



Trump wants to be king

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Will NDP emulate New York City's Mamdani?

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Exclusive opinion: inside

THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR, NO. 2237

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NEWS

Federal major projects office 'should not take the place of proper consultation with First Nations,' says AFN national chief

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak of the Assembly of First Nations said that while it's too early to comment on Ottawa's plan to develop a federal major projects office supported by an Indigenous advisory council, such an office mustn't take away from speaking to Indigenous rights holders regarding projects of national interest.

"We're fine with it, but at the same time ... that should not take the place of proper consultation with First Nations on any project," said Woodhouse Nepinak. "What is the makeup of that [advisory council]? What is the composition of that? We look forward to hearing more from the federal government on their thoughts and plans on that. And, of course, dialogue needs to go both ways."

The One Canadian Economy Act, or Bill C-5, received royal assent on June 26. The legislation enacts the Building Canada Act, which is intended to speed up the approval and development of "national interest projects" (NIPs) by streamlining the federal regulatory process. To help implement this process and to serve as a single point of contact, a new major projects office will be established, and supported by an advisory council with First Nation, Inuit, and Métis representatives, according to an Intergovernmental Affairs press release on June 26.

Few details have yet been announced regarding either the major projects office, or the advisory council.

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NEWS

Chants of 'shame' erupt at Conservative AGM in GTA after organizer 'unfairly' disqualifies a slate of 30 candidates

BY ABBAS RANA

Some Conservative Party members in the Greater Toronto Area are calling out a regional party organizer for "unfairly" block-

ing a slate of 30 candidates from the riding's board of directors election at its recent annual general meeting.

At issue is the June 25 meeting where two competing slates of candidates were vying for

positions on the Mississauga-Erin Mills, Ont., electoral district association's (EDA) board of directors. The party constitution permits

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THE WORLD, ACCORDING TO COYNE

Globe and Mail columnist Andrew Coyne talks about his new book, *The Crisis of Canadian Democracy*.



In his new book, *The Crisis of Canadian Democracy*, Andrew Coyne unpacks how parties choose their leaders, how the leaders control their MPs, and how the shortcomings in Canada's electoral system are putting a squeeze on democracy. It's not pretty. Read the Q&A by Peter Mazereeuw on p. 20.

Handout photograph courtesy Sutherland Books and illustration/design by The Hill Times' Neena Singhal

Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

Anaida Poilievre really doesn't care, do you?

Anaida Poilievre wants you to know she's unbothered by social media vitriol, and you shouldn't be, either.

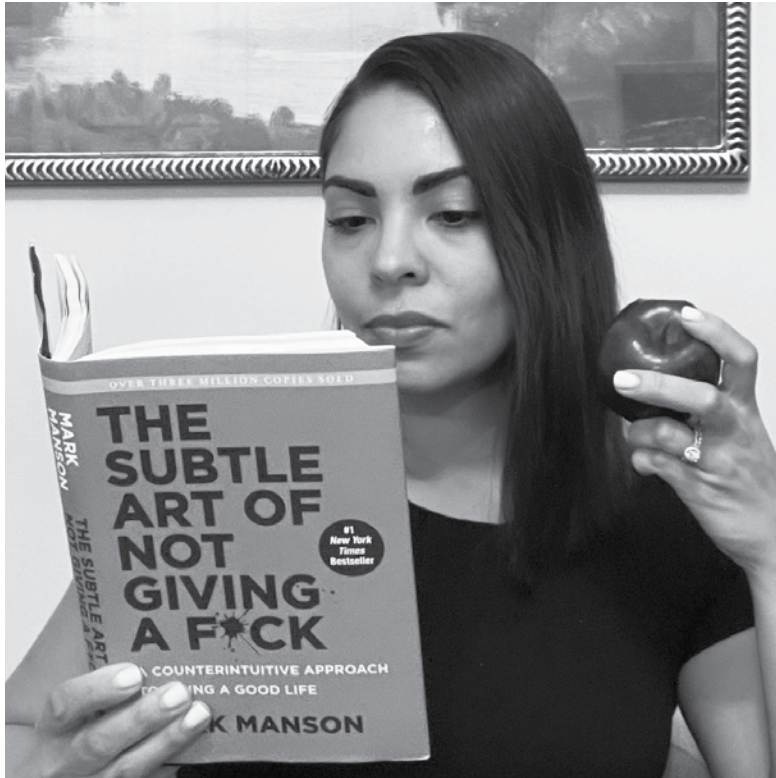
In a June 29 post, "The Art of Not Caring: Social Media Hate? Not My Problem" on her 10-year-old blog *Pretty and Smart Co.*, Conservative Party Leader **Pierre Poilievre's** wife writes about how reading the online comments isn't something on which she's going to waste her time.

"When I published my recent piece 'Has Society Become Too Promiscuous?' on *Pretty & Smart Co.*, I knew it would spark conversation. What I didn't anticipate was the sheer volume of vitriol that would follow or how utterly unbothered I would be by it," Poilievre wrote.

"Not indifference born of numbness, but a profound sense of clarity about what deserves my emotional energy and what doesn't."

The accompanying photograph of the author eating an apple whilst reading **Mark Manson's** book *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* channels both her husband's viral apple-eating interview from 2024, and the message on the jacket worn by United States **Melania Trump** in 2018, which read: "I really don't care, do u?"

Mrs. Poilievre noted that Manson's premise that "we all have a limited amount of emotional energy to give in life, so we better choose wisely where we spend it," has inspired her.



Anaida Poilievre, wife of the Conservative Party leader, says Mark Manson's book has inspired her not to waste her time on letting social media comments bring her down. Photograph courtesy of X

"The secret to a good life isn't eliminating problems or avoiding criticism. It's choosing the right problems and caring about the right things," she wrote.

"This doesn't mean I'm immune to criticism or that I never doubt myself. It means I've

learned to distinguish between criticism worth considering (thoughtful disagreement from people I respect) and noise worth ignoring (anonymous vitriol from people who don't know me)," she wrote, encouraging her readers to do the same.

Two films spotlighting Canadian political crises part of upcoming REEL Politics Film Festival

The anticipated lineup for the movies to be shown at the REEL Politics Film Festival this fall has been released, including two Canadian films touching on actual domestic political crises.

"Ottawa people: save these dates for [eight] great evenings of movies about politics," posted event organizer **Bruce Anderson** on X on June 28, plugging this year's fundraising event for the **Jaimie Anderson** Parliamentary Internship and scholarship fund at Carleton University.

As **Heard on the Hill** first reported on May 12, the film festival is a new event that the fundraiser organizers are trying out starting this fall. It will take the place of the one evening of music in Wakefield that they've done for the past few years.

The two Canadian films on the eight-film slate are 2020's *Beans*, a coming-of-age drama directed by **Tracey Deer** and set in 1990 during the Oka Crisis at Kanesatake, Que.; and 1974's *Les Ordres*, a docu-drama about the 1970 October crisis directed by **Michel Brault**.

There are two European films on the schedule. *The Battle of Algiers* is a 1966 Italian-Algerian war movie directed by **Gillo Pontecorvo** about the 1954–1962 Algerian War. And 2017's political satire black comedy *The Death of Stalin* is a French-British-Belgian co-production by **Armando Iannucci** and starring **Steve Buscemi**, **Jason Isaacs**, and **Michael Palin**.

The remaining films are all American, starting with 1957's *A Face in the Crowd* starring **Andy Griffith** and **Walter Matthau**; *All the President's Men*, a 1976 mystery thriller with **Robert Redford** and **Dustin**



Tracey Deer's 2020 film *Beans*, and Michel Brault's 1974 film *Les Ordres* are the two Canadian films out of the eight that are expected to be screened at the REEL Politics film festival this fall. Screenshots courtesy of YouTube

Hoffman; 1997's *Wag the Dog* comedy/drama with Hoffman and **Robert De Niro**; and 2005's thriller *Good Night and Good Luck* with **George Clooney**.

Tickets are anticipated to go on sale later this month. The films will be screened at the ByTowne Cinema at 325 Rideau St.

Three ex-parliamentarians, PMO's new chief of staff among July 1 Order of Canada recipients



Among the 83 Canadians invested into the Order of Canada on July 1 were former Senators **Claudette Tardif** and **Bob Runciman**. *The Hill Times* photographs by Jake Wright

Speaking of **Bruce Anderson**, the president of Spark Advocacy was one of 83 Canadians who received the Order of Canada on July 1. Anderson was recognized as being "one of our country's leading opinion researchers" as well as for his co-founding the aforementioned **Jaimie Anderson** Parliamentary Internship.

Other notable inductees who are ex-parliamentarians are former Liberal deputy prime minister **John Manley**, who was promoted within the Order to the rank of companion; retired Conservative Senator **Bob Runciman**, who sat from 2010 to 2017 following 29 years in Ontario politics as an MPP and cabinet minister; and former Alberta Liberal Senator **Claudette Tardif**, who was commended for her "exemplary commitment" to promoting minority language rights in Canada. Tardif sat in the Senate from 2005 until her early retirement in 2018.

Then there's a tranche of former senior public servants—many from the health sector—who were inducted, most notably Dr. **Theresa Tam**, the Public Health

Agency of Canada's former top doctor; former deputy health minister Dr. **Stephen Lucas**; and the country's first chief public health officer **David Jones**, who helped create the agency. Two other former civil servants are from the world of foreign affairs: former ambassador and G8 summit sherpa **Donald Campbell**, and former ambassador **Alexandra Bugailiskis**, now chair of the UNU Institute for Water, Environment and Health.

Other notable names from the Ottawa bubble who joined the Order are lawyer **Maureen McTeer** who is also married to former prime minister **Joe Clark**; retired senior public servant, arts patron, and philanthropist **Susan d'Aquino**; Canadian military and veteran law practitioner **Michel Drapeau**; and Prime Minister **Mark Carney's** incoming chief of staff **Marc-André Blanchard** who was recognized for his "outstanding contributions to Canada and its economic development, both domestically and internationally" in his varied career as lawyer, ambassador to the UN, and in the private sector.

Rose LeMay's book makes *The Globe's* bestsellers' list

The Hill Times columnist **Rose LeMay's** recently published book *Ally is a Verb: A Guide to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*, cracked the *Globe and Mail's* top 10 list of Canadian non-fiction books on June 28.

LeMay's book, published by Strong Nations Publishing, is one of three books on the list on the topic of reconciliation. **Bob Joseph's** 2018 book *21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act*, published by Indigenous Relations Press, appeared in seventh place. And **David A. Robertson's** book *52 Ways to Reconcile*, published by McClelland and Stewart, remains in the fourth spot where it had been the previous week. It has been on the bestseller list since it was released back in May.

Clinching top place on the list is Prime Minister **Mark Carney's** 2021 book *Value(s)*, which has been on the bestseller list since at least April.

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Rose LeMay is the author of *Ally Is a Verb*. Handout photograph

CORRECTION:
The Hill Times, July 2 issue

Re: "The failed \$5-billion program the feds can't shake" (Les Whittington, *The Hill Times*, July 2, 2025, p. 9). This column had indicated that the current Phoenix pay system backlog was at 450,000. However, Public Services and Procurement Canada's most recent numbers indicate the current backlog is 320,000, which included the roughly 150,000 cases that have been unresolved for more than a year. *The Hill Times* apologizes for this error.

Carney Liberals missed winning majority by only 60 votes despite 19.5-million votes cast in last election, say pollsters

The April 28 election proved yet again why ground game is critical in the outcome of every election, says pollster Nik Nanos.

BY ABBAS RANA

If the Liberals had won just 60 more votes in the three ridings they lost by the narrowest margins in the April 28 election, they could have formed a majority government, say pollsters.

According to Elections Canada, a total of 19.5-million votes were cast in 343 ridings across the country. The Liberals won 43.7 per cent of the vote and secured 169 seats—just three short of a majority in the 343-member House of Commons. The Conservatives received 41.3 per cent of the vote and captured 144 seats. The Bloc Québécois—which fields candidates only in Quebec—and the New Democratic Party each garnered 6.3 per cent of the vote, with the Bloc winning 22 seats and NDP taking seven. The Greens earned 1.2 per cent of the vote and managed to win just one seat.

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

The three ridings that the Liberals lost by the narrowest margins—and a win in these could have secured a majority government—were: Nunavut, where incumbent NDP MP Lori Idlout won by 42 votes; Terra Nova–The Peninsulas, N.L., where Conservative MP Jonathan Rowe won by just 13 votes; and Windsor–Tecumseh–Lakeshore, Ont., where Conservative Kathy Borrelli edged out a win by only five votes.

“When we’re talking about 60 votes, it’s realistically a ground war,” said Nik Nanos, founder and chief data scientist for Nanos Research, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. “It all comes down to the ground game for all the parties in those three ridings.”

Stephen Carter, an Alberta-based political strategist, said the election results reinforced the old cliché that every vote counts. He said that in every campaign, there’s always the potential to



Prime Minister Mark Carney, center, walking on Sparks Street on May 2, 2025. “It all comes down to the ground game for all the parties in those three ridings,” says pollster Nik Nanos (not pictured). *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

mobilize 20 to 40 more supporters, and Liberal campaign managers are likely regretting not doing more to get their base to the polls.

“As long as both teams did the best that they could do, then this is probably the outcome that was destined to be,” said Carter, who helped out rookie Liberal MP Corey Hogan (Calgary–Confederation, Alta.) in his successful election campaign.

“But I’m sure that there are some campaign managers and candidates kicking themselves, saying that, if only we’d done ‘X’ or ‘Y,’ [they could have won these ridings],” said Carter.

In Terrebonne, Que., Liberal candidate Tatiana Auguste won by a single vote, narrowly defeating Bloc Québécois incumbent Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné. However, the result may still be overturned, as the Bloc has taken the matter to court. The dispute involves a mailed-in ballot cast in support of the Bloc that was returned to the voter due to an incorrect postal code on the return envelope. Elections Canada has acknowledged the error, and the Bloc is now requesting that the court order a new election in the riding.

“If you think about it nationally, it’s easy to sort of imagine your vote doesn’t matter, but this is a good example that on the local level your vote really,

really does matter,” said pollster Janet Brown, in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

“And in terms of ‘get out the vote,’ this is, again, why ground game matters so much. People mostly focus on the national campaign, but the people who work in the local campaigns [are] the unsung heroes who distribute the lawn signs and knock on the doors. This election just really proves how important those people are, that those are the people who have to make sure they drag every single vote out for their candidates.”

In Windsor–Tecumseh–Lakeshore, Borrelli surprised many by winning the seat in the traditionally left-leaning region where Liberal and NDP candidates typically prevail.

In Terra Nova–The Peninsulas, a riding held by former Liberal MPs Churence Rogers and Judy Foote since 2015, Pierre Poilievre’s Conservatives clinched victory by 13 votes. On election night, former veteran CBC Radio host Anthony Germain, the riding’s Liberal candidate, was initially declared the winner by 12 votes, but a recount reversed the result, confirming Conservative Rowe as the elected MP.

Nanos said one of the key reasons the Liberals won the last four elections—with three of those resulting in minority

governments—was the party’s superior voter efficiency.

“This is about as close as you come to forming a majority government without forming one—60 votes out of almost 20 million votes,” said Nanos. “So what we’re seeing, at least, is that every single election, where the Liberals have formed a minority government, they seem to be getting more efficient and they’re getting closer and closer to a majority.”

Prior to the 2015 election, the Conservatives were known for their voter efficiency, but that changed in 2015 when Justin Trudeau’s Liberals won a landslide majority. Since then, the Liberals have been beating all parties in their voter efficiency.

According to a Nanos Research poll released last week, the Liberals were leading with 44.5-per-cent support nationally, followed by the Conservatives at 31.4 per cent, the NDP at 12.8 per cent, and the Greens at 2.5 per cent. Since the election, the Liberals have been in a honeymoon phase, and are now enjoying a 13-point lead.

Nanos said that, based on his polling, if an election were to be held now, the ridings of Terra Nova–The Peninsula and Windsor–Tecumseh–Lakeshore would still be a tossup with the Liberals at an advantage, but that Nunavut would still be won by the NDP.

Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, said it was “very difficult,” for national campaigns in the last election to be focused on individual seats. He referred to the April 28 contest as a “political war of movement” election that was marked by major swings in public opinion.

Lyle explained that for nearly 18 months leading up to January, the Conservatives held a strong double-digit lead over the Liberals, who were led at the time by then-prime minister Justin Trudeau. At that point, it seemed the Liberals would be lucky to win even 60 seats.

However, the political landscape changed dramatically after Trudeau announced his exit plans back in January, and a trade war triggered by United States President Donald Trump became a top-of-mind issue for Canadians. This led to a rally-around-the-flag effect, which benefitted the Liberals.

Current Prime Minister Mark Carney’s (Nepean, Ont.) decision earlier this year to seek the Liberal leadership further boosted the party’s fortunes, given his strong background in finance and his reputation as a seasoned executive who was best placed to handle international economic tensions. These developments helped the Liberals regain lost political ground, and the momentum carried through to election day.

Based on these developments, Lyle said that it’s unrealistic to expect field teams to keep pace with fluctuating voter sentiment, especially since organizing get-out-the-vote efforts takes weeks. One of the biggest challenges in identifying voter trends, Lyle said, is that most people no longer answer their phones. As a result, campaigns now rely heavily on social media and door-to-door canvassing to identify trends, which takes a long time.

He also pointed out that the three ridings the Liberals narrowly lost are in different regions of the country, each with its own dynamics. Nunavut, for example, is geographically vast but sparsely populated, and most residents’ primary language is neither English or French. In Windsor–Tecumseh–Lakeshore, the collapse of the NDP vote was a key factor, while the Conservatives performed strongly with the “hard hat” or blue-collar vote. Similarly, oil has an important local impact in rural Newfoundland because the province has their own offshore oil resource. There are many Newfoundlanders who work in the oil industry in their own province as well as in Alberta, which makes it an important local issue.

“This election was fundamentally about emotions,” said Lyle. “So, it was the anger and betrayal of older Canadians and Carney being seemed to be the better voice that caused older Canadians to move. But they didn’t move because they’re old. They moved because they were way more angry [about the] trade [war with the U.S.] than younger Canadians, who were way more focused on affordability.”

