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pp. 12-19



# THE HILL TIMES

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NEWS

## Ten parliamentary committees forgo scrutiny of \$25-billion in spending estimates

BY NEIL MOSS

Nine House committees, plus a joint House and Senate committee, eschewed reviews of \$25.4-billion in planned governmental spending, leaving more than 13 per cent of voted spending estimates without committee scrutiny.

The main estimates for 2024-25, which set out the government's spending plans for the fiscal year, were tabled on Feb. 29 and referred to the 24 relevant

House standing committees and the Joint House and Senate Committee for the Library of Parliament. The spending plan totalled \$449-billion, which included \$191-billion in voted spending for committees to review. If committees do not perform a review by May 31 and report back to the House, the plans are deemed to be adopted. Committees that chose to perform review of the estimates cannot increase budgets, but they can vote to accept, reject, or reduce the planned funds.

The House of Commons voted to concur in the spending estimates on June 13 by a vote of 202-115.

The House Committee on Public Safety and National Security had the largest referred estimates that went without committee scrutiny at \$11.9-billion, which included \$4.2-billion for the RCMP, \$2.9-billion for Correctional Service Canada, \$2.4-billion for the Canada Border Services Agency, \$1.5-billion for the Department of Public

Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and \$648-million for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, among others.

It is the second straight-year that the committee didn't perform a study of planned spending for Canada's public safety and intelligence community. Liberal committee chair Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam-Port Coquitlam, B.C.) didn't respond to interview requests.

The House Committee on Immigration and Citizenship

also didn't review \$4.3-billion in referred spending estimates—its second-straight year not scrutinizing the government's spending plan.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) singled out spending allocated to the Departments of Health and Justice to be looked at by all MPs as Committee of the Whole, but the other associated estimates that were referred to the House Health

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NEWS

## The buck stops where? Experts urge party leaders to be accountable for NSICOP report findings

'Much more leadership and proactive solution-making has to come from parliamentarians themselves, from political parties, and from the government,' says UOttawa professor Thomas Juneau.

BY NEIL MOSS

As two party leaders offer opposing readings of an unredacted report on foreign interference, national security observers say it is up to parliamentarians to be more accountable for their own houses as MPs shift responsibility to the public inquiry commissioner.

A heavily redacted report published by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) came on June 3 with the explosive conclusion that some elected officials are "semi-witting or witting" actors in foreign interference, including a former MP who was connected with a foreign intelligence officer.

Green Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.) was the first to speak publicly after reading the unredacted report, downplaying

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Shifting responsibility to the Foreign Interference Commission to parse the headline-grabbing report from the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, chaired by Liberal MP David McGuinty, is an inadequate solution, according to national security observers. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

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Christina Leadlay

## Heard On The Hill

# NATO head Stoltenberg makes Ottawa whistle-stop



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, pictured left with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, will be in Ottawa on June 19. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NATO Secretary General **Jens Stoltenberg** is in Ottawa today for a quick visit sandwiched in between a week's worth of meetings in Washington, D.C., where he's been since June 17.

According to a media advisory from NATO late last week, Stoltenberg will be in Ottawa on June 19 where he will meet with Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** before heading over to the Sir John A. Macdonald Building. There, Stoltenberg will deliver remarks at a ceremony hosted by the NATO Association of Canada to mark the organization's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It's at this event that he will receive the Louis St. Laurent Award for outstanding service to peace and security. He will also take part in a fireside chat with journalist **Lisa Laflamme**, followed by a Q&A session.

Stoltenberg is scheduled to return to D.C. on June 20 for more meetings with American national security big wigs before heading back to Europe. But he'll be back in the U.S. capital next month—along with Trudeau and other NATO member heads of state and government—for the NATO Summit taking place July 9-11.

## Glowing tributes in Red Chamber for soon-to-retire Senator Jaffer

While she's not officially retiring until Aug. 20, ISG Senator **Mobina Jaffer** received a touching session of tributes on June 12 from two dozen of her colleagues both inside the Red Chamber and in the media last week.

"Which senator is the most likely to have a school named

after them? I am certain that Senator Jaffer's name would be first on the list," said CSG Senator **Scott Tannas**.

Conservative Senator **Yonah Martin** called the former lawyer who served as Canada's special envoy for peace in Sudan "a trail-blazing pioneer ... in more ways than one," a reference to Jaffer being the first Muslim Senator, the first African-born Canadian Senator, and the first of South Asian descent.

As both Houses of Parliament are expected to rise for the summer break this month, it was a convenient time for Senators to honour one of their own.

"The very first day I met you, you have made it less lonely here for me," recalled ISG Senator **Bernadette Clement**.

ISG Senators **Raymonde Saint-Germain**, **Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia**, **Rosemary Moodie**, and **Pat Duncan**; Conservative Senator **Salma Ataullahjan**; and PSG Senator **Amina Gerba** all referred to Jaffer as their "sister."

An Ismaili Muslim of Indian heritage originally from Uganda, Jaffer came to Canada as a refugee in 1972.

A lawyer by training, she was appointed to the Senate by then-

prime minister **Jean Chrétien** in 2001, "just one week after 9/11," she noted in her post-tribute rebuttal on June 12 while members of her family as well as the Indian and Ugandan high commissioners to Canada, Liberal MPs **Taleeb Noormohamed** and **Chandra Arya**, as well as former Liberal MP **Yasmin Ratansi**, listened from the gallery.

She recalled, as special envoy to Sudan, she met Ugandan President **Yoweri Museveni** who kept repeating, "How can a refugee become a Senator?"

On the same day, in the *Vancouver Sun*, Jaffer's fellow British Columbian Senators—**Bev Bussan**, **Margo Greenwood**, and **Yuen Pau Woo**—penned an op-ed highlighting Jaffer's legacy, thanking her for her service, and also calling for the prime minister to fill the soon-to-be two vacant seats from that province. They used the opportunity to call for a change in provincial seat allocation in the Red Chamber: "B.C. has a paltry six seats in the Upper House, which may have been justifiable in 1871 ... but is far out of kilter today, given our demographic and economic weight."



ISG Senator Mobina Jaffer was appointed in 2001, and will be retiring on Aug. 20. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## New envoys appointed to NATO, Iceland, Australia, Costa Rica



Heidi Hulan will be Canada's new ambassador to NATO. Photograph courtesy of X

Speaking of NATO, Global Affairs Canada's **Heidi Hulan** has recently been appointed as this country's new ambassador to NATO.

In her most recent role as assistant deputy minister for international security and political director, Hulan has been Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly**'s frequent travel buddy, according to *The Hill Times*' latest list of Canada's top 50 foreign influencers. A former staffer turned civil servant, Hulan was previously Canada's ambassador to Austria and Slovakia. She's been described as a "quiet, effective operator" who has strong relations with all G7 counterparts.

In addition, **Jenny Hill** will be Canada's new ambassador to Iceland. Both appointments were announced by Joly on June 6.

Hill joined GAC via the Canadian International Development Agency in 2005, and has been on posting to Afghanistan, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, and South Sudan where she held the role of ambassador.

Hulan will succeed **David Angell** in Brussels, while Hill will take over from **Jeannette Menzies** in Reykjavik.

Joly announced two more appointments on June 17: **Ioanna Sahas Martin** will take over from **Elizabeth Williams** as Canada's ambassador to Costa Rica, while **Julie Sunday** becomes high commissioner to Australia, succeeding **Mark Glauser**. Both women joined the Department of Foreign Affairs in 2001 and 2005, respectively. Martin has experience on the Central American and Caribbean file, while Sunday was named Canada's first senior official for hostage affairs in October 2023.

## Narwhal and Toronto Star win Michener prize

The prestigious 2023 Michener Awards were handed out at Rideau Hall on June 14 with *The*

*Narwhal* and *The Toronto Star* taking the prize for their joint reporting on the Ontario Greenbelt Scandal.

Founded in 1970 by then-governor general **Roland Michener**—whose daughter **Wendy Michener**, a journalist and broadcaster, died in 1969—the award recognizes meritorious public service journalism, and is given to a news organization, not an individual. It is considered one of the highest distinctions in Canadian journalism.

This year's Michener Award shortlist also included *The Canadian Press* for the story "A 'predator' at CSIS," CBC/Radio-Canada for "The girls around Robert Miller/Le système Miller," *The Globe and Mail* for "Montreal fire safety," *Montreal Gazette* for "Staff haunted by suicide at the Lakeshore Hospital ER," and Radio-Canada for "La face cachée de Neptune/The dark side of Neptune."

This year's judges for the award were **Katherine Sedgwick**, former deputy editor of *Montreal Gazette*; **Sally Reardon**, former senior CBC-TV news producer; **Tahieron:iohte Dan David**, journalist and founding director of APTN News; **Mary McGuire**, retired journalism professor at Carleton University; and **Guy Gendron**, broadcast media journalist and former CBC Radio Canada ombudsman.

In addition to the award, Governor General **Mary Simon** also officially bestowed the 2024 Michener-Deacon Fellowship for Investigative Journalism to **Ève Lévesque** and **Marie-Christine Noël** who will investigate food security in Canada for *L'Actualité*, and the Michener-L. Richard O'Hagan Fellowship to **Jean-Hugues Roy** and **Naël Shiab** who will create a free online course on data journalism. Each fellowship is worth \$40,000 plus \$5,000 in expenses.

The Michener Awards and Fellowships are administered by the Michener Awards Foundation and the Rideau Hall Foundation.

## National Post bureau adds new faces

And in other newsroom news, the *National Post* announced two new reporters will be joining its Ottawa bureau.

Erstwhile parliamentary reporter for French-language Ottawa-based paper *Le Droit*, **Antoine Trépanier** will now write for *The Post* on Quebec-federal relations, while **Rahim Mohamed**, already with the Postmedia family as a weekly columnist, will focus on Western Canada-federal relations.

"Both have excellent insight on regional dynamics. Welcome!" Postmedia's executive editor **Kevin Libin** posted on X on June 13.

"Wow this is great news to shake up the Parliamentary Press Gallery," posted the Business Council of Canada's **Howard Fremeth** in reply.

cleadlay@hilltimes.com  
*The Hill Times*



# Trudeau is up against a worldwide phenomenon

The federal byelection on June 24 will be an important marker as Canadians watch how all this plays out for their democracy and their futures.

Les  
Whittington

*Need to Know*



A recent survey suggests the angry mood of voters is the most notable feature as half the world's population holds elections in 2024, writes Les Whittington. *Unsplash photograph by Yogendra Singh*

the Israel-Hamas conflict. On top of that, there is the long-standing tendency to use byelections to try to shake up the ruling party. With that in mind, the Liberals have pulled out the stops to prevent what would be a stunning symbolic loss, with a parade of more than a dozen cabinet ministers and Trudeau himself joining the campaign in Toronto-St. Paul's.

A Liberal failure in this instance could mean the end of the road for Trudeau as prime minister even though there is still more than a year of supposed bounce-back time before the next federal election. It would amplify the Conservatives' huge lead in the polls, and show that—despite Poilievre's lack of popularity—he is in position to help his party capitalize big-time in a “change election.”

This shouldn't come as much of a surprise. The incumbency factor that used to convey significant advantages on governments of the day come election time has lately turned into a curse across much of the world.

The power of the anti-establishment mood sweeping the globe's democracies was very much on display at last week's G7 summit meeting in Italy, where only arch-conservative populist Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni could claim to be in a politically solid position. The G7 leader who faces voters the soonest—United Kingdom's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak—is in a spot where his Conservative party could, according to pollsters, face “electoral extinction” in next month's election.

And that's just part of the picture. According to a survey by Associated Press, the most notable feature as half the world's population holds elections in 2024 is the angry mood of voters. Incumbents around the world—including in Poland, South Korea, Argentina, and South Africa—have been dumped in recent votes. In Latin America, for instance, leaders and their parties have lost 20 recent elections, AP notes.

The foul mood in which voters find themselves can be tied to a wide range of causes. But it is generally agreed that it has roots in 21<sup>st</sup> century calamities such as the 9/11 attack in the United States, the 2008 financial crisis, and COVID. Added to that are the hyperinflation in the pandemic's aftermath, the toxic extremism bred by social media, a collapse of confidence in government, and the political polarization and identity issues dividing people across the world into uncompromising tribes.

In a poll last year in 24 countries, the Pew Research Center found widespread negative attitudes toward politics in most nations. Overall, about 59 per cent said they were dissatisfied with how democracy is working. In the U.S., it was 66 per cent; in Canada, 47 per cent. On another question, 74 per cent of those surveyed said “elected officials don't care what people like them think.” In the U.S., it was 83 per cent; in Canada, 64 per cent.

Current exceptions to the rebellious wave globally involve mainly anti-establishment populists such Italy's Meloni and Argentina's Javier Milei, known as the “madman” president.

This deepening trend in recent years has been setting off alarm bells concerning the deterioration of democracy. “Democratic backsliding is occurring in an unprecedented number of wealthy countries once thought immune to such forces,” a study by Cornell University political scientists found. In *Democratic Backsliding, Resilience and Resistance*, the authors say threats to democracy are increasingly the result of autocratic leaders undermining key democratic institutions such as courts, media, and legislatures to take control of the political power structure. And earlier this year, democracy watchdog Freedom House said in an annual report that global freedom had receded in the previous 12 months for the 18<sup>th</sup> straight time, with political rights and civil liberties deteriorating in 52 countries in 2023.

In Canada, the Conservatives' Poilievre is tailoring his new-found populist persona to what is obviously a highly effective political game plan. His attacks on institutions such as the Bank of Canada, and attempts to sideline mainstream media are a good fit in the anti-establishment approach that is working well for politicians in much of the world who portray themselves as outsiders. And his claim that Canada is broken helps gin up the public's angst and resentment of the current socio-economic situation.

All told, June 24 will be an important marker as Canadians watch how all this plays out for their democracy and their futures.

*Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.*  
*The Hill Times*

# Action, not avoidance, necessary on foreign interference

Instead of fuelling chatter and wannabe Joe McCarthys, political leaders should be taking a united approach to addressing whatever security challenges we may be facing.

Tim  
Powers

*Plain Speak*



OTTAWA—For the last number of weeks, a parliamentary report on foreign influence in Canada allegedly deliberate or otherwise—or should I say witting or unwitting—has been generating lots of chatter. But on the surface, there hasn't been a lot of action in response, and instead there's been lots of avoidance.

Avoidance has come in many forms. First, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) avoided providing reasonable context as to the degree of foreign activity in the public release of its material. By using general terms open to broad interpretation, we've had a nation of Joe McCarthy wannabes pop up, seeing spies and scandals everywhere.

While some party leaders like the Greens' Elizabeth May

and New Democrat Jagmeet Singh have gained the security clearance necessary to read the report, and then share as best they could their interpretation of what they read, all party leaders have avoided coming together in common purpose. What might that common purpose be? Taking a united approach to addressing whatever security challenges we may be facing. Instead of avoiding the partisan consequences, it looks—to some degree—like those consequences are their prime motivators.

The government is doing nothing more than the bare minimum of public disclosure in addressing the matters raised in the NSICOP report that have been publicly shared. This continues a pattern of avoiding any significant public discourse about the problems we face, and how we

are managing them. In the case of the NSICOP report, it has been shuffled off by MPs to the separate commission of inquiry looking into foreign interference in Canada.

The commission is a step above the special rapporteur role that the government had created and filled with former governor general David Johnston last year. But it all feels like avoiding the transparency of sunlight is imperative.

To date, the Conservatives have avoided digging their teeth into this in a manner that could be constructive both politically for them, and for the country at large. While they fulfilled their opposition duties well in asking questions of the government's commitment to national security, they have ducked an opportunity to lead from the front on a tricky issue. Opposition parties don't tend to like to do that, but this is a natural one for the Conservatives.

For years, Conservatives in Canada have fared well in opinion polls asking who is stronger and more effective on security issues. They usually score strongly. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has so far resisted the temptation to get the appropriate security clearance to read the unredacted NSICOP

report and get other security briefings. His rationale has been that this is all a partisan trap to snare him, and limit his critique of the Liberals.

There's no doubt there is a partisan aspect to it. However, by getting the necessary security clearances, and reviewing pertinent information, Poilievre could put himself in a place to begin to shape and direct security policy now, whether that be in developing an election platform or boning up on key initiatives he may inherit should he win the next election. As others have also argued, it may add to his public appeal by demonstrating a “prime ministerial” look.

