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THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR, NO. 2234

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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NEWS

## Senate Conservative ranks could continue to grow, says caucus leader Housakos



The Senate Conservative caucus, now led by Quebec Senator Leo Housakos, recently added three new Senators to its ranks—its first new members since 2013. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Conservative Senate Leader Leo Housakos pointed to the recent change in prime minister and a desire to join a party-affiliated national caucus as reasons for the uptick.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

The Senate Conservative caucus recently got its first injection of new blood in more than a decade, with three Senators announcing their decisions to join the Upper Chamber's only remaining party-affiliated caucus. New Conservative Senate Leader Leo Housakos says more such announcements could be coming soon.

Housakos (Wellington, Que.) was acclaimed as the new Conservative Senate leader on May 6, just weeks before the start of the 45<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

Since taking over, he said he's "been focusing on a lot of things"—and talking to Senators about joining the otherwise dwindling Conservative caucus is one of them.

Continued on page 14

NEWS

'Action, not words' needed to cool potential long, hot One Canadian protest summer, says Liberal strategist

BY STUART BENSON

Prime Minister Mark Carney is attempting to lower the temperature ahead of a potential "long, hot summer" of renewed Idle No More protests over the Liberals' marquee One Canadian Economy Act, but repairing the relationship with First Nations and re-committing to "the spirit of free prior and informed consent" requires actions not words, says Liberal strategist and ex-staffer Olivier Cullen.

As the Liberals' Bill C-5 speeds through the Parliament with no signs of slowing down as it enters the Senate this week, Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) focus on expediting "national interest" projects is causing friction with Indigenous Peoples with whom his party has spent the better part of a decade working toward reconciliation.

During a press conference in the House of Commons foyer on June 17 organized by the Chiefs of Ontario, which represents 133 First Nations in the province, Nishnawbe Aski First Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler said Bill C-5 does not fulfill the government's constitutional obligations to Indigenous Peoples.

Continued on page 20

# Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

## ‘One of the most inventive minds’: ex-minister John McCallum has died



Then-immigration minister John McCallum in 2015. McCallum died on June 21 in Mississauga, Ont., at the age of 75. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

A humble public servant with a sense of humour is how many former colleagues as well as his family are remembering ex-Liberal cabinet minister **John McCallum** who died on June 21, aged 75.

McCallum's family announced his death in a press release, thanking the medical team at Mississauga's "Credit Valley Hospital who provided care and support during this difficult time."

Prime Minister **Mark Carney** called McCallum "an inspiration, a mentor, and a friend," whose "contributions to Canada were as deep as they were diverse."

Prior to politics, McCallum was dean of McGill University's arts faculty, and was the Royal Bank of Canada's chief economist from 1994 to 2000. He was first elected as Liberal MP for

the riding of Markham, Ont., in 2000, and sat in the House until 2017. During that time, he served as **Jean Chrétien's** defence minister, **Paul Martin's** veterans affairs minister and later national revenue minister, and in **Justin Trudeau's** first cabinet as immigration minister before he was appointed as ambassador to China from 2017 to 2019.

McCallum's former cabinet colleague **Stéphane Dion** called him a "personal friend" who "was one of the most inventive minds I have ever known."

Energy Minister **Tim Hodgson** offered his condolences, saying "I hope to honour that legacy by serving the people of Markham-Thornhill with the same grace and dedication he brought to public life."

Ex-Liberal MP **Marwan Tabbara** shared his memory of McCallum on social media on June 23, writing, "As a rookie MP, John gave me words of advice that I will never forget and hold dear. Honoured to serve with him on Immigration Committee."

Former Conservative MPs also shared their memories of McCallum following the news of his death: "While I often crossed swords with John McCallum, I had respect for his service to Canada. John stepped up to help Afghan interpreters when their plight was being ignored and he made a real impact," posted former Conservative leader **Erin O'Toole** on X on June 22. "I remember your sense of humour in Parliament," said **Rona Ambrose** on X.

## NCC shares Parliamentary Precinct vision in updated plan

Trams on Wellington Street, a new building next to the current Senate, and the "transformation" of 24 Sussex Dr. are a few of the National Capital Commission's recommendations in its updated Core Area Plan published last week.

The plan is one of many items the NCC's board of directors approved at its June 19 public meeting, including the design of the National Monument to Canada's Mission in Afghanistan, set for construction in LeBreton Flats, as well as the 50-per-cent schematic design for the Parliamentary Precinct's new Block 2—comprising Wellington, Metcalfe, O'Connor, and Sparks streets—complex, which "will provide office space for Parliament and retail space for the public. The next major milestone is the 100 per cent developed design," the NCC posted on X on June 19.

The Core Area Plan includes the NCC's "long-term intentions and broad policy directions" for the precinct and other central areas. Among the items on the NCC's wish list is to "integrate tram-based public transit, cycling and civic spaces into a high-quality Confederation Boulevard streetscape environment" along Wellington Street. It also wants to save the vacant land on Wellington Street between the Justice Building and the Supreme Court "for a future landmark building to complete the Judicial Triad."



The Block 2 construction site is blocked off by fencing along Wellington Street, as seen on March 27. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Meanwhile, on the east end of Wellington where it turns into Rideau Street, the agency hopes to "pursue adaptive and public-facing use for the current Senate of Canada Building including a possible new building with active frontage towards the Rideau-Sussex node."

The NCC also noted its general vision for 24 Sussex Dr.—which lies outside of the precinct, but is of interest to Parliament—recommending the "renewal and possible transformation of the official residence for the prime minister of Canada."

## Sayonara to Senator Seidman

"Her achievements are many. Her expertise is impressive," said ISG Senator **Raymonde Saint-Germain** last week of Conservative Senator **Judith Seidman** who is set to retire on Sept. 1 during the summer recess.

Conservative Senate Leader **Leo Housakos** praised the former epidemiologist who's "served on almost every committee in this chamber." He noted her "ardent" defence of "minority language rights for the English community in Quebec and for the French community outside of Quebec."

Both Housakos and Government Representative in the Senate **Marc Gold** thanked Seidman for her friendship: "You have been somebody whom I have relied upon when I needed to vent a little bit," said Gold. Colleagues noted the 2019 book



Conservative Senator Judith Seidman, pictured in 2018. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Seidman and then-senator **Serge Joyal** wrote for the Senate's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, *Reflecting on Our Past and Embracing Our Future*. "Imagine that: A Liberal and a Conservative working together on a common project. It truly is something beautiful," remarked CSG Senator **Scott Tanas**.

In her words of thanks to her colleagues, her staff, and family, Seidman recalled how being on the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying was "one of the most intellectually and emotionally challenging that I have faced as a parliamentarian."

"How fortunate we are to have the gift of time in our work here, to be able to think big picture and to act on big issues confronting our country," she said.

## A handful of public service promotions

Prime Minister **Mark Carney** announced changes to the public service's senior ranks on June 20.

On June 30, Privy Council Office deputy secretary **Mollie Johnson** will succeed **Jean-François Tremblay** as deputy minister of Environment and Climate Change. Tremblay will move to PCO this summer in anticipation of his upcoming role as ambassador to the OECD, according to the press release.

The Public Health Agency's executive vice-president **Nancy Hamzawi** has been promoted to full president following the recent retirement of **Heather Jeffrey**. Hamzawi started her new role on June 20.



Mollie Johnson becomes deputy minister of Environment and Climate Change on June 30. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

And following associate deputy minister of finance **Suzi McDonald's** departure, **Alison O'Leary** will step into the role on June 30. O'Leary is currently the department's assistant deputy minister for Federal-Provincial Relations and Social Policy.

Carney also noted that associate deputy minister of Fisheries and Oceans **Kaili Levesque**

will "provide direct support" to the Secretary of State for Nature **Nathalie Provost**; and that PCO's **Mark Schaan**, deputy secretary to the Cabinet (Artificial Intelligence), will do the same for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation Minister **Evan Solomon**.

## Ottawa lawyer Shore in CBC's Air India bombing film

The CBC released *Two Suitcases: The Anatomy of the Air India Bombing* on June 18, a documentary marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Air India Flight 182, still known as Canada's "worst act of terrorism."

Narrated by **Ian Hanomansing**, this 44-minute-long documentary looks into the tragedy, the investigation, and the inquiry that followed. Gowlings' lawyer **Jacques**

**Shore** appears in the film. He was counsel to the Air India Families Association. "There wasn't a day where I wouldn't walk into our hearing of the inquiry thinking about the 329 victims on that flight," he said in *Two Suitcases*. "During the inquiry it was obvious that the RCMP and CSIS were not working well together."

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*The Hill Times*

# LOBBY MONITOR

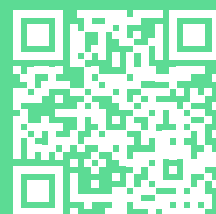
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## NEWS

# ‘They were emphatic in their foolishness’: Senate defers to House on Bloc supply management bill despite concerns



Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet introduced Bill C-202 in the early days of the new Parliament after a previous version died on the Order Paper in the last one. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Barring supply management concessions in trade talks is widely politically popular, but has been subject to vocal criticism in trade circles.

BY NEIL MOSS

Despite their opposition to a bill banning supply management concessions in trade talks, some Senators say they couldn't thwart the will of the elected House of Commons.

The Senate quickly passed Bill C-202, which was first introduced in the House of Commons by Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil-Chambly, Que.) on May 29. The bill passed the House through a unanimous consent motion on June 5, and later passed the Senate on division through a June 17 voice vote.

The bill bars increasing the tariff rate quota in a trade agreement for the supply-managed dairy, egg, and poultry sectors.

Independent Senator Yuen Pau Woo (British Columbia) said he didn't want the Senate to collectively “armwrestle with the House” over the bill.

“They were emphatic in their foolishness,” he said. “I accept the complementary [role of the Senate] ... we understand the importance of the elected Chamber.”



Independent Senator Yuen Pau Woo, left, pictured with Bill C-202 sponsor Progressive Senator Pierre Dagher in 2018, says taking supply management off the negotiation table will come back to hurt Canada. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

“The fact that this has gone through twice now was an indication that it would not have been a good use of our time to send it back with an amendment, or worse, to defeat it,” he said.

A replica of the bill was passed by the House in the previous Parliament, receiving cross party support at the time. The Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade subsequently completed a lengthy study of the bill and moved an amendment to have the law only apply to negotiations with countries that Canada didn't currently have a trade agreement with. That bill ultimately died on the Senate Order Paper at report stage upon prorogation. The reintroduced version of C-202 does not include the amendment.

This time around, C-202 skipped the committee stage in the Senate.

Woo said despite Bill C-202's passage, his view in opposition to the bill has not changed.

“I think the issue will come back to bite us, and there will be no crying over spilled milk,” said Woo, who sat on the Senate Foreign Affairs committee in the last Parliament.

He said the fact that a duplicate bill was passed by the House unanimously in this Parliament changed the dynamic of what the Red Chamber could do with it.

Woo said he personally would have welcomed more debate on Bill C-202 and greater reflection, though he didn't think the outcome would change.

Conservative Senator Leo Housakos (Wellington, Que.), leader of the opposition in the Senate, said in a statement that due to the level of consensus from MPs in support of the bill, there was “broad agreement” among the Senate factions to “move the bill forward expeditiously.”

“The Senate's decision to respect the unanimous will of the House reflects our role in supporting the democratic process, espe-

cially when legislation has already undergone significant scrutiny and consultation,” he said.

Housakos noted the fact of the bill passing on division, remarking that there “remains a diversity of perspectives on the issue.”

## ‘Sometimes you lose an argument’

Independent Senator Paula Simons (Alberta) told *The Hill Times* that the Senate made it “abundantly clear” to the government and the House what it thought about the bill.

“Reprising that debate wasn't going to change anything,” she said. “Once the bill has unanimous consent, it becomes even more difficult for us to push back.”

Simons said that another committee study would have produced the same results as the previous one in the last Parliament.

She said there was a feeling that the government was putting pressure to have the bill pass quickly.

“What was telegraphed to us—pretty clearly—is that we were to pass this expeditiously,” she said.

She said that it's a concern—and not just with Bill C-202—that the government wants the Senate to pass legislation rapidly, noting the cases of bills C-4 and C-5.

“Sometimes going faster is actually going slower,” Simons said. “If you're going to have a Senate, you might as well get the benefit of what we do.”

But she said that with Bill C-202, she didn't think sending it to committee would have accomplished anything new, given the past study of the mirroring bill.

“Sometimes you just lose an argument,” she said. “It is not the Senate's role to defeat legislation just because we don't like it.”

“The feeling in the Senate was not so much that we were giving in. It was [that] sometimes you have to know when you've lost a fight,” she said.

But she said the passage of Bill C-202 doesn't mean the topic of supply management concessions in trade negotiations is over.

Access to the Canadian dairy market is almost assuredly going to be addressed by the United States during the upcoming review of Canada's North American trade pact. And trade talks sputtered with the United Kingdom over Canada's refusal to allow increased levels of British cheese into the Canadian market, something that will likely have to change if Canada wants to complete a comprehensive trade pact with London.

## Senate role isn't to oppose: Harder

Bill C-202 was stickhandled through the Senate by Progressive Senator Pierre Dagher (De Lorimier, Que.), who helped pave the way for its quick passage.

Independent Senator Mary Coyle (Antigonish, N.S.), who sat on the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee in the last Parliament, said “many voices were raised to utter the words on division” during the voice vote, but that Dagher had requested an exped-

ited passage of Bill C-202, and it was out of deference to the House that it was agreed to.

“Many members of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee and other Senators had the same concerns we had had with [the previous version of the bill],” she said in an email. “Some of us saw the bill as a flawed piece of legislation, which ties the hands of our trade negotiators and goes against Canada's commitment to the rules-based international trading system.”

The Bloc blamed Senators for stalling the previous version of the bill in the last Parliament.

Bloc MP Yves Perron (Berthier-Maskinongé, Que.) told *The Hill Times* that there was “no legitimacy” for the Senate to slow the passage of the bill because it was passed unanimously by the House.

“Everybody agreed on this bill and we want it to go through,” he said. “That's what the Senators accepted. And they did the job very fast because they did all the job that was to do in the previous legislature.”

Perron said negotiations in the House on the bill were done mostly by the parliamentary leaders.

Progressive Senator Peter Harder (Ontario), a vocal opponent of the bill in the last Parliament, said he remains strongly opposed to it, but remarked that it is essential that the Senate not be put in opposition to the House.

Harder moved a fast-track motion to pass the bill, but ultimately that wasn't successful.

“I thought further debate would only antagonize the stakeholders as well as our trade partners,” he said.

Echoing Simons, Harder said that the conversation about supply management in trade negotiations isn't finished.

He highlighted the case of Canada-U.K. trade talks and noted that a trade pact is likely not achievable without some movement on supply management protections.

“If we are to achieve a trade settlement in various scenarios that involves some level of supply management, the government is going to have to explain itself,” he said.

Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA) president Greg Northey said the fact that the bill received unanimous consent in the House was a surprise.

CAFTA was one of the leading voices in opposition to efforts to ban supply management concessions in trade talks.

Northey said that with the previous version of the bill having some opposition in the House, there was more of a runway for the Senate to study and amend it.

“But because it received unanimous consent this time—just from a purely institutional aspect—there was not a lot of room for the Senate to do anything about it,” he said.

“If there's no debate from the elected side, there's a real reluctance in the Senate to push back on it in a more formal way, and so that's essentially what happened,” Northey added. “It became a foregone conclusion.”

—with files from Eleanor Wand  
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# ‘Too many rules’: AG urges feds to streamline procurement, reduce outsourcing

Auditor General Karen Hogan says ‘worrying observations’ around procurement processes need to be addressed.

BY IREM KOCA

Canada’s Auditor General Karen Hogan says the federal government’s procurement woes may be stemming from “too many” overlapping rules, and urged the government to streamline its processes.

Hogan appeared before the House Public Accounts Committee on June 19 to answer MPs’ questions about the findings of her latest report. Her June 10 report concluded that federal departments “frequently disregarded procurement rules” in professional services contracts awarded to Ottawa-based IT-staffing firm GC Strategies between 2015 and 2024.

The report did not include any recommendations—unlike the office’s previous procurement audits—and highlighted that there is no need to introduce any more procurement rules to address long-standing issues.

