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# THE HILL TIMES

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NEWS

## 'Political class needs to wake the hell up, and stop treating India with kid gloves,' say Sikh advocates seeking answers on foreign interference

The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians' latest report found the government of India—not Russia—to be the second-most significant foreign interference threat after China.

BY STUART BENSON

**S**ikh community advocates say they feel "validated and vindicated" by a recent national security and intelligence report looking into foreign interference activities since 2018, which found that second only to China, India—not Russia—is one of the most significant foreign interference threats facing not only the Sikh community, but also the halls of Parliament.

The recent National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) report, released on June 3, examined intelligence on foreign state interference in Canada's democratic processes over the course of the past six years, from Sept. 1, 2018, to Nov. 7, 2023.

In a 2019 review of the federal government's response to foreign

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Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc says the government 'respectfully disagrees' with elements of the recent report from the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, and that releasing the identities of implicated parliamentarians could harm criminal investigations, and violate federal secrecy laws. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS

## Deal disquiet: CUSMA review could be a rough ride with the U.S. holding the reins, says pact's negotiator

BY NEIL MOSS

**W**ith two years to go before a mandated review—that could also herald the end—of Canada's most important trade deal, uncertainty in the business sector is

already running rife that the probe will give the United States even more leverage, says the former chief negotiator of the pact.

The Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) sets out that a review

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NEWS

## Translation Bureau launches 'entry-level' accreditation pilot, raising red flags for industry association

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

**I**n a bid to expand its pool of interpreters, the federal Translation Bureau recently launched a new pilot project whereby it will offer contract positions and a new

"entry-level accreditation" to individuals who came close but failed to pass its accreditation exam.

But the move is raising red flags with the International Association of

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Christina Leadlay

## Heard On The Hill

# Au revoir to Conservative Senator Victor Oh



Conservative Senator Victor Oh, left, pictured with U.S. Ambassador David Cohen and his wife Rhonda, on July 4, 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Lobsters on a plane, changing citizenship laws, and gunshots during caucus are some of the memorable moments Conservative Senator **Victor Oh** has racked up over his more than 11 years in the Red Chamber, which he shared with **Heard on the Hill** on June 10, his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday—and his last day as a Senator.

Oh said he is proud to have sat on the Senate's Agriculture Committee for 11.5 years. He's visited many farms, spoken with many farmers, and has "seen lobsters loaded on a jumbo jet to China" in Halifax, all to help promote Canadian agricultural exports, particularly to the Asia Pacific region.

"When I was appointed to the Senate by prime minister **Stephen Harper**, he told me at the time: 'help wherever you can in trade with Asia.' So I picked that up, and I carried on doing it," said the former entrepreneur who emigrated to Mississauga, Ont., with his wife **Rosa** and family in 1978. "I am from Singapore, I know Asia Pacific well," he said.

It's this committee work, and working with his Senate colleagues that Oh said he will miss the most now that he takes his leave upon reaching the mandatory retirement age. "I think committee work brings out a lot of things, and I have learned a lot, too," he says, noting he's also vice chair at the Senate's Veterans Affairs committee.

Oh has also been one of the vice-chairs of the Canada-China Legislative Association. It was through this group that he joined a delegation of parliamentarians who visited China this past March.

"I have carried on advocating for Chinese Canadians, asking for their equal rights," Oh told HOH.

"Discrimination has been a problem for the last few years," he said. "When we come here, we belong to this country, we make this a better place. Everybody has to work together."

It's these principles that, in 2016, inspired him to work on amending Canada's immigration

laws to make it easier, quicker, and cheaper for refugees under the age of 18 to access citizenship. "I noticed a lot of refugee children who came to this country had no special attention paid to them, and when they grow up some of them don't even get proper citizenship, and this creates a lot of problems ... you become stateless," he said. After the amended bill received royal assent, citizenship judges would ring him up. "They would call me and say, 'Senator Oh, we have 35 kids here today that are using your amendment to become Canadian citizens. Would you like to come and give them their citizenship?'" These were invitations he always happily accepted.

It's positive memories like this that counter a grim one Oh recounted to HOH. Just a year into being a Senator, Oh was in the Conservative caucus meeting on Oct. 22, 2014, the day an armed intruder stormed Parliament before being killed in a hail of gunfire contributed to by then-sergeant-at-arms **Kevin Vickers**. "When the first gunshot rang out, I looked up and remembered it was almost 10 a.m. It's seared in my memory," he recalled.

Another memory Oh likely wants to keep in the past is the fallout from a 2017 trip to China which got him in hot water with the Senate Ethics and Conflict of Interest Committee over questions about who paid the bill.

Looking ahead to his life post-Senate, Oh told HOH he is looking forward to spending time with his grandchildren, playing golf—particularly the June 27 Senate charity golf game—doing some charity and advocacy work, and visiting friends back in Singapore.

## Al Zaibak and Robinson join CSG, Lankin returns to ISG

There are a few recent moves in the Red Chamber to catch up on.

Two newish Senators joined the Canadian Senators Group last week. Both **Mohammad Al Zaibak** and **Mary Robinson** were appointed to the Red Chamber back in January.

Meanwhile, Ontario Senator **Frances Lankin** returned to the Independent Senators Group at the end of May. She had paused her membership during a six-month secondment in the role of Government Liaison in the Senate in order to help shepherd Government Motion 165, which amended the Rules of the Senate and ensured equity among all recognized groups.

"With the successful adoption of the motion and ISG members voting unanimously in favour of Senator Lankin's membership request, she is now once again a member of our group," the ISG posted on X on May 28.

In addition to **Victor Oh's** aforementioned retirement on June 10, the 105-seat Senate standings are as follows: the largest group is the ISG with 43 members, followed by the CSG with 18, Progressive Senators Group with 14, Conservative Party at 12, non-affiliated members at eight, and vacancies at 10.



## House craftspeople to make a table for Montserrat



House Speaker Greg Fergus on Dec. 13, 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Parliament's team of master craftspeople will be making a new clerk's table for the Montserrat Legislative Assembly.

On May 30, MPs on the House Board of Internal Economy approved a proposal for the House to craft and donate a table to the tiny Caribbean island.

The British Overseas Territory has been rebuilding since 1997 when a volcanic eruption destroyed much of the island, including its capital city and parliament building. The capital has since been relocated, and a new legislative assembly is being built.

In presenting the proposal, House Speaker **Greg Fergus** said he was approached about the possibility of a donation while at the 75<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Speakers meeting in London, U.K., last March, noting that Montserrat has also sought similar assistance from other parliaments.

It's estimated that the table's design and construction will take six to eight months, and the project is "tentatively slated to begin in early 2025," said **Mathieu Gravel**, director of outreach and media relations in the House Speaker's Office, by email.

The estimated final price tag is around \$38,000—including materials, contingency costs, shipping and travel. The table will be built in

Ottawa, but will need to be reassembled on site once delivered, which is already factored into the cost estimate, Fergus told the board.

—*Laura Ryckewaert*

## Christine Ivory tapped as new Parliamentary Librarian

**Christine Ivory** has been nominated to be the next Parliamentary Librarian. The prime minister announced her nomination on June 7.

Originally from Winnipeg, Man., Ivory is currently working at Library and Archives Canada as assistant deputy minister of the collections sector, a role she's held since 2023. Before making the move to LAC, Ivory was a key member of the Library of Parliament's management team for more than 15 years. She also worked internationally with legislatures from across the globe for nearly a decade, and is fluently bilingual, according to the June 7 press release from the PMO.

The Parliamentary Librarian oversees the management of the Library, and reports to the Speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons. The current Parliamentary Librarian, **Heather Lank**, was appointed in 2018.

## Latin American Film Festival launches June 22

Now in its 27<sup>th</sup> year, the Latin American Film Festival returns at a new venue: the University of Ottawa.

The film fest opens June 22, and continues June 23, 28, 29 and 30 at Jock Turcot University Centre, 85 University Priv.

According to details shared with HOH from the Group of Embassies of Latin American Countries—who took over hosting duties last year following the Canadian Film Institute's withdrawal as the main organizer—this is the only film festival in Canada featuring such a large number of Latin American movies (16 countries in all). All the screenings are free, and will feature English subtitles.

Not only will most of the innovative films from a variety of genres be making their Ottawa premiere during the festival, but one of the directors and one actor will be on hand during their respective country's screenings.

The Embassy of Mexico will host Emmy award-winning Mexican actor **Horacio Castelo**, who will be in Ottawa for the screening of *Taken Identity*, while the Embassy of Paraguay presents **Robert Rodriguez**, director of the film *Pedro Undercover* at that film's screening, inviting the audience for a Q&A session.

Free tickets for the Latin American Film Festival are available through Eventbrite.

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*The Hill Times*

Senators Mohammed Al Zaibak, top left, and Mary Robinson, top right, joined the Canadian Senators Group last week. Meanwhile, Senator Frances Lankin rejoined the Independent Senators Group after a six-month hiatus. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



# New leadership embodies Rothmans, Benson and Hedges' commitment to transformational change



Rothmans, Benson & Hedges Inc.  
a subsidiary of Philip Morris International Inc.

## *An Industry Disrupting from the Inside Out*

Since 2019, RBH has continued to build on its position as a leader in smoke-free products to help adults who would otherwise continue to smoke, transition to better alternatives.

Guided by the principles, if you don't smoke, don't start; if you smoke, quit; if you don't quit, change, the company is focused on bringing to market scientifically substantiated, smoke-free alternatives. While addictive and not risk-free, these alternatives, such as heated tobacco products and vaping products offer adult smokers potentially less harmful alternatives compared to continuing to smoke cigarettes.

Smoke-free alternatives are intended only for current adult smokers and RBH's guiding principle is that that no tobacco or nicotine-containing product should ever be in the hands of a non-legal age Canadian or an adult that isn't currently smoking or using other nicotine products.

A smoke-free future is a shared responsibility. RBH calls for the cooperation of Governments to help adult smokers by openly recognizing the harm reduction potential of smoke-free products and modernizing Canadian legislation so that regulations keep up with innovation.



**MILENA TRENTADUE,**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR



**KORY MCDONALD,**  
HEAD, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Trentadue makes history as the first female managing director at Rothmans, Benson & Hedges. The appointment embodies the organization's commitment to transformational change.

Coming from over 15 years in the pharmaceutical industry, McDonald knows firsthand how important it is for people to have the right information to make the right choices for themselves and their health. With this in mind, she is working for regulatory change to improve public health outcomes.

## Opinion



Citizens must protect democracy, too. Hanging the Canadian flag upside-down or flying a particularly disrespectful flag is an abuse of our hard-won freedoms, and ultimately a contempt of Canada and all Canadian citizens, writes Liberal MP John McKay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# Canada's democracy under attack as MP harassment goes too far

improved by arson, firebombing, window-smashing, or office invasions. It is only a matter of time until someone gets hurt. Whether that's a citizen or an MP, it will not only be a personal injury or worse, it will be a tragic democratic failure.

“Do we really want MPs providing their own security, with thugs pushing people away from interaction with their elected representatives? Many of my constituents come to Canada to escape that very thing.”

In the face of harassment and intimidation, it's no surprise MPs withdraw from interactions with citizens, damaging our democracy.

Liberal MP  
John McKay

Opinion



In the previous year, the following incidents happened to Members of Parliament from all parties:

- One MP had his garage burned to the ground;
- Another had all the windows in his home smashed;
- Another had his office firebombed;
- Another has had so many invasions of his riding office that he is moving out of his plaza location to a multi-storey office in

order to improve security for his staff;

- A gay Member had to abandon his home for several weeks due to homophobic threats;
- A Jewish Member had his car plastered with Nazi stickers; and
- The Toronto offices of three MPs were vandalized just in the last week.

I can cite multiple more examples.

There seems to be a feeling among some citizens that it is OK to bully, harass, and try to intimidate Members of Parliament, their spouses, and families. These gutless citizens seem to think that these tactics are acceptable in a democracy. Beyond pathetic, these neolithic Neanderthals feel that firebombing, arson, and trashing property are legitimate expressions of political opinion. They are not—and never will be—except, of course, in a Mafioso state.

The consequences are real for all of us. As MPs necessarily withdraw from interactions with citizens, discourse and dialogue—the mother's milk of democracy—becomes stilted, pro forma, and surreal. If the goal of these anarchists is to destroy the institutions of democracy, then they are having some success. Without the

direct contact of MP to citizens in a safe space, both the citizen and MP will become estranged. Needless misunderstandings will flourish, and conspiracy theories will take flight. When MPs have to routinely close their offices due to security concerns, dialogue is diminished. If staff are not safe, no work gets done. When financial resources are redirected to security, the money is then not available for more useful benefits to citizens.

When security becomes a preoccupation, citizens wishing to participate in public life will decline. Instead of getting a larger pool of higher-quality candidates, we will get a smaller pool of less-qualified ones. The system becomes mutually reinforcing. More incidents, fewer candidates. Fewer candidates, poorer representation. Poorer representation, more frustration. More frustration, more incidents.

The only people who can break the cycle are the citizens. All citizens have a core responsibility to protect the institutions of democracy, and the people who work in them. Free speech is not a freedom from responsibility. Hanging the Canadian flag upside-down or flying a particularly disrespectful flag is an abuse of our hard-won free-

doms, and ultimately a contempt of Canada and all Canadian citizens. If those who take over our symbols of nationhood are permitted to be so disrespectful, what does this say about the rest of the citizens who let this contempt occur?

Misinformation and disinformation are real and practiced extensively by the four agents of chaos—China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea—plus others. Sorting through the noise is challenging at the best of times, but citizens committing criminal acts against MPs, their families, and staff only serve to alienate MPs from the public that they have been elected to serve. Critical thinking by citizens can be challenging; however, it is the bedrock of democratic norms.

Do we really want MPs providing their own security, with thugs pushing people away from interaction with their elected representatives? Many of my constituents come to Canada to escape that very thing. Citizens have a responsibility to see that their elected representatives and their families are protected. In return, MPs should be readily accessible to their constituents. It is a social contract, and some citizens are breaking the contract. It is not likely that access will be

Liberal MP John McKay represents Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont., and has been re-elected to the House of Commons nine times. He is chair of the House National Defence Committee. *The Hill Times*



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## News

# Canadian creators cheer CRTC contribution decision as streamers warn ‘discriminatory tax’ will lead to higher prices

As part of its Online Streaming Act plan, the CRTC ruled that online streamers making more than \$25-million in domestic revenue must give five per cent to Canadian media funds.

BY STUART BENSON

Canadian broadcasters and artist associations are celebrating the new requirements for online streaming services to contribute some of their domestic revenues to support Canadian content. But with those same streamers already hinting the decision could lead to higher prices or fewer investment dollars, whether or not the contributions will lead to any net new funding or more Canadian music, film, or television is still up in the airwaves.

On June 4, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) published its fourth decision in its regulatory review of the Canadian Broadcasting Act following the passage of the Online Streaming Act.

The CRTC’s decision will impose a five per cent base contribution on foreign online streaming services not affiliated with a Canadian broadcaster that make \$25-million or more in annual Canadian revenues. Those conditions are expected to take effect in the 2024-25 broadcast year beginning on Sept. 1, and the CRTC estimates the contributions would provide \$200-million in new annual funding.

That funding will be distributed to sectors of “immediate need,” including local radio and television news, French-language and Indigenous content, and “content created by and for equity-deserving groups, official language minority communities, and Canadians of diverse backgrounds.”