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NEWS

Queer Senators now outnumber MPs on Pride Caucus, as group looks to include allies



The Senators who sit on the Canadian Pride Caucus are Duncan Wilson, top left, Kristopher Wells, Kim Pate, René Cormier, bottom left, Marnie McBean, and Martine Hébert. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and courtesy of the Senate of Canada and the office of Senator Duncan Wilson

St-Onge, Seamus O'Regan, and Randy Boissonnault—all one-time Liberal cabinet ministers—each did not seek re-election in 2025, nor did former NDP MP Randall Garrison.

April's election only added one new face to the group: first-time Liberal MP Ernie Klassen (South Surrey—White Rock, B.C.), who is set to co-chair alongside Wells.

McBean told *The Hill Times* the caucus made her realize that “there’s a responsibility” in Canada “to not necessarily be vocal,” but to be visible as a queer person on the Hill.

“It might set an example, or just a sense that there’s others out there for other parliamentarians in other countries who aren’t in a country that has the same openness and inclusion that we have,” said McBean, who came out later in life after she’d retired from Olympic sports.

“I tend to take for granted the ease at which I say ‘I’m gay,’ or the ease at which I say ‘I have a wife,’” she said, acknowledging that progress came from “the hard, hard work, and hard times of others.”

“I try not to move through the spaces thoughtless, but with with gratitude of that.”

Senate a place to ‘work for’ queer rights, says Cormier

Cormier said it’s important to have queer people involved in studying legislation, but admitted that as a young gay person growing up in a small town in New Brunswick, he didn’t always realize why. Cormier, who moved to Montreal in 1974 amid the “sexual revolution” of the 1970s, said he didn’t understand “the amount of work” that needed to be done to advance and protect queer rights.

“When I came into the Senate, that’s where I first realized ... how much rights are important,” he said. “More than accepted, I felt that I was accepted also because I had rights. My community had rights. And I had to be aware of that, and work for those rights.”

The former actor, musician, and composer explained that earlier in his career people would often attribute his “difference” to his vocation, not his sexuality.

“I did, of course, struggle when I was young. I was really insecure with my identity,” he admitted.

“I would be, like, not comfortable meeting in meetings ... where there were a lot of straight guys around the table,” said Cormier, who previously chaired several arts organizations, including the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, and l’Association des théâtres francophones du Canada. “And I realized that later—really later—that I was putting myself down ... because I was insecure.”

Cormier said he had to work to “get over that,” and to “become who I wanted to be.”

In 1977, when Cormier was still living in Montreal, police raided two gay bars in the city—Truax and Le Mystique—and arrested 146 people. Cormier, who

Continued on page 5

Having a historic six openly queer Senators ‘comfortable’ with their identities and ‘not shy to say that they’re out’ is a step forward for representation, says Senator René Cormier, one of the founders of the now 10-member group.

BY ELEANOR WAND

In a historic moment for the Upper Chamber, Senators now outnumber MPs in the Canadian Pride Caucus, which has the group looking to include allies among its ranks, says Senator René Cormier, the caucus’ former co-chair and founding member.

Cormier (New Brunswick) says the appointment of four more openly 2SLGBTQIA+ Senators since the caucus was founded in 2022 is “very good,” noting that following the April 28 federal election, its MP membership numbers have dwindled from nine to four after several weren’t re-elected or opted not to re-offer, which made Cormier “quite nervous.”

The Red Chamber contingent of the 10-member caucus sits at six, marking a landmark first for an institution which has only seen



eight openly queer Senators in its history. They are Independent Senators Group (ISG) Senators Cormier, Martine Hébert (Victoria, Que.), Kim Pate (Algonquin Anishinabe Aki, Ont.), and Marnie McBean (Ontario); as well as Progressive Senate Group (PSG) Senators Duncan Wilson (British Columbia) and Kristopher Wells (Alberta), who is the co-chair of the caucus.

Cormier also says the caucus, which is a non-partisan group of parliamentarians who convene to discuss 2SLGBTQIA+ issues, is now looking to include allies in the mix.

“From what I see, the majority of Senators are very, very

good allies for LGBTQ communities,” he said, noting many already regularly participate in the caucus’ activities. “So, now we want to find a way to have them more included in the caucus itself.”

And having a historic six openly queer Senators who are “comfortable” with their identities and “not shy to say that they’re out” is a step forward for representation in the home of sober second thought, said Cormier.

“I think it’s an important message that it sent to not only parliamentarians, but to civil society and to the general population,” Cormier told *The Hill Times*. “I think it’s a great, great, great

moment not only for the Senate, but for all Canadians.”

Prior to the election, the caucus was co-chaired by then-NDP MP Blake Desjarlais, who was also the first openly two-spirit person to be elected to the House of Commons. Desjarlais lost his seat in the last election, as did caucus member and then-NDP MP Lisa Marie Barron.

Of the nine MPs who were originally members of the caucus, only three remain: Conservative MPs Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, Ont.) and Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, Ont.), and Liberal Robert Olinphant (Don Valley West, Ont.). Former caucus members Pascale

Continued from page 4

was almost caught in raids, said the event was an “important wake-up call” to the inequalities queer people faced in Canada.

“The next day, there was a big protest in Montreal, and that’s where I met my first partner, actually,” he said. “I started to be more aware that it was not easy, of course, to be gay, and there were a lot of problems.”

Protest efforts in Quebec and Montreal eventually led to legislative results: later that year, Quebec became the first province to amend its Human Rights Charter to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination.

Views from marginalized communities ‘vitally important,’ says Pate

Pate said many of her Red Chamber colleagues grew up in a generation where queer people felt that they had to be in the closet—herself included.

“We’ve grown up in a time when it ... certainly [was] not okay to be out,” she said, explaining that her father was in the military, which added to the pressure to hide her sexuality. “It would never have been encouraged for you to be out. And so most of us lived closeted for significant periods of our lives.”

Pate said that while the Senate is now “more representative ... than it ever has been” with Senators from marginalized communities in the Chamber, some legislation still doesn’t “enjoy the same sort of equality,” so it’s all-the-more important for the Senate to scrutinize bills with an eye to how they impact these communities, including Indigenous, queer, and racialized people.

“Bringing [marginalized] lenses to the work we do is, I think, vitally important for all of us,” said Pate, who led the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies for nearly 25 years prior to her 2016 appointment.

“I see myself as a public servant, and someone who should be working for the betterment of all people in Canada,” she continued. “But ... it’s often said that the Senate is supposed to represent minority interests, and so I see myself as responsible for really doing that work.”

Over the years, several political parties approached Pate about running for office, but she refused, saying that none of them had “sufficiently progressive social, economic, or health policies.”

But when she was nominated for the Senate by a group of Indigenous women in 2016—before the system was changed to an application process—Pate didn’t think “there was a hope in you-know-what” that she would be appointed. As “a pain in the butt of most parties,” Pate said she thought her activism for incarcerated, Indigenous, and lower-class people would take her out of the running for the opportunity.

But when it came, “I took it as a huge responsibility,” she said.

‘The pushback is quite scary,’ says Wilson

Wilson, who served as one of the first openly gay politicians in British Columbia, said that while Canada is “much better than most countries in the world,” when it comes to 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, there are some “early signs” of populism, and that is a “really big concern.”

“We’ve been sliding a little bit in recent years, and I think the sort of the wave of populism that we’ve seen south of the border—we’re not immune to that,” Wilson said. “In Canada, we are starting to see some of that.”

Wilson said he worries some are “sowing the seeds of hate,” which could take root here.

“I worry that some of the 2SLGBTQ issues get drawn into a broader narrative



PSG Senator Duncan Wilson, centre, pictured in the Senate with drag kings HercuSleaze, left, and Cyril Cinder, said he worries that Canada has been ‘sliding a little bit in recent years’ when it comes to queer rights and acceptance. Photograph courtesy of the office of Senator Duncan Wilson

around sort of this populist push, that sort of ‘anti-woke’ [agenda] and all of that,” he said. “This pushback is quite scary, frankly, because we’ve become so accustomed to Canada being a very open and accepting place.”

Wilson also pointed to his home province where recent public comments and actions from B.C. MLAs have come under fire.

Most recently, Conservative MLA Heather Maahs hosted a reception for the Association for Reformed Political Action, a Christian advocacy group that is opposed to same-sex marriage, abortion, and gender transitioning for youth, at the B.C. legislature. The April 29 event was attended by more than a dozen Conservative MLAs, including the party’s current leader, John Rustad.

On June 10, Wilson rose for the first time in the Senate—but it was not to speak on the economy, as the former executive imagined for his first Chamber address. Instead, he rose in support of Bill S-218, which, if passed, would amend the Constitution Act to add conditions to the notwithstanding clause that would limit Parliament’s power to invoke it.

The clause has previously been used at the provincial level to push through controversial legislation. In his speech, Wilson highlighted its use in advancing anti-queer legislation, and spoke about his personal experience growing up as a young gay person.

“In 1982 ... a young teenaged boy struggled with the realization that he was attracted to men,” Wilson said. “He felt ashamed as he fought, unsuccessfully, to deny his feelings. Self-hate and thoughts of self-harm were part of his daily life.”

“In December 1996 ... as he was walking home from the pub with some friends, a car screeched to a halt and three male teenagers leaped out of the vehicle. ‘You are going to die, faggot’ was among the slurs shouted as one of the teenagers fractured the face of the young man with a tire iron,” Wilson said.

“That once-young man now stands before you in the Senate of Canada.”

In 2023, the notwithstanding clause was invoked in Saskatchewan to pass the controversial Bill 137, which many 2SLGBTQIA+ advocacy organizations have denounced. The bill requires that all children under the age 16 have parental consent to change their names or pronouns in schools, which some fear could lead to

students being outed to unsupportive parents, among other concerns.

Wilson said though the speech left him “a bit vulnerable,” the response from other Senators has been “overwhelmingly supportive,” and that he deliberately chose a different, more personal tactic to deliver his message.

“[It] was an emotional speech for me to give,” he said. “I felt that was taking huge risks for my first time in the Senate. And I have ... had so many Senators come up to me and just say how much more important it was.”

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NEWS

Environment groups want ‘national interest’ defined in Liberals’ One Economy law

The government needs to have a ‘national conversation’ about what it means to have a project meet Bill C-5’s criteria, says Anna Johnston, a staff lawyer with West Coast Environmental Law.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Critics of the Liberals’ recently passed One Canadian Economy Act are urging Ottawa to consult with the public to define what “national interest” means when it comes to major projects amid concerns the legislation will be used to bypass regulations intended to safeguard the environment.

“I think the first order of business is to convene a national conversation about what it means to be in the national interest. This can’t be a definition that governments and [project] proponents alone come up with. We’re still a democracy. This is an important moment in our time,” said Anna Johnston, a staff lawyer with West Coast Environmental Law.

“We could have that conversation over the summer, figure out what national interest looks like in 2025 for Canadians, and then come up with that definition and some actual criteria for how projects are qualified.”

The controversial One Canadian Economy Act, or Bill C-5, made swift progress through the House and Senate last month after being tabled on June 6 by Canada-United States Trade and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.). It received royal assent on June 26. The first half of the bill focuses on addressing barriers related to interprovincial trade and labour mobility through the implementation of the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act, while the second half of the legislation enacts the Building Canada Act, which intends to speed up the approval and development of “national interest projects” (NIPs) by streamlining the federal regulatory process.

Johnston told *The Hill Times* that the legislation offers the federal government two ways to potentially bypass environmental laws.

Under the Building Canada Act, the governor-in-council may



Canada-United States Trade and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc said in a June 26 press release that the One Canadian Economy Act ‘will help attract investment in big nation-building projects that create good-paying jobs, connect our country, and ultimately reduce our reliance on the United States.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

designate a member of the King’s Privy Council for Canada as “the minister” for the purposes of the act, and that minister would have decision-making authority when it comes to NIPs. That minister would issue a single, all-in-one document that functions as the authorization under various pieces of legislation in respect to a project, rather than multiple ministers issuing individual regulatory decisions.

“What that means is that, with this wave of a pen, any prerequisites for getting those authorizations under other laws are deemed to have been met,” said Johnston.

As an example, Johnston talked about how the construction of a hypothetical mining project could be expedited under the Building Canada Act.

“Under the Fisheries Act ... there’s a regulation saying that to get a section-35 authorization, the proponent has to have an offsetting plan for how it’s going to build an equal amount of habitat as the habitat that it’s destroying with the mine,” she said, but that the all-in-one document as outlined under the act “magically deems” an offsetting plan has been created, because that document is deemed to have met all requirements under the Building Canada Act.

Johnston also raised concern about section 22 of the Building Canada Act, which states that the governor-in-council may, on the recommendation of the minister responsible for the enactment, make regulations that exempt a NIP from the application of any provision of that enactment or any provision of regulations made under that enactment.

“Through section 22, the governor-in-council can make regulations saying that certain laws just don’t apply to the project at all,” she said.

When it comes to the federal government’s decisions about

what environmental regulations will be followed, “the devil’s in the details,” according to Johnston.

“Because of these two—the deeming provision and then the cabinet’s authority to make regulations—it’s really going to be up to the minister to decide whether or not the conditions that he imposes in this conditions document live up to the standards of other laws, and it’s up to cabinet to decide whether to make regulations allowing projects to be exempt from laws,” she said.

“They could, theoretically, ... still impose the same kind of standards and requirements on proponents as they would for any other project. The thing that worries me is that Parliament has given cabinet this power to erode those standards or bypass them. But they don’t have to.”

According to the Building Canada Act, the decision whether to designate a project as being in the “national interest” is to be based on factors such as whether the project would strengthen Canadian autonomy, resilience, and security; provide economic or other benefits to the country; have a high likelihood of successful execution; advance the interests of Indigenous Peoples; or contribute to clean growth and to meeting Canada’s objectives with respect to climate change.

Now that the bill has received royal assent, Johnston argued that a clearer definition of what constitutes the “national interest” is required.

“The factors in the bill, they keep getting talked about as if they’re criteria, but they’re not. They’re just factors that the government may or may not consider when deciding whether a project is in the national interest,” she said. “There’s at least, I should say, potential for this ability to come up with clear criteria to really clarify what we mean when we say we want to prioritize this particular project approval. The second, I

think, is to convene a national conversation on which projects we actually want to go ahead.”

Through a June 27 press release, Ecojustice also called for Ottawa to work with the public, Indigenous leaders, and civil society organizations to define “national interest” for the purposes of the bill.

Since its introduction, the legislation has drawn polarizing reactions from representatives of Canada’s business and environmental groups.

Matthew Holmes, executive vice-president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, commended the House and Senate for the bill’s passing in a June 26 press release, and said the legislation has “the potential to overcome domestic challenges that have held the Canadian economy back for decades.”

In contrast, Environmental Defence argued in a June 24 press release that the legislation could jeopardize environmental protection and Indigenous rights, with Theresa McClenaghan, executive director and counsel of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, saying in the release that the bill fails to provide a legal framework that requires NIPs to be carried out in a manner that is “environmentally sound, democratically legitimate, and constitutionally robust.”

Thomas Green, senior climate policy adviser for the David Suzuki Foundation, argued that it is a myth that environmental regulations significantly slow down infrastructure projects. In an interview with *The Hill Times*, he cited a study released in 2024 by researchers from Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia, which looked at mines in British Columbia and found that, while regulations were cited as a factor in delays for some projects, the more common cause of delay was economic factors, particularly fluctuating commodity prices.

“That process of review has advantages, and in many cases, developers come up with projects [and] design them with the impact assessment process in mind, and come up with better projects and the kind of projects we want to see go ahead,” said Green.

“We’re fearful that we’re going to end up with projects that are poorly conceived. It might actually slow projects down, because even though they get approvals quickly, then there’s more protests and dissent about going ahead with them.”

Green told *The Hill Times* that now that the One Canadian Economy Act has received royal assent, the David Suzuki Foundation is

advocating that the government prioritize NIPs that “make sense.”

“One is electricity—growing more renewables, energy storage, energy efficiency, and really expanding the national transmission system, because that will improve the resilience of your overall grid. It will enable more use of renewables. It helps electrify the economy, which can be Canada’s competitive advantage,” he said.

“On transportation, we can be doing a lot more to support light-duty vehicles and medium- and heavy-duty vehicles charging—so, building out charging infrastructure. We’d also like to see a lot more emphasis on national transit as a ... nation-building project.”

Bill C-5 is not ‘a blank cheque for mining,’ says EY leader

To help serve as a main point of contact for project proponents, the federal government will launch a major projects office in “the coming weeks,” according to a June 26 press release from Intergovernmental Affairs.

Energy Minister Tim Hodgson (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.) said on May 23 in Calgary that the federal major projects office would reduce approval schedules for nationally significant projects from five years to two.

Theo Yameogo, who leads EY’s metals and mining practice for North America, told *The Hill Times* that the promise of expedited project approvals provides clarity, and is not “a blank cheque for mining.”

“People are not going to be more cavalier in getting permits done because that’s not how the sector sees itself. The sector wants to be great environmental stewards, but also wants to be welcome in the communities. The government cannot provide that level of community integration or community relationship through bills. It doesn’t work like that,” said Yameogo.

“The government can put the bills forward to actually reduce the red tape and reduce the uncertainty of the timing of the permitting, but it’s up to the mining companies ... to make sure they have the approval and buy-in of the communities in which they operate. And that is not a bill. That is something metals and mining companies have been doing for years and have experience doing,” he added.

On the day that Bill C-5 came into force, the federal government promised to immediately move forward on consultations with provinces, territories, Indigenous Peoples and private sector proponents to identify nation-building projects.

“The One Canadian Economy Act is a crucial step in our commitment to driving economic growth that benefits every Canadian. It will help attract investment in big nation-building projects that create good-paying jobs, connect our country, and ultimately reduce our reliance on the United States,” said LeBlanc in the Intergovernmental Affairs press release.

jcnockaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



We Stand on Guard for Canada's Digital Sovereignty

OPEN LETTER to Prime Minister Carney on Re-setting Canada's Digital Policy Agenda

Canada Day, 2025

Congratulations on your election. We're encouraged by your promise of a new direction for Canada. For too long, Canada's federal government (whether Liberal or Conservative) has missed the opportunity to lead on digital policy innovation.

