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THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR, NO. 2127

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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NEWS

Foreign interference registry should include more explicit contact with leadership candidates and nominations, says Democracy Watch

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

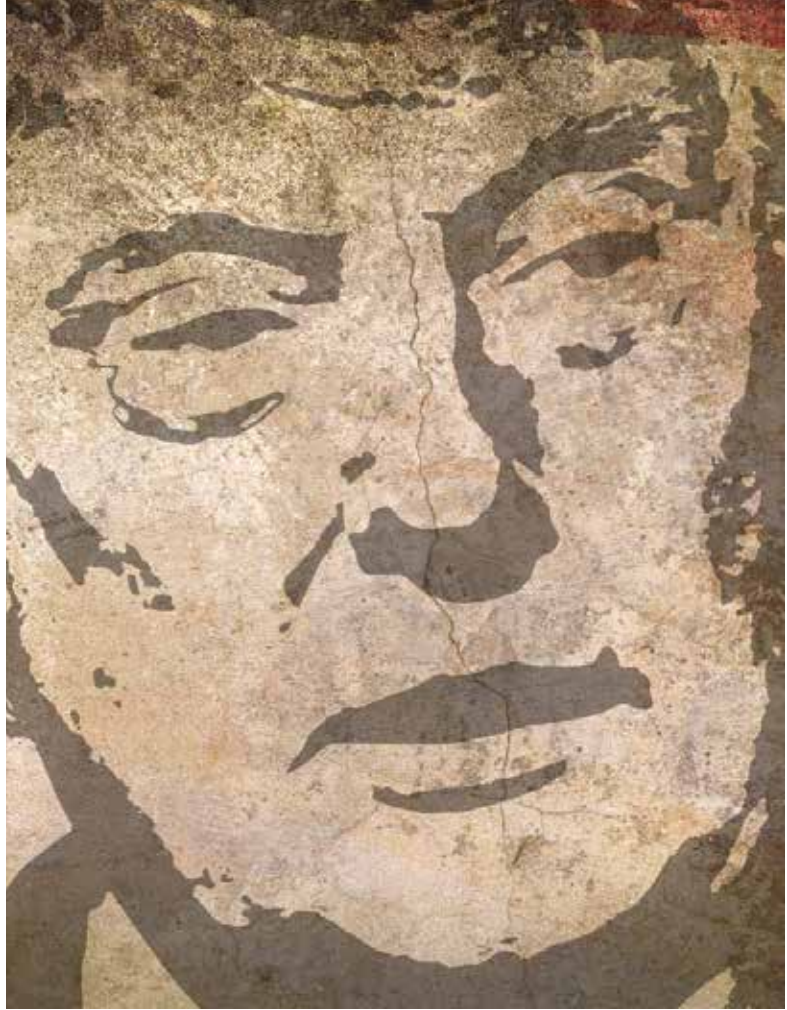
The government's proposed foreign influence registry bill should be amended to more explicitly include lobbying of nomination or leadership contestants who have yet to be elected to public office on behalf of foreign powers, transparency advocacy group Democracy Watch argues. Bill C-70, Countering Foreign Interference Act, introduced by Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) on May 6, includes a proposal to create Canada's Foreign Influence Transparency Registry. Anyone acting on behalf of a foreign power in seeking to influence government processes must register. Duff Conacher, co-founder of advocacy group Democracy Watch, said the wide range of registrable activities captured in the bill—including communications with public office holders or public information campaigns related to any legislative, procurement, election, or party nomination process on behalf of a foreign power—goes far beyond what is currently covered in lobbying rules. "The definition of 'arrangement' requires disclosure, whether activities are paid or unpaid. This is a huge win," he said. "We were pushing for that, for all activities to be covered, whether they were paid or unpaid ... that raises the question about why Canadian lobbyists who are trying to influence our public officials

Continued on page 26

OPINION

Donald Trump's vulgarity is fast becoming signature across so much of our politics today

Donald Trump has set the stage for a radical change in U.S. democracy by making abusive language and hateful speech acceptable at the highest levels of American politics. Sadly, he has several imitators. See Michael Harris' column p. 10.



Donald Trump's greatest contribution to the toxic, partisan mud bath that politics has become, is the ex-president's industrial scale lying, writes Michael Harris. Image courtesy of Needpix.com

NEWS

'Crappy' polling numbers make some Liberal MPs uneasy about electoral prospects, but still consider next election 'worth fighting'

BY ABBAS RANA

Odds are stacked against the governing Liberals, making some MPs "nervous" and "uneasy" about the next election, but caucus members are vowing to go all-in against the federal Conservatives led by Pierre Poilievre. "We've got a year to turn it around. [It] means that the campaign is going to matter," said four-term Liberal MP Sean Casey (Charlottetown, P.E.I.) in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "It means that people are completely disengaged. It means that we're long in the tooth, and the political pendulum is swinging against us. ... We can't give up, and I owe it to the people I represent, we owe it to Canadians to keep plugging, to keep a positive message, and to keep working. I mean, I don't know what the hell else you can do." When asked whether, given low public support for the Liberal Party and the prime minister, Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) is the right person to lead the party in the next election, Casey declined to say. "That's his decision," he said. "My opinion doesn't matter." Pressed again, he said, "I'm not going to share [my opinion] with the public." For about a year, the Liberals have been facing a massive public support deficit in national public opinion polls, trailing the Conservatives with a double-digit margin. According to a weekly Nanos Research poll released last week, the Conservatives had the support

Continued on page 25

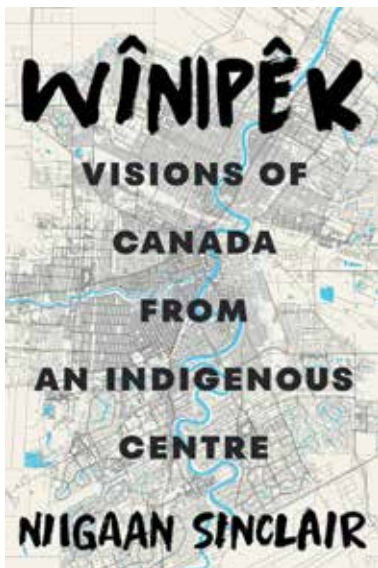
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Mike Lapointe

Heard On The Hill

Wînipêk Visions of Canada from an Indigenous Centre set to hit bookshelves this month



Winnipeg Free Press columnist and professor in the department of Indigenous Studies at the University of Manitoba Niigaan Sinclair has a new book coming out later this month. *Handout image*

Winnipeg Free Press columnist Niigaan Sinclair has a new book coming out soon: *Wînipêk Visions of Canada from an Indigenous Centre*.

Sinclair, who is a professor in the department of Indigenous studies at the University of Manitoba, was called “provocative, revolutionary, and one of this country’s most influential thinkers” on the issues affecting Indigenous cultures, communities, and reconciliation in Canada, according to the book description, which is set to hit bookshelves on May 28.

The book is based on years’ worth of columns with Sinclair delivering a defining essay collection on the resilience of Indigenous Peoples.

“It’s a book that reminds us of the power that comes from loving a place, even as that place is violently taken away from you, and the magic of fighting your way back to it,” according to the description.

Terry Fox Humanitarian Award winners to be fêted on the Hill

Fourteen young humanitarians will receive the 2024 Terry Fox Humanitarian Award during a special event co-hosted by House Speaker Greg Fergus, Liberal MP Pam Damoff, Conservative MP John Brassard, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, and Green Leader Elizabeth May on the Hill on May 27.

This year’s award winners, who are between the ages of 16-22 years old and who hail from across Canada, includes advocates for marginalized people, mental health, education access, food security, medical and health research, and the right to practice one’s faith.

Established in 1982, the scholarship is awarded annually

to students who exemplify the humanitarian ideals of Terry Fox by volunteering and giving back to their communities, according to the press release.

Library and Archives Canada celebrates Scholar Awards on May 29

Library and Archives Canada is rolling out the red carpet this week for five recipients of the organization’s Scholar Awards.

The annual awards recognize Canadians who have, according to Library and Archives’ website, “made an outstanding contribution to the creation and promotion of our country’s culture, literary heritage and historical knowledge.”

This year’s recipients are actor, playwright, poet, director and producer Renelta Arluk; Kate Beaton, comics artist and award-winning author; journalist and television and radio host René Homier-Roy; award-winning author Rohinton Mistry; and writer, visual artist and video maker Shani Mootoo.

The recipients will be celebrated at an event in Ottawa on May 29. The members of the LAC Foundation Board are Roseann O’Reilly Runte (chair), Shelley Ambrose, Rory Capern, Ronald I. Cohen, Michael DeGagné, Jon Dellandrea, Blake Goldring, Kevin Hanson, Isabelle Henrie, Marlene Jennings, Pradeep Merchant, Sophie Montreuil, Jacques Shore, and Deborah Yedlin.

Proof Strategies hires Megan Stanley in Ottawa



Megan Stanley has a new role as an account director for Proof Strategies based in Ottawa. *Photograph courtesy of Proof Strategies*

Megan Stanley, former director of government relations with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), is headed to Proof Strategies as an account director based in Ottawa.

Stanley led the FCM government relations and advocacy efforts for more than a decade, working with Canada’s mayors and federal politicians. She brings extensive government relations experience to her new role, with deep industry knowledge and insights on solving multi-jurisdictional challenges, according to

Proof’s associate account director Madeleine Porter.

Two changes in senior ranks of the public service



Laura Lee Langley will become president of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency on July 2. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced two changes in the senior ranks of the public service on May 17.

Laura Lee Langley will become president of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. She currently serves in Nova Scotia’s government as deputy minister of the Office of Citizen-Centered Approaches; deputy minister of the Office of the Premier, head of the public service, clerk of the executive council, chief executive officer of communications; and deputy minister of the Treasury and Policy Board. The move is effective July 2, 2024.

And as of May 27, Christine McDowell, formerly senior assistant deputy minister, Client Service Delivery, at Employment and Social Development Canada, becomes associate deputy minister of Veterans Affairs.

All-Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking releases annual report

The All-Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking is set to hold its annual general meeting and release its 2023–2024 annual report, which will highlight the organization’s sixth year of

activities and partnership with the International Justice and Human Rights Clinic.

The co-chairs of the group include ISG Senator Julie Milville-Dechêne, Liberal MP Jon McKay, Conservative MP Arnold Viersen, and Bloc Québécois MP Andréanne Larouche.

On a similar note, Conservative Senator Salma Atallahjan introduced Bill S-263, National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking Act, on May 9. The bill, which mirrors Bill C-308 and was introduced by Viersen in November 2022, requires the government to maintain a national strategy to combat human trafficking, including a review every five years.

The bill outlines the framework for consultations, an annual report tabled in Parliament on the government’s progress to combat human trafficking, and for the public safety minister to “make every reasonable effort” to fulfill the obligations of Canada under key international conventions, according to the Senate.

Lawn Summer Nights returns in July to support Cystic Fibrosis Canada

The Hill Times’ Lawn Tall Sailors squad is gearing up for another season of Lawn Summer Nights, a national lawn-bowling fundraiser in support of Cystic Fibrosis Canada.

Every year, Lawn Summer Nights unfolds in cities across Canada, where teams of friends compete on bowling greens over four or five summer nights in July.

Every dollar raised through Lawn Summer Nights goes toward cystic fibrosis research, health care, support and advocacy.

The Hill Times’ Party Central reported in July 2023 that since its inception, Lawn Summer Nights events have raised more than \$4.4-million for Cystic Fibrosis Canada.

According to the organization’s website, 73.5 per cent of Canadians newly diagnosed with cystic fibrosis in 2020 were diagnosed through newborn screening. Of the Canadians with cystic fibrosis who died in the last five years, half were under the age of 37.

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The Hill Times’ Lawn Tall Sailors 2023 squad consisted of Paul Goubko, left, Stephen Jeffery, Stuart Benson, and Kate Malloy. The team raised \$1,350 for Cystic Fibrosis Canada last summer. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

IT'S BOATING SEASON!

The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) is the leading trade association for the recreational boating industry in Canada.

NMMA member companies produce more than 80 percent of the boats, engines, trailers, marine accessories, and gear used by millions of boaters in North America.

Our members support over 80,000 good-paying jobs, contribute \$9.2 billion to Canada's GDP, and generate \$4.6 billion in tax revenues annually.

We work to ensure Canadians who enjoy recreational boating with their families can continue to do so, safely and with ease.

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News

Once a coveted safe Liberal seat, Toronto-St. Paul's now a 'swing riding' and leaning Conservative, says pollster Lyle

A veteran GTA Liberal says that the Liberals will likely win the Toronto-St. Paul's byelection, but with a single-digit margin.

BY ABBAS RANA

The riding of Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., has been a safe Liberal riding for three decades, but the Conservative candidate appears to have an edge in carrying the seat in the June 24 byelection, says a veteran pollster.

"It's now a swing riding, where in the last election, as you know, that the Liberals doubled the Tory vote," said Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "In theory, the NDP would have a potential to grow, generally, but the situation right now is that because the NDP have been propping up the Liberal government. If you're upset with the Liberal government, you're probably also upset at the NDP for propping it up."

Up until the last federal election, Lyle said that this riding was in the category of "safe Liberal ridings," along with 41 others that the governing party carried with double-digit margins in the last three federal elections. In all of these ridings, the Liberals and the Conservatives are now considered competitive chiefly because of the national polling trends where the Conservatives are between 15 and 21 points ahead of the Liberals.

Innovative Research conducts monthly vote tracking in all ridings across the country. For



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has called the high-stakes byelection in Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont. for June 24. A negative outcome of this election for the Liberals could have serious implications for Trudeau's future political plans, says Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

this polling, Lyle has categorized all 343 ridings into different clusters, including CPC strong (Prairies); CPC strong (non-Prairies); Conservative Party-Liberal Party swing (Ontario); Conservative Party-Liberal Party swing (non-Ontario); Conservative Party-to-Liberal-Party defectors; Liberal Party strong; consistent NDP; swing NDP; Montreal Bloc Québécois-Liberal Party swing; regions Bloc Québécois-LPC swing; National Capital-Chaudière-Appalachias, and Green/Other.

Based on the monthly polling numbers, Lyle said he makes seat projections on ridings divided in different clusters.

Since last year, the Liberals have trailed the Conservatives nationally on issues such as affordability, housing, and inflation. The tight race between the Liberals and the Conservatives

in Toronto-St. Paul's is a reflection of the national sentiment of discontent, Lyle said. On top of that, this riding is home to the fifth-highest number of Jewish Canadians across the country, and the government's handling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has caused the Liberals to lose support amongst Jewish and Muslim Canadians.

"It's the general story of people are upset with their standard of living," said Lyle. "It's the equivalent of [former U.S. president Ronald] Reagan posing the question to viewers, in his [televised presidential] debate with [Jimmy] Carter, where he said, 'Are you better off now than you were four years ago?' If you ask Canadians, 'Are you better off now than you were in 2015?' More Canadians are going to say that they're less well off rather than better."

According to a weekly Nanos Research poll released last week, the Conservatives had the support of 42.8 per cent of respondents, followed by the Liberals who were at 24.9 per cent. The NDP was at 17 per cent, the Greens 4.4 per cent, and the People's Party at 2.5 per cent.

Innovative Research's April polling numbers suggested that the Conservatives had the support of 41 per cent of Canadians, the Liberals 24 per cent, the NDP 19 per cent, the Bloc Québécois seven per cent, the Greens five per cent, and the People's Party three per cent.

Based on recent national numbers from different public opinion companies, according to polling aggregator 338canada.com, if

an election were to happen now, the Conservatives would win 217 of the 343 seats, the Liberals 64, the Bloc 40, the NDP 20, and the Greens two. It would take 172 seats for a party to win a majority government.

The same polling aggregator suggested last week that the riding of Toronto-St. Paul's is Liberal leaning.

The next general election is scheduled for Oct. 20, 2025, but one could be called earlier as the Trudeau Liberals are running a minority government. Since March 2022, the Liberals and the NDP have operated under a confidence and supply government where, in return for delivering on the NDP priorities like dental care and pharmacare, the left-of-centre party is voting with the government on all confidence votes.

The last time the Conservatives won Toronto-St. Paul's was in 1988, when then-Progressive Conservative Barbara McDougall was re-elected. Since 1993, it has been a safe Liberal riding.

McDougall represented the area from 1984-1993. She did not seek re-election in 1993 when the Progressive Conservatives were reduced to only two seats, and the Jean Chrétien Liberals won a majority government. In that election, Liberal Barry Campbell bested PC candidate Isabel Bassett in the riding. Campbell did not reoffer in 1997, opening the door to Bennett's candidacy.

The riding opened in January after Bennett's resignation. She has since been appointed as

Canada's ambassador to Denmark. Bennett won the riding in the last election with 49 per cent of the vote, followed by the Conservative candidate with 25 per cent, the NDP with 17 per cent, and the Green candidate with six per cent.

With the exception of the 2011 general election, Bennett won this riding by double the number of votes of second-place candidates. The 2011 election was the worst in the Liberal Party's history, when it was reduced to third place in the House, but still it carried Toronto-St. Paul's.

The federal Liberals have nominated Leslie Church, former chief of staff to Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.). She won the nomination contest against Global Affairs official Emma Richardson. Church has been campaigning for the Liberal nomination in Toronto-St. Paul's for months now. The Conservatives have nominated Don Stewart, and the NDP Amrit Parhar as their candidates.

The federal and provincial riding boundaries in Ontario are identical. Provincially, this riding is held by NDP MPP Jill Andrew.

A veteran Greater Toronto Area Liberal told *The Hill Times* that the party does not have the same public support in the riding that it did in the last general election, but if an election were to happen now, they would win by a single digit margin.

They also pointed out that these are early days of the campaign, and it was too early to make any meaningful prediction. Based on early feedback from people who are going door knocking, this source said, people don't like either Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) or Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.).

"If you ask me to make an assessment at this time, we're going to win with less than a 10 per cent margin over the Conservatives," said this source. "Things could, however, change in the coming days."

Meanwhile, Lyle said that this byelection has high stakes for the prime minister's future plans. Ideally, he said, the Liberals should win with a comfortable double-digit margin. But, if the Conservatives end up winning this riding, there will be serious questions about Trudeau's leadership, and whether he should stay on to lead his party in the next election. If the Liberals win with a close margin then people are going to raise similar questions.

"If they actually were to lose a seat like this, there weren't a lot of Liberals that beat their opponents by twice as many votes," he said. "So most of that caucus is going to look at a byelection result like that and say, 'this is getting serious.'"