Specifically, money from video streaming services will see two per cent of contributions directed to the Canada Media Fund and/or direct expenditures towards certified Canadian content; 1.5 per cent to the Independent Local News Fund; 0.5 per cent



As of September, large online streaming services like Spotify, Netflix, and Amazon will be required to pay five per cent of their annual domestic revenue in contributions to Canadian media funds, which the CRTC estimates would provide \$200-million in new annual funding. *Unsplash photograph by Tamas Pap*

to the Black Screen Office Fund, Canadian Independent Screen Fund for BPOC creators, and/or the Broadcasting Accessibility Fund; 0.5 per cent to the Certified Independent Production Funds supporting official language minority communities (OLMC) producers, and producers from diverse communities; and 0.5 per cent to the Indigenous Screen Office Fund.

For audio-only services, their contributions will be divided similarly, with two per cent to FACTOR and Musicaction in a 60-40 per cent split; 1.5 per cent to a new temporary fund supporting local news production by commercial radio stations outside of the designated markets; 0.5 per cent to the Canadian Starmaker Fund and Fonds RadioStar, split 60-40; 0.5 per cent to the Community Radio Fund of Canada; 0.35 per cent to direct expenditures targeting the development of Canadian and Indigenous content; and 0.15 per cent to the Indigenous Music Office.

The various associations, guilds, and federations representing Canadian creators—who have been advocating for what they say is a more fair regulatory playing field with large foreign streamers in the competition for viewers and advertising dollars—welcomed the CRTC’s long-awaited decision.

The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) called the CRTC’s decision an “important first step” toward “[rebalancing] the obligations between all players who benefit from their access to Canadian audiences and advertisers.”

“Foreign online streamers have benefited immensely from

their presence in the Canadian marketplace for more than a decade without any obligation to support our domestic broadcasting system,” wrote CAB president Kevin Desjardins.

Desjardins told *The Hill Times* that the contributions to the Independent Local News Fund and the two radio news funds fulfill the same obligations that Canadian broadcasters had when they were “at the top of the food chain.”

“For years, broadcasters were asked to support the music industry, they were asked to support the film and television industry, and to underwrite their own news operations,” Desjardins explained. “Supporting the news with the dollars generated by popular entertainment was always an underlying principle of the broadcasting sector.”

The Canadian Independent Music Association (CIMA)—which had been advocating for contributions to flow through FACTOR, Musicaction, and the Canadian Starmaker Fund—said the decision “lays the groundwork for a dynamic partnership with digital platforms where Canadian talent can thrive both domestically and internationally.”

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, CIMA’s president and CEO Andrew Cash said those organizations have a “proven track record” of investing in Canadian artists and productions, and have the infrastructure to help those artists and the companies that support them compete on a “global stage.”

While CIMA welcomes the CRTC’s decision, Cash said it would be important to see a financial breakdown of how much

funding those contributions will raise, noting that of the projected \$200-million, that number includes both audio-visual and audio-only services, of which the latter will be a significantly smaller portion.

The Fédération Culturelle Canadienne Française (FCCF) is also seeking clarification about where the funding will go, and ensuring sufficient funding will support French artistic organizations and French OLMC-produced content.

Marie-Christine Morin, the FCCF’s executive director, told *The Hill Times* that the federation is “delighted” by the decision, which she said is “more than welcome, but necessary and urgent.”

“We think this decision recognizes the immediate need to support French-language content,” Morin said, adding that the funding would help create equity across the industry for OLMC-produced content and ensure that the “cultural sovereignty of Canada” is respected.

The FCCF also advocated for the base contributions to be distributed through FACTOR, Musicaction, and Starmaker, as well as the Canadian Media Fund for the audio-visual contributions, since those funds offered sufficient data to track how much was being provided to French-language community productions.

However, when it comes to the Certified Independent Production Fund, Morin said there isn’t sufficient data to ensure that money is going where they want it to, adding that OLMCs include English-speaking communities in Quebec.

Morin said the “sprinkling of funding across different funding silos” will reduce the potential outcomes of the new money, and that there needs to be a distinction for how much of the contributions earmarked for the independent production fund will go to supporting French OLMC productions.

“We need to recognize the overall decline of the French language and take action immediately,” Morin said.

The reaction from the corporations being asked to foot the bill for these contributions, however, has been decidedly more gloomy.

The Digital Media Association (DiMA)—the organization representing Amazon Music, Apple Music, and Spotify—said it is “deeply concerned” by the CRTC’s decision. It called the contributions a “discriminatory tax” on the “main source of revenue and engine of growth for music in Canada.”

DiMA’s president and CEO Graham Davies suggested that the decision could add to the burden of the country’s existing affordability crisis, which would particularly affect younger Canadians, “who are predominant users” of streaming services.

“Ignoring streaming’s existing support and the growth of new Canadian music is massively disappointing and runs counter to Canada’s wider interests,” Davies wrote. “We will be carefully reviewing [the CRTC’s] decision with our members in order to plan the next steps accordingly.”

This past March, in response to a similar online streaming tax introduced by the French government, Spotify announced it would raise prices for users in that country. While the company previously said it had no plans to increase prices in Canada in response to the Online Streaming Act, Spotify warned it could be forced to do so or reduce its investment and expenditures in Canada to cover the new costs in its submission to the CRTC’s consultations.

In a statement to *The Hill Times* following the decision, a spokesperson for Spotify called the decision a “devastating blow to artists” wherein the CRTC “chose the past over the future by demanding that streaming services pay a protectionist subsidy to radio.”

The Motion Picture Association-Canada said the CRTC’s “discriminatory” decision reinforces a “decades-old regulatory approach designed for cable companies” without fully considering the “significant contributions” streamers already make, pointing to the more than \$6.7-billion those studios and streaming services spend in Canada annually.

While the streamers have claimed that the new contribution requirements will force them to increase prices, Desjardins pointed out that companies like Amazon and Netflix haven’t needed the excuse of the Online Streaming Act to raise prices “year over year over year,” noting that Netflix’s prices have risen 250 per cent since it first entered the Canadian market in 2010.

“They have had no problem increasing the cost for the consumer for years,” Desjardins said, calling any appeals to the affordability crisis by the streamers “very disingenuous.”

As for the warnings that production dollars could dry up, Desjardins noted that any money those streamers spend in Canada is a business expense, not charity.

“It’s true that it does benefit our creators, and the very highly skilled people who work in the film and television industry, but ultimately, those are investments in themselves, not just Canada,” Desjardins said. He added that they had chosen to invest in Canada because of the ease of access to those highly skilled workers and high dollar-exchange value.

“Those realities will remain, and the question is whether or not the foreign streamers will pull productions to spite themselves and, basically, the Canadian economy,” Desjardins said.

*sbenson@hilltimes.com*  
*The Hill Times*

An open letter to Treasury Board President Anita Anand

# Embracing the work revolution: Remote work is here to stay



Dear Minister,

Over the past month, you may have seen public surveys that captured different opinions on federal telework and on the three-day return-to-office mandate, with the public weighing in, sometimes in favour, sometimes not. But the surveys that really matter are those that collect the views of those directly impacted and delivering for Canadians – your employees, our members.

In March, we ran a survey to collect our members' perspectives on remote work, inviting them to provide us with an honest assessment of their experience with telework, and to state their preferred work model. Thousands of our members (more than 75 per cent of respondents) confirmed that work flexibility was important to them, citing increased productivity and better work-life balance when able to work remotely.

**We are asking the federal government to embrace remote work as a pivotal strategy for enhancing productivity, cutting costs, and fortifying resilience.** The pandemic's impact alone has underscored the viability of remote work, revealing its potential to elevate productivity, attract diverse talent, and ensure service continuity. By fostering a culture of flexibility and innovation, you can position your government as a trailblazer in the modern workplace, while also optimizing resource allocation, converting real estate into housing and reducing your environmental footprint.

**We want our members to enjoy the right to negotiate what works best for them.** It is evident that our traditional notions of work are evolving at an unprecedented pace, and there are opportunities to revolutionize the federal workplace to serve everyone's best interest. The type of work that most CAPE members do can be performed independently or collaboratively using digital tools and communication platforms. Telework is a good fit for them and many would like to have the flexibility to work remotely, part-time or full time.

**During National Public Service Week,** there is no better way to express your gratitude to your employees than trusting that they will excel in their roles, regardless of their physical location, and empowering them with the flexibility to achieve their best work-life balance through remote work arrangements. We encourage you to lean into this conversation with an open mind and show goodwill by revoking the return-to-office mandate.

Yours sincerely,

**Nathan Prier**

President

Canadian Association of Professional Employees

## Remote works for everyone

### Benefits for Canadians:

- millions of dollars saved in federal office real estate
- more real estate available for housing and other social services
- less commuter traffic and reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- greater investment in local economies, suburbs and communities
- employment opportunities for Canadians living in remote areas across the country

### Benefits for federal employees:

- better work-life balance and family life
- more efficient and productive workdays
- fewer sick days used
- more women able to fully participate and advance their careers
- reduced barriers for employees with disabilities
- greater employee satisfaction and higher attraction and retention rates

**#RemoteWorks! #ÇaTravailleàDistance!**

[acep-cape.ca](http://acep-cape.ca)



# Editorial

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## Editorial

### Foreign interference foot-dragging hurts everyone

It's almost physically painful to watch the scrambling that has occurred in the wake of the committee report that's currently rocking Parliament Hill.

On June 3, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) unveiled its *Special Report on Foreign Interference in Canada's Democratic Processes and Institutions*. Its headline findings included the charge that "[s]ome elected officials ... began wittingly assisting foreign state actors soon after their election."

This has led to calls to publicly reveal the names of any current and former MPs and Senators who may have been involved in any collusion with foreign actors. In response, the government said it would back a Bloc Québécois non-binding motion to broaden the scope of the ongoing Foreign Interference Commission led by Justice Marie-Josée Hogue to "investigate Canada's federal democratic institutions, including members of the House of Commons elected in the 43<sup>rd</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> Parliaments, as well as Senators."

It's understandable that there are many variables when it comes to potentially releasing privileged national security information, not the least of which is the "intelligence is not evidence" principle that should give pause to anyone wanting to put people on blast in a potentially life-ruining way.

But what continues to confound is the government's lack of urgency in dealing

with any of these matters when they first come to light. NSICOP's report was tabled in the House last week, but it was submitted to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in March. That's plenty of time to have by now crafted a better response than the awkward buck-passing that's been happening since the report's public release.

As it currently stands, the Hogue Commission is supposed to finish its work and report back by the end of this year. That's plenty of time for the Liberal government to keep slow-rolling its foreign interference response. Yes, Bill C-70 is working its way through Parliament, but legislation is the culmination of what's been years of requests and inaction.

The government's pattern of a slow response to foreign interference issues is something NSICOP highlighted: "Given the risks posed by foreign interference to Canada's national security, the Committee expected the government to act. It was slow to do."

"The length of this process did not, in the Committee's view, demonstrate a sense of urgency commensurate with the gravity of the threat."

"The slow response to a known threat was a serious failure and one from which Canada may feel the consequences for years to come."

An election is coming. And the government hasn't demonstrated that it's feeling any sense of urgency in ensuring our democracy is as sound as it can be.

*The Hill Times*

## Letters to the Editor

### Fighting Conservative disinformation should be a top priority, says gun-control advocate

Re: "Hey, Liberals! Why be shy? Isn't it time to refute the disinformation?" (*The Hill Times*, June 3, p. 11).

Susan Riley hit the nail on the head with respect to the lack of Liberal push-back against Pierre Poilievre's ongoing disinformation campaign about the party's gun control agenda.

While the Conservative leader repeatedly claims at rallies that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau wants to ban hunting guns, Liberals have so far failed to confront this disinformation.

While it's possible that a handful of legitimate hunting guns may have been swept up by the 2022 proposed—and later withdrawn—amendments to Bill C-21 aimed at banning assault weapons (G-4 and G-46), these models have actually never been officially identified.

What's most important for Canadian hunters to understand is that *none* of the firearms that were showcased by the Conservatives and the gun lobby as potentially banned under the proposed amendments would have been affected: they were either already prohibited, or they would have remained legal (all except the Soviet-designed SKS, which is indeed a military weapon).

This analysis—which the gun lobby continues to dispute—has been validated by the RCMP, and reflects the testimony of every government expert that was heard by the House Public Safety Committee.

There is also some misinformation with respect to the final version of Bill C-21 adopted last December. Like many

others, Riley assumes that the government replaced G4 and G46 with a new amendment that also "bans assault-style weapons." This is not the case.

The fact is that the final bill changes nothing with respect to the availability of assault weapons in Canada. The new definition of "prohibited firearm" only adds more confusion—and can therefore be easily misrepresented—as it only applies to future models. Hundreds of existing models that fall under the same definition remain legal.

In addition, new models can continue to enter the Canadian market, as the definition is easily circumventable. All manufacturers need to do is tinker with the sequence of their market rollout: by offering lower-capacity magazines (five rounds or fewer) for their new assault weapons before offering high-capacity ones (six or more).

All this means that owners of the approximately 2,000 models of assault weapons prohibited under the 2020 order-in-council can simply take the money from the upcoming buyback and purchase one of the existing 480 models that remain legal, or any new model that bypasses the new definition. In order for Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc to finish the job of banning all assault weapons before the next election, as he promised to do, fighting Conservative disinformation should be a top priority.

**Heidi Rathjen**  
Co-ordinator, PolySeSouvient/  
PolyRemembers  
Montreal, Que.

### Gazans are victims twice-over: Yukon letter writer

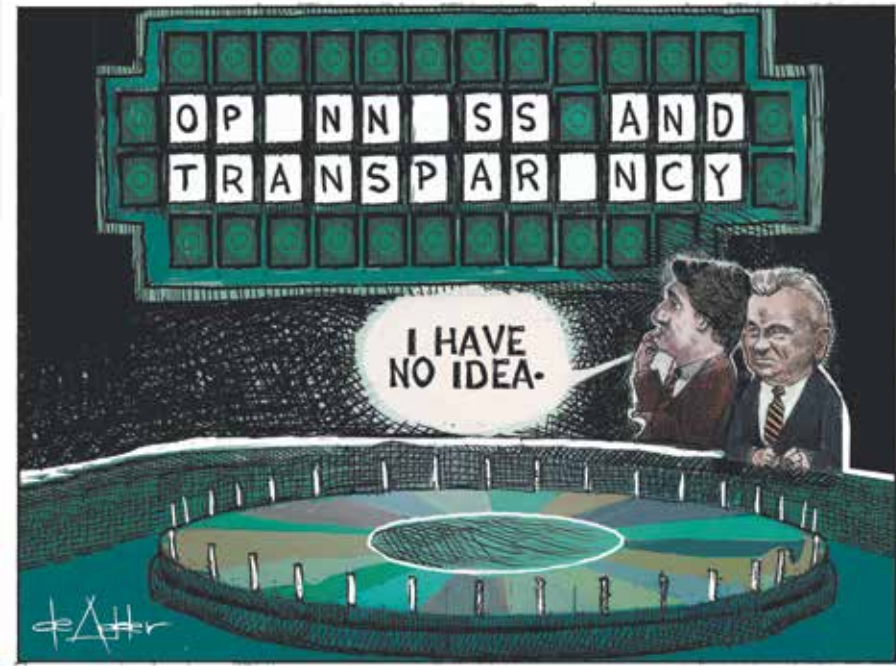
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently said that there was no "equivalency between the democratically elected leaders of Israel and the bloodthirsty terrorists." He is partly right. The last time Gazans had the luxury of voting was in 2006. Gazans are victims twice-over: of Hamas authoritarian rule, and of collective punishments by Israel.