However, Hogan told MPs the government should examine streamlining its procurement processes, and investigate the underlying behavioural patterns within the public service that contribute to errors and questionable contracting decisions.

The government needs to figure out if there are “too many rules,” and if so, remove duplication or rules “that aren’t adding any value,” she said, “so that this can be a faster process in the future.”

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) said in a statement it has addressed Hogan’s recommendations raised in previous audit reports, and has taken concrete actions to strengthen oversight on all professional services since November 2023. Those reforms include improving evaluation requirements to ensure resources are

Auditor General Karen Hogan’s June 10 report showed federal organizations ‘frequently did not demonstrate value for money’ in professional services contracts awarded to GC Strategies. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meader



qualified, requiring further transparency from suppliers around their pricing and use of subcontractors, and improving documentation when awarding contracts, issuing “task authorizations,” and clarifying requirements of the work.

The department is the central purchaser for the federal government managing approximately \$37-billion every year on behalf of departments and agencies. Over the last couple of years, PSPC has faced increased criticism due to a series of contracting controversies, political scrutiny, committee showdowns, scathing watchdog reports, a historic admonishment of a contractor, and multiple RCMP investigations.

New Government Transformation and Public Services and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Que.) previously told *The Hill Times* that streamlining the process is a top priority for him, as well as reducing reliance on consultants. He also said the government plans to build in-house expertise within the public service, and use AI to drive modernization and boost efficiency—all while enforcing existing rules.

Hogan suggested that the complexity of the procurement system may be a driver for some public servants to bypass rules in some cases.

“More rules are constantly added, and, eventually, it just becomes too much for people to be able to apply with due diligence,” she said.



New Government Transformation and Public Services and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound says using AI and streamlining government procurement are among his priorities. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

“I don’t need to say to the public service and the government to follow their own policies. So, I encourage them to really evaluate the root causes of our observations because these are worrying observations,” she said, recommending better training and clearer reminders could support compliance.

Hogan’s June report is just the latest in a chain of audits stemming from intense parliamentary scrutiny of federal procurement, much of which was triggered by the ArriveCan controversy. Both the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee, and the Public Accounts Committee had studied the matter during the previous parliamentary sessions.

Conservative MP Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, Alta.), who took part in both studies, pressed Hogan as to whether “this Liberal government incapable of following and enforcing the rules?”

Hogan said she does not expect a minister to be involved in day-to-day procurement practices, but noted they still have a responsibility to work with their deputies to ensure rules are followed, and value for money is delivered. Before Lightbound was appointed to the role in Prime Minister Mark Carney’s (Nepean, Ont.) post-election cabinet, PSPC was briefly overseen by Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Ont.) from March to May, and before that by Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Que.) since July 2023.

## Dig into overuse of staffing firms, says Hogan

Hogan told MPs that most public servants she met during her investigations want to do right by Canadians, but the urgency to deliver services may be driving some to bypass complex rules—a finding she said calls for further analysis from the government. “I think going back to the basics and understanding the rules is essential,” she said.

Speaking at the same committee, Deputy Auditor General Andrew Hayes said “simplification” would be a big help to public servants.

Hayes cited the findings of a 2024 investigation that looked into \$200-million worth of federal

contracts awarded to McKinsey and Company which found “a frequent disregard of federal contracting and procurement policies. He said understanding how things like standing offers and competitive contracts are used in procurement, “can make it easier for the public service to understand, and by virtue of that, follow the rules.”

Hogan also pointed to the frequent use of staffing firms in IT-related professional services contracts as one of the areas that needs probing.

“What is it about the procurement process in the federal government that a staffing company is the mechanism that is typically used for IT services?” she asked, further questioning whether this stems from the complexity of procurement, or from vendors not wanting to wade through the burdensome process and preferring to go through a staffing firm to secure government contracts instead.

“I do think that that’s something that the government needs to figure out,” she said.

## ‘A pandemic is not a reason to forget certain basic rules’

Liberal MP Kristina Tesser Derksen (Milton East—Halton Hills South, Ont.), asked Hogan whether factors like the pandemic might explain why departments failed to follow procurement rules.

Hogan pushed back, reiterating that “a pandemic is not a reason to forget certain basic rules,” and noted that her audits covered the period between 2015 to 2024. “What we found is that some of these rules were ignored, not just during that period, so it was before and after.”

GC Strategies—the subject of Hogan’s audit—was the firm hired as the primary contractor for the COVID-era ArriveCan application that became mired in controversy for allegations of procurement misconduct. Hogan’s audit took a broader view of the company’s history with the government and found 31 different federal organizations issued 106 professional services contracts to the firm over nine years for a total of value of \$92.7-million. Hogan found departments ‘frequently did not demonstrate value for money,’ often giving little evidence to the required services were received, and security requirements were not enforced.

PSPC has banned the firm from entering into contracts with the government for seven years.

When Derksen questioned if the problems Hogan found were more prominent in any time period, Hogan rejected the suggestion, emphasizing the problems are systemic.

“There were 31 federal organizations, and we had a concern with every contract that we looked at. So I don’t think you want to link it to time periods,” she pushed back, calling the issues “more pervasive,” making it important to figure out “why that behaviour is happening.”

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## COMMENT

## Speaking for a forgotten people

The rule of international law in Palestine today—or on the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel tomorrow.

Jim  
Creskey

Opinion



OTTAWA—There were eight. An NDP MP, a professor of international human rights law, two Muslim community leaders, one Jewish peace activist, and three doctors appeared in the West Block press theatre early in the morning of June 20, the last day of this parliamentary sitting. The event was not well attended. The apparent lack of interest in what they had to say was dispiriting, although the speakers did not appear dispirited. They were speaking for a forgotten people, now pushed further out of the public eye and deeper into the fog of war between Iran and Israel and the United States.

The cause of Palestinians—by no means a popular cause in Canada—is about issues of genocide, war crimes, mass starvations, arms dealing, and international law. All of these topics have an impersonal quality, until they don't. One of the first speakers at the press conference tried to bring that home.

Emergency room physician Tarek Loubani spoke remotely from Khan Younis in Southern Gaza. He said that his internet connection was sketchy, but he was able to deliver a prerecorded statement. It was a story, not a rant; a sad story of a man and his little boy, whom the doctor had treated. They were the victims of a grenade dropped from an Israeli drone that the doctor called “a quadcopter.”

When the injured man regained consciousness, he asked the doctor about his little boy. Dr. Loubani looked into the lifeless eyes of the boy who, he thought, was four or five years old. Telling the man that his son was dead, the doctor had to remind himself not to ask about the man's other family members, a wife, other children, elderly parents. The doctor had learned from experience not to ask these questions. If other family members were not present, they were probably dead.

The other speakers: NDP MP Alexandre Boulerice, Alex Neve, Dr. Dorotea Gucciardo, Dr. Ben Thomson, Tabassum Wyne, Ahmad al Qadi, and Sam Hersh each had a different story, but they all came down on the same message.

They pleaded for the Government of Canada to shed its euphemisms and declare the war crimes of Gaza a genocide.

They pleaded for humanitarian access to address the starvation crisis.



A European Union humanitarian aid worker in Gaza in February 2025. There is a compelling reason for Canada to be a relentless champion of international law today as it is applied and thwarted in rulings on the illegal occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem, and the International Court of Justice rulings, writes Jim Creskey. Photograph courtesy of Flickr/EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid



**Not dispirited:** Ahmad al Qadi, left, Alex Neve, Dr. Dorotea Gucciardo, Dr. Ben Thomson, Tabassum Wyne, NDP MP Alexandre Boulerice, and Sam Hersh, with Dr. Tarek Loubani from Gaza on screen behind in the West Block press theatre on June 20. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jim Creskey

They pleaded for a Canadian arms embargo without American loopholes.

And they pleaded for the respect and the enforcement of international law in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem.

The speakers reminded their small audience of the bodies of fathers, sons, mothers, daughters, and grandparents who are still being pulled out from under the rubble of Gaza. They cited the 20 to 50 Palestinians who are shot and killed nearly every day by American mercenaries at the inadequate Gaza food drops, while the World Health Organization and respected aid organizations warn—unheeded—of mass starvation. This goes on while the Palestinian residents of the West Bank and East Jerusalem suffer under the kind of apartheid conditions that once motivated Canada to take a principled stand against South Africa.

What will these painful memories breed?

Thomas Friedman recently wrote in *The New York Times* that one result of “Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ugly, nihilistic policy in Gaza” will be to make Israel unsafe for Jews for generations to come.

“Israel, instead of being seen by Jews as a safe haven from antisemitism,” Friedman wrote, “will be seen as a new engine generating it; sane Israelis will line up to immigrate to Australia and America”—he forgets to mention Canada—“rather than beckon their fellow Jews to come Israel's way. That dystopian future is not here yet”—here, he links to the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*—“but if you don't see its outlines gathering, you are deluding yourself.” And then there is Canada.

Middle power Canada today looks out at 8,890 kilometres of President Donald Trump's America and wonders “What next?”

The leaders of the world's most militarized empire, one we believed to be a friend, has come to notice Canada not for who we are, but for our vast resources, fresh water, and land mass. It's commander-in-chief repeatedly muses about a 51<sup>st</sup> state. He sees it as another land acquisition transaction, forced by tariff-induced pressures.

What has this to do with Israel and Palestine? There is a compelling reason for Canada to be a relentless champion of international law today as it is applied and thwarted in rulings on the illegal occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem, and the International Court of Justice rulings. The rule of law only works when it is persistently pursued, whether that is in Palestine today or on the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel tomorrow.

Jim Creskey is a founding editor and publisher of *The Hill Times*.

*The Hill Times*

## OPINION

## Canada's water is a strategic asset, so let's treat it like one

Water is foundational to our economy, our food and energy systems, and our national security. We must meet the moment with fresh solutions to emerging water issues.

Soula  
Chronopoulos

Opinion



In his April election night victory speech, Prime Minister Mark Carney gave a stark warning: “The Americans want our resources, our water, our land, our country. Think about that. If they succeed, they will destroy our way of life.”

This recurring election talking point tapped into a central concern preoccupying Canadians. By threatening long-standing water treaties and musing about bulk water exports, United States President Donald Trump has forced Canadians to take a fresh look at water as being imperative to our sovereignty, security, and survival.

With 20 per cent of the world's freshwater, Canadians are rightly proud of the beauty and abundance of our lakes and rivers. But in the face of shifting Canada-U.S. relations, as well as the impacts of climate change and pollution, water is taking centre stage.

Water is foundational to our economy, our food and energy systems, and our national security. We must meet the moment with fresh solutions to emerging water issues.

That's why the new \$100-million Strategic Water Security Technology Fund that was included in the Liberal Party platform is a watershed moment for Canada. This is the first time that the federal government has made water tech innovation a national priority.

This new fund will unleash Canadian-led research, AI-powered water monitoring, and dynamic startup business solutions as one of the main ways we protect our freshwater, and prepare for global water stress.

As a leading not-for-profit aimed at driving entrepreneurial

Continued on page 18

# OPINION

## Carney says Indigenous traditions are key to protecting nature—Métis climate leadership offers a path forward

As wildfires increasingly impact the Métis Homeland, drawing on the wisdom of our ancestors offers sustainable, culturally grounded solutions for the future.

Victoria Pruden

Opinion



These spring wildfires come as no surprise after a winter with little snow. Canadians have watched wildfire season grow

more intense each year. A significant number of Métis communities are in regions vulnerable to climate-induced emergencies. There are currently multiple wildfires burning out of control across the Prairie provinces, yet peak season is still ahead. As of June 11, there were 83 active out-of-control wildfires across Canada, and there have been 1,900 wildfires this year.

But as people flee their homes and firefighters battle blazes around the clock, promised funding for emergency management has not found its way to Métis communities. The previous



Métis Crossing in Alberta, with the Sturgeon County wildfire burning nearby on May 6, 2025. Photograph courtesy of the Métis National Council

Liberal government pledged to advance Indigenous climate solutions by investing in the Métis Nation Climate Leadership Agenda.

The agenda—co-developed by Métis governments across the Homeland and the Government

of Canada—calls for sustainable long-term climate funding. It would support Métis-led nature stewardship, sustainable energy and infrastructure, emergency management and climate resilience, health and well-being, and economic development and prosperity. The Government of Canada has consistently denied the Métis Nation fair access to climate funding, leaving us with just two per cent of all available federal climate resources.

Being left out of emergency management funding has created serious challenges for Métis governments, communities, and families. In past wildfire seasons, Métis evacuees were denied transportation, supplies, and support offered to our First Nations relatives. Let's make 2025 the year that we end these inexcusable policies that divide communities at their most vulnerable moments, and leave Métis communities behind. We have done the work, we have the plan, let's implement it together.

The agenda was scheduled to go to cabinet for approval in the fall of 2024; however, an election, tariffs, and geopolitical strife put this on pause. As wildfires rage and communities flee, we need this funding now.

The Liberal Party's 2025 platform states that Prime Minister Mark Carney's government "will draw on the wisdom of Indigenous traditions, the power of modern technology, and the strength of a united Canada." We support this and are calling on the government to follow through on past Liberal commitments to provide this funding to Métis governments so they can

support, protect, and assist their citizens.

Despite having a clear path forward, Métis governments continue to receive minimal and inconsistent funding to reduce wildfire risks, prepare for emergencies, respond to crises in our communities, and support displaced citizens with essentials. Advancing Métis-led climate action is not only a matter of rights, but also a solution that will benefit all Canadians and support our most vulnerable.

Métis knowledge systems are rooted in our traditional ways of life and the deep respect our ancestors held for the land. Our culture is built on resilience, adaptability, and a reciprocal relationship with the lands, waters, and skies we call home. As wildfires increasingly impact the Métis Homeland, drawing on the wisdom of our ancestors offers sustainable, culturally grounded solutions for the future.

The smoke blanketing Ottawa is only a glimpse of this crisis. The real impact is being felt in the communities on the front lines. My heart is with all those affected by the wildfires. As president of the Métis National Council, guided by the spirit of *Wahkohtowin*, I remain deeply committed to advancing Métis climate leadership and strengthening our resilience to climate-induced emergencies. We will not stop advocating for the resources our governments need to protect their citizens, communities, and Homeland.

Victoria Pruden is the president of the Métis National Council.

The Hill Times

## Capitalizing on the capital: Ottawa has defence hub potential

The need for economic renewal in Ottawa and defence modernization for Canada creates a generational opportunity to designate the city as Canada's Defence Innovation Hub.

Sonya Shorey & Sueling Ching

Opinion



Canada has a critical window of opportunity: for the first time in decades, there is clear political and public consensus on the urgent need to invest

in national defence. As global tensions escalate, the call to modernize Canada's military and security capabilities has never been louder.

But this is not just about defence; it's also about economic resilience. Strategic investments in dual-use and defence technologies can strengthen Canadian innovation, create jobs, and anchor regional economies. It's a nation-building opportunity we can't afford to miss.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Ottawa.

Long known as the seat of government, Ottawa's economy is anchored by the federal public service. But with hybrid work, decentralization, and talks of public service caps, what was once a stabilizer is now a source of vulnerability. To remain competitive, Ottawa must evolve beyond its role as a government town.

At the same time, Canada urgently needs to scale domestic innovation in areas critical to national security, from cybersecurity to artificial intelligence. The convergence of these two

needs—economic renewal in Ottawa, and defence modernization for Canada—creates a generational opportunity to designate the city as Canada's Defence Innovation Hub.

This would be a win for the entire country.

Ottawa is already home to 190 aerospace, defence, and security companies. It boasts North America's highest concentration of tech talent, a bilingual and highly educated workforce, more than 65 federal labs, and the headquarters of key departments including National Defence and Public Safety Canada. It's also home to CANSEC—one of the largest defence and security trade shows in North America.

Geography also gives Ottawa an edge. With a climate and infrastructure suited to year-round cold-weather testing, Ottawa is a natural centre for innovation relevant to Arctic security, one of the most pressing geopolitical issues facing Canada and its allies.

International examples show what is possible. In the United States, the Washington-Virginia

corridor became a global defence leader through deliberate federal investment. In France, Toulouse's aerospace sector was built with targeted government support. These clusters didn't happen by chance; they were created by design.

