FEDS CONTINUE to persecute whistleblowers

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FEDERAL SPENDING JUMPED 5.7 PER CENT IN 2024-25

▶ *LAURA RYCKEWAERT* PAGE 6

THOUSANDS COME OUT FOR REMEMBRANCE DAY IN OTTAWA

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Exclusive opinion: inside

THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR, NO. 2248 | CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER | MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2025 $5.00

NEWS

Poilievre should take a page out of Brian Mulroney's playbook on caucus management, say political players

BY ABBAS RANA

As MPs return to Ottawa following the Remembrance Day break, and after a tumultuous week prior that saw one Conservative MP cross the floor and another announce he would step down, some pundits and political insiders are suggesting that

Continued on page 32

NEWS

House Speaker Scarpaleggia residing at an Ottawa hotel instead of official residence, 'The Farm,' for family reasons

BY ABBAS RANA

Liberal MP Francis Scarpaleggia, who was elected as House Speaker in May following the last general election, has chosen not to reside at "The Farm," the Speaker's official residence in the Gatineau Hills in Quebec, opting instead to stay at a local hotel in Ottawa for family reasons, his office says.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Olivier Duhaime, director of outreach and media relations for the House Speaker's Office,

Continued on page 33

COMMENT

Carney walks a timid line on climate change

The final vote on Prime Minister Mark Carney's first budget is imminent, but one thing is already obvious: it suggests no urgency to address the climate crisis, and only token attempts to attach green requirements to the advertised building and investment boom the budget is supposed to unleash, writes Susan Riley. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

The longer Prime Minister Mark Carney tries to play both sides of the street—and this game has been going on for decades—the farther behind we fall, environmentally and economically. He must know that.

Read Susan Riley's column on p. 12

NEWS

'We will be facing a financial cliff': advocates concerned about mental health and substance use programs as bilaterals begin to lapse in 2027

BY TESSIE SANCI

With some federal funding for mental health and addictions programs lapsing next fiscal year—and other related cash barely being applied to help with provincial and territorial efforts—organizations and the NDP's

Continued on page 34

NEWS

Budget signals strong economic focus, but falls short in details like regulatory burden or clarity on defence spending, say experts, economists

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

The recently-released federal budget signals a "fundamental realignment" and a "course correction" for Canada in terms of economic growth, but a blueprint is still needed to address the trade war with the United States, according to economists and

Continued on page 36

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Heard on the Hill

By Christina Leadlay

Conservative MP Leslyn Lewis is helping out Jamaica's hurricane victims

Jamaican High Commissioner Marsha Coore Lobban. *The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia*

Conservative MP Leslyn Lewis has been working with churches and community partners in her Ontario riding to help coordinate hurricane relief for Jamaica. "In moments like these, we see the best of humanity," she posted on X. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Conservative MP **Leslyn Lewis** is acting locally to help Jamaicans who are rebuilding after Hurricane Melissa touched down in the Caribbean last month.

"Over the past week, in addition to my parliamentary duties, I've been working alongside churches and community partners to help coordinate hurricane relief for Jamaica following one of the most powerful Category 5 storms in modern history," the two-term MP for Haldimand-Norfolk, Ont., posted on X on Nov. 10.

Lewis, who is originally from Jamaica, described the devastation: "Entire towns have been flattened—scenes that look more like war zones than tropical landscapes. The devastation is immense, but so is the spirit of Canadians to help those in need," acknowledging the work of Mississauga's "Pastor **Pat Francis** and many churches who have mobilized together to send another 40 ft container of food, clothing, and essential supplies to those hardest hit."

Lewis also thanked Berlo's Best Farm, located in her riding, which has shipped a 40-foot container to Montego Bay with products like food, small tools, hygiene products and more to be dispersed to hurricane victims around the island. She noted donations continue to be accepted.

"These swift, selfless actions are a reminder that governments cannot do everything—and that when communities unite, faith and compassion can move faster than bureaucracy," wrote Lewis. "In moments like these, we see the best of humanity: people choosing to lift each other up when everything else has been torn down."

On Oct. 30, the Canadian government pledged $7-million for humanitarian assistance to support emergency relief efforts in the Caribbean region, according to Global Affairs Canada. In a video on social media on Nov. 7, Jamaican High Commissioner to Canada **Marsha Coore Lobban** noted that Canada has set aside "$2-million specifically for Jamaica to assist in the relief efforts."

On Nov. 12, Secretary of State for International Development **Randeep Sarai** announced that the federal government would match donations made to the Canadian Red Cross' Hurricane Melissa Appeal. Every donation made by individuals to this appeal retroactively from Oct. 28 until Nov. 24 will be matched up to a total of $1.5-million.

Ontario Senator Paulette Senior honoured for her community impact

Independent Senator Paulette Senior. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Independent Ontario Senator **Paulette Senior** received the Community Impact award, part of the 2025 Ontario Business Achievement Awards, at a ceremony in Toronto on Nov. 15.

Hosted by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the awards "are the premier celebration of business success in the province," according to a Nov. 10 press release.

"The Ontario Chamber was particularly inspired by Paulette's work to empower women entrepreneurs while at the Canadian Women's Foundation," said **Daniel Tisch**, the chamber's president and CEO.

"She is a true trailblazer whose influence now shapes national policy."

"This award underscores the importance of not just serving the community but changing the policies that affect it. That is the work that truly drives me, and I am honoured by this recognition," said Senior, whose family immigrated from Jamaica when she was 11 years old. She was appointed to the Senate in December 2023.

Bob Rae to speak at Queen's University, Nov. 20

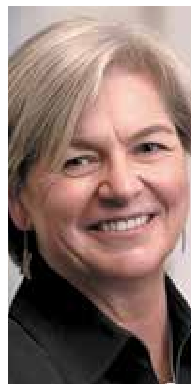
Former ambassador Bob Rae. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Erstwhile ambassador **Bob Rae** will be in Kingston, Ont., later this week to give his first public remarks since wrapping up his tenure as Canada's envoy to the United Nations.

Queen's University hosts Rae as part of its **Donald Matthews** Lecture Series on Nov. 20. The former Ontario premier and interim federal Liberal leader will give remarks titled "1984 Was a Warning, Not a Guidepost: The World We Are In."

He is expected to reflect on his five years at the UN in New York, and offer insight into the profound changes he has witnessed globally. His remarks will explore how current international dynamics echo the warnings of the past, offering a candid and sobering assessment of where we stand today.

Martha Hall Findlay, Simon Kennedy now advising Teneo



Martha Hall Findlay, left, and Simon Kennedy. *Photographs courtesy of Teneo*

Former Liberal MP **Martha Hall Findlay** and retired deputy minister **Simon Kennedy** are now both senior advisers at Teneo, a global CEO advisory firm.

She will be based in Calgary, while he will be based in Ottawa.

"Martha and Simon represent the very best of Canadian public and private sector leadership," said **James Crossland**, Teneo's global vice chair in a Nov. 10 press release. "Their deep understanding of public policy, business strategy and global competitiveness will bring exceptional insight to our clients."

Hall Findlay served as the Liberal MP for Willowdale, Ont., from 2008 to 2011, and ran unsuccessfully for the party's leadership in 2006, which **Stéphane Dion** won. More recently, she's been involved with the University of Calgary, Suncor, and as president and CEO of the Canada West Foundation think tank.

Kennedy retired last year, following a 34-year career in public service including six deputy minister–level positions in the Privy Council Office, Industry Canada, Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Health Canada, and Innovation.

Allan Gregg joins C.D. Howe Institute

Earnscliffe Strategies' principal **Allan Gregg** joined the C.D. Howe Institute as a senior fellow on Nov. 13.

Gregg, a political strategist who shaped election campaigns for former prime ministers **Joe Clark** and **Brian Mulroney**, and who pioneered modern polling in Canada, said it was "an honour" to be invited to join the Toronto-based think tank in a press release that day.

"I have long admired the Institute's rigorous, evidence-based approach to policy analysis and prescription…I cannot imagine anything that could be more stimulating at this stage in my career than finding ways to collaborate with them and contribute to the strengthening of Canada's economic and political landscape."

"Allan is among Canada's most recognized and respected researchers, strategists, and social commentators," said the institute in a press release.

Movember dialling up the issue of men's mental health

Movember's phone booth, pictured in Dublin last year. The phone booth will be in Ottawa this week, where Canadians can share their thoughts on men's mental health. *Screenshot courtesy of YouTube*

Officials with the men's mental health charity Movember will be on the Hill this week for two days of meetings, and are bringing with them a unique way for Canadians to dial up the issue.

The Movember phone booth will be available at the charity's Nov. 18 "Get to Know Mo" parliamentary reception at Queen St. Fare. Amongst the other party favours like Movembeer, pocket squares, and custom Merry Dairy ice cream, guests are encouraged to take part in 'Calling for Change' by ducking into the phone booth to record messages with their thoughts on men's mental health—whether that's speaking from personal experience, or more generally.

The phone booth will then re-locate to the top of Elgin Street the next day outside of the popular Little Victories café so the public can have a turn sharing how they feel, something Movember did successfully on Dublin's Grafton Street last year.

During their Hill meetings, Movember's team will be advocating for a national Men's and Boys' Health Strategy, one of the recommendations in the charity's *Real Face of Men's Health* report released earlier this year.

cleadlay@hilltimes.com
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See our REALTOR® Recommendations to learn more about how we can work together to address Canada's housing crisis at **CREA.ca/MP**.

NEWS

Losing measles elimination status makes Canada a 'pariah,' says Liberal MP

Disinformation and weak access to health care are playing a part in measles outbreaks, according to some MPs.

BY TESSIE SANCI

Liberal MP Hedy Fry, a physician, says the return of measles to Canada is a 'ridiculous' situation. *The Hill Times photograph by Jake Wright*

One week after Canada lost its measles elimination status, some MPs say the development is an unfortunate "milestone," and has turned this country into a "pariah."

"It makes us a pariah. It's what we see in a lot of developing countries. This is ridiculous. I mean, measles was eliminated around the world even in developing countries," said Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, B.C.), a Liberal MP and chair of the House Health Committee. Fry is also a physician who served on the boards of various medical organizations before being first elected in 1993.

Fry said she believes that this could motivate people travelling here from other countries to ensure they're vaccinated against measles before making the trip.

"I don't know if you ever tried going to some countries where you have to get a yellow fever vaccine [or] you have to get typhoid vaccine because those illnesses are endemic. In other words, they happen to be there in that country in large amounts, and you can catch it if you go. Well, this is what Canada now is," Fry told *The Hill Times*.

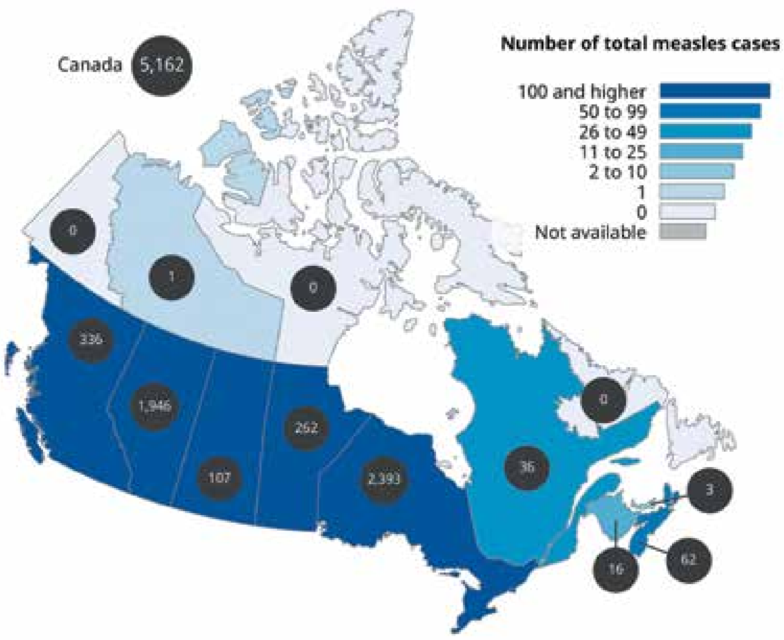
NDP health critic Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni, B.C.) said, "It's a milestone in our declining public health system in Canada. It's driven by low vaccination rates and poor data on vaccine coverage."

On Nov. 10, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) issued a statement informing the public that after a year of sustained measles outbreaks in multiple provinces and one territory, the Pan American Health Organization has withdrawn this country's measles elimination status.

In order to re-attain that status, there must be no ongoing local transmission of the disease for at least one year.

The Pan American Health Organization in its own Nov. 10 statement said that the decision affects the elimination status of the Americas, but that all other countries still continue to maintain their elimination status.

"The Americas, which was the first region in the world to eliminate measles twice, has now lost its measles-free status," reads the statement.



The number of measles cases by province or territory in 2025, as of Nov. 1. *Image courtesy of the Public Health Agency of Canada's website*

As of Nov. 1, Canada has seen 5,162 measles cases in 2025, according to PHAC. Three provinces reported new cases between Oct. 26 and Nov. 1: British Columbia (12), Manitoba (nine), and Alberta (two). All other provinces and territories had zero cases.

Both Johns and Liberal MP Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Ont.), who practiced medicine before turning to politics in 2019, said growing disinformation is a significant cause.

"It's unfortunate that, increasingly in our society, we're having the undermining of science and scientific evidence by people with little if any credibility," said Powlowski, a Health Committee member.

"Nowadays, all you have to have is a podcast or a forum, and you can amplify your message—however unscientific your message is,or however unqualified you are to make any sort of scientific pronouncements."

"I would say that we're seeing the consequences, really, of years of erosion and trust in public institutions, growing disinformation, [and] much of it is actually imported from outside of Canada," Johns said.

But Johns also attributed the situation to problems accessing health care, which has been a problematic issue across Canada for many years.

NDP health critic Gord Johns says tackling the measles outbreaks has to include improving access to health care especially for Indigenous, rural, remote, and underserved individuals. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

This country has "a health care system where too many people can't access care close to home. When people have a family doctor they trust, cultural services and stable public health outreach, vaccination rates go up," Johns said.

A study published last year from the MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions in Toronto found that 6.5 million Canadian adults do not have access to a family physician or nurse practitioner.

The federal Liberal government under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau and current Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) have each made promises to improve access to care. Health Minister Marjorie Michel's (Papineau, Que.) office told *The Hill Times* on Sept. 10 that improving access to primary care would be one of her main priorities this fall.

While Carney's first budget on Nov. 4 included $97-million over five years for a fund to help improve processes related to recognizing health care workers' foreign credentials, it did not act on the Liberals' 2025 election promise to put money towards the creation of new medical spaces.

In response to the measles elimination status loss, PHAC said in its statement that it's collaborating with the Pan American Health Organization, and working with federal, provincial, territorial, and community partners "to implement co-ordinated actions—focused on improving vaccination coverage, strengthening data sharing, enabling better overall surveillance efforts, and providing evidence-based guidance."

Fry referred to PHAC's approach as "good public-health strategy."

She noted that vaccination policy falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, but that the federal government could have a role to play if those jurisdictions are short on vaccines.

But the provinces have to do their part, according to Fry, who says she believes every school in Canada should require students to be vaccinated against illnesses such as measles before they can attend.

Provinces including Ontario and New Brunswick require students to be vaccinated against certain diseases before they can attend class. Alberta and British Columbia do not have that requirement.

Powlowski said that while vaccines are "absolutely" one of the best forms of preventative medicine, it's vital to convince the public of the importance of vaccination as opposed to making it a requirement.

"I think probably there has to be a kind of concerted effort to convince people of the wisdom of being vaccinated, not a requirement to get vaccinated, but that it's in their best interest," he said.

Johns said a key part of tackling the spread of measles has to include "stronger public health infrastructure in every region of Canada; federal support especially for Indigenous, rural, remote and underserved [individuals] who've faced the deepest gaps in care; and a clear proactive national vaccination outreach, not reactive crisis management."

"We're going to continue pushing the federal government to treat public health like the essential infrastructure it is, not as an afterthought, and to restore health in our health systems to protect kids and prevent further outbreaks," he added.

The Hill Times reached out to Conservative MPs Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, Man.), his party's health critic, and Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Ont.), a Health Committee member and a physician, for comment on this article, but did not receive a response prior to deadline.

tsanci@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Increasing the impact of new medicines by speeding patient access

AbbVie applauds pan-Canadian, provincial and federal efforts to accelerate patient access to innovative medicines in Canada, and we are honoured to play an active role. As the third largest biopharmaceutical company in Canada, our teams are dedicated to delivering medicines that address both current and emerging health challenges.

Our key therapeutic areas of focus include immunology, oncology, neuroscience, eye care, virology, gastroenterology and aesthetics. These are areas in which we have deep experience, allowing us to support improvements in disease management and help more than 1 million patients in Canada with our medicines every year. New, innovative therapies are imperative to address patient and health system challenges and needs, but medicine only works if patients can access it. Fortunately, there are promising initiatives underway to get new treatments to Canadians faster. AbbVie is keen to support government in building on this momentum and creating a ripple effect.

First-Ever pan-Canadian Early Access Pathway

AbbVie is encouraged by the early access pathway introduced by Canada's Drug Agency (CDA) and the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance (pCPA). In fact, AbbVie was the first company to navigate this novel pathway, enabling promising drugs with a Notice of Compliance with Conditions (NOC/c) from Health Canada that address critical unmet needs to receive time-limited recommendations.

By working with the CDA and pCPA, AbbVie achieved access for a new cancer medicine ten months faster than the standard pathway. Success factors for this remarkable outcome included the collaborative spirit among all those involved, proactive and regular engagement plus flexibility and a willingness to learn among all parties.

AbbVie values our partnership with these pan-Canadian healthcare bodies as our industry navigates new accelerated patient access pathways.

Province-led Access Acceleration

Recently, the Ontario government launched the Funding Accelerated for Specific Treatments (FAST) pilot program to fast-track access to some cancer drugs. This initiative is intended to connect patients to eligible cancer treatments sooner, improving access to cutting-edge cancer care. AbbVie supports the Ontario Government in their efforts to speed up access to cancer therapies for patients who are waiting and looks forward to ongoing collaboration to expand the pilot program.

Federal Opportunities to Speed Patient Access

AbbVie looks forward to leadership initiatives from the federal government related to faster access to innovative medicines and to participating in discussions about potential solutions. We welcome the government's commitment to address processes that put us behind other G7 countries in terms of time-to-patient for life-saving medications.

AbbVie supports initiatives that consider how funding processes for innovative medicines can be conducted in parallel instead of sequentially, as they are now. The federal government has a seat at the table at pan-Canadian drug funding agencies, since it operates several drug plans, including for Indigenous peoples. The federal government can help to expedite the uptake, expansion and acceleration of the pilots that are underway.

While there is more work to be done, AbbVie is excited about the positive momentum toward improving patient access to innovative medicines across Canada. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with all levels of government and healthcare stakeholders as we collectively work toward faster access to medicines for Canadian patients.

"Abbvie is honoured to work with pan-Canadian, provncial and federal partners to accelerate access to medicines. These collaborative efforts will contribute to reducing wait times for life-saving medications for all Canadians. AbbVie is committed to working together to rethink how medicines can be delivered faster so that patients can access the life-changing treatments they need."

Arima Ventin, Head of Market Access & Government Affairs, AbbVie Canada

abbvie

NEWS

Federal spending jumped 5.7 per cent in 2024-25

Program expenses for the year totalled $489.9-billion, while public debt charges reached $53.4-billion.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali, left, with Government Transformation, Public Works, and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound at an Oct. 30 House Operations and Estimates Committee meeting. Ali tabled the 2025 Public Accounts in the House of Commons on Nov. 7. *The Hill Times photograph Andrew Meade*

Federal spending—including both departmental program expenses and public debt payments—increased by roughly 5.7 per cent in 2024-25 compared to the year prior, standing at $543.3-billion in total.

While that's still a notable drop (13.6 per cent) from the COVID-time high of $628.9-billion in federal spending recorded in the 2020-21 Public Accounts, it's up 14.7 per cent from the five-year low of $473.5-billion in federal expenditures logged for 2022-23.

Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali (Brampton–Chinguacousy Park, Ont.) tabled the 2025 Public Accounts in the House of Commons on Nov. 7, covering federal finances between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025.

Program expenses alone—a category that includes transfer payments to provinces and territories, and benefit payments to individuals, along with departmental operating costs and other related spending—increased by almost five per cent in the most recent fiscal year, at roughly $489.9-billion compared to almost $466.7-billion in 2023-24.

Public debt charges, meanwhile, have continued their rise, jumping from almost $47.3-billion in 2023-24 to about $53.4-billion—a roughly 13 per cent increase, and representing almost 10 per cent of all federal spending in 2024-25. Looking over the last five fiscal years, public debt charges have more than doubled since 2020-21 when they totalled close to $20.4-billion—the lowest level on digital record, with the government's online archive going back to the 1994-95 fiscal year.

Transfer payments overall accounted for about $359.4-billion, or 66 per cent, of federal program expenses for 2024-25—up 10 per cent from the $326.6-billion in transfer payments recorded the year prior.

In the most recent fiscal year, transfer payments included $80.3-billion for Old Age Security benefits, and Guaranteed Income Supplement and spouse's allowance payments (up 5.6 per cent from 2023-24); $105.1-billion in transfers to other levels of government (up 4.9 per cent); $24.9-billion tied to Employment Insurance and support measures (up 7.6 per cent); $28.6-billion for children's benefits (up 8.5 per cent); almost $15.6-billion for returned "pollution pricing proceeds" (a.k.a. the Canada Carbon Rebate, representing a 58.2 per cent increase from 2023-24); and $107.1-billion in other transfer payments (up 11.2 per cent). Offsetting those expenses is almost $2.2-billion in recovered COVID-19 income support payments in 2024-25.

Taking into account net actuarial losses—the difference between actual and expected pension payments, and other employee and veteran benefits—which totalled a little more than $4-billion in 2024-25, total federal expenses reached $547.3-billion in the most recent fiscal year, up almost five per cent from the $521.4-billion in total expenses (including net actuarial losses) recorded in 2023-24.

Federal revenues in 2024-25 increased by almost 11.2 per cent from the year prior, at just under $511-billion compared to $459.5-billion in 2023-24. Among that, revenues from income taxes increased roughly 10.3 per cent to total $344.8-billion, while the goods and services tax brought in $52.5-billion (up 2.1 per cent); energy taxes—both the excise tax on gasoline, and on aviation gasoline and diesel fuel—brought in almost $5.7-billion (up 0.9 per cent); and customs import duties generated roughly $6.3-billion in revenue, a 12.4 per cent increase from 2023-24.

With $547.3-billion in overall expenses—including net actuarial losses—and about $511-billion in revenues, that leaves an annual operating deficit of roughly $36.3-billion for 2024-25. That's an almost 41.3 per cent decrease in the annual operating deficit compared to the year prior when it totalled about $61.9-billion.

Before net actuarial losses, the annual deficit was $32.3-billion in the most recent fiscal year, down from $54.4-billion in 2023-24.

"The year-over-year improvement in the budgetary balance was attributable to higher revenues, particularly income tax revenues and other revenues, offset in part by higher expenses, reflecting higher transfer payments and public debt charges," reads an explanation in Volume 1 of the Public Accounts.

Finance once again leads spending

Looking at federal program expenditures by department, Finance was once again the top spender at almost $143.9-billion, up almost $7.8-billion from $136.1-billion in 2023-24.

While that total includes other offices and agencies that fall under the Finance ministry—like the Office of the Auditor General, and the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada—the Department of Finance unsurprisingly makes up the bulk of spending, at $143.3-billion. The most notable increases logged by the department between 2023-24 and 2024-25 were in transfer payments (which increased by almost $1.5-billion) and public debt charges (which rose by $5.5-billion).

In second place was Employment and Workforce Development with $98.9-billion in expenses for 2024-25, up about $4.5-billion from the year prior; followed by National Defence at roughly $35-billion in spending, an increase of $533.8-million from 2023-24.

While spending by Indigenous Services dropped by some $20.1-billion between 2023-24 and 2024-25, the ministry still came in at No. 4 with almost $26.5-billion in expenses on the books for the most recent fiscal year.

A small fraction of that decrease comes down to the fact that in 2023-24 the Indigenous Services ministry included spending related to the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario (FedNor)—but that only accounted for $71.8-million of the $46.54-billion reported that year, with the rest spent by the Department of Indigenous Services (which is the only federal entity included under the ministry umbrella in 2024-25). As explained by the department in response to questions from *The Hill Times*, the decrease is largely a result of one-time payments that were on the books for 2023-24, including settlements related to First Nations Child and Family Services, Jordan's Principle, and the Trout Class Action, which totalled roughly $23.3-billion.

National Revenue—a.k.a. the Canada Revenue Agency—was the fifth-highest spending ministry in 2024-25 at $22.2-billion, an almost $5.4-billion increase from the $16.8-billion spent the year prior. Much of that increase is tied to transfer payments, which totalled $15.9-billion compared to almost $10.2-billion in 2023-24. Looking to the breakdown of those transfer payments, the bulk of that increase is attributable to Canada Carbon Rebate payments.

While it fell just outside the top 10 list, at No. 11, Treasury Board's expenses notably more than doubled, going from almost $4.4-billion in 2023-24 to about $11.1-billion in the most recent fiscal year—a roughly $6.8-billion increase.