Being a democracy doesn't preclude bloodthirsty terrorism. Like Hamas, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government contains ideologues who don't care how many innocent civilians perish in this conflict. While it's a given that Hamas leaders are monsters, what can be said about those responsible for blocking food, water, and

medical aid to Gaza? And of those who decided to launch a military campaign into Rafah knowing full well that there is no safe place for civilians to evacuate?

This isn't the first time a democratically elected government has committed crimes against humanity. Genocide was how the West was won for America, a democracy since its inception. Britain was a democracy when it oversaw mass starvation in Ireland. The newly minted democracy of Canada orchestrated the starvation of First Nations on the Prairies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Had the International Criminal Court been around, they would definitely have issued an arrest warrant for John A. Macdonald.

**Linda Leon**  
Whitehorse, Yukon



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# On language, these MNAs don't vote in their constituents' interests

In supporting an anti-bilingualism resolution, a group of Quebec Liberal MNAs failed to speak up for their community, its values, and history.

Andrew Caddell

*With All Due Respect*



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—Their names are Madwa-Nika Cadet, Enrico Ciccone, Moncef Derraji, André Fortin, Brigitte Garceau, Greg Kelley, Jennifer Maccarone, Désirée McGraw, Elisabeth Prass, and Michelle Setlakwe. They are Quebec Liberal Party Members of the Quebec National Assembly (MNAs), elected in predominantly anglophone ridings in the Montreal area.

They recently supported a National Assembly resolution in response to comments by the Liberal MP for Alfred-Pellan, Que., Angelo Iacono. He said, “I believe that Quebec, and I believe that Canada, should be a bilingual country, to be stronger and not just be a unilingual French-speaking province.” The resolution—without mentioning Iacono—said “the National Assembly firmly reject all statements that Quebec would be stronger as an officially bilingual State,” and proceeded to emphasize “Quebec’s rich history ... to defend ... the vitality of its only official language, French.”

In one simple resolution, the National Assembly erased the contributions of English-speaking Quebecers over centuries. For the 1.25 million current English-speaking Quebecers, their representatives failed to speak up for their community, its values, and history.

While a unanimous resolution has no effect in law, the weaponizing of these motions in Quebec to press the nationalist agenda has become common in the past few years: denouncing other Canadians, denouncing the “Bonjour-Hi” greeting, or supporting a sovereign Quebec. Each time, these resolutions have been used to show “solidarity” within Quebec, and each time, the members representing English-speaking Quebecers have been unwitting dupes. In this case, the fact is the Constitution ensures English is the language of the courts and legislature in Quebec, and the government provides services in English. By law, this resolution had to be published in French and English to be official.

These Liberal members argue they are supporting the cause of francophone Quebec in face of the so-called “decline” in the French language. However,

Edmund Burke, in his speech to the electors of Bristol, U.K., said, “Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.” They failed Burke’s test by submitting to nationalist opinion, rather than standing for principle and the law: a single vote would have killed this resolution.

As a municipal councillor in francophone Kamouraska, I am sensitive to the status of the French language. But my bilingualism enriches me, as it does the millions of other Quebecers and Canadians who speak both languages. Indeed, the word “francophone” means someone who speaks French: it is not restricted to those Quebecers who can trace their lineage to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and it does not exclude those who speak a third language at home. In fact, when all these “other” francophones are included, demographers and even the Office québécois de la langue française has concluded French is doing fine in Quebec.

The Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission in the 1960s spoke of Quebec as the *point d’appui*, or fulcrum, of the French language, to ensure a bilingual Canada. I have supported the cause of francophone minorities in the rest of the country all my life, so I can speak of the necessity of a strong support by Quebec for the French language across Canada. But as is obvious from the billions of people around the world who speak several languages, being bilingual is not the pathway to assimilation, and a francophone Québécois does *not* become an *Anglais* by speaking English.

When any MNA—from the premier on down—ignores the contribution of the English-speaking community to the building of Quebec, it is a galling repudiation. It ignores the entrepreneurs who transformed Quebec from an agricultural to an industrial economy, the intermarriage and collaboration between anglophones and francophones, the sacrifices of the Irish who came here after the famine of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It repudiates the Jewish and other refugees fleeing discrimination and war in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It fails to celebrate the Indigenous, Black, and Asian communities who make up the rainbow of colours the English-speaking community now represents.

These MNAs could have avoided this vote, or one of them could have voted no. Instead, their partisan ambitions led them to cravenly support it. I think they owe an apology to Iacono, as well as to their English-speaking constituents, whom they purport to represent in Quebec City.

Andrew Caddell is retired from Global Affairs Canada, where he was a senior policy adviser. He previously worked as an adviser to Liberal governments. He is a town councillor in Kamouraska, Que. He can be reached at [pipson52@hotmail.com](mailto:pipson52@hotmail.com).

The Hill Times

# G7 faces toughest tests of its 50-year history

The G7 is now at the forefront of anti-authoritarian forces in the deepening geostrategic struggle magnified by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Les Whittington

*Need to Know*



OTTAWA—Once host to a sleepy annual confab of interest mainly to economists and financial institutions, the G7 is now the fulcrum of the western world’s response to the conflicts dividing the globe.

Not that the rich nations’ club bringing together the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Germany, Italy, and Japan hasn’t had its share of crises. It began meeting in the early 1970s in hopes of steering the world economy through the recession set off by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries’ oil embargo. Over the decades, the exigencies affecting G7 leaders also included terrorism, the AIDS/HIV epidemic, the 2008 financial collapse, anti-globalization revolts, COVID, and the military aggression of one-time G8 member Russia.

At the turn of the century, it was widely thought that the then-G8 was too narrow in its reach and would be surpassed by the G20, which counted among its members the G8 countries plus China, Brazil, India, Indonesia, and other emerging economies. At the 2009 Pittsburgh G20 summit, leaders agreed the G20 should become the premier forum for addressing international economic issues.

But the co-operative goals of the G20 have been rendered inoperative by the growing East-West divide pitting the U.S. and its allies against Russia and China. Committed to multilateralism, rules-based international trade, democracy, and the peaceful resolution of differences, the G7 is now at the forefront of anti-authoritarian forces in the deepening geostrategic struggle magnified by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Critically, U.S. President Joe Biden—who meets with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and other G7 leaders for the 50<sup>th</sup> summit this week in Italy—has renewed his country’s commitment to its global alliances after former president Donald Trump’s divisive, America-first position.

Measures to help Ukraine in its efforts to fend off Russia’s invasion, and issues around China’s crucial support for Moscow’s war effort will top the leaders’ agenda in Italy. “Our concern is that

China is increasingly the factory of the Russian war machine,” a U.S. official said last week. “You can call it the arsenal of autocracy when you consider Russia’s military ambitions threaten obviously the existence of Ukraine, but increasingly European security, NATO and transatlantic security.”

The G7 could decide this week to issue a tough new warning of possible sanctions to smaller Chinese banks that have assumed an increasingly important role assisting Russia in evading western sanctions, according to Reuters. Leaders will also try to reach agreement on a plan to use windfall profits from the 260-billion euros of Russian central bank funds frozen worldwide to help finance Ukraine’s now-desperate war effort. The U.S. wants to use the annual profits to leverage a US\$50-billion loan that would guarantee support for Ukraine through 2025, regardless of any changes in U.S. policy after the November presidential election. But European officials have consistently raised questions about the legality and means of implementing the plan.

Unfortunately, with the summit coming days after the stunning right-wing gains in France and Germany in the European Parliament elections, it will be harder than usual to predict the positions of the G7’s European members on collective projects. On June 9, a shaken French President Emmanuel Macron—a strong proponent of European Union support for Ukraine—took the risky step of calling a national legislative election after his party was left far behind by Marine Le Pen’s ultranationalist National Rally in the EU parliamentary voting. The coalition keeping German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in power was weakened by the strong showing of the far right there. And Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni—who hosts this year’s G7 meeting—greatly enhanced her prominence in Europe and at home when her far-right party won European elections in Italy.

On top of that, Biden’s efforts to provide leadership on the other issue of global concern—the Israel-Hamas conflict—are unlikely to produce a significant consensus at the summit. G7 nations endorsed the U.S.’s recent ceasefire proposal, but significant differences on the war remain between the Americans and Europeans, who are represented by the EU at the summit.

Most governments in Europe have backed the International Criminal Court’s efforts directed at the Israeli government’s actions in Gaza. And Ireland, Spain, and Norway have formally recognized Palestine as an independent state. At the United Nations, France has come out in favour of Palestine being made a full member of that international body.

All this amounts to a challenging situation for Canada and its G7 allies at this year’s conference—where the need for concerted action is all the greater because it might be the last G7 before Trump and his isolationist, Russia-curious mentality emerge again on the world scene.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times



## Opinion

# Return to which office? Boycotting National Public Service Week

Despite the return-to-office mandate, there is simply no space for all public servants to be working in Government of Canada buildings.

Waheed Khan

Opinion



For the first time since its creation in 1992, the National Public Service Week (June 9-15) will be boycotted by all public service unions. The objective of the week is to “recognize the value of the services rendered by federal public service employees,” and to “acknowledge the contribution of federal public service employees to the federal administration.”

The unions are protesting the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) announcement to amend its common hybrid work model so that, as of Sept. 9, public servants will be required to work on-site a minimum of three days per week. It will create a challenging situation for management because there is not enough space for all employees.

For public servants, it is all about better public services for Canadians at reasonable, sustainable cost. They have been working diligently to serve Canadians during the very challenging times of the pandemic when they were directed to work from their homes. Many employees also delivered 24/7 services on site in areas such as weather forecasting for Canadians, agriculture, and aviation.

The common hybrid work model was introduced by TBS in the spring of 2023, drastically reducing office space. Several buildings owned or leased by Public Works and Procurement Canada are currently uninhabitable due to long-overdue renovations, while 10 buildings are slated for downloading. There is simply no space for all public servants to be working in Government of Canada (GOC) buildings.

Public servants no longer have offices, but work at “unassigned seating.” Upon arrival in their building, they go to their floor to find an empty cubicle. They bring their laptop, and often their keyboard and mouse. There is no space to leave a coffee mug or other items of personal use, or even documents on their desk or cabinet. Everything must be brought in daily and taken back at the end of the day.

There are no phones at these unassigned seats. When an employee has to make or receive a call, they have to find a “quiet room” and take their cell phone or laptop there. Quiet rooms are in short supply, and employees often book them for meetings, which are often held virtually, defeating the myth that presence in the office promotes in-person meetings and collaboration. Employees often go floor to floor to find a vacant quiet room.

The current practice of two days per week works because each desk can be used by two employees: one employee may come to the office on Monday and Wednesday, and another on Tuesday and Friday. There also needs to be some redundancy because some employees work in the

office four to five days per week. When every employee is required to come to the office three days per week, at least once per week, there will be two employees for one desk.

TBS neglected the feedback provided by employees through the 2022 Public Service Employee Survey. In response to the statement, “Having the flexibility to choose where I work allows me to have a better work-life balance,” 89 per cent provided positive answers. For the “completing other administrative work” question, 80 per cent of respondents stated these activities are best performed from their remote location, while only 20 per cent said a GOC location is better. Sixty-two per cent of respondents said a remote location works better for attending meetings, while only 38 per cent stated this activity can be performed better from a GOC location.

TBS neglected its legal obligation under Division 3 of the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act, which requires the employer to consult with bargaining agents on issues relating to the workplace that affect their members. TBS also neglected its responsibilities

under its own Guidelines for Labour-Management Consultation, which state that good labour-management relations are essential to good human resources management. Unions were blindsided, and they learned about the TBS decision through the media on April 29.

Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe has stated that there is an urgent need to deal with a depleted downtown core in Canada’s capital that has not rebounded after the pandemic, as other Canadian cities have. “The more that federal public servants are in the office, obviously, the better it is for our businesses in the downtown core, and the better it is for our public transit service.” Everyone in the National Capital Region knows that public transit does not provide timely and efficient transportation for commuters who live in the east, west, and south of the city, and the problem worsens for those who have to cross the bridges between Ottawa and Gatineau. The mayor could focus on improving transit, and reducing greenhouse gases emissions in co-ordination with the City of Gatineau. Putting the city’s problems on the shoulders of public servants is not a good solution.

*Waheed Khan is the president of the Community of Federal Visible Minorities, and serves on the board of directors of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada.*

*The Hill Times*

## A moving experience

This June, hundreds of Canadian families at home and abroad are preparing to resettle during the annual diplomatic rotation season.

Andrew Elliott

Opinion



KINGSTON, JAMAICA—In 1988, former fugitive and sometimes-Chelsea, Que., resident Randy Quaid appeared as the villain in the film *Moving*. It stars Richard Pryor as a man who loses his job, and has to move his family from New Jersey to Idaho for the prospect of a new gig. Along the way, the movers he hires to ferry his belongings from the East Coast to what colloquially became known as fly-over country go AWOL, and Pryor takes things into his own hands to get his stuff back.

The film is both a screwball comedy that would never get made today, and a celebration of capitalist attachment to “our” things. It currently has a 33 per cent rating on Rotten Tomatoes. No matter, I still laugh out loud thinking about the scene where Pryor’s character gets fired; it’s comedy gold.

Growing up we had a copy of the movie on VHS, and it got played a lot. Probably for the double hit that we’d recorded it off “First Choice Superchannel”—it paid for itself—and that my parents could never figure out the Motion Picture Association film rating system. “R” meant regular. More than anything, it got that rating for the explicit language, which anyone who has ever moved a family becomes overly familiar with using.

As a kid, I never moved. I spent all my formative years in the same semi-detached house off Montreal Road near Beacon Hill in Ottawa. “Moving”—outside of the colourful vocabulary every kid finds hilarious—also provided a fantasy that was wholly ethereal: getting out of my hometown.

I’ve spent my entire adult life leaving and returning to Ottawa. While my current situation is the first as a dependent of a Global Affairs Canada employee, I have become an old hand at packing

up a home and setting up a new one over the last 20 years—yet each occasion brings a new set of challenges.

As we career through June, hundreds of Canadian families at home and abroad are preparing to resettle during the annual diplomatic rotation season. Think cicadas, only noisier and slightly more entitled. Thankfully, my family doesn’t have to step into the fray this go around.

Relocating under the benevolent watch of the federal government is an experience that harkens back to the plot of *Moving*. You have a new job to go to, very far away from your old one. You have a tight timeline, at best eight months from finding out about your new posting to getting on a plane. Your spouse likely has to leave their job, and your kids have to leave their friends and go to new schools. When you arrive, you don’t pick your neighbours since your accommodation has likely been chosen for you. The only real difference is that Pryor’s character selected his own movers—to his chagrin, and the comedic effect of the film.

When you move courtesy of the feds, they pick the movers. Contracts have been signed, and companies procured. Not all procurements are equal, especially during a time crunch, which these



Posting season is hectic, and relocating under the benevolent watch of the federal government is an experience that harkens back to the plot of a movie, writes Andrew Elliott. Photograph courtesy of Pexels

movers are under. You are told the day they will be showing up—no window, simply told. After this, it’s advised you have everything separated into piles: stuff that is going with you, and stuff that is staying in storage.