Ottawa is already gaining global recognition for defence. In 2023, four Ottawa sites were chosen to participate in NATO DIANA (Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic)—more than any other Canadian city. Ottawa's Area X.O, a smart mobility test facility managed by Invest Ottawa, and three National Research Council labs are now among the 13 DIANA test centres across the country.

Kanata North, Canada's largest tech park, adds further strength to this ecosystem. With companies like Lockheed Martin, Thales, and CAE operating alongside hundreds of scale-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the region is a living lab for secure commu-

nications, autonomous systems, and aerospace.

What's missing isn't capacity; it's co-ordination and commitment.

Designating Ottawa as Canada's Defence Innovation Hub would catalyze a bold national strategy. It would align procurement with Canadian innovators, expand opportunities for SMEs, and attract more global investment. It would also send a message to allies that Canada is stepping up with an innovation-led defence economy that is ready to contribute.

And as the capital of a G7 country, Ottawa must reflect the strength and ambition of the nation it represents. In an era of soft power and global perception, the vitality of Canada's capital city is a national imperative.

The opportunity is now: with the right national focus and investment, Ottawa can power a modern, sovereign Canadian defence strategy. One that equips our Armed Forces, fuels economic growth, strengthens supply chains from coast to coast, and gives Canada a global edge in the technologies that will define the future.

Sonya Shorey is president and CEO of Invest Ottawa. Sueling Ching is president and CEO of the Ottawa Board of Trade.

The Hill Times



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# Editorial

## Editorial

# Time to get off the omnibus, Carney

Omnibus bills are hardly new to Canadian federal politics. And the practice of packaging different legislative changes together into one bill is, in plenty of cases, legitimate. Take budget implementation bills, which typically enact multiple spending and other commitments pledged in a corresponding federal budget document. No problem there (mostly).

But modern Parliaments have also seen plenty of examples of abuses of the practice. Former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper faced criticism on more than one occasion for his government's use of omnibus legislation, right up to the end of his mandate. And despite having criticized the Harper Conservatives' misuse of the practice, and pledging to do differently during the 2015 campaign, former Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau's government also tabled omnibus bills to slip in unrelated measures, with 2018's budget implementation bill as just one example.

On a mission to move fast and make changes, Prime Minister Mark Carney has introduced some big, beautiful bills of his own.

Bill C-2, the Strong Borders Act, seeks to amend a range of Acts related to the security of the Canada-United States border, but within that proposes consequential changes to enable law enforcement to obtain information from "service providers" without a warrant.

Bill C-4 includes a number of signalled economic measures, like the Liberals' pledged income tax reduction, scrapping of the consumer carbon tax, and elimination of the GST for new homes under \$1-mil-

lion—but it would also exempt political parties from federal and provincial privacy laws.

And Bill C-5, the One Canadian Economy Act, seeks to remove federal barriers to interprovincial trade—as pledged during the campaign—but would also grant cabinet sweeping powers to fast-track infrastructure and energy projects deemed to be in the national interest.

All three bills have been pushed through Parliament at breakneck pace.

Proponents of these moves point to the need to act fast and meet the pressing moment Canada currently faces, and to the Liberals' recent electoral victory as proof the government has a mandate from the people to act.

Sure. It is a pressing and consequential moment for our nation, indeed, and many of these measures were in fact put to the populace during the writ.

But are the scope of the changes proposed—the potential bypassing of established environmental protection processes, for example—what Canadian voters envisioned?

Probably not.

And—aside from providing federal political parties much-needed cover in their ongoing legal battle to avoid being subject to British Columbia privacy laws—why include those changes in a bill otherwise focused on promised economic measures?

With faith in government eroding globally, and abuses of power going unchecked, such use of omnibus legislation is disheartening and counterproductive, to say the least.

Let's do better.

The Hill Times

## Members' statements from June 20



Image courtesy pexels.com

Fifty years ago, on June 20, 1975, the legendary Gilles Vigneault performed his song, *Gens du pays*, for the very first time on Mount Royal in Montreal. On stage, three Quebec music greats, Gilles Vigneault, Louise Forestier, and Yvon Deschamps, sang the now-famous lyrics that ring out during our national holiday celebrations as well on as birthdays.

*Gens du pays* is one of the greatest gifts to francophone song. It is a classic, an anthem for Quebecers. It

is a testimony to our collective memory. This year, our national holiday [Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day] will give us an opportunity to pay tribute to this iconic song. The singer from Natashquan will be proud to hear his words, which unite us and bring us together, being sung throughout Quebec.

I would like to thank Mr. Vigneault for leaving such a lasting impression on our culture. I wish everyone a happy national holiday.

Liberal MP Élisabeth Brière

Yesterday, a devastating rockslide on the Banff Icefields Parkway near Bow Glacier Falls resulted in the loss of a life and injured many.

I offer my heartfelt condolences to the family who lost their loved one, and I am wishing a speedy recovery to all those who were injured. We are grateful for the heroic efforts of our first responders, including Parks Canada staff, local firefighters, the RCMP, Alberta Health Services, and STARS air ambulance for their swift and courageous

efforts to provide emergency care and ensure public safety under difficult circumstances.

This is a stark reminder of the unpredictable power of nature, even in places we cherish most for their beauty and tranquility. Emergencies like this highlight the need to improve our cellular and communication services in remote areas.

For all those planning to visit our beautiful parks this summer, please plan ahead and stay safe.

Conservative MP William Stevenson

It is with tremendous pride, and thanks to the initiative and vision of Mayor Jean Lamarche, that TroisRivières will be hosting the 59<sup>th</sup> Quebec Games this summer, from July 25 to August 2.

This event will bring together more than 3,500 young athletes, aged 12 to 17, from 19 regions of Quebec. It will feature 18 sports and celebrate excellence, passion and commitment. The success of these games can be primarily attributed to the incredible dedication of

the volunteers. I would like to mention the chair, Martin Leblanc, Bernard Milette, and David Labecque and his team, who are working tirelessly to provide the athletes with the best possible environment to achieve excellence and personal growth.

I invite everyone to TroisRivières this summer to cheer on these talented young athletes, share their energy and make these games something our community will never forget.

Liberal MP Caroline Desrochers



## COMMENT

# Strikes on Iran a Middle East déjà vu

All of this political theatre, and they didn't even destroy the uranium they pretended to seek. What a waste of time, money, and military resources.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—Another one? I must've imagined 2003 because there's no way this is happening again.

In the latest instalment of failing to mind their own business, on June 21, the United States military launched air strikes targeting Iran in a mission named Operation Midnight Hammer. Ostensibly, the strikes were to end Iran's nuclear program; but it was most likely to provide support for Israel's ongoing bombing campaign of Iran that had begun a week prior. U.S. President Donald Trump, in an address to the nation, proclaimed the air assault on Fordow, Isfahan, and Natanz nuclear sites a success. In retaliation, Iran fired missiles at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, America's largest military installation in the Middle East. No casualties were reported. America is involved in yet another conflict in the Middle East due to a commander-in-chief who proclaimed himself the "anti-war president." Surprise, he lied.

In response to the unfolding events, Prime Minister Mark Carney tweeted that Iran's nuclear program is a threat to international security, and called on all parties involved to return to the negotiating table. In a recent press conference, Carney was asked whether he supported the strikes, to which he answered, "the prospect ... of Iran having a nuclear weapon is fundamentally destabilizing to peace in the Middle East." Carney and United Kingdom Prime Minister Kier Starmer fell in line behind Washington to support the thesis that Iran has a nuclear weapon. The uncanny resemblance of both tweets from each western leader demonstrates that they're not calling the shots on their own country's Middle East policies.

Iran has been capable of making a nuclear weapon in six months to a year for the last 30 years.

Jon Stewart, host of *The Daily Show*, recently depicted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's various official speeches accusing Iran of developing a nuclear weapon. The trip down memory lane went back as far as 1995, and included the embarrassment that was the Acme rendering of a bomb in a speech to the United Nations in 2018. The man could not have been bothered to come with a full PowerPoint presentation. The pretence given to invade another sovereign nation, as in the lead up to the Iraq war in the early 2000s, was that Iran was building a nuclear weapon that would threaten Israeli security. Nevermind that this is the same American president who tore up former president Barack Obama's Iran deal, named the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA permitted the nation "to ensure that Iran's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful," as explained by the U.S.



U.S. President Donald Trump. America is involved in yet another conflict in the Middle East due to a commander-in-chief who proclaimed himself the 'anti-war president,' writes Erica Ifill. Photograph courtesy of Flickr/The White House

State Department. China, France, Germany, Russia, the U.K., the U.S., the European Union, and Iran endorsed the plan. In 2018, Trump withdrew from the JCPOA.

In other words, like the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) pretence used to invade Iraq—of which none were found—this is an unprovoked act of aggression without justification, or imminent danger. Does Iran not have a right to defend itself?

Those of us who were around for the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan will recognize the evolution of manufactured consent. First is the relentless effort by government officials all over the western world and mainstream western media to turn the lie into the truth. This happened in the case of Iraq. You couldn't go anywhere without hearing about WMDs. When UN investigator, Hans Blix, concluded that Iraq didn't have weapons of mass destruction, the preface for invading the country pivoted to Saddam Hussein and his treatment of Iraqis. And if that didn't work, former president George W. Bush's administration perpetrated another lie that Hussein was connected to al-Qaeda, which was a terrorist organization connected to the 9/11 attacks. It was yet another lie.

Similarly, Carney, Starmer, and mainstream media are trying to convince the public of the justification of the recent aggressive act. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, released a strong, unequivocal statement on Twitter that negated the necessity of the conflict: "I am gravely alarmed by the use of force by the United States against Iran today. This is a dangerous escalation in a region already on the edge—and a direct threat to international peace and security." He went on to say that there is no military solution. U.S. Democratic Senator Chris Murphy, who sits on the Foreign Relations Committee, confirmed the mendacity of the aforementioned pretext on Bluesky: "I was briefed on the intelligence last week. Iran posed no imminent threat of attack to the United States. Iran was not close to building a deliverable nuclear weapon. The negotiations Israel scuttled with their strikes held the potential for success." In addition, Central Intelligence Agency director William Burns denied there was evidence of Iran building a nuclear weapon. *The New York Times* reported: "The Israelis, in their assessment, are also looking at satellite imagery from a few days before the U.S. strikes. They believe the images show the Iranians moving uranium and equipment from the Fordo facility."

All of this political theatre, and they didn't even destroy the uranium they pretended to seek. What a waste of time, money, and military resources. Wonder when they'll be threatening regime change, which is unfortunate, since America has never met a country it's never wanted to bomb.

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

The Hill Times

# Let's all be ambassadors this summer

Simple little gestures, showing friendship and respect, might be the most 'Canadian' way of approaching domestic tourism this summer.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—It was June 1980, soon after the first Quebec referendum, in which I had been an organizer for the federalist "No" camp. I was standing in the Anglican cathedral in Quebec City, talking to a tourist from Toronto.

I explained how my ancestors in Quebec City, who were parishioners at the cathedral, had always been integrated in the francophone community through marriage, friendships, professional contacts, and business partnerships.

The visitor then asked why English Quebecers didn't impose their will on the francophone community. "It makes much more sense for everyone to speak English. It is quaint that people speak French here, but how will they ever accomplish anything?" I pointed out there were many accomplished French Canadians who had been statesmen, scientists, scholars, and professionals. She replied, "Yes, but they had to learn English to succeed!"

The discussion began to degenerate. I offered a few choice words about her narrow-mindedness, and expressed regret I had supported a united Canada in the referendum.

Looking back, I am sure she thought I was a rabid Quebec nationalist. I, on the other hand, hoped she didn't share her narrow-minded views with francophones in Quebec City. I have heard and read stories from committed separatists about travelling in the rest of Canada and someone told them to speak English, or insulted Quebec, which is known as "Quebec bashing." They might have had 20 good encounters, but the one negative experience was vividly remembered and often recounted.

This is pertinent this year because Canadians have decided collectively to avoid travelling to the United States. The anecdotal accounts are being borne out in statistics: Canadian travel to the U.S. is expected to drop 40 per cent, taking a \$12.5-billion bite out of their economy. Places like Old Orchard, Maine and Cape Cod, Mass., are seeing cancellations, and our "neighbour" states like Vermont and New York are doing everything to woo Canadians back.

For Canada's domestic tourism industry, it's shaping up to be the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. And for places like Kamouraska, Que., an invasion of tourists will be good for our many restaurants, boutiques, and B&Bs. We are prepared, both logistically and psychologically. But good fortune has its challenges: while tourism is the bread and butter for favoured destinations, it can cause resentment.

I recall hearing merchants in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., complaining about the arrival of "yet another tour bus," and in Barcelona, Spain, the backlash has involved residents turning water guns on the hordes of tourists who have jacked up the cost and scarcity of accommodation.

In Canada, our challenge is saying the wrong thing or expecting everyone to speak our language. I have to remind my friends outside Quebec that half the population here cannot speak English. More and more young people, and those in the service industries do, but if the clerk at the depanneur in Montmagny doesn't respond in English, rather than complaining or yelling, try a bit of your high school French on them. And the same goes for Quebecers in the rest of Canada: we are all effectively ambassadors to one another, whether I am the waiter serving you or the client being served.

Here are some suggestions: in Quebec say "bonjour" and "merci." Meanwhile, if you are in the service business in the rest of Canada, if someone walks into your business and has a Québécois accent, make them feel at home with a few French phrases. One of my unilingual friends from Kamouraska drove across Canada two years ago and came back raving of how wonderful Canada was. Almost everyone he met communicated with him in French.

I know this is just one example. But this year, and the years to come, may be an opportunity to build a new sense of nationhood. In the midst of this, the Parti Québécois is dominating in the polls in Quebec, and we have struggled with the extreme nationalism of Premier François Legault's CAQ government in the past few years. We need a little "Canada love."

We don't need a last-minute invasion of amorous English Canadians flooding into Montreal during some future referendum. But simple little gestures, showing friendship and respect, might be the most "Canadian" way of approaching domestic tourism this summer.

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

## COMMENT

# Conservatives, NDP should make the most of the summer recess

Prime Minister Mark Carney's team is off to a good start, and hoping the honeymoon will eventually end is not enough of a plan for the Conservatives.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



Conservatives Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, and interim NDP Leader Don Davies. The NDP's biggest challenge over the coming months is figuring out what their leadership race looks like, and who might contest it, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Carney got the King to Ottawa to read his first Throne Speech. He committed Canada to achieving its two per cent of GDP defence spending target. All of his early legislative agenda was passed by the House of Commons and now sits with the Senate. He had two in-person meetings with American President Donald Trump that have been cordial and lean positive. He hosted and managed a G7 on Canadian soil. He, along with Trump, suggested

some trade and tariff deals could be struck by mid-July.

The early expectations Carney set out are on track to be met. Though he may be courting trouble with many of Canada's Indigenous leaders who are concerned his major projects legislation will give short shift to Indigenous rights and have limited consultation. Other prime ministers have learned that not properly and duly working with Indigenous leaders can derail agendas

quite quickly. Little wonder then that Prime Minister Carney, in a Friday evening end-of-legislative session press conference on June 20, tried to argue consultation with First Nations leaders would be substantive and real.

Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives are hoping summer and fall will be better for them than were the winter and spring. Now that Poilievre knows he will face a party leadership review vote at the end of January 2026, his mind ought to be focused. He'd win that vote today, but January is months away.

He and the Conservatives have a new opponent who they have, to date, generally underestimated. Hoping Carney's honeymoon will eventually end, and opportunity will be theirs again, is not enough of a plan.

Ramming on the same things they have been, with the same tone and approach, is not enough, and probably not wise. If rage worked for a while last time, how about presenting a serious alternative to the Liberals at a time when Canadians seem to want to gravitas, not gravy-train grovelling?

The Conservatives, like the other parties, do need the rest

summer provides, but that time should be used to reflect. What does a competitive strategy look like? Showing more of what talent exists in the caucus? Accepting their leader has public connection problems, how do you manage that? Stephen Harper had a connection problem, but ultimately worked through it with a competency offering. All options aren't lost for them.

