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Independent Senator Hassan Yussuff is a member of Prime Minister Mark Carney's 19-member Council on Canada-U.S. Relations. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## Transparency in trade talks to come when deal complete, says Senator on Canada-U.S. council

- The government has shared limited information about trade negotiations with Prime Minister Mark Carney's Council on Canada-U.S. Relations, says member Independent Senator Hassan Yussuff.
- The council last met in late June prior to the government's decision to rescind the controversial digital services tax.
- Conservative MPs on the House Committee for International Trade have called for an emergency meeting to 'contribute to the negotiations process and ensure transparency.'

**BY NEIL MOSS**

Amid calls for increased transparency over the Liberal government's negotiations with the United States, a member of the prime minister's Canada-U.S. advisory council says that clarity will have to wait until trade talks are completed.

Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has been mum on what precisely he is seeking to accomplish in trade negotiations with U.S. President Donald Trump. The New

Democrats have called on the government to table its objectives for the talks in the House of Commons.

"I think there should be transparency once the negotiations have concluded," said Independent Senator Hassan Yussuff (Ontario), a member of Carney's Council on Canada-U.S. Relations. "Canadians do have the right to know where we ended up at the end of the day, but I think given the delicate nature of the negotiations at this stage,

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# Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

## Two NDP MPs plan to nominate Francesca Albanese for Nobel Peace Prize



NDP MPs Alexandre Boulerice, centre, and Heather McPherson, right, plan to nominate UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese, left, for the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize. *Photograph courtesy of X and The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade*

Two NDP MPs intend to nominate Italian lawyer **Francesca Albanese** for the Nobel Peace Prize in response to Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu's** plans to put forward United States President **Donald Trump's** name for the prestigious award.

As United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Albanese "has travelled the world to share what she has witnessed on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories and has urged us to take action in the name of justice and the rule of law," said Alberta MP **Heather McPherson** in a July 11 press release. "Albanese should be the recipient of the Nobel Peace prize."

The NDP release noted the U.S. government's recent sanctions against Albanese. On July 9, Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** said "Albanese's campaign of political and economic warfare against the United States and Israel will no longer be tolerated." In her latest report published last month, Albanese was critical of the war in Gaza, accusing American tech giants of helping Israel.

"This is a bad joke," said Quebec MP **Alexandre Boulerice** in the release. "The world—including Canadians—was appalled to see the Prime Minister of Israel, who has arrest warrants issued against him for war crimes, nominating a convicted felon, Donald Trump, for a Nobel Peace Prize."

"She is the one who truly deserves the Nobel Peace Prize," said Boulerice.

Albanese has been in her current role since 2022. According to the Nobel Peace Prize website, "All living persons and active organizations or institutions are eligible candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize. What is considered a valid nomination is defined by the Nobel Foundation's statutes." Submissions via an online form are due Jan. 31, 2026, with nominees whittled down to a short list over the year, and a final laureate announced at the start of October.

## Ex-NDP MPs Caron, Green won't run for leader

In other NDP news, the list of people opting out of the upcoming leadership race grew a bit longer last weekend, as former MPs **Guy Caron** and **Matthew Green** confirmed they won't run to succeed **Jagmeet Singh**.

"I will not be in the running for the upcoming NDP leadership race, and I will not be involved," Caron told *The Globe and Mail* on July 11, noting that he's focusing his energy on his mayoral re-election campaign. Caron is currently at the end of his first four-year term as mayor of Rimouski, Que. He was an NDP MP for the riding of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Que., from 2011 to 2019.

The same article said Green—who was MP for Hamilton Centre, Ont., from 2019



Former NDP MPs Guy Caron, left, and Matthew Green, will not seek the party's leadership. *The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade*



until his defeat in the April 28 federal election—would not be running for leader, either. "I consider myself young relative to politics and still, with some things to learn, including a deep fluency in French, which I don't

have," Green told *The Globe*. "I'm trying to demonstrate leadership in other ways by making sure there's internal party democracy and accountability and more responsiveness and engagement with our rank-and-file members."

## Celebrity chef Guy Fieri praises Lauren Harper's BBQ skills



Food Network star Guy Fieri, left, judged the annual Cowboys BBQ Cook-Off at the Calgary Stampede on July 10. He awarded best beef ribs to Lauren Harper's team. *Photographs courtesy of X*

**Lauren Harper** makes some tasty beef ribs, but don't take my word for it.

**Heard on the Hill** couldn't make it to the Stampede this year, but luckily Food Network star **Guy Fieri** was in Cowtown last week to preside as judge at the sixth annual "Cowboys BBQ Cook-Off" on July 10.

The unelected "mayor of Flavortown" deemed the Cowboys Calgary team—which featured the wife of former prime minister **Stephen Harper**—to have the best beef ribs.

"My BBQ team @CowboysCalgary getting ready to head to Flavour Town," Mrs. Harper posted on X that day. "My job for the team is to take the lid off the BBQ and put it back on when I am told."

According to the internet, Cowboys Calgary is a nightclub/dance hall whose motto is "The

Most Fun You Can Have With Your Boots On!"

"And @GuyFieri announced we won best beef ribs," Harper posted later that day. "Lots of fun and we will be back next year."

This was the American celebrity chef's second stint as barbecue judge at the Stampede, having first done the honours back in 2019.

"As part of the event, BBQ grillmasters and pros will compete to impress Fieri with their best pork and beef rib recipes. They'll also be judged on their unique flavours and team spirit," reported **Charlie Hart** on dailyhive.com on July 9.

During his visit, Fieri reportedly also took in some iconic Stampede events including the chuckwagon and relay races, and visited some local Calgary restaurants.

## Xavier Trudeau to perform in Ottawa on July 18



Xavier Trudeau, left, and Taz Benti will perform at Ottawa's 27 Club on York Street on July 18. *Screenshot courtesy of CTV Morning Live*

In other news about former prime ministers' family members and nightclubs, **Xavier Trudeau** will be performing at The 27 Club in Ottawa's ByWard Market on July 18.

The eldest son of former prime minister **Justin Trudeau** will take to the stage with 20-year-old Ottawa-based rapper **Taz Benti** in an all-ages show titled "Xav + Taz" at the former Zaphod's location on York Street.

Speaking with *CTV Morning Live* host **Rosey Edeh** on July 14, Xavier Trudeau explained that music is a way for him to ignore the haters and to carve out his own path.

"I was always known as Justin Trudeau's son. That's something

I've been dealing with my entire life," he told Edeh. "I am super proud of what he's done, but I want to be my own man, my own person."

The 17-year-old artist told Edeh that while his mother listens to **Céline Dion** and his dad to "rock stuff" like The Tragically Hip, he was drawn to rap as a child.

"I was like a rebel kid. I wouldn't break rules, but I would like to do my own thing. When I have my eye on something, when it's set, I'm going to do it, I am going to achieve it."

Tickets are available via Eventbrite. Doors open at 6 p.m.

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





# Jointly Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations for Sustained and Steady Development of China-Canada Relations

June 10 this year was the first United Nations International Day for Dialogue Among Civilizations. On June 7, the Chinese Embassy in Canada participated for the first time in the annual "Doors Open Ottawa" event, attracting over 600 Canadian visitors. The event featured Chinese cultural displays such as tea art, calligraphy, painting, and paper-cutting, along with photo exhibitions that walked the visitors through the stories of China-Canada exchanges. Visitors were deeply impressed by the profound and rich Chinese culture, commending the event as a perfect embodiment of mutual learning and integration among different civilizations.

As a country with a long history and a splendid civilization, China is committed to promoting exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. In 2023, President Xi Jinping solemnly put forth the Global Civilization Initiative, which calls for respecting the diversity of civilizations, upholding the common values of humanity, emphasizing both heritage and innovation and strengthening international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. In 2024, the 78th session of the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution proposed by China and co-sponsored by over 80 countries to declare June 10 as the International Day for Dialogue Among Civilizations. This meets the shared desire of people around the world for more dialogue among civilizations to drive human progress, and reflects true multilateralism and the common values of humanity. This is part of China's efforts to actively advance the GCI, and an important contribution to equal-footed exchanges and dialogue among civilizations as well as to world peace and development.

In the face of the immense impact from world changes unseen in a century, the value of civilizations has taken on an unprecedented significance and interactions among civilizations are of vital importance. It is prime time to promote dialogue among civilizations. In his remarks at the UN event to celebrate the International Day for Dialogue Among Civilizations, Member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Foreign Minister Wang Yi highlighted that dialogue among civilizations is a bond of peace, a driver of development, and a bridge for friendship. As the world comes to a historic crossroads, China calls upon all countries in the world to uphold equality, promote exchanges, and advance the progress of civilizations, aiming for cooperation and mutual benefit, rejecting confrontation and zero-sum games, and staying committed to peaceful coexistence among civilizations. It is important for countries to step up exchanges and mutual learning, draw inspirations from dialogue

among civilizations to address global challenges, explore paths toward global modernization, and build a community with a shared future where all civilizations thrive together.

Canada was one of the first Western countries to establish diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China. For a long time, China-Canada relationship was among the best in China's relations with the West. Over the 55 years of diplomatic ties, China and Canada have conducted fruitful cooperation in various fields including trade, culture, education, health, science and technology, and sub-national exchanges, bringing tangible benefits to people of both countries. This also proves that countries with different political systems and ideologies can well promote mutual understanding, bridge differences, and achieve win-win outcomes through dialogue and exchanges.

The GCI is rooted in the fine traditional Chinese culture and embodies the concept of "harmony in diversity." It advocates equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness among civilizations—concepts that closely align with Canada's multiculturalism and values of openness and inclusiveness. Last month, Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney had a successful phone call and reached important consensus on promoting bilateral relations, opening up an important window of opportunity for improving and further growing China-Canada relations. China looks forward to working together with Canada to enhance mutual learning between civilizations and promote steady and sustained growth of bilateral relations through open and candid exchanges and dialogues.

In June, the 2025 Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival was successfully held, with over 100 teams from across North America participating in the races. This year's Festival also marked the debut of the "Panda Cup" Challenge sponsored by the Chinese Embassy in Canada. During the dragon boat racing, people of different cultural backgrounds and skin colors paddled together and raced forward, showcasing the dragon boat spirit of weathering the storm and seeking strength in solidarity. It was a good example of East-West civilizational dialogue in action.

Guided by the GCI, China will continue to work with the rest of the international community, including Canada, to fully utilize the International Day for Dialogue Among Civilizations as an important platform to uphold equality and promote exchanges and progress among civilizations, thereby injecting positive energy into the joint efforts of humanity to address common challenges.

**H.E. Chinese Ambassador to Canada Wang Di**

**For more information please visit: <http://ca.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/>**

Upper Left Photo: A special cultural performance was held in the General Assembly Hall to mark the inaugural International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations. (UN website)  
Upper Right Photo: Chinese Ambassador to Canada H.E. Wang Di gave remarks at the Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival's opening ceremony on June 20, 2025. (Chinese Embassy in Canada)





## NEWS

# Canada's diplomatic vacancy in Germany lingers despite diversification push

Canada's vacant ambassadorial posting in Germany is just one important embassy abroad that will soon need to be filled as most G7 envoys near the tail end of their tenure.

