



THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR, NO. 2218

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2025 \$5.00

Completing *the* comeback

▶ Conservatives spent campaign 'fending off attacks on all sides' as Liberals, third parties dominated Meta election ads

PAGE 14

▶ Liberals led federal leader stops in snap campaign as parties sought gains in Ontario, Quebec, and B.C.

PAGE 15

▶ Feds can't keep ignoring election issues 'crushed' by Trump: politicians

PAGE 18

▶ Carney clicked with caretaker convention's call for restraint, experts say

PAGE 19

The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS

Conservatives plunge into blame game after election defeat

BY ABBAS RANA

After a disappointing performance and losing his own seat in the April 28 election, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh offered his resignation, while blame games

erupted within the Conservative Party over how they squandered a 27-point lead from earlier in the year and failed to form government.

Continued on page 16

NEWS

'Americans don't know enough about Canada': prominent Washington voice for Canada-U.S. relationship shuttered

BY NEIL MOSS

Amid escalating trade and sovereignty threats from United States President Donald Trump, an influential think tank

in Washington, D.C., dedicated to raising American awareness of Canada's relationship with its southern neighbour has been shuttered.

Continued on page 21

Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

2025 ELECTION

It was an election campaign unlike any other



Prime Minister Mark Carney, top left, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, top right, and Green co-Leader Elizabeth May did the Hip Flip with the irreverent journalist Nardwuar earlier this month. Screenshots courtesy of YouTube

The election many Canadians were eagerly awaiting is now over, and this campaign has been unlike any other as the spectre of trade war, tariffs, and other threats coming from the White House cast a shadow over our federal politics.

The effects of the recent riding redistribution played a major role, too. Changes ranged from the

big—the creation of five new constituencies, bringing the total to 343, with a few others being wiped off the map (officially being absorbed into neighbouring ridings)—to the small, including boundary adjustments and name changes.

Let's take a post-campaign recap of our 37-day hike into uncharted political territory.

THE HIGHS

Advance voting breaches 7 million

Record-high numbers of registered voters made the trek to their local polling station over the Easter/Passover weekend to cast their ballots in the four days of advanced voting. Many people endured long lines and hours of waiting to exercise their franchise. Elections Canada said on April 24 that 7.3 million voters had taken part in the advanced

ballots, compared to the 2021 election which saw more than five million people participating in early voting. CBC reported on April 25 that in Conservative Leader **Pierre Poilievre's** riding of Carleton, Ont., in particular, about 40 per cent of registered voters voted early. Perhaps they wanted extra time to hack their way through the 91-name ballot?

Anaida Poilievre stands by her man

The Conservative leader's wife, **Anaida Poilievre**, has arguably been the most visible party leader's spouse in this campaign. A former Hill staffer, she's regularly appeared alongside her husband **Pierre**, often introducing him at rallies and accompanying him—along with their young children **Valentina** and **Cruz**—at announcements, meet-and-greet events, and media interviews. **Christina Frangou** wrote in *Chatelaine* on April 24 that Mrs. Poilievre "has been front and centre of a campaign that often features their relationship—a strategy that, the Poilievres hope,

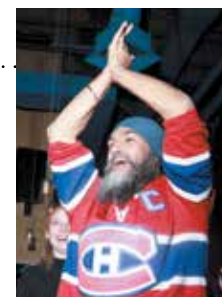


Pierre Poilievre, left, and his wife Anaida on the last night of the campaign in Edwards, Ont. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

will help make him the next prime minister of Canada." She's credited with attempting to soften her husband's aggressive politician persona both physically (losing the glasses and donning jeans) and socially, showing he's a supportive husband and loving father. "She is as public a political spouse as we have seen in Canada," wrote Frangou.

Hockey 1, Politics 1

When a do-or-die game for the Montreal Canadiens was scheduled the same evening as the French-language leaders' debate on April 16, the New Democrats and the Bloc Québécois worried francophones would choose watching the game over four besuited men trading verbal barbs at Montreal's CBC's broadcast headquarters. "This kind of political discussion shouldn't compete with something that means so much to so many," said NDP Leader **Jagmeet Singh** in an April 15 news release. The debate commission agreed, and the time



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh dons a Habs jersey on April 16, the day of the leaders' debate in French in Montreal. Photograph courtesy of X

was moved two hours earlier. Being a good sport, the NHL returned the favour on April 28, agreeing not to hold any hockey games featuring Canadian teams on election day.

Continued on page 4

THE WIRE REPORT

Canada's telecom, innovation and broadcasting news service



SIGN UP FOR A
FREE TRIAL TODAY!

For more information visit
thewirereport.ca
or call 613-688-8821

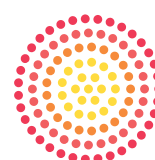


Congratulations, Prime Minister

**There are real challenges facing
children's health. We need your help.**

It will take everyone –
Members of Parliament,
corporate and philanthropic
partners, community and
healthcare leaders – working
together to improve children's
health outcomes in Canada.
The issues are complex,
but better is possible.

**When we invest in
the health of kids,
we invest in the
health of Canada.**



**Children's
Healthcare
Canada**

**CANADA'S
CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL
FOUNDATIONS**

HEARD ON THE HILL

Continued from [page 2](#)

THE HIGHS

Doing the Hip Flip with Narduar

The eccentric Canadian journalist known as **Narduar** scored interviews with three out of four federal party leaders this campaign. “Every Canadian election, I approach the different party leaders and ask if they will do an interview/Hip Flip,” he said in the introduction to his interview with Green Party co-Leader **Elizabeth May** on April 23, noting he’d spoken with Prime Minister **Mark Carney** and NDP Leader **Jagmeet Singh** earlier in the month. All three leaders engaged in the man-

datory “Hip Flip” with Narduar, a retro two-player game from Hasbro where participants “gyrate in such a way that that centre piece spun around,” according to boardgamegeek.com. It’s a game Narduar’s played with politicians including **Jean Chrétien**, **Paul Martin**, **Jack Layton**, **Tom Mulcair**, and **Justin Trudeau**. But the Vancouver-based interviewer with a slightly absurd persona remains 0-2 in speaking with Conservative Party leaders. **Stephen Harper** declined to take part in 2004. Last week, he said “I’m still waiting to hear back if **Pierre Poilievre** will do an interview. I won’t give up! I’ll keep trying, cuz that’s what I do.”

THE LOWS

An election all about Trump, says Trump

U.S. President **Donald Trump** elbowed his way into the Canadian political conversation on the morning of election day, saying what many voters were likely already thinking: this election is about Trump. “Good luck to the Great people of Canada,” he posted on his TruthSocial platform on April 28. “Elect the man who has the

strength and wisdom to cut your taxes in half, increase your military power, for free, to the highest level in the World, have your Car, Steel, Aluminum, Lumber, Energy, and all other businesses, QUADRUPLE in size, WITH ZERO TARIFFS OR TAXES, if Canada becomes the cherished 51st. State of the United States of America.”

THE LOWS

Mass killing mars campaign’s final days



Prime Minister Mark Carney pays tribute to the victims of the April 26 attack at the Lapu Lapu Festival in Vancouver on April 27. Photograph courtesy of X

A horrific mass casualty event in Vancouver on April 26 muted the tone of the campaign’s final days as party leaders expressed condolences for the 11 people killed by a driver at a Filipino community festival. “Just before the attack, I was at Lapu-Lapu Day,” wrote NDP Leader **Jagmeet Singh** on X, calling the attack “heartbreaking.” Prime Minister **Mark Carney** visited the makeshift memorial, posting that “We will comfort the grieving, care for one another,

and unite in common purpose,” while **Rechie Valdez**, the first Filipina Canadian cabinet minister and candidate in southern Ontario, wrote “A moment meant for unity and celebration has been stolen by violence and grief.” “All of Canada grieves with you in this difficult time,” wrote **Pierre Poilievre**. Green co-Leader **Elizabeth May** said, “Such violence has no place in Canadian society,” and Bloc Leader **Yves-François Blanchet** shared his condolences for the victims.

Rumours of unrest in the big blue tent

By mid-April, rumours of discontent in the Conservative campaign spilled into the mainstream media as **Kory Teneycke** vented his opinions with how **Jenni Byrne** was running the federal campaign, accusing his former Harper-era colleague of “campaign malpractice” for losing a “massive” lead and failing to pivot on key issues. Some Liberal staffers attempted to capitalize on the tension, planting some buttons at the conservative Canada Strong and Free Network conference poking fun at the reported internal rift. Dubbed “Buttongate,” the episode didn’t seem to harm the Liberals terribly—PM **Mark Carney** said the staffers who made and distributed the buttons were “reassigned within the campaign”—but the Byrne-Teneycke tension remained. Ontario Premier **Doug Ford** reaffirmed his support for Teneycke, who ran Ford’s successful re-election campaign back in February. cleadlay@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Candidates dropped on red and blue teams

A bunch of candidates either found themselves removed from holding their party’s banner, or stepped back for various past (social media) transgressions. While the Conservatives ended up dropping four candidates—**Mark McKenzie** in Windsor-Tecumseh-Lakeshore, Ont.; **Stefan Marquis** in Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.; **Don Patel** in Etobicoke North, Ont.; and

Lourence Singh in Westminster-Burnaby-Maillardville, B.C.—it was the erstwhile Liberal incumbent **Paul Chiang**’s departure that captured the most headlines in early April. Not only was it the revelation that he’d encouraged people to claim a Chinese bounty on a political opponent that got him in hot water, it was Prime Minister **Mark**

Carney’s initial support for the one-term incumbent that raised eyebrows. Chiang bowed out of the race, citing not wanting to be a distraction, but Carney’s judgement was judged. Also questioned was the Conservatives’ decision to keep **Aaron Gunn** as the candidate in North Island-Powell River, B.C., despite his past comments about the harms of residential schools.



Then-Liberal MP Paul Chiang on Feb. 4, 2025. The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia

Whither a bellwether?

The following 34 ridings were largely unchanged after the recent federal electoral redistribution process, and have all been bellwether ridings—electing an MP from the party that ultimately forms government—since at least 2011. With the results of the 2025 election now in, have they maintained their bellwether status?

Riding	Province/Territory	Bellwether since	Winning Margin % (2021)	Still a bellwether?
Burlington	Ontario	1984	8.48	✓
St. Catharines	Ontario	1984	5.5	✓
Winnipeg South	Manitoba	1988	15.45	✓
Orléans	Ontario	1993	23.67	✓
Prescott—Russell—Cumberland	Ontario	1993	14.81	✓
Ottawa West—Nepean	Ontario	1997	17.75	✓
Fleetwood—Port Kells	British Columbia	2006	17.4	✓
Central Nova	Nova Scotia	2006	11.45	✓
Cambridge	Ontario	2006	4.1	✗
North Vancouver—Capilano	British Columbia	2008	15.31	✓
West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country	British Columbia	2008	3.91	✓
St. Boniface—St. Vital	Manitoba	2008	15.61	✓
Saint John—Kennebecasis	New Brunswick	2008	6.21	✓
London West	Ontario	2008	2.72	✓
Newmarket—Aurora	Ontario	2008	5.62	✗
Waterloo	Ontario	2008	18.04	✓

Riding	Province/Territory	Bellwether since	Winning Margin % (2021)	Still a bellwether?
Egmont	Prince Edward Island	2008	14.9	✓
Winnipeg South Centre	Manitoba	2011	17.17	✓
Madawaska—Restigouche	New Brunswick	2011	24.22	✓
Moncton—Dieppe	New Brunswick	2011	27.24	✓
Brampton West	Ontario	2011	28.57	?
Don Valley West	Ontario	2011	27.32	✓
Eglinton—Lawrence	Ontario	2011	12.03	?
Etobicoke Centre	Ontario	2011	14.04	✓
Etobicoke—Lakeshore	Ontario	2011	14.67	✓
London Centre	Ontario	2011	7.17	✓
Mississauga East—Cooksville	Ontario	2011	18.67	✓
Mississauga—Lakeshore	Ontario	2011	6.43	✓
Mississauga—Streetsville	Ontario	2011	13.02	✓
Nipissing—Timiskaming	Ontario	2011	4.98	✓
Richmond Hill South	Ontario	2011	9.07	✗
Willowdale	Ontario	2011	17.34	✓
York Centre	Ontario	2011	9.44	✗

The true election loser? The mainstream press



For such a consequential vote, the treatment of its substance by Canadian news media left much to be desired, writes Erica Ifill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

This was an abysmal demonstration of Canadian mainstream journalism perfectly affirming the emperor's-new-clothes' approach to their democratic duty.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



CALGARY—So vilifying wokeness and incessantly banging on about former prime minister Justin Trudeau didn't work—you don't say? No matter the outcome of the election, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre should've won a majority as indicated at the beginning of the year.

But you know who is the true loser of this election? Journalism. Canadian news media need a democratic exorcism because the way they covered this election was appalling. For such a consequential vote, the treatment of its substance left much to be desired. This election revealed many truths about the downfall of journalism and journalistic indolence when it comes to proper reporting and analysis (except mine, of course). Let's look at some of those problems.

1. The lack of meaning when it came to the actual policy prescriptions for the problems the country faces. I never knew what the main policies were for the necessary transition of the economy—and I dutifully watched CBC and CTV television (I don't listen to the radio). Yes, we need to diversify our trading partners, but what specific policies were the candidates proposing to get there?

For example, are we or are we not strengthening our economic ties to China? China has indicated that that they would be open to improving trade relations with

Canada, which may be a strong, positive response to United States President Donald Trump's tariffs. The Canadian Press confirms that "Beijing is Canada's second-largest trading partner." Yet, the *National Post* reported, "Liberal Leader Mark Carney named China as Canada's biggest security threat." How are these conflicting facts resolved in the reporting? Hint: they are not, so now I'm left confused as to the proposed directions the Liberals and the Conservatives intend to take. I can guess, however, the point of journalism is not to leave the public guessing, but to inform and reconcile.

2. The election was treated like a horseshoe and a circle-jerk of various polling companies, giving them a lot of free advertising. At any time, I could find more on the day-to-day polling than what Canadians' policy concerns were. I would've liked

an array of Canadian voices that don't include partisan actors to articulate their concerns. That was done through polling. As I wrote in my article for *The Guardian*: "This election is focused more on Canada and less on Canadians. It lacks solutions for those who are struggling." That emphasis was overtaken by rah, rah, rah, pomp-pomp cheerleading of the country vis-a-vis Trump's America. Elbows up. OK, sure.

3. The English-language debate was hot garbage. Can we get a host that challenges the participants with facts instead of a time-keeping schoolmarm who is trying to usher students to homeroom before the bell rings? In addition, that stage was a sausage-fest. As much as we criticize other countries for their women's rights and female representation, we are presenting the country as monolithic. Diversity is our strength, my gluteus maximus.

The debate topics and their responses sounded like the Republican convention. Pipelines, tax cuts, border control, and nationalism dominated the discussion. If that's what the parties have to offer, we might as well become the 51st state, given our policies are basically the same. The only time the leaders talked about Indigenous people was in determining how to partner with them to bring about resource projects faster; all of the men decided that that was Indigenous Peoples' value, obstructions to building pipelines.