The NDP's biggest challenge over the coming months is figuring out what their leadership race looks like, and who might contest it. Also, what is their brand offering going to be? What can they do to insert themselves into public conversation so as not to be forgotten? How to they begin to inflame the seeds of discontent among NDP-Liberal switch voters who supported Carney out of a fear that Poilievre's Conservatives would form government?

While it is not usual after an election to feel like those who lost are still a bit lost on why they did, it feels like this is more of an acute thing for both the Conservatives and the NDP. For their own purposes, they need to move past that point. If they don't, this minority government might have a multiple-years-long run as opposed to the normal 12 to 18 months.

*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*

## Time to walk the walk

A clear way to demonstrate to Canadians that he is not simply posturing would be for PM Mark Carney to cancel the remaining F-35 order.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—On June 9, Prime Minister Mark Carney did the unthinkable. He promised to immediately boost defence spending to meet the NATO spending objective of two per cent of gross domestic product within the current 2025-26 fiscal year.

The original defence budget tabled for this same timeframe was \$40-billion, or roughly 1.3 per cent of Canada's GDP. With Carney's new directive, spending on defence and security is to balloon to \$62.7-billion prior to April 1, 2026.

Now before all those amateur mathematicians start simply

subtracting the former from the latter to determine the increase, we need to keep in mind that some creative accounting is being employed by the Carney team.

While there will be \$9-billion in "new" spending, the rest of the boost will come from rolling spending from other government departments into the Department of National Defence's accounting ledger. The most prominent among those moves will see the Canadian Coast Guard becoming essentially a fourth branch of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) rather than reporting to the Department of Fisheries.

Other announced spending increases include a 20-per-cent pay raise for service members, retention bonuses, and special allowances for training exercises. It was also announced that DND will hire an additional 1,400 civilian workers to take some of the strain off our overstretched and understaffed combat forces.

Carney also announced that additional medical staff will be hired to improve access to health care for CAF members. However, given the state of Canada's health-care facilities nationwide, I'm not sure exactly where he believes those personnel are to be found.

In that same June 9 speech, Carney repeated his previous statements that Canada needs

to move away from our current heavy reliance on the United States for our military equipment purchases. This is, of course, in light of President Donald Trump's continued threats to annex Canada into becoming the "51st state" through economic measures such as crippling tariffs.

"We should no longer send three-quarters of our defence capital spending to America," Carney said. "The transformation of our military capabilities can help with the transformation of our economy."

For the record, Carney also ordered a review of the acquisition of 88 F-35 fighter jets from Lockheed Martin. At present, Canada has only contracted to purchase the first 16 of those F-35s.

A clear way to demonstrate to Canadians that Carney is not simply posturing would be to cancel our order for the remaining 62 F-35s on the books, and instead purchase a similar number of Saab Gripen fighter jets. The Gripen was the last remaining challenger to the F-35 in the competition to find a replacement for Canada's aging fleet of CF-18s.

For anyone about to argue against Canada operating a mixed fleet of fighter aircraft, the Royal Canadian Air Force used to do just that only a couple of decades ago. During the transition from CF-104 Starfighters to



There's an ongoing review of Canada's acquisition of 88 F-35 fighter jets from Lockheed Martin. U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Donald R. Allen

the CF-18 Hornets, Canada also had several squadrons of CF-116 Freedom Fighters. One also only needs to look at the Australian example. With a smaller population and GDP than Canada, the Australian air force presently operates 24 F-18 Super Hornets, and 72 F-35 Lightnings.

It has also been argued that the operating and maintenance cost of the Gripen are far less than those of the F-35. While the F-35s are built entirely in the U.S., Sweden's Saab has offered an option for Canada to assemble the Gripens under licence. A similar arrangement was successfully implemented in Brazil.

Now, before anyone gets their elbows too far up over this proposed solution, keep in mind that

the engines for the Gripen are still manufactured in the U.S.

In other words, Trump would still be getting a chunk of cheese, just not the whole damn thing.

Also, the review that Carney has ordered into the F-35 purchase is being conducted by the very same Air Force officers who have steadfastly maintained that they want the F-35—and only the F-35—since the outset. Do not expect a different outcome this time around. They are simply going through the motions to appease Carney, and stall for time until the current spat with Trump blows over.

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

*The Hill Times*

## COMMENT



It remains to be seen whether Prime Minister Mark Carney's government can make all this work in a timeframe that complies with his refreshing, unconventional campaign to rapidly bring the country together to start building a stronger, more independent economy, writes Les Whittington. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# Carney blows the roof off inertia-bound Ottawa, but there's no guarantee of success

Canada's highly decentralized federation requires time, energy, and good fortune to reach consensus.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—"Action This Day" was the sticker that Winston Churchill appended to his missives to generals and cabinet ministers requiring urgent, proactive

decisions as he sought to energize Britain's defences against Adolf Hitler in the 1940s.

Without comparing Mark Carney to Churchill, the new Canadian prime minister's approach does put one in mind of the famous red-ink stamps the British leader employed to try to cut through his government's inertia.

Whether it's ditching the carbon tax, initiating a middle-class tax cut, expanding ties with Europe, ramping up military spending, or establishing a working relationship with the United States' Donald Trump, the overachiever from Fort Smith, N.W.T., is moving with a speed and reach that hasn't been seen around Parliament Hill in a very long time.

Newly-elected prime ministers talk about rapid action, but this

commitment is usually honoured in the breach in the immediate going as governments get organized and calculate potential blowback from the political opposition, vested interests, etc.

Of course, no prime minister in recent decades has been elected in the midst of the kind of life-or-death crisis Canada faces from Trump's destruction of 45 years of bilateral free trade and threats of annexation.

But it's worth keeping in mind that Carney has more experience dealing with national economic emergencies and crises of international scope—and the leaders involved—than any other Canadian. This not only includes heading Canada's central bank during the 2008 worldwide banking collapse, and running the United Kingdom's central bank during

the Brexit upheaval. He was also put in charge of the G20-commissioned effort to tighten up the global financial system to avoid another meltdown. And in 2019, he was named a United Nations Special Envoy for Climate Change.

So no one should be surprised that Carney seems to see Canada's problems in a wider context than most of the people who have been the temporary owners of a seat in the Commons in recent times. He is unabashedly promoting a new strategy to break through the usual parochial interests and, in effect, demanding that his elected counterparts across the country live up to their good faith responsibility to act in the best interests of all.

And, in keeping with voters' overwhelming demands for

change, the prime minister is moving fast. Last week alone, he gave Canada's long-held aspirations of global leadership a semblance of reality by successfully managing a minefield-laden G7 Summit, talked Trump into a putative 30-day deadline for trade talks, and pushed through legislation to fulfill key economic promises. The bill aims to reduce the internal trade barriers that have been hamstringing the economy since forever, and open the way for accelerated action on major infrastructure projects.

And this past weekend, Carney headed to Europe for NATO and Canada-European Union summits where he is working to fulfill his pledge to diversify trade and reduce dependence on the U.S. In doing so, he is on the way to providing Canada with the closest defence and economic ties to Europe of any non-EU country.

Passage of the One Canadian Economy Act, which is expected to receive Senate approval this week, fits with Carney's agreement with the premiers in Saskatoon to try to leave the country's largely paralyzed major projects' authorizations process in the past.

"For far too long, when federal agencies have examined a new project, their immediate question has been 'why,'" Carney told the media on June 20. "Now, they'll ask themselves: 'how?'"

All this is bracing, but, even leaving aside the many possible disruptions from the U.S.'s entry into the Israel-Iran conflict, the outlook for Carney's build-baby-build campaign seems, at best, mixed.

Canada's highly decentralized federation requires time, energy, and good fortune to reach consensus, and a lot of the most obvious large infrastructure projects—like pipelines—are already encountering customary divisions and lack of private sector excitement. It seems unlikely, for instance, that Carney's initiatives will succeed in fulfilling Alberta Prime Minister Danielle Smith's make-or-break demand for another oil pipeline to a port on British Columbia's northern coast.

And First Nations spokespeople are insisting that the Carney government rethink its approach to greenlighting these projects so as to comply with its duty to bring Indigenous people into the decision-making process. Backtracking, the Liberals have scheduled meetings with Indigenous leaders this summer to try to set the guardrails and incentives around hurry-up project approvals—something that is not likely to be settled in a few months, regardless of Ottawa's good intentions.

Considering that, and the range of other issues involved in achieving consensus on major undertakings, speed could prove very elusive. So, despite the U.S.-incited emergency, it remains to be seen whether the Carney government can make all this work in a timeframe that complies with his refreshing, unconventional campaign to rapidly bring the country together to start building a stronger, more independent economy.

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

# OPINION

# Investing in Indigenous education is an investment in Canada's future

Continued investment in Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous-led initiatives isn't just about equity, but also about creating intelligent policy which will result in sustainable prosperity for all.

Mike DeGagné

Opinion



Access to quality education is the single greatest determinant of reconciliation—and consequently Indigenous success.

During the May 27 Speech from the Throne, the flames of the qulliq in the Senate Chamber were a vivid illustration of the ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures, economic approaches, and political systems in Canada continue to be inextricably linked. King Charles III spoke of the land acknowledgement being “a recognition of shared history as a nation,” expressing a hope that “collectively as a country a path is found toward truth and reconciliation, in both word and deed.”

At Indspire, effective reconciliation is the work of many hands, and that means partnerships like the one we have had with the Government of Canada: a mutual recognition that education is the critical bridge between reconciliation and national prosperity. The priorities outlined in the Speech from the Throne—productivity, workforce development, and equity—align perfectly with Indspire's mission.

The Government of Canada is a long-time supporter of Indspire's Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries and Scholarships (BBF) program. Since 1996, this program has enabled Indspire to disburse more than \$250-million to more than 75,000 Indigenous post-secondary students, fostering Indigenous excellence while investing in the education of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people for the long-term benefit of these individuals, their families and communities, and Canada.

We are proud of this support, which is simultaneously a tangible sign of reconciliation in action and a sound investment. Approximately 89 per cent of BBF recipients go on to graduate, with approximately 90 per cent



Supporting young learners not only enables them to succeed, but also provides quantifiable benefits to their communities and to Canada, writes Mike DeGagné. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

finding employment post-graduation. As numerous BBF recipients tell us, reciprocity is very important to them; 45 per cent of these recipients go on to work in Indigenous communities or Indigenous-related fields post-graduation, which demonstrates the tremendous power of education. Supporting these young learners not only enables them to succeed, but also provides quantifiable benefits to their communities and to Canada.

As the 2021 census revealed, Indigenous Peoples are the fastest-growing demographic in Canada, outpacing the non-Indigenous population while skewing considerably younger. It is essential that these young First Nations, Inuit, and Métis learners are positioned for success—not simply to complete their post-secondary journeys, but also to remove barriers that prevent them from entering and fully contributing to the Canadian economy and workforce.

In its commitment to remaining a reliable partner to Indigenous Peoples, the federal government has signified its intention to uphold its fundamental promise to advance reconciliation. By doubling the Indigenous Loan Guarantee Program from \$5-billion to \$10-billion, enabling more Indigenous communities to become owners of major projects, the government has made another promise to further the essential principles of nation-building with full and informed consent from all parties.

The federal government has also been a valued partner in supporting Indigenous education initiatives and celebrating Indigenous excellence through such platforms as the Indspire Awards, an annual celebration of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis leaders whose contributions have created positive change across Turtle Island. Broadcast annually by the CBC, these stories of Indigenous excellence inspire future generations.

Nevertheless, there is still work to be done. Despite the recent increase in public awareness of Indigenous issues, many Canadians lack a full understanding of Indigenous contributions to the country in fields such as business and commerce, the arts, health, governance, education, and science. Outdated beliefs about Indigenous Peoples—such as the myth that all Indigenous people in Canada receive free post-secondary education—still persist.

In the face of such beliefs, it is more important than ever that we collectively dispel such myths with accurate public education. National Indigenous History Month and National Indigenous People's Day campaigns are examples of successful public awareness campaigns. Coupled with culturally informed curriculum reform, this type of outreach is essential for creating and strengthening the bonds that will enable Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians to arrive at a greater mutual understanding—and, ultimately, achieve

greater community cohesion and prosperity.

Strategic investment in Indigenous education and learners at this time will ensure that Indigenous Peoples are full participants in Canada's economic transformation, benefitting both Indigenous communities and Canada as a whole. When this investment is combined with increased support for public education to normalize and promote real-world examples of Indigenous leadership, its positive impact will be felt in every area of Canadian society.

With greater investment in Indigenous-led education organizations and the integration of Indigenous workforce strategies into national productivity and housing plans, the government will forge a path for lasting success that will sustainably future challenges.

Indspire is primed to support the implementation of two platform commitments aimed at removing barriers to educational attainment and improving economic participation for Indigenous Peoples.

We can contribute to the development of an Indigenous Pathways to Prosperity Skills and Training Fund. By leveraging our expertise and relationships to advance access to skills training and education opportunities, Indspire can support Indigenous learners to gain the knowledge and skills they need to flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy while addressing urgent labour market needs.

Indspire has more than 30 years of experience in the efficient delivery of education funding to support a commitment to accelerating funding for access to post-secondary education so that more First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students can go to school and prepare for a brighter future.

As we go forward into this new era where challenges and opportunities are inextricably linked, it is incumbent upon us to acknowledge the progress that has been made thus far—and to remember that good relationships are essential for our collective success. Continued investment in Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous-led initiatives isn't just about equity; it's also about creating intelligent and forward-thinking policy which will result in sustainable prosperity for all. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission emphasized, education is the most effective, direct, and lasting path to both reconciliation and prosperity.

*Dr. Mike DeGagné is the president and CEO of Indspire, an Indigenous national registered charity which supports and invests in the education of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people across Turtle Island. The former president and vice-chancellor of Nipissing University and former executive director of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, he now serves as professor of sociology and special adviser on Indigenous issues at University of Toronto Scarborough.*

*The Hill Times*

## OPINION

# The G7's HIV/AIDS response wanes precisely when global leadership is required



We have a responsibility to share our concerns with G7 states, and encourage them to work together to avoid the global collapse of the HIV/AIDS effort, writes Julio Montaner. *Unsplash photograph by Bermix Studio*

When G8 leaders came together in 2002, Canada committed to defeat HIV/AIDS. Today, the G7 must reinvigorate its effort to end the pandemic.

Julio Montaner

Opinion



Twenty-three years ago, the G8 sherpas visited me in my office in Vancouver in advance of the 2002 G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alta. They were curious about the success of our strategies to manage and control HIV/AIDS. To my surprise and delight,

a key outcome of that summit was the launch of the G8 Africa Plan. It committed the G8 to support inclusive and peaceful development of Africa with the primary objective to combat HIV/AIDS, which was devastating the continent. Last week, Canada once again hosted the G7 meeting (G8 minus Russia) in Kananaskis. Sadly, at a time when we are so close to defeating HIV/AIDS, the G7 appears to be reneging on its 2002 commitments.

While the world has made substantial progress on HIV/AIDS since 2002, the G7's recent retreat came at a critical time. In 2023, new HIV infections across Canada were up by 35 per cent, and the Public Health Agency of Canada estimates this will be even higher in 2024. Other western countries such as the United States and United Kingdom are also seeing increases in new HIV infections.

Meanwhile, the U.S. administration has decided to cut funding and support to key agencies and programs responsible for domestic and international HIV/AIDS

control, and complementary programs such as food support, family planning, and TB and malaria control.

The U.S. cuts are devastating. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that 80 per cent of all U.S. Global Health Awards and 71 per cent of all HIV Global Awards have been terminated. UNAIDS estimates that between 2025 and 2029, permanent cuts to HIV programs supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief would lead to an additional 6.6 million new infections globally, and 4.2 million AIDS-related deaths. This would set global control of HIV/AIDS back by a decade, with overwhelming social, economic, and security implications. Of further concern, the U.K., Germany, France, and Canada are also looking at cutting foreign aid.

This all comes at a time when we know how to treat and prevent HIV/AIDS, and end the pandemic. Globally, antiretroviral therapy has been rolled out to prevent the progression to AIDS, AIDS

deaths, and HIV transmission under the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS's Treatment as Prevention (TasP) strategy. Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), which is more than 90 per cent effective in protecting against HIV infection, is now also available. Furthermore, TasP and PrEP are cost-averting.

