

NEWS



Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree said in August he planned to consult recognized party leaders on candidates for the promised Foreign Interference Transparency Registry before Parliament returned, but neither those consultations nor the registry have materialized. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Lack of foreign interference registry ‘mystifying’ as Canada attempts diplomatic reset with primary culprits, says NDP MP Jenny Kwan

BY STUART BENSON

As Prime Minister Mark Carney attempts a diplomatic reset with China and India, his government has yet to name its candidate to oversee the promised foreign interference registry to address the threat of political meddling and transnational repression.

But as public attention shifts toward economic concerns over human rights, NDP MP Jenny

Kwan (Vancouver East, B.C.) says the federal government must “walk and chew gum at the same time,” and remain focused on protecting Canadians caught in the crosshairs of foreign influence.

“The federal government can’t take its eyes off the need to protect Canadians and our democratic institutions,” said Kwan, her party’s public safety and national security critic, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. Her comments came as Foreign Affairs

Minister Anita Anand (Oakville East, Ont.) wrapped up travel to India and China for talks with government officials.

“Our democratic institutions are the foundation of who we are as a country, and they were—and are—under attack,” Kwan said, adding that while the issue may have faded from headlines since justice Marie-Josée Hogue’s final Foreign Interference Commission report earlier this year, the threat remains.

Released Jan. 28, Hogue’s report warned that “the fight against foreign interference will be a never-ending battle” requiring “relentless effort and perseverance,” and that China is the “most active perpetrator of state-based foreign interference” in Canada, followed by India.

While Hogue noted that the previous Trudeau government had “taken too long to act” and “proven

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NEWS

Conservative attacks on DEI are nothing new, but fighting past battles risks future growth, say politicians

BY STUART BENSON

The Conservatives’ recent attack on federal diversity and inclusion initiatives may not be anything new, but strategists say that fighting the comfortable battles of the past rather than dealing with the issues affecting Canadians today will provide

little short-term benefits for growth, and much larger electoral risks in the future.

“End DEI. Restore the merit principle,” Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River–Crowfoot, Alta.) wrote in an Oct. 13 post on X targeting federal diversity, equity, and inclusion

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NEWS

Feds need clearer focus on youth as unemployment hits 15-year high, critics say

BY GRACE BESTARD

With youth unemployment at its highest rate in 15 years, excluding the COVID-19 pandemic years, Canada’s new secretary of state for children and youth, and the government overall, “should

be doing more,” says NDP MP Leah Gazan.

Liberal MP Anna Gainey (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce–Westmount, Que.) assumed the role of secretary of state for children and youth this past May. She is tasked with supporting Jobs and

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NEWS

Carney fourth most travelled G7 leader since becoming prime minister, prioritizing trips to Europe and the U.S.

BY NEIL MOSS

The number of international trips that Mark Carney has made since taking office is at the midpoint among G7 leaders as the new prime minister has turned his spotlight on Europe.

Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has made 11 European trips since coming to power on March 14, as well as three stops in the United States, and a lone stop each in Mexico and Egypt for a total of 16 excursions that hit 13 countries overall.

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NEWS

Departments grapple with tracking employee attendance after a year of return-to-office rules

BY MARLO GLASS

More than one year after civil servants were mandated to work in the office three days per week, and executives four days per week, there is no standardized way for departments to track employee attendance across the federal public service.

This directive was applied to the core public service in September 2024, affecting more than 279,396 workers as of March 2025. Departments are expected to implement the Treasury Board’s directive, and monitoring those efforts has largely been done on

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Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

Mayoral hopeful ex-Tory MP Steven Blaney dishes on politics' secret sauce



Former Conservative cabinet minister Steven Blaney, right, discusses how poutine is like politics with Noovo.info reporter Caroline Dumont in Lévis, Que., on Oct. 7. Screenshot courtesy of Noovo.info

If politics were a poutine—that iconic Canadian snack of cheese curd-topped fries smothered in gravy—then former Conservative cabinet minister **Steven Blaney** says he's the gravy.

"I am the sauce. I'm the gravy. I make sure everything is fixed together and is delicious," Blaney said in French to reporter **Caroline Dumont** of Noovo.info as they each enjoyed a poutine for lunch on Oct. 7.

Their nearly three-minute long interview took place at Le Fromagerie Victoria on Président-Kennedy street in Lévis, Que., located on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, opposite Quebec City.

"The fries are the people," Blaney said. He didn't say what the "delicious" cheese was in the poutine analogy, suffice to say it's the combination of the three items that is "the force," before going more in depth with Dumont about what "the force" is in the city of Lévis where Blaney is running for mayor on Nov. 2.

Blaney, 60, is looking to get back into politics, this time at the municipal level. He is one of a few

former federal MPs who are running to be mayor in various Quebec cities, including former Liberal cabinet ministers **Marie-Claude Bibeau** who's running in Sherbrooke, and **Soraya Martinez Ferrada** in Montreal.

Blaney represented the riding now known as Belchasse-Les Etchemins-Lévis, Que., in the House of Commons from 2006 to 2021—he didn't reoffer—and was **Stephen Harper's** minister of veterans affairs, and then of public safety. He told Dumont that running political campaigns at any level of government is all about the ground game.

"All of the campaigns that I have done have been on the ground," he said. "What I adore is that it's on the ground level. It's nice. We get to meet people ... they immediately tell us their thoughts on current affairs that concern them, like traffic congestion," said Blaney.

Quebecers vote for their municipal politicians on Nov. 2. The provincial election will take place in one year's time.

Sweden to welcome Sinclair as new Canadian envoy

Foreign Affairs Minister **Anita Annand** announced on Oct. 17 that **Robert Sinclair** will take over from **Jason LaTorre** as Canada's ambassador to Sweden.

Sinclair has been with Global Affairs Canada since 1995. His previous assignments overseas have included Brussels, Dublin, London, Washington, and Moscow, as well as deputy head of Canada's mission to the European Union from 2019 to 2021. In Ottawa, in 2023, he established the Office of the Well-being Ombud and Inspector General, and most recently was senior Arctic official and director general, Arctic, Eurasian, and European affairs.

According to LinkedIn, LaTorre is back at the Pearson Building headquarters, and last month started a new position as director general for North America.



Robert Sinclair, left, takes over from Jason LaTorre as Canada's ambassador to Sweden. The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia and photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Why Canada blasted a huge hole outside its Parliament



A fearless specialist abseils across the Peace Tower's clock face in a scene from *The B1M's* video on the Centre Block renovations. Screenshot courtesy of YouTube

British YouTube "construction influencer" **Fred Mills** did a 10-minute video last week on the epic construction project happening on Parliament Hill.

Uploaded on Oct. 15 and titled *Why Canada Blasted a Huge Hole Outside its Parliament*, the video is a great primer not only about the decade-long, \$5-billion Centre Block renovation project, but also into why Ottawa was chosen as Canada's capital, and the demise of the original Centre Block.

Devoted *Hill Times* readers will be familiar with reporter **Laura Ryckewaert's** ongoing series on the work happening beneath and inside Centre Block, but for those less connected, Mills' video is a good Coles Notes version.

Published by *The B1M*, "world's largest, most subscribed-to (and best) video channel for construction," Mills' video comes as a report into options for relocating both of Britain's Houses of Parliament and further details into major renovations at the Palace of Westminster in London, U.K., is expected by the end of 2025.

Featuring plenty of drone footage and imagery courtesy of Public Works and Procurement Canada, Mills' mini documentary on Parliament Hill contains some fun facts, such as how the restoration crew uses lasers to clean the dirt off stonework, and that "specialists were called in to secure the four pinnacles around the top of the Peace Tower while they awaited repair," said Mills in the video.

"This isn't just about patching up a crumbling icon; it's a chance to ensure it can withstand whatever the future holds," said Mills of the Centre Block construction.

Gulp. Mills seems impressed by the work going on here in Ottawa, and is clearly an advocate for preserving heritage buildings for continued use.

"This isn't just about patching up a crumbling icon; it's a chance to ensure it can withstand whatever the future holds," said Mills of the Centre Block construction.

Richard Alexander is Beer Canada's new president

Cheers to **Richard Alexander** who was appointed president of Beer Canada last week.

"Richard is uniquely qualified to lead Beer Canada at this critical time for the Canadian beer industry," said **Andrew Oland**, president of Moosehead Breweries of Canada and chair of Beer Canada, in a Oct. 16 press release.

For the past three years, Alexander has been with Restaurants Canada, most recently as executive vice-president of government relations and public affairs.

He will take over as Beer Canada president from **CJ Hélie**, who is retiring from a nearly 40-year career in the Canadian beverage alcohol industry. Hélie had been with Beer Canada since 2021.



Richard Alexander. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Wedding bells in Conservative MP Kram's future



'Yesterday I proposed to Rechel, and she said yes,' posted Conservative MP Michael Kram with this photograph on Oct. 19. Photograph courtesy of X

Best wishes to Conservative MP **Michael Kram** who proposed to **Rechel Capoquian** this past weekend. "Yesterday I proposed to Rechel, and she said yes. We feel truly blessed and are looking forward to spending the rest of our lives together," the three-term 46-year-old MP for Regina-Wascania, Sask., posted on social media on Oct. 19.

Peruvian music coming to the NAC on Oct. 25

The Embassy of Peru is hosting a concert at the National Arts Centre this weekend. Happening the evening of Oct. 25, *The Sounds of Peru* features members of the Latin-Andean fusion band **Colores Andinos**, led by **Luis Abanto**. Most of the musicians are originally from Peru, and are now based in Canada, having formed the band in 1997 in Ottawa. There will also be Peruvian dance performances by the cultural association **Baila Connigo Canada**.

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Carney fourth most travelled G7 leader since becoming prime minister, prioritizing trips to Europe and the U.S.

Prime Minister Mark Carney is taking his first trip to the Indo-Pacific region this week after five previous excursions to Europe where he visited 11 countries.

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He is set to depart on Oct. 24 for his first trip to the Indo-Pacific region, where he will visit Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea. He has yet to travel to South America or Australia. His lone stop in Egypt was a last-minute jaunt to the Gaza peace summit in Sharm El Sheikh located on the Sinai Peninsula—the only Asian region of Egypt. He is expected to have his first stop in Africa when he travels to South Africa for the G20 Leaders' Summit next month.

Carney's touring schedule places him fourth among the Group of Seven leaders for the most countries visited since becoming prime minister in March. French President Emmanuel Macron has made 28 foreign trips over the past seven months, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has done 22 (he assumed the role on May 6), Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni is at 19, United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer has done 13, United States President Donald Trump has made 11 foreign visits, and outgoing Japanese prime minister Shigeru Ishiba made five trips. Ishiba's successor, Sanae Takaichi, was elected on Oct. 21.

Then-prime minister Justin Trudeau made 11 foreign trips seven months into his time in office compared to Carney's 16.

Carney's first trip as prime minister was to France and the U.K. in March. That was followed by a trip to Italy and the Vatican City in May for the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV. In June, he was in Belgium and the Netherlands for the NATO summit. He travelled to Ukraine, Poland, Germany, and Latvia in August. And he went back to the U.K. last month.

"[Carney] spent a lot of time in Europe and the U.S. and that is understandable given the calendar of events," said Vina Nadjibulla, vice-president of research



and strategy at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. "We're seeing this fall more attention to the Indo-Pacific, which was anticipated and was necessary given that the region is critical to Canada's prosperity and security—and the focus until recently had been on Europe."

