



HEALTH
MINISTER
MARJORIE
MICHEL
sets staff

► HILL CLIMBERS
PAGE 14

THE PANTOMIME
ENDS
in
Gaza

► PAGE 5



WHY WE SHOULD START
PUBLIC SERVICE CUTS AT
THE TOP

► PAGE 10



Scott
Taylor
p. 6



THE
HILL TIMES

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR, NO. 2244

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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NEWS



As the Liberals boast of historic grassroots fundraising totals in the first half of 2025 and rumours swirl over the NDP's potential debt post-election, both parties have requested a 60-day extension to the June 30 deadline to file their 2024 financial disclosures. *Photo illustration by Joey Sabourin*

BY STUART BENSON

With only the Conservative Party disclosing last year's financial statements on time and the remaining parties having received extensions of up to three months, the delayed reporting renders important financial information "outdated to the point of uselessness," says Democracy Watch's Duff Conacher, who is calling for stricter timelines.

"The federal parties are big public organizations, and they should face the same quarterly disclosure requirements as publicly traded companies," Conacher told *The Hill Times*. "Only disclosing donations every quarter is only telling half the story, and donors should be able to know whether their party is in a healthy position or if it's just going to financing debt."

Of the five main federal parties, only the Conservatives

Late report on
2024 finances
'so outdated it's
useless,' says
Democracy
Watch as most
major parties ask
for more time

submitted their complete 2024 financial statements to Elections Canada by the June 30 deadline, reporting a total revenue of just over \$48.5-million, including \$42.2-million in monetary contributions and more than \$5-million in membership dues.

However, the Conservatives also reported just shy of \$50-million in spending last year, including more than \$8-million in fundraising expenses, \$9.3-mil-

lion in salaries and benefits, and \$16.5-million on advertising, with nearly half spent on television ads—\$7.8-million—followed by \$7.1-million on digital and "other" advertising, and more than \$1.5-million on radio ads.

Despite a deficit of over \$1.47-million between revenue and expenses, the party ended the year with just shy of \$16-million

Continued on page 13

NEWS

Feds mum on
timing of
crucial North
American trade
pact meeting
anticipated to
'set the stage'
for 2026 review

BY NEIL MOSS

The timing for an annual meeting of trade ministers from Canada, United States, and Mexico—which has added importance being the last one before a likely renegotiation of Canada's most

Continued on page 4

NEWS

PSPC sparks
backlash as it
eyes shift to
'lowest-bid'
approach to
Hill freelance
interpretation
assignments

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Public Services and Procurement Canada is looking to revamp its contracting process for interpretation services for Parliament Hill and other "high-level events," but the proposed changes, which include a shift to awarding work based on "lowest bid" rather than "best fit," are being met with backlash from freelance interpreters.

Continued on page 3

NEWS

Canada's Syrian embassy to remain
empty for 'immediate term' as
more countries restart missions

BY NEIL MOSS

Thirteen years after Ottawa shuttered its embassy in Damascus the lights remain off while a slew of other governments have reopened missions in Syria following the collapse of the al-Assad regime.

Canada's embassy in Damascus has been closed since 2012

due to the now-ended Syrian Civil War. Canada hasn't had a resident envoy for Syria since the closure.

"Canada should try to reopen its embassy in Damascus as soon as possible," said University of Ottawa professor Thomas Juneau, an expert on the Middle East.

Continued on page 12

NEWS

New Leaf Liberals want to root
out Ontario Liberal shortcomings,
not back a particular leader,
says co-founder

BY STUART BENSON

With the Ontario Liberal Party's general meeting about six weeks away, Leader Bonnie Crombie is making a case for progress while a growing number of party supporters are looking to

turn over a new leaf if she can't secure more than two-thirds of delegate support this September.

Nathaniel Arfin, a co-founder of the burgeoning New Leaf Liberals (NLL), which hosted its second meet-and-greet event

Continued on page 11

Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

NDP announces leadership race rules, key dates

The NDP leadership race will officially kick off on Sept. 2 and conclude on March 29, 2026. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The race is on to elect the next leader of the federal New Democratic Party following **Jagmeet Singh's** post-election resignation, and the party recently made public details of the coming contest, which will officially kick off on Sept. 2 and conclude on March 29, 2026.

The application package for those interested in putting their name forward will be made available starting Aug. 20.

While there are a number of prospective candidates for the party's top job, only two people have definitively stated their intent to run for party leadership so far: author and activist **Yves Engler**, and activist and farmer **Tony McQuail**. A number of current and former NDP MPs—including current interim leader and British Columbia MP

Don Davies, current Quebec MP **Alexandre Boulerice**, and former MPs **Charlie Angus**, **Matthew Green**, and **Nathan Cullen**—have indicated they do not intend to put their names forward.

Voting, which will be done by ranked ballot, will end on March 28, with the winner to be announced the following day. According to the race rules, the exact “schedule and methods of voting”—whether by “mail, telephone or online, or a combination thereof”—will be communicated to candidates no later than Dec. 30. As per the rules, the voting period can be “no longer than 21 days.”

The cut-off for new membership sign-ups to be eligible to vote in the contest is Jan. 28, 2026, and candidates are required to have registered and paid deposit

fees by Jan. 31 in order to be listed on the ballot. In addition to a \$100,000 race entry fee, candidates must submit \$25,000 alongside their submission of nomination signatures, \$25,000 two weeks before the first debate, another \$25,000 by Dec. 30, and \$25,000 at the membership cut-off date of Jan. 28.

A party news release notes that three leadership events are planned: a candidate forum to be held sometime in October, followed by the first debate in November, and a second debate in February 2026.

“This is a crucial first step in what will be an important opportunity for New Democrats to come together, rebuild, and elect our new leaders,” reads the release announcing the race details.

Former NWAC head Lynne Groulx has died

Lynne Groulx, who led the Native Women's Association of Canada as chief executive officer from 2016 to 2024, died on July 16 in her hometown of Cochrane, Ont., at the age of 61.

In an obituary, her death was described as a “sudden passing.”

“Lynne leaves behind a lasting legacy of selfless advocacy. She was a proud member of the Métis Nation of Ontario. Throughout her life, she championed the rights of women, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalized communities. She will be remembered as a fierce advocate for justice, a tireless community leader, and a compassionate presence in the lives of many,” reads the obituary.



Lynne Groulx, former CEO of the Native Women's Association of Canada, died on July 16. *Handout photograph*

Prior to joining NWAC, Groulx worked for the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Reacting to the news, Women and Gender Equality Minister **Rechie Valdez** posted on X that she was “[d]eeply saddened to hear” of Groulx’s passing. “She was a tireless advocate for the rights and safety of Indigenous women and girls. My condolences to her family, friends, and all those she inspired.”

A private ceremony for friends and family is planned for Groulx, and the obituary requests that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the University of Ottawa Heart Institute and the Minwaashin Lodge: Indigenous Women's Support Centre in Ottawa.

Arctic ambassador unveiled

Canada's newest Arctic ambassador will be **Virginia Mearns**, Foreign Minister **Anita Anand** announced on July 24.

An Iqaluit resident who is Inuk, Mearns is coming from her role as senior director of Inuit relations at the Qikiqtani Inuit Association.

“As Canada's Senior Arctic Official, Ambassador Mearns will advance Canada's polar interests in multilateral forums, engage with counterparts in Arctic and non-Arctic states, and serve as a representative in our diplomatic



Virginia Mearns. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

corps. With this appointment, we are fulfilling a key commitment in Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy, to which we have dedicated \$35-million,” Anand said in a social media post.

The Arctic Foreign Policy was announced in December, and alongside the commitment to appoint an ambassador included a promise to open new consulates in Anchorage, Alaska, and Nuuk, Greenland; work towards a resolution of Arctic boundaries; to establish an Arctic and northern Indigenous youth internship program.

Library and Archives Canada Scholar Awards to honour Ramadan, MacMillan, Kaur, Highway, and Boulianne-Tremblay



This year's Library and Archives Canada Scholar Awards honorees: Danny Ramadan, left, Margaret MacMillan, Rup Kaur, Tomson Highway, and Gabrielle Boulianne-Tremblay. *Photographs courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, Baljit Singh, The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia, and by Isabelle Lafontaine*

The Library and Archives Canada Scholar Awards for 2025 will honour a quintet of “Canadians whose contributions have left a lasting impact on our country's cultural, literary, and historical heritage.”

This year's honorees are: Syrian Canadian author and activist **Danny Ramadan**; vaunted historian and professor **Margaret**

MacMillan; poet, performer, and feminist **Rup Kaur**; Indigenous playwright, novelist, pianist, and composer **Tomson Highway**; and writer, actor, screenwriter, and trans rights advocate **Gabrielle Boulianne-Tremblay**.

The awards will be handed out during an invite-only Oct. 22 reception at Library and Archives Canada.

Former Poilievre staffer joins Summa Strategies

Bryce McRae has joined Summa Strategies as a senior consultant where he is taking his first step into the private sector after six years working in various public roles including his time in the offices of Conservative Party Leader **Pierre Poilievre** and Ontario Finance Minister **Peter Bethlenfalvy**.

“I’m not getting as many calls on a Saturday, but otherwise I wouldn’t say it’s really that different given my previous roles ... being so front-facing,” said McRae in an interview with *The Lobby Monitor* published July 23. “The skills and experiences have definitely transferred over very well.”

Prior to joining Summa, McRae was manager of stakeholder relations in Poilievre's office between June 2023 and May 2025.

“Working with external stakeholders across industries, sectors, and organizations was a major part of that role,” he said.

“Being able to really take all of that information and formulate it in a way that was productive and helped move the needle is something that has been significantly beneficial,” he said, adding that “the role in [Poilievre's] office—working across various policy files—really opened up the breadth of the folks that I got to meet and showed the different dynamics that exist across government, across corporate and non-profit spaces.”

At Summa, McRae—whose CV also includes working as a policy and operations assistant to then-senator **Doug Black** from April to October 2021—will be focused on advancing “the priorities of organized labour in this country,” as well as advising clients, supporting government relations strategies, and helping clients navigate both federal and provincial landscapes.

—Sergiy Slipchenko
The Hill Times

PSPC sparks backlash as it eyes shift to 'lowest-bid' approach to Hill freelance interpretation assignments

The International Association of Conference Interpreters Canada wants to see PSPC's proposed changes put 'on ice until we have an opportunity to talk and sort this out,' says spokesperson Nicole Gagnon.

Continued from page 1

International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) Canada spokesperson Nicole Gagnon said the "community is of one mind" that the proposed terms of the new Standing Offer that would replace the current open contract system are "non-starters," and will "turn off a lot of people who may not bid" to continue offering their services, including more experienced interpreters whose corresponding higher rates will "automatically" make them outliers if assignments are attributed based on lowest bid.

"What they're going to be doing is going to encourage a race to the bottom with the lowest bid," Gagnon told *The Hill Times*.

First shared with media and industry representatives on June 27 via a news release and request for information (RFI) posted on the federal tendering site, CanadaBuys.ca, PSPC set an original deadline of July 25 for freelancers and industry associations to give their feedback on the "proposed procurement process" for interpretation services for "high-level events." Last week, that deadline was extended to Aug. 1.

"The department is considering a Standing Offer, which would allow the Translation Bureau to award future contracts to pre-qualified suppliers as needed," reads a statement from PSPC, which notes that input gathered from stakeholders "will play a key role in shaping and refining the procurement strategy moving forward."

In light of this move, freelance interpreters, whose current contracts had been set to expire on June 30, have been offered six-month extensions through to the end of December.



Freelance interpreters, whose current contracts had been set to expire on June 30, have been offered six-month extensions as Public Services and Procurement Canada seeks to introduce a new Standing Offer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

More than half of interpreters covering Parliament Hill are freelancers rather than staff interpreters employed by the Translation Bureau. As of this past March, the bureau had 61 staff interpreters and 84 freelancers on the roster for Hill events.

Under the current open contract for all federal freelance interpreters, work is "attributed" based on "best fit criteria" ranked by availability, followed by an individual's language profile, then security clearance, their location, and finally an individual's "Quality Index" rating.

As explained in the RFI on the new system, offers would instead "be ranked in descending order of lowest evaluated price."

That shift from "best fit" to "lowest bid" in awarding work to freelance interpreters is the top-most concern being highlighted by Gagnon, but a list of other changes have raised red flags.

Among them is the proposed shift from daily to hourly rates, which the RFI states will "ensure the best value for Canada" and "are the best means of paying interpretation contractors for the actual effort that was made while reducing administrative burdens for all parties."

Currently, interpreters are paid daily rates based on the length of their assignment, with some variation depending on whether interpreters are working in-person, in hybrid format, or at a distance.