In addition to Toronto-St. Paul's, there are three other ridings that are currently vacant and byelections will be called in the coming months. They include: LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que.; Elmwood-Transcona, Man. and Cloverdale-Langley City, B.C.

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The riding of Toronto-St. Paul's opened up for a byelection in January after Carolyn Bennett stepped down from her seat. She has since been appointed as Canada's ambassador to Denmark. *The Hill Times* file photograph by Andrew Meade

Human-driven changes are degrading the Ottawa River.

Ottawa Riverkeeper gives watershed health a grade of

C



<https://ottawariverkeeper.ca/report-card>

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Watershed Report Card to
learn more.



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News

Clean electricity regulation tops environment-focused lobbying in April

The federal government is developing Clean Electricity Regulations as part of Canada's plan to help reach a net-zero emissions target by 2050.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Proposed regulations intended to compel Canada's electricity sectors to reach net-zero emissions targets could also lead to "serious reliability issues and cost implications" for many Canadians, according to Electricity Canada, which was among the most active groups discussing environmental issues in April.

The federal government is currently developing Clean Electricity Regulations (CER) as part of Canada's 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan to help reach a national emissions reduction target of 40 to 45 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050. The draft CER, along with a cost-benefit analysis, were published on Aug. 19, 2023, with the final regulations expected to be published later this year in the *Canada Gazette, Part II*. The regulations would establish a performance standard requiring qualifying electricity generating units—with limited exceptions—to not exceed a set limit on carbon dioxide emissions per gigawatt hour of electricity produced.

Francis Bradley, CEO of Electricity Canada, told *The Hill Times* that issues pertaining to the CER are the primary driver of advocacy discussions for his organization in lobbying the federal government currently.

The environment proved to be the most popular subject discussed in federal lobbying in April, continuing a monthly trend of environment-related advocacy dominating since the start of 2024. Electricity Canada and the Grain Farmers of Ontario led in environment-related advocacy in April by each filing 25 communication reports listing the environment as a subject for discussion.

Bradley argued that the currently drafted CER could

potentially result in "significantly higher costs in some jurisdictions" when it comes to electricity use.

"We want to make very clear our concerns about the potential impacts of those regulations on affordability for electricity customers, and reliability of electricity grids," said Bradley. "As they are currently structured, those clean electricity regulations would very negatively impact the reliability of the electricity grid, and would have a very negative impact on electricity bills for individual Canadians."

Electricity Canada released a response to the proposed CER in November, 2023, which argued that costs associated with the regulations as drafted would be highest in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

According to the response, region-specific projections conducted by Electricity Canada of the potential impact of the CERs "contrast sharply" with nationally averaged modelling from Environment Canada. Electricity Canada argues in the response that this discrepancy "undermines the reliability of projected outcomes," and that the proposed regulations would result in a disproportionate impact on certain provinces, "while a national model hides behind averages."

In the *Canada Gazette, Part I*, the federal government noted that some provinces and utilities voiced concerns about the costs of complying with the proposed regulations. However, separate from the proposed CER, the government has announced and implemented "complementary

measures, including funding," intended to help support the net-zero transition, and indirectly reduce the proposed CER impact on electricity prices, according to the *Gazette*.

"Ultimately, focusing on establishing a grid that can supply needed electricity in a manner that is affordable, reliable, and non-emitting is a crucial step in Canada's efforts to grow the economy, make life more affordable, and protect the environment," reads the foreword by Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) and Energy Minister Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver, B.C.) in the *Powering Canada Forward* plan released in August 2023. "If we get this right, we will create jobs for Canadians, ensure long-term prosperity for communities, and leave a healthier planet for our children."

On April 30, Electricity Canada communicated with 13 MPs to discuss the environment, including Julie Dabrusin (Toronto-Danforth, Ont.), parliamentary secretary to Guilbeault and Wilkinson; and Conservative MP Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, Que.), his party's environment critic.

Electricity Canada is represented on the registry by Bradley; consultant Terrence Toner of Terry Toner Consulting; Casey Malone of Casey Malone Technical Utility Consulting; Ross Johnson of Bridgehead Security Consulting; and Patrick Marley a tax partner with law firm Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP.

Following close behind, in terms of advocacy related to the



Energy Minister Jonathan Wilkinson said that bringing 'clean, reliable, and affordable power to every region of Canada is an enormous undertaking,' in an Environment Canada press release on Aug. 10, 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

environment, is the Canadian Cattle Association, which filed 22 communication reports relating to that subject in April.

Jennifer Babcock, the association's senior director of government and public affairs, told *The Hill Times* that advocacy last month focused on the environmental benefits of beef production, which included representation by beef producers from Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. The potential benefits of beef production vary from region to region, according to Babcock.

"The native prairie grasslands [in Saskatchewan] are an endangered ecosystem, and having cattle on these lands, grazing them, is actually beneficial for ... the carbon sequestration. To conserve that habitat, it's crucial to have grazing animals on there," she said. "When we had B.C. producers in town ... they have a really unique story of how having grazing cattle close to city centers, like Kelowna, help with forest fire mitigation."

Grazing by livestock can help mitigate the risk of wildfires by promoting growth of new, green grass that maintains moisture more easily and burns more slowly. Since 2021, the provincial government of British Columbia has provided about \$300,000 in grant funding to build and expand on an existing initiative that develops and tests new models of targeted livestock grazing as a supplemental tool for managing fine fuels in B.C.'s forested rangelands, according to the government website.

In April, the Canadian Cattle Association's representatives also discussed the organization's goals, including reducing primary production greenhouse gas emissions intensity by 33 per cent by 2030. The association also continued its discussions related to the federal carbon price, according to Babcock.

The Canadian Cattle Association's advocacy related to the environment included communication with Conservative MP Frank Caputo (Kamloops-Thompson-Cariboo, B.C.) and NDP MP

Richard Cannings (South Okanagan-West Kootenay, B.C.) on April 30; and with Conservative MP Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, Sask.) on April 16.

In terms of overall lobbying in April, the most active organization was the Canadian Cancer Society, which filed 51 communication reports as a result of a busy Lobby Day on the Hill on April 9. During the event, the organization communicated with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), and Health Minister Mark Holland (Ajax, Ont.).

April is Cancer Awareness Month in Canada. Canadian Cancer Society representatives were on the Hill to discuss issues including the "out-of-pocket costs" faced by people living with cancer, and their caregivers, according to the society's advocacy account on X.

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The Hill Times

Most lobbied cabinet minister (April)

| Cabinet minister | Communication reports |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland | 14 |
| Minister of Environment Steven Guilbeault | 14 |
| Minister of Employment Randy Boissonnault | 13 |
| Prime Minister Justin Trudeau | 12 |
| President of the Treasury Board Anita Anand | 12 |
| Minister of Innovation François-Philippe Champagne | 12 |
| Minister of Housing Sean Fraser | 11 |
| Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Jonathan Wilkinson | 11 |
| Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly | 10 |
| Minister of Export Promotion Mary Ng | 10 |

The above table shows the federal Cabinet ministers who were listed in the most communication reports for lobbying activity in April based on a search of the federal lobbyists' registry on May 22.

Top organizations lobbying about the environment (April)

| Organization | Communication reports (environment) | Communication reports (total) |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Electricity Canada | 25 | 30 |
| Grain Farmers of Ontario | 25 | 34 |
| Canadian Cattle Association | 22 | 35 |
| World Animal Protection | 18 | 19 |
| Environmental Defence Canada | 14 | 23 |
| Nature Canada | 17 | 19 |
| Grain Growers of Canada | 17 | 18 |
| FortisBC Energy | 17 | 17 |
| TransAlta Corporation | 17 | 17 |

The above table shows the organizations that filed the most communication reports in April related to the environment based on a search of the federal lobbyists' registry on May 22.

No support for Conservative push to release safer supply program contracts, feds say the deals are under provincial control

Calling the committee motion a ‘disruption’ attempt, NDP MP Gord Johns says the Conservatives know ‘full well that this motion, the way they presented it, will get defeated.’

BY IREM KOCA

A Conservative motion pressing the Liberals to disclose safe supply purchasing contracts is not getting cross-party support at a parliamentary committee, with the federal government saying the contracts are granted under provincial jurisdiction.

MPs on the House Government Operations and Estimates (OGGO) Committee are debating a Conservative motion urging the Liberals to release all contracts and agreements since 2016 concerning the purchase of Dilaudid or any generic form of hydromorphone for use in any safer supply, safe supply, or prescribed alternative programs.

While Conservative MP Garnett Genus’ (Sherwood Park-Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.) May 6 motion did not specify any particular companies engaged in contractual relations with the federal government, Conservatives—who have previously suggested that pharmaceutical companies had contributed to Canada’s opioid crisis—pushed to see the paper trail of the funding for the programs.

“I would like this committee ... to do more work to try to uncover some of the relationships that have existed between these bad, dangerous, harmful policies, and some of the corporate actors who have benefited from them,” said Genus on May 6. The committee continued to debate the motion on May 8 and 15.

All Liberal, Bloc Québécois, and New Democrat MPs have questioned the framing of the issue as a contracting one rather than a subject for the House Health Committee to study, and expressed concerns regarding the programs’ provincial jurisdiction. MPs have been debating amendments to the motion to define the scope of documents to be requested from the government since its proposal.



Pierre Poilievre’s Conservatives ‘are fundraising and trying to score cheap political points out of people’s misery,’ says Guillaume Bertrand, press secretary for Procurement Minister Jean-Yves Duclos. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

“They know full well that this motion, the way they presented it, will get defeated,” NDP MP Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni, B.C.) told *The Hill Times* in a May 21 interview.

“They try to use OGGO as a disruption committee. [Liberals and New Democrats] put forward amendments, [Conservatives] shot them down. The federal government is not involved in direct purchasing or acquisition or transferring of safer supply. Conservatives know this. It’s just a game,” said Johns.

Johns, a former member of OGGO who is his party’s mental health and harm reduction critic, has been vocal about the opioid crisis’ impact on his community in British Columbia. He slammed the Conservatives for their approach on the issue.

“They’re literally fundraising off of their disinformation campaign when it comes to the toxic drug crisis. They are trying really hard to find scandals. They don’t want to fix things,” he said.

Johns also argued the Conservatives’ push for the release of the supply contracts, which he also emphasized were handled at the provincial level, would expose patients and physicians.

“Health-care providers and provinces and territories are making agreements with providers and suppliers to deliver care, and they can’t put those at risk. [Conservatives] are creating harm, the stigma, and their approach to this issue is absolutely causing so much damage,” he said.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) says nearly 42,500 people died from opioid toxicity between January 2016

and September 2023. Most—88 per cent—of the accidental apparent opioid toxicity deaths in Canada occurred in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario.

Health Canada began funding safer-supply pilot projects in 2020. Safer supply refers to providing prescribed medications as a safer alternative to the toxic illegal drug supply to people who are at high risk of overdose, as described by Health Canada. Dilaudid is the brand name for the generic drug hydromorphone, a prescription opioid used for strong pain relief. Opioid agonist treatment involves taking long-acting opioid drugs instead of the shorter-acting opioids to which patients are addicted to, to prevent withdrawal and reduce cravings.

Public Services and Procurement Minister Jean-Yves Duclos’



NDP MP Gord Johns says the Conservatives are ‘fundraising off of their disinformation campaign when it comes to the toxic drug crisis.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

(Québec, Que.) office also stressed the provincial nature of the contracts, and declined to disclose further details.

“The vast majority of drug contracts are granted by the provinces and territories. It is not for the federal government to disclose provincial or territorial contracts,” said Guillaume Bertrand, press secretary for Duclos, in a May 17 statement.

“The terms and conditions of federal contracts are usually not publicly disclosed for competition and/or security reasons,” said Bertrand, adding that the Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) interacts with the providers based on the conditions and needs determined by the relevant department—PHAC and Health Canada in this case.

Health Canada did not provide a comment by deadline. PSPC and Health Canada both did not provide documents with further contracting information relating to safer supply programs.

In response to further questions, Bertrand accused the Conservatives of politicizing tragedy.

“The Conservatives are fundraising and trying to score cheap political points out of people’s misery,” he said by text on May 20. “They do not care about the health or safety of Canadians. They voted multiple times against measures to improve the health—and mental health—of Canadians.”

Conservative MP Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray-Cold Lake, Alta.) said during a May 8 OGGO appearance that her party’s push is about “trying to get to the bottom of where the money came from.”

“We do know this is government money that is gone towards these programs,” said Goodridge, who is not a member of OGGO, but sits on the House Health Committee. She stressed to MPs the “critical” need for the House Government Operations Committee to take the contracts under this study.

Health Canada’s Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP) provides contribution funding to other levels of government, according to public records. The 2023 Budget allocated \$359.2-million over five years, beginning in 2023-24, to bolster the Canadian Drug and Substances Strategy. This funding includes \$144-million designated for the SUAP.

At the following May 15 OGGO committee, Liberal MP Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Ont.) stated that the federal government is not directly involved in the procurement of drugs used in the safe supply program.

“I am very suspicious of the claims that no such contracts exist, but even if it were true, let’s get the contracts and find out,” Genus responded. “What do you have to be afraid of?”

The latest amendment to the motion proposed by Liberal MP Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor-Tecumseh, Ont.) asked for limiting the request to “direct” purchases by the federal government and excluding information relating to third parties. The discussion on the amendment of the motion continues.

MPs Genus and Goodridge did not respond to *The Hill Times* inquiry seeking additional comments regarding the Conservative motion.

The conversation surrounding the safer supply program at committee is the latest move to draw attention to matter. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) has long opposed the federal government’s safer-supply program.

Poilievre criticized British Columbia’s federally sanctioned decriminalization policy for small amounts of certain drugs, and pledged to introduce a private member’s bill to prevent provinces from allowing illicit drug use in hospitals. B.C. has since reversed course on the 2023 pilot that was intended to reduce overdose deaths, and earlier this month Ottawa approved the move to recriminalize certain illicit drugs in public spaces.

The Conservative leader was kicked out of the House of Commons on April 30 for calling British Columbia’s decriminalization of hard drugs a “wacko policy,” and for referring to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) as “wacko” for supporting it.

Poilievre previously argued that “paid activists and public health bureaucrats” are championing the safe supply narrative. In 2023, his motion in the House of Commons to cut funding for non-toxic drug programs for addiction and redirect it to treatment was defeated.

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The Hill Times

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Editorial

Byelection bonanza awaits as Parliament nears its end

Unless Prime Minister Justin Trudeau decides to pull a Rishi Sunak and, like his British counterpart, call an early election, the only Canadians who will be able to officially voice their thoughts on his government any time soon are 400,000-odd people scattered across four ridings.

As of today, four seats are vacant in the House of Commons after the resignations of Liberals Carolyn Bennett (Toronto–St. Paul’s, Ont.), David Lametti (LaSalle–Émard–Verdun, Que.), and John Aldag (Cloverdale–Langley City, B.C.), and the NDP’s Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood–Transcona, Man.).

So far, only one of the byelection dates has been unveiled: voters in Toronto–St. Paul’s, Ont., will go to the polls on June 24. It remains to be seen when the other three will be called, and whether they will take place simultaneously.

If the Liberals opt for the latter, it will place greater strain on the coffers of the parties seeking to reclaim the ridings and maintain their numbers in the House of Commons. Both the Liberals and the NDP are well and truly out-spent in the fundraising game by the ascendant Conservatives.

Those hoping for some excitement from byelections during the 44th Parliament have been sorely disappointed. All seven contests thus far have seen the incumbent party returned with a new

face, despite warnings to supporters that it would be a hard fight.

On paper, Cloverdale–Langley City, B.C., would be the most interesting contest. Aldag won the riding on its creation in 2015, lost it to the Conservatives in 2019, then won it again in 2021. The other three—again, on paper—are relatively safe for the incumbents: Elmwood–Transcona, Man., has been orange for all but four of its 36 years in existence; LaSalle–Émard–Verdun, Que., has been red for its entire nine years; and Toronto–St. Paul’s, Ont., has been held by the Liberals since 1993.

But it is the latter riding that pundits seem interested in seeing it as a test of how wedded Torontonians are to the governing party now that a longtime, popular MP has departed.

With Bennett gone, it is possible that a three-way race could open up. The identical provincial riding has been held by the NDP since 2018, and the Conservatives have frequented Toronto as the party sees a path to victory in the riding-rich region.

The biggest clue to the public appetite in all of these byelections is not who wins, but who actually shows up to decide who wins. Will there be a groundswell of support for one particular party? Or have people tuned out, with only the most passionate supporters willing to cast their ballot?

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor



Canada should renew Charlevoix Declaration at G7 in Italy, lasting impact on children worldwide: letter writer

Did you know that more children were killed in just over four months of conflict in Gaza than in four years of wars worldwide combined? This tragic reality underscores the urgent need to protect children in emergencies. As Canada prepares to host the G7 summit in 2025, we have a critical opportunity to champion their well-being by upholding humanitarian access and law.

Historically, Canada has committed to children’s rights through the Muskoka Initiative (2010) and the Charlevoix Education Initiative (2018). However, with more than 460 million children currently living in conflict zones, where millions face severe malnutrition and disrupted education, much more must be done. Addressing children’s rights and basic needs

affected by conflict, crisis, and forced displacement is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’s goal of “leaving no one behind.” By prioritizing these vulnerable children, we can ensure a brighter and more inclusive future for all.

We call on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his ministers to use this global platform at the 2024 G7 in Italy to renew the Charlevoix Declaration and support mechanisms like Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Fund to Fight Aids, TB, and Malaria. Let us seize this opportunity to make a lasting impact on children worldwide and #ReachEveryChild.

Kajanan Dayaparan
 Markham, Ont.



Humans should not be exposed to deadly radioactive poisons: Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility

The word “clean” has many definitions, but only two apply to energy production facilities: a) not polluting and b) not radioactive. On both counts, nuclear energy is not clean. Every nuclear reactor emits dozens of radioactive materials into the environment during routine operations. Each reactor also leaves behind a stash of high-level radioactive waste, dangerous for more than a million years. The Nuclear Waste Management Organization intends to spend \$26-billion to try to keep these wastes out of the environment for countless millennia. If this is a mere “speck” in the eye of the nuclear industry, it is surely an expensive one.

As for natural radiation deaths, every atom of radon starts out as an atom of uranium, and the same is true for the atoms of radium and polonium. All three are killers. Human exposure to these deadly radioactive poisons in such communities as Port Hope and Elliot Lake, Ont., is due to contamination from the mining of uranium to build nuclear weapons and to fuel nuclear reactors—the only two significant commercial uses of uranium. It is the nuclear industry that brings these materials to the surface.