She said that it would have been good for Carney to be in the region sooner, but remarked that given the summit calendar, now is a good opportunity to make the trip.

In Malaysia, Carney will attend the summit for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Canada is currently in trade talks with ASEAN. The stop in Singapore will be a bilateral visit. He will then go to South Korea for the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) summit.

It is anticipated that Carney could meet with senior Chinese leaders at one of the Asian summits.

Nadjibulla said she expects that Carney would be back in the region soon following his upcoming trip, noting the upcoming AI Action Summit in India in February 2026 and possible bilateral visits, such as in Japan when its new government is formed.

Japan is the only G7 country that Carney has yet to visit. Typically, the chair of the Group of Seven visits with all members during its presidency.

Too much or too little?

Carney's travel schedule came under fire from Conservative

Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River–Crowfoot, Alta.) last month, criticizing his U.K. trip by remarking that the prime minister was "on his taxpayer-funded jet" for "more photo ops."

Roy Norton, who served as Canada's chief of protocol from 2016 to 2019, said Canadians have a greater sensitivity around its leader's foreign travel than most countries.

There are frequent criticisms over the money that is spent on the leaders' tours for both the prime minister and the Governor General.

"We're pretty cheap," Norton said. "Our take on this is not consistent ... with our self-image as internationalists [and] as a country that can, must, should play a larger role in the world as possible."

Norton questioned how that self-image is sustained if trips are not taken.

"You don't do it by declining to go places—you've got to go places," he said.

Before Carney's second trip to the White House earlier this month, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil-Chambly, Que.) criticized the prime minister's "absence" from Washington, D.C.

"The prime minister's rare appearances or absences in Washington have been widely noted in Washington, both by the political apparatus of the administration and by economic associations which often share our views,"

Blanchet told the House Chamber on Sept. 15.

Carney returned to the Oval Office on Oct. 7. He previously met with Trump in the White House on May 6. He also traveled to New York last month to attend the UN General Assembly in September, which was marked by recognizing the State of Palestine.

No other G7 leader has had more White House meetings with Trump since coming to power. Merz and Meloni have also each had two.

Diversification through Europe

Norton said Carney's choice for where to travel hasn't been "unusual or inappropriate or skewed," remarking that he came to office with a commit-

ment to diversify Canada's diplomatic relationships.

He said diversification through Asia is more precarious, calling a Canadian process with China "not an obviously compelling one," nor is one with India.

But Norton said it wouldn't be surprising if Carney ends up making a trip to either country.

"Even with the groundwork, it's not clear if India and China are going to prove to be as steadfast in partnership with us on diversification with the United States as what some European countries are—they recognize the imperative maybe more than countries elsewhere do," he said.

Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand (Oakville East, Ont.) travelled to India, Singapore, and China from Oct. 12-17.

Norton said Canada typically looks to the summit's host nation as an anchor for regional travel, noting that there could be increased political criticism if Carney were holding more one-off bilateral visits on top of the summit stops.

He noted that given Canada's geographic isolation, many trips are a long haul compared to European leaders who can stop in a major capital and be back home in the same day.

Balsillie School of International Affairs director Ann Fitz-Gerald said Carney's foreign policy is focused on cementing existing diplomatic relationships and crystallizing new ones.

"He's trying to prioritize trade diversification, and link that to an increased security spend," she said.

She said what will matter is not how many trips Carney takes, but their outcomes and what Canada will be able to promise its partners.

"Canada is at a very, very critical juncture in its history. It is a point where it has to turn to the world to say, 'We are still connected with you—we have been relying on one country far too heavily for past decades and that is now changing,'" she said.

Fitz-Gerald said there are reasonable questions being asked about what Canada is offering to others, and the pathway towards diversification.

She noted that Carney is "very comfortable" in Europe as a former governor of the Bank of England, remarking that strong relationships with European countries that have deep connections to other global regions will also be beneficial when Canada engages in those places.

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G7 leaders' international visits since March 14

Leader	Country	International visits
Emmanuel Macron	France	28
Friedrich Merz	Germany	22
Giorgia Meloni	Italy	19
Mark Carney	Canada	16
Keir Starmer	United Kingdom	13
Donald Trump	United States	11
Shigeru Ishiba	Japan	5

NEWS

Lack of foreign interference registry ‘mystifying’ as Canada attempts diplomatic reset with primary culprits, says NDP MP Jenny Kwan

The delay in naming a commissioner to lead the foreign interference registry is ‘clearly linked’ to the foreign minister’s recent travel to India and China, suggests national security expert Dan Stanton.

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to be a poor communicator and insufficiently transparent,” she acknowledged signs the government had begun “prioritizing” the issue over the course of the inquiry and in the previous two years.

Since then, however, Kwan said it has been “mystifying” how quickly Carney’s team had seemingly forgotten those lessons.

Kwan said that while the Liberals’ promised Foreign Influence Transparency Registry had been introduced parallel to the inquiry last year, the government is no closer to its implementation than it was before the election.

Introduced in May 2024 and unanimously approved by all parties the following month, Bill C-70, the Countering Foreign Interference Act, created the legal framework for the registry as part of the new Foreign Influence Transparency and Accountability Act, alongside amendments to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, the Security of Information Act, the Canada Evidence Act, and the Criminal Code. The registry requires those acting on behalf of foreign states or entities to disclose influence activities directed at Canadians or elected officials within 14 days. Failure to comply could result in a fine of up to \$5-million, and/or five years in prison.

Before the bill passed, officials estimated implementation would take “up to a year.” This past May, Public Safety officials said several steps—including office setup, IT infrastructure, and regulation development—still needed to be completed.

In August, Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough–Guildwood–Rouge Park, Ont.) told CBC News the long-awaited commissioner would be named in September, with the registry to launch later this fall.

According to the legislation, the appointment of the commissioner is to be made after



NDP MP Jenny Kwan says Canadians may be more concerned with the economy, but the Liberal government needs to be able to ‘walk and chew gum at the same time.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



In her report, Commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue found China to be the ‘most active perpetrator of state-based foreign interference’ in Canada, followed by India. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

consultations with the leader of the opposition, and the leader of each “recognized party” with at least 12 members in the House of Commons, and leaders of every other recognized party or parliamentary group in the Senate. The appointment will also require approval by resolution in both parliamentary chambers.

Yet, as of Oct. 20, the Bloc Québécois said it had not been

consulted on the candidate. On Oct. 21, in response to multiple requests to clarify the state of consultations, Anandasangaree’s office said it had “no update to provide at this time.”

The Conservative Party did not respond to multiple inquiries regarding whether Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River–Crowfoot, Alta.) had been consulted, and MP Michael Chong (Welling-

ton—Halton Hills North, Ont.), his party’s foreign affairs critic, declined to comment on Anand’s recent trip to China and India.

“It’s mystifying to me why the Liberals have taken so long and still have yet to fully put in place the commissioner and the registry. This should have been done before the last election,” Kwan said. She called the government’s attempt to reset relations with China while “paying lip service” to the threat of foreign interference “deeply concerning.”

While the issue may not be a top concern for many Canadians, for those being targeted, it can be “a matter of life and death,” Kwan said.

In 2023, Kwan was briefed by Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), which warned her she remains an “evergreen target” for Beijing due to her advocacy on Chinese human rights. Chong and his family have also faced alleged interference and intimidation by the Chinese government for his condemnation of Beijing’s treatment of Uyghur Muslims as a genocide.

“I am constantly worried about this, but that doesn’t mean I’m not also worried about affordability issues for Canadians; I can do both,” Kwan said. “The Carney government needs to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time; they need to address both with the level of seriousness and attention they require.”

Kwan said that while Canadians may be more focused on the financial pressures in their daily lives to the exclusion of everything else, the federal government can’t afford to lose focus.

“We’ve only just scratched the surface in addressing foreign interference activities, and much work needs to be done; the government needs to actually ensure the work is done,” Kwan said. “Right now, I don’t see any action.”

‘Rebalancing’ relationships requires ‘eyes-wide-open’ recognition of foreign interference threat: Dan Stanton

While Anand has assured Canadians that the attempt to mend diplomatic ties and reopen trade negotiations with China and India will not conflict with defending citizens’ security, national security expert Dan Stanton told *The Hill Times* that he views the delay in naming the commissioner and Anand’s recent visits as “clearly linked.”

Stanton, a former CSIS executive manager, said that “some-

one in government” had clearly decided to hold off on the naming of a new commissioner as it would have made things “awkward” for Anand.

“Even though the registry is technically country agnostic, let’s not kid ourselves: most of the calls for it were about China and India,” said Stanton, now director of national security at the University of Ottawa’s Professional Development Institute. “The Chinese would have been very sensitive to the move if Anand was visiting Beijing while Ottawa was launching the registry.”

Despite agreeing that the country should re-engage with China and India on trade, Stanton said Canada can’t simply “wipe the slate clean” after then-prime minister Justin Trudeau’s 2023 announcement that the Indian government was believed to be involved in the assassination of Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, B.C. The RCMP has since accused Indian agents of involvement in plots against other Sikh leaders, including through the Lawrence Bishnoi Gang, which is now listed as a terrorist organization, and provided “duty-to-warn” notices to numerous Sikh activists—including former NDP leader Jagmeet Singh—that their lives were in danger.

“Chinese-Canadian communities continue to face transnational repression, and we’re still dealing with Uyghur issues and the crackdown in Hong Kong,” Stanton added. “These concerns won’t just fade into the sunset as we attempt to repair our relationships China or India.”

However, while Stanton said that both economic and political sovereignty—which includes public safety—should be treated as equally “sacrosanct” by the government, that wasn’t always the case, nor was it always what voters wanted.

A survey from the Asia Pacific Foundation released on Oct. 15 found that only a slight majority of Canadians—52 per cent—prioritize human rights over trade opportunities from China, a nearly 20-point drop since 2021.

While favourable views of China remain in the minority at 27 per cent, with less than 14 per cent believing Canada should pursue deeper trade with China, 46 per cent are more likely to view Washington, D.C., as a greater threat than Beijing.

Stanton said that regardless of what politicians say publicly, “economic interests almost always outweigh concerns about human rights or the rule of law.” Still, as Canada resets its relationships with China and India, there needs to be some attempt at a counterbalance, he said.

“Our sovereignty has been violated by China, just as it has been with India, and part of that rebalancing is the registry,” Stanton said. “Canada does need to re-engage, but we need to go into this with eyes wide open, and communicate to Canadians that we value human rights with concrete action.”

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COMMENT

A message to Conservatives: it's time to cut the cord with Trudeau

The Conservatives' focus vanishes as quickly as a former prime minister's shirt on a yacht off the coast of Santa Barbara when they turn their gaze to that same fellow.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—Katy Perry knows Justin Trudeau has moved on. Perhaps the federal Conservatives should clue in, too. They still seem to be fighting the last war, and not living in our current reality.

Yes, Trudeau has a high-profile girlfriend and is no longer running Canada's government, but—like his father before him—he remains a polarizing figure. The Conservatives seem hell-bent on keeping him front and centre in our political ecosystem. Everything Prime Minister Mark Carney either does or doesn't do is likened to Trudeau. They tried that in the election, and it just didn't work, so it's hard to imagine that it would now.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre did himself no favours in calling the leadership of the RCMP “despicable,” and launching a blazing critique against them for not investigating what he perceived as criminality in the Trudeau regime. He felt that criminal wrongdoing centred on the well-documented mess surrounding an apparent attempt at contractual favouritism towards SNC-Lavalin.