Here are some ways to re-set Canada's digital policy agenda and defend Canada's digital sovereignty:

1. launch a Canada-wide public consultation (including Indigenous rightsholders) on digital governance;
2. conduct an expert assessment of Canada's digital infrastructure;
3. publish the analysis that supports the government's investments in artificial intelligence;
4. reintroduce an improved modernization of Canada's private sector privacy law;
5. reintroduce an improved protection from online harms law;
6. localize Canadian digital infrastructure;
7. expand digital policy capacity across the federal government; and
8. establish an independent national observatory for digital governance.

See **Backgrounder** for details.

We look forward to working with your government, Indigenous rightsholders, and all stakeholders to ensure Canada's digital infrastructure remains strong and free.

Sincerely,

C.D.R.A. | CENTRE FOR DIGITAL RIGHTS
CENTRE POUR LES DROITS NUMÉRIQUES

Please sign [**here**](#) or email [**info@centrefordigitalrights.org**](mailto:info@centrefordigitalrights.org) to support this call to action.



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Editorial

Editorial

Axworthy’s not wrong: Carney does look like he’s taking a ‘bootlicking’ approach to Trump, so far

Prime Minister Mark Carney, who campaigned and won the recent federal election by promising to stand up for Canada, has so far acquiesced to United States President Donald Trump’s significant demands. Carney agreed to increase spending on our national defence to five per cent of our GDP, agreed to rescind our digital services tax on American tech giants, and seemed to suggest that Canada may take part in Trump’s Golden Dome, modelled after Israel’s Iron Dome. On the dome issue, Trump is now saying it would cost Canada \$61-billion, or we can participate for free if we become America’s 51st state. Hopefully, Carney is playing the long game here and will eventually fight back, but so far, at least publicly, he has not.

This is not standing up for Canada’s values.

Last week in a blog post, Lloyd Axworthy, who served as foreign affairs minister in prime minister Jean Chrétien’s cabinet and led the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines in countries around the world, accused Carney of taking a “bootlicking” approach to Trump, and in an interview with the Canadian Press, said Carney has to be principled, tactical, and pragmatic, but also tough. “Flattery is always part of the game, but you can take it to the point where you actually become unctuous,” Axworthy told CP.

In his blog post, Axworthy accused Carney and other world leaders of sucking up to Trump after agreeing to increase defence spending. “NATO

now risks letting one craven, mendacious man set the tone for a strategy of unrestrained militarism,” Axworthy wrote, calling Trump “abusive,” and a “racist bully.”

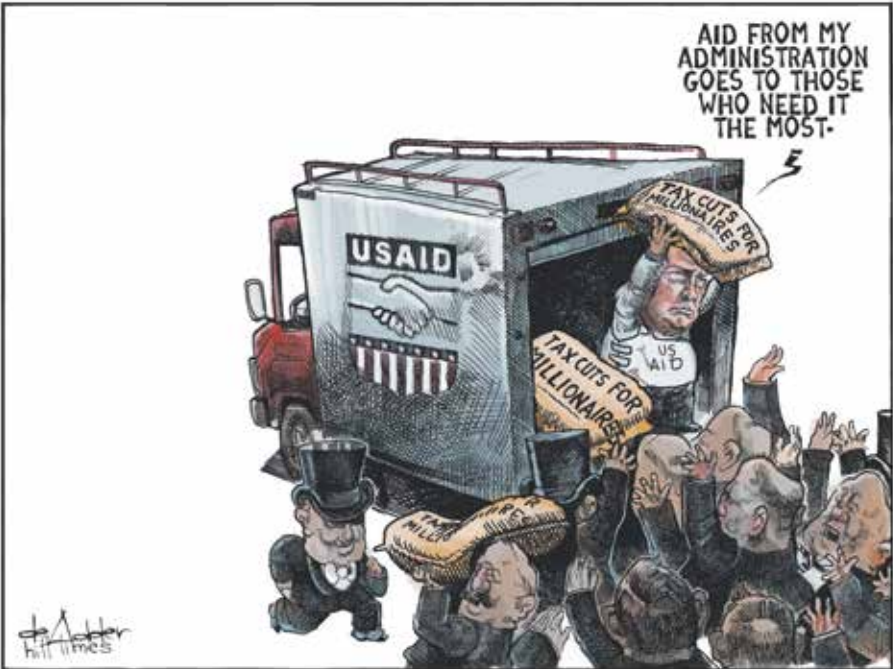
He continued: “When do we stop pretending it’s all part of some clever negotiating strategy that justifies bootlicking in hopes of tariff concessions?”

On the Golden Dome, the prime minister has vaguely suggested that everything is on the table to protect Canada, and that talks continue with Trump. But critics say the Golden Dome, which would supposedly protect the U.S. from rockets, could create an arms race. Carney is also now looking to join major European defence rearmament.

Axworthy made some other solid points. He said Carney should be defending this country’s values on the world stage, and should be focused on diplomacy rather than military spending, and investments in freshwater management as the world expects more droughts. He said Carney’s Bill C-5 undermines reconciliation with First Nations.

Carney is obviously talking to Trump behind the scenes, but he’d better start showing Canadians that he has some backbone, too. As difficult as it is to deal with this current American president, Carney’s long game should always be about defending Canada and Canadian values, as well as rallying other countries to do the right thing for the world.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor

Don’t ignore role of climate change: letter writer

Re: “Members’ statements from June 20,” (*The Hill Times*, letter to the editor, June 25, 2025).

The huge impact on Earth’s atmosphere from the release of gigatons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases is now being writ large in the many weather stories, and storm and temperature records being broken as we are now reading in our daily newspapers. The role of carbon dioxide in the atmospheric energy balance was published by United States scientist Eunice Foote in 1856!

Science is not an isolated, intellectual exercise; it is the observation of what is happen-

ing in the world and providing an attempt to understand the forces that make things control the way they are. The predictions of this process about climate change are now showing up as facts, and the criminals who caused it have been identified but have not yet been punished nor stopped. We are in deep trouble and conservative reticence in dealing with the situation, here in Canada, the U.S. and elsewhere, is terrifyingly concerning. Financial greed *must* certainly take a back seat to the survival of humanity.

Tom McElroy,
PhD, FCMOS, FRSC
Toronto, Ont.

Unpleasant truths about nuclear energy: letter writer

Re: “Public comment on nuclear regulator welcome, but misinformation is not: letter writer,” (*The Hill Times*, letter to the editor, June 23, 2025).

Jeremy Whitlock’s use of the term “robust” to refer to Canada’s nuclear regulatory regime made me laugh. Members of civil society have long found overuse of the term “robust” by staff of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) comical. Our international colleagues who work for nuclear responsibility say Canada’s nuclear governance is a laughing stock. Even the international nuclear industry noted the un-robustness of our nuclear regulatory regime in 2018 when it touted Canada’s “benign regulatory environment” as a reason to come to this country to experiment with so-called small, modular, nuclear reactors.

Canada’s nuclear governance regime is far from robust. It lacks checks and balances, and delegates virtually all governance responsibilities to the CNSC, which is widely seen to be captured by the nuclear industry and to promote the projects it is supposed to regulate.

The current CNSC president and his predecessor were both high-ranking nuclear industry executives immediately prior to their appointments, arguably violating the IAEA safety standard (GSG-12) that spells out the need for inde-

pendence of the regulatory body, stating that independence from the nuclear industry is needed.

Before joining the CNSC as president and CEO, Pierre Tremblay was president and CEO of AECOM Canada Nuclear Services, designer and promoter of the near surface disposal facility, the controversial giant nuclear waste dump on the shores of the Ottawa River upstream of Ottawa that is currently mired in legal challenges. This should have disqualified Tremblay for the position of CNSC president.

The CNSC’s predecessor, the Atomic Energy Control Board, had a dual mandate to promote and regulate the nuclear industry. The promotion role was eliminated when the *Nuclear Safety and Control Act* took effect in 2000. However, CNSC staff apparently didn’t get the memo. To this day, they unashamedly bend over backwards to give the industry whatever it wants. This results in patently absurd and dangerous actions such as lobbying to exempt small module nuclear reactors from environmental assessment, granting a construction licence for a nuclear reactor still in the design stage, and giving out 30-year licences for aging nuclear power plants.

Lynn Jones, MHSc
Ottawa, Ont.

The letter-writer is a member of Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County and Area.

COMMENT

Backing down on DST is understandable, but doing so on supply management would be another story

Trump will definitely be pushing hard for dairy concessions but Carney cannot afford to cave on supply management.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



To cave or not to cave, that is the question.

According to Karoline Leavitt, the White House's press secretary, Canada caved.

According to Prime Minister Mark Carney, his administration cancelled a tax initiative of the previous government in order to get trade negotiations back on track.

Carney knew there would not be too much push back in Canada since the tax was opposed by Conservatives and poorly understood by Canadians.

The trade-off of continuing negotiations in lieu of taxing American high-tech companies in the short term seems like a fairly easy call.

Many workers in the steel, aluminum, and auto industries are already seeing their jobs affected by American tariffs, so the sooner an agreement can be reached between Canada and the United States, the better.

But Leavitt's crowing from the podium did allow Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre to claim that the government has its elbows down in the fight for Canadian jobs.

To be fair, Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne's announcement of the cancellation of the Digital Services Tax was met with a major yawn by the public.

But those in the know understand that the tax mimicked a similar levy already imposed

by the European Union, with countries like France and Spain already imposing a three-per-cent tax on companies providing certain digital services. In France, the tax is levied on firms with global revenues in excess of 750-million euros and in excess of revenues of 25-million euros in France.

Turkey has a DST more than double that of EU countries, with the levy weighing in at 7.5 per cent.

Canada has been a leader in finding ways to fund local content via the tax system, and it was fully expected in the streaming world that the digital tax passed last year was untouchable. It was not widely debated and as late as last week, Champagne confirmed the tax would be going ahead.

That was then and this is now. Carney obviously took a look at the big picture and decided he could afford to cancel the tax with little political punishment.

But there are other elements facing much more opposition if Carney plans to meet the deadline of July 21 for a trade agreement

with the U.S. That was the timeline tentatively established by the American president and the Canadian prime minister at their G7 meeting in Kananaskis, Alta.

Trump keeps reinforcing his government's opposition to Canada's supply management system in our dairy industry.

That is one issue that is widely understood and broadly supported by all political parties.

It has even been subject to the provision that no government could eliminate supply management without a parliamentary vote.

The government and all opposition parties support the Canadian supply management system that limits imports of dairy products including milk and cheese, and adds heavy tariffs to some dairy items.

In reality, the heavy fees that Trump keeps referring to have never actually been applied because no American companies have imported enough dairy products into Canada to trigger the fee.

But on every occasion, Trump keeps referring to how "nasty"

Canadian negotiators are, and how he would like to see the dairy system released from any agreement on supply management.

This is one hurdle that Carney will not be able to bypass as easily as he did with the DST.

The Bloc Québécois and the Tories have already indicated their support for retaining supply management. The only party that opposes it is the People's Party, led by Maxime Bernier, which has no seats in Parliament. In fact, it was Bernier's opposition to supply management that cost him the Conservative Party leadership in 2017. He was leading in 12 rounds of voting against Andrew Scheer and eventually lost the Tory leadership because of the support Scheer received from dairy farmers in Quebec.

Carney is committed to the July deadline for a trade agreement, but the pursuit of a deal will definitely put supply management on the line.

And this is one area where "elbows up" is required on the Canadian side. Carney cannot afford to cave on supply management, and Trump will definitely be pushing hard for dairy concessions.

The political damage Carney would suffer from giving up on supply management is equally as important as the fight for steel, autos, and aluminum.

If Leavitt was crowing about Canada caving on the digital tax, she would be absolutely ecstatic if supply management were sacrificed to the larger trade agenda.

Carney's elbows up strategy has worked so far. But the stakes are getting higher.

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

The Hill Times

Will the NDP emulate New York City's Mamdani?

Just because a 'new American left' might be surging in the U.S., that doesn't mean it'll also happen here in Canada.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKVILLE, ONT.—Canada's New Democrats must be paying close attention to New York City politics.

After all, a recent mayoral primary race in that city may have dramatically changed the dynamics of left-wing politics in America.

I say that because the surprise winner of that primary was

Zohran Mamdani, an unabashed democratic socialist, who is promising to implement unabashed democratic socialist policies, including setting up government-run grocery stores, eliminating bus fares, and increasing taxes on the rich.

Basically, it's populism of the left and, as such, is a direct challenge to the American political establishment.

At any rate, it's now widely expected that Mamdani, as the Democratic candidate, will easily win New York City's mayoralty race in November.

Many are also expecting that such a victory would help to push the entire Democratic Party to the left.

As Stephanie Taylor, co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, put it, "Mamdani's likely victory shows that a new direction for the Democratic Party is possible—a future of dynamic candidates who appeal to young voters and

working-class voters with a platform that fights for people, not corporations."

So, given all this, it's easy to see why Canada's New Democrats might be taking an interest.

Perhaps they might see Mamdani's victory as providing them with an ideological road map to escape the political wilderness in which they currently find themselves.

And yes, that might be the case.

Keep in mind, the NDP was once more ideologically socialist, more closely tied to the working class, and more attuned to the problems of economic inequality than it is now.

However, about 15 years ago, to appear less frightening to middle-class voters, the NDP began shifting ideological gears, jettisoning much of its working-class rhetoric along with its pro-working-class agenda.

Essentially, the NDP moved towards the centre, occupying

pretty much the same ideological turf as Canada's Liberal Party.

In fact, in recent federal elections, the NDP marketed its then-leader, Jagmeet Singh, not as a left-wing populist champion who would stick it to the country's capitalist elite, but rather as a hip, cool, trendy politician who knew how to use TikTok.

That branding clearly didn't work.

So maybe it makes sense for the NDP to return to its working-class and socialist roots, to emulate Mamdani's unapologetic, left-wing messaging.

Certainly, such a strategy would help distinguish the NDP from the left-centrist Liberals, and it might even win back some voters who are currently attracted to the populist stances of the Conservative Party.

However, it should be noted that just because a "new American left" might be surging in the United States, that doesn't mean it'll also happen here in Canada.

In fact, I strongly suspect that Mamdani's success is an emotional reaction to the presidency of Donald Trump.

In other words, Trump's right-wing policies are energizing the American left.

That's the way it is in politics: extremism on one side feeds extremism on the other.

But in Canada, we don't really have that much in the way of political extremism.

Indeed, so far, Prime Minister Mark Carney is pushing an aggressively bland form of liberalism, while a demoralized Conservative Party is sitting quietly on the sidelines.

Polls have also shown that Canadians are more or less content with the status quo.

My point is, in such a humdrum political environment, there's not much material out there to fuel a far-left political uprising.

Of course, depending on what happens with the economy in the months ahead, that could quickly change.

So, it's possible that Mamdani might one day serve as an ideological and political role model for the NDP.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

It's Trump's world. Other world leaders are just living in it.

Donald Trump hates Canada's supply-management policies. What if he next says either you drop supply management as a policy of your country, or the trade talks end? Would Carney 'cave' again for pragmatic reasons?

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—Everyone knows, or ought to know by now, that United States President Donald Trump wants to be king. But do Canadians want to be his subjects?

The answer to that is a hearty "hell no." Every poll shows an overwhelming number of Canadians want no part of becoming America's 51st state. This year's Canada Day celebrations showed a greater-than-usual public love of country, and an appreciation of what it means to be Canadian. There is a simple reason for that outpouring.

Canadians want no part of a kingdom run by a convicted felon who likes to pardon criminals and wants to expand American territory. Panama Canal, Greenland, Canada—take your pick.

A king with a heartless deportation program that lands people without criminal records in prison camps like the newly opened "Alligator Alcatraz" in the Florida Everglades. Trump's joke about it? "We'll teach them how to run from alligators."

A king who recently called for the cancellation of the corruption trial of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump's buddy who runs the most far-right government Israel has ever seen. Never mind the Israeli justice system.

The aversion to Trump's suggestions regarding Canada was so intense that it changed the



U.S. President Donald Trump, right, meets with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney in the White House's Oval Office, on May 6, 2025. Official White House Photo by Emily J. Higgins

ballot question in this country's recent federal election.

It was no longer about the price of eggs, but the price of sovereignty. And that meant focusing on a single issue: who was the best person to deal with the very real threat to Canada posed by Trump?

Despite years of double-digit leads in the polls by the Conservative Party, the country chose Mark Carney and the Liberals for the job. Carney is a former central banker who is deeply experienced in finance, and a man of the world, as compared to Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, a lifetime politician with no private sector experience.

On the campaign trail, Carney promised an "elbows up" approach to Trump, and a stout defence of Canadian interests.

Carney also made some profound pronouncements. He said that the "special relationship" with

the U.S. was "over." He warned that tough times could be coming, as Canada transitioned into a new world of trade and alliances. But he assured the country that we could give ourselves more than the U.S. could ever take away.

Carney's handling of the U.S. president in early meetings more than met the standard of his election promises. He was firm yet civil with Trump, and certainly not obsequious. Trump never called him "Governor Carney," the demeaning phrase he hung on former prime minister Justin Trudeau. Perhaps in the most telling shift, Trump softened his 51st-state musings.

All of this makes the latest twist in the trade negotiations between Canada and the U.S. so mystifying.

At the demand of the U.S. president, Prime Minister Carney rescinded a multi-billion-dollar

digital services tax (DST) on the big U.S. tech companies operating in Canada. The DST had applied to Apple, Google, Amazon, and Meta. The last federal budget projected that the DST would bring in nearly \$6-billion over the next five years.

The thinking behind the DST was solid. It was aimed at preventing these American tech giants from generating profits in Canada and not paying taxes on them. Several European countries also have DST legislation, which is sometimes referred to across the pond as the "Amazon tax."

Trump called Canada's DST a "blatant attack" on great American companies, and claimed the European version of the tax was an "overseas extortion." And to show that he meant it, Trump gave Carney an ultimatum. He cancelled all trade negotiations

between the two countries until Canada got rid of the DST.

When Carney informed the president that the tax had been rescinded, the White House gloated. It boasted that Carney had "caved." Karoline Leavitt, Trump's press secretary, piled on with her own observation: "President Trump knows how to negotiate. ... Every country on the planet needs to have a good relationship with the United States."

No, Trump knows how to intimidate.