Under the hourly rate system, interpreters would be guaranteed

to be paid for a minimum number of hours depending on the projected length of events assigned in a given day, with actual time worked rounded up to the nearest half hour. The RFI's question-and-answer section states that "[a]ll time spent at an assignment ... is considered as time worked," including time spent doing sound tests or "waiting during delays, pauses, and suspensions."

But Gagnon said that doesn't take into account all of the work interpreters do.

"They just want to count the time at the mic. They don't take into account the time that's spent preparing for it, or keeping up with current affairs or perfecting one's language skills," she said.

Gagnon said regardless of the length of an assignment, interpreters are required to be available from 8 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., meaning if their original 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. committee meeting is cancelled, they can be reassigned to instead cover a 3:30-5:30 p.m. meeting. "Hence why we feel we work on a daily basis," she said. "We're a captive staff; we have to be there when they need us."

Gagnon also argued that despite the shift to hourly rates being partly pitched as a way to reduce administrative work, it will actually increase the burden on freelancers who will be required to fill out timesheets and provide quarterly reports.

Moreover, Gagnon noted the new terms set out in the RFI don't specify the number of interpret-

ers to be assigned per shift based on whether it's in person, hybrid, or at a distance, though she said PSPC has given verbal assurances that it will still abide by the stipulations introduced during the pandemic as part of measures aimed at better protecting the health and safety of interpreters amid the surge in remote participation prompted by COVID-19.

As early as May 2020, alarms were being raised over the increased rate of injuries being experienced by interpreters during remote proceedings, threatening an already dwindling workforce. In response to evidence of the increased health risks and cognitive workload experienced by interpreters covering remote participants, among other measures, the Translation Bureau reduced shift hours and increased the number of interpreters assigned per shift for events involving more remote participation to allow for more breaks.

In 2023, the House of Commons permanently changed its rules to continue operating in a hybrid format.

Herself a freelance interpreter, Gagnon has not offered her services on the Hill in three years due to the ongoing sound issues facing interpreters. More recent sound issues have centred on the Larsen effect—feedback caused by ear pieces or other electronic equipment (namely cellphones) getting too close to live mics.

Among other things, the new terms also remove mention of

the current colour-coded "Quality Index" system used to assess interpreters' competence. Gagnon said PSPC wasn't able to answer questions regarding how interpreters' performance would be assessed at a recent industry day on the proposed changes.

Gagnon additionally noted that the new system would create "two classes" of interpreters as the proposed Standing Offer is specifically for "parliamentary and high-level conference interpretation services in official languages," whereas current contracts apply to both parliamentary and conference interpreters covering other, lower-level federal government events in Canada's official languages. She said no details have been offered for how interpretation services for other events for government departments and agencies will be handled. "We have been told there's going to be another procurement tool ... but we have no details," she said, raising concern over the possibility such events could be opened to the use of non-accredited interpreters, or even artificial intelligence.

She said she thinks the changes are ultimately about cutting costs and giving PSPC more flexibility to change employment terms. While one-year open contracts can be renewed, their terms carry over, whereas Standing Offers, which can offer multiple option years, can be amended between years.

"They want to cut costs as best they can, but this is not somewhere you would want to cut costs, I would think," she said.

Gagnon said her association wants to see the changes put "on ice until we have an opportunity to talk and sort this out."

She noted previous attempts by PSPC to shift to a lowest-bid approach have been met by similar backlash.

According to Gagnon, this past February, the department "started applying lowest bid procurement" in "clear violation of the existing open contract," leading to a complaint being filed with the Office of the Procurement Ombud (OPO). In an April letter to AIIC-Canada, PSPC recognized the "discrepancy," she said.

"[With] the open contract, terms are set. They cannot change them willy-nilly. This is what the Standing Offer will allow them to do," said Gagnon.

In an email to *The Hill Times*, the OPO confirmed it received a complaint regarding "the administration of a contract issued ... for the provision of interpretation services," into which it launched a review on July 7.

Back in 2016, PSPC had sought to introduce a Standing Offer for hiring freelance interpreters that would have used an automated system to award contracts to freelance interpreters, employing an algorithm that would have favoured lowest bids. In response to backlash and concerns, that plan was cancelled by then-PSPC minister Judy Foote in early 2017.

PSPC did not respond by filing deadline to questions from *The Hill Times* regarding these changes, including its reasons for pursuing them now.

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NEWS

Feds mum on timing of crucial North American trade pact meeting anticipated to 'set the stage' for 2026 review

The Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement Free Trade Commission meeting was initially anticipated for 'mid-2025,' according to an internal memo, but Canada's foreign ministry isn't providing a date for when it will occur.



Dominic LeBlanc is Canada's lead minister responsible for Canada-U.S. trade. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Continued from page 1

consequential free trade deal—has yet to be publicly revealed.

The Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) Free Trade Commission (FTC) is typically held around the anniversary of its entry into force, which occurred on July 1, 2020. The 2025 iteration and fifth FTC is set to be hosted by Canada. An internal Global Affairs Canada memo that was circulated last December indicated that it would occur in "mid-2025."

Global Affairs Canada didn't directly answer a question regarding when the meeting will take place.

"We remain in close contact with our American and Mexican counterparts and will share updates as soon as more information becomes available," department spokesperson John Babcock told *The Hill Times* in an email.

The briefing note for then-international trade minister Mary Ng stated that the 2025 FTC would include discussions on preparations for the CUSMA review.

"The fifth FTC meeting will take place at a critical juncture for CUSMA," the memo notes.

It will be the first FTC meeting since the Trump administration returned to power in January and since Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum's victory last October. The latest meeting in a given calendar year was in 2023, when the FTC took place on July 13. Other FTC gatherings have taken place on July 8, May 23, and May 18.

A CUSMA review is mandated for 2026—after the agreement is in force for six years. As part of the review, any party to the agreement can decide to leave the pact, which would start a

10-year period of annual reviews that would end with the country withdrawing from the agreement, if it doesn't change course.

"This will be the last meeting of the CUSMA FTC prior to the review of the overall agreement in 2026. As such, key components of the 2025 FTC will likely include in-depth discussions on CUSMA-related issues, including preparation for the 2026 CUSMA review, chapter-specific reviews from the labour and environment committees for ministerial consideration, and stakeholder engagement," the memo reads.

The memo was drafted following U.S. President Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 presidential election, but before he returned to the White House. The heavily redacted briefing note was obtained by *The Hill Times* under the Access to Information Act.

Trade observers have suggested the review will likely take the form of a renegotiation when the sides meet next year.

'Hugely important forum'

Canadian Labour Congress senior researcher Elizabeth Kwan said the expectation is for an upcoming FTC to "set the stage" for the trade deal renegotiation in 2026.

"It is very important for the FTC to come together and have a good discussion about how to move forward, setting out the understanding of the process, as well as setting out some of the key areas that they would like to look at," she said, remarking that she would like to see labour, environment, and inclusive trade highlighted.

Kwan said she isn't surprised the timing of the meeting has been delayed.

"Since we're living in unusual times, it is not a bad thing," she said. "It is important for the FTC to take very seriously the responsibility that they have to shepherd the next steps towards the CUSMA renegotiation, and not to punt it too far down the line."

She said there is a need for the commission to "show leadership," and not be overly influenced by the tariff environment that currently exists.

Canadian Chamber of Commerce director of international policy Gaphel Kongtsa said this year's FTC is "particularly significant" given the approaching review.

"It is an opportunity for Canada as the host country to leverage the platform of the FTC to demonstrate leadership on North American trade," he said, remarking that it is a "hugely important forum" that "connects the trade leads for all three governments and brings them together in a very focused way for a discussion around trade and the CUSMA review."

Kongtsa described the commission as a "rare" opportunity to show leadership, remarking that it is important for Ottawa to "maximally leverage" the moment by putting forward an agenda to further integrate North American trade.

Like Kwan, Kongtsa said he also isn't surprised that the dates have yet to be announced.

"Ideally, we would know and there would be more certainty around this," he said. "But, I think, given all the uncertainty and chaos when it comes to trade, it's really unsurprising that the U.S. administration is not as focused on the FTC as it might ordinarily be."

He said that's because U.S. trade officials are stretched thin due to ongoing global tariff nego-

tiations, as well as ongoing Section 232 tariff investigations and the statutory mandated domestic consultation on CUSMA.

The U.S. most recently came to agreement on a trade deal with the European Union, which would lock in a 15-per-cent tariff, and not offer reprieve on a 50-per-cent tariff on steel and aluminum tariffs.

"There's a whole host of logistical and bandwidth challenges that the U.S. administration is currently facing, and I think that one unsurprising outcome of that is delay and uncertainty," Kongtsa said.

But he said he thinks it is still "very likely" that the FTC will occur this year.

"I think the U.S. government will need to redirect its attention to the CUSMA review," Kongtsa said, suggesting that the FTC will likely happen in the fall given any additional delay wouldn't give much time to prepare for the review.

Trump still committed to CUSMA: analysts

While much focus has been on Canada's trade negotiations with the U.S., as it seeks to reach a deal to lower tariffs ahead of the Aug. 1 deadline, trade observers say that work isn't being done without the CUSMA in mind.

"CUSMA is still pretty central," said Kwan, noting the exemptions for goods that are CUSMA-compliant to Trump's 25-per-cent International Emergency Economic Powers Act tariffs placed on Canadian exports under the guise of combating a fentanyl and border crisis. "That indicates to me that it is still very important."

Trump has threatened that the across-the-board tariff will jump

to 35 per cent for non-CUSMA compliant products after Aug. 1.

Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) told reporters on July 28 that the negotiations are in an "intense phase." Trump has suggested that an agreement won't be reached with Canada.

That is despite Trump proclaiming that the CUSMA is a transitional trade deal. The American president hasn't indicated what the deal is transitioning to.

Kongtsa said that while there is uncertainty, the U.S. has shown signals it is interested in preserving CUSMA, remarking that the tariff exemptions for CUSMA-compliant exports are a "good example" of that.

He said the FTC will help to reveal "critical insights" to how the U.S. is positioning itself and its priorities heading into the review.

"As of right now, we're piecing together how the U.S. administration might tackle the review, but the FTC will be an opportunity to more formally ascertain what the U.S. government's priorities are," Kongtsa said.

Labour review timing being discussed: GAC

The timing for the review of the labour chapter of CUSMA is "presently" being discussed between the parties of the pact, according to a GAC spokesperson.

"With regards to the labour chapter review, the parties are presently discussing the timing, logistics, and program for conducting the review, including the possibility of doing so during the next meeting of the CUSMA Labour Council, which is tentatively scheduled to occur in Canada in the fall of 2025," Babcock said in an email.

"The program for the Labour Council meeting will include a public session, giving the parties an opportunity to engage with stakeholders on the operation and effectiveness of the labour chapter. More information regarding the Labour Council meeting and public session will be shared with stakeholders once the parties have finalized their discussions," he added.

The labour review is the second of two reviews that are mandated to occur this year. The review of the environment chapter was completed on June 17, which included the participation of all three countries to the pact. The minimalistic review included a reaffirmation of the importance of environmental co-operation.

Kwan called the environmental chapter review "a little bit disappointing."

"There was enough space to look for improvements during that review, and I think they basically passed on that opportunity, which is really too bad," she said.

Kwan said she hopes that the labour chapter review is "more robust," and includes stakeholder participation. But she said that the FTC will be "the central body" of CUSMA, which has a higher responsibility to steer the pact compared to the chapter-specific reviews.

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COMMENT

Rumours of the death of the political long game have been greatly exaggerated

Just in the last week, we have seen three examples of a more-plodding type of politics, proving the old-school has some life in it still.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—In many parts of Canada, we are getting pummeled by yet another “heat dome.” If you aren’t living it, think of it as your outdoor living space being turned into one big, hot sauna. Lots of sweat and the occasional tears from trying to survive it.



Prime Minister Mark Carney's, centre, July 28 announcement of the Confederation Bridge toll cut is old-school pork-barrel politics at its best, writes Tim Powers. Screenshot courtesy of CPAC

What has been equally hot so far this summer has been the politics. Not some of the obvious smash-in-your-face stuff that has been so common in the last number of years, but the more traditional stuff that's not always captured through instantaneous social media projection.

Just in the last week, we have seen three examples of a more-plodding type of politics—though, arguably, no less beneficial to its instigators. Let us start

with the Carney government's announcement on the cutting of rates for travel on the Confederation Bridge to Prince Edward Island, and on federal government-owned and -operated services in other parts of Atlantic Canada.

It's not super sexy on the surface, but it's hugely symbolic and important to many in Atlantic Canada where a never-ending highway is not an option. Some people in P.E.I. and Newfoundland and Labrador never believed

they should have to pay for those services in the first place, arguing they should be free as the they part of our Confederation bargain. Free is best, but a cut-rate is not a bad second option. In a region that awarded the Carney government with a proportionally large number of seats, this is old-school pork-barrel politics at its best.