BY NEIL MOSS

Canada's embassy in Berlin has been without a full-fledged ambassador for nearly two of the last three years, and as Ottawa looks to build closer links with Europe, filling that post and potentially turning over other key diplomatic roles could present an opportunity for the Carney government.

Most of Canada's other G7 ambassadors are reaching or have surpassed the traditional four-year posting, which would give Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) and Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand (Oakville East, Ont.) an opening to reshape key ambassadorial posts.

After Stéphane Dion departed Germany to become Canada's ambassador to France in August 2022, there was a 14-month gap before John Horgan formally started the role in December 2023. The former British Columbia premier died in November 2024. The mission has been without an ambassador for the last eight months, and for 22 of the last 34 months, overall.

At the same time, Carney has been aiming to boost Canada's transatlantic links, including signing a defence pact with the European Union last month.

"A country like Germany—which is an important country—would expect the vacancy to not be too long," said former Canadian ambassador Guy Saint-Jacques, who led the foreign ministry's assignments division.

"In the case of Germany, this is unusual, especially at a time we want to have closer military and political links," he said. "This should be a top priority right now."

Canada is represented in Berlin by deputy head of mission and chargée d'affaires Evelyne Coulombe.

German ambassadors to Canada Matthias Lüttenberg and Tjorven Bellmann started their shared post last September, a



Prime Minister Mark Carney has championed increased trade and defence links to Europe as part of diversification efforts. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

handful of months after Sabine Sparwasser departed Ottawa at the end of June 2024.

The posting in Germany was not included among the 23 new heads of mission announced by Anand on July 3.

As part of the Global Affairs Canada (GAC) transformation implementation plan, a commitment was made to move up the launch dates for the appointment process to "ensure the timely deployment of heads of mission."

A number of former diplomats criticized the delays in appointing ambassadors in Canada's system. That has intensified as GAC, the foreign minister's office, and the Prime Minister's Office all have input into the process.

Former diplomat Colin Robertson, now senior adviser at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, said not having an envoy in Berlin limits Canada's output in Germany.

"Not having somebody in Germany at a time when Germany is the ascendant power is a disadvantage for us," he said. "I don't think we're able to make the contacts that we'd like to have."

"You're simply not charging on all your cylinders," he said.

Past ambassador Patricia Fortier called the length of the vacancy in Germany "very concerning."

"The past government seemed to want more political appointments—especially for major countries and that slowed everything down," she said.

Former envoy Michael Small, president of the Canadian Ambassadors Alumni Association, said the vacancy isn't a grave problem, but it is something that the government should remedy, remarking that it reduces



Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand announced 23 new envoys on July 3, but a new ambassador to Germany was not on the list. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canada's "bench strength" in the country.

Royal Military College professor Adam Chapnick, an expert on Canadian foreign policy, said the country's interests are undermined by not having full-fledged ambassadors in major nations.

"They have a degree of access that people acting in their capacity don't have," he said. "You don't have access back to the centre of your government, and therefore you are looked at as somewhat less important because your word isn't as valuable as an ambassador's."

Chapnick said there are a couple of possible reasons to explain why the posting still remains empty, including that GAC's appointment system remains slow, as well as Car-

ney and Anand both wanting to be engaged in the process of appointing a new envoy.

## Carney's footprint on the diplomatic corps

Beyond Germany, Carney and Anand have the opportunity to appoint new envoys as a number of ambassadors in some of Canada's most important missions abroad are soon reaching or have surpassed the traditional four-year tenure.

Ailish Campbell was appointed ambassador to the European Union in February 2021. Ralph Goodale has been in London as high commissioner to the United Kingdom since May 2021. Canada's top diplomat in Japan has been Ian McKay since September 2021. Canadian Ambassador to Italy Elisca Golberg has been in Rome since December 2021.

Kirsten Hillman has been Canada's top diplomat in the United States since March 2020. Prior to that, she was the acting ambassador since August 2019. She had her term extended in June, and was appointed as chief trade negotiator with the U.S.

Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations Bob Rae has been in that key role since August 2020.

Since the Canada-India relationship reached a nadir over allegations of New Delhi's involvement in the 2023 killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, B.C., the two countries have been without high commissioners in each other's capital. Carney and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed at the G7 summit in June to appoint new envoys.

Anand was asked by a reporter on July 10 when a high commissioner to India would

be announced. She responded that the government is taking its relationship with India "one step at a time," and that next steps in the relationship will be taken "prudently and in due course."

"That timeline will be steady, not immediate and I will leave it at that," she said.

Robertson said Carney has an opening with envoys in important postings currently serving longer tenures.

"This opens up a big opportunity for Prime Minister Carney to make appointments to key NATO, G7, and Indo-Pacific capitals as well as posts in the Americas that will be essential for the trade diversification part of his economic plan," he said.

Small said he expects there to be a shuffle in the important missions abroad as envoys reach their fourth and fifth year in the post.

"[Carney] does have an opportunity either this summer or next summer to do some turnover in some of our most important missions," he said.

## Political appointees or career diplomats?

When filling the multitude of important posts, Carney and Anand will have to decide how much they will rely on career diplomats or political appointees. Former prime ministers Justin Trudeau and Stephen Harper each appointed a slew of political appointees to important posts.

Former Canadian ambassador Gilles Rivard, who served as ambassador and deputy permanent representative at the UN, said that Carney should increasingly be looking to career diplomats to fill vacant roles.

"The people that are best placed to do that job are the people that know the job," he said. "You have political appointees that are very competent, but you also have political appointees that are not that competent."

He said that GAC has many in the senior executive ranks who would be well placed to fill important missions abroad.

Chapnick said there is an opportunity for Carney to reset the idea of a professional ambassadorial corps.

"Mr. Carney is under no obligation to make the number of partisan ambassadorial appointments that Mr. Trudeau did," he said. "One way to send a message that we are serious about professionals would be to appoint more career diplomats to some of these posts."

Chapnick said that Carney has already shown his respect for career diplomats by extending Hillman's posting. Hillman represents an outlier as a career diplomat in a posting that has more frequently been given to political appointees.

"There's a real opportunity here to get away from this trend to an ever-increasing number of political appointees in the most senior roles, which—while there is some value on occasion—demoralizes the career folks who have no opportunity to rise in the ranks," he said.

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



# Skeleton of new Parliament Welcome Centre starts taking shape

Meanwhile, workers continue to haul bedrock out from under the historic Centre Block building as part of excavations that will reach 23 metres below ground.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

The exterior concrete walls of the new underground Parliament Welcome Centre being built in the shadow of Centre Block are going up, and inside the historic building, excavations are moving ahead, with some 190 truckloads' worth of bedrock hauled out to date.

As of mid-June, total spending on the multi-year, multibillion-dollar project to both renovate the Centre Block building and construct the Parliament Welcome Centre (PWC) complex reached roughly \$1.28-billion, according to Public Services and Procurement Canada's (PSPC) latest quarterly report, up from the \$1.17-billion spent as of mid-March. Altogether, the project has an estimated budget of \$4.5- to \$5-billion, as announced by PSPC in June 2021.

There are four main components to the work currently happening on the site: construction of the underground PWC, restoration of Centre Block's exterior masonry, structural work to levels two through six of the historic building as well as to its roof, and basement-level excavations inside Centre Block, which are needed both to install base-isolation seismic upgrades underneath the 100-year-old structure and to connect the building with the new PWC complex.

All three of the tower cranes that will be used in the construction of the PWC now stand tall in front of Centre Block. Concrete footings for the structure began to be poured at the end of last year, and today span the length of the PWC pit, with columns and elevator shafts taking shape. According to PSPC, "exterior foundation walls are currently being poured on the east side" of the pit as work progresses "steadily eastward."

The future three-storey structure will offer roughly 32,000 square metres of new space for parliamentarians and the public, and along with serving as the new public entrance to the Hill, it will be the hub that connects the Hill's soon-to-be-expanded underground tunnel network.

While construction is ongoing outside of Centre Block, inside the building, various forms of demolition are underway.



Five cranes currently surround Centre Block. Three sit inside the Parliament Welcome Centre pit to facilitate construction of the new underground complex, with two flanking Centre Block's east and west ends to haul material in and out of its internal courtyards. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The bones of the Parliament Welcome Centre, as seen on June 3, are taking shape. *Photograph courtesy of PSPC-SPAC*

Workers began excavations on the basement level of Centre Block, starting in its west courtyard, this past April, and as of June 30, some 950 cubic metres of bedrock have been removed, the equivalent of roughly 190 truckloads' worth of material, according to PSPC.

"This marks the beginning of a complex effort," said the department in emailed responses to *The Hill Times*. "Unlike the open-pit excavations of the Parliament Welcome Centre, work beneath Centre Block must proceed with extreme care due to limited access, significant site constraints, and strict processes in place to maintain the building's stability."

Working in tight quarters, there will be no blasting through bedrock as there was for the 23-metre-deep PWC pit, with workers instead using smaller machinery, including more than 20 Brokk machines and mini excavators.

To help hold up the building during these excavations, a support network of steel posts, support beams, and jacks has been installed underneath, onto which Centre Block's weight will be transferred as excavations progress. On its western end, the building's load in the west courtyard area was transferred onto this support network ahead of the start of excavations in the spring, and work continues to ready it for load transfer in the east courtyard area this summer in time

for excavations on that end of the building to begin in the fall.

To date, 97 per cent of the steel support posts set to be drilled into the basement level of Centre Block have now been installed. Those posts will be extended, with further support beams installed, as excavations work down.

"Transferring of the building's load will continue into 2027 as we continue to progress the excavation underneath Centre Block," said PSPC.

Centre Block's east and west courtyards are both set to be enclosed with glass roofs—similar to the West Block's old courtyard—and will serve as the main, public route into Centre Block, with pathways and elevators bringing visitors up from the PWC and into the building.

Elsewhere in the building, with sufficient temporary support braces installed to help keep the building stable, structural demolition is underway on levels two through six, including demolition of the concrete slabs that make up each floor, which are being rebuilt.

This summer, PSPC is aiming to demolish four of the six "elevator penthouses" that house "elevator supporting systems" in Centre Block. All six will eventually be replaced, but workers are starting with the four closest to Centre Block's courtyards. The two others, which sit along the building's south hall near the respective House and Senate

entrances, will be widened as part of renovations.

Demolition work is also moving ahead on Centre Block's roof where the copper and structure are being stripped back to be rebuilt and raised by roughly five metres in order to house new mechanical systems.

Finally, exterior masonry restoration—which will soon begin on Centre Block's iconic south façade—is chugging along. The north façade has long been complete, but on the east end, it reached 60-per-cent completion as of the end of June, up from 52 per cent at the end of March. On the west, it's now 48-per-cent complete, up from 42 per cent in the previous quarterly update.

Also on the agenda for this summer is restoration of the 14 frescoes that have been carefully removed from the walls of the Opposition Leader's Office in Centre Block, and of the heritage woodwork found in the building's high heritage, "Pearson Special" rooms—woodwork that will be retained and needs to be restored regardless of the final design strategy for these spaces, which is still yet to be approved.