If Poilievre has some evidence to back up his convictions, he should bring it forward. In this case, rhetoric doesn't cut it and it doesn't help Canada when

the man who wants to be prime minister so comfortably looks to undermine our national police force. Our leaders should be trying to improve and uphold our national institutions, not just run them down because that is the norm of the day.

The RCMP is due criticism on many levels. The Mass Casualty Commission that examined Canada's worse mass murder highlighted the Red Coats' many organizational, operational, and management challenges.

There have been other reports and investigations that strongly criticized the RCMP for how it does its business. Other important exposés and legal challenges have alleged sexual harassment with the force. That is fair game for any politician. In fact, part of their job is to expose these issues, and call for policy reform.

To not-so-gently suggest—with no evidence other than the vitriol fired from a political flame-thrower—that RCMP leadership protected the Trudeau government

and covered up for it is reckless. It co-opts that worst of Trumpian politics, and looks for its comfortable application in Canada. It shouldn't be OK to just make everything about clicks and flicks.

Whether it is personal animus towards Trudeau or habitual behaviour, Poilievre is doing neither Canada nor the Conservative Party any favours. Someone should show the elected leadership of the party the photos the *Daily Mail* had of the former—yes, “former”—prime minister enjoying his new life. On second thought, maybe don't—it might spawn some personal jealousy.

At a time when Canada is in a historic struggle with the United States over trade, and we are possibly on the verge of a gigantic federal deficit in the forthcoming budget, Conservative efforts should be almost solely focused on that. Yes, the Conservatives have offered consistent perspectives here, but they vanish as quickly as a former prime minister's shirt on a yacht off the coast



Whether it is a personal animus towards Justin Trudeau or habitual behaviour, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, pictured, is doing neither the nation nor his party any favours by making accusations against him, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

of Santa Barbara when they turn their gaze to that same fellow.

As was said of his father, Trudeau still haunts the Conservatives, and Poilievre specifically. Though Trudeau won three elections and dominated our landscape for a decade, Poilievre's supporters struggle with that history and view the former prime minister as a lightweight. That sort of obsession—if not shaken off—will get you in trouble.

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

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COMMENT

Remaking Canada at warp speed: Nov. 4 will be a budget like no other

The Liberals have been left to draw up a budget package in the midst of the destruction of the trade relationship that is the modern Canadian economy.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—Back in the winter, when Mark Carney was angling to become prime minister, the size and shape of the trade war initiated by United States President Donald Trump was unclear.

The U.S. president's on-again-off-again tariff measures left open the possibility that he might back down before he wrecked the global economy. There was speculation that revolts by consumers, the U.S. Congress, or Wall Street

might force a rethink of the White House's tariff madness.

None of that has materialized. U.S. businesses have been hesitant to fully pass on the costs of tariffs to consumers, limiting the inflationary impact. Under Republican control, Congress is a doormat. And U.S. financial markets have made their peace with Trumponomics.

And, as the prime minister has learned firsthand, the trade war is not fixable. The only question now is how badly Canada is going to suffer. Carney has obviously been desperate to get relief from Trump on some sectoral tariffs before the Nov. 4 budget.

In any case, the Liberals have been left to draw up a budget package in the midst of nothing less than the destruction of the trade relationship that is the modern Canadian economy. As a starting point, the budget will have to earmark tens of billions of dollars to support, reorient, and sustain the industrial sectors and workers watching their economic way of life disappear.

But the nation-threatening trade file is only one element in the much wider agenda of challenges Carney and the Liberals set for themselves in their effort to deal with the Trump catastrophe, and remain in power.

In the briefest possible terms, Carney has promised to build a new economy out of the currently struggling, dangerously unproductive one; miraculously fix the deeply ingrained problems behind the enduring housing crisis; catalyze a round of nation-building projects unseen in many decades; and make Canada an energy superpower. Then there's the plan to quadruple defence spending while creating a Canadian military industrial complex mostly from scratch.

Even leaving aside the U.S.-wrought trade crisis, any of these projects would by themselves be enough to preoccupy most federal governments over the course of the usual four-year term—let alone being addressed in a single budget. So, Carney has on his shoulders a collective task that surpasses the long-term challenges undertaken by a single prime minister in decades, probably not since the Second World War.

The federal government is already feeling the predictable political crosscurrents arising from Ottawa's trade-offs in U.S. negotiations, infrastructure building, and energy development.

And the huge financial outlays demanded by the Liberals' generational rebuilding

strategy will push the federal deficit into the stratosphere, with some predicting a \$80-billion to \$90-billion budget shortfall in the current fiscal year—compared to the Liberal election platform's estimate of a \$62.3-billion deficit (and a \$42.2-billion deficit for this year forecast in the December 2024 fiscal update). This will raise endless questions about Canada's creditworthiness, and ignite widespread condemnation from the Conservatives and the country's very vocal fiscal hawks.

On that front, Carney has acknowledged his government's multi-faceted spending plan to meet this crucial moment will run up government debt. "Yes, there's going to be implications for the deficit. But it will build a much stronger Canada," he maintains.

And all this at a time of minority government, which of course means the Liberals will have to enlist support from somebody on the opposition benches to pass the budget legislation and avoid being pitched into an election.

Still, Carney is by far the best possible candidate to try to manage Canada at this history-shaping political/economic turning point. And there's no doubt that, with this budget and other policies, he is determined

to cut through the usual government inertia, federal-provincial jurisdictional static, and business hesitancy to try to push Canada toward recently unimaginable achievements.

But there's the obvious question of whether the new Liberal leader, in his successful effort to lance public dissatisfaction with the Trudeau years, has taken on way too much in the way of commitments. It's also debatable whether the Liberals—in their rush to transform the country in the midst of the current menu of emergencies—have done enough to prepare Canadians for the upheaval implicit in Carney's sort of revolutionary vision for renewal. Or whether the Liberal government can make progress quickly enough on key issues like housing affordability to contain voters' long-simmering anger and frustration.

There's no assurance yet from the opposition parties of support for the Liberals on the budget. But, luckily for Carney, no one wants another federal election. And the Conservatives, while in sync with widely held and resurging public concerns about living costs and crime, are saddled with a leader who seems to make them more unelectable by the day.

Given the magnitude of what's at issue, the long-awaited Nov. 4 economic announcement will, at the very least, be a day for the history books. But the next act in the ensuing national drama is certain to be something else again.

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

Is Canada at risk of being complicit in U.S. military crimes?

The recent U.S. navy attacks on shipping off the coast of Venezuela have raised concerns at DND headquarters in Ottawa.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—For weeks now, the United States navy has been engaging and sinking small civilian vessels off the coast of Venezuela.

The result is a half-dozen Venezuelan boats sunk, and an estimated 20 people killed.

U.S. President Donald Trump and his Secretary of War Pete Hegseth claim these attacks are part of the American military's new, more robust rules of engagement.

Canada has partnered with the U.S. on Operation Caribe, a counter-narcotic effort in the Caribbean, since 2006. DND photograph by 12 Wing Imaging Services



Those so-called rules are labelling those targeted by the U.S. navy as "narco-terrorists" or

"unlawful combatants" in an undeclared armed conflict between the U.S. and Venezuela. It is Trump's

belief that this precludes those targeted and killed from being afforded due legal process.

However, given that in all cases to date any evidence of drug smuggling has been sunk, and not one survivor has been apprehended to shed light on the actual cargos, we need to presume that the U.S. navy has flawless intelligence to justify these extrajudicial killings.

The crazy part is that the American navy actually published the drone footage from the first attack. It revealed an open boat with four outboard motors, and 11 passengers on board. There was no warning shot or any attempt to halt and board the vessel. They simply dispatched it to the bottom of the sea.

The claim that the drugs on board were bound for the U.S., and thus the navy was defending American civilians, seems patently absurd. Four outboard motors could not propel that boat the 1,000 (plus) nautical miles from Venezuela to U.S. soil.

It also seems odd that the Venezuelan cartel would put 11 crew members aboard when you would think that drug cargo space/weight would be the priority.

If these little boats that the American navy is blowing out of the water did somehow manage to make it all the way to the U.S., the crew members would not be facing a death penalty even if apprehended. While the law in the U.S. does allow for capital punishment in the case of drug trafficking, such a lethal sentence

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OPINION

Handling Canada-China relations in an age of weaponized supply chains

If Canada wants to remain a G7 economy, it must approach economic relations with China through the lens of strategic caution, not short-term commercial convenience.

Vina Nadjibulla

Opinion



China's ambassador to Canada recently bluntly declared that Beijing would lift its tariffs on Canadian canola if Ottawa were to remove tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles. What was once coercion by stealth is now coercion in plain sight. The message was no surprise—everyone understood that canola tariffs were leverage to pressure Ottawa on EVs—but the timing was telling. It came just as China escalated its trade war with the United States through sweeping export controls on rare earths and critical minerals, while Washington doubled down with threats of additional 100-per-cent tariffs on Chinese imports.

We have entered a new era where trade, technology, and security are fused—and leverage is the currency of power. For a country like Canada—long comfortable selling raw materials to the U.S., and, increasingly, to



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left and Chinese President Xi Jinping. We have entered a new era where trade, technology, and security are fused—and leverage is the currency of power, writes Vina Nadjibulla. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade and courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

China—this new reality demands a fundamental rethink. Over-reliance on a single buyer or market is no longer just an economic risk; it is a strategic vulnerability.

For much of the past two decades, Canadian policy toward China has been driven by commercial optimism—an assumption that access to China's vast market could be pursued safely within the bounds of international rules and multilateral institutions. That world no longer exists. Beijing's industrial strategy—built on state subsidies, export surpluses, currency manipulation, and protection of domestic champions—has tilted the global playing field so sharply that further integration with China now poses real risks to Canada's competitiveness and

prosperity. If Canada wants to remain a G7 economy, not merely an exporter of raw materials, it must approach economic relations with China through the lens of strategic caution, not short-term commercial convenience.

This is especially true in critical minerals, green technologies, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and research collaboration—areas Beijing explicitly defines as part of its national industrial and security strategy. China's tactics in these sectors are designed to absorb innovation abroad, strengthen self-reliance, and ensure others' dependence. Through policies like Made in China 2025, Beijing pursues self-sufficiency at home—from wafers to battery cells—while

using scale, subsidies, and control of upstream inputs to make others reliant on Chinese supply. The result is Beijing's accumulation of leverage and choke points in rare earths, graphite, gallium, solar panels, battery materials, and critical minerals processing.

This is not just industrial policy; it is a dependency strategy that turns supply chains into instruments of state power. Canada's response must be to strengthen its domestic capabilities and deepen relations with trusted allies and partners—not expand trade and technological entanglement with a systemic competitor. Building parallel supply chains with allies, rather than hoping for Chinese restraint, is the only sustainable path to resilience.

There are, of course, sectors where selective trade with China still makes sense. Canada can export more oil, liquefied natural gas, and certain agri-food products in the near term, especially where exposure remains limited. But selective trade cannot mean strategic dependence. In this era of weaponized supply chains, no single market should account for more than half of Canada's exports in any key commodity. Selling 67 per cent of our canola seed to China is a vulnerability we can no longer afford. Even if the current dispute over canola tariffs is resolved, diversification must remain the goal.

We should focus on expanding trade and investment ties with Japan, South Korea, Australia, India, the European Union, and trusted Association of Southeast Asian Nations partners. But diversification will remain out of reach without building domestic competitiveness. Rebuilding domestic competitiveness and resilience requires a modern industrial strategy—one that does not solely rely on subsidies—but prioritizes building productive ecosystems and infrastructure, scales skills and technology, streamlines the regulatory environment, and deploys smart public financing to keep and build manufacturing and processing capacity in Canada.