As we live in a turbulent, unsettled, and unsteady world, what could be more Canadian than coming together to address contemporary and future security challenges for the good of the country? There are lots of historical examples of how we have come together after attacks or security failures. Isn't it time to get ahead of the curve for once instead of avoiding action?

*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*



## Opinion

# Europe is in the middle of a ‘greenlash.’ If Canada doesn’t put workers first in its green transition, we could be next

The European far right’s pivot to attacking green policies shows why Canada needs a climate change approach that centres the interests of working people.

Luke LeBrun

Opinion



Seven in 10 Canadians say they’re worried about climate change, so you might think it’s strange to hear Pierre Poilievre’s Conservatives railing against “woke” green policies and vowing to “axe the tax.”

But Canadians who want to see action on climate change should pay closer attention to what’s happening in Europe, where a cost-of-living crisis, and far-right populists are threatening to derail years of progress towards a green transition.

Last week’s European Union elections revealed two troubling but inter-related trends: a collapse in support for green-friendly parties on one hand, and a rise in support for far-right parties on the other.

Green parties, who are significantly more successful in Europe than Canada, were among the biggest losers on election night, losing one-quarter of their seats in the EU parliament, and falling from fourth to sixth place behind two separate blocs of far-right parties.

Germany’s Greens—who appeal to affluent white-collar urban voters, and might be more closely aligned ideologically with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberals than Elizabeth May’s “not left, not right” Greens—are currently partners



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, may want to pay attention to the shrinking vote share of both German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and his Green coalition partners as the rise of far-right populists threatens to derail years of progress towards a green transition. PMO photograph courtesy of Adam Scotti

in a coalition government and control several important ministries. But even in Germany, Green support was cut in half from 20.5 per cent in 2019 to 11.9 per cent in 2024.

The social democratic SPD—the party of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz that currently heads the coalition government with the smaller Greens and Liberals—didn’t do much better: the party received 13.9 per cent in the 2024 vote compared to 15.8 per cent in 2019.

Both coalition parties actually got fewer votes than the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), a party so extreme French far-right parliamentary leader Marine Le Pen kicked them out of her group after their top candidate went on a “not all Nazi SS officers” tangent. If that’s not troubling enough, the AfD is also under surveillance by Germany’s domestic intelligence agency, and one of its former MPs was arrested for planning a coup.

The AfD, whose official climate change policy rejects mainstream climate science,

spent much of its campaign attacking Greens and green policies.

The stakes could be high. The loss of so many Green MEPs could put the European Green Deal in jeopardy. Both centre-right and far-right voices in the EU parliament are now musing about rolling back key features of the landmark climate legislation.

While this backlash against green policies—or “greenlash”—might surprise some Canadians, the underlying conditions in Europe are really not so different from what’s happening here at home.

In both Canada and Europe, polling shows a clear consensus that climate change is real and caused by human

activity. Most people also want the government to do something about it. But both here and abroad, people are also unhappy about rising costs of living, and they’re directing their anger and frustration at incumbent governments.

While Canada’s affordability crisis revolves around real estate and the post-pandemic impacts of inflation, Germany and other European countries have been dealing with that, too, plus rising energy and food prices following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Laura-Kristine Krause, the Berlin-based executive director of More in Common, a non-profit group focused on issues of social cohesion, said polling data is clear that the collapse of Germany’s Greens is not a reflection of a sudden shift in beliefs about climate change.

“Eighty per cent of Germans are worried about climate, 67 per cent of Germans want more action on climate,” Krause pointed out. “We don’t have a huge climate-denier camp.”

In fact, other research from the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) shows climate change remains a top issue in the minds of voters, though this was overtaken by those worrying about the rising costs of everyday life, and later morphed into anxieties about immigration.

“Our data shows momentum for the European Green Deal is a bit lost,” ECFR senior research fellow Jana Puglierin said. “More people would say—if it were up to them—European governments should do everything possible to reduce energy bills, even if that meant missing carbon emissions [targets].”

Scholz’s coalition government found that out the hard way after his Green coalition partners brought forward legislation to phase out oil and gas heat pumps from German homes. The coalition was forced to make changes after it nearly led to the government’s collapse.

Canadians may see parallels between Scholz’s heat pump debacle and the Trudeau government’s decision to pause carbon pricing on home heating oil last year, an acknowledgment of the impact of inflation and rising costs of living.

Here in Canada, costs of living and housing affordability also overshadow climate change, though climate change consistently ranks as a top concern for Canadians. While carbon pricing is not unpopular per se, Abacus Data says opposition in Ontario and Atlantic Canada could make it a “decisive factor in the next federal election.”

Over in Berlin, senior SPD officials acknowledge green policies need to centre the interests of working people. One challenge for them is that their Green coalition partners—who are to the right of the SPD

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a carbon price carveout for home heating oil, backed by members of his Atlantic caucus, in October 2023. It was an acknowledgment of the affordability crisis, but also a blow to his party’s messaging on the environmental file. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Continued from page 4

on economic issues—are steering that agenda.

Manon Luther, an SPD candidate for the European Parliament, insists Germany's coalition government has an "outstanding record" on getting new solar and wind energy infrastructure built, but acknowledges the way its green policies were implemented and communicated has been problematic.

"In Germany, we had a big consensus that we want cleaner energy, and I still believe that there is this consensus, but there have been some policies that made it very difficult," Luther conceded. "We always told them, 'clean energy is great and we will make it in a social way and you're not going to pay for it.' And the first thing we did? We made them pay for it."

It's been difficult in Canada, too, where the Liberal government has struggled to communicate how carbon pricing works, and Poilievre has inaccurately blamed carbon pricing for higher food prices.

This can feed perceptions that green policies are implemented in ways that feel technocratic and tone deaf, something that not only erodes support for those policies, but also plays into the hands of far-right populists.

René Cuperus, a senior research fellow at the Clingendael Institute, said the far right portrays green policies as a "technocratic transition laid upon society without consent." The concerns of ordinary people are seen at odds with the "policy-making classes" who appear "only interested in climate."

In Cuperus' view, what's playing out across Europe are symptoms of a deeper malaise, a "struggle between transition and tradition" casting those on the periphery of society against "metropolitan elites."

Far-right messaging and conspiracies online that play on these themes are also a big factor in what's going on, and help explain the literal and figurative attacks on Greens by the far right.

The AfD's YouTube channel has videos with more than one million views claiming Greens are trying to restore East German-style communism, while one AfD politician was quoted declaring that the "Greens are our main enemy."

ECFR research shows majorities in some European countries believe their leaders—including Germany's Scholz and France's Emmanuel Macron—are deliberately driving up energy prices as part of a green agenda when, in reality, other factors, like Russia's war on Ukraine, were bigger drivers of that.

The AfD's anti-green rhetoric also invokes conspiratorial narratives about the World Economic Forum and the "Great Reset," topics Canadian Conservatives have engaged with, too.

Poilievre has himself claimed the World Economic Forum is plotting against "working-class people" so they can't "heat their homes or drive their pickup trucks." He has even accused Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault of having a secret "radical" agenda to "deindustrialize" Canada.

Meanwhile, other Conservative MPs keep railing against random objects like vegan Häagen-Dazs ice cream, and "woke paper lids" at Tim Hortons. Leslyn Lewis—one of three Conservative MPs who dined with an AfD politician last year—also sponsored a petition calling for Canada's exit from the United Nations, in part due to the UN's "Agenda 2030" and "sustainable development goals."

A recent report from Re.Climate, a Carleton University academic unit focused on communications and climate change, highlights data showing overlap between Canadian right-wing online networks and "foreign right-wing and conspiratorial influencers."

During Germany's convoy-esque farmers' protests earlier this year—a backlash

Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives have been similarly working to mobilize resentment against green policies, but it remains unclear whether this rhetoric will give rise to a European-style greenlash in Canada, writes Luke LeBrun. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



against cuts to diesel fuel subsidies—the most shared content within Canadian right-wing networks were from far-right European influencers "framing protests as resistance to alleged extremist environ-

mental policies by government and global elites exploiting climate change to control food supply and restrict freedoms."

Researchers found Canada's own right-wing media and influencers attempted to

mobilize similar protests in Canada, but it was "unclear if these efforts are slowly building or generally failing to mobilize farmers against climate policy."

While Poilievre's Conservatives have been similarly working to mobilize resentment against green policies, it also remains unclear whether this rhetoric will give rise to a European-style greenlash in Canada.

But what is clear is that far-right messages and conspiracies have less space to take root when working people feel like their interests are front and centre in policy discussions about the green transition.

Luke LeBrun is the editor of *Press-Progress*, and regularly reports on federal and right-wing politics. Original reporting on the 2024 European Union elections and travel was facilitated through a transatlantic journalism program sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, a non-profit German foundation funded by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. This piece is exclusive to *The Hill Times*.

*The Hill Times*

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## Opinion

# Weaponizing IHRA and ignoring foreign interference



There is extensive documentation of the IHRA definition being used to curb academic freedom by silencing, erasing, dehumanizing, and defaming Palestinians and their allies, write Louise Smith and Shenaz Kermalli. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism by post-secondary institutions would only reinforce a troubling double standard.

Louise Smith & Shenaz Kermalli

Opinion



A fire is lit in front of a Muslim family's home and destroys pro-Palestinian lawn posters; an Israeli woman pulls out a knife at a University of Toronto encampment; a man drives his car through a pro-Palestine rally in East Vancouver, narrowly avoiding protesters and bumping into others. A pro-Israeli man threatens to kill "every Palestinian" at a protest while holding a nail gun and reportedly shooting at them.

Just as Jewish organizations have been documenting concerning incidents after Israel began its retaliatory attack in Gaza last October, so, too, have the National Council of Canadian Muslims, and Amira Elgawhaby, Canada's special representative on combating Islamophobia, been tracking anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian backlash. And while Islamophobic incidents long preceded the Hamas attack on Oct. 7, 2023—recall the murder of a Muslim family in London, Ont., three years ago this month—it is clear that the escalation in incidents on both sides is being driven by ongoing carnage in Gaza.

It is neither fair to hold Jewish Canadians culpable for Israel's actions, nor Palestinian activists culpable for Hamas' actions, and yet this is precisely what has led to rising patterns of hate.

But what entrenches those patterns is when those incidents

are projected using a singular lens—one in which only one side is consistently given the benefit of doubt.

Contrary to what some believe, the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism by post-secondary institutions would only reinforce that double standard. The definition conflates criticism and/or protest of Zionism and colonialism with antisemitism.

There is extensive documentation of the IHRA definition being used to curb academic freedom by silencing, erasing, dehumanizing, and defaming Palestinians

and their allies who advocate for Palestinian human rights, and slandering them as inherently antisemitic or as being terrorist threats/sympathizers. Even the

lead writer of IHRA has argued it is being weaponized to muzzle legitimate criticism of Israel.

People advocating for the IHRA definition are trying to exceptionalize the struggle against antisemitism. They want it tied to a political cause—Zionism and the Israeli state—rather than recognizing it as part of a broader anti-racist movement against fascism and white supremacy.

The recent National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) report raised concerns about politicians "communicating frequently with foreign governments to obtain support from community groups or businesses ... to help their campaigns." All federal parties have agreed that this is concerning. The public is also rightly concerned.

With this in mind, encouraging institutions to adopt the IHRA definition is irresponsible. Its primary use has been to insulate criticism of Israel, a foreign government. If the objective is to define antisemitism so that it can be countered, there are other more widely accepted definitions, such as the Jerusalem Declaration. And, to ensure balance in combating hate, institutions should also be adopting a definition of anti-Palestinian racism to provide a framework and approach for better protecting that community from hate.

Beyond the IHRA definition, it is interesting to observe how

Israel has never been included in parliamentary discussions about foreign interference, despite recent findings in *The New York Times* and Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* of a co-ordinated online influence campaign that stokes anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments tracing back to a private firm hired by a branch of the Israeli government. The firm conducted an operation to sway public opinion in Canada and the United States over its conduct during the ongoing war in Gaza.

So why doesn't the NSICOP report include consideration of Israel as a foreign government worth looking into? Israel lobby organizations proudly boast of free trips to Israel for Canadian MPs and Senators—more than 800 by one group alone. The Toronto Police chief has also taken an Israel trip with a lobbyist organization that has been criticized for its surveillance of perceived anti-Israel sentiments by school children.

In May 2021, the Ottawa-based Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs' Israel office director, David Weinberg, used shockingly callous language to justify Israel regularly bombing Palestinians: "Just like mowing your front lawn, this is constant, hard work. If you fail to do so, weeds grow wild and snakes begin to slither around in the brush. So too, reducing enemy capabilities and ambitions in Gaza require Israeli military readiness and government willingness to use force intermittently, while maintaining a healthy and resilient Israeli home front despite repeated military offensives."

Most people's baseline value for human lives would lead them to find this language offensive. But criticizing this kind of language or the Israeli government policy it supports could be challenged by IHRA proponents as antisemitic.

It should be no surprise, then, when we witness the stark double standard in Canada today as pictures and stories surface every weekend of pro-Israel and/or pro-Palestinian protests and demonstrations. Pro-Palestinian supporters have lost jobs, opportunities to compete for jobs, medical school placements, and their rightful places in the caucus of political parties. And the IHRA definition is one tool that has been weaponized against people calling for Palestinian human rights. It has no place in academic institutions.

There is a reason why so many pro-Palestinian activists mask or cover their faces in contrast to the pro-Israel demonstrators: in the massively one-sided court of public opinion and instruments of the state—politicians and police—they have much more to lose.

*Louise Smith is a Jewish activist with Independent Jewish Voices Canada, and the Jews Say No to Genocide coalition. Shenaz Kermalli is a freelance journalist with a focus on geo-politics, and a journalism instructor at Toronto Metropolitan University and the University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies, among other post-secondary institutions in Ontario.*

*The Hill Times*





Neil Moss

## Diplomatic Circles

# ‘We are ready’: senior Uruguayan diplomat comes to Ottawa to spotlight CPTPP bid

Uruguayan deputy foreign minister Nicolás Albertoni says it's time for CPTPP member countries to signal who is next in line for accession to the multilateral trade pact.

Eighteen months after Uruguay officially applied to join Canada's Pacific Rim trade deal, the second-in-command at its foreign ministry was in Ottawa to declare that now is the right time to consider the South American nation's entry.

Uruguay is one of seven countries to looking to join the 11-member Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) having formally applied to accede to the pact in December 2022. The United Kingdom will become the 12<sup>th</sup> member of the deal after concluding negotiations last year as its accession process continues.

“We are ready, and we want to be part of the [agreement],” Nicolás Albertoni, Uruguay's deputy foreign minister, told *The Hill Times* during a June 13 interview at the Uruguayan Embassy.

He said that Montevideo is ready to meet the high standards set out in the agreement, remarking that there will be no substantial reforms needed by his nation.

Albertoni said he would like to see the accession negotiations move at a quicker pace, suggesting a possible solution would be to take certain nations in groups, such as Uruguay with Costa Rica.

It took 22 months for talks to conclude after negotiations for the U.K.'s accession started in June 2021. Negotiations for the accession of a second country to the pact have yet to take place.

“We think that Costa Rica and Uruguay may fit [together] to be more efficient,” Albertoni said.

He said dealing with multiple countries simultaneously would avoid the queue backlog for all countries having to wait for a single nation's accession to end before talks on their accession can begin.

“We need to see—now that you've closed negotiations with the U.K.—what is the next step? Because we really want to be a close partner of Canada through CPTPP,” he said, remarking that it would be beneficial to see signals that the CPTPP is moving forward.

Albertoni said Uruguay doesn't view the wait in a negative light, but wants to see progress.

“Now it's time to receive some signals because we showed all the possible signals to say we want to be closer with you,” he said.

The Canadian government has maintained that it supports expanding the CPTPP for those countries that can meet its high standard, and have a history of



Uruguayan deputy foreign minister Nicolás Albertoni was in Ottawa last week to meet with Canadian officials and parliamentarians. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

trade compliance with existing agreements. Canada is currently serving as the CPTPP commission chair for 2024.

Canada's 2023 Indo-Pacific strategy referenced strengthening and expanding the CPTPP to diversify exports, and boost free trade access.

Albertoni said there has been a “very positive” reception to Uruguay's accession bid.

“We are a small country, but very strong politically in Latin America. So, we are a key ally of the partners of CPTPP,” he said. “We heard only positive things about it.”

He said that it is important that the CPTPP is composed of “likeminded countries thinking together,” adding that the agreement should go beyond trade, and include geopolitical considerations.