Equally notable has been the shifting Canadian narrative concerning our trade negotiations with the United States, which—if what is happening across the globe is to be our fate—is better described as damage limitation. We moved from being driven by deadlines to reframing the politics of our Trump trauma as some kind of grand resistance to the imposition of the president's tariff tyranny.

The broader public is eating it up, while the business community—which rightly expects predictability in commerce—nervously twiddles its collective thumbs. There's no single meme or infographic here to elicit an immediate reaction. Rather, it's an old-school exercise in

creating and writing a new story. It is tedious and painful, much like what it must be to work to find agreement with the Trump administration.

We have moved away from an early updated Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement to a place where a win looks like minimal tariffs in sectors of concern. While that might be truly a victory in the era in which we find ourselves, it is not where we started. We have gone from elbows up, to strategic pandering, to resistance for resistance's sake.

And then there is some old-school politicking in the nonsense of the Long Ballot Committee's destabilizing efforts in Alberta where a federal byelection is happening that Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre hopes to win. That is, Poilievre and some-200 other candidates. Poilievre—a favourite target of the Long Ballot Committee, since he had more than 80 others run against him in the general election in April—will likely win handily despite the big field.

No obvious geo-targeting here or sparkling social media campaigns—just a group working an old system, which requires a candidate for office to have the signatures of 100 people in the riding they're contesting to put their name on a ballot. Despite the clunkiness of it all, they are trying to get a discussion going about electoral reform. Maybe it is working.

Long-play politics isn't dead, it seems—it still has some life in it.

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

The pantomime ends in Gaza

Since food distribution to Palestinians is so erratic, deaths from this artificial famine continue to grow. It's not clear whether this is random malevolence or mere incompetence.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—The co-ordinated chorus of despair by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, United States President Donald Trump, and their various henchpeople and flacks was quite impressive. The message was that everybody should stop hoping for a negotiated peace. Netanyahu has stared Trump down once

again, and the four-month pantomime search for a new ceasefire in Gaza is at an end.

On July 29, Steve Witkoff, Trump's billionaire real-estate pal and lead diplomatic negotiator, said: “ Hamas does not appear to be co-ordinated or acting in good faith. We will now consider alternative options to bring the hostages home and try to create a more stable environment for the people of Gaza. It is a shame that Hamas has acted in this selfish way.”

Trump himself, speaking from the White House, was more colourful: “ Hamas didn't really want to make a deal. I think they want to die. Now we're down to the final hostages, and they know what happens after you get the final hostages. And basically, because of that, they really didn't want to make a deal.”

Of course the surviving junior members of Hamas—all the senior ones are dead—didn't want the only deal Israel is willing to offer them. A 60-day ceasefire during which all Israeli hostages are released, followed by a resumption of the war until the Hamas fighters are either all dead or driven out of Gaza, was never a plausible offer. Might as well die fighting.

Similarly, the current Israeli government would never offer

Hamas a better deal. Most of its members share Netanyahu's determination that the Gaza Strip should be largely or wholly “cleansed” of its Palestinian population, although there is not full agreement on what should follow: Israeli control and Jewish settlement, or Trump's “Riviera on the Mediterranean.”

All the back-and-forth diplomacy of the past six months was just for show, and the only audience that mattered was Trump. His naive belief that his personality alone could persuade bitter opponents in both Israel/Gaza and Russia/Ukraine to sign peace deals had to be indulged for a while because the U.S. is so powerful, but it was never realistic.

The last ceasefire in Gaza, declared one day before Trump took office in late January, was a precautionary measure taken by both sides while they tried to make sense of what the new American president intended. When Netanyahu realized that Trump was even easier to manage than his predecessor Joe Biden, he unilaterally broke that ceasefire in mid-March.

Through March, April, and most of May, Israel blocked all food, water, medicine, and fuel from entering Gaza, most of

whose 2.1 million civilians were near starvation by the time Israel restarted deliveries. But now it was no longer international aid distributed from 400 neighbourhood locations in the Strip.

Instead, it's the four massive centres of the “Gaza Humanitarian Foundation,” controlled by American mercenaries and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers. They are only open for a few minutes twice a day, people have to walk for hours to reach them, and every day some are shot by the IDF or the mercenaries.

The number of Palestinians killed rarely exceeds 100 a day and is often just a dozen or so, but the amount of food delivered by the new system since May 26 amounts to only one meal per person every second day. Since distribution is so erratic, moreover, many people are getting far less, and the deaths from this artificial famine continue to grow.

It's not clear whether this is random malevolence or mere incompetence, but it is accompanied by an IDF military campaign that has brought 89 per cent of Gaza's land under direct Israeli military occupation. For Palestinian civilians, these are virtually free-fire zones.

Trump's last flailing attempt to bring Netanyahu to heel failed during the latter's recent visit to Washington, D.C., and Netanyahu is now off the leash. He no longer needs to pretend he is negotiating for a ceasefire to keep Trump happy. On July 26, he wrote on X: “Together with our U.S. allies, we are now considering alternative options.”

The next three months is the summer recess of the Knesset, traditionally the time when Israeli governments make controversial decisions. It would be the ideal time to activate Netanyahu's plans for the future of Gaza, if he has any. So what “alternative options” might he be considering?

Is this when Defence Minister Israel Katz puts into action his plan to build a giant concentration camp (sorry, “humanitarian city”) on the ruins of Rafah to hold 600,000 Palestinians?

Will the “voluntary migration” of Palestinians to other countries willing to take them also start? Bribes (sorry, “relocation assistance”) will be available.

Will Jewish settlement in the Strip start? Will Trump reveal his plans for Gaza-sur-Med?

Stay tuned.

Gwynne Dyer's new book is *Intervention Earth: Life-Saving Ideas from the World's Climate Engineers*. Last year's book, *The Shortest History of War*, is also still available.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Sniffing out alleged terrorists in the military's ranks

This is exactly what the hard-pressed CAF did not need at this juncture—another bad news story to throw on the pile.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—On the morning of July 8, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police took four men into custody. Three of the men arrested were charged with facilitating terrorist activity, while the fourth was charged with a variety of weapons offences.

What made this story so alarming is that all four suspects have links to the Canadian Armed Forces. Corporals Matthew Forbes and Marc-Aurèle Chabot are still serving in the regular force at CFB Valcartier, while Simon Angers-Audet and Raphaël Lagacé are a former CAF regular force member and a former civilian instructor with the Royal Canadian Air Cadets, respectively.

At the time of the arrests, the RCMP told the media: “The three accused were planning to create [an] anti-government militia. To achieve this, they took part in military-style training, as well as shooting, ambush, survival and navigation exercises.”

The RCMP categorized this as ideologically motivated terrorism with the accused “intending to forcibly take possession of land in the Quebec City area.”

In the initial CBC online story about the arrests, a sub-head reads “Guns, explosives seized,” which reinforces the drama of an alleged terrorist plot being foiled.

However, the RCMP stated that they had conducted searches in the Quebec City area in January, 2024. At that juncture, the RCMP had seized 16 explosive devices, 83 firearms and accessories, approximately 11,000 rounds of ammunition of various calibres, 130 magazines, and four sets of night-vision goggles.

That was 18 months before they arrested the four suspects, and charged three of them with facilitating terrorism.

The RCMP also noted that some of the firearms confiscated were prohibited and they had also recovered “seized military equipment.” The Department of National Defence has since claimed that the equipment in question was not stolen from military stores.

However, if the police believed that this wannabe militia was building their arsenal with stolen CAF property, why were these individuals allowed to continue serving at CFB Valcartier?

According to the RCMP, the investigation into the accused began in the spring of 2023, and they believe that the anti-government militia plot was hatched

in 2021. Over the past four years, the accused conducted training activities, which included weapons training along with climbing, survival, and orientation exercises. It is believed that in addition to the four accused, there were as many as 15 individuals who had received some sort of numbered badge as proof of their membership. The training activities routinely included 30 to 40 participants. The group also posted images on an Instagram account that listed nearly 1,000 followers.

However, despite the fact that the RCMP labelled this “ideologically motivated terrorism,” to date, this group does not seem to really have a clear-cut ideology. Social media posts from the members illustrate pro-gun, anti-gun restriction sentiments along with right leaning political agendas. Chabot is alleged by one of his former comrades in the Royal 22nd Regiment to have uttered “almost treasonous” comments about former prime minister Justin Trudeau.

While a number of terrorism experts have pointed out that this case involves the largest cache of weapons ever seized in an alleged terrorism-linked plot, the fact is that no one is going to start a war with 11,000 rounds and 83 small arms. Short of seizing property in Quebec, this gang seems to have no known mid- or long-term plan.

Back in 2006, the so-called Toronto 18 terrorists were definitely driven by ideology, and while not formally affiliated with al-Qaeda, they were admittedly inspired by them. This gang of 14 adult and four teenage Muslim extremists had a very specific target list aimed at terrorizing the bejeezus out of every Canadian. Their plan included: blowing up the CN Tower, storming Parliament Hill, executing then-prime minister Stephen Harper, and the *coup de grâce* was to be the live beheading of CBC news anchor Peter Mansbridge during the evening broadcast. The problem was that the Toronto 18 did not have a clue about firearms and explosives, nor did they know how to procure them.

Unwittingly, they recruited a chap named Mubin Shaikh who was actually a de-radicalized Muslim acting as a counterterrorism operative. When the Toronto 18 conducted a training camp organized by Shaikh in December 2006, they were watched by some 200 law enforcement officials. The plot was over before it could be hatched.

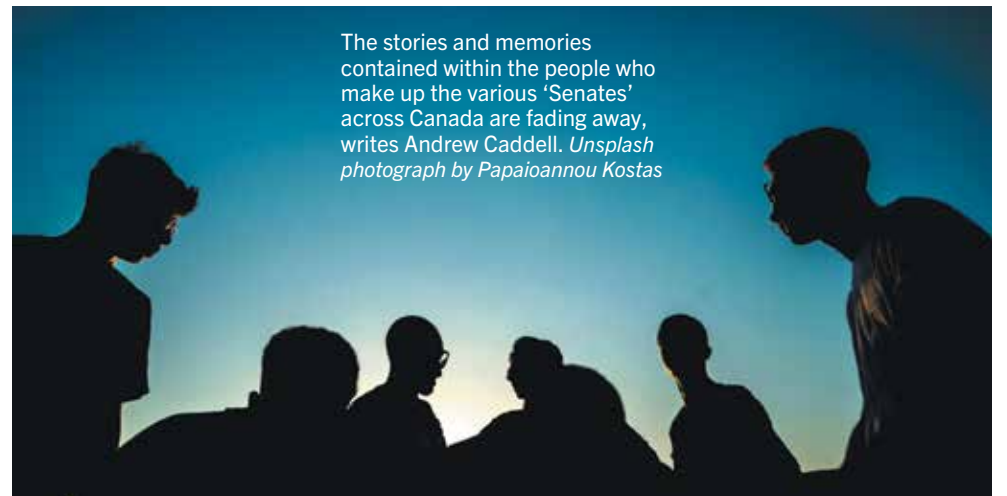
Following guilty pleas at their June 2010 trial, these 18 would-be terrorists received seven- to 20-year prison sentences.

The “Quebec 4” are in a different league as they do have experience with automatic weapons, explosives, and tactics. This fact was not missed by the international media as this story got flagged by CNN, BBC, *The New York Times*, and *The Guardian*. This is exactly what the hard-pressed CAF did not need at this juncture—another bad news story to throw on the pile.

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

The Hill Times

The power of Canada's many ‘Senates’



The stories and memories contained within the people who make up the various ‘Senates’ across Canada are fading away, writes Andrew Caddell. *Unsplash photograph by Papaioannou Kostas*

All across the country they are the faithful, the friends, the former work colleagues, the civic-minded, some politically engaged, some not, who gather to discuss the issues of the day.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—You see them everywhere across the country. They might be in the local Tim Hortons, an independent coffee shop in the middle of town, a social club, a shopping mall, or, as in Kamouraska, down by the wharf.

They are the faithful, the friends, the former work colleagues, the civic-minded, some politically engaged, some not, who gather to discuss the issues of the day. It could be for breakfast or lunch, or an afternoon coffee break. I have joined many of them in their conversations in both official languages. Once, the other four people in the booth at the Smitty’s in Saskatoon were wearing their Order of Canada pins.

In Kamouraska, there was a group who congregated at a picnic table near our local wharf in the summer and at the “warm-up” space of the local outdoor rink in winter. We called it “*le Sénat* (the Senate).” It was not meant in a pejorative way, but as a description of a gathering of our older citizens. The group would meet each day around 4 p.m.

The Senate would thrash out the issues of the day, and gossip a bit after an hour or so, and then adjourn to meet the next day. I would see my Anctil neighbours—brothers Jean-Guy, David, Gilles, and Georges—walk down to the wharf to join their friends, or as I was lacing up my skates in winter. Then, over time they no longer walked, but drove to the rink or the wharf. Then Gilles, Jean-Guy, and David died, and last month, Georges joined them at the age of 94.