Canada also needs stronger tools of statecraft for a world where global rules and norms are no longer enough: tighter investment screening, robust research-security guidelines, leading cybersecurity capacity, export controls co-ordinated with allies, and an enforceable foreign-interference transparency regime. Finally, none of this will work without sustained public outreach and deeper China competence across government, business, and civil society to build awareness and resilience.

In this age of great-power competition, the goal is not to contain China but to contain our vulnerability to the Chinese Communist Party. The sooner Canada acts on that understanding, the better prepared we will be for the shocks to come.

Vina Nadjibulla is the vice-president of research and strategy at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

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Editorial

Editorial

A fancy title does not a minister make

It's not easy being green.

As *The Hill Times*' Abba Rana reported this week, members of the Carney government's front bench—many of them first-time cabinet members—are still struggling to find their footing after five months on the job.

As a politician, and a political leader, Carney is still a bit of an unknown quantity. And after a dozen years with Justin Trudeau at the Liberal Party helm, it's almost amusing to hear about the things to which people must now adjust.

"MPs, cabinet ministers, and political aides describe [Carney] as a no-nonsense leader who demands results, and who holds his ministers to high standards. He expects punctuality, professionalism, and preparation for meetings from both his staff and cabinet members. This includes arriving on time, dressing appropriately, and being fully briefed for meetings," Rana reported.

But those are relatively small stakes that anyone with a new boss would be attempting to navigate. What's more telling is that it appears those who are still trying to learn the "Carney way" are doing so while trying to remain as shielded from public view as possible. And that's kind of hard to do in an extremely public-facing job, like being a member of cabinet.

"These ministers haven't really figured out—some of them have, some of them haven't—how do you keep your job in a Carney cabinet. And one of the first things they [ministers in this situation] will do, if they're unsure, is the

same thing, which is nothing. Ministers are not going to launch individual initiatives independent of clear direction from the centre," one well-connected Liberal told *The Hill Times*.

Doing nothing is not what this country needs right now.

At a time of economic and social turmoil, many Canadians went to the polls this past spring and cast ballots for a government that would protect the country.

As prime minister, it can be said that Carney is indeed being proactive. But it's not a team of one, or even a few. Barely a handful come to mind who are willing to take the spotlight with their files, such as Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc. Carney appointed a team of 27 cabinet ministers and 10 secretaries of state. There are 37 people directly charged to play a bigger role in helping him carry out the vision he laid out for the country during the election. It's not good enough for people to carry a title and collect a paycheck while ducking behind staff who don't answer the phone. If it's a matter of not having the agency to do their jobs, then they should step aside and speak up.

As Rana reported, "Hill insiders are speculating that Carney will shuffle his cabinet around the new year, dropping under-performers and bringing in fresh talent." Canadians deserve more than those who work in fear of keeping their job versus serving the public to the best of their ability.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor

Bill C-11: outdated, incomplete, and unproven, says reader

Re: "Military justice reform bill 'a major step forward,' but needs work at committee, say Bloc MPs as Tories favour more debate," (*The Hill Times*, Oct. 9).

Samantha Wright Allen's article quoted MPs who claimed Bill C-11 is a "major step forward," in part due to its shifting of sexual offence investigations in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to civilian police. While well-intentioned, this bill actually applies a 2025 signature block to a 2015 recommendation—risking a new set of problems for those directly impacted by military sexual offenses.

In 2015, former Supreme Court justice Marie Deschamps recommended civilian oversight for CAF sexual offence cases because complainants faced mandatory reporting, and lacked independent support or legal resources. The current 2025 landscape has changed considerably: mandatory reporting is gone, the Canadian Victims' Bill of Rights applies to complainants in the military system, and the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre offers independent support, including legal advice. If this had been the case in 2015, Deschamps might well have made a different recommendation, and prioritized empowering complainants to make their own choices between military and civilian reporting channels. By removing that choice, Bill C-11 may solve a 2015 problem but creates several new ones.

Civilian police are not a universal fix. Many police forces—especially in rural areas—lack the budget, staff, or expertise for complex military cases. Bill C-11 offers no federal funding to bridge this gap, risking inconsistent investigations and support for CAF members located across Canada, who—as a highly mobile workforce—often do not contribute to the local police budgets of the jurisdictions they are now expected to rely on.

The bill also leaves sexual offence cases in operational settings and deployments under military jurisdiction, raising a clear contradiction: if military police are deemed unfit for domestic cases, why are they trusted when abroad? As NDP MP Lori Idlout noted in debate on Oct. 6, the bill may also overlook the full integration of Reservists, Canadian Rangers, and Cadets—denying many equal access to justice.

The 2022 Statistics Canada Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the CAF shows 7.5 per cent of women and 2.8 per cent of men in the Regular Force reported sexual assault in the previous year—higher rates than in 2016 or 2018. Military culture change clearly remains elusive. True cultural reform must include a focus on prevention and on support for complainants' health, careers, and retention—not just on legal issues.

Before proceeding further on this bill, the government must release its data from the past two years of interim civilian referrals. Show us evidence that shifting these federal responsibilities to the provincial and municipal police actually improves outcomes for complainants and accused CAF members alike. Without such proof, the perceived rush to push Bill C-11 through by year's end risks being seen as a political move to avoid tough headlines rather than a people-first solution.

If Bill C-11 does move forward, it needs meaningful input from those with lived experience, dedicated federal funding to equip civilian police to effectively and equitably handle complex military-specific cases, and clear evidence that this approach is more effective than the military justice system of 2025. Anything less is a step backward.

Karen Breeck MD, MHSc, CD
Retired Canadian Armed Forces physician
Ottawa, Ont.

COMMENT

Setting the stage for Quebec's fall election season

On Nov. 2, 1,131 cities, towns, and villages, and 87 regions in Quebec will go to the polls.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—Quebec is very much a distinct society, and part of its distinct nature revolves around the calendar. In the summer, only Quebec celebrates Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day on June 24. This is followed by “moving day,” on July 1, as most leases expire on Canada Day. Then comes the “construction holiday,” that two-week period when everyone, including construction workers, takes a vacation.

So, it is not surprising that every municipality in the province has its election on the first Sunday in November. This means 1,131 cities, towns, and villages, and 87 regions will go to the polls on Nov. 2.

The highest-profile race is no doubt the City of Montreal, where parties contest the election. The incumbent Projet Montréal administration has the left-wing activist Luc Rabouin up against Ensemble Montréal's Soraya Martinez Ferrada, the former federal minister of tourism and economic development.

The election could be a toss-up: the last poll showed far more undecideds than choices for either candidate. A negative factor for Rabouin is his predecessor; he is following the unpopular two-term mayor Valérie Plante, who increased taxes, shut down commercial arteries, and built hundreds of kilometres of bicycle paths in what critics called “the war on cars.” Despite the high-profile contest, only a third of Montreal's citizens are expected to vote.

Meanwhile, in the Lower St. Lawrence region, most of the elections are uncontested. In Kamouraska's regional municipality, most of the councillors and mayors have been acclaimed. This is a sign of a disinterest in municipal politics, as well as a reflection of the more than 1,500 councillors and mayors who resigned from the 8,000 or so seats since the last election in 2021.

Some of this discontent has to do with treatment by citizens, and some with the attitude of public servants toward elected officials. On several occasions, beginning with a seminar for newly elected officials in 2021, we were told by an officious regional representative of the Quebec Municipal Affairs ministry that we had no power or influence in the operations of our towns.

Although I was elected as a councillor in the village of Kamouraska in 2021, I chose not to run again for a number of reasons, the first being the sense of frustration of not accomplishing as much as I expected. The second was my age and health: having suffered a concussion in June, I found it hard to concentrate. I will be 77 years old at the end of the next term, and I can't guarantee I would meet my own standards as a councillor.

Although Kamouraska is a small municipality with only 600 people, it is thought to be the most beautiful village in Quebec, and possibly Canada. With a \$2-million budget and a \$1-million surplus, it is far wealthier than neighbouring towns. In a busy year, through bucolic summer days and in the shoulder seasons of fall and spring, we attract thousands of tourists.



The highest-profile race is no doubt the City of Montreal, where incumbent Projet Montréal administration's Luc Rabouin, left, is facing off against Ensemble Montréal's Soraya Martinez Ferrada, a former federal Liberal minister. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn and The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia

It means business for our restaurants, *auberges*, and boutiques. But in a town where more than two-thirds of the population is over 65 years old, there are serious demographic challenges. And while agriculture is the backbone of the town, tourism has the potential to attract investment and generate a stronger tax base. Unfortunately, like many tourist towns, real estate is too expensive for young families.

The next council has its work cut out for them. The mayor who served prior to 2021, Gilles Michaud, has returned and was acclaimed. I like him: he is frank, direct, hard-working, and understands the community. He has always said, “We lend the community to the tourists for a few months, and then we take it back.” He is leading a group composed of agricultural producers and retirees, with two of my former

colleagues opposing them in contested races.

Both of those colleagues are capable professionals—one is a former CEO, and the other a long-time municipal public servant. They know their stuff and deserve to be re-elected. Their experience is needed to develop the vision for a thriving municipality. In the last election, 74 per cent voted here: people care for their community.

I will miss my time on council, but hope to be an active citizen, contributing as I can. And my desire to see Kamouraska flourish will not diminish in any way.

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 former town councillor in Kamouraska, Que. He can be reached at pipson52@hotmail.com.
The Hill Times

Is Canada at risk of being complicit in U.S. military crimes?

Continued from page 6

is reserved for the kingpins or cartel leaders. The schmucks loaded into those open Venezuelan drug boats are mere cartel foot soldiers.

This escalation in scale and scope of U.S. counter-narcotic operations in the Caribbean has raised concerns about Canada's possible complicity in what is clearly a violation of international law.

Keen-eyed observers of the Canadian Armed Forces would be well aware that, since 2006, Canada has partnered with the U.S. on Operation Caribbe, a counter-narcotic effort in the Caribbean. Canada's contribution includes ships from the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), and

long-range CP-140 Aurora patrol aircraft from the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF).

According to the Department of National Defence, the RCN warships and RCAF aircraft locate and track vessels of interest, at which point U.S. Coast Guard law-enforcement teams then approach and intercept them.

The area being monitored covers the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific Ocean. Canada also allows U.S. Coast Guard teams to operate from Canadian warships.

Since the outset of Operation Caribbe, the Canadian military claims to have contributed to the disruption or seizure of more than 123 metric tonnes of cocaine.

While Operation Caribbe is a multi-national mission under the overall command of the U.S. Coast Guard, the recent U.S. navy attacks on shipping off the coast of Venezuela have raised concerns at DND headquarters in Ottawa.

“The Canadian Armed Forces does not participate in any U.S.-led counter-narcotic operations outside of Operation Caribbe,” DND spokesperson Cheryl Forrest confirmed to *The Ottawa Citizen*. “At this time, there are no planned changes to our current Operation Caribbe engagements.”

Forrest further clarified that CAF activities under Operation Caribbe “are separate and distinct” from the U.S. military strikes alleged against the Venezuelan drug cartel boats.

However, not all Canadian military analysts are comfortable with that policy.

Tim Addison, director of naval affairs for the Naval Association of Canada (NAC), told the CBC that he understands the distinction the department is trying to make, but it's not enough to alleviate his concerns about the U.S. navy's recent deadly strikes, and where the U.S. could go from here. “Were they illegal?” Addison remarked on CBC. “Should Canada continue to contribute to Operation Caribbe if in fact it seems to be going down the path towards illegal operations?”