In *The Breach*, Pam Palmater reiterates these red flags for Indigenous rights: "Despite much-improved political rhetoric about reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples over the past decade ... it is still not a central feature of federal election discourse." I guess that the trend of reconciliation died with the previous administration. Granted, Carney does mention Indigenous people in his platform, but the topic is buried in the back of the document, which demonstrates its importance. Please note the English leaders' debate asked nothing about implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, or the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls inquiry's calls to action. We get it: Indigenous people are just a means to an end, which should concern every racialized Canadian. We are now just impediments to, and facilitators of, white men's power.

What about women? Did moderator Steve Paikin ask Poilievre about the paucity of female support, or all of them about the generational differential in support for their parties? Where was the debate on climate change, trans rights, the homelessness crisis, and social programs? There was not a peep about childcare and only a perfunctory mention of affordability. The housing crisis was absent of discussion about skyrocketing rents; rather, it was to be managed by encouraging more developers to build and tax cuts. That's what the current national housing policy prescribes, and it's been an abject failure. But given there was no pushback on these questions, we're led to believe that these proposed options are suitable.

All in all, this was an abysmal demonstration of Canadian mainstream journalism perfectly affirming the emperor's-new-clothes' approach to their democratic duty. It's shameful and rudimentary, considering I get more analytical depth from YouTube.

Erica Ifill is a co-host of the *Bad+Bitchy* podcast.

The Hill Times

World Press Freedom Day Luncheon

Disinformation and Democracy: Standing on Guard

Featuring keynote speaker

Kevin Newman

Catherine Clark as emcee

MAY 1, 2025 | 12-1:30 P.M.

NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE, OTTAWA

TICKETS ARE \$85 AND SUPPORT WORLD PRESS FREEDOM CANADA

(Doors open for registration and networking at 11:30 a.m.)

BUY YOUR
TICKETS TODAY!



COMMENT

2025 ELECTION

Will anyone learn anything from the election that was?

Don't give up, relationships matter, hubris is still a killer, and be careful what you wish for.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—Regardless of the outcome of Election 2025, there are a number of lessons that can be taken from the 37-day race.

Even when your political fortunes appear dire, never give up hope. Hey, Liberal Party, looking at you here. That party was effectively on a death march to disastrous results until former prime minister Justin Trudeau resigned. When Trudeau left, not only did Liberals feel less burdened, but the country also seemingly became a little less angry.

Canadian historian Donald Creighton's famous statement



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, left, Prime Minister Mark Carney, and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will all have some things to take away from this campaign, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia, and illustration by Joey Sabourin

on history being about character and circumstance fits perfectly in tracing Liberal Prime Minister Mark Carney's trajectory. A new figure enters the political arena, with a CV not previously seen in modern national politics at a time when an American president economically attacks Canada and threatens annexation. Cast as political outsider—despite Conservative attempts to define him otherwise—and a crisis manager for many citizens, Carney becomes the Captain Canada

of the moment. The lesson here: unexpected events and characters can have consequential impacts.

Relations matter in politics just as they do in life. Building them up as opposed to just burning down bridges is always better. The Conservatives created unnecessary grief for themselves by not finding ways to have better reports with two recently re-elected Progressive Conservative premiers: Tim Houston of Nova Scotia and Doug Ford of Ontario. Both popular in their own juris-

dictions—though perhaps not as “pure” in Conservative terms as federal Leader Pierre Poilievre and his team would like—they felt disrespected by their federal counterparts. The lack of a co-operative approach created public tensions, interparty strife, and likely cost seats. Why?

Be careful what you wish for, and know when it has run its course. Step on up, Jagmeet Singh. While the NDP leader is now arguing that he kept the confidence-and-supply agreement with Trudeau longer than he may have liked so as to save Canada from a Poilievre Conservative majority government, it does read as a bit of on-the-spot revisionist history. For all the policy achievements that came from the deal of which the NDP can be proud, the long-term political damage to the party looks painful. Going into the vote, the New Democrats had anemic polling numbers, and Singh—despite his best efforts—apparently hasn't convinced Canadians his deal-making skills are worth keeping around. If anything, he looks like the last relic of the Trudeau style of governing, and there is no appetite for that among the public.

Hubris is still a killer in politics. Most often it is something that effects the Liberals and leads to their undoing, but in this case it has not helped the Conservatives. Whether it anyone would admit or not, many Conservatives assumed a Poilievre prime ministership was inevitable. In accepting that proposition and a certainty that circumstances were most likely to remain in their favour weakened the Conservatives as opposed to emboldened them. The burning of relationships wasn't restricted to Ford and Houston. Recall in this battle how former Harper minister and still well-respected outgoing caucus member Ed Fast chose to endorse a popular independent candidate who had been shoddily dealt with by Poilievre's team ostensibly because they knew best. Appointing candidates in different provinces because of that same “we know best” attitude that frowns on local input was not just restricted to British Columbia where Fast spoke out. All of that emanates from hubris and its poisonous venom that creates a disconnect from the reality that exists as opposed to the one you choose to see.

The outcome of this election will be historic for many reasons, and there will be no shortage of lessons to be learned. This just scratches the surface.

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

Blanchet's Bloc doesn't add value to Parliament

In this moment of great strain on Canada, hardline separatists like the Bloc Québécois leader and his caucus now hold the balance of power. What a tragedy for Canada.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—I am a proud Quebecer, with roots going back to 1640, when the Gagnon family came to Quebec City. I take pride in my hard-earned bilingualism and my experience as a journalist at the Quebec National Assembly, having interviewed René

Lévesque, Camille Laurin, and the heavyweights of the independence movement. It doesn't make me any less of a federalist, but I appreciated their dedication and the respect they showed to a young reporter.

I also remember every slight I experienced from anti-French bigots outside Quebec, so I understand why francophone Quebecers supported the Bloc Québécois when it was created in 1991. After all, the party was born in the aftermath of the failed Meech Lake Accord, by Conservative Lucien Bouchard and Liberal Jean LaPierre.

But current Bloc Leader Yves-François Blanchet's recent comment was just too much for me. On April 25, he declared: “We are, whether we like it or not, part of an artificial country with very little meaning, called Canada. It's a foreign Parliament because this nation is not mine.”

His comment reflects Bouchard's declaration “Canada is not a real country.” But Blanchet's attack came at a time of existential crisis, his words echoing United States President Donald

Trump, who believes Canada should not exist. It seemed Blanchet took a sadistic pleasure in rubbing separatist salt into the wounds of patriotic Canadians.

The Bloc leader was either bitter his party trailed in the polls, or was desperate to secure his separatist base. Indeed, when the American president started attacking Canada in February, Blanchet and Parti Québécois Leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon joined in on the *schadenfreude*. When they realized Quebecers were rallying to the federal cause, they changed their tune to emphasize the need to “stand up for Quebec,” but not Canada.

Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston had enough, and wrote a scathing letter to Blanchet. “I find it difficult to find the words to adequately describe how insulting this statement is to all Canadians and to our great nation... I hope going forward you will reflect on what it means to be Canadian, and take more pride and honour in being an elected official in Canada. If you can't do that, I would ask you to

step aside in favour of those who put country first.”

But Houston has come to this party a little late: Blanchet has always been known as a “*pur et dur*,” a hardline *indépendantiste*, who—unlike many federal parliamentarians—has no interest in a sense of collegiality with other MPs. He has no affection for Canada, except for the paycheque he and his 32 caucus members received during the last Parliament.

Over its 35-year history, the Bloc has gone out of its way to undermine Canadian unity, and support Quebec nationalist initiatives in Parliament. In 2006, the Bloc pressed for a motion—eventually amended by the minority Harper government—to recognize “Quebecers as a nation in a united Canada.” But nationalists have always said it recognized Quebec itself being a “nation.”

As a follow-up, in 2021, the government of Premier François Legault included a constitutional amendment in Bill 96 declaring Quebec a “French-speaking nation.” Blanchet moved House of Commons endorsement of the amendment, with neither the Liberals, Conservatives, nor NDP having the courage to oppose it.

Thanks to the Bloc, in 2023 the new Official Languages Act, Bill C-13, recognized only francophones outside Quebec as a minority, openly excluding

and discriminating against the 1.25 million English speakers in Quebec.

In 2023, the Bloc supported a private member's bill, C-282, on supply management for dairy products, which would have tied the hands of Canadian trade negotiators. Although I support supply management, it is a slippery slope when legislation circumscribes trade negotiations. Luckily, the bill died when the election was called.

In each of these examples, it was the separatist agenda, not Canadian values, which dominated House debate. The Bloc, which lost seats on election night, should now be ignored, as it has undermined Canadian unity long enough. But if it is a spent force in Quebec, the province's federalist MPs will now have to step up for the province's interests in the fight against Trump.

In this moment of great strain on Canada, hardline separatists like Blanchet now hold the balance of power. What a tragedy for Canada.

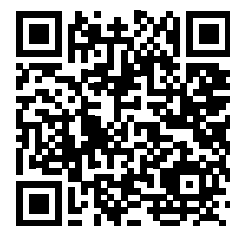
Andrew Caddell is retired from *Global Affairs Canada*, where he was a senior policy adviser. He previously worked as an adviser to Liberal governments. He is a town councillor in Kamouraska, Que. He can be reached at pipson52@hotmail.com.

The Hill Times

FROM
TRADE WAR
TO
**CAMPAIGN
TRAIL**

**Independent Journalism
Keeps Democracy Healthy.**

Subscribe to *The Hill Times*.





Editor: Kate Malloy
Managing Editor: Charelle Evelyn
Digital Editor: Samantha Wright Allen
Executive Editor: Peter Mazereeuw
Deputy Editors: Stephen Jeffery,
Laura Ryckewaert
Assistant Deputy Editor: Abbas Rana
Publishers: Anne Marie Creskey,
Jim Creskey, Leslie Dickson, Ross Dickson
General Manager, CFO: Andrew Morrow

- EDITORIAL**
NEWS REPORTERS
Stuart Benson, Jesse Cnockaert, Riddhi Kachhela,
Irem Koca, Neil Moss, and Eleanor Wand
ENGAGEMENT EDITOR
Christina Leadlay
PHOTOGRAPHERS
Sam Garcia, Andrew Meade, and Cynthia Münster
EDITORIAL CARTOONIST
Michael de Adder
COLUMNISTS
Andrew Caddell, John Chenier,
Sheila Copps, David Crane, Jim Creskey,
Gwynne Dyer, Matt Gurney, Michael Harris,
Erica Ifill, Joe Jordan, Rose LeMay, Alex Marland,
Arthur Milnes, Tim Powers, Susan Riley,
Ken Rubin, Josie Sabatino, Bhagwant Sandhu,
Evan Sotiropoulos, Scott Taylor, Lori Turnbull,
Nelson Wiseman, and Les Whittington
- ADVERTISING**
**VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING AND
MULTIMEDIA SALES**
Steve MacDonald
**DIRECTORS OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT**
Ulle Baum, Craig Caldbick, Erveina Gosalci, and
Martin Reaume
- DIGITAL AND DESIGN**
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER
David Little
SENIOR WEB DEVELOPER
Nick Vakulenko
DIGITAL AND PRODUCTION MANAGER
Joey Sabourin
SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Neena Singhal
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Naomi Wildeboer
- ADMINISTRATION**
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER
Tracey Wale
- SUBSCRIPTIONS**
MARKETING DIRECTOR
Chris Rivoire
**LOYALTY AND
SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER**
Melanie Grant
- OFFICE AND CIRCULATION MANAGER**
Irma Guarneros
SALES CONSULTANT
Puran Guram

DELIVERY INQUIRIES
circulation@hilltimes.com
613-688-8821

**Published every Monday and
Wednesday by Hill Times
Publishing Inc.**

246 Queen Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E4
(613) 232-5952
Fax (613) 232-9055
Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 40068926
www.hilltimes.com

Please send letters to the editor to
the above street address or e-mail
to news@hilltimes.com. Deadline is
Wednesday at noon, Ottawa time,
for the Monday edition and Friday
at noon for the Wednesday edition.
Please include your full name,
address and daytime phone number.
The Hill Times reserves the right to
edit letters. Letters do not reflect the
views of *The Hill Times*. Thank you.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40068926
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN
ADDRESSES TO: CIRCULATION DEPT.
246 Queen Street Suite 200, Ottawa, ON
K1P 5E4



Editorial

Editorial

Here’s hoping MPs return with a sense of respect for Parliament

The 2025 campaign has come to an end, with Mark Carney’s Liberals elected to remain in government. Campaign signs are now being collected, and candidates—winners and losers alike—are coming to terms with the results.

It will be at least a bit of time before the 45th Parliament officially gets underway. First, a new cabinet has to be sworn in, as do all 343 members elected to sit in the House. In 2021, there were 63 days between the Sept. 20 vote and the start of the 44th Parliament on Nov. 22. And in 2019, Parliament didn’t return until Dec. 5—45 days after that year’s Oct. 21 vote.

According to reporting by *The Globe and Mail* before the polls closed on April 28, Prime Minister Carney was already eyeing an earlier start, with a potential cabinet swearing-in date set for only two weeks away.

MPs across party lines will soon be diving into orientation sessions to learn the ins and outs of running a parliamentary office, and the broad strokes of the procedures and schedules that guide parliamentary work.

Those latter lessons are ones to which MPs should pay close attention. Rookies and returning incumbents would both be well served by understanding the rules and intended functioning of our federal legislature.

Recent parliamentary sittings have raised questions over the level of respect being shown to the rules and conventions of our Westminster parliamentary democracy. And with the composition of the House offering pretty slim margins for error, those conventions are going to be used and scrutinized more than they’ve been in recent years.

Since cameras were introduced to the Chamber, House committees have been seen as where “the real work happens.” But the 44th Parliament saw partisanship and polarization increasingly creep into the forefront of committee work.

Most Canadians don’t tune in to regular committee meetings, with debate in the Chamber—particularly during Question Period—more likely to attract public eyes. But today, committee and Chamber debates can be easily clipped and disseminated online. And MPs across party lines—albeit, some more than others—have seized on such opportunities, injecting more partisan posturing into committee studies.