Gordon Edwards, PhD,
 president, Canadian Coalition
 for Nuclear Responsibility

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House Speaker Fergus is currently on strike two

Parliament's hyper-partisan climate has made the Speaker's job doubly difficult, but Greg Fergus can defuse crisis situations with his moderate demeanour. But the Conservatives feel that any venial sin is reason for his dismissal.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—Three strikes and you're out. House Speaker Greg Fergus is currently on strike two.

According to the New Democrats, this strike was really the fault of the Liberal Party organization, and should not be blamed on the Speaker.

In the end, it was much ado about nothing. The Conservatives are all about focusing on anything negative, especially if it involves members associated with the governing Liberals.

Conservatives would not want the public to focus on the good numbers that have dominated the news recently.

A drop in inflation and a reinforcement of Canada's AAA credit rating may make the governing Liberals smile.

But they don't make the news with the same ferocity as a generic press release from Fergus' local riding association which had not-so-nice things to say about Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre.

Fergus' first strike occurred early in his tenure when he made the mistake of appearing in a partisan tribute video wearing his speaker's robes.

He apologized for the mistake, and dodged the firing bullet with all parties eventually accepting his apology.

That was before Fergus threw Poilievre out of the House of Commons for refusing to apologize for the use of unparliamentary language against the prime minister.

In that exchange, both Poilievre and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau traded insults. The difference was that Trudeau quickly withdrew his statement while Poilievre would not.

The hyper-partisan climate in Parliament has made the Speaker's job doubly difficult, but Fergus has a moderate demeanour, and is usually ready with a smile to defuse crisis situations.

The latest mess was not of his own making. The party posted generic information about the local riding association's spring gathering, and included some negative comments about the leader of the opposition.

In normal circumstances, this would probably go unnoticed, but the Conservatives have obviously decided that any venial sin is reason for Fergus' dismissal.

What must be particularly difficult for Fergus is that, although he is bound to impartiality in the management of House debate, he needs to get re-elected as a Liberal.

The Speaker is chosen from amongst Members of Parliament, most of whom are attached to a political party.

Never in Canadian history has a non-aligned member served as House Speaker.

So Fergus has to tread a very fine line between impartiality in the House, and partisan politics in the local community.

He also happens to represent a riding within a stone's throw of Parliament, which makes it much easier for Hill staffers and political followers to keep an eye on all material that emanates from his local association.

Long-serving House Speaker Peter Milliken served a decade as Speaker, and also had the distinction of being the only one to preside over four Parliaments.

He was succeeded by Andrew Scheer, who used his private time in the Speaker's chair to reach out to caucus members in a bid to become his party's leader.

Having spent most of his parliamentary career in neutral positions, as deputy Speaker and then Speaker, Scheer managed to secure huge caucus support when he ran for the Conservative Party leadership.

One of the perks of being the Speaker is that you can organize parliamentary dinners on a regular basis, and invite small numbers of members to join you in Speaker's chambers.

As Speakers don't attend caucus meetings or parliamentary committees, most of their energy can be devoted to

building relationships behind the scenes.

Those relationships are often partisan, as private dinners can include only members of your own party, but no one in the public has access to the list.

So it is easy to be quietly partisan but—heaven forbid—you have an event in your own riding for local activists.

Even though Speakers are expected to prepare for re-election, their hands are ultimately tied when it comes to riding-organized events.

Fergus cannot be blamed for this cock-up, but when you are the Speaker, the last thing you want to be making is the news.

The summer break is looming. That is good news as it will give all parliamentarians a chance to cool off in their ridings, and lower the political temperature.

That may not make the official opposition very happy. Their strong lead in recent polls reinforces the wish to have an election as soon as possible.

Chaos in the Commons plays into that scenario because an unruly Parliament is usually a precursor to an election.

Instead, Speaker Fergus can use the summer period to nurture government and opposition relationships.

He will need them to hang on to his job.

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

The Hill Times

Poilievre's potential problem

The problem is the 'power people' will inevitably clash with the true-blue conservative ideologues who form the party's core.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKVILLE, ONT.—Not to rain on Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre's parade, but I'd just like to note for the record that his current big lead in the polls carries the seeds of a potentially serious problem.

And the seeds I'm talking about here might not be the ones you're thinking of.

For instance, I'm not referring to one problem usually associated with high polling numbers, namely complacency.



Not to rain on Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre's parade, but his current big lead in the polls carries the seeds of a potentially serious problem, writes Gerry Nicholls. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Yes, complacency is a risk since confident party partisans, certain of their victory, might say something like, "We're so far ahead in the polls, there's no need for me to donate to the party. Heck, I could even stay home on election day."

Of course, if a race suddenly tightens up, such an attitude could lead to defeat.

Plus, sometimes even party leaders can fall into the complacency trap.

Indeed, many political observers believe former U.S. politician Hillary Clinton lost the 2016 presidential election because

she failed to campaign in certain traditional Democratic states, believing (falsely) she couldn't lose them.

But I don't think complacency will be a problem for Poilievre's Conservatives.

For one thing, Conservatives are nothing if not a loyal bunch; they'll support the party both financially and in the voting booth, no matter where it stands in the polls.

On top of that, Conservatives are now incredibly motivated.

In other words, their fervent desire to topple the Liberal regime will almost certainly

overwhelm any sense of overconfidence.

Nor do I think Poilievre, given his aggressive, disciplined personality, will ever take anything for granted.

The other problem often linked to a party that's peaking well before an election has to do with that most magical of all political forces: momentum.

If Poilievre's support in the polls has already peaked, it'll be hard for him to claim momentum going into the next federal election since it's likely he'll see a dip in support, as voters become more focused.

This could give Prime Minister Justin Trudeau an opening to claim that his party possesses momentum, which could matter since parties with momentum exude a special kind of energy, an energy that attracts voters.

But I don't think this will be a serious problem for Poilievre, either.

I say that because, so far, he's shown himself to be an energetic leader who seems to have the ability to generate enthusiasm, which can create the perception that he has momentum.

And, in politics, perception is reality.

Thus, if I don't think the problem is either complacency or

momentum, what do I think is the challenge facing the Tories due to their high polling numbers?

Well, because it seems the Conservatives will win the next election in a landslide, it means the party is likely attracting a lot of people who might not be "real conservatives."

In fact, they're what I call "power people."

By that I mean they're not individuals who are necessarily drawn to the Conservative Party through a desire to promote conservative ideals; they just want to be in power.

This includes people seeking nominations to be federal candidates in the next election as well as all the political consultants hoping to get jobs with the party.

So, what's the problem with this, you ask?

The problem is the "power people" will inevitably clash with the true-blue conservative ideologues who form the party's core.

And that clash could get really ugly, really fast.

After all, each side will be suspicious of the other; each side will believe the other is bad for the party.

Simply put: power people never get along with ideologues.

So, good polls today might cause a conservative civil war tomorrow.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

Opinion



Donald Trump's greatest contribution to the toxic, partisan mud bath that politics has become is the ex-president's industrial scale lying, writes Michael Harris. Image courtesy of Needpix.com

has signed library content restrictions into law. The intolerance is increasingly becoming official.

There are two fundamental requirements for the rise of fascism: the normalization of violent political language, and the existence of figures who can be scapegoated for all the troubles citizens face.

Donald Trump has set the stage for a radical change in U.S. democracy by making abusive language and hateful speech acceptable at the highest levels of American politics. Sadly, he has several imitators.

Consider just a part of the catalogue of his violent public statements that have now become "normal": Grabbing women by their genitals; calling his political opponents "vermin"; characterizing the press as "enemies of the people"; denouncing immigrants as "drug-dealers" and "rapists"; traducing a judge for being of "Mexican" heritage; telling immigrants to "go back where you came from"; describing the current president of the United States as a "moron"; and calling Canada's prime minister a "left-wing lunatic."

Not so long ago, any politician who used that language would be out of business. But over the eight years he has been on the political scene, Trump has so desensitized his audience with his routine exhibitions of racism and bigotry that his outrageous words seem not to register. How bad is it? Just last week, Trump posted on his website that the country needed a "unified Reich."

Although the post was blamed on an underling, the unmistakable language of Nazi fascism remained up for hours. As Georgia Republican Geoff Duncan told CNN, the normal thing to have done in the circumstances was to fire the staffer, and disavow the post personally and publicly. Duncan noted that neither of those things has happened.

Perhaps Trump's greatest contribution to the toxic, partisan mud bath that politics has become is the ex-president's industrial scale lying. Despite irrefutable evidence to the contrary, Trump continues to peddle the Big Lie that he really won the 2020 election. According to *The Washington Post*, in the one term Trump was president, he told 4,000 lies.

It pays to remember that his big whopper that Joe Biden's presidency is illegitimate, incited a mob to sack the U.S. Capitol, beat police, and go hunting for politicians like Nancy Pelosi and Mike Pence to deal out some frontier justice.

No one should be surprised that Canadian MPs like Pam Damoff, Charlie Angus, Carol Hughes, Rachel Blaney and others are leaving politics. It has become a toxic arena of threats, misogyny, and disrespectful dialogue.

And it all begins, and perhaps ends, with the weaponizing and debasement of language.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

Vulgarity fast becoming signature across so much of our politics

Donald Trump has set the stage for a radical change in U.S. democracy by making abusive language and hateful speech acceptable at the highest levels of American politics. Sadly, he has several imitators.

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—How did gross incivility take over so much of the public square in both Canada and the United States?

There is probably a good PhD thesis in the answer to that question. But the disintegration of the political middle begins and

perhaps ends with something we all share: the language.

Language is the basis of how societies mediate differences of opinion. The give and take of sweet reason that produces compromise comes in words.

Language is the foundation of diplomacy, that, to paraphrase the late British prime minister Winston Churchill, substitutes words, words, words for war, war, war.

Words are the magic ingredients of books that give delight and breathe life into culture. In the hands of masters like Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Timothy Findley, and Farley Mowat, they offer glimpses into worlds we would otherwise never see.

But these days it is not the language of reason or culture that dominates the national conversation. Everywhere you turn, you hear the angry, implacable, language of intolerance. That matters. The degradation of language is the degradation of society.

During the "Freedom Convoy," Canadians got a good look at the new vulgarity that is fast becoming the signature across so much of our politics.

It is one thing to protest a particular government policy. That is a treasured right in any democracy. But carrying "Fuck Trudeau" signs has nothing to do

with airing grievances. It is about promoting hate.

Gumming up the national capital for three weeks, upending the lives of thousands of people in the process, is not protest. It is pandemonium.

And when a national political leader takes doughnuts to the very people who wanted to change the government without the bother of an election, it endorses and reinforces the politics of confrontation and intimidation. It guarantees more "Fuck Trudeau" signs, more gravel-throwing, and who knows what else.

Nor did Pierre Poilievre enhance his image as a statesman when he recently called the prime minister "wacko." That language got him tossed out of the House of Commons, and forced a later apology. "Wacko", by the way, is one of Donald Trump's favourite pejoratives when he attacks his opponents. Just name-calling you say? Childish, but no big deal? Think again.

A case in point. Trump and the GOP's merciless verbal abuse of former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi sent a deranged, hammer-wielding, Pelosi-hater into the politician's San Francisco home. When the attacker found out that the former Speaker was

in Washington, D.C., he fractured the skull of Pelosi's husband of 60 years, Paul Pelosi.

Intolerance, with violent overtones, has shown up in the strangest of places: American libraries. Language is at the centre of this unlikely development.

It began with a very old story—the effort by some to segregate or remove books with "offensive" or "obscene" content from public libraries. That means anything dealing with sex or gender issues. Viewing culture through that horrible moral squint is what got *To Kill a Mockingbird* pulled from the curriculum by a British Columbia school board. As the saying goes: great books read you, you don't read them.

But in the U.S., this effort to dry clean literature, to have the few decide what the many can read, has gone much further. Librarians from across the country told ABC news that they are facing physical threats, lawsuits, and criminal charges for having "inappropriate" books on the shelves. Last year, 3,000 books were banned in the U.S.

"We had people threatening to burn down our building," librarian Maegan Hanson said in an interview. The librarians think that the threats will only get worse now that Idaho Governor Brad Little



Esprit de Corps Canadian Military Magazine Salutes the **TOP WOMEN IN DEFENCE 2024**

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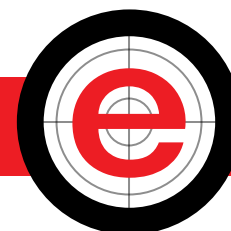
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Feature

Author of Trudeau biography says he doesn't think Trudeau will run again, but Lanthier says 'even if he might lose, he wants to go down fighting against Pierre Poilievre'

In a sensational new book, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says he's looking forward to running against Pierre Poilievre because he doesn't want Poilievre to run the country, but author and veteran journalist Stephen Maher says he doesn't think Trudeau will run again.

KATE MALLOY

When veteran journalist Stephen Maher got the green light for a sit-down interview with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Ottawa last February for his biography of the leader, Maher was on his sailboat in Staniel Cay, in the Bahamas, and a storm was coming. So he left his boat with friends, and high-tailed it back to Ottawa, buying and borrowing clothes so he could look presentable.

The result of that one-hour interview in the Prime Minister's Office—along with 200 other interviews with top political players over 16 months—is Maher's sensational new book, *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*, published by Simon & Schuster. Maher takes a deep and unvarnished look at Trudeau's leadership, shedding light on the behind-the-scenes machinations of some of the biggest issues and policies Trudeau and his government have dealt with over the years, including the SNC-Lavalin scandal, renegotiating NAFTA with then-U.S. president Donald Trump, and leading the country through the pandemic.

The Prince looks at Trudeau's errors in judgment, and his struggles to manage his PMO. It deftly captures what went on behind the scenes in Trudeau's big successes, along with his big failures. The book's strengths are in Maher's interviews with top political players who speak candidly about what it's really like in political Ottawa's backrooms. The book is



Justin Trudeau: 'The contrast between the vision that Mr. Poilievre is putting forward and what we continue to work for every single day couldn't be clearer, couldn't be crisper. As a competitor, as a leader, as someone committed to this country, being there for that conversation with Canadians touches me at the core of what I feel my purpose is.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

a must-read for anyone interested in politics and the prime minister.

In that February interview, Trudeau told Maher that he wants to run against his arch-nemesis, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, the man who's been openly campaigning for the job of prime minister since Feb. 5, 2022, because Trudeau does not want to see Poilievre running the country.

"He's been around this place a long time. I have never seen the drive to service. What is the call to build a country? I've seen a tremendous, cutthroat competitor, someone who's willing to do whatever it takes to win, to score points, to make the goal. And there've been politicians in all parties who do that, but that's never been what drives me," Trudeau says in the book.

Trudeau also says he's looking forward to campaigning against Poilievre. "I just see it as such a fundamental choice in what kind of country we are, who we are as Canadians. That, for me, is what I got into politics for: to have big fights like this about who we are as a country, and where we're going. And that is what this next election is going to be—because the contrast between the vision that Mr. Poilievre is putting forward and what we continue to work for every single day couldn't be clearer, couldn't be crisper. As a competitor, as a leader, as someone committed to this country, being there for that conversation with Canadians touches me at the core of what I feel my purpose is in stepping forward into politics."

Others also say Trudeau will run again, including his former

executive assistant Louis-Alexandre Lanthier, the guy who was a key player in getting Trudeau first elected in the House in 2008, and then as party leader back in 2013. "Even if he knows he might lose, he wants to go down fighting against Pierre Poilievre because I think he feels in his bones that there is a stark difference. With another leader, like [former Conservative leader] Erin O'Toole, I'm not sure that he would feel as compelled to want to fight," Lanthier says in the book.

Former cabinet staffer Zita Astravas says she told Trudeau in 2023 that she would return from the private sector to work on his next election campaign, and tells Maher that Trudeau is the best candidate "by a country mile" to run against Poilievre: "He is running. He's excited for the campaign."

Astravas told Maher: "I have never worked alongside a campaigner like the PM. The energy that he brings every day, but particularly during campaigns, is something you can't count him out for. And I think the Conservatives have seen that for three campaigns consecutively. There's nothing really to talk about other than I know that he's running, and I think that he's the best guy for the job."

But it's still not clear if Trudeau will actually run.

The following is a Q&A with Maher.

Do you think Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will run again? Why or why not? And if he's not going to run, when would he have to decide, do you think?

"I don't know what he will do, but I think if he considers his position carefully, he will conclude it would be better not to run, because if he loses, his post-prime ministerial career prospects will be somewhat worse. If he decides to go, he should do so soon, within the next month or so, to leave enough time for a leadership contest and a bit of runway for a successor."

Your book suggests that Trudeau shouldn't be underestimated, and you interview a number of staffers who say he will definitely run again. But that was a little while ago, and Pierre Poilievre is still polling 20 points ahead of Trudeau. Do you believe Trudeau is the only guy who can run against Poilievre right now?

"I think he may be uniquely ill-equipped to face Poilievre. If Trudeau stays, the election will be a referendum on Trudeau. If Trudeau leaves, it may turn into a referendum on Poilievre."

If he did run, do you think he would lose?

"I do."

How long did it take you to write your book?

"Sixteen months. I signed the contract on Oct. 11, 2022, and the manuscript was finalized on Feb. 12, 2024."

How many people did you interview for your book, and how difficult was it to get them to really open up to you about Trudeau?

"I interviewed about 200 people, the majority of whom are not named in the book. People were

generally open, trying to help me understand the government. It is different from daily journalism in that many people feel they should help establish a historical record."

Who was your best interview for the book?

"Trudeau himself. It was stressful because he only agreed at the very last minute, and I had to travel frantically to get to town again, but it was good to put some things to him, to be reminded of what he is like in person. I wish I had had more time with him."

Where were you when you had to scramble to get to town to interview Trudeau?

"I was in Staniel Cay, in the Bahamas, on my sailboat, not far from Bells Cay, which Trudeau visited. There was a scary storm coming in, but I had friends on the boat who promised to look after it while I flew back, first in a small plane to Nassau, and then to Newark and Ottawa. I had to buy and borrow clothes so I wouldn't look like a raggamuffin."

How long was your interview?

"One hour."

Where did you do the interview?

"What we used to call Lanthier's office. In his office."

Did you interview him more than once?

"Only once. I was really glad to have the chance."

What's your biggest take-away from the book?

"Politics is hard. I am impressed by almost all of the people I interviewed from Trudeau's government. They are intelligent, resourceful. A lot of them have game in one way or another. And in spite of their hard work, the government is in a state of permanent near-crisis. Running the country is hard."