The NAC is a volunteer national group of retired and serving naval personnel, who advocate for the RCN. The NAC

does not generally publicly comment on such policy issues.

However, given the sensitivity of this development and the potential negative consequences for Canada, Addison felt it was time to raise the NAC's concerns. “This involves the law of armed conflict and the rules of waging war between two states,” he said.

For his part, Trump has hinted that the next move will be for the U.S. military to start engaging the drug cartels inside Venezuelan territory. That would mean war.

If the Canadian government is too afraid to talk Trump out of this fool's errand then we should definitely cut all ties to such an escalation. This would include suspending our long-standing commitment to Operation Caribbe.

If you cannot get the keys away from your drunk neighbour, you sure as hell don't climb into the car with him.

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

The Hill Times

OPINION

The American empire's slow collapse—and Canada's problem

Canada cannot get out of the way after two centuries of economic integration and cultural interdependence with the U.S. But we cannot afford blind loyalty, either.

John McKay

Opinion



It's never pleasant to watch an empire fall apart, especially one next door. But that's what we're seeing now in the United States: a superpower devouring itself in real time.

The assassination of Charlie Kirk was not the cause of America's crisis, only a symptom. Accusations devoid of fact ran wild. The country has been drifting toward this kind of fracture for years. As Abraham Lincoln warned, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." The old unity of purpose has collapsed, replaced by tribal politics and mutual contempt.

The latest congressional shutdowns aren't about fiscal policy or ideology; they're about paralysis. The Republican Party is split between those who fear U.S. President Donald Trump and those who worship him. Democrats—though representing tens of millions of Americans—can do little more than watch the wreckage pile up. The world's oldest democracy has become hostage to its own dysfunction.

Beneath the noise lies a more fundamental problem: the money is running out. U.S. public debt now equals the size of the entire economy, and is heading toward 120 per cent of GDP within a decade. Servicing that debt will swallow funds once meant for infrastructure, research, or defence. The fiscal room for manoeuvre is vanishing.

Trump will almost certainly try to massage the numbers, suppressing inconvenient statistics and leaning on the Federal Reserve to print prosperity. That is the kind of thing fragile empires do on the way down. Rating agencies have noticed, and so have investors. The dollar's mystique as the world's safe haven is not what it once was.

When confidence in a currency falters, confidence in the empire behind it follows. America's soft power has eroded, too. Fewer people abroad admire it, and fewer governments trust it. Cuts to foreign aid and "America First" rhetoric have done lasting damage. For decades, the U.S. led by attraction; now it leads mostly by habit, and even that is wearing thin.

The military machine still runs, but it is coughing. Recruitment is down, maintenance is behind, and technical expertise is stretched. The Pentagon can still fight, but not everywhere, not indefinitely, and not without strain. Once, the U.S. could impose its will on multiple fronts; now it struggles to sustain a long deployment without cutting corners.

Then there is China. The contest between Washington and Beijing is no longer rhetorical; it is structural. Each is trying to wall off the other from the technologies that define the future: semiconductors, artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing. The result is a slow decoupling of the global economy, one that hurts everyone but is politically irresistible on both sides.

Meanwhile, America's relations with its allies have become increasingly transactional. Tariffs, threats, and trade disputes have replaced the language of shared purpose. You cannot build coalitions that way for long. Short-term wins for domestic politics mean long-term erosion of trust abroad.

So yes, the American empire is in decline, slowly, unevenly, but unmistakably. And that decline—once it becomes a story the rest of the world believes—begins to feed on itself. Investors pull back, allies hedge their bets, and rivals grow bolder. The perception of weakness creates the reality of it.

Where does that leave Canada? Stuck, mostly. We cannot get out of the way. Two centuries of economic integration, shared infrastructure, and cultural interdependence make that impossible. But we cannot afford blind loyalty, either.

Prime Minister Mark Carney's push to diversify trade and dismantle domestic barriers is necessary, if overdue. Success will require prying open the protectionist instincts of provincial and territorial premiers, and finding partners abroad who see Canada as more than an American appendage. That will not be easy, but neither is drifting down with the ship.

The fall of empires is rarely sudden, and the U.S. still has vast resources, deep talent, and real resilience. But it has also lost the one thing that sustained its global role: confidence, both in itself and from others.

For Canada, the task is to adapt before the cracks widen. Build new partnerships, strengthen our own institutions, and learn to navigate a world where America's shadow no longer covers everything. The empire next door is fading. The question is whether we can adjust before the lights go out.

John McKay is a senior associate with David Pratt & Associates. He previously served as the Liberal MP for Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont., and is a former chair of the House Standing Committee on National Defence.

The Hill Times

What about Canada's commitment to poverty reduction? MPs left us on read



There is a clear need for bold federal action on income security, including strengthened support programs and implementation of a guaranteed livable basic income, write Hannah Owczar and Jennie Pearson. *Unsplash photograph by Emil Kalibradov*

Young people are demanding elected officials take responsibility for commitments to Canada's poverty-reduction goals. But, they're choosing to ignore us.

Hannah Owczar & Jennie Pearson

Opinion



When we asked our elected officials how they plan to keep their promise to cut poverty rates, they had nothing to say. Three-hundred-and-forty-three letters. No real answers. In a country as wealthy as ours, people living in poverty aren't just being ignored—they're being ghosted.

As young people in Canada, we are dismayed by the signs of increasing precarity and inequality among our peers and in our communities, which have recently been confirmed by Canada's Official Poverty Dashboard. According to Statistics Canada, all progress that had been made to reduce poverty since 2019—largely because of the introduction of programs like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit—has been lost. Today, Canada's official poverty rate has returned to pre-pandemic levels. Despite federal commitments to reducing poverty by 50 per cent by 2030, the numbers show we are moving backwards.

Last month, as members of the Basic Income Youth Collective—a grassroots network of young people organizing for economic justice—we mailed every Member of Parliament, newly elected and re-elected, a personalized letter clearly asking what specific, measurable actions they will champion to address rising income inequality and poverty in Canada.

Not one MP replied to us with a meaningful response or any real answers to our questions. Two MPs' staffers were kind enough to respond, but simply passed the buck. "I don't care about poverty, but I will pass this along to someone who might," is a generous summary of their responses to

our pointed, clear request for their commitments to ending poverty. The other 341 letters were met with radio silence.

Young people are demanding that our elected officials take responsibility for their commitments to Canada's poverty-reduction goals. Instead, they're choosing to ignore us. What will it take for the government to finally act on rising inequality in Canada? Allowing poverty to persist is a fundamental violation of our Charter rights, that every person has the right to life, liberty, and security, and must not unjustly be deprived of these rights, as well as our right to substantive equality.

Poverty affects us all; we see its insidious effects in our health-care, child-welfare, and justice systems. We see the increasing number of encampments and people experiencing homelessness in cities across Canada. We hear about the mounting reliance on food banks and "struggle meals," and the highest youth unemployment rate in decades. And yet, the government does nothing—but the solution is right there.

A guaranteed livable basic income is a proven policy to reduce poverty, and Canada's existing basic-income-type programs demonstrate its effectiveness. The Canada Child Benefit (CCB) for low-income families with children, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) for low-income seniors have both been effective in reducing income insecurity. It's time these programs were expanded to include all Canadians. The Parliamentary Budget Office suggests that poverty would fall by half with no increase in tax rates, no new taxes, and no reductions in public services if we were prepared to transform cash transfers programs like the CCB and GIS into a basic income for all Canadians.

There is a clear need for bold federal action on income security, including strengthened support programs and implementation of a guaranteed livable basic income.

How can our elected officials continue to deprive people of human rights, basic needs, and a life with dignity when the solution is right in front of us? We won't let silence be the final word on poverty—and we won't stop pushing for a response that matters.

Hannah Owczar and Jennie Pearson are members of the Basic Income Youth Collective, a grassroots and non-partisan national network of young people who organize and equip young people to advocate for transformative policies like a guaranteed livable basic income.

The Hill Times

Departments grapple with tracking employee attendance after a year of return-to-office rules

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada has only recently begun tracking staff attendance. However, the departments that have been monitoring employee attendance say there is no issue with compliance.

Continued from page 1

an ad-hoc basis, though officials from Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) say efforts are under way to collect the data on a government-wide scale.

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) only began monitoring employee attendance earlier this month.

Spokesperson Rémi Larivière said IRCC's pilot program—which covers an estimated 2,507 workers as of March 2025—“aims to ensure transparency and consistency in how on-site attendance is tracked, and will provide managers with data to help address cases of non-compliance.”

Larivière did not specify how the attendance data will be tracked, but said it will run from Oct. 1 to Nov. 30, with “formal reporting” starting in January 2026.

However, the departments that have been monitoring attendance say there is no issue with employees complying with the Treasury Board's mandate.

While the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) did, at one point, track the attendance of its own staff, *The Hill Times* understands the department no longer reports this information. In September 2024, the first month of the in-office order, about 70 per cent of TBS staff were compliant with the mandate. The secretariat employs 2,374 people as of March 2025, though, like many departments, its plans project a reduction in staff over the next three years.

“Based on our observations, taking into account temporary exceptions authorized by managers, TBS staff are complying with the requirements of the Direction—namely, three days in person (four for executives),” spokesperson Barb Couperus told *The Hill Times*.

“In the rare cases of non-compliance, managers must take

appropriate action to address the situation, in consultation with labour relations experts. To date, the number of non-compliance cases reported to labour relations specialists has been negligible.”

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) uses aggregated log-in data to identify when its approximately 39,000 employees are on site.

“We aim for a 100-per-cent compliance rate, taking into account all relevant variables, such as employees who work their onsite days from a non-ESDC location (for example, meetings with colleagues in outside departments), who are on travel status, in training, on leave, or whose on-site days are in the field,” spokesperson Mila Roy said, adding “employee presence is also primarily assessed through direct observations by management.”

“ESDC is pleased with the recent attendance rates achieved by its employees working under a hybrid work arrangement. Nevertheless, the department remains vigilant and continues to pay close attention to this issue, with the goal of ensuring that these results are maintained and that they are continuously improved.”

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) provided data to *The Hill Times* that showed its compliance rate has hovered between 78 and 90 per cent since September 2024.

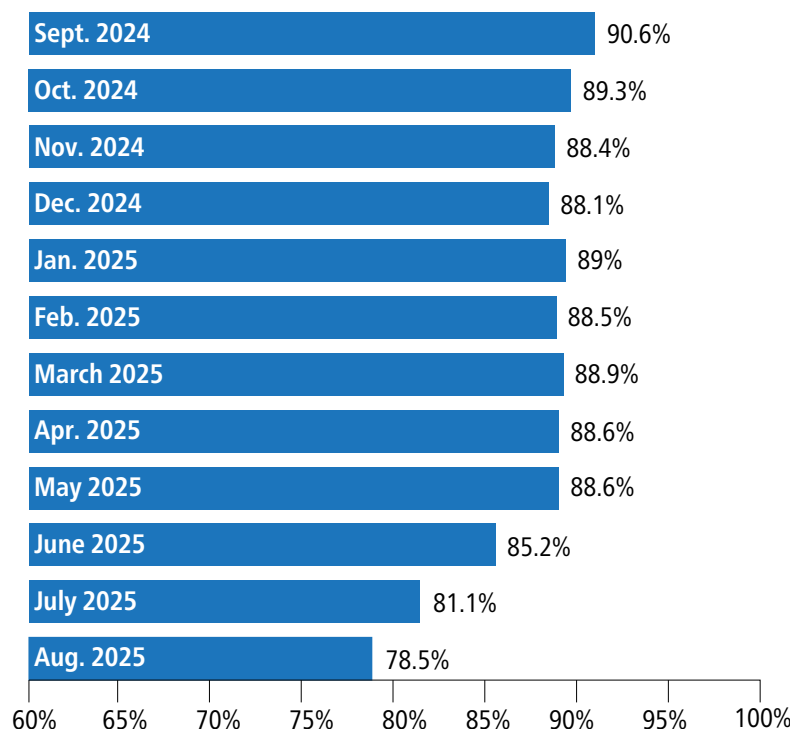
Spokesperson Charlotte MacLeod said the attendance data does not account for days where employees are on annual leave, including periods of increased leave during the summer months; days where employees are on business travel, “which is an integral part of GAC's mandate,” or days worked on site at other GAC or government buildings. GAC reported 7,657 staff as of March 2025.