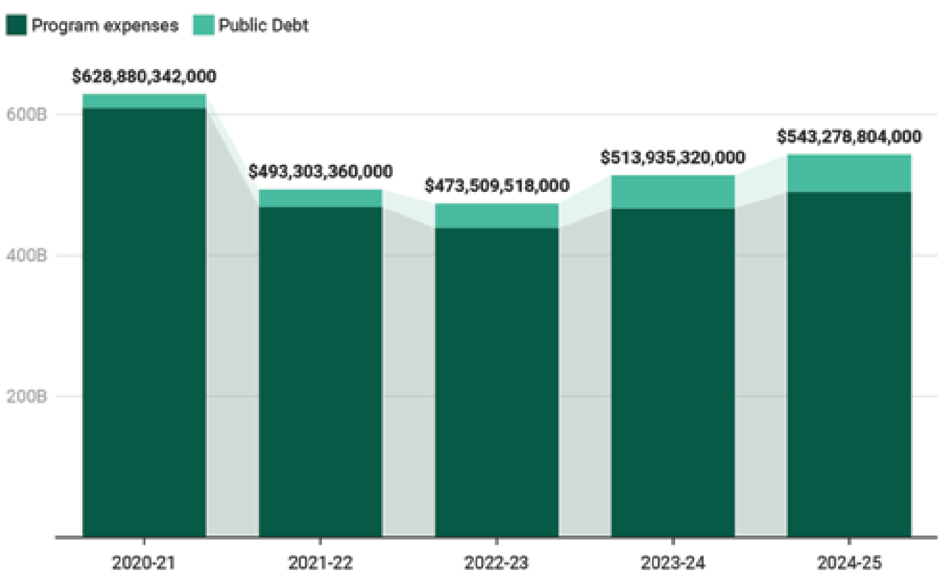
The Treasury Board ministry includes the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS)—which makes up the bulk of spending, at $11.03-billion—as well as the Canada School of Public Service, the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying, and the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner. The largest increase, "by standard object," in TBS spending related to personnel, which jumped by $6.7-billion between 2023-24 and 2024-25.

TBS did not respond to questions from *The Hill Times* regarding this increase by filing deadline.

Parliament ranks near the bottom of the pack at $960.2-million in 2024-25, compared to $930.4-million the year prior. The 2024-25 total includes $644.1-million spent by the House of Commons, $129.9-million spent by the Senate, $107.8-million by the Parliamentary Protective Service, and almost $62.1-million for the Library of Parliament.

lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Public Accounts expenses overview, 2020-25



Source: Public Accounts of Canada

IT'S TIME TO MODERNIZE NICOTINE POLICY.

INSIGHTS FROM CANADA'S FORMER CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER

With over two decades in public health, I've seen **how science-informed policy can drive better health outcomes**. The same approach is urgently needed in Canada's approach to reducing cigarette use.

Alternatives like heated tobacco, vaping products, and oral smokeless products don't burn tobacco or produce smoke. While not risk-free, **the growing body of scientific evidence shows they have the potential to be substantially less harmful than continued smoking.**

Despite this, Canadian smokers are **denied access to critical information** and products. Nicotine pouches remain unavailable in convenience stores, and **current laws restrict communication about the relative risk of smoke-free alternatives**.

Countries like Sweden have shown the power of harm reduction. Their balanced, evidence-based policies have helped cut smoking rates to under six per cent. Canada must follow suit.

Let's align regulation with science, expand access to smoke-free options, and provide Canadians with the information they need to make better decisions.

THE EVIDENCE IS HERE. THE TOOLS EXIST. PUBLIC HEALTH DEPENDS ON IT.

PASCAL MICHEL, *Sr Manager, Scientific Engagement, Rothmans, Benson & Hedges and former Chief Science Officer of the Public Health Agency of Canada*

NOT ALL NICOTINE PRODUCTS CARRY THE SAME RISK

Combustion is the primary cause of smoking-related diseases.

IT'S TIME TO ALIGN TOBACCO REGULATION WITH SCIENCE:

- Differentiate regulation based on actual product risk
- Amend the Tobacco and Vaping Products Act and stop denying smokers access to the vital health information on smoke-free alternatives
- Provide adult smokers better access to alternatives by putting nicotine pouches back in convenience stores

Learn more at *UN*SMOKE.ca

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Editorial

Editorial

Bolton's right: Canada should slow down negotiations with Trump until U.S. Supreme Court decides on legality of tariffs

John Bolton, former national security adviser to United States President Donald Trump during his first presidential term, offered some pretty good advice to Canada recently. In a Nov. 8 interview with CTV News, Bolton said Canada should slow down on negotiating any trade deal with the U.S. until the new year when the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to decide on the legality of Trump's tariffs.

Bolton, who was also once his country's ambassador to the United Nations, said it's important that Canada not "take steps now that [it] can't retrace," once the Supreme Court makes its decision.

"I think the Supreme Court understands how important this case is, [and] how important getting a result to the economy, as a whole, is. They'll make their constitutional decision, or whatever the basis is, but speed is important," Bolton told CTV's Vassy Kapelos on Nov. 8.

Bolton, now a critic of Trump, said he expects the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn most of Trump's tariffs, which, if that were to happen, would have an "extraordinarily significant, negative impact" on the president.

The American Supreme Court is currently conducting hearings on the legality of the tariffs under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), and is expected to make a final decision in 2026. The Trump administration has slapped IEEPA tariffs on Canada under the pretext of a fentanyl and border crisis.

The Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, meanwhile, is also up for a review next year.

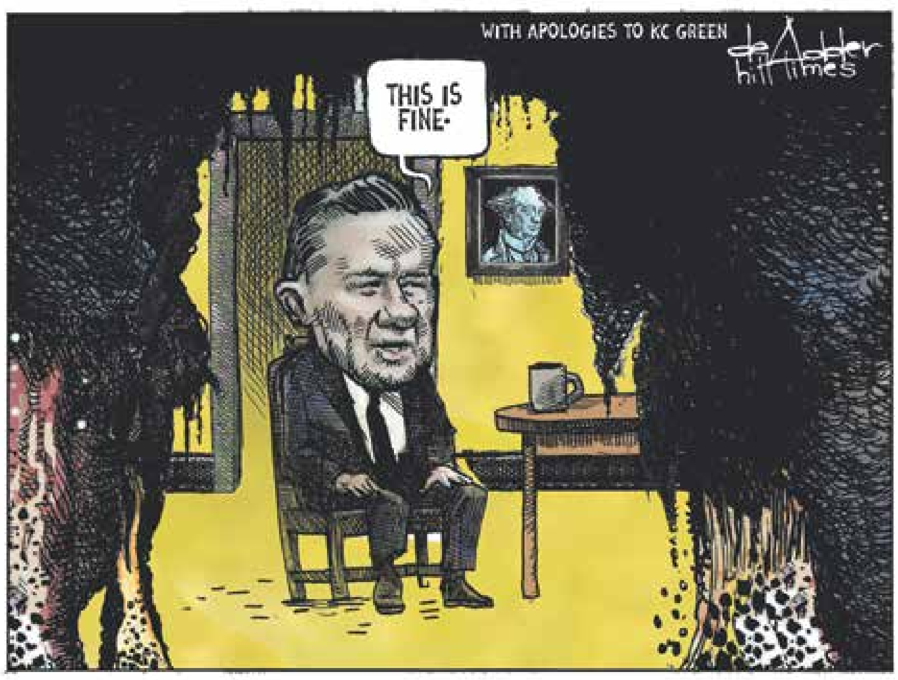
Carlo Dade, who leads the University of Calgary's North America Initiative at the School of Public Policy, recently told *The Hill Times*' Neil Moss that the top court's decision will be "monumental" for Canada.

"We'll know whether or not we're stuck with the U.S. where the president [can impose tariffs] anytime, anywhere, or anyhow [he] wants," Dade said. "Or whether the president is constrained."

Meanwhile, other international lawyers told *The Hill Times* that the greater concern is the sectoral tariffs on steel, aluminum, automobiles, and lumber, under Sec. 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, and said even if the tariffs are struck down by the Supreme Court, Trump could use other measures to advance his trade actions. The president will fight like hell against any Supreme Court ruling.

Canada should not rush negotiations with Trump, but it should continue to fight to cut the sectoral tariffs, keep finding new trading partners—as Prime Minister Mark Carney is trying to do—and prepare for some tough times and slower economic growth ahead because, as international trade lawyer Lawrence Herman said, the White House is "going to the wall" to defend its use of IEEPA tariffs.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor


Image courtesy pexels.com

Schedule 'A' and the status of budget 2025: letter writer

A Schedule 'A' in the context of a federal budget or appropriation act is the detailed annex that accompanies a money bill, laying out exactly how appropriations are allocated—department by department, program by program. It is not a mere formality: without it, Parliament would be asked to approve spending without legal authority or specific detail. It also provides clarity for countless organizations who see zeros and must prepare to plan.

When then-Senator Anne Cools pointed out to then-finance minister Bill Morneau that the Liberal government's first budget under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau lacked a Schedule A, she was exercising deep institutional knowledge. Her intervention underscored that money bills must include all required schedules to conform to parliamentary procedure—grounded in Sec. 53 of the Constitution Act, 1867, which requires that all appropriations originate in the House of Commons and be properly detailed for Senate review.

While Schedule A is not part of the Constitution itself, it is central to the constitutional process of supply—the mechanism through which Parliament grants the Crown authority to spend public money. Without it, the Senate cannot perform its role of "sober second thought" on a valid money bill. Cools' correction of Morneau's omission was not grandstanding; it was an act of institutional stewardship, reminding Ottawa how fragile and rule-bound the machinery of government truly is.

That same procedural vigilance remains essential today. As of this month, the 2025 federal budget—titled *Canada Strong*—has completed its initial tabling and is being debated in the House of Commons. The government's corresponding appropriation legislation, Bill C-6, An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, was passed the House of Commons and received royal assent on June 26, 2025. This confirms that Parliament has formally granted supply for the current fiscal year, supported by the detailed appropriations typically contained in Schedule A.

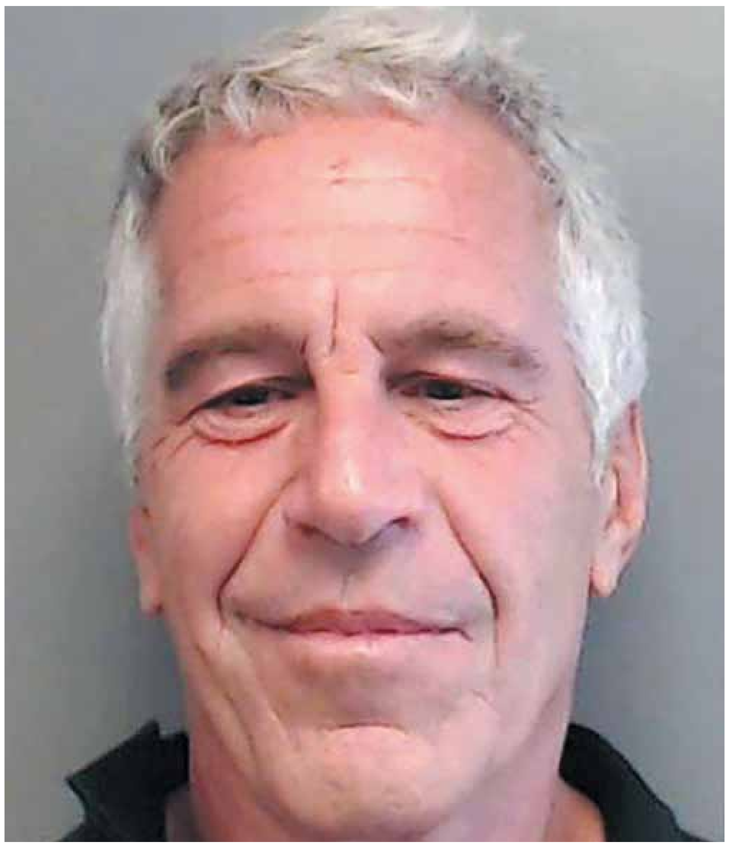
While there has been no procedural controversy or omission reported yet, we shall see who is actually doing their job in the Senate, publication of Schedule A remains vital to the integrity of Canada's financial governance. The 2025 budget documents, tabled on Nov. 4, also mark a structural shift—moving Canada's federal budgets to a fall timetable, with an economic and fiscal update to follow each spring.

Through these new and evolving fiscal practices, the legacy of Cools' intervention endures: the safeguarding of Parliament's constitutional control over the public purse and the insistence that every dollar authorized for spending be traceable, debated, and justified through the proper schedules of supply.

Kelly Patrick
Ottawa, Ont.

The letter-writer is an Ottawa-based public affairs consultant who has worked for several Liberal Senators.

Politics



Jeffrey Epstein, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump. *Photographs courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

America is getting to be a strange country

If Donald Trump has nothing to hide, if, in fact, he wanted to back up his claim that he neither participated in Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking, or even knew about it, there is a simple solution. Give the green light to release all the Epstein files held by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Michael Harris

Harris

HALIFAX—America is getting to be a strange country.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio just announced that obesity, along with cancer and diabetes, is now grounds for denying visa applications. According to 2025 statistics, 37 per cent of Americans are obese. Hmm.

On the less facetious side, the president of the United States continues to be relentlessly tied to the most egregious sexual abuser in American history. Jeffery Epstein may be dead, but his emails live on. And those emails, including the most recent tranche from the Epstein Estate, have the White House on the defensive— yet again.

The reopening of government after the longest shutdown in history may be the biggest story on the merits. But the story everyone is talking about is the saga of the sex trafficker and the man who currently occupies the Oval Office. What was the nature of that odd relationship?

A series of tawdry questions hang over Donald Trump. Why would a billionaire, and later a political potentate, pal-around with a guy who was sex-trafficking young girls to allegedly powerful people? Trump claims that he didn't know what Epstein, and his accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell, were doing.

One of the latest Epstein emails disputes that. He wrote that Trump knew all about the girls, citing as evidence the fact that he demanded that Maxwell stop recruiting girls from his spa at Mar-a-Lago.

Epstein also wrote that he knew that Trump was "dirty," without detailing exactly what he meant. He went on to say that Trump had spent several hours in his house with Virginia Giuffre, one of the girls Epstein was trafficking.

Giuffre committed suicide last April. There have also been reports, so far unconfirmed, that Epstein had photographs of Trump with scantily clad young women.

It is important to note that no one has accused Trump of any illegal acts during his association with Epstein. So far, this has largely been a classic tabloid case of "he said, he denied."

Against the slow leak, drip by drip, of Epstein memos, Trump has dismissed the whole thing as a vicious, partisan hoax. Here's how Trump's press secretary Karoline Leavitt put it: "These stories are nothing more than bad-faith efforts to distract from President Trump's historic accomplishments, and any American with common sense sees right through this hoax and clear distraction from government opening up again."

For his part, Trump has characterized his friendship with Epstein as no more than the result of the meeting of two men who happened to live in West Palm Beach, Florida.

The president said that as soon as he found out about Epstein's sex-trafficking, he banished the "creep" and cancelled his membership in Mar-a-Lago. Just months before his apparent suicide in prison, Epstein disputed that claim in an email. "Trump said he asked me to resign, never a member ever. Of course he knew about the girls."

The perception may be that Trump is somehow compromised by his friendship with Epstein. Although it is true Trump has fudged on a number of factual details of his relationship with the sex-trafficker, the hard evidence is so far in Trump's favour. No one has produced anything suggesting he broke the law, leaving this largely as a case of guilt by association.

So here is the puzzle. With nothing definitive against Trump, with the claims against him, such as they are, coming from a vile, disgraced and deceased sex-trafficker, and with Trump's consistent denials, how has this story carried on for so many months?

The answer is simple: The public, including the president's MAGA base, is suspicious—and with good reason.

The Epstein case, as egregious as it was, with up to 1,000 underage and young women being sex-trafficked, has been handled in a bizarre way by the justice system and its political masters.

Back in 2008, in a now widely panned non-persecution agreement, Epstein was allowed to plead guilty to lesser-state charges of fostering prostitution, rather than face much tougher federal sex-trafficking charges.

Subsequently, the FBI announced that there was no credible evidence that Epstein trafficked the girls to anyone but himself—a direct contradiction of what several Epstein survivors have claimed.

And what did the FBI actually do before coming to that conclusion? Trump's name, for example, has come up multiple times in the reports on the Epstein files. But he has never apparently been interviewed. What about the other allegedly powerful men who participated in Epstein's monstrous enterprise? Who, if anyone, did the FBI actually talk to?

If Trump has nothing to hide, if, in fact, he wanted to back up his claim that he neither participated in Epstein's sex trafficking, or even knew about it, there is a simple solution. All he has to do is give the green light to releasing all the Epstein files held by his Department of Justice. So far, they have released a reported one per cent. The transcripts of interviews, recordings, and videos of the rest of the documents would simply and once and for all tell the tale.

If this whole thing is a cheap smear of the president for partisan political reasons, surely releasing the record would confirm that. But instead of doing the common-sense thing, instead of providing the public with the documented evidence of the facts in this matter, the president has refused to reveal the full files.

Why?

Up until now, that tactic has worked because the GOP controls all the branches of government, and all the branches of government has so far prostrated themselves in front of Trump's executive power. But the political calculus has now changed.

After the swearing-in of Democratic Representative Adelita Grijalva, a pathetic seven weeks after her election in Arizona, her vote will now force the House to take further action on demanding the release of the full Epstein files from the Department of Justice.

If there is nothing to hide, this should be a no-brainer for the GOP. But if there are further government roadblocks, it should be a wake-up call for Americans.

Michael Harris is an award-winning columnist and author.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Canadians are voting with their feet, and America's not on the ballot

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has not said much recently, but the number of Canadians visiting his state has hit a post-pandemic low. The drop was 26 per cent. The Canadian travel boycott is hitting Florida where it hurts: in the pocketbook.

Ten months into the mandate of U.S. President Donald Trump, the number of Canadians who visit the United States has slumped dramatically. *Image courtesy of Pixabay*

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner

OTTAWA—Canadians are voting with their feet. And America is not on the ballot.

Ten months into the mandate of United States President Donald Trump, the number of Canadians who visit the U.S. has slumped dramatically.

Just last week, the United States Travel Association reported a 3.2 per cent decline in international tourism spending in their country, for a loss of $5.7-billion compared to the previous year.

Canadians account for approximately 30 per cent of all foreign travel to the U.S., but we are not the only country that is putting the brakes on American tourism.

Canadians have good reason to boycott. In the last 10 months, the American president has threatened our economy, insulted our prime minister, backtracked on trade agreements, and continuously repeated he wants to annex our country.

As for other foreign travellers, the crackdown on migrants carried out by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has sent a global message that people can be rounded up at will.

A Canadian died while in ICE custody recently. Unfortunately, his sad story reflects that of hundreds of others who have been arrested without due process and thrown into detention centres hundreds of kilometres from where they were located.

Canada and the U.S. used to be very proud that we shared the world's longest open border, defended only by smiles and a few border crossings. Those smiles are gone.

Canadian snowbirds who still visit the U.S. now have to be fingerprinted and registered as aliens.

Likewise, the cost of visiting the U.S. has jumped dramatically for some other international visitors with the introduction of the new $250 "visa integrity fee," making America one of the most expensive destinations in the world.

When Canadians originally threatened a boycott, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis treated it as a joke, saying that with 3.3 million Canucks visiting his state in 2024, it wasn't much of a boycott.

During an address to lawmakers in Tallahassee, DeSantis joked that Canadians were all coming down "to get a glimpse of what a Stanley Cup winning hockey team actually looks like."

But the joke is now on him.

For the first time this year, the U.S. is going to move from a surplus to a deficit when it comes to how much travel money is spent in the country.

The United States Travel Association is predicting a total travel deficit of nearly US$70 billion. Canadians represent almost one-third of the travellers to the U.S., so our boycott is definitely not worth laughing at.

The projected deficit is caused by a 3.2 per cent decline in international tourism spending in the country, a loss that the association attributes largely to the drop in Canadian visitor numbers.

In the latest data from October, the number of Canadians travelling to the states by air dropped 24 per cent, and by land it decreased 30 per cent.

A recent Angus Reid poll surveyed 1,607 Canadians. Some 70 per cent said they were not comfortable travelling to the U.S. Their primary explanations were to stand up for Canada, oppose America's political climate, and avoid border security concerns.

I was invited a few months ago to participate in a bilateral trade panel at the University of Southern California.

When I declined, citing security reasons, the organizing committee said it was not surprised as other Canadians had bowed out for the same reason.

The refusal to travel to the U.S. has opened up opportunities elsewhere. Statistics Canada recently reported a seven per cent increase in travellers heading to Europe.

Just recently, KLM/Air France announced a 30 per cent hike in their bookings.

Meanwhile, American politicians are doing their best to encourage an end to the boycott.

California Governor Gavin Newsom recently participated in a "California loves Canada" promotional campaign designed to encourage Canadians to reconsider the boycott.

Several governors joined in a recent Canadian tourism trade mission. Some states are offering promotions and "Welcome Canada" rebates in an effort to bring Canadians back.

Meanwhile, American visits to Canada are rebounding. In October, there was a one per cent reduction from 2024 travel in the same time period.

Florida's DeSantis has not said much recently, but in the second quarter of this year, the number of Canadians visiting his state hit a post-pandemic low. The drop was 26 per cent.

Miami-Dade County has reported that spending by Canadians fell almost 13 per cent.

The Canadian travel boycott is hitting Florida where it hurts: in the pocketbook.

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

The Hill Times

Carney's fundraising problem

Considering the Liberals are still basking in their electoral triumph from earlier this year and seeing how they're still doing relatively well in the polls, you might think they'd have an easy time right now raising money from their donors.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit

OAKVILLE, ONT.–When it comes to dealing with finances, Prime Minister Mark Carney has to worry about more than just the federal budget.

He also has to concern himself with the Liberal Party's budget.

After all, even political parties that win elections and form governments still have nagging bills that need to be paid.

As American political consultant Morton Blackwell once put it, "you can't save the world if you can't pay the rent."

This is why it might trouble Carney just a little bit that his party is currently going through a fundraising slump.

Indeed, according to a recent report, in the third quarter of 2025, the Liberals raised just over $4-million overall, which is their weakest quarterly performance since early 2022.

On the surface, this fundraising downturn might seem a little counterintuitive.

Considering the Liberals are still basking in their electoral triumph from earlier this year and seeing how they're still doing relatively well in the polls, you might think they'd have an easy time right now raising money from their donors.

But there are a couple of reasons as to why this isn't the case.

First off, I strongly suspect that many Liberal Party supporters are suffering from "donor fatigue."

Keep in mind, for the past year or so, Liberal donors have been hammered to help pay not only for the recent federal election, but also for a leadership race.

Meanwhile, Liberals in Ontario also had to help fund a provincial election race.

That's a lot of giving.

As Liberal strategist Dan Arnold recently told *The Hill Times*, "Money tends to follow enthusiasm, and a lot of people are tapped out."

In fact, the same sort of donor fatigue seems to be afflicting the Conservative Party, which also had a weak third quarter when it comes to fundraising.

Yet, I'd argue, all things being equal, that Conservative fundraising numbers will soon bounce back to higher levels, whereas Liberal numbers will likely remain flat.

I say that because the fundraising problem facing the Liberals likely goes beyond just donor fatigue.

As a matter of fact, I'd say the greater challenge the Liberals must deal with is their own success; sometimes winning can be a detriment to fundraising.

Yes, I know that sounds strange, but please hear me out.

Typically, successful fundraising messages are ones that tap into our darker emotions: hate, fear, and anger.

Basically, you don't want donors to think; you want them to react.

Hence, donors will be bombarded with pitches such as, "Our political enemies want to destroy everything we hold dear; they will wreck the country and crush our values. Only you can stop them by giving us the most generous donation you can afford! Give now!"

This is certainly the kind of fearmongering messaging the Conservatives will pack into their future fundraising appeals, which is why I think they'll eventually rebound.

But it'll be more difficult for the Liberals to play that fundraising game.

As far as most Liberals are concerned, their side won, the right people are in charge, and the country is heading in the right direction.

Everything is rosy.

Certainly, it's difficult to scare people into giving money if they have that sort of cheerful mindset.

In other words, political victory leads to complacency.

Still, I'm sure the Liberals will seek ways to prod and frighten their donor base into giving money.

I can certainly see them using the fear of Trumpian America to jolt their donors into action.

But, despite that, I suspect the Liberals will still trail the Conservatives in fundraising.