The 105-year-old frescoes by Italian artist Attilio Pusterla are being restored off-site and will "undergo specialized conservation treatment" before returning to the fourth-floor office, said PSPC.

"This type of treatment is highly technical and must be tailored to each fresco's unique

condition. Prior to the removal, each piece was assessed by professional painting conservators to determine the appropriate conservation approach," explained the department.

One fresco has already been restored, with the others "currently moving through the procurement process for conservation work."

Project health trackers remain as they've been since the second quarter of 2024. While that means the project scope and cost remain marked in green—indicating they're "progressing in line with" approved plans—it also means the project's schedule is still nearing the red, reflecting enduring challenges that could impact projected timelines.

The auditor general has previously flagged decision making by parliamentarians as a top risk for the project schedule. Between prorogation and the election, there's been little progress in finalizing decisions from parliamentarians so far this year.

While both the Senate and MP subgroups overseeing Hill renovations flexed their abilities to meet during prorogation—holding one meeting each during that period—of their two parent bodies, only the House Board of Internal Economy has discussed renovation plans during its sole meeting so far this Parliament. Since then, the MP working group has met once on June 20.

PSPC is aiming to finalize design development for both Centre Block and the PWC by this fall. As of the end of June, "several items originally planned for endorsement in spring 2025 remain outstanding such as the integrated design strategy for the Pearson Special heritage rooms," said the department in an email. "PSPC continues to work with parliamentary administrations to advance these elements. The project will continue to design at risk to maintain construction momentum, and not impact the 100-per-cent design development deliverables in fall 2025."

South of Wellington Street, the Block 2 project—which will see a new complex built between Metcalfe and O'Connor streets, and Sparks and Wellington streets to house MPs, Senators, administration staff, and committee rooms—is moving along. The project's total estimated cost and schedule still have yet to be announced by PSPC, and according to the department, will be finalized "once the design is further advanced and the scope is further refined."

PSPC said it's "on track" to complete 90 per cent of schematic design plans by this fall.

"Site investigations, enabling projects and site preparatory works such as interior demolition and abatement are presently ongoing," in existing buildings on the site, said the department. "Key design decisions, such as those related to space allocation and integration of parliamentary requirements, are being reviewed in consultation with Parliamentary Administrations and other stakeholders."

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



## NEWS

# Trade tribunal calls for freeze on multimillion-dollar defence contract after complaints it favours U.S. supplier

Highly restrictive bid criteria made competition ‘impossible’ for Canadian and European companies to secure the contract for military night-vision goggles, says a filing from Canadian defence company Cadex.



Defence Minister David McGuinty said he would ‘look into’ the terms of the contract before the Canadian International Trade Tribunal called for the government to put a hold on the procurement. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

BY IREM KOCA

The Canadian International Trade Tribunal has ordered the government to pause its multimillion-dollar procurement of night-vision binoculars for the military, following a complaint from a Canadian firm that claims the contract’s restrictive criteria favours an American supplier.

A July 10 notice by the Canadian International Trade Tribunal (CITT) orders Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to “postpone the award of any contract” in connection to a major binocular devices purchase until it rules on a complaint filed by Canadian defence firm Cadex Inc.

The Quebec-based company claims the request for proposal (RFP)—which closed on July 8—contained highly restrictive technical requirements that effectively excluded all potential bidders except one American supplier. Two European companies have sent letters to the Tribunal in support of Cadex’s complaint.

Jean-François Létourneau, a PSPC spokesperson, told *The Hill Times* on July 10 that “the procurement process is ongoing and no decisions have been made,” and that the department is working with the Department of National Defence to procure new binocular night-vision devices for the Canadian Armed Forces. PSPC is the central purchaser for the government.

The Tribunal has 90 days to issue its determination and recommendations once a complaint is filed. While the CITT cannot force the government to rewrite a request for proposal, its ruling can lead to the procurement being reconsidered.

If the government pushes back on the CITT’s freeze order on the

grounds that delaying the award would be contrary to the public interest, the Tribunal must rescind its order, though the inquiry would continue. CITT does not have the power to delay any contract already awarded.

Defence Minister David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Ont.) told reporters on July 7 that he would “look into” the specs of the procurement. Neither DND nor McGuinty’s office responded to questions from *The Hill Times* about the minister’s review, or the rationale behind the restrictive criteria used in the RFP.

Serge Dextraze, president and CEO of Cadex Inc., told *The Hill Times* in a July 11 interview that he does not like being in a dispute with the government, but that the feds’ approach to this contract “seem to be very suspicious.”

“We want something that is fair, something that doesn’t look like a sole-source [contract], and [to ensure] the Canadian government will get the right product,” Dextraze said.

Frédéric Guilhem, chief commercial officer of the night-vision department of Photonis, one of the most prominent European manufacturers of image intensifier tubes and night-vision systems who was competing for this contract, said they are “cautiously optimistic” to see the CITT review.

“A just outcome would be a revised RFP with technical criteria aligned to global standards, which allows Photonis and other European and Canadian firms to offer their world-leading products in a fair, open competition. What matters most is that the Canadian end user has the freedom to field test various solutions, instead of a bureaucrat deciding the best solution on paper,” Guilhem said.

The tender for the supply of 17,000 binoculars to the Canadian

Armed Forces was initially issued on March 4. The estimated cost of the binoculars was a broad range of between \$5-million and \$500-million. The tender stated the contract would run for a three-year term, with the option to extend for nine, one-year periods.

The disputed technical requirement involves the night-vision devices’ image-intensifier tubes. Suppliers say the government raised the requirement for the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) from 29-31 to 33, a threshold Cadex described in its CITT complaint as “discriminatory, unreasonable, and impossible to meet.”

Multiple European companies have previously raised the alarm on the fairness of this procurement, saying they are actively being excluded from the bidding process due to a combination of rigid technical specifications, an accelerated timeline, and the limitations caused by the U.S. export control laws that dictate access to certain defence-related technology.

A senior representative of one European company involved in the dispute who spoke to *The Hill Times* on a not-for-attribution basis said that they have been in communication with the federal government for two years for this procurement, ready to bid on the tender had the original conditions been kept, but that the SNR requirement was changed at the “very last moment.”

“We are able to produce such tubes, but not in such a short period of time, and not in such large numbers. We believe they need to rewrite the technical specification to go back to the original value,” said the source.

The federal lobbying registry shows two companies—Photonis and Thales Canada—have lobbied the government on

night-vision systems and related military procurements over the last year. Thales confirmed to *The Hill Times* that it has “submitted a compliant proposal” for the night-vision binoculars. The Quebec-based firm is a subsidiary of the French, multinational company Thales.

While Thales did not disclose which tube manufacturer it would work with should it be awarded the night-goggle contract, it said in a statement that the device would be assembled in a manufacturing facility in Montreal.

Competitors speculate that the only company with the capacity to meet the restrictive criteria is the U.S.-based tech and defence company L3Harris. Government records show that all four contracts awarded to L3Harris in 2025, with a total value exceeding \$1.8-million, were sole-sourced. The company did not immediately respond to *The Hill Times’* request for comment.

## ‘It is all very strange,’ says one European contractor

Another representative of a European firm involved in the dispute told *The Hill Times* that neither DND nor PSPC has justified the reasons for the change in the technical requirement despite multiple attempts by the industry to communicate how it excluded many viable suppliers as well as created risks of entangling the procurement in Canada-U.S. political tensions.

“It’s all very strange. We don’t understand where these influences are coming from that would cause this technical requirement—which has never been seen before in a tender,” the source said, adding that the industry

repeatedly told the government that their insistence on this criteria is “illogical.”

According to the source, there are four tube manufacturers in the western world that can support this standard—two in Europe, and two in the U.S.—and the European ones “immediately raised alarms,” saying they can’t support this standard, at these quantities, due to the changes.

“It doesn’t have to do with the quality of the tubes they make—it really has to do with the production yield,” the source said.

The sources spoke on condition of anonymity because their companies are actively competing for federal contracts.

CITT records show that Daphne Lam, the contracting authority at PSPC, told a supplier who raised these issues in a June 26 communication that the tender—first issued March 4 and extended multiple times from its original April 14 deadline—would not be extended past July 8.

Lam’s response said Canada had concluded that lowering the minimum SNR level would not align with the government’s commitment to ensuring optimal performance and the highest safety standards for CAF members.

She also addressed a question about an internationally used metric applied to the tubes, called the Figure of Merit (FOM).

According to European competitors, the U.S. government uses FOM to restrict exports of high-performing tubes under International Traffic in Arms Regulations, and that these regulations limit the sale of the highest-performance tubes to foreign buyers.

Lam’s response said the Canadian government does not state the minimum or maximum FOM limit, “therefore, it is open for bidders to choose the appropriate resolution that will meet the FOM based on the SNR required in the RFP.”

“Even if a Canadian or French company wins the contract, it will be with U.S. tubes inside. That makes it essentially a U.S. product,” said one source. “That is exactly why we have been pushing for months now in order to explain this crazy situation.”

But the European contractors argue that the government’s approach to this contract undermines its stated goal of reducing reliance on the U.S. and diversifying defence procurement as it seeks to deepen ties with European allies through a \$1.25-trillion security and defence partnership ReArm Europe/Readiness 2030 plan.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced on July 10 that his country will impose 35-per-cent tariffs on Canadian goods starting Aug. 1, up from the previously threatened 25-per-cent level.

Trump’s tariff threats and talk of annexation have strained relations between the two countries since his first days in the White House. Carney, who was elected on a promise to reduce reliance on the U.S., previously said Canada “should no longer send three-quarters of our defence capital spending to America.”

ikoca@hilltimes.com  
The Hill Times



## OPINION

# Turning the tables on ‘Positive Nutrition’

Positive Nutrition encourages individuals to view eating as an opportunity to nourish the body and mind by focusing on the abundance of nutrients and foods we should incorporate for optimal health.

Jacques J.M. Shore & Suzanne Sabourin

Opinion



A shift in approach would not only better address individual health, but would also encourage a more inclusive and positive societal relationship with food, write Jacques Shore and Suzanne Sabourin. *Pexels photograph by August de Richelieu*

In an era where healthy eating and wellness have become paramount, the importance of nutrition cannot be overstated. The concept of “Positive Nutrition” stands at the forefront of a growing movement, advocating for a balanced and wholesome approach to eating that focuses on the importance of overall diets in promoting health and prevention of chronic diseases.

Positive Nutrition marks a critical evolution in how we ought to address healthy eating. While traditional dietary advice often emphasizes what to limit—such as saturated fats, added sugars, and sodium—Positive Nutrition flips the script, focusing on the abundance of nutrients and foods we should incorporate for optimal health.

This paradigm shift recognizes that a sustainable relationship with food is not built on dietary restrictions or avoiding “bad” foods. Positive Nutrition encourages individuals to view eating as an opportunity to nourish the body and mind. This approach contributes to reducing the feelings of guilt or anxiety that often come with vilifying certain foods that are fine in a well-balanced diet, and to fostering a healthier mindset around eating.