During our packing ahead of our current posting, we were informed by other diplomats to make sure we didn’t have garbage anywhere near our belongings, noting that we’d be better off if we could use our neighbour’s trash. Asked why, they told us flat out: “The movers will pack your garbage”. We laughed. We laughed less when four months into our time in Jamaica, our stuff arrived and one of our boxes contained garbage. I should have clued in, when in Ottawa, they packed the licence plates off our car.

Posting season is hectic. It’s like regular moving, only more

so. From all the government agencies involved, to all the companies contracted out, getting people from A to B hasn’t gotten any easier. To everyone who is relocating—to another country or otherwise—I offer up three pieces of advice. First, the move is all part of the adventure, embrace it. It won’t hug back, but at least you’re trying. The movers will pack your trash—they really, really will. Finally, there is no way Randy Quaid will be your neighbour—unless you move to Burlington, Vt., where he owns a home on Randy Lane.

*Andrew Elliott has spent two decades hosting radio shows around the world, most recently in Ottawa, and now writes stuff from his home in Kingston, Jamaica.*

*The Hill Times*



# Why we must 'contextualize' hate



Protesters march in downtown Ottawa on Feb. 17, calling for an end to the bombing of Gaza. Too often, pleas for understanding have been equated with defences of Hamas terrorism, writes Phil Ryan. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

If we fail to understand acts of hatred and their context, even greater suffering and evil may be unleashed.

Phil  
Ryan

Opinion



Since the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist carnage, many observers have insisted that we must understand the background to the attacks. Ian S. Lustick wrote of “the gut punch of seeing or hearing people of all ages—including children, teenagers, the elderly, and the disabled—being brutalized, riddled with bullets, or dragged into captivity.” But he insisted that a response to the terrorism could not be based on strong emotional revulsion or a thirst for vengeance. Lustick, the—Jewish—founder of the Association for Israel Studies, noted that Gaza has long been a “resource-starved and overpopulated open-air prison, forced to rely on Israel for food, wa-

ter, electricity, trade, mail delivery, access to fishing, medical care, or contact with the outside world.”

Too often, these pleas for understanding have been equated with defences of Hamas terrorism. A recent letter to *The Hill Times* is a case in point: the author laments the fact that some people urge us to “contextualize” the Oct. 7 terrorism, likening this to an attempt to “justify” the attack.

But to understand is not to justify. And however painful it may be, understanding acts of hatred and their context is precisely what we *must* do. If we fail to do this, even greater suffering and evil may be unleashed.

After 9/11, the most influential “explanations” of the atrocity were of the quality of then-United States president George W. Bush’s claim that America was attacked because it is “the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world.” A few brave voices pushed back: “Let’s by all means grieve together. But let’s not be stupid together. A few shreds of historical awareness might help us understand what has just happened, and what may continue to happen.” For that common-sense observation, Susan Sontag was subject to vicious attacks.

The reluctance of Americans and their allies to understand the history that paved the road to 9/11 gave political cover

to catastrophic military adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq. We all know the results: hundreds of thousands of civilians dead, trillions of dollars wasted, the lives of many young soldiers—including hundreds of Canadians—ended or blighted.

And today? If there is no context, no history that might shed light on the Hamas attacks, it is all too easy to conclude that the crimes were the work of “human animals,” as Israel’s defence minister put it. His full quote shows where that type of rhetoric leads: “No electricity, no food, no water, no gas—it’s all closed ... We are fighting human animals, and we act accordingly.” Sadly, this frank declaration of an intent to commit war crimes was applauded by many in Israel and elsewhere.

The defence minister’s statement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s ominous reference to the Biblical Amalekites (whose extermination was supposedly commanded by God), calls in the Knesset for a second Nakba—all these make current news feel like a chronicle of a genocide foretold.

Former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak warned in 2017 that his country

was on a “slippery slope toward apartheid.” Inconceivable as it may seem, Israel today may be on a slippery slope to something even worse. It may get away with this, for a while. Egypt, which has resisted pressure to accept a mass transfer of Palestinians into the Sinai, may relent, in return for some relief of its crushing foreign debt. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates may resume the development of relations with Israel, believing this gives them a free pass for their own authoritarianism.

But in the long run? Will Israelis be more secure when—one by one—governments around the world end their long-standing support for Israel? Or when a new generation of Palestinians grows up dreaming of avenging the post-Oct. 7 crimes? Will Israel flourish when the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement goes mainstream, becoming as taken-for-granted as it was in the case of South Africa? Another past Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, warned in 2007 that, once the equivalence between his country and apartheid-era South Africa is widely accepted, “the state of Israel is finished.”

Taking history and context into account—rather than behaving as if the history of Palestine began on Oct. 7—may lead us to conclude that those who today view themselves as the firmest supporters of Israel, who refuse to protest its most extreme actions, could turn out in the long run to have simply enabled its long painful suicide.

Phil Ryan is an associate professor in the school of public policy and administration at Carleton University. His most recent book is *On the other hand: Canadian multiculturalism and its progressive critics.*

*The Hill Times*



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## Comment

# The minister who cried capital gains

The feds are trying to weaponize the capital gains framework as some form of class warfare under the cover of a call for fairness.

Tim Powers

*Plain Speak*



Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's direction on the changes to the capital gains tax structure is facile at best, and deliberately divisive at worst, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

OTTAWA—The air of desperation around the Liberal government is growing more intense. For once, though, this isn't another column about whether Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will stay or go. Instead, it's a rant of sorts about Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's introduction of a ways and means motion on changing our capital gains tax structure.

Yes, I know no one will cry for me and others who will be subject

to this change. But that hasn't stopped the minister from amping up the hysteria, trying to weaponize the capital gains framework as some form of class warfare under the cover of a call for fairness and a suggestion that only 0.13 per cent of Canadians will be affected. Have you asked small business owners, tech businesses, and doctors, among others, how they feel?

I have no time for over-the-top, the-world-is-ending, or you-are-a-devilish-person type of spin. I don't care whether that comes

from Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, or the man in the moon. That sort of language—when deployed by a politician—screams trouble in their own backyard.

Freeland, one of the poorest communicators in the government, reached a new low this week. Usually, she is criticized for her lecturing and tone-deaf references, like when she was going to try to deal with the affordability crisis by cancelling her Disney Plus subscription. Now she is rushing to the front lines to save

Canadians from the scourge of the current capital gains tax policy.

According to the minister, she is acting for fairness' sake, because: "Do you want to live in a country where those at the very top live lives of luxury, but must do so in gated communities behind higher fences, using private health care and airplanes because the public sphere is so degraded and the wrath of the vast majority of the less-privileged compatriots burns so hot?"

Earth to the minister. Where are these Canadian gated communities you talk about? Remember a few weeks ago, Canadian star Drake—who's living in one of the country's wealthier neighbourhoods—had some shots fired at his home, and a member of his team got hit? No gates there, other than on his own property. It's still an accessible spot.

As for the "wrath of the vast majority of the less privileged compatriots" burning so hot, hasn't your government been in power for nine years? Weren't you the government that was going to help those in the middle class, and those striving to join it? So, don't you have some significant

responsibility for people "burning so hot"?

Freeland's most-outrageous stretch line in justifying her policy changes was this dandy: "Do you want to live in a country where a teenage girl gets pregnant just because she doesn't have the money to buy birth control?" So, if there isn't capital gains tax reform, unwanted pregnancies in the country will rise? Please show me the Department of Finance economic modelling that demonstrates this will be the case.

Freeland has been regarded in the past for having a serious mind, and taking a thoughtful, broad approach to problems. Her direction here is facile at best, and deliberately divisive at worst.

If she wants to defend her capital gains policy changes, do so without creating a sense of dislocation among all. Sell the policy on its merits. There is nothing fair about exasperating tensions among people with your own language and deeds. Enough.

Tim Powers is chairman of *Summa Strategies* and managing director of *Abacus Data*. He is a former adviser to Conservative political leaders.

*The Hill Times*

# A dressing down: the CAF's dress code debacle

The military's 'new' dress code is actually a sharp reversal of the controversial policy change announced in September 2022.

Scott Taylor

*Inside Defence*



OTTAWA—On June 5, the Canadian Armed Forces issued a directive that, as of July 2, 2024, there will be new, stricter dress codes in effect for all serving members.

For those who follow Canadian military affairs closely, this "new" direction is actually a sharp reversal of the controversial policy change that was just announced in September 2022. At that juncture, Chief of Defence Staff, General Wayne Eyre and then-Canadian Forces Chief Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class Gilles Grégoire had made a joint announcement repealing many of the military's

traditional regulations on dress and deportment.

"Many of us have grown up with an ingrained view of what a traditional sailor, soldier, or aviator must look like. And over the ages, uniformity has been a method used to install discipline. But uniformity does not equal discipline or operational effectiveness any more than the colour or length of your hair define your commitment or professional competence," Eyre stated.

"So, as our society evolves, our military standards also change and evolve. We will balance our traditions with societal expectations, and the needs of the service."

To achieve that goal, Eyre and Grégoire went on to explain that there would no longer be restrictions on hairstyle, hair colour, facial hair, tattoos, and piercings. From that point forward, service members would be free to wear the uniform items that were no longer gender specific.

The irony of having these two particular veteran senior military leaders—both Eyre and Grégoire are bald, middle-aged Caucasian males—talking about the inclusivity of relaxed dress standards, would have been hilarious were it not for the gravitas of what they were announcing.

It was not just the hard-core military traditionalists who were alarmed by these regulation changes, it was anyone who understands the definition of the word "uniform." Included in Eyre's statement was a strong argument against the removal of these standards. Yes, people have an ingrained view of what they want military members to look like. Just like police officers or first responders, we expect a certain level of professional appearance. Likewise with airline pilots or flight attendants.

That the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) would allow individuals to sport all manner of hairstyles—including varied hair colour and outlandish facial hair—would naturally have an impact on the public perception of all in uniform, even if only a relative few availed themselves of these new freedoms.

This latest directive is an attempt to ensure that "the deportment and appearance of all ranks, in uniform or when wearing civilian attire, shall on all occasions reflect credit on the CAF and the individual."

The recent official announcement noted that while Eyre and Grégoire's policy change had some positive effects, "there has been inconsistent interpretation and application."



The fact that service members now need a regulation telling them they cannot have so much hair that they cannot don a hat speaks volumes for how low officials lowered the bar, writes Scott Taylor. *DND photograph by Cpl. Hugo Montpetit*

That, my friends, is one hell of an understatement.

To be fair, the proposed "new" dress codes are not going to be draconian in that we will see nothing but "high-and-tight" United States Marine Corps-style haircuts. For instance, the directive states that "hair extending below the lower portion of the shirt collar must be tied back away from the face. The volume of hair must not prevent the proper wearing of the headress or protective equipment."

The fact that service members now need a regulation in place telling them they cannot have so much hair that they cannot don a hat speaks volumes for how low Eyre and Grégoire lowered the bar.

In announcing the imminent changes to the dress code, Canadian Forces Chief Warrant Officer Bob McCann said "what got lost in translation is that we—who choose to serve—represent when we wear the CAF uniform. We do not represent just our individual selves, but everyone who wore this uniform and fought before us so that we can enjoy the freedoms and way of life we get to enjoy today."

This seems such a logical understanding of the word "uniform" that one has to ask: just what the heck were Eyre and Grégoire thinking?

Scott Taylor is the editor and publisher of *Esprit de Corps* magazine.

*The Hill Times*



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## Opinion

# This Indigenous History Month, it's time to hold Canada's top bankers accountable

When the executives of Canada's Big Five testify at the House Environment Committee on June 13, it will be an opportunity to cut through the banks' greenwashing and redwashing.

Tori Cress & Richard Brooks

Opinion



As communities across Canada feel the strain of an affordability crisis, increasingly year-round climate disasters are wreaking havoc. Already this year, Indigenous communities in the tarsands region and rapidly growing Fort McMurray, Alta., have endured one evacuation for

disasters striking earlier than ever.

This year's wildfires are expected to be worse than last year's record-breaking season, exacerbated by climate change, which is being driven by fossil fuels. And who is funding fossil fuel development? Canada's Big Five banks: RBC, Scotiabank, BMO, CIBC, and TD.

According to the 15<sup>th</sup> annual *Banking on Climate Chaos* report, of the US\$6.9-trillion in fossil fuel financing from 60 global banks since the Paris Agreement was signed in 2016, Canada's Big Five financed an outsized proportion at US\$911.15-billion. That's 13 per cent of global fossil fuel financing from just five banks in a country with 0.5 per cent of the global population. Canadian banks are officially becoming fossil fuel lenders of last resort.

In 2023, the Big Five pumped more than US\$103.85-billion into fossil fuels, and US\$44.6-billion into tarsands projects since 2016, holding nearly half of all global tarsands investment, proving what we've known all along: tarsands are a bad investment financially, and for our health and planet.

In January 2024, research from Yale University and the Environ-

ment and Climate Change Canada Air Pollution Program revealed that emissions from the Alberta tarsands are grossly underreported, exceeding industry reported values by 1,900 per cent to 6,300 per cent. Despite these alarming impacts, CIBC, RBC, Scotiabank, and TD top the chart of tarsands backers.

For Indigenous Peoples, banks' investment in tarsands development means funding climate chaos, displacement, deforestation, poisonous water, toxic tailings, cancer, criminalization, and the further colonization of our bodies, minds, and homelands.

As we collectively stand at the open doorway of Indigenous History Month, the House of Commons Environment Committee is recognizing where the buck stops, and summoning the top bankers of Canada's Big Five to testify in Ottawa on June 13.

This hearing is an opportunity to cut through banks' greenwashing and redwashing—public relations attempts to use climate action and reconciliation to distract from the financing of fossil fuels and human rights violations. RBC, for instance, is under investigation by Canada's Competition Bureau over allegedly misleading climate advertising, and faces a

securities complaint over allegedly misleading investors.

Like historical hearings of Big Tobacco and Big Oil, this offers a consequential moment of accountability. Here's what should happen at the hearing:

- Banks should be challenged for financing community-destroying fossil fuel projects, and violating Indigenous rights;

- Banks should be questioned as to why they continue to fund the expansion of tarsands, fracked gas, and oil pipelines and gas terminals locking in unnecessary usage for years to come; and

- Banks should be held accountable for putting only 40 cents to every \$1 into renewables, when the International Energy Agency says we need to invest \$6, or more than 15 times that amount.

In April, we joined hundreds of people rallying in the rain to speak at RBC's shareholder meeting. Clearly, waiting for voluntary action from banks isn't enough. It's time for our government—led by Finance Canada—to step in and mandate that banks help, rather than hinder, efforts to meet our climate goals.

Alongside prioritizing Indigenous traditional knowledge and

natural law, climate-aligned financial policy is a major missing piece of Canada's climate plan. We have part of the solution in front of us: the Climate-Aligned Finance Act is necessary legislation to align Canada's financial system with its stated climate goals.

In standing up for the right to free, prior, and informed consent to the development of traditional territories, Indigenous Peoples are at the frontline of experiencing environmental racism and ecological disasters, and in turn, leading climate resilience and solutions.

Rebranding fossil fuel financing and colonization as "economic reconciliation" is the latest co-option of a quick to make and easy to break promise—like a trinket. We know the path forward is not new shiny trinkets; with immediate government intervention, and centring Indigenous traditional knowledge in financial decision-making, there's still hope for a balanced and just energy transition for generations to come.