Luckily for them, being in power is a good consolation prize.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

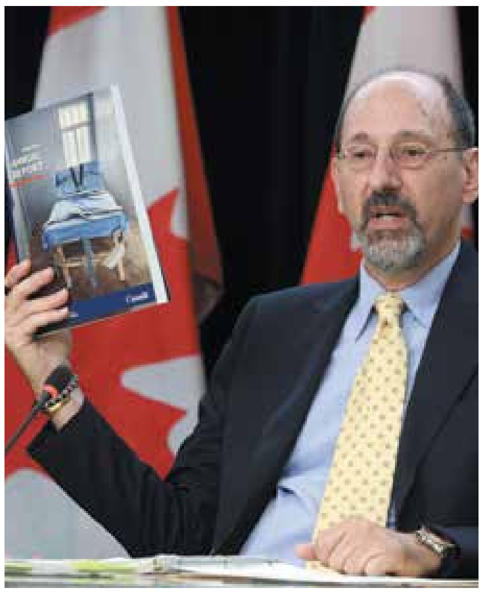
COMMENT

A debt of gratitude for Ivan Zinger, correctional investigator

Five federally operated regional treatment centres are 'not fit for the purpose,' and Ivan Zinger argues the Correctional Service of Canada should not even be in the mental health business, but should hand that to the experts. It's hard to disagree with the logic.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



Dr. Ivan Zinger, correctional investigator of Canada, holds up his last annual report on Nov. 12, 2025, at the National Press Theatre in Ottawa. *The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia*

OTTAWA—On Nov. 12, Dr. Ivan Zinger, the correctional investigator of Canada, dropped his most recent annual report on the state of prisons. The truth is harsh: mental health supports in prisons are outdated, without sufficiently trained staff, force is used when mental health and therapeutic interventions are needed, and more. Five federally operated regional treatment centres are "not fit for the purpose," and Zinger argues that the federal Correctional Service of Canada should not even be in the mental health business, but should hand that to the experts in the mental health sector. It's hard to disagree with his logic.

In theory, yes, of course, those convicted of crimes should receive mental health supports if they need it. Withholding treatment for mental health is just like withholding treatment for any illness—it's about human rights. In theory, yes, Corrections Canada should uphold the expertise that exists in the mental health sector, and transfer out those prisoners who need expert support to psychiatric hospitals. Except we don't have enough expertise, and we haven't built enough space for complex care.

As a new board governor, I had the opportunity recently to view the Ottawa Hospital's psychiatric emergency rooms, and I walked away with profound sadness. We are not doing enough either on the prevention side or on the treatment side. Federal and provincial governments are not doing enough. The evidence is in your walk to work while stepping over fellow humans lying on the sidewalk. If we had a well-funded and resourced mental-health sector, then for sure it could serve the complex needs of those in prisons.

But Zinger's report gets worse. This annual report stresses that Indigenous Peoples are grossly overrepresented in prisons, and Corrections Canada is not doing enough—and has not done enough in years. It's a complex problem that starts with policing that deals harshly with Indigenous Peoples, and does not give them the benefit of the doubt, so Indigenous Peoples are more likely to be charged. It continues with the legal system which more often than not views Indigenous Peoples as more dangerous regardless of the charge, thus more likely to be convicted. And then the prisons are likely to continue that trend of viewing Indigenous prisoners as more dangerous, and they end up in maximum-security, and are less likely to receive mental health supports.

It's like a bad movie and you know how it ends. The most at risk of trauma in this country are Indigenous Peoples (racism being a strong factor), and then they are unable to get the supports to heal within the community thanks to lack of consistent long-term community-based programs from the feds, and then unable to access healing in prisons, and then more likely to die by suicide. I've seen this movie before.

This is not news. One can be sure that most annual reports from the Office of the Correctional Investigator repeat this message.

Over and over again. And nothing changes.

How is it that we are in an era of reconciliation, yet choose to do nothing to fix wholesale systems built in institutional racism? That's what institutional racism is: differential access and treatment based on race. This is the picture of Canada's corrections today. The amount of cognitive dissonance required is just exhausting.

Zinger nailed it: Canada is not upholding the human rights of prisoners who need mental health supports, nor of Indigenous Peoples.

And then Zinger resigned partly due to the government failing on the long-standing and worsening crisis of Indigenous over-representation in jails. Thank you, Ivan Zinger, for being an exemplary model of an ally—one who uses the stage and influence to amplify the voices of Indigenous Peoples who say "it's not working."

Rose LeMay is Tlingit from the West Coast and the CEO of the Indigenous Reconciliation Group. She writes twice a month about Indigenous inclusion and reconciliation. In Tlingit worldview, the stories are the knowledge system, sometimes told through myth and sometimes contradicting the myths told by others. But always with at least some truth.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Carney walks a timid line on climate instead of full speed ahead

Prime Minister Mark Carney, pictured in Ottawa on Oct. 10, 2025. Tackling climate change is not a priority for his government, writes Susan Riley. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

The longer Prime Minister Mark Carney tries to play both sides of the street—and this game has been going on for decades—the farther behind we fall, environmentally and economically. He must know that.

Susan Riley

Impolitic

CHELSEA, QUE.—The final vote on Prime Minister Mark Carney's first budget is imminent, but one thing is already obvious: it suggests no urgency to address the climate crisis, and only token attempts to attach green requirements to the advertised building and investment boom the budget is supposed to unleash. Besides that, the second list of "major projects" continues to favour large LNG developments and new mines with only token nods to green power.

One small clue: in a 406-page budget document, the "Climate Competitiveness Strategy" occupies only 10 pages, and was added to the larger piece as an afterthought when an anticipated stand-alone announcement on climate seemingly vanished. Those few pages include some familiar promises—reduction of methane emissions, a strengthened industrial pricing system, and tax credits for clean (as well as fossil) investments—but very few details.

We know where this could go now: into prolonged, unproductive "negotiations" with oil and gas producers, premiers and federal bureaucrats who provide the illusion of progress, while the sector's emissions continue to rise as fossil fuel production continues to grow. Since the days of then-prime minister Stephen Harper, this has been the *modus operandi* of all federal governments and their well-financed private sector counterparts. Talk everyone into exhaustion, while, elsewhere, fires blaze, farmlands flood, and northern communities are destroyed while our major cities choke on smoke.

An associated tell: of the nation-building "major projects" unveiled so far, LNG facilities overshadow clean-tech investments—like the $20-billion LNG floating platform to be built on the British Columbia Coast near Prince Rupert on Nisga'a Nation land. Announced last week, it will be constructed by a Houston, Tex.-based company. By contrast, a new hydro dam envisioned for outside of Iqaluit, which will displace some of the polluting diesel fuel widely used in the North, will cost $400-$500-million when constructed.

Another green project—expansion and twinning of a $6-billion hydro line from Prince George to Terrace, B.C.—is intended to provide clean energy to nearby LNG terminals and proposed mines, but is, essentially, facilitating the production and export of "natural" gas to Asia and contributing to what some environmentalists have called "a carbon bomb in the middle of a climate summit."

This is all disappointing for those who clung to the belief that the prime minister—on the strength of his pre-politics writing and actions on the environment—would take the climate crisis seriously. But there were warnings—in a technocratic and limited Liberal campaign environmental platform, in Carney's endorsement of noisome fictions like "decarbonized oil" and the "promise" of carbon capture and storage, and in his studious avoidance of the topic in almost every public appearance.

It is doubly dispiriting given the scope of Carney's ambition, and soaring rhetoric ("generational" "transformative"), concerning the general reboot of our economy. Canada, he frequently declares, is going to unleash a wave of building, investing, and resource development using domestic products, aimed at developing new markets, increasing our independence from the United States, and protecting our sovereignty. As the prime minister told a Toronto business crowd last week, "we will build big, fast, and bold again."

Carney sometimes mentions clean tech as part of this revolution, but vaguely; by contrast, he is quite specific in his support for another oil pipeline, for example, and the expanded LNG terminal in Kitimat, B.C., one of the first "major projects" approved. (There is also $300-million in tax credits in the budget for fossil fuel-related projects, despite Canada's decade-old pledge to end taxpayer support for the profitable sector.)

If Carney were truly ambitious, if he were serious about charting a new direction and taking risks, he would be directing more attention and money towards clean tech, electrification, and exploiting our abundant hydro, wind, and solar capacities. While much of the world—led by China and to a lesser extent Europe—moves deliberately and quickly (in the case of China) to an emissions-free world, Carney, like his predecessor Justin Trudeau, walks a tightrope between encouraging more oil and gas production, and the money it continues to generate, with small gestures in the direction of green power, and emissions reduction.

In a recent radio interview, Environment and Climate Change Minister Julie Dabrusin noted that an east-west electricity grid "as a national building idea, keeps coming up as something we are going to have to work on." This tepid endorsement of an old and exciting proposal to share our abundant hydro power across provinces (on which then-Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff campaigned) suggests it is maybe too risky for a supposedly bold government.

As to pledges to strengthen methane regulations, we'll see. Emissions of the powerful greenhouse gas, associated with fossil fuel production, have declined notably in British Columbia, but not everywhere. The technology has long existed to curb leaks and federal pledges to do something date back years. However, no timelines, deadlines, or details accompany this latest re-iteration of an old promise.

Carney has, at least, abandoned Trudeau's impassioned and ultimately vacuous declarations of climate virtue, but also some of the former government's showroom items: the two-billion trees pledge, rules against corporate green-washing, various initiatives to protect nature and habitat. Meanwhile, greenhouse gas emissions declined only 8.5 per cent from 2003 to 2023, mostly because of reductions in methane leaks and coal-fired electricity plants.

As troubling, is the budget's silence on the expired greener homes grants, which helped homeowners make buildings more airtight, nor have federal EV rebates been restored, contributing to a slump in EV sales here, while China and other countries motor on. No word either on the EV mandate that would have required an increasing number of new vehicles sold to be zero-emission.

Rebates are tricky: they can be inequitable—you have to be able to afford a new car, or heat pump, or home reno, to qualify for grants or loans in the first place—and businesses can simply add the rebates to the sales price. But they can also be designed to be more universally available. (Quebec, for instance, offered a $4,000 rebate on used EVs for a while, which made the technology more affordable.)

Moreover, these mostly expired programs were immensely popular, over-subscribed, and a powerful way of involving ordinary Canadians in the energy transition. Once a consumer has experienced cost-savings in driving an EV, or replacing gas or oil heating with a heat pump, there is no turning back.

"In coming weeks" the government is set to pronounce on the future of the EV mandate, and the diminishing group of hopeful environmentalists is waiting for the final veil to drop. Will green rebates return, will more funding be devoted to building an adequate charging network, and will homeowners get any help transitioning from fossil fuels? Or will it just be more delay?

One two-word explanation for the Carney government's approach to climate change: moral failure. Another: Donald Trump. The U.S. president's war on the future has obvious implications for his next door neighbour and main trading partner. But it also should open a door for Canada to move into the clean energy space vacated by the U.S.

We'll never catch China, but, if we want a toehold in the economy of tomorrow, we can't afford more dithering. The budget, and some of the announced "major projects", accelerate the development of critical minerals mines, crucial to the battery revolution. But there is no dramatic move to reduce emissions (and carbon capture and storage is an unproven, limited, costly remedy.)

The longer Carney tries to play both sides of the street—and this game has been going on for decades—the farther behind we fall, environmentally and economically. He must know that.

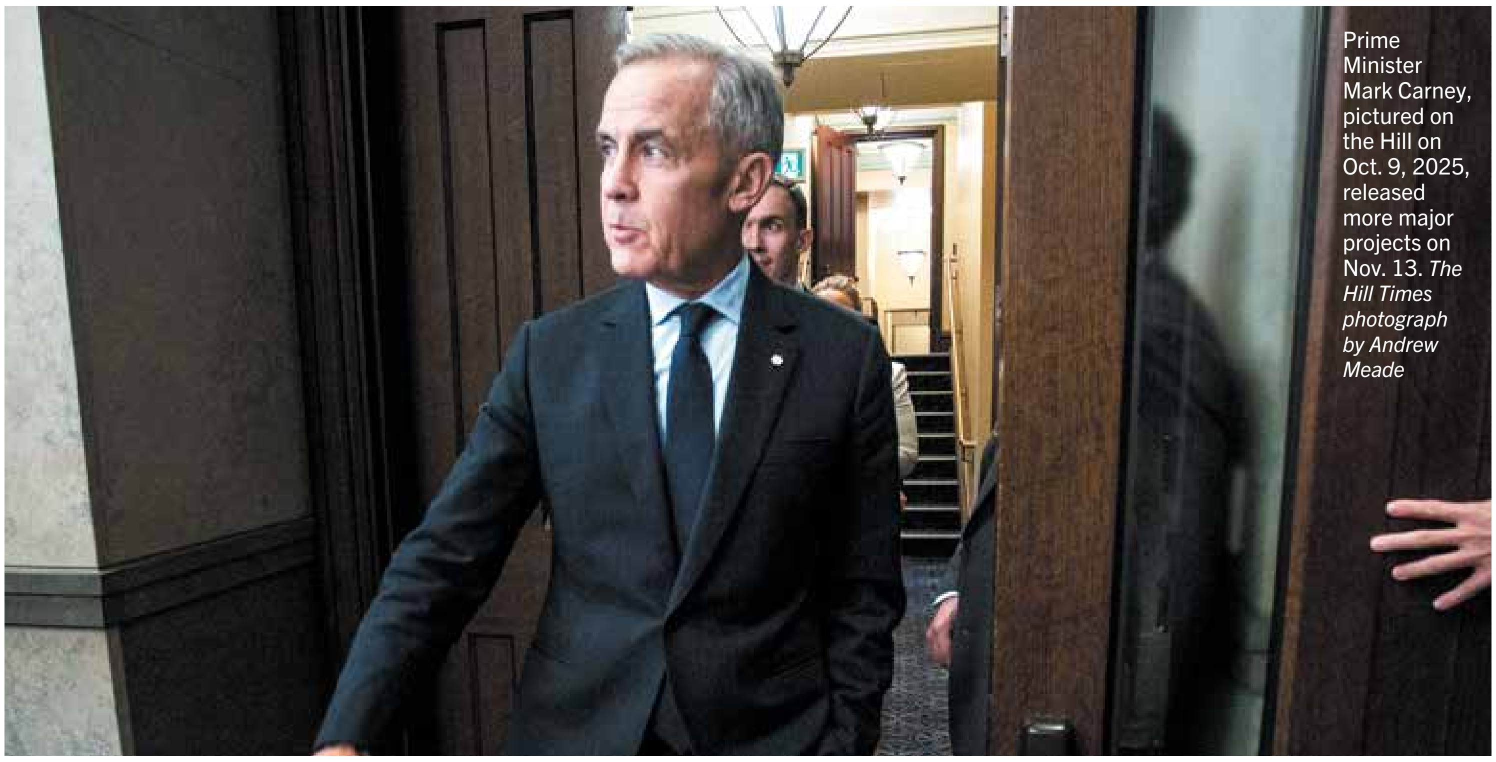
Already, climate-concerned voters are looking for another champion. Will NDP leadership hopeful, Avi Lewis, meet the moment? The job is still open.

Susan Riley is a veteran political columnist who writes regularly for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

New list of major projects is good, but the hard part will be actually getting them done



Prime Minister Mark Carney, pictured on the Hill on Oct. 9, 2025, released more major projects on Nov. 13. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

This is a problem across Canadian society. We have become so risk averse and conflict averse that we've geared shockingly large percentages of our state institutions into being effectively machines that can only say 'no'.

Matt Gurney

Opinion

TORONTO—The Major Projects Office's list of major projects has gotten longer. The new additions include electrical generation projects, mines, and an additional LNG export facility on the B.C. Coast, and more.

It's a good list. It captures both real economic needs and opportunities, and also sprinkles ventures all around the country.

The question, though, isn't how long the list is, but how effective the Major Projects Office (MPO) will be at actually accelerating things.

It's too soon to tell, and I'm willing to keep an open mind. But what struck me as interesting about the latest additions is that they are harder projects. The initial announcement of projects for the MPO also included important and worthy efforts, but notably included things that were already substantially down the line of the approvals process. That's not to take away from their importance to the economy—it's just to note that the Carney government—probably wisely—chose to put a strong foot forward with the initial tranche of projects. I'm a big believer in the psychological power of early wins. Putting those projects forward first was good political judgment.

These other programs, though, while still worthy, could also prove more challenging. We're definitely going to see some difficulties—both in terms of the practical logistics of getting them built, and also in clearing the not-minor tasks of Indigenous consultation and environmental review.

It hardly needs to be said that this is a country where it is very difficult to get anything done. I myself have been sitting on a darkly amusing horror story of trying to get a very simple permit for a very simple job — well, what *should have been* a very simple permit. Every time the process was suddenly delayed, or we were told we needed to resubmit something that had already been submitted six or seven times, I'd shake my head and think to myself, "You know what? We aren't getting high-speed rail anytime soon."

This is a problem across Canadian society. We have become so risk averse and conflict averse that we've geared shockingly large percentages of our state institutions into being effectively machines that can only say 'no'. We all understand why. No one gets fired when a project is rejected—but people *might* get in trouble if a controversial one is approved. All the incentives are to say 'no,' and there's no direct incentive to the people approving the projects to ever stick their neck out. They don't earn their living prioritizing the national interest and economic productivity.

So here we are. We've done this to ourselves.

And now we're going to have to start undoing it. The newly enlarged list of major projects being considered by the office is good. These are things I'd like to see Canada have, and they certainly suit the needs of our new geopolitical moment.

But the hard part is actually getting these projects done—and that doesn't mean just getting some permit issued by the MPO itself. We're going to need to make sure the MPO is actually the final word on this. It's not going to do us any favours if we end up turning the MPO into an accelerated platform for issuing rulings that are immediately derailed by appeals, and decades of litigation and bargaining.

I was relatively confident the MPO would succeed in showing at least some improvement with that first group of proposals. I'm more worried about the second. And I'm still worried that the very notion of having an MPO results in a *de facto* acknowledgment that a great number of other ventures are going to be abandoned to the existing—and now universally acknowledged to be dysfunctional—process we already had. There's all kinds of risk in having a two-tier approvals process, where a handful of political projects with great lobbyists get put into the funnel that works, while a bunch of other projects—which may also be strongly in the national interest but lack the guiding hands of well-connected advisors—languish and die on the vine.

For what it's worth, I hope they pull it off. I want the MPO to succeed, though I hope it's only a stopgap toward a fuller reform of what's broken in this country's way of doing business. But it's on them to prove that they can get it done—and that people will listen when they give any given project the official thumbs-up.

Matt Gurney is a Toronto-based journalist. He is co-editor of The Line *(ReadTheLine.ca), an online magazine. He can be reached at matt@readtheline.ca.*

The Hill Times

OPINION

Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump at the West Wing entrance of the White House on May 6, 2025. *Photograph courtesy of White House photographer Daniel Torok*

Carney is unwilling to expend any political capital to make the case for Canadian climate leadership

It's time for Mark Carney to recapture that mojo that transformed him from a grey banker to an internationally renown climate champion. Not to burnish his own reputation, but to secure a better future for all of us.

Shawn McCarthy

Opinion

OTTAWA—A decade ago, 196 nations came to together in Paris to ink a climate-change agreement aimed at limiting the increase in global temperatures to well below 2 C above pre-industrial levels.

The heady optimism of Paris has yielded to a grim reality as national representatives now gather in Belem, Brazil, for this year's Conference of the Parties (COP30). Resistance to the enormous changes required to mitigate the climate threat has overwhelmed the best intentions of Paris.

In this era of skepticism and anti-elite populism, we need global leadership to provide some hope that we have not abandoned current and future generations to a dystopian future of killer weather, inflationary conditions, and a horde of climate refugees.

Prime Minister Mark Carney assumed a leading role on climate finance when he was the Bank of England's governor, and again as climate adviser to the United Nations secretary general. It's time for him to pick up that mantle again.

The Paris Treaty that was reached in December 2015 represented the high-water mark of hope that the global governments could work together to avert the most catastrophic impacts of climate change.

I covered the COP21 meeting for *The Globe and Mail*. Amid the frantic rush to report its conclusion, I allowed myself a few seconds to stop a savour the historic moment when world leaders overcame deep divisions to reach an agreement aimed at averting an environmental catastrophe for humanity.

The treaty highlighted the threats that climate change poses, set benchmarks and goals to mitigate those risks, and galvanized countries to pursue emission-reduction strategies—albeit in fits and starts.

We need to "recapture the mojo of Paris," United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said in a report released before the Belem COP. "When the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015, it brought with it hope that humanity could turn the tide against climate change."

The treaty and its implementation clearly have not delivered the hoped-for successes.

The UNEP reported this month that the world is well off track in meeting the target to limit warming to less than 2 C and aim for 1.5 C. Given current commitments under the treaty, we can expect average global temperature to rise by 2100 in the order of 2.3 to 2.5-degrees above pre-industrial levels, according to UNEP's "emissions gap" report.

Although that's an improvement over the pre-Paris trajectory of 3.5 C, the impact from 2.5 C of global warming "could still prove devastating to billions of people around the world," UNEP reported.

And the 2.3 C to 2.5 C forecast assumes that countries will actually achieve the emission targets to which they've committed under the Paris Treaty. Canada is far from the only country that is not on track to so.

Galvanizing international action is a herculean task. United States President Donald Trump has declared climate change to be a "hoax"; and his administration is shredding years of progress. Citizens in democracies are wary of any action that would increase the cost of living, and poorer nations are demanding more than $1-trillion from wealthier ones to reduce emissions and adapt to extreme weather and rising seas.

It was predictable once government leaders and ministers left the self-congratulatory mood of Paris that they would return home to the tough political realities that make implementation difficult.

Nowhere is that more apparent than in Canada. Justin Trudeau attended the opening of the Paris summit as a newly elected prime minister, full of pride and promises. Carney, in contrast, is skipping the Belem conference this year as he works to get parliamentary passage for his budget that gives short shrift to climate action.

Trudeau wasn't alone in his enthusiasm at Paris. He was joined at the summit opening by world leaders such as then-U.S. president Barack Obama, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and then-Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff.

The newly-minted Canadian prime minister also led a "Team Canada" contingent of premiers to the UN COP. They included Rachel Notley from Alberta, Christy Clark from British Columbia, Stephen McNeil from Nova Scotia, Ontario's Kathleen Wynne, and Philippe Couillard from Quebec.

Saskatchewan's then-premier Brad Wall was the lone hold-out a year later when Trudeau succeeded in gaining provincial endorsement for his Pan-Canadian Framework for Clean Growth and Climate Change, a plan that pledged nation-wide carbon pricing and other measures to reduce emissions and meet Canada's climate commitments under the Paris Accord.

But in the intervening years, provincial governments changed and opposition grew to a federal climate strategy which piled on a succession of regulations. The inflationary spike that followed the COVID-19 pandemic further eroded support for a strategy that imposed current costs to avoid future pain.

Canadians, however, continue to support strong climate action. In a poll conducted by Abacus Data on behalf of Clean Energy Canada and released last June, 41 per cent of respondents wanted the federal government to maintain its emission reductions effort, while 44 per cent said Ottawa should do even more.

Despite his previous leadership on climate change, Carney has failed to make it a priority for his government. He talks about promoting "clean energy" and "climate competitiveness," but rarely dwells on the urgency of climate action or the need for global co-operation on it.

His long-promised Climate Competitiveness Strategy was buried on eight pages in the Nov. 4 budget nearly 500 pages long, and offered little substance. He appears unwilling to expend any political capital to make the case for Canadian climate leadership.

While Environment Minister Julie Dabrusin was in Brazil pledging more aggressive action, Carney travelled to Prince Rupert, B.C., to announced federal support for more fossil fuel infrastructure, in this case a project to liquify and export natural gas.

Ottawa's LNG support comes despite a warning from the International Energy Agency on Nov. 12 that a wave of new supply coming on the market will drive down international prices. An over-supplied global market for natural gas will not only undercut profitability for Canada's new LNG projects but crowd out investment in lower-carbon alternatives in Asia and elsewhere.

Carney's long-promised climate competitiveness strategy was buried on eight pages in the Nov. 4 budget that was nearly 500 pages long, and offered too little substance. He appears unwilling to expend any political capital to make the case for Canadian climate leadership.

It's time for the prime minister to recapture that mojo that transformed him from a central banker to an internationally renown climate champion. Not to burnish his own reputation, but to secure a better future for all of us.

Shawn McCarthy is a senior counsel at Sussex Strategy, and a former national business reporter covering global energy for The Globe and Mail. *He's also the past president of the World Press Freedom Canada, a volunteer advocacy group based in Ottawa.*

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Pro-Trump rioters occupied Capitol Hill on Jan. 6, 2021. Ahead of the protest in Washington, D.C., Donald Trump had posted it would 'be wild.' *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

Trump, the BBC, and a bad edit

With video editing, there is an honour system which says that you can edit the shot, but you must not change the meaning.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs

LONDON, U.K.—I have spent thousands of hours sitting alongside video editors working on productions quite similar to the *Panorama* documentary that has landed the British Broadcasting Corporation with the threat of a billion-dollar libel suit by United States President Donald Trump. I think I know what happened.

Most people don't talk in complete sentences unless they are reading a script. They ramble, they backtrack, they take a long time saying something that could be expressed much more quickly—and part of the editor's job is to clean it up: keep it short, clear, and to the point.

That's why you always need "cutaways": shots of the crowd, of the speaker's hands, of anything that can provide visual material to cover the fact that you have just made a sound edit. Otherwise you will have a jump cut in the video, which nobody likes. So there is an honour system which says that you can edit the shot, but you must not change the meaning.

It's not always a written code. In many places, it's more of a consensus. Occasionally there will be an argument about whether or not an edit is legitimate, but everybody knows more or less where the line is—and since they are all editing footage against deadlines every day, there is really no time for lengthy debates.

Now we come to the specific edit that caused the problem. It purported to show Trump urging the crowd on Jan. 6, 2021, to attack the Capitol building where then vice-president Mike Pence was scheduled to ratify the election returns and acknowledge that Joe Biden had won the 2020 election.