UNAIDS endorsed the TasP strategy in 2010, and the United Nations followed suit in 2015 with the goal of reducing AIDS deaths and new HIV infections by 90 per cent by 2030, which would end HIV/AIDS as a public health threat. To achieve this ambitious goal within five years, we must meet the UN 95-95-95 Target calling for 95 per cent of people living with HIV to be diagnosed, 95 per cent of them on antiretroviral treatment, and 95 per cent of the latter virologically suppressed by December 2025.

Six months away from the UN 95-95-95 Target deadline, UNAIDS reports that 86 per cent of people living with HIV glob-

ally were diagnosed, 89 per cent of them were on antiretrovirals, and 93 per cent of them were virologically suppressed at the end of 2023. As a result, by 2023, worldwide AIDS-related deaths decreased to about 800,000 per year, and new HIV infections decreased to about one million per year. The UNAIDS 2024 Global AIDS Update estimated that a full 19 key target countries in the world's South were within reach of the 95-95-95 Target.

Still, due to rising HIV incidence in key countries and U.S. program cuts, HIV/AIDS control in Canada and around the world is now threatened. Prime Minister Mark Carney has called for cost-effective, nation-building projects to improve the lives of Canadians and demonstrate leadership. Redoubling efforts to defeat HIV/AIDS in Canada by 2030 certainly fits the bill.

It will save lives, prevent AIDS deaths, improve quality of life, prevent transmission, and save money. We have a proven, six-point plan to ensure that Canada meets the UN 95-95-95 Target so that we stay on track to end HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. It includes fully funding access to antiretroviral therapy and PrEP for all in need, harmonizing risk reduction policies across the country, and enhancing social, legal, and medical supports for priority populations.

Beyond these Canadian efforts, we must act globally. We have a responsibility to share our concerns with G7 states, and encourage them to work together to avoid the global collapse of the HIV/AIDS effort. The math is simple: the U.S. contribution to global HIV/AIDS programs is estimated to represent 57 per cent of the total provided by donor countries. Therefore, G7 leaders should double their respective contributions. In doing so, they would lead by example and avert a major global health and security crisis. We can do so now or pay a higher toll in terms of suffering, disease, death, insecurity, and money in the not-so-distant future. This would be a legacy-building initiative, entirely consistent with a key priority of Canada's G7 presidency to protect our communities and the world.

Finally, we must consider the wise words of former U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell. In 2003, he said: "HIV/AIDS is not just a health and humanitarian issue. If left to rage, it tears the fabrics of societies, undermines governments and devastates economies. It can destroy countries and destabilize entire regions. Unless we act, millions will die. No country is immune; all countries are vulnerable."

His words were true then and are true today. Failure to act will have grave global consequences.

*Dr. Julio Montaner, OC, OBC, MD, is executive director and physician-in-chief at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS. He is also Killam Professor, division of infectious diseases, faculty of medicine, at the University of British Columbia.*

*The Hill Times*

# Senate Conservative ranks could continue to grow, says caucus leader Housakos

Conservative Senate Leader Leo Housakos pointed to the recent change in prime minister and a desire to join a party-affiliated national caucus as reasons for the uptick.

Continued from [page 1](#)

Without the recent addition of three new Senators, the caucus had been on track to drop to 10 members with the upcoming retirement of Senator Judith Seidman (De la Durantaye, Que.) this September. Senate groups need at least nine members in order to have recognized status, which is required, for example, to be allocated seats on committees.

As it was, Conservative Senators were juggling as many as three or four committee assignments, said Housakos.

“In an appointed Chamber where we haven’t formed government, the only way for us to grow is to bring in new members. So I won’t say that it’s preoccupied most of my time [since becoming leader], but it’s been made a lot easier by a great deal of interest since the election on the part of many of my colleagues who want to join us,” said Housakos.

The recent announcements came in quick succession, starting on June 4 with a press release welcoming non-affiliated Senator David Richards (New Brunswick) to the Conservative caucus. On June 10, it was announced non-affiliated Senator Mary Jane McCallum (Manitoba) would also be joining the Tory team, and two days later Senator Larry Smith (Saurel, Que.) announced his return to the caucus from his most recent home with the Canadian Senators Group (CSG).

Richards, McCallum, and Smith are the first new Conservative Senators since 2013.

Housakos suggested at least another two such announcements could be coming soon. “I really hope it’s before we rise [this] week, but definitely over the course of the summer,” he told *The Hill Times*.

“I think it’s imminent; there’s been a lot of interest since Senator Richards broke the ice.”

Asked how many Senators are currently mulling potentially



New Brunswick Senator David Richards was the first to recently announce his decision to join the Senate Conservative caucus. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Former prime minister Justin Trudeau appointed individuals as non-affiliated Senators through his time heading government. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

joining the caucus, Housakos said “it’s not an insignificant amount ... I can tell you it’s a fistful.”

Housakos said interest from independent Senators began emerging months ago, even prior to the election and his acclamation as caucus leader.

“Many,” he said, are “intrigued with the possibility of sitting in a national caucus,” something which offers the “privilege” of “an additional platform in order to advocate for their region and the issues they believe in,” and which most of former prime minister Justin Trudeau’s appointees—ex-MPs not included—haven’t had the opportunity to experience.

“We’re not on a deliberate sales pitch; we’re not like on a door-to-door Amway campaign to try to recruit colleagues,” said Housakos. “Most have proactively approached me, and I’ve answered their questions, I’ve shared with them what our [caucus] outlook is, and, for many of them, it’s just sheer curiosity of trying something different. For most of these Senators that we’re talking to, they’ve never been in a national caucus, they’ve never been in a party-affiliated group, so some of them have some misconceptions.”

Among those “misconceptions,” he said, is that all caucus votes are

whipped—he called that a “myth,” saying “people think we’re whipped or more aligned than we actually are”—and that it doesn’t “allow for open debate.”

“We’re a big-tent group that reflects many different points of view,” he said.

Housakos said “many” of the Senators he’s spoken to have expressed a belief in the importance of having “an effective opposition to hold the government to account.”

“And some of them who I’m in discussion [with] right now feel that there’s not enough of that going on,” he said.

The timing of that increased interest aligns with Trudeau’s exit from the Liberal Party helm—announced in January, and realized in March.

Trudeau got the ball rolling on Senate modernization by severing caucus ties with Liberal Senators in 2014, and subsequently establishing a new independent advisory board for Senate appointments. Since 2015, all new Senators have been appointed to sit as independents.

“I think there’s always a sense of more liberty and more independence when the prime minister who appointed you is no longer in Ottawa,” suggested Housakos, noting many of former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper’s appointees felt similarly after 2015.

Rather than seeing the shift in interest as a win for the old order of things, Housakos said he sees it

“as a win for the modernization of

the Senate, that, finally, independent and open-minded Senators don’t see a dichotomy between having independent Senate groups and political party affiliations in the Chamber.”

“One should not exclude the other if you’re a truly open-minded, independent parliamentary system,” he said.

Housakos said the recent level of interest expressed in his caucus is “reassuring.”

“You need to have a strong opposition in order for a Parliament to function properly,” he said. “You also have to find a happy medium to make sure government legislation is treated with a solid, sober second thought, but not in an obstructionist fashion. We need to respect the democratic House.”

## Smith returns to his roots

McCallum and Richards both declined interview requests from *The Hill Times*.

Richards was appointed to the Senate on Trudeau’s recommendation in August 2017. He subsequently joined the Independent Senators Group (ISG), but left in 2018 to once again sit as a non-affiliated Senator. In late 2019, Richards joined the CSG, but left that group, too, in May 2024.

The press release on McCallum’s decision noted she would “continue her work on Indigenous health, education, and reconciliation as a member of the Senate Conservative Caucus.” In quotes included in the release, McCallum, who is of Cree heritage, said she made the decision after “consulting with Grand Chiefs and community leaders,” and that she feels it is “a crucial step in building bridges.”

“Our communities have long sought opportunities for greater collaboration and mutual understanding. By joining the Senate Conservative Caucus, I hope to help broaden the conversation and ensure Indigenous perspectives are reflected across the full political spectrum.”

McCallum was appointed in December 2017, and, like Richards, subsequently joined the ISG. She left that group in early 2022 and has sat as a non-affiliated Senator since.

McCallum has in recent years been among the voices calling for the Senate to reconsider its rules and processes to facilitate greater participation for non-affiliated Senators, and last year, the Senate Rules, Procedures, and the Rights of Parliament Committee launched a study looking into the matter. However, Parliament prorogued before it tabled a report.

It’s a return to the caucus for Smith, who was appointed as a



Manitoba Senator Mary Jane McCallum announced her decision to join the Conservative caucus on June 10. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Conservative on Harper’s recommendation in 2010, and served as caucus leader from 2017 to 2019. Smith left the Tory team to join the CSG in August 2022.

In a June 18 interview with *The Hill Times*, Smith said he’s seen an “evolution” in the Conservative caucus amid the shift away from the Senate’s old two-party culture. Looking down the barrel of his mandatory retirement in April 2026, Smith said he decided he wanted to end his Senate career where it started, and saw an opportunity to contribute “to strengthening the Conservative caucus.”

Smith said Housakos—who years ago was the one who initially encouraged Smith to get involved in politics—first raised the idea of him returning to the fold “four to six months ago.”

“The idea of going back to the caucus, especially with Leo taking over ... it made the decision a lot easier,” said Smith.

While he said he “enjoyed” his time with the CSG, Smith said he felt the difference of not sitting in a party-affiliated caucus.

“When you’re in a government or an opposition caucus, you’re into the real action of what’s going on with the government and the Senate. It’s a little more difficult when you’re in a splinter group to say, ‘well, what part of the government or what part of the opposition are we related to?’ ... You’re not necessarily related to anybody, you’re in a completely different environment. And so, for me, I think being in the Senate Conservative caucus, in opposition, you’re

close to the engines of authority and power,” said Smith, adding that sitting in a caucus alongside Members of Parliament offers a “different level” of involvement in the legislative process.

“You also have direct access to decision-makers, whatever side they’re on,” he added.

But rather than seeing Senate modernization as a failed experiment, Smith said he sees it as “still a work in progress.”

New Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has yet to make his first Senate appointment—two seats will be open as of the end of this month—and there’s been some contemplation among Senators about what the future holds for the institution, initially prompted by expectations last fall that the Conservatives would form government.

“I think there’s some questions that might be being asked about what is the future of how the Senate will operate, will there be any reversion back to the old way? Will it continue to evolve? These are all the questions that I think are going to be up in the air,” said Smith.

## Senate group leaders react

CSG Leader Scott Tannas (Alberta) said his group wishes Smith well.

“I wasn’t caught completely by surprise ... we all go through times when we’re reflecting on all of our time here and decisions and so on, and frankly, you know, there’s new leadership in the Conservatives, and that’s the fact, right? It’s a new era.”



Quebec Senator Larry Smith, right, with CSG Leader Scott Tannas. Smith will retire from the Senate in April 2026. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Former Conservative Senate leader Don Plett says he’s ‘happy’ his former caucus will have a ‘few extra bodies’ going forward. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Tannas said he doesn’t see the recent decision by three Senators to join the only party-affiliated caucus left in the Chamber as a bad sign for the future of Senate modernization, saying he thinks the bottom line is “Senators are very much, now, more independent,” and are exercising their freedom to “make whatever decisions they want with respect to affiliation.”

“I really chalk it up to the efforts of a new leader to try and keep things relevant, and I applaud him for doing it,” said Tannas.

Reacting to the announcements, ISG Facilitator Raymonde Saint-Germain (De la Vallière, Que.) said she isn’t surprised—particularly given it’s the start of a new Parliament—and that “it speaks a lot [to] the advantage in the Senate of being a member of a caucus or a group.”

“This may also demonstrate that independent Senators appointed by then-prime minister Justin Trudeau are not all on the same, I would say, ideological spectrum,” she said.

Saint-Germain said she doesn’t “believe that the modernization or the

independence of the Senate is in danger,” but noted that the next Senate appointment “will give us a sign” of Carney’s vision for the institution.

Saint-Germain said since the start of the new Parliament, she’s seen a welcome “change in tone” in the Red Chamber.

“Debates are more respectful, more focused on the substance, and I see a good collegiality and co-operation amongst every group, and this includes the Conservative caucus under the leadership of Senator Housakos,” said Saint-Germain, adding she thinks it’s “no coincidence” that Conservative “recruitment seems to be more successful” since Housakos was acclaimed.

In emailed comments, PSG Leader Brian Francis (Epekwitk, Mi’kma’ki) said he’s “not surprised that [Housakos] is working hard to ensure that his caucus continues to be able to fulfil” its role as opposition, and that independence in a modern Senate is also “about the freedom of individuals to choose” how they wish to align themselves.

“Like many others, I have found it useful to belong to a group so it’s not surprising that it is the path most of us choose,” said Francis.

Reached by *The Hill Times* last week, former Conservative Senate leader Don Plett, who retired on May 14, said he isn’t taking the fact that three Senators opted to join his old caucus the month after he left personally.

“My initial reaction is: they’ve finally all seen the light,” he said.

Plett said he’d had similar conversations with Richards—who he described as “staunchly conservative” as an individual—in the past, but that the Senator expressed a desire to “keep his word to Trudeau as long as Trudeau was there.” And while personal issues were cited at the time of Smith’s departure from the Conservative caucus in 2022, Plett said it was “nothing to do with me.” Smith similarly said the pair “got along well.”

After years as a non-affiliated Senator, Plett said he thinks Housakos succeeded in convincing McCallum “that she would have a lot of freedom in our caucus,” and be able to sit on committees.

“I’m simply happy that Senator Housakos has a few extra bodies,” said Plett.

“The change in the Senate has forced the Conservatives as well to take a bit of a different view if they want to stay relevant, because if they ... drop below nine, they become irrelevant. And so Leo had a big task to fill there because we were getting awfully close to that,” said Plett. “He went and made that task No. 1, and I commend him for it.”

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*The Hill Times*

## NEWS

# Dong settlement gives closure, but little clarity on foreign interference, say national security and intelligence experts

The lawsuit's settlement affirms that 'intelligence isn't evidence,' but former CSIS analyst Stephanie Carvin says politicians and the media must be better equipped to process and contextualize 'fragmented' intelligence leaks.

BY STUART BENSON

The settlement in former Liberal MP Han Dong's lawsuit against Global News offers a degree of closure for him and his family, as well as some clear lessons for politicians and the media regarding how to more effectively respond to and contextualize fragmented intelligence leaks and allegations of foreign interference, say national security and intelligence experts.

"It sounds like a slogan at this point, but it's true for a reason: intelligence isn't evidence," former CSIS analyst Stephanie Carvin told *The Hill Times*. "It's why we don't convict people based on intelligence; we base it on substantiated evidence that meets court standards."

Carvin said that, as demonstrated by the settlement, as well as the findings of both the final report of the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference and the first report from then-special rapporteur David Johnston, Global News' reporting on Dong was based on "fragmentary pieces of intelligence that were hand-selected by someone, or a few individuals, out of a much larger context."

"That is how intelligence failures happen," explained Carvin, an associate professor of international affairs at Carleton University. "Even if the sources have noble intentions, these were pieces in a complex, multi-year, and ongoing investigation into foreign interference, and we have to be really careful with how that is interpreted, especially when it's leaked."

Dong's lawsuit against Global News stemmed from its reporting in early 2023, citing unnamed national security sources, that the



Former Liberal MP Han Dong has settled his lawsuit with Global News over two years after he left the party's caucus and vowed to defend himself from 'absolutely untrue' allegations he advised a Chinese diplomat to delay the release of Micheal Spavor and Michael Kovrig. Screenshot courtesy of CPAC



Carleton University's Stephanie Carvin says the 'brick wall' between parliamentarians and intelligence services needs to come down to better prepare and protect against foreign interference threats. Photograph courtesy of Stephanie Carvin



Secretary of State Wayne Long says he's happy Dong can now 'get closure and move on.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi says the settlement demonstrates the need for both journalists and politicians to 'do their due diligence' in responding to allegations of foreign interference. Screenshot courtesy of CPAC

then-Liberal MP had "privately advised a senior Chinese diplomat in 2021 that Beijing should hold off freeing Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor."

