, Charmaine Williams, Ontario's Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, has also chosen not to speak out.

The unwavering courage of these Canadian women underscores the critical importance of standing up for justice and human rights, regardless of the price. These leaders, and others like them, deserve support as they continue to fight for what is right in the face of adversity.

Taha Ghayyur is the executive director of Justice for All Canada, a non-profit human rights organization dedicated to preventing genocide. Follow him on Twitter at @tahaghayyur. Dr. Yaser Haddara is the board chair of the Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council. Follow CMPAC on Twitter at @CMPACOnline. *The Hill Times*

Military housing problem a reflection of wider culture

Why would a young person join the CAF today when they might not have a home tomorrow?

Tom Ellard

Opinion



If a soldier has no home in which to eat breakfast, what does that say about the culture in which the soldier operates?

This question leverages the famous Peter Drucker quote that "culture eats strategy for breakfast." The culture that the federal Liberals have created over the last nine years in the Canadian Armed Forces has resulted in a shortage of 16,500 personnel.

That culture lacks agility, compassion, and accountability.

Canadians need to understand the strategy that the government is trying to implement, and hold them accountable for the culture they have created. Immediate action is required now to overhaul recruitment, build housing for soldiers, and provide funding to offset the areas with a high cost of living.

I have hired hundreds of people, and I do not subscribe to the simplified narrative that we can blame the generational zeitgeist of younger people's shifting values for the failure to attract and retain personnel. To attract and maintain a committed workforce, organizations must have a purpose, work-life balance, reward performance, and provide for the needs of its personnel. In the private sector, failure to recruit and retain staff is a reflection on leadership, and there is accountability for performance.

Businesses recognize that recruitment and retention are vital to success, and ask themselves key questions: what is my compelling value proposition for a person wanting to work here?

What growth and opportunity do we offer individuals? How do the market conditions affect my ability to hire and retain top talent? Why is talent leaving? What is the impact on my bottom line?

That last question in a military context, is: how will Canada protect its interests and fight a war without people?

Is Defence Minister Bill Blair asking himself that question? If not, he should be, because he recently characterized the CAF as being caught in personnel "death spiral," acknowledging that soldiers are leaving at a faster rate than the CAF can recruit.

These issues are compounded by the Defence Policy Updates that the chief of defence staff says will nearly double Canada's troop shortage. That shortage may exceed 30,000 personnel with the requirements to operate proposed new equipment. To address this shortage, Blair called for a different approach to recruitment, yet his government is complicit in perpetuating a broken culture. Like the budget, recruiting will not balance itself.

That culture is one that ignores the basic needs of Canada's soldiers, suggesting that it does not value its people. As it stands, there are thousands of soldiers on base housing waitlists. The cost-of-living crisis has become so problematic that some troops find themselves relying on food banks.

The Forces opted to replace the post-living differential—which was already frozen at 2009 rates—with the newer—supposedly more adaptable—Canadian Forces Housing Living Differential scheme. This change could embarrassingly result in a leading seaman earning more than their more seasoned petty officers (PO). That same PO might receive zero benefit if they have lived in the same location for more than seven years, all because they are expected to "have adjusted to the cost." This scheme was designed to save an estimated \$30-million on housing, as enforced by the Treasury Board, currently led by former defence minister Anita Anand. Realistically, housing allowances is an area where the government should be looking

to spend more—not less—until it solves the CAF housing shortages.

The crux of the housing problem lies in the fact that the new housing assistance is tied to pay rates rather than being contingent solely on a member's assigned living location. In essence, as soldiers receive raises through promotions and gain experience, their housing assistance diminishes. Consequently, these raises become negligible, failing to provide the financial relief intended.

In challenging economic times, historically, the military should benefit from increased enrolment. The problem is that prospective recruits are aware of the issues and culture in the CAF. Why would a young person join today when they might not have a home tomorrow? The Liberal government is not meeting the covenant with our nation's warriors—to look after them, so they can protect us. Lead from the front, minister, and fix the government culture that isn't looking after the welfare of our soldiers.

Tom Ellard served in Canadian Armed Forces as a reserve infantry officer. He is presently a partner at The Paradigm Group, and is seeking the Conservative Party of Canada nomination in Lakeshore-Mississauga, Ont. *The Hill Times*



Laura Ryckewaert
Hill Climbers

Comms staff on the move: new press secretaries for Champagne, Sudds



Audrey Milette has been made press secretary to Minister Champagne. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Lecoursière LeBrun avocats, she joined his ministerial team at the end of that year, first taking on the role of special assistant for communications. Milette was made a Quebec regional affairs adviser to Champagne in 2022, and roughly a year later, in the fall of 2023, she was promoted to policy adviser.

Both Audrey's started in their new titles during the first week of May, and will be working closely with senior adviser for issues management and communications **Laurel Lennox**, and communications and social media assistant **Lekan Edwards**.

Ian Foucher continues as chief of staff to Champagne.