Albertoni was in Ottawa on June 12 and 13 following a stop in Montreal during a whirlwind visit as part of bilateral consultations on Canada and Uruguay co-operation, during which he met with Canadian officials and parliamentarians.

“I am here to reaffirm the friendship we have with Canada,” he said. “In North America, [Canada] is a key partner of us, and vice versa in Latin America and specifically in the South Atlantic.”

Along with trade links with Canada, a top agenda item was immigration as Uruguay deals with the aftershocks of the Venezuelan refugee crisis, which has ballooned the Venezuelan population in Uruguay to 33,000 people in 2023—a tripling in the last five years, according to a Reuters report. Uruguay, which is separated from Venezuela by Brazil, had a population of 3.4 million people as of 2023.

Albertoni said Uruguay is eyeing the model Canada took with those fleeing the war in Ukraine as it handles those people escaping the political crisis in Venezuela, as well as with Cuban refugees.

Once Uruguay has managed to deal with the Venezuelan refugees “in the best humanitarian way,” then the country will be a position to “concentrate the challenge [in Latin America], and not to globalize the challenge,” he said. “Canada clearly sees that in a very creative and strategic way. That is why it is [logical] to receive some co-operation not only from Canada, but from around the world.”

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

## Taiwan draws a crowd on the Hill

*The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia



Conservative Senator Michael MacDonald, left, and Harry Ho-Jen Tseng, the representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada, attend Tawain Night in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building on May 7.



Conservative MP Martin Shields, left, Tseng, and his wife Yu-ling Lu.



Taiwan Night drew a large crowd to the Sir John A. Macdonald Building.



Conservative MP Michael Chong delivers remarks.



Tseng, left, Liberal MP Judy Sgro, and Lu.

## Bangladeshi HC enjoys pre-farewell national day



Khalilur Rahman, then-Bangladesh high commissioner, delivers remarks at an independence and national day reception at the Hilton Garden Inn & Homewood Suites on April 13.



Rahman, left, Liberal MP Chandra Arya, and Najnin Akhter, wife of the high commissioner.



Jordan Ambassador Sabah Nizar Rashid Al Rafie, left, Rahman, and Akhter.



Rahman, left, Qatar Ambassador Khalid bin Rashid Al-Mansouri, and Akhter.



# Editorial

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## Editorial

# Water promises run dry ahead of summer recess

As the mercury spikes in Ottawa, taking a glance at the House of Commons calendar should offer a cool wave of relief: it's the last week of the spring sitting.

In the run-up to this final week, members of the official opposition have been sabre-rattling over upsetting their colleagues' "vacation" plans, threatening to call summer committee meetings or otherwise extend sitting days to "help fix Trudeau's problems."

That's social media fodder; however, if one were to be serious about wanting to put in some extra hours on Parliament Hill, there are in fact a litany of things that could be addressed—that would do more than just clear out the oppo research queue.

The last-minute push to get legislation out the door and into the Senate is always a fraught mess of time allocation and bundling motions. But there are going to be bills that don't meet the "must-do" timeline, and will instead languish until the fall.

It would appear that one of those is C-61, the First Nations Clean Water Act. First introduced last December—at the tail end of the fall sitting—the bill had its second-reading debate on Feb. 5, and was sent to committee on June 5. It's so far had two days of study at the House Indigenous and Northern Affairs Committee on June 12 and 17.

The bill "sets out principles, such as substantive equality, to guide the provision for First Nations of clean and safe drinking water and the effective treatment and disposal of wastewater on First Nation lands. It provides for minimum standards for water quality and quantity and wastewater effluent. It also provides pathways to facilitate source water protection."

During its June 12 meeting, committee members adopted a work plan for the bill, and agreed to seek a study budget of \$97,200. There is clearly intent to put in some work on the legislation, and consult with the people who will be most affected, which is a good thing. But, given the amount of time that it has taken to get even this far, there's a missing sense of urgency.

Yes, the number of long-term water advisories in First Nations communities has been significantly reduced since 2015, and that's nothing to sniff at. But when contrasted with the visible urgency with which the recent Calgary water main break has been treated, it's hard not to wonder if there couldn't have been a fast lane in which this bill could have been placed to at least make the cut as a pre-summer priority.

*The Hill Times*

## Letters to the Editor

# Forest management supports Canada's climate change mitigation goals, says FPAC head

Re: "Forestry has finally been recognized as a climate polluter: now what?" (*The Hill Times*, June 5, p. 22).

The recent opinion piece by Nature Canada's campaign manager Michael Polanyi is wantonly misleading and ignores significant aspects of sustainable forest management, and the vital role that Canada's forests play in the global fight against climate change. On behalf of Canada's 200,000-plus forest sector workers and the communities they call home, we believe it is important to set the record straight.

In releasing its 2024 National Inventory Report (NIR), the Government of Canada demonstrated its commitment to improving how it estimates forest carbon using the best science and data. Polanyi's article misses several key points from the NIR, most glaringly the fact that emissions related to Canada's forest sector have been steadily decreasing since 2005.

Canada's biggest carbon emissions problem is fire, plain and simple. In 2023, wildfires released a staggering 2.2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, more than triple Canada's total annual emissions. These fires burned through roughly 25 times the forested land base relative to what Canadian foresters would harvest and renew across the country in an entire year.

As Canada enters another wildfire season, who better to help us manage growing fire risks than Canada's foresters? These are the professionals who maintain forest health and enhance carbon storage by ensuring that forests

continue to serve as valuable carbon reservoirs and wildlife habitats, even as they face increasing threats from climate change impacts including wildfire, pests, and disease outbreaks.

Not to be ignored is the fact that Canada is a vast landscape where natural disturbances occur frequently in remote, unpopulated areas. In Canada's boreal forest, cycles of growth, disturbance, and regrowth repeat more frequently and older stands are rare. Roughly 60 per cent of the trees in this region are between 60 and 140 years old, and active management strategies like thinning are important to reducing fuel loads, improving forest resilience, and protecting communities. Without active management of these high-risk areas—which face unprecedented levels of dryness and heat—huge swaths of forests and adjacent communities are left to burn. Sustainable forest management not only helps prevent catastrophic wildfires but also mitigates their associated greenhouse gas emissions, supporting Canada's climate change mitigation goals.

Now more than ever, Canadians need fact-based and constructive solutions to our collective environmental, economic, and social challenges. On behalf of forestry workers and their families, we will not allow hyperbolic headlines and these fundraising campaigns to go unchallenged.

**Derek Nighbor**  
President and CEO,  
Forest Products Association of Canada  
Ottawa, Ont.

# Party leaders should ask for security sign-off for MPs seeking re-election: Toronto letter writer

Collusion with foreign powers by unknown MPs is a very serious political and parliamentary matter. Several, if not all, MPs under National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians scrutiny will be seeking re-election.

I consider this an egregious fundamental insult to the ethical moral decorum of Canada's Parliament.

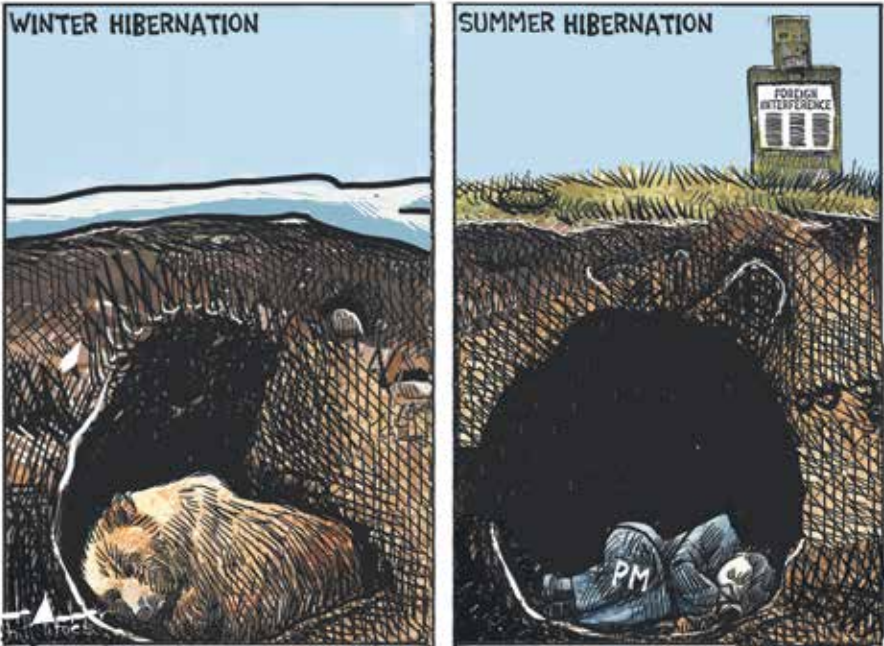
I agree that the names of MPs under scrutiny must remain privileged. Therefore, my suggestion is for each party leader to request from all caucus mem-

bers seeking certification as a candidate a certificate from security and law enforcement agencies stating that they are not under any kind of investigation.

The party leader might wish to query MPs unable to provide certification, and consider disallowing those MPs seeking re-election under the party banner.

This procedure would enhance the likelihood that those MPs under scrutiny might wish to reconsider their respective options.

**Monte McMurchy**  
Toronto, Ont.



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# Canada and Kosovo: 25 years of ties

Operation Parasol represented a quick, efficient humanitarian response to a country in crisis.

Tom MacGregor

Opinion



Last month, various officials from Kosovo—including Deputy Prime Minister Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz—were in Canada for economic and political discussions, and to recognize the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations with Canada and Operation Parasol.

When most Canadians think of Canada's involvement in Kosovo, they think of the NATO bombing in 1999, designed to stop Serbian forces on a murderous rampage and drive them out of Kosovo. However, Operation Parasol was a very short and successful humanitarian effort involving the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF),



About 7,000 Kosovar refugees were settled in Canada following the 1999 military and humanitarian campaigns in which Canadian soldiers and other personnel participated. Screenshot courtesy of Global News

the Canadian Red Cross, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and others. It helped settle millions of Kosovars who had fled with few possessions into neighbouring countries. In the end, about 7,000 refugees were settled in Canada.

Kosovo is a landlocked region in Europe's Balkans, surrounded by Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro. It is

about the size of Jamaica. Its population today is just under two million people.

It was controlled by the Ottoman Empire from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century until the empire fell apart following the First World War. After that, it became part of Serbia, and then Communist Yugoslavia. During that time, the mostly Serbian-speaking, Orthodox Christian population was replaced by an Albanian-speaking, Muslim population.

With the breakup of the former Yugoslavia came the collapse of communism in eastern Europe in the 1990s. An Albanian-speaking revolutionary group began seeking independence. As a result, Serbian troops invaded the region, and began a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Whole villages were evacuated of men and older boys who completely disappeared. It was only after the fighting stopped that mass graves started to be found.

The fighting caused about one million Albanian-speaking Kosovars to flee into the neighbouring countries. Finally, with atrocities on both sides, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) mounted a bombing campaign to stop the Serbian troops and drive them back into Serbia. Canada

contributed six CF-18 fighter aircraft. That was later increased to 18. This was the first combat mission the Royal Canadian Air Force had flown since the Korean War.

Flying out of an airbase in Italy between March 24 and June 10, 1999, they flew 684 sorties, dropping 230,000 kilometres of gravity- and precision-aimed bombs. Canadians flew roughly 10 per cent of the NATO missions into Kosovo.

This led to a ceasefire, but by then a humanitarian crisis was unfolding. Canada responded by launching Operation Parasol, which involved the CAF, the RCMP, the Canadian Red Cross, CIDA, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The CAF, which already had troops in the area to help stabilize peace in the former Yugoslavia, committed 800 troops to help. It later added an extra 500 troops. They were helping to maintain the peace, protect civilians, and provide reconnaissance assistance. They provided an armoured squadron, a tactical helicopter squadron, a field engineering squadron, an infantry battlegroup, and command and logistical support personnel. As well as their military duties, the CAF rebuilt

schools and medical facilities, and installed playgrounds for children. They also built small bridges.

Those refugees who were brought to Canada were at first housed on CAF bases in Ontario. Later, other bases such as Valcartier in Quebec, and Greenwood in Nova Scotia were involved.

Once in Canada, the refugees were put into escort groups of between seven and 14 refugees. Each group was escorted by one CAF member and one civilian who would be responsible for each member as they moved through processing procedures. The civilian volunteers came from the Rotary and Lions clubs, and other community organizations. About one-third of the refugees eventually returned home while the rest were absorbed into Canada's population.

Operation Parasol was officially terminated on Aug. 31, 1999.

Twenty-five years ago, Operation Parasol represented a quick, efficient humanitarian response to a country in crisis. It should remain a model for the many crises we face around the globe today.

Tom MacGregor writes on veterans and military heritage. *The Hill Times*

## Comment

# Are we truly 'laggards' in spending?

Among all of these stakeholders clamouring for Canada to spend more on defence, no one is even discussing what they want that money spent on.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



There has been a steady drum beat of late wherein all the usual suspects have been echoing their age-old chorus that Canada must increase its defence spending drastically.

Their hook, of course, is that global security has been drastically eroded following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Hamas terror attack on Oct. 7, 2023, which sparked an eight-month, ongoing Israeli military intervention in Gaza.



Former U.S. ambassador to Canada Kelly Craft recently added her voice to the chorus calling for Canada to hit the two per cent NATO target. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

To fuel the debate in Canada, United States lawmakers recently signed a petition decrying Canada as "laggards" when it comes to defence spending. In a May 23 letter signed by a bipartisan group of 21 American senators, they urged Canada to meet the NATO alliance's collective goal of member states spending two per cent of their gross domestic product on national defence.

For the record, Canada currently spends \$26.9-billion per year on defence, which amounts to roughly 1.33 per cent of our GDP.

In terms of real dollars spent, that expenditure ranks Canada sixth among the 32 NATO member states, and—believe it or not—14<sup>th</sup> in the world. Not bad

for a supposedly peacekeeping nation.

For Canada to comply with the two per cent GDP goal, we would need to increase the annual defence budget by \$20.1-billion to a whopping \$47-billion.

On June 5, former U.S. Ambassador to Canada Kelly Craft was in Toronto to attend the C.D. Howe Institute's annual Directors' Dinner. She, too, weighed in on the "two per cent of GDP on defence spending" message, only she included both a timeline and a warning.

"The bottom line is that Canada needs to step up," stated Craft. "Canada needs to spend more on its own defence, and more to help Ukraine."

She urged that Canada spend at least the two per cent of GDP on defence as early as 2024. In other words, immediately.

Craft's advice to those in attendance was curt: "So, I come to you today with a simple message: Buckle up and get ready—because [Donald] Trump is coming back."

The part that I cannot fathom is that among all of these Canadians and American stakeholders clamouring for Canada to spend more on defence, no one is even discussing what they want that money spent on.

Canada already wastes a boatload of money on botched, delayed, and overpriced procurement projects.

If it was increased capability in terms of weapons and warriors, Canada could field a far-better, more-effective fighting force by simply buying proven weapons off the shelf. That is also not something that lends itself to a quick fix. Sure, Canada could agree to suddenly boost the budget by \$20-billion, but the truth is that our woefully understrength Canadian Armed Forces cannot absorb additional personnel at that rate. Nor do we currently have enough trained personnel left in the ranks to operate the

current worn-out vehicle, aircraft, and maritime fleets.

You could spend a wad of cash on recruiting ads, but the truth is that last year, 71,000 citizens applied to enlist, and the overworked recruiting centres could only process 4,500 files.

If no one seemingly cares about what Canada actually spends the money on—just so long as it is defence related—here is a quick fix. Incorporate the Coast Guard as the fourth service branch of the CAF in the same way that it is part of the U.S. military, and add that cost to the defence budget.

Convert the Royal Canadian Mounted Police back into a para-military police force—even if in name only—similar to the French National Gendarmerie or the Italian Carabinieri, and add that budget to the total.

Finally, take all health benefit costs associated with caring for Canada's veterans and label that the cost of defending Canada.

If these pundits simply want the accounting ledger to meet some arbitrary percentage of a fluctuating GDP amount, then get creative with the accounting.

Should one actually want defence dollars to purchase real military capability, that will be the subject of another column.

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



## Opinion

# Moving forward on the path to self-determination

Work is underway to address the controversial membership criteria within the Indian Act, often known as the Second-Generation Cut-Off.