"Let me be clear. What has been reported is false, and I will defend myself against these absolutely untrue claims," Dong said in a statement in the House of Commons at the time.

Kovrig and Spavor were released in September 2021, nearly three years after they were first detained in China, which was widely viewed as retaliation for the extradition case against Hua-

wei executive Meng Wanzhou. Wanzhou's case was dropped just hours before the two men were released.

While Dong confirmed he had spoken with China's consul general in Toronto, he has consistently denied the reporting's core allegations. However, two days after the story broke in 2023, Dong announced he would be taking the "extraordinary step" of sitting as an independent MP so that the "business of government and indeed the bills of Parliament is not interrupted as I work to clear my name and the truth is

presented to Parliament and the Canadian people."

Dong launched his lawsuit against Global News in April 2023, naming the journalist responsible for the reporting, the news agency's then-editor-in-chief and managing editor, and several television journalists and anchors who appeared in broadcasts of the story.

In a June 15 statement, Global said it "recognizes the findings of the Final Report from the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference, including that the classified information reviewed by Justice

Marie Josée Hogue corroborates that Mr. Dong did not suggest that the PRC extend the detention of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor."

Global reiterated that the original reporting had been based on information provided by "confidential intelligence sources," and highlighted Dong's consistent denials.

"Global News' intent was to report on matters of significant public interest and to qualify that the allegations were unproven and subject to different interpretations."

The statement does not include specific details of the settlement, and as of publication deadline, the original reporting has not been updated with a correction or editor's note. Global News and its parent company, Chorus Entertainment, have not responded to *The Hill Times*' request for comment.

Dong confirmed the settlement in a social media post a few hours after Global News released theirs, writing, "[a]fter two long years, my family and I can move on."

"I have had a profound appreciation of the privilege of holding a public office and being a member of the Liberal caucus," Dong wrote, adding that he owes "a great debt of gratitude" to his legal team, as well as his friends and family, "for sticking with us."

Dong's lawyer declined to comment on the settlement, and instead directed *The Hill Times* to his client's public statement.

Dong did not seek re-election in the 2025 federal election, announcing his decision after the Liberal Party named its new candidate for Don Valley North, Ont.—now MP Maggie Chi, who defeated Conservative candidate Joe Tay with more than 53 per cent of the vote.

While several of Dong's former Liberal caucus colleagues were unaware or unwilling to comment on the settlement last week—partially due to the lack of public details—a few were willing to wish him well.

Secretary of State for the Canada Revenue Agency Wayne Long (Saint John-Kennebecasis, N.B.), who previously sat beside Dong in the House of Commons and alongside him on the Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities Committee, told *The Hill Times* he is "happy that [Dong] is able to get closure and move on."

"I liked him a lot. I obviously don't know all the details and circumstances, but I know the pain he faced and the media scrutiny. I know the toll that took on him," Long said.

MP Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* he is glad there has been a settlement and that Dong's name has been cleared.

"I really wish Han the best of luck as he rebuilds his life," Naqvi said in a post-Question Period scrum outside the West Block on June 20.

Naqvi also said the settlement underscores the need for journalists and politicians to "do our due diligence" when allegations

# ‘Survivors are waiting for it’: Sen. Boyer reintroduces bill to criminalize forced, coerced sterilizations

Boyer says she hopes the Senate’s previous study of her bill tackling forced and coerced sterilizations will speed up its passage in the Chamber the second time around.

BY ELEANOR WAND

Ontario Senator Yvonne Boyer is hoping her reintroduced bill seeking to criminalize forced and coerced sterilizations through a Criminal Code amendment will quickly pass through the Senate and the House after a previous iteration of the bill died on the Order Paper.

A member of the Independent Senators Group, Boyer’s bill, S-228, was tabled in the Upper Chamber on May 26, and seeks to amend the Criminal Code to include forced or coerced sterilization under aggravated assault in Section 268 of the code.

Boyer, who delivered her second reading of the bill in the Senate on June 16, said it addresses “a practice that is both unconscionable and ongoing” in her speech to the Red Chamber. The legislation has now been sent to the Senate Legal Affairs Committee—which has not yet been formed—to be studied before it can be passed on to the House where Conservative MP Jamie Schmale (Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes, Ont.) is set to take it on as sponsor.

“The survivors are waiting for it,” Boyer, a member of Métis Nation, told *The Hill Times*. “It’s very important to them, and it’s something that I’ve been working on for a number of years, so it’s very important to me, too.”

For Boyer, the fight to get this legislation passed stems from personal roots, with her aunt having



ISG Senator Yvonne Boyer says she hopes the current iteration of Bill S-228 will move from the Chamber to the House ‘very soon,’ as she has been ‘working on [it] for a number of years.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

faced racism within the medical system.

“[My aunt] used to talk to me about how there was experiments done on her and other people, too,” Boyer recalled, explaining that her aunt suffered from tuberculosis, for which she spent 10 years in a sanatorium as a teenager. “She was a brown little girl in a big, white starched bed.”

Boyer believes her aunt is one of thousands of Indigenous women who were sterilized without consent.

“Although she never told me that, she never had any children, and it just seemed like that’s what had happened to her.”

Boyer said that “throughout the years,” her aunt’s “voice kind of stayed with me.” Prior to studying law and being appointed to the Senate, Boyer worked as a nurse—an experience she said also informed her activism on the issue.

“I worked in high Indigenous population areas in Western Canada, and I heard on more than

one occasion, other nursing staff talking about ‘well, the Indian problem might be solved if all of them were sterilized,’” she said.

Boyer was first appointed to the Red Chamber in 2018 under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, making her the first Indigenous senator appointed from Ontario.

Bill S-228 follows a previous iteration, Bill S-S50, which Boyer first tabled in the Senate in June 2022 in response to a recommendation from the Senate Human Rights Committee. After being passed by the Upper Chamber in October 2024, the legislation died on the Order Paper before it could be read in the House as a result of Trudeau’s decision to prorogue Parliament, sending a number of Senators’ public bills back to square one.

Boyer has long been working on the issue of forced and coerced sterilization, even prior to her Senate appointment. In 2017, she co-authored an external review that looked at reports of

Indigenous women being coerced into tubal ligation surgeries in hospitals in the Saskatoon Health Region. Two years earlier, Indigenous women had begun coming forward to media, saying they had been coerced into sterilization surgery after giving birth.

Boyer’s review highlighted the systemic issue of illegal, coerced, and forced sterilization of Indigenous women, and looked into the cases of 16 women in the Saskatoon Health Region, relying on their interview testimony. It also evaluated the impact of since-repealed eugenics laws in British Columbia and Alberta that legalized forced sterilization. The report says Alberta’s Sexual Sterilization Act resulted in an estimated 2,800 sterilizations between 1929 and 1972. Similar legislation resulted in 400 sterilizations in B.C. between 1933 and 1973. These numbers provide only a partial snapshot of the level of forced sterilizations that have occurred in Canada, including in provinces where such practices were never legislated.

Speaking to *The Hill Times*, Boyer said that as a lawyer and then-Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Health and Wellness at Brandon University, she was asked to review the Saskatoon Health Region’s tubal ligation practices by the Saskatoon Health Authority. While she was initially hesitant, she was told elders asked for her to be the one to conduct the review, which Boyer said “put a different light on it.”

Since becoming a Senator, Boyer has further examined the issue, producing reports as a member of the Senate Human Rights Committee.

Last year, Boyer also helped launch a group devoted to the issue of forced and coerced sterilization, citing the need for a registry to tabulate cases. The not-for-profit The Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice focuses on Indigenous people who have experienced reproductive and obstetric violence, including forced and coerced sterilization. The group launched a national registry to “serve as the official record of forced sterilization of Indigenous people in Canada” in November 2024. Prior to its launch, the registry had already identified as many as 15,000 cases.

Boyer’s reintroduced Bill S-228 is identical to the amended version of Bill S-S50 that was sent to the House, with her original proposal having been updated to reflect concerns regarding possible unintended consequences raised during the Senate committee review stage. During that study, Senators and witnesses raised concerns about the bill’s potential impact on women’s reproductive rights in emergency situations, as well as gender-affirming care requiring surgery.

The current bill proposes adding a “for greater certainty” clause to section 268 of the Criminal Code to include sterilization, explicitly defining a sterilization procedure as “the severing, clipping, tying or cauterizing, in whole or in part, of the fallopian tubes, ovaries or uterus of a person or any other procedure performed on a person that results in the permanent preven-

tion of reproduction, regardless of whether the procedure is reversible through a subsequent surgical procedure.”

Speaking in the Chamber on June 16, the bill’s critic, Conservative Senator David Wells (Newfoundland and Labrador), said he “was as frustrated as anyone—well, almost anyone,” when the bill died on the Order Paper earlier this year. He said he remains “confident that some of the possible consequences that were raised ... will be avoided.”

“When I was introduced to this issue, I was certain it was a practice of the past,” Wells told the Chamber. “I was wrong.”

Wells also noted that although some witnesses of the previous bill felt the legislation “would be redundant” as there are “laws on the books to deal with these crimes,” of the victims who have already come forward, “no one has been convicted of a crime, much less charged with one.” He called the bill a “necessary step to begin to address ... [a] grievous wrong.”

When asked about the likelihood of her bill passing, Boyer told *The Hill Times* that she believes it has support in the Senate, saying that it also had “all-party support when it was in the House in October.” Boyer said she hopes the legislation will have the same support when it passes from the Senate for a second time, adding she’s eager to see it move forward “very soon.” She pointed to the Senate’s previous, already completed study of the bill, which she said she hopes will speed up the process.

“We’ve already really studied this bill,” she said. “We’ve got the testimony of the survivors, we’ve got the witnesses. We’ve got the expert testimony of the medical associations across the country. ... It’s already there.”

NDP MP Lori Idlout (Nunavut), who studied under Boyer when she was a law student at the University of Ottawa, called the bill “important,” noting that the issue is “very much something that [Boyer’s] always been passionate about.” Idlout said she “hopes it passes” in the House.

“She always talked about it as a major issue, and I wasn’t particularly aware of how deep the impact was, and how broad the policy was to all Indigenous Peoples,” Idlout, who was re-elected for the second term this past April, told *The Hill Times*.

Idlout signalled that she would vote in favour of the bill if it reaches the House, but cautioned that “it’s quite an unpredictable Parliament this year ... so it’s very hard to say if it will [pass].”

“We need to continue the conversation,” Idlout emphasized. “Because these injustices [are] just another example of colonial and genocidal policies that the federal government, the churches, have done to try and ‘take the Indian out of the child,’ as the policy was.”

Idlout said that reconciliation work must be ongoing, and that MPs need “to make sure that we support these kinds of bills so that we’re taking a right-based approach to reconciliation.”

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# OPINION

# Scrapping net-zero commitments step in right direction for CPPIB

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board's objective should not be climate activism or other environmental or social concerns, but risk-adjusted financial returns.

Matthew Lau

Opinion



The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board has cancelled its commitment, established just three years ago, to transition to net-zero emis-

sions by 2050. According to the board, "Forcing alignment with rigid milestones could lead to investment decisions that are misaligned with our investment strategy."

This latest development is good news. The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB), which invests the funds Canadians contribute to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), has a fiduciary duty to citizens who are forced to pay into the CPP and who rely on it for retirement income. The CPPIB's objective should not be climate activism or other environmental or social concerns, but risk-adjusted financial returns. And as noted in a broad literature review by Fraser Institute senior fellow Steven Gliberman, there's a lack of consistent evidence that pursuing environmental, social, and governance (ESG) objectives helps improve financial returns.

Indeed, as economist John Cochrane pointed out, it's logically impossible for ESG investing to achieve social or

environmental goals while also improving financial returns. That's because investors push for these goals by supplying firms aligned with them cheaper capital for the firm is equivalent to lower returns for the investor. Therefore, "if you don't lose money on ESG investing, ESG investing doesn't work," Cochrane explained. "Take your pick."

The CPPIB is not alone among financial institutions abandoning environmental objectives in recent months. In April, RBC—Canada's largest company by market capitalization—announced it will cancel its sustainable finance targets and reduce its environmental disclosures due to new federal rules around how companies make claims about their environmental performance.

And in January, all of Canada's six largest banks quit the Net-Zero Banking Alliance, a group formerly led by Mark Carney (before he resigned to run for leadership of the Liberal Party) that aimed to align banking

activities with net-zero emissions by 2050. Shortly before Canada's six largest banks quit the initiative, the six largest United States banks did the same.

There's a second potential benefit to the CPPIB cancelling its net-zero commitment. Now, perhaps with the net-zero objective out of the way, the CPPIB can rein in some of the administrative and management expenses associated with pursuing net-zero.

As Andrew Coyne noted in a recent *Globe and Mail* commentary, the CPPIB has become bloated in the past two decades. Before 2006, the CPP invested passively, which meant it invested Canadians' money in a way that tracked market indexes. But since switching to active investing, which includes picking stocks and other strategies, the CPPIB ballooned from 150 employees and total costs of \$118-million to more than 2,100 employees and total expenses (before taxes and financing) of more than \$6-billion.

This administrative ballooning took place well before the rise of environmentally themed investing or the CPPIB's announcement of net-zero targets, but the net-zero targets didn't help. And as Coyne noted, the CPPIB's active investment strategy in general has not improved financial returns, either.

On the contrary, since switching to active investing, the CPPIB has underperformed the index to a cumulative tune of about \$70-billion, or nearly one-tenth of its current fund size. "The fund's managers," Coyne concluded, "have spent nearly two decades and a total of \$53-billion trying to beat the market, only to produce a fund that is nearly 10-per-cent smaller than it would be had they just heaved darts at the listings."

Scrapping net-zero commitments won't turn that awful track record around overnight. But it's finally a step in the right direction.

Matthew Lau is an adjunct scholar with the Fraser Institute. *The Hill Times*

# Canada's water is a strategic asset, so let's treat it like one

Continued from page 6

solutions to Canada's water crisis, AquaAction has been advocating for two years for this kind of bold innovative thinking. And we are ready to help mobilize the water innovation ecosystem around it to achieve maximum impact. This is about more than technology. It's about defending Canada's sovereignty, boosting our economy, and building water diplomacy with the U.S.

The need for innovative solutions to water problems could not be greater.

Repeated droughts in the Prairies are forcing difficult decisions about how to allocate water for farmers and other industries. Canada's advantage as a hydro-electricity superpower is increasingly vulnerable to shifting snow-packs and rainfall patterns.

There is no food or energy security without water security. Canada must move urgently to support technologies and policies that safeguard our water resources. Done right, Canada will grow our reputation beyond being hewers of wood and drawers of water, or being focused on raw resource exports—we'll export innovative water technologies.

Canada's blue economy—the sustainable use of freshwater resources—is already generating jobs and innovation. But we're only beginning to tap its full potential. At AquaAction, we see this enormous potential every day.

In Jasper National Park, we supported RHST Technologies to restore water quality after the devastating wildfires. Their technology treats stormwater runoff contaminated with ash and heavy metals, a growing issue across fire-prone regions.

In Quebec, we are working with Biocene, a startup that can remove toxic algae from the Lachine Canal and convert it into clean bioenergy.

In the Prairies, AquaAction is working with Indigenous and government groups to create a first-of-its-kind tool that can best allocate scarce water resources in real time to respond to drought.

These solutions exist. What they need is scale, and the political will to back them.

Last year, the federal government took a major step towards addressing the co-ordination of Canada's water issues with the creation of the Canada Water Agency (CWA).



To secure Canada's national water and economic security, we need coherent federal-provincial partnership and barrier-free markets, writes Soula Chronopoulos. *Unsplash photograph by Yoann Boyer*

Headquartered in Winnipeg, the CWA is well-positioned to catalyze Canada's water innovation economy, by aligning new data and science strategies with this promised water tech fund.

To secure this country's national water and economic security, we need coherent federal-provincial partnership and barrier-free markets. This water tech security fund should incentivize provincial investments while boosting water-related intellectual property

development, domestic commercialization, internal market access, and export promotion.

Canada has the talent, the tech, and the trust to lead the world in freshwater protection.

Water is not infinite. It is not guaranteed. But if we protect it, it can be a source of strength, security, and shared prosperity for generations to come.