Trump had already been falsely claiming for almost two months that the election had been "stolen" from him by the Democratic Party. He had already posted on his website that the big protest in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6 would "be wild." Thousands of his extreme supporters—Oath Keepers, Proud Boys, and the like—were already in the city.

So one or more of the *Panorama* editors "remembered" that Trump told the mob to attack the Capitol. He must have. Even three-and-a-half years later, they were sure they saw him saying that on that morning. But when they looked for it on screen, it wasn't there. His wishes were clear, but he never said all the words together in quite the right order.

Trump is the veteran of 100 courtroom battles. There are not many days when he doesn't consult a lawyer about one thing or another. He was hoping to reverse the outcome of the 2020 election by force and regain the presidency, but he knew that his plan might not work, and he did not want to face charges of treason and rebellion.

So his words were carefully chosen, and probably heavily vetted by his lawyers. The House Select Committee to Investigate the Jan. 6 attack observed that "President Trump used the phrase 'peacefully and patriotically' scripted for him by his White House speech-writers once, about 20 minutes into his speech."

"Then he spent the next 50-or-so minutes amping up his crowd with lies about the election, attacking his own vice-president and Republican members of Congress, and exhorting the crowd to fight." It was a call for an insurrection, but with deniability for Trump (although not necessarily for all his supporters) in case it failed.

The *Panorama* editors working on this part of the documentary were clearly so frustrated by this that they created a clip in which Trump did say the words in the right order, some from 20 minutes in and some from 50 minutes later. That was a brazen, stupid lie.

BBC people from outside the *Panorama* team would have seen the finished product before broadcast, but if nobody warned them about the clip they probably didn't notice that it was a fake. It's what they thought Trump said, it's what he meant people to think he was saying, but it is not what he actually said.

Trump says he will sue the BBC for $1-billion, but the biggest defamation payout ever awarded by a British court was about $2-million. U.S. libel awards can go 1,000 times higher, but persuading an American court that Trump's reputation took a severe hit over this would not be easy. Love him or hate him, everybody already knows what he's like.

The BBC's status as the English-speaking world's "most trusted source of information" will probably survive, although it is currently running No. 2 in the U.S. (just behind the Weather Channel). The whole thing will probably die down in a few weeks. It is, as my wife Tina Viljoen remarked, "a firestorm in a teapot."

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

The Hill Times

OPINION

OGGO hearing confirms: our government continues to persecute whistleblowers rather than protect them

Public Sector Integrity Commissioner Harriet Solloway poses for a portrait at her office in Ottawa on July 29, 2025. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

The Liberals need to put in place a system that truly protects whistleblowers and the Canadian public. Perhaps then we can begin to restore our national image and rejoin the ranks of truly clean and well-governed democracies.

David Hutton

Opinion

A recent meeting of the House Government Operations Committee with Public Sector Integrity Commissioner Harriet Solloway provided a fresh window into the Alice-In-Wonderland world of whistleblower protection in Canada. The meeting's main focus was PSIC's ridiculously inadequate budget and the fruitlessness of her efforts thus far to correct this.

As expected, and as her role requires, Solloway presented her agency's work in the best possible light, and focused on the resulting lack of resources as her main problem. But the elephant in the room—the dysfunctional whistleblowing law that provides her mandate—was scarcely mentioned. Also not mentioned was the appalling track record of our federal whistleblower protection system, of which her agency is a key component. Without correcting these problems, pouring more resources into this system is like loading defective cannons that blow up our own troops half of the time. Our whistleblowers are the victims.

It didn't help the discussion that OGGO is filled with fresh faces, most of whom have no knowledge of the committee's long involvement in whistleblower protection, and its valiant efforts over many years to get the law improved.

Conservative MP Kelly Block did ask innocently about the fate of whistleblowers suffering reprisals, specifically how many had been "reinstated." The answer is zero. In fact, after 18 years of operation and more than 500 public servants submitting formal complaints of reprisal, not a single whistleblower has been awarded any kind of compensation by the tribunal created for this purpose. This remarkable statistic is not an accident, but a predictable consequence of the law—the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act (PSDPA)—which seems purposefully designed as a weapon to silence and punish whistleblowers.

Treasury Board still mum on PSDPA Task Force

Since the PSDPA was first brought before Parliament in 2006, numerous experts have pointed out the major flaws in this law, but to no avail. The Senate passed 16 amendments that would have dramatically improved it, but these were all rejected. In 2017, 10 years after it came into force, OGGO carried out—at the request of the government—what was understood to be the legally required five-year review of the law. OGGO did an excellent, thorough job, interviewing 52 witnesses including experts from three other jurisdictions, and its unanimous report recommended numerous amendments. Not one of these has been implemented.

In 2022, a new Bloc MP Jean-Denis Garon, who was disturbed by the number of whistleblowers coming to his office, put forward a private member's bill, C-290, which proposed a number of useful amendments, partly modelled on the 2017 OGGO report. This bill was slow-walked in committee, and then allowed to die on the Order Paper when this year's election was called. Treasury Board's response to Bill C-290 was to quickly announce the formation of a 'PSDPA Task Force' to review the law. We at the Centre for Free Expression said at the time that this looked like just another delaying tactic. Apparently, we were right: three years on there is still no sign of a report or even any communication from the Task Force.

And Treasury Board remains silent regarding what exactly the 2017 OGGO study was if not the legislative five-year review? Was this just an expensive make-work project, or even a diversion? At the time, some committee members believed the intent was to distract OGGO from a breaking scandal. The government had forced 235 public servants to sign lifetime gag orders regarding a questionable procurement process—sole-source negotiations with Boeing for 18 Super Hornet jets— effectively blocking OGGO's investigation into this highly controversial matter.

Solloway's mantra is "due process," which sounds eminently reasonable—except that the due process for whistleblowers prescribed by the PSDPA is a sham: a treadmill of useless processes that may take years and exhaust the whistleblower financially and emotionally, with no prospect of a successful outcome at the Tribunal. Rather than protecting, it persecutes and re-victimizes public servants who are already being crushed by life-changing, career-ending reprisals inflicted by their bosses.

Public sector integrity commissioner wears many hats

We have met with Solloway a few times and found her to be refreshingly different from her three predecessors—all of whom were Ottawa-based career bureaucrats with every reason to remain loyal and avoid embarrassing the bureaucracy. However, regardless of her evident commitment to the public interest, Solloway has a mountain to climb to make her agency effective. In committee, she acknowledged frankly that she is "uncomfortable" at how little she can do to protect whistleblowers (virtually nothing), and apparently no one in power wants to give her the resources or the legal tools that she needs to do her job.

Our main concern about Solloway's principled approach is her reluctance to critique the PSDPA in any meaningful way on the basis that, as a kind of judge, she needs to remain 'neutral.' She says she is waiting to hear what the Task Force has to say about the law. This sounds like waiting for Godot.

The reality is that Solloway wears multiple hats. Besides handing down quasi-judicial decisions, where she has to remain neutral, she is also responsible for the operations of an anti-corruption force responsible for conducting investigations into alleged wrongdoing—and in this role, a forceful and skeptical attitude is essential. No one would have confidence in a police force that claimed to be 'neutral' in its dealings with both suspected mobsters and witnesses subject to death threats. Similarly, neutrality is not an appropriate guiding principle when dealing with whistleblowing situations, where there is an overwhelming imbalance of power and career-ending reprisals are commonplace. Witnesses to serious wrongdoing need to be protected from those who can destroy them on a whim. There is no such protection for our public servants, and this is written into the law, yet Solloway has remained silent about that.

Fortunately, there are solutions at hand—if anyone in government cares to reach for them. The PSDPA's many specific failings, and recommendations for fixing them, have been clearly set out in an extensive, detailed report published recently by the Centre for Free Expression at Toronto Metropolitan University and available on the CFE website. This report is the culmination of three years of work by Dr. Ian Bron who has studied the whistleblowing laws of all Canadian provinces as well as our federal law, looking both at the provisions on paper and how they have been implemented in practice.

This research's thoroughness and credibility is underpinned by CFE's *Evaluation Criteria for Protection of Whistleblowers*. This sets out in plain language the internationally accepted best practices for whistleblower laws based on decades of experience in other leading jurisdictions.

PM's reputation will be made by his response to scandals

Why should the current Liberal government pay any attention to this issue when it is beset by other existential problems? There are several reasons.

First, there is pure partisan self-interest. Every change of government in the past several decades has resulted in part because voters became disillusioned by scandals, and regardless of who was to blame, the government of the day is held responsible. The Trudeau government was about to fall disastrously, largely for this very reason, before it was rescued by United States President Donald Trump's re-election. As dozens of other countries have realized, preventing scandals is vital to maintaining public confidence, and whistleblower protection is by far the most effective (and cost-effective) single tool for accomplishing this.

The usual knee-jerk response—trying to maintain public confidence by denying and covering up wrongdoing—leads to an ever-expanding swamp of sleaze and incompetence. Like his predecessors, Mark Carney's reputation (and his longevity as prime minister) will be influenced by the nature and frequency of the scandals that erupt on his watch, and how he deals with them.

Second, there is operational efficiency and effectiveness. As we see in many regimes abroad, unchecked corruption results in massive waste of resources and inability to deliver services because the focus of bad actors is not on serving the public, but on individual advancement and self-enrichment. We have seen plenty of examples of this recently in Canada, such as the decades-long procurement scam ArriveCan, and the ongoing Phoenix pay disaster. Scandals like these suggest that the federal bureaucracy has become incapable of combatting systemic corruption within its ranks, and this looks like a worsening trend.

Third, Canada's standing and influence in the world is heavily dependent upon our reputation as good guys: willing to help out, and being ethical and trustworthy. But this reputation has been eroding for years as demonstrated by our dramatic slide in the Corruption Perceptions Index published annually by Transparency International. It doesn't help when foreigners see our government officials protecting accused criminals and abusers within their ranks, and attacking the witnesses. Even Canadians have less reason today to believe in the clean image that has been our national brand for decades, and less reason to trust the institutions that sustain our democracy.

For 18 years, Canadian governments of all stripes have been punishing efforts to expose wrongdoing—to their own cost and ours. The Liberals can end this nightmare—and help protect their own reputation—by waking up, facing reality, and finally putting in place a system that truly protects whistleblowers and the Canadian public. Perhaps then we can begin to restore our national image and rejoin the ranks of truly clean and well-governed democracies.

David Hutton is a senior fellow at the Centre for Free Expression at the Toronto Metropolitan University.

The Hill Times

OPINION

Restrictive U.S. worker visa could fuel Canada's rise as a global tech leader

The recent introduction of a $100,000 fee per year for H-1B visas is presented as a measure to protect American workers. In practice, it threatens to accelerate brain drain.

S. Yash Kalash

Opinion

Immigration Minister Lena Metlege Diab. If the U.S. turns away the builders of tomorrow, Canada must ensure they don't just land here but thrive here, writes S. Yash Kalash. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

The global competition for highly skilled STEM talent is intensifying, and the United States risks falling behind. At a time when countries are re-evaluating their immigration rules to attract skilled workers, Washington is moving in the opposite direction. The recent introduction of a $100,000 annual fee for H-1B visas is presented as a measure to protect American workers. In practice, it threatens to accelerate brain drain, creating an innovation vacuum across critical industries and leaving the U.S. vulnerable to both economic and strategic setbacks.

For Canada, however, America's H-1B uncertainty is a lucrative opportunity to attract the top tech talent and highly skilled workforce, expand and strengthen our own innovation ecosystem, and accelerate its emergence as a global tech leader.

For decades, America's technological leadership has rested on openness. Immigrants have been central to building the country's innovation ecosystem: nearly two-thirds or 65 per cent (28 of 43) American AI companies were founded or co-founded either by immigrants or their children, according to a 2022 report, and international students make up the majority of graduate enrolments in STEM and computer science programs. Across sectors as diverse as semiconductors, cloud computing, and cybersecurity, H-1B visa holders play an indispensable role.

The U.S. has never produced enough STEM graduates to meet domestic demand, which means foreign professionals are not displacing Americans but rather filling gaps that keep the innovation engine running. Restrictive immigration policies do not solve this skills shortage. Instead, they risk undermining the human capital that sustains growth.

History shows that talent is highly mobile. When one country closes its doors, others open theirs wider. Already, Canada is trying to position itself as North America's alternative tech hub, offering fast-track permanent residency and streamlined immigration pathways for skilled workers. Unlike the U.S., Canada has built an immigration model rooted in predictability and openness. Its Global Talent Stream, part of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, which allows technology firms to bring in high-skilled workers within two weeks.

More recently, in 2023, Canada launched a Tech Talent Strategy that potentially invites H-1B visa holders stuck in American immigration limbo to apply for open work permits. Canadian cities like Toronto and Vancouver are already emerging as global tech hubs. The convergence of robust universities, thriving startup ecosystems, and world-class public services makes the country especially attractive to mid-career professionals looking for stability, not just opportunity. By proactively marketing itself as North America's innovation haven, Canada can attract the very people being driven out of Silicon Valley.

But attraction alone is not enough. Canada must now build a whole-of-government innovation strategy that links talent inflows to sectoral growth. This includes expanding permanent residency options for STEM professionals and their families, supporting startups and SMEs that hire global talent with visa sponsorship, capital, and R&D credits, building global IP and commercialization pipelines, so Canadian tech is not just homegrown, but also world leading.

Canada's goal should be not just to benefit from American missteps, but to leapfrog into global leadership across frontier sectors. This is especially urgent as nations like India and China begin aligning immigration with industrial policy.

Nations around the world understand that in the digital economy, talent is as valuable as oil was in the industrial age. China has poured resources into programs designed to lure back overseas graduates, offering generous research funding, housing subsidies, and startup capital. India is beginning to position its vast technical workforce as a strategic resource, leveraging its size to attract R&D partnerships and joint ventures. The shift of talent flows toward these countries could gradually alter global innovation networks, moving entrepreneurship, intellectual property, and investment capital out of the U.S. Once lost, such ecosystems are extraordinarily difficult to rebuild.

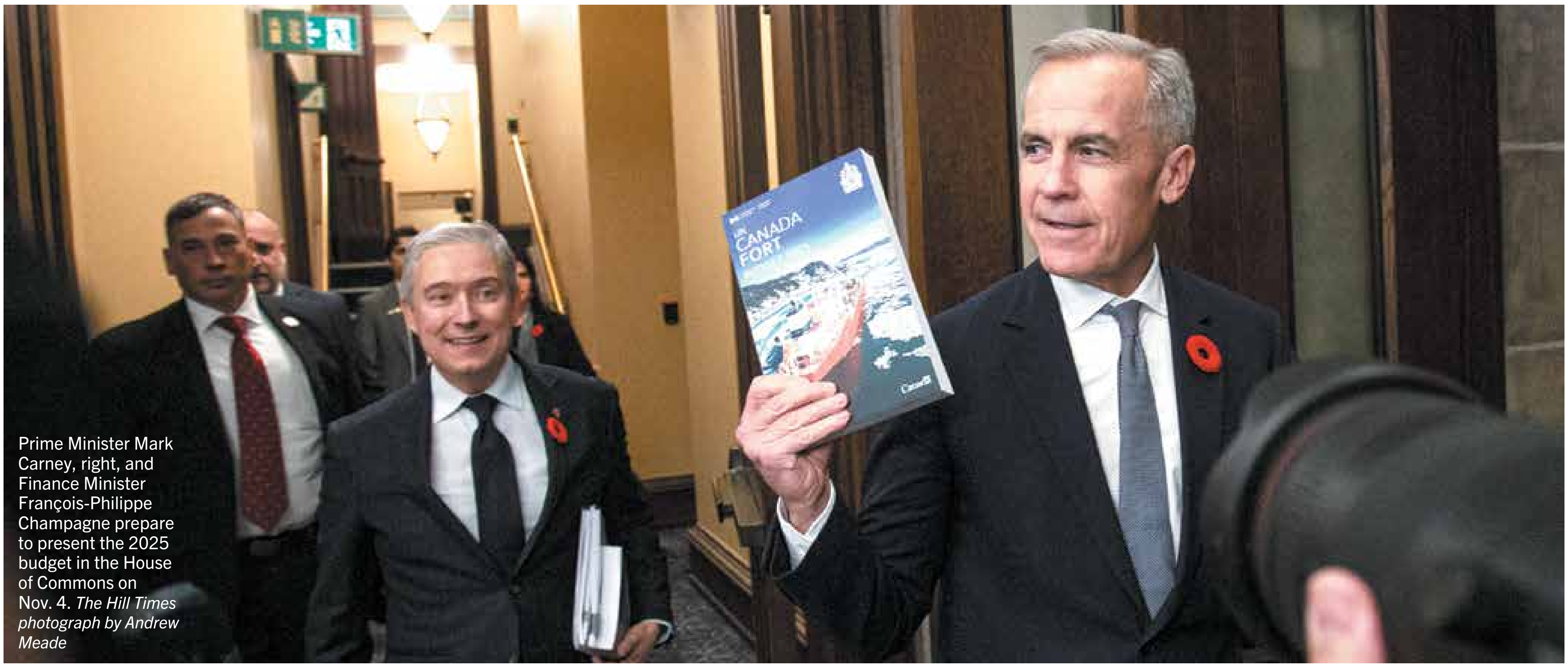
The argument for protecting American workers is not misplaced. But a strategy of exclusion is counterproductive. Rather than raising barriers that deter young professionals and startups, U.S. policy should aim to balance domestic opportunity with international openness. But with the current policy, America risks creating an innovation vacuum that no policy reversal can easily fix. Once top-tier talent begins rerouting itself toward Toronto or Berlin or Bangalore, the downstream effects will be hard to reverse. Patents, investments, unicorns, and Nobel prizes follow people, not policies.

Canada is uniquely placed to become the beneficiary of America's closed-door pivot. But that requires bold vision, not incrementalism. If the U.S. turns away the builders of tomorrow, Canada must ensure they don't just land here but thrive here.

S. Yash Kalash is a senior fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation, and an expert in strategy, public policy, digital technology and financial services.

The Hill Times

COMMENT



Prime Minister Mark Carney, right, and Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne prepare to present the 2025 budget in the House of Commons on Nov. 4. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Budget 2025 is more of the same

The budget has positive measures, but it fails to provide a credible plan for the future. What is the Carney government's vision for the future?

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century

TORONTO—The Carney government promised transformation and generational change—a bold plan for a new and better future. But, as post-budget polling shows, the message is not registering.

Many Canadians do not see a connection between the daily challenges and fears they face and the transformation they were promised. They were expecting a plan for the future that they could understand and have confidence in. Others were expecting a strategy for a generational change that would lead to a surge in advancing Canadian-owned and world-competitive businesses at the forefront of frontier technologies.

The problem is partly language. Prime Minister Mark Carney and his cabinet are not talking in a way that passes the Tim Hortons test: can they explain the budget in ways that the average Canadian can understand and relate?

As Andrew MacDougall, former director of communications for then-prime minister Stephen Harper, explained in *The Line*, the budget is a communications failure as it's not written for ordinary people. It is, he argued, the language used by management consultants and bankers. "It is not the kind of chat being had around Canadians' kitchen tables," MacDougall wrote in the Nov. 10 article.

But the problem is much bigger than language. More profoundly, the problem is lack of vision. What is the future Canada that the government has in mind? What is the confidence-building vision for transformative change for a new and better nation?

There are, to be sure, some important proposals in the budget: a much greater commitment to "Buy Canadian," expanded investment in infrastructure, fostering a long-overdue defence industrial base, and incentives for investment. There is a much-needed focus on improving our productivity performance, which is essential for improved living standards. But the budget fails to recognize the needed transition to a new economic model for Canada. Instead, there is more of the same, and attachment to the model of the past.

This is not an argument for defeating the budget as much of it is critical in these difficult times. But it does mean recognizing that we are not yet on the right path, and that more work is needed. We still need a vision and plan for a transformed Canadian economy; one leading to a more productive, prosperous, and sovereign nation with improved potential for growth and jobs.

Transformation would mean shifting away from the old model—where we export natural resources, and import innovation and technology—to a new model in which we sell high-value products and services not just to Americans, but to the rest of the world.

But this budget is about a Canada that is over-reliant on the production and export of raw materials and commodities when we need to transition to a knowledge-based, digital-era economy where intangible investments, ownership and commercialization of intellectual property, the scaling up of our ambitious entrepreneurs, and ownership of data all matter more.

Instead, much of the focus is on expanding our dependence on raw materials. Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne indicated as much recently in Calgary, Alta. "I think people understand that the natural resources sector is key to national prosperity, to investment in the country, to who we are as Canadians in many ways," he said during a Calgary Chamber of Commerce event. He described the potential expansion of LNG Canada on the British Columbia coast as "a game-changer" for the country.

Really? It sounds more like more of the same, not transformation. While there is nothing wrong with developing natural resources and seizing opportunity where it exists, that is not a vision for the future. Hewers of wood and drawers of water at a time when our future depends on innovation, technology and intellectual property?

And with the second round of nation-building projects announced by Prime Minister Mark Carney in Terrace, B.C., late last week, natural resource projects still dominate.

Jim Balsillie, co-founder and chair of the Council of Canadian Innovators, noted recently that while the federal government spends roughly $7.5-billion a year on research funding, it's not getting a return on that investment.

Despite the critical need for new approaches, the budget provides no new set of policies, institutions, and regulations to commercialize intellectual property from this publicly-funded R&D; no new system to capture the benefits for domestic-owned enterprise; no strategic realignment for a Canada-strong knowledge economy; and no reforms to ensure the flow of patient capital to scale up young Canadian firms.

Unlike many other countries, including the United States, Canada does not attempt to steer the commercialization of this research into home-grown companies and national projects.

Meanwhile, hardship is a reality for many Canadians. Statistics Canada reports that in October, 27.7 per cent of Canadians age 15 and older were living in a household that faced difficulty in meeting its financial needs for transportation, housing, food, clothing and other necessities. This is life on a treadmill.

Canadians remain worried about jobs, housing, and health care, and the budget has done little to allay those concerns. An Abacus poll taken over two days after the budget found it hadn't lifted optimism across the country, with 49 per cent of Canadians fearing the nation was headed in the wrong direction, compared to 33 per cent who believed it was headed in the right direction. "What is striking is the continued dominance of cost of living concerns," Abacus found.

Another poll, from Nanos, found much the same. As Nanos reported, "Canadians are increasingly pessimistic about both their personal finances and the broader economy." Likewise, a Leger poll found that only 15 per cent of those surveyed believed the budget would have a positive effect on their lives while 32 per cent felt the impact would be negative.

The budget has positive measures, but it fails to provide a credible plan for the future. What is the Carney government's vision for the future? More of the same, or transformation? So far it is more of the same, and not much needed transformation. More needs to be done.

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

The Hill Times

Global

Nothing very impressive is likely to come out of the UN climate conference despite the urgency of the situation, writes Gwynne Dyer. *UN photograph courtesy by Kiara Worth*

COP 30 unlikely to shift political will

Money is tight, wars are a huge distraction, and the climate has become unfashionable, so we'll just have to wait and hope for better times.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs

LONDON, U.K.— Populist parties are already in power in some developed countries, and waiting just outside the door in many more. The key trick of populist politicians is to tell the voters what they want to hear, and the voters definitely do not want their lives to be disrupted by global heating, so they are told it is not happening. It's "the world's biggest con," in United States President Donald Trump's words.

These lies have consequences. On the eve of COP 30, the annual climate summit that opened in Brazil on Nov. 10, only one-third of the countries that signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (64 out of 198) had submitted their plans for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.

Every member is supposed to improve their "nationally determined contributions" to cutting emissions every five years and new ones are due this year, but they are being ignored by most countries this time around. Money is tight, wars are a huge distraction, and the climate has become unfashionable, so we'll just have to wait and hope for better times.

That could be a plausible—even sensible—strategy if we were still in the '90s or the noughties, when climate change was still seen as a slow, linear, and above all predictable process. But we now know that, like most natural processes, climate change usually happens in sudden lurches: you cross an invisible threshold, and suddenly you are in a changed world.

It's not just plain old physics, which gives you nice, smooth curves. With the biosphere, you are dealing with complex systems that can change in abrupt and unforeseen ways. They may also resist attempts to switch them back to the original climate state.

This is the world that today's climate scientists inhabit: they know that the trend is relentlessly upward in temperature, but they also now know that the warming may accelerate if they cross one of those invisible thresholds.

Indeed, that is why the scientists persuaded their political masters back in 2018 to set a "do not exceed" target for average global temperature of 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level. But it turned out that they were still being too optimistic.

In 2023, the average global temperature suddenly jumped by about one-third of a degree in the single month of June, all the way up to that "do not exceed" level of 1.5 C—and it has been around there ever since. The previous assumption was that we wouldn't get there until the mid-2030s. What happened?

It took a year and a half to figure it out. The warming had crossed an invisible threshold, and suddenly the amount of low-lying cloud over the oceans in the tropics decreased sharply, letting a lot more sunshine reach the Earth's surface. Sunshine equals warming, and away we all go. It's called a "feedback."

Then scientists noticed that the amount of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere soared in 2023 and 2024, from an average of 2.6 parts per million in the past decade to 3.7 ppm. It doesn't sound like a lot, but this is the main factor that determines the speed of the warming ,and it has grown by a third in two years.