This message was reiterated at a June 26 Science Symposium, “Positive Nutrition – Food, Education and Healthier Lifestyles,” hosted by Italian Ambassador to Canada Alessandro Cattaneo in co-ordination with the University of Ottawa’s School of Nutrition in the health sciences faculty. Scientists from Italy and Canada underscored the importance of food combinations and overall dietary habits in preventing chronic diseases more effectively, and promoting long-term, positive changes in dietary habits.

“One of the most common misguided paths in relation to healthy eating is to ignore that consumers do not eat ‘nutrients,’ but rather they eat foods within the context of an entire diet,” said professor Luca Piretta. Professor Nick Bellissimo also remarked that, “Health policies rooted in a reductionist view of nutrition, focusing on isolated nutrients rather than holistic, functional dietary patterns, are unlikely to shift the pendulum on chronic disease. Instead, they risk undermining their very purpose.”

Professor John Sievenpiper, from the University of Toronto’s department of nutritional sciences, initiated the application of Positive Nutrition when the Canadian Diabetes Association moved away from traditional nutrient-centric dietary approaches to more food and dietary pattern-based approaches in its 2013 clinical practice guidelines for nutrition therapy.

Food is a complex issue, and nutrition cannot be addressed through a series of

incremental and isolated interventions. Decoupling nutrition from economic, social, and environmental issues is no longer possible or desirable. Positive Nutrition underscores the importance of an integrated and holistic approach for reasonable public health policy.

Public health policies around the globe are lagging in this evolution of nutritional science in the wake of directives from the World Health Organization and the United Nations regarding healthy-eating policies based on nutrients of concern. In Canada, the focus on nutrients of concern was expressed through the mandatory front-of-package nutrition symbol labelling regulations for most pre-packaged foods high in saturated fat, sugars, or sodium, which come into force on Jan. 1, 2026.

It’s time our public health policymakers understand the concept of Positive Nutrition, and apply its principles diligently with provincial and territorial health policy leaders across the country. This perspective would not only better address individual health, but would also encourage a more inclusive and positive societal relationship with food.

In Canada, federal/provincial/territorial ministers of health and education can play a pivotal role by introducing Positive Nutrition education into the curriculum. This change would foster a deeper understanding of the importance of overall dietary patterns and empower individuals to make informed choices about their food intake.

At the same time, the federal government must be more strategic about creating an agriculture/agri-food sector that is resilient, consistently generates jobs and wealth across the country, sustains our environment, and is a partner in reducing food insecurity. The government would be wise to partner with industry, and to move beyond prescriptive regulations to develop new tools and approaches to make more informed, effective, sustainable, and evidence-based decisions on nutrition policy. For far too long, industry has not been treated as a reliable and valuable partner.

Public health policy cannot be an experiment. In the absence of science-based decision-making, the government has been shifting the regulatory burden to food manufacturers, and eroding the public confidence that once existed in our regulatory system. By embracing the shift to Positive Nutrition, public health officials can foster a deeper understanding of nutrition and empower individuals to make informed choices that enhance their well-being, health, and self-image.

As the UN prepares for a fourth High-Level Meeting on the Prevention and

Control of Non-communicable Diseases this September, it’s hoped that it will abandon its obsession with “unhealthy” foods via current recommended policy interventions to tax food products considered unhealthy, and to impose marketing restrictions, warning labels, and sales bans, which have no conclusive evidence regarding the reduction in the incidence of non-communicable diseases. Why should Canada endorse and emulate a policy that increases the burden of regulations that will not achieve positive results?

If Canada weighs in effectively, we could benefit from improvements to the health and well-being of Canadians, and begin a new dialogue with industry leaders in the agri-food sector.

*Jacques J. M. Shore, C.M., is a partner at Gowling WLG, a member of the firm’s Advocacy Group, and past leader of the firm’s National Government Affairs Practice. Suzanne Sabourin is counsel at Gowling WLG, and a member of the firm’s Advocacy Group, with a practice focusing on food law and public policy.*  
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# Editorial

## Editorial

### Don't let budget consultations get buried in summer heat

The Carney government made headlines and gave opposition parties plenty of fodder this past spring when it announced that it wouldn't be tabling a budget before the summer recess.

Chief among the reasons behind that decision was the unpredictable and unstable economic landscape thanks to the mercurial machinations of one United States President Donald Trump.

The initial furor was exacerbated by the original implication in mid-May that a budget wouldn't be tabled at all in 2025, and only a fall economic statement would be forthcoming, but Prime Minister Mark Carney eventually clarified that wouldn't be the case.

But regardless of when the formal budget was coming out, it was still a matter of contention that Canadians wouldn't be getting the full financial plan for some time while the government moved ahead on major policy promises.

In the interim, the government has enacted a tax cut and announced a massive boost to defence spending, as well as a plan to look for "efficiencies" throughout the public service.

Carney said early on that he wanted to spend less to invest more. This means splitting the government's operational spending—namely, the day-to-day running of programs and departments—from capital spending.

If you want to transform the economy, and spend big on defence, then the money is going to have to come from somewhere. But without a budget or detailed financial statement, the public is left in the dark as to which federal Peter is being robbed to pay which government Paul.

On July 14, the Liberals announced the start of the budget consultation

process, seeking to collect feedback until Aug. 28.

"In the election, Canadians called for change—and Canada's new government is moving with urgency to deliver this change. Budget 2025 will spend less and invest more to catalyze private capital, unleash investment, and build the strongest economy in the G7," said a Finance Department press release about the consultations.

The release notes that the budget consultations "will also emphasize job-creation, including measures to build more homes, expedite nation-building projects, and bolster Canada's defence industrial capacity."

That may be cold comfort for thousands of public servants who are now worried about potentially losing their jobs as the feds look to reduce program spending by increasing amounts, reaching up to 15 per cent by the 2028-29 fiscal year.

And as the federal government continues to provide even more support to the province of Manitoba and the prime minister convenes the Incident Response Group under smoky Ottawa skies in the wake of continued wildfires that are devastating the land, people's homes, and livelihoods, the lack of any mention of the environment and how it directly contributes to the economy is unsurprising—given the short shrift environmental policy has received from the Carney government—but nonetheless disappointing.

Hopefully, Canadians will speak up and not allow the government to ignore key issues, despite the timing of these dead-of-summer consultations.

The Hill Times

## Letters to the Editor

### Talking to Trump requires Canada to have some sort of leverage: Heale

Re: "Axworthy's not wrong: Carney does look like he's taking a 'bootlicking' approach to Trump, so far," (*The Hill Times*, July 7, p. 8).

I read your editorial with

interest, and I do appreciate the preference to see our new prime minister go "elbows up" with United States President Donald Trump. In fact, it was Trump himself who wrote, "Leverage. Don't make deals without it. Enhance."

After decades of cozying up to a country that once tried to annex us, we have far less leverage than the Americans. We are in what Trump may have called an "enhancement stage" to build leverage for what could prove to be a 10-year reworking of our relationship with that country.

This stage already sees us expanding internal trade, planning significant nation-building mega proj-

ects, and looking to grow our economic relationships with other countries. Until this has been accomplished, it makes sense to give on some smaller issues, and to promise

other things that won't be delivered until after Trump's term has ended in order to win the big prize later.

If the world is moving back to tariff barriers, I suggest that the "big prize" would be an agreement with the Americans for

free trade in natural resources—I'm looking at you, Canadian-American Reciprocity Treaty of 1854—while maintaining protections for our manufacturing, agricultural, and service sectors. Couple that with a reasonable, post-Trump agreement on security, and I suspect that few people would remember the smaller things we gave up on the way.

Ronald A. Heale  
Nepean, Ont.



It makes sense for Prime Minister Mark Carney to give on some smaller issues, and to promise other things that won't be delivered until after U.S. President Donald Trump's term has ended, writes Ronald Heale. *White House photograph by Daniel Torok*

### Carney's DST drop was a smart step, says Ottawa reader

Re: "A critical mistake": former Grit ministers call out what they say is Carney's capitulation to Trump," (*The Hill Times*, July 9, p. 11).

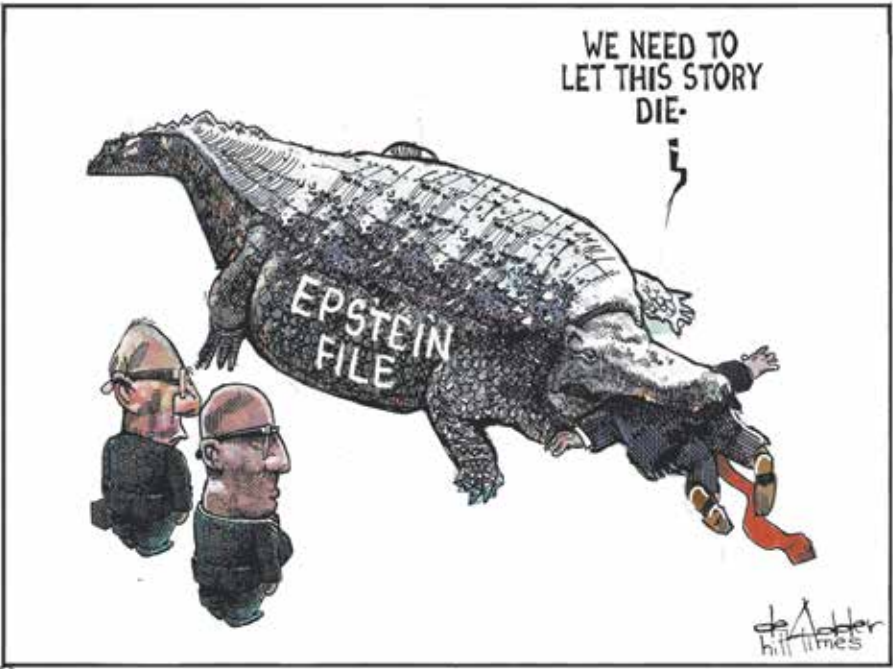
I would respectfully disagree with the honourable Messrs. Lloyd Axworthy and Sergio Marchi that zeroing the impending digital services tax (DST) was a capitulation to United States President Donald Trump or in any way a misstep.

Trump may pretend to care about auto workers, steel workers, and midwestern dairy farmers, but he actually does care what tech moguls

like Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, and Peter Thiel want because their displeasure goes right to his personal bottom line.

He set the revocation of the DST as a threshold condition to negotiation, and Prime Minister Mark Carney was right to drop it. It's not as if Canada lost any revenue: it had never been collected in the first place. And by placating Trump's financiers, Carney lowered the temperature for the real negotiations to come.

Joel Henderson  
Ottawa, Ont.





## COMMENT

# Hurly-burly nonsense around Carney's assets is standard politicking—and a shame

The noise about the PM's blind trust can turn people off from politics, particularly those in sectors where they were compensated commensurately for their performance.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—The federal ethics commissioner recently released information about Prime Minister Mark Carney's financial holdings, and how he will seek to

avoid conflicts related to making decisions around them.

The opposition—unsurprisingly—are pouncing, suggesting Carney divest himself of all that he currently has and put it in one blind trust so he can't consciously or subconsciously make decisions that could benefit his personal interests. It is standard opposition politics, and involves a bit of a long-play strategy. More on that in a moment.