You run with "The Prince" theme throughout your book and run a different quote from Machiavelli's *The Prince* at the beginning of each chapter. Why did you choose this theme for your book about Trudeau, and what's the significance of each quote?

"When I was getting started, Kevin Hanson, who was then the CEO of Simon & Schuster, suggested I reread [Niccolò Machiavelli's 1532] *The Prince*, which I hadn't read since I was a student. It is full of insights into politics, things that haven't changed since the Medicis were running Florence. I thought the quotes I picked distilled a lesson from the chapters they precede."

Machiavelli's book's main thesis is that "immoral acts are justified if they can help achieve political glory." Do you think Trudeau has done that? Is that your message?

"That is not my message. Many people who know Trudeau think he is narcissistic, but I don't see him as Machiavellian and manipulative. He can be ruthless—you don't get to be prime minister without ruthlessness—but he is

Canada's newest defence policy has vision, but lacks prioritization to strengthen Canadian Armed Forces



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured recently in Ottawa. The defence policy has directed its vision for how investments in sea, air, land, space, and cyber domains will secure and defend Canadian territory, writes Andrew Erskine. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The new defence policy should have created a strategy that would see our military structured as a maritime force, prioritizing the CAF's sea and air domains supplemented by space and cyber capabilities.

Andrew Erskine

Opinion



Canada's latest defence policy, *Our North Strong and Free*, has laid forth an ambitious, albeit more domestic-focused strategy for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). With the international order becoming more confrontational—with wars waging in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, as well as being more prone to the stressors of great power politics returning to a “might-makes-right” perspective to territorial, economic, and diplomatic interests—a new defence policy was needed to chart an updated vision for how Canada's military will be structured and operate.

By focusing on the Arctic and North America, the defence policy represents the Liberal government's newest attempt to make military spending more palatable to Canadians in a time of budgetary and social concerns over housing, health care, and inflation. In the hopes of getting Canadians on board, the defence policy has directed its vision for how investments in sea, air, land, space, and cyber domains will secure and defend our territory and our people at home while also providing the CAF with the tools and equipment needed to fulfill our defence obligations to NATO and interests in the Indo-Pacific, inseparable areas the prime minister be-

lieves—quite correctly—are key to defending the Arctic and North America.

Policy experts and academics have applauded the government's tilt to stress the importance of Arctic and continental defence in Canada's military posture. However, they also reflect that the defence policy continues Ottawa's ineptitude to reach NATO's two per cent spending target while also failing to lay out a functional method to implement the large-scale spending it pledges. In effect, the policy is a good experiment for something the government cannot or does not intend to fully carry out.

Nonetheless, the defence policy did strike a new note by expressing a legitimate vision to make the CAF ready, resilient, and relevant for “global uncertainties at home and abroad.” This motivation is something I greatly applaud the government for pushing as the CAF—with record low recruitment and retention rates and an aging naval, air force, and land forces—is not a bolstered military that can credibly protect and defend Canada and Canadians as well as reinforce Ottawa's role as a reliable and capable partner in international security efforts.

However, in its pursuit to make the right investments to strengthen the CAF as a combat-effective and relevant force, the policy lacks a genuine understanding of how to hone its fiscal and budgetary resources to accomplish this mission. Instead of attempting to modernize the entirety of the CAF's domains simultaneously, the policy should have prioritized certain domains over others. Given that Canada has a persistent recruitment crisis, an abysmal procurement system, insufficient military industries, and the high cost of modern capabilities, there must be tactical trade-offs in modernizing the CAF as a credible and lethal military to defend and deter threats.

In this case, if the vision for the CAF is to defend and protect the Arctic and North America, then the defence policy should have established a strategy that would see Canada's military structured as a maritime force, prioritizing the CAF's sea and air domains supplemented by robust space and cyber capabilities, given the large swath of coastline and aerial spaces needed to be defended and surveyed. As a result of this approach, the government

would have needed to refocus the Canadian Army away from tank and artillery capabilities in favour of lighter forces that provide relatively inexpensive, adaptable, and prompt military options for larger

multi-domain operations like airborne task mission with the Royal Canadian Air Force or littoral combat operations with the Royal Canadian Navy—a valid trade-off in my opinion.

Prioritization also has the impromptu ability to assist the government in better promoting investments in air-to-air and surface-to-air missile capabilities for the navy and air force, a new submarine fleet, unmanned underwater vehicles, as well as more squadrons of fighter jets, multirole aircraft, and unmanned aerial vehicles by alleviating the longstanding issue of overestimating equipment use and underestimating support costs that has beset the military.

Having a better course to attain a vision in this way would assist the Canadian public to understand how their taxes are designing a ready, resilient and relevant CAF.

Andrew Erskine is a Young Fellow with the Institute for Peace and Diplomacy, and Canada-Asia Young Professional Fellow at the Asia-Pacific Foundation of Canada. *The Hill Times*

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Opinion

Clark makes passionate plea for a return to 'co-operation across our differences' in politics today

At a dinner in his honour last week, Joe Clark rebuked the modern Conservative Party for worsening Canada's divisions today, and the Liberals for not ignoring 'the unwinding world' around us. The Alberta boy was in fighting form.

Douglas Roche

Opinion



OTTAWA—Joe Clark used the 45th anniversary of his election as Canada's 16th prime minister on May 22 in Ottawa to politely—but unmistakably—re-buke the modern Conservative Party for worsening the divisions in the country today. He did not mention the name of the party or its leader, Pierre Poilievre, but he did not have to. The dinner crowd of 300 people assembled



Joe Clark, pictured in this file photo, celebrated his 45th anniversary of his election as Canada's 16th prime minister on May 22 in Ottawa, and used the event to make a plea for a return to co-operation across our differences in politics today. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

in the Trillium Room in the Shaw Centre, with its sweeping vista of Ottawa's power centres, knew exactly what he was talking about.

Clark turned what might have been just a last hurrah for the Red Tories into a passionate call for a return to "co-operation across our differences," and a plea to "counter the negativism that characterizes public debate today." Again and again, he returned to "the divisions arising in Canada today." He scorned the public

debate that "concentrates on what we want rather than what the country needs."

He invoked the names of Lester Pearson, Robert Stanfield, and Nelson Mandela as political leaders who healed the divisions of their times, and brought people together. "That spirit is not present today," he said.

Clark, whose minority government in 1979 was defeated after only nine months in power, obviously does not want his regime to be consigned to a footnote in history. It had some remarkable achievements in bringing the Vietnamese "Boat People" to Canada, and sheltering American diplomats during the Iranian revolution. But his nine years as foreign minister in the Mulroney government, in which he pursued a dynamic and activist Canadian foreign policy known as "constructive internationalism," allowed him to shine on the world stage.

At 39 years old, he was the youngest person ever to become Canada's prime minister, but he has endured and is now a robust 85-year-old statesman who has never lost the dream of building Canada into an important middle power playing a key role in world affairs.

The event was held under the aegis of the Pearson Centre, a

think tank that upholds progressive, centrist, and moderate public policy combining economic success with social responsibility. It is named after Lester Pearson, Canada's 14th prime minister, whose grandson Michael Pearson praised Clark for having the same values as his Liberal grandfather.

Clark's criticism of politicians today did not stop with his obvious main target, the Conservatives. He did not mention the Liberal government by name when he lamented that Canada today is not living up to the "inherent Canadian capacity" to find agreements among diverse nations. It is the Liberals, however, not the Conservatives, who manage foreign policy. Clark made it clear he doesn't think much of the present foreign policy, which, he commented adroitly, needs a lot more funding.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, a Liberal, paid his respects to Clark by attending the reception preceding the dinner. Clark didn't mention him, either, but Trudeau's ears must have been ringing when Clark called on Canada to pay more attention to "the unwinding world," and use its influence to build reconciliation among nations.

Instead of giving a speech, Clark answered questions from his interviewer, his own daughter Catherine, who is a noted broadcaster. She asked her father good questions about his career and policies, drawing him out on his favourite theme that Canada is a "community of communities" that has gone askew.

We'll hear more on these themes when Mathew Hayday, a professor of history at Guelph University, publishes his long-awaited biography of Clark. Hayday says that Clark, supported by Mulroney, developed a strong agenda marked by boldness, and a desire for activism and constructive international engagement on a multitude of fronts, including trade, human rights, arms control, the environment, and peacekeeping. Clark's specialty was having Canada persuade major multilateral bodies to engage in coordinated actions. That sounds very Canadian, and that is the Canada Clark pointed to wistfully and energetically.

Clark's outreach to Quebec, his defence of the provinces' legitimate interests, his support for the United Nations and international development all are hallmarks of a very caring man. As he put it in his book, *How We Lead: Canada in a Century of Change*, he believes passionately that Canada can "make a difference" in the world by employing soft-power engagement with international partners. That's the best of Clark that ought to be emulated in today's chaotic world.

I asked Clark if he will write his memoirs, for surely Canada needs to hear directly from a political figure who stands in the highest ranks of the country's foreign ministers. He gave me a non-committal reply. So I'm not sure what he is going to do. But judging from his performance at the dinner as the last of the Red Tories on the national stage, the Alberta boy is in fighting form.

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

The Hill Times



Joe Clark at the Progressive Conservative leadership convention on June 11, 1983. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons/Alasdair Roberts



Joe Clark at the unveiling of his official portrait as prime minister on the Hill in 2008. *The Hill Times* file photograph

The Big Photo

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland holds a press conference in the National Press Theatre on May 21, 2024. *HT* photographer Andrew Meade on this shot: 'While photographing Freeland's regular update on the government's economic plan, I thought I'd play with the flags, and her being placed between them and make a more playful picture. Her wide eyes looking out of the frame and the symmetry, combined with the triangles of the flags added interesting features to the composition.'



The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Opinion

Time to enforce the Polar Code in Canada's Arctic waters

It is time to enforce the seven-year-old Polar Code, which aims to reduce the risk of an accident and loss of life in regions which are still isolated and very challenging.

Pierre Leblanc

Opinion



Global warming is gradually increasing maritime access to the Canadian Arctic which has led to an increase of maritime traffic. The immediate concern is not with the traditional annual community resupply shipping companies who are well experienced navigating those waters, but more with adventurers, super yachts, and cruise ships. In the future, in addition to the disappearing ice, the present water restrictions of the Panama Canal, the ongoing security issues with the Red Sea, the relationship with Russia and its Northern Sea Route, and piracy in the Strait of Malacca, we may also see an increase with transoceanic commercial traffic through the Northwest Passage.

More cruise ships are entering the waters of the Arctic Archipelago to experience the fabled Northwest Passage. Unfortunately, cruise ships running aground in Canada is not a theoretical exercise as three of them have already done so. The *Hanseatic* in 1996 ran aground "because the bridge team did not strictly adhere to the plan that had been prepared for navigating the vessel through the strait. Relying on a navigation buoy left in the strait from the previous navigation season contributed to the grounding." The *MV Clipper Adventurer* near Kugluktuk ran aground in 2010. Its forward-looking sonar was inoperable. The *Academik*

Ioffe ran aground in 2018 some 78 nautical miles north-northwest of Kugaaruk. In that case, "While transiting the narrows, the officer of the watch was multitasking, the helmsman was busy steering the vessel, and no other crew were tasked with monitoring the echo sounders and keeping lookout. As a consequence, they did not notice the under-keel water depth steadily decrease. The under-keel low water depth aural and visual alarms for both echo sounders were turned off." Also worrisome is that several fuel tankers have run aground in the Arctic: the *Mokami* in October 2010, the *MV Nanny* in February of 2012 and 2014, and the *Kivalliq W* in October 2022. All of those occurrences were avoidable. Fortunately, nobody was injured, and there was only a minor environmental impact. We might not be so lucky next time.

One of the older maritime conventions of the International Maritime Organization is called the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974. It is focused on preserving life at sea through regulations and inspections "to ensure that, from the point of view of safety of life, a ship is fit for the service for which it is intended." The regulations apply to the ship as well as the life-saving appliances. Under SOLAS Regulation 7, Surveys of Passenger Ships, there is a requirement for periodical survey once every 12 months. Specifically, "The periodical survey shall include an inspection of the ... life-saving appliances ... is in satisfactory condition and fit for the service for which it is intended." Life-saving equipment being "fit for service" is very important for ships operating in the polar regions.

The International Maritime Organization adopted a Polar Code in November 2014 with the aim of reducing the loss of life at sea caused by the lack of preparedness to operate in the polar regions which are more isolated and challenging in which to operate. The Polar Code entered into force on Jan. 1, 2017. It sets several standards, such as ship design and construction, and qualifications of the crew and safety equipment on board. Although the Polar Code isn't perfect and doesn't address all the challenges of operating in the polar regions, it was deemed to be a major step

in improving operations in those areas. It specifically called for a high standard of design for the survival equipment.

Serious maritime accidents happen almost daily: loss of power, allisions, loss of steering, groundings, and fires. If a ship loses the ability to steer it can quickly get into significant trouble. The recent destruction of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore by the ship *MV Dali* provides a clear example of how quickly a situation can lead to disaster when a ship loses its controllability. Another good example of what could happen took place off the coast of Norway when the cruise ship *Viking Sky* lost power in a storm.

On March 18, 2019, the cruise ship *Viking Sky* issued a mayday distress call after engine problems in heavy seas off Norway's western coast. At the time, it was carrying a complement of crew and passengers of 1,370 people. In very rough seas, the vessel started to drift towards the coast. The sea conditions were such that it was deemed unsafe to deploy the emergency lifeboats. A frantic rescue effort was made to evacuate the passengers and crew by helicopters. In challenging weather conditions and a ship swaying severely in all dimensions, several helicopters managed to airlift some 400 passengers to safety by the time the crew managed to restart one engine, and sail away from the coast. Dozens of people were injured, and several had to be hospitalized. Had the ship ran aground, the waves would have repeatedly smashed it against the shore. Passengers and crew may have had to abandon the ship by jumping into frigid waters without proper protection.

In the case of the *Akademik Ioffe* grounding mentioned above, the research vessel *Akademik Sergey Vavilov* provided assistance by taking on board the passengers of the *Akademik Ioffe*. However, it departed the grounding site for Kugaaruk, Nunavut, to deliver those passengers after having been granted an exemption from Transport Canada to sail with 100 persons more than the vessel's lifesaving equipment capacity. This created another dangerous situation. Fortunately, all were delivered safely.

To contrast these ships, there is the *Commandant Charcot* of



Transport Minister Pablo Rodriguez, pictured. At a recent meeting of the Canadian Maritime Advisory Council, Prairie and Northern Region, Transport Canada has indicated that it will increase the inspection of vessels operating in the Canadian Arctic. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the *Ponant Fleet*. It is an actual icebreaker, as opposed to an ice-strengthened expedition vessel. It operates with an experienced crew. It has participated in several Arctic search and rescue exercises with national Coast Guards, and is equipped with the latest survival equipment. Furthermore, it has been involved in testing several types of equipment for the passengers and crew to survive several days after abandoning ship.

In the Canadian Arctic, search and rescue (SAR) assets may be hours or even days away depending on where an incident happens. In the case of the *Clipper Adventurer* near Kugluktuk, it took 42 hours for the Canadian Coast Guard vessel to arrive. In the Canadian Arctic, ships providing assistance face several challenges. They will invariably have to proceed slowly because of ice-infested water, poor weather, and the fact that much of the Arctic Archipelago is only partly charted. Search and rescue aircraft of the Canadian Forces are located in the south on bases such as Canadian Forces Base Winnipeg. The stand-by SAR aircraft should normally be able to take off within two hours. The faster *CC-130 Hercules* aircraft will reach the Arctic faster, but they are not equipped with a forward-looking infrared radar (FLIR). They use onboard observers, a much less efficient system. The new SAR aircraft, the slower *CC-295 Kingfisher*, with a cruising speed of 260 nautical miles, will reach the Northwest Passage—some 1,100 nautical miles away—in about eight to 10 hours. Because of its limited range of 730 nautical miles, it will have to refuel en route adding to the time to reach the search area. However, they are equipped with FLIR which will make the search more efficient and faster against a very cold background. By then, however, the survivors may have been in cold Arctic waters for 10 or more hours. Unless the survivors have the appropriate level of protection, the search and rescue will likely become a search and recovery operation.

The Polar Code requires vessels that will operate in polar wa-

ters to obtain a polar certificate attesting that the ship, its crew, their qualification and life-saving appliance meet the requirements of the Polar Code. The issuance of those certificates is done by the vessel's class societies acting as a "recognized organization" to the ship's flag administration. There are several societies that issue the polar certificates such as the American Bureau of Shipping, Bureau Veritas, and Lloyds Register. Those societies have a duty to perform due diligence prior to issuing those polar certificates.

To increase search and rescue operations in the Arctic, on May 12, 2011, in Nuuk, Greenland, the Arctic Council put in place the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic. It is a legally binding agreement between Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States. It was recognized that the distances, the weather, and the paucity of SAR assets in the Arctic were such that countries had to work together. This agreement, along with the Polar Code will hopefully reduce the loss of life in the Arctic.

At a recent meeting of the Canadian Maritime Advisory Council, Prairie and Northern Region, Transport Canada has indicated that it will increase the inspection of vessels operating in the Canadian Arctic. This is welcome news as it will encourage ship owners to make sure that their ships have the proper design, that the safety equipment—such as forward-looking sonar—is on board and operational, that the crews are qualified, and that having the proper survival equipment will allow survivors to stay alive for that minimum period of five days.

The Polar Code has been in effect for more than seven years. It aims to reduce the risk of an accident and loss of life in the polar regions which are still isolated and very challenging environments. It is time to enforce it in the Canadian Arctic.

Colonel (Retired) Pierre Leblanc is an experience Arctic practitioner. *White Glacier* is one of his clients.

The Hill Times



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is among six named in arrest warrants by the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on May 20. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Crunch time for Netanyahu?

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has had a bad week, but the pattern remains: the U.S. pleads for moderation, and Israel pretends to listen, but does what it wants.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—It has not been a good week for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu, chief decision-maker in the war in the Gaza Strip that

has already cost at least 35,000 civilian deaths. (Some thousands of those 35,000 may have been Hamas fighters, but thousands of other civilians still lie undiscovered in the wreckage of their homes. The number stands.)

The week began with the Israel Defence Force (IDF) launching its assault on Rafah, the last undestroyed city in the Strip—but at the same time, Hamas fighters reappeared in Gaza City, the first city the IDF destroyed. This feels like 'whack-a-mole.' Is something wrong with the IDF's game plan?