Liberal MP  
Jaime Battiste

Opinion



Indigenous identity can be a controversial subject, and there is not one way wherein Indigeneity is determined across the globe. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for the more than 50 distinct Indigenous nations across

Canada, or the more than 600 First Nations communities. Indigenous identity is a complex issue, especially considering the rise in so-called “Pretendians.” With that said, many would argue that as opposed to legislation created in the 1800s, First Nations themselves are in a better position to determine who belongs to their community, rather than the archaic Indian Act which currently is being used.

In November 2023, Canada began the work to address the controversial membership criteria within the Indian Act, often known as the Second-Generation Cut-Off. This harmful policy was introduced in 1985 as a way of addressing the discrimination towards women within the Indian Act, and created a cut-off point for status Indians after only two generations of having children with non-First Nations people (status Indians).

To put it in perspective, the grandchildren of a full-status Indian—depending on whom they procreate with, and with whom their children procreate—are at

risk of not being recognized as status Indians under the Indian Act. Further to this, if a First Nations mother does not put the name of the father on the birth certificate of the child, it is automatically assumed that the other parent is non-status.

Within the next 20 years, some First Nations communities will not have any children born who meet the set criteria. It means that children born into First Nations communities may not be recognized by the government as a part of their community.

Put bluntly, colonial rules in Canada are still dictating to First Nations in 2024 who or who not to fall in love with should they want their children to be recognized by the government as status Indians. In 2024, we still legislate to First Nations who is and is not a member of their community. Our government has heard from several First Nations in committees and conversations, and has heard that this must change. We’ve listened, and moving forward, this can change by consulting First

Nations on amending sections of the Indian Act.

This shift in thinking was the promise of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act, which received Royal Assent in June 2021. Nowhere in the act does it attempt to define what is meant by Indigenous, but rather, Article 33 states that Indigenous nations have the right to determine their own identity and membership. This also comes with the necessity for the federal government to recognize those individuals who are recognized by their community or nation.

Minister of Indigenous Services Patty Hajdu has stated that the Indian Act should not be the only documentation relied upon to define status. Indigenous laws, values, and families must be a part of the solution. Consensus is always difficult, and First Nations will not agree on who is and is not recognized as status Indians. But perhaps we can start with the premise of recognizing that our First Nations chiefs and councils should

be a part of the process. If they can do so as collective nations, that is something worth striving for—but now is the opportunity to have these important conversations.

There are several unanswered questions: do we need to create amendments to the Indian Act to create flexibility? Should these amendments be optional to ensure each community takes on this responsibility on their own terms? How do we ensure that there are not abuses to this system? All of these are important questions, and they deserve and require important conversations.

Thankfully, the questions are now about how we move forward on this important work, not when—or if—our government will start these conversations. Let us start and continue the conversations of how we can ensure recognition of our children and grandchildren as part of our communities, and how to move past the Indian Act and toward the promise of self-determination contained within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act.

*Jaime Battiste was first elected as the Liberal MP for Sydney–Victoria, N.S., in 2019. He is the first Mi’kmaq to be elected to Parliament, and currently serves as the minister of Crown-Indigenous relations.*

*The Hill Times*

# Turning down the volume on ocean noise pollution

Canada’s Ocean Noise Strategy is already three years delayed, and we have an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to marine conservation by prioritizing its timely release.

Hussein  
Alidina

Opinion



Ever been awakened by loud construction? Or been unable to concentrate because your neighbour won’t turn down their audio system? Believe it or not, it could be worse: if you were under water, sound travels nearly five

times faster than in air, covering vast distances with little loss of intensity.

For marine soundscapes, this means that noise radiating from human activities reverberates through the water column with astonishing clarity and severity. The continuous rumble of a distant ship’s engine or the rotation of propellers can travel several kilometres, essentially competing with the natural sounds of the species that call these waters home.

The volume from human-made underwater noise is about to increase substantially, and it’s time to do something about it.

With oil now flowing through the Trans Mountain pipeline, the first tanker departed last month to kick off an expected tripling of oil tanker traffic in the Salish Sea. Up on British Columbia’s north coast, the LNG Canada liquefied natural gas terminal in Kitimat is approaching completion—tankers should start traversing the Great Bear Sea in mid-2025, sending 350 more massive vessels annually across this still-quiet home to at-risk humpbacks and fin whales.

Some noise is inevitable, of course, but like you, every animal has a biological limit to the type

and intensity of noise it can handle before impacting its health and survival. There’s a reason why noise is a recognized form of torture. When underwater noise surpasses that limit and becomes noise pollution, the effects are widespread and severe, endangering whales, seals, fish, invertebrates, and even coral reefs.

Underwater noise pollution interferes with communication, navigation, mating, feeding, and overall behaviour of marine species, which can lead to stress, displacement, injury, and even death. The growing chorus of underwater noise also increases the risk of fatal ship strikes and strandings of whales, which have become increasingly prevalent in Canadian waters.

What’s causing this dramatic increase in underwater noise? The dominant source of human-made underwater noise is from marine traffic. Large and small vessels alike make noise, but the threat is particularly acute from commercial shipping, including tankers, container vessels, bulk cargo vessels, cruise ships, and tugs. Other sources of human-generated underwater noise include marine construction, seismic

exploration blasting, and offshore oil and gas and renewable energy installations.

With ports rapidly expanding, shipping increasing to meet growing consumer demand, and tourism reaching increasingly remote areas, including the once-quiet Arctic, the threat underwater noise poses to wildlife is set to increase exponentially, causing ever more profound adverse effects.

One of Canada’s most iconic and endangered whale populations, the southern resident killer whale, now numbers only 74 animals. Designated under the Species at Risk Act as endangered, and assessed by the government as facing imminent threats to its recovery, these orca continue to have their critical habitat degraded with increasing levels of noise pollution from the continued growth in shipping traffic from industrial projects in the Salish Sea.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. By leveraging quieter technology and setting underwater noise pollution limits based on scientific, Indigenous, and local knowledge about marine species, their habitats, and how noise impacts them, we can achieve

significant protections without disrupting our economy.

Canada has been at the forefront of this emerging issue on the world stage, notably through its leadership at the International Maritime Organization where they’ve been pushing for stronger guidelines because the current ones are “too vague.” And yet, Canada’s own domestic efforts on this front, the Ocean Noise Strategy, is already three years delayed.

The threat of underwater noise pollution will continue rising without government action, as will its negative impact on marine biodiversity. And this is also a matter of economic and social importance, given coastal communities’ reliance on healthy oceans for food security, livelihoods, and cultural heritage.

Canada has an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to marine conservation by prioritizing the timely release and implementation of its Ocean Noise Strategy. By doing so, we also set a positive example for other nations, fostering international co-operation in safeguarding our oceans for future generations.

But with commercial shipping increasing dramatically even before B.C.’s impending surge of tanker traffic and climate change opening new trade routes in the Arctic, we must take action against underwater noise pollution now—before it’s too late.

*Hussein Alidina is lead specialist for marine conservation at World Wildlife Fund Canada. He is based in Nanaimo, B.C.*

*The Hill Times*



# Poilievre's briefing refusal is a sign of the end of collegiality on the Hill



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's decision to avoid the necessary security clearance to obtain a deeper briefing on foreign interference is a sign of the degradation of collegiality between Members of Parliament, writes Andrew Caddell. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Unlike days of yore, there now appears to be a climate of mistrust reigning over Parliament Hill.

Andrew Caddell

*With All Due Respect*



KAMOURASKA, QUE—In early September 1983, my then-minister, solicitor-general of Canada Bob Kaplan, reached out to new opposition leader Brian Mulroney. Mulroney had been elected in a byelection a few weeks before in the Nova Scotia riding of Central Nova, and now had a seat in Parliament. As the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, which was second to Pierre Trudeau's Liberals, he automatically became Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Kaplan—with Trudeau's blessing—called Mulroney and asked him if he would like a briefing on Canadian security files. As the minister responsible for the RCMP, and—a year later—the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Kaplan had access to significant secret files. It was felt that Mulroney, as the leader of the official opposition, should be aware of the sensitive issues engaging the government, and Mulroney agreed.

It was not an unusual courtesy: previous leaders of the opposition had received similar briefings from previous solicitors general. There were two conditions: an oath of secrecy, and the promise to not divulge any of the briefing.

Mulroney readily agreed, and although I was not present, I was told afterwards the briefing lasted several hours, and Mulroney grasped the seriousness and the secrecy of the information he was given. This was a sign of the respect and collegiality that was a feature of politics on Parliament Hill at the time. In subsequent years, this tradition continued until the Harper government was in power, and the NDP was the official opposition.

It has now become a political football, with the current leader of the opposition, Pierre Poilievre, refusing the briefing and

the necessary security clearance. It allows him to complain about the issue of foreign interference with impunity.

My first reaction to Poilievre's decision was that it is a sign of the degradation of collegiality between Members of Parliament. While I am no longer a denizen of the Hill, there is a visceral meanness to the public pronouncements I see in the media that didn't exist before. In the 1980s, it was not unusual for members on opposite sides of the House to socialize together. Today, all that has been lost, and there appears to be a climate of mistrust reigning over the Hill.

This has become pertinent in the last few weeks in the wake of various reports, most notably that of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP). The issue of foreign interference—or more appropriately, the willing collaboration of MPs with foreign powers, both overtly hostile (China, Russia, Iran) and traditionally friendly (India)—is now making headlines. Most journalists are indulging in what I call “soap-opera analysis” on the issue of foreign interference, with the “Who will take the briefing?” speculation, and in Poilievre's case, “Will he or won't he?”

This reporting makes it sound as if foreign interference is new. Serious journalists have written extensively about the subject in the past. In 2021, I devoted a column to the issue when CSIS had released a study called *Foreign Interference Threats to Canada's Democratic Process*.

It reads: “Foreign interference directed at our democratic institutions ... can pose serious threats to Canadians both inside and outside Canada, and threaten Canada's prosperity, strategic interests, social fabric, and national security.” I also mentioned that in 2010 then-CSIS director Richard Fadden warned parliamentarians of active Chinese efforts to recruit Canadian MPs. And yet, the current controversy over the NSICOP report in the media makes it sound as if this is a recent phenomenon.

When CSIS was established almost 40 years ago, I remember many Canadians asking why it was necessary—after all, what secrets could Canada possibly have? As most historians know, we have plenty as a member of the Five Eyes intelligence group, and a member of NATO and NORAD.

So, those in government face the challenge of convincing Canadians—and even their elected officials—of the importance of protecting our interests. In writing this column, I am careful not to stray into areas of material I saw when I worked on the Hill, and as a public servant. That is because I took an oath to be loyal to Canada. And also, because I love my country. I wish more elected officials felt that way.

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).

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21<sup>st</sup> Annual Terrific 25 Staffers List

21<sup>st</sup> Annual Terrific 25 Staffers List

Telford untouchable at the top of the 21<sup>st</sup> Terrific 25 Staffers list, as Conservatives sweep Most Knowledgeable and Best Spin

Coming in at second and third on *The Hill Times'* Terrific 25 Staffers list are Conservative staffers Jordan Johnston and Colin Thackeray, respectively.

BY STUART BENSON

After breaking the record for longest-serving chief of staff to a prime minister more than a year ago, **Katie Telford** remains at the top of *The Hill Times'* Terrific 25 Staffers list for the third year in a row, and her fourth win since 2017. Telford also ranked No. 1 in the Most Influential, Best Access to PMO and Cabinet, and Best PMO Staffer categories; and placed No. 4 in Best All-Round Staffer and Most Knowledgeable in the 21<sup>st</sup> annual survey conducted by Forum Research between May 22 and June 5. A total of 178 politicos cast their votes online, with 495 individual staffers receiving at least one vote across all 18 categories. The top 25 list is then determined by tallying the total votes for each staffer across all categories, with Telford receiving 150 votes, and her largest share coming from her influence and access to PMO. Many respondents who cast their votes for Telford either felt those votes needed no explanation or responded incredulously for even needing to explain their votes with single-word responses like

“duh,” “c’mon,” or the rather ominous “she is her.” At the “top of the food chain” and the “centre of the decision-making universe,” after nine years at the helm of Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau’s** (Papineau, Que.) office since the fall of 2015, Telford’s access is “second to none” as Trudeau’s “right hand,” and “the most powerful staffer in Ottawa” and—in the views of many respondents—the entire country. Having previously led the Liberals’ 2015 federal election campaign and Trudeau’s 2013 leadership campaign, Telford has “been through it all,” and due to the longevity of her close working relationship with her boss, “everybody wants her ear.” However, her influence is not entirely viewed as an inherently positive trait, with one respondent describing Telford as both “the engine of the Liberals’ ship, and [potentially] the iceberg that will sink it.” While last year’s survey saw a Liberal sweep of the Top 25, 10 Conservative staffers have made their way into this year’s list, filling three of the top five positions. Sitting at No. 2 is **Jordan Johnston**, the director of parliamentary affairs for Conservative MP **Michael Barrett** (Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ont.), his party’s ethics critic. With 106 votes, Johnston took the No. 1 spot for Most Knowledgeable and Most Discreet, as well as the No. 2 spot for Best All-Round, Conservative Staffer, Most Influential, Spin Control, and Conservative Hill Staffer. After getting his start on the Hill in the office of then-Conservative leader **Andrew Scheer** (Regina–Qu’Appelle, Sask.) in 2018,

Johnston moved to work for Barrett’s after his byelection win that December. According to the survey results, Johnston is the staffer who “sets the bar” for his colleagues, and whom the rest of the caucus wish they had snagged first. Fortunately for those other MPs without Johnston in their office, respondents described him as the “go-to staffer” for caucus members to send rookie staffers and interns for mentorship. “He has taken some rough interns and turned out some competent staffers,” one respondent said, while another credited him for having “a million answers,” and thanked him for always taking the time to provide them. However, Johnston’s real value, according to the voters, are his contributions to Barrett’s success over the past year, particularly during committee. “He’s an operator,” one respondent said, while another credited him for “firing up multiple punishing scandals” over the past year, as well as his ability to keep those fires stoked “with a little help from the government, of course.” Contributing to that success is Johnston’s discretion, with respondents describing him as “a vault,” and “master of whispers.” Voters also praised his ability to “spin Liberal attacks into a pretzel” on the fly while remaining steadfastly “on message and never swaying,” which one respondent described as “a sight to behold.” Coming in at No. 3 on the Terrific 25 list is **Colin Thackeray**, a senior adviser to Scheer who has worked in the opposition House leader’s office since 2007. He previously worked as a Hill staffer for then-Conservative MP **Tom Lukiwski**, the parliamentary secretary to the Government House Leader under then-prime minister **Stephen Harper**. Garnering 90 votes across all categories, Thackeray ranked No. 1 Best All-Round and Best Conservative Hill Staffer, the No. 2 Most Discreet, and the No. 3 Most Knowledgeable and Most Influential. Thackeray told *The Hill Times* it was an “honour”



The Hill Times' top three Terrific 25 Staffers are: Katie Telford, chief of staff to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left; Jordan Johnston, director of parliamentary affairs to Conservative MP Michael Barrett; and Colin Thackeray, senior adviser to Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer. The Hill Times photographs Andrew Meade and Cynthia Munster, and courtesy of Facebook



to be recognized by his peers, and said he feels “privileged to be able to work in Parliament every day with such great colleagues.” With June marking Thackeray’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the Hill, respondents described him as a “dedicated, loyal staffer” whose “amazing institutional knowledge”

of both procedure and the political environment has made him an “instrumental resource” for the Conservative House leader and whip’s offices, and for caucus members and staffers alike for more than a decade. Described as both “a class act” and “the genius behind Order Paper

Questions,” Thackeray is credited for his versatility, speed of results, and highly specific knowledge of all things parliamentary, and, apparently, ribs. “People listen to what he says, whether it’s about what ribs to eat, what receptions to attend, or political advice,” one respondent said, while another dubbed him both “the King of Ribs and King of the Hill.”

“[Thackeray] possesses an exceptional depth of procedural knowledge and insight, and is consistently responsive to queries from staffers who need his guidance,” one respondent said, while another suggested that his experience and political connections “will be key” to a future Conservative government.