Carney's chief of staff and the clerk of the Privy Council are the all-seeing ones meant to make sure the prime minister does not find himself in a position of conflict. Their role, according to the screen filed with Office of the Ethics Commissioner, is "aimed at preventing any opportunity" to further the PM's interests, "or to improperly further those of Brookfield Asset Management, Brookfield Corporation, and Stripe Inc., and any company owned by them."

According to the disclosure, Carney does have a blind trust, but before this, he owned shares

in more than 560 companies through "an investment account managed by a third party in respect of which the prime minister did not control or direct the selection of investments."

It should be noted that many Canadians own RRSPs, RESPs, TFSA's, and other vehicles that hold funds from organizations like Brookfield, and these funds can have investments spread across many companies or industries. The prime minister or any elected official should not be precluded from owning these assets or have it assumed of them when they are in public office that they will work to make policy that personally advantages them. But politicians are held in such low regard by the public it is easy to default to that perspective.

Conservatives in opposition have done a particularly good job—if you want to call it that—of framing those in the Liberal government who are wealthy of being suspicious or of having questionable credibility. Former prime minister Justin Trudeau's

first finance minister Bill Morneau, who had built a successful business, was constantly mocked for being off at his château in France. If the poppy is tall, you tear it down with vigour was the Conservative approach, and in the case of Morneau, it worked because there is an audience in Canada who aren't fans of wealthy people.

While the ethics disclosure for Carney provides no figure that informs us of how many zeros he has in his bank account, it does create the impression there are a few. Little wonder Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, who has had a quiet summer to date, was out on this matter of the prime minister's holdings on July 14. He knows that this—sadly—is when you start building the narrative of Carney as the wealthy, self-interested, effete leader. That doesn't happen overnight, particularly when your opponent is popular. Poilievre also knows Carney is personally sensitive about his private financial matters; there was a time when

people would respect that, but not anymore.

If Carney wanted to enhance whatever wealth he has, there would be many easier ways to do it than seeking elected office and becoming the prime minister. He was elected in large measure because of his global business experience; it is perverse that now he'll feel some political pain for his past personal gain.

It is too bad that the political public discourse around matters like this disclosure get politically weaponized so easily. This hurly-burly nonsense can turn people off from politics, particularly those in sectors where they were compensated commensurately for their performance.

Screens and blind trusts are essential. But the political threat that accompanies them is not often helpful.

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

The Hill Times

## OPINION

# Bill C-5: RIP reconciliation?

An understanding of Indigenous Peoples' foundational beliefs will explain why they do not rush when making consequential decisions. It's a mistake to regard their opposition to large-scale projects as mere obstructionism.

Doreen Barrie

Opinion



Against the backdrop of United States President Donald Trump's threat to Canada's future, the prime minister is embarking on a nation-building project rivaling John A. Macdonald's National Policy.

The mantra is "build, baby, build," with Bill C-5, the One Canadian Economy Act, the midwife of this plan. The haste with which this legislation was rushed



Prime Minister Mark Carney is buoyed by his April election victory, but if he overplays his hand, he might find that it isn't just Indigenous groups and environmentalists who are experiencing buyer's remorse, writes Doreen Barrie. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

through Parliament is troubling many, as was the Trump-like urgency behind getting an agreement on internal trade by Canada Day.

There's no question that Mark Carney has a lot of political capital to spend, and he has to exploit the honeymoon afterglow. It is also true that the logic of his actions is sound: Canada has been far too dependent on trade with the Americans—an understandable strategy if a multibillion-dollar market sits on your doorstep. With that market disappearing, moves to find others in

Europe and beyond are necessary, as are plans to forge a closer relationship with the European Union. However, embedding the ability to bypass pesky regulations and perhaps limit public consultations to accelerate construction of major projects does not inspire confidence. Legitimate concerns have been expressed by—among others—Indigenous and environmental groups who feel that their voices will be muted, if not silenced.

The cost of living and the housing shortage dominated the recent federal election, easing out

issues like climate change, health care, etc. Here again, not surprising since having a roof over one's head must take precedence over everything else. Building housing at break-neck speed is one thing, but fast-tracking mega-projects is something else entirely. Is it wise to put the environment on the back burner when evidence of a warming planet smacks us in the face every summer? And is there not a danger that Indigenous interests may be sidelined in pursuit of a new National Policy? RIP reconciliation?

The duty to consult Indigenous groups has been affirmed and clarified by various Supreme Court decisions, and Canada's ratification of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The latter obliges the federal government to uphold the principle of "free, prior, and informed consent" of Indigenous groups before resource development projects affecting their lands can proceed.

It is important to point out that Indigenous groups have a very different attitude to decision-making. They do not make important decisions lightly. They consider their impact far into the future to determine how the seventh generation will be affected. While this might seem excessive to Settler society, one would hope that we would—at

the very least—consider the repercussions of our actions on our grandchildren.

In fact, we could learn much from Indigenous values and attitudes to resources, especially with respect to water. Indigenous groups do not frame the discussion in terms of their rights to water; rather, the focus is on their obligations to it. While Settlers believe they have dominion over the Earth, Indigenous people adhere to an ethic of responsibility when interacting with water and other resources. They consider themselves stewards of nature's bounty obliged to protect and preserve it for future generations.

An understanding of foundational beliefs shared by Indigenous Peoples across the globe will explain why they do not rush when making consequential decisions. It's a mistake to regard their opposition to large-scale projects as mere obstructionism. In fact, we would do well to adopt some of their caution when we undertake massive projects whose environmental impact may prove costly.

The prime minister is buoyed by his victory in the April election, but if he overplays his hand, he might find that it isn't just Indigenous groups and environmentalists who are experiencing buyer's remorse.

Doreen Barrie is an adjunct assistant professor of political science at the University of Calgary. She is the author of *The Other Alberta: Decoding a Political Enigma*.

The Hill Times



## COMMENT

# Has Trump realized Putin was making a fool out of him on the world stage?

The Russian leader's ability to hoodwink the American former reality show host has been a constant element of Trump's actuality for more than a decade.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—Russia's Vladimir Putin has not only made United States President Donald Trump look like a fool on the world stage, but he has also kept rubbing Trump's face in it.

While the U.S. president and his aides muttered on and on about possibly bringing Putin onside for a ceasefire in Ukraine, the Kremlin escalated its invasion to new heights, destroying Ukrainian cities and people in the most powerful attacks of Russia's unprovoked three-year invasion.

More than out of any concern for the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian civilian and military casualties, Trump appears to have finally changed his tune on the Russians because Putin has run circles around the self-appointed great dealmaker in Washington, D.C.

"We get a lot of bullshit thrown at us by Putin, if you want to know the truth," Trump complains now. "He's very nice all of the time, but it turns out to be meaningless."

During an Oval Office meeting on July 14 with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Trump confirmed plans for the U.S. to sell large quantities of weapons to NATO countries that will in turn supply them to Kyiv, including crucial Patriot weapons systems. Also, Trump threatened to impose what the White House said would be 100-per-cent tariffs on Russia, and secondary tariffs on countries that buy Russian oil if Putin does not agree to a ceasefire within 50 days. This U.S. intervention comes at a time when Ukraine appears on the verge of being overwhelmed after years of holding off the militarily superior invaders.

So the general response from many around the world is no doubt: how could it have possibly taken so long for the U.S. president to figure out that he was being played by Putin?

In fact, the Russian leader's ability to hoodwink the diplomatically inexperienced, plutocratic American former reality show host has been a constant element of Trump's actuality for more than a decade. Hillary Clinton once called him Putin's "puppet."

Trump's awe for the Russian dictator first gained international prominence after the two men met in Helsinki in 2018. The

then-first-term U.S. president—who had tweeted that Americans were responsible for Washington's bad relations with Moscow—sided with Putin rather than his own intelligence agencies on the question of Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Afterwards, Senate Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer labelled it a "shameful performance" based on a "thoughtless, dangerous and weak" approach by the president. John Brennan, who ran the CIA for former president Barack Obama, accused Trump of treason.

In the years since, Trump has sympathized with Putin's argument that Ukraine is not a real country, and that the West provoked the invasion of Ukraine by theorizing about admitting Ukraine into NATO; echoed the Kremlin's contention that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is a despot without a democratic mandate; and insisted that Russia should never have been pushed out of the G8 Group in 2014 despite Putin's brazen annexation of Crimea.

And, notwithstanding the U.S. leader's current whining about the Russian tyrant, little has changed over the years. While often lamenting the bloodshed in Ukraine, Trump has exhibited an outrageous moral relativism about the cause of the worst European war in 80 years, never laying the blame on Putin for his illegal invasion of a neighbouring country or for Russia's subsequent war crimes. Unbelievably, the U.S. president has on numerous occasions even gone as far as accusing Zelenskyy of starting the war.

Trump, whose lack of interest in factual information is well known, also seems to have missed the underlying motivation for the attack on Ukrainians. As part of a campaign along with China to upend the current geopolitical order, Putin is obsessed with overcoming the "shame" of the breakup of the Soviet Union by forcefully expanding Moscow's territorial reach in eastern Europe.

On top of that, Trump clearly prefers autocrats over Europe's social democrats. And many in his base revere Putin's iron-fisted Christian cultural repression, and have no use for spending billions helping Ukraine. The U.S. has twice moved to cut off military aid to Kyiv, only to reverse itself not long after. And U.S. officials appear to have ruled out Ukraine getting a path to joining NATO in any negotiated solution of the war.

So, it will take time and real, concerted action from Washington for the West to believe that Trump has really turned a corner and committed his government to an unwavering effort to force Putin to the bargaining table. Or that the president is finally taking action to confront Russia's refusal to entertain serious peace negotiations for reasons that go beyond Trump's desire to stack up as a Nobel Peace Prize aspirant.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

# Carney government's quest for public service efficiencies will test its mettle

The summer months often provide a buffer from intense public scrutiny, but come fall, all eyes will be on the government as it unveils its plans.

Josie Sabatino

Beyond the Headlines



OTTAWA—The dog days of summer have finally arrived after what felt like a never-ending cascade of political drama that defined the first half of the year. Politicians have now swapped business attire for summer casual, flooding social media with content from rodeos, barbecues, and community events.

Time away from the halls of power is likely a welcome break for Prime Minister Mark Carney, who's been engaged in a marathon that hasn't stopped since he officially put his name forward for Liberal Party leader back in January. Though he failed his first official pancake flip at the Calgary Stampede, shockingly little has thrown the new government off course in the early days of executing its mandate.

Still, these quieter summer months—when announcements and news reports often land without fully registering with the public—could prove consequential for the Carney government. As part of efforts to identify cost savings ahead of the fall federal budget, and to fund new spending commitments, Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne has tasked his cabinet colleagues with identifying efficiencies across their portfolios.

In simple terms, this means that cuts to the federal public service are now on the table and part of an active conversation. The government is aiming to trim operational spending by 7.5 per cent next year, 10 per cent the following year, and 15 per cent by 2028-29 as part of its mandate pledge to spend "less on government operations so that Canadians can invest more in the people and businesses that will build the strongest economy in the G7."