Satellite data suggests it is caused mainly by the record-breaking drought in the Amazon, which has reduced the forest's ability to absorb carbon dioxide. If the greater heat and lower rainfall in the Amazon are permanent—as they well may be—then this is another irreversible feedback, and the forest may be on its way to turning into savannah.

In effect, we are now walking across a minefield. Some other feedbacks we know about, like the potential collapse of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC or Gulf Stream), but we don't know when they will activate. And there are probably others we simply don't know about at all.

What can we do about this beyond cutting our emissions as fast as possible (which is not very fast, if past experience is any guide)? Holding the warming down by direct human intervention would be equally useful if the goal is to avoid triggering more feedbacks, but there is a superstitious fear about "geoengineering" even in parts of the scientific community.

Nothing very impressive is likely to come out of COP 30 despite the urgency of the situation, and we will continue to mark time until intellectual and political fashions change. If that's too late, then too bad.

We are a species that evolved to live in small groups who were always at war with one another. To build a civilization we had to learn to live in groups millions strong and stop the wars, and both are still works in progress. If we can fix those problems we can probably still solve the climate challenge. If not, then not.

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

The Hill Times

OPINION

MP Chris d'Entremont, left, with then-Green MP Mike Morrice in 2023, now affiliates himself with the Liberals after crossing the floor on Nov. 4—which was also budget day. The move stunned the Conservative Party and political observers. *The Hill Times photograph by Stuart Benson*

Floor-crossings are controversial, but not necessarily a political kiss of death

It's uncertain if Chris d'Entremont can successfully carry the banner as a Liberal. But he joins a long line of defectors who make covering the House of Commons interesting.

Paul Park

Opinion

OTTAWA—In 1977, rock-ribbed Alberta Tory MP Jack Horner shocked Ottawa by crossing the floor to become a cabinet minister in Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Liberal government.

Horner had lost the 1976 Progressive Conservative leadership race to Joe Clark. Fed up with Clark's direction of the party, Horner joined the governing Grits. A few months later, former Progressive Conservative prime minister John Diefenbaker was asked if Horner had a ghost of a chance of being elected as a Liberal in Alberta.

"A ghost of a chance?" replied Diefenbaker. "Yes, that."

Diefenbaker was prescient, as Horner was trounced badly in the 1979 election. But the Albertan's party-switching successors have been meeting with different, more positive outcomes.

The recent defection of Nova Scotia Conservative MP Chris d'Entremont to the Liberals has brought the issue of floor crossings to a head once again.

Running under another party's banner used to be the political kiss of death. But the rise of the Reform Party in the late 1980s and early 1990s changed all that.

Disaffected Tories, believing then-prime minister Brian Mulroney had sold them out, flocked to the Western-based party. Many former Progressive Conservative MPs returned to Ottawa as Reformers. In the early 1990s, the Bloc Québécois was founded by six dissident Quebec Progressive Conservatives and two apostate Liberals.

In the 1997 election, each of the five parties in Parliament—the Liberals, BQ, Reform, NDP, and PCs—had at least one candidate who had been an MP for another party. Every one but the Bloc had a former MP running under another banner. Not all were successful, of course, but enough made it to dispel the myth that defection equals defeat.

Pierre Trudeau had to put up with departures from his caucus. Paul Hellyer was a long-time Liberal MP from Toronto who left Trudeau Sr.'s cabinet and joined the Progressive Conservatives. He squeaked by as a Tory in that year's election, but was defeated in 1974 and never returned to office.

Quebec MP Raymond Rock also defected from Pierre Trudeau's Grits to run as a Tory in 1972. Despite the voters trending to the PCs in that election, Rock was defeated by another Liberal.

Justin Trudeau experienced both sides of the switch. Originally a Green MP, Jenica Atwin was elected in 2021 as a Liberal in her then-riding of Fredericton, N.B., while Leona Alleslev, first elected as a Toronto-area Liberal in 2015, was successful as a Tory candidate in 2019, but was defeated two years later. Ontario MP Derek Sloan, after being tossed out of the Conservative caucus, was defeated when he ran as an Independent in Banff, Alta., in 2021.

Some switchers have even sought the top job, although none have succeeded. Hellyer ran against Pierre Trudeau during the 1968 Liberal leadership race, and then ran for the PC leadership in 1976. Both ex-Tory MP Scott Brison and one-time NDPer Bob Rae have run for the federal Liberal leadership, with Rae even serving as interim leader for a spell from 2011 to 2013.

Deborah Coyne, the mother of Justin Trudeau's half-sister, ran against him for the Liberal leadership. She later stood as a Green Party candidate.

One of the most blatant political chameleons is former British Columbia MP David Emerson. A minister in Liberal prime minister Paul Martin's cabinet, Emerson was re-elected as a Liberal in 2006. The ink was barely dry on the results of then-Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper's minority government when Emerson crossed the floor so he could continue as industry minister.

Defections are controversial. The NDP will not accept members of other parties joining its caucus without a byelection. Some MPs will leave a party over disagreements with a new leader to sit as Independents, as then-Quebec MP Alain Rayes did following the election of Pierre Poilievre as party leader in 2022. Others will depart a caucus over legal or ethical issues. Liberal Han Dong did that when questions were raised about foreign interference in his riding in 2023.

It's uncertain if d'Entremont can successfully carry the banner as a Grit. But he joins a long line of defectors who make covering the House of Commons interesting.

Paul Park is a reporter with The Wire Report.

The Hill Times

NEWS

MPs to vote on $10.8-billion spending boost in new estimates

Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali's second supplementary estimates for 2025-26, tabled on Nov. 7, outline $10.8-billion in spending. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

The Canadian Dental Care Plan will receive the largest portion of the funds at $1.6-billion, with Indigenous Services, Crown-Indigenous Relations, and National Defence each requesting over $1-billion.

BY ELEANOR WAND

The government's second round of supplementary estimates for 2025-26 outlines $10.8-billion in voted spending for defence procurement, settlements, and the Canadian Dental Care Plan, among other expenditures, bringing the government's total spending up to $506.6-billion so far this fiscal year.

Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali (Brampton–Chinguacousy Park, Ont.) tabled the latest spending ask on Nov. 7, outlining requests from 76 different federal organizations, eight of which are seeking more than $500-million in funds. Ultimately $10.7-billion in spending is on the books as part of the supplementary estimates B, with the $10.8-billion offset by a $112.9-million decrease in statutory expenditures. Another $2.5-billion in non-budgetary spending is in the mix, mainly reflecting an extra $2.3-billion of financial assistance to Ukraine, provided through the Administered Account for Ukraine at the International Monetary Fund.

The voted spending marks a $14-billion decrease from the feds' second round of supplementary estimates from last year, where Ottawa requested an additional $24.8-billion in funds. The year before, that number was $24.6-billion.

The big-ticket items on the table are: $1.6-billion for benefits covered under the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP), $1.4-billion to Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), $1.3-billion to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and $1.1-billion to National Defence.

The CDCP, which began its rollout in December 2023, opened to the largest cohort of eligible Canadians this year. As of October, five million Canadians were covered under the plan, and close to 2.8 million people had received care, reads a press release from Health Canada.

The funds requested for National Defence are set to go primarily to procurement projects. Ottawa is seeking $476-million as part of its purchase of 88 advanced fighter aircraft, which the government says are "essential for defending Canada and Canadian sovereignty." The first of those aircraft is set to arrive next year, with the fleet expected to be in service "beyond 2060." The government has yet to report on the review underway of the contract with American-based Lockheed Martin, which Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) launched in March amid trade tensions with the United States.

Another $215.1-million will go to building a fleet of river-class destroyers, which is one leg of Canada's National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy. The feds have committed to a fleet of 15, with the first delivery of those ships estimated to arrive early 2030s, and the fleet expected to be completed in 2050.

Carney laid out an additional $81.8-billion over five years in defence spending in his fall federal budget—one of the biggest increases in spending Ottawa has seen in decades. The Nov. 4 document says the funds are to "rebuild, rearm, and reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces" (CAF) with the largest spend, $20.4-billion, going towards recruiting and retaining troops. Those funds include a pay raise for CAF members of up to 20 per cent, depending on rank.

National Defence Minister David McGuinty's department is seeking $1.1-billion in the latest estimates. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

The feds' first round of supplementary estimates for this year also secured an additional $8.2-billion for National Defence out of the total $9-billion requested. Those funds went to CAF recruitment and retention, equipment, projects, and support for Ukraine, among other expenditures.

The other major new spend on the table for defence is investments in the Capital Investment Fund, for which $265.2-billion is being requested.

CIRNAC is seeking funds to settle claims, something which is typically a large chunk of CIRNAC's budget. The department's 2025-26 departmental plan projected CIRNAC would spend $1.6-billion settling "specific claims," this year, with an additional $1.1-billion spent on "land-related claims and litigation."

In the latest estimates, Ottawa is seeking $673.1-million to settle claims to First Nations whose treaty rights to certain agricultural implements were not upheld.

In February, then-CIRNAC Minister Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Guildwood—Rouge Park, Ont.), who now holds the Public Safety file, announced the government would be paying $1.72-billion in settlements for First Nations under Treaties 4 and 6 for agricultural claims.

The department's second-biggest funding request—$270.6-million—will go to settlements from the Federal Indian Day Schools lawsuit, a $1.47-billion class-action which reached its settlement agreement in 2019.

Under the agreement, individuals who attended a Federal Indian Day School and "suffered harm as a consequence of their attendance" are entitled to compensation, depending on the severity of abuse they suffered. An additional $200-million settlement was reached to fund projects that "support healing, commemoration, education, language and culture." That fund is being administered by the McLean Day Schools Settlement Corporation.

An additional $108.4-million of CIRNAC's requested $1.4-billion will go to settling the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation's Rouge River Valley Tract Claim. The nation's claim, which was initially filed in 2019, says Canada (and Ontario) failed to protect their interest after they surrendered 4,427 hectares of reserve land to the feds in 1820.

That land, which is now Mississauga and Oakville, Ont., was sold by the government, so the Mississaugas of the Credit have been unable to financially benefit from it, they argue. The province of Ontario is also paying $75-million to settle that claim.

Both ISC and CIRNAC have been largely exempt from the government's pledge to slash 15 per cent across the public service over three years. The fall federal budget plans for two per cent cuts at both departments, amounting to a total cut of almost $2.3-billion by 2030.

ISC is requesting an injection of $705.9-million to reimburse First Nations communities, as well as provincial, territorial, and municipal governments for emergency response and recovery activities that took place on reserves.

This summer, a number of First Nations communities were forced to evacuate to escape wildfires. In some cases, like in Sandy Lake First Nation, Ont., residents were airlifted out of their communities. This year was Canada's second-worst wildfire season ever recorded.

The remaining funds for the department will go to programming—the First Nations elementary and secondary education program and the First Nations child and family services program—infrastructure projects, and legal settlements.

The estimates are also requesting an additional $568.1-million for VIA Rail procurement, as well as maintenance and repair; $315-million for salaries to meet new collective bargaining agreements terms; $595.9-million for public service insurance plans and programs; and $598-million for the Interim Federal Health Program, which provides health-care coverage to asylum claimants and refugees, as well as some other foreign nationals; and $673-million to fund Canada's International Climate Finance Program, which supports developing countries in fighting climate change.

ewand@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

Proposed collective bargaining changes could 'influence the opinions of arbitrators' to consider feds' fiscal situation: lawyer

The budget outlines plans to update the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act, which federal unions are criticizing as 'vague' and 'concerning' for its potential to infringe on workers' rights.

Treasury Board Secretariat President Shafqat Ali. The federal government has signalled changes could be coming to legislation that controls collective bargaining with public servants, which could take into account the country's financial situation during negotiations with unions. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

BY MARLO GLASS

The federal government has signalled changes could be coming to legislation that controls collective bargaining, which, for the first time, would take into account the country's financial situation during talks between unions representing federal public servants and the government.

The proposed amendments to the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act outlined in the Nov. 4 budget says the government needs to "attract and retain the necessary talent" while "respecting Canada's fiscal circumstances relative to its stated budgetary policies and objectives."

The budget says public sector compensation "must align with Canadian labour market trends" and the government's own fiscal position.

Christopher Achkar, founder and managing partner of Achkar Law, a firm focusing on employment and labour law, said the budget is "a bit all over the place" on changes to labour law with its references to both collective bargaining and recruitment to join the public service.

"The government is attempting to essentially influence the opinions of arbitrators and decisions of arbitrators by getting them to consider macroeconomic factors, budgetary constraints, and procedures that the government is going through," he said in an interview.

"Which, in a way, pushes arbitrators to a more lenient view of the government, and less in favour of the demands of unions, like increasing pay and benefits."

He noted the budget doesn't say arbitrators must consider these factors, but rather these factors may be considered.

"But they'll read between the lines," he said.

Public Service Alliance of Canada president Sharon De Sousa said she's concerned by the vague language around the proposed changes, covered off in three paragraphs of text.

"Why would something like that be so vague?"

The government, she said, is also an employer, and "if you're going to set the budget, that means you can also shrink the budget so there are fiscal constraints," she said.

"How is that fair? How is that transparent? As far as I'm concerned, that goes against our constitutional rights."

The Hill Times reached out to the Treasury Board Secretariat, as the employer of the public service, for details about what specific changes to the legislation are being considered. A spokesperson redirected all budget-related comments to the Department of Finance.

Finance spokesperson Benoit Mayrand said in a statement the amendments intend to "clarify" the factors an arbitration board must consider when making a decision between an employer and union, "including the necessity of attracting and retaining competent persons in the public service to meet the needs of Canadians; and, the Government of Canada's fiscal circumstances relative to its stated budgetary policies and objectives."

De Sousa said PSAC's legal team would be reviewing the legislation "very closely," and emphasized workers have a constitutional right to strike.

De Sousa says she's "very concerned" about how the Liberals have approached labour disputes in recent cases. During the holiday 2024 Canada Post strike, mail carriers were ordered back to work under then-labour minister Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.). Then, this past summer, Jobs and Families Minister Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ont.) similarly mandated striking Air Canada flight attendants back to work.

As it stands, the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act requires employers and bargaining unions to meet and make "reasonable efforts to enter into a collective agreement," Achkar said, noting the legislation already references the importance of taking the public interest into account.

"It's just the government's attempt to … help itself out during bargaining the new collective agreements that are coming into play, and to still encourage employees to join the ranks," he said.

The legislation has already faced criticism from unions who feel the arbitrators often make decisions in favour of the government, Achkar said.

"There's already doubts about how much the collective bargaining process works without the government stepping in," Achkar said. But he added this change to legislation could potentially benefit unions, though, once books are balanced and clearer economic skies are forecast, Achkar said.

"The government can't get to have the benefits from appearing that they are in control of the budget, and not expect to concede on some collective bargaining," he said. "If we're balancing the budget and we're doing a good job, then that could potentially mean the arbitrators should consider that when rendering decisions."

The public service is currently reeling from the implications of the budget, which lays out some $44-billion in spending cuts across a wide swath of the public service and forecasts thousands of job losses. All told, the budget lays out a 10 per cent reduction in staffing levels from its peak of 368,000 in 2023-24, through a combination of attrition, early retirement, and job cuts.

Unions have decried these cuts as austerity measures that will hamper the work of the public sector.

"Balancing the budget can be a cute euphemism sometimes, but what it meant in the '90s, under a Liberal government as well, was devastating the infrastructure that keeps this country strong," said Nathan Prier, president of the Canadian Association of Professional Employees, referring to then-prime minister Jean Chrétien's 1995 budget, which laid similarly deep cuts to government spending and some 45,000 job losses in the public service.

Prier said public servants aren't responsible for the government's deficit, which Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean's, Ont.) first budget reported would be $78.3-billion next fiscal year. He said the bureaucracy is "running at a level of efficiency we have not seen in a long time," arguing that public servants make up proportionally less of the government's spending in the last decade, compared to previous years.

"If the government wants to start considering its own fiscal crisis that it itself generated, then we are not going to accept that as a basis for worsening our conditions," Prier said.

"As far as the [legislation] goes, and the change to it, it's a sign," Prier said. "Just like Mark Carney gave us a sign when he ordered the flight attendants back to work, that these rights are fought for and they are defended."

mglass@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

G7 top diplomats find little new ground on support for Ukraine

The second day of the G7 foreign ministers' meeting on Nov. 12 commenced with a session on President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Ukraine. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

The G7 foreign ministers' joint statement on Ukraine retreads many items that were agreed upon the last time the group met in March.

Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand, right, was joined by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha as she announced new sanctions on Russia on Nov. 12. *The Hill Times photograph by Neil Moss*

BY NEIL MOSS

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONT.—Canada's top diplomat trumpeted the Group of Seven's support for Ukraine, but questions over American support have muddied the efforts.

That hurdle was physical on the final day of Canada's last major test of its G7 presidency. Opening a Nov. 12 group session on Ukraine, it wasn't Kyiv's top diplomat sitting directly to the right of Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand (Oakville East, Ont.)—that seat was occupied by United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio. To Rubio's right was Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha.

"We haven't laboured at the G7 in terms of our commitment to Ukraine," Anand said as pooled reporters huddled into a small conference room at the White Oak Resort.

Anand welcomed her G7 counterparts to Ontario's snow-covered Niagara region for two days of meetings on Nov. 11 and 12.

During the meeting, the G7 "reaffirmed" their support for Ukrainian people, and "confirmed their commitment to work closely together for a just and lasting peace," according to a Japanese readout of the meeting provided to *The Hill Times*.

In the summit's closing joint statement, the Group of Seven's reaffirmation to support Ukraine "in defending its territorial integrity and right to exist, and its freedom, sovereignty, and independence" is a word-for-word repetition of what was penned when top diplomats gathered in Quebec's Charlevoix region in March.

Heading into that meeting seven months ago, Rubio proclaimed that he wouldn't do anything to affect the peace process led by U.S. President Donald Trump.

The previous and current joint statements both condemned military assistance being directed to Russia from North Korea and Iran.

This week's joint statement noted that the G7 is "increasing the economic costs on Russia, and exploring measures against countries and entities that are helping finance Russia's war efforts."

It also acknowledged "ongoing discussions on a wide range of financing options, including further leveraging immobilized Russian sovereign assets in our jurisdictions in a co-ordinated way to support Ukraine."

Anand said that the G7 commitment to Ukraine was demonstrated at the Leaders' Summit in Kananaksis, Alta., where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended in June.

"We, as G7 ministers, are carrying over that commitment to ensure that we are doing whatever is necessary to support Ukraine," she said.

The high-minded rhetoric hasn't always played out throughout Canada's G7 presidency as building consensus on Ukraine has felt like a Sisyphean task.

The The two joint statements from two separate foreign ministers' meetings have been heavy on affirmations and expressions, but light on plans for direct action.

In June at the Leaders' Summit, no joint statement on Ukraine materialized. Instead, language was included in the chair's summary of the gathering. The Prime Minister's Office initially suggested that the U.S. had blocked work on an initiative—a claim that was retracted hours later. Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) told reporters at the time that a joint statement was never passed around, and it was always the plan to address the conflict in Ukraine within the chair's summary.

The June chair summary included support for Trump's peace efforts, and a recognition that Russia needs to accept a ceasefire.

Absent from this week's joint statement was a reference to supporting the Trump-led peace process, which was included in Carney's chair summary in June.

Sybiha said that gathering in Niagara is "really important" for Ukraine's peace efforts.

"It is critical to strengthen support for Ukraine, and increase pressure on Russia," he said. "We must make the cost of continuing this war unbearable and dangerous for Putin and his regime."

Sybiha said he came to the G7 meeting with specifics in mind, including strengthening Ukraine long-range capabilities, as well as scaling up investments in innovation and defence industry.

"We urge G7 investment in missile and drone manufacturing," he said.

Those specifics weren't reflected in the Nov. 12 joint statement.

Ottawa announces new sanctions on Russia

In place of G7 action in Niagara, Anand announced that Canada is enacting a new round of sanctions—targeting 13 individuals and 11 entities. Canada's foreign minister was joined by Sybiha when making the announcement.

A press release by Global Affairs Canada noted that targets included those involved in the "development and deployment" of Moscow's drone program, as well as cyber infrastructure employed in Russia's "hybrid strategies" against Russia. It also listed 100 vessels part of Russia's shadow fleet, according to the department.

During the opening of the G7 meeting on Ukraine, Anand said that "we need to make sure that, collectively, we're doing our part."

"We're … leveraging the G7 now to get Ukraine the defence capabilities that it needs," she remarked. "Today, let's highlight further work that we can do together."

Toshihiro Kitamura, a spokesperson for Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, told *The Hill Times* that Japan is focusing its support on Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery efforts due to constitutional limits on military assistance.

"We try to provide what we can provide," he said.

"The most important thing is to demonstrate the unity of the G7," he added.

He said that Japan is "fully committed" in its support of Ukraine.

"That is because we strongly believe that today's security of Europe and Asia is inseparable," Kitamura said. "Today's Ukraine could be tomorrow's Asia."

Japanese officials provided *The Hill Times* with their summary of the Nov. 11 working dinner—focused on global peace and security—which notes that G7 countries "confirmed the importance of an immediate ceasefire and of co-operating as the G7 to achieve a just and lasting peace."

That meeting started at 8:52 p.m., and lasted past 11 p.m., according to Japan's readout.

'First step' is having Ukraine on the agenda: UCC

Ukrainian Canadian Congress chief executive officer Ihor Michalchyshyn told *The Hill Times* that Canada has made Ukraine a priority throughout its G7 presidency, which he said is a "strong positive."

"We know that there's some differences of opinion amongst some of the G7 countries, but I think it's important that Canada has brought that right as a top agenda item," he said.

He said that over the last number of months, there were "different ideas" regarding which leader was willing to sign on to what type of statement.

"The American position has continued to evolve and it is Canada's role to convene the table and get as much consensus as can be," Michalchyshyn said.

Michalchyshyn said having the topic on the ministers' agenda is the "first step."

"It would have been a big problem to not be able to agree to discuss it," he said.

He said that it was "important and respectful" that Ukraine was represented at the gathering, noting that it is an important principle to maintain that Ukraine isn't discussed without being present.

He said that the sanctions that Canada announced on Nov. 12 are "welcome."

"We're more concerned about the enforcement of sanctions at this point," Michalchyshyn said. "We've seen a lot of attempts to evade sanctions by changing names, changing companies, changing addresses."

nmoss@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

Up to the U.S. to decide if it violated international law with Caribbean boat strikes, says Anand

Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand broke with tradition as she seemingly asserted that Canada's top diplomat doesn't weigh in on a foreign country's adherence to international law.

BY NEIL MOSS

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONT.—Canada's foreign minister suggested that it is not her job to determine if the United States has breached international law when striking alleged drug boats in the Caribbean Sea.

Foreign Minister Anita Anand (Oakville East, Ont.) made the remark at the closing press conference of the final gathering of top diplomats of Canada's G7 presidency in Ontario's Niagara region on Nov. 12.

Asked whether Canada has a view as to whether the recent U.S. airstrikes on alleged drug boats violate international law, Anand noted that a foreign country's compliance with international law is outside her jurisdiction.

"As Canada's foreign minister, I hold responsibility for Canada's compliance with international law—we are always seeking to comply with international law," she said. "Regarding the question that you asked, I would say it is within the purview of U.S. authorities to make that determination."

According to a Nov. 11 Reuters report, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot—who was also at the two-day G7 meeting—said that the U.S. strikes violate international law.

"We have observed with concern the military operations in the Caribbean region because they violate international law, and because France has a presence in this region through its overseas territories, where more than a million of our compatriots reside," Barrot said.

Anand told reporters that she had not seen Barrot's comments, and that it was not raised when the G7 ministers held a group session on maritime security.

Anand's comments are a departure from previous instances where Canada has alleged foreign countries have committed international law violations. On Nov. 10, Anand was one of more than a dozen signatories to a joint statement "condemning atrocities and violations of international humanitarian law in Sudan."

The U.S. has conducted airstrikes on 19 boats since the beginning of September, killing 75 people, according to an NPR report.

On Nov. 11, CNN reported that the United Kingdom has suspended intelligence sharing with the U.S. regarding suspected drug boats in the Caribbean over concerns of the strikes' legality. That same report notes that Canada has "made clear to the U.S. that it does not want its intelligence being used to help target boats for deadly strikes."

Asked about that report, Anand said that the U.S. has "made clear that it is using its own intelligence."

At the close of the most recent gathering of G7 foreign ministers, Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand outlined what she saw as the parameters of her job. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

"That has been clear for some time," she said, remarking that Canada has been supporting the U.S. Coast Guard's work intercepting narcotics on their way to North America.

"We're continuing to monitor the situation, but we have no involvement in operations that you're referring to," she said.

Seven months later, a new approach

Anand also reiterated that it wasn't her job to address the rocky Canada-U.S. trade relationship with her American counterpart.

Trade talks have been suspended by U.S. President Donald Trump since Oct. 24 following the Ontario government placing an anti-tariff ad on American airwaves.

"The issues relating to trade fall within the purview of my colleague Dominic LeBlanc, and that's where they remain as they should," Anand told reporters. LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) is the minister responsible for Canada-U.S. trade.

Anand was by Rubio's side throughout the two-day gathering, appearing next to him in both the traditional G7 family photo taken on Nov. 11, and the expanded family photo on Nov. 12 that included representatives of non-G7 invited countries.

She also was with the former Florida senator—along with other G7 foreign ministers—for a more than two-hour-long working dinner on Nov. 11.