In the No. 4 spot is **Ryan Gauss**, director of operations and personnel to Liberal MP **Peter Fragiskatos** (London North Centre, Ont.), with 66 votes and the unique recognition as the Best Liberal Staffer whether he’s on the Hill or in the constituency office since the 2015 election. Rising from No. 7 on last year’s list, Gauss—who previously worked in HR for the RCMP for 12 years—has worked for Fragiskatos both on the Hill and in the London constituency office since the 2015 election. Since then, respondents said Gauss “works like a dog” for Fragiskatos and his constituents, and has a reliable reputation for “getting things done.” Described as a “jack of all trades,” respondents said Gauss’ years of experience and “careful understanding of the work” make him an “unmatched” asset to his longtime boss.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Gauss said he was honoured

Marking her 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the Hill last April, Haley has previously worked as manager of tour logistics for the OLO; director of operations for Conservative MP **Rob Moore** (Fundy Royal, N.B.); as well as a member’s assistant and director of operations to then-Conservative deputy leader **Lisa Raitt**. Respondents said that, over the past decade, Haley has demonstrated “incredible institutional knowledge” and the ability to motivate and lead not just her team, but also the next generation of Conservative staffers as a mentor and positive influence. Respondents described her as a “legendary figure” who “single-handedly” balances her boss’s health file and the caucus’ interns, and “she does it all with a smile,” bringing “a ray of sunshine everywhere she goes.” “The warmest and friendliest personality in the room,” wrote one respondent, describing her as an “absolute legend” among the Conservative caucus. Conservative staffers also performed strongly in several of the

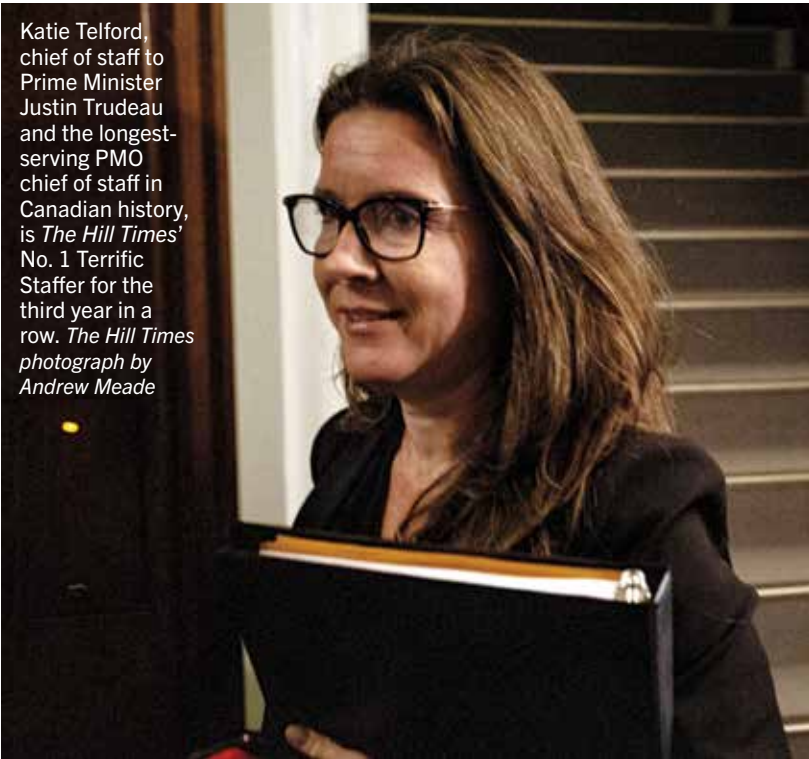


Sebastian Skamski, the Conservative leader’s director of media relations, prepares for the post-press conference spin cycle on Sept. 19, 2023. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

survey’s sub-categories, sweeping the top three spots in both Most Knowledgeable and Most Discreet. Following Johnston in the No. 1 Most Knowledgeable position is his colleague **Adam Church**, a senior adviser to Scheer and this year’s overall No. 7 Terrific Staffer. Thackeray is in third, edging out Telford in fourth by a single vote. That trio also claimed the top spots for Most Discreet, with Johnston again at No. 1, Thackeray at No. 2, and Church at No. 3. Conservatives also claimed the top two spots for Best Spin Control, with the No. 15 Terrific Staffer,

**Sebastian Skamski**, director of media relations for the Conservative Leader **Pierre Poilievre** (Carleton, Ont.), ranking No. 1. Skamski was followed by Johnston, and then the No. 11 Terrific Staffer, **Vanessa Hage-Moussa**, director of communications with the PMO. Following behind Telford at No. 1 for Best Access to the PMO and Cabinet is Terrific Staffer No. 7, **Andrew Bevan**, chief of staff to Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister **Chrystia Freeland** (University–Rosedale, Ont.) at No. 2, and Terrific Staffer No. 25, **Kate**

Continued on page 14



Katie Telford, chief of staff to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the longest-serving PMO chief of staff in Canadian history, is *The Hill Times'* No. 1 Terrific Staffer for the third year in a row. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Jordan Johnston, left, and his boss Conservative MP Michael Barrett at the Government Operations and Estimates committee on March 13, during its study of the ArriveCan app. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Ryan Gauss, director of operations and personnel to Liberal MP Peter Fragiskatos, is the No. 4 Terrific Staffer, rising from No. 7 on last year’s list. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

and humbled by the recognition, and that his status as a “bit of a unicorn” is simply a testament to his boss. “I didn’t come to work in politics; I came to work for Peter,” Gauss explained. “Obviously, I’m biased, but I think he’s the best [MP] around. He’s in it for the right reasons, and that’s why I’m still here.” Rounding out the Top 5 Terrific Staffers is **Allison Haley**, a director of parliamentary affairs for Conservative MP **Stephen Ellis** (Cumberland–Colchester, N.S.), his party’s health critic. Receiving 43 total votes, Haley tied for third—alongside Gauss—for Best All-Round Staffer, and was the No. 3 Best Conservative Hill Staffer. She also made the top 10 for Most Knowledgeable and Most Influential.



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, and Allison Haley, director of parliamentary affairs for the Conservative health critic and this year’s No. 5 Terrific Staffer. An ‘absolute legend’ and a mentor to Conservative interns, Haley brings joy, wisdom, and thoughtfulness to the job, according to survey respondents. Photograph courtesy of Allison Haley



21<sup>st</sup> Annual Terrific 25 Staffers List

Telford untouchable at the top of the 21<sup>st</sup> Terrific 25 Staffers list, as Conservatives sweep Most Knowledgeable and Best Spin

Continued from page 13

Van Gerven, the PMO’s director of tour and international visits, at No. 3.

This year’s best PMO staffers are Telford, followed fittingly by Terrific Staffer No. 9, **Brian Clow**, the PMO’s deputy chief of staff, and Terrific Staffer No. 23, **Alan Ning**, the PMO’s Ontario regional adviser.

Bevan is also this year’s Best Cabinet Staffer, followed by **Tanveer Kaur Tur**, executive assistant to Public Services and Procurement Minister **Jean-Yves Duclos** (Québec, Que.), and Terrific Staffer No. 6, **Gianluca Tatone**, Freeland’s senior manager of executive operations.

Rounding out the top three Liberal Hill staffers are Terrific Staffers No. 22, **Sashalie Quiros**, senior communications adviser to MP **Francesco Sorbara** (Vaughan–Woodbridge, Ont.); and No. 10, **Jeff Jedras**, chief of staff to MP **Salma Zahid** (Scarborough Centre, Ont.).

Joining Gauss on the constituency side is **Patricia LeFebour**, constituency assistant to Liberal MP **Rob Oliphant** (Don Valley West, Ont.); and **Nusrat Malim**, Zahid’s constituency office manager.

The top three Conservative constituency staffers this year are **Randy Hopkins**, Barrett’s constituency assistant, followed by **Jill Ferguson**, a constituency assistant to MP **Karen Vecchio** (Elgin–Middlesex–London, Ont.), and **Sean Schnell**, a constituency assistant for MP **Michelle Rempel Garner** (Calgary Nose Hill, Alta.).

This year’s Best Bloc Québécois Hill Staffers are Terrific Staffer No. 14, **Guillaume Freire**, parliamentary assistant to MP **Gabriel Ste-Marie** (Joliette, Que.); **Meili Faille**, parliamentary assistant to MP **Sébastien Lemire** (Abitibi–Témiscamingue, Que.); and **Anthony Trouilhas**, legislative assistant to Bloc MP **Stéphane Bergeron** (Montarville, Que.).

Constituency assistants **Ariane Francoeur** in Bloc MP **Kristina Michaud**’s Avignon–La Mitis–Matane–Matapédia, Que., office; and **Josée Latendresse** in



Jennifer Howard, chief of staff to NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, took the No. 1 spot for NDP Hill staffer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Ste-Marie’s were voted Best Bloc Québécois Constituency Staffers.

**Jennifer Howard**, chief of staff to NDP Leader **Jagmeet Singh** (Burnaby South, B.C.); **Anthony Salloum**, lobby officer and assistant to NDP Whip **Heather McPherson** (Edmonton Strathcona, Alta.); and **Tyler Cosby**, a legislative assistant to MP **Matthew Green** (Hamilton Centre, Ont.), were named Best NDP Hill Staffers. For the third year in a row, **Nadine Abi Raad**, a constituency assistant to MP **Lindsay Mathysen** (London–Fanshawe, Ont.), placed No. 1 as Best NDP Constituency Staffer.

**Debra Eindiguer**, chief of staff to Green Party Leader **Elizabeth May**’s (Saanich–Gulf Islands, B.C.), is once again this year’s No. 1 Green Party Hill Staffer, followed by **Robyn Cummings**, a legislative manager to MP **Mike Morrice** (Kitchener Centre, Ont.). Morrice’s office is also represented in both the top spot for Green Constituency Staffer and the only Green Staffer in the Top 25, by No. 24 pick **Dawn Gill**.

sbenson@hilltimes.com  
The Hill Times



Following Telford as the top PMO staffers are Brian Clow, the PMO’s deputy chief of staff, left; and Terrific Staffer No. 23, Alan Ning, the Ontario regional adviser. *The Hill Times* photograph by Aidan Chamandy, and courtesy of LinkedIn

Terrific 25 Staffers list, 2024

1. Katie Telford, chief of staff to the prime minister
2. Jordan Johnston, director of parliamentary affairs to Conservative MP Michael Barrett
3. Colin Thackeray, senior adviser to the Conservative House leader
4. Ryan Gauss, director of operations and personnel to Liberal MP Peter Fragiskatos
5. Allison Haley, director of parliamentary affairs to Conservative MP Stephen Ellis
6. Gianluca Tatone, senior manager of executive operations to the deputy prime minister and minister of finance
7. Andrew Bevan, chief of staff to the deputy prime minister and minister of finance
8. Adam Church, senior adviser to the Conservative House leader
9. Brian Clow, deputy chief of staff to the prime minister
10. Jeff Jedras, chief of staff to Liberal MP Salma Zahid
11. Vanessa Hage-Moussa, director of communications to the prime minister
12. Udit Samuel, deputy director of operations and outreach for the prime minister
13. Michael Bailey, legislative assistant to Conservative MP Todd Doherty
14. Guillaume Freire, parliamentary assistant to Bloc Québécois MP Gabriel Ste-Marie
15. Sebastian Skamski, director of media relations for the Conservative leader
16. Emily McCullough, chief of staff to Conservative MP Michelle Ferreri
17. Randy Hopkins, constituency assistant to Conservative MP Michael Barrett
18. Jill Ferguson, constituency assistant to Conservative MP Karen Vecchio
19. Olivia Wright, executive assistant to the minister of immigration, refugees, and citizenship
20. Craig Hillmoniuk, director of parliamentary affairs for the Conservative party leader
21. Mélanie Lauzon, executive assistant and senior adviser to the Liberal whip
22. Sashalie Quiros, senior communications adviser to Liberal MP Francesco Sorbara
23. Alan Ning, Ontario regional adviser to the prime minister
24. Dawn Gill, constituency assistant to Green MP Mike Morrice
25. Kate VanGerven, director of tour and international visits to the prime minister

Best All-Round Terrific Staffer:

1. Colin Thackeray, senior adviser to the Conservative House leader
2. Jordan Johnston, director of parliamentary affairs for Conservative MP Michael Barrett
3. Ryan Gauss, director of operations and personnel to Liberal MP Peter Fragiskatos; and Allison Haley, director of parliamentary affairs to Conservative MP Stephen Ellis

Most Knowledgeable:

1. Jordan Johnston, director of parliamentary affairs to Conservative MP Michael Barrett
2. Adam Church, senior adviser to the Conservative House leader
3. Colin Thackeray, senior adviser to the Conservative House leader

Most Influential:

1. Katie Telford, chief of staff to the prime minister
2. Jordan Johnston, director of parliamentary affairs to Conservative MP Michael Barrett
3. Colin Thackeray, senior adviser to the Conservative House leader

Best at Spin Control:

1. Sebastian Skamski, director of media relations to the Conservative leader
2. Jordan Johnston, director of parliamentary affairs to Conservative MP Michael Barrett
3. Vanessa Hage-Moussa, director of communications to the prime minister

Best Access to PMO/Cabinet:

1. Katie Telford, chief of staff to the prime minister
2. Andrew Bevan, chief of staff to the deputy prime minister and minister of finance
3. Kate VanGerven, director of tour and international visits to the prime minister

Most Discreet:

1. Jordan Johnston, director of parliamentary affairs to Conservative MP Michael Barrett
2. Colin Thackeray, senior adviser to the Conservative House leader
3. Adam Church, senior adviser to the Conservative House leader

Best PMO Staffer:

1. Katie Telford, chief of staff to the prime minister
2. Brian Clow, deputy chief of staff to the prime minister
3. Alan Ning, Ontario regional adviser to the prime minister

Best Cabinet Staffer:

1. Andrew Bevan, chief of staff to the deputy prime minister and minister of finance
2. Tanveer Kaur Tur, executive assistant to the minister of public services and procurement
3. Gianluca Tatone, senior manager of executive operations to the deputy prime minister and minister of finance

Best Liberal Hill Staffer:

1. Ryan Gauss, director of operations and personnel to Liberal MP Peter Fragiskatos
2. Sashalie Quiros, senior communications adviser to Liberal MP Francesco Sorbara
3. Jeff Jedras, chief of staff to Liberal MP Salma Zahid

Best Liberal Constituency Staffer:

1. Ryan Gauss, director of operations and personnel to Liberal MP Peter Fragiskatos
2. Patricia Lefebour, constituency assistant to Liberal MP Rob Oliphant
3. Nusrat Malim, constituency office manager for Liberal MP Salma Zahid

Best Conservative Hill Staffer:

1. Colin Thackeray, senior adviser to the Conservative House leader
2. Jordan Johnston, director of parliamentary affairs to Conservative MP Michael Barrett
3. Allison Haley, director of parliamentary affairs to Conservative MP Stephen Ellis

Best Conservative Constituency Staffer:

1. Randy Hopkins, constituency assistant to Conservative MP Michael Barrett
2. Jill Ferguson, constituency assistant to Conservative MP Karen Vecchio
3. Sean Schnell, constituency assistant to Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner

Best Bloc Québécois Hill Staffer:

1. Guillaume Freire, parliamentary assistant to Bloc Québécois MP Gabriel Ste-Marie
2. Meili Faille, parliamentary assistant to Bloc Québécois MP Sébastien Lemire
3. Anthony Trouilhas, legislative assistant to Bloc Québécois MP Stéphane Bergeron

Bloc Québécois Constituency Staffer:

1. Ariane Francoeur, constituency assistant to Bloc Québécois MP Kristina Michaud
2. Josée Latendresse, constituency assistant to Bloc Québécois MP Gabriel Ste-Marie

Best NDP Hill Staffer:

1. Jennifer Howard, chief of staff to NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh
2. Anthony Salloum, lobby officer and assistant to the NDP whip
3. Tyler Cosby, legislative assistant to NDP MP Matthew Green

Best NDP Constituency Staffer:

1. Nadine Abi Raad, constituency assistant to NDP MP Lindsay Mathysen

Best Green Party Hill Staffer:

1. Debra Eindiguer, chief of staff to Green Leader Elizabeth May
2. Robyn Cummings, legislative manager to Green MP Mike Morrice

Best Green Party Constituency Staffer:

1. Dawn Gill, constituency assistant to Green MP Mike Morrice
2. Kyra Jansen, constituency assistant to Green MP Mike Morrice





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## Guide to Hill Staff

# Electoral loss can be defined by the many lessons learned in the aftermath

Losing may be part of the story, but the insights gained from these experiences are a north star that will better prepare you for future challenges.

Josie Sabatino

Opinion



For political staffers, failure is a question of when, not if. This isn't a traditional career path that's socialized with young children when they are contemplating what they want to be when they grow up. Very little in life before this job prepares you for the proverbial blows to which you will succumb when you choose to align yourself with a political party, and work your way up the ranks.