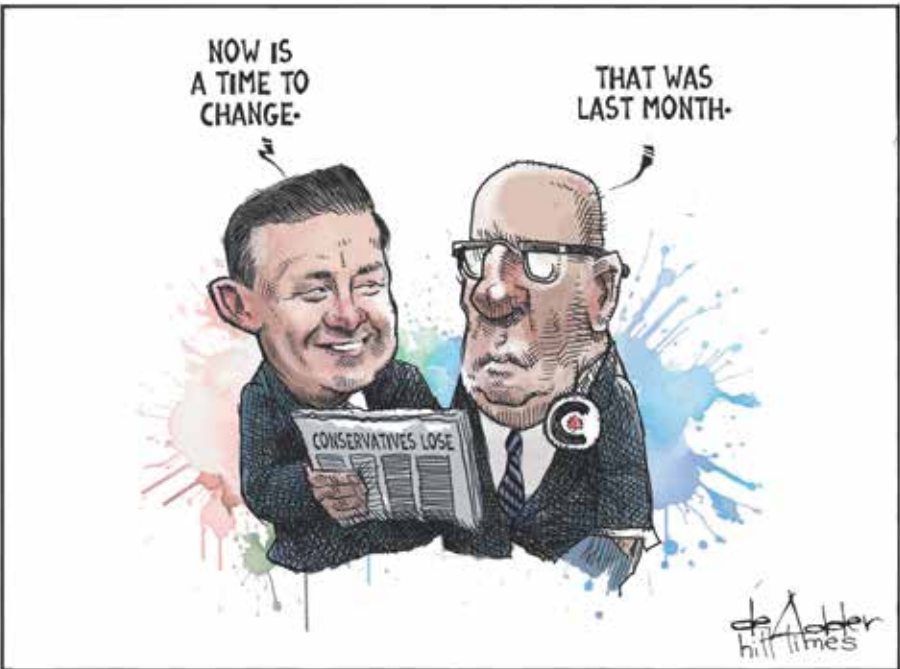
The last Parliament also saw opposition MPs target the House of Commons chairperson, accusing then-speaker Greg Fergus of partisanship on multiple occasions. Such criticisms were not entirely without base; Fergus indeed found himself in legitimate hot water for making partisan Liberal videos using Speaker’s Office resources. But attacks went beyond that into partisan opportunism, with Fergus repeatedly dismissed as a mere Liberal agent in trying to carry out the functions of the job.

Since Confederation, House Speakers have held party affiliations, with each Speaker being an MP elected to the role by the House.

Just as it’s important for the Speaker to dispense their duties without partisan prejudice, so, too, is it important for MPs to respect the non-partisanship of the role.

Let’s hope the 45th Parliament sees its members demonstrate more respect for the institution.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor

Trump and Putin are violating the UN charter to which both of their countries signed on: Toronto reader



U.S. President Donald Trump, left, and Russian President Vladimir Putin on July 16, 2018. White House photograph by Shealah Craighead

Re: “Future MPs should stand up for the rule of law and human rights,” (*The Hill Times*, April 23, p. 8).

The war in Ukraine is a frightening example of the ultimate violation of human rights, and the rule of law. One needs to remember the history that led to the current international crisis—and how dangerously close we are to repeating past mistakes.

After the Second World War, the United States became the greatest and richest empire ever on Earth. It stood astride a grateful world—particularly Europe—liberated from Nazi tyranny. Then-U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt created the modern United Nations to provide international rule of law to guide global relations. These principles provided a stable world order for almost 70 years, until Russia invaded Ukraine.

The U.S. administration has now abandoned the tenets of democracy in their constitution by not respecting the rule of law within their own country and internationally. The world had a set of agreements controlling interactions among countries, according to the 1945 UN charter with Russia as a founding member. The most important being the agreement—that Russia signed on to again in 1994 in the Budapest Memorandum—that the sovereignty of nations be respected in return for Ukraine giving up nuclear weapons. U.S. President Donald Trump is now trying to rewrite history and align himself with the worst current autocrat: Russian President Vladimir Putin. He risks dangerously destabilizing world order, possibly igniting a wider conflict.

International relations and global trade are not “zero-sum” games. Collaboration, not conquest, enhances life everywhere. The Russian people were better off before Putin launched his disastrous war. Ukraine is a “breadbasket” of the world, and Putin’s destruction is affecting people everywhere, both through devastating Ukraine’s agriculture, and restricting Russia’s contribution to global food supplies.

Ukraine was invaded twice by Russia, in 2014 and again three years ago. Ukraine did not start this war. This is dangerous aggression toward a new Russian empire and takeover of Europe, reminiscent of the Nazis. It is killing tremendous numbers of unfortunate Russian soldiers and even some from other autocratic countries. The American people must emphatically tell Trump that democracy matters and sovereign countries can not be invaded. Not to mention the loss of civilian life, waste of materiel, and environmental damage from this senseless war.

Tom McElroy
Toronto, Ont.

COMMENT

HMCS Windsor takes part in Exercise Cutlass Fury on Sept. 18, 2016. It is the only one of Canada's four Victoria-class submarines that has been to sea since 2021, notes Scott Taylor. Photograph courtesy of DND/Cpl. Chris Ringius

Canada's sub-standard submarines

Can the Royal Canadian Navy really lose a capability that it doesn't actually possess?

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—A recent headline in the *Ottawa Citizen* caught my attention as it had an update on our submarine fleet: “Canadian submarine sidelined for at least a decade will be operational this summer, DND says.”

The news article appeared to be a positive one, leading with a quote from the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) proclaiming that HMCS Corner

Brook is now Canada's “most advanced submarine.”

But following that patriotic-sounding claim, the article revealed HMCS Corner Brook only achieved this elevated status after DND spent \$715-million in repairs and upgrades to this 34-year-old boat.

For casual observers of the Canadian military, it is worth recapping the RCN's history of operating submarines, as it was announced last September that Canada intends to buy a new fleet of up to 12 diesel-electric powered submarines at the staggering cost of more than \$100-billion. The first of those new submarines is not expected to enter service until 2037, but international bidders are already lining up at Canada's doorstep.

According to many a Canadian naval analyst, it is imperative that the RCN does not lose its underwater capability. Their fear is that, once lost, it will be lost forever.

The historical record says otherwise. In 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, the government of British Columbia bought two submarines from an American shipyard that had originally been built for Chile. These two primitive subs patrolled the Pacific until 1917 when they transmitted the Panama Canal and came to be based in Halifax. They were used to train surface ships, and decommissioned at the end of the war.

During Second World War, the RCN did not operate submarines, although Canadian volunteer-submariners served aboard British submarines.

In the 1960's, Canada purchased three Oberon-class submarines from Britain for the express purpose of using these boats as training aids for the RCN's anti-submarine warfare vessels. The RCN wanted the more capable U.S. navy Barbel-class submarine, but the Canadian government preferred the more economic Oberons.

In the late 1970's, due to the sorry state of the RCN's surface capability, Canada made the decision to upgrade the three Oberons into hunter-killer attack submarines. This Submarine Operational Upgrade Program was completed in 1986, just in time for the end of the Cold War. A fun trivia tidbit is the fact that no Canadian submarine has ever fired a torpedo in anger in the history of the RCN.

In the 1987 White Paper on Defence, the Mulroney Progressive Conservatives announced an ambitious plan to build between 10 and 12 nuclear powered hunter-killer attack submarines. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, the idea of Canada operating a large fleet of nuclear-powered submarines was thrown on the scrap heap of history.

The old Oberon's were getting older, and at the risk of losing the RCN's underwater capability for good, the Navy brain trust of the day agreed to take on four used British Upholder-class submarines. It was a case of then-newly elected Liberal prime minister Jean Chrétien telling the RCN leadership it was these four used boats, or nothing. The RCN should have opted for nothing. There was a good reason why the British Royal Navy commissioned these four Upholder-class submarines between 1990 and 1993, only to mothball all four submarines in 1994.

The Canadian acquisition team kicked the tires and pronounced the subs a good deal. A short time later, the tires simply fell off. To wit: high-pressure welds had to be replaced, and cracks were found in some of the valves on the four submarines. Torpedo tubes had been welded

shut, steel piping needed to be replaced as the subs had been put into storage in the United Kingdom with water in their fuel tanks, and HMCS Victoria had to undergo repairs after a dent was discovered in her hull.

The most serious—and tragic—incident occurred when HMCS Chicoutimi was damaged by a fire during her transit to Halifax in 2004 that killed one officer.

A May 2009 RCN report that was seemingly written by “Captain Obvious” concluded: “The introduction of the Victoria class has been fraught with many issues and faced a number of setbacks.”

Canada agreed to the Upholder deal in 1994, but the actual transfer of ownership took place between 2000 and 2004. The last Oberon to be decommissioned was HMCS Onondaga, and that occurred in July 2000.

HMCS Windsor was the first of the renamed Victoria-class submarines to enter RCN service on June 2005. So, for roughly half a decade Canada was without any underwater capability.

Critics have questioned the value of Canada's submarine fleet, pointing out that they have cost billions of dollars and have not spent that much time at sea.

For the record, HMCS Windsor is the only one of Canada's four Victoria-class submarines that has been to sea since 2021, logging 43 days in 2022 and 14 in 2023.

Which begs the question: can the RCN really lose a capability that it doesn't actually possess?

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

The Hill Times



COMMENT



U.S. President Donald Trump can't seem to get through a day in the Oval Office without reverting to his accusations about those freeloaders in Canada, writes Les Whittington.
White House photograph by Daniel Torok

And now comes the hard part: negotiating with Trump

Canadians can't count on a flip-flop on tariffs since the U.S. president seems obsessed with undermining Canada in keeping with his persistent lust after its territory.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—At the top of the to-do list for Canada's prime minister will be arranging to sit down with Donald Trump to discuss the devastating trade war the United States president has launched against this country.

While the Liberals' Mark Carney and the Conservatives' Pierre Poilievre have vowed to fight the extensive tariffs imposed by the Trump administration, both have also talked about the overriding need to quickly begin negotiations with the White House over a new bilateral economic and security relationship.

It is, of course, incumbent on Canada's political leaders to

sound positive about hammering out a deal with the U.S. But the prospects for success in the fun-house on Pennsylvania Avenue are not conducive to anything approaching optimism.

Trump—as everyone knows—can reverse himself at any moment. But Canadians can't count on a flip-flop on tariffs since the president seems obsessed with undermining Canada in keeping with his persistent lust after its territory.

On April 28, in the ultimate insult, Trump urged Canadian voters to use their election to subvert their own sovereignty by choosing “the man who has the strength and the wisdom” to lead Canada into becoming the 51st American state. Aside from the unprecedented audacity of it all, his social media post was the usual stuff about how joining America would reduce Canadians' taxes, give them “free” access to U.S. military protection, and supposedly expand their economy with tariff-free trade.

Against this crazy tapestry, only one thing makes sense: Trump knows he has the upper hand with Canada because of population size differences, and our dependence on trade with the American market. And he clearly relishes the provocation caused by his assertion that Canadians should sign up as the 51st state.

Despite an agenda loaded with colossal, world-defining issues, Trump can't seem to get through a day in the Oval Office without

“
TRUMP KNOWS
HE HAS THE
UPPER HAND
WITH CANADA
BECAUSE OF
POPULATION
SIZE
DIFFERENCES,
AND OUR
DEPENDENCE
ON TRADE
WITH THE
AMERICAN
MARKET.”

reverting to his accusations about those freeloaders in Canada. He always brings up the fictional notion that the U.S. subsidizes this country to the tune of about—depending on which day—\$200-billion annually. This is a figure that was apparently drawn up by the White House's resident crackpot economist, Peter Navarro, based on trade misconceptions and some back-of-the-envelope calculations about Canadian savings on military spending by virtue of being under the U.S. defence umbrella.

And lately, Trump's been regularly repeating his assertion—which he tries in his convoluted way to attribute to former prime minister Justin Trudeau—that Canada would cease to exist without the billions of dollars in made-up subsidies the president ascribes to American largesse.

Although he originally talked about slapping tariffs on Canadian goods in retaliation for a largely imaginary problem of fentanyl and migrant smuggling, he has lately made clear that he would just as soon not have trade relations with this country at all.

The problem for Canada's new prime minister, then, will be how to try to position this country in any negotiations with the Trump gang. The president has putatively started a global trade war to force other countries to equalize their tariffs with the U.S.'s mostly low import levies. But, under free trade, Canada generally has no tariffs to reduce on

American imports. That of course is why Canadians were “spared” when the White House rolled out “reciprocal” tariffs on hundreds of other countries. So, Ottawa has very little to offer Trump in the looming negotiations. We are not, for instance, going to offer to dismantle the integrated North American car industry.

The president's subordinates always say he should be taken at his word, an *Alice in Wonderland* proposition if ever there was one. But Trudeau, who had the dubious privilege of discussing this personally with the president after the U.S. election, was convinced that Trump really does want to annex Canada to create what the president calls the world's most “beautiful landmass.”

In an interview with *Time* last week, Trump said he was indeed trolling Canada with his annexation talk, then back-flipped and said he was serious: “We're taking care of every aspect of their [Canadians'] lives, and we don't need them to make cars for us. In fact, we don't want them to make cars for us. We want to make our own cars ... We don't need anything from Canada. And I say the only way this thing really works is for Canada to become a state.” Asked about his expansionist geopolitical aspirations, he said he “wouldn't mind” being remembered as a president who enlarged U.S. territory.

How the new prime minister will do when they enter into Canada-U.S. trade talks along with the hundreds of other countries Trump claims are calling to make deals remains a mystery. Because on the face of it, there's not a whole lot for Canada to negotiate with this monumentally avaricious, predatory con man wearing the trappings of a statesman.

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

2025 ELECTION

Change is needed when it comes to costed party platforms



Conservative and Liberal supporters in Montreal ahead of the April 17 English-language leaders' debate. It is a major disservice to voters if party platforms are released mere days before ballots are cast, writes Andrew Tzembelicos. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Recent elections suggest voters are increasingly choosing to cast their ballots in advanced polls. This means they need the full details of platforms that much sooner.

Andrew Tzembelicos

Opinion



With the federal election behind us, more than ever there's a clear need for change around the timing of costed platforms, given that four parties released their plans within the final 11 days of the campaign—with the Conservative Party waiting until just six days before Election Day.

Costed platforms serve an important function, and, as others noted throughout the campaign, it is a major disservice to voters if those platforms are released mere days before ballots are cast.

Having worked in the backroom of the federal Liberal campaign in 2000, the Liberal Party—in power when the writ was dropped—was, as memory serves, the final party to release its costed platform. Even in those days, it seemed disingenuous why we, as the government, did not release that document sooner.

Today more than ever, in an era of misinformation, and when there is increasing distrust of journalists and the media, voters require that raw information to be as fully informed as possible. As such, if they are truly interested in serving voters' needs, political parties should swiftly provide those unfiltered details of their plans and related costs.

At all electoral levels—federal, provincial, municipal—recent elections suggest voters are increasingly choosing to cast their ballots in advanced polls. This means they need the full details that much sooner.

There is a simple solution to the matter—one that could be addressed by the next Parliament: the new government should introduce a law mandating that all parties must release their costed platforms within the first 10 days of the election campaign. Since there are fixed-election dates,

meeting this timeline would not be so onerous. In the case of a minority Parliament or snap election call, the timeline could be extended to 20 days; in a 36-day campaign, this would still give voters more than two weeks to digest the costed platforms of all parties prior to E-Day.

What would happen to parties that failed to meet these deadlines? Quite simply, Elections Canada could impose a daily fine on the party. In turn, that fine would revert to the organization to help defray the cost of the election. In other words, any penalty levied would help fund the electoral system.

Some parties might be concerned about releasing their platforms sooner, that they might be disadvantaged. Release timing could remain at the discretion of each party, as per current practice, but adhering to that 10- or 20-day release period. Alternately, a more formalized structure could be entrenched in law, with a release schedule based on the number of seats each party holds at dissolution. In this way, the party with the fewest seats would release its platform first while the party with the most seats would do so last, with other parties slotted in accordingly.