Tori Cress is Anishinaabe, and communications manager at Keepers of the Water. Richard Brooks is the climate finance director at Stand.earth.

The Hill Times

# National Housing Council's missed opportunity

The Council decided not to hold financialized landlords accountable, resorting to a well-intentioned, but misguided comparison to the health-care system.

Leilani Farha & Julieta Perucca

Opinion



In 2019, the Government of Canada recognized housing as a human right, and created the National Housing Council, tasked with conducting consultations and review panels on key issues. On May 29, it released its much-anticipated

review panel report on the financialization of purpose-built rental housing. This was an opportunity to use human rights standards to wrestle down a major driver of housing insecurity. Instead, the authors steadfastly avoided talking about the very topic before them.

The report neither offers nor adopts a definition of financialized rental housing. It also provides zero information on the business model that turns people's apartments into a financial asset, and results in compromised living conditions for tenants: higher rents, increased fees, and renovations.

Financialized rental housing refers to apartment buildings owned by—often—publicly listed real estate investment trusts, pension funds, and other financial firms. Shareholders have no involvement with operations, but expect ever-growing returns on investment. To quench investors' thirst for dividends, research shows financialized landlords engage in predatory practices more often than other landlords.

But you wouldn't learn any of this by reading the National Housing Council (NHC) report.

Part of the problem is that the panel wants to model our housing system after Canada's health-care system. They argue that health care is treated as a universal human right and so, too, should housing—a well-intentioned, but misguided comparison.

Canada's health-care system is primarily public. Canada's housing system is 96 per cent private. Human rights may require an increase in social housing, but it does not require the transformation of a mostly privatized housing market into a public one. But it does require those engaged in the industry to be responsive and accountable to human rights.

Had the Council likened the housing system to Canada's food system—which, like housing, is almost completely privatized and where the largest industry actors are distorting the market—the panel's results might have been different. No one would reasonably suggest that the way to stop the big grocery store chains from price gouging and undermining the right to food is to make the food system public. What is required of governments under

human rights law is that they regulate the food industry to ensure affordability.

Despite the testimony of hundreds of tenants alleging rights violations by financialized landlords and evidence of how they help distort Canada's housing market, the Council decided not to hold financialized landlords accountable. Instead, they glom onto a common narrative taking aim at the lack of supply of affordable housing—a problem to be solved only by the non-profit sector and governments, according to them.

Incredulously, the Council then proceeds to make a series of recommendations that benefit financialized landlords.

For example, the panel recommends expanding the Canada Housing Benefit to subsidize rents for low-income tenants spending more than 30 per cent of their income. This measure would funnel more public funds into the hands of financialized landlords without requiring them to lower rents or provide greater security of tenure.

Rather than recommending that financialized landlords

convert part of their portfolios to non-market housing as a condition of favourable tax schemes, the panel recommends that these actors be incentivized to build housing for low-income families—an idea that has yet to produce meaningful results almost anywhere.

Rather than providing examples of tenant protections to challenge the financialized business model—eg: eviction moratoriums, rent freezes, and an abandonment of above-guideline rent increases—the panel suggests that "national consensus standards" be negotiated, undermining the very idea of human rights.

One is left wondering why the review panel refused to address the elephant that was purposefully brought into the room. Regardless, the result is a report that offers recommendations barely different from those pedalled by the real estate industry and its pundits.

The NHC missed a unique opportunity to use human rights to envision and shape the private housing market. As a result, they failed to fulfill their mandate and have left tenants to—once again—pay the price.

Leilani Farha is the global director of The Shift, an international human rights organization, and the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to housing. Julieta Perucca is the deputy director of The Shift.

The Hill Times



# Translation Bureau launches 'entry-level' accreditation pilot, raising red flags for industry association

The bureau's plans are 'watering down the qualification that's required to uphold official language requirements,' says AIIC Canada's advocacy lead Nicole Gagnon.

Continued from page 1

Conference Interpreters (AIIC) Canada, which says the bureau is diminishing the quality of its services for a short-term solution to a long-term challenge: the shortage of qualified interpreters in Canada and around the world.

"We are watering down the qualification that's required to uphold official language requirements under the act," said Nicole Gagnon, AIIC Canada's advocacy lead and a freelance interpreter with the bureau.

News of the pilot project was shared with different stakeholders earlier this spring, and the bureau confirmed it plans to begin offering entry-level accreditation to individuals in the near future once the results of the most recent May 10 accreditation exam—which 35 people sat—are known later this month.

The bureau has said these entry-level interpreters will only be assigned to cover "general, non-technical" departmental events, and not parliamentary ones. But Gagnon said AIIC Canada is concerned that once such individuals are "through that door," in time, they will be used to cover parliamentary events as well, as the interpreter shortage "is not getting any better."

"Near-pass candidates of the Translation Bureau's accreditation exam will be granted partial accreditation to work as freelancers for the Bureau. This will allow the Bureau to contract these interpreters, who have demonstrated considerable interpretation skills, to cover general, non-technical events the Bureau would not otherwise be able to support," explained Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) media relations in response to emailed questions. The bureau falls under PSPC.

"Events being organized by other government departments will now be able to benefit from the Translation Bureau's interpretation services instead of having to contract non-accredited interpreters on their own," said PSPC, touching on the fact that due to the bureau's struggle to meet current service-level demands, departments have had to look to outside providers to get interpretation services at some events.

"Parliamentary events are considered technical in nature and will therefore not be assigned entry-level interpreters," stated the department.

The bureau has long offered interpreter intern positions to individuals who come close to passing its accreditation exam. These interns are hired as bureau staff, and while they cover parliamentary events, "they are constantly supervised, evaluated, and provided coaching to ensure the quality of their interpretation services," the department explained. The number of interns hired depends on the bureau's "capacity to offer an intern position, as well as candidates' willingness," said PSPC.

The new entry-level interpreters would be contracted as freelancers, and as such, PSPC confirmed there isn't the same "employer-employee relationship" as exists with intern interpreters. Still, "coaching will be provided to the pilot project entry-level freelance interpreters, and they will be encouraged to take the exam to obtain full accreditation."

PSPC said entry-level accredited interpreters "will remain in the Translation Bureau's pool of freelancers in that capacity until they either sit the exam again and get full accreditation, "quality checks show that they should no longer benefit from entry-level accreditation," or until the bureau decides to end the pilot project.

"Entry-level freelance interpreters will be subject to quality evaluation of their work as are all Translation Bureau freelancers," noted PSPC. "This being a pilot project, adjustments will be made as outcomes, lessons, and best practices become known."

Last year, the bureau increased the frequency of its accreditation exam to two times per year. Historically, only a small fraction of the individuals who sit the exam actually pass, and not all who pass opt to work for the bureau.

For example, following the 2021 exam, nine of the 52 indi-

viduals who sat the exam passed, three of whom opted not to work for the bureau. No exam was held in 2020, but in 2019, just two people out of 44 candidates passed, only one of whom accepted an employment offer.

To try to boost capacity and entice more people to work for it, the bureau recently launched a new remote simultaneous interpretation—or dispersed mode—option, whereby freelance interpreters can work from outside the physical meeting room, and as a result are no longer required to live and work in the National Capital Region.

According to a slide presentation prepared by PSPC and shared with *The Hill Times*, entry-level accreditation would be equivalent to what's called the "yellow quality index," and such interpreters would be offered "one day of coaching per year, with feedback, by a Bureau staff interpreter."

"Freelancers who wish to can contribute to the initiative by mentoring entry-level freelancers," reads the slide.

The pilot has AIIC Canada—whose membership includes freelance interpreters—concerned on a number of fronts.

Along with worry that, once through the door, use of entry-level accredited interpreters will in time slip into parliamentary events, Gagnon highlighted the bureau's own description of what a "yellow" rating means, and the understanding entry-level interpreters would only get one day of coaching guaranteed per year, with any other mentorship being volunteer based. Meanwhile, she said she understands the mentorship program for staff intern interpreters has already "suffered because ... [of] the lack of interpreters to support them as they train."

"How is someone who has failed an exam, who is going to work—let's say—in general conferences, as claims the Translation Bureau, going to hone the skills required without mentoring—except for one day a year—to become a full-fledged interpreter?"

According to the definition included in the bureau's open contract document for freelancers, a yellow rating is described as when "interpretation contains many inaccuracies or omissions OR the inaccuracies and omissions are more serious and affect the meaning OR linguistic mistakes and clumsiness are serious

or frequent enough to distract the listener."

"These people are not ready," said Gagnon.

"The Translation Bureau is looking for a short-term solution to the problem of the qualified interpreters shortage, and there is no short-term solution."

A June 10 open letter to bureau CEO Jean-François Lymburner signed by 101 accredited freelance interpreters spoke to the group's "deep concern" over the bureau's plan, writing that it "de-values the credentials" of accredited interpreters. The bureau's "approach to addressing the shortage" of qualified interpreters "is both hostile to quality service and alienating of freelancers, to the point that a growing number of us will no longer be accepting assignments to work in Parliament."

"With the increase in the number of accredited freelancers who have become disaffected from the [Translation Bureau], we know it is only a matter of time before this new group of non-accredited freelancers will be assigned to work in Parliament," reads the letter. "Currently, accredited freelancers working at Parliament are assuming the lion's share of the work on the Hill [55 per cent], but this number will drop with the introduction of the [bureau's] plan."

To be eligible for bureau accreditation, individuals must hold a master's degree in conference interpreting. Currently, only two universities in Canada offer such a degree, producing only a small number of graduates each year. The bureau has previously noted efforts to encourage more universities to adopt such programs.

At a recent appearance before the Senate Internal Economy, Budgets, and Administration Committee, Lymburner noted "enrolment in language programs across the country has been declining."

Touching on the idea of the entry-level accreditation pilot—which was not specifically mentioned—in response to a question about the use of "yellow category" interpreters, he said the bureau has focused on trying to use "lower levels [of qualification] in order to bring young people into the Translation Bureau earlier and support them."

"I realize that this can give the impression that quality may be going down. However, that isn't

the case at all," Lymburner told Senators.

According to numbers provided by PSPC, the bureau managed to keep up with staff attrition—albeit by largely slim margins—between 2020-21 and 2022-23, but last year only hired four new staff interpreters while five retired or left for other reasons. Currently, the bureau has 66 staff interpreters, and 84 freelance interpreters who provide services to Parliament.

In terms of freelancers, that's a roughly 29 per cent decrease since 2020-21, when 119 freelancers were on the bureau's roster.

AIIC Canada has warned of a "looming crisis" for the bureau when it comes to staffing levels. An August 2022 survey by the association found that, of the 92 accredited freelance interpreters who responded, 49 per cent indicated they planned to retire in the next five years.

Along with a scant pool of new grads and natural attrition, the bureau has been grappling both to respond to increasing service-level demands from Parliament, and to protect its existing workforce from injury.

When Parliament switched to a hybrid format amid COVID-19, reports of injuries among interpreters spiked.

While the rate of injuries has since dropped, reports continue, including from those interpreting in-person participants. In April, feedback caused by an earpiece device getting too close to a microphone led to a "significant hearing injury" for one interpreter, who went on leave as a result.

The Translation Bureau was allocated \$35-million in the 2024 federal budget to help boost its translation and interpretation capacity, including \$1.1-million over five years to establish a scholarship program.

Gagnon recognized the challenge the bureau is facing in increasing its workforce, noting "the association has no short-term solution, either," but argued that with this new pilot project, it "is now trying to get through the back door to broaden" its pool.

"You have a great many interpreters who have been injured, you have a great many who have announced they will be retiring ... this is not the answer, to take people who have failed the exam," said Gagnon.

"The [Translation Bureau] was not mandated to water down quality. It has [been allocated] \$35-million to grow the number of qualified interpreters, not to cut quality standards."

Gagnon said the bureau's focus should instead be on an "all-hands-on-deck approach," with the government working together with industry and academia "to pull together to train the next generation of interpreters," and encourage uptake of the profession, "not unlike what was done" to encourage more women to pursue careers in STEM.

"The government has to invest in training qualified people; you cannot do that overnight," she said.

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*The Hill Times*



## News

# Pharmacare bill and Liberal messaging at odds, confusing stakeholders on vision for 'single-payer' system

The language in the pharmacare bill is 'fatally flawed,' according to pharmacare expert Dr. Steve Morgan.

BY TESSIE SANCI

The Liberal government's highly anticipated pharmacare bill promises a single-payer program, but what that means exactly is unclear as Health Minister Mark Holland continues to say publicly that people on private insurance plans can keep using those plans.

Bill C-64, the Pharmacare Act, outlines principles that are meant to assist the Liberals in their "aim of continuing to work toward the implementation of national universal pharmacare," as per the bill's wording. The federal government wants to begin coverage with "universal, single-payer, first-dollar coverage" of some pharmaceuticals related to diabetes and contraception.

"The [bill's] language is fatally flawed because of its ambiguity," said Dr. Steve Morgan, a professor at the University of British Columbia and a well-known pharmacare expert who has advocated for a single-payer program for many years. "[Pharmaceuticals are] a critical and massive component in the health-care system, and yet this legislation doesn't define terms such as what does 'single payer' mean? What does 'universal' mean? What does 'first dollar' mean? What does 'public' mean?"

None of those terms are defined in the legislation, which is an outcome of the supply-and-confidence agreement between the Liberals and the New Democratic Party. Instead, definitions are limited to the following: "Indigenous Peoples," "Minister," "pharmacare," and "pharmaceutical product."

"We understand the term 'single payer' to be one payer, and we understand the term 'universal' means everybody is on that plan," said Stephen Frank, president and CEO of the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association, which has advocated for a mixed-payer program where national pharmacare would focus on coverage for those without access to a private plan.

"If that's not what this means, then those need to be defined



Despite the pharmacare bill referencing only a 'single-payer' program, Health Minister Mark Holland says people with private insurance for contraceptives and diabetes-related pharmaceuticals can keep their plans following the implementation of national pharmacare. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

differently in the act," Frank told *Hill Times Research*.

Single-payer coverage would typically mean that drug coverage is provided by one payer. In this case, that payer would be the federal government. But Holland (Ajax, Ont.) has publicly said that individuals with private plans can remain on those plans following the program's implementation.

Asked about that detail by his parliamentary secretary, Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Ont.), at a May 23 House Health Committee meeting, Holland said that was "100 per-cent right," and Canadians would be able to maintain their private insurance coverage.

Holland said the same during a scrum in the West Block on June 4. When asked by *Hill Times Research* if those with private insurance for contraceptives and diabetes-related pharmaceuticals could keep their plans following the implementation of national pharmacare, Holland's one-word answer was "yes."

But Bill C-64 does not mention the continuation of private insurance plans. Instead, it makes references to "universal" and "single payer," as well as the Canada Health Act. For example, the preamble states that the "step-by-step implementation of national universal pharmacare" is "to be guided by the Canada Health Act."

The Canada Health Act requires that health care provided by physicians and in hospitals be paid for by the provinces and territories. The federal government contrib-

utes to that public funding through the Canada Health Transfer.

"Those terms [in the Canada Health Act] have been defined in the courts over 30 to 40 years to mean publicly administered, etc.," Frank said. Private insurers "can't provide coverage for physicians and hospitals."

Another concern is how Bill C-64 would be interpreted in a court if it were ever legally challenged.

"Legislation is the law of the land. If you go to court, the court pulls the legislation out and interprets that; they don't take a scrum from the minister and say, 'that's the rule,'" Frank said on June 5 in reaction to Holland's comments to *Hill Times Research* the previous day.