While the prime minister pledged to cap the number of government employees during the Liberal leadership race, he stopped short of explaining how that would be achieved. Despite his newcomer status in politics, it's clear that Carney and his team understood the political risks of campaigning on public service cuts—particularly while running in a riding heavily populated by federal government employees.

The language used by the Liberal Party during the federal election was also intended to draw a sharp contrast with Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre who took a more vocal and hardline stance on reducing red tape and streamlining the public service as part of a broader push to



The political honeymoon Prime Minister Mark Carney's government has enjoyed since the election may have left them unprepared for the strength of the opposition they now face, writes Josie Sabatino. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

rein in government spending. Poilievre now claims that public service unions went on the offensive, and his candidness about his plan led to his defeat in the Ottawa-area riding of Carleton, Ont.

In response to news of the government's cost-cutting review, the Public Service Alliance of Canada—which represents nearly 240,000 members—is already gearing up for battle. The union warned that "Prime Minister Carney has a choice: work alongside workers to strengthen public services and protect good jobs or continue down a path of deep cuts that will hurt workers, hollow out services, and break public trust."

Given how Carney managed the "cap" narrative during the election, he's likely aware that his government's approach will spark pushback from both unions and the Canadians they represent. And yet, the political honeymoon his government has enjoyed since the election may have left them unprepared for the strength of the opposition they now face.

The summer months often provide a buffer from intense public scrutiny, but come fall, all eyes will be on the government as it unveils its plans to rein in spending and deliver structural changes in the name of efficiency. While the Conservatives aim to paint the prime minister as untrustworthy, the public sector unions will be focused on protecting their members' jobs.

All of this means strong headwinds for a government that has yet to be tested on delivering its agenda to rein in government operations. Whether it can achieve this goal while maintaining its voter coalition remains to be seen.

Josie Sabatino is a senior consultant at Summa Strategies. Prior to joining Summa, Sabatino spent nearly a decade as a Conservative political staffer, providing communications and issues management advice to Members of Parliament and the leader of the official opposition.

The Hill Times



## OPINION

# Canada needs to look beyond the U.S. and Europe for its future

A bolder Canada would act in its own interests, building coalitions of middle powers in Africa, Latin America, and South and Southeast Asia that can navigate a multipolar world on their terms.

Kumaran Nadesan

Opinion



For too long, Canada's foreign policy, trade strategy, and even our sense of self has revolved around two poles: the United

States and Europe. We talk about "diversification" in polite policy papers, but rarely act on it with the urgency that the changing world order now demands.

Prime Minister Mark Carney says his vision for Canada is to "diversify our trading partners." To secure our future, we need to move beyond the vision and act by engaging with those nations ready to do business with us.

Let's be blunt: The U.S. is our indispensable neighbour, but it is also our biggest strategic risk. About 75 per cent of our exports still go there. American protectionism is not a passing phase but a structural reality, no matter who wins its next election. Meanwhile, Europe may share many of our values, but its strategic horizon is overwhelmingly focused on its neighbourhood: Russia, North Africa, and internal cohesion. The European Union is a crucial partner on climate and security, but its markets are not where global growth will come from in the next 50 years. Even the much-touted Canada-EU Comprehensive Eco-

nomic and Trade Agreement has delivered underwhelming results compared to the hype.

So, where does the future lie?

Consider Africa: a continent of 1.4 billion people, projected to double by 2050, with the fastest-growing urban populations in the world and the African Continental Free Trade Area promising unprecedented economic integration. While China, India, Turkey, and the Gulf states invest billions in African infrastructure, energy, technology, and education, Canada's approach remains fragmented and cautious, guided more by aid logic than real partnership. It's time to move beyond explorations into bilateral pacts and act.

Or Latin America, where rising democracies are searching for alternatives to U.S. hegemony and Chinese debt diplomacy alike. Mexico is our Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement partner, but Canada barely scratches the surface of its potential as a manufacturing and energy partner. Brazil, Colombia, and Chile are critical to the world's energy

transition, offering both opportunities and risks that Canada is not seriously tracking.

South and Southeast Asia are another obvious frontier. India will soon be the world's most populous country with a vast, young workforce. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is forging regional supply chains and digital economies, while the U.S.-China rivalry is driving countries there to look for new partners. Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy was a start, but it risks being reduced to talking points about countering China without a meaningful plan for building our presence and credibility in the region.

We need a course correction that is not just geographical, but also conceptual.

These are not just markets for our commodities or destinations for token development aid. They are dynamic regions with growing middle classes, ambitious infrastructure plans, technological innovation, and geopolitical weight. Canada needs to treat them as genuine partners,

investing in shared infrastructure, research, education, green technology, and cultural exchange. That means developing the capacity to speak their languages—literally and diplomatically—by investing in expertise, embassies, trade offices, and diaspora ties.

A bolder Canada would act in its own interests—even when they diverge from Washington's or Brussels'—building coalitions of middle powers that can navigate a multipolar world on their terms. Unless Canada takes decisive action now, our future prosperity will continue to be held hostage by American politics and the whims of its president, who may or may not base a fair-trading relationship on facts. This is a moment of generational choice. Are we ready to reimagine Canada as a truly global power, building new partnerships, taking smart risks, and shaping the future rather than merely reacting to it?

If we're serious about Canada's future, the answer is clear: it's time to look beyond the U.S. and Europe and engage with the world as it is now, not as it once was.

Kumaran Nadesan is the co-founder and deputy chairman of 369 Global. His debut book, *The Impolite Canadian: How Playing Nice is Costing Us the Future*, is expected in Spring 2026.

The Hill Times

## COMMENT

# Raising hackles: why can't the CAF help stepping on their own dicks?

Protecting the military's reputation should never take priority over actually handling an issue, like that of the service members involved in a Facebook group sharing antisemitic, homophobic, and misogynistic material.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—On the surface, the recent "Blue Hackle Mafia"



The self-proclaimed 'Blue Hackle Mafia' Facebook group posted images of male soldiers in uniform exposing their genitals, others posing naked with Canadian Forces weapons, or simulating sexual acts with each other in uniform. Photograph courtesy of Facebook first published by The Ottawa Citizen

Facebook group scandal is an embarrassment to the individuals involved, their regiment—the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa

(Duke of Edinburgh's Own)—and, by extension, the Canadian Army and the Armed Forces in general.

For those unaware of the recent news reports, it was revealed that approximately 200 members of a Facebook group were using the social media platform to share antisemitic, homophobic, and misogynistic messages with each other. Oh, and they also used the site to share a boatload of dick pics with each other.

The self-proclaimed "Blue Hackle Mafia" posted images of male soldiers in uniform exposing their genitals, others posing naked with Canadian Forces weapons, or simulating sexual acts with each other in uniform. Some of the photos were taken at military installations. It was widely reported that the private Facebook page also included hateful comments that were directed towards women, derogatory sexual comments about former prime minister Justin Trudeau, as well as discussions about raping grandmothers.

In other cases, the Blue Hackle Mafia posted disparaging

comments aimed at both Jews and Muslims.

This story was first "broken" by CBC News reporter Catherine Tunney on July 3. Tunney's report appears to be based solely upon statements and messages from Army Commander Lieutenant-General Michael Wright, and Brigadier-General Vanessa Hanrahan, the CAF provost marshal, that were "shared with CBC News."

It was a classic attempt at senior-level damage control. To paraphrase the statements Tunney received that had been sent out by Wright and Hanrahan, while the contents of the Facebook page had been flagged by the chain of command as early as December 2024, the Army commander had only learned of the contentious material on June 25.

The provost marshal's message advised that the military police had investigated the initial reports, and then turned the investigation back

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## NEWS

# Transparency in trade talks to come when deal complete, says Senator on Canada-U.S. council

The government has shared limited information about trade negotiations with the prime minister's Council on Canada-U.S. Relations, says one of its members.

Continued from page 1

I think it's fair for the government to try to keep its hand close to its vest as a way to not prejudice the outcome of what might happen."

He said that limited details about the negotiations are being shared with the council.

Yussuff said both Canada and the U.S. need to exercise caution to not say anything that could be interpreted the wrong way, but also not to cause any false hope over the trajectory of the talks.

"The government will have an obligation to inform Canadians, if there is an agreement, as to how we got here and allow for as much transparency for Canadians to understand ... how we ended up where we ended up at the end of the day," he said.

The NDP and labour groups have been calling for more transparency in trade talks, including the tabling of the government's negotiating objectives, as previously reported by *The Hill Times*.

Conservative MPs on the House Committee for International Trade have called for an emergency meeting to "contribute to the negotiations process and ensure transparency." None of the three studies approved by the trade committee before the House rose in June dealt with negotiations with the U.S.

Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil-Chambly, Que.) also said in a July 10 social media post that Parliament—or at least the party leaders—should be kept informed about the state of negotiations.

Yussuff said the objective for the negotiations is to get a "fair deal," and to do "everything to protect our industry, workers, and our vital interests."

He said that the government's strategy is to remind the Trump administration that the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) is in place, and if there are issues to be discussed, there is a process to do that through the agreement.

"In the absence of [getting a fair deal], there will be criti-



Prime Minister Mark Carney has been tight-lipped over the state of trade negotiations with the U.S. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

cism—it could be from the council [or] writ large from Canadians that get a chance to judge the agreement once it is finalized," he said.

The council was initially set up this past January by then-prime minister Justin Trudeau as a redux of the previous NAFTA council, on which Yussuff also sat as then-president of the Canadian Labour Congress.

Yussuff said the council last met in late June prior to the government's decision to rescind the digital services tax (DST)—a major concession granted to the Trump administration by Canada to resume trade talks after they were suspended by the American president due to complaints about the levy.

The Ontario Senator said the last meeting was to review what deals other countries have reached with the U.S., citing the pact that the United Kingdom signed with the U.S. That deal maintains a 10-per-cent American tariff on most U.K. imports.

## The future of Carney's advisory council

Yussuff said it will be up to the government to determine how many meetings they wish to hold with the council.

"We're not going to know for certain all the details of what's being discussed until we are at a certain place when there is an agreement of some sort that we can look at and hear an explanation of how we got here," he said.

"I can only assume if the government needs our advice, they'll seek it. Beyond that, I'm assuming that they don't need our advice, and they are proceeding in a way that they need to negotiate a fair deal," he said.



In a July 10 letter, U.S. President Donald Trump said tariffs on Canada would jump to 35 per cent. *White House* photograph by Daniel Torok



Conservative MP Adam Chambers has called for an emergency meeting of the House Committee for International Trade to look into trade talks with the U.S. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"But at the end of the day, if they are able to land an agreement without our guidance, so be it. We are here to help. We were always of the view that we're not going to be called every day and every week to give advice or guidance, but when necessary we're there to do so," he said.

While the leaders set a deadline at the G7 Summit to finalize

an economic and security partnership by July 21, that cutoff has been extended to Aug. 1. In a July 10 letter, Trump told Carney that tariffs on Canada would jump to 35 per cent. The U.S. has previously placed 25-per-cent tariffs on Canada. Like previous tariffs, it was reported that the new measures would mainly be focused

on goods that are not compliant with CUSMA.

Carney convened a cabinet meeting on July 15, which focused on the Canada-U.S. negotiations, according to the PMO.