Taking this all a step further, to create uniformity and make for easier "comparison shopping," a platform format could be imposed on the parties. If shoppers have such a framework available to them when buying electronics and other goods online, why not give them the same ability to assess political platforms?

Not having costed campaign platforms in the first few weeks of the writ period, particularly when some voters are casting their ballots early, as more than seven million Canadians did across the advanced polls in the latest campaign, is like embarking on a road trip and having a vague idea of the destination, only to receive a detailed map towards the end of the journey.

Practicing meaningful democracy calls for changing this longstanding practice, and helping the average voter—regardless of political affiliation—understand who and what they are voting for, and at what cost. In an era of increasing public deficits and debt, and economic uncertainty, voters need sufficient time to understand the choice they are making. The time to make this change is now.

Andrew Tzembelicos is a Greek-Canadian writer and editor who worked with the federal Liberals in Ottawa for nearly a decade.

The Hill Times

AI and the innovation-regulation pendulum

Achieving a healthy balance between innovation and regulation is key as Canada continues to pursue more digital transformation initiatives.

Ulrike Bahr-Gedalia

Opinion



AI is being woven into the fabric of our everyday lives. It's the common thread in nearly every trend we monitor or predict—regardless of the sector or circumstance.

From self-driving cars to personal assistants in our pockets, AI is transforming the way we interact with the world, offering a powerful promise to revolutionize entire industries, and increase productivity and quality of life by empowering organizations and employees.

But there's another side to the coin: potential privacy and digital security risks.

The AI boom—including the advent of large language models (LLMs) and their associated chatbots—has created new challenges for digital security and privacy. More personal and sensitive data is being transmitted, collected, used, and stored by AI than ever before. With the sheer volume of data in play, coupled with the pace at which the technology develops, it's all but inevitable that at some point some data will be exposed or deployed in ways that infringe on privacy rights. Financial data, health-care information, personal data from social media sites, and biometric data used for facial recognition are just a few possibilities of areas that may be at stake.

As some nations and policymakers rush to address this issue by imposing AI privacy regulations, questions arise: will compliance requirements create challenges for the businesses that use AI for decision-making, unintentionally but ultimately stifling innovation at a time when Canada needs it the most? How can we resolve the struggle between the need to innovate and the need for meaningful AI governance that protects privacy?

Geopolitical trade tensions have highlighted the many holes in Canada's economy, particularly our productivity crisis, which has been decades in the making. A 2024 report from the Business Data Lab found that, depending on the rate of adoption, generative AI (GenAI) use could grow Canada's productivity by between one and six per cent over the next decade. Considering that economist Trevor Tombe projected a 1.57 per cent hit to labour productivity if the United States implemented 10-per-cent across-the-board tariffs, this is no insignificant contribution.

At the moment, though, businesses seem reticent to adopt GenAI—only 14 per cent are early adopters—and point to challenges like hiring and retaining workers, accessing financing, and ensuring security and privacy of data. The need to build trust in AI and ensure the technology is used for good are key factors in increasing business adoption. Clear rules for data privacy and security would help.

There's likely no "one size fits all" answer to these questions, which is why



The need to build trust in AI and ensure the technology is used for good are key factors in increasing business adoption. Clear rules for data privacy and security would help, writes Ulrike Bahr-Gedalia. *Photograph courtesy of Pixabay*

the innovation-regulation pendulum keeps swinging, and the AI trust barometer seems to follow the latest news—often regardless of whether it's hype, or hope. However, all the most recent AI discussions seem to lean toward a couple of common denominators: international and domestic collaboration, and partnerships between governments, industry, academia, and polytechnics.

As such, perhaps a good start would be to promote the Hiroshima AI Process (HAIP) as the baseline for any form of cross-cutting advanced AI and frontier AI regulation. It's a promising tool for driving coherent global AI governance. Launched by the G7 in 2023, HAIP aims to create an international framework for governing artificial intelligence with respect to the development of advanced AI systems, and address issues related to AI governance, IP rights, and transparency.

To build on this, on Feb. 7, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development launched a voluntary framework for companies to report on their efforts to promote safe, secure, and trustworthy AI. This global reporting framework is intended to monitor and support the application of the International Code of Conduct for Organizations Developing Advanced AI Systems delivered by the 2023 G7 Hiroshima AI Process.

A framework like HAIP might also help provide more certainty for businesses and not leave important details to future regulations. Recent global developments have clearly shown that businesses and societies thrive on certainty—to which legislative and regulatory clarity and stability are foundational. And that's no different for AI or any other technology advancement.

Achieving a healthy balance between innovation and regulation is key as Canada continues to pursue more digital transformation initiatives to foster a digital economy everyone can engage in. A clear, reasonable, and opportunity-driven regulatory approach would safeguard digital privacy and security, and empower Canadian businesses to invest in the development and application of new technologies, lifting Canada's lagging productivity and fostering a dynamic and resilient economy.

Ulrike Bahr-Gedalia is senior director of digital economy, technology and innovation at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

The Hill Times

Capital competition



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and his wife Diana Fox Carney leave St. Bartholomew's Church Hall in Ottawa's New Edinburgh neighbourhood after voting on April 28. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Former governor general Michaëlle Jean arrives at St. Bartholomew's to cast her ballot in the 45th general election. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



'We have to look out for ourselves and, above all, we have to take care of each other,' Carney said in his victory speech. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Fox Carney introduces her husband at TD Place. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Carney took to the stage to *Carry On* by Canadian singer-songwriter Cœur de pirate. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Liberals were in a festive mood, even as many races across the country were tighter than polls had predicted. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Carney delivers remarks in the early hours of April 29 after securing the continuation of a Liberal government. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Canadian rock band Down With Webster performs at the Liberals' election night event in Ottawa on April 29. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Liberal Party supporters gather at an election night event in Ottawa's TD Place Arena to await the results of the election on April 28. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Conservative Party supporters gathered at Rogers Centre Ottawa to await the election results on April 28. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



Liberal supporters eagerly watched the results roll in over the course of the night. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Party faithful waited late into the night on April 28 and into the early morning waiting to hear from Leader Pierre Poilievre, who is projected to lose his Carleton, Ont., seat. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



Tories rallied throughout the night as results poured in that showed many races tipping in their favour. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



Journalists watched the proceedings inside the convention centre's third-floor Canada Hall. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



Party Leader Pierre Poilievre, right, and his wife Anaïda took to the stage early on April 29 to the tune of Brett Kissel's *Our Home*. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



'My purpose in politics is and will continue to be to restore Canada's promise,' Poilievre told his supporters. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Conservatives spent campaign ‘fending off attacks on all sides’ as Liberals, third parties dominated Meta election ads, says expert

The five main parties spent more than \$5.5-million on Facebook and Instagram ads in the first 30 days of the election campaign, with the Liberals leading the Conservatives by nearly \$1-million heading into election day.

BY STUART BENSON

Messaging from the Liberals and progressive third parties dominated Canadians’ Facebook and Instagram feeds this election, with the Grits, their leader and candidates, and left-wing special interest groups outspending the Conservatives by significant margins, as the previously dominant Tories fell further behind in the final week of the campaign.

Yet, while the Liberal Party and Prime Minister Mark Carney have gotten “nearly everything right” online this election, the decreased spending on Meta



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, Green co-Leaders Elizabeth May and Jonathan Pedneault, and People’s Party Leader Maxime Bernier are projected to spend nearly \$8-million collectively on Meta ads alone this election. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and illustration by Joey Sabourin

ads by Conservative Party and Leader Pierre Poilievre only tells part of the story, according to digital marketing expert Harneet Singh.

“As more and more seniors and boomers walk away [from the party], the Conservatives’ path to victory was through the youth vote, and they’re not on Facebook,” explained Singh, a managing principal at EOK Consults.

In the first 30 days of the 45th general election campaign—March 23 through April 19—the pages of prominent federal parties and leaders spent a combined \$5.5-million on Facebook and Instagram advertising, according to Meta’s Ad Library, and are projected to spend nearly \$8-million during the entire 37-day writ period.

The Liberals remained nearly \$1-million ahead of the Conser-

vatives entering the final week of the campaign, with a combined \$3.058-million across both Carney’s and the party’s official Facebook and Instagram accounts, compared to the \$2.23-million across the Conservatives’ and Poilievre’s pages. Much further back, the New Democrats and Leader Jagmeet Singh spent just over \$104,264, followed by the Bloc Québécois with \$93,758, and the Greens with \$72,330.

Despite outspending all other parties combined nearly week-to-week since last September, the Conservatives have trailed the Liberals on Meta since the election began on March 23, when the Grits outspent the opposition Conservatives by 14-to-one: \$118,922 versus \$8,354.

While the Tories were quick to play catch-up—dropping more than \$100,000 on March 25 and ramping that up to a roughly \$120,000 daily spend over the next four days—the Liberals have been spending consistently higher on average—\$103,233 per day versus \$75,924.

The Conservatives spent a total of \$2.67-million on Meta ads during the four weeks of the campaign up to April 19—a figure which also includes the pre-writ spending of \$536,360 from March 16-22, before the implementation of election spending limits. In comparison, despite spending less than half of what the Tories’ did during the pre-writ period—\$250,400—the Liberals’ total for the same period is just shy of \$2.96-million.

In an April 24 interview, Harneet Singh explained that the Liberals’ early focus on Carney’s “brand recognition,” spending substantial amounts on both pages each day, and the depth of not only content, but also its “expanded multilingual strategy” had allowed the party to quickly catch up to the Conservatives before surpassing them on the platform.

Singh noted that in early January, Carney’s Facebook page had up to 3,000 followers, before rising to 95,000 in early March, and has since jumped to more than 334,000.

The Liberals had been expanding their content and increasing the number of languages into which those ads were translated—including Mandarin and Punjabi—to match the Conservatives’ efforts. In the final days of the campaign, the Liberals pulled nearly all of their previous ads to focus entirely on Get Out The Vote campaigns.

The incumbent governing party also significantly increased their spending, breaching a \$200,000 daily spend on April 23. The Liberals splashed out more than half a million dollars on Meta ads from April 22-24. In comparison, the Conservatives spent \$394,629 in the same three-day period, and had its first daily spend over \$200,000 the next day, according to the most recent publicly available data as of April 28.

However, while Meta may no longer be where the Conservative Party is spending its advertising dollars, “to dismiss their digital game would be unfair,” Singh said.

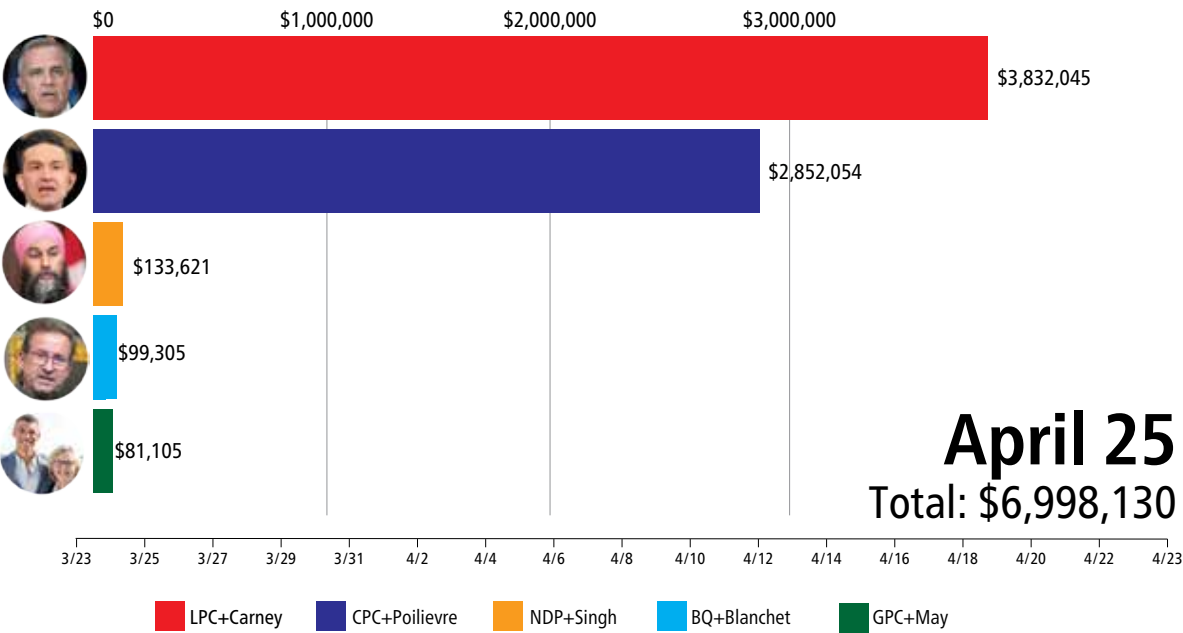
While Meta is the only platform that publicizes near-up-to-date spending numbers for this election period, the Conservatives have continued to spend large amounts on radio and television advertising, including through connected Smart TV ads, as well as elsewhere online, Singh noted.

The Conservatives have also continued with the extensive third-language translations on almost all of those platforms, Singh said, recalling that during his commute in Toronto the previous week, “every third ad was a Conservative candidate or the Conservative Party on an ethnic radio station.”

While detailed expenses will not be available until the financial disclosures are released on Dec. 28, the parties are on track to spend more than one-third of the \$18.5-million they collectively spent on digital online advertising during the 2021 election on Meta ads alone this year. During the last election, the Conservatives spent \$5.7-million on online advertising, as well as \$8.9-million on television ads, and a total of \$17.7-million across all advertising platforms, including print, radio, and other mediums.

In 2021, the NDP narrowly outspent the Liberals in nearly every advertising category, including online, with the NDP spending \$5.86-million compared to the Grits’ \$5.72-million. The NDP paid \$7.7-million for TV ads, compared to the Liberals’ \$6.1-million. Overall, during the last election the NDP spent a total of \$16.6-million

Daily Meta Campaign Spending by Parties and Leaders



Source: Meta Ad Library
Last updated: April 28 with data as of April 25

Liberals led federal leader stops in snap campaign as parties eye gains in Ontario, Quebec, and B.C.

An analysis of the campaign itineraries shows the Liberals, Conservatives, and NDP sent their leaders to Ontario at least 88 times, followed by 44 stops in B.C., 32 in Quebec, 10 in Alberta, nine in Nova Scotia, and six in Manitoba.

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT ALLEN

Prime Minister Mark Carney, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh spent the bulk of their campaigns in seat-rich Ontario and Quebec, but British Columbia’s 43 ridings became a target battleground along the tour, propelling it to second place as the most-visited province.

Of the three leaders, Carney recorded the most stops across the country at 76 during his 36-day tour—which included three pauses in Ottawa to address Canada-U.S. trade tensions—followed by Singh’s 66, and Poilievre’s 62, according to an analysis of schedules released by the campaigns to the media over 36 days ahead of the election. The list isn’t exhaustive as not all events were telegraphed, with new stops in the mix when teams pivoted in response to daily news events or internal strategy.