Then last weekend Netanyahu got two ultimatums from his allies. One came from Benny Gantz, an old political opponent of Netanyahu but a member of his three-man war cabinet.

Gantz demanded that Bibi produce a credible plan by June 8 for ending the war, freeing the hostages, and creating a multinational civilian administration for Gaza. "If you choose the path of fanatics and lead the entire nation to the abyss, we will be forced to quit the government," Gantz said.

By "the abyss," Gantz was referring to Netanyahu's apparent

preference for permanent Israeli military rule in Gaza, a prospect that also alarms the third member of the war cabinet, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant. But the ultimatum that probably disturbed Bibi more came on Sunday from U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan.

The United States does not issue formal ultimatums to its allies. Sullivan merely "urged" Netanyahu to connect his war to a "political strategy" for who runs Gaza afterwards (something Bibi has steadfastly refused to do). But reading between the lines, it was a message from U.S. President Joe Biden that he is running out of patience with Netanyahu.

Then it got worse for Bibi. On May 20, Karim Khan, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), requested arrest warrants for six named individuals associated with the Gaza War on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity: two Israelis and three leaders of Hamas. Netanyahu led the Israeli list.

The Israeli prime minister is no stranger to criminal charges. Indeed, he was on trial on corrup-

tion charges that could end with a jail sentence until the war paused that process (perhaps one of the reasons he is in no hurry to end the war). But he was outraged at being mentioned in the same breath as a bunch of 'Palestinian terrorists.'

Naturally, all the suspects were 'outraged.' Yahya Sinwar, accused of being responsible for murder, hostage-taking, and rape, is not answering the phone, but a Hamas spokesman protested that the Court's decision "equates victim with executioner." (Rule No. 1: claim victim status.)

Israel's extreme-right finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, called the ICC move "a display of hypocrisy and Jew-hatred" that "we haven't seen since Nazi propaganda." (Rule No. 2: claim victim status.) But the question remains: will any of this make the least bit of difference to the outcome?

Certainly not the IDF's little difficulties. The war is really over in the sense that Hamas clearly cannot be eradicated, but it will continue so long as it serves Netanyahu's purposes (and Hamas', too).

Is Gantz's threat to leave the government real? Maybe, but his departure would not bring the government down so long as Netanyahu's ultra-nationalist allies remain loyal.

Will Sullivan's warning about Biden's growing impatience work? Very unlikely because Netanyahu thinks he's bluffing, and he's probably right.

The pattern is clear, from Israel's 1948 War of Independence to

the nuclear plant in Dimona, the establishment of West Bank settlements, and Israeli operations in Gaza today. The United States pleads for moderation, Israel pretends to listen, but does what it wants, and the U.S. eventually accepts it.

The only thing that is likely to have a lasting effect, bizarrely, is the ICC's seemingly quixotic attempt to bring the leaders of both sides to justice.

It cannot actually put them in jail: 124 countries have ratified the ICC treaty, but most major military powers, including Israel and the U.S., shun it. However, having an arrest warrant in your name in 124 countries can be a major nuisance.

The ICC's prosecutor is not "one of the great anti-semites in modern times," as Netanyahu predictably said. Khan is a British lawyer, born in Edinburgh, who became a King's Counsel in London before going on to be an assistant secretary-general of the United Nations.

Khan's first act in his current job was to revive an investigation into the brutal actions of the Taliban and Islamic State. The second was an investigation into the Ukraine war that led to an ICC arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin. For Khan, Bibi is just another day.

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

Federal public service has lost its way, and not always by its own doing

The stakes for Canada, for representative democracy, and for the future of our institutions are too high to simply let things drift. It is also important to explore every avenue to involve Canadians in the debate either through a royal commission or a high-profile, all-party parliamentary committee, staffed with the best advisers, criss-crossing the country. This would have the added benefit of strengthening the civic literacy among Canadians, another important step in arresting democratic backsliding.

Donald J. Savoie

Opinion



The federal public service has lost its way, and it's not always by its own doing. Senior federal public servants reported

in a recent study that they are now afraid to speak truth to power. Public opinion surveys reveal that Canadians are losing trust in senior public servants. Failures in program delivery in recent years have been well-documented, as has the significant growth in the size of the federal public service. Given this growth and generous employment benefits, the federal public service should be a happy place to work. It is not for many. It is plagued with a continuing morale problem, and recently retired federal public servants have become increasingly critical of the public service.

There are two kinds of federal public servants: poets and plumbers. The poets work in central agencies, and in departmental policy, liaison, co-ordination, and evaluation units. Few of the poets deliver programs and services, or deal directly with non-government officials. For the most

part, they work in the National Capital Region (NCR) or in the Ottawa-Gatineau region. Their numbers have grown in recent years when compared with plumbers. Parliament should ask the government to report on how many of the new positions established over the past several years were for those working in policy and co-ordination units—that is poets—and how many were created to staff front-line services, the plumbers.

Poets are much closer to powerful decision-makers than plumbers. In the 1970s, 72 per cent of federal public servants worked in regional or local offices but now, the public service is edging closer to having 50 per cent of public servants work in the NCR. Anyone looking for ways to improve the delivery of federal government programs and services could start here. This is also in sharp contrast to other

countries: in the United States, only 16 per cent of career officials work in Washington, D.C., while in the United Kingdom, 18.6 per cent work in London. No one at the political or public-service levels has ever explained why Ottawa decided to locate more and more federal public servants in the NCR.

Plumbers deliver programs and services. Among many other activities, they work processing applications, issuing cheques, looking after border security, and staff search-and-rescue operations. Plumbers, not poets, staff telephone lines at Revenue Canada. When things go off the rails at the passport office, or when subjected to interminable waiting on the phone with the Canada Revenue Agency, plumbers—never poets—are to blame. Plumbers are the poets' poor cousins. They enjoy lower classification and pay than the poets—an assistant dep-



uty minister in the Privy Council Office or the Department of Finance, for example, will enjoy a higher classification and higher pay than assistant deputy ministers in departments delivering programs and services, simply by being in a central agency. It pays more to be a poet than a plumber.

The federal public service has too many management levels and has attached too many associate positions to executive positions. This has made the federal service thicker, more risk-averse, and hide bound. From time to



PSAC president Chris Aylward, pictured doing a scrum on April 26, 2023, at a rally with hundreds of striking federal public servants on Parliament Hill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



The Prime Minister's Office in Ottawa, pictured. In the 1970s, 72 per cent of federal public servants worked in regional or local offices but now, the public service is edging closer to having 50 per cent of public servants work in the NCR. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

expenditure budget. That responsibility, as well as responsibility for personnel and administrative management policies, belongs to the Treasury Board with nearly 1,951 full-time employees. I am on safe ground writing that there are far more talented poets in Ottawa than there are interesting things for all of them to do. The result is that many are kept busy turning a crank that is not attached to anything.

We have seen large private firms capture important administrative savings and reduce staff by turning to IT to process applications and payments in a highly efficient manner. The growth in the federal government in recent years and problems in delivering programs and services to Canadians suggest that Ottawa has failed to do the same. Why? The federal public service is not providing answers—at least, there are no indications that it is. One only has to read annual reports that the Clerk of the Privy Council and head of the public service tables every year to see that the reports never deal with these issues. They only put forward the best interpretation of the work of the public service, a public service version of political spin.

The public service is not solely responsible for this state of affairs. The federal government has piled on measures after measures on its public service, seriously inhibiting implementing better management practices. In the mid-1960s, the government introduced collective bargaining. Today, 74.1 per cent of public-sector employees belong to a union compared with only 13.8 per cent for the private sector. Collective bargaining has transformed management in government. Collective bargaining did away with a long-held view that a sovereign state could not be compelled by lesser bodies, in this case, public-sector unions. Time is long overdue for a public debate on the role of public sector unions and their impact on public-sector management.

Government executives and managers now have to keep an eye on many things as they go about their work—on collective agreements, on central agencies, on ministers and their offices, on other departments, on officers of Parliament, on the media, and on access-to-information legislation that has made government more transparent but, at the same time, made life more difficult for managers. The legislation challenges the anonymity of public servants or the notion that it has no constitutional identity separate from the government of the day. This, too, now belongs to history. If nothing else, the fact that the clerk of the Privy Council tables an annual report on the federal public service makes clear that the public service has a constitutional personality distinct from the government.

I believe Canadians and their elected politicians need to launch a debate on the health of our national institutions. I am making a few suggestions in the hope of encouraging the debate. I hold that the health of our national institutions should enjoy a priority status with Canadians, not simply with politicians and public servants. The stakes for Canada, for representative democracy, and for the future of our institutions are too high to simply let things drift. It is also important to explore every avenue to involve Canadians in the debate either through a royal commission or a high-profile, all-party parliamentary committee, staffed with the best advisers, criss-crossing the country. This would have the added benefit of strengthening the civic literacy among Canadians, another important step in arresting democratic backsliding.

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The Hill Times

time, the federal government will talk about eliminating management levels, but then does the opposite. Some 40 years ago, the government expressed concern that its executive category had grown to 2,562 members. It decided that reducing management levels and the number of executives would both “improve government operations and morale.” The argument from the government was convincing: “if you take a whole level out, then the managers below automatically gain greater control over their operations.” The objective was clear: “de-layer” management levels. In 2012, the government of the day came to the same conclusion and it, too, declared its intention to de-layer management levels and reduce the number of executives. It hired outside consultants to give it a hand. How did that work out? By 2015, the number of executives had actually shot up to 6,400 and, today, the number is 7,320, some 4,758 more than when the government decided that there were too many executives in its ranks and declared that it needed to do something about it.

No one has been held accountable for the failure to deliver on the commitment made in the early 1990s and again in 2012. Parliament has said very little about the failure, lacking the resources to undertake an in-depth review to do so, or even to ask penetrating questions. No one either at the political or public service level has also ever explained why the significant growth in executive positions which has favoured the poets, not the plumbers. If questions are not asked in Parliament, or by the media, Canadians should not expect an answer from government officials either from politicians or public servants.

Poets have also won the day in other areas. Comparing the machinery of government today to years past is revealing in several ways. It also explains many of the challenges now confronting the federal government. Forty years ago, the organization of a typical federal government department had a deputy minister, perhaps a special adviser, an assistant deputy minister responsible for programs and services delivery, an assistant deputy minister responsible for policy and a director general responsible for administration, finance, and human resources. There were no or very few “associate” posi-

tions. Today, one of many federal government departments has a deputy minister, an associate deputy minister, two senior assistant deputy ministers, about a dozen assistant deputy ministers and several associate assistant deputy ministers. For the most part, they are poets, not plumbers.

Central agencies are home to poets. The Department of Finance has a deputy minister, two associate deputy ministers, a senior assistant deputy minister, 12 assistant deputy ministers, five associate deputy ministers managing a staff complement of 929 full-time equivalents. Finance does not look after the



Finance Chrystia Freeland attends the Liberal winter caucus retreat on Parliament Hill on Jan. 25, 2024. The Department of Finance has a deputy minister, two associate deputy ministers, a senior assistant deputy minister, 12 assistant deputy ministers, and five associate deputy ministers managing a staff complement of 929 full-time equivalents. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Opinion



Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry François-Philippe Champagne speaks with reporters outside the Liberal caucus meeting in the West Block on May 8, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

velop in Canada intellectual property owned by and for the benefit of these corporations. These are R&D branch plants and all the big tech firms have them here: Alphabet/Google, Microsoft, Meta, and Apple, for example. They are all active in our artificial intelligence hubs in Edmonton, Toronto, and Montreal.

With the world investing heavily in AI in what has been dubbed AI nationalism and the growing use of AI industrial strategies, Canada risks falling seriously behind. While a source of talent and research, it is—like Britain—in danger of becoming “little more than a research offshoot,” in the words of *Financial Times* columnist John Thornhill. With great flourish, then-industry minister Navdeep Bains proclaimed in 2017 that Canada was the first country in the world to unveil a national AI strategy. Problem was that it wasn’t a strategy; it was simply a funding package for universities. Only now is there recognition that an AI strategy is much more than research funding; for example, AI today demands massive computing capability, and Canada is now belatedly playing catch-up.

In the meantime, our governments are investing tens of billions of dollars to attract investment in electric vehicles, batteries, battery components, and the development and processing of critical minerals—leading governments to proclaim we are a world leader in electric vehicles and batteries.

This is not true—there are no Canadian electric vehicles aside from some school buses, and no Canadian batteries for these vehicles, while much of the critical mineral development in this country so far is being conducted by foreign mining companies. We are importing the innovation of others, and we will be importing engineering, production machinery, and other technology, and paying for the use of the intellectual property of these firms.

Canada faces a dangerous tipping point. We are not developing the kind of industries—and hence the kind of jobs, productivity, and wealth—we need to preserve, sustain and improve the kind of country we want. We face a rough world where other countries are working aggressively for advantage while our largest trading partner, the United States, is engaged in harsh forms of protectionism combined with massive subsidies to put American industry first. Climate change presents enormous transition challenges where there is limited public appetite for change, and little recognition of the real costs of moving to net-zero emissions by 2050.

For too long, complacency has been our Achilles heel. We have been able to muddle through. But no more. The world is more dangerous, and there are many new players in the global marketplace. With just 0.5 per cent of the world’s population, we will have to work much harder—and smarter—to secure our place in it.

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

The Hill Times

Canada faces a dangerous tipping point on its economy

We are not developing the kind of industries—and hence the kind of jobs, productivity, and wealth—we need to preserve, sustain and improve the kind of country we want.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



TORONTO—In the first three months of this year, Canadians invested \$51.5-billion in foreign securities, with a record \$35.6-billion in March alone. According to Statistics Canada, this included \$14.1-billion in shares of foreign companies, mainly big American tech firms.

Yet, if Canadian businesses need capital to grow, far too often they have to go to the United States or other foreign markets to raise the capital they need, despite the large pools of Canadian savings that flow out of the country. They simply can’t get the capital they need here. All too frequently this means they have to sell the company itself, with its talent and intellectual property, to foreign investors so that what could have grown to become a large-scale Canadian enterprise instead becomes a branch of a foreign business.

We pay a price for this. Our failure to invest our savings to build world-leading, but Canadian-headquartered firms with scale and scope to provide good jobs, build portfolios of rich intellectual property, generate high-value exports, support networks of Canadian suppliers and build a well-diversified economy is lost. Instead, we have a branch-plant economy where the leading industries of the future are foreign-controlled with the wealth generated accruing to the foreign owners.

It’s why we need a full-scale review of our financial system

so that we can much better utilize the savings of Canadians to build a stronger Canada. In a world where investments in intangibles—such as research and development, employee skills upgrading, marketing and branding, business organization and methods, and pursuit of intellectual property—may be more important for business success than investments in tangibles—such as machinery and equipment and buildings—our financial system is designed for a world of investment in the latter rather than the former.

While we can lecture pension funds, mutual funds, banks, and other pools of capital for not making a better contribution to our future potential, this is just grandstanding, not a policy. We have to seriously review our financial system so that all the elements together provide the incentives, opportunities, and regulations that will lead to a much greater share of Canadian savings going into building a better domestic future with far fewer promising Canadian start-ups having to go to the treacherous world of New York private equity or prematurely sell

to foreign multinationals in order to get capital.

Canada has many of the elements of potential success. Our universities and colleges produce good graduates, and our university research base is capable of important advances in knowledge. Moreover, this country has some frontier companies that have shown we can succeed on the world stage—businesses like Linamar Corp (auto parts), CAE (flight simulators), and Kinaxis (supply chain software).

But that is not enough. The foreign takeover of so many of our best-emerging firms, and the difficulties we have in transforming start-ups into fast-scaling commercial success means that having talent and good research is a start, but only that. A key gap is in finance. And the failure to finance the growth of more Canadian firms means we have fewer investment opportunities on the Toronto Stock Exchange in scaled up companies at the frontiers of the next economy.

One consequence of our strength in talent development and university research is that we are helping foreign businesses build their own strengths, and de-

‘We wanted answers’: federal public service unions protest government’s return to workplace policy

A recent Angus Reid poll found that 59 per cent of Canadians support federal workers spending more time in the office and less time remotely.

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

Canada’s biggest public service unions are fighting back against the government’s requirement that public service workers return to the workplace three days a week beginning Sept. 9, and according to a recent Angus Reid poll, balance between work in-office and at-home has become a source of dispute between employees and employers.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), which represents nearly 240,000 public service workers, has promised a “summer of discontent” in response to the new federal government remote work policy requiring at least three days of in-office work.

Negotiations between the union and the government are set to kick off once again this summer, which could see 9,000 Canada Border Services Agency workers delay border crossings.

Meanwhile, an Angus Reid survey of 1,751 Canadians—237 of whom were public sector union members—found that 47 per cent supported the federal government requiring its employees to increase the number of days worked in the office. The survey about the directive took place between May 16 and May 21, with 59 per cent of the total cohort backing the government’s plans, 28 per cent opposed, and 13 per cent unsure.

A plurality of public sector union members—45 per cent—felt the government should back down and reverse its policy if unions made good on their threats of a disrupted summer, compared to 36 per cent calling for the government to continue on regardless, and 19 per cent were unsure. Among the total number



Members of Canada’s public service unions gathered outside of Ottawa’s City Hall on May 23 to protest the federal government’s back-to-workplace policies. *The Hill Times* photograph by Mike Lapointe

of people surveyed, 47 per cent wanted the government to move forward with the plan, 33 per cent said it should reverse course, and 20 per cent were unsure.

A majority of respondents—63 per cent—either agreed or strongly agreed that it was not up to federal government workers to revitalize downtown Ottawa, with that figure rising to 81 per cent of those living in Ottawa.

The three largest public sector unions, including PSAC, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC), the Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE), and the Association of Canadian Financial Officers, are launching a united fightback campaign to oppose the government’s one-size-fits-all approach to hybrid work, which they say violates the “hard-won rights of employees and fundamentally breaks the trust of workers and unions in this government,” according to a PSAC release.

“The decision to force workers back into ill-equipped and poorly maintained offices is purely political, and puts the services Canadians depend on at risk,” said Chris Aylward, PSAC national president, in a statement. “The Liberal government props itself up as a friend of public service workers, yet at every turn they continue to ram through backroom decisions without any consultation that impact the well-being of workers and their families.”

Hundreds of federal public sector union members protested outside Ottawa City Hall on May 23, calling on the government to revisit its move to make govern-

ment workers come into the office three days a week.

The gathering, following the Mayor’s Breakfast featuring guest speaker Treasury Board President Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.), was organized to let Anand, Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, and other municipal officials know why union members are against the mandate, which would require employees to come into the office three days a week, and executives four days a week.