Soula Chronopoulos is the president of AquaAction, a not-for-profit dedicated to building a water-secure future by fostering a

new generation of entrepreneurs to transform ideas to market-ready solutions to pressing water issues. Chronopoulos is a member of the Forum for Leadership on Water and the Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters. She has been recognized as one of Canada's Top 100 Female Entrepreneurs by Profit Magazine, and currently lectures at the McGill Desautels School of Business on entrepreneurship and sustainability in retail.

*The Hill Times*

## OPINION

# If Carney wants to transform the economy, he needs to fix the housing crisis

Whether it's attracting investment, ensuring labour mobility, or improving productivity, housing is what makes economic growth and transformation possible.

Tim Richter, Pedro Barata, Janice Myers & Ray Sullivan

Opinion

Federal and provincial leaders recently signalled a new era of collaboration—one focused on transforming Canada's economy for a more secure and competitive future. The success of this work hinges on tackling the housing crisis. And for Canadians, it's personal.

Whether it's a young couple in Regina trying to save for a down payment, a family in Vancouver squeezed into a too-small apartment, a low-wage worker in Halifax couch-surfing to keep a roof over her head, or a senior in Mississauga facing homelessness after renoviction, the housing crisis is everywhere, and it's getting worse.

The good news is that housing sector organizations have the solutions, and the new government seems ready for the scale of action and innovation Canadians need. Prime Minister Mark Carney and Housing Minister Gregor Robertson committed to bring in a housing plan with a level of ambition not seen since the Second World War, including support for homebuilding innovation that will lower costs and speed up delivery. But the housing crisis is a shared problem, and solving it requires shared determination. Provinces and local governments have critical roles in reducing building costs and timelines, and improving supply chains. Bringing together all orders of government, new private investment, and the best work of the housing sector is the best shot at success.

We need a Team Canada effort that draws on the unify-



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and Housing Minister Gregor Robertson committed to bring in a housing plan with a level of ambition not seen since the Second World War, write Housing Canada Coalition representatives. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia



A rental building at 178 Nepean St. in Ottawa on Aug. 6, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ing moment we're in, one where our entire nation is focused on securing our economic future and quality of life. Whether it's attracting investment, ensuring labour mobility, or improving productivity, housing is what makes economic growth and transformation possible.

To meet this moment for Canadians, we need the prime minister to bring together provinces, territories, and communities, leveraging the expertise of the housing sector, to develop a formal agreement with clear targets, timelines, co-ordination, and accountabilities.

No matter what, Canadians can't afford to wait for action—

every day means more people at the breaking point. That's why we've identified four priority areas where progress can make the biggest difference.

First, the federal government must take younger Canadians' dream of homeownership seriously. For a generation priced out of the market, homeownership has come to symbolize more than just shelter—it's about stability, and a future they can build toward. With non-condo ownership housing starts at their worst level since the 1990s, a GST rebate for first-time home buyers is a good start, but we need to go further. That means unblocking housing supply, addressing

financing barriers, and ensuring the housing system is working for young Canadians, not against them.

Second, tackling surging homelessness is foundational for solving the housing crisis. Right now, 53 per cent of Canadians are worried about losing their home or becoming homeless due to trade turmoil. A national housing agreement needs to include the creation of a housing safety net to protect Canadians from losing their homes, along with shared targets for homelessness reduction, supported by a housing strategy that prioritizes deeply affordable community and supportive housing.

Third, we must make serious investments to double the supply of non-market community housing. These homes play a vital role in meeting the needs of those facing the most severe housing challenges, while also stabilizing the broader housing market. The proposal to create a new federal agency, Build Canada Homes, presents an opportunity to drive this expansion. However, progress must not stall while the agency is being established. The federal government must continue funding and financing new non-profit community housing developments in parallel, meeting the urgent need for these critical projects.

Fourth, specific and sustained investments are needed to address the housing needs of displaced and dispossessed First Nations, Inuit, Métis, Status, Non-Status, and Status Unknown Indigenous Peoples living in various communities across Canada without dedicated support. Indigenous Peoples experience some of the deepest housing gaps in Canada. Tackling the housing crisis will require a rapid and large-scale expansion of culturally appropriate, for-Indigenous, by-Indigenous housing solutions.

The Housing Canada Coalition stands ready to partner with our new government to build the stable housing system we need for a secure and competitive economy. With clear next steps, the expertise of housing and homelessness organizations, and strong leadership founded on intergovernmental collaboration, we can build a Canada where everyone has a safe, affordable place to call home.

Let's get building.

Tim Richter is president and CEO of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. Pedro Barata is the president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity Canada. Janice Myers is the CEO of The Canadian Real Estate Association. Ray Sullivan is the executive director of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association. The Housing Canada Coalition is a partnership between the four represented organizations. As organizations across the housing continuum, coalition members have a shared stake in finding solutions so every Canadian has a safe, affordable place to call home. Learn more about our plan at [www.endthehousinggame.ca/plan](http://www.endthehousinggame.ca/plan).

*The Hill Times*

## NEWS

# ‘Action, not words’ needed to cool potential long, hot One Canadian protest summer, says Liberal strategist

Despite an adjustment to the Liberals’ ‘public-facing’ message on Bill C-5, Nishnawbe Aski First Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler says their approach has been ‘a huge step backward’ on the path to reconciliation.

Continued from page 1

The One Canadian Economy Act includes two parts. The first aims to eliminate interprovincial trade barriers and establish free trade inside Canada, while the second—the Building Canada Act—gives cabinet broad powers to approve and fast-track infrastructure and energy projects if they are deemed to be in the “national interest.” Those projects would be assessed based on five criteria, including whether they will boost Canada’s economy, strengthen its “autonomy, resilience, and security,” contribute to “clean growth,” and “advance the interests of Indigenous peoples.”

“If you pass this Bill C-5, it will be a long, hot summer,” Fiddler said on June 17. “We will not sit idly by and watch any government, whether it’s Ontario or Canada, come to our territory and take whatever they want, because it is ours.”

Alongside a simultaneous protest on Parliament Hill’s front lawn, which drew more than 300 people from those First Nations, Fiddler’s warnings were echoed by Kebaowek First Nation Chief Lance Haymond during the bill’s marathon one-day clause-by-clause study at the House Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities committee on June 20. Haymond said “the process that led to Bill C-5 is a case study in how not to engage with Indigenous nations.”

“The conditions for an Idle No More 2.0 uprising are being written into the law as we speak,” Haymond told the committee during the last round of witness testimony.

Grand Chief of the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta Trevor

Mercredi told the committee that “the last thing we want to do is hold up industry and projects with court cases.” But given the lack of prior consultation, “this is exactly where it’s headed,” he said.

While the bill passed through the committee largely unchanged, it was amended by MPs to ensure it could not override laws like the Indian Act, the Canada Labour Code, and the Criminal Code, and to require the government to publish the conditions of project approval. However, most environmental laws can still be circumvented.

In an interview with *The Hill Times* on June 19, Fiddler said that by passing the bill despite the protests, press conferences, and committee testimony, the government has sent the signal that “even if they heard the message, they did not listen.”

“They’ve heard the message loud and clear, but they’re still adamant about following through with this process. It’s very disappointing,” Fiddler said.

Fiddler said that while former prime minister Justin Trudeau may not have accomplished everything he set out to do, “he made the effort to build a respectful relationship with First Nations that was based on trust and mutual respect.”

“The actions of Carney’s government on C-5 are a huge step backward in that relationship,” Fiddler said. “The trust and respect that’s been built over some time is pretty much gone.”

Carney has attempted to emphasize the importance of Indigenous consultation and



Amid growing threats of a renewed Idle No More summer, Prime Minister Mark Carney held a press conference following Bill C-5’s passage through the House of Commons on June 20 to clarify and emphasize that ‘free, prior, and informed consent’ is ‘embedded in the plan.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler speaks during a press conference held by the Chiefs of Ontario in the West Block on June 17 to voice their opposition to Bill C-5, which he says does not fulfill Canada’s constitutional obligations to Indigenous Peoples. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

consent for projects to move forward, and sought to make that message more explicit following the bill’s passage at third reading last week.

“These projects will build our national economy—and through Indigenous equity and resource management, these projects will be built with Indigenous nations and communities,” Carney told reporters at a June 20 press conference in the House foyer. “This is not an aspiration. It is the plan embedded in the bill itself.”

During the press conference, Carney also emphasized that Indigenous communities will be meaningfully consulted when determining projects of national interest and developing the conditions for each project, and that

the legislation would “be in alignment with UNDRIP [the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples] and therefore respect the principle of free, prior, and informed consent.”

“It’s the right thing to do,” Carney said, adding that to “build trust and build shared leadership ... the first thing we will do to launch the implementation of this legislation in the right way is through full-day summits with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis rights holders, leadership, and experts.”

Carney announced that he, “responsible ministers,” and public servants would hold the first of those meetings in Ottawa with First Nations rights holders on July 17. Inuit leaders would follow later that month, and Métis leadership “soon thereafter,” Carney said.

“First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples know the best steps to take for the future of their communities and what meaningful consultation means for their lands,” Carney said.

However, when asked whether he would provide the same assurances as the provinces have been given in the legislation that if they oppose a project that needs their territory or their resources, a “no” will be a full sentence, Carney didn’t directly answer the question. Instead, he suggested such questions should be framed more positively around how to get to a “yes.”

“Nations are built in partnership ... positively, not negatively,” Carney said.

“We’re looking for those projects that will build the nation

positively,” he continued. “Projects don’t move forward unless you have that partnership ... that’s what the positive aspect of free, prior, and informed consent means, and that aspect begins now.”

When asked whether his recent emphasis on Indigenous consultation was a “recalibration” in response to the pushback and potential protests from Indigenous groups, Carney said that while the “spirit” of Indigenous consultation and partnership was always “the first obvious thing,” he admitted he had not “clearly” articulated that intention.

Indigenous Services Minister Mandy Gull-Masty (Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou, Que.) said that while that message of partnership may not have been sufficiently “public facing,” it’s the same one she has heard from her one-on-one conversations with the prime minister, as well as in cabinet and from caucus.

“I’m very pleased that with the passing of this bill, now the real work begins,” Gull-Masty said.

Former Liberal cabinet staffer Olivier Cullen said that while the House’s amendments to C-5—specifically the exclusion of the Indian Act from the laws the proposed legislation could override—and the commitment to “working in the spirit of free prior and informed consent” are both a “positive sign,” repairing the damaged relationship and trust requires “action, not just words.”

“It’s just shocking that they didn’t see this coming,” said Cullen, a former acting chief of staff to then-Indigenous services minister Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay-Superior North, Ont.), who now serves as jobs and families minister.

“The concern isn’t about Indigenous people trying to halt, slow down, or stop projects—there are First Nations that are desperate for some of these projects to get going—the problem is you can’t supplant treaty rights with national interest projects,” explained Cullen, now a director with BlackBird Strategies.

“I understand why the government wants to move quickly on this, and why the majority of Canadians want this type of bill to be passed because we are in a critical moment and things need to happen quickly, but things can happen quickly, but also respectfully,” Cullen said. “They need to take a little time to get things right.”

The Senate will continue to sit this week to vote on the bill, but the Red Chamber has also adopted a motion to limit its study to fast-track its passage before the summer.

On June 11, the government’s representative in the Senate, Senator Marc Gold (Stadacona, Que.), passed a motion to fast-track and time-limit debate, with second reading to begin and end on June 25, followed by the same limit for third reading on June 26. Additionally, the motion dictates “no further debate or amendment be permitted at any stage,” and that “no motion to refer the bill to committee be received,” with the final vote on the legislation required by 5:30 p.m. on June 27.

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*The Hill Times*

## NEWS

# Dong settlement gives closure, but little clarity on foreign interference, say national security and intelligence experts

Continued from page 16

of foreign interference are levelled, noting that the Hogue Commission's final report had also cleared Dong of the specific allegations.

In the final report from the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference, Justice Marie-Josée Hogue wrote that classified intelligence she had reviewed "corroborates Mr. Dong's denial" that he did not suggest that the People's Republic of China should "hold off" on the release of Kovrig and Spavor, and "did not suggest that the PRC should extend their detention."

Former governor general David Johnston, appointed by then-prime minister Justin Trudeau in March 2023 as the special rapporteur assigned to investigate allegations of foreign interference in Canadian elections, had also questioned the veracity of the reporting.

"The controversy that led to my appointment arose out of media reporting by Global News and *The Globe and Mail* over the past several months, based on classified information," Johnston wrote in his first report released in May 2023, noting that "[m]uch of what was reported was based on limited intelligence."

"When viewed in full context with all of the relevant intelligence, several leaked materials that raised legitimate questions turn out to have been misconstrued in some media reports, presumably because of the lack of this context," it continues.

In a press conference following the report's release, Johnston said that, "in some cases," the materials he reviewed "tell a very different story than what has been reported to date."

"Foreign interference is not usually embodied in one-off pieces of intelligence," Johnston said.

National security expert Wesley Wark told *The Hill Times* that, partially due to the "irresponsible and sensationalized" handling of the intelligence leaks by the media, even after the settlement, there's little clarity on the case.

"I think there was a lot of smoke in this case, but not a lot of clarity," Wark said, pointing to last year's ruling against the motion to dismiss Dong's lawsuit, which found a lack of documentation to support the allegations.

In June 2024, an Ontario Superior Court judge ruled against Corus Entertainment's application to throw out the lawsuit, finding that the case was "worthy of the freedom of expression of an open court system."

Justice Paul Perell also found that the reporter behind the story could not provide "tangible [or] documentary corroboration" of the information provided by the confidential sources, had not personally reviewed a transcript of the conversation between Dong and the diplomat, and did not keep all of the notes that were used as

part of the reporting process. Those provided to the court did not reference Dong advising the Chinese diplomat to "delay" or "hold off" on releasing Kovrig and Spavor.

"It's particularly important when you're talking about national security issues, which go to the heart of the safety of this country, that you get the story right," Wark said. "I hope Global and all media organizations take that to heart."

However, Wark said "one lesson" from this experience "is that you don't want backbench MPs without any responsibilities or a particular mandate to engage in conversations that might impact Canadian policy with foreign diplomats."

"Party leadership needs to provide some clear rules of the road about caucus engagements with foreign officials, especially representatives of unfriendly countries," Wark said. "No political party—in office or otherwise—should want freelancing to happen."

However, Carvin said that while it may sound contradictory, she doesn't believe the lesson is that parliamentarians should never meet or speak with foreign diplomats, including those viewed as unfriendly or hostile to Canada. But rather, if they choose to do so, they need to be prepared to protect themselves, she said.

Carvin said, historically, there has been a solid "brick wall" between parliamentarians and Canada's intelligence services, but within the current environment and evolving foreign interference threats, that needs to be dismantled, at least partially.

Both Wark and Carvin agreed that intelligence officials need to improve their methods of briefing parliamentarians. With the passage of Bill C-70, the Countering Foreign Interference Act, in June 2024, Carvin said they will be able to do this more effectively.

"Whatever other questions surround Dong, no one ever really warned him because of how we structured intelligence and politics in this country," Carvin said, adding that while Dong's decision to meet with the diplomat was still his to make, she can't be certain he wouldn't have made a different one had he been better prepared.

"It's not the job of the intelligence services to tell politicians who they can and can't talk to, but it is their job to equip them to have those conversations in a way that protects them and the interests of their constituents," Carvin explained. "This never should have happened; his career was ruined as a result, and I can only wonder if he would have had a better chance if he had been better prepared."

"At the end of the day, it's still on him, but we have to better equip our MPs to understand the kinds of threats that are out there, and until very recently, we did not take that seriously."

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The Hill Times

## FEATURE

## Guyana hosts June fête

The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia



1. Toronto-based duo Django Pan Fyah entertain guests at Guyana's national day party at the National Arts Centre on June 2. 2. Liberal MP Greg Fergus, left, Guyanese High Commissioner Keith George, and his wife Anita Kapildeo. 3. Sylvie Bédard, Global Affairs Canada director general for Central America and the Caribbean, left, and George cut into the festive flag cake. 4. Dale E. Jones, counsellor at the Jamaican High Commission, left; George; Kapildeo; and Cindy Sauers, minister counsellor at the Guyanese High Commission.