“Therefore, the collected compliance rate is significantly lower than the actual compliance rate. Considering these significant and unpredictable factors, the department considers GAC's compliance rate to be very satisfactory,” MacLeod said.

Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), with a total of approximately 13,000 employees as of March 2025, measure office attendance via anonymized Microsoft 365 login activity from government office networks, spokesperson Mark Johnson recently told *The Hill Times* via email.

GAC employee compliance rate for in-office work requirements

The Treasury Board Secretariat mandated public servants to work in-office three days per week beginning September 2024.



Departments were expected to implement the September 2024 return-to-office directive from the Treasury Board, now led by President Shafqat Ali, but monitoring has largely been done on an ad-hoc basis. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

“Our current system is designed to provide a snapshot of attendance over a rolling four-week period. This equips management with information to understand trends and to assist with decision-making, rather than tracking individual compliance over time,” Johnson said.

He added no personal or identifiable employee data is collected or reported. To maintain accuracy and protect privacy, data is retained only for short-term reporting, and refreshed as new information becomes available. Since data sources are regularly updated, historical reports prior to June 2025 are not available.

Between June 29 and Sept. 15, 2025, Health Canada employees with hybrid work arrangements have been on site for 95 per cent of their scheduled days, while PHAC employees were on site for 87 per cent of their scheduled days.

“This is consistent with expectations based on current hybrid work arrangement data.”

He said the data does not take into account all “legitimate, context-specific management decisions, nor personal circumstances such as training, family responsibilities, or other operational needs, which may impact office attendance.”

PSPC officials recently appeared before the House Public Accounts Committee on Oct. 2, discussing their efforts to track employee attendance and ultimately sell off surplus office space in an effort to build affordable housing. Progress on that front has been slow as there is currently no standardized way of knowing how many workers throughout the public service come into an office on a given day.

Efforts to standardize tracking underway

Michael Mills, associate deputy minister of PSPC, said prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government didn't track office space use at all, and current methods run into both privacy and data-quality concerns. A June report from Auditor General Karen Hogan found some departments use key-pass swipes or IP addresses, while others

don't track day-to-day attendance at all, and the attendance data is so scattershot and unreliable that she didn't include it in her report.

There is a solution on the horizon, though. Nathalie Bertrand, PSPC's associate assistant deputy minister, said the department is working with Shared Services Canada (SSC), which is the public service's technology hub and employs nearly 8,900 staff, to find a solution to standardize tracking attendance across the government.

“We are working hand in hand with our SSC colleagues because we truly believe that technology is going to be the piece that actually helps us drive this forward,” Bertrand said.

There are currently “three or four” different solutions being assessed, and department officials committed to returning to the committee with a final proposal by the end of the spring.

Nathan Prier, president of the Canadian Association of Professional Employees, said department efforts to track attendance is an “unprecedented employee surveillance system,” and a waste of managers' time.

Unions in the federal public service have been pushing for greater flexibility in hybrid work arrangements since the TBS mandated a return to in-office work, arguing that remote work offers greater productivity and flexibility for workers.

“Federal workers are still waiting for an explanation of why workers can't work remotely if they so choose, and instead, they're being told that their privacy rights are being violated instead,” Prier said in an interview. “This reads as a bit of a management flex over workers who are already getting pretty fed up with being mandated into inefficiency, being mandated into less productivity by their own employer, and the best and the brightest are packing up and looking for work in other shores.”

“The government's going to have to live with the consequences of treating workers like children, and just openly disrespecting them and making them less productive,” he said.

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NEWS

Conservative attacks on DEI are nothing new, but fighting past battles risks future growth, say politicians

The Tories' latest salvo on DEI policies and Trudeau-era grievances appeals to 'the base,' but could alienate potential new voters, says Liberal strategist Greg MacEachern.

Continued from page 1

(DEI) policies, sharing an earlier post from Conservative MP Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill, Ont.), which included a link to a petition titled "DEI spending and government waste needs to die."

The petition says the Liberal government has "wasted" \$1.049-billion on "DEI bureaucracy while Canadians struggle to make ends meet," and accuses it of "undermining academic freedom, silencing dissenting voices, and eroding trust in Canadian institutions ... by tying research funding to identity politics."

While many Liberals and progressives responded to Poilievre and the Conservatives push against DEI by defending the benefits of the programs for underserved communities, some also noted the apparent irony of Poilievre commenting on "the merit principle," by likening his recent byelection campaign to an inclusion initiative after losing his long-held seat in Carleton, Ont., this past April.

Liberal deputy House leader Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Ont.) argued that his "message would be more powerful" if he "resign[ed] from the seat you took from a hardworking MP so you can participate."

Former ministerial staffers Olivier Cullen and Greg MacEachern also called it out during separate interviews with *The Hill Times*, but added that beyond the dissonance between believing DEI is unfair while also needing a "re-do" to be included in the House of Commons, the need for the byelection had further-reaching effects on Poilievre's image.

As an example, Cullen, now director of strategy at Blackbird Strategies, said that while the clip



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's recent call for federal spending on diversity, equity, and inclusion 'to die' is a renewal of his party's campaign promise to end 'failed policies with little resonance for average Canadians,' says Crestview Strategy's Ashton Arsenault. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

of Poilievre biting into an apple during an interview had boosted his image as the guy to take on then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, since his election loss, those kinds of antics could be less beneficial if not directly harmful.

"At the time, it worked for him because he was going to take down the guy nobody liked, but people aren't looking at him the same way anymore," explained Cullen, who previously served as chief of staff to then-Indigenous services Minister Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay-Superior North, Ont.), now minister of jobs and families.

MacEachern, a principal with KAN strategies, said the apparent return to "Reform-esque" grievance issues is a regression caused by the Conservatives' "inability to adjust" to their loss in the last election.

"This is a return to the rhetorical style that made Canadians question whether Poilievre was the right person to lead the country," MacEachern said. "You can't say that you're about pocketbook issues and then start talking about grievance issues like DEI."

MacEachern said Poilievre is "stuck in the past," and making arguments more suited to an imagined election against Trudeau in 2024, pointing to the Tory leader's comments on a recent podcast suggesting the former prime minister "probably" violated the Criminal Code and should have faced time in jail.

During an appearance on the *Northern Perspective* podcast released on Oct. 14, Poilievre described the leadership of the RCMP as "despicable" and that he believed many of the Trudeau-era scandals, such as SNC-Lavalin, "should have involved jail time."

"These would normally have led to criminal charges, but of course the RCMP covered it all up," Poilievre said.

Those comments drew criticism from across the political

spectrum, including from Dimitri Soudas, a former communications director to then-prime minister Stephen Harper who accused Poilievre of "dismantling the principled, trustworthy Conservative Party we tried to build."

However, in a statement on social media, Harper's current chief of staff, Anna Tomala, said Soudas' opinion piece in *The Toronto Star* "does not reflect [Harper's] views."

On Oct. 20, *Politico* reported that several Conservative MPs suggested that Poilievre's remarks do not represent the view of caucus. Later that day, *The Star* reported on a talking-points memo sent to caucus advising them to attempt to soften those remarks, and reinforce that they had been aimed at the RCMP's former commissioner Brenda Lucki, and the organization's decision not to lay charges during the SNC-Lavalin affair or over Trudeau's decision to vacation at an island owned by the Aga Khan.

MacEachern said while Poilievre may not seem concerned about the next election, many of the newer Conservative MPs and those who retained their seats in hotly contested ridings will likely be starting to get concerned over how Poilievre's comments will affect their future chances.

"There are going to be members of his caucus that may decide that they're not going to run again or that Poilievre isn't the right person to keep leading them," MacEachern said. "This stuff will only appeal to the base of the base in the Conservative Party—but if Poilievre doesn't have them on board already, he has much more significant problems."

However, Conservatives who spoke with *The Hill Times* disagreed.

Crestview Strategy's Ashton Arsenault, a former ministerial staffer in the Harper government, said the party's messaging may

be more explicitly partisan and had begun to cover more socially conservative issues, but it wasn't really anything new.

During this year's general election, the Conservative Party's platform included a promise to end "woke ideology" in the federal public service, and in the allocation of federal funds for university research.

"I don't see anything crossing a line or a boundary that need not be crossed," Arsenault said, adding that while Liberals may be defensive of those programs, for the "average Canadian," DEI is "failed policy with little resonance."

As one example, Arsenault pointed to the \$8.2-million Global Affairs Canada allocated toward an Oxfam Canada program for "gender-just, low carbon" rice in Vietnam, which Poilievre also highlighted in an Oct. 6 social media post.

"When people are struggling with bills and wondering how they're going to get month to month, or sometimes week to week, seeing the government drop this kind of money on these kinds of programs, quite frankly, it should and does piss people off," Arsenault said. "When you see that type of carelessness with tax dollars, it's only right to point it out."

The program, Go-Rice, aims to make rice production in Vietnam "more sustainable and inclusive," according to Oxfam Canada, including by helping to close the "24-per-cent productivity gap between women and men farmers" that exists "largely due to ... structural inequalities" such as "lack of access to training and technology" and "persistent gender biases." The program also looks to tackle the rising environmental costs of rice farming through new, climate-smart techniques, the organization's website says. "Overreliance on fertilizers and pesticides, coupled with the widespread burning of rice straw, has polluted soil and water, and released over one million tons of CO2 and other pollutants in 2020 alone."

In a survey conducted in the winter and released this past May by Abacus Data, 45 per cent of Canadians indicated that DEI policies have no impact on "people like me," while 20 per cent said the policies are harmful. While only 35 per cent of respondents reported being helped by those policies, that number rises to 47 per cent among Canadians aged 18 to 29, to 38 per cent among women, and to 55 per cent among those who identify as a visible minority.

The survey also found that in terms of overall impact on society, 51 per cent said DEI policies have a net-positive impact. In comparison, 25 per cent and 24 per cent reported negligible or adverse effects, respectively. Furthermore, 46 per cent of respondents said DEI policies have a net-positive impact on the economy, 21 per cent said the impacts were negative, and 32 per cent said they have no effect.

Former Conservative staffer Jordan Paquet, now a vice-president at Bluesky Strategy Group, said that while Poilievre may be opening himself to comparisons to United States President Donald Trump, the Liberals have long attempted to attack successive Conservative leaders by associating them with Republicans.

"When you look back at the early 2000s, they said the Conservatives were like [then-U.S. president George W. Bush], so the Liberals are always going to try to frame the party that way," Paquet said. "That's always going to be a challenge that they have to learn to overcome."