The health insurance industry also has questions about whether it could legally cover diabetes-related pharmaceutical products and contraception in light of the fact that the federal government plans to cover a selection of those. (The federal government published a list of products it would cover on Feb. 29—the same day that Bill C-64 was introduced in the House of Commons.)

Holland answered that question during the June 4 scrum.

"A private plan will continue to operate as it has with the drugs that it covers. We are going to cover a base-level of drugs... We're going to talk with provinces to establish what we might be able to do for that or beyond," Holland said. "And then a private carrier will continue to offer the

coverage that they have... There's nothing about the legislation that in any way contemplates an interruption of that private care."

Frank told *Hill Times Research* that he would like to see that clarification in the legislation.

## Feds aim to compare two pharmacare pilot projects

Since the bill was first introduced in the House in February, Holland has referred to the national pharmacare program as a pilot project.

Another related pilot project is a funding arrangement with Prince Edward Island's government, in which Ottawa has been providing money to the province to help increase access to medications for those who are eligible for any one of the province's 26 public drug plans. This improved access has occurred in part by reducing out-of-pocket costs for those who use a P.E.I. plan to help pay for medication.

Unlike the proposal for "universal" national pharmacare, P.E.I.'s drug plans are not available to all Islanders. Eligibility can depend on financial need, the type of illness someone has, or their age, amongst other criteria.

"I don't think we have all the data," Holland said on June 4. "I want to be able to take a look at these two models not as theoretical concepts, but as things that are actually living and breathing in the real world, so that as we expand out to other drugs [beyond diabetes medications

and contraceptives], we can know what model is best."

"I think eventually when we roll out an entire pharmacare plan, there will have to be a decision [as to] whether or not it's a fill-in-the-gaps P.E.I. model or whether it's a single-payer universal model," Holland added.

When asked how the government expects to compare the two models if they both rely on a mixed-payer system, Holland said, "They're not [both mixed-payer] in the sense that the model that will be for contraceptives and will be for diabetes drugs—anybody can have access to it."

Morgan said that the health minister won't get the "real-world data" he's looking for on a single-payer system if the government goes ahead with a national program that keeps private insurers in the mix.

"If we wanted to provide real-world evidence of what a single-payer public pharmacare program would look like on just the two drug classes that have been identified in this bill, we would do a different model than ... [the one Holland] is committed to implementing, which is a fill-in-the-gaps program for those drugs," Morgan told *Hill Times Research*.

Another issue that lacks clarity in the bill, as far as Morgan is concerned, is the level of administrative burden for those who would prefer to access diabetes medications and contraceptives through a national plan.

Morgan noted that the federal dental care plan requires someone to state on their application that they don't have a private plan. If similar documentation is necessary for access to the national pharmacare plan, that could be a deterrent, especially for pharmaceutical products where there tends to be social stigma, such as with contraceptives, Morgan said.

On June 5, *Hill Times Research* requested interviews with both the NDP and Conservative Party health critics—Peter Julian (New Westminster-Burnaby, B.C.), and Stephen Ellis (Cumberland-Colchester, N.S.), respectively—but did not receive a response by publication.

During a scrum in West Block on June 4, *Hill Times Research* asked NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) about the contradictory message between the bill's references to a "single-payer" program, and the Liberals' intent that private insurance plans continue to be an option for Canadians.

"The first step right now is covering birth control and diabetes medication and devices, and the legislation lays out a foundation for us to move forward with universal pharmacare," Singh said.

"We believe in a universal single-payer program. We included that language in the bill. This bill isn't perfect, but this bill does lay the foundation," he added.

Tessie Sanci is the executive editor of *Hill Times Research*, which provides in-depth coverage of federal health policy.

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## News

# ‘Political class needs to wake the hell up, and stop treating India with kid gloves,’ say Sikh advocates seeking answers on foreign interference

The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians’ latest report found the government of India—not Russia—to be the second-most significant foreign interference threat after China.

Continued from page 1

interference, NSICOP noted that the “most significant perpetrators” of foreign interference were the governments of China and Russia, with China representing the greatest foreign interference threat, followed by Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, and one other country, the identity of which the latest report has redacted.

However, during the most recent report’s period of review, while it noted that the “broader trends” of foreign interference remained consistent with that report—with China remaining the largest foreign interference threat—it observed that Russia was not engaged in foreign interference activities “within the more narrow context of Canadian democratic institutions and processes.” While Russia maintained the capability to engage in those activities, it “lacked the intent to do so,” since Canada was a “lower-level priority” compared to the United States, the report said.

Instead, NSICOP found that India had emerged as the “second-most significant foreign interference threat,” and that during its period of review, India’s activities had “extended beyond countering what it perceived as pro-Khalistani efforts in Canada to include interfering in Canadian democratic processes and institutions, including through the targeting of Canadian politicians, ethnic media, and Indo-Canadian ethnocultural communities.”

While much of the report’s findings have been redacted and replaced with vague descriptions



NSICOP has ‘gone as far as we possibly can’ in terms of transparency, says Liberal chair David McGuinty. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

of the information that has been removed, it describes allegations ranging from instances of “media manipulation,” citing an example of attempts to discredit a political party leader using “materials drafted by Indian intelligence organizations”; alleged interference in a Conservative Party leadership race; financial support to “some candidates from two political parties,” who CSIS assessed had been unaware of the source of the funding; and examples of parliamentarians who wittingly assisted India to influence their colleagues, and provided confidential information to Indian officials “soon after their election.”

The report also describes how India uses its network of influence, which includes not only some parliamentarians, but also journalists, members of “ethnocultural communities,” and an “active proxy,” who attempts to further India’s interests by “monitoring and attempting to influence politicians.” One redacted section of the report describes Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) information regarding an Indian proxy repeatedly claiming to have transferred funds from India to politicians at all levels of government in return for “political favours,” including “raising issues in Parliament.” NSICOP also notes that CSIS did not share this information with the RCMP or with the Commissioner of Elections Canada.

The NSICOP conclusions are echoed in the preliminary findings from the federal Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference, which included clandestine attempts to provide financial support to unwitting preferred candidates in the 2021 federal election, foreign interference in both the 2021 and 2019 elections, and the use of Canadian-based proxies and influence networks.

In the first report released by the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference on May 3, commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue said that while India’s interests relate to Canada’s South Asian community and what it views as the fostering of anti-India sentiment and support of an independent Sikh homeland—Khalistan—India “does not differentiate between lawful, pro-Khalistani political advocacy, and the relatively small Canada-based Khalistani violent extremism.”

Lawyer Jaskaran Sandhu, who represented the Sikh Coalition at the Hogue inquiry, told *The Hill Times* that the NSICOP report is a “validation” of the Sikh community’s “lived experience and knowledge” of how India not only targets the diaspora, but also conducts hostile foreign interference.

Sandhu, a former executive director of the World Sikh Organization (WSO) of Canada and the co-founder of Baaz News, said the report also vindicates advocacy groups like the WSO and associa-

tions like the Ontario Gurdwaras Committee and British Columbia Gurdwaras Council, which had been “ringing alarm bells” for decades, and had been forceful advocates for India’s inclusion in Hogue’s mandate.

“We’ve allowed the Indian government—over decades—to interfere in this country without any serious level of scrutiny from our decision-makers, [or] any punishment or even public shaming of the nefarious activities they are engaged in,” Sandhu said. “They’ve allowed this to fester, evolve, and morph into something that, in its extreme form, has led to the assassination of a Canadian on Canadian soil.”

On Sept. 18, 2023, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) rose in the House of Commons to reveal “credible allegations” implicating the government of India in the assassination of Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar outside of the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, B.C., the previous June.

On Nov. 22, 2023, *The Financial Times* reported that U.S. authorities had thwarted a conspiracy to assassinate Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, a dual American-Canadian citizen who is general counsel for Sikhs for Justice, and a close associate of Nijjar. *The Financial Times* also reported that U.S. President Joe Biden raised the matter with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the

G20 summit in New Delhi that same month. The U.S. National Security Council confirmed to the outlet that alongside the diplomatic warning between U.S. and Indian officials “at the senior-most levels,” federal prosecutors have also filed a sealed indictment against at least one alleged perpetrator in a New York district court.

Four Indian nationals—Karan Brar, Kamalpreet Singh and Karanpreet Singh, and Amandeep Singh—who have been accused of murder and conspiracy in Nijjar’s killing appeared in B.C. provincial court on May 21, where Judge Mark Jetté placed them under a no-contact order before adjourning until the suspects’ next appearance on June 25.

While India was later specifically included in Hogue’s mandate alongside China and Russia, given the NSICOP findings and Nijjar’s assassination, the country’s exclusion from the initial mandate was a diplomatic calculation rather than one based on Canadians’ security, Balpreet Singh Boparai, legal counsel and spokesperson for the World Sikh Organization of Canada, told *The Hill Times*.

“That’s absolutely unacceptable,” Boparai said, adding that the Sikh community feels as if the Indian government’s foreign interference has largely been ignored as it only seemed to affect them, and Canada would rather safeguard its trade relations.

“That trade-off is immoral and unprincipled, as far as we’re concerned, and the results are in front of us,” Boparai said, pointing to not just the targeting of the Sikh community, but also the “metastasizing” foreign interference efforts detailed in the NSICOP report.

However, Boparai said it shouldn’t have taken that long for Canada to “put its foot down,” questioning why it had seemingly not been considered an issue for nearly four decades when the targets were limited to the Sikh community.

“What does that say to our democratic values here that it was OK to target Sikhs for four decades, and now that it’s gotten worse and India has gotten bolder, now it’s a problem?”

Boparai noted that while Trudeau has gone far beyond any previous prime minister in addressing the foreign interference threat posed by India’s government, it still isn’t enough.

“We’re talking about MPs working on behalf of India to influence their colleagues and provide confidential information to foreign states or receiving payments for raising issues in Parliament on their behalf. It doesn’t get any worse than this,” Boparai said. “This is absolutely shocking and unacceptable, and I really feel that we need to know who these individuals are.”

Boparai said that the allegations in the report undermine the public’s confidence in its Parliament and parliamentarians, and “transparency is absolutely critical” to restore that confidence.

“I understand the need for due process, but this isn’t a minor

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# Deal disquiet: CUSMA review could be a rough ride with the U.S. holding the reins, says pact's negotiator

Canada, the U.S., and Mexico could all be jockeying to sweeten the deal as competing interests and priorities colour the road to the required 2026 review.

Continued from page 1

must take place six years after the agreement entered into force on July 1, 2020, with all three parties having to sign off on the deal being extended.

"The review is still more than two years away, but already business communities in all three countries are concerned about it," Steve Verheul, who led the NAFTA renegotiations, told the House Committee on International Trade on June 4.

The committee is studying the approaching 2026 review of CUSMA, holding four meetings and hearing from 28 witnesses.

Verheul, now a principal at GT and Company Executive Advisors, said the review is "not a good fit" in a trade pact, but was included at the request of the U.S. so they could "build leverage" to "seek changes on an agreement on an ongoing basis."

"This undermines confidence in the agreement, and introduces ongoing uncertainties," he told MPs.

"The review clause—in itself—creates unwelcome uncertainty for business. More significant impacts will depend on whether or not a fractious review can be avoided, what specific issues may be opened or reopened in the review, and whether the parties can instead pursue a more common forward-looking North American agenda," he added.

Verheul said he thinks it is "very unlikely" that the review will lead to the end of the North American trade deal, but noted that he wouldn't be surprised if the U.S. tries to improve CUSMA for itself.

"I think they [the U.S.] will see the need for them to continue with the agreement as well," he said.

If one or more of the three countries indicate that they don't want to continue the agreement, it starts a 10-year process of annual reviews that would then lead to the pact expiring in 2036,



Former trade negotiator Steve Verheul says it is 'very unlikely' that the CUSMA review in 2026 will lead to the deal expiring 10 years later. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

if all three countries don't agree to extending the deal for another 16-year term.

During the NAFTA renegotiations, U.S. trade officials initially proposed a six-year sunset clause, but that was rejected by Canadian negotiators in favour of the agreed-upon clause that kept the deal in place for at least 16 years.

Verheul said elections in the three member countries elevate the uncertainty.

Americans go to the polls on Nov. 5, while a federal election will take place in Canada no later than October 2025. Mexico recently elected Claudia Sheinbaum to succeed term-limited Andrés Manuel López Obrador as president.

Verheul said that Canada and Mexico will "almost certainly" support continuing the agreement, but remarked that both Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. have indicated that the review could be a forum to renegotiate some aspects of the deal.

Verheul said the review is becoming a "potentially critical turning point" in Canada-U.S. trade, remarking that Canada will face "significant challenges" regardless of November's election results due to the protectionism and interventionism emanating from both camps.

"How the review turns out could go a long way towards determining if we continue down the path towards a more integrat-

of dairy access that was negotiated in CUSMA prevents the U.S. from having full access to what was agreed.

The Canadian government has asserted that it will offer no additional access to the politically sensitive supply-managed sectors.

Another potential stumbling block in the review could be a legislated ban on supply-management concessions if Bill C-282 becomes law. The bill is currently in front of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

In a second-reading speech opposing the bill in the Upper Chamber on April 11, Progressive Senator Peter Harder (Ontario) said the bill would be akin to "handing the United States a hand grenade," adding that its passage would be as if Canada was "pulling the pin."

Verheul said he doesn't think Bill C-282 would come into play during the review, as the U.S. complaints about Canadian dairy have been over how the government allocates it, and not how much access is given.

## Review won't just be a rollover of trade pact: Blais

Former diplomat Louise Blais, who was twice Canada's consul general in Atlanta, said that while the hope was for an easy CUSMA rollover and extension, that is looking increasingly like "wishful thinking."

She said the review is "a bit of a poison pill" for Canada, but it was something the government had to accept due to its bargaining position during NAFTA renegotiations if it wanted to finalize the deal.

"Everything is pointing to the fact that we should be preparing for discussion, that it won't be just a rollover," said Blais, senior special adviser at the Business Council of Canada.

She said that Canada should be preparing for the review by avoiding self-inflicted wounds, citing the digital sales tax that has been opposed by the Biden administration, as well as Bill C-282.

"Avoiding adding irritants to the list is important, especially when you want to show goodwill, and you want to show sensitivity to concerns," she said.

Blais said realizing wins in the review could be even more difficult than during the NAFTA renegotiations, but she added that she thinks it would be "very

difficult" for the U.S. to walk away from the deal.

But unlike the blindside of NAFTA renegotiations that came with the election of then-U.S. president Donald Trump, Blais said Canada knows the CUSMA review is coming, and should be prepared.

International trade lawyer Lawrence Herman said the review provisions were designed to give "maximum leverage" to the U.S.

He said that it is a "very plausible scenario" that the trade pact will end in 2036, but noted that the U.S. may be willing to extend the agreement if it can be amended to address some of its concerns.

Herman added that the annual reviews that will take place if the three parties don't agree to extend the pact in 2026 will also provide "maximum leverage," and allow "maximum pressure" by the U.S. leading up to the deal's end.

"There's going to be a lot of uncertainty. It's unclear how the process will unfold. It's unclear what U.S. demands will be. It's unclear what Canada can bring to the table to resist those demands. All of which means the Canada side has to start preparing for some difficult years ahead when it comes to Canada-U.S. trade, and Canada-U.S.-Mexico trade," he said, remarking that the Canadian government should be meeting with American and Mexican counterparts to figure out how the process can best be managed.