Poilievre was quick to pounce on Carney's "elbows down" dumping of the DST. He said that Carney should have gotten something for rescinding the tax, such as the U.S. dropping tariffs on Canadian softwood lumber. That is not an unreasonable expectation.

Carney obviously concluded that he did get something for dumping the DST in the reopening of vital trade talks with the U.S.

After all, Trump's ruinous tariffs are still on the books. As long as those tariffs are applied against our auto, steel, and aluminum industries, the Canadian economy is at grave risk.

So, in the national interest, Carney simply made a sacrifice that had to be made in hopes that an all-encompassing trade deal with a vital trading partner can be reached.

It is a plausible claim to say that Carney didn't cave, but merely adjusted to *real politik*. But plausibility is often the way to hell in politics. It is too often a retreat from principle, rather than an adjustment to reality. And Carney's decision is a case in point.

The first question about this regrettable decision is why the DST did not remain just another one of the contentious issues that should have been part of the trade negotiations?

Given the U.S. aversion to the tax, surely that could have been a bargaining chip in the talks. Why would Carney give up something that could have been used for getting something in return, such as relief from some of those ruinous tariffs?

But here is the bull's-eye on the political dart board: Trump has learned the lesson, as trumpeted by his White House, that he brought Canada to its knees with the threat of cancelling the trade talks.

Why does this matter?

It matters because a dreadful precedent has been set by Canadian negotiators. Since Trump has gotten his way on the DST, which is a matter of Canadian sovereignty, why wouldn't he invoke the same threats the next time he can't get his way in talks?

Let me give an example. Trump hates Canada's supply-management policies. He hates the fact that on agricultural products, America faces daunting tariffs in this country. What if he next says either you drop supply management as a policy of your country, or the trade talks end? Would Carney "cave" again for pragmatic reasons?

Though Carney, with all of the impossible cards he has been dealt, would do well to take those words to heart. Easier said than done.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

OPINION

The real Mark Carney is about to emerge

The new prime minister needs to come clean with the Canadian public. It is the existential threat of climate change, nuclear weapons, pandemics and forced migrations of peoples that also challenge Canada's security. Carney must think beyond NATO to be a credible leader.

Douglas Roche

Opinion



EDMONTON—Through adroit sleight-of-hand in signing on

to United States President Donald Trump's outrageous demand that NATO states spend five per cent of their GDP on defence by 2035, Prime Minister Mark Carney has extricated himself from the clutches of the avaricious U.S. president. But Carney now faces the biggest test of his professional career: his credibility. The real Mark Carney is about to emerge.

Carney knows full well that raising this country's military spending to \$150-billion a year—which is what five per cent of GDP would cost—would cripple the government's ability to meet Canadians' needs at home as well as humanitarian assistance abroad. The prime minister plunged ahead with this commitment to assuage Trump, and thus stay in his good graces in order to get a better deal for Canada in the ongoing tariff negotiations.

Because Spain—a NATO member—balked at Trump's five-per-cent demand, Trump instantly retaliated, stating at a press conference, "We'll make them pay twice as much on tariffs." Carney evidently saw that intimidation tactic coming.

The prime minister was also aware that NATO would review the five per cent pledge in 2029,

i.e., after Trump leaves office. This means that once Trump is out of power, the five-per-cent demand will lose its force and may fade away. So let's not worry about it today! For the moment, Trump is off our back.

Besides, Carney argues, part of the increased "defence" spending will actually go to ports, transportation, and the development of critical minerals. So all this is good for Canada's economy.

When I say that Carney's credibility is at stake, I do not mean his personal honour. Carney is a principled man, but he has become a pragmatic politician able to outmanoeuvre an opponent, and that is what he has done in the complicated work of re-setting Canada's economic and security relationship with the U.S.

Rather, his credibility will be challenged in measuring how he leads Canada in helping to build the conditions for sustainable peace. His book, *Value(s): Building a better World for All*, was about dedicating the market to help vulnerable people. So far, he has put all Canada's eggs in the military basket as if more armaments is the route to peace with social justice. And he has not

once caused this vital subject to be debated in Parliament.

As a former adviser to the UN secretary-general, he knows that the agenda for peace goes far beyond guns and involves vigorous diplomacy, boosting the Sustainable Development Goals, and a sturdy defence of international law. So far, Carney has been silent in these areas.

Worse, his government presented estimates this spring forecasting a 7.1 per cent decrease in Global Affairs Canada's \$8.4-billion budget. That includes an 11.3-per-cent decrease in "development, peace and security programming," going from \$5.6-billion in planned spending in 2024-25 to \$4.9-billion next year. It will be a tragic stain on Carney's place in history if he proves unable to champion the UN Charter's insistence that the "least" amount of money be spent on armaments.

What is most troubling about the prime minister's rush to boost military spending in Canada—at the expense of domestic needs in the health-care field, to say nothing of this country's deplorable low rate of foreign aid and virtual absence in the peacekeeping field, too—is the normalization of war thinking that is now sweeping through the Western world.

Disarmament campaigns are a thing of the past. The UN's "Agenda for Peace," concentrating on preventive measures to avert wars, is swept aside. The 2024 UN "Pact for the Future," which brought into sharp focus the need for a recommitment to

international cooperation based on respect for international law, shows little sign of being actually implemented.

Canadians have a right to expect a higher level of action by Carney in steering the country to greater involvement in building the conditions for peace rather than boosting militarism as the answer to the chaos of today. In order to demonstrate his credibility as an international leader, Carney must now recognize the importance of diplomacy, international development, and peacekeeping.

I am not alone in lamenting Carney's sense of direction. Alex Neve, the outstanding former secretary-general of Amnesty International, who is giving this year's CBC Massey Lectures, has expressed "a sense of dread that protecting human rights, addressing humanitarian needs and responding to the climate crisis are precisely the crucial imperatives that will be sacrificed to fund this massive military spend. We must push back."

The new prime minister needs to come clean with the Canadian public. It is the existential threat of climate change, nuclear weapons, pandemics and forced migrations of peoples that also challenge Canada's security. Carney must think beyond NATO to be a credible leader.

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

The Hill Times

Is Trump protecting tech billionaires in U.S. fight with Canada over digital services tax?

Canada should continue working with European partners and others, who are also likely to face similar threats on the digital tax from the U.S. president and his billionaire friends, with the goal of finally establishing global tax reform agreements.

Errol P. Mendes

Opinion



OTTAWA—On June 27, United States President Donald Trump stunned federal politicians

and trade negotiators in Ottawa when he decreed through his social media site, Truth Social, that he was ending all trade discussions with Canada due to this country's plan to impose a three-per-cent tax—set to come into effect on June 30, 2025—on the giant U.S. digital platforms that earn more than \$20-million in revenues in Canada. It should be remembered that the billionaire owners of some of these giant digital platforms, such as Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, and others, have indicated their support to the president, and were present at Trump's inaugural celebrations for his second election.

The president asserted that he demanded that the tax be removed before the negotiations could begin again. He further tried to rub salt in a growing trade wound that has already caused job losses in this country by asserting that he had "such power and all the cards" thereby implying that Canada would just have to give in to his demands. This is the same U.S. president that had agreed to the G7 partners and the world that he would negotiate a trade deal with

Canada and potentially reach an agreement within 30 days.

Perhaps it was not Canada that was the main point of this sudden attack, given the fact that these giant web sites have even more to lose in Europe. Austria, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom have each implemented a digital services tax; and other European nations have published intentions to implement similar taxes on revenues by these giant web sites in their countries. Some of these digital platforms pay little or no corporate taxes on their multi-billion-dollar revenues by shifting profits to low-tax jurisdictions and other complex tax loopholes.

Trump may be revealing a strategy to first focus our country for implementing this tax when he said he was upset that Canada was following a tax strategy similar to Europe's. In attacking Canada for this comparatively small tax, the U.S. president may be acting as the protector for the billionaires who have swung their support behind Trump, and is using the attack on us as a warning to the European countries with similar taxes.

There is an ancient Chinese saying that in an adversarial situation, the stronger party must kill the chicken to scare the monkey. Canada was the chicken that could be slaughtered because Trump wants to scare the European nations from implementing similar taxes on the digital platforms.

Our nation can't afford to be treated as the chicken in Trump's taxation and tariffs pot to scare off the European monkey. We could have fought back and shown that we have cards to play, including restricting electricity power as Ontario Premier Doug Ford suggested in the face of devastating tariff threats earlier this year. However, given our relatively smaller economy as compared to European economies, and the potential that there could be even greater economic damage to the auto, steel, and aluminum sectors—and potentially other sectors—it was not unexpected that Carney opted to rescind the tax.

However, Canada should continue working with its European partners and others who are also likely to face similar threats on

the digital tax from Trump and his billionaire friends. Canada should urge collective action with our partners in Europe and elsewhere with the goal of finally establishing global tax reform agreements preferably through multilateral organizations like the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

In the hope that fairness in the global economy will still survive after Trump departs from the scene, Canada should continue working with the 38 member countries of the OECD with the goal of ensuring that the giant digital platforms pay their fair share of corporate taxes in the post-Trump era. Hopefully by then, a future U.S. administration will understand that it is in its own economic interests to demand more from the digital billionaires with its own digital tax.

Professor Errol P. Mendes is editor-in-chief of the *National Journal of Constitutional Law*; president of the *International Commission of Jurists*, Canadian Section; and teaches law at the *University of Ottawa*.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Major projects beget major challenges

Mark Carney has demonstrated sure-footedness and confidence in his vision of transforming Canada's economic fundamentals. However, many of the high cards in his quest are not in his hands.

Nelson Wiseman

Opinion



TORONTO—Mark Carney is in a hurry. He is directing the public service to focus on results and hurry up on his government's priority: delivering major nation-building projects. On the heels of his personal election victory, Carney has a surplus of political capital and is rushing to take advantage before there is inevitable ebb. Public opinion supports accelerated timelines for infrastructure projects deemed to be in the national interest. The government is promising approvals for such projects within two years. However, many people, including some Senators, do not want to prioritize speed at the expense of environmental concerns, or without the concurrence of Indigenous Peoples and affected provincial governments. The prime minister wants to reconfigure Canada's economic foundations. Speed has often driven major projects in the past, from the canals and railroads of

Lower and Upper Canada in the first half of the 19th century to the transcontinental telegraph and railroads delivered by Confederation. In the 20th century, the colonization of the Prairies, the Trans-Canada Highway, the Trans Canada natural gas pipeline, and the St. Lawrence Seaway further bonded regions and people both economically and psychologically. So, too, did the creation of institutions such as the Bank of Canada, the CBC, and the National Film Board. The latter were produced by a smaller, more efficient public service, which is also promised by Carney.

Major projects sometimes came on the backs of minority groups when there was an institutionalized ethnic pecking order. Discrimination and racism were once Canadian values. Irish peasant stock built the early canals and railroads for Anglo-Scotch employers who regarded them as uncultivated, ignorant, belligerent,



Prime Minister Mark Carney, pictured on May 25, 2025, on the Hill, is promising dramatic productivity growth and to build the fastest growing economy in the G7. These are high bars, writes Nelson Wiseman. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and indolent outcasts. Worked like horses, they died like flies. Thousands of Chinese, targeted by legalized racial discrimination, were imported to help construct the Canadian Pacific Railway. Eastern Europeans were brought into the country by Ottawa to pop-

ulate the Prairies, but relegated to economically marginal northerly farmland. Immigration officers preferred British settlers.

At times a foreign actor held up a major nation-building

Continued on page 14

OPINION

An invitation to parliamentarians: let's build an all-party men's mental health caucus

The caucus will look at what can be done in the realms of education, employment, family, mental health services and civic society, all with the aim of developing appropriate policy and legislation that can contribute to healthy men, healthy families and healthy communities.

Senator Patrick Brazeau, Rob Whitley & Justin Trottier

Opinion



It is time that Canada had an all-party caucus for men's mental health. This is a forum where parliamentarians can come together, with the help of experts, to devise practical and workable solutions at the federal level.

This is not an academic exercise. It is urgent.

A report from the Canadian Men's Health Foundation, released on May 29, found that 50 per cent of men are experiencing social isolation, and that 64 per cent report moderate to high levels of stress.

Such suffering may have amplified in recent months, given the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and concerns about job security due to the trade war with the United States.

Men are disproportionately impacted by the opioid crisis. Recent Statistics Canada data found that 71 per cent of deaths in 2024 that were due to opioid toxicity occurred among males. They also accounted for approximately two-thirds of hospitalizations and emergency room visits.

A 2021 introductory primer on men's mental health, written by Dr. Rob Whitley, states that 17 per cent of Canadian men report poor or fair mental health.

Non-affiliated Senator Patrick Brazeau is an advocate for mental health for men and boys. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Data also indicates that young men are finding themselves falling behind. The most recent federal data concerning Canadian high school graduation rates found that females were more likely to graduate than males. This data covered three academic years between 2014 and 2017.

This is unfortunate considering the economic changes that have led to a massive decline in industries such as manufacturing, fisheries, forestry, and oil which has particularly affected rural areas and small towns. These industries offered honourable and well-paying jobs to many generations of Canadian men. This may get worse as the trade war inten-

sifies and the economic effects of U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs kick in.

As Senator Patrick Brazeau noted in the Senate's Social Affairs Committee's June 2023 report, *Doing What Works: Rethinking the Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention*: "There is a huge gap or disparity between what is available for women and what's available for men."

In addition to being a member of the committee that studied the issue, Brazeau also testified during the study and shared his own lived experience.

"When we see that three out of four suicides are committed by men, maybe we're just doing what

historically we've always done in thinking that men are strong, men are supposed to be tough, and men don't have to get help, and they'll sort it out on their own. I'm living proof that that's not the case. That's simply not the case," he said during the study.

For these reasons, and many more, Brazeau is planning to launch an all-party parliamentary caucus on mental health for men and boys. The caucus, which has already attracted interest among parliamentarians of all parties, will look at what can be done in the realms of education, employment, family, mental health services and civic society—all with the aim of developing appropriate policy and legislation that can contribute to healthy men, healthy families and healthy communities.

We welcome all parliamentarians to reach out to us and help us build a better Canada for all Canadians.

Patrick Brazeau is a non-affiliated Algonquin Senator who represents Repentigny, Que. Rob Whitley, PhD, is a professor of psychiatry at McGill University. Justin Trottier is the national executive director at Canadian Centre for Men and Families.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Carney's China challenge requires a foreign policy reset

Ottawa won't gain global independence by echoing Washington or isolating China. It's time for selective engagement, grounded in Canadian interests.

Bhagwant Sandhu

Opinion



OTTAWA—In the wake of the NATO and G7 summits, Canada's foreign policy has begun to resemble a ship sailing with a cracked compass—adrift between old alliances and rising powers. Unchecked, it risks reducing Prime Minister Mark Carney's declaration that "Canada's economic dependence on the U.S. is over" to an empty claim.

If independence is the aim, then fixing the rapport with China could be Carney's test. Carney's June 6 phone call with Chinese Premier Li Qiang hinted at a rebalancing. But symbolic gestures won't suffice if Carney doesn't stop replicating Washington's antagonism against Beijing.

In fairness, Carney inherited a threadbare relationship from former prime minister Justin Trudeau. Since the 2018 arrest of Huawei's Meng Wanzhou and China's retaliatory detention of two Canadians, the bilateral diplomacy has defaulted to escalation with Trudeau's ideological moralism substituting for method. His 100-per-cent tariff on Chinese EVs provoked predictable countermeasures: cuts to canola, curbs on tourism, and a chill across other sectors.

Over \$100-billion in annual trade is vulnerable to this volatility. Carney needs to reorient the ship and change our foreign policy course. He should accept that China is not a friend, a peer nor a pariah. It is an established world power fully embedded in global supply chains, climate mitigation frameworks, and multilateral institutions shaping this century.



Prime Minister Mark Carney cannot let defence spending stand-in for a foreign policy strategy, writes Bhagwant Sandhu. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Prime Minister Mark Carney's June 6 call with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, pictured, hinted at a policy rebalancing, writes Bhagwant Sandhu. *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

Ottawa's approach to Beijing, however, remains trapped in distrust, summed up under the vague label of "security concerns." It mirrors Washington's stance. A prime example is Carney's use of the G7 to overlook China while extending courtesies to India—despite allegations that India was behind the extraterritorial assassination of a Canadian citizen. That signal could be interpreted as an implicit attempt to isolate China, a trade-off of principle for geopolitical positioning.

Consider also Trudeau's 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy. It was promoted as Canada's vision for Asia, but instead of focusing on Canadian interests, it mostly repeated Washington's program for superpower competition by promoting security and economic decoupling from China.

According to Statistics Canada, Beijing is still Canada's second-largest trading partner. Before the 2018 diplomatic freeze, exports to China grew over 12 per cent annually across agriculture, aerospace, tech, and tourism. In

Q1 of 2025, they surged by 31 per cent—driven by high demand for minerals and agri-food, which have been products sidelined by United States tariffs. A timely reminder that Ottawa's economic fortunes depend as much on Beijing's decisions as on Washington's designs.

A solid, thought-through sovereign foreign policy should be able to simultaneously protect democracy without resorting to outdated techniques of isolationism, especially when a rising economic power is involved.

This is not to ignore real concerns. China's human rights record and assertiveness in the South China Sea demand serious dialogue. And, as the Hogue Commission noted: foreign interference is a reality, not a rumor. The response should not be to abandon diplomacy. Quite the opposite addressing interference—whether by China or India—entails institutional co-ordination.

Canada may need a doctrine of selective engagement—a policy grounded in economic realism and strategic sobriety. This means Ottawa must expand its diplomatic toolkit. Qualified voices, like Rob Oliphant, the parliamentary secretary to Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand, bring institutional memory and diaspora diplomacy expertise. They should be empowered to create capacity for issue-based backchannels with Beijing and New Delhi.

Structural reform is also essential. Co-ordination across Global Affairs; Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada; Canadian Security Intelligence Service; and the RCMP is still fragmented. A dedicated cabinet subcommittee on strategic international engagements could help ensure that Canada's relationships with critical players like China and India are led by long-term interests, not short-term impulses.

Carney could also start embracing multilateral forums where only norms—not blocs—set the agenda. Climate, public health, and food security are areas where constructive engagement with China is not optional, but obligatory. Selective engagement is not the same as naive, full-on co-operation. It's a calculated interaction where our influence aligns with our interests.