To do so, both Paquet and Arsenault said that rather than attempting to retreat from those comparisons, many Conservatives would rather the party and Poilievre hold their ground and get their message out on their own terms.

"Let Conservatives be Conservatives," Arsenault said, paraphrasing the similar advice given to *The West Wing*'s fictional U.S. president Jed Bartlet.

Paquet added that as the Conservatives are leaning into their identity, he also noted that the Liberals have begun to "change their spots" on DEI issues since the last election.

"We shouldn't discount the Liberals' capability to be chameleons and to get voters and the media to buy their narratives about why they have to shift," Paquet said, noting that the government's proposal for a more-than 80-per-cent reduction to Women and Gender Equality Canada by 2028, and further reductions to the federal public service as a whole, according to departmental plans from this spring.

However, NDP political strategist Jordan Lechnitz, former deputy chief of staff to then-leader Tom Mulcair, said that playing to what's comfortable can be a significant hindrance to the growth the Conservatives need to win the next election.

Lechnitz said that while keeping the base energized or shoring up support ahead of the leadership review is likely a consideration, the more likely explanation is that it's Poilievre's preferred strategy.

"The lesson a lot of observers took from their loss was that his kind of Trump-like rhetoric and behaviour is a hard ceiling for their growth, but that's clearly not the lesson that he and his immediate circle took away from it," Lechnitz explained. "Poilievre enjoys this kind of rhetoric, he's comfortable with it, and he clearly has no interest in changing his approach."

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Feds need clearer focus on youth as unemployment hits 15-year high, critics say

Prime Minister Mark Carney 'has silenced the voice of youth at the cabinet table by failing to appoint a minister,' says NDP critic Leah Gazan, noting Secretary of State for Children and Youth Anna Gainey should be pushing for more.

Continued from page 1

Families Minister Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay–Superior North, Ont.) on Employment and Social Development Canada files.

According to Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, Man.), her party's critic for families, children, and social development, without a minister responsible for youth, there is no one fighting for them in the cabinet.

"I think it's beholden on Gainey, even as a secretary of state without a cabinet seat, to be pushing her caucus to make this a top priority," Gazan said.

Then-prime minister Justin Trudeau's cabinet had a minister with the youth portfolio for nearly his entire tenure, with Trudeau holding it himself from late 2015 until early 2019. The portfolio returned to the cabinet table in November 2019 as part of then-minister Bardish Chagger's diversity, inclusion, and youth file. In October 2021, the role was moved to then-minister Marci Ien, who was responsible for women and gender equality and youth until the end of the Trudeau ministry earlier this year.

When forming his cabinet, Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) did not include a minister responsible for youth. "He has silenced the voice of youth at the cabinet table by failing to appoint a minister," said Gazan.

Gazan pointed to areas like artificial intelligence, tariffs, and an increase in poverty among aging populations—limiting retirements and reducing job openings—as sectors where she believes "impacts are being felt by youth," and are not being dealt with sufficiently. She suggested investing in resources for seniors, training, education, and programs.



Despite Liberal MP Anna Gainey serving in the role of secretary of state for children and youth, the federal government is not making young people enough of a priority, according to the NDP critic. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

According to the Statistic Canada Labour Force Survey, as of this past September, the youth unemployment rate was at 14.7 per cent, marking the highest in 15 years, excluding during the COVID-19 pandemic years. In September 2024, youth unemployment was at 13.5 per cent. In September 2018, the youth jobless rate was at 11 per cent, and in September 2019, it was 11.9 per cent.

"I've been a career adviser for 15 years, and this past summer was one of the hardest I think I've seen for students," said Jana McDonald, who works at the University of Guelph and who connects students to jobs and work experience.

McDonald said that many students with relevant work experience also faced challenges in getting hired. "I don't think it's a lack of effort from the students," she said. According to her, the federal government is making an effort, but young people need more.

Conservative MP Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park–Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.), his party's employment critic, released his party's youth jobs plan to address the "deepening youth unemployment crisis" on Oct. 15. He called on the Liberal government to incorporate the plan in the Nov. 4 federal budget.

"We want to hold the government accountable for what has not happened up until now, but also present these constructive proposals," said Genuis during a press conference.

The Conservative plan outlines four key pillars in addressing youth unemployment. First, it calls for repealing "anti-energy and anti-resource development laws," cutting taxes, and reducing red tape to boost investment and business. It proposes fixing



NDP MP Leah Gazan says a voice for youth is missing in cabinet decisions. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

immigration by improving credential recognition, and matching intake with labour and housing needs. On education, the Tories suggest student aid, prioritizing in-demand fields. Finally, the plan includes a 100-per-cent tax write-off for companies building housing for new workers.

"So far, the only response to these events from the Liberal government has been to propose increased public expenditure to modestly expand existing youth job subsidy programs," said Genuis. "The government has no jobs plan for our youth."

When asked if he thought Gainey, in her role of secretary of state, was adequately addressing the issue of youth unemployment, Genuis said: "I don't think the government in general is adequately addressing this issue—the numbers continue to climb. The government has no plan."

Gainey was not made available for an interview with *The Hill Times*, but a statement from an office spokesperson said: "Our government is investing across the country to equip young people with the tools they need to secure quality, good-paying jobs and build successful futures. We have targeted programs and youth-specific strategies that have created over 130,000 job opportunities for youth this year."

Since she began her role, Gainey has been named in government releases supporting youth program investments, including an announcement this summer by Hajdu, which added 6,000 more jobs under Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ), on top of the 70,000 jobs it was on track to have.

Gainey has also focused on making the National School Food Program permanent. Initially introduced by the Trudeau government in April 2024 with a \$1-billion, five-year investment, the program provides Canadian students with access to healthy meals at school and helps parents save on groceries. As announced by Carney on Oct. 10, his government will invest \$216-million annually starting in 2029-30, when Trudeau's five-year investment ends.

In an Aug. 12 statement for International Youth Day, Gainey said, "In the face of youth employment challenges, we are fully committed to helping young Canadians get ahead by accessing meaningful jobs." The statement said the Liberals intend to advance the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, CSJ, and the Student Work Placement programs, which all aim to help Canadian youth gain experience and overcome job barriers.

Gainey and her husband, Tom Pitfield, are a part of Carney's inner circle. Pitfield is the principal secretary to Carney. Her father Bob Gainey is a Canadian hockey legend who played for the Montreal Canadiens from 1973 to 1989.

After graduating with degrees in political science and international relations, Gainey worked as a policy adviser for two ministers responsible for national defence and veterans affairs. During that time, she and Justin Trudeau became close friends. As the president of the Liberal Party of Canada from 2014 to 2018, Gainey was involved during and after the decisive Liberal majority government win in 2015. She also served as executive chair at Canada 2020, a progressive think tank once chaired by Carney, before successfully running for federal office in a 2023 byelection to succeed then-Liberal MP Marc Garneau.

Earlier this month, the Montreal Economic Institute, a non-profit research organization, released a study on social mobility by province, which refers to the ability of people to earn more than their parents and achieve socio-economic success. All provinces showed a social mobility score under 60 per cent. As reported by *The Hub*, the report cites many contributing elements, including high youth unemployment.

As Canada's youth face significant barriers to social mobility and employment, the House Human Resources, Skills, and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities Committee is studying the issue and hearing testimony from witnesses. In its first report released on Sept. 22, committee members reported they were "alarmed over the 25-year low youth employment data."

In its brief submitted to the committee for this study, Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi (MASSE) argued that Canada's Employment Insurance program (EI) is inaccessible, and fails to protect all unemployed workers, especially youth, women, and part-time workers. MASSE is a Québec-based network of organizations advocating for the rights of unemployed people.

"The labour market accessible to young people is shifting radically," MASSE wrote in its brief, citing a study by Desjardins on youth unemployment, calling young people overrepresented in part-time and seasonal work.

MASSE said the current EI system penalizes part-time workers because eligibility is based on the number of hours worked, not weeks. This favours full-time workers, while part-timers, often young, take longer to qualify. They suggest a hybrid system that considers both hours and weeks for improved access.

"Currently, youth unemployment is particularly high, at a rate usually seen during a recession. Despite this, it should be noted that youth still face challenges accessing benefits," MASSE wrote.

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FEATURE

Japan marks Self-Defense Forces Day with song

The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia



1. Japanese Ambassador Kanji Yamanouchi, left, former governor general Michaëlle Jean, and her husband Jean-Daniel Lafond toast to Japan at the Self-Defense Forces Day reception at the ambassador's residence on Sept. 24. 2. Yamanouchi on guitar, right; El Salvadorian Ambassador Ricardo Alfonso Cisneros Rodríguez, European Union Ambassador Geneviève Tuts, Colombian Ambassador Carlos Arturo Morales López, and Argentine Ambassador Josefina Martinez Gramuglia on vocals; and Seiya Uchinami, first secretary at the Japanese Embassy, on piano. 3. Bulgarian Ambassador Plamen Georgiev, left; Mahmoud Eboo, representative of the Aga Khan Development Network; Vessela Georgieva, wife of the Bulgarian ambassador; and Afghanistan Ambassador Hassan Soroosh. 4. CSG Senator Krista Ross, left, and Yamanouchi. 5. Maj.-Gen. Dave Yarker, commander of the Canadian Armed Forces Cyber Command, left; and Lt.-Col. Takashi Ochiai, military attaché of Japan. 6. Alina-Victoria Manoiu, left, and her husband Romanian Ambassador Bogdan Manoiu.

Chile raises flag for national day



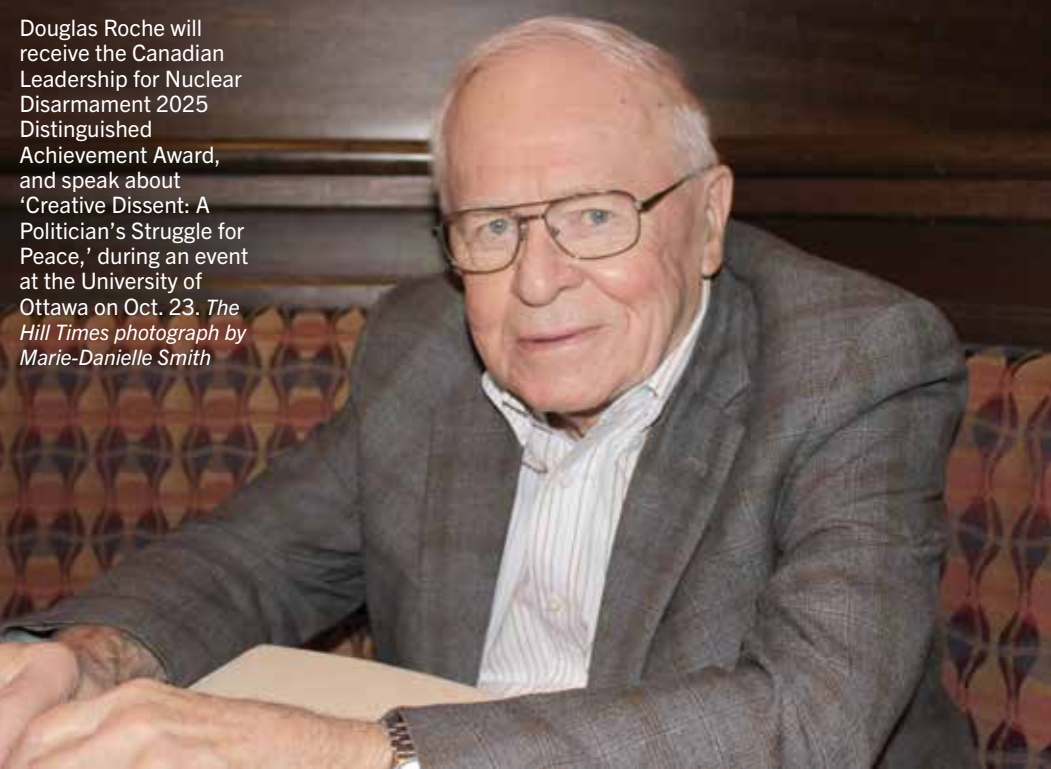
1. Chilean Ambassador Juan Carlos García Pérez De Arce delivers remarks at a Sept. 18 flag-raising ceremony at Ottawa City Hall. 2. Chile's national dance, La Cueca, is performed at City Hall. 3. Sergeant John Lagos raises the Chilean flag. 4. Liberal MP Robert Oliphant, left; Xochitl Poblete Rojas, the Chilean ambassador's wife; and García Pérez De Arce attend a national day reception at the official residence on Sept. 23. 5. Portuguese Ambassador Antonio Manuel Torres Domingues Leao Rocha, left; Poblete Rojas, García Pérez De Arce, and Maria Luisa Leão Rocha, wife of the Portuguese ambassador. 6. Poblete Rojas, left; García Pérez De Arce, and Liberal MP Ahmed Hussien.