Over in the families minister's shop, Sudds has a new press secretary of her own, with **Geneviève Lemaire** having recently taken over the post replacing **Soraya Lemur** who's left Sudds' office.



Geneviève Lemaire is Minister Sudds' new press secretary. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Lemaire comes fresh from International Development Minister **Ahmed Hussen's** office where she spent a few months shy of a year as a digital communications adviser. Prior to joining Hussen's team in August 2023—shortly after that summer's shuffle—Lemaire passed a few months as a communications adviser to then-immigration minister **Sean Fraser**. A former consultant with the job recruitment firm Page Personnel, she also has experience tackling communications work for then-transport minister **Omar Alghabra**, and for then-Liberal MP **Will Amos**.

A former assistant to now-House Speaker **Greg Fergus** as the Liberal MP for Hull-Aylmer, Que., Lemur had been press secretary to Sudds since August 2023—hired shortly after Sudds was named to cabinet for the first time.

Margaret Jaques is director of communications to Sudds, and also currently oversees digital communications adviser **Kheyi Isichei**, and special assistant for operations and communications **Layla Platt**.

Chris Evelyn is chief of staff to the families minister.

Stay tuned for more updates soon on other recent communications staff moves.

lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne, left, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Families Minister Jenna Sudds have all seen communications staff changes of late. The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade

Plus, Audrey Champoux has taken over as communications director to Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne following Laurie Bouchard's return to the PMO.

Communications staff changes seem to be the theme of late with recent moves having taken place in a number of ministerial offices, including those of Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**, Innovation Minister **François-Philippe Champagne**, and Families Minister **Jenna Sudds**.

Champagne has seen a switch up to both his press secretary and director of communications following communications director **Laurie Bouchard's** recent return to the Prime Minister's Office.

Bouchard, who previously spent roughly three years as a PMO advance between 2018 and 2021, returned to the halls of 80 Wellington St., at the end of April to fill in as deputy director of communications while **Michelle Johnston** is on maternity leave. Bouchard had been working for Champagne since bidding



Laurie Bouchard is back in the PMO. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

farewell to the PMO at the end of 2021 after that year's election. Starting out as a senior communications manager, she was promoted to lead the unit for Champagne last year. Prior to her first run in Trudeau's office, Bouchard was a government relations consultant with TACT Intelligence-conseil.

Max Valiquette is executive director of communications in the PMO, supported by director of communications **Vanessa Hage-Moussa** and director of media relations **Ann-Clara Vaillancourt**.

In Champagne's office, since Bouchard's exit, press secretary **Audrey Champoux** has been promoted to take over as the minister's communications director, and in turn, policy adviser **Audrey Milette**

has been tapped to replace Champoux as press secretary.

Champoux has been fielding media queries for Liberal ministers since the spring of 2022, starting out as press secretary to then-public safety minister **Marco Mendicino**. Before then, she'd been an editorial assistant with *COOL! Magazine*. Champoux left Mendicino's office—ending as press secretary and senior communications adviser—to do the same for Champagne in June 2023 just before that summer's cabinet shuffle (which saw Mendicino dropped from cabinet).



Audrey Champoux is now Minister Champagne's director of communications. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Milette has been working for Champagne since the spring of 2021, starting out in his office as the MP for Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que. A former lawyer with

Feature

Parliamentary Calendar

Joe Clark to mark 45th anniversary of his election as Canada's 16th prime minister on May 22 in Ottawa



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 on Wednesday, May 22, at 5:45 p.m. at the Shaw Centre in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

MONDAY, MAY 20

House Sitting Schedule—The House is scheduled to sit for a total of 125 days in 2024. The House returns on Tuesday, May 21, after the Victoria Day holiday, and will sit for five straight weeks until June 21. The House resumes sitting on Sept. 16, and will sit for four weeks from Sept. 16-Oct. 11, but will 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.

TUESDAY, MAY 21

2024 Next Gen—Beacon North Strategies hosts a day-long event, "2024 Next Gen: Shaping the Future of Public Affairs Today" featuring panel discussions on polling for advocacy, crafting election strategy, and women in public affairs. Participants include Liberal MP Mona Fortier, Conservative MP Dean Allison, Lobbying Commissioner Nancy Bélanger, former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, Pendulum Group's Yaroslav Baran, and *The Hill Times* publisher Leslie Dickson. Tuesday, May 21, at 9 a.m. ET at The Westin Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details online: beaconnorthstrategies.com.

Photo Exhibit: 'Nagorno-Karabakh: Endangered Armenian Heritage'—Speaker of the House of Commons Greg Fergus and Armenia's Ambassador to Canada Anahit Harutyunyan host an invitation-only photography exhibition titled "Nagorno-Karabakh: Endangered Armenian Heritage" featuring the works of Canadian-Armenian photographer Hrair Hawk Khatcherian. Tuesday, May 21, at 9 a.m. ET in Room 215-A, West Block, Parliament Hill. Contact g.yedigaryan@mfa.am.