Finally, Carney cannot let defence spending stand in for strategy. If his commitment to meet NATO's five-per-cent target simply validates a U.S. confrontational posture, it will become a distraction. As scholars like John Mearsheimer of the realist school have argued, sovereign foreign policy works best when it reconciles principle with proportion and when states like Canada understand not only what we stand for, but what we stand to gain—or, lose.

The last time China "attacked" Canada, it was with a weather balloon that was shot down by the U.S. Meanwhile, our American ally challenges our sovereignty in the Beaufort Sea and entertains the idea of annexing us.

China is not a cartoon villain. If Carney wants self-determination, he must stop surrendering our foreign policy to Washington. Reclaiming our compass means fixing it—not replacing one dependency with another. That requires attentive leadership willing to think Canadian, act Canadian, and speak for Canada—not for someone else's fears or fantasies.

Bhagwant Sandhu is a retired director general from the federal public service. He has also held executive positions with the governments of Ontario and British Columbia.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Canada can't ignore climate change just because the U.S. is missing in action

At some point, the U.S. will again become a 'responsible stakeholder,' but its failure to assume its responsibility is no excuse for Canada or any other country to slack off. Climate change is an urgent challenge for today.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



In 2005, Robert Zoellick, who was then the U.S. secretary of state, called on China to become a "responsible stakeholder in the international system." He argued the country had reached the stage where it could "help shore up the stability of the international system." China, Zoellick argued, should play a much greater role, along with other nations, in sustaining and enhancing the institutions and

policies that enabled the world system to function.

Today, though, it is the United States that is failing its role as a responsible stakeholder. "America First" means the rest of the world doesn't matter. But as foreign policy expert Walter Russell Mead argues in the *Wall Street Journal*, this doesn't mean that U.S. President Donald Trump wants to withdraw from the world, but "far from limiting America's world role, Mr. Trump intends to place the country at the centre of international affairs."

But the goal isn't to sustain, strengthen, or expand the international order in pursuit of a more stable and sustainable world. "His presidency is about the concentration of power for maximalist goals," Mead writes, so as to maximize American power and use it to benefit the U.S. and its corporate and security interests. America First.

The use of tariffs to extort concessions from trading partners, the disdain for international institutions, the cessation of U.S. foreign aid, the lack of interest in supporting democracy and human rights, and the disregard of international rules and rulings are all examples. But when the history of this era is written, it will be the Trump administration's reckless undermining of urgent global efforts to address climate change that will stand out as one of its greatest failings.

The world continues to struggle with dangerous heatwaves, wild-



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, meets with U.S. President Donald Trump in the White House's Oval Office on May 6, 2025. Photograph courtesy of Flickr/The White House (Official White House Photo by Daniel Torok)

fires, floods, drought, and other climate-induced natural disasters, which are all existential threats to future life on this planet that can only be fixed with global resolve. But the Trump administration has gone out of its way—deliberately—to make the future risks and costs much worse. Trump loves coal, oil, and natural gas, but hates electric vehicles, solar panels, and wind power.

More than any other country, the U.S. today is consciously pursuing policies that will intensify the costs and effects of climate

change while disregarding even the impacts of climate change at home, from devastating wildfires in California to communities in Florida where it is increasingly difficult to get mortgage insurance (and hence a mortgage) because of climate risks.

A recent report in the *Financial Times* showed there are potential risks in the future if insurance companies halt providing mortgage insurance in regions vulnerable to disasters from climate change. A financial crisis could result as banks and other mortgage providers end up with large portfolios of unsellable real estate.

From almost his first day in office, Trump has been working to cancel or weaken domestic policies on climate while undermining international efforts. Almost as soon as he was sworn in as president, he withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Agreement on climate change and from commitments to the Green Climate Fund, which raised contributions from rich nations to help developing countries make climate-related investments. These actions were followed by two executive orders: "Unleashing American Energy," and "Declaring a National Energy Emergency." The aim of these orders is to expand the use of domestically sourced fossil fuels, and to weaken regulations designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Now, the Trump administration seeks to go further. Its proposed tax bill—the One Big Beautiful Bill Act—not only sought to end subsidies for electric vehicles, and solar and wind power, but it goes a radical step further. The bill proposes to increase taxes on any solar or wind power plant that comes into service after June 15, 2027. And if that was not enough, the Trump administration has now shut down its U.S. Global Change Research Program website that provided a national climate assessment report every four years. The scientists working on the next such report have all been fired.

Yet the next decade promises to be even more challenging, requiring nations everywhere to step up their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to

green energy. Worldwide, the costs from climate-induced natural disasters are rising dramatically—last year's wildfire in Jasper, Alta., alone caused \$283-million of property damage—with the possibility of even greater costs from hurricanes, floods, rising sea levels, wildfires, drought, and damaging changes to ecosystems.

As average world temperatures continue to rise, parts of the planet will become uninhabitable, climate migration could increase, new health risks—including new pandemics—could emerge, agricultural yields could fall, heat-related deaths could rise, conflicts over water could rise, and many other challenges emerge—all of which make human survival and quality of life more difficult.

This November, Brazil will host the 30th Conference of the Parties, the UN body that oversees global action on climate change. This will be a critical meeting since countries, including Canada, are failing to close the gap between their 2015 emission reduction targets and their 2030 deadlines, while the overall target of holding global temperature rise to no more than 1.5 C appears likely to be missed. Before the summit, countries must submit detailed plans on how their country will meet their 2030 targets. Missing will be any report from the U.S. even though it is among the world's highest emitters.

For America, failure to do its share in averting this climate threat is more a sign of decline than strength. As with its budget deficit, the substantiality of social security, or rampant inequality, the U.S. appears incapable of dealing with big issues politically.

At some point, more deeply embedded American values will reassert themselves and the U.S. will again become a "responsible stakeholder." But in the meantime, its failure to assume responsibility is no excuse for Canada or any other country to slack off. The climate challenge cannot be put off to tomorrow. It is an urgent challenge for today.

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

The Hill Times

Major projects beget major challenges

Continued from page 12

project. Although Canada and the United States had agreed in 1941 to build the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Americans failed to ratify the agreement until the following decade, and did so only when Ottawa told them that if vacillation persisted, Canada would finance the Seaway itself and toll American ships to help offset the cost.

Provincial governments may also delay or jettison a major national infrastructure project.

Ottawa acquired land for a new Toronto area international airport in Pickering in 1972, but had to abandon the project when Queen's Park—listening to residents, farmers, environmentalists, and municipal officials—announced that the province would not build the roads and sewers essential to service the airport without a thorough needs assessment.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith has announced that a new private-sector proposal for an oil pipeline to the West Coast—the type of priority project Energy

Minister Tim Hodgson is looking for—is coming soon. We shall see. In exchange for building such a pipeline, she wants Ottawa to underwrite another pipeline project of six major oilsands companies to transport CO2 emissions captured at their facilities to a distant underground site. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) is technically feasible, but would it be cost-effective? The International Energy Agency has doubts, saying the CCS experience to date has "largely been one of unmet expectations."

Carney has promised the elimination of interprovincial trade barriers because they limit competition, hinder innovation, and reduce overall productivity. The government has already acted to remove most federal barriers, but they are not as significant as provincial barriers, whose elimination is beyond Ottawa's scope. Some observers estimate they reduce Canada's GDP as much as four per cent. Others suggest there are annual potential gains to be had of up to \$200-billion.

Many provincial trade officials deny that there are significant barriers beyond governments' procurement policies. Most barriers relate to professional credentials, licensing, and trucking. Is it in the public's interest for nurses licensed in one province to be licensed automatically in another? Manitoba's College of Registered Nurses offers a cautionary tale. It alleges

that two internationally trained nurses, licensed in an unnamed province, have contributed to preventable deaths.

Carney has demonstrated sure-footedness and confidence in his vision of transforming Canada's economic fundamentals. He promises dramatic productivity growth and to build the fastest growing economy in the G7. These are high bars. The public and the opposition Conservatives are cheering him on. However, many of the high cards in his quest are not in his hand. Canada's complicated institutional structures, its position as the neighbour of a declining, unpredictable United States, and the volatile geopolitical evolution of world affairs will all contribute to shaping his legacy.

Nelson Wiseman is professor emeritus of political science at the University of Toronto.

The Hill Times

Chants of 'shame' erupt at Conservative AGM in GTA after organizer 'unfairly' disqualifies a slate of 30 candidates

Multiple Conservative EDA members in Mississauga-Erin Mills, Ont., want the party's national council to annul the results of the June 25 AGM after they say a regional organizer disqualified an entire slate of board of directors candidates on an unfounded technicality.



Between 80 and 90 Conservative riding association members for Mississauga-Erin Mills, Ont., attended the June 25 annual general meeting. Many party members chanted 'shame, shame, shame' after a GTA regional organizer disqualified a slate of 30 candidates from running for the riding's board of directors. Photograph supplied by a Conservative Party member

Continued from page 1

a maximum of 30 executive positions on the board. One slate presented candidates for all 30 positions, while the opposing slate had just 11.

Tamara Tomilko, a GTA regional party organizer who was overseeing the meeting, disqualified the full slate of 30 candidates, citing their failure to submit "appendix A"—the written affirmation of office for directors—prior to the meeting, according to four riding association members.

However, the party's constitution does not require candidates to submit appendix A before the meeting begins. The written affirmation of office is a statement that requires directors to maintain the confidentiality of all information related to the party, riding association, or membership, and a commitment to carry out their duties with honesty and integrity. The party constitution does not specify a deadline for submitting the appendix. Based on its wording, it appears the statement is intended to be signed after the election has concluded.

"I, [blank space left for the name], affirm that I will keep the affairs and plans of the EDA and the Party confidential, that I will keep any personal information respecting members strictly confidential and that I will perform the duties of a Director of the EDA honestly and justly in conformity with the EDA and the Party constitutions," states the written affirmation of office for director, which is available on the party's website.

The Hill Times reached out to two other Conservative electoral

district associations to ask when appendix A is typically submitted. They said that, in their ridings, it is completed after the election.

The Hill Times also interviewed a former senior party official who has overseen these meetings, and they confirmed that the signed statement is typically completed after the AGM. Based on the official's experience, the timing has never been an issue as long as appendix A is submitted before the first meeting of the new board. The source said that if the party organizer expected the statement to be signed before the start of the AGM, she should have brought printed copies, distributed them to the candidates, and requested their signatures on the spot.

Following the disqualification, Tomilko declared the slate of 11 candidates acclaimed, four sources told *The Hill Times*. When some of the disqualified candidates tried to persuade her to reconsider her decision, she declined. Tomilko abruptly left the meeting before the agenda was completed, sources said.

Tomilko did not reply to interview requests from *The Hill Times*. By press time, both the Conservative Party's director of communications and the president of the Mississauga-Erin Mills EDA were also not available to comment for this article.

"If this is how the [party] co-ordinator [Tomilko] is operating at the lowest level of the CPC, I can't imagine what is going on at the higher level!" wrote Mujtaba Shaukat, a riding association member and a disqualified candidate, in an email to Ontario national councillors, former

campaign director Jenni Byrne, and the party's executive director Mike Crase.

"Definitely reduced my confidence in supporting the CPC. I guess we'll never win against the Liberals if this is how things will be!"

Shaukat provided the email to *The Hill Times*, and confirmed the details of the meeting. He also shared a copy of the email sent out to all riding association members by the party prior to the meeting, which makes no mention of appendix A. The email only specifies the date, time, and location of the AGM, and that potential candidates must be members of the riding by June 4.

"Please note, in order to be eligible to stand for election, or to vote at the AGM, you must be an active member as of June 4 (21 days prior to meeting date)," states the June 10 email sent out by the party.

Shaukat told *The Hill Times* that according to the party constitution, appendix A is not required to be signed by directors prior to the AGM, and he is unsure why the regional organizer, Tomilko, disqualified all 30 candidates. He also confirmed that once she blocked the entire slate from running and refused to reconsider her decision, attendees began chanting "shame, shame, shame" in protest. Shaukat said that it appears the party is trying to hand-pick who serves on the riding boards.

"It makes absolutely no sense that I needed to have 'Appendix A' signed and dated BEFORE the AGM meeting (as early as the DAY before, since Tamara

announced that she had received Appendix A from [two] people [from the acclaimed slate] who emailed her last night)...as the Appendix A is to be signed by NOMINEES and not by members," wrote Shaukat in his email to national councillors after the annual general meeting.

"Those people who had signed Appendix A without even being nominated could not do so, as the Appendix A is to be signed by the Nominees....not by members and how could they have been nominees the day before the AGM? You can only be nominated at the AGM...I was rejected my democratic right to even be nominated so how can I complete Appendix A?"

Shaukat told *The Hill Times* that he had not received any reply from any of the national councillors, or the party executive director by press time.

The Hill Times obtained a copy of the meeting agenda that is printed on the party letterhead. The agenda includes nine items, including a call to order, approval of agenda, report by the president, financial report, appointment of auditor, election of directors, review of code of conduct, candidate remarks, and other business.

Shaukat said that the review of the code of conduct was not taken up properly, and that Tomilko told attendees that the code of conduct was on the website, and everyone can read it there.

A second potential candidate who was at the meeting said they also have concerns about the impartiality of the regional organizer. They said that a number of

party members felt that Tomilko's behaviour was "disrespectful and discriminatory." They said that members felt they were being treated as "second-class citizens." The candidate spoke to *The Hill Times* on a not-for-attribution basis.

A third attendee who also spoke to *The Hill Times* on a not-for-attribution basis said that at the start of the meeting, Tomilko read out the names of all 30 candidates and they stood up to confirm their presence at the meeting.

They said that Tomilko read out the names of the second slate of 11 candidates, but they're not sure if all of the 11 were even present at the meeting.

The source told *The Hill Times* that Tomilko also mentioned that two of the 11 candidates had submitted appendix A to her the day before the meeting, but that those two individuals were not present at the meeting. Still, they were declared acclaimed board members. Shaukat also confirmed the same.

"[Tomilko] left abruptly and she didn't complete the agenda," said a third source.

Maged Srour, a riding association member who was also at the meeting, told *The Hill Times* that he was surprised the regional representative blocked 30 party members from running over a technicality that isn't even outlined in the party rules. He added that if submitting appendix A was truly that significant, Tomilko could have simply given the candidates 15 minutes to sign and submit it.

"We were not voting to launch some nuclear weapons, we were only voting to elect members of the board of a riding association," said Srour.

All of the individuals who were interviewed for this article said that the party's national council should annul the results of the June 25 AGM and call a new meeting to elect the riding board.

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Conservative Party rules for the election of EDA board of directors

7.4 The following rules apply:

7.4.1: elections for the Board of Directors may not proceed without the opportunity for nominations from the floor;

7.4.2: each nominee must have the opportunity to speak, with the Chair to determine the speaking time allotted;

7.4.3: each nominee must complete the Affirmation of Office (Appendix "A");

7.4.4: if there are more nominees than the maximum set out in Article 7.8, the election will proceed by secret ballot, otherwise all nominees shall be acclaimed; and

7.4.5: in the case of a tie, the tie shall be broken by drawing lots.

Source: the Constitution of the Conservative Party of Canada Electoral District Associations

NEWS

Digital services tax retreat risks showing ‘Canada will fold’ in Trump trade talks, warn experts

The DST has long been a sticking point in Canada-U.S. relations, after the Liberals tried to close what they saw as a loophole for American firms raking in millions of dollars in Canada without paying taxes.

BY MARLO GLASS

The Liberal government’s 11th-hour withdrawal of a controversial tax legislation, that was set to bring in billions of dollars from multinational tech giants, is a capitulation that was years in the making, economists and digital experts say.

“This has been a source of friction for a number of years,” Michael Geist, a law professor at the University of Ottawa and Canada Research Chair in internet and e-commerce law, told *The Hill Times*. “It’s reached a boiling point now, but it’s sort of always been simmering.”

While that may not be a good enough reason to quash tax legislation on its own, “it is at least reason enough to realize that it was going to raise some real sensitivities and trade friction,” said Geist, both under former U.S. president Joe Biden and under current president Donald Trump.

Set to come into effect on June 30, the digital services tax, or DST, applied a three-per-cent tax on revenue above \$20-million earned from digital services that rely on engagement, data, and content from Canadian users, as well as the sale or licensing of some Canadian user data. Payments were slated to be retroactive to 2022, with billions of dollars anticipated to be paid by tech giants like Meta, Google, and Airbnb.

Other Trudeau-era digital legislation, like the Online News Act, were “arguably about levelling the playing field” among tech giants, Geist said, but the rationale for the DST was more straightforward: “This was just about the billions of dollars the government was hoping to get through this tax measure.”

Richard Forbes, principal economist at the Conference Board of Canada, said the tax was the Canadian government’s attempt at closing what they saw as a tax loophole, as American firms were operating in this



Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc, left, Industry Minister Mélanie Joly, Prime Minister Mark Carney, and Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne at a press conference in the West Block on June 19, 2025. Carney has defended eliminating the DST, saying trade negotiations with the U.S. restarted on June 30. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



U.S. President Donald Trump, left, greets Prime Minister Mark Carney at the White House on May 6. Carney said rescinding the DST was necessary for trade negotiations to begin again. *Official White House photograph courtesy of Gabriel B. Kotico*

country without paying tax to the government.

“If a company from another country is operating, selling goods to people in your country, you can see that it should be taxed,” he said. “The line becomes more fuzzy when it’s digital.”

First announced in 2020, the legislation has been a thorn in the side of Canada-U.S. relations for years, long before Trump took office for his second term and threatened to annex Canada as the 51st state. A 2023 letter from U.S. lawmakers from both sides of the aisle denounced the tax as an “unusually aggressive and discriminatory approach” that would “target U.S. companies and workers who would disproportionately bear the burden of this new tax.”

The tax was a convenient battering ram in the latest chap-

ter of the protracted trade war between the U.S. and Canada, with Trump using the impending levy as a reason to cancel trade negotiations on June 27, and threatening again to hit some Canadian products with hefty tariffs. Two days later, Ottawa responded by dropping the DST, with a 10 p.m. press statement on June 29 from Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Que.) saying Canada is “leading complex negotiations” with the U.S. The statement said Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) “has made it clear that Canada will take as long as necessary, but no longer, to conclude this agreement.”