For Georges, the conversations offered a chance to connect with his friends and his brothers. His daughter Dominique recently talked to me about him and his long, but not easy, life. A child of the Great

Depression, he was one of 13 born to his father Leo, a ship captain, and his mother Marguerite. Georges quit school to work on the family farm and cut pulpwood in the winter. He later joined his father and his brothers on the waters of the St. Lawrence in the “*goélettes*,” schooners that would dock at the wharf in Kamouraska on their way to the pulp mills downriver.

The era of the *goélettes* and the wharf faded with the construction of the Trans-Canada Highway in the 1970s, and the use of logging trucks. Georges took his experience to the ships of the Great Lakes, working for Paterson and Sons of Thunder Bay, Ont., for 25 years, mostly on a freighter called the “Kingdoc.” He had a good grasp of English, although we always conversed in French. Despite the time away from Kamouraska, he and his wife Denise had two children and were married 43 years until she died in 2005.

When he retired from the ships, he continued to work into his late 70s for the town of Kamouraska, and for a local potato grower. Georges had an incredible memory, and read voraciously, so the time spent at the Senate was a chance to listen to the opinions of the others.

“He didn’t say too much,” said Dominique, “but if someone said something that didn’t seem right, he would come back the next day with the correct information, having done his research.” He talked to his family about the boats he worked on, and the places he travelled in Canada and the United States. He was a huge hockey fan, and whenever he had a chance, would go to a Canadiens game in Montreal or elsewhere.

Georges was from a family that had a pride and a willingness to work as part of their DNA. My parents respected them enormously, and when the Anctils were children, my great-grandmother and great-aunts doted on them. Now they are fading away, and the stories and memories with them.

At 4 p.m. the other day, I went down to the wharf. There were plenty of tourists from across Quebec and Canada, and the voices of children on the beach echoed across to the picnic tables. There were a few adults having a drink, but there were no “Senators” discussing the events of the day. After several decades of debate, discussion and gossip, our “Senate,” sadly, is no more.

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

The Hill Times

COMMENT



U.S. President Donald Trump, left, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The horrors being visited on the people of Gaza are one of the most grievous of the many atrocities consistent with a world increasingly steered by rights-ignoring leaders, writes Les Whittington. White House photograph by Daniel Torok

has been and continues to be badly eroded, in part because of U.S. regression under its current president. Amnesty International calls it the “Trump effect.”

“The Trump administration’s anti-rights campaign is turbocharging harmful trends already present in 2025, gutting international human rights protections and endangering billions across the planet,” the organization warned ahead of its latest annual report, *The State of the World’s Human Rights*.

In its assessment of the situation in 150 countries, the survey found “vicious, widespread clampdowns on dissent, catastrophic escalations of armed conflict, inadequate efforts to address climate collapse, and a growing backlash globally against the rights of migrants, refugees, women, girls and LGBTQ people.”

In addition to Israel and Russia, Amnesty’s list of countries of deepening concern included China, Myanmar, Turkey, Iran, India, Sudan, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“Year after year, we have warned of the dangers of human rights backsliding. But events of the past 12 months—not least Israel’s livestreamed but unheeded genocide of Palestinians in Gaza—have laid bare just how hellish the world can be for so many when the most powerful states jettison international law and disregard multilateral institutions,” commented Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International’s secretary general.

“At this historical juncture, when authoritarian laws and practices are multiplying the world over in the interests of very few, governments and civil society must work with urgency to lead humanity back to safer ground,” Callamard added.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

A world without principles

The commitment to democracy and individual rights has been and continues to be badly eroded, in part because of U.S. regression under its current president.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—Summer is normally a good time for trying to write lighter, diversionary columns that might provide a break from the usual pressing issues of the day. But there hasn’t been a summer like this one in many years.

One of the most grievous of the many atrocities consistent with the transformation toward a world increasingly steered by rights-ignoring leaders are the horrors being visited on the people of Gaza.

God knows the Jewish people deserve to live in a homeland free from constant threats of death and destruction. And there’s no doubt that Hamas touched off this current round of violence in the long-volatile region with its vicious Oct. 7, 2023, attack killing 1,200 Israelis and taking 251 hostages. And Hamas’ treatment of, and refusal to release, the hostages from that incursion into Israeli territory no doubt justifies in the minds of many Israel’s disproportionate response.

But letting the people of Gaza face starvation and allowing those desperately seeking food to be killed as they try to access what little aid is being distributed is clearly way outside the scope of any justifiable response. It is an obvious breach of human principles that should not have been tolerated in the months before dozens of countries began to forcefully speak out against it.

Thousands of Palestinians are going without food and, according to the United Nations human rights office, about 1,000 people have been killed while seeking aid in Gaza, including many shot down by Israeli troops near aid points operated by a private United States aid distribution group.

Meanwhile, as western elected leaders stepped up pressure on Israel to address the mounting starvation of Palestinians, U.S. President Donald Trump played golf in Scotland. Having distanced his administration from the long-held U.S. policy favouring creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel and endorsing the ethnic cleansing of Gaza, he—until the weekend—had little to say about the plight of Gazans. He has instead stood behind Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s continuing attempt to root out Hamas’ leadership at all costs, with Trump even musing about the use of more military force despite risks to the remaining hostages. On July 27, Trump finally realized the situation in Gaza is beyond intolerable, but was still ambivalent about Israel’s role in the development of the crisis.

Some 3,000 kilometres away, Russia continues to defy international law and widespread condemnation with its deadly invasion of and continuing nightly attacks on Ukraine, which has seen an estimated 400,000 casualties since Moscow opened the war in 2022. Trump, who more than anyone has the potential to bring Russia’s Vladimir Putin to the bargaining table, has never been frank about the illegality of Putin’s unprovoked assault on its neighbour. Unbelievably, the American president at times has twisted reality totally out of shape by echoing Putin’s claims that Ukraine’s leaders were the ones responsible for the invasion. This past weekend, the Trump said he was fed up with months of Putin’s double-talk, and shortened his deadline for Moscow to actually seek peace or be hit with extreme sanctions.

In the wider perspective, it’s important to remember that the U.S.—for better or worse—has in most cases in the past 75 years sought to work with other nations in an effort to create a more peaceful, prosperous world with increased dignity for all, in keeping with the lasting response by

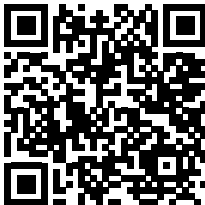
many around the globe to the calamity of the Second World War.

But the commitment to democracy and individual rights at the core of this effort



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Editorial

Editorial

MPs have left Elections Canada high and dry

With the deadline now passed for the upcoming byelection in Battle River–Crowfoot, Alta., the final tally of names that will be on the ballot clocks in at a record of more than 210.

The Aug. 18 contest to replace former Conservative MP Damien Kurek is still Tory Leader Pierre Poilievre’s to lose as the choice of an incredibly safe seat to return to the House of Commons after losing his own longtime Carleton, Ont., riding in April.

But voters will have to wade through a historically long list to find his name, or any other candidate making a legitimate run for the seat thanks to the protest effort organized by the Longest Ballot Committee in its bid to foster change to Canada’s electoral system away from the first-past-the-post status quo. It has been active in eight federal and provincial races since 2019.

There wasn’t a massive hue and cry when the group targeted Liberal-held ridings during a pair of 2024 byelections, but now that it’s picking up steam and has twice affected a race in which Poilievre is running, politicians and hopefuls are progressing past quiet grumbling into full-scale discontent.

On July 22, Poilievre and democratic reform critic Michael Cooper sent a letter to Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon to “demand action against a blatant abuse of our democratic system.”

They flagged legislative reforms they want to see introduced this fall, including a restriction for official agents to only represent one candidate at a time, and to require endorsement

signatures be limited to one candidate while also raising the threshold for signatures on a candidate’s nomination to 0.5 per cent of the riding’s population.

Some of these changes are things for which Chief Electoral Officer Stéphane Perrault has been advocating for quite some time, but those suggestions have previously fallen on ears unwilling to listen.

He raised the issue again last November when the electoral reform bill C-65 was working its way through the House. That bill ultimately died on the Order Paper, having never made it out of committee.

But when legislators had the chance to truly dig in, only a couple of committee members meaningfully engaged with Perrault’s suggestions.

This has led to Perrault and Elections Canada having to take matters into their own hands. The Aug. 18 vote will feature a modified ballot where electors can simply write in the name of their preferred candidate.

“In the last four byelections, I’ve had to adapt the prescriptions of the [Elections] Act to accommodate the number of candidates. That means I’m setting aside the will of Parliament, and I do not do that lightly,” Perrault said last November.

If the Longest Ballot Committee is exposing a vulnerability in our democratic system (aside from their stated intentions of abolishing first past the post), then it’s a legitimate question to be examined. But it shouldn’t take politicians being personally inconvenienced to want to actually take real action on any issue.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Canada should be leading on long-term care: nurses union president

Re: “Health minister won’t commit to tabling safe long-term care bill,” (*The Hill Times*, July 21, p. 6).

How is this even possible with the urgent need to protect seniors in long-term care?

We would all like to have our memories of the COVID-19 pandemic fade, but nurses can’t, and governments certainly shouldn’t.

Long-term care residents accounted for three per cent of all COVID-19 cases, and 43 per cent of COVID-19 deaths in Canada—a greater proportion than any other country in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Canada also had one of the highest infection rates for COVID-19 among health-care workers.

I was dismayed that safe long-term care legislation is not a priority on the new Liberal government’s agenda. *The Hill Times’* review of Health Canada’s 2025-26 departmental plan reveals that the government has seemingly abandoned a promise to table a Safe Long-Term Care Act.

The previous Liberal government was working towards tabling an Act, and this one should, too.

Access to quality and safe long-term care is becom-

ing further out of reach for people across Canada. A 2024 survey of Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions members revealed that long-term care nurses have the highest rates of dissatisfaction with their workplaces, with more than half indicating that the quality of care had deteriorated over the course of a year.

There is a roadmap to safe long-term care. We can support workers in the sector with a strategy that attracts and retains skilled caregivers. Let’s also start with enforcing the Health Standards Organization and Canadian Standards Association guidelines, including a minimum of 4.1 hours of direct care per resident per day. We must eliminate for-profit homes, which had the highest mortality rates during the pandemic, and redirect federal funding to public and non-profit homes.

It’s not the time to stick our heads in the sand and try to forget the pandemic. The federal government must do right by our seniors and ensure Canada is a leader in long-term care.

Linda Silas
President, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions
Ottawa, Ont.

Feds shouldn’t fear the benefits of AI, says ex-pat letter writer

Re: “AI coming at public service like a ‘freight train at a tremendous speed’ and it could mean thousands of job losses, says Savoie,” (*The Hill Times*, July 21, p. 35).

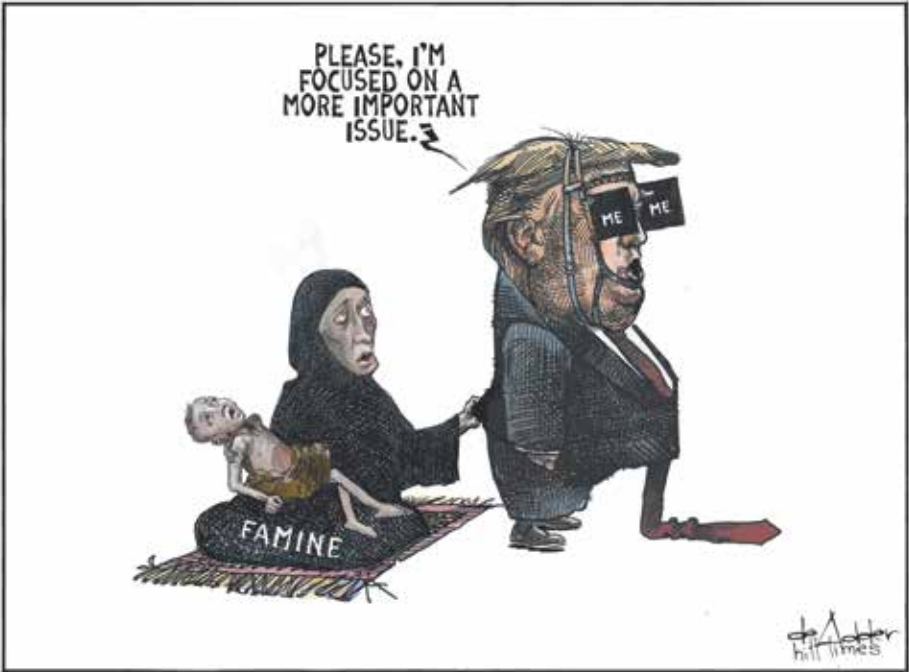
Professor Donald Savoie is right about the freight train, but wrong about the danger. What really threatens Canadians is a federal service model still running on steam power.