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, discuss practical on-the-ground strategies, and evaluate the impact of current and potentials of policies on environmental 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.

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 Pélouin, 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: cccmm.ca.

FRIDAY, MAY 24

Africa Day 2024—The Casa Foundation for International Development hosts Africa Day 2024, "Celebrating Excellence in the People of African Descent," featuring a panel session exploring opportunities for growth in sustainable investment and development in African countries by Canadian entrepreneurs. Participants include government officials, ambassadors and diplomats, industry experts, and entrepreneurs. Friday, May 24, at 9 a.m. ET at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St. Details online via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, MAY 28

Insurance Brokers Association of Canada Reception—Please join insurance brokers from across the country at a parliamentary reception wrapping up a successful annual advocacy day on the Hill. Tuesday, May 28, 5:30-7:30 p.m. ET, in the Renaissance Room, Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Register: rsvp@summa.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 Mairi McPhedran hosts the Vote16 Ottawa Summit, a gathering of groups and leaders working towards youth empowerment through democratic reform. Wednesday, May 29, at 2 p.m. at 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, at Library and Archives Canada, 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—Indigenous Services Minister and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario Patty Hajdu, and Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, and Economic Development Mary Ng are among the speakers at the 2024 Economic Reconciliation Summit hosted by Canada 2020 and Indigenous leaders from across the country. 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.

Doors Open at Justice Canada—The Department of Justice is holding its annual hybrid "Open Doors at Justice" event to engage with the public and stakeholders on various topics related to making government more open and accessible. Thursday, May 30, from 2-4 p.m. ET at the Department of Justice of Canada, 284 Wellington St. Details online via Eventbrite.

Steve Paikin to Launch New Book—TVO host Steve Paikin will take part in the Ottawa launch of his biography on former 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.

Panel: 'Empowering East African Youth through Education'—The Aga Khan Foundation Canada and the Canada-Mathare Education Trust host a panel discussion, "Rise and Thrive: Empowering East African Youth through Education" exploring innovative approaches, challenges, and triumphs in promoting educational access for girls in East Africa and beyond. Thursday, May 30, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam, 199 Sussex Dr. 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 policymakers in the United States and Germany on questions of price stabilization. Thursday, May 30, at 7 p.m. ET at the Toronto Metropolitan University's George Vairi Engineering and Computing Centre. Details online: torontomu.ca.

Webinar: 'How To Run (and Win) Campaigns'—The Right Recruiter Conservative Talent Network hosts a webinar, "How To Run (and Win) Campaigns." Veteran Canadian political campaigner Steve Outhouse will chat with Jenni Byrne, one of the most experienced local campaign managers in the country who has run multiple national general election campaigns, and who piloted Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's leadership campaign in 2022. Thursday, May 30, at 7 p.m. ET taking place online: rightrecruiter.ca/jenni.

German Ambassador on the Yukon—Germany's Ambassador to Canada Sabine Sparwasser will discuss Germany-Canada relations at an event hosted by the Canadian International Council. Thursday, May 30, at 5:30 p.m. PT at the Baked Cafe. Details online: thecic.org.

SUNDAY, JUNE 2

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

MONDAY, JUNE 3

Minister LeBlanc to Deliver Keynote—Minister of Public Safety Dominic LeBlanc will deliver a keynote address at the day-long 2024 National Security Conference hosted by the Policy Insights Forum. Other participants include New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs (by video); former U.S. ambassador to Canada Bruce Heyman; Shelly Bruce, former chief of the Communications Security Establishment; and two former national security and intelligence advisers to the prime minister: Richard Fadden and Vincent Rigby. Monday, June 3, at 9 a.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 15th floor, 99 Bank St. Details online via Eventbrite.

Book Launch and Panel for The Prince—The Ottawa International Writers' Festival hosts a panel discussion for the launch of Stephen Maher's new book *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*. Panelists include *The Hill Times*' Charelle Evelyn, CBC's Jorge Barrera, *The Globe and Mail*'s Steven Chase, and *Le Devoir*'s Marie Vastel. Monday, June 3, at 7 p.m. ET at the Church of Saint John the Evangelist, 154 Somerset St. W. Details online: writersfestival.org.

TUESDAY, JUNE 4

Book Launch for The Prince—Journalist and author Stephen Maher will host a book launch for his new book, *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*, at the Métropolitain Brasserie in Ottawa on Tuesday, June 4, 5 p.m.-7 p.m.

Book Launch: Laurier Liberals and the Theft of First Nations Reserve Land—Library and Archives Canada hosts the Ottawa launch of historians Bill Waiser and Jennie Hansen's new book *Cheated: The Laurier Liberals and the Theft of First Nations Reserve Land*, a compelling narrative of single-minded politicians, uncompromising Indian Affairs officials, grasping government appointees, and well-connected Liberal speculators, set against a backdrop of politics, power, patronage, and profit. Tuesday, June 4, at 7 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St. Details online via Eventbrite.

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.