The tax, Champagne said, would be cancelled “in anticipation of concluding a mutually benefi-

cial comprehensive trade agreement with the United States.”

It was a move Carney defended as key in resuming trade talks, telling reporters negotiations had re-started as of June 30, with an eye to the July 21 deadline that was agreed to during the G7 meeting in Kananaskis, Alta.

Vivek Dehejia, a professor of economics at Carleton University, said the intent of the levy was for Canadians to benefit from the profits of “invisible” services in the digital realm that go untaxed.

“Having said that, in a country like Canada which is already highly taxed compared to other G7 countries, is another tax what we need to jumpstart productivity, growth, jumpstart the economy?”

Canada is already “languishing” compared to other G7 nations,

Dehejia said, something Carney has pledged to tackle in his fight to reinvent the domestic economy.

While the DST would have remitted potentially billions of dollars from tech giants, Dehejia said the burden would likely not have been borne by the monopolistic firms, but the cost would have been passed on to consumers who have little choice but to use the tech giants’ services, since there are few competitors.

“Basic economics and common sense tells us they would have passed on much of the tax to consumers here in Canada,” he said.

“So this headline idea that we were going to be soaking these companies for billions, whoever said that doesn’t understand basic economic tax incidence theory,” he said. “It’s right out of the first chapter of the economics textbook. The reality is it would pass on the tax to us, and we’d be the ones left holding the bag.”

Carney, Dehejia said, could have “drawn a line in the sand” when he first became prime minister and done away with the tax before it became a lightning rod in trade negotiations.

“The way it was handled was, in my opinion, very damaging,” he said. “In terms of the bargaining relationship, ... all it does is reconfirm to Trump and the people around him [that] if Trump threatens Canada, and that threat is seen as credible, he’ll get his way, and Canada will fold.”

Asked if Canada received anything in return for rescinding the DST, Carney told reporters the tax is “part of a bigger negotiation” and was a question of timing in the talks.

“It doesn’t make sense to collect tax from people and then remit them back,” he said. “So, it provides some certainty.”

Carney promptly ended a June 30 press conference after taking just one question, and didn’t address queries about White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt’s comments that Carney “caved” to Trump’s pressure and that the president “knows how to negotiate.”

Dehejia says in the end there’s “no harm done” to Canadians since the tax didn’t come into effect, but it could leave a lasting impression on negotiations.

“My sense is, in any future negotiations, it will be at the back of the minds of Americans, that if we push them hard enough, Canada will bend to what we want,” he said.

Adam Taylor, president of Export Action Global, agreed that the DST had been in America’s crosshairs for months.

“It’s a tossup. Everyone has an opinion on if it was a good, strategic tactical move right now, or do you hold it for later? But ultimately, I think it keeps negotiations on track,” he said.

Every aspect of the negotiations will be scrutinized, but just getting back to the negotiating table is a positive, he said.

“Anything that leads to an outcome that preserves, to the greatest extent possible, our duty-free access to the U.S. market, that is the long-term goal.”

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Federal major projects office ‘should not take the place of proper consultation with First Nations,’ says AFN national chief

Bill C-5 will create a major projects office with an advisory council of Indigenous representatives, but leaders from those groups are still waiting for details as to what that means for their input.

Continued from page 1

The Hill Times reached out to the Privy Council Office (PCO) for details about the major projects office, such as its structure, leadership, budget, and when it's expected to begin operation.

Daniel Savoie, a spokesperson for the PCO, responded in an email on July 2 that the major projects office will be established in the coming weeks, and that further details will be shared “in due course.”

“The office will act as a single point of contact and information for proponents, co-ordinating with implicated departments to support timely and efficient project reviews. The office will benefit from support from an Indigenous advisory council with First Nation, Inuit, and Métis representatives,” said Savoie by email.

To help address Indigenous concerns, Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has pledged to personally lead engagement sessions with rights holders over the summer, starting with First Nations on July 17.

Woodhouse Nepinak said that projects worth more than \$500-billion are forecast on First Nations territories in the next 10 years, which represent a potential benefit in the trillions, but added that those projects won't advance without First Nations' consent.

According to research by the First Nations Major Projects Coalition, there are approximately 470 major projects that will impact Indigenous lands in Canada over the next decade, representing a total capital investment of more than \$525-billion.

“While this hard discussion moves to the next stage, the honour of the Crown is still at stake,” said Woodhouse Nepinak. “First Nations are united with Canadians in the fight against [U.S. President Donald] Trump's illegal tariffs, but Canada won't



Indigenous Services Minister Mandy Gull-Masty said in an Intergovernmental Affairs press release on June 26 that the One Canadian Economy Act ‘marks a historic milestone in creating a stronger, more inclusive Canada—one where Indigenous partnership is not only valued, but is fundamental to every step of development.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

win by compromising rights—by rolling back on reconciliation and ignoring legitimate environmental concerns in this bill.”

The Hill Times reached out to the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), a non-profit organization representing more than 65,000 Inuit across Inuit Nunangat and the rest of Canada, to ask for its thoughts about the federal major projects office and the Indigenous advisory council. In response, an ITK spokesperson said in an email on June 30 that they were not sure they had enough information to respond properly, and suggested they might be in a better position to do so at the end of July. *The Hill Times* also reached out to the Métis National Council, but did not receive a response before deadline.

In response to the royal assent of Bill C-5, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) issued a statement on June 30, saying they recognize the federal government's intention through the bill to modernize Canada's approach to infrastructure and economic development, but “we must ensure that progress is not achieved at the expense of Indigenous rights.”

“We urge the Government of Canada to work with us, now and throughout the life of this legislation, to ensure that Bill C-5 delivers prosperity without undermining the constitutional and legal foundation of Indigenous rights in this country,” said the MNO in the press release.

Grand Chief Kyra Wilson of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs



National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak of the Assembly of First Nations says that ‘First Nations are united with Canadians in the fight against [U.S. President Donald] Trump's illegal tariffs,’ but Canada won't win this fight by using Bill C-5 to compromise their rights. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Grand Chief Kyra Wilson of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs says that an advisory council does not suggest that First Nations will have decision-making authority within the proposed major projects office. *Photograph courtesy of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs*

told *The Hill Times* that her concern is whether or not the Indigenous advisory council would have any authority when it comes to making decisions regarding NIPs.

“To me, we need to be able to make decisions, and an advisory council—that does not sound like decision-making authority,” she said.

“If you want to work with First Nations, then we need to be at the table where decisions are being made, not as an advisory council. I think right now, as First Nations, we are waiting to see what Canada is going to be doing in moving forward with First Nations. We don't have a lot of information. All we see is a bill that's been passed.”

When asked for her thoughts regarding the One Canadian Economy Act, Wilson said the bill opens the door for discussion on how First Nations are going to move forward with Canada, which she said is a positive.

“I am positive that we will be able to work together and come to some sort of conclusion, but what that conclusion is, we as First Nations need to discuss that amongst ourselves and our leadership and our nations, and we will let Canada know,” she said.

“Canada is wanting to work with First Nations. I am grateful that they are wanting to, but there are also the obligations, as a government, that they need to work with First Nations.”

In regard to plans for the Indigenous advisory council to include First Nation, Inuit, and Métis representatives, Wilson said, “It's great when we are able to come together with our brothers and sisters,” but that she could never speak for Inuit or Métis Peoples.

“As First Nations, we're not against development ... but we need to understand what is that process going to be. What does it mean in terms of ownership, as rights holders and not as stakeholders? What does that mean for revenue sharing, and is that going to include all First Nations? Because it should, and we just need to understand what is this vision that Canada has for this discussion on major projects,” she said. “We don't have that information right now, so once we have that conversation, then we'll be able to make informed decisions.”

Upon the royal assent of the One Canadian Economy Act, an Intergovernmental Affairs press release stated that “Indigenous partnership is a vital part of this legislation, and meaningful consultation will be key to the success of future projects.”

The press release also stated that the federal government is committed to respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

“Together, we are building an economy that works for everyone. The One Canadian Economy Act marks a historic milestone in creating a stronger, more inclusive Canada—one where Indigenous partnership is not only valued, but is fundamental to every step of development,” said Indigenous Services Minister Mandy Gull-Masty (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, Que.) in the press release.

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NEWS

Report forecasts ‘worst cuts to public service in modern history’ to meet Carney’s campaign pledge

The pressure is on for Carney to present a fall budget that delivers on campaign promises while meeting the commitment of balancing the operating budget, says former PBO Kevin Page.

BY MARLO GLASS

Prime Minister Mark Carney’s election promise to cut \$13-billion from the federal budget by 2028-29 could result in the worst spending cuts in modern history that would “inevitably diminish the quality of the public service,” a new report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives warns.

“This isn’t about attrition, or being more efficient,” David Macdonald, senior economist with the CCPA and the author of the report, said in an interview with *The Hill Times*. “These are deep cuts to staffing, deep cuts to services that will absolutely be noticed by regular Canadians.”

Carney’s (Nepean, Ont) election platform included balancing the operating budget via \$13-billion in “productivity” cost-saving measures. Macdonald noted that amounts to a 10-per-cent cut of the entire federal government’s operating expenses. The Liberals’ recently-announced \$9.3-billion defence spending pledge for



Prime Minister Mark Carney campaigned on promises to reduce the government’s operating budget, but amid increases in defence spending, cuts could hit the public service deeply, according to a report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

this fiscal year likely means the Department of National Defence (DND) would be exempt from cuts, though it makes up 28 per cent of operational spending, Macdonald said.

The supplementary estimates, which were approved before MPs rose for the summer, asked parliamentarians to approve an additional \$8.2-billion for DND, and \$370-million for the Communication Security Establishment.

“In my mind, there’s no way they’ll increase defence spending by \$8.57-billion immediately, and then cut it ... to get to these operational targets,” Macdonald said of those numbers. “In my mind, it’s clear DND spending is now protected from operational efficiency cuts. And that’s going to be a big problem for getting anywhere near \$13-billion.”

Achieving the campaign pledge would mostly be done through slashing personnel



Former parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page says he believes Carney’s Liberals aren’t looking to just make cuts for the sake of hitting fiscal targets. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

expenditures in non-defence departments, Macdonald said, amounting to a cut of 24 per cent. He added this would be drastically worse than then-Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper’s 10-per-cent cuts on some departments, and comparable to then-Liberal finance minister Paul Martin’s 1995 austerity budget, which reduced government spending significantly in order to tackle the country’s growing debt.

Cuts at this level won’t simply just be achieved by capping hiring or finding efficiencies via artificial intelligence, Macdonald said.

“For cuts this deep, it would require across-the-board job losses and major service reductions. In other words, if it proceeded, it would represent a major disruption to federal public services, and would rival the 18.9-per-cent cut in operation expenditures of Paul Martin’s 1995 budget as the most extreme budget slashing in Canadian history.”

The 2025 Liberal platform references achieving

\$28-billion in savings via direct program expenses, including capping the public service; reducing reliance on external consultants; boosting automation; amalgamating service delivery; consolidating grants and contributions; and better managing litigation.

But previous budgets projected these “program expenses” to remain flat around \$130-billion every year.

“The line isn’t growing with population or the economy. It means this budget line is already capped at zero growth,” the report says. “To get big savings going this route will require deep cuts.”

Macdonald warns of the “real dangers” of personnel cuts and substitutions with “completely untested” technologies like AI, which may sound good on paper.

“Just like the Phoenix [pay system] saga, you can end up in a very costly situation,” he said. “Then you’ve got to fix it all at great expense a year or two down the road.”

Ram Mathilakath, a former executive with the Parliamentary Budget Office, said big savings could be found simply in cutting the government’s consulting budget.

Macdonald’s analysis found cutting contracting would only

result in \$1.2-billion in savings, but Mathilakath said the number is closer to \$7-billion.

“We pay double the price to consultants because the government is incompetent,” he told *The Hill Times*. “We don’t have the ability to assess the actual work and the confidence required.”

He said a “very top-heavy” public service could also withstand deep cuts to the executive cadre, which has grown by nearly 50 per cent since 2016.

Former parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page said the pressure is on for Carney to deliver a budget in the fall that delivers on campaign promises while meeting the commitment of balancing the operating budget, along with the prime minister’s recent NATO commitments. At last week’s summit of the military alliance, leaders agreed countries would reach five-per-cent of GDP spending on defence. That came just weeks after Carney committed to reaching the former two-per-cent target this fiscal year.

“It’s getting harder, not easier,” Page said, and cuts can’t just be limited to operating expenses and personnel. “The government is going to get bigger, not smaller,” he said. “The direct program spending base, because it includes the military, is actually going to get bigger.”

That means reallocation efforts will also have to be large, he said, and “you can’t just do this by cutting the size of the public service.”

Page noted while direct program spending is forecasted to remain flat, Macdonald’s analysis didn’t include the growth of the government’s spending since 2015.

“We’ve boosted the size of the public service. We boosted grants and contributions to a number of areas, the environment, Indigenous groups, others, industry,” he said. “We’re going to have to look at that.”

Carney’s platform focused largely on the cost of government operations, but Page said in the ensuing weeks, “there’s changing context around this,” citing Canada’s new commitments to NATO.

“This is going to be a real grind. There’s a lot to do.”

Page said he anticipates the fall budget to include a spending review process, which could take several years. The spending review isn’t an austerity measure, Page said, but rather an effort of “generating fiscal room that’s going to be reallocated to other priorities,” he said, including national defence.

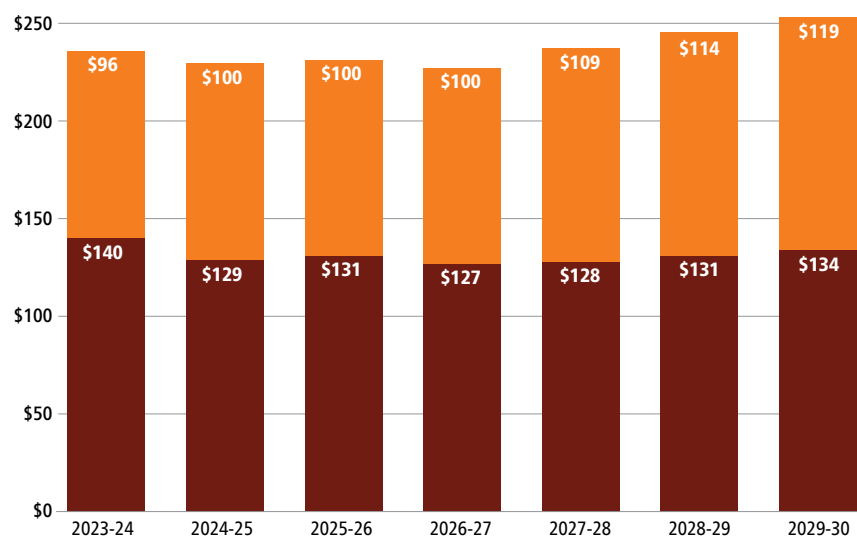
Page said he believes Carney’s Liberals aren’t looking to just make cuts for the sake of hitting fiscal targets. And, given ever-changing geopolitical woes and the ongoing trade war with the United States, the government’s bottom line may grow more than expected. Carney has shown he’s prepared to increase capital spending to boost Canadian growth, said Page, citing the NATO pledge.

“I think we’re going to end up with higher spending ... but we’re trying to find fiscal room to accommodate that.”

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Direct program expenses (in billions of dollars)

Operating expenses Other transfer payments



Source: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

PSPC's three-year \$17.5-billion spending plan lacks clear roadmap to future goals, say insiders

BY IREM KOCA

Public Services and Procurement Canada plans to spend more than \$17.5-billion over the next three years, but its latest departmental plan—which reveals failed targets including those for procurement timelines and stabilizing the federal payroll system—lacks a clear strategy for execution, casting doubts about the department's ability to deliver future projects.

According to the departmental plan released on June 17, the spending is set to peak in 2025–26, reaching more than \$7.2-billion in total, with most of the funding allocated to major property and infrastructure projects and payroll systems. This is an increase from the almost \$5.4-billion PSPC spent in 2023–24, and the \$5.6-billion spent so far in the current fiscal year according to the main estimates.

The plan attributes the increase in spending to funding injections for major ongoing projects, most of which are expected to wind down gradually as the projects—from IT to infrastructure—are completed. These include the Next Generation Human Resources and Pay Initiative, the newly approved administrative system to replace the Phoenix pay system and modernize HR and pay administration; the Electronic Procurement Solution, a cloud-based platform aimed at streamlining federal procurement; the Les Terrasses de la Chaudière modernization in Gatineau, Que.; and the renovation of the Lester B. Pearson Building in Ottawa.

In 2026–27, total spending is projected to drop to \$5.7-billion, with investment toward property and infrastructure falling to \$4-billion. In 2027–28, the department plans to spend a lower \$4.6-billion, with allocation for property and infrastructure still being the highest bucket with \$3.6-billion, and the rest of the spending areas similarly seeing a gradual decrease over the years.

While the increase in money and targets outlined in the plan align with the new Liberal government's broader objectives from Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) mandate letter, observers highlight that considering the absence of a clear

delivery plan and PSPC's track record, there is little evidence the department can follow through.

"There's very little evidence, without fundamental change in the way PSPC delivers, that this plan is going to be entirely successful. Significant changes are going to have to be made," Sahir Khan, a former assistant parliamentary budget officer and expert in government finances at the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, told *The Hill Times* in an interview.

"I think this new prime minister is going to be very demanding. Fact is, if the department can't meet the expectations of delivery for this new government, then heads will roll."

While the timing of the departmental plans—prepared during a period of government transition—may have contributed to their lack of clarity, Khan said PSPC's plan "really lack[s] the detail required to explain how departments are going to implement the prime minister's new mandate letter." He added that it is especially important for PSPC to clearly articulate its implementation strategy to Parliament, "given that so much of the government's agenda will rely on them."

According to Khan, any federal government transformation will involve PSPC significantly, as the department must manage unresolved files left over from the previous government, such as persistent errors tied to the Phoenix pay system and missed targets in areas like Indigenous procurement.

"Past reform efforts have not proven to be very successful, and so there'll be particular attention paid to how the government's reform agenda actually gets implemented," Khan said.