That dinner was held at Stone Eagle Winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., where the G7 top diplomats enjoyed a three-course meal. To start, a butternut squash soup was served with crisp sage and croutons. The main course was pan-seared Atlantic salmon with green goddess dressing and roasted carrots, black kale, and potato pavé. For dessert, there was an apple galette with ice cream and caramel sauce. The wines served were Eagle Eye White, a 2022 Sauvignon Blanc; as well as the Stone Eagle Red, a 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon. The listed price for the wines are $89 and $150 a bottle, per the Ontario winery's website.

Rubio didn't speak to media gathered at the site of the ministerial gathering at White Oak Resort. Instead he held a scrum with travelling American press at the Hamilton, Ont., airport.

The four readouts of Anand's bilateral meetings with non-U.S. counterparts that have been made public as of publication deadline show a willingness to speak about topics that fall under other ministerial portfolios.

She spoke about trade or the economic relationship with counterparts from France, India, Japan, and the U.K. despite it also being under the purview of International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Ont.).

A U.S. State Department readout of Anand's meeting with Rubio makes no mention of trade, noting the topics of transatlantic security, the Indo-Pacific, and "reinforcing supply chains," as well as Haiti.

Global Affairs Canada's readout of the meeting did not highlight the bilateral trading relationship.

Asked to confirm if Anand turned down the chance with Rubio to speak about resuming bilateral trade talks, the foreign minister didn't answer directly.

"As foreign minister, my responsibility is to represent Canada on the world stage on these and other issues, that's exactly what I did. And I'm respectful of my colleagues' portfolio—one of whom is Dominic LeBlanc—whose role it is to cover Canada-U.S. trade," Anand said.

In the manufacturing heartland of the Golden Horseshoe region, Anand's approach is a departure from the one taken by her predecessor seven months ago when G7 foreign ministers gathered in Charlevoix, Que.

Heading into the first top diplomat gathering of Canada's G7 presidency, then-foreign minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic–Cartierville, Que.) said tariffs would consistently be on the agenda.

"In every single meeting, I will raise the issue of tariffs to co-ordinate a response with the Europeans, and to put pressure on the Americans," Joly said at the time.

nmoss@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

Avoiding 'expensive failures': feds risk losing millions in taxpayer dollars if ball dropped on AI procurement, says new report

'If we can't get outcome-based procurement right, we'll always be seeing overspending,' says procurement expert Kelly Hutchinson.

Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation Minister Evan Solomon. The 2025 budget proposed providing $925.6-million over the next five years to support a large-scale 'sovereign' public AI infrastructure. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Lindsey Marchessault, Open Contracting Partnership's director of impact and innovation, says the government is heading in the right direction for AI procurement, but is still open to risks. *Handout photograph*

Kelly Hutchinson, a digital government and procurement strategist, says the government needs to use outcomes-based processes for AI procurement. *Handout photograph*

BY IREM KOCA

Governments risk wasting taxpayer dollars and eroding public trust as they rush to buy artificial intelligence, warns a new report, and Canada is not immune to those risks as it moves to adopt AI solutions, say observers.

A Nov. 10 report, *Buying AI: Tools and Tips for Public Procurement* released by Open Contracting Partnership (OCP), a global non-profit based in Washington, D.C., says governments commit billions of dollars for AI adoption, but the pressure to move quickly can hurt them in the long run if departments are not prepared for the transition.

"Poor AI procurement can cost governments millions, not just in failed projects, but in lost public trust," said Kathrin Frauscher, OCP's deputy director, in a news release that highlights that "expensive failures" can be mitigated through smart AI procurement strategies.

Lindsey Marchessault, director of impact and innovation at OCP and board member of anti-corruption organization Transparency International Canada, told *The Hill Times* in a Nov. 10 interview that while the government is "headed in the right direction" by publishing its AI strategy and keeping an AI source list, it is still to open to the risks identified in the report.

Marchessault pointed to the problem-plagued Phoenix pay system as an example of an IT procurement gone wrong, and said similar cases can occur with AI implementation, too.

"If people's personal data wasn't being handled appropriately, or they were given incorrect information as a result of usage of AI … Those are the types of things that could cause challenges," she said.

"There is room for improvement in Canada in terms of the quality of data around public procurement, and also some of these use cases."

The 2025 budget tabled on Nov. 4 proposed providing $925.6-million over the next five years to support a large-scale "sovereign" public AI infrastructure. According to the budget, $800-million of that total investment will come from funds set aside by the last federal budget, which promised $2-billion to boost domestic AI computing capacity.

"One of the recommendations we would have would be that Canada implement the open-contracting data standard to better publish and structure information about public procurement so that it ultimately will help them if they want to augment their public procurement with artificial intelligence tools and help them to gain more efficiencies," Marchessault said.

While using AI could help government departments with things like market analysis; routine low-value tasks, such as checking compliance, and evaluation and performance tracking; or help with risk detection, all of that requires solid documentation and data management public procurement across departments, according to Marchessault.

Kelly Hutchinson, a digital government and procurement expert, echoed the findings of the OCP report, and told *The Hill Times* in a Nov. 11 interview that the federal government risks losing millions of dollars in AI procurements if it does not follow an outcome-based process—one that follows clear goals and performance expectations as opposed prioritizing the method of achieving that outcome.

"If we can't get outcome-based procurement right, we'll always be seeing overspending … It's no different than a management services contract," Hutchinson said.

A July 2025 report on *Top 5 Foundational Changes Needed in Federal Procurement* by the Office of the Procurement Ombud (OPO) also touched on this suggestion.

In the report, one senior procurement official told the OPO that AI "should be used to gain statistical insights and lead to better decision making and outcomes-based procurement. AI can help the federal government be more transparent on matters related to procurement and help share information more easily internally and externally."

Hutchinson, who also leads the Ottawa firm Compass Rose's Smart Procurement Group, said the government's announcement of a new Digital Transformation Office (DTO) in the budget is "exciting" news, but that the industry will be looking to see how this new body will be set up, and what its priority objectives will be.

According to the budget, the office will lead the adoption of AI and other new technologies across government. "This, coupled with near-term procurement of made-in-Canada sovereign AI tools for the public service, means not just a more efficient government, but also a generational opportunity for our domestic innovators." Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) did not immediately respond to *The Hill Times*' questions about this new office.

"We're waiting for further meat on these bones," Hutchinson said.

Government Transformation, Public Works, and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Que.) told *The Hill Times* this past summer that his priorities include simplifying the procurement process, reducing reliance on consultants, building in-house expertise within the public service, and using AI to drive modernization and boost efficiency.

The federal government published its AI strategy for the public service back in June, and one of the early AI initiatives was also rolled out in September with the establishment of GCtranslate, an AI prototype for official languages translation. PSPC's departmental plan for this fiscal year also reiterated the government's goal to leverage AI in procurement.

Hutchinson said that it is essential for the new DTO to lead government efforts to centralize its data, mature digital operations, and modernize legacy digital platforms before departments can adopt AI solutions.

"So when they actually go to play with AI and do something at scale, it can be outcomes based, because if it's not, then we're setting the procurement up to fail," she said.

The OCP report suggests that many government agencies around the world are buying off-the-shelf, ready-to-use AI tools, but don't always have the expertise to vet vendor claims and pricing, nor do they have the in-house capacity to integrate and manage them. It outlines practical steps for governments to follow to adopt AI strategically for their needs and strengthen their procurement processes.

"Governments are racing to adopt AI, but too often they're doing it without the preparation and guardrails to make those investments succeed," said Kaye Sklar, an OCP senior program manager, in a news release.

"Public agencies are under pressure to 'get into AI,' but without strong procurement practices, they risk buying expensive tools that don't work, don't get used, or even undermine public confidence."

According to the OCP report, AI readiness for organizations would involve conducting targeted risk assessments, defining clear and purpose-specific use cases, and maintaining human oversight, and accountability.

Recommendations by the OCP include following outcome-based contracting, starting small with low-risk pilots to build experience before scaling and working with with key stakeholders early in the procurement process. The report also underlines that clear language and documentation would speed things up and improve outcomes.

The report aims to help guide procurement officials on how purchase AI tools responsibly. The data is derived from interviews and workshops with more than 50 public practitioners and experts, according to the OCP.

It highlights Australia—which has its own the Digital Transformation Agency—as a good example for having the world's "most robust frameworks for responsible AI in government." It outlines that the Australian model's success comes from having clear policies, technical standards, and contract clauses embedded in in the procurement process, and guidelines that are regularly updated.

Another country singled out by the OCP as a good example was Chile. The country's national digital agency created an internal "sandbox" to test and verify vendor claims before full-scale deployment.

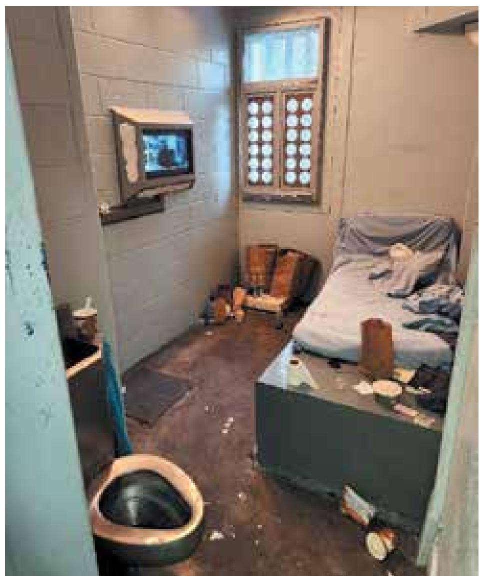
According to data compiled by the OCP, the United Kingdom government has spent 573-million pounds by August 2025 in contracts for AI projects, exceeding all of 2024. In the United States, federal agencies committed US$5.6-billion to AI between 2022 and 2024.

ikoca@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

Prison watchdog leaves post early with 'frustrations' as final report keys in on 'grossly inadequate' mental health care behind bars

Canada's Correctional Investigator Ivan Zinger has catalogued issues plaguing this country's prison system after 20 years with the office, including the past nine years at the organization's helm. *The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia*



A photo of a cell at the Regional Mental Health Centre, located within the Archambault Institution in Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, Que. *Photograph courtesy of the Office of the Correctional Investigator's 2024-25 annual report*

Correctional officers attempting to use pepper spray through the door of a health-care cell at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary. *Photograph courtesy of the Office of the Correctional Investigator's 2024-25 annual report*

The geriatric unit at a regional treatment centre within the Pacific Institution in Abbotsford, B.C. *Photograph courtesy of the Office of the Correctional Investigator's 2024-25 annual report*

Serving an ombud's role gives a great deal of power to investigate Canada's prison system, says Ivan Zinger, but his powers are ultimately limited to making recommendations.

BY MARLO GLASS

A longtime public servant and investigator into Canada's prison system is retiring two years before his mandate ends in part due to his frustration with Correctional Services Canada's lack of action on key issues plaguing this country's prisons.

"I leave with a fair amount of frustrations," Ivan Zinger told reporters after he unveiled his final report as the country's prison watchdog.

"If I was in a situation where [Correctional Services Canada] was more responsive, maybe I would have stuck around for another two years."

The annual report, tabled in Parliament on Oct. 30, found mental health care treatment facilities in federal prisons are not equipped to provide advanced psychiatric care, and have become functionally a "holding centre" for aging people behind bars. Zinger's office documented pepper spray, restraints, suicide watch, and other "severe measures" used against incarcerated people who are having a mental health crisis.

Zinger's investigations also found "systemic neglect" of prisoners with cognitive deficits, with no strategy in place to support these people; a lack of psychological support for women in the prison system, "despite the fact that nearly all women in custody have experienced some sort of trauma," and a similar lack of culturally sensitive mental health resources for Indigenous people.

Serving an ombud's role gives "a great deal of power" to investigate Canada's prison system, said Zinger, whose office operates independently from public safety minister and Correctional Services Canada (CSC). But, he said, "despite the fact that I can do excellent work with my team, and document some significant gaps in the mandate of the agency subject to my oversight … my powers are limited to making recommendations."

After 20 years with the Office of the Correctional Investigator, including the past nine years at the helm of the organization, Zinger has catalogued issues plaguing Canada's prison system, including the prevalence of solitary confinement and the over-representation of Indigenous people behind bars. Despite seeing "minimal impact" and change, Zinger said he's satisfied with what he's accomplished.

But, he said, there's a laundry list of "frustrating issues" that linger, citing one particular report from four years ago on sexual violence and coercion.

"We wanted to do something as basic as an anonymous survey to determine the prevalence of sexual violence and coercion, and nothing has been done," Zinger said.

Warehouses for the medically vulnerable

Zinger's final report investigats conditions in the five "regional treatment centres" (RTC) operated by CSC. These facilities operate within prisons, and provide mental health care assessment and treatment for incarcerated people with "serious acute and/or chronic mental health conditions," per the Correctional and Conditional Release Act.

But Zinger's investigation found an over-reliance on use of force on patients within these facilities, a culture where security is more important than the delivery of physical and mental health care, weak governance that undermines decision-making by mental health professionals, and "outdated and inappropriate infrastructure for a psychiatric and therapeutic hospital setting."

"We are seeing a system that was never designed to meet the needs of those with serious mental illness," Zinger told reporters, saying the facilities are outdated, ill-equipped, and "increasingly resemble warehouses for aging and medically vulnerable people."

Approximately 500 incarcerated people are currently patients in these facilities, with 98 per cent being men, 50 per cent being white, and diagnoses ranging from schizophrenia, depression, borderline personality disorder, dementia, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and more, according to Zinger's report.

He said these facilities essentially amount to penitentiaries offering psychiatric services, but have a limited capacity for emergency care.

"None of the RTCs live up to their name, nor can they be considered to be classified as a proper psychiatric hospital."

Zinger's report furthermore says that one-third of incarcerated people in these treatment centres don't meet the criteria for admission, but require 24-hour care not otherwise available within the system. Most common are age-related ailments, he said, noting the number of aging people in the system is growing.

"Given this trend, the infrastructure and services in place are grossly inadequate to humanely meet the needs of this population," he wrote, citing aging infrastructure and a lack of adequate space.

"Older patients suffering from conditions such as incontinence and needing a brief change, for example, find themselves restricted by institutional routines, including security patrols, designated cell time, or formal counts. These conditions are detrimental to patients' health and wellbeing as well as to their right to dignified care," Zinger wrote.

"When walking through these units, it is blatantly evident that these patients would not pose any undue risk to society and could be easily and safely managed in the community, in keeping with CSC's legal obligation to apply the 'least restrictive measures' when administering sentences."

Zinger recommended these treatment centres be "redefined and formally recognized as intermediate mental health care facilities, with limited capacity to manage emergency psychiatric cases," but CSC rejected this recommendation, saying federal prisons must maintain "a critical capacity to provide in-patient psychiatric care in RTCs."

The service said it has initiated a review of the centres, to "provide a standardized baseline of service provision."

Zinger also recommended the government reconsider replacing the regional treatment centre at the Dorchester penitentiary in

Continued on page 29

NEWS

Campaigns 'grounded in people's lived realities' key to NDP success, say strategists after Mamdani sweeps NYC mayoral race

As progressives celebrate New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's win across the border, strategists say the lesson for the NDP is not to lean further left, but to speak to voters' everyday concerns.

New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani, left, and NDP leadership candidates Heather McPherson, clockwise top left, Avi Lewis, Rob Ashton, Tanille Johnston, and Tony McQuail. *The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade and courtesy of X*

BY ELEANOR WAND

New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's recent victory is the result of his charisma and a progressive electorate, say NDP strategists who warn that federal New Democrats in Canada shouldn't take his win as a sign to shift further left.

Mamdani's Nov. 4 first-place finish has been touted as a major win from the progressive left, as the 34-year-old politician is a self-described democratic socialist who ran on a platform on addressing affordability, and who brought in a swathe of young voters in a race that saw the largest turnout for a mayoral race in over 50 years.

Mamdani won New York City's mayoral race with 50.4 per cent of the vote, beating the Republican candidate, Curtis Sliwa, as well as former New York governor Andrew Cuomo who ran as an independent candidate after losing the Democratic primary to Mamdani back in June.

NDP leadership candidate Avi Lewis called the mayor's win "a beacon of hope and possibility" in a Nov. 4 press release, saying it's "proof that a people-powered, solutions-focused, democratic socialist campaign can defeat entrenched power in the centre of global wealth."

Mamdani ran on a platform of city-owned grocery stores—something Lewis himself is pitching on a national scale—free bus lines, universal childcare, freezing rents, and raising the corporate tax rate.

But Jordan Leichnitz, a former NDP strategist, said that Mamdani's win wasn't due to his place on the political spectrum, but rather to his ability to speak to everyday people about the issues they care most about.

"Mamdani had bold commitments, and he himself talked about himself as democratic socialist, but his campaign wasn't really oriented around that label," she said.

"It was oriented around big commitments about very everyday, mainstream things."

Leichnitz said the mayor-elects's campaign was successful for a number of reasons, pointing to Mamdani's large-scale local mobilization; his charisma, which she said was successfully translated into a powerful social media campaign; and his work to listen and win back the votes of working-class people who had turned their backs on the Democrats in the last election.

"They did really amazing things on the ground," Leichnitz said. "They built the largest field operation in the city's history. … By election night, they had over 100,000 volunteers."

She also called his win "a symbol of generational change," noting that Mamdani did "phenomenally well in younger demographics." The mayor-elect captured 78 per cent of voters under 30 and 66 per cent of voters ages 30 to 44, according to ABC News' exit polls.

Leichnitz said one of the "biggest lessons" Canada's NDP can take from Mamdani's win is to "start by listening first."

"Keep the campaign grounded in people's lived realities," she said. "Investigate why voters might have left your party's vote coalition, and … hear from them about that with an open mind."

New Democrats suffered a brutal defeat in the April 28 federal election, culminating in the resignation of then-leader Jagmeet Singh and the return of only seven MPs to the House of Commons, dropping the caucus below the threshold for recognized status in the House. The NDP is in the midst of rebuilding efforts and a leadership campaign, which is set to end at the party's national convention in March in Winnipeg, Man.

'A star could reveal itself' in leadership race, says ex-campaign director

Zain Velji, a campaign strategist and the former campaign director to Alberta's opposition leader Naheed Nenshi, pointed to Mamdani's personality as a key driver of his success.

"The candidate is unbelievably charismatic, probably a generational communicator," Velji said, adding that it "supercharged" the other successful campaign moves in a "significant way."

When asked if he thought there was a New Democrat with the same quality, Velji said that "processes can create leaders," saying one could still emerge in the ongoing leadership race.

There are currently five vetted candidates in the running: three-time NDP MP Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, Alta.), filmmaker and activist Avi Lewis, British Columbia city councilor Tanille Johnston, farmer and environmentalist Tony McQuail, and International Longshore and Warehouse Union president Rob Ashton. Activist Yves Engler has also applied to join the race, but has not yet been vetted.

"I always remain bullish, regardless of political party, that … a star could reveal itself through a rigorous process," said Velji.

He added that races have "so many elements," including oratory, connection, debate, ground organizing, and branding.

"All of those things are like individualized tests that are cumulative within a leadership race, and you may not necessarily be able to predict who has the ability to do that in a significant way prior to that process."

But Velji said that's not the main lesson New Democrats should be taking from Mamdani's win. He pointed to the importance of "propositional, self-evident policies" that are "easy to understand," and explained that Mamdani's campaign demonstrated campaigns don't have to be "based on negative partisanship."

Velji said that though Mamdani had moments where he was "quite negative" towards Cuomo, his posture was "like a happy warrior."

But he added that the "wrong lesson" to draw from the mayor-elect's win is that progressive candidates ought to play further to the left. Instead, it's about appealing to the base.

"The lesson is that you actually give stuff to your base that is popular to them with the hopes that it doesn't just satisfy them, but with the hopes that they're so excited about what you're giving them … that they start talking to friends and family and those around them," Velji said.

He said the approach often taken in Canadian politics is to assume the support of the base and to appeal to others instead.

"It's just trying to flip it on its head a bit," he said, "not to say you move further to the left or the right. It says you do stuff that's popular with your base that you also believe in, that are evident and self-evident and clear, that are not mired in entire negativity."

Next NDP leader could be the 'last leader the NDP ever has': Holmstrom

Former NDP strategist Cam Holmstrom also said a shift to the left won't serve federal New Democrats as Mamdani's strategy only works in "very niche areas of urban centers."

"For certain people [in] the NDP, they want to just draw a straight line from Mandami to a way forward to sweep the country," he said, "but to me that will never work."

Holmstrom, the founder and principal of Niipaawi Strategies, said that Mamdani's constituency is what "allowed" him to run as a very progressive candidate, but that if he had run elsewhere in the United States, the result would likely have been much different.

He said the NDP has historically been able to speak to urban and rural voters equally, but now "that balance is totally off kilter."

The lesson is to speak to constituents "where they're at," as Mamdami did, Holmstrom said, and not to use Mamdani's policy approach across the country, as some are suggesting.

Pitching government-run grocery stores, for example, to people in Prince Albert, Sask., won't go over well, he said.

"When you come in like that, they look at you and say, 'you're not serious. You don't really want to get to know me and where I'm at because you're coming in with your mind made up.'"

The five vetted candidates are gearing up for the race's first leadership debate, which will be held primarily in French on Nov. 27 in Montreal. But Holmstrom isn't holding his breath for a front-runner to arise.

"I don't see a candidate who actually meets this moment," he told *The Hill Times*. "It's depressing for me, it really is."

Holmstrom added that he was initially interested in Ashton, but pointed to the union leader's lack of French as a sore spot. None of the candidates have described themselves as fluently bilingual, but are reportedly working on improving their skills ahead of the debate. Ashton has said he plans to take intensive lessons in the new year.

Holmstrom also noted that McPherson has been endorsed by former Alberta NDP premier Rachel Notley, but said "the party doesn't need a candidate backed by Rachel Notley. The party needs a Rachel Notley."

He added that "serious candidates" don't want to touch the NDP with "a 10-foot pole" because of the work involved in rebuilding the "mess that's been left."

"We're going to end up with a candidate, a leader, potentially, who can't do the job, and could very well trust be the last leader the NDP ever has."

ewand@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

Prison watchdog leaves post early with ‘frustrations’ as final report keys in on ‘grossly inadequate’ mental health care behind bars

Continued from page 27

New Brunswick, the cost of which has ballooned to $1.3-billion from the initial estimate of $400-million. He recommended that CSC instead partner with provinces to expand the availability of psychiatric beds for incarcerated people. This includes supporting the creation or expansion of bed space in provinces facing capacity constraints, he said.

But CSC, too, rejected this request, saying the facility will "set the standard for health care in federal corrections."

Zinger's report says, during his time as the correctional investigator, the Department of Public Safety and various ministers have "shown a reluctance to compel CSC to act on [Office of the Correctional Investigator] recommendations."

Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Guildwood—Rouge Park, Ont.) did not respond to requests for comment, and neither did Conservative MPs Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, Ont.) and Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, B.C.), who are their party's critics for justice and public safety, respectively.

An ‘indirect way of being effective’

Zinger said even though his recommendations aren't immediately accepted or acted on, "the fact remains that lawyers and litigators across the country do pick up our reports," which often lead to court cases or class-action lawsuits that can force CSC to comply "when there are blatant human rights violations."

He called it an "indirect way of being effective" and added he suspects his final annual report "will be another one that will generate, unfortunately, lawsuits and class actions to ensure the service meets our legal mandate."

Emilie Coyle is co-executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, a group that advocates for incarcerated women and monitors conditions of confinement in the prison system. She said Zinger is reiterating "what we've been saying for decades … that we have an inadequate and, in fact, harmful system that welcomes people who have experienced a lifetime of trauma, and then continues to traumatize them in the environment in which they are seeking rehabilitation."

She said women's prisons have been deteriorating since the COVID-19 pandemic, with cases of overcrowding and "conditions that we didn't imagine we would be seeing at this stage in the game."

It's particularly concerning, she said, given the "tough on crime" stance adopted by both the Liberals and Conservatives, with both parties pushing for stricter bail conditions and tougher sentencing laws.

"And so you see a double focus … when we have increasing mental health issues in our communities and responses that are leading to further incarceration rather than dealing with them in a health care environment, which is what we have been pushing for."

Independent Senator Kim Pate (Ontario), a longtime advocate for improving the prison system, noted Zinger's report emphasizes that security concerns override therapeutic interventions.

"The result is that people are being housed in increasingly inhumane and sometimes dangerous situations," she said.

Pate has worked for years to enact legislation that would end the use of segregation and isolation in prisons, called Tona's Law in honour of an incarcerated Indigenous woman who spent 10 years in federal custody, mostly in solitary confinement.

The legislation reached the House of Commons during the last Parliament, but died on the Order Paper when Parliament was prorogued for the spring election. The law is now back in the Senate, being studied by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

mglass@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

FEATURE

They came to remember

An estimated 30,000 people came to the National War Memorial in Ottawa to mark Remembrance Day on Nov. 11, despite the cold and the early snow. *The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia*

The National War Memorial, covered in snow.

Canada's Chief of Defence Staff Jennie Carignan.

People place their poppies on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Diana Fox Carney and Prime Minister Mark Carney.

RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme places a wreath at the National War Memorial.

FEATURE

Diana Fox Carney, left, and Prime Minister Mark Carney.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard Wagner, left, and RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme.