The schedule gives a clear window into how the campaigns approached their electoral priorities, according to former partisan campaigners who reviewed the numbers. The data suggests the Liberals were on the offensive, targeting ridings to flip especially in the final stretch. The Conservatives also focused on regions that could bring them some gains, while the former strategists described the NDP campaign as largely on the defensive, fighting to keep some of the 25 seats won in 2021 amid dismal polling that suggested its official party status was on the line.

“The Liberals ran more of a whistlestop campaign to try to spread the love a little bit everywhere, and that’s probably kind of suitable to a front-runner campaign,” said Yaroslav Baran, who led Conservative war room communications during the campaigns in 2004, 2006, and 2008.

“The Conservatives tended to focus more on large rallies,” and spend time in swing zones, he said, while Singh “tended to have deeper



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, left, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, Prime Minister Mark Carney, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, and Green Party co-Leaders Jonathan Pedneault and Elizabeth May. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade, Sam Garcia, and illustration by Naomi Wildeboer

tours in fewer areas” in an effort to fight “to hang onto seats where the NDP has the most strength.”

A CBC analysis of 419 campaign events in 148 ridings for the three leaders echoed that assessment, reporting Poilievre in ridings where his party had no incumbents in three-quarters of the cases. The Liberals, meanwhile, started the campaign targeting more incumbent ridings, but shifted Carney’s schedule after the final April 17 leaders’

debate so that 62 per cent of the stops were to seats the party could flip.

The tour stops are nearly all driven by the party’s internal numbers, fuelled by riding-level data that is much better than what is available to the public, said Baran.

“They know where they’re strong; where they are competitive, but behind; where they have a slight lead, but one that needs to be defended; and where they have

no plausible hope of winning,” but it’s the two middle categories that “determine the tour.”

Aside from the numbers, national campaigns have a checklist to consider, said Dan Arnold, who handled polling for the Liberals in 2015, 2019, and 2021, helping guide the campaign’s next steps.

“Sometimes you just go somewhere because it’ll make for good visuals. You can draw a big crowd in the location that you’re going to, you want to highlight a star candidate so you want to do an event with them, or there’s just a nice backdrop,” said Arnold.

Former NDP MP now vice-president of Proof Strategies Matthew Dubé said the Conservative Party often seemed to tie thematic announcements with rally locations, like addressing crime and car theft in Brampton, Ont., where the issue is rampant.

“You want to be in the right place for the right message,” he said, noting all the parties appeared to have some success on that front.

Carney, Poilievre, and Singh all stopped in Windsor, Ont., where the strategists noted campaigns could project an image of national strength in the face of U.S. aggression against the backdrop of the border. In Carney’s case, an April 26 press conference

was positioned with Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor and Detroit, Mich., at his back while supporters held signs saying “Canada Strong.”

The checklist also means ensuring all provinces are checked off, or the leader is likely to face questions about their ability to govern the whole country, Arnold said. All save Green co-Leader Jonathan Pedneault skipped the three territories—which represent only three of the House of Commons’ 343 seats—during the campaign. Pedneault visited Whitehorse, Yukon, to pitch a civil defence corps, while Carney and Singh stopped in Nunavut in March just days before the election call and a month after Poilievre landed in the territory to promise a new military base in the territory. Logistically, the trip north is very challenging, and with the vast territories representing only one riding apiece, “the payoff is limited,” noted Arnold.

Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet had the clear lead—although with a major caveat—with at least 94 events on his calendar. Blanchet, running for re-election in Beloeil—Chambly for a third term, spent nearly the entire campaign in his home province aside from part of one day in Ottawa on April 8, where he held a news conference at the Supreme Court of Canada to address the notwithstanding clause. With Quebec’s 78 seats and his 33-member caucus as his entire focus, Blanchet could afford to fit in at times four and five stops a day during the short campaign period, with none of his travelling time eaten up by long flights.

Green co-Leaders Elizabeth May and Pedneault each spent the majority of their time split across the country with May defending her Saanich—Gulf Islands, B.C., seat for a fifth term, and Pedneault trying to take Outremont, Que., from the Liberals. The pair also added stops in Ontario, New Brunswick and Yukon to their combined hitlist.

Ontario in focus, but B.C. ‘the big story’

Ontario represented the most campaign events among the Liberals, Conservatives, and NDP at 88, followed by 44 in B.C., 32 in Quebec, 10 in Alberta, and nine in Nova Scotia.

Manitoba had six spots, with parties focused on Winnipeg’s four ridings, and NDP taking up half the visits. The three top leaders each made a pair of stops in in Saskatoon, the province’s largest city which is split into three ridings, with Carney the only one to split his up on return visits. The Conservatives swept all of the province’s 14 seats last election, and the three Tory incumbents are defending their territory in Saskatoon. Newfoundland and Labrador was the province where Carney officially kicked off his campaign, and it saw four leader visits. Singh skipped out on two Atlantic provinces—New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island—where the party is unlikely to

Liberal, Conservative, and NDP leader stops by province				
Province	Mark Carney	Pierre Poilievre	Jagmeet Singh	Total
Alberta	3	3	4	10
British Columbia	12	11	21	44
Manitoba	2	1	3	6
New Brunswick	1	2	0	3
Newfoundland and Labrador	2	1	1	4
Nova Scotia	4	2	3	9
Ontario	36	30	22	88
Prince Edward Island	1	1	0	2
Quebec	13	9	10	32
Saskatchewan	2	2	2	6

Source: Leader itineraries shared with media

Conservatives plunge into blame game after election defeat



New Democrat Jagmeet Singh, left, resigned as party leader on election night, while Conservative Pierre Poilievre's party plunged into infighting after an election defeat by the Mark Carney Liberals. Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet's two-dozen seats could play a pivotal role in the new House. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and illustration by Joey Sabourin

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre acknowledged his party's disappointment over failing to form government, but gave no indication in his concession speech that he intends to step down despite losing his own seat.

Continued from page 1

By press time on April 29, the Liberals had won or were leading in 168 seats, the Conservatives in 144, the Bloc Québécois in 23, the NDP in seven, and the Greens in one. In the newly reconfigured 343-seat House of Commons, a party needs 172 seats to form a majority government.

In comparison, after the 2021 federal election—when the House had 338 seats—the Liberals won 160 seats, the Conservatives 119, the Bloc 32, the NDP 25, and the Greens two.

In his concession speech on election night, Singh announced he would step down once the party chooses an interim leader. On Monday evening, it was doubtful the NDP would secure official party status, which requires a minimum of 12 seats.

"Choosing to commit your life to politics obviously comes with some sacrifice, but we choose this life because of the chance to

change the country you love for the better. We may lose sometimes, and those losses hurt. It's tough, but we are only defeated if we stop fighting. We're only defeated when we believe that those that tell us that we can never dream of a better Canada, a fairer Canada, a more compassionate Canada," an emotional Singh told supporters in British Columbia.

Prior to Singh's speech, Conservative MP-elect Jamil Jivani (Bowmanville-Oshawa North, Ont.) accused Ontario Premier Doug Ford's Progressive Conservatives of undermining the federal party's election prospects. Jivani argued that while federal Conservatives had stayed neutral during the last Ontario provincial election, Ford's team did not do the same—ultimately damaging Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's chances of forming government.

"When it was our turn to run an election, [Ford] couldn't stay out of our business, using criticisms and all about distracting our campaign, trying to position himself as some kind of political genius that we need to be taking cues from," said Jivani in an April 29 interview with CBC.

During the 37-day election campaign, Kory Teneycke, the Progressive Conservative campaign director who led Ford to three consecutive victories, repeatedly questioned the Poilievre

Conservatives' electoral strategy—specifically, their failure to focus on the escalating trade war with the United States and President Donald Trump's annexation threats. Teneycke pointed out that the Conservatives had held a 27-point lead over the Liberals in early January but were trailing by the end of the campaign, calling it a case of "campaign malpractice."

"So when I talk about campaign malpractice, blowing a lead that big, and your response being, 'I don't believe in the polls,' I don't know. I think it's kind of weak sauce," Teneycke told CTV on April 11.

In media interviews Ford backed up Teneycke's criticism of the federal Conservatives.

"I've said right from Day 1, he's tough as nails, but he's the best campaign manager in the country. And to be very frank, if

Kory was running that campaign, I don't think Mr. Poilievre would be in the position he's in right now," Ford told reporters on April 14. "At the end of the day, the people will decide which way they want this country to move forward. But sometimes the truth hurts."

In his concession speech on election night, Poilievre showed no intention of stepping down, instead telling supporters that "change is hard" and would take time. As of press time on April 29, Poilievre was projected to lose his long-held Carleton, Ont., riding to Liberal challenger Bruce Fanjoy.

"I know you are disappointed," said Poilievre in his election-night speech. "Change is difficult and it takes time."

As recently as this past December, many Liberal MPs and senior Liberals feared their party could fall to third or fourth

place under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, whose popularity had plummeted amid growing frustration over affordability and inflation. But public sentiment began to shift after Trudeau announced his departure on Jan. 6, with Chrystia Freeland's (University of Toronto, Ont.) December resignation from cabinet seen as the final blow to his leadership.

As Trump ramped up threats of tariffs and annexation after he re-entered the White House in January, the Liberals began to climb in the polls. Just eight weeks after Trudeau stepped down, the party elected former Bank of Canada and Bank of England governor Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) as its new leader and prime minister. Carney carried all 343 ridings in the leadership contest. Two weeks into his premiership, he called a snap federal election to capitalize on the momentum.

For nearly two years, Poilievre's Conservatives had led the polls by double digits. But a combination of Trudeau's resignation, the suspension of the carbon tax, and escalating Trump tariffs shifted the momentum. While the trade issue dominated voter concerns, Poilievre focused almost exclusively on the cost of living. Insiders suggest two key reasons for his silence: many in the Conservative base support Trump, and Carney's economic credentials made him a more credible voice on international finance and trade—giving the Liberals a clear advantage on the issue.

Throughout the campaign—and even on election day—Trump continued pushing his rhetoric, falsely claiming the U.S. was subsidizing Canada by \$200-billion, and suggesting on social media that Canada could become the 51st state in exchange for zero tariffs and skyrocketing industry growth.

"Elect the man who has the strength and wisdom to cut your taxes in half, increase your military power, for free, to the highest level in the World, have your Car, Steel, Aluminum, Lumber, Energy, and all other businesses, QUADRUPLER in size, WITH ZERO TARIFFS OR TAXES, if Canada becomes the cherished 51st State of the United States of America," Trump said on social media on election day.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio echoed similar sentiments on NBC's *Meet the Press*, saying Canada would benefit from statehood and promising the U.S. would work with whoever wins the Canadian election. "We'll deal with the new leadership of Canada," Rubio said. "There are many things we work co-operatively with Canada on but we actually don't like the way they treated us when it comes to trade."

In a rally for Ottawa Centre Liberal Yasir Naqvi's ultimately successful re-election campaign on April 26, former prime minister Jean Chrétien mocked Trump's annexation proposal, jokingly thanking him for uniting Canada and suggesting he had nominated Trump for the Order of Canada—before quipping that Trump probably wouldn't qualify due to his criminal record.

arana@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



After the April 28 election loss, Ontario Conservative MP-elect Jamil Jivani blasted the Ontario Progressive Conservatives for interfering in the federal campaign, negatively affecting the party's electoral prospects. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

POLICY BRIEFING

ENVIRONMENT

Publication date: Wednesday, May 7 | Advertising deadline: Thursday, May 1

Where is Canada in terms of achieving its climate goals? How might progress towards net-zero emissions be affected by a reduction or removal of the consumer-facing carbon tax?

The Arctic is warming faster than the global average. What are the environmental challenges facing Canada's North, and how can the federal government help?

What new technologies or innovations could assist with

protecting the environment? Is the federal government supporting these advances?

Canada is a producer of mined substances, including potash, uranium, and critical minerals.

What are the environmental concerns associated with mining? How can those concerns be addressed?

What are some of the at-risk species in Canada? How can the federal government help protect the environment so our native species thrive?

**Reach the political decision-makers
who will receive this report by
reserving ad space with us today!**

Call 613-688-8841 or email sales@hilltimes.com to reserve your advertising space in The Hill Times' Environment policy briefing.

THE HILL TIMES

Trump, tariffs, and the economy ‘crushed’ other election issues that can’t be ignored by the next government, say politicians

The environment, climate change, public transit, Indigenous reconciliation, and Big Tech took a back seat during the campaign, but governing will mandate their attention, says NDP strategist Will Shelling.

BY STUART BENSON

In the face of an “existential” threat from south of the border, a variety of issues took a back seat this election, as United States President Donald Trump steered much of the debate, policy proposals, and questions to party leaders.

Yet, once the dust settles, politicians say the new government and cabinet won’t be able to hide under Trump’s shadow for long.

While Canada has long been affected by “every twitch and grunt” from south of the border—as then-prime minister Pierre Trudeau told then-U.S. president Richard Nixon in 1969—the newly unfriendly White House “has crushed all the other issues that don’t fit into Trump or the economy and cost of living,” said Nik Nanos, chief data scientist and founder of Nanos Research.

“Similar to the choice of party on the ballot, there’s been a consolidation in the minds of voters toward those two competing issues,” Nanos said, noting that beyond instances where they could be wedged into that narrow scope, there had been a deficit of attention on issues like the environment and climate change, health care, or even defence spending.

“Those issues are important, but if you have an existential threat from the U.S. to the future of the Canadian economy, they just cannot compete,” Nanos said.

While jobs and the economy remain the top national issue on Nanos Research’s weekly tracker, the focus on health care has increased significantly since September. Meanwhile, the environment, education, and even the



U.S. President Donald Trump’s views on Canada crushed any attempt by Liberal Leader Mark Carney, left, or Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre to steer the election away from anything not focused on Canada-U.S. relations. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade, Wikimedia Commons, and Pixabay, and illustration by Joey Sabourin

national debt have all steadily decreased in importance since then, with a notable decline in the final week of the election.

Additionally, Nanos said the dual issues that have garnered most of the attention have become increasingly intertwined, despite the Liberals and Conservatives attempting to frame them separately and pin the blame on different culprits.

“When the focus is on the economy and the cost of living, the Conservatives are very competitive, and then when the focus is on Trump and tariffs, it tends to favour the Liberals,” Nanos explained. “For the Conservatives, when they talk about the threat, they blame the ‘lost Liberal decade,’ but the Liberals want to blame Trump.”

While the advantage depends on who’s speaking and which framing is most successful on any given day of the campaign, and how long Trump has gone without interjecting via his Truth Social platform, Nanos said he would give the overall advantage to the Grits.

Going after former prime minister Justin Trudeau and the Liberals’ record “is just taking political shots at the past,” Nanos explained. “This election is about the future, not a referendum on the last 10 years. If it was, [Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre] would be measuring the drapes in 24 Sussex.”

Nanos’ final one-day tracking poll on April 27 placed the Liberals with a nearly three-point lead with 42.6 per cent, followed by the Conservatives at 39.9 per cent and the NDP at 7.8 per cent. Asked who Canadians would prefer as prime minister, Carney comes in at 51.9 per cent, followed by Poilievre at 32.1 per cent.