Herman said Canada needs to do whatever it can to maintain a framework with the U.S.

Carlo Dade, Canada West Foundation director of trade and trade infrastructure, said the worst-case scenario isn't necessarily that CUSMA will end, but that Canada will enter a period of limbo through successive annual reviews.

"If we're on tenterhooks every year—if we're worried for 365 days for 10 years [about] have we upset the Americans [and] are the Americans going to be worried—we have to factor that worry into pretty much every decision we take as a country," he said.

While the government has launched a "Team Canada" engagement effort with the U.S.—which is being led by International Trade Minister Mary Ng (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.), Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.), and Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. Kirsten Hillman—Dade said more attention needs to be paid to Mexico due to its increased leverage over the U.S. compared to Canada.

He said it will be important to understand whether Mexico will be a friend or foe on issues most important to Canada.

"We're prepared to be totally and completely blindsided by Mexico," he said. "As bad as things are in the U.S. for us, things are worse in Mexico. It's a complete blind spot. We have no clue."

Ng and officials from Global Affairs Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will appear before the House International Trade Committee on June 13.

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## News

# ‘Political class needs to wake the hell up, and stop treating India with kid gloves,’ say Sikh advocates seeking answers on foreign interference

Continued from page 18

issue,” Boparai said. “There’s clearly a very big problem here, and Canadians need to know more.”

On June 10, the Bloc Québécois introduced a motion requesting the terms of reference for the Hogue inquiry be further expanded to include the allegations raised in the NSICOP report. The Conservatives sought to amend it to include a demand to release all the names of the current and former parliamentarians involved.

Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) told reporters during a June 10 press conference the Liberals would support the Bloc’s non-binding motion when it came for a vote on June 11 as the Hogue commission is the “appropriate forum” to examine the allegations in the NSICOP report.

“We understand that all parliamentarians should want to ensure that the appropriate review takes place with respect to parliamentarians themselves,” LeBlanc said, adding that the commission would have access to all of the information NSICOP had, and can request any other documentation it requires.

LeBlanc said that the Privy Council Office had already contacted the commission over the weekend for suggestions on a “best way forward,” and would work collaboratively, but added that the commission’s terms of reference “as already drafted” are sufficient for it to follow the evidence.

The Liberal government has been resistant to calls to identify the implicated parliamentarians, arguing that it is bound by secrecy laws and that disclosure could harm ongoing criminal investigations. LeBlanc said that based on a conversation he had with RCMP deputy commissioner Mike Flynn, he could be criminally prosecuted if he were to stand up in the House and disclose the names involved, as some are requesting.

While speaking with reporters on June 5, Liberal MP David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Ont.), who chairs NSICOP, said the committee had “gone as far as we possibly can,” and it couldn’t provide any more information than what was in the report.

Sandhu said that without greater transparency into the report’s findings, he is concerned that the alleged behaviour will only be allowed to become more normalized, particularly when it involves the Indian government.

Compared to allegations of foreign interference by the Chinese government, which he said are rightly treated like the

actions of a hostile state attempting to undermine Canadian interests, Sandhu said that when India engages in similar activities, Canadian politicians are much more “willing to stay wilfully ignorant,” since it is viewed as an important geopolitical ally and trade partner.

“Our political class needs to wake the hell up and stop treating India with kid gloves,” Sandhu said. “We need to stop seeing India as a value-aligned partner, and treat this more like how we treat [China’s interference].”

While the Trudeau government has taken a slightly more aggressive approach to India since the Nijjar allegations, Boparai said he is concerned that a potential government under Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) would attempt to “turn the page and restore relations with India without fixing the underlying problems” of foreign interference.

Since becoming party leader, Poilievre has repeatedly highlighted—including during his April 11 keynote address at this year’s Canada Strong and Free Networking Conference—the potential use of Canada’s liquefied natural gas reserves to help reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by exporting it to India and cutting out 2.5-billion tonnes of emissions currently generated by its use of coal-fired power plants.

Poilievre’s plan, alongside his proposal to increase lentil exports and sell civilian-grade uranium produced in Saskatchewan to India, has also caught the eye of Indian media. *The Hindustan Times* reported on a June 2 press conference Poilievre held in Mississauga, Ont., where he highlighted the plan. Additionally, in an October 2023 interview with the Nepalese media outlet Namaste Radio Toronto, Poilievre said the governments of Canada and India need a “professional relationship,” according to a *Hindustan Times* report.

“It’s fine to have our disagreements and hold each other accountable, but we have to have a professional relationship, and that is what I will restore when I’m prime minister of this country,” Poilievre is reported to have said.

Poilievre’s office did not respond to questions from *The Hill Times* regarding how his government would maintain a professional relationship with the government of India given the findings in the NSICOP report, and how he would maintain that relationship while holding India accountable for any interference or transnational repression of Canadian citizens.

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## Opinion

# A strong government focus is key to supporting Canada’s evolving workforce needs

We must collectively ensure that workers and employers in all regions of Canada have the skills and resources to thrive in the economy of today and tomorrow.

Ron J. McKerlie

Opinion



The support of the federal government has been critical in ensuring Canadians of all ages have access to lifelong learning opportunities that meet the demands of our changing economy and workforce.

As the country expands its industrial base and economic opportunities, we must collectively ensure that workers and employers in all regions of Canada have the skills and resources to thrive in the economy of today and tomorrow.

With funding through Employment and Social Development Canada’s (ESDC) Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program (SWSP), Canadian Colleges for a Resilient Recovery (C2R2) launched Quick Train Canada in 2023—a project that offered demand-driven workforce training solutions for a clean economy. The project supported short-cycle training to Canadians of all ages to upskill in their current sector, or to reskill for new opportunities. C2R2 also initiated—with ESDC funding—Resilient Housing and Upskilling for Canada’s Communities, a collaborative program in remote Indigenous communities to support efficiency in buildings and energy solutions.

The extensive influence and success of initiatives like Quick Train Canada and Resilient Housing and Upskilling for Canada’s Communities underscores how imperative federal government investments are in addressing the growing need to engage, retain, and cultivate the Canadian workforce, particularly as industries and the economy pivot towards new opportunities. The impact and nimbleness of these projects increase dramatically when government contributes resources. Funding provided by the Government of Canada plays a crucial role in fostering confidence, competitiveness, and the requisite skills among Canadians, thereby bolstering the country’s competitive advantage.

## A convenor to support Canada’s economy

While Canada’s population, communities, and economy grow and evolve, these changes are made easier when proper supports are in place, and there is strong engagement with industry partners, partner institutions, and likeminded organizations.

The organizations the Government of Canada has previously supported with investments through SWSP serve as examples of how a collective impact framework can rapidly advance the goals of the federal government. These organizations have broad networks, actively seek collaboration opportunities with industry leaders, and have an ability to lead national conversation. The collective impact approach taken by these organizations through SWSP has allowed projects aligned with the overarching goals of the federal government to be achieved quickly, with training opportunities being made available to Canadians within months of the federal investment.

## Readying workers and employers for the future

Without the support of the federal government, projects like Quick Train Canada and Resilient Housing and Upskilling for Canada’s Communities could not have been implemented with such agility.

C2R2 believes the Government of Canada should continue supporting projects that are national in scope to ensure regional comparative advantages, strengths, and challenges are addressed, and that Canadians are provided equal opportunity to contribute to their country’s growing economy.

We applaud the Government of Canada as it continues to create new opportunities to help employers, organizations, and employees extend their knowledge base. The most recent funding opportunity available through ESDC under the Sustainable Jobs Training Fund will support a range of training projects that ensure workers and employers across Canada have the skills and resources needed to thrive in a greener, more sustainable economy.

As Canada’s economy continues to evolve regionally and nationally, so, too, will industry demand. Government-supported national initiatives are important—now more than ever—to support mid-career upskilling and reskilling of all Canadians, readying our country for the future, and reinforcing Canada’s position as a leader on the global stage.

Ron J. McKerlie is the president and CEO of Mohawk College, and chair of Canadian Colleges for a Resilient Recovery.  
The Hill Times





Stuart Benson

## Party Central

# The 'Godfather' of Canadian hip hop and a *Godspell* reunion take over the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards

The National Arts Centre rolled out the red carpet for some of the biggest names in Canadian hip hop, opera, theatre, and songwriting on June 8 for the annual Governor General's Performing Arts Awards.

**Party Central** was on the scene, alongside ambassadors, politicians, and some of the heaviest hitters in Canada's performing arts scene.

The annual Governor General's Performing Arts Awards (GGPAA) gala—presented this year by sponsor RBC—was created in 1992 to celebrate those Canadians who have enriched this country's performing arts from theatre, ballet, and classical music, to more contemporary pop culture.

This year's Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award laureates included **Measha Brueggergosman-Lee**, a soprano and faith advocate who has performed for parliamentarians, **Queen Elizabeth II**, and at the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver; **Ronnie Burkett**, a playwright and puppeteer credited with reinventing and revitalizing the art of puppet theatre in Canada; **Diane Juster**, a singer-songwriter, pianist, and arts advocate who has written songs for **Céline Dion**, 1999 GGPAA laureate **Ginette Reno**, and **Dalida**, and is co-founder of the Société professionnelle des auteurs et des compositeurs du Québec; Tony Award winner **Andrea Martin**, of SCTV fame; and the "godfather of Canadian hip hop," **Wesley "Maestro Fresh Wes" Williams**, whose debut album, *Symphony in Effect*, was the first album by a Canadian hip-hop artist to reach platinum status, and his single *Let Your Backbone Slide* was the first rap recording to go gold and to be inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame.

The winner of this year's **Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism** in the Performing Arts was **Jenny Belzberg**, a community activist and philanthropist. The 2024 National Arts Centre Award, which recognizes the work of an "extraordinary nature and significance" by an individual artist and/or company in the past performance year, was bestowed to **Mélanie Demers**, multidisciplinary artist, choreographer, director, performer, and founding artistic director of Montréal-based contemporary dance company MAYDAY.

Joining the laureates on the red carpet this year, alongside Governor General **Mary Simon** and her husband **Whit Fraser**, was the gala's returning host **Isabelle Racicot**, a three-time Sounds of Blackness Awards' Female Personality of the Year; guest conductor **Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser**; hip-hop artists **Michelle "Michie Mee" McCulloch** and **Ruben "Timal" Louis**; and this year's pairing for the 2024 mentorship program: 2016 GGPAA laureate **Susan**

**Aglukark**, Canada's first Juno Award-winning Inuk singer-songwriter, and mentee **Angela Amarualik**, a folk/pop artist and throat singer from Igloolik, Nunavut.

Ahead of the red-carpet entrance of the laureates, more than 300 VIP guests arrived for an exclusive cocktail reception and pre-show dinner.

While not important enough for a seat at the dinner, among those who were, **Party Central** spotted NAC president and CEO **Christopher Deacon**; **Guy Pratte**, the NAC's board of trustees chair; CBC CEO **Catherine Tate**; **Jeremy Clark**, vice-president of CPAC; Music Publishers Canada CEO **Margaret McGuffin**; Heritage Minister **Pascale St-Onge**; Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly**; Liberal MP **Mona Fortier**; former governor general **David Johnston**; former federal finance minister **Bill Morneau**; Japanese Ambassador to Canada **Kanji Yamanouchi**; Hungarian Ambassador to Canada **Maria Vass-Salazar**; United States Ambassador to Canada **David Cohen**; independent journalist **Paul Wells**; former CBC parliamentary editor **Don Newman**, now with Rubicon Strategy; **Shannon Day-Newman**, Honens Ottawa Laureate Circle chair; and *The Hill Times*' publisher and CEO **Anne Marie Creskey**, her sister **Magdelene Creskey**, committee reports writer, and **Leslie Dickson**, *The Hill Times* publisher.

Once all of the laureates and the Governor General walked the ruby runway and posed for photos, the lights dimmed and attendees were ushered into Southam Hall for the night's tribute performances.

These included a high-flying operatic performance, throat singing, a moving rendition of Juster's *Je ne suis qu'une chanson* performed by **Bruno Pelletier**, Michie Mee letting her backbone slide, and a performance from Brueggergosman-Lee herself featuring a couple of bars from Timal.

In the finale—and a personal highlight for this reporter raised on Comedy Central reruns—Martin's fellow SCTV alumni **Martin Short** and **Eugene Levy** took to the stage alongside accompanist **Paul Shaffer**, musical director of the *Late Night with David Letterman* band. The trio—who were all involved in the famed 1972 Toronto production of *Godspell*—lead the audience in a sing-along in Martin's honour.

After the show, it was back out into the Canal Lobby where The Rock Steadies kept the after party going until well past midnight.

However, while the Hendricks Grand Cabaret gin cocktails were indeed very special, after five receptions since the week began, **Party Central** called it an early night and headed home to watch some Stanley Cup Finals' highlights.

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Whit Fraser, left; Stephen Lee; his sons Shepherd and Sterling Brueggergosman; Governor General Mary Simon; and 2024 Laureate Measha Brueggergosman-Lee at the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards on June 8 at the National Arts Centre.



Diane Juster.



CBC CEO Catherine Tate, left, and Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge.



Wesley 'Maestro Fresh Wes' Williams, left, and his son Chancellor Williams.



Michelle 'Michie Mee' McCulloch, left, and Ruben 'Timal' Louis.



Susan Aglukark.



Angela Amarualik.



Jenny Belzberg, recipient of the 2024 Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts, left; and Petronila Lorgonio.



Andrea Martin.

*The Hill Times* photographs by Stuart Benson



Mélanie Demers, centre, her son Milo, Angélique Wilkie, left, and Daniel Villeneuve.



Ronnie Burkett, left, and his husband John Alcorn.





Laura Ryckewaert  
**Hill Climbers**

# Labour and Seniors Minister O'Regan finds a new comms lead

Plus, there are some recent staff departures from the offices of Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, and Sport Minister Carla Qualtrough.

Labour and Seniors Minister **Seamus O'Regan** has found a new director of communications for his office in **Andreea Campobasso**, who's new to Parliament Hill.



Andreea Campobasso is communications director to Minister O'Regan. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Campobasso has most recently been busy as founder and chief strategy officer of The Advisory Studio, a strategic and brand management services firm that she first founded back in 2004. Between 2020 and 2022, she was a principal secretary in the office of then-Barrie, Ont., mayor **Jeff Lehman**, during which time she also served as interim executive director of Ontario's Big City Mayors.

Campobasso logged her first day as communications lead in O'Regan's office on May 16.

**Jane Deeks** was previously communications director to O'Regan, but as reported by **Hill Climbers**, she left the minister's office in mid-April to join Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s office as director of



Jonathan Robinson is now a senior adviser for parliamentary affairs. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

digital communications. Following her exit, **Jonathan Robinson**, who until recently had been filling in as acting director of parliamentary affairs, stepped in as the minister's interim head of communications. With Campobasso's hiring, Robinson has been made a senior adviser for parliamentary affairs to O'Regan.

Prior to joining O'Regan's office in the fall of 2023 to oversee the parliamentary affairs team while director **Damien O'Brien**—who has since returned—was on paternity leave, Robinson was working for the federal fisheries minister. Originally hired as a senior policy adviser under then-fisheries minister **Joyce Murray**, Robinson's most recent title there was that of director of parliamentary affairs. Murray was shuffled out of cabinet in July 2023, with **Diane Lebouthillier** taking over as minister for fisheries, oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Robinson is also a former assistant to both Murray as the MP for Vancouver Quadra, B.C., and to fellow British Columbia Liberal MP **Hedy Fry**, and a past West and North regional affairs adviser for the Liberal research bureau.