Crowds of people came to the War Memorial to honour Remembrance Day. CBC News reported 30,000 came out to pay their respects to Canadian veterans.

Members of the Royal Canadian Regiment, wearing their full-dress uniform scarlet tunics and Wolseley helmets, march past the War Memorial.

A Canadian Ranger holds an Eagle Staff, considered by Indigenous Peoples to be 'a sacred and living symbol of identity, unity, and resilience,' used in special ceremonies and Remembrance Day.

Another view of the National War Memorial with all the wreaths.

Poppies are placed on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier after the ceremony.

Whit Fraser, left, chats with Diana Fox Carney, and Prime Minister Mark Carney. Fraser is married to Gov. Gen. Mary Simon who was hospitalized last week for a 'respiratory virus,' and missed Remembrance Day.

Another dramatic view of the War Memorial.

A Mountie stands guard.

NEWS

Poilievre should take a page out of Brian Mulroney's playbook on caucus management, say political players

To effectively manage his 143-member caucus, Pierre Polievre, pictured on Sept. 14, 2025 on the Hill, must build mutual trust and have regular two-way communication with MPs, says David McLaughlin. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

David McLaughlin says building and maintaining trust requires two-way communication. It's also political capital that leaders can draw upon in tough ties. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre needs to reach out to his MPs individually, rather than through the House leader and whip.

Continued from page 1

Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.) should adopt the Brian Mulroney model of caucus management.

"He was an absolute master of managing the caucus," said Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "The level of loyalty that that caucus had, even though it was very clear that they were on the Titanic and they were heading towards an iceberg was considerable."

The week of Nov. 3 was expected to centre entirely on Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) much-anticipated first budget, which was set to be tabled on Nov. 4. With the governing Liberals lacking a majority in the House and none of the opposition parties committing to vote in support of the budget, there was widespread speculation that a defeat on the budget vote could trigger an election.

But everything changed on Nov. 4 after Conservative MP Chris d'Entremont (Acadie-Annapolis, N.S.) left his party to join the Liberals. He said he disagreed with Poilievre's "negative" approach to politics as one key reason for leaving the caucus. A day later, rumours began circulating that Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, Alta.) was also preparing to join the Liberals, though he announced on Nov. 6 that he would step down from his seat by spring. Other reports suggested more MPs could also be considering crossing the floor. As of press time last week, however, no other MP had left the Conservative caucus.

Towards the end of the week, Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina-Qu'Appelle, Sask.) accused the Liberals of using "backroom deals and pressure tactics" to encourage Conservative MPs to join the Liberal Party. He described the tactic as a way to distract Canadians from a "terrible budget that is being almost universally panned."

In interviews last week, Conservative insiders—who spoke on a not-for-attribution basis—seemed confident that no other MP will leave the party.

In a Nov. 9 interview with CBC News, d'Entremont said that after *Politico* first reported on Nov. 4 that he was considering crossing the floor, Scheer and Whip Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie, Alta.) reportedly "barged" into his office, where the House leader had a testy exchange with him, making it clear he was unhappy that the Nova Scotia MP was planning to leave the party. Following the meeting, d'Entremont said he had made up his mind to move to join the Liberal Party.

In a statement to CBC News, the Office of the Leader of the Official Opposition denied d'Entremont's version of events, saying that Scheer expressed his disappointment, but spoke to the MP in a "calm and measured voice."

Immediately after the general election this past spring, a number of media stories suggested that the Liberals were enticing NDP MPs to join their party.

The NDP currently has only seven seats in the House, the Liberals 170, the Conservatives 143, the Bloc Québécois 22, and the Greens one. In the 343-member House, the Liberals need only two more seats to get the majority government status. Without a majority government, they will need the support of at least one of the three opposition parties to pass legislation in the House.

The Liberals successfully survived two budget votes two weeks ago. They will be facing multiple confidence votes on the budget this week. Given that an election happened only six months ago, it appears highly unlikely that the opposition parties will defeat the government as that would automatically trigger another election.

David McLaughlin, former chief of staff to late Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney told *The Hill Times* that the challenge Poilievre is facing may not be as "deep and profound" as it seems. He said that every caucus experiences ups and downs in politics, and in a caucus of 143 MPs, there will always be some who are unhappy about something, but that does not necessarily mean there is dissension within the ranks. However, he added that party leaders should pay close attention to their caucuses and be able to anticipate any political storm coming their way.

McLaughlin said Mulroney's "secret sauce" to maintaining a strong relationship with his caucus was rooted in building mutual trust and maintaining two-way communication. Mutual trust, he said, is political capital that leaders can draw upon in tough times. Given the circumstances Poilievre is dealing with right now, McLaughlin said, he should be reaching out to caucus members individually and speaking with them directly, rather than through the House leader or the whip.

"There's got to be caucus trust in the leader that the leader has got the best interest of the caucus at heart, and is dealing with it," McLaughlin said. "And the second part is communication, and it's two-way communication."

He said that an important factor that will determine if Poilievre can stay in his position is how he performs in his leadership review set for January.

McLaughlin said that Mulroney used to regularly call MPs on their birthdays, special family occasions, a death in the family, or on important events in their families' lives. He continued this routine long after leaving government, right up until his death. During his own time as senior adviser and chief of staff to the prime minister, McLaughlin recalled receiving a phone call from Mulroney almost every evening around 9 p.m., with the prime minister beginning the conversation with an open-ended question, "What's going on?" In those calls, Mulroney wanted to get updates on everything he needed to know about his caucus, government or staff, McLaughlin said.

"The strategy behind it was knowing [any potential curveballs ahead of time] so you could act and deal, and react and deal, with things in a way before it became a problem," said McLaughlin. "So, caucus management never ends. It's always ongoing. It doesn't always have to be the leader, but the leader has to be aware of these things and be able to deal with it at the appropriate time."

Former interim Conservative leader John Reynolds told *The Hill Times* that he's very upset with recent challenges his party has been dealing with, but would not comment further. He said that the leader can recover by analyzing the current situation and also by getting advice from party veterans who have been in these situations before. He found it encouraging that Poilievre is reaching out to party elders for advice. When asked if Poilievre has reached out to him, he said, no.

"I've never talked to him since he became the leader of the party," said Reynolds.

Reynolds said that he was responsible for bringing then-Liberal cabinet minister David Emerson into the Conservative Party right after the 2006 federal election. Recounting that experience, he said he was close friends with Emerson. After the election, he reached out to him and arranged his meeting with then-prime minister Stephen Harper. Emerson agreed to join the Conservative Party but was blasted by the Liberals for leaving their party right after the election.

Conservative MP Mike Lake (Leduc-Wetaskiwin, Alta.) said that based on his 20-year parliamentary experience, "these things happen" in reference to the announced departures. He said the discussion about the actions of d'Entremont and Jeneroux will soon be over, and that Conservatives will focus on issues like the cost of living, housing and immigration that are affecting Canadians' daily lives. In his view, Lake said, there is no better leader than Poilievre to hold the Carney government to account.

"Not only do I think he does a great job as the leader of His Majesty's Official Opposition in prosecuting the government at this point in time and challenging the government, asking the right questions, I think he'll do a fantastic job when he's prime minister one day in leading us to a better place as a country," said Lake.

At a media availability last week, Poilievre was asked whether he had any plans of reflecting on his leadership style after the departure of two MPs to which the Conservative leader said, "No."

"My plan is to continue to lead and be the only leader in the country that's fighting for an affordable Canada where our people who work hard can afford a home and food. That is my agenda."

arana@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

House Speaker Scarpaleggia residing at an Ottawa hotel instead of official residence, 'The Farm,' for family reasons

It's more economical for the Speaker to live at a hotel than at the official residence in Gatineau Hills, says spokesman Olivier Duhaime.

Continued from page 1

said Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Que.) and his family have chosen not to live at the official residence because his wife is deeply involved in her community, and did not want to relocate to Kingsmere, Que.

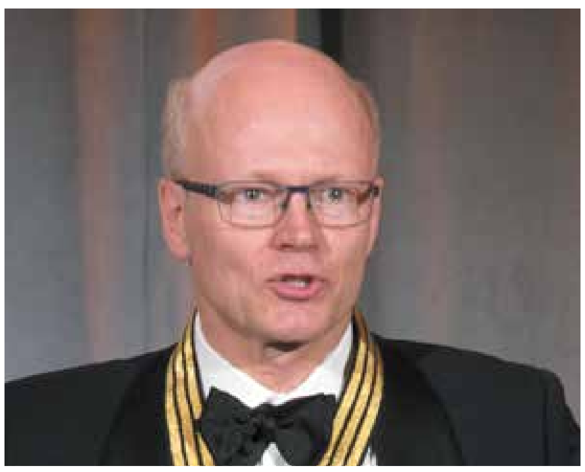
"The Speaker has made the personal decision not to live there," said Duhaime in a phone interview with *The Hill Times*. "His wife is not going to move here. She's quite involved in her community. The kids are grown up, and you just didn't want to have to drive 30 minutes both ways to go live in the woods, basically."

Duhaime said that since Scarpaleggia's first election to the House in 2004, he has stayed in different hotels in Ottawa and continues to do so currently. Traditionally, once an MP is elected Speaker, they move into the official residence, known as "The Farm," and are no longer eligible for accommodation expenses by the House of Commons. Each MP receives an annual budget of $39,800 for living expenses when they come to Ottawa, which includes meals, incidentals, and accommodation.

Duhaime said the Commons Board of Internal Economy approved giving Scarpaleggia the standard MP housing allowance after he decided not to live at the Speaker's official residence. The powerful seven-member board is chaired by the House Speaker, and has representation from all recognized parties in the Commons. The other six members are: Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.); Deputy Government House Leader Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Ont.), Chief Government Whip Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Ont.), Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina-Qu'Appelle, Sask.), Conservative Whip Chris Warkentin (Grand Prairie, Alta.), and Bloc Québécois Whip Yves Perron.

The board oversees the overall governance of the House, including about $600-million spending each year. The House administration, procedure, legal services, security, and maintenance divisions all report to the House Speaker who has an annual office budget of $1.3-million. On top of the base salary of an MP of $209,800, the Speaker gets a top up of $99,900.

House Speaker Francis Scarpaleggia, who was elected to the role in May, has chosen not to live at his official residence for family reasons, says Olivier Duhaime, director of outreach and media relations. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*



Liberal MP Geoff Regan, who served as House Speaker from 2015 to 2019, says that 'The Farm' is a great place to unwind after a stressful day on Parliament Hill. *The Hill Times photograph by Jake Wright*

Liberal MP Greg Fergus served as the House Speaker from 2023 to 2025. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

In the House, the Speaker chairs the parliamentary proceedings, including the daily 45-minute Question Period, interprets rules and traditions, manages procedure, maintains decorum, and is the custodian of MPs' rights and privileges. The Speaker does not participate in the House debates, and votes only in case of a tie. The Speaker also leads inter-parliamentary missions abroad, and hosts receptions for diplomats and visiting heads of state.

House Speakers do not attend the weekly national caucus meetings on the Hill held every Wednesday morning when the House is sitting. In addition to the official residence, the position comes with a chauffeur and a private apartment in the West Block for late-night House sittings.

According to the history of "The Farm" available on the National Capital Commission's website, which is responsible for maintaining the official residences in the National Capital Region, the property was originally owned by former prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, who, upon his death in 1950, specified in his will that it should be used as the prime minister's retreat. Since the prime minister already had Harrington Lake (also in the Gatineau Hills) for that purpose, the property was instead designated as the House Speaker's official residence in 1955. A 2021 report on official residences recommended several upgrades and renovations, including repairs to the roof coverings and foundations, as well as modernization of the electrical wiring, air-conditioning equipment, and hardwood flooring, among others.

"It needs an investment of $1.34-million, to address just the deferred and accumulated maintenance of existing systems," said the report.

Duhaime said that except for the regular upkeep, there's no renovation work going on at "The Farm" at this time, and this report is not the reason why the Speaker does not live at the residence.

"There are no renovations taking place at the farm. No construction, upgrades, or modifications are being carried out on the property," said Duhaime.

"This was a personal decision. There are no additional costs involved—it is the same housing allocation provided to all 343 Members of Parliament, within the same overall budget approved for members. No new or exceptional expenses are being incurred as a result of this decision. The decision was reviewed and approved by the Board of Internal Economy, which ensures compliance with all existing rules and policies governing Members' allowances."

Former House Speaker Geoff Regan, who represented the riding of Halifax West, N.S., said that he lived at the official residence from 2015 to 2019, but his wife did not because she was a provincial politician in Nova Scotia, who stayed with him whenever she could.

Regan said that the residence offers a good place to unwind away from Ottawa after a stressful day on Parliament Hill. He said when the House would sit late, he used to sleep in the Speaker's apartment in the West Block.

"When the House would sit very late, if I'm in the House until after midnight, say, or one o'clock in the morning, or there was one of those rare all-night sittings, having the apartment, which, of course, is now in West block with a Murphy bed was very, very helpful," Regan said.

The former MP said that during his time as House Speaker, he used to host lunches and dinners for parliamentarians and diplomats on the Hill, and said it was helpful in bringing the temperature down in the House. It helped build cordial relationships among MPs from different parties, he said.

"It's a little bit harder to be screaming at somebody if you've gotten to know them a bit and then you've had a pleasant conversation with," said Regan.

Regan said he enjoyed his time at the residence, where he also spent time hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Regan said that, like all other House Speakers, he used to host an annual garden party for parliamentary reporters, parliamentarians, and diplomats; and occasionally held dinners for parliamentarians at the official residence. Scarpaleggia also hosted a House Speaker's garden party in September.

Regan said that during his stay at the official residence, one year he also hosted a Christmas party for people living in the neighbourhood. Before him, then-House Speaker Peter Milliken used to host a similar gathering for the community.

arana@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

‘We will be facing a financial cliff’: health and substance use programs

The 2025 budget didn’t include any new funding for these areas as Prime Minister Mark Carney’s Liberals continue to rely on bilateral agreements negotiated by the previous government.

Continued from page 1

health critic say the absence of any new money in the 2025 budget means uncertainty over future efforts.

“It was incredibly disappointing to see very little reference to the fact that within a few short months, we will be facing a financial cliff,” said Sarah Kennell, the Canadian Mental Health Association’s national public policy director.

The lack of new funding has “left a cloud of uncertainty by failing to renew existing funding beyond 2027,” said NDP health critic Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni, B.C).

Provinces and territories are currently receiving federal dollars for their mental health and addictions programs from two sets of bilateral deals. A 2017 agreement specifically for mental health and addictions provided $5-billion in funding that will expire in the 2026-27 fiscal year; and the “Working together to improve health care in Canada” plan—with its $25-billion in funding—from 2023 will expire in 2032. The latter plan’s funding is also meant to help with provincial and territorial efforts connected to primary care, health human resources, and digital health tools.

Health Minister Marjorie Michel (Papineau, Que.), who’s been vocal about her personal interest in mental health policy, told *The Hill Times* on Nov. 7 that her government “protected health care” in the budget through these health transfers.

But the expiry dates on the two deals worry advocates who say Ottawa is not being clear about the direction it wants to take in helping provinces and territories with their efforts on mental health and toxic drugs.

“In the lead-up to the budget, we had thoughts [and] hypotheses around where this government was headed from a program perspective,” said Kennell.

“The absence of clarity in this budget indicates that it isn’t a priority, and that they are really relying on those existing transfers, which we don’t know where they’re headed once they culminate, either.”

Dr. Lisa Votta-Bleeker, CEO of the Canadian Psychological Association, told *The Hill Times* that her group has been in touch with Liberal staffers to try to understand what happens once the 2017 agreement expires.

“People right now don’t seem to know what happens after. They’re like, ‘Well, this is 2025 now, we’ll deal with that in 2027,’” Votta-Bleeker said, adding that the budget is still fresh, and her association hopes it will get answers soon. “I think people are still trying to figure it out themselves before they can give us information.”

Few governments allocating major bilateral cash to mental health, substance use: reports

The Working Together deals have a longer runway, but multiple sources interviewed for this article noted that provinces and territories are not required to spend that money on all four areas. Michel confirmed this to *The Hill Times* on Nov. 7.

The Canadian Mental Health Association and Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health produced separate reports in 2024 outlining the level of Working Together funding each province and territory is using for mental health and substance use programs.

Both reports state that Yukon has allocated the highest proportion of its funds, though they provide different figures—the Canadian Mental Health Association says the figure is approximately 65 per cent, while the alliance’s report states it’s 75 per cent. The reports agree that British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, and Manitoba have not used any of their Working Together money on mental health and substance use programming.

Kennell said that a median of approximately six per cent of Working Together funds across all provinces and territories is being spent on mental health and substance use efforts.

Prime Minister Mark Carney’s (Nepean, Ont.) government’s decision not to add new funding to these areas comes amid an effort to cut government spending. Most departments—including Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)—were asked to submit savings over three years, beginning with 7.5 per cent in 2026-27.

Michel told *The Hill Times* a few days post-budget that her government is focusing on “streamlining” some programs.

Still, the budget outlined a slight increase in spending from $581-billion in 2025-26, to $644-billion in 2029-30.

Conservative MP and mental health critic Mike Lake (Leduc—Wetaskiwin, Alta.), whose party has been attacking the government for high levels of spending, said that the Liberals’ financial decisions over the last decade are creating the conditions for growing mental health problems.

He said the affordability crisis has impacted individuals who previously may have not required the services of food banks, or who could have afforded housing, and the situation is even worse for those who were already struggling.

Lake also said he’s concerned about what high levels of spending could mean for future health transfers. He noted that Fitch Ratings issued a note two days after the Nov. 4 budget with a “warning” about the government’s fiscal situation.

The note reads, “While Canada’s rating is broadly stable, persistent fiscal expansion and a rising debt burden have weakened its credit profile and could increase rating pressure over the medium term.”

When Canada’s credit rating was downgraded in 1995—under Jean Chrétien’s Liberal government—that resulted in “absolutely devastating cuts to transfers,” including those for health and social services, Lake said.

Push to include mental health funding in health transfers

Advocates continue to push for mental health and substance use program support that is considered a part of ongoing health funding, and not discretionary depending on which federal party is in power. This would be similar to how Ottawa supports provincial and territorial health-care systems through the annual Canada Health Transfer, which focuses on funding the care provided in hospitals and by physicians.

The Canadian Mental Health Association, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, the Canadian Psychological Association, and the Community Addictions Peer Support Association (CAPSA) have all advocated for this.

Johns has introduced on two occasions—including in this session—a bill that would include mental health and substance use services as a part of the “insured health services” covered by the Canada Health Transfer.

Lake told *The Hill Times* that “both physical and mental health should be covered under the amount of money that is transferred to the provinces for health.”

Votta-Bleeker said that mental health is treated differently funding-wise, and that’s a challenge even in publicly-funded hospitals.

“When you’re looking at a hospital administration budget, they’re having to figure out, ‘how do we fund a psychologist?’ Whereas when you’ve got a physician, well, that’s through an Ontario health plan,” she said.

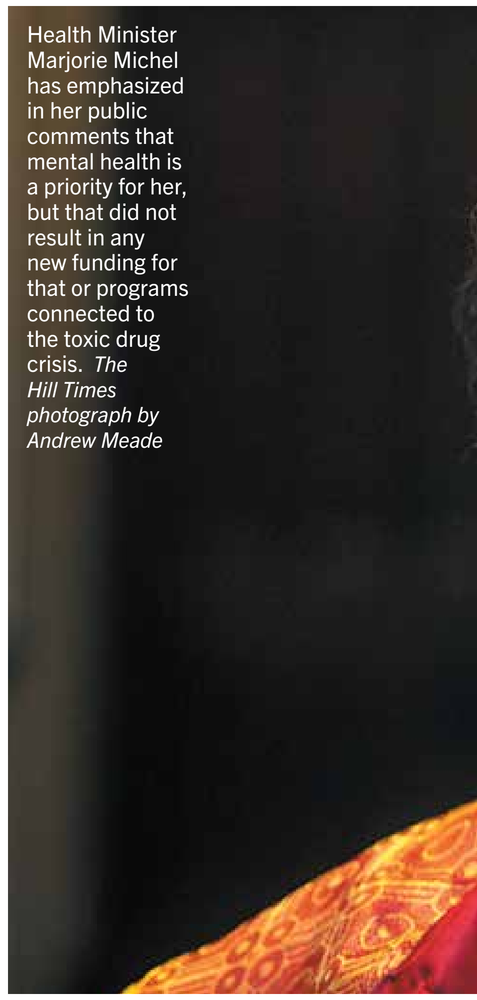
Advocates see a shift in substance use policy across Canada

Health programs targeting the toxic drug crisis also did not receive any new funding in this year’s budget.

A total of 6,601 people died from opioid-related causes between March 2024 and April 2025. Since PHAC began publishing these statistics in 2016, 53,821 people have died.

Ottawa provides related funding through the Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP), launched in 2016, and the Emergency Treatment Fund, announced in 2024 as a two-year program with $150-million.

Neither one received any money in the recent budget even though the Liberals promised during the 2025 election campaign to add $500-million specifically to the Emergency Treatment Fund, which will expire next fiscal year if it doesn’t receive any new money.



Health Minister Marjorie Michel has emphasized in her public comments that mental health is a priority for her, but that did not result in any new funding for that or programs connected to the toxic drug crisis. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

The Hill Times asked Health Canada how much money remains in SUAP, whether the program has an expiry date, and if there are any plans to renew it.

“Since 2017, more than $755-million has been invested in over 465 projects under Health Canada’s SUAP. SUAP is not accepting funding applications at this time. Many of the current projects are scheduled to end March 31, 2028,” reads an emailed response from the department.

CAPSA CEO Anthony Esposti said he believes that SUAP will be

The Canadian Mental Health Association’s Sarah Kennell says groups focusing on mental health and addictions support face a ‘financial cliff’ once a dedicated bilateral deal expires in 2026-27. *Photograph courtesy of Sarah Kennell*

On two occasions, NDP health critic Gord Johns has introduced bills that would require mental health and substance use funding to be considered an insured health service that would be eligible for annual transfers. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

advocates concerned about mental as bilaterals begin to lapse in 2027

"shuttered" once the last funding envelope is distributed.

CAPSA has benefited from SUAP programming with Esposti saying that the money his group received—which expired this past March—allowed them to develop projects focused on reducing the stigma of substance use.

SUAP "kicked off" many harm reduction, safer supply, and supervised overdose prevention sites, in addition to funding many local initiatives, he said.

Esposti said his reaction to the budget's lack of funding is disappointment and concern.

"If we look at the various health care systems, physical health, mental health and substance use health—and consider mental health [as] the poor cousin to physical health—unfortunately, substance use health is rarely even invited to the family reunion. It continues to be an area that is ignored by all levels of government and funding," Esposti said.

Johns said the current government is "washing their hands" of the drug crisis, and downloading the issue to the provinces and territories, which is "100-per-cent irresponsible in a national crisis."

The lack of new support leaves advocates wondering what this government's approach is to the toxic drug crisis.

Under the previous Liberal government led by then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, PHAC for the first time began publishing the number of opioid-related deaths online; the decriminalization of certain drugs was permitted in B.C.; supervised consumption sites were approved—not legally challenged—by Ottawa; and SUAP was created to fund projects that could include "safer supply," as in the availability of prescribed and regulated drugs with the goal of reducing consumption of toxic street drugs.

But the drug policy landscape has shifted over more than a year. Ontario's Progressive Conservative government in 2024 banned supervised consumption sites from being located within 200 metres of schools and child care centres, which has led to the closure of some sites. B.C.'s NDP government, which had requested decriminalization, has rolled back some of the provisions by recriminalizing the use of drugs in public spaces.

Broadly, the shifts have occurred due to public concerns about crime, and the occurrence of drug use and the presence of drug paraphernalia in community spaces.

Michel, during a House Health Committee meeting on Oct. 9, was asked by Conservative MP Helena Konanz (Similkameen-South Okanagan-West Kootenay, B.C.) whether the federal government would work with B.C. to end its decriminalization program, which expires on Jan. 31, 2026.

Michel said, "The British Columbia government has already requested changes. It has not requested renewal. I will continue to work with them and will keep you informed when a decision has been made."

The Hill Times reached out to Conservative health critic Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, Man.) and Conservative addictions critic Todd Doherty (Cariboo-Prince George, B.C.) for their views, but did not receive a reply.

The Hill Times also asked the offices of B.C. Premier David Eby and his Health Minister Josie Osborne whether there are plans to request an extension of decriminalization, and how they would characterize their current addictions policy. The request was acknowledged by Osborne's office, but a reply was not received by deadline.

There also seems to be a shift at the federal level, which began under the previous government, with a stronger focus on drug trafficking. In December 2024, the Trudeau Liberals launched a new border plan, with $1.3-billion to increase funding to law enforcement agencies to help detect and intercept fentanyl and other precursor chemicals coming into Canada.

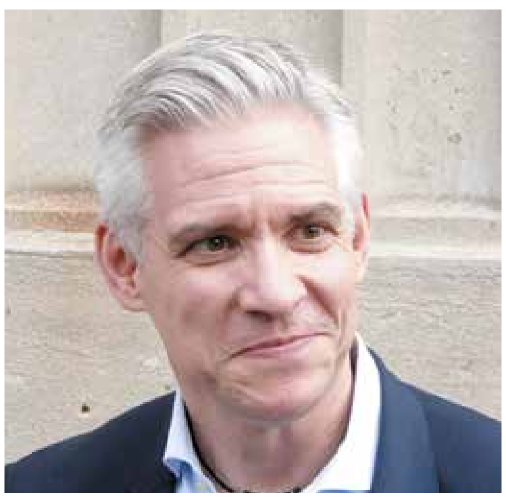
The 2025 budget's sole mentions of fentanyl referred to the issue of drug trafficking.