Parliamentary Calendar

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

Former senator Douglas Roche to receive the Canadian Leadership for Nuclear Disarmament award, deliver lecture on Oct. 23 in Ottawa.



Douglas Roche will receive the Canadian Leadership for Nuclear Disarmament 2025 Distinguished Achievement Award, and speak about 'Creative Dissent: A Politician's Struggle for Peace,' during an event at the University of Ottawa on Oct. 23. *The Hill Times* photograph by Marie-Danielle Smith

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 22

House Schedule—The House of Commons will sit Oct. 20-24; Oct. 27-31; Nov. 3-7; Nov. 17-21; Nov. 24-28; Dec. 1-5; and Dec. 8-12. 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.

We Grow to Build: FPAC's National Policy Conference—The Forest Products Association of Canada hosts its 2025 National Forest Policy Conference. This year's theme is "Canadian Forestry at a Crossroads: Navigating Turbulence, Unlocking Potential and Restoring Resilience." Wednesday, Oct. 22, at 8:30 a.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St. Contact rogers@fpac.ca. Register via Eventbrite.

'Reimagining Trade in the Federation'—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts "Barriers and Bridges: Reimagining Trade in the Federation," a chance to reflect on the future of internal trade in Canada. Participants include former Quebec premier Philippe Couillard; professor Stéphane Paquin; and Maryse Picard, lawyer and former executive director of the Huron-Wendat Nation. Wednesday, Oct. 22, at 5 p.m. ET at the Morrin Centre, 44 Chaussée des Écossais, Quebec City. Details: irpp.org.

Ocean Week on the Hill Reception—As part of Ocean Week on the Hill, Canada's Ocean Supercluster hosts a networking reception bringing together our senior representatives and decision-makers in Ottawa on the transformative potential of Canada's

ocean economy, and how our national ocean cluster can help unlock it. Wednesday, Oct. 22, 5 p.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St., Ottawa.

Library and Archives Canada Scholar Awards—The Library and Archives Canada Foundation, and Library and Archives Canada host the 2025 Library and Archives Canada Scholar Awards honouring outstanding Canadians who've left an indelible mark on our country's cultural, literary, and historical heritage. This year's recipients are: author Danny Ramadan, historian Margaret MacMillan, poet Rupi Kaur, playwright Tomson Highway, and writer Gabrielle Boulianne-Tremblay. Wednesday, Oct. 22, 5:30 p.m. ET, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa. By invitation only.

Psychedelic Medicine Soirée—PsyCan hosts a reception, Psychedelic Medicine Soirée. Join senior leaders, practitioners, and patients for refreshments and to chat about the future of psychedelic medicine in Canada. Wednesday, Oct. 22, at 6:30 p.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 15th floor, 99 Bank St., Ottawa. RSVP: admin@psychedeliccanada.org.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 22—SUNDAY, OCT. 26

Ottawa International Writers' Festival—The Ottawa International Writers' Festival fall edition takes place from Wednesday, Oct. 22, to Sunday, Oct. 26. Details: writersfestival.org.

THURSDAY, OCT. 23

Getting Big Things Done 2.0—Canada 2020 hosts the second

instalment of "From Ambition to Action: Getting Big Things Done," a one-day summit focused on the realities of delivering transformational projects in Canada. Following up on the June edition, this event will convene top-level doers—developers, policymakers, Indigenous leaders, and industry builders—from across housing, infrastructure, energy, economic development, and trade. Thursday, Oct. 23, at 8:30 a.m. ET at The Westin Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details: canada2020.ca.

'Mining For a Resilient and Productive Economy'—Pierre Gratton, president and CEO of the Mining Association of Canada, will deliver remarks on "Mining For a Resilient and Productive Economy: Strengthening Canada's Future," hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. Thursday, Oct. 23, at 11:30 a.m. PT, at Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, 900 W. Georgia St. Details: boardoftrade.com.

Panel: 'Shaping the Future of the Ring of Fire'—Former Liberal MP now mayor of Sudbury, Ont., Paul Lefebvre will take part in a panel discussion, "Ontario's Critical Corridor: Shaping the Future of the Ring of Fire," hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. He will be joined by Priya Tandon, president of the Ontario Mining Association; and Ashley Larose, CEO of Science North. Thursday, Oct. 23, at 12 p.m. ET at the C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

Douglas Roche to be Awarded—Douglas Roche will receive the Canadian Leadership for Nuclear Disarmament 2025 Distinguished Achievement Award. He will also deliver a lecture,

"Creative Dissent: A Politician's Struggle for Peace." A reception will follow. Thursday, Oct. 23, at 4 p.m. at the Centre for International Policy Studies, Room 4007, Faculty of Social Sciences Building, 120 University Pk., University of Ottawa. Contact: clnd@pugwashgroup.ca.

Ex-CBC Reporter Brian Stewart to Discuss New Book—Former CBC foreign correspondent and award-winning reporter Brian Stewart will discuss his new book *On the Ground: My Life as a Foreign Correspondent*, part of the Ottawa International Writers' Festival. Thursday, Oct. 28, at 6:30 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St. Details: writersfestival.org.

FRIDAY, OCT. 24

Minister McGuinty to Deliver Remarks—Defence Minister David McGuinty will deliver remarks on "The Economics of Action," hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Friday, Oct. 24, at 11:30 a.m. ET online and in person at Arcadian Court, 401 Bay St., Simpson Tower, 8th floor, Toronto. Details: empireclubofcanada.com.

FRIDAY, OCT. 24—SATURDAY, NOV. 1

Prime Minister Carney to visit the Indo-Pacific Region—As part of his trip to the Indo-Pacific region, Prime Minister Mark Carney will attend the ASEAN summit in Malaysia and meet with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim; and then meet Prime Minister Lawrence Wong in Singapore. In South Korea, he will attend the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, and meet with President Lee Jae Myung. Friday, Oct. 24, to Saturday, Nov. 1. Details: pm.gc.ca.

SUNDAY, OCT. 26

Crescendo Concert Series at Rideau Hall—Rideau Hall launches its Crescendo Concert Series featuring seasoned performers from the Central Band of the Canadian Armed Forces in small ensembles. This intimate concert series will showcase talented musicians in the elegant ballroom where audiences can experience the magic of live music up close. Today's concert features the Chinook Woodwind Quintet. Sunday, Oct. 26, at 2 p.m. ET, at Rideau Hall, 1 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Details: gg.ca.

Alex Neve to Discuss 'Human Rights in a Fractured World'—Former Amnesty International Canada secretary-general Alex Neve will sit down with Carleton University's Adrian Harewood to discuss this year's CBC Massey Lectures, titled "Universal: Renewing Human Rights in a Fractured World," part of the Ottawa International Writers' Festival. Sunday, Oct. 26, at 8 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa. Details: writersfestival.org.

MONDAY, OCT. 27

Book Launch for Bob Joseph—Perfect Books and The Other Hill host the launch of Bob Joseph's book, *21 Things You Need to Know About Indigenous Self-Government: A Conversation About Dismantling the Indian Act*. Monday, Oct. 27, at 7 p.m. ET at allsaints, 330 Laurier Ave. E., Ottawa. Details: theotherhill-lautrecoline.ca.

TUESDAY, OCT. 28

Conference: 'Canada's Next Chapter in the Indo-Pacific'—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts a day-long conference on "Canada's Next Chapter in the Indo-Pacific." Among the participants are Malaysian High Commissioner to Canada Dr. Shazlina Z. Abidin; Japan's deputy head of mission Ishii Hideaki; Lisa Baiton, president and CEO, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers; Mark Maki, CEO of Trans Mountain Corp.; and various Canadian government officials. Tuesday, Oct. 28, at 8:30 a.m. ET at 150 Elgin St., Suite 1800, Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

David Collette to Deliver Remarks—Former Liberal cabinet minister David Collette will deliver virtual remarks on "Navigating the Geopolitical Challenge of Canada's National Security," hosted by the Balsillie School of International Affairs. Tuesday, Oct. 28, at 11 a.m. ET. Happening online: balsillieschool.ca.

Michael Wernick to Deliver Remarks—Michael Wernick, former clerk of the Privy Council and secretary to the federal cabinet, will deliver remarks, "Beyond Dogma: Rethinking State Capacity to Drive National Productivity," at the C.D. Howe's Patron Circle Dinner. Tuesday, Oct. 28, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

CFA Hill Day Reception—The Canadian Federation of Agriculture hosts its Hill Day reception, a chance to network with farm leaders from across Canada, industry stakeholders, politicians and decision-makers throughout the industry. Featuring cocktails and appetizers made with Canadian ingredients. Tuesday, Oct. 28, at 5:30 p.m. ET at Ottawa Marriott Hotel, 100 Kent St. Register via Eventbrite.

Hill Day: 'Protecting Canadian Lungs'—Join the Lung Health Foundation and the National Lung Health Alliance in Ottawa for three days of education, advocacy, and impact. Leading clinicians, researchers, community leaders, and people living with chronic lung conditions will meet with policymakers to raise awareness and advance solutions to address Canada's respiratory health crisis. The National Lung Health Alliance will host a reception on Tuesday, Oct. 28, 6-9 p.m. ET, at Metropolitan Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Details: nbennett@lunghealth.ca, 647-544-7314.

The Walrus Talks 'Sovereign Canada'—Former Conservative cabinet minister James Moore will take part in a panel discussion on "Sovereign Canada" hosted by The Walrus Talks. Other participants include Richard Stursberg, former head of English Services at CBC; journalist Stephen Maher; Marisa Beck with the Canadian Climate Institute; Deanna Horton, distinguished fellow, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy; Jesse McCormick, consultant on Indigenous Participation in Major Project Developments; and Sean Speer, co-founder of The Hub. Tuesday, Oct. 28, at 7 p.m. at Isabel Bader Theatre, 93 Charles St. W., Toronto. Details: thewalrus.ca.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 29

Bell Canada President and CEO to Deliver Remarks—Mirko Bibic, president and CEO of BCE Inc. and Bell Canada, will deliver remarks on building the next generation of nation-defining infrastructure in Canada. Wednesday, Oct. 29, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, 100 Front St., Toronto. Register: canadianclub.org.

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Nov. 5, 2025

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