**Hartley Witten** is press secretary and senior communications adviser to O'Regan. Also currently tackling communications for the minister are **Mohammad Kamal**, strategic communications adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary; **Mark Whelan**, communications and regional adviser for the Atlantic, West, and North; and **Gabriel Mezzari**, adviser for communications, parliamentary affairs, and Quebec regional affairs.

**Paul Moen** is chief of staff to O'Regan.

## Staff exits for ministers Freeland, Qualtrough

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister **Chrystia Freeland** has seen a couple of staff departures from her office of late, and one new addition.

**Hill Climbers** has already noted **Guillaume Bertrand**'s recent exit from his role as director of Quebec outreach and strategy to Freeland to become press secretary and senior communications adviser to Public Services and Procurement Minister **Jean-Yves Duclos**.

Along with Bertrand, Freeland recently bade farewell to policy adviser **Nicholas Mahoney** who's set to begin a master's of business administration degree at Yale this fall.

In a recent LinkedIn post about his departure, Mahoney wrote: "It's been a privilege to spend the past few years learning from a whole bunch of incredible people. I'm grateful for everything they've taught me."

A former research associate with Finances of the Nation in Toronto, Mahoney



Labour and Seniors Minister Seamus O'Regan speaks to reporters in the West Block on Feb. 28. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Nicholas Mahoney, right, with Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

first joined Freeland's office as an intern through the Liberal Summer Leadership Program in 2021. After the 2021 federal election, Mahoney was hired as a special assistant for policy to Freeland; he was promoted to policy adviser in 2022.

On the flip side, Freeland's policy shop recently got some new blood with the hiring of policy adviser **Jeffrey Li**.

Li comes from the Ontario public service where he was most recently an economic specialist with the federal-provincial relations unit within the fiscal policy branch of the provincial finance ministry's budget office. He's also previously been an economist, and policy and programs assistant with Ontario Finance, and briefly worked as an intergovernmental affairs officer with Ontario's Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs.



Jeffrey Li is a new policy adviser to Minister Freeland. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Li already has some experience working at the federal level as a former assistant to Markham-Stouffville, Ont., Liberal MP **Helena Jaczek** between the spring of 2020 and 2021. His CV also includes time spent as a research assistant with Toronto Metropolitan University's Diversity Institute, as founder and president of Framework Public Affairs, as lead analyst on terrorism with the G8 Research Group, and as an intern with Red Gate International in Shanghai, and with the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., among other past roles noted on his LinkedIn profile.

Meanwhile, Sport and Physical Activity Minister **Carla Qualtrough** said goodbye to veteran staffer **Lucio Durante** last month.

Durante, who had been director of parliamentary affairs to Qualtrough since her time as employment minister, marked his last day in her office on May 20.

But he hasn't gone far. Durante is now working in The Other Place as an assistant to Ontario ISG Senator **Toni Varone**.

A staffer on the Hill since the early 1990s, Durante's more recent past roles include serving as director of operations to then-public services minister **Judy Foote**, and to Qualtrough during her turn in the public services portfolio. In 2018, Durante joined Liberal Party headquarters as national field director to prep for the 2019 election, though he left before the actual election took place. Durante returned to the Hill in early 2020 as parliamentary affairs director to Qualtrough as then-employment minister, and followed her to the sport portfolio after last summer's cabinet shuffle.

While a new parliamentary affairs head has yet to be named—so far as **Hill Climbers** understands—there is one new addition to Qualtrough's team to report: that of **Nina Perez**, who's been hired to cover Quebec regional affairs.



Nina Perez is now covering the Quebec desk for Minister Qualtrough. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Perez was most recently working as a constituency assistant, tackling outreach and communications, for then-Quebec Liberal MP **David Lametti**. She's also a former communications assistant with the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, and has previously interned with ACAT Canada, and the Green Party of Quebec.

In Qualtrough's office, she joins fellow regional advisers **Miles Wu**, who's also a senior policy adviser in addition to covering the Ontario desk; **Eamonn Schwartz**, who is both a policy and Atlantic regional affairs adviser; and **Diane Chieng**, who's a special assistant for operations and West and North regional affairs adviser.

**Kelly Bryant** is chief of staff to the sport minister.

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

# Veterans Affairs Committee releases report on experiences of women veterans on June 12

Liberal MP Emmanuel Dubourg chairs the House Veterans Affairs Committee, which will table its report on the experiences of Canadian women veterans and then hold an afternoon press conference on Wednesday, June 12. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



## MONDAY, JUNE 10—WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12

**IEFA's Montreal Conference**—Treasury Board President Anita Anand, Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne, and Small Business Minister Rechie Valdez will take part the International Economic Forum of the Americas' Montreal Conference. Other participants include Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem; Mairead Lavery, president and CEO, Export Development Canada; New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs; Canadian Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Perrin Beatty; Goldy Hyder, president and CEO of the Business Council of Canada; and former Liberal cabinet minister Scott Brison, who's now with BMO Wealth Management. Monday, June 10 to Wednesday, June 12 at the Bonaventure Hotel, 900 rue De la Gauchetière O, Montreal. Details online: [laconferencedemontreal.com](http://laconferencedemontreal.com).

## TUESDAY, JUNE 11—WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12

**Assembly of First Nations' Indigenous Law Gathering**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its second Indigenous Laws gathering from June 11-12. This year's theme is "Holding Space: Elevating Indigenous Laws to Address Historical Wrongs," with a focus on creating an Independent Centre for the Resolution of Specific Claims that recognizes and includes Indigenous Laws and legal orders. Tuesday, June 11, to Wednesday, June 12, at the Hôtel-Musée Premières Nations, Wendake, Que. Details online: [afn.ca](http://afn.ca).

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12

**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.

**Webinar: 'Skilled Trades Workforce Shortage'**—The Institute of Public Administration of Canada hosts a webinar, "Addressing Canada's Housing Supply Challenges: Skilled Trades Workforce Shortage." A panel of experts from various industries, including public and non-profit sectors will discuss strategies to attract, retain, and hire skilled-trade workers. Wednesday, June 12, at 12 p.m. happening online: [ipac.ca](http://ipac.ca).

**Veterans Committee to Hold Press Conference**—The House Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a press conference following the tabling of its report on the experiences of Canadian women veterans. Wednesday, June 12, at 4:30 p.m. ET in room 325, 180 Wellington. Call 613-944-9354.

## THURSDAY, JUNE 13

**Building NORAD's Northern Infrastructure**—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts a full-day event exploring the implementation of the infrastructure projects under NORAD Modernization. Thursday, June 13, at 8 a.m. ET. at Westin TwentyTwo, 22nd Floor, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details online: [cgai.ca](http://cgai.ca).

**BoC Deputy Governor Kozicki to Deliver Remarks**—Bank of Canada Deputy Governor Sharon Kozicki will discuss "The Bank of Canada's use of exceptional monetary policy tools in the COVID-19 pandemic: From Quantitative Easing to Quantitative Tightening," hosted by the Ottawa Economics Association. Thursday, June 13 at 8:30 a.m. at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St. Details online: [cabe.ca](http://cabe.ca).

**Ambassador Dion To Deliver Remarks**—Canada's Ambassador to France and to the European Union Stéphane Dion will take part in a panel discussion in French on "How can we strengthen our trade relations with Europe?" hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Thursday, June 13, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Marriott Château Champlain, 1050 De la Gauchetière St. W., Montreal. Details online: [corim.qc.ca](http://corim.qc.ca).

**Minister O'Regan to Deliver Remarks**—Labour and Seniors Minister Seamus O'Regan will deliver remarks on "Growth, Productivity and the Care Economy" at a lunch event hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Thursday,

June 13, at 11:30 a.m. at One King West, 1 King St. W., Toronto. Details online.

## THURSDAY, JUNE 13—SATURDAY, JUNE 15

**Prime Minister to Attend G7 Summit**—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will travel to Apulia, Italy, to attend the G7 Summit from Thursday, June 13, to Saturday, June 15. Details online: [pm.gc.ca](http://pm.gc.ca).

## SATURDAY, JUNE 15—SUNDAY, JUNE 16

**Prime Minister to Attend Ukraine Peace Summit**—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will visit Lucerne, Switzerland, to participate in the Summit on Peace in Ukraine from Saturday, June 15, to Sunday, June 16. Details online: [pm.gc.ca](http://pm.gc.ca).

## MONDAY, JUNE 17

**Munk Debate on Anti-Zionism**—The Munk Debate returns with a debate on anti-Zionism. The ongoing Israel-Gaza war brings new urgency to an old debate about whether anti-Zionism—the rejection of statehood for the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland—is being used as a cover for hatred against Jews as a people. Arguing in favour of this motion are author and journalist Douglas Murray, and Natasha Hausdorff, a London-U.K.-based barrister and director of UK Lawyers for Israel. Arguing against the motion are former MSNBC anchor Mehdi Hasan; and Gideon Levy, Israeli broadcaster and *Haaretz* columnist. Monday, June 17 at 7 p.m. at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto. Details online: [munkdebates.com](http://munkdebates.com).

## MONDAY, JUNE 17 - THURSDAY, JUNE 20

**Caribbean Development Bank Board of Governors Meeting**—Canada will host the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Caribbean Development Bank from Monday, June 17, to Thursday, June 20.

## TUESDAY, JUNE 18

**Panel: 'The Next Frontier in Canada's Digital Divide'**—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts

a hybrid event, "The Next Frontier in Canada's Digital Divide." Broadband coverage is on target to connect 100 per cent of Canadians to high-speed internet by 2030, but glaring gaps remain. Panelists include Ian Scott, former chair of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission; and Elisha Ram, senior assistant deputy minister of Employment and Social Development Canada's Income Security and Social Development Branch. Tuesday, June 18 at 11:30 a.m. ET at Delta Ottawa City Centre, 101 Lyon St. N. Details online: [irpp.org](http://irpp.org).

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19

**Human-Centred Leadership in Government**—The Institute of Public Administration of Canada, National Capital branch, hosts a learning event exploring the new era of hybrid work, a human-centred approach to leadership, and the role that leaders play in the public service. Panelists include Christiane Fox, deputy clerk of the Privy Council; and Sarah Smith, Ernst and Young. Wednesday, June 19, at 5 p.m. at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St. Details online via Eventbrite.

**Parliamentary Sickle Cell Breakfast**—It's National Sickle Cell Awareness Day, and the Senate's African Canadian Group will host a parliamentary breakfast in collaboration with Canada's Sickle Cell Association and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Black Health of uOttawa. Wednesday, June 19, 8-9:30 a.m., Room 200, Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St. To RSVP, visit: [forms.office.com/r/QZK9tWUkf](http://forms.office.com/r/QZK9tWUkf) or email [marie-francoise.megie@sen.parl.gc.ca](mailto:marie-francoise.megie@sen.parl.gc.ca).

## THURSDAY, JUNE 20

**CEO of Via HFR at Mayor's Breakfast**—Martin Imbleau, CEO of Via HFR, will be the special guest at the Mayor's Breakfast, hosted by Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, the Ottawa Board of Trade, and the *Ottawa Business Journal*. Thursday, June 20 at 7 a.m. at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Details online: [business.ottawabot.ca](http://business.ottawabot.ca).

**Webinar: 'Future of Remote or Hybrid Work'**—The Institute of Public Administration of Canada's Vancouver chapter hosts a webinar, "What's up for the Future of Remote or Hybrid Work: Social Connections, Wellness and Engagement?" the second in a two-part discussion on the evolving nature of workplaces and transforming the state of work in the public sector focusing on in-person, remote or hybrid work environments. Thursday, June 20 at 3 p.m. ET taking place online: [ipac.ca](http://ipac.ca).

## FRIDAY, JUNE 21

**Conference: 'Safeguarding Security in the Age of Disinformation'**—The Information Integrity Lab and the Canadian International Council, in collaboration with the Department of National Defence's MINDS program, host a one-day conference, "Canada and the World: Safeguarding Security in the Age of Disinformation." In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, disinformation profoundly challenges our democratic values. Featuring speakers from FINTRAC, the Business Council of Canada, Google, the Atlantic Council, and more. Friday, June 21 at 8:30 a.m. at the University of Ottawa, FSS, Room 4007, 120 University Priv. Details: [infolab.uottawa.ca](mailto:infolab.uottawa.ca).

## SATURDAY, JUNE 22—SUNDAY, JUNE 30

**Latin American Film Festival**—The Group of Embassies of Latin American Countries in Canada are hosting the 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Latin American Film Festival, which will take place on June 22, 23, 28, 29, and 30. The festival will feature an extraordinary selection of film productions (screened with English subtitles) from 16 countries at the University of Ottawa's Jack Turcot University Centre, UCU auditorium, 85 University Pvt. Free tickets can be booked through Eventbrite.

## MONDAY, JUNE 24

**Byelection in Toronto-St. Paul's**—A federal byelection will take place today in the riding of Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont.

## TUESDAY, JUNE 25

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

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26

**Sports Diplomacy and the Paris Olympics**—French Ambassador to Canada Michel Miraillet will take part in "Sports Diplomacy and the Paris Olympics" hosted by the Canadian International Council. Lois Betteridge, Canadian athlete heading to Paris 2024 Olympics, will join Miraillet to discuss global sports, climate change, and security at the Summer Olympics. Wednesday, June 26, at 5:30 p.m. at KPMG Headquarters, Suite 1800, 150 Elgin St., Ottawa. Details online via Eventbrite.

## MONDAY, JULY 1

**Canada Day Celebrations**—Downtown Ottawa is the place to be to celebrate Canada Day. This year marks the 157<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation. Official celebrations will take place on the main stage at LeBreton Flats Park from 9 a.m. to 10:15 p.m. ET. In addition to musical and dance performances celebrating Canada's diversity, there will be an RCAF Centennial flypast around noon, and fireworks in the evening. Details: [canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage](http://canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage).

## FRIDAY, JULY 5—SUNDAY, JULY 14

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

## SATURDAY, JULY 6

**Conservatives Host Stampede Barbecue**—Conservatives will celebrate the Calgary Stampede with a barbecue. Saturday, July 6 at 5:30 pm. MT at Heritage Park, 1900 Heritage Dr. SW., Calgary, Alta. Contact [bbq@conservative.ca](mailto:bbq@conservative.ca). Details online: [conservative.ca/events](http://conservative.ca/events).

## TUESDAY, JULY 9—THURSDAY, JULY 11

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

**AFN's Annual General Assembly**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its 45<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly on the traditional territory of the Kanien'ke'há:ka Nation. This year's theme is "Strengthening Our Relations." Tuesday, July 9, to Thursday, July 11, at the Palais des Congrès, 159 rue Saint-Antoine O, Montreal, Que. Details online: [afn.ca](http://afn.ca).

## MONDAY, JULY 15—WEDNESDAY, JULY 17

**Council of the Federations' Summer Meeting in Halifax**—Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston, who chairs the council, will host this meeting, July 15-17.

## FRIDAY, JULY 26—SUNDAY, AUG. 11

**Summer Olympics**—Cheer for Team Canada as they take part in the XXXIII Olympic Summer Games. Friday, July 26, to Sunday, Aug. 11, in Paris, France. Details: [olympics.com](http://olympics.com).



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