“In terms of hybrid, that hybrid work is important,” Anand said, as reported by CTV news on May 23. “It is important to have flexibility, it is important to be able to hear from public servants and employees generally about what they need to cope in the workplace.”

Anand said the move from two to three days is still “within the range that was put down in the policy before I became Treasury Board president, and it’s four days for managers—so hybrid still exists in that respect.”

The Treasury Board announced that as of Sept. 9, 2024, public servants in the core public administration who are eligible for a hybrid work arrangement will be required to work on-site a minimum of three days per week.

“To ensure leadership and effective support for their teams, executives are expected to be on-site a minimum of four days per week as of the same date,” according to the government.

Sean O’Reilly, vice-president of PIPSC, explained the government had said the directive was to boost collaboration, but that he isn’t sure it is grounded in evidence.

“The one thing I’ve heard is they want to do it to increase collaboration, to increase productivity within the workplace,” he said. “But they say that, but then we talked to our members. And they’ve indicated to us that they go into the office to sit on a Teams or a Zoom call with their colleagues.”

“So it’s nonsensical,” said O’Reilly, noting that since the union members started coming back into the office following the pandemic, people have been working in kitchenettes, food courts, or on the floor due to a shortage of space. Tens of thousands of public servants in the National Capital Region are affected.

“We want to have the flexibility, but also when folks are in the office, they have to have a workplace that is functional, and allows them to be productive in the office” said O’Reilly.

A recent PIPSC survey found that fewer than 30 per cent of respondents said they did not have a dedicated workstation, less than half felt their current working conditions met their needs, and 50 per cent of racialized, LGBTQ2S+, and people with disabilities are likely or extremely likely to consider leaving the public service due to the return to office directive.

“Our survey results reinforce this order’s lack of evidence-based decision-making and nonsensical nature,” said Eva Henshaw, acting president of PIPSC. “The vast majority of our members do not even have an adequate office environment to return to.”

CAPE, which represents more than 25,000 federal public service members, attended last week’s protest, with the union’s president Nathan Prier saying “we wanted answers on why this government insists on wasting billions of dollars of taxpayer money on buildings that nobody needs to work in, frankly, and that most workers in those buildings would prefer to convert to other uses.”

Among the hundreds of people that attended the protest included dozens who are represented by CAPE. The union is dedicated to advocating on behalf of federal employees in the Economics and Social Science Services and Translation groups, as well as employees of the Library of Parliament, the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer and civilian members of the RCMP.

“Frankly, it’s not just that workers here in the federal government can work from home, and are more productive from home, and don’t want to work in these decrepit buildings that the federal government maintains. But it’s also that they’re living through a cost-of-living crisis right now. People need housing. People need childcare. People don’t want to be burning fossil fuels on the road unnecessarily,” said Prier.

“We’ve seen other jurisdictions totally convert to telework rights regime, as we call it, where it’s telework,” said Prier, referring to places like Australia and British Columbia. “We’re not asking for a fantasy world here. We’re just asking this government to catch up, and, like, they haven’t been

able to explain who pushed for this decision to return workers to the office three days a week.”

Meanwhile, Liberal MP Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan-Woodbridge, Ont.), told *The Hill Times* in an interview on the Hill last week he’s always believed that having a collaborative approach between an employer and employee—whether or not it’s a bargaining unit—is the best way to go about it.

“I also am a big believer in presence. Work, I think, when folks are working together—whether it’s mentoring, onboarding, productivity, young people getting experience—having that in-person presence is very important. But of course, with a balance of where there’s opportunities to do hybrid, where there’s an opportunities for employees to have flexibility for their daily work lives is also important,” said Sorbara, who sits on the House Public Accounts Committee.

Sorbara said that, as someone who worked in downtown Toronto for 13 years before he went into politics, cities like Ottawa “need a vibrant downtown core.”

“Now, that may be reshaped and some of those buildings that were office buildings may be converted into other purposes, whether it’s housing or some other purpose. I think what you are seeing now is a return to life,” said Sorbara.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) has not taken a definitive position on the government’s move, as reported by the *Globe and Mail*.

When he was asked during a news conference in Vancouver, B.C., about the issue, Poilievre “did not clarify where he stood on the matter,” according to the report, instead stating that “common sense Conservatives believe public servants should be working for Canadians, that the work should be brought in-house at a lower cost, everyone should be working five days a week.”

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-Carleton, 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., earlier this month, was also unavailable for an interview.

Ottawa Centre Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa-Centre, Ont.) was available earlier this month, and said he supports maintaining hybrid work for federal public servants. “I support maintaining hybrid work for federal public servants,” Naqvi said in a statement to *The Hill Times* two weeks ago.

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News

British Columbia voter data complainant calls out microtargeting as parties mum on next steps after court loss

Using voter data for targeted messaging ‘exposes you to a manipulative process rather than a public deliberative process,’ says Andrew Clement, who filed a privacy complaint against federal political parties.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

A private citizen behind a complaint that has led to tighter privacy rules for political parties is calling a recent court ruling a “vindication,” while a former Conservative Party president says the decision leaves the country’s rules for political parties “balkanized,” and should be appealed.

Andrew Clement, a computer scientist and professor at the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Information, was one of three private citizens who submitted a request to several federal political parties in 2019 asking for any personal information the parties possessed about him. That request set in motion a years-long battle with privacy commissioners and in court. On May 15, a British Columbia judge ruled that federal political parties are subject to that province’s privacy laws.

“It was really a very clear sort of vindication,” Clement told *The Hill Times*. “The judge really got the message, and was clear and powerful in his judgment wording.”

Clement and the two other private citizens—who have chosen to remain anonymous—are all British Columbia residents, and used that province’s privacy laws to make the request.

Federal privacy legislation does not cover political parties, while British Columbia has some of the strictest provincial privacy laws in Canada. Provincial political parties operating in British Columbia are subject to its privacy laws, and the three private citizens asserted federal parties also fell under its jurisdiction. The federal Liberals, Conservatives, and NDP objected.

In a May 15 ruling, Justice Gordon Weatherill waded through a series of complex constitutional



The parties of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh have not yet said if they will appeal a May 15 court ruling that found federal political parties are subject to B.C.’s privacy laws. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

arguments about the division of powers under federalism, and whether applying British Columbia privacy laws would frustrate Ottawa’s role in regulating federal elections. He ruled that it wouldn’t.

That means federal political parties are now subject to British Columbia’s privacy laws, and a stalled investigation into how the parties collect and use data can resume—unless the parties seek a stay of the ruling pending appeal. If the investigation proceeds, it could shed light on what sort of data the federal parties possess about Canadians, and affect how the parties carry out many activities such as fundraising, canvassing, and getting out the vote.

‘A long pre-occupation’: Clement

A computer scientist, Clement said he has had “a long pre-occupation” with “the issues of surveillance and privacy,” which motivated his desire to challenge the federal parties.

“I’ve just been interested in how computerization has been used to basically grab people’s information in all kinds of ways and then process it—whoever’s doing it—to their advantage,” he said.

One of the central concerns privacy advocates have raised is that political parties are using data to create profiles of voters, which is used for microtargeting. They’re concerned about the impact this may have on the democratic process.

Clement said these practices can lead to “fragmented exchanges” where “contradictory messages can be given.” He said

having a profile that might tell the party how a voter thinks about a particular issue “exposes you to a manipulative process, rather than a public deliberative process.”

He said that he saw filing the complaint as an opportunity to promote greater accountability for how data is used.

“It just doesn’t make any real sense from a governance point of view that a set of organizations that collect some of the most sensitive personal information are not governed effectively by any privacy regime,” he said.

Clement pointed to the Cambridge Analytica scandal—in which the personal data of Facebook users was collected without their consent and used to craft political advertising—as an example of large-scale misuse of personal information.

He also noted a 2019 report from British Columbia’s Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) that looked into how that province’s provincial political parties were collecting and using voter data. The report found that parties were keeping large amounts of data about voters, including sex, ethnicity, age, languages spoken, religion, income, education, and professional status.

That’s why when the federal parties sent Clement a response to his initial inquiry in 2019, their answer didn’t sit right with him. Clement said the parties claimed to have only some basic information on him, such as his voter registration information including some details related to when he used to live in Toronto. They also provided records of some past donations he had made.

ing media questions to the Privy Council Office—which speaks for Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) in his role as democratic institutions minister.

PCO did not offer a reaction to the ruling, or say whether the government would appeal.

“The Government of Canada will further analyze the court’s decision over the coming weeks,” said Pierre-Alain Bujold, a media relations manager at PCO in a statement.

Asked about whether the Liberals would consider new legislation or changes to Bill C-65—the electoral reform bill—in order to create a more robust federal privacy regime that might overtake the need for the application of provincial privacy laws, Bujold indicated Ottawa plans to proceed on the current legislative path.

“Work on Bill C-65 has been ongoing for quite some time. The changes proposed in Bill C-65 are not in response to this litigation—they are a continuation of the Government of Canada’s ongoing enhancement of privacy provisions, which were strengthened for the first time in 2018,” said Bujold. “We look forward to continuing with the process towards royal assent.”

Immediate implications

With an appeal possible, the immediate implications of the ruling for federal political parties remain somewhat unclear.

According to the ruling, the parties are now subject to British Columbia’s privacy laws, meaning they must comply with the 10 principles of British Columbia’s Personal Information Protection Act. This includes obtaining consent, and limiting data collection to what is strictly necessary. However, unless the B.C. privacy office resumes its investigation, it’s not clear if the parties will change their operating practices.

OIPC told *The Hill Times* it is consulting with its legal team to determine if and when that investigation would resume.

A spokesperson for OIPC could not comment on a specific investigation, but offered some insight into how the process generally works. He said it would involve gathering evidence from both parties, considering whether the organization was acting in compliance with the applicable privacy law, and issuing findings.

“If a public body or organization is found to have been offside of the legislation,” said the spokesperson, “they will be subject to a legally binding order to take action to comply with the law.”

Lamb said an order would usually relate to one of the principals in the act. For example, it could require a party to shift from relying on implied consent and start obtaining explicit consent from voters on their data—which he said would create undue burden given the voluntary nature of political canvassing.

A final report from an investigation could also shed light on what type of data parties possess on voters.

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The Hill Times

“This didn’t sit with what we knew about the way in which political parties are trying to extract as much actionable information as they can about voters,” he said.

‘Leaves the country a bit balkanized’: Lamb

Scott Lamb, a former Conservative Party president and British Columbia-based privacy lawyer, said the ruling should be appealed.

“It, unfortunately, leaves the country a bit balkanized, said Lamb. “We don’t have an overarching approach to how political parties—who are very important entities in our democracy—are governed across the country.”

Regardless of the debate on regulating political parties’ use of data, Lamb said he is concerned the ruling could lead to a patchwork of different provincial rules for how federal elections are regulated. He expects those constitutional issues could be central in an appeal.

Lamb also disagreed with tighter privacy rules for federal parties on the grounds that most of the campaigning is carried out by thousands of volunteers going door to door. He said that makes compliance with increased regulation difficult.

None of the political parties have yet stated if they will launch an appeal.

The Attorney General of Canada was also a party in the case, and argued against the application of British Columbia’s laws. Despite that involvement, Attorney General Arif Virani’s (Parkdale-High Park, Ont.) office has consistently sidestepped comment on the matter, point-

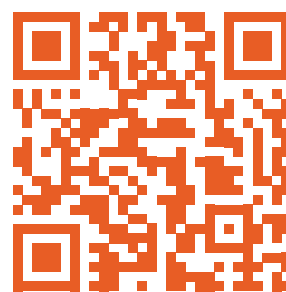


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News

Poilievre's narrative 'not resonating' in Quebec, but observers say that won't hurt a Conservative path to victory

If Quebecers see a change in government to the Conservatives as 'inevitable' in the next federal campaign, they may prefer to send a contingent of Bloc MPs to Ottawa, says pollster David Coletto.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Quebec is the only province where Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives are not leading in public opinion polls, but that doesn't mean the Tory leader would benefit from a different approach in that province, say observers.

Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) holds a commanding lead of around 20 points in most national opinion polls, and is leading in every region of the country except for Quebec.

When asked by *The Hill Times* about the dynamics at play in that province, many political observers came back to two core themes: Poilievre can win a majority without Quebec, and Quebecers can experience a change in federal government while sending a majority of Bloc Québécois MPs to Ottawa. That means there may not be strong motivation on either side to bring about a Conservative breakthrough in the province in the next federal campaign.

Public opinion in Quebec has followed the national trajectory to some extent with most polls tracking a moderate rise for the Tories in recent months. However, all major surveys continue to find the Bloc Québécois under the leadership of Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil-Chambly, Que.) in a comfortable first-place position.

An Abacus Data poll released on May 2 found the Bloc Québécois had 33 per cent support in Quebec. The Conservatives were tied for second place with the Liberals at 28 per cent support. That was an improvement from the previous Abacus poll released on April 11, which had the Liberals in second place with 30 per cent, and the Tories in third with 26 per cent.



Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, left, is leading in the polls in Quebec, with Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in a tight race for second place. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Of the 77 Quebec MPs currently in the House of Commons, there are 34 Liberals, 32 Bloc Québécois, nine Conservatives, one New Democrat, and one Independent.

Several observers said there are broad similarities between Quebec and the rest of Canada when it comes to the dominant issue set—like affordability and housing—but there are also important differences. Immigration and climate change are bigger topics in Quebec, and health care—another important issue across Canada—holds even greater priority for Quebecers.

Political scientist Daniel Béland, director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, said "Quebecers don't live on the moon," so they share concerns expressed by other Canadians, but their political landscape is fundamentally different because the Bloc Québécois is an option.

Quebecers also show fatigue with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), but frustration with a federal government of any political stripe often drives voters towards the Bloc rather than a federalist alternative, he said.

Abacus Data CEO David Coletto added that some Quebecers may be looking at the national polls, and realizing they can have a change in government while still sending a contingent of Bloc MPs to Ottawa.

"I think they'll see that outcome inevitable ... and so then

they'd rather send somebody to Ottawa perhaps who's always going to stand up for Quebec," said Coletto.

He added that his polling has found a high number of Quebecers say they want a change in government, but a smaller percentage believe there is a good alternative to the federal Liberals as compared to voters in the rest of Canada.

"I think for many, they look at Pierre Poilievre and they say, 'We're not excited about the prospect of him becoming prime minister,' which is why I think the Bloc remains in such a strong position," said Coletto.

'Axe the tax' may not be a winner in Quebec

Some aspects of Poilievre's message may be playing a role in that.

Sandra Aubé, a former federal Liberal ministerial staffer who served in the office of Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.), told *The Hill Times* that one reason Poilievre may not be gaining as much traction in Quebec is because his "axe the tax" campaign to end the federal carbon tax—a core message he has delivered while soaring in the polls in most of Canada—is less likely to resonate with Quebecers.

That's because Quebec has had a price on carbon for years—in the form of a cap-and-trade system that predates the Trudeau government—meaning residents

of that province are already used to the system, and are not subject to the federal backstop.

"What that means is that the Conservative narrative is not resonating the same way in Quebec as it did in rest of the country," said Aubé, who is now vice-president of federal affairs at the government relations firm TACT. "Quebec is a little bit immune when it comes to that."

With polls showing Quebecers place a higher priority on climate change, Coletto said this message is less likely to resonate there.

Karl Bélanger, a former NDP staffer who was part of the party's 2011 breakthrough campaign in Quebec, said New Democrats are "not really seen as an option in most regions" of the province at this time.

If Quebecers "feel the need to change government, it's the Conservatives that will benefit," said Bélanger, who is now president at Traxxion Strategies. "But Quebecers are suspicious of Pierre Poilievre at this time."

On the other hand, the Bloc is able to operate as a kind of blank slate for many voters. "Because you don't see the Bloc as present as it once was in federal politics, so it can represent all things to all people," he said.

Former Conservative ministerial staffer Yan Plante told *The Hill Times* there are several factors that put a ceiling on the amount of support Poilievre can expect to win in Quebec—at least in the coming election—and that

means there's not a strong strategic incentive to offer a unique message to the province.

Plante said the Bloc is leading in the polls partly because it has been an effective opposition, but also because it can expect a certain amount of baked-in support with voters whose primary issue is separatism—maybe around a quarter of the electorate.

For the remaining three-quarters of voters, Plante said history shows they have a strong preference to back a leader from Quebec, meaning many of them will be looking at either Blanchet or Trudeau before considering Poilievre.

Poilievre right to keep on-message in Quebec, even if it won't win big there: Plante

Plante said Poilievre doesn't appear to be tailoring a separate message to Quebec.

National parties often have a specific message and campaign for Quebec, as well as for other regions of the country such as British Columbia and Atlantic Canada.

"To me, having been in three national campaign war rooms, it's a nightmare to run a campaign like that," said Plante. "Because you will always face days where you won't have said exactly the same in two provinces," which can leave the appearance of the campaign contradicting itself.

Given the electoral math for Poilievre, Plante said this is a strategically good choice to stick with one national message.

Not only are there are more competitive seats for the Conservatives in regions like the Greater Toronto Area than in Quebec, but flipping a seat in the GTA generally means taking it away from the Liberals. In Quebec—with a few key exceptions—most ridings where the Tories are competitive would see them taking seats from the Bloc. Plante said that picking up seats from the Liberals is more valuable.

"It's like a hockey standing because the race of having the most seats is really only between the Liberals and the Conservatives," he said. "So when the Conservatives or the Liberals win the seat that the other one had, it means two points."

Plante said the Tories will likely target a handful of key ridings, particularly the small numbers of seats the Liberals have in the Quebec City region, like that of Procurement Minister Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec, Que.). He sees Poilievre attacking the Bloc on its policy positions—rather than the fact it cannot form government—and believes that is a good approach.

While the best hope for the Conservatives in the coming campaign may be to win a dozen or so seats—similar to the Harper era—he said Poilievre could fare better in a future campaign if he was against a Liberal leader who was not from Quebec.

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‘Crappy’ polling numbers make some Liberal MPs uneasy about electoral prospects, but still consider next election ‘worth fighting’

The caucus morale ‘waxes and wanes,’ but overall MPs have their ‘eye on the ball,’ says Liberal MP Sean Casey.

Continued from page 1

of 42.8 per cent of respondents, followed by the Liberals who were at 24.9 per cent. The NDP was at 17 per cent, the Greens 4.4 per cent, and the People’s Party at 2.5 per cent.

Other recent polls have also suggested that the Liberals have been 15-21 points behind the Conservatives.