Forming government will put sidelined issues ‘back in the ring,’ say politicians

Canadian elections have increasingly become leader-focused, with platforms providing less information about a party’s suite of policies while highlighting those most relevant to the specific ballot issues.

However, NDP strategist Will Shelling, a consultant with Counsel Public Affairs, told *The Hill Times* that once a government is formed, and subsequently a cabinet with new mandate letters, there will undoubtedly be a shift in priorities, “and that’s when those issues will enter the ring.”

Additionally, the Vancouver-based Shelling said that issues like the environment and climate change will soon become top of mind, regardless of those priorities.

“I watch the sky turn red every year as we transition into wildfire season,” Shelling explained. “So, regardless of the government, more and more people will be asking questions about what they’re going to do to prevent climate change and protect cities and infrastructure from its impacts.”

While those issues may not pose the same immediate threat to the Canadian economy as Trump, climate change has already had devastating impacts on the economy of his province, most recently on the agricultural sector from last winter’s frost devastating wine growers, to the record droughts the past two summers, Shelling added.

In a similar vein, Shelling said he had hoped to see more discussion of transit during the election, arguing that it could have been framed as an economic driver to protect and “Trump proof” the economy.

“I know it’s not the biggest thing right now, but it would have been nice.”

Former Liberal staffer Kait LaForce, a senior consultant with Summa Strategies, told *The Hill Times* she had been disappointed to see the “noticeable absence” of the Canada Disability Benefit, or any other significant discussion on issues faced by Canadians living with a disability.

“There’s growing frustration within the disability community over the delays in implementing the benefit, especially as inflation continues to impact people with disabilities disproportionately,” LaForce said.

Dan Pujdak, chief strategy officer with Blackbird Strategies and former director of policy to then-Crown-Indigenous relations minister Carolyn Bennett, said he had been surprised by the lack of discussion focused on issues like the opioid crisis, as well as debates on issues concerning First Nations and Indigenous reconciliation.

While both the Conservatives, Liberals, and NDP put significant emphasis and policy commitments related to the issues in their platforms, “it was never the main point of the stump speeches,” Pujdak said.

“But, my impression is that reconciliation [will be] central to the policy approach of whoever forms the next government, no matter what,” Pujdak added. “The Liberals and Conservatives both seem to understand that not only do Canadians expect the next government to improve Crown-Indigenous relations, but their resource development ambitions absolutely require them to do so.”

“Sometimes, policy, investments and relationships benefit from a quiet consensus and less partisan emphasis. I’m optimistic that’s what is happening.”

Daniel Perry, a director of federal affairs at the Council of Canadian Innovators (CCI), said that while few of the specific issues the industry had been raising before the election got much attention in the headlines, “we did see some wins.”

On March 3, the CCI released a pre-election briefing document titled *What Innovators Need to Scale* to all major federal parties, which Perry said included several suggestions that showed up in the Conservative and Liberal platforms.

Among them were commitments to improve procurement and an increased focus on domestic suppliers.

“That is a great idea that should be tapped into no matter who forms government,” Perry

said. “The government purchases billions of dollars’ worth of goods and services from suppliers. Why shouldn’t they be Canadian?”

However, Perry said that all the parties and their platforms are “missing the moment” on artificial intelligence (AI), and he was most disappointed in the Conservatives’ commitment to reduce federal investments in AI initiatives by nearly \$900-million over the next four years.

“AI is expanding and becoming part of everyday life, as we’re seeing the government and the private sector embrace it,” Perry explained. “It’s a technology that aligns very well with the Conservatives’ economic focus because it can produce increased productivity in a wide range of industries, from mining to oil and gas, and agriculture.”

Matt Chilliak lives south of the border but has worked on NDP and Democrat campaigns in both countries, including for the federal NDP and provincially in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. He has also worked on Democratic campaigns during the 2020 election cycle and as a director for a political action committee in 2024.

Chilliak told *The Hill Times* that Trump has been a factor in previous Canadian elections, but “the biggest difference is that it’s not just a question of who controls the government, it’s a question of sovereignty and who controls the country.”

“You can’t blame the Liberals for the fact that everything in this election has been through the prism of Trump; they’re just following the voters.”

Poilievre and the Conservatives have nonetheless attempted to redirect the discussion through the prism of Trudeau and the carbon tax, but that has been far less effective, Chilliak said.

“There was barely even much discussion about the Liberals’ record either, and Carney’s been smart not to want to associate with it,” Chilliak said. “[Carney] knows those are politically toxic, and he’s done well rebranding the party under himself.”

Even worse for the Conservatives was that they were also unable or unwilling to reframe the debates around the “culture war” issues that dominated the last U.S. election, with minimal mention of topics such as the World Economic Forum, vaccines, or even gender policies, Chilliak noted.

Chilliak said he was glad those debates were a “mole hill” compared to the past three U.S. elections.

However, the contest Chilliak is most reminded of is the 2015 campaign.

“My memory of that election is that you had a government that had been in power for close to a decade and everything under the sun was up for debate, from marijuana legalization, to climate change, pipelines, agriculture and election reform,” Chilliak recalled. “This election, whether it’s foreign interference, national security, the economy or the environment, everything came down to Trump.”

sbenson@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Carney clicked with caretaker convention's call for restraint, experts say

Mark Carney's Liberal government had few cabinet orders during the election despite criticism that he wasn't adhering to the caretaker convention.

BY NEIL MOSS

Prime Minister Mark Carney stepped off the Liberal campaign trail a handful of times to address Canada's swelling trade war with the United States, which some say risked breaching the caretaker convention. But parliamentary observers say no such contravention took place.

Three times during the writ period, Carney put a pause on his campaign to address trade threats from U.S. President Donald Trump, which included an announcement of retaliatory tariffs.

Conservative Michael Chong (Wellington-Halton Hills North, Ont.) took issue with the pauses during the campaign.

"This is beyond the pale," he wrote in an April 11 post on X. "Where is the caretaker convention? Where is the Privy Council Office? Where is our independent public service, providing fearless advice: 'Prime minister, you cannot bind a future government during the writ period. Furthermore, your repeated use of the Office of Prime Minister during the writ period amounts to putting your thumb on the scale of the electoral process'."

In an April 8 editorial, *The Globe and Mail* said that Carney "should take greater care in observing the caretaker convention, and respecting the democratic process."

Carleton University professor Philippe Lagassé, an expert on the Westminster system, said Carney adhered to the convention.

"We can't really point to things that bound another government or that were irreversible," he said.

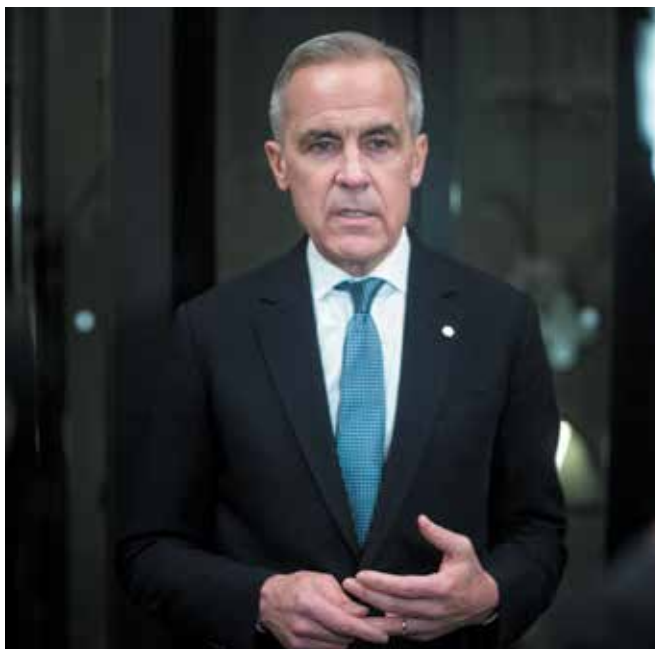
"Were the decisions that were made urgent and in the public interest? That's the real question," he said. "It's ultimately the prime minister's call, but I think they were."

The caretaker convention is in place to curtail some government action when the House of Commons isn't sitting during an election and cannot give confidence in the executive's decisions.

Lagassé noted that the prime minister never stops being the



The Privy Council Office issues guidance for ministers and the public service on what they can and cannot do during an election period. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Prime Minister Mark Carney took a number of pauses from his campaign to address American trade action. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

address American trade threats, which other party leaders argued was a breach of the convention.

Five cabinet orders issued during campaign

During the writ period, Carney's executive issued five orders-in-council—not including order to issue writs of election—as of April 24, tying the lowest number issued during an election campaign in the last three decades. In the 2008 and 2011 elections, the government of the day also issued five.

During the 2021 campaign, 14 cabinet orders were issued. There were six in 2019, 41 in 2015, 39 in 2009, 26 in 2004, 51 in 2000, 111 in 1997, and 107 in 1993.

Carney's five orders-in-council all related to trade countermeasures, except for a special warrant for the payment of \$40-billion, which is "urgently required for the public good."

Lagassé said that the decline in cabinet orders during the campaign period is a "good proxy" to outline how the convention has developed.

"The fact that there are fewer of them tells us that this principle of restraint is starting to ensconce itself more thoroughly over time—that's not too surprising," he said. "It reinforces ... that the expectations around this are much tighter than they might have been in the past."

Wernick argued that the number of cabinet orders being issued isn't a "terribly meaningful metric."

"One OIC [orders-in-council] could be very impactful, and another one a small routine transactional matter. The context, time of year, and length of the writ period would all have an influence on what lands on

the government's plate so no two elections are the same and extrapolating a trend would be dubious," he said.

"It is plausible to me that governments have become more cautious over time given the hyper-reactive media and social media context of modern elections, but I am not sure that is provable," he added.

Macfarlane said the issue isn't how many cabinet orders are issued during an election period, but their nature.

"It's about what decisions are being made and in what context," he said. "It requires a qualitative assessment of the situation."

'Caretaker creep' in public service

Lagassé said there is a concern that excessive "risk aversion" could lead to too much governmental restraint in the public service.

"There is quite a bit of caretaker creep that happens where stuff that is routine and not controversial and even arm's length is being delayed for no good reasons," he said.

He said that there is an "abundance of caution" being taken by the bureaucracy.

"I'm not sure we're well served by that," he said. "Working business, including things that have already been already approved, already funded, all that should keep moving forward," he said. "But in some cases, the public service tries to be very careful."

Macfarlane said that there is a suggestion that the public service is being "too excessive" in how it adheres to the caretaker convention.

"[That] it's pausing what we would and should consider normal day-to-day operations in some cases when it shouldn't—when they're decisions that are actually routine or even ... arm's length from the government of the day," he said. "There is sometimes a pause put on them when there doesn't need to be."

Lagassé said that the convention ceases to be in place with Carney's Liberals winning a plurality of the seats in the April 28 vote. But it would continue on in the case of a transition of government until a new prime minister is sworn in by the Governor General.

nmoss@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Cabinet orders during federal elections

Election	Number of orders-in-council*
2025	5
2021	14
2019	6
2015	41
2011	5
2008	5
2006	39
2004	26
2000	51
1997	111
1993	107

*Doesn't include the cabinet order to issue writs of election.

prime minister, including while campaigning.

University of Waterloo professor Emmett Macfarlane, an expert on public policy and constitutional law, said overall, Carney stayed within the bounds of the convention.

"It was clear going into the campaign that the government would continue to need a free hand and respond to some of what Donald Trump was doing in regards to tariffs," Macfarlane said. "The principle behind the caretaker convention is simply one of restraint."

But Macfarlane said that restraint doesn't apply to urgent situations or emergencies, during which the caretaker convention allows for government action.

"The caretaker convention is not one that actually handcuffs

the government in those contexts," he said.

Macfarlane said that the "bulk" of government actions in the past few weeks was in response to the U.S. trade threat.

He said that the concern over the caretaker convention has been "excessive."

"Sometimes people associate the dissolution of Parliament with the end of a government, and in our system that's just not how it works," he said.

Former Privy Council clerk Michael Wernick said in an email that he has "no concerns" regarding the way in which the caretaker convention was respected either during the federal campaign, or during the recent Ontario election. During the provincial vote, Ontario Premier Doug Ford travelled to Washington, D.C., to

Conservatives spent campaign ‘fending off attacks on all sides’ as Liberals, third parties dominated Meta election ads, says expert

Continued from page 14

on ads versus \$16.2-million spent by the Liberals. The only category where the Liberals exceeded the New Democrats’ ad spending was in print, at \$126,472 compared to \$113,263, respectively.

In total, the Liberals, Conservatives, NDP, Bloc, and Greens spent nearly \$52.6-million across all forms of advertising in 2021, and a collective \$82.9-million across all categories of expenses.

During that election, the expense limits for the Liberals, Conservatives, and NDP were set at just over \$30-million. Of that, the Liberals spent a little more than \$27-million, the Conservatives spent just over \$28.3-million, and the NDP spent \$24.1-million.

During this election with the newly redistributed 343 ridings, the spending limit is set at roughly \$35.8-million for all three parties.

Accounting for all spending from the parties, leaders, candidates and third-party advertisers, Singh said that EOK’s projections estimate a total spend of \$60-mil-

lion in online advertising, and “easily” more than \$100-million across all platforms.

Conservatives, Poilievre attacked on all sides by Liberals, progressive interests on Meta

During the first 30 days of the campaign, Liberal candidates accounted for 17 of the 25 highest spending totals, according to Meta’s Ad Library, spending more than triple the total of their Conservative rivals: \$170,697 to \$51,999.

In total, those 25 candidates spent a collective \$239,643 in the first month, with Liberal incumbent George Chahal spending the largest sum of \$21,457 to contest the newly created Alberta riding of Calgary–McKnight. That total is more than 17 per cent of Chahal’s total expense limit for the riding, as of Elections Canada’s final totals publicized on April 22. Liberals also account for 70 per cent of the top 10 spending totals, spending just shy of \$89,900.



EOK Consults Harneet Singh said the Liberal campaign has done ‘nearly everything right’ in terms of its digital strategy this election. Photograph courtesy of Harneet Singh

The only Conservative candidates to break the top 10 are Karen Stitz, who spent more than \$11,000—8.5 per cent of her expense limit—in a bid to flip Eglinton–Lawrence, Ont., previously held by former Liberal minister Marco Mendi-

cino. During that 30-day period, Liberal candidate Vince Gasparro spent roughly \$6,000. The second Conservative candidate is Sukhdeep Kang, who spent \$10,568 or 7.6 per cent of her total riding expense limit in Brampton South, Ont., in hopes of unseating

Liberal incumbent Sonia Sidhu, who has spent roughly \$6,000 in the same 30-day period.

Mike Morrice, the Green Party incumbent in Guelph, Ont., is the sole candidate not from the two frontrunner parties in the top 10, spending \$9,485 on Meta ads—or 7.2 per cent of his riding expense limit—in the first 30 days of the campaign.

Out of the 106 third parties that have registered with Elections Canada as of April 27, 36 of them have Meta advertising spending information, and the vast majority of the expenses were aimed at progressive causes or anti-Conservative or anti-Poilievre messaging.