Not much fazed me in the early years of my employment as a Conservative staffer. The political science textbooks I had studied in university suddenly came to life as I learned the machinations of how departments interact with political offices and, subsequently, how cabinet advances their priorities through the parliamentary system.

In my free time, I discovered a new city with fellow staffers who found themselves in the similar situation of uprooting their lives to be part of meaningful change.

In hindsight, we were just a group of optimistic young people who didn't bear the scars and bitterness of elections lost. This is exactly the kind of perspective you want involved in the chain of political decision-making.

The first time I realized the precariousness of my chosen profession was Oct. 19, 2015. After a gruelling 78-day campaign, much of which I spent living in the basement of an elderly couple's home in British Columbia, the election was over. The results were counted. Not only had the local candidate I was working for lost, but the Conservative government was subsequently unseated. Former prime minister Stephen Harper stepped down as leader, and so began the trajectory of the Conservative Party of Canada's time in opposition.

Despite losing my job, I wasn't ready to call it quits. In the years that would follow, I was privileged to continue working in Ottawa, first for the Member of Parliament from my hometown in northern British Columbia, and then in the Conservative Opposition Leader's Office for two now-former leaders.

Between elections, these jobs would take me from one end of the country to the other. From the suburbs of Toronto, to the town of Gander, N.L., the views of Canadians in different regions of the country opened my eyes to how they perceive is-



Working on the Hill comes with the emotional toll of supporting a political movement that could fall in and out of favour with the public at the drop of a hat, writes Josie Sabatino. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

sues differently, and how politics is treated as a lifeline for those seeking change.

Nationally, our team would go on to lose the 2019 and 2021 elections. And in 2022, then-party leader Erin O'Toole would step down from his role after his caucus voted to remove him.

During my time in politics, I had more than half a dozen roles. Thanks to many wonderful bosses and colleagues, many of whom remain friends today, I felt supported through the good times and the bad.

I also learned many important lessons. Politicians aren't perfect. Mistakes will happen. Not every policy will be popular. Demanding our political leaders—and their staff—be anything less than perfect is bad for parties, our country, and for Canadians.

Most political staffers know that when they sign up for these jobs, they are going to be working long hours that often come at the expense of time with family and friends. What's less well understood is the emotional toll that comes with supporting a political movement that can fall in and out of favour with the Canadian public at the drop of a hat.

After nearly a decade in opposition, Conservatives understand this fact well. Many Liberal staffers who grew up under the Trudeau banner are now experiencing the tidal wave of change for the first time. With an election slated for next year, the outcome is by no means certain.

A passion for politics is what led me to Ottawa, but it is the network of friends, colleagues, and former bosses that taught me how to persevere. To anyone contemplating getting involved in politics, take the chance. And while losing may be part of the story, know that the insights you will gain from these experiences are a north star that will better prepare you for future challenges.

*Josie Sabatino is a senior consultant at Summa Strategies focused on providing strategic insight, and helping clients meet their objectives in an ever changing and complex political and regulatory environment. Prior to joining Summa, Sabatino spent nearly a decade in political communications, most recently as the director of communications to Erin O'Toole, former leader of the Official Opposition.*

*The Hill Times*

# Gratitude, honour, and respect: reflections from a former Indigenous political staffer



Katherine Koostachin's path as a political staffer began in the environment minister's office, and culminated in a role in the Prime Minister's Office where she advised on Indigenous policy and litigation. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Indigenous Peoples have always been an integral part of Canada, and it is crucial for governments, industries, and institutions to recognize and incorporate our perspectives.

Katherine Koostachin

Opinion



My path to becoming a political staffer was anything but conventional. As a lawyer specializing in environmental and Aboriginal law, my focus was on lands and resources, shaped by my community of Attawapiskat, and my work on mining consultation with De Beers Canada. I witnessed firsthand the regulatory and Indigenous participation challenges that communities faced. At the time, the Government of Canada was not responsive enough, leading to significant frustrations and obstacles for Indigenous communities.

In 2017, everything changed when Jesse McCormick, an Indigenous staffer from then-minister Catherine McKenna's office at Environment and Climate Change Canada, reached out to me. He conveyed that the minister was seeking to expand her team with Indigenous individuals possessing environmental regulatory backgrounds

to aid in the development of the new Impact Assessment Act (IAA). With McCormick's endorsement, McKenna asked me to join the team.

At the time, I lacked any experience as a political staffer, and was not affiliated with any political party, but I was eager to enhance Indigenous participation in environmental assessment processes, and so we did. Despite ongoing debates surrounding the current IAA, its Indigenous components remain robust and essential. Today, it's evident that major projects cannot proceed without meaningful Indigenous involvement.

As the political landscape evolved, my journey took me through various ministerial offices, from Indigenous Services Canada to Natural Resources Canada. Ultimately, this path led to an invitation from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to advise on Indigenous policy and litigation. Initially, I was hesitant to join, knowing the immense time and energy it would demand. I understood the challenges, especially in balancing my responsibilities at the PMO with raising two young boys.

Thankfully, my spouse and family were supportive, and I had heartfelt conversations, especially with my late father, Gregory Koostachin. He recognized the challenges I would face working at the highest political office and institution of the Privy Council. However, he encouraged me because it was my chance to make a significant impact. So, I accepted the position in 2020, during the height of the pandemic.

In my role, I approached my duties with unwavering seriousness and dedication. Amidst the Liberal government's prioritization of reconciliation, I felt a deep-seated

Continued on page 19



## Guide to Hill Staff

# The best tool is the ability to write for your target audiences—not the Ottawa bubble

Good communication should resonate beyond the Hill to people at home.

Mélanie Richer

Opinion



My favourite—and most useful lesson—I learnt from my years on Parliament Hill is to go beyond the commentators in the Ottawa bubble, and to focus all communications on the people at home.

And sometimes that's hard to do. The work being done on Parliament Hill is very important. The procedures, Question Period, committees, and processes in the House of Commons take up most staffers' time while the House is sitting. And it's easy to fall into a mode of speaking in the same shorthand that is spoken on the Hill.

Referencing a study happening at AGRI, instead of talking about examining grocery store prices that are making family budgets tighter, or Private Member's Bill C-213, instead of talking about pharmacare, and about working to cover people's medication.

But it's so key in every one of those things you're communicating to remember to whom you're ultimately speaking, and to speak to them in a way they understand—and in the world of what they believe to be possible.

The best habit for writing politically is to figure out your audience, and the compelling narrative that moves that audience. For me, it was writing for mom and dad in a way that they understood, and in a way that connected with what they were going through and believed to be true.

And I really mean mom and dad. When working with the NDP leader or MPs, I would ask them to choose to whom they were speaking—I most often picked my parents. It got to the point where it became a joke. The leader would say “what does your mom and dad think of this?” and we would talk it out, and then “speak to them” in the way the leader framed his remarks and his questions.

While drafting each speech, press release, and social copy, we would go through the issue and what we were trying to say, and write it as though we were talking to our target person and trying to make them feel and make them care about that issue.

Because if we couldn't get them to care, to join in, to do something, then really, we were just talking to ourselves.

In fact, the best skill to have in communications on the Hill—and off of it—is being able to communicate persuasively to folks outside your audience in a way they understand, and that moves them.

This doesn't mean not talking about the issues you care most about; it just means doing so in a way that brings people with you, and does not turn them off because they don't understand—or care—about

what you're speaking about.

This helps in the day-to-day tasks of amplifying the work MPs do in the House, in telling a story over time about the issues MPs, parties, and leaders care about, and in building the groundwork in the next election, and beyond.

This is also a great skill to hone for life after politics: how to speak to government on your issues, but more importantly, the general public, and different audiences within that public. We know that people move politicians with the issues that matter most to them. By empowering those people with the knowledge of your issues, you're in turn giving your message a better chance to be heard and actioned.

Every day since I've been off the Hill, while working on all sorts of different campaigns, I think: what would mom and dad think of this? And I continue to believe that the most important and useful thing I learned was to determine as a starting point to whom we were speaking, and writing—or talking—directly to them.

Mélanie Richer is a communications principal at Earncliffe Strategies. With years of experience in both federal and provincial politics with the NDP, Richer specializes in strategic communications, crisis management, and media relations. Richer previously worked as the director of communications for NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, and has served as the media lead on tour for political leaders in federal and provincial elections.

The Hill Times



Remember who you're ultimately speaking to, and to speak to them in a way they understand—and in the world of what they believe to be possible, writes Mélanie Richer. Unsplash photograph by Volodymyr Hryshchenko



Zita Astravas, left, walks with her then-minister Harjit Sajjan to a Liberal cabinet meeting on Dec. 10, 2019. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

## Finding community on Parliament Hill: lessons from a former staffer

You can't do these jobs alone. Building relationships around the Hill, and pulling people together is what makes a terrific staffer.

Zita Astravas

Opinion



Many of my colleagues made *The Hill Times*' Terrific Staffers list that year, and in the years to follow. Later, as director of issues management and a chief of staff, I had the opportunity to build my own teams of terrific staffers to support our important work.

Terrific staffers are the backbone of any MP, caucus, or leader's office. They keep everything running smoothly, bringing smiles and laughter on both the best and hardest days. While you can learn any job—and I certainly did—what's critical is the character, work ethic, experience, and drive you bring to your team. I hired generalists who wanted to grow both as a team, and as individuals.

I've learned many lessons along the way, some from my own mistakes, and others from incredible mentors and colleagues. Admitting, “I don't know, but I will find out,” is a strength, not a weakness. Seeking advice leads to better decisions. Sometimes, what seems like a mistake is a valuable lesson. Asking for a second pair of eyes improves outcomes. Reviewing recent tours by your minister or MP can highlight areas for improvement. It's important to check in on your peers, and make time for those who reach out.

Years later, you'll encounter these same people on the Hill or elsewhere, and you'll remember how you were treated. Strive for positive, thoughtful engagements, and if it didn't meet that mark, reach out and start over.

You can't do these jobs alone. Building relationships around the Hill, and pulling people together is what makes a terrific staffer. These staffers become your family away from home, and friends for a lifetime. I'm grateful to many on this year's list and look forward to the generations of terrific staffers to come.

Zita Astravas is vice-president, federal, at Wellington Advocacy, which she joined after serving in a number of senior leadership roles in the Trudeau government, including as director of issues management to the prime minister. Astravas has also served as chief of staff to the president of the King's privy council and minister of emergency preparedness, the minister of public safety, and the minister of national defence.

The Hill Times



## Guide to Hill Staff

# How policy interests, not partisan politics, brought Éloge Butera to Parliament Hill

A survivor of the Rwandan genocide, Butera is currently director of labour relations to Treasury Board President Anita Anand.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Every year, the weeks between April and July are a period of reflection for Éloge Butera—a time to remember lost loved ones, to reflect on how far he’s come, and to recall the lessons of the genocide that robbed him and thousands of others of their childhoods.

Butera—who today is director of labour relations to Treasury Board President Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.)—was just 10-and-a-half years old and living in Kigali when the Rwandan genocide began on April 7, 1994.

Over a roughly three-month span, as many as one million Tutsi Rwandans were murdered. There remains no consensus on the official death toll, but Butera, in recalling the horror wrought by the “very well-equipped, well-rehearsed mob of Hutu extremists,” cites the figure enshrined in the country’s constitution of more than one million Tutsis killed—Butera’s father, grandmother, and “many relatives” among them.

“I survived by hiding and running away for those three months. But, of course, the memories of that have to stay with you. I consider myself one of the lucky ones because my mother and my two siblings survived,” Butera told *The Hill Times* during a recent interview in downtown Ottawa.

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide, and is all the more poignant not just in light of current events, but because Butera’s son is now around the same age he was when the violence began.

“We spent the last 30 years really trying to find meaning and a way to live on the legacy of those we loved who did not survive. The period of the genocide—from April 7 to about July 4—for many Rwandans, every single day comes with a significant milestone of something important to remember,” said Butera.

“And of course, 30 years later, I’ve become a father, and you start looking at this differently. My son is about the same age as I was when all this was happening, and it’s a whole other vibe to be thinking about those



Éloge Butera sat down with *The Hill Times* at 90 Elgin St. in downtown Ottawa on June 11 to talk about his path to Parliament Hill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Laura Ryckewaert

memories with the perspective of transmission, but also protecting them from the kind of poison that robbed us of our childhood.”

Those reflections are “especially” striking today given his work in recent years for the federal ministers of public safety and foreign affairs, and as director of the Dallaire Institute’s Africa Centre of Excellence for Children, Peace, and Security in Rwanda.

“The pattern of normalized hate and gratuitous violence is definitely a thing that takes you back in all the wrong places. But the key is also remaining engaged, and remaining committed in fighting those elements in public life, and the global stage, and other places with the work that we get to do,” said Butera. “A tribute of the last 30 years is where Rwanda has come and where Rwanda is today, but also with the lessons of Rwanda that need probably to be more studied today than they have ever been because you can’t be careful enough, especially if you check the first box, which is normalized hate, normalized violence that begins with words but usually—and always—ends with deeds.”

Witnessing such violence at such a young age leaves its mark, and while on one hand Butera said he “probably would have been a different person” if he hadn’t “lived through that and borne witness to that kind of evil,” he also describes it as a “moment” in life’s journey, and only one of many factors that have shaped him, with his family, mentors, and past jobs each also playing a “critical role.”

Butera stayed in Rwanda through high school, and—interested in exploring “what moves people”—immigrated to Canada in 2002 to study religion and

Kasirer, who was then teaching family law. With such mentorship “comes another responsibility to step up and serve the country,” he said. Butera’s activism during school—including work to help organize the 2007 UN Conference on Prevention of Genocide, which took place in Montreal—earned him the Claude-Masson Award.

Ultimately, it was an interest in human rights work, not partisan politics, that brought Butera to the Hill.

After graduating law school, in 2012, Butera landed a job in Cotler’s office as the then-MP for Mount Royal, Que. At the time, the Liberals were the third party in the House with a caucus of just 34 MPs. Cotler was vice-chair of the House Justice and Human Rights Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee’s Subcommittee on International Human Rights, and was “doing a lot of incredible work as a champion and advocate for political prisoners,” recalled Butera.

Come 2013, then-Quebec Liberal senator Roméo Dallaire was in need of a new parliamentary lead.

Two decades earlier, Dallaire had been commander of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, and had tried to intervene to stop the bloodshed before it broke out. Butera had already met the senator at conferences through his human rights advocacy work, and after being “lucky” to land the job in Dallaire’s office, was able to continue working on issues related to human rights law and genocide prevention, as well as tackling the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and issues related to national security, defence, and veterans affairs, including the post-traumatic stress injuries of veterans of the war in Afghanistan.

While working for Dallaire, Butera was invited by residential school survivors to become an honorary witness as part of the then-ongoing Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), through which he attended national events.

The Trudeau government has since faced criticisms for its slow progress in fulfilling the TRC’s resulting 94 Calls to Action, but Butera said he believes the commitment is there.

“To cure an injury that has been going on for 150 years—more—will take way more than eight years of government. But there is no question in my mind that we have moved some serious milestones in the way Canadians think about this issue and the way Indigenous communities, I hope, see their relationship with the federal government,” he said.

After Dallaire retired from the Senate in 2014, Butera left the Hill to work with him at Dalhousie University’s Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security, and at the same time taught as an adjunct professor at McGill.

He was lured back to the Hill in 2016 to work for then-public safety minister Ralph Goodale, motivated by the chance to “make a difference” on issues including efforts to transform the culture of the RCMP, create the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, address PTSD in first responders, and deliver national strategies on counter-ing radicalization and extremist violence and combatting human trafficking.

Goodale lost his seat in the 2019 federal election, but a new opportunity from an old friend knocked on Butera’s door when Dallaire asked him to return to his home country to set up the Dallaire Institute’s African Centre of Excellence, which works to prevent and reduce the recruitment of child soldiers.

As a result, Butera was in Rwanda—separated from his wife and two children, who remained in Canada—when COVID-19 shut down international borders. Amid those lockdowns, in early 2021, he got a call from Anand’s team as then-public services and procurement minister, offering him a job as a senior policy adviser. He jumped at the chance, and while COVID-related work dominated his focus, he said his time there also included attention to the issue of preventing the use of child or forced labour in Canada’s supply chains, including in the production of PPE.

After the 2021 election, Butera became deputy director of policy to Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic—Cartierville, Que.), working for her until last summer, when he returned to work for Anand as now Treasury Board president, serving as her director of labour relations—no small feat, given the Treasury Board Secretariat is, as Butera noted, the “largest employer in the country.”