## Israel marks national day



1. Israeli Ambassador Iddo Moed delivers a toast at his country's national day reception at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building on May 21. 2. Peruvian Ambassador Manuel Gerardo Talavera Espinar, left, and Uruguayan Ambassador Gustavo Alvarez Goyoaga. 3. Moed, left, his wife Betty Bat Sheva Oz Moed, Diane Marie Hoekstra, and her husband U.S. Ambassador Pete Hoekstra. 4. Croatian Ambassador Vice Skracic, left, and Bulgarian Ambassador Plamen Georgiev.

# Hill Climbers



By Laura Ryckewaert

## Ministers LeBlanc, Hodgson, Thompson make key staffing hires



Canada-U.S. Trade and One Canadian Economy Minister Dominic LeBlanc, left, Energy and Natural Resources Minister Tim Hodgson, and Fisheries Minister Joanne Thompson have further fleshed out their respective ministerial teams. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

For one, Samir Kassam is deputy chief of staff and director of policy to Natural Resources and Energy Minister Tim Hodgson.

Privy Council President and Intergovernmental Affairs, Canada-U.S. Trade, and One Canadian Economy Minister **Dominic LeBlanc**—say that five times fast—is making progress in firming up his team, with directors of communications and operations now confirmed.

Tapped to oversee operations for LeBlanc is **Alex Axiotis-Perez**, who's been doing the same for the minister since the start of 2023, beginning during LeBlanc's time as then-minister of intergovernmental affairs, infrastructure, and communities.

LeBlanc has since also been minister of public safety, democratic institutions, and intergovernmental affairs; and minister of finance and intergovernmental affairs.

Since interning with the Liberal research bureau over the summer of 2018, Axiotis-Perez has worked as a constituency assistant to Quebec Liberal MP **Emmanuella Lambropoulos**, and as a scheduling assistant to LeBlanc as then-intergovernmental affairs, northern affairs, and internal trade minister. In January 2020, she joined then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau's** office, initially as special assistant to his

chief of staff **Katie Telford**. About a year and a half later, Axiotis-Perez was promoted to policy adviser in the PMO, and in 2022, became a tour advance—her last role before exiting to once again work for LeBlanc.

Leading communications for the minister is another familiar face: **Jean-Sébastien Comeau**.

Comeau has been director of communications to LeBlanc since September 2024, and has been working for him since May 2021, beginning as a press secretary and communications adviser in LeBlanc's office as then-intergovernmental affairs minister and Privy Council president. Before then, Comeau was working for the federal agriculture minister. Initially hired as a special assistant to then-minister **Lawrence MacAulay**, Comeau was kept on after **Marie-Claude Bibeau** took over the portfolio in March 2019, and by 2020 had been promoted to press secretary.

Also in place tackling communications for LeBlanc are **Gabriel Brunet**, who continues as press secretary and senior communications adviser to the minister, and **Eve Loignon-Giroux** as senior communications adviser.

Brunet was first hired as press secretary to LeBlanc in September 2024, fresh from the environment minister's office where Brunet had been working since February 2021, starting as a special assistant for communications to then-minister **Jonathan Wilkinson** and ending as

parliamentary affairs adviser to then-minister **Steven Guilbeault**. Prior to joining Wilkinson's office, Brunet had most recently worked for public relations firms **Mongeau Pellerin** and **Torchia Communications**.

**Loignon-Giroux** has been working for LeBlanc since 2023, and previously interned in his office as then-intergovernmental affairs minister and Privy Council president.

As previously reported by *Hill Climbers*, **Brandan Rowe** is chief of staff to LeBlanc.



Samir Kassam is deputy chief of staff and director of policy to Minister Hodgson. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

There are likewise a handful of staff updates for Energy and Natural Resources Minister **Tim Hodgson**, including the hiring of **Samir Kassam** as deputy chief of staff and director of policy.

Kassam had been policy director to Hodgson's portfolio predecessor, **Wilkinson**, since the start of 2024, beginning as director of policy for sustainable resource development specifically before becoming director outright last summer.

A former assistant to then-Ontario Liberal MP **Kyle Peterson**, Kassam first joined the natural resources minister's office at the end of 2018 as executive assistant to the chief of staff to then-minister **Amarjeet Sohi**. **Seamus O'Regan** took over the portfolio following the 2019 election, and Kassam became a legislative assistant and assistant to the parliamentary secretary, then parliamentary affairs and policy adviser, and finally issues manager and policy adviser before exiting to join then-trade minister **Mary Ng's** team after the 2021 election.

Kassam worked as a policy adviser, and later senior policy adviser, to Ng for a little more than two years in all before returning to the natural resources office.

**Angelo Molhem** is staying with the energy and natural resources office, and has been elevated to senior parliamentary affairs and Quebec adviser to Hodgson.

Molhem has been with the office since November 2023, beginning as a parliamentary affairs and Quebec adviser to then-minister **Wilkinson**. According to his LinkedIn profile, he helped oversee Get Out The Vote efforts in Quebec during the recent federal election.

Also so far hired to stay on in the office under Hodgson are **Arash Randjbar** as senior digital adviser, and **Charlotte Power** as issues and communications adviser.

A former reporter with the *Daily Hive* in Vancouver, Randjbar was first hired to the energy and natural resources office by then-minister **Wilkinson** this past January. Before then, he'd spent a few months as a special assistant for communications to then-Treasury Board president **Anita Anand**. Randjbar is also a former digital producer with Global Affairs Canada, amongst other past experience.

Power was previously an issues management adviser in the office under **Wilkinson**—having been hired this past September—and tackled communications for Wilkinson's successful re-election campaign in North Vancouver-Capilano, B.C., this past spring.

As previously reported, **Eamonn McGuinty** is chief of staff to Hodgson.

Fisheries Minister **Joanne Thompson** has also named a director of policy for her office, at least for the interim.

**Kurtis Layden**, who was most recently director of policy to Guilbeault as then-environment minister, is set to lead policy work in Thompson's office until the end of this summer.

Layden previously spent close to a year as policy director to then-fisheries and oceans minister **Joyce Murray** between the end of 2022 and early fall of 2023. A past assistant to then-Liberal MPs **Matt DeCoursey** and **John Aldag**,

Layden landed his first cabinet-level job in early 2019 when he was hired as an Atlantic adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to then-environment minister **Catherine McKenna**. He stayed with the office through to the end of 2022, becoming a parliamentary affairs and policy adviser after **Wilkinson** took over as environment minister following the 2019 election, and later senior policy adviser after **Guilbeault** took it over following the 2021 election. When he returned to the environment office in 2023,

Layden was initially hired as a senior policy adviser; he was promoted first to director of climate and energy policy last year.

**Andrew Richardson** is set to continue as director of issues management and parliamentary affairs to the fisheries minister, a role he'd filled under then-fisheries and oceans minister **Diane Lebouthillier** since following the minister to the portfolio in the summer of 2023.

Richardson previously worked for Lebouthillier as then-national revenue minister, starting in early 2020 as an issues manager and assistant to the parliamentary secretary. He was promoted to senior adviser for issues management and parliamentary affairs roughly a year later, and then director of parliamentary affairs a few months after that.

Richardson is also a former manager of political insights and strategy with National Public Relations.

Also confirmed on Thompson's team is senior adviser **Morgan McCullough**.

McCullough started his Hill career as an assistant to British Columbia Liberal MP **Patrick Weiler** in 2016—he recently once again helped Weiler get re-elected this past spring—and got his first ministerial gig in July 2021 when he was hired as a policy and Pacific regional adviser to then-fisheries and oceans minister **Bernadette Jordan**.

Not long after the July 2023 shuffle that saw B.C. Liberal MP **Terry Beech** added to cabinet, McCullough left the fisheries office to become director of operations to Beech as then-citizens' services minister. McCullough left Beech's office this past October and joined then-innovation minister **François-Philippe Champagne's** team—his most recent post.

As reported, **Neil MacIsaac** is chief of staff to Thompson. [lryckewaert@hilltimes.com](mailto:lryckewaert@hilltimes.com)  
*The Hill Times*



Arash Randjbar is a senior digital adviser to Minister Hodgson.

Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Morgan McCullough is a senior adviser to Minister Thompson. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Kurtis Layden will be interim policy director to Minister Thompson until the end of the summer. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



# 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](mailto:news@hilltimes.com) by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.

## National Indigenous History month event featuring author Phyllis Webstad happening at Library and Archives Canada on June 26



Orange Shirt Day founder Phyllis Webstad will facilitate a dialogue around the Indian Residential School system, education, awareness, and healing at Library and Archives Canada on June 26. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

### SUNDAY, JUNE 22—WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25

**Prime Minister to Visit Brussels, The Hague**—Prime Minister Mark Carney will travel to Brussels, Belgium, and The Hague, the Netherlands, to participate in the Canada-EU Summit and the NATO Summit from Sunday, June 22, to Wednesday, June 25.

### MONDAY, JUNE 23—SUNDAY, JUNE 29

**Ottawa International Jazz Festival**—The Ottawa International Jazz Festival once again shines a national spotlight on Canadian jazz with a stellar lineup that stretches from coast to coast to coast. The Jazz Fest started on Friday, June 20, and will run until Sunday, June 29 in Confederation Park and other downtown locations. Details: [ottawajazzfestival.com](http://ottawajazzfestival.com).

### 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](http://nato.int).

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25

**Conference: 'Pluralism, Security, and the Future of the Transatlantic Alliance'**—The Canadian International Council co-hosts this conference, "Pluralism, Security, and the Future of the Transatlantic Alliance," exploring the intersection of pluralism, security, and transatlantic partnerships in an evolving global order with an emphasis on how Canada and Germany, as well as other G7 nations, can collaborate to strengthen inclusive societies and enhance stability. Wednesday, June 25, at 8:30 a.m. ET at the Global Centre for Pluralism, 330 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Details: [thecic.org](http://thecic.org).

**Panel: 'Freedom to Move'**—As part of its CIPPIC Summer Speaker Series 2025, the University of Ottawa's Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic hosts "Freedom to Move," a panel discussion on labour mobility and non-competes with experts from McMaster University, the Competition Bureau, and more. Wednesday, June 25, at 1 p.m. ET at uOttawa, Fauteux Hall, 57 Louis-Pasteur Priv. Register via Eventbrite.

**Webinar: 'U.S. and Canadian PFAS Regulations for the Apparel Industry'**—The Canadian Apparel Federation and Marten Law host a webinar on complying with U.S. and Canadian regulations concerning per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), commonly known as "forever chemicals." Wednesday, June 25, at 2 p.m. ET. happening online. Register: [caf-fcv.ca](http://caf-fcv.ca).

**GRIC Spring Social**—The Government Relations Institute of Canada's board of directors hosts a toast to the end of the parliamentary session and to welcome the summer. Wednesday, June 25, at 5 p.m. ET at Beyond the Pale Taproom, 21 George St., Ottawa. Register: [gric-irgc.ca](http://gric-irgc.ca).

**Webinar: 'Is the Pivot Possible?'**—The Canadian International Council hosts a webinar, "Is the Pivot Possible? Evaluating Economic Diversification Options in the Age of Trump," featuring former co-CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada Paul Evans, and retired diplomat and host of the *Global Exchange* podcast Colin Robertson. Wednesday, June 25, at 6 p.m. ET happening online: [thecic.org](http://thecic.org).

### THURSDAY, JUNE 26

**Sharon Musgrave is Retiring**—After 35.5 years at the CBC, Sharon Musgrave is ready to travel, sit on the dock and ski her butt off. Come and raise a glass to Musgrave, a friend and colleague. Thursday, June 26, 6 p.m. (speeches begin at 7 p.m. ET). The Met, 700 Sussex Dr, Ottawa. Please RSVP: [rosemary.barton@cbc.ca](mailto:rosemary.barton@cbc.ca).

**A Discussion with Phyllis Webstad**—Library and Archives Canada and the Ottawa Public Library host an event in honour of National Indigenous History month featuring author Phyllis Webstad. Founding member of Orange Shirt Day and CEO for the Orange Shirt Society, Webstad will facilitate a dialogue around the Indian Residential School system, education, awareness, and healing. Thursday, June 26, at 7 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St. Register via Eventbrite.

### FRIDAY, JUNE 27

**Fireside Chat: 'Global War and Chaos'**—The Royal Canadian Legion hosts a fireside chat on "Global War and Chaos: How Did We Get Here and What's The Solution?" featuring retired general Walter Natynczyk and retired general David Lord Richards

of Herstonceux. Friday, June 27, at 7 p.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

### SUNDAY, JUNE 29

**Ottawa Commission on the Future of Ireland**—Sinn Féin has conducted commission events the length and breadth of Ireland. Ottawa is the next stop as Sinn Féin encourages the Irish diaspora in Canada to have a say in Ireland's constitutional future. Featuring Sinn Féin TD Rose Conway-Walsh. Sunday, June 29, 2-5 p.m. ET at Saint Brigid's Centre for the Arts, 310 Saint Patrick St. Details via Eventbrite.

### 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.

### TUESDAY, JULY 1

**Beaumont Hamel and the Somme Anniversary Ceremony**—A ceremony will take place commemorating the 109th anniversary of the battles of Beaumont Hamel and the Somme. Tuesday, July 1, at 8 a.m. ET at the National War Memorial, Elgin at Wellington Streets, Ottawa. Contact: 613-406-1414, [herb@herbdavis.net](mailto:herb@herbdavis.net).

**Canada Day in Ottawa**—Prince Edward, the Duke of Edinburgh, is expected to be in Ottawa for Canada Day festivities. Official celebrations will take place on the main stage at LeBreton Flats Park from 9 a.m. to 10:15 p.m. ET. Other events include the Changing of the Guard on Parliament Hill at 10 a.m., the Snowbirds aerial show at 4 p.m., and fireworks by the War Museum at 10 p.m. ET. Details: [canada.ca](http://canada.ca).

### 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](http://caricom.org).

### SATURDAY, JULY 5

**Canada First Stampede Barbecue**—The Conservative Party of Canada hosts its Canada First Stampede

Barbecue at the Calgary Stampede. Saturday, July 5, at 5:30 p.m. MT at Heritage Park, 1900 Heritage Dr. SW, Calgary. Details online.

### WEDNESDAY, JULY 9

**Panel: 'Reforming Access to Information'**—As part of its CIPPIC

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Summer Speaker Series 2025, the University of Ottawa's Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic hosts a panel discussion on "Reforming Access to Information," featuring Information Commissioner Caroline Maynard, freelance journalist Dean Beeby, Canadian Press reporter Jim Bronskill, and access to information activist Ken Rubin. Wednesday, July 9, at 1 p.m. ET at uOttawa, 302 Fauteux Hall, 57 Louis-Pasteur Priv. Register via Eventbrite.

**Lawn Summer Night**—Cystic Fibrosis Canada's annual lawn bowling fundraiser is switching things up this year in Ottawa. We're condensing the excitement into one epic evening instead of four. Invite your friends out to come watch, and get ready for cold drinks and great prizes. Wednesday, July 9, at 6 p.m. ET at the Elmdale Lawn Bowling Club, 1 MacFarlane Ave., Ottawa. Details: [lawnsunnernights.com](http://lawnsunnernights.com).

### THURSDAY, JULY 10

**Webinar: 'Navigating Telecom Regulation'**—*The Hill Times* and *The Wire Report* host a subscriber-only webinar, "Navigating Telecom Regulation: A Conversation with the CRTC," exploring what the CRTC's updated strategic vision means for small and medium telecom players, which regulatory resources are available, and what to expect from key ongoing proceedings. *Wire Report* editor Hannah Daley will moderate the discussion featuring the CRTC's Leila Wright, executive director, telecommunications; and Scott Hutton, vice-president, consumer, analytics and strategy. Thursday, July 10, at 11 a.m. happening online. Details: [tinyurl.com/487b2kbh](http://tinyurl.com/487b2kbh).

### THURSDAY, JULY 10—SUNDAY, JULY 20

**Ottawa Bluesfest**—Ottawa's Bluesfest returns for 10 days featuring a lineup of musicians from a variety of genres including blues, world music, alternative, rock, jazz, funk, soul, rap, folk, urban, and more. Thursday, July 10, to Sunday, July 20 in LeBreton Flats Park, Ottawa. Details: [ottawabluesfest.ca](http://ottawabluesfest.ca).

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