There are 2.2 million immigration, visa, and citizenship files that remain in Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada’s queue—officially acknowledged on Canada.ca. Last year, the Taxpayers’ Ombudsperson logged 2,796 complaints, most about being unable to reach a Canada Revenue Agency agent. Passport lines grew so long that Ottawa now offers a “30 business days or it’s free” guarantee just to restore public trust. When Employment Insurance tested

a machine-learning triage in July 2023, it processed 40,000 claims in weeks, and saved \$2.6-million. That is not a pink-slip apocalypse; it is proof that algorithms can bulldoze backlogs while freeing skilled officers to handle complex cases.

Ottawa’s payroll exceeds \$55-billion annually. If artificial intelligence were to shave even five per cent of the rote work, the savings could fund faster veterans’ benefits, wildfire response, or dental care. Instead of fearing job losses, the Treasury Board should set a public target: every high-volume program will have an AI co-pilot by 2026, or departments will explain to Canadians why they’re still waiting.

Dr. Matt Crowson
[Canadian] Clinician-data scientist, Harvard Medical School
Boston, Mass.



OPINION

Creating a two-tiered Canada with budget cuts that divide by race

Blanket cuts may appear neutral but have discriminatory effects, particularly on First Nations peoples whose essential services are federally funded.

Anne Levesque



Opinion

On July 8, the Carney government announced significant spending reductions—15 per cent across all federal departments over three years. Among the departments affected is Indigenous Services Canada, which funds crucial services for First Nations communities.

While budgetary restraint may seem justified amid economic uncertainty, surging defence spending, and national crises in housing and climate, it must still align with Canada's constitutional and human rights obligations. Blanket cuts may appear neutral but have discriminatory effects, particularly on First Nations peoples whose essential services are federally funded,



Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne, left, and Indigenous Services Minister Mandy-Gull Masty. Instead of narrowing funding disparities for First Nations people, these new proposed spending cuts threaten to widen them, writes Anne Levesque. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia

unlike those for most Canadians, which fall under provincial jurisdiction.

The government has stated that transfer payments to provinces will be protected, ensuring continued support for public services like education and health care for most Canadians. However, these same services for First Nations are funded by the federal government and are not similarly shielded from cuts. As a result, essential services for First Nations communities will face reductions, while the same services provided to other Canadians by the provinces will remain untouched, effectively creating a two-tiered system in which First Nations people bear the brunt of austerity while others are spared.

This approach runs counter to Canada's legal framework.

Sec. 15 of the Charter guarantees equality rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination in federally regulated services. Canadian law does not allow treating everyone identically when their realities differ. Instead, it requires substantive equality. This means services that account for distinct cultural, historical, and geographic contexts.

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) has repeatedly ruled that the federal government's failure to meet this standard amounts to racial discrimination. In 2016, it found Canada had underfunded First Nations child welfare services by approximately 22 per cent compared to provincial systems. More recently, in 2022, the CHRT concluded that Canada had failed to provide adequate and culturally appro-

priate policing in First Nations communities, findings echoed by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

These funding inequities are systemic and extend to nearly every federal service offered to First Nations peoples, from education and housing to health care and job training. Despite recent investments by the federal government, funding remains insufficient to close long-standing gaps.

Instead of narrowing disparities, these new cuts threaten to widen them, putting Canada in direct violation of binding CHRT orders. Beyond being unlawful and unconstitutional, this could expose the government to further legal action, including potential contempt of court.

There are both moral and economic costs to this approach. If reconciliation is to be more than rhetoric, the government must stop chronically underfunding First Nations services. The harms of unequal treatment are not theoretical. The CHRT has compared the impact of discrimination in child welfare to the trauma of residential schools: children removed from families and communities, with lifelong consequences.

Moreover, ignoring legal responsibilities comes at a high price. The CHRT's compensation order, which led to a \$23.3-billion settlement for victims—the largest in Canadian history—was the result of Canada's wilful and reckless discrimination against First Nations children. If the government repeats its discriminatory conduct, taxpayers could once again be on the hook for more payouts.

In short, cutting services that are already under-resourced is not fiscally prudent; it is legally indefensible and socially destructive. True reconciliation requires investment, not withdrawal. Canada cannot meet its constitutional obligations—or its moral ones—by slashing support to the very communities it has pledged to support.

Anne Levesque is a human rights lawyer, law professor, and advocate for substantive equality. She holds the Gordon Henderson Chair on Human Rights at the University of Ottawa where her work focuses on advancing minority rights, addressing systemic discrimination, and improving access to justice. With nearly two decades of experience working alongside equality-seeking communities, she bridges research, advocacy, and legal action to combat discrimination in Canada.

The Hill Times

Canada is on the brink of greatness, but can we afford it?

The country's ambitious trajectory towards becoming an energy superpower and key geopolitical player is achievable, but hinges on securing new revenue streams.

Michael Cholid & Geoffrey Goodell



Opinion



Prime Minister Mark Carney's leadership could ensure that Canada not only meets its extensive commitments, but also emerges as a key global player in energy and critical minerals, write Michael Cholid and Geoffrey Goodell. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canada is currently on the brink of greatness, driven by ambitious economic and geopolitical objectives set by new Prime Minister Mark Carney. His government aims to transform Canada into an energy superpower, highlighted by the recent passage of Bill C-5,

which was designed to streamline federal approvals for significant nation-building projects.

Domestically, Canada's most considerable financial commitment involves increased defence spending, aiming to rise from \$40-billion annually to \$122-bil-

lion by 2035. This represents an unprecedented increase, shifting defence to become the largest federal budget item, constituting about 25 per cent of annual spending. Meeting NATO's five-per-cent-of-GDP target—comprising 3.5 per cent for military capabilities and 1.5 per cent for dual-use infrastructure—would require finding an additional \$110-billion annually to sustain current service levels across other government departments.

Simultaneously, Canada remains deeply involved in supporting Ukraine amid its ongoing conflict with Russia. As of June 2024, Canada's total aid to Ukraine is \$13.3-billion including financial, military, and humanitarian contributions, constituting 3.2 per cent of global aid to Ukraine, according to the Kiel Institute.

However, potential withdrawal of significant American support

under Trump's administration could burden Canada with another \$6-billion annually to maintain current support levels. Further complicating matters is Ukraine's estimated post-war recovery, projected by the World Bank to exceed US\$524-billion. Including private property and trauma compensation, costs could surpass US\$1-trillion, potentially leaving Canada responsible for another \$5-billion annually.

These commitments create significant fiscal pressures, with the figures above suggesting an additional annual cost of \$148-billion to \$166-billion for Canadian taxpayers to maintain current health-care, pension, and transfer payments. This amount does not even include the costs associated with Bill C-5 infrastructure projects.

The PM's message of support from the G7 includes establishing consensus on how to make use of frozen Russian assets. After all, Russia has caused all this damage by illegally invading Ukraine, and according to international law and the principle of "you broke it, you bought it," Russia must pay the entire bill.

One potential solution lies in accessing the substantial pool of

Continued on page 10

OPINION

Why we should start public service cuts at the top

A top-heavy bureaucracy has weighed down innovation, delayed decisions, and strained the relationships needed to move Canada forward.

Dani Srour

Opinion



As a retired public servant with nearly two decades of executive experience, and as a proud immigrant who believes deeply in the mission of serving Canadians, I've seen both the brilliance of our institutions and the barriers holding them back.

If we want to protect the integrity of our services while advancing the ambitious "One Economy" vision outlined in the this spring's Speech from the Throne, we must cut with strategy, not blunt force.

And that strategy should begin at the very top—soon, transparently, and iteratively. Reducing the size of the public service must be approached with both purpose and precision.

Why 'One Economy' needs a different kind of leadership

At the heart of the government's renewed priorities is a commitment to working closely with provinces, territories, and Indigenous Peoples to grow a truly inclusive economy. But these partnerships can't thrive under a rigid, top-heavy system.

Over the past decade, senior public service leadership has become increasingly bloated, yet less effective. While the federal workforce grew by nearly 44 per cent since 2015, the executive ranks grew even faster. Accountability became diluted and boardrooms became quite full. Today, our leadership layer is bloated, yet its effectiveness is in question.

Yet many of these top executives may not be able to acquire the depth of subject matter knowledge, long-term relationships, and frontline experience required to deliver transformational, cross-government agendas

in a timely fashion. Frequent shuffles—nearly 100 deputy minister moves in the past nine years—undermine continuity, accountability, and trust with both internal staff and external partners.

The problem with backward delegation

Despite a formal push to decentralize decision-making, authority is still hoarded at the top. Human resources, policy direction, and financial powers often remain confined to deputy or assistant deputy levels, limiting regional and middle managers' ability to lead effectively. Layers of oversight have grown, not because of increased complexity, but as a workaround for poor delegation and risk aversion. All the while, leaders stopped holding peers or themselves accountable.

Instead of empowering capable experts on the ground, we've created a top-heavy structure of administrators checking one another's work—without necessarily delivering better outcomes.

A smarter way to downsize

Rather than sweeping, across-the-board layoffs, what Canada needs is an iterative, top-down

approach that starts with the highest ranks and works its way down based on clear progress and organizational stabilization with a focus on relationship building across Canada. A law or a policy does not nurture a partnership, relationships do; and that is why preserving and empowering those senior managers and regional experts should be the priority when the cuts start taking shape.

Here's how it could work while in parallel services that are no longer desired could be cut:

- 1. Start with senior executives:** Trim excess at the deputy minister and assistant deputy minister levels, where the highest salaries and clearest duplication exist. This signals that leadership is not exempt from accountability. Those who are needed will make decisions on the next layer down.
- 2. Monitor results and move down:** Monitor the impact on services, operations, and the government's core priorities as decisions for cutting other layers are considered.
- 3. Empower the middle:** Restore meaningful authority to directors, managers, and regional leaders—the people closest to Canadians and the ones best positioned to lead lasting change.
- 4. Protect the frontlines:** Avoid early cuts to frontline workers. Instead, reduce costs through

attrition and hiring freezes, maintaining morale and service delivery in the short term.

This approach is inspired by the Chrétien-era Program Review of the 1990s, which successfully streamlined government. But, unlike that effort, this strategy flips the order: it starts at the top where the disruption is least damaging and reform most overdue.

The approach works. It prioritizes and focuses on the character of the leadership we need to maintain in the public service. It is fair, it builds trust, it is agile, and it supports continuity.

The passion, empathy, and mission that define the public service live closest to the people it serves. But a top-heavy bureaucracy has weighed down innovation, delayed decisions, and strained the relationships needed to move Canada forward.

If we want a government that's more collaborative, responsive, and equipped to make "One Economy" a reality, we need to rethink who leads it—and how.

That means starting with executive ranks, empowering skilled leaders in the middle, and protecting those on the frontlines. Only then can we assess further reforms.

Let's not cut the grass before we know where the roses and other plants are. A leaner top, stronger middle, and service-focused front is not just a budget solution—it's a leadership solution.

Dani Srour is a retired senior public servant with more than 25 years of public and private sector experience.

The Hill Times

Canada is on the brink of greatness, but can we afford it?

Continued from page 9

frozen Russian assets, notably the 183 billion euros frozen under European Union sanctions in Euroclear, which is headquartered in Belgium. However, these sanctions require unanimous renewal votes every six months, with figures like Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico introducing uncertainty. According to Euroclear's 2024 annual financial statement, eight per cent of the 183 billion euros is denominated in Canadian dollars. Canada itself has no EU representation but stands to benefit directly by seizing all Russian cash, approximately—\$23 billion denominated in Canadian dollars—held in Euroclear accounts in Canadian banks on behalf of Russia, using existing legislation, the Special Economic Measures Act.

By independently freezing this \$23-billion, Canada could significantly offset some financial commitments, reducing taxpayer burdens. This proactive

measure demonstrates leadership and underscores Canada's seriousness about its geopolitical commitments.

Beyond the immediate geopolitical tensions, Canada's domestic economic strategy involves attracting private investments for ambitious Bill C-5 nation-building projects. These investments hinge on Canada's ability to replace Russian energy and mineral exports to Europe and Asia.

Russian energy and mineral exports (including fossil fuels) total US\$337-billion to \$384-billion annually—this figure includes fuels and minerals per Observatory of Economic Complexity/World Bank 2022-23 data—providing Canada with an opportunity. Replacing even half these exports with clean, decarbonized, Canadian products could generate approximately \$231-billion annually. This would position Canada as offering a reliable, democratic, and environmentally responsible alterna-

tive to authoritarian-controlled Russian resources.

If successfully executed, this strategy could yield significant economic gains. By seizing Russian assets in Canada and capturing half of the country's mineral export market, Canada could realize a net gain of \$40- to \$50-billion per year while still maintaining pensions, healthcare, and transfer payments to provinces, covering the projected increases in defence spending, and continuing assistance to Ukraine, without imposing additional burdens on taxpayers or increasing national debt.