The next election is scheduled for Oct. 20, 2025, but one could be called earlier. Most current and senior Liberals believe the current Parliament will not last until next October, and an election will likely be called next spring.

Casey said that one of the key reasons for the Liberal Party’s low public support is that the party has been in power for about a decade, and the “malaise” and “fatigue” factors have set in. Other reasons that have dragged the Liberal Party’s popularity down are cost of living, inflation, and housing.

“You know what, they [low polling numbers] make me feel uneasy, but I’m not afraid to lose,” said Casey. “It’s a fight worth fighting. And that’s the mindset that I’m going in with. No, this isn’t a matter of desperation. This is a matter of doing what’s in the best interest of my constituents, and what’s in the best interest of my country. And if they decide to pick somebody else, that’s their right.”

Casey said the Conservatives have been able to maintain the momentum since last year because people are not paying attention, but they will once the election is called. Even if the Conservatives are able to keep the lead they have now until the vote takes place about 18 months from now, Casey does not believe the right-of-centre party will be able to withstand the scrutiny during the election campaign. He



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addresses the Liberal caucus. Depending on political developments, the morale of the caucus ‘waxes and wanes,’ but overall Liberal MPs are ‘resolute’ to win the next election, says Liberal MP Sean Casey. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Despite the Conservative Party’s double-digit lead, two-term Liberal MP Marcus Powlowski says that if an election were to happen now, it would be close. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Four-term Liberal MP Sean Casey. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

also believes some senior Conservatives will make some mistakes that will help the Liberals in the next election.

“It’ll be a combination of self-destruction, and not being able to stand up to the increased scrutiny that comes with an election campaign,” said Casey. “I don’t think—when people start to focus in—that they [the Conservatives] will be able to maintain the level of support they have.”

Casey said there has been a conversation *ad nauseam* for months about the horse-race numbers, but no one knows how and who can turn things around for the Liberals. All MPs can do is to focus on their jobs, and deliver for Canadians. He described the caucus morale overall as “reso-

lute,” but there are ups and downs depending on the political situation.

“It waxes and wanes. I would say for the most part people have their eye on the ball, I would say they’re resolute,” said Casey. “The polls are what they are. All we can do is keep our eye on the ball. And nobody has the answer. Nobody knows for sure what’s going to turn it around. We wish it would turn around, but you can continue to be thoughtful, you have to continue to work hard, you have to continually be mindful of what you say, and how you project. So, that’s kind of where we are, and it’s not like anything has changed in the last 18 months. The polls have been crappy for that long.”

Two-term Liberal MP Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay-Rainy River, Ont.) said that the low level of public support is making some of his colleagues “nervous,” adding that, overall, MPs believe they will win the next election.

Powlowski, who won his riding twice with five per cent and six per cent margins, said that his training and work as an emergency-room physician is coming in handy to prevent him from feeling nervous. He said the political landscape could be vastly different than it is now come election time. Powlowski conceded that if he were to lose he can return to his medical practice. But some MPs may find it hard to get a similar well-paying and prestigious job as they currently

have if they lose the next election. Currently, an MP’s base salary is \$203,100, and each cabinet minister earns a total of \$299,900. Parliamentary secretaries and MPs with other responsibilities get a salary top-up in addition to their base salaries.

“Everybody in the population knows that there isn’t going to be an election for a while, and so they can afford to be pissed off, and they are pissed off for a whole bunch of reasons against us, against provincial governments, against the world in general. Things haven’t been great in the world in the last number of years with all the wars going on, inflation going on,” said Powlowski.

“It’s like a relationship that you’ve been with the same person for a while, but then when you’re actually forced to choose and say, ‘do I want this person, and I’m not going to divorce them and take someone else, especially someone who’s a little bit iffy,’ in my opinion, like Poilievre. People are going to maybe decide that that old guy Trudeau—not that he’s that old—is maybe not so bad after all.”

Powlowski said that right now people are not paying attention to politics, and most are unaware of Poilievre’s (Carleton, Ont.) “hard right” political tendencies such as his failure to distance himself from the anti-vaccine movement, or from truckers who drive around with “Fuck Trudeau” signs. He claimed that even with the Conservative Party’s 20-point lead, if there were an election held right now, it would be a close one.

“I would say [we have] a good chance of winning the [next] election,” said Powlowski. “Even at the moment, if there was an election, I think it’d be [a] close election.”

Powlowski said that by winning three back-to-back elections, Trudeau is best placed to lead the party in the next election.

Liberal MP John Aldag (Colverdale-Langley City, B.C.) who is stepping down from his seat this week to run provincially for the NDP in British Columbia, said that he has “very little faith” in polls as he has seen several times in his political life that they have turned out to be wrong. First elected in the 2015 federal election, Aldag lost the 2019 election to Conservative Tamara Jansen by 2.5 per cent before winning it back in 2021 by a 3.1 per cent margin. He denied that he’s switching to provincial politics because he’s in a marginal riding, and with current federal polling numbers, he could have lost the next federal election. Aldag did not believe that despite the current Conservative lead, Poilievre would be able to win the next election. Also, he said things will most likely change between now and then.

“There’s—in my mind—absolutely no way the Conservatives will hold on to the numbers. I think it’s going to be a very competitive race,” said Aldag. “And I, frankly, deep in my heart believe that the Liberals can win again in in 2025.”

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News

Foreign interference registry should include more explicit contact with leadership candidates and nominations, says Democracy Watch



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

With misinformation and disinformation tied to foreign interference under the spotlight, a government think tank named “people cannot tell what is true and what is not” as the most likely of 35 potential future ‘disruptions’ for which Canada needs to be prepared.

Continued from page 1

and politicians are not required to disclose all of their communications and register all of their lobbying activities, and why the difference?”

At the same time, Conacher said part of the bill’s application to communications with “public office holders” was too narrow.

According to Bill C-70, a public office holder is someone included in that definition in the Lobbying Act, which lists elected federal officials and their staff; anyone appointed by a minister or the governor-in-council, excluding judges and provincial lieutenant governors; officers, directors, or employees of federal boards, commissions, or tribunals; and members of the Canadian Armed Forces or the RCMP.

The Foreign Influence Registry, unlike the Lobbying Act, will also apply to those who reach out to provincial elected officials, their staff, and provincial civil servants; municipal officials; and members of Indigenous governments.

But Conacher said he wants the bill to be expanded to include party nomination contestants, leadership contestants, and candidates as defined in the Canada Elections Act. The bill requires disclosure of any public, social media campaigns, or exchanges of money or items of value on

behalf of a foreign power during elections and nomination and leadership contests, but not direct communications with contestants.

“The idea is to track foreign interference and influence in nomination contests, but if someone running in the nomination contest is not a public office holder, then only communications with public office holders are required to be disclosed,” he said. “If you were running for a party leadership, but were not already an MP or a member of cabinet, then attempts to communicate with you to influence you would not be required to be disclosed.”

Hard to sort fact from fiction a potential future ‘disruption’: federal report

Bill C-70 has not yet been debated at second reading in the House. If it passes, it remains unclear when it will come into effect, and whether that date will be before the next election, which is due on Oct. 20, 2025.

At the same time, the government and politicians have continued discussions about the effect of misinformation and disinformation on Canadian democracy, and on the work of parliamentarians.

The Foreign Interference Inquiry’s initial report stated that the next phase of the commission’s work could include exploring responses to online misinformation or disinformation originating from foreign interference campaigns.

Policy Horizons Canada, a think tank within the Government of Canada, said “people cannot tell what is true and what is not” as the most likely of 35 potential future “disruptions” for which Canada needs to be prepared in a report published earlier this year.

The *Disruptions on the Horizon* report surveyed approximately 500 government and non-government employees and experts to share their thoughts on the disruptions, which ranged from “immigrants do not choose Canada” all the way through to “world war breaks out,” and “biodiversity is lost and ecosystems collapse.”

On people being unable to tell what is true, the report states that public decision-making could be compromised as institutions struggle to communicate effectively with the public.

“More powerful generative AI tools, declining trust in traditional knowledge sources, and algorithms designed for emotional engagement rather than factual reporting could increase distrust and social fragmentation,” the report said. “More people may live in separate realities shaped by their personalized media and information ecosystems. These realities could become hotbeds of disinformation, be characterized by incompatible and competing narratives, and form the basis of fault lines in society.”

Senior officials from the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) appeared at the House Ethics Committee on May 21 to discuss what the organization is doing to combat foreign interference, in particular misinformation and disinformation campaigns.

Nicole Giles, CSIS senior assistant deputy minister of policy and strategic partnerships, told the committee that a growing number of states had created sophisticated programs to bolster online influence.

“These online influence campaigns attempt to change voter opinions, civil discourse, policy-makers’ choices, as well as sow confusion, discord and distrust in Canadian democratic processes and institutions,” she said in French.

“These tactics can also be leveraged by non-state actors, which can magnify the threat further. Unfortunately, violent extremists use mis- and disinformation to promote their own narratives, to sow division and discord and to create mistrust in institutions and authorities in furtherance of a particular ideological position.”

Asked by NDP MP Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.) about how best to protect the Canadian government and public against threats of foreign interference, Giles said information and awareness was key.

“The biggest defence we have is to ensure that there is awareness and there is sufficient information so that parliamentarians and Canadians can identify the threat and know how to defend themselves,” Giles said.

Green also asked whether any thought had been given to interference from multinational corporations using misinformation and disinformation for pecuniary gain, including astroturf campaigns surrounding the oil and gas industry.

Giles answered with specific reference to Chinese corporations, stating that the government in Beijing did not distinguish between state-owned companies and official channels.

“We do see corporate actors out of [the People’s Republic of China] using all means and various techniques at their disposal to try to further the objectives of the Communist Party of China,” she said.

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‘I just wanted to acknowledge that kids are dying’: author Molope says Writers’ Trust has a responsibility to support freedom of expression

Following her impromptu speech at the Politics and the Pen gala, Kagiso Lesego Molope was escorted from the Château Laurier hotel by security.

BY STUART BENSON

Nearly three weeks after award-winning South African-Canadian author Kagiso Lesego Molope was escorted out of the Politics and the Pen gala following her unscheduled speech protesting the rising death toll and humanitarian cost of Israel’s war in Gaza, she says she isn’t waiting for an apology, but still believes the Writers’ Trust of Canada should be showing more solidarity with one of their own for speaking truth to power.

Molope said as she stood on the Château Laurier terrace patio on May 7, enjoying cocktails and appetizers with her fellow authors as well as politicians, diplomats, and various other VIPs, she decided then and there that she had to say something about the war.

“That’s the thing that I feel like people don’t get,” Molope said in an interview with *The Hill Times* on May 15. “These are the conversations that are already being had because we’re celebrating outspoken political writers.”

Yet, as the guests filled the hotel ballroom where a three-course dinner awaited them, Molope—an award-winning author born and raised in apartheid South Africa—said those side conversations were insufficient to the moment’s seriousness. Rather than take her seat, Molope headed to the stage, standing alongside event organizing committee co-chair Patrick Kennedy, House Speaker Greg Fergus (Hull–Aylmer, Que.), and Assembly of First Nations National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak.

After the scheduled opening remarks, Molope seized her opportunity, walking calmly and confidently to the mic to take a moment of the audience’s time to highlight the rising death toll from Israel’s ongoing war against Hamas in Gaza, and highlighting the worsening humanitarian crisis leading to widespread starvation. During her comments, Molope did not



South African-Canadian author Kagiso Lesego Molope, pictured on stage on May 7, says the Writers’ Trust, which runs the annual Politics and the Pen gala, should be more publicly supportive of outspoken, political expression. Screenshot courtesy of Twitter/X

differentiate or delineate the deaths as Palestinian or Israeli, but provided inclusive totals since the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attacks.

In concluding her speech, Molope asked the audience—consisting of some of the most powerful members of the Ottawa political and social scene—what they would say when the history of the conflict is written, and they are asked: “what did you do with your power?”

The reception to Molope’s speech in the room was decidedly mixed with some scattered applause near the end competing with others in the crowd shouting expletives at Molope, alongside calls to “free the hostages,” and a chant of “Nazis go home” as she left the stage.

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

As she was escorted from the event, Molope told *The Hill Times* that she found it “appalling” that some in the crowd seemed more opposed to her speech than dying children.

During her speech, Molope highlighted a March 15 report from UNICEF, which indicated that 31 per cent of children under the age of two were suffering from acute malnutrition in the north of Gaza, a nearly two-fold increase from the 15.6 per cent reported in January.

“I’m not proud to be around those people,” Molope said. “I want to break bread with people who believe that children should not be dying of malnutrition.”

In a statement to *The Hill Times* on May 9, the Politics and

the Pen organizing committee wrote that following Molope’s unscheduled, “impromptu remarks,” she had “departed the event accompanied by venue security.”

“As an event with many attendees who require their own security, venue security and government security details have protocols that they are required to adhere to in the event of unplanned interruptions,” the statement reads.

In a May 16 statement, David Leonard, the Writers’ Trust of Canada’s (WTC) executive director, said neither the WTC nor the event’s independent organizers were aware of Molope’s intention to speak when she took the stage, and noted that she had not been prevented from giving her full remarks.

“The Writers’ Trust of Canada did not, at any point, ask for Kagiso to be removed from the event, nor is it our understanding that the event organizers did either,” Leonard wrote. “The Writers’ Trust has been working with the event organizers and the venue to gather as many facts as we can and has also spoken directly with Kagiso Lesego Molope



Writers’ Trust’s executive director David Leonard says the group did not ask for Molope to be removed from the venue. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

the day after the event and since to ensure we have a clear understanding of her perspective of what took place.”

Molope confirmed she spoke with Leonard on May 9 who had informed her the WTC was considering a public statement on her removal later that day.

However, Molope said that the only statement she has seen since are comments similar to those sent to *The Hill Times*, which she first heard when they were shared during her interview with CBC Radio’s *All In A Day* on May 10. She said she learned they had been sent to the news outlet prior to her conversation with Leonard the day before. Additionally, Molope noted that the comments given to the CBC had been a joint statement on behalf of both the Writers’ Trust and organizing committee, despite their attempts to present themselves as separate entities.

In a *Hill Times* video recording of the end of Molope’s speech, organizing committee member Rob Rosenfeld can be seen leading security to Molope as she leaves the stage and returns to her seat. Rosenfeld did not respond to *The Hill Times*’ request for comment.

Molope said she feels that the WTC and the organizing committee would rather focus on the fact that she was not invited to speak than on what she actually said.

“They make me sound threatening like it was just this huge scary, disruptive thing,” Molope said. “I said two things when I started speaking: I acknowledged I wasn’t invited to speak, but I was asking for a few minutes of their time, and I said I come in peace.”

“I just wanted to acknowledge that kids are dying, but it can never be said that I didn’t do this in a peaceful way,” Molope said, noting that her speech would have taken less time if she had not needed to speak over the “profanities being hurled at her.”

While Molope said it would be nice to receive an apology from those who had shouted profanities or called her a Nazi, she doesn’t believe that is the Writers’ Trust’s responsibility.

Instead, she believes their duty should have been to stand with her right to express herself freely, whether or not that speech was scheduled, and that she doesn’t plan on returning to the gala next year without that kind of support.

“You don’t go back to places you were kicked out of,” Molope said, adding that, based on the hateful things that were shouted at her in the room without consequence, it wouldn’t feel like a safe space to which to return.

“My question is: if [Politics and the Pen] isn’t a space where we can be outspoken, where is it?” Molope asked. “Why is it the culture that the person who spoke peacefully was removed, but the people yelling profanities are allowed to stay?”

“At the very least, the Writers’ Trust has a responsibility to support freedom of expression, so they’re in a position to say that shouldn’t have happened,” Molope said. “In all of this, no one has taken that position.”

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Stuart Benson
Party Central

SOCAN sings in the rain on the Hill



Multi-Félix award winning Les Soeurs Boulay—Mélanie, left, and Stéphanie, right—were singing in the rain at the SOCAN on the Hill reception on May 22, sharing the East Block courtyard stage with JUNO award winning William Prince and Ron Sexsmith. Photograph courtesy of Cynthia Münster

SOCAN and Proof Strategies' Hill reception returned to the East Block courtyard on May 9 with performances by Ron Sexsmith, William Prince, and Les Soeurs Boulay.

Parliamentarians and politicians beat the heat and a rainstorm with a concert in the courtyard of East Block on May 23 featuring performances from Félix and JUNO award-winning Ron Sexsmith, William Prince, and Les Soeurs [Stéphanie and Mélanie] Boulay.

Hosted by Proof Strategies and the Society of Composers, Authors, and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN), this year's event returned to the re-opened East Block courtyard, the existence of which Party Central was completely unaware until receiving the invitation.

After taking the long way around to the entrance near the back of the building overlooking the Ottawa River, the party was already picking up steam as guests took advantage of their two free drink tickets at the bar, and enjoyed some respite from the day's heat in the shady courtyard.

After making introductions to the Proofers at the door, including Matthew Dubé, Melody Gaukel, Josh Zanin, and Maurice Rioux, and grabbing drink tickets from Tara Beauport, Party Central spotted one of the most welcome faces at any reception, photographer Cynthia Münster. That meant Party Central could stow the camera bag, enjoy a drink, and still have a hand free for notes. By the way, Münster is a former photo-journalist for *The Hill Times*, regularly shooting for Party Central when Harris MacLeod used to write it.

Unfortunately, with a complimentary rum and coke in one hand, the free hand was distracted by the platters of pulled-pork sliders, roast beef skewers with crumbled cornflakes, and fried three-cheese and heirloom tomato lollipops provided by Les Flavoureux catering.

While many parliamentarians were no doubt still busy with the ongoing late-night House proceedings—which provided welcome white noise while writing this column later that evening—there were plenty of Senators on hand. Party Central spotted Senators Rob Black, Amina Gerba, Éric

Forest, Fabian Manning, René Cormier, and Rebecca Patterson.

However, a few Members of Parliament were in attendance, including Conservative MP Kevin Waugh and Bloc MP Martin Champoux, co-chairs of the Canadian Heritage Committee; Conservative MP Ted Falk; NDP MP Charlie Angus in a very stylish, rose-red, flat-brim Stetson; and Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge.

Party Central also spotted Gatineau singer-songwriter Mia Kelly and her publisher, Vincent Digiorgio, of Cymba Music Publishing; and Arun Chaturvedi, president and board director of the Songwriters' Association.