Yussuff said he anticipates that the council will meet either soon before or after Aug. 1 as a potential deal could come together.

He said that the government has made it clear that it doesn't want to have tariffs in the end agreement, but noted that it remains to be seen whether that will be the outcome, citing the U.K. case where tariffs are still in place.

"We'll have to wait and find out and then pass judgment at that point in time," he said. "The Americans have signalled very clearly that ... no matter what happens there will be some degree of tariffs remaining at the end of the day."

In the last bilateral meeting between the countries' leaders held at the G7 in Kananaskis, Alta., Trump reiterated his preference for tariffs, while noting that Carney had a more "complex" proposal.

## Trade threats aren't over with: Yussuff

Yussuff said that Canadians shouldn't expect a potential agreement will end Trump's trade threats on the country.

"I don't think we should expect that Donald Trump will not go backwards and change his mind and do something very dramatic that will cost us as a country," he said. "So long that he's in power, we should reconcile ourselves to that, that is the reality we are going to be dealing with."

It was the previous Trump administration that negotiated the trilateral pact that Canada argues the U.S. is violating through its tariff regime.

"I don't think anybody could assure me that this president isn't going to contradict [himself] immediately after he negotiates something or agrees to something, that he's going to change his mind," Yussuff said. "As Canadians, we need to be resolved that we have to build a very diverse economy that isn't so dependent on the Americans going forward—we are always going to be vulnerable to the unilateral actions of the United States."

While Carney has pledged to diversify Canada's trading markets, he hasn't articulated how any Canada-U.S. agreement would bind Trump not to renege with additional tariffs.

In 2019, the Canadian government and the Trump administration came to an agreement to remove steel and aluminum tariffs, which set out a process for them to be reimposed if necessary.

The agreement allows tariffs to be put in place if imports "surge meaningfully beyond historic volumes," but it sets out that consultations would occur before tariffs would be reimposed. No such consultations occurred before the U.S. reimposed steel and aluminum tariffs earlier this year.

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



# Diplomatic Circles

By Neil Moss



## Rules being replaced by deals on the international stage, says past Bundestag president

Both Canada and Germany are ‘challenged’ by the Trump’s administration’s ‘new understanding’ of transatlantic relations, says Norbert Lammert.

With international norms increasingly crumbling, a former president of Germany’s lower house of parliament said it is important for Europe—as well as Canada—to stand up for the rules-based order.

“We are approaching a situation in which, globally, the validity of rules is going to be replaced by deals,” said **Norbert Lammert**, who served as Bundestag president from 2005 to 2017. “Unfortunately, the American president is the most popular example of replacing rules by deals.”

United States President **Donald Trump** has enacted a global tariff policy that many nations have asserted is unjustified and against international trading rules.

“I’m completely convinced that it is of vital interest of all European countries—and definitely in this sense from Canada as well—that we defend the validity of rules because, in terms of the global world we live in, Europeans and Americans are a small minority. And it is in the interest of the minority to have rules,” said Lammert.

He said that he is convinced that Americans will understand in time that they depend on rules and that they have to defend them.

Lammert was in Ottawa earlier this month as part of a delegation of the Christian Democratic Union-aligned Konrad Adenauer Foundation, for which he serves as chair.

Both Canada and Germany have new leaders with Prime Minister **Mark Carney** taking on the role this past March, and German Chancellor **Friedrich Merz** coming to power in May.

“We are both challenged by the American administration, and their obviously new understanding of transatlantic relations,” said Lammert, remarking that now is not only a “good occasion” to “confirm” the significance of the Canada-Germany relationship, but also to strengthen it.

### A new age for European defence

Lammert highlighted increased opportunities to diversify trade, but also to boost co-operation on defence.

“On the defence field, I see a lot of opportunities—perhaps even necessities—for further co-operation between Canada and Europe,” he said.

Canada recently signed a defence pact with the European Union, which could pave the way for Ottawa to participate in ReArm Europe, a \$1.25-trillion rearmament initiative and its \$235-billion loan program.



Norbert Lammert was president of Germany’s Bundestag from 2005 to 2017. He now serves as chair of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

As members of NATO, both Canada and Germany pledged to boost defence spending to five per cent of their respective GDP in the recent NATO summit.

Lammert said there is a new understanding of the changed world order that has led to the shift towards greater investment in defence.

He said the post-Cold War peace order established in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe of 1990 is not only being challenged, but it has also been broken with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

“Russia allows no doubt that it has no interest at all to come back to what it has agreed with,” he said.

Lammert said there is a “broad consensus” within the EU to establish its own architecture for boosting European security.

“Not with the intention to replace the [NATO] alliance, but with the intention to establish a pillar, which does not completely depend on American supplies and support,” he said. “This could be an interesting question for the Canadian government whether at all and to what extent it might participate in such an effort.”

He said that even if the Ukraine war ends, the Russian threat will remain.

“Given the historic experiences of the last century—particularly the first half of the last century—nobody should expect a dictator to finish his ambitions if he could accomplish what he has done [through] breaking obligations and agreements that he has signed years ago,” he said.

Lammert said that in the past, a future European conflict that was thought to be “unprobable” was diminished due to the protection that the U.S. afforded Europe.

“Now there is an understanding that we have to look for our security ourselves,” he said.

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

## OPINION

# Marking a new era: a quiet reset for India–Canada ties

India and Canada should see each other not as hesitant allies, but as natural partners for resilient growth.

Nadira Hamid

Opinion



There are moments in bilateral relations that quietly usher in a new era without fanfare. For India and Canada, this summer could mark just such a moment—if we get it right.

A newly elected federal government in Ottawa, combined with encouraging signals from New Delhi, has opened the door for measured re-engagement. For two democracies that share deep people-to-people ties and strong economic fundamentals, this is more than a diplomatic nicety—it is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss.

The past year has reminded us how quickly trust can fray amid shifting geopolitical currents. But what is often overlooked in headlines is the steady, behind-the-scenes work that happens away from the cameras, where businesses, institutions, and community leaders keep the corridor open when politics gets complicated.

At the Indo-Canadian Business Chamber, we have seen this resilience up close for more than two decades. Canadian pension funds alone have invested more than \$100-billion in India’s infrastructure, renewables, and financial sectors, generating stable returns for Canadian beneficiaries. Even when political dynamics have been strained, strong people-to-people connections, a young and aspirational Indian population, and Canada’s deep strengths in innovation and technology have kept partnerships active. From digital transformation powered by Indian talent and Canadian know-how, to robust university linkages with thousands of students moving between our countries each year, these commonalities continue to anchor a corridor that adapts and grows.

We have also seen bilateral trade adapt and evolve, weathering policy shifts that might have unsettled less-durable partnerships. This relationship is like a river—setbacks may disrupt the flow for a time, but they cannot permanently dam it. Experience shows that even when politics gets bumpy, the economic current finds its way.

This July, the Chamber will convene two high-level roundtables in Canada—in Ottawa on July 17, and in Toronto on July

23. These focused dialogues will bring together senior voices from business, finance, diplomacy, and academia to chart practical pathways forward. The Ottawa session will centre on policy dialogue, institutional engagement, and building confidence in our shared corridor. The Toronto session will take a more business-focused approach, with discussions on sustainable finance, infrastructure, technology partnerships, and emerging platforms like GIFT City that offer new avenues for Canadian institutions.

In both cities, the format will be clear and candid: lead speakers will open the floor with perspectives, followed by a roundtable discussion where participants share insights openly. A short note will capture key takeaways to help inform next steps for stakeholders on both sides.

There is no denying that the global context is more complex than ever. Trade realignments, protectionist policies, and shifting Indo-Pacific strategies are redrawing the map. India’s economic ascent has positioned it as a trusted partner for many nations, while Canada’s renewed commitment to diversifying its trade relationships is driving fresh interest in Indo-Pacific ties. In this landscape, India and Canada should see each other not as hesitant allies, but as natural partners for resilient growth.

The role of non-governmental institutions—chambers of commerce, industry associations, and universities—is critical in bridging gaps while official channels find their footing again. Our job is not to dictate policy, but to keep lines of communication open, share perspectives, and ensure the corridor remains strong when politics alone cannot.

In the end, the true mark of a new era will not be one dramatic announcement, but a patient, steady rebuilding of the small bridges that enable larger partnerships to thrive. Trust does not return overnight; it is earned through thousands of quiet conversations, thoughtful investments, and honest exchanges that deepen confidence over time. This is exactly what the Chamber is aiming to achieve.

As we step into this chapter, I remain hopeful that India and Canada will rediscover what has always bound us together: a commitment to openness, shared prosperity, and a belief that collaboration—not conflict—will shape our common future. The coming weeks will not solve every challenge. But if we can lay the groundwork for a more stable, forward-looking corridor, it will mark the beginning of a new era—and a quiet reset that lasts.

*Nadira Hamid is the chief executive officer of the Indo-Canadian Business Chamber, India’s only bilateral institution exclusively focused on fostering economic, institutional, and strategic partnerships with Canada.*

*The Hill Times*



# Hill Climbers



By Laura Ryckewaert

## Trade Minister Sidhu confirms roster of directors

Plus, AI and Digital Innovation Minister Evan Solomon has made progress in staffing up his new office, and Rob Jamieson is chief of staff to Secretary of State Ruby Sahota.

International Trade Minister **Maninder Sidhu** has filled a slate of director-level roles in his office, with directors of communications, stakeholder relations, parliamentary affairs, and operations now confirmed.

As previously reported by **Hill Climbers**, **Kevin Lemkay** is chief of staff to Sidhu, while **Sarah Manney** is director of policy, and **Spencer Knight** is the minister's driver.

Leading parliamentary affairs for the first-time minister is **Frank Tersigni**, who most recently did the same for then-Treasury Board president **Ginette Petitpas Taylor**. A former assistant to then-Ontario Liberal MPP **Liz Sandals**—both as the MPP for Guelph, Ont., and later as minister of education—Tersigni got his start on Parliament Hill as a legislative assistant to Waterloo, Ont., Liberal MP **Bardish Chagger** in early 2016. He stepped away from the Hill for about a year between 2017 and 2018, during which time he tackled events and communications for Polytechnics Canada before returning as an assistant to then-Guelph, Ont., Liberal MP **Lloyd Longfield**.

Tersigni landed his first ministerial level job in early 2021 when he was hired as an Ontario regional adviser to then-seniors minister **Deb Schulte**. He's since also been a senior Ontario adviser to then-Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario minister **Helena Jaczek**, senior issues manager to Jaczek as then-public services and procurement minister, senior special assistant for parliamentary affairs to then-trade minister **Mary Ng**, and director of parliamentary affairs to **Petitpas Taylor** as then-veterans minister.

Tapped to oversee stakeholder relations work for Sidhu is **Neeraj Bhalla**.

Bhalla previously spent more than five-and-a-half years—between early 2016 and the fall of 2021—working in then-Mississauga-Malton, Ont., Liberal MP **Navdeep Bains'** constituency office, during Bains' time as then-innovation, science, and industry minister. Since 2021, he's been a principal with Bhalla Consulting, according to his LinkedIn profile. Bhalla also has roughly 17 years working for the BMO Financial Group, last as implementation manager for small business banking.