Moreover, Canada's proactive stance on seizing frozen assets and expanding its role as an energy provider would send a powerful global message. Such actions reinforce Canada's commitment to global security, economic stability, and environmental responsibility, aligning with its broader domestic and geopolitical ambitions. This approach underscores Canada's

resolve, potentially galvanizing international support and co-operation, especially in European nations eager to reduce reliance on Russian energy.

Carney's background as a trusted former central banker uniquely qualifies him to navigate these complex economic and geopolitical waters. His leadership could ensure that Canada not only meets its extensive commitments, but also emerges as a key global player in energy and critical minerals.

Ultimately, Canada's ambitious trajectory towards becoming an energy superpower and key geopolitical player is achievable, but hinges on securing new revenue streams, leveraging frozen Russian assets, and attracting private investment. By strategically positioning itself to replace Russian exports and taking decisive action on frozen assets, Canada stands to enhance its economic prosperity, maintain its geopolitical commitments, and solidify its global leadership role.

Who better to deliver a strong economic response to Russia and secure our allies' need for clean oil, liquefied natural gas, and minerals than Canada, led by a trusted former central banker and master planner?

Michael Cholod is executive director of The Peace Coalition, an international, non-profit association of NGOs, academic institutions and independent experts in housing, land, and property restitution. Cholod is currently co-ordinating with local and international experts and organizations on a variety of initiatives aimed at using the recovery of Ukraine to pilot a self-funding and sustainable roadmap to recovery for victims of the global crime of aggression.

Geoffrey Goodell is a lecturer in financial computing at University College London whose work focuses on socio-technical systems in financial services. He is a member of the Bank of England CBDC Technology Forum, and an associate of the Systemic Risk Centre at the London School of Economics. He serves on the steering committee of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Central Bank Digital Currency, and the product advisory committee of the Digital Token Identifier Foundation.

The Hill Times

New Leaf Liberals want to root out Ontario Liberal shortcomings, not back a particular leader, says co-founder

The push to oust Ontario Liberal Leader Bonnie Crombie in September is heating up as her supporters go on the offensive, accusing the still-budding New Leaf Liberals of colluding with Liberal MP Nate Erskine-Smith.

Continued from page 1

at Brigid's Well in Ottawa on July 17, told *The Hill Times* the response that gathering received tells him Crombie's team is taking the challenge to her leadership seriously.

However, Arfin said he was surprised by how "reactive" Crombie's messaging has been, echoing much of the NLL's criticisms or even inadvertently making their arguments for them, pointing to several of Crombie's interviews over the past week, including with Progress Canada on July 25.

"[Crombie] is making the case for why she should no longer be leader entirely by herself," Arfin said. "When she says 'we weren't ready,' and failed with outreach and ground game or that we didn't pivot or weren't fully prepared, every time she says 'we' she's referring to her and her leadership team, and if she is diagnosing the election as a failure, then it lands at her feet."

Following meetings Crombie has held with provincial Liberals in the months since the election, she has already promised to open candidate nominations in "many ridings" as of January 2026, as well as to do more to "lift up and engage" the rural and northern parts of the province by ensuring dedicated resources and staff are in place to support those ridings ahead of the next election.

"We will use the learnings from this campaign to make sure the next campaign is run differently," Crombie said in a social media video addressed

to party supporters on July 15. "We must evaluate and build on our strengths and identify and address our weaknesses."

After the February provincial election, the Ontario Liberals managed to reclaim official party status with 29 per cent of the popular vote, gaining an additional five seats, from nine to 14. However, they failed to reclaim official opposition status from the Ontario New Democrats, who won 27 seats—a decrease from 28—and received just 18.5 per cent of the popular vote. Crombie, who had served as mayor of Mississauga for a decade before becoming Liberal leader, also failed to secure victory in her riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville, placing second to Progressive Conservative MPP Silvia Gualtieri.

Arfin said that while he is encouraged to see that Crombie's team is beginning to demonstrate at least a willingness to listen to her detractors and provide more resources to grow the party's grassroots, he is dismayed by some of the more personal attacks against him and his fellow organizers, and the accusations he is either a willing or unwilling pawn for any potential leadership hopeful.

"This isn't about Nate," Arfin said, referring not only to himself, but also Liberal MP Nate Erskine-Smith (Beaches-East York, Ont.), whom many have speculated is contemplating a second run at the leadership, and is using the NLL as either a witting or unwitting proxy.

That accusation was raised during the NLL's Ottawa meet-up as Crombie supporter Curtis O'Nyon, a Liberal strategist with Global Public Affairs and an organizer and regional representative for Crombie's leadership campaign, interrupted Arfin's speech to challenge him on whether the group was a front for Erskine-Smith.

During the July 17 event, *The Hill Times* witnessed O'Nyon, who had otherwise interacted cordially with attendees before the speech, interrupting Arfin to demand whether the event was "just all about Nate."

In an interview with *The Hill Times* on July 22, O'Nyon clarified that while he is a Crombie supporter, he had attended the event of his own accord.

"I went because I think [Erskine-Smith] would be a terrible choice for leader, and I felt that this group was just a front,"

O'Nyon told *The Hill Times*. "I wanted to see what they would say, so I asked them specifically, and they denied it. I may have said that I didn't believe that, but I don't think I heckled."

O'Nyon described Erskine-Smith's first campaign for leadership in 2023 as "vicious," and said his performance as a federal MP since has not improved his impression.

Additionally, O'Nyon said that Erskine-Smith isn't doing much to dissuade the impression that he and the NLL are co-ordinating, noting the MP's July 18 *Uncommons* Substack post in which he echoed many of the group's demands and criticism from the night before, including encouraging party members to sign up as delegates to vote for a leadership review and for one to be initiated if Crombie fails to achieve 66 per cent of delegate support during the annual general meeting in September, rather than the required 51 per cent.

Erskine-Smith was not available for an interview, and did not provide a written response to *The Hill Times*' request for comment by publication deadline.

Arfin—who has previously organized for Erskine-Smith, including during his 2023 leadership bid—said that while he is "thrilled Erskine-Smith is stepping up to encourage change and growth in the party," and echoed his call for party members to register as delegates, the issues the NLL are raising are not tied to any specific leadership hopeful, or even about Crombie specifically.

"This isn't about a specific leader but the leadership itself, and the fact that the party has been failed continuously by not just Crombie, but the people who recruited and continue to surround her," Arfin explained. "We're trying to diagnose the root cause of the leadership failures; Crombie just happens to be the person currently in the hot seat."

Arfin added that it would also be a strategic mistake for Crombie to focus on a potential challenge from Erskine-Smith rather than on the actual improvements for which the group is calling.

As of July 28, the group has 270 signatories to its petition for party renewal that it started in June 2024.

The NLL's Ottawa event followed its first in Toronto on July



Provincial and federal Liberal sources say Ontario Liberal Leader Bonnie Crombie's problems in Ottawa could expand well beyond any potential challenger's leadership aspirations. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

11, with roughly 15-20 attendees at both. Two more events are scheduled in Mississauga on July 30 and Burlington on Aug. 7.

Matthew Gagné, an associate with McMillan Vantage and the Ontario Liberal Party's eastern Ontario region vice-president, was also in attendance on July 17 to pitch his re-election at next September's AGM. He used his time to speak in favour of the continuity of Crombie's leadership, which he said is the best path to addressing the NLL's "very reasonable" criticisms and suggestions.

"What the NLL are asking for is what the party should be doing," Gagné told *The Hill Times*. "We should be opening up the policy process and having earlier nominations to grow the voices that can participate so people can feel like part of a larger movement, but a leadership election would effectively be hitting pause on all that progress for another 18 months, and we'd potentially end up unprepared for the next election."

As for the NLL's demand that Crombie achieves 66 per cent of delegate support at September's AGM to continue as leader, Gagné also said that number wasn't unreasonable either, but the "first bar" she will need to clear in his mind is 53.4 per cent, her total vote share during the last leadership election.

Regardless, Gagné said that addressing the concerns and criticisms being raised by supporters beyond the NLL will be essential to rebuilding trust and quelling further internal conflict.

However, multiple Liberal Party organizers who have worked on campaigns for both federal and provincial candidates, and both Erskine-Smith's and MP Yasir Naqvi's (Ottawa Centre, Ont.) 2023 leadership campaign teams, say Crombie's leadership has only further widened the rift between her party and the federal Grits.

While there has long been tension between the federal and provincial Liberal parties, Liberal

sources pointed to then-prime minister Justin Trudeau's decision not to send federal organizers to aid their provincial counterparts in the 2018 provincial election, which they described as "essentially letting the party die."

For the federal Liberals, Crombie in turn created "a lot of bad blood" over her attempt to distance herself from Trudeau near the end of his tenure, including calling for an end to the consumer carbon price last December.

"There's always been animosity between the two, but trying to find bridge builders is more difficult than ever," said one Liberal source based in Toronto, adding that while the northern and rural district associations have rightly been identified as needing more attention, one of the province's largest cities and the nation's capital still seems to be getting the cold shoulder.

Several sources told *The Hill Times* that they have had difficulty organizing fundraisers or other party events, with much of the goodwill and organizing resources that were built up by both Erskine-Smith and Naqvi's leadership campaigns being met with "crickets" when they enquired about organizing fundraisers for the party after the race had concluded.

"It all just dissolved because Crombie's team wouldn't activate them unless her people were in charge," one source said.

Those sources also said that Crombie shouldn't expect that "barely passing by one per cent" will be sufficient to quell the challenges to her leadership.

"The fact that we're talking about 51 or 66 per cent is dragging the absolute bottom of a passable leadership vote," one source said. "It just really shows how anemic the party has become under Crombie."

The Ontario Liberal Party's annual general meeting is scheduled for Sept. 12-14 in Toronto.

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NEWS

Canada's Syrian embassy to remain empty for 'immediate term' as more countries restart missions

Canada's foreign ministry says its newly appointed ambassador-designate to Lebanon will be a non-resident envoy to Syria.

Continued from page 1

"The best time to make that decision is right now."

He said that Syria is an "extremely important country" that is at a "really critical juncture right now," remarking that all nations have an interest in ensuring that a new Syria is successful, and that work will take years and decades due to the damage that has been done.

"If the international community [and] Canada's allies are to have a say in rebuilding and are to encourage it, the best way to do that is to be on the ground, to lift sanctions, to provide humanitarian assistance and other forms of aid," he said. "You can't do that from the sidelines."

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) spokesperson Charlotte MacLeod told *The Hill Times* in an email that Canada doesn't intend to reopen its embassy any time soon.

"Canada remains focused on restoring its diplomatic presence in Syria; however, there are currently no plans to reopen an embassy in the immediate term," she said.

In the final days of government under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, now-outgoing Canadian ambassador to Lebanon Stefanie McCollum was nominated to serve concurrently as non-resident envoy to Syria. An order-in-council was not published regarding the appointment.

In recent weeks, sectarian violence has erupted in southern Syria in regions not controlled by government forces. The violence has displaced more than 150,000 people, and included targeted killings of members of the Druze minority in the area around the city of Sweida. Israel has pledged support for the Druze, and launched what the United Nations has described as "escalatory" rocket attacks on Syria.

In a July 21 meeting, Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) and Jordanian King Abdullah II spoke about the "imperative for stability in Syria."

A 'messy' process to reopen an embassy: Deschamps-Laporte

When Gregory Galligan was named Canada's ambassador-designate to Lebanon earlier this month, the release didn't include Syria representation.

MacLeod confirmed that Galligan will be the concurrent non-resident ambassador to Syria.

The order-in-council appointing Galligan as ambassador to Lebanon didn't include reference to Syria.

Galligan most recently led GAC's Middle East division. He was ambassador to Iraq from 2021-2023 and executive co-ordinator for Syria while based in Beirut from 2019-2021.

GAC currently warns Canadians to avoid all travel to Syria, and notes that the ability for its embassy in Lebanon to provide consular assistance in Syria is "extremely limited."

A number of countries have since reopened their embassies in Damascus after the fall of the government of then-president Bashar al-Assad, including Germany, Italy, and Spain, among others. Morocco was the most recent country to reopen its embassy on July 6.

Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa came to power in January after his Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) forces drove Assad's troops out of Damascus. The HTS is a listed terrorist organization in Canada.

Middle East expert Laurence Deschamps-Laporte, the scientific director of the Montreal Centre for International Studies at l'Université de Montréal, described the reopening of an embassy as a "messy" process as it can be viewed by Canadians through the lens of approval of a hosting nation, while in actuality it is the channel to resolve conflicts.

"It's helpful to always keep a diplomatic presence, but now we're stuck with the fact that we don't have one [in Syria]," she said, remarking that Canada faces hurdles in reopening its embassy given legal realities, including the sanctions applied on Syria and the HTS terrorist listing.