“It’s a lot of [working with] stakeholders, it’s a lot of legal, technical language to understand what employment contracts mean and what they intended to achieve ... but it’s also a lot of work to understand the principles of equity, and human rights, and how you drive them as part and parcel of the culture of this institution.”

Asked about the recent back-to-office order that’s sparked complaints among the public service, Butera—who works in the office himself—noted it’s a decision of the public service. But be it labour negotiations or navigating the day-to-day management of the public service, Butera said it comes down to “making sure that people feel strong and healthy and happy in their work.”

As to his own future of work on the Hill, Butera said, “we’ll see.”

“It’s a special place to work, and it’s an awesome responsibility to carry.”

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



## Guide to Hill Staff

# Skills, values, and ethics: where is political staffing work headed?

Canadian politics and the wider world are undergoing several important shifts that will impact how and why we all do our work, and staffers can't do their jobs now without several forms of technology.

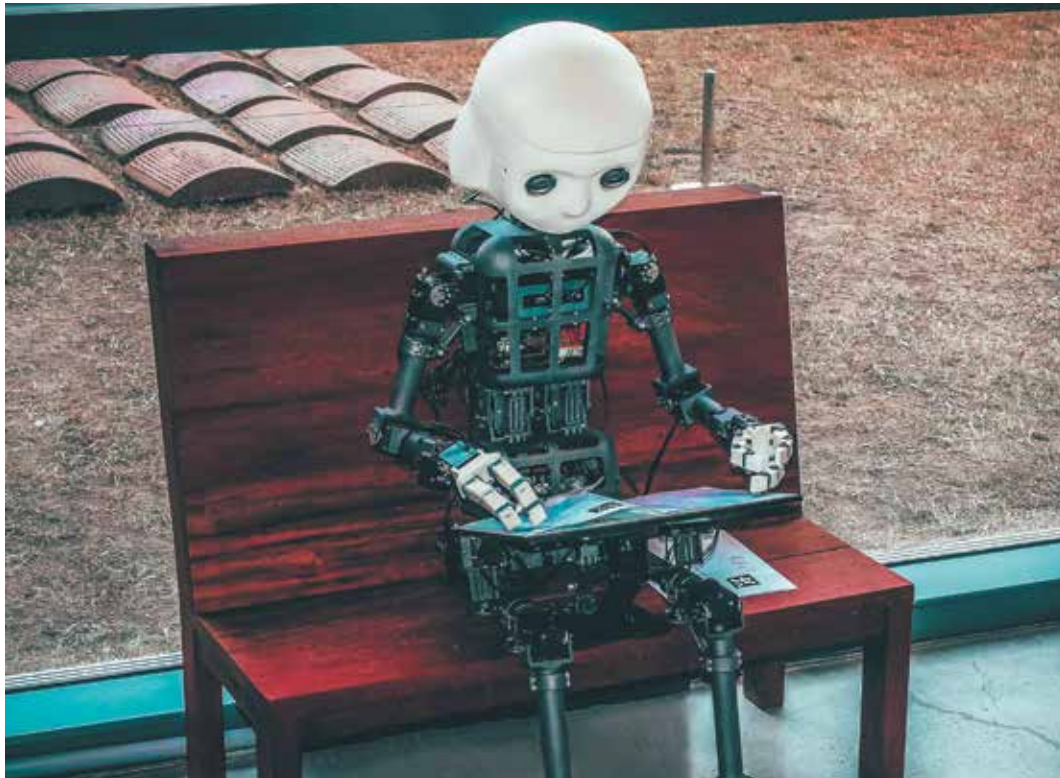
Jennifer Robson

Opinion



There are many terrific staffers across Parliament and government, and your work deserves to be recognized. You are working in a profession that requires skill, knowledge, and ethical judgment. I'm writing this as I get ready to take a sabbatical year after serving as the head of Canada's premier graduate program in the practice of political management, an academic and professional education program I've been part of for the last 13 years. This has put me in a reflective mood. Despite a few close calls, it's been a long time since I worked inside a political office, but I listen to and learn from my current and past students who do.

To read many political commentators, staffers today are—as a group—ill-informed, unqualified, and delusionally partisan. This isn't new. Go look up the Dorion



Staffers will play a really important role in the values and ethics that govern how new tech tools like AI are used in our politics, writes Jennifer Robson. *Unsplash photograph by Andrea De Santis*

Inquiry in 1965, or the Gomery Inquiry in the early 2000s. That said, it's never a bad idea to be open to more learning. Maybe you would benefit from some extra training on things like parliamentary procedure, cabinet and central agencies, policy analysis, media relations, or digital campaigns. In the program at Carleton University, there are some really good teachers with loads of political experience, and yes, courses can be taken as professional development if you don't want another degree. We all need to keep our skills sharp, especially in the current environment.

I think Canadian politics and the wider world are undergoing

several important shifts that will impact how and why we all do our work—you staffers included. The one I want to highlight here is the impact of emergent technologies on the work of politics. You can't do your jobs now without several forms of technology. Some politicians have been able to build profitable businesses by specializing in the more advanced tech skills, customizing off-the-shelf tools, maximizing impact on key platforms, or even building new tools altogether. Artificial intelligence is already part of a lot of the tools and platforms you may be used to. Generative AI will be part of more of them in the very near future. With these leaps

in tech, will we need as many staffers or campaign workers in the future? Will Hill-adjacent jobs in government relations and public affairs need as many staff if a chatbot can be programmed to handle a lot of the routine tasks?

Most importantly, there are the very real ethical issues and frightening public harms that advanced AI could have on our politics. To illustrate the point, I had Open AI's ChatGPT 4 contribute the next paragraph, shown in quotes, and totally unedited from the original output:

"Imagine an election cycle where deepfake videos are indistinguishable from reality, spreading lies about a candidate's

stance or actions. The damage to public trust and the integrity of our democratic process would be immeasurable. We've already seen glimpses of this in recent campaigns globally, where AI-generated content has been used to deceive and manipulate voters. Moreover, AI's role in accelerating microtargeting efforts raises ethical concerns. While targeted messaging can effectively reach specific demographics, it can also exacerbate divisions and spread tailored misinformation. In the wrong hands, AI can segment the electorate into echo chambers, each receiving a customized narrative that reinforces biases and undermines informed decision-making."

If that paragraph doesn't give you pause for what it says and how it says it, then you're not paying attention. As generative AI becomes more integrated into the work of politics, what value will political staffers continue to bring? Like I said, we will all need to keep our skills sharp. You should really check out the course offerings in the master of political management program.

But more than learning prompt engineering, staffers will play a really important role in the values and ethics that govern how these new tools are used in our politics. It's not clear that Canada's proposed AI legislative framework—sent to committee last September—is up to the task of putting sensible guardrails on the use of AI in political work. The legislation likely doesn't even apply to parties, and relies on privacy legislation that absolutely does not. So, can we start to have a cross-partisan conversation on the ethical use of advanced tech and AI in politics, or will delusional partisanship get in the way?

*Jennifer Robson is an associate professor and the outgoing director and practicum co-ordinator in Carleton University's graduate program in political management.*

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## Gratitude, honour, and respect: reflections from a former Indigenous political staffer

Continued from page 16

commitment to translating rhetoric into meaningful action for Indigenous Peoples. I refused to accept "no" as an answer, steadfast in my belief that tangible progress was achievable with determination and willpower.

Alongside fellow Indigenous staffers and dedicated political allies, we faced challenges with resilience, working tirelessly to transform our shared vision into reality. From spearheading Indigenous policy and legislative initiatives, to resolving major litigation and long-standing disputes, every step forward was a testament to

our shared commitment. While there's still a long road ahead, I take pride in the strides we made.

After seven years in politics, I decided it was time to move on at the end of 2023, having accomplished much of what I set out to achieve. However, I have also observed troubling changes in the political landscape. Unfortunately, the environment has shifted from creating good policy to politicking for election readiness, often at the expense of reconciliation. Indigenous Peoples have always been an integral part of Canada, and it is crucial for governments, industries, and institutions to recognize and incorporate our perspectives.

Failure to do so will lead to ongoing legal challenges and significant, avoidable costs. Reconciliation must transcend politics, and become deeply embedded in our laws and policies to ensure lasting and meaningful change.

Despite these challenges, my commitment to reconciliation remains unwavering. This is why I joined Sussex Strategy Group as vice-president where I lead their Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation practice. I continue to advocate for what I believe in by working on major projects related to energy, mining, and critical infrastructure to ensure meaningful Indigenous participation.

I want to acknowledge and commend all Indigenous staffers on the Hill for your invaluable work. Your dedication is truly commendable, and your contributions are making a difference for future generations. I extend special recognition to Indigenous women, fellow colleagues, and communities to which I've had the privilege of working closely with: Tania Monaghan at Justice Canada, Cheryl Cardinal in the office of the deputy prime minister and finance minister, Sherry Ann Smith at Crown-Indigenous Relations, Deliah Bernard in the PMO, and Kathy

Kettler at Northern Affairs. As role models for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, you are effecting meaningful change and inspiring countless peers through your advocacy. *Ki-keh-nah-sko-mih-tin-now.*

*Meegwetich, thank you, merci.*

*Katherine Koostachin served as a senior adviser on Indigenous policy and litigation in the Prime Minister's Office, advancing reconciliation initiatives through cabinet, and securing historic federal investments. She's now with the Sussex Strategy Group as their VP of Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation.*

*The Hill Times*





Laura Ryckewaert  
**Hill Climbers**

# Wilkinson, Anandasangaree, Miller swap comms staff

Staff changes in Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Gary Anandasangaree's office also include the promotion of a new director of operations.

There's been a recent domino effect of cabinet communications staff changes prompted by **Sabrina Kim**'s exit as director of communications to Energy and Natural Resources Minister **Jonathan Wilkinson**.

Kim officially called an end to her time running Wilkinson's communications shop on June 14, after having a sending-off party attended by colleagues, current and former ministers, and reporters alike at D'Arcy McGees at the end of May.

Kim's career on the Hill dates back to 2016, starting as an assistant to then-Ottawa Liberal MP **Catherine McKenna**. She became a ministerial staffer in 2018 when she was hired as a special assistant for issues management and Ontario regional affairs to McKenna as then-environment minister, eventually working her way up to press secretary to the minister.

After the 2019 election, Kim landed a job as an issues management adviser in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s office, where she worked for almost all of 2020 before returning to the environment portfolio to serve as director of communications to then-minister Wilkinson. Kim ran Wilkinson's communications shop as environment minister until the end of 2021—spending that year's federal election as an issues adviser for the national Liberal campaign—and started 2022 as director of communications and issues management to then-defence minister **Anita Anand**. She left Anand's office to once again work for Wilkinson—this time as natural resources minister—in April 2023. Initially hired as his director of issues management, she swapped hats to instead serve as head of communications a few months later in July.

Already, Wilkinson has recruited **Joanna Sivasankaran** from Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister **Gary Anandasangaree**'s office to take over as his head of communications.



Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, left, Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Gary Anandasangaree, and Immigration Minister Marc Miller have all had communications staff moves in recent weeks. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



Joanna Sivasankaran is now director of communications to Minister Wilkinson. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Sivasankaran has been director of communications to Anandasangaree since last fall, and she's been working full time for Liberal ministers since 2019, starting as a special assistant to McKenna as then-environment minister.

When Wilkinson took over the environment portfolio after the 2019 election, Sivasankaran stayed on as a special assistant for communications, later becoming communications manager, and then press secretary to her now once-again boss. She initially followed Wilkinson to the natural resources portfolio—continuing as press

secretary—when he was shuffled after the 2021 election, but a few months later in early 2022 she left to become a writer in Trudeau's office. She worked in the PMO for more than a year and a half before leaving to oversee communications in Anandasangaree's office.

Now in Wilkinson's office, Sivasankaran will be working closely with press secretary **Carolyn Svonkin**, senior communications manager **Madeleine Gomery**, and strategic communications and parliamentary affairs adviser **Maheep Sandhu**.

**Kyle Harrietha** remains chief of staff to Wilkinson.

Anandasangaree has since followed suit, and has scooped up a new director of communications straight from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Minister **Marc Miller**'s office.

**Bahoz Dara Aziz**, who has been press secretary and senior communications adviser to Miller since he took over the immigration portfolio last summer, took charge of Anandasangaree's communications team on June 18.



Bahoz Dara Aziz is now communications director to Minister Anandasangaree. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Dara Aziz is a former co-ordinator with National Public Relations, and previously spent roughly five months in 2021 as a constituency assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Ryan Turnbull**. She's been working for Liberal cabinet ministers since early 2022, starting as an issues manager to Indigenous Services Minister **Patty Hajdu** in

March of that year. That October, Dara Aziz joined then-immigration minister **Sean Fraser**'s office as press secretary, staying on—with a promotion—after Fraser was replaced by Miller in the July 2023 shuffle.

**Matthieu Perrotin** continues as press secretary and Quebec regional affairs adviser to Anandasangaree.

Along with Dara Aziz's hiring, there have been a couple of other staffing changes in Anandasangaree's office to catch up on, including senior policy adviser **Rayna Sutherland**'s promotion to director of operations.

**Gowthaman Kurusamy** was the last to fill the role of operations director in Anandasangaree's office. As reported by **Hill Climbers** earlier this spring, Kurusamy left to join the PMO as an Ontario regional affairs adviser in March.



Rayna Sutherland is now director of operations to Minister Anandasangaree. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Sutherland, who was part of the Parliamentary Internship Programme's 2021-22 cohort, first joined the Crown-Indigenous relations minister's office under then-minister Miller as a policy adviser in May 2023, and was promoted to "senior" status a few months later. Prior to working for Miller, she'd been a West and North regional affairs adviser to then-public safety minister **Marco Mendicino**.

**Natalia Zhou**—whose exit from Innovation, Science, and Industry Minister **François-Philippe Champagne**'s office was recently noted in these pages—is now a policy adviser to Anandasangaree.

A former assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Francesco Sorbara**, Zhou had been a West and North regional affairs adviser to Champagne since October 2023.

**Sherry Smith** is director of policy to Anandasangaree, whose office is run by chief of staff **Shaili Patel**.

In Miller's office, a new press secretary had yet to be named last **Hill Climbers** checked in, but in another change, special assistant for operations and policy **Philip Gebert** is now filling in as West and North regional affairs adviser to the minister while **Stefany Sorto** is on maternity leave.

Gebert has been working for Miller as immigration minister since November 2023, and before then was an assistant in Miller's office as the Liberal MP for Ville-Marie-Le Sud-Ouest-Îles-des-Soeurs, Que.

Also currently tackling regional affairs for Miller are **Matthieu Saint-Wrill**, who's both a policy and Quebec regional adviser; **Tyler Foley**, who serves as Atlantic regional affairs adviser; and **Lisa Stewart**, **Juan Sarmiento**, and **Dorine Soundranayagam**, who all cover Ontario, with Stewart focused specifically on casework.

**Aissa Diop** remains director of communications to Miller, and continues to oversee issues manager and communications adviser **Aiman Akmal**.

**Mike Burton** is chief of staff to Miller, supported by deputy chief of staff **Youmy Han**.

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



Sabrina Kim, centre, listens to remarks from her former boss, ex-Liberal minister Catherine McKenna, right, at her going away party at D'Arcy McGees as Treasury Board President Anita Anand, Energy and Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, and others look on. *Photograph courtesy of Nicolas Takushi*



# Ten parliamentary committees forgo scrutiny of \$25-billion in spending estimates

The House Foreign Affairs Committee also didn't finish its review of \$8.5-billion of planned spending.

Continued from page 1

and Justice committees went unscrutinized.

The Health Committee bypassed scrutiny of \$3.8-billion in spending estimates, which included \$1.8-billion for the Public Health Agency of Canada, while the Justice Committee didn't perform reviews of \$497-million in planned expenditures.

Liberal Health Committee chair Sean Casey (Charlottetown, P.E.I.) said there wasn't any interest to perform the study.

"I can't say there was a conscious decision made to not look at them," he said, remarking that there was no motion presented to invite the minister to appear for a study on the estimates. "For most of the last few months, the priority of the committee has been pharmacare, the opioid crisis, and a pretty extensive study on women's health."

Casey questioned the seriousness with which committees treat examinations of the spending plans.

"It's extremely common for ministers to appear on estimates and not get a single question on the estimates," he said. "Anytime a minister appears before a committee, if you're a member of the opposition, it's all about getting a clip and interrupting the minister at every opportunity. When there are votes, the votes pass without debate and very rapidly."