Just before 6:30p.m., Cormier took to the stage and attempted to herd the crowd away from the single corner of the courtyard where most of the guests were gathered near the bar and appetizers. After a few failed attempts to coax the crowd, Party Central reluctantly assisted by alerting the crowd to the as-yet-undiscovered second bar on the opposite side of the courtyard this reporter had been using to skip the lineup.

Once a sufficient crowd had gathered by the stage and on the nearby benches, Jennifer Brown, SOCAN CEO; Marc Ouellette, SOCAN president and board chair; Waugh, Champoux, and St-Onge delivered speeches on the importance of supporting Canadian artists, and the current and possible future impacts of AI on the music industry.

Unfortunately, rather than listening intently, Party Central's attention kept being drawn skyward to the ever-darkening clouds. While the few trees in the courtyard provided enough cover for the light sprinkling of rain that began as Champoux finished speaking and throughout the Boulays' and Sexsmith's performances, the downpour reached its peak as the artist currently known as Mr. Prince took the stage.

Fortunately, the good folks at Proof were prepared with plenty of plastic ponchos so the more adventurous guests could still enjoy the show under the stage's roof overhang. The close proximity made for a rather intimate performance with the exception of the occasional sound of wet ponchos rubbing together.

As if to spite the organizers, the weather seemed to clear up almost immediately after the performances were done, though the post-storm sky made for quite the view over the Rideau Canal as Party Central headed home to catch some *ParlVu After Dark*.

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Politicos and politicians beat the heat in the newly re-opened East Block courtyard on May 23 at the SOCAN on the Hill reception.



Jennifer Brown, CEO of SOCAN, left; Senator René Cormier, centre; and Andrea Kokonis, chief legal officer and general counsel for SOCAN.



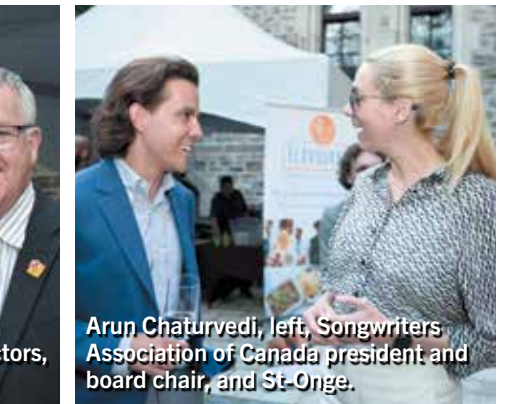
Senator Éric Forest, left, and Les Soeurs Boulay.



Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge, left, Brown, and Kokonis.



Marc Ouellette, chair of SOCAN's Board of Directors, left, Brown, and Senator Fabian Manning.



Arun Chaturvedi, left, Songwriters Association of Canada president and board chair, and St-Onge.



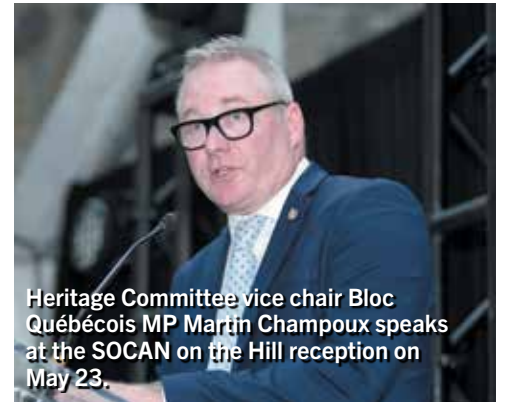
Singer-songwriter Ron Sexsmith, left, and NDP MP Charlie Angus, himself a singer and a musician.



Senator René Cormier speaks at the SOCAN on the Hill reception on May 23.



Heritage Committee vice chair Conservative MP Kevin Waugh speaks at the SOCAN on the Hill reception on May 23.



Heritage Committee vice chair Bloc Québécois MP Martin Champoux speaks at the SOCAN on the Hill reception on May 23.

Photographs courtesy Cynthia Münster & SOCAN



Ron Sexsmith.



William Prince.

Now is not the time to retreat on public transit leadership

The federal government must not retreat from public transit leadership. It's time to embrace solutions, like delivering direct support for growing transit service, that will help build public transit ridership, make our cities more inclusive, and put transport emissions on track towards Canada's net zero goals.

Nate Wallace

Opinion



Canada's latest carbon emissions numbers are officially out.



Rather than stepping up and leading in this crucial moment, the federal government's 2024 budget actually slashed half a billion dollars in funding for programs that support the deployment of electric buses and public transit in rural areas. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The good news is that this country's overall emissions appear—finally—to be bending downwards. The bad news is that transportation emissions are not. In fact, they haven't shrunk at all since 2005, and grew more than any other sector in 2022—including oil and gas.

While some may dismiss this rise as simply a growth in travel activity following the end of pandemic restrictions, it instead highlights how we're moving towards a very uneven recovery.

Vehicle traffic is up. However, public transit ridership is still down. Canada still has no targets and no plan to actually reverse this trend.

Even more concerning is that in many places across the country things seem to be getting even worse.

Facing mounting public transit operating deficits, Quebec mayors have recently challenged Premier

François Legault's government to come to the table with a plan to rescue transit agencies. In response, provincial Transport Minister Genevieve Guilbeault declared that funding public transit "is not a responsibility of the state."

In Ontario, where road transportation is the single largest source of carbon emissions, the provincial government is bulldozing a new highway through the Greenbelt that will line the pockets of land speculators and lead to more car-dependent sprawl.

In Alberta, Premier Danielle Smith announced that the provincial government would be slashing funding for low-income transit passes in Edmonton and Calgary. Thankfully, after a swift backlash, this idea was promptly pulled.

Rather than stepping up and leading in this crucial moment,

the federal government's 2024 budget actually slashed half a billion dollars in funding for programs that support the deployment of electric buses, and public transit in rural areas.

They also continued to delay the start of the Permanent Public Transit program until after the next federal election, snubbing the country's three largest transit systems—Metro Vancouver's TransLink, Toronto's TTC, and Montreal's STM—which wrote a joint open letter calling for quicker action.

The federal government was once a leader on public transit. Canada used to be long known as the only G7 country with no national public transit strategy, funding program, or policy framework. That all dramatically changed in 2016 when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau put public transit at the heart of his flagship infrastructure program, and for the first time ever, created a long-term role for the federal government in supporting public transit.

We have finally moved past the Stone Age of federal public transit policy. Canada now stands at a pivotal moment. That 2016 flagship program has now sunset, and the federal government must now develop the next generation of infrastructure funding deals with provinces. Meanwhile, cities are facing the challenge of supporting record-breaking popula-

tion growth with public transit infrastructure that has been stretched to its limits, and saddled with a broken funding model.

Federal leadership on public transit has the potential of delivering significant emissions reductions. Environmental Defence and Équiterre's most recent report, *Putting Wheels on the Bus: Unlocking the Potential of Public Transit to Cut Carbon Emissions in Canada*, demonstrates this. Supported by modelling from Dunsky Energy + Climate Advisors, it found that, with the right policy interventions, Canada can double public transit ridership by 2035, and reduce carbon emissions by 65 million tonnes.

To achieve this, public transit service will need to improve significantly to persuade so many people to ditch their cars. How much better? Overall service levels—which means how often the bus or train comes, and how convenient and reliable these services are—will need to increase by 109 per cent by 2035, the report finds. Abundant public transit, in turn, supports the growth of the dense housing supply we need to fight the housing crisis, and creates walkable, sustainable, and affordable complete communities.

Now is not the time for the federal government to retreat from public transit leadership. It's time to embrace solutions—like delivering direct support for growing transit service—that will help build public transit ridership, make our cities more inclusive, and put transport emissions on track towards Canada's net zero goals.

Nate Wallace is the clean transportation program manager at Environmental Defence.
The Hill Times

Feature

Author of Trudeau biography says he doesn't think Trudeau will run again, but Lanthier says 'even if he might lose, he wants to go down fighting against Pierre Poilievre'

Continued from page 12

less prone to score-settling, for instance, than his predecessors."

What other characteristics does Trudeau have in common with Machiavelli's Prince?

"Machiavelli described the doings of many Renaissance princ-

es—many of whom had inherited their positions. Machiavelli wrote: "There are fewer difficulties in holding hereditary states, and those long accustomed to the family of their prince, than new ones; for it is sufficient only not to transgress the customs of his ancestors, and to deal prudently with circumstances as they arise."

Trudeau is different from his predecessors because his family connection to the government is so important."

How will Trudeau's record as prime minister go down in history?

"When I started working on the book, in October 2022, I thought he would be seen

as more significant than Jean Chrétien or Stephen Harper, less significant than his father, perhaps on the same level as Brian Mulroney. Since that time, the government has been struggling terribly, so I am less certain."

How will he be remembered?

"He legalized marijuana, worked hard on reconciliation, reduced child poverty and greenhouse gas emissions, but also let a housing crisis develop, a decline in productivity. Our relations with China and India could not be worse. I interviewed Mr. Mulroney for the book, and he said that Trudeau would be remembered for handling the pandemic well, and renegotiating NAFTA. I think that is right, but it is too soon to tell how the whole thing will look. He's still prime minister."

Why is this book important, and who should read it?

"I hope it will help readers—whether or not they support Trudeau—understand how they are governed, how political support is won and lost, how elections work, how the people who work in politics see the business. I hope everyone will read it."

The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau, by Stephen Maher, Simon & Schuster Canada.

The Hill Times



Laura Ryckewaert Hill Climbers

Staff shakeup in Energy and Resources Minister Wilkinson's shop

Along with a new addition, Kyle Harrietha's promotion to chief of staff in late March led to a couple of other director-level promotions in the minister's office.

Energy and Natural Resources Minister **Jonathan Wilkinson** has adjusted his office lineup following the promotion of a new chief of staff, and the minister also recently welcomed a new digital media manager to his team.

Previously, deputy chief of staff and director of parliamentary affairs, **Kyle Harrietha** took charge of Wilkinson's office in late March following chief of staff **Claire Seaborn**'s decision to return to Toronto's Bay Street.

As noted in *Hill Climbers* original report on the changes, director of operations and international affairs **Laura Mitchell** was in turn promoted to deputy chief of staff. Originally, her full title was trimmed down to deputy chief of staff and director of operations, but a recent promotion has turned Mitchell's title into that of deputy chief of staff and director of international affairs.

Kieran Steede is now director of operations to the natural resources minister. Steede first began working for Wilkinson in the spring of 2021, just before that year's election, as an assistant in Wilkinson's office as the MP for North Vancouver, B.C. Steede subsequently lent a hand to Wilkinson's successful re-election bid, helping tackle communications and serve as an aide to the now three-term MP during the race.



Kieran Steede is now director of operations to Minister Wilkinson. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Post-election, Steede was hired to Wilkinson's office as the minister for natural resources, beginning as the minister's aide. He was promoted to operations and communications adviser in 2022, and then to senior adviser for both last summer.

In another director-level promotion, **Auston Pierce** has been named Wilkinson's



Energy and Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson speaks with reporters in Ottawa about the government's newly released emissions cap framework on Dec. 7, 2023. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Auston Pierce has been promoted to director of parliamentary affairs and issues management. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

new director of parliamentary affairs and issues management.

Pierce similarly got his start in Wilkinson's MP office, where he worked from the end of 2021—starting just after that year's election—until joining the ministerial team as a parliamentary and Ontario regional affairs adviser in July 2022. Almost a year later, Pierce was made a parliamentary adviser and issues manager, and last fall was bumped up to "senior" status—his most recent title. Prior to working for Wilkinson, Pierce did a public affairs internship with Crestview Strategy.

More recently, **Nicolas Takushi** marked his first day as a digital media manager to Wilkinson on May 6. Originally from Brazil, Takushi's experience is in multimedia production and communications. Among other things, he's a former official photographer and videographer to then-Nova Scotia Liberal premier **Iain Rankin**, and has been a digital communications lead for the Royal Canadian Navy's Halifax International Fleet Week. He also holds a bachelor's degree in commerce from Saint Mary's University in Halifax.

On the flip side, communications and Ontario regional affairs adviser **Shahenda Elwerdany** bade farewell to Wilkinson's team on May 17.

She was first hired as a special assistant for policy and executive assistant to the chief of staff in 2022, and changed roles twice in 2023, first to that of executive assistant and Quebec regional affairs adviser, and then to communications and Ontario regional affairs adviser by year's end.

Already, policy adviser **Yasmin Atassi** has been promoted, and is now a senior policy and Ontario regional affairs adviser to the minister. Atassi started in the natural resources office as a 2021 Liberal Summer Leadership Program intern under then-minister **Seamus O'Regan**, who subsequently hired her as executive assistant to the chief of staff and special assistant for policy. Atassi was kept on in both roles after Wilkinson took over the portfolio following the 2021 election, and was elevated to policy adviser in 2022.

Sabrina Kim remains director of communications to Wilkinson, and continues to oversee senior communications manager **Madeleine Gomery**, parliamentary and



Yasmin Atassi is now a senior policy and Ontario regional affairs adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

strategic communications adviser **Maheep Sandhu**, and press secretary **Carolyn Svonkin**.

Policy adviser **Jared Forman**, who added on the title of lead speechwriter to Wilkinson last fall, also bid the minister's office adieu on May 17. Stay tuned for an update soon on where he's landed on the Hill.



Jared Forman has left Minister Wilkinson's team. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

A former research associate with the Canadian Climate Institute, Forman had been working for the energy and natural resources minister since last summer. His past experience includes internships with the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee and the Canadian International Council (CIC) think tank, as well as time spent working as an environment and climate change research co-ordinator for the Human Development Research Initiative, and as a policy specialist with CIC.

Policy adviser **Brenna Walsh** also has a new title in Wilkinson's office, having recently added on responsibility for Atlantic regional affairs.



Brenna Walsh is now a policy and Atlantic regional affairs adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Walsh took over the regional desk following communications and Atlantic regional adviser **Irawati Khedkar**'s previously reported exit in March. She's been working for Wilkinson since the start of this year, and is a former energy co-ordinator with Ecology Action Centre in Halifax.

Aside from those already mentioned, also currently working for Wilkinson are: **Sandy Schembri**, director of policy for net-zero energy; **Samir Kassam**, director of policy for sustainable resource development; **Gary Xie**, policy and British Columbia regional affairs adviser; **Kaylie Stathopoulos**, senior policy adviser and regional affairs adviser for Manitoba and the North; **Jan Gorski**, senior policy adviser and regional affairs adviser for Alberta and Saskatchewan; **Angelo Molhem**, Quebec regional and parliamentary affairs adviser; **Sonja Blondeau**, scheduling manager; and **Richard Mavin**, executive assistant to the chief of staff and assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretaries.

lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Hillman to deliver speech at lunch hosted by Montreal Council on Foreign Relations on May 29 in Montreal



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. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

MONDAY, MAY 27

House Sitting Schedule—The House is scheduled to sit for a total of 125 days in 2024. The House is sitting for five straight weeks until June 21. After the summer break, 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.

Ambition 2035 Briefing Reception—Canada's Ocean Supercluster will be on Parliament Hill to discuss its \$220-billion ambition for Canada's ocean economy. A briefing reception will be held featuring innovation stations highlighting Canadian-made ocean solutions. Monday, May 27, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Shaw Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Contact osc@national.ca.

TUESDAY, MAY 28

Canadian Biogas Association Meet-and-Greet Reception—The Canadian Biogas Association hosts an evening of refreshments and conversation with its members and board of directors as part of its ongoing advocacy for the potential of the biogas and renewable natural gas sector in Canada. Tuesday, May 28, 5-8:30 p.m. ET in the Quebec Suite, Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. RSVP to cba@paainc.ca.

Insurance Brokers Association of Canada Reception—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 Marilou McPheeran 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. and the gala showcase and reception will be held at 7 p.m., the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Details online via Eventbrite.

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

Canadian Steel Parliamentary Reception—Join members of the Canadian Steel Producers Association from across the country and the Parliamentary Steel Caucus at a reception to recognize the strategic benefits of Canadian steel's contribution to the domestic economic activity, environmental performance, and overall prosperity. Wednesday, May 29, 5:30-7:30 p.m., in the Wellington Building, Room 310. RSVP to RSVPOttawa@globalpublic.com by May 20.

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.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29—THURSDAY, MAY 30

CANSEC 2024—The Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries holds its annual global defence and security trade show, featuring keynotes from cabinet ministers and Canadian Armed Forces leadership. Wednesday, May 29 to Thursday, May 30, at the EY Centre, 4899 Uplands Dr., Ottawa. For details, visit: defenceandsecurity.ca/CANSEC/.

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 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 a 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 Vari 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 in 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, *The Globe*

and *Mail*'s Steven Chase and Ian Bailey, 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

Auditor General to Table Three Audits—Auditor General Karen Hogan will deliver three performance audit reports to the House of Commons. Reports in this release include: Report 5—Professional Services Contracts; Report 6—Sustainable Development Technology Canada; and Report 7—Combating Cybercrime. Tuesday, June 4, at 10 a.m. ET in the House of Commons. Contact infomedia@oag-bvg.gc.ca.

Book Launch: *The Prince*—Journalist and author Stephen Maher will host a book launch for his new book, *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*. Tuesday, June 4, 5-7 p.m. ET, at the Métropolitain Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr., Ottawa.

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.

TUESDAY, JUNE 4—SUNDAY, JUNE 9

Minister Petitpas Taylor to Lead Delegation to France—Veterans Affairs Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor will lead an official Government of Canada delegation featuring veterans, representatives from Indigenous and veterans organizations, parliamentarians, and a contingent from Canadian Armed Forces to take part in events marking the 80th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy from Tuesday, June 4, to Sunday, June 9, in Courseulles-sur-Mer, France. Call 613-992-7468.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5

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

Canadian Fuels Association Parliamentary Reception—The Canadian Fuels Association invites you to the third annual parliamentary reception, an evening of celebration and excitement. Wednesday, June 5, 5-7 p.m., at Métropolitain Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. RSVP to GarthNazareth@canadianfuels.ca.

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

Senator McPheeran to Host Panel Discussion—Non-affiliated Senator Marilou McPheeran and the Canadian Centre for Safer Communities host a presentation and panel discussion: "How can Canada use evidence to reduce violent crime significantly?" It will focus on getting smart on crime by using evidence to get results, inspired by advances in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Professor Irvin Waller will present the main takeaways for decision-makers from his book *Science and Secrets of Ending Violent Crime*. Wednesday, June 5, at 6 p.m. ET at 1 Wellington St. Details online via Eventbrite.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

POLICY BRIEFING

Publication date:
Monday, June 3

Advertising deadline:
Tuesday, May 28

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