Deschamps-Laporte, a former chief of staff to then-foreign affairs minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.), said that a balance needs to be struck between not delisting groups that should legitimately remain as terrorist entities and also ensuring Canada gains diplomatic immunities needed under the Vienna Convention to conduct day-to-day diplomacy.

"It's going to be a negotiation because everything [about a] diplomatic presence is reciprocal," she said.

Canada is "well positioned to play a positive, proactive role" in Syria given its past contributions, Deschamps-Laporte.

"Over the last 10 years, Canada has invested incredible amounts of money with very, very creative programming" in support of refugees and neighbouring countries, she said.

Canada played a small—but noteworthy—role as a buffer against the human right abuses of the Assad regime. It has reset-



Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand's department hasn't had a resident ambassador in Syria since 2012. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

tled more than 100,000 Syrian refugees since 2015. Ottawa also provided support for White Helmet rescue workers operating in Syria, including helping hundreds escape the war-torn country when they were increasingly threatened by Assad's forces.

"[Syria] is a place in the Middle East that is an outlier in terms of Canada's role in the Middle East where Canada has actually been really active and involved in programming despite the fact that we didn't have contact with Assad for obvious political reasons," Deschamps-Laporte said.

"So I think it would be very strategic and necessary for Canada to make sure that we remain involved in what was the hope all along with the end of this war," she said.

Preferable to have on-the-ground presence: Juneau

Juneau said that countries without ambassadors on the ground—like the United States—have special envoys for Syria.

In May, U.S. envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack—who is also the ambassador to Turkey—raised the American flag at his country's Syrian embassy for the first time since its closure. The embassy remains closed due to security reasons.

In February, then-Liberal MP Omar Alghabra was appointed parliamentary secretary to Trudeau and the foreign affairs minister, stylized as special envoy to Syria. Alghabra was appointed to serve in the post until September, but the role ceased with the call of the recent federal election, in which he did not re-offer.

Juneau said that having an ambassador on the ground with

a small staff would be preferable to appointing another special envoy. But he remarked that if the government doesn't choose to do that then the next best option is a special envoy posted to Beirut who can travel to Damascus and promote Canadian interests.

"It's a Plan B, but it's not the same as an actual ambassador on the ground," he said, remarking that even if Canada is a marginal player on the international stage, being on the ground does make a difference.

Chris Kilford, who sits on the Canadian International Council board of directors, said there are moving parts that Ottawa likely wants to see quiet before reopening its embassy, including recent factional violence.

Kilford was posted to the Canadian Embassy in neighbouring Turkey as a defence attaché when Canada's Syrian embassy shuttered in 2012.

"I think, in our sense, we are looking at some solid signs of stability and probably taking our cues from the United States," he said.

He added that Canada's work to counter the Assad regime does give it some degree of influence, but it will need a presence on the ground to carry that forward.

"Other countries will fill the vacuum, and you will just be seen as a late comer," he said. "It's important for Canada to take a leadership role. We're opening new embassies around the world ... but in Syria for the long-term stability, I think we should be more aggressive in our handling of our relations."

"It's a dangerous place to be, but we have played such a significant role in that country in the past," Kilford said.

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Late report on 2024 finances ‘so outdated it’s useless,’ says Democracy Watch as most major parties ask for more time

The federal Conservative Party was one of only five registered parties to report its 2024 financial statement by the June 30 deadline, while the NDP and Liberal figures won’t be ready until the end of August.

Continued from page 1

“cash on hand,” and just over \$9.3-million in net assets.

This deficit follows two consecutive years of significant net revenue, with the party generating \$3.9-million in net revenue in 2023 and \$11.5-million in 2022. It’s also far lower than the Conservatives’ roughly \$7-million election-year deficits in 2021 and 2019.

According to Elections Canada’s database, only four other parties submitted financial disclosures on time: the People’s Party of Canada (PPC), the Centrist Party, the Christian Heritage Party, and the Marxist-Leninist Party.

In 2024, the PPC reported \$1.5-million in total revenue, including \$1.15-million in contributions and \$145,975 in memberships, against more than \$1.6-million in expenses, resulting in a deficit of \$185,530. However, the PPC also ended the year in a positive financial position, with \$482,651 in cash and \$1.78-million in net assets.

Of the remaining federal parties that have yet to submit their returns, nine were provided with extensions ranging from 30 to 90 days, according to Elections Canada spokesperson Matthew McKenna. The Green Party was given until Aug. 14, the Liberals and NDP until Aug. 29, and the Bloc Québécois until Sept. 29. The remainder were given a 30-day extension, he said.

Should any of the parties fail to meet those extended deadlines, McKenna noted that they would be issued a notice of non-compliance with the Elections Canada Act and would be given another 30 days to either file their completed financial return or submit their reasoning for not doing so. In the latter case, Chief Electoral



Chief Electoral Officer Stéphane Perrault granted extensions for several political parties to file their 2024 financial disclosures. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Officer Stéphane Perrault would review that party’s explanation and consider granting a further extension.

If neither their disclosure nor extension request is submitted on time, or if their request is denied, that party will be deregistered and referred to Elections Commissioner Caroline Simard, who will review the case and decide whether enforcement measures, including monetary penalties, are required.

In response to *The Hill Times’* request for comment, Liberal Party spokesperson Matteo Rossi confirmed the party’s financial disclosure would be submitted by the new deadline, noting it was “not unusual for political parties to request filing extensions.”

Rossi also noted that while its 2024 financials have yet to be submitted, the party is currently in “one of the strongest positions for fundraising and grassroots organizing” ever.

“Grassroots Liberals powered our party to its best-ever first and second quarters for fundraising this year, with more donors chipping in [the first quarter of 2025] than in any single year in our history,” Rossi said.

In the first quarter of 2025, the Liberal Party was buoyed by a leadership race and brought in more than \$13.6-million in donations from 156,489 individual contributors, outpacing their total contributions for all of 2024 when the party raised just shy of \$15.2-million from 118,238 contributors. The Liberals also surpassed the Conservatives’

total first-quarter contributors of 148,676. However, the Tories more than doubled the Grits’ fundraising total for that period, bringing in just shy of \$28.4-million, amounting to nearly three-quarters of the Conservatives’ 2024 fundraising total of roughly \$42-million from 211,255 total contributors.

Both the NDP and Greens cited the demands of an election year to explain their request for an extension, but confirmed that they would also submit by the new deadline.

“Recognizing the demands of a campaign year, we proactively requested more time to ensure the report receives the attention it deserves,” wrote NDP national director Lucy Watson.

Laurie MacMillan, Green Party director of communications, noted that as a “small party with a small staff ... we simply needed a bit more time to finalize the required materials.”

The Bloc Québécois did not respond to *The Hill Times’* request for comment by publication deadline.

While the quarterly and annual financial disclosures are of value to party supporters and potential voters, without more regular disclosures of party expenses and debt, “Canadians are only getting half the story,” Conacher said. And once they get that whole picture, the information is “so outdated it’s useless” since nearly all of the major parties won’t have submitted their information until nearly the end of the third quarter of 2025.

“It’s ridiculous that the public isn’t able to track a party’s expenses or the status of its assets and liabilities in real time,” Conacher said, noting that parties in both poor financial situations and those attempting to present a stronger one have vested interests in delaying disclosure.

“We get stories four times a year about how strong the Conservatives are at fundraising, but only once do we get a glimpse at whether they’re spending more than they’re raising,” Conacher explained.

On the other hand, Conacher said that there are “rumours of the NDP’s financial demise,” pointing to a recent analysis by Conservative strategist Fred DeLorey in *The Hub* regarding the NDP’s loss of recognized party status, and more importantly the election expense rebate from Elections Canada, as fewer than 50 of 343 NDP candidates reached the 10-per-cent vote threshold needed to qualify.

Without those rebates, DeLorey predicts “financial ruin” for the NDP as it will struggle to repay its election loan without them. According to several party insiders he has spoken to, DeLorey reports that the party borrowed close to the maximum of its \$35.8-million election spending limit.

Under the Canada Elections Act, registered parties are required to repay election loans within three years. After this period, any unpaid balance can be deemed a political donation, which banks are prohibited from

providing and are capped at \$1,775 per individual.

In a June 25 interview on the CBC’s *Power and Politics*, NDP president Mary Shortall said that the party spent less money than was budgeted for. While the party has debt to repay after every election, she was “very optimistic” about the party’s path forward.

“We’re not dead in the water by any stretch of the imagination,” Shortall told host J.P. Tasker, but noted she did not have an exact amount for how much the party owes.

While the NDP is late in disclosing last year’s financial statements, it has already submitted its second-quarter fundraising totals—the period accounting for the 45th general election—to Elections Canada ahead of the July 30 deadline.

The New Democrats raised just over \$1.9-million from 38,149 total contributions between April 1 and June 30, a slight increase from the \$1.8-million raised from 37,538 total contributions during the first three months of 2025, for a total of \$3.76-million for the first half of 2025. According to *The Hill Times’* tracking of quarterly fundraising, the NDP raised just over \$6.2-million in 2024 from 211,255 contributions.

Speaking with *The Hill Times*, DeLorey said the response to his analysis from NDP supporters was split between “very concerned” and those who dismissed him because he “just didn’t know the numbers,” noting the irony that the party isn’t required to disclose them until next year.

Additionally, the NDP’s 2024 disclosure would have also confirmed whether the party had fully paid off its \$22-million 2021 election loan. According to the NDP’s 2023 financial disclosure, the party reported a balance of \$716,667 in loans at the end of the year, down from \$3.58-million to close out 2022.

However, while DeLorey said he is skeptical about whether the NDP actually ran a fully funded campaign, and thus may not have spent the full amount it borrowed, if he and the rest of Canada have to wait nearly a year to find out, there should at least be more strict requirements for parties to disclose on time. Additionally, he said “repeat delinquency” should be a more significant factor when Elections Canada decides whether to provide an extension.

“This should be easy to do,” DeLorey said, noting that if riding association volunteers can submit their disclosures on time, political parties with millions of dollars to hire accountants should be able to do as well.

“They all eventually do it, so it’s not that they’re trying to hide anything, it’s just a matter of the parties putting the resources into doing what should be a basic job,” DeLorey said.

The federal parties are required to disclose their third-quarter financial reports by Oct. 30, and their financial returns for the 45th general election by Dec. 29, according to Elections Canada’s political financing calendar.

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Hill Climbers



By Laura Ryckewaert

Checking up on Health Minister Michel's current 17-member team

For one, Sandenga Yeba has been named deputy chief of staff and director of policy to the first-time minister.

Health Minister **Marjorie Michel** has to date pulled together a 17-member staff team, which includes a number of former staffers to then-health ministers **Jean-Yves Duclos** and **Mark Holland**.

As previously reported, **Jade Mallette** is chief of staff to the rookie minister.

Michel is herself a former cabinet staffer and ex-deputy chief of staff to then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau**. The now-minister's time as a staffer included roughly three years working for Duclos as then-families minister between November 2016 and November 2019, and some of her former colleagues are now part of her ministerial team.

Sandenga Yeba has returned to the health file as deputy chief of staff and director of policy to Michel.

Most recently director of policy to then-tourism and Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec minister **Soraya Martinez Ferrada**, Yeba previously worked for then-health minister Duclos for almost two years from the beginning of 2022 until the fall of 2023. First hired as a senior policy adviser to Duclos, Yeba was promoted to deputy policy director to the minister at the end of 2022.

Yeba is also a past senior policy and Quebec regional affairs adviser to then-agriculture minister **Marie-Claude Bibeau**—his first job with the federal government. Before then, he'd been an economic and commercial development adviser to Montreal Mayor **Valérie Plante**. He's also an ex-adviser to then-Quebec economic development minister and deputy premier **Dominique Anglade** and a past co-ordinator with Montréal International.

Working under Yeba are senior policy advisers **Roy Karam**, **Jibril Hussein**, **Shahad Khalladi**; policy



Health Minister **Marjorie Michel**—a former Hill staffer herself—has 17 staff currently working in her ministerial office. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

adviser **Bryan Savage**; and policy co-ordinator **Justine Frame**.

Karam has been with the health minister's office since the start of 2022. Beginning as an Atlantic regional adviser to then-minister Duclos, Karam stuck with the office as

director of operations after Holland was shuffled into the post in July 2023.

Karam is also a past assistant to Nova Scotia Liberal MP **Mike Kelloway**, and a former Atlantic regional adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to then-employment minister **Patty Hajdu**.