In charge of operations for Sidhu is **Meghan Pritchard**, who is a carryover from former trade minister Ng's team. Pritchard joined Ng's trade office at the start of 2020 as a senior special assistant for operations, and in 2023, she was promoted to director of planning and tour to the minister—her most recent title. A former international election observer with CANADEM for the 2019 Ukrainian parliamentary and presidential elections, Pritchard is also a former senior consultant with Burrard Strategy in Vancouver, and a former senior operations manager for the British Columbia Liberal Party, among other past roles.

Finally, **Huzaif Qaisar** is director of communications to Sidhu. Qaisar was previously press secretary to Ng, and first joined the trade office as a special assistant for communications in April 2023. Before then, he'd been an assistant to Prince Edward Island Liberal MP **Robert Morrissey**.

Qaisar is also a former president of the Ontario Young Liberals, a past research and communications co-ordinator with the Canadian Defence and Security Network, and a former research and communications

assistant with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, among other things.

### Solomon names FedDev Ontario policy director

Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation Minister **Evan Solomon**, who is also the minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, has made progress in filling out his staff team, including hiring **Melissa George** to lead policy work related to the regional development agency.

George was previously director of labour relations to the Treasury Board president, starting in July 2024 under then-minister **Anita Anand**—and continuing through **Petitpas Taylor's** subsequent turn in the role—after roughly eight months as a senior consultant with Navigator in Toronto.

A former early resolution officer with the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario and a past associate business ethics consultant with Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, George got her start in federal politics in 2020 when she was hired as a human resources adviser in then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau's** office. At the start of 2022, George left the PMO to become a policy adviser to Anand as then-defence minister, later adding "senior" to her title.

Also so far hired to focus on the FedDev Ontario file are **Hamid Mohamed** and **Tanveer Tur**, who both hold the title of senior special assistant for operations and stakeholder engagement.

Mohamed is a former executive assistant and operations assistant in now-Women and Gender Equality Minister **Rechie Valdez's** office as then-small business minister, and, according to his LinkedIn profile, was field manager for Solomon's successful 2025 campaign to represent Toronto Centre, Ont. Mohamed is also a former assistant to then-Toronto Liberal MP **Arif Virani**, and previously worked on Virani's successful 2021 and 2019 re-election

campaigns, amongst other past experience.

Tur was previously an operations adviser to then-democratic institutions and FedDev Ontario minister **Ruby Sahota**, and has been working for the minister responsible for the economic development agency file since the summer of 2022, beginning as executive assistant to then-minister **Jaczek**. She was later promoted to southern Ontario regional affairs adviser to then-FedDev Ontario minister **Filomena Tassi**. Tur is also an ex-aide to Jaczek as the MP for Markham-Stouffville, Ont., and to Willowdale, Ont., Liberal MP **Ali Ehsassi**.

Beyond the specific FedDev Ontario team, **Meron Cheway** has been hired as director of operations to Solomon. Cheway previously worked for then-women and gender equality and youth minister **Marci Ien**, having first been hired to Ien's team in late 2022 as a regional adviser for the West and North. He was promoted to add "senior"

to his title in 2024, and near the start of this year was promoted again to director of operations to Ien, who did not seek re-election this past April.

Cheway is also a former special assistant for policy to then-housing, diversity, and inclusion minister **Ahmed Hussen**. Along with past campaign experience, Cheway has also worked as a marketing co-ordinator with Supply Chain Canada's Manitoba Institute, and is a former Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee fellow, among other things.

Rounding out the list of confirmed staff so far is **Benjamin Ebadi**, who fills the role of

Prairies, West, and North regional adviser to Solomon. Ebadi is a former policy and stakeholder relations adviser to Sahota as then-democratic institutions and FedDev Ontario minister, having joined her team at the beginning of this year. Before then, he'd been a special assistant for operations to then-northern affairs minister **Dan Vandal**, whose team Ebadi first joined as

a 2024 summer intern. Ebadi is a former assistant to then-Manitoba Liberal MP **Jim Carr**, and a former summer intern with the Liberal research bureau.

As reported by **Hill Climbers**, **Anson Duran** is chief of staff to Solomon.

Stay tuned for more updates on Solomon's office in the near future.

### Rob Jamieson to lead Sec. of State Sahota's shop

Sahota, who was sworn in as secretary of state for combatting crime on May 13, has scooped up **Rob Jamieson** to lead her office.

Jamieson had previously been working for the federal public safety minister since early 2022, beginning as a senior adviser to then-minister **Marco Mendicino**. Jamieson continued after now-Canada-United States Trade Minister **Dominic LeBlanc** took over as

then-public safety, intergovernmental affairs, and democratic institutions minister, and by late 2024 Jamieson was leading policy related to the democratic institutions file for LeBlanc. According to his LinkedIn profile, Jamieson stepped up as chief of staff to now-Defence Minister **David McGuinty** during McGuinty's brief turn as public safety and emergency preparedness minister from March to May of this year.

A former Liberal candidate and former federal party staffer, Jamieson began working for the former Trudeau government in the fall of 2016 as chief of staff to then-democratic institutions minister **Maryam Monsef**, continuing in the role after Liberal MP **Karina Gould** took over as minister in 2017. In early 2020, Jamieson exited to join then-government House leader **Pablo Rodriguez's** office as a senior adviser, and worked there for roughly two years overall.

Also so far confirmed in Sahota's shop is senior special assistant **Cole Walsh**.

Walsh previously worked in Sahota's office as the MP for Brampton North, Ont., and earlier this year, was hired as a communications adviser in her office as then-democratic institutions and FedDev Ontario minister. Walsh has also previously worked for then-Ontario Liberal MP **Vance Badawey**, and for an Ontario MPP.

[lryckewaert@hilltimes.com](mailto:lryckewaert@hilltimes.com)  
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Meghan Pritchard is director of operations to Minister Sidhu. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Hamid Mohamed is a senior special assistant to Minister Solomon focused on the FedDev Ontario file. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Tanveer Tur is another senior special assistant tackling the FedDev Ontario file. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Huzaif Qaisar is director of communications to Minister Sidhu. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Meron Cheway is director of operations to Minister Solomon. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Ben Ebadi is a regional adviser to Minister Solomon. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



COMMENT

Raising hackles: why can't the CAF help stepping on their own dicks?

Continued from page 11

over to the unit involved. However, as of June 27, the military police investigation had been re-opened. Hanrahan therefore advised that, "This new investigation is ongoing and no further information will be provided at this time to protect the integrity of the investigation." Wright condemned the contents, and wrote that he is "disgusted by the content of some of the posts published on this group."

What did not get shared with CBC News was the identity of the regiment in question. We know this because in her story, Tunney wrote: "Not much else is known about the Blue Hackle Mafia group, including how many CAF members allegedly participated. 'Hackle' could be a ref-

erence to the plume some infantry regiments wear."

What Tunney did not realize was that the Canadian military brass were not simply coming clean on some very dirty laundry of which they had just been made aware. The truth is that *The Ottawa Citizen* reporter David Pugliese had been following this story for several weeks. A source had tipped him off, and Pugliese had subsequently screen-saved the explicit images and posts. On June 24, Pugliese had forwarded this collection of screenshots to Canadian Forces Public Affairs, and asked for a comment from Wright to include in his upcoming story.

However, instead of just replying to Pugliese, someone chose

to share the responses with CBC News. They knew full well that the reporter did not have the full details, nor the supporting imagery. Hell, Tunney did not even know the name of the regiment involved.

Of course, *The Citizen* published the full story the very next day along with two supplementary stories the following week.

As a result of Pugliese's reports, we now know that while the Army commander may only have been made aware of the Facebook group on June 25, others in the chain of command were aware long before that date. The group, which included roughly 200 members, was first established in 2007.

We also know that the members of the Blue Hackle Mafia knew

what they were doing ran counter to the CAF's current policies, but were only concerned about getting caught. One post from October 2017 warned the group, "Basically anything bad to happen to any military unit in the last 25 years is because some asshole didn't put his camera away."

Another wrote, "It is not what we know, it is what we can prove."

Perhaps the most explicit warning revealed that photos of genitalia had been brought to the attention of the commanding officer of the regiment. "No f-king pictures in the mess," wrote one soldier. "There should be 0 photographic evidence of anything we get up to in that room. We don't

need anymore pictures of penises going to the CO [commanding officer]."

Unfortunately for Wright and Army public affairs, their attempt to conduct damage control by using the CBC to "break" this story sends the wrong message to serving members. Protecting the institution's reputation should never take priority over actually handling an issue.

For the record, the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa have a long-standing reputation as a first-class infantry regiment. In 1882, they were granted the right to adopt the City of Ottawa's motto "Advance." The Blue Hackle was authorized to be worn on their headgear by the King during the Second World War in recognition of the regiment's honour and fighting pride.

Let's hope that their martial legacy trumps this current stain on the regiment's reputation.

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

*The Hill Times*



Parliamentary Calendar

First ministers meet to talk Trump's tariffs in Huntsville, Ont., on July 22

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.

SATURDAY, JULY 19

**Move Nation: A Parliament Hill Revival**—The Canadian Mental Health Association hosts a free, bodyweight workout open to the entire community. All fitness levels, all ages, and all backgrounds are welcome. Bring a water bottle, a fitness mat or towel. Saturday, July 19, at 11 a.m. ET. on the lawn of Parliament Hill. Details via Eventbrite.

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: canadapremiers.ca.

TUESDAY, JULY 22

**First Ministers' Meeting**—Prime Minister Mark Carney will meet with the provincial and territorial premiers to discuss the nation's response to the latest tariff action from U.S. President Donald Trump. Tuesday, July 22, in Huntsville, Ont.

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.

SATURDAY, JULY 26

**Canadian Multiculturalism Day 2025**—Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi hosts "Canadian Multiculturalism Day 2025," a day full of celebrating the diversity of cultures that make up Canada through music, dance, food, and more, organized by Leading Ladies Canada. Saturday, July 26, at 3 p.m. ET at 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

MONDAY, JULY 28

**Webinar: 'Continuing the Fight for Pharmacare'**—The Canadian Health Coalition hosts a webinar, "Continuing the fight for pharmacare, breaking the grip of big pharma," featuring Dr. Joel Lexchin and Sharon Batt. Monday, July 28, at 12 p.m. ET. happening online: healthcoalition.ca.

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 Eatrides, 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 75<sup>th</sup> 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: masseycollege.ca.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 21

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

TUESDAY, SEPT. 23

**Future Forward Summit**—Canada 2020 hosts its annual policy summit on the topic "Future Forward: Shaping Public Policy in Canada." At a time when the world is shifting fast, this summit asks the question: how can Canada shape—not just react to—the forces defining our future? Tuesday, Sept. 23, at The Westin Ottawa. Details: canada2020.ca.

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 40<sup>th</sup> 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' 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, which means his mandatory retirement from the Senate.

TUESDAY, OCT. 21

**The Regent Debate**—The C.D. Howe Institute host the seventh Regent Debate, a marquee platform for serious discussion on policy issues essential to Canada's future. Speakers to be announced. Tuesday, Oct. 21 at 5 p.m.

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





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