In the first 30 days, those 36 advertisers spent more than \$1-million on Facebook and Instagram ads, with the four largest spending between \$107,734 and \$132,607 each.

The largest third-party spender was the National Police Federation, a non-partisan organization promoting the importance of the RCMP, which spent \$132,607. The next four top spenders—the Public Service Alliance of Canada, Canada Action Network, Stand Up For Canada, and Save the CBC—spent a collective \$401,237 from March 23 through April 21, focused on attacking Poilievre and the Conservatives.

“While Poilievre was battling it out with Carney, the Conservatives have had to fend off attacks from all sides,” Singh told *The Hill Times*. “These third parties have played a big role in this election, and I think that will only grow in the future.”

sbenson@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Liberals led federal leader stops in snap campaign as parties eye gains in Ontario, Quebec, and B.C.

Continued from page 15

have a chance. New Brunswick and P.E.I. saw three and two leader visits, respectively.

Carney spent at least part of 17 days of the campaign in Ontario, where his party won 73 of 121 seats in the 2021 election, and where the majority outcome typically predicts who will form the next government. Now another seat is in the mix in the province that represents more than one-third of all the country’s seats, and where the Conservatives took 37 last election, followed by five New Democrats, and one Green.

Poilievre spent part of 18 days in Ontario logging 31 stops, including a final stop in his Carleton riding where he campaigned three times. Singh spent some of 16 days there for at least 22 events in ridings where his team hoped

to retain seats: Hamilton, London, Timmins, Toronto, and Windsor.

Singh spent nearly one-third of his campaign days in B.C., recording 21 stops over 11 days in his home province where pollsters were projecting a tough fight throughout the campaign to win his Burnaby Central seat. Poilievre, meanwhile, had at least 11 stops over nine days in B.C., and Carney 12 stops over six days. The leaders spent all of their time in Metro Vancouver or Vancouver Island, save for three stops concentrated in the province’s Interior. The Liberals and the NDP both targeted Victoria, with Singh also making stops in Duncan, Nanaimo, and Comox on Vancouver Island.

“B.C., by and large, is the big story,” said Baran, noting the province is where the NDP is defending half of its seats, and it is common for all three parties

to be in the mix in tight two- or three-way races.

Three of Carney’s B.C. stops, including on his last day, were in Victoria, a notable shift compared to past Liberal campaigns, according to Arnold when Liberal campaigns would typically drop in on the island once.

“That would signal that the Liberals see the potential to pick up at least one seat,” Arnold said, calling it a “telling visit because historically, it’s not been a strong area for the Liberals, but you would not send the leader back there for any reason, other than thinking it’s close this time around.”

Seven of the last nine days of Singh’s campaign were spent at least in part in B.C., where the party was on the defensive.

“If you look at the NDP, they’re spending their time where their seats are, likely an effort to shore up support for existing MPs in

the final days but also in the past number of weeks: a lot of British Columbia,” said former Liberal staffer Zita Astravas.

Dubé said Singh was being smart spending time where incumbents give the party the best chance to form a strong caucus. Recalling his time as a candidate, Dubé said a leader brings “a big boost” to the campaign and volunteers toiling in the get-out-the-vote trenches, while also offering a chance for national media attention.

Arnold agreed, noting internal Liberal polling in past campaigns often showed a “bump” but it “didn’t last forever,” so the last stretch of targeted stops were “really telling.”

Quebec was notable for Carney’s 13 stops over nine days, said Baran, with the prime minister ahead of the other federal leaders in *la belle province* likely because

he saw an opportunity to “really break through there as Bloc numbers started to start to drop.”

The data in Quebec is slightly inflated, with all leaders arriving in the province the day before the back-to-back leaders’ debates on April 16 and 17, adding three days to each of their totals, with Poilievre at nine stops over eight days campaigning in Quebec, and Singh reporting similar numbers.

While Carney reported the most stops of the cross-country leaders, his pace was notably slower than that of his predecessor Justin Trudeau, said Arnold, who said Trudeau typically did four or five events most days.

“He had the stamina, and was somebody who feeds off a crowd and performs well in those situations,” said Arnold. “I think the Liberal campaign has tried to take it a bit easier with Carney, and that’s because he’s a political newcomer and there’s a higher risk of gaffes.”

Dubé called the Liberal approach “paint by numbers” in that it checked off all the boxes of a cross-country tour for the Liberals.

“The tour reflects what, rhetorically, kind of what we’ve seen from the campaign. It’s just very safe. Don’t make any mistakes, keep your head down, and hope that the lead holds through.”

swallen@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

‘Americans don’t know enough about Canada’: prominent Washington voice for Canada-U.S. relationship shuttered

There are hopes of reconstituting the efforts of the Canada Institute in a new organization, but it won’t be attached to the Wilson Center.

Continued from page 1

Trump targeted funding for the Wilson Center in a March 14 executive order, which slashed its operations to the lowest level required by law. The Center’s Canada Institute was just one of the order’s casualties.

Canada Institute director Christopher Sands announced the closure of the program in an April 15 LinkedIn post.

“The Wilson Center’s Canada Institute has closed,” he wrote, remarking that “amid the greatest crisis of confidence in U.S.-Canadian relations of my lifetime, the Canada Institute is more needed than ever.”

Laura Dawson, a past director of the institute, said its base in Washington, D.C., was of particular importance, especially given its location.

The Wilson Center, which was established by Congressional authority in 1968, has its headquarters along the National Mall in the Federal Triangle.

“It’s just a few blocks from the White House, and a few blocks from the Capitol Building,” said Dawson, who led the Canada Institute from 2015 to 2018. “It was really a meeting place for members of Congress and policymakers. So, Canada and Canadian interests had a great opportunity to accelerate and leverage their views to a much broader audience than they would have otherwise.”

She said that at the Wilson Center, frequent congressional training would be offered to legislative assistants, along with briefings on key issues.

Dawson said it is “extraordinarily unfortunate” that the closure of the institute is happening when the two countries’ relationship is at its lowest.

“There’s no greater time that we need that expertise,” she said.

Canada hasn’t built up a standing advocacy network in the U.S., preferring an ad hoc approach of Canadians travelling south of the border to champion their cause, said Dawson.



Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly during then-U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s visit to Ottawa in 2022. For many cabinet ministers, their first stop during a trip to Washington, D.C., was to the Wilson Center’s Canada Institute to give an address. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

“One of the reasons why Canada is having so many challenges in the United States right now is because Americans don’t know enough about Canada. Our voice has not been down here,” she said, remarking that trade advocacy efforts attempting to correct the misinformation that is behind Trump tariff’s agenda have been done on a “shoestring” budget.

“There aren’t established networks for Canadian advocacy, business knowledge, or anything in the U.S., the way there is for almost every other major trading country,” Dawson said. “A decision was made many years ago that Canadians could just travel down to the U.S. and make their voices heard and didn’t need that special facilitation, but they do, and we didn’t have it, and it’s to our loss.”

‘First port of call’ for Canadian officials

Trade consultant Eric Miller, who was a global fellow at the Canada Institute, called its closure “a great tragedy” and a “real loss.”

“Canada will rue the loss in many ways,” said Miller, who’s also a former official in the Canadian Embassy in Washington and now president of the Rideau Potomac Strategy Group.

“Canada had a place to go, to set forth its point of view, to set out facts that perhaps others didn’t know,” he said. “It also offered Americans an opportunity to say things about what they hoped the relationship with Canada would look like and put all of that forward.”

“It was the first port of call or the first stop for every visiting minister or elected official in Canada. It was a place where they could go and have discussions about issues that were important to Canada, and important to the United States,” he said.

Energy and Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson spoke at the Wilson Center last January, joining a list of cabinet ministers that have used the venue to address an American audience, including past prime minister Justin Trudeau, as well as Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly, Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne, Innovation Minister Anita Anand, and Transport Minister Chrystia Freeland, as well as then-ministers Marco Mendicino and Mary Ng.

The center was also a stop for members of the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG) during their Congressional visit in March.

Now former Liberal MP John McKay, who served as co-chair of the Canada-U.S. IPG, said he was “shocked and dismayed” about the closing, but “not surprised.”

“I’m not surprised given the state of wilful ignorance on the part of our American interlocutors,” said McKay, who opted not to seek re-election this year.

During the March trip, McKay held a panel at the Canada Institute with fellow co-chair Conservative Senator Michael MacDonald (Cape Breton, N.S.), and American co-chairs Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar and Republican Congressman Bill Huizenga.

“It’s a real loss. You can’t sugarcoat this in any way,

shape, or form,” McKay said.

“This was one of our main go-to organizations.”

He said he’d like to think that an institute explaining the importance of the relationship would still be useful.

“But nobody down there seems to be listening,” he said. “The American body politic seems to be committed to willful ignorance, and I don’t know how you get around that.”

McKay said the IPG has “enough difficulties at the best of times just breaking through.”

“If Americans aren’t interested, not listening, don’t think we should exist, it’s pretty hard to carry on any useful conversation after that,” he said.

‘We have to up our game’

Miller said with the institute’s closure, Canada’s prime minister will need to have conversations regarding what our country’s footprint will be in Washington beyond its embassy.

“Canada will have to think seriously about what its strategy looks like, and that strategy has to look beyond the embassy because a lot of what they’re going to miss is having a neutral forum,” he said.

Trade analyst Carlo Dade, the University of Calgary School of Public Policy’s international policy director, said the shuttering of the institute is a “huge loss for Canada.”

“This is your permanent, institutionalized track to diplomacy for the U.S.,” he said. “That’s an invaluable resource that can’t be replaced by a

one-funding-cycle program at the embassy, or a premier flying in. So, it’s a huge, huge loss for us. And, I think it weakens us vis-a-vis other regions and other countries that have interests in the U.S. that have funded centres.”

“The game of musical chairs stopped and we are suddenly standing up without a chair while everyone else is sitting down in D.C.,” he said.

Dade said while the closure of the Canada Institute is happening at an inopportune time, it also raises the question of why the only institute studying the Canada-U.S. relationship was funded by the American government, especially given how important the bilateral relationship is to Canada.

He said that there needs to be greater reflection from Canada on the possibility of creating its own institute to look at the relationship, suggesting there could be a role for a province to do just that.

He added that having the institute in the American capital was very beneficial, but there is also a need to have a Canada-based organization.

“In the current environment, I hope it’s clear to people that we have to up our game,” Dade said. “That means not just keeping an institution in Washington, but building a capacity in Canada.”

What comes next?

Former U.S. envoy Gordon Giffin, who served as ambassador to Canada during the Clinton administration, said the institute has been valuable in highlighting the importance of the Canada-U.S. relationship, but also in educating policymakers on Canada generally.

“I don’t think it’s going to disappear,” said Giffin, a member of the Canada Institute advisory board. “While not being affiliated with the Wilson Center going forward, I am hopeful it survives in some other incarnation.”

In his April 15 LinkedIn post, Sands wrote that work will continue in a new organization in Washington with “strong support” from the scholars and community that were developed at the Canada Institute.

Giffin said there is “real interest”—especially among those who were on the advisory board—to see the work of the Canada Institute “survive and prosper.”

“In the Washington context, many of us believe it is awfully important,” he said. “It’s almost a unique educational tool about the Canada-U.S. relationship, which otherwise won’t exist.”

He said the main think tanks of Washington don’t have any element that is focusing on the American relationship with Canada.

There is currently some discussion of creating a “U.S.-Canada Institute” or something similar to emphasize the bilateral nature of the organization, said Giffin.

He added he is “hopeful” there will be a way to structurally reconstitute the institute, while having sufficient financial backing.

nmoos@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

OPINION

Canada must not join the deregulation race to the bottom

Long-term forestry-based employment can only be sustained if forests are managed to ensure their continued ecological integrity.

Rachel Plotkin, Julee Boan & Michael Polanyi



Opinion

As Canada responds to the economic uncertainty caused by the Trump administration's threatened and actual tariffs, our leaders are proposing ways to build more long-term resilience throughout our economy.

Forests should be part of this resilience.

Canada is a land of forests—the boreal forest alone covers almost 60 per cent this country's land mass.

Forests sustain us on many fronts—purifying water and air,

storing carbon, mitigating against flooding, providing habitat for iconic species such as boreal caribou, and contributing to employment and our economy.

Yet a recent report shows that decades of industrial development, including logging, have left much of Canada's managed forest more fragmented, younger and less diverse, and more at risk of extreme flooding and wildfire than their natural counterparts. Scientifically, this loss of ecosystem integrity—a forest's composition, structure, or function relative to its natural or baseline state—is known as forest degradation.

Forest degradation harms our economy and environment

"Modern" forest management approaches often include extensive clearcut logging, glyphosate spraying, and dense conifer plantations. In British Columbia, for example, these practices have resulted in the "falldown" of old-growth trees available to sustain mills—most old growth has now been logged.

Research shows that forest degradation has occurred and

continues to occur across forest ecosystems in Canada, even under provincial regulations and certification systems that are assumed to offer safeguards. The vast array of federal and provincial forest-related legislation, policies, and planning just aren't delivering.

Governments rarely acknowledge that forestry laws and guidelines, as well as indicators measured to report on sustainability, are significantly shaped by the very industries they seek to regulate.

Industry lobbyists are once again pressing to "cut red tape"—a predictable call in times of economic turmoil. In practice, cutting red tape means weakening the rules that sustain forests for the benefit of everyone. These calls mirror actions of the Trump administration, which, just days into office, advanced an aggressive agenda to log its national forests.

Who will benefit from this approach? Millions of hectares of Canada's "public" forests are controlled by foreign companies that serve the interests of non-Canadian shareholders, in effect transferring wealth out of the country. Contrary to industry claims, it's usually not "red tape"

that hinders resource-extraction industry profits—downturns are often the result of short-term thinking, increased mechanization, and/or global market forces.

Canada has made numerous commitments on the international stage to halt and reverse forest degradation. These commitments include the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework signed in Montreal in 2022, the Global Stocktake, and the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use. The European Union—the world's largest market for forest product imports, and a target of increased exports by Canada—has committed to stop purchasing products from deforested or degraded forests starting December 2025. But, to date, Canada has not accepted any formal definition of forest degradation, let alone tracked it.

Healthy economies depend upon healthy ecosystems

Recently, unions representing forest workers joined calls for forest planning processes to "protect woodland and caribou, ensure a

sustainable future for the forestry industry and adequately support the workers who make it prosper." Similarly, last month, a coalition of 14 environmental groups recommended that public funding for the forestry sector "focus on wage protections, retraining programs, and investments in sustainable practices that create stable, well-paying jobs while maintaining and restoring forest ecosystem health."

Resilience cannot be a short-term game; long-term forestry-based employment can only be sustained if forests are managed to ensure their continued ecological integrity.

Canada must not join the deregulation race to the bottom. While deregulation might provide a financial bump—for some—in the short term, it will erode long-term security. Instead, implementing better environmental standards and upholding international commitments can bolster international trade.

A systems shift is required—Canada must recognize that forest degradation is occurring and move to redress it. Our national fabric depends upon it.