Hussein spent the last roughly year and a half

working for then-small business minister **Rechie Valdez**, starting as a West and North regional affairs adviser and ending as a senior policy adviser. According to his LinkedIn profile, he stepped in

as acting director of policy to Valdez at the beginning of this year. A former constituency assistant to then-Manitoba Liberal MP **MaryAnn Mihychuk**, Hussein spent the summers of 2018 and 2019

interning in then-science—and later science and sport—minister **Kirsty Duncan**'s office. He landed his first full-time cabinet job in 2021

when he was hired as an Atlantic regional adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to then-families minister **Ahmed Hussen**, and went on to work as a policy adviser to then-families minister **Karina Gould**. Khalladi last held

the title of deputy director of policy to then-women and gender equality and youth minister **Marci Ien**, having been hired by Ien in May 2024. Before

then, Khalladi was a senior policy adviser to then-innovation minister **François-Philippe Champagne**, whose office she first joined as a policy adviser in February 2022. Khalladi's CV includes time spent as an international public affairs officer with the National Council of Canadian

Muslims; a science policy analyst in the office of Chief Science Adviser **Mona Nemer**, which falls under Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada; and as an assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Anita Vandenbeld**, among other past jobs. She also spent roughly

six months in 2017 as an intern tackling youth affairs and public appointments in Trudeau's PMO. Savage, who holds a master of political management degree from Carleton University, is a practicing psychotherapist, and in 2020 founded her own clinic,

Plum Mental Wellness, in Toronto, through which she's offered psychotherapy services. Before then, Savage had worked for the Farber Group, according to her LinkedIn profile. She's also a former yoga teacher with Bodhi Tree Yoga, and worked as an administrative assistant with the Saint Paul University Counselling Centre while working towards a master's degree in psychotherapy, counselling, and spirituality at the school.

Yves-Joseph Rosalbert is director of operations and outreach to Michel. He, too, comes from Valdez's former office as then-small business minister where Rosalbert had been director of parliamentary affairs and issues management since 2023.

Rosalbert has previously overseen parliamentary affairs for then-international development minister **Harjit Sajjan**, and since first landing on the Hill in early 2019, he's also been a Quebec regional adviser, and later policy and Quebec adviser, to then-veterans affairs minister **Lawrence MacAulay**, and a policy adviser to then-sport minister **Pascale St-Onge**. Rosalbert also has experience working at Quebec's national assembly as an adviser to the province's then-immigration, diversity, and inclusion minister **David Heurtel**.

Shanza Khan is covering Ontario as a senior regional adviser to Michel. A former field organizer for the federal Liberal Party, Khan worked in the health offices of then-ministers Duclos and Holland, starting under the former as an Ontario regional affairs adviser in January 2023.

Josh Jagger is on board as an Atlantic regional affairs adviser to the health minister, while **Jaeda Schilke** covers the West and North. Jagger, a former director of data and

operations for the Nova Scotia Liberal Party, previously did the same for Holland as then-health minister. Jagger worked for the provincial party from late 2016 until early 2023, and before then was a customer service representative with Nova Scotia Power.

Schilke spent the recent election as a volunteer co-ordinator and field organizer for now-Veterans Affairs Minister **Jill McKnight**, and before then, worked in Trudeau's PMO as a special assistant for human resources. Schilke was hired to the PMO after her Liberal Summer Leadership Program internship in the top office came to an end. She's also a former constituency assistant to then-Liberal MP **Carla Qualtrough**—who previously represented McKnight's riding of Delta, B.C.—and spent the summer of 2023 as an intern in the federal employment minister's office.

Sachini Liyanage is an operations adviser in the office. Liyanage was also last working in the PMO as an assistant for public appointments starting in March 2024. Before then, she'd worked at Liberal Party headquarters as a riding and party services co-ordinator.

Matthew Pollesel has returned to Ottawa's political staff

ranks as director of parliamentary affairs and issues management to Michel.

He's spent the last roughly two years working as a public servant with Public Services and Procurement Canada as a legislative and policy adviser.

A former digital engagement specialist with the United States Embassy in Ottawa, Pollesel began working for the Trudeau government in 2017

as a special assistant for communications to Duclos as then-families minister. Later named a senior special assistant for parliamentary

affairs and issues management to Duclos, Pollesel has since also been director of parliamentary affairs to then-women and gender equality minister **Maryam Monsef**, then-economic development and official languages minister

Mélanie Joly, and then-official languages and Atlantic Canada



Yves-Joseph Rosalbert is director of operations and outreach. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Jibril Hussein is a senior policy adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Sandenga Yeba is deputy chief of staff and policy director. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Senior policy adviser Shahad Khalladi. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Roy Karam is a senior policy adviser to Minister Michel. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Bryn Savage is a policy adviser to Minister Michel. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Matthew Pollesel is director of parliamentary affairs and issues management. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



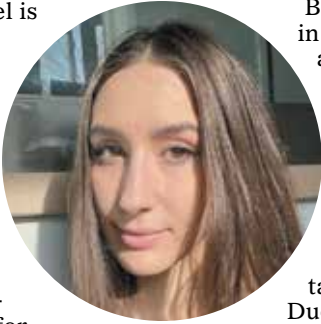
Jaeda Schilke is a West and North regional affairs adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

HILL CLIMBERS

Continued from page 14

Opportunities Agency minister **Ginette Petitpas Taylor**.

Supporting Pollesel is parliamentary affairs adviser **Sara Kasum**. Kasum has been working on the Hill since the spring of 2022, starting as a digital strategy adviser with the Liberal research bureau (LRB). She went on to tackle digital communications for then-Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (Fed-Dev Ontario) minister **Filomena Tassi**, and was most recently a digital communications and issues adviser to then-democratic institutions and FedDev Ontario minister **Ruby Sahota**. Prior to joining the LRB, Kasum had been an event co-ordinator with the Hamilton Law Association.



Sara Kasum is a parliamentary affairs adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Guillaume Bertrand has also made his return to the health file as director of communications to Michel.

Bertrand last worked in the health office as a senior communications adviser and press secretary to then-minister Duclos between 2022 and 2023. A former assistant to Duclos as the MP for Québec, Que., Bertrand joined



Director of communications Guillaume Bertrand. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

then-deputy prime minister and finance minister **Chrystia Freeland**'s office as a communications adviser after the 2021 election. After roughly a year working for Duclos at

health, Bertrand returned to Freeland's office, this time as director of Quebec outreach and strategy. Bertrand has since also been senior communications adviser and press secretary, and most recently director of communications to Duclos as then-public services and procurement minister. He spent the recent federal election as a

Liberal campaign spokesperson.

Emilie Gauduchon-Campbell is back on the Hill as a senior communications and issues adviser to Michel. Gauduchon-Campbell previously worked as a federal political staffer between 2016 and 2019, starting as press secretary to Duclos as then-fam-

ilies minister and ending as his director of communications. Gauduchon-Campbell first stepped away from Duclos' office



Emilie Gauduchon-Campbell is a senior communications and issues adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

in 2018 to go on maternity leave, but, after having twins, returned over the summer of 2019 and worked for the minister for a few months up until that year's federal election. Post-election, Duclos was shuffled into a new portfolio, and soon after came the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which together led Gauduchon-Campbell to the decision to step away from politics to focus on her family. Prior to working for

Duclos, she'd worked for her alma mater, the Université de Montréal, as a project manager. Gauduchon-Campbell is also a former communications manager with the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, among other past jobs.

Finally, **Rachel Desjardins** is director of executive services.

A former executive secretariat manager with the office of the federal privacy commissioner, Desjardins is a former longtime aide to Duclos, having first been hired as a senior special assistant in his office as then-families minister at the start of the 42nd Parliament. She's since been a senior executive assistant to Duclos as then-Treasury Board president, then-health minister, and then-public services minister. At the end of last year, she was promoted to director of executive services to Duclos as then-public services minister—her most recent role.

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Parliamentary Calendar

CRTC chair Eatrides to talk telecom in Canada as part of CIPPIC summer panel on July 30

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30

Bank of Canada Rate Announcement—The Bank of Canada will announce its decision on the target for the overnight rate. The Bank will also publish its quarterly Monetary Policy Report at the same time as the rate decision. Wednesday, July 30, 9:45 a.m. ET. Details via bankofcanada.ca.

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 Private. Register via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, AUG. 5

Lecture: 'Green Hydrogen: Navigating the Hype, Realities, and Governance for Its Pragmatic Role in the Clean Energy Transition'—The Balsillie School for International Affairs hosts a hybrid lecture on "Green Hydrogen: Navigating the Hype, Realities, and Governance for Its Pragmatic Role in the Clean Energy Transition," delivered by fellow Munur S. Herdem. Tuesday, Aug. 5, 12-1 p.m. ET, at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, 67 Erb St. W. Waterloo, Ont., and online. Details: balsillieschool.ca.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 6

Panel: 'Building Better Housing Policy'—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute hosts a panel discussion addressing how immigration patterns affect supply and demand, how demographic shifts are changing housing needs, and how affordability influences key life decisions such as marriage, childbearing, and household formation. The panel will look at how municipalities and developers can respond with strategies

that promote affordability, strengthen civil society, and support long-term prosperity. Wednesday, Aug. 6, 12 p.m. ET, online. Details: macdonaldlaurier.ca.

THURSDAY AUG. 7—FRIDAY, AUG. 8

Aerospace Defence and Security Expo—The Aerospace Industries Association of Canada hosts the two-day Aerospace, Defence and Security Expo (ADSE). Under the theme of "Resilience and Readiness," ADSE will feature opportunities for networking with industry and government leaders. Speakers include Secretary of State for Defence Procurement Stephen Fuhr, and Sara Cohen, deputy head of mission (foreign policy and national security) for the Embassy of Canada to the United States. Thursday, Aug. 7, to Friday, Aug. 8, Fraser Valley Trade and Exhibition Centre, 1190 Cornell St., Abbotsford, B.C. Details and registration: aiac.ca.

MONDAY, AUG. 18

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

MONDAY, SEPT. 1

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

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 3—FRIDAY, SEPT. 5

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

FRIDAY, SEPT. 5—SATURDAY, SEPT. 6

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

TUESDAY SEPT. 9—THURSDAY, SEPT. 12

Liberal National Caucus Meeting—The federal Liberals will meet from Tuesday, Sept. 9 to Thursday, Sept. 12, for their national caucus meeting in Edmonton to set their fall strategy.

MONDAY, SEPT. 15

House Returns—The House of Commons returns on Monday, Sept. 15, and it's expected to be a busy fall session. It will sit Sept. 15-19; Sept. 22-26; Oct. 1-3; Oct. 6-10; Oct. 20-24; Oct. 27-31; Nov. 3-7; Nov. 17-21; Nov. 24-28; Dec. 1-5; and Dec. 8-12. That's 11 weeks left before it breaks for the year 2025. In total, the House will have sat only 73 days this year. Last year, it sat 122 days, and in 2023 it sat 121 days. In 2022, it sat 129 days, and in 2021 it sat 95 days.

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 75th birthday, which means her mandatory retirement from the Senate.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 23

Senate Returns—The Senate will return on Tuesday, Sept. 23, at 2 p.m., and is scheduled to sit Sept. 23-25, but

could also sit on Sept. 26. It's scheduled to sit Oct. 1-2 (possibly Oct. 30); Oct. 7-9 (possibly Oct. 6 and Oct. 10); Oct. 21-23 (possibly Oct. 20 and Oct. 24); Oct. 28-30 (possibly Oct. 27 and Oct. 31); Nov. 4-6 (possibly Nov. 3 and Nov. 7); Nov. 18-20 (possibly Nov. 17 and Nov. 21); Nov. 25-27 (possibly Nov. 24 and Nov. 28); Dec. 2-4 (possibly Dec. 1 and Dec. 5); Dec. 9-11 (possibly Dec. 8 and Dec. 12); and finally Dec. 16-18 (possibly Dec. 15 and Dec. 19). And that will be it for 2025.

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 40th anniversary of his becoming premier of Ontario in 1985. Monday, Oct. 6, at 6:30 p.m. ET at One King West, Toronto. Details: thepearsoncentre.ca.

FRIDAY, OCT. 17

Senator Richards' Retirement—Today is New Brunswick Senator David Adams Richards' 75th 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. ET at the Fairmont Royal York, Toronto. Register: cdhowe.org.

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



A MESSAGE FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA'S SHIPBUILDERS

We CAN Build Ferries in BC

We are the 5,000 workers who build, operate and maintain ferries in British Columbia.

And we oppose BC Ferries building the next four new major vessels in China.

For more than a century, we've proudly built the ships that take families to their homes on the coast. When our province and country need world-class ships, we build them.

BC yards are building ships for the Royal Canadian Navy - some of the longest and most sophisticated vessels our country has ever made. We have the skills and capabilities to build ferries right here in our province. We stand ready to seize this generational opportunity - to keep good jobs here in our province while training the next generation of master shipbuilders.

We urge the BC and federal governments to change course and build these major vessels here at home. We call for a Canadian shipbuilding strategy that includes requirements for BC workers, Canadian materials, and training for the next generation of shipbuilders.

Let's build our ferries here at home. Show your support and learn more at BCBuildingTrades.org/ferries