The departmental plan shows pay inaccuracies affected 112,273 public servants in 2023–24, which is down from the 135,500 from the prior year, but still well above PSPC's target of reducing this number to 88,000. On June 23, PSPC reported the total backlog sat at around 450,000 cases.

"If the department was having difficulty with the ambitions of the last government, the ambitions of this new government are stacked on top of it. That's why I say they're going to have a very challenging time over the summer," Khan said.

A senior executive at the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, speaking on background, pointed to vague targets with no clear deliverables or timelines, and a lack of implementation details in the plan.

"Targets are very good, especially for the contracting," the source said. "[But] how are these programs going to be implemented? There's no dates, really, in the plan, it just says they're going to use this new program to address this issue. But then there's nothing saying, when is that going to be achieved?"

"It is going to be highly questionable whether they can meet their targets for the procurement. I think that one is probably the weakest," said the source.

Another senior government executive with previous experience at both the Privy Council Office and the Treasury Board Secretariat, who spoke to *The Hill Times* on background, argued PSPC is "too big" a department to be guided by such a limited plan.

"PSPC is involved in a lot of internal government processes, so it's critical they work efficiently. This plan is not transparent enough for all that it does," the source said.

As for the significance of the spending increase from last year to this one, the source said, the additional funds as well as some of the clearer goals outlined in the departmental plan are consistent with the new government's goals under a "very focused prime minister," based on their read of the Liberal platform.

"I actually think you are looking at more spending and more activity in this department than what's contained in the plan," the source said, noting that additional spending in the plan is linked to specific projects, which are "apolitical in nature."

"So it's simply good governmental management, which is for the most part what PSPC does."

This also explains the higher use of full-time equivalents (FTEs) the source said, given shifting priorities under a new government might mean moving resources around departments, hiring more staff, and reducing some in other areas.

PSPC reported 19,121 FTEs for 2024–25—up from 18,107 the previous year. About one-third of those FTEs are part

of work associated with payment and accounting. The department forecasts a gradual drop in staffing over the next three years, with 18,725 in 2026–27, and 15,324 by 2027–28, with the majority of them working in property and infrastructure areas.

"What they campaigned on was not reductions in the size of the public service, but a ceiling in the size of the public service. Now, a ceiling does not mean everybody keeps their job. That's the important thing, and I think that's something that everybody has kind of missed. So, a ceiling means the overall size of public service doesn't change. It can certainly mean that who is working and what people are doing in the public service can change," the source explained.

What's in PSPC's spending plan?

The lion's share of this year's spending—\$5.4-billion or 74 per cent—will go toward ongoing major property and infrastructure projects. Another \$1.11-billion is set aside for payments and accounting, which includes efforts to fix long-standing issues tied to the troubled Phoenix pay system.

Spending on government-wide support for areas such as digital upgrades, linguistic services, and modernization of information security is projected at \$192-million. Meanwhile, the purchases of goods and services account for \$187-million, and \$385-million has been set aside for internal services.

The planned spending also allocates \$4.5-million to the Office of the Procurement Ombudsman to review federal procurement practices, investigate supplier complaints, and offer dispute resolution.

For 2027–28, the department plans to spend \$2.7-billion less than in 2025–26.

The departmental records also show that spending has increased by more than \$1-billion over the last two fiscal years. From 2022–23 to 2023–24, spending jumped by \$925-million, largely due to a \$561-million increase in property and infrastructure funding, for major federal projects such as the Centre Block renovation, recapitalization of Place du Portage III, and the purchase of 181 Queen St. in Ottawa for House of Commons accommodations. Another increase of \$272-million during the same year is attributed to efforts to stabilize the federal pay system, eliminate the Phoenix backlog, and absorb the NextGen HR and Pay Initiative.

The records also show that spending increased a further \$93-million between 2023–24 to 2024–25, mostly due to continued transition of HR and pay modernization. The federal government announced on June 11 that it would adopt Dayforce as its new human resources and payroll platform to replace the problem-plagued Phoenix pay system which rendered costly errors, affecting hundreds of thousands federal staff for nearly a decade.

PSPC fails key procurement targets

The departmental plan shows that PSPC failed to meet several key performance targets over the last year. According to the records, only 58 per cent of basic-level contracts were awarded on time in 2023–24—well below the target of 85 per cent. Meanwhile 66 per cent of standard-level contracts were awarded that year on schedule, which also fails the 80-per-cent goal.

The department also fell short on meeting its targets for supplier diversity goals. Only 20 per cent of contract value went to small and medium enterprises, below the 25-per-cent target.

According to the plan, federal departments awarded 3.41 per cent of all contracts to Indigenous businesses in the 2023–24 fiscal year, falling short of its five-per-cent target, introduced in 2021 as part of the government's commitment to economic reconciliation. PSPC continues to pursue the five-per-cent target in both the 2024–25 and 2025–26 fiscal years.

Despite several shortfalls, PSPC did meet numerous targets in 2023–24. Some include maintaining an on-time payment rate 99.99 per cent of the time, and exceeding its green procurement goal, with 51 per cent of contracts reaching above the 45-per-cent benchmark percentage of contracts, standing offers and supply arrangements that include "green" goods and services.

According to the plan, PSPC also expects its net cost of operations to rise by approximately \$428-million to reach more than \$4.6-billion by the end of the 2025–26 fiscal year. As for the reasons, PSPC cites cost drivers such as rent, utilities, and accommodation over which it "has little or no control." The increase is largely attributed to new funding tied to the federal government's Next Generation Human Resources and Pay System, inflation-related property costs, and continued work on the Office Portfolio Reduction Plan.

The department's future goals include promoting competitive bids, expanding digital procurement systems, limiting the outsourcing of professional services, improving oversight over documentation and decision-making processes, delivery of military procurements to support the Canadian Armed Forces' operational readiness, and launching a green procurement tool for government contracts.

The internal plan identified a few key risks to delivering its work, including disruptions in trading relationships, rising commodity prices, supply chain uncertainties, and security concerns driven by geopolitical tensions.

The department also highlighted potential challenges in procurement staff adapting to new processes, tools and policies, which it says it will address by streamlining procurement and increasing training. These were all recommendations to the department by the auditor general.

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Books & Big Ideas

MPs ‘utterly subservient’ to leaders, says *Globe* columnist Andrew Coyne who offers a path away from Canada’s anti-democratic system in his new book, *The Crisis of Canadian Democracy*

In his new book, *The Crisis of Canadian Democracy*, Andrew Coyne unpacks how parties choose their leaders, how the leaders control their MPs, and how the shortcomings in Canada’s electoral system are putting a squeeze on democracy. It’s not pretty.

BY PETER MAZEREUEW

Canada’s Members of Parliament are propping up a system that removes their power and makes them “utterly subservient to the party leaders” as the government centralizes power with the prime minister, argues columnist Andrew Coyne in his new book, *The Crisis of Canadian Democracy*.

In his book, published by Sutherland Books, and in a recent interview on *The Hill Times’* Hot Room podcast, Coyne laid out how this trend is hurting Canada’s legislative body and governing system.

“In substantive terms, we are a long way from a fully functioning democracy. I just don’t think there’s any reason to sugarcoat that,” says Coyne, a columnist for *The Globe and Mail* and CBC panellist whose 250-page book was published in May.

Coyne digs into how parties choose their leaders, how leaders control their MPs, and the shortcomings in this country’s electoral system. He connects the dots to bigger-picture problems like regional alienation, low voter turnout, hyper partisanship, and more.



Prime Minister Mark Carney. In his new book, Andrew Coyne says he tries to show that centralized power is ‘worse here than in other countries.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The centralization and concentration of power in party leaders’ offices is “worse than it was decades ago,” Coyne told *The Hot Room* with host Peter Mazereeuw.

“The role of MPs in our system has become extraordinarily diminished, and very diminished relative to other countries,” he said, and the centralization of power in the Prime Minister’s Office so acute that ministers have “very little agency” and MPs are “utterly subservient to the party leaders.”

The following interview has been edited for length, style, and clarity. Listen to this Hot Room episode for the full interview.

How did we get to this point where MPs are so deferential to their party leaders?

“It’s a long story. It really goes back at least to 1919, which was when the Liberals first introduced the idea that the party leader should be elected by ‘the party at large’—the membership—rather than as in previous times by the caucus. When you are a leader chosen by the caucus, you are necessarily accountable to them because they can also remove you. But when [Liberals] made

that switch, and the Conservatives followed a few years later, it meant that the party leader was essentially accountable to nobody. It sounded more democratic—‘Let’s have a larger group of people voting’—but of course, one of the points I try to make in the book is democracy is not just what happens on voting day. It’s every day in between. And it basically left the leader accountable to nobody.

“It was compounded many years later when we moved to the idea that, to run for a party, a candidate would have to have his or her nomination approved by the party leader. So, in effect, not only did the caucus not choose the leader, the leader chooses the caucus. And, of course, a lot of them would owe their nomination to begin with to having been basically appointed by the party leader. Then you pile on top of that all the many powers that a party leader has over the careers of MPs. [If] they want to be on the committees, if they want to travel, if they want to have a good office appointment, if they want to have any hope of being a critic, or if you’re on the governing side a cabinet minister, you’re utterly

beholden to the party leader. In fact, if you want to just speak in Parliament, if you want to be able to ask questions during Question Period, if you want to be able to make a member’s statement, all of these things are the absolute purview of the party leadership.

“One of the things that I try to show in the book, if anybody’s tempted to say, ‘Well, it’s always been like this,’ or ‘every country has its problems, no system’s perfect.’ What I try to show is it’s worse here than in other countries. Other countries don’t have party caucuses that are so utterly subservient to the party leaders, and it’s worse than it was decades ago.”

Why doesn’t this happen elsewhere?

“I guess because, in other countries, they still think the cabinet is supposed to govern the country. The average size of a cabinet in OECD countries is 19. Ours recently and under previous prime ministers, was close to 40. ... It is absurd, and it means that individual ministers have very little agency. It means the cabinet as a whole is essentially not a deliberate body. You get some

ministers who are close to the prime minister, who will have a degree of power, but very few.

“What we’ve decided is the cabinet is not to govern the country. The cabinet is a means of doling out prizes to regions or demographic groups whom the party is anxious to secure [their] loyalty. And the more that you have to divide up the pie among different groups to achieve representation, the larger the cabinet has to be, and the less significant either cabinet or ministers turn out to be. So the irony, of course, is they use this large cabinet as a way to incentivize loyalty amongst the backbench. And what’s extraordinary is you see these memoirs from prominent cabinet ministers—[former foreign affairs minister] Marc Garneau, [former finance minister] Bill Morneau, [former justice minister] Jody Wilson-Raybould—and they all talk about how, basically, the prime minister mostly ignored them.”

How much of this boils down to money: MPs and ministers not wanting to lose a lucrative job? Is it that simple?

“I doubt it. I think some of them imagine they’re going to get in there and make a difference. When you read the exit interviews ... most of them come across very disillusioned and broken by it. They can’t admit that it was all a waste of time. So they retreat into the constituency office defence, which is, ‘No, I didn’t manage to get any legislation passed. And no, I didn’t really make any significant difference as a legislator, but look at all the letters I wrote on behalf of people trying to get their files through immigration,’ or something, which is obviously work you could hire a student to do.

“I think [for] a lot of them it’s because they want to be part of a gang, part of a team. They think they’re going to be at least mildly famous. Politics, for a lot of people, is just about beating the other guys. It’s remarkable for policy wonks like me. I have to keep reminding myself how many people in senior positions in politics don’t give a fig for anything to do with policy. It’s just the thrill of my gang beating their gang. But it’s sad because it becomes a self-selection process.

“I think anybody who’s paying attention knows that the role of MPs in our system has become extraordinarily diminished, and very diminished relative to other countries. So if you go into it anyway—for the most part, unless you’re completely deluded—you kind of signed up for this. You’re okay with the idea that ‘my job is basically just to be a ‘step and fetcher’ for the party leader. I’m going to have very little independence. I’m not really going to represent my constituents or my own point of view. I’m just going to basically be a spokesperson.’”

Continued on page 21

BOOKS & BIG IDEAS

Continued from page 20

Many don't appreciate the amount of cultural or peer pressure that these MPs are under. If you're an MP for one of the big parties, you spend most of your time in Ottawa surrounded by other MPs for that party, by staffers for that party, and over time, you convince yourself that the other team is bad, ergo anything we do is okay because it's keeping the bad people out of power.

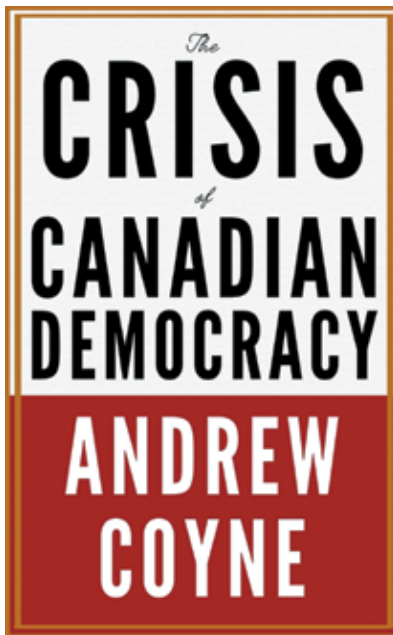
"Absolutely. So partly, as I mentioned, there's self-selection. Partly there's the bewildering nomination process and everything that follows—it's almost like a sensory deprivation or brain-washing thing, where basically any rebellious streak that they might have once had is beaten out of them. But, yes, then you get in there, and even if you did have your conscience and individuality intact, you run up against your fellow MPs who will say to you on some issue, 'You and your precious conscience: don't wreck this for us.'

"I'll give you an example that is really striking is when [former Liberal ministers] Jody Wilson-Raybould and Jane Philpott did the right thing and (a) stood up to prime minister [Justin Trudeau] on the matter of [attempted politically] interfering in a criminal prosecution, which is pretty serious business. And (b)[when] Jane Philpott resigned in solidarity, the prime minister kicked them out of the caucus. And my understanding is the caucus stood and cheered when they were told. So there was no solidarity with their fellow MPs who had tried to carve out a useful role for themselves and stand up for conscience and their personal beliefs. The solidarity was all with the team and the leader."

A lot of this has been attributed in the past to personality. When I started on the Hill, Stephen Harper was the prime minister, and all we could hear was 'He's a control freak. He's power hungry. He's centralizing everything.' Justin Trudeau comes along—completely opposite politics, opposite personality—promised to do away with all these things, and did all the same things.

"Remarkably so. It's been going on for decades. You really have to go back to the '60s and '70s to really see the real centralization of power in the Prime Minister's Office. Really it starts with Pierre Trudeau for the most part. But each prime minister comes in vowing to fix what the previous one had done, and each of them tightens it still further.

"It got worse under Harper. As you say, a lot of that was attributed to his personality, but it was basically just the system grinding out its own logic. And Justin Trudeau comes in and ... promised that we're not going to use prerogation as a political tactic to evade accountability, we're not going to use the dissolution power for the same purpose, we're not going to have these mammoth omnibus bills with hundreds of pages and dozens of bills of completely different subject matter all yoked together in one bill that MPs have to vote



The Crisis of Canadian Democracy, left, the latest book by *Globe and Mail* columnist Andrew Coyne, right, was published in May and was on the bestsellers' list. Handout photograph and courtesy of X



up or down on, we're not going to invoke time allocation every time we want to get a bill through. And he proceeded to do all of those ... specific things that he had rounded on Harper for.

"We now have the situation today where you are passing an omnibus bill with the help of time allocation and closure on top of time allocation to push through a bill [Bill C-5 to fast-track major projects] that will allow cabinet ministers to basically govern without Parliament in significant measure, doing it in a matter of days. Why? Because, 'We're up against the deadline. We've got to rise for the summer, even though we, Parliament, sat dark for six months prior to this.' Why? Because the prime minister prorogued rather than face a confidence vote so [Liberals] could then have a leadership vote under the same old rules where children and foreigners could vote for the leader. And why did they have to go through that? Because the prime minister was stuck as the leader of the Liberal Party, even though nobody in the Liberal Party wanted [Trudeau] to still be there. But because prime ministers and party leaders are so remote and unaccountable, they couldn't remove him. You compound all these things together, and that's why we're here today."

How do you decide how much space to devote to covering this kind of thing in your columns? There's a pressure within the industry to stick with the big-picture stuff that's going to impact people directly, rather than inside baseball.

"You don't want to be a bore, so you can't write about it all the time. But I certainly have no aversion to writing about 'process' questions, which is the thing that every press gallery person waves their hand. Look, democracy is a process question. Whether we're going to be a democracy is a process question and, in many important ways, we're not one now. We have the ceremonies and the rituals and the forums. But in substantive terms, we are a long way from a fully functioning democracy. I just

don't think there's any reason to sugarcoat that.

"When one person, basically, can dictate that things will be rammed through Parliament with no debate. When you look at the mandate that that's based on—where it will typically be less than 40 per cent of the vote, most of it from one part of the country—it's remarkable the things we put up with. It's remarkable when you look at our electoral system, where, effectively, the votes of some people for some parties in some ridings are worth many times in terms of their ability to elect somebody, what the votes of other people in other parties in other ridings are worth. We grow up with the belief that we have a system of one person, one vote. Effectively, we don't.

"We have a system not of majority rule that we might imagine we do. We have a system of institutionalized minority rule. This has practical, real-world effects on what kind of tax bill are we assessing and what's our defence policy, etc. When you don't have a functioning democracy, then you get a lot of inefficiency and bad decisions being made by overwhelmed people in the Prime Minister's Office who are trying to do it all themselves and aren't getting enough feedback, and aren't being told this is actually not going to work. If you're in that bubble inside Ottawa—particularly that bubble of the prime minister's office—it's very easy to get detached from reality. Then you get bad policy, and you get policy that's not connected to what's actually going on in the country.