He added: "I would hazard that there are very few Members of Parliament that actually understand the details in estimates."

Casey said the power resides with the committee to perform a review, but it is a power that is not understood or exercised, and comes secondary to political gamesmanship.

While he said it is "technically" possible that something is lost without a study taking place, he said that "practically," he has his doubts given the number of eyes that have already looked at the spending plans before they make it to MPs.

"By the time it gets to committee, it has been analyzed in a level of detail that no parliamentarian would be capable of," Casey said.

The House Environment Committee missed studying \$3.7-billion in spending estimates, including \$2.6-billion for Environment and Climate Change Canada, and \$1-billion for Parks Canada.

Liberal committee chair Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Que.) said it had planned to invite Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie,



Nine House committees and a joint parliamentary committee—chaired by MPs Lena Metlege Diab, top left, Ben Carr, René Arseneault, Judy Sgro, Shelby Kramp-Neuman, Ron McKinnon, Sukh Dhaliwal, bottom left, Sean Casey, Angelo Iacono, and Francis Scarpaleggia, and ISG Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia—failed to complete a review of the government's planned spending. *The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia and Andrew Meade, and photographs courtesy of X and Sen. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia's office

Que.) for the review, but House voting forced the cancellation of the meeting. A subject matter study of the estimates was done by the committee on June 18, but in such a meeting no decision can be made to accept, reject, or reduce the spending plans.

"At this time of year, things can get sidelined pretty frequently," he said.

Scarpaleggia said during estimates reviews, opposition MPs question ministers on issues "peripherally" tied to the spending plans, and he suggested that the Public Accounts and Government Operations committees are places where that estimates scrutiny can happen.

MPs would need more time and a larger staff in order to pore over the numbers to facilitate a proper review of the spending estimates, Scarpaleggia said, adding that committees have to balance their time with amending bills and performing other studies.

The Procedure and House Affairs Committee didn't review \$605-million in planned spend-

ing, including \$447-million for the House of Commons, and \$93-million for the Parliamentary Protective Service.

The House Committee on the Status of Women was the lone Conservative-chaired committee to forgo a review of \$365-million in planned expenditures.

The Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament was given the task of studying \$56-million, but did not. It has only met twice since the last election in 2021, performing its last review of the government's spending for the library during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament in 2019.

The House International Trade Committee was referred \$46-million in planned expenditures, but didn't undertake a study. Neither did the House Official Languages Committee, which was referred \$22-million in spending to review.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee was referred \$8.5-billion, but ended its study in a partial review, only holding a single meeting where it heard

from International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen (York South-Weston, Ont.), but not Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.). The committee didn't vote on whether to accept, reject, or reduce the spending plan.

Compared to past years, the \$25.4-billion represents a decrease in spending estimates that have gone without review, but there has been an uptick in the number of committees that didn't do a study. For the 2023-24 estimates, \$30.7-billion went without scrutiny from six committees. It was \$50.5-billion for 2022-23 fiscal year, and \$41.4-billion for 2021-22 main estimates, with seven committees bypassing reviews in both years.

The House Industry Committee reviewed the planned spending it was referred for the first time this Parliament. It had not performed a review since 2020, bypassing a look at three straight spending estimates, totalling \$34.7-billion.

Acadia University politics professor Alex Marland said it is "outrageous" that committees are not taking advantage of their ability to perform reviews on the government's spending plan.

"It's almost the No. 1 thing that we really need parliamentary committees to be doing is to scrutinize money and how it is being spent," he said, adding that he is confused as to why opposition MPs wouldn't want to look into the government's plans.

He said there should be more leadership being taken by the committee chairs to sound the

alarm about the need to perform the studies.

"If it's just one committee that's one thing, but if it's multiple, there's something systemic going on," he said.

Marland said MPs on committees may be prioritizing more interesting studies as opposed to the monotony of delving into accounting documents.

Nicholas Dahir, research officer at the C.D. Howe Institute, said the money tasked for committee review could be doubled, but it is unlikely to lead to any increased scrutiny.

"The estimate cycle is pure inertia," said Dahir, who studies fiscal transparency.

He said reviewing spending is no small part of an MP's job.

"It raises the question: what the heck are you guys doing? If you're not doing this, what are you doing?" he asked.

"Their role is to steward public funds," he said. "This is part of the job, whether it's a lot of money or a little money. For a transparency aspect, you're breaking the link."

Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy chief economist Mostafa Askari—a former assistant parliamentary budget officer—said the issue is long-standing, and is complicated by two factors. On one hand, the main estimates are misaligned with the budget and new spending is only reflected in the supplementary estimates. On the other, the spending estimates are a confidence measure, and rejecting them would mean defeating the government.

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



Treasury Board President Anita Anand's spending estimates for 2024-25 included \$191-billion for parliamentary approval, but more than 13 per cent went without committee scrutiny. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



## News

# The buck stops where? Experts urge party leaders to be accountable for NSICOP report findings

‘Much more leadership and proactive solution-making has to come from parliamentarians themselves, from political parties, and from the government,’ says UOttawa professor Thomas Juneau.

Continued from page 1

concerns of sitting MPs. She told reporters that after reading the report she was “relieved.”

“There is no list of MPs who have shown disloyalty to Canada,” she said on June 11.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) seemingly offered a very different reading of the unredacted report.

“I am not relieved after reading this report. I am more concerned today than I was yesterday,” he said on June 13.

“There are a number of MPs who have knowingly provided help to foreign governments, some to the detriment of Canada and Canadians,” he said, remarking that some of the behaviour “absolutely appears to be criminal and should be prosecuted,” and added that those alleged to be involved are “indeed traitors to the country.”

Speaking to reporters on June 17, May said there aren’t

any sitting MPs who would be considered treasonous, per the unredacted report that she read.

Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil-Chambly, Que.) committed to undergoing a security clearance process so he could read the unredacted report.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) is the lone federal boss who has not yet committed to reading the unredacted report. According to a *Globe and Mail* report, his office said that Poilievre would accept a briefing by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) if it has any concerns about his caucus or party.

After the NSICOP’s report release, the Bloc Québécois successfully put forward an opposition motion on June 11 for the Hogue Commission to expand its terms of reference to investigate democratic institutions—including MPs

and Senators—during the last two federal elections. The vote passed with Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, and NDP support, and the two Green Party MPs in opposition.

A June 17 release from the public inquiry stated that the “commission takes note of the government’s decision to resort

to the process of an independent commission of inquiry to shed light on the facts and events discussed in the NSICOP report that refer to the role that certain parliamentarians may have played, wittingly or unwittingly, in foreign interference activities,” noting that it has access to the same documents that NSICOP had.

Speaking to CBC News on June 17, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) defended the decision to have the Hogue Commission look at NSICOP’s conclusions.

“I think there are very real reasons why we should be trusting a semi-judicial process and an independent person, who is not of any political bias, to be able to say, ‘look, this is how a thoughtful country and democracy should go about dealing with these very real threats to it,’” he said.

National security experts told *The Hill Times* that it is up to politicians and party leaders to also take accountability for the unfolding situation.

University of Ottawa professor Thomas Juneau, a former Department of National Defence analyst, said the vote to move the case to the Hogue Commission shows that MPs are jettisoning the responsibility on to others.

“That being said, let’s see what exactly comes out of the Hogue Commission on this specific aspect,” Juneau said, adding that it could have some useful advice that would be welcome.

“But much more leadership and proactive solution-making has to come from parliamentar-

ians themselves, from political parties, and from the government,” he said.

To start, all party leaders need to read the unredacted report, Juneau said.

“It’s an issue of getting all facts in hand to take a more enlightened decisions, which you cannot do in absence of having read the classified version of the report, and other classified sources of information as necessary,” he said.

While there may be political rationale behind a refusal to read the unredacted report, Juneau said that all leaders have to engage with it to be able to tackle the issue more seriously.

He said there is a need for a more “rigorous” process to determine which names outlined in the report should be made public.

He said currently the “ad-hoc muddling along” is the “worst of both worlds,” as it offers no clarity and feeds mistrust in Parliament and parliamentarians.

“There should be transparency, but as the result of a process, which does not exist at this point,” he said. “Moving forward—not just releasing the names—there needs to be much more clarity and rigour in terms of addressing the problem itself.”

Juneau said the government and political parties should be more transparent about who are the MPs in question in the NSICOP report.

“But it would be a huge mistake, in my view, to just release the names tomorrow,” he said. “There needs to be a threshold above which names are made public.”

He remarked that it isn’t likely a threshold of criminal prosecution as that would be too high of a bar, but it can’t be just above zero.

“That threshold isn’t going to invent itself. Government and political parties and parliamentarians have to sit down and do some difficult work of agreeing on this,” Juneau said.

Artur Wilczynski, a former diplomat and Communications Security Establishment executive, agreed that there has been a passing of responsibility over to the commission.

“Leaders need to look at the information to understand how foreign interference operates within the political party process,” he said, remarking that questions about foreign interference were muted in the first Question Period after the NSICOP report was released.

Wilczynski said what has been raised has more likely to do with vulnerabilities within the political process in Canada as opposed to the prospect of any criminal charges being levelled.

“It’s up to leaders of parties to make sure their houses are in order because they’re as an integral part of the electoral system in Canada’s democratic institutions as Parliament itself,” he said.

He said all leaders should be informed about the contents of the NSICOP report so they can understand if the conclusions drawn in the report merit action.

“There needs to be a more robust response in general, so that people know that when we collect intelligence, it’s not just something that sits in the corner, but something that results in action and activity that is in Canada’s national interest,” he said.

Wilczynski said there is a danger in having NSICOP cast suspicions over MPs, in that it erodes Canadians’ trust in the democratic system.

“Amplifying that anxiety—by some—is perceived by some as a partisan benefit. That’s why we need institutional responses to these challenges,” he said.

*nmoos@hilltimes.com*  
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Green Party Leader Elizabeth May said she was ‘relieved’ after reading the unredacted NSICOP report. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh says he is ‘more concerned’ after reading NSICOP’s unredacted findings. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Nearly all MPs voted to refer NSICOP’s findings to the commission led by Justice Marie-Josée Hogue. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



# All eyes on Toronto—St. Paul's as byelection vote wraps on June 24

Will Toronto—St. Paul's, Ont., remain a safe Liberal seat? Everyone will find out on Monday, June 24, when voters cast their ballots in a byelection to fill the seat of longtime former MP and cabinet minister Carolyn Bennett. *Photograph courtesy of Flickr/Can Pac Swire*



## MONDAY, JUNE 17—THURSDAY, JUNE 20

**Caribbean Development Bank Board of Governors Meeting**—International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen, chairman of the Caribbean Development Bank's Board of Governors, will chair the meeting taking place from Monday, June 17, to Thursday, June 20, in Ottawa.

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19

**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.

**Parliamentary Sickle Cell Break-fast**—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/QtZK9tWUkf or email marie-francoise.megie@sen.parl.gc.ca.

**NATO Secretary General in Ottawa**—Following a meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg will deliver remarks at a ceremony hosted by the NATO Association of Canada during which he will receive the Louis St. Laurent Award for outstanding service to peace and security. Stoltenberg will also take part in a fireside chat with journalist Lisa Laflamme. A Q&A will follow. Wednesday, June 19, at 3 p.m. in Room 200, Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St. Call 343-598-2477.

**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. Panellists include Christiane Fox, deputy clerk of the Privy Council Office; and Sarah Smith, Ernst and Young. Wednesday, June 19, at 5 p.m. at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St. Details online via Eventbrite.

## 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.

**Panel: 'The Charlevoix Education Initiative'**—The Aga Khan Foundation Canada hosts a panel: "The Charlevoix Education Initiative: Celebrating Progress and Sustaining Our Impact" featuring Christopher MacLennan, deputy minister of international development, Global Affairs Canada; Tracey Evans with Right to Play International; and Catherine Paquin-Schmidt with the AKFC, among others. Thursday, June 20 at 10 a.m. ET at the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam, 199 Sussex Dr. Details online: akfc.ca/events.

**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.

## FRIDAY, JUNE 21

**Conference: 'Safeguarding Security in the Age of Disinformation'**—The Information Integrity Lab, the Canadian International Council, and 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.

## 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 Turcotte University Centre, 85 University Pk. 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.

## 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.

## THURSDAY, JUNE 27

**Minister Blair to Deliver Remarks**—National Defence Minister Bill Blair will deliver remarks on "Defence Policy Update-2024," a breakfast event hosted by the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. Thursday, June 27 at 8 a.m. AT at a downtown Halifax hotel. Details online: business.halifaxchamber.com.

## 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.

## 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 p.m. MT at Heritage Park, 1900 Heritage Dr. SW., Calgary, Alta. Contact bbq@conservative.ca. Details online: 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.

**AFN's Annual General Assembly**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its 45th Annual General Assembly on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá: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.

## 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, from Monday, July 15, to Wednesday, July 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.

## WEDNESDAY, AUG. 7

**Royal St. John's Regatta**—Keep an eye out for federal politicians at the annual Royal St. John's Regatta. Wednesday, Aug. 7, in St. John's, N.L. Details: stjohsregatta.ca.

## MONDAY, SEPT. 30

**National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**—The fourth annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, also known as Orange Shirt Day, is today, honouring the children who never returned home and Survivors of residential schools, as well as their families and communities.

## FRIDAY, OCT. 4—SATURDAY, OCT. 5

**The Francophonie Summit**—The Francophonie Summit will take place on Friday, Oct. 4, to Saturday, Oct. 5, in Villers-Cotterêts and Paris, France. Details: francophonie.org.

## SUNDAY, OCT. 6—FRIDAY, OCT. 11

**ASEAN Summit**—The ASEAN Summit will take place in Vientiane, Laos, Oct. 6-Oct. 11.

## MONDAY, OCT. 21—FRIDAY, NOV. 1

**COP16 Conference on Biodiversity**—The COP16 Conference on Biodiversity will take place in Colombia.

## TUESDAY, OCT. 29—THURSDAY, OCT. 31

**CAEH24: The National Conference on Ending Homelessness**—The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness will host its 11<sup>th</sup> annual Conference on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa from Oct. 29-31. Registration is now open. Learn more about the conference here.

## TUESDAY, NOV. 5

**U.S. Presidential Election**—The U.S. presidential election happens on Tuesday, Nov. 5. U.S. President Joe Biden and Republican candidate Donald Trump, who lost the last election, will likely face off against each other in the election happening Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024. It will be the first rematch in a U.S. presidential election in 70 years.

## TUESDAY, DEC. 31

**Foreign Interference Commission**—The Foreign Interference Commission's final report will be released on Tuesday, Dec. 31. For more information, check out foreigninterferencecommission.ca.

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# A LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF UOTTAWA



Dear President Frémont,

We are writing as concerned students from the University of Ottawa, Carleton University and Algonquin College, as well as parents, alumni, faculty and community members. Over the past several weeks, Hillel Ottawa, uOttawa students, uOttawa faculty and Ottawa community members have witnessed and been victims of the hostile and unsafe incidents stemming from the ongoing encampment occupying the University of Ottawa.

For over a month, this encampment has fostered a hostile environment where your Jewish students, faculty, and staff have been targeted with hatred, harassment, and violent messaging.

**Hate has no place at the University of Ottawa, and yet it is screaming at us from the lawn next to Tabaret Hall.**



**Jews are the No. 1 target of hate crimes in Ottawa** with violent incidents targeting Jewish institutions across Canada – including a terror bomb plot in Ottawa and recent gunfire at Jewish schools in Montreal and Toronto. **Our fears are real and justified**, and the incitement of hate and violence by the encampment heightens the threat.

**In order to combat this issue effectively, we present two actionable demands:**

**1. We seek public condemnation of the hate speech and harassment levelled against our campus Jewish community from the protesters in the encampment.** The university's silence enforces the idea that hateful and antisemitic behaviour is permissible on our campus and that Jews are not welcome here.

**2. Enforce your existing policies which the current encampment violates.** Violations include **Policy 130** - Student Rights and Responsible Conduct, **Policy 28** - Temporary Use of University Space and **Policy 67a** - Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination.

We implore you to take immediate and decisive action to address the escalating threats faced by the Jewish community on our campuses before someone gets hurt. The safety and well-being of all students, faculty, and staff must be paramount, and it is incumbent upon university leadership to uphold this fundamental principle.

Sincerely,

**1,100+ CONCERNED STUDENTS, FACULTY & COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