Rachel Plotkin is the boreal project manager at the David Suzuki Foundation. Julee Boan is the partnership director with the Natural Resources Defense Council's Global North International program. Michael Polanyi is the policy and campaign manager for Nature Canada's nature-based climate solutions program.

The Hill Times

Feds must step up to protect Canada's natural health product industry

Instead of supporting these businesses, Health Canada is making it harder for them to survive, and is proposing a punitive and discriminatory cost recovery program.

Aaron Skelton



Opinion

Small- and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy, and a core component of our social fabric. They are an individual's proudest accomplishment; the history of a family; stories of resilience, perseverance, and success.

Canada's natural health product (NHP) industry is full of these

stories: small- to medium-sized businesses, many family-owned, committed to supporting the health and well-being of their loved ones and communities, creating jobs, stimulating local economies, and setting future generations up for success. The industry is more than just your daily multi-vitamin; it's an integral part of our proactive health care, made up of companies from coast to coast seeking to help Canadians live healthier lives.

Over the past weeks and months, we have seen Canadians unite like never before. It is a proud moment to be Canadian and to represent our country as true, strong, and free. But at this critical time, when we need to be coming together, the NHP industry continues to face excessive regulation from our very own Health Canada. As a result of these actions, the existence of this distinctly Canadian sector is now at risk.

Health Canada is hitting the NHP industry with excessive fees and crushing red tape, essentially taxing trusted Canadian products, driving up consumer costs, hurting local businesses, and opening the floodgates for American

companies to take over a critical Canadian industry.

NHPs are a cornerstone of Canadian health and wellness, and a vital economic driver. Hard-working small- and medium-sized businesses—the backbone of this \$11-billion industry—are being pushed to the brink. These are the same businesses that employ more than 54,000 Canadians, generate \$2.8-billion in tax revenue, and provide trusted, natural health options upon which more than 80 per cent of Canadians rely. They play a crucial role in driving the economic growth, job creation, and innovation that moves our country forward.

But instead of supporting these businesses, Health Canada is making it harder for them to survive, and is proposing a cost recovery program for NHPs that would require industry to absorb approximately \$51-million in regulatory service fees—modelled after pharmaceutical drugs, and introduced without meaningful consultation or a comprehensive impact analysis.

Health Canada's punitive and discriminatory cost recovery policies will impose an unsustainable domestic tax for regulatory services. These fees will severely

impact Canadian businesses, especially small- and mid-sized companies, while giving large American multinationals a competitive edge.

Unlike Canadian companies, American brands can bypass Canada's regulations and fees, entering the market with little oversight and accessing this country's consumers through online channels with under-regulated products. Recent changes at the United States Food and Drug Administration further weaken post-market oversight, raising serious concerns about the safety of imported goods. This leaves Canadians vulnerable, with fewer safe, compliant home-grown alternatives available.

We need smart, pro-Canadian regulation that fosters innovation, protects consumers, and ensures our businesses remain competitive and can continue to serve Canadians. Instead, Health Canada's cost recovery scheme does the opposite—it penalizes Canadian companies, rewards foreign competitors, and threatens decades of progress. This approach is directly contradictory to the economic policy that is needed—now more than ever—to set Canadian industries

up for success, and reduce reliance on the U.S. and other foreign markets.

While industry fully supports strong, outcome-based regulations that protect consumer health and safety, regulations must also support Canadian businesses—not threaten them. Standing strong for Canadians means standing strong for the businesses that serve them. Regulatory reform is critical to growing our economy and sharpening Canada's competitive edge.

Across Canada's NHP industry, all over the country, hard-working Canadians are grappling with the reality that they may have to close the doors of businesses that have sustained their communities and their families for generations. These are our stories. These are our businesses. Let's protect them.

The next federal government must take immediate action and commit to supporting our NHP industry by stopping the cost recovery plan, and evening the playing field between Canada and the U.S. before it's too late. It's time to prioritize productivity and competitiveness: the future of Canadian health, innovation, and our proudly Canadian NHP industry depends on it.

Aaron Skelton is president and CEO of the Canadian Health Food Association, a not-for profit trade association representing natural, wellness, and organic products in Canada.

The Hill Times



Parliamentary Calendar

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

Economic Club talks Canada vs. Trump on May 1



United States President Donald Trump's approach to Canada is the focus of an Economic Club of Canada event taking place in Toronto on May 1. Photograph courtesy of Flickr/The White House

will take place at the Rogers Centre in Ottawa from Thursday, May 29, to Sunday, June 1. Details: fcm.ca.

TUESDAY, JUNE 10

Panel: 'From Ambition to Action'—Canada 2020 hosts a one-day summit, "From Ambition to Action: Getting Big Things Done", dedicated to the practical realities of delivering transformational projects in Canada featuring top-level doers—developers, policymakers, Indigenous leaders, and industry builders—from housing and infrastructure to energy, Indigenous economic partnerships, and trade. Tuesday, June 10, at the Fairmont Château Laurier, Ottawa. Details: canada2020.ca.

SATURDAY, JUNE 14

Governor General's Performing Arts Awards—The 2025 Governor General's Performing Arts Awards will take place with a gala evening featuring red-carpet arrivals of the laureates and special guests, performances and tributes. Saturday, June 14, at 6:30 p.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Details: nac-cna.ca.

SUNDAY, JUNE 15—TUESDAY, JUNE 17

G7 Summit—This year, Canada is president of the G7, and the annual meeting will take place in Kananaskis, Alta., from Sunday, June 15, to Tuesday, June 17. Details: g7.canada.ca.

TUESDAY, JUNE 17—THURSDAY, JUNE 19

Workshop: 'The Road to Sovereignty'—Okimaw and Niipaawi Strategies host "The Road to Sovereignty," a three-day, high-level gathering focused on building Indigenous law policy frameworks that reflect the unique traditions, cultures, and governance aspirations of First Nations across Canada. Tuesday, June 17, to Thursday, June 19, at the Rideau Club, 15th floor, 99 Bank St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, JUNE 24—THURSDAY, JUNE 26

NATO Summit—The 2025 NATO Summit will be held at the World Forum in The Hague, the Netherlands, from Tuesday, June 24, to Thursday, June 26. Details: nato.int.

MONDAY, JUNE 30

Senator Gold's Retirement—Today is non-affiliated Quebec Senator Marc Gold's 75th birthday, which means his mandatory retirement from the Senate.

THURSDAY, JULY 3—SATURDAY, JULY 5

CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting—The annual Caribbean Community Heads of Government meeting is scheduled to take place from Thursday, July 3, to Saturday, July 5, in St. George's, Grenada. Details: caricom.org.

TUESDAY, JULY 15—THURSDAY, JULY 17

Assembly of First Nations' AGM—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its annual general meeting. Tuesday, July 15, to Thursday, July 17, at the RBC Convention Centre, 375 York Ave., Winnipeg, Man. Details: afn.ca/events.

MONDAY, SEPT. 1

Senator Seidman's Retirement—Today is Quebec Conservative Senator Judith Seidman's 75th birthday, which means her mandatory retirement from the Senate.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 21

Senator Mégie's Retirement—Today is Quebec ISG Senator Marie-Françoise Mégie's 75th birthday, which means her mandatory retirement from the Senate.

FRIDAY, OCT. 17

Senator Richards' Retirement—Today is non-affiliated New Brunswick Senator David Adams Richards' 75th birthday, which means his mandatory retirement from the Senate.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30

CANIC 2025—The Canadian Military Intelligence Association hosts CANIC 2025, the Canadian Intelligence Conference. Participants include Nathalie Drouin, national security and intelligence adviser to the prime minister, and her predecessor Richard Fadden, among others. Wednesday, April 30, at 7:30 a.m. ET, Ottawa Conference and Event Centre, 200 Coventry Rd. Details via Eventbrite.

Panel: 'Rethinking the 'One China' Policy'—Former Liberal MP John McKay will take part in a panel discussion, "Rethinking the 'One China' Policy," hosted by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office. Other participants include former Canadian ambassador to China Guy Saint-Jacques, ex-vice chief of defence staff Mark Norman, and Bonnie Glaser from the German Marshall Fund. Wednesday, April 30, at 8:30 a.m. ET at the Delta Ottawa City Centre. Register via Eventbrite.

THURSDAY, MAY 1

OEA/CABE Spring Policy Conference—The Ottawa Economics Association and the Canadian Association for Business Economics host the OEA/CABE Spring Policy Conference on the theme "Securing Canada's Prosperity." American economist Joseph Stiglitz will virtually deliver the morning keynote, while former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge will deliver the lunchtime keynote in person. Thursday, May 1, at 8 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details: cabe.ca.

World Press Freedom Day Lunch—World Press Freedom Canada hosts its annual luncheon on the theme "Disinformation and Democracy: Standing on Guard." Former newscaster and current disinformation watchdog Kevin Newman will address the threat that the growing flood of disinformation poses to Canadian unity, security, and democracy, and to the country's traditional media. Thursday, May 1, at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Details: worldpressfreedom-canada.ca.

Panel: 'Canada vs. Trump'—The Economic Club of Canada hosts a lunch event, "100 Days of Disruption: Canada vs. Trump" featuring Flavio Volpe, president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association; Benjamin Tal, deputy chief economist with CIBC Capital Markets; and Jeremy Kronick, the C.D. Howe Institute's

director of monetary and financial services research. Thursday, May 1, at 11:45 a.m. ET in Toronto. Details: economicclub.ca.

FRIDAY, MAY 2

Corporate Control with Nora Loreto—As part of the Ottawa International Writers' Festival, activist, author, and journalist Nora Loreto will discuss *The Social Safety Net*, the second book in her landmark series, *Corporate Control*, which takes a deep dive into systemic inequality and the corporate web spun around Canada's economy, society, and politics. Friday, May 2, at 8 p.m. at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa. Details: writersfestival.org.

SATURDAY, MAY 3

The Certainty Illusion with Timothy Caulfield—As part of the Ottawa International Writers' Festival, University of Alberta professor Timothy Caulfield will discuss his book, *The Certainty Illusion*, lifting the curtain on the forces contributing to our information chaos, and unpacking why it's so difficult—even for experts—to escape the fake. Saturday, May 3, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa. Details: writersfestival.org.

SUNDAY, MAY 4

From Truth to Reconciliation with Rose LeMay—As part of the Ottawa International Writers' Festival, *The Hill Times* columnist Rose LeMay will join Bruce McIvor to discuss their respective new books: *Ally Is a Verb: A Guide to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*, and *Indigenous Rights in One Minute: What You Need to Know to Talk Reconciliation*. Sunday, May 4, at 4 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa. Details: writersfestival.org.

Canada in the New World Order with Lloyd Axworthy—As part of the Ottawa International Writers' Festival, former Liberal cabinet minister Lloyd Axworthy will discuss what Canada's role is in the world and what are our most pressing threats and opportunities. Sunday, May 4, at 5:30 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa. Details: writersfestival.org.

TUESDAY, MAY 6

National Prayer Breakfast—Held under the auspices of the Speakers of the Senate and the House of Com-

mons, the National Prayer Breakfast includes Canadian and international Christian faith leaders, ambassadors, MPs, Senators, and Canadians tuning in from across our nation and abroad. Tuesday, May 6, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Rogers Centre Ottawa, 55 Colonel By Dr. Details via Eventbrite.

Lisa Raitt to Deliver Bell Lecture—Former Conservative cabinet minister Lisa Raitt will deliver this year's Dick, Ruth and Judy Bell Lecture, hosted by Carleton University. Tuesday, May 6, at 7 p.m. ET at Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre, 355 Cooper St., Ottawa. Details: carleton.ca.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7

Patrons Circle Dinner with Gerald Butts—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts its Patrons Circle Dinner with Gerald Butts, former principal secretary to then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, now vice-chair of the Eurasia Group. Wednesday, May 7, at 5:30 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

MONDAY, MAY 12

Lunch: 'Legal Ethics and the Attorney General'—The University of Ottawa's Public Law Centre hosts a conversation with Andrew Martin on his forthcoming book, *Legal Ethics and the Attorney General*, looking at the position of Canada's attorney general, emphasizing the ethical standards they must uphold as lawyers and the importance of professional accountability in maintaining the rule of law. Monday, May 12, at 11:30 a.m. ET at uOttawa, Fauteux Hall, Room 202, 57 Louis-Pasteur Priv. Details via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, MAY 13

Webinar: 'Lobbying in Post-Election Ottawa'—Lobbying Commissioner Nancy Bélanger will take part in a webinar hosted by the Public Affairs Association of Canada's Saskatchewan Chapter on "New Government, New Reality: Lobbying in Post-Election Ottawa." This session will explore what public affairs professionals need to know to effectively and ethically navigate federal lobbying in the post-election environment. Tuesday, May 13, at 2 p.m. ET happening online: publicaffairs.ca.

TUESDAY, MAY 13—THURSDAY, MAY 1

Sustainable Finance Summit—The Sustainable Finance Summit is sched-

uled to take place in Montreal from Tuesday, May 13, to Thursday, May 14. This year's theme is "Aligning Finance with Planetary Boundaries." Details: sommenet-financedurable.com.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

Senator Plett's Retirement—Today is Manitoba Conservative Senator Donald Plett's 75th birthday, which means his mandatory retirement from the Senate.

Lunch: 'AI Sovereignty in a Shifting Global Order'—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a lunch event, "Canada at a Crossroads: AI Sovereignty in a Shifting Global Order" featuring Erin Kelly, co-founder and CEO of Advanced Symbolics, AskPolly; and Niraj Bhargava, co-founder and CEO of NuEnergy.ai. Wednesday, May 14, at 12 p.m. ET at the Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details: canadianclubottawa.ca.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21

Trade Conference 2025—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts Trade Conference 2025 taking place in Ottawa. Wednesday, May 21. Details to follow: cgai.ca.

THURSDAY, MAY 22

Yves Giroux to Deliver Remarks—Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux will deliver remarks at a virtual event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, May 22, at 12:30 p.m. ET happening online: cdhowe.org.com.

TUESDAY, MAY 27

Lunch: 'Investing in Canada's Defence Industrial Base'—The Canadian Club of Toronto hosts a lunch event, "Security and Prosperity: A Business Case for Investing in Canada's Defence Industrial Base." Participants include Unifor national president Lana Payne, Business Council of Canada president and CEO Goldy Hyder, former Canadian ambassador Louise Blais, OMERS president and CEO Blake Hutcheson, Bombardier Inc.'s president and CEP Éric Martel, and ATCO Ltd.'s president and CEO Nancy Southern. Tuesday, May 27, at 11:30 a.m. ET at a location to be announced. Details: canadianclub.org.

THURSDAY, MAY 29—SUNDAY, JUNE 1

FCM Annual Conference—The Federation of Canadian Municipalities' annual conference and trade show

LOBBY MONITOR

**COALITIONS ARE
FORMING.**

**POLICY IS BEING
MADE.**

**DO YOU HAVE THE
TOOLS YOU NEED
TO STAY AHEAD?**

TAKE A FREE TRIAL
LOBBYMONITOR.CA