"I don't think it's totally coincidental that the governing party lost touch with the idea that housing prices were really a big issue and that the public was hurting, and this was going to really hurt them in the election. And maybe if we had a more democratic system where they were more connected to things that would have occurred to them earlier. Or if you look at the divisions we have in our country, there was this big foofaraw after the election of the Liberals [being] shut out again from Alberta, and this is going to feed

separatism. Liberals got [nearly] 30 per cent of the vote. It's the best they've done [there] since 1968, but they still only got two seats. Now I would be the first to say I think the Liberals should be criticized for not really being attuned to the interests and concerns of Albertans over the years. But if you were a Liberal, you might well say, if you're being honest or cynical, well why should we? We can't win any seats there. Or if you're really being cynical, you would say, Well, why should we? Because we don't need to win seats there. We've already got our majority wrapped up in Ontario and Quebec. And that is a function of our first past-the-post electoral system. If we had a more proportional system—if, in other words, parties could win seats across the country—and if, more importantly, parties had to win seats across the country, then we'd have genuine national politics.

"We have vast numbers of our ridings that are basically written off. They're safe ridings. They're safe regions where the parties might as well not even campaign for all the good it would do it. We've become so used to all of these things that we lose sight of the fact that, wait a minute, this is just way, way, way far from a normal democracy, such as exists in other countries."

You made a case for electoral reform as one of the ways to start fixing this problem. You are also pretty clear in the book that it's going to be hard to change any of this because all the power on almost all these subjects eventually comes back to the prime minister. Is this going to take a remarkable personality to somehow fall into the prime minister's chair and decide to change things, or is there some other way we can make this happen?

"I will be waiting a long time if we're waiting for that. The dynamics of these things is that, even if they were sincerely interested in electoral reform before they got elected, once you get elected, you become quite enamoured of the system that got you elected. So it is a dilemma. I think there's two chances or possibilities for how it could ever get reformed. One is that you get the ball rolling somewhere. We're caught in all these vicious circles ... Parliament's become so irrelevant that nobody cares what's happened to Parliament. And all these things feed on themselves. ... One small way is the Reform Act, the bill that was put forward by [Conservative MP] Michael Chong—had to be watered down in a lot of ways to get it passed because the party leaders, while professing to support it, were behind the scenes saying, 'do not support this bill.' But it did eventually get through. It offered to party caucuses a number of powers if they themselves voted to acquire them—which is a weird thing—they have to have a meeting after each election. Unfortunately, it's not a secret ballot, so most of the time, the parties have simply said, 'we don't want these powers.'

"But the exception was the Conservatives. And lo and behold, when [then-party leader] Erin

O'Toole got significantly offside of the caucus, they removed him. And even after Pierre Poilievre was elected, after losing this [federal] election, they decided to maintain that power, which means he's going to have to look over his shoulder. He cannot simply ignore the caucus the way party leaders of all stripes have done over the decades. Let's hope it spreads beyond the Conservatives. Then MPs start to feel 'okay. I've got a bit more agency here. I don't have to be quite as deathly afraid of the party leader in every respect.' And maybe once they feel that about themselves, they say, 'Well, I feel I ought to be able to ask questions in Parliament rather than having to get on the list that the party leaders maintain.' It's a slim chance, perhaps, but you've got to start somewhere. So that's one way.

"The other way is we get into some massive crisis, and I'm very worried about this. We're in an age now, with Donald Trump as [United States] president, where I think there's a broad consensus that we're going to have to make a lot of big changes in the country. Big changes in defence policy and trade policy and economic policy because our world has changed. And we haven't been good at making big changes in the country. We usually avoided those kind of big changes because we know if we do, we're going to have big fights because our system's so undemocratic. I think we kind of know that that places a certain limit on your ability to push through measures. We do even so, and we oftentimes get into those regional fights, but there's limits on it. Well, if we're now caught in the situation where we absolutely have to push through these big changes—and you're starting to see it even now with this new government and a lot of democratic principles being thrown overboard even now—but if it gets into that regional dimension, then I really fear we're going to have not separation, but just paralysis and drift. And maybe at some point the situation becomes so bad that people look around each other and go, 'we've got to change the way we make decisions in this country.'

"The root cause of this isn't just that we're a big, sprawling, diverse country. It's that our processes are putting us at each other's throats. If you want a precedent for that, that's exactly what happened at Confederation. The government of the Parliament of the United Province of Canada, they were all at loggerheads, the French and the English, the Catholics and the Protestants, the Liberals and the Conservatives. They were just stalled. They couldn't get anything through Parliament. And eventually, there was such a crisis that George Brown, the leader of the Reform Party as it was then called, crossed the floor and joined a grand coalition with his hated rival, Sir John A. Macdonald. So stranger things have happened, and sometimes it just becomes apparent that the only way out is major reform. I hope it doesn't come to that, but that may be what we finally have to do."

The Hill Times

Party Central



By Stuart Benson & photographs by Sam Garcia

Beating the heat at Birkett Castle with the Royal Conservatory and Tamás Török

Hungarian Ambassador Mária Vass-Salazar hosted an intimate reception and recital performance at her official residence on June 20 in support of the Budapest Symphony Orchestra's upcoming Canadian tour.

A small group of big donors joined Hungary's Ambassador Mária Vass-Salazar at her official residence recently for a fundraising dinner and recital in support of next year's performance by the Budapest Festival Orchestra with a night of fine food, music, and—thankfully—air conditioning.

With the “feels-like” temperature still hovering far too close to 40 C, on June 23, **Party Central** headed over to the residence, known as Birkett Castle, in Centretown to beat the heat with a glass of champagne and an intimate fundraising recital performed by Hungarian-Canadian orchestra pianist **Tamás Török** and organized by the Hungarian Embassy and the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM), which will be hosting the Budapest Festival Orchestra's performance next February.

Led by Hungarian composer **Iván Fischer**, the orchestra is slated to perform **Gustav Mahler's** “gargantuan” *Symphony No. 3*, which RCM President and CEO **Alexander Brose** told attendees is expected to “blow the roof off the hall” with nearly 100 musicians set to perform at once, alongside a full chorus, a children's chorus, and a *mezzo soprano* for good measure. If, like this reporter, your musical education is limited to high school concert band, you can find a performance of Mahler's Third performed by the orchestra and conducted by Fischer from 2017 on YouTube.

Fortunately, there were plenty of far more cultured attendees at Vass-Salazar's soirée, including **Margaret Dickenson**, renowned Ottawa celebrity chef, cookbook author, and CPAC CEO **Christa Dickenson's** mom; **Shannon Day-Newman**, Honens Ottawa Laureate Circle chair; author and former culture and politics journalist **Sarah Jennings**; Pendulum Group's **Heather Bakken**; and **Catherine Bélanger**, president of KatiCorp Inc. and widow of the late-Liberal MP **Mauril Bélanger**.

After a bit of mingling as the guests arrived, Vass-Salazar and Brose gathered their guests' attention for the perfunctory speeches highlighting the cultural connections between the RCM and Hungary, including two statues of Hungarian-born musicians **Béla Bartók** and **Ferenc Liszt**.

Brose also highlighted the “five-headed beast” that is the RCM, including the three amigos—the Taylor Performance Academy, and the **Glenn Gould** and **Oscar Peterson** schools—its nationwide music curriculum (which you probably owned a copy of at some point if you learned an instrument as a child in Canada), and, of course, the “exquisite” and world-renowned Koerner Hall in Toronto where the orchestra will perform when it comes to Canada next February.

“To have the Budapest Festival Orchestra perform there is going to be one of the crowning musical experiences of my life,” Brose said.

Brose also took the time to introduce the night's talented performer, Török, who began playing piano at the age of six, and joined the RCM's academy for young artists—under the tutelage of renowned Chinese-Canadian pianist Li Wang—before completing the musical “feat” of securing one of 20 pianist spots at the RCM's Glenn Gould School, which only accepts about five applicants per year. During that time and since, Török has earned international recognition and performed with several other major orchestras alongside the RCM, including the Toronto Concert Orchestra, the Vienna Opera Ball Orchestra, the Scarborough Philharmonic, and the Huronia Symphony Orchestra.

After the speeches, Vass-Salazar led guests into the dining room to take their seats for a brief recital from Török featuring performances of Bartók's *Három Magyar Népdal* (*Three Hungarian Folk Songs*), **Johannes Brahms' Intermezzo 2** and *Ballade No. 3*, and **Ernő Dohnányi's Rhapsody in C Major**.

Once the recital was concluded, the guests were served a sumptuous three-course meal of roasted goat cheese-stuffed figs with spicy honey, followed by a whole-roasted tenderloin with baby glazed carrots and duchess potatoes, and poached peaches with cassis reduction and Chantilly cream for dessert.

However, as **Party Central** had failed to RSVP in time, rather than leer over the guests as they ate, this reporter headed back out into the much more reasonable weather—at 31 C—just after 9 p.m. and found some cheap chicken wings.

sbenson@hilltimes.com
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1. Pianist Tamás Török performs at an intimate fundraising dinner and recital at Hungarian Ambassador Mária Vass-Salazar's official residence on June 20. *The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia 2. Tamás Török, left, Hungarian Ambassador Mária Vass-Salazar, and Alexander Brose, the Michael and Sonja Koerner president and CEO of The Royal Conservatory of Music. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia 3. Shannon Day-Newman, left, Margaret Dickenson, and Vass-Salazar. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia 4. Vass-Salazar, bottom right, welcomes guests to the pre-recital reception. From left to right: Kinga Petrovai, Dickenson, Daisy Williams, Judy Young Drache, Catherine Bélanger, Heather Bakken, Katalin Haás, Stuart Benson, Maja Ristic-Solajic, Day-Newman, Brose, Török, and Sarah Jennings (sister to the late-ABC World News Tonight anchor Peter Jennings). *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia 5. Brose hypes up next year's performance of Mahler's 'gargantuan' Third symphony by the Budapest Festival Orchestra at the Royal Conservatory of Music's Koerner Hall. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia 6. Török performs a selection of Hungarian piano compositions ahead of dinner. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia 7. Once the recital was complete, the paying guests were treated to a three-course meal of goat cheese-stuffed figs, roast beef, and peaches in Chantilly cream for dessert. *Photographs courtesy of the Embassy of Hungary*

FEATURE

Thousands come out to celebrate Canada Day

The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia



Prime Minister Mark Carney, who talked about unity in a 'changing' world, waded through the crowd at LeBreton Flats in Ottawa.



Canadian Heritage estimated that 58,000 people came through LeBreton Flats on Canada Day, and 8,000 visited LeBreton Flats for the noon show.



Prince Edward, The Duke of Edinburgh, was in Ottawa for Canada Day, and praised Canadian unity and accomplishments.



Big-time Hollywood actor Ryan Reynolds, left, a Canadian who received the Order of Canada earlier in the day, shares a look with Gov. Gen. Mary Simon on stage.



Liberal MP Mona Fortier, who represents Ottawa-Vanier-Gloucester, Ont., came out for the show.



Reynolds, spotted again.



The Duke of Edinburgh schmoozes.



Lots of people were dressed in red and white.



And many people were waving flags.



Indigenous leader and University of Ottawa chancellor Claudette Commanda raises her feather.



It isn't a party until the pipers come piping in.



Parliamentary Calendar

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

Macdonald-Laurier Institute to host talk on AI policy in Canada on July 7: 'A unique path between the EU and U.S.'



The Macdonald-Laurier Institute is hosting a webinar: 'AI Policy in Canada: A Unique Path Between the EU and U.S.,' exploring key legislative developments, evolving regulatory frameworks, and their implications for innovation, privacy, equity, and global competitiveness. Monday, July 7, at 1 p.m. ET happening online. Register via Eventbrite. Image courtesy of Pixabay

SUNDAY, JULY 6—TUESDAY, JULY 8

CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting—The annual Caribbean Community Heads of Government meeting is scheduled to take place from Sunday, July 6, to Tuesday, July 8 in Montego Bay, Jamaica. Details: caricom.org.

MONDAY, JULY 7

Webinar: 'AI Policy in Canada'—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute is hosting a webinar: "AI Policy in Canada: A Unique Path Between the EU and U.S.," exploring key legislative developments, evolving regulatory frameworks, and their implications for innovation, privacy, equity, and global competitiveness. Monday, July 7, at 1 p.m. ET happening online. Register via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9

Panel: 'Reforming Access to Information'—As part of its CIPPIC Summer Speaker Series 2025, the University of Ottawa's Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic is hosting 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, and 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: lawnsummernights.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.

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.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 16

CSIS Director to Deliver Remarks—Daniel Rogers, director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Services, will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Wednesday, July 16, at 12 p.m. ET at the C.D. Howe Institute, 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

THURSDAY, JULY 17

Prime Minister Carney to Meet with First Nations Leadership—Prime Minister Mark Carney, responsible cabinet ministers, and public servants are expected to hold the first in a series of meetings with First Nations rights holders in Ottawa. Details to follow.

MONDAY, JULY 21—WEDNESDAY, JULY 23

Council of the Federation Summer Meeting—Ontario Premier Doug Ford, chair of the Council of the Federation, will host the premiers' 2025 Summer Meeting. Monday, July 21, to Wednesday, July 23, at Deerhurst Resort, Huntsville, Ont. Details: canadaspremiers.ca.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23

Elevate Girls on the Hill—Elevate International hosts a leadership forum that brings girls and young women to the steps of Parliament Hill for a day of leadership, empowerment, and celebration. Students, emerging leaders, Members of Parliament, educators, and changemakers will take part in

keynote speeches, youth-led panels, and leadership workshops. Wednesday, July 23, at 9:30 a.m. ET at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, Room 100, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30

Panel: 'Telecommunications in Canada'—As part of its CIPPIC Summer Speaker Series 2025, the University of Ottawa's Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic hosts a discussion on "Telecommunications in Canada," featuring Vicky Eatrises, chair and CEO of the CRTC; and Rachelle Frenette, general counsel and deputy executive director, CRTC. Wednesday, July 30, at 1 p.m. ET at uOttawa, Fauteux Hall, 57 Louis-Pasteur Priv. Register via Eventbrite.

MONDAY, AUG. 18

Byelection in Battle River-Crowfoot—Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will be running in the byelection in Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta., which will be held today. Former Conservative MP Damien Kurek resigned his seat so that Poilievre could run here and get a seat in the House.

MONDAY, SEPT. 1

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

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 3—FRIDAY, SEPT. 5

Assembly of First Nations' AGA—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its annual general assembly. Wednesday, Sept. 3, to Friday, Sept. 5, at the RBC Convention Centre, 375 York Ave., Winnipeg. Details: afn.ca/events.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 5—SATURDAY, SEPT. 6

CSFN Regional Conference—The Canada Strong and Free Network hosts its 2025 Regional Conference. Conservatives will gather to discuss the unique needs and aspirations of Western Canadians within the Canadian federation. Friday, Sept. 5, to Saturday, Sept. 6, at the Westin Airport Calgary Hotel. Details: canadastrongandfree.network.

MONDAY, SEPT. 15

Ottawa Centre September Trivia Night—The Ontario Liberal Party hosts an evening of trivia and fun downtown with fellow Liberals. Each ticket includes snacks and a drink cover, and new Future Fund sign-ups will be accepted at the door. Monday, Sept. 15, at 5:30 p.m. ET at 3 Brewers Restaurant, 240 Sparks St., Ottawa. Details: ontarioliberal.ca.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 16

Conference: 'Canada's Next Economic Transformation'—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts a day-long conference, "Canada's Next Economic Transformation: Industrial Policy in Tumultuous Times." Participants include Steve Verheul (former assistant deputy minister of the Trade Policy and Negotiations branch of Global Affairs Canada); Matthew Holmes (Canadian Chamber of Commerce); Emna Braham (L'Institut du Québec); Jim Stanford (Centre for Future Work); Jesse McCormick (First Nations Major Project Coalition); Chris Bataille (Centre on Global Energy Policy); and Tim Hudak (Counsel Public Affairs). Tuesday, Sept. 16, at the Lord Elgin Hotel, 100 Elgin St., Ottawa. Details: irpp.org.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 17

CUTA 2025 Policy Forum—The Canadian Urban Transit Association hosts its 2025 Policy Forum, bringing together some of North America's leading transit and urban mobility experts to discuss the industry's future. Wednesday, Sept. 17, at 8 a.m. ET the Lord Elgin Hotel, 100 Elgin St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 19

First of 2025 CBC Massey Lectures—Former Amnesty International Canada secretary-general Alex Neve will deliver this year's CBC Massey Lectures, titled "Universal: Renewing Human Rights in a Fractured World." The next lectures will take place in Vancouver (Sept. 25), Edmonton (Oct. 1), Happy Valley/Goose Bay, Labrador (Oct. 15) and Ottawa (Oct. 30). Friday, Sept. 19, Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto. Details to follow: massey-college.ca.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 21

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

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 24

Politics and the Pen Gala—The Writers' Trust of Canada hosts the Politics and the Pen Gala, its annual fundraiser where the \$25,000 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing will also be presented. Location to be announced. Details: writerstrust.com.

MONDAY, OCT. 6

An Evening with David Peterson—The Pearson Centre hosts an evening with David Peterson, celebrating the 40th anniversary of his becoming premier of Ontario in 1985. Monday, Oct. 6, at 6:30 p.m. ET at One King West, Toronto. Details: thepearsoncentre.ca.

FRIDAY, OCT. 17

Senator Richards' Retirement—Today is non-affiliated New Brunswick

Senator David Adams Richards' 75th birthday, which means his mandatory retirement from the Senate.

THURSDAY, OCT. 30

Final CBC Massey Lecture—Former Amnesty International Canada secretary-general Alex Neve will deliver the final instalment of this year's CBC Massey Lectures, titled "Universal: Renewing Human Rights in a Fractured World." Thursday, Oct. 30, at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Details to follow: massey-college.ca.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 5

Vimy Gala—The Conference of Defence Associations Institute hosts its 33rd annual Vimy Gala. This prestigious black-tie event honours Canada's fallen heroes and celebrate exceptional Canadians who have shaped the nation's defence and security landscape. The 2025 Vimy Award Laureate will also be honoured. Wednesday, Nov. 5, at the Canadian War Museum, 1 Vimy Pl. Register: cdainstitute.ca.

SATURDAY, NOV. 22

Press Gallery Dinner—The Parliamentary Press Gallery will host its annual gala dinner. Saturday, Nov. 22, at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, Ottawa. Details: collin.lafrance@parl.gc.ca.

THURSDAY, JAN. 29—SATURDAY, JAN. 31, 2026

Conservative National Convention—The Conservative Party of Canada will hold its the National Convention. Thursday, Jan. 29, to Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026, at the Telus Convention Centre, Calgary.

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