Johns, a B.C. NDP MP and a supporter of decriminalization, said that "everybody agreed" that policies would change in order to "meet the public. … But there's no way that decriminalization is the cause of the toxic drug crisis."

Rob Boyd, CEO of Ottawa Inner City Health, told *The Hill Times* that the feds' approach to toxic drug policy "wasn't adequately scaled and supported."

It's not that the harm reduction approach has failed, according to Boyd, whose group operates shelters, supportive housing, outreach programs, and a supervised consumption site. "We had never adequately tried doing it in the way that it ought to have been done."

The lack of direction from the federal government is adding to "a sense of precarity" among service providers, according to Boyd.



Conservative mental health critic Mike Lake says that both physical and mental health funding should be included in annual transfers to provinces and territories. *The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia*

Canadian Psychological Association CEO Dr. Lisa Votta-Bleeker says that Liberal staffers have not provided answers about what happens to federal funding once mental health and addictions bilateral deals expire next fiscal year. *Photograph courtesy of Lisa Votta-Bleeker*

CAPSA CEO Anthony Esposti described substance use health as the part of the health care 'family' that doesn't even get invited to the 'reunion.' *Photograph courtesy of Anthony Esposti*

"These people who—are every day showing up for work, connecting with the most marginalized of clients, and doing life-saving interventions on a daily and weekly basis—are also worried now about losing their jobs," Boyd said.

Consultation needed about future plans, advocates say

As for the current federal government's approach to the toxic drug crisis, Michel told *The Hill Times* that cash remains in the Emergency Treatment Fund, and that decisions about future support for substance use programs will be made in the next budget.

The Carney Liberals continue to announce funding for projects through the Emergency Treatment Fund and SUAP with funding allocated by the previous Trudeau government.

Advocates hope that the time between now and any future new funding will involve more consultation with stakeholders in mental health and addictions.

Johns has long advocated for a summit of health ministers and stakeholders.

Noting that the Trudeau government held an auto-theft summit last year, Johns said that while that issue is important, "there's no way that anybody agrees that it's more important than the toxic drug crisis."

Boyd said he hopes the government will hold a consultation about what precisely requires federal funding. He would like to see more money for recovery program beds, outpatient counselling, withdrawal management programs, and peer recovery coaching. Supportive housing, pre-employment programs, and culture and land-based healing for Indigenous communities should also be considered.

The issue of mental health and substance use needs a national approach, including a discussion about how to move forward, according to Kennell.

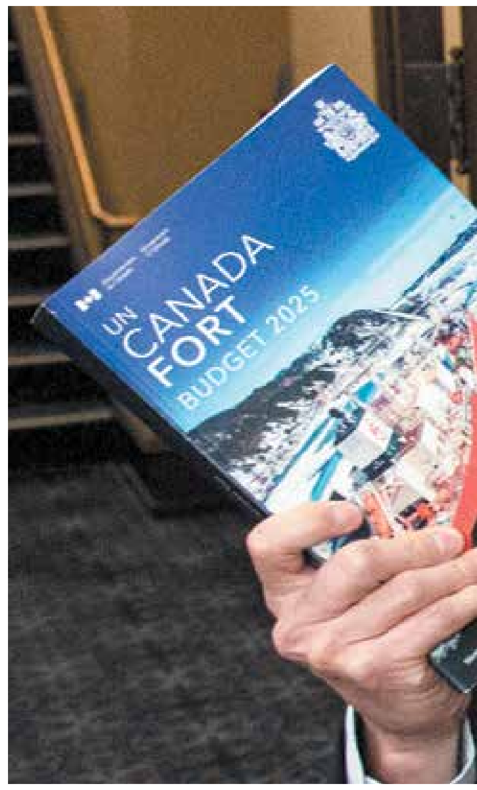
Noting the intersection of these issues with housing supply, income supports, and the availability of health care professionals across the country, Kennell said "hospitals and doctors and community agencies and governments and policy-makers" should be coming together to consider where investment is needed.

"In the absence of a co-ordinated strategy and a kind of pan-Canadian approach, we're going to deepen the inequities that exist because we're left to think of it bilaterally rather than holistically. But I would just say, in the absence of funding, when those convenings happen, it doesn't go very far," she said.

tsanci@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

Budget signals strong economic focus, but falls short in details like regulatory burden or clarity on defence spending, say experts, economists



'There's an urgency that if we don't go big, then we're going to fall short,' says Goldy Hyder, president and CEO of the Business Council of Canada.

Continued from page 1

representatives from the business sector.

"I think it was a refreshing change to have a budget that was actually about the economy—that was actually about solving the problem at hand, which is, ultimately, we have an investment crisis in our country," said Goldy Hyder, president and CEO of the Business Council of Canada (BCC).

"You know that it fell short of what would be described as 'generational' or 'transformational,' but directionally, the steps taken … are heading in the right direction, even if they're incremental."

Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) Liberal government delivered its first budget on Nov. 4 with a promise to spend less on government operations and more on workers, businesses, and nation-building infrastructure intended to grow the economy. The 406-page document proposes $141-billion in new spending over the next five years, and projects a deficit of $78-billion for 2025-26. That deficit is forecast to drop to $65-billion in the next fiscal year before gradually falling to $57-billion in 2029-30.

Highlights include an announcement of an intention to launch the Build Communities Strong Fund with $51-billion over 10 years to support infrastructure projects; $2-billion over five years to create a Critical Minerals Sovereign Fund that would make strategic investments in mineral projects and companies; a total of $81.8-billion over five years for the Canadian Armed Forces, which will cover "generational pay raises," defence infrastructure, and expanded military capabilities; and $13-billion over five years towards the new Build Canada Homes agency.

Hyder describes this budget as "hopeful" and "big," but only with a lowercase "b." He cited a commitment in the budget around nation-building infrastructure, defence and critical minerals as positives. However, he added that whenever the BCC surveys CEOs, they most commonly cite over-regulation as the largest barrier to deploying capital.

In a report released in September, the BCC argued Canada's future prosperity is being strangled by an "outdated, duplicative and overly complex regulatory system," and that overlapping rules from multiple jurisdictions costs Canada 1.7 per cent of GDP. According to the report, it takes nearly 20 years on average to approve a mine in this country.

Hyder told *The Hill Times* that the federal budget didn't go far enough to address regulatory burdens, which he described as its biggest shortcoming in many ways.

"I use the phrase 'falling short,' but I've also used the phrase 'a lost opportunity' to go all the way, because … what I hear most from my members is, 'Get the government to understand the urgency here. There's an urgency that if we don't go big, then we're going to fall short of what it is that we're hoping to achieve at this time.' You know the old saying, 'Don't waste a good crisis.' We just might be," he said.

"Time will tell whether [addressing regulatory burden] comes or not, but that is by far the issue we hear the most, multi-sectorally, across the country."

Hyder added that among the top concerns when it comes to Canada's economy is the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), scheduled for review in 2026. Hyder emphasized that in the absence of that trilateral deal, there is "no chance that we can do enough fast enough to diversify in the near term."

"Job one is to stabilize the relationship with the United States of America," said Hyder. "Something that people say to me is, 'It's not going to happen. [U.S. President Donald Trump] doesn't like trilateral agreements. Why would we do an agreement with somebody who breaks their word?' and all of that. And my ask of them is very simple, 'What is your alternative?' Are you suggesting to me that we should have 35-per-cent tariffs on all of our goods? Is that your alternative? Because I don't like that alternative very much."

The Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) published an independent assessment of the budget on Nov. 14, which highlighted financial and transparency concerns.

Under the fiscal plan presented in the 2025 budget, the deficit is projected to be an average of $64.3-billion annually over 202526 to 202930, which is more than double that projected in the 2024 Fall Economic Statement, according to the PBO report. Finance Canada projects the deficit-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio to increase to 2.5 per cent in 2025-26, before declining over the medium term to reach 1.5 per cent in 2029-30.

Analysis by the PBO suggests there is only a 7.5-per-cent chance that the deficit-to-GDP ratio will fall every year over 2026-27 to 2029-30.

"Based on the long-term baseline projection in Budget 2025, there is limited fiscal room for the government to reduce revenues or increase program spending while ensuring the federal debt-to-GDP ratio in 2055-56 is at or below its initial (2024-25) level. This contrasts with fiscal policy settings over the last three years that would have provided more fiscal room to address future challenges and risks," reads the report.

The PBO report recommends that the federal government establish an independent expert body to determine which federal spending categories and measures qualify as capital investment under an expanded definition beyond the Public Accounts of Canada.

The budget includes $81.8-billion in defence spending over five years on a cash basis, which is a total that includes funding already appropriated through Supplementary Estimates (A), 2025-26, which provided over $9-billion in 2025-26, as announced by Carney in June 2025.

While the budget provides some detail, it remains unclear how much of this funding is incremental to existing projections in previous defence plans, those being "Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada's Defence," released in 2024, and the Department of National Defence (DND)'s 2025-26 Departmental Plan, according to the PBO report. It is also unclear how defence spending in the budget interacts with the capital investment framework detailed in PBO's latest report on planned capital spending under Canada's defence policy, reads the report.

The PBO has submitted an information request to DND seeking clarification on how measures in this year's budget compare with existing spending projections, and to determine how much of the funding represents new resources rather than reallocations within existing plans.

Kevin Page, founding president and CEO of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, told *The Hill Times* in a Nov. 10 emailed statement that he would describe this budget as a "strategic shift to wealth creation," and a response to the changed relationship with the U.S. and "rising geopolitical tensions."

"Budget 2025 focused on economy growth with both spending and tax measures; measures limited by [a] higher deficit projection and [a] commitment to balance [the] operating budget in 2028-29," said Page. "Governments had little choice but to respond with [a] build budget focused on trade diversification and national defence. Canada is losing fiscal buffers but remains fiscally sustainable."

Page said in the email that this year's budget is a course correction in government policy with a focus on economic growth and competitiveness. A blueprint for the future and dealing with the trade war can follow.

"Canada will adjust to the new relationship with the U.S. We needed this trade shock to seek new opportunities in new markets," he wrote.

On Nov. 4, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.) criticized the "costly" budget, arguing that every dollar the prime minister spends comes out of Canadians' pockets.

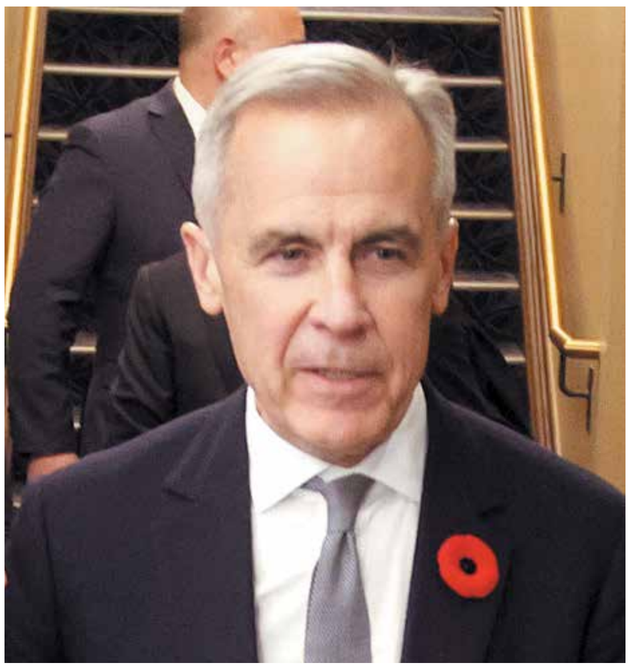
Following the budget's release, a Leger survey indicated approximately 30 per cent of Canadians who responded approve of the budget, while 37 per cent had a negative response, and those remaining offering no opinion, as reported by CTV News on Nov. 12. The poll surveyed 1,565 adult Canadians between Nov. 7 and Nov. 9, and can't be assigned a margin of error because it was conducted online.

Other critics of the budget include the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), which argued in a Nov. 7 press release that the document falls short in meeting the needs identified by First Nations by lacking new investments in mental health and addictions treatment, policing, First Nations procurement, and education.

In the press release, the AFN pointed out that, unlike in previous years, this budget does not include an Indigenous-specific chapter. However, the AFN acknowledged some commitments to First Nations in the budget, such as $2.3-billion over three years to renew the First Nations Water and Wastewater Enhanced Program, and for the Canada Infrastructure Bank to triple Indigenous infrastructure investments, from $1-billion to $3-billion within its $35-billion portfolio.

NEWS

Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne, pictured holding up the budget document on Nov. 4, 2025, before heading into the House to table it. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*



Prime Minister Mark Carney said this year's federal budget 'builds Canada strong by focusing on what we can control,' in remarks at the Canadian Club Toronto on Nov. 7. *The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia*

Goldy Hyder, president and CEO of the Business Council of Canada, says regulatory burden is 'by far the issue we hear the most, multi-sectorally, across the country.' *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

"The budget has significant gaps in social areas, including no specific First Nations investment in health, training, language, or Truth and Reconciliation. Although Budget 2025 proposes to introduce legislation and provide $216.6-million per year to make the National School Food Program permanent, further analysis is needed to confirm the funding amount will provide enough for First Nation schools," said the AFN in the release.

Mikaela McQuade, a deals partner who helps lead the national economics and policy practice at PwC Canada, told *The Hill Times* that her biggest takeaway from the budget is that the government is indicating that borrowed money through a deficit has to do "double duty," or that every dollar needs to be both building capacity and credibility.

"[Buying credibility means] shifting to a frame of productive debt; that you're not just taking on debt to fund social programs or to do grants and subsidies for sectors that may not drive as much economic growth—you're buying credibility with the market and with investors and with the credit agencies to say this debt is going to be productive and attract investment. It's a little bit of a different story," she said.

When looking at the budget, McQuade said she sees "a big bet and a big hedge."

"I think that the government is placing a big bet that it can turn its investments into that attraction investment, that it can turn that $280-billion worth of expenditure into the $1-trillion of inbound investment. That's a little bit of a leap of faith, in some cases, but I think that the structure is there and the signals are there, and I think that the momentum behind the government to deliver is there," she said.

"I would say the momentum is not only palpable in terms of the communications for the government, but the agencies that it struck up to try to accelerate as much as possible, to try to advance major projects in a meaningful way … in a way that signals to the private sector that Canada is open for business, bring your investment here."

To help offset new spending, Ottawa has been running a "comprehensive expenditure review" with the goal of reducing the costs of day-to-day federal government operations. According to the budget, that review will save $13-billion annually by 2028-29, that combined with other savings and revenues, will lead to a total of $60-billion over five years.

The number of public service workers is expected to drop from the peak of almost 368,000 in 2023-24 to roughly 330,000 people by 2028-29, representing a 10-per-cent reduction compared to 2023-24, or about 40,000 jobs.

Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) said the pending job cuts to the public service will be done in a "respectful and compassionate way," adding that most of these cuts will be via attrition and by voluntary departures, as previously reported in *The Hill Times*.

Dale Beugin, vice-president of the Canadian Climate Institute, told *The Hill Times* that the budget brings greater clarity to questions about climate competitiveness in Canada.

"There has been some growing uncertainty as to what the next steps would be. What would be the future of methane regulations? How would we tackle problems in industrial carbon markets? Would those investment tax credits for electricity ever happen? And the budget brought some clarity to those questions," he said.

According to the budget, the feds will finalize enhanced methane regulations for the oil and gas sector and landfills, and intend to work with provinces and territories to negotiate equivalency agreements as appropriate.

"We weren't exactly sure what was going to be the next steps on those methane regulations, and now there's very clearly stated they're moving forward. We're going to see those soon," said Beugin.

Regarding electricity, the budget proposes to include the Canada Growth Fund as an eligible entity under the Clean Electricity investment tax credit, and also proposes to introduce an exception so that financing provided by the Canada Growth Fund would not reduce the cost of eligible property for the purpose of computing the Clean Electricity investment tax credit.

"Overall, this is a budget that brings a little more certainty to the future of what federal climate policy will look like, and more certainty is good for investment and good for competitiveness. Obviously, there's lots of details to be determined still," said Beugin.

"How we build out a bigger, cleaner, smarter electricity system has huge implications, both for emissions in the country, as well as for competitiveness. This is a big source of Canada's strength in driving towards net-zero, but also into building a competitive economy."

David Macdonald, a senior economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, told *The Hill Times* that this is a "generational realignment budget" which shifts priorities towards "Trumpian" priorities, such as defence, the RCMP, and border security.

"This is really a turn away from some of [then-prime minister Justin Trudeau's] focus on the creation of new programs—dental care, pharmacare, childcare, [which were] big initiatives of the Trudeau government. They weren't cut under this budget, but it's clearly not the priority of this new government," he said.

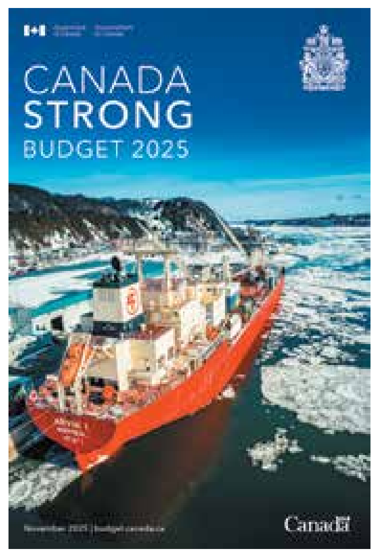
The Liberal government's priority in the budget is clearly defence, according to Macdonald.

"These are the things that Trump wants to see spending on and that's what we're doing, as opposed to other things that we might see as priorities for Canadians," he said.

"[There's] very little in here on health care, and the type of health-care funding that we were seeing is really seen through the capital lens. You get this new health-care infrastructure fund, so … through this fund you could build more emergency rooms, but you couldn't staff those emergency rooms. It's too much focus, in fact, on the capital side, to the exclusion of operating."

jcnockaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Budget 2025's Big Numbers



$78.3-billion
the size of the deficit in 2025-26

$89.7-billion
new spending outlined in the budget over five years

$59.6-billion
total projected savings over the next five years from Carney's Comprehensive Expenditure Review (CER)

$44.2-billion
cuts made by the CER, tasking most departments to cut 15 per cent over three years, represent the bulk of those savings

40,000
the number of public service job cuts expected by 2028-29 compared to the peak population size in 2023-24.

$81.8-billion
total defence spending over five years, including previously announced figures

155,000
the new cap on international students entering Canada next year, cutting the numbers permitted this year in half

$76.1-billion
what debt-servicing payments are expected to rise to in 2029-30

42.4 per cent
Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio for 2025-26

Hill Climbers

By Laura Ryckewaert

Catching up with Public Safety Minister Anandasangaree's team

The currently 15-member office doesn't include many ex-aides to former public safety ministers, with a higher proportion of ex-justice staffers instead.

Public Safety Minister **Gary Anandasangaree** now has a 15-member team, including **Sarah Cozzi** as director of policy and **David Taylor** as director of communications.

As first reported by **Hill Climbers** back in June, **François Giroux**, a former Department of Justice public servant who'd been a judicial affairs adviser to multiple Liberal justice ministers since 2018, is in place as chief of staff to Anandasangaree.

Cozzi is a former director of issues management to then-Treasury Board president **Ginette Petitpas Taylor**, and up until the beginning of this year—when she followed Petitpas Taylor from veterans affairs to Treasury Board—Cozzi spent the last seven working in various roles for the federal veterans minister.

Beginning in 2018 as a legislative assistant and issues manager to then-minister **Seamus O'Regan**, by 2020 Cozzi had been made director of policy to then-minister **Lawrence MacAulay**. She later did the same for Petitpas Taylor before stepping in to lead issues management at Treasury Board.

Cozzi is also a former assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Vance Badawey**.

Currently working under Cozzi on the public safety policy team are senior policy adviser **Nina Sartor** and policy adviser **Zachary Torok**.

Nina Sartor is a senior policy adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

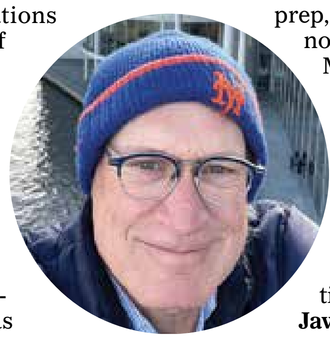
Sartor worked on the transport file for almost a year and a half before joining Anandasangaree's team.

A Parliamentary Internship Programme alumna, Sartor landed her first cabinet gig in July 2023—right after her internship ended—as an Atlantic regional adviser and executive assistant to the chief of staff to then-innovation minister **François-Philippe Champagne**. In March 2024, she switched offices, becoming a marine policy and cabinet affairs adviser to then-transport minister **Pablo Rodriguez**. Sartor stayed on after now-Foreign Affairs Minister **Anita Anand** took over the transport file that fall, becoming a senior policy adviser—her most recent role. She holds a bachelor and master's degree in history from McMaster University.

Zachary Torok is a policy adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Torok is a former constituency assistant to then-Liberal MP **Marco Mendicino**, and joined Mendicino's office as then-public safety minister in early 2022 as a regional affairs adviser for the Greater Toronto Area. Torok exited that office roughly one year later, and, according to his LinkedIn profile, was most recently working as a desk officer with Global Affairs Canada. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science and government from Queen's University, and a master's degree in political science and international relations from the University of Amsterdam.

In charge of Anandasangaree's communications, Taylor—like his chief of staff—is an ex-justice staffer. But prior to 2017, Taylor spent decades working in journalism, including as a senior producer with the CBC—and as its parliamentary bureau chief for a time—and as a foreign editor with CTV News.



David Taylor is director of communications. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Taylor began working for the Trudeau Liberal government in 2017, beginning as communications director to then-justice minister **Jody Wilson-Raybould**. He stayed on for a time after **David Lametti** took over the justice portfolio in January 2019, but after that year's election, Taylor became director of communications to then-infrastructure minister **Catherine McKenna**, whom he'd helped get re-elected to the House that fall. Taylor returned to the justice file to lead communications for Lametti less than a year later, and continued in the role through **Arif Virani** and Anandasangaree's turns in the minister's chair.

Supporting Taylor is press secretary and deputy communications director **Simon Lafortune**.

Lafortune has been working for Liberal ministers since early 2023, beginning as press secretary to then-agriculture minister **Marie-Claude Bibeau** that March. He followed Bibeau to national revenue after the July 2023 cabinet shuffle, but left a year later to become press secretary and communications adviser to then-defence minister **Bill Blair**. Lafortune briefly stepped into the role of acting communications director to Blair during his roughly six-month run in that office, which he exited at the end of 2024 to become press secretary in then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau**'s office. After Prime Minister **Mark Carney**'s took over the top office, Lafortune left to focus on election prep, and was part of now-Quebec Liberal MP **Madeleine Chenette**'s successful campaign team.

Also working on communications in the office is issues manager and communications adviser **Maha Jawass**. Jawass is another ex-justice staffer, having worked there for almost two years prior to joining the public safety team.

Maha Jawass is an issues manager and communications adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

A former aide to Ontario Liberal MPP **Stephanie Bowman**, Jawass was hired as executive assistant to the chief of staff to then-justice minister Virani in late 2023. She was subsequently promoted to regional affairs adviser for the Prairies by Virani, and later took on the added role of communications adviser. According to her LinkedIn profile, she stuck with the justice file through Anandasangaree's brief run heading the portfolio earlier this year, becoming an issues manager to the minister. During the election, Jawass helped run now-Ontario Liberal MP **Karim Bardeesy**'s successful campaign.

Arielle Mantes is director of parliamentary affairs to Anandasangaree.

Arielle Mantes is director of parliamentary affairs. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Mantes is a former longtime aide to then-Liberal MP and minister **Mark Holland**, starting as a constituency assistant in his office as the MP for Ajax, Ont., in 2017. She subsequently joined Holland's office as then-government whip in 2020 as a committee adviser. Mantes briefly stayed on as a committee adviser to then-whip **Steven MacKinnon** before following Holland to the House leader's office as a parliamentary affairs adviser at the start of 2022. She's since been a senior parliamentary affairs adviser, and more recently deputy director, to Holland as then-health minister.

Calum McPhee has been hired as a parliamentary affairs adviser in the public safety office.

Frédéric Rivard is in place as assistant to Anandasangaree's parliamentary secretary, Quebec Liberal MP **Jacques Ramsay**. According to his LinkedIn profile, Rivard volunteered on Ramsay's successful 2025 campaign to represent La Prairie–Atateken, Que., and subsequently worked in Ramsay's MP office for a few months post-election before being hired to the public safety office to support the new MP in his capacity as a parliamentary secretary.

Sabrina Sutherland is director of operations.

Sutherland was previously a regional affairs adviser for British Columbia to Anandasangaree as then-Crown-Indigenous relations minister, and used to do the same for then-fisheries minister **Joyce Murray**. Sutherland is an ex-constituency assistant to Murray as the then-MP for Vancouver Quadra, B.C., and first joined Murray's fisheries team as an operations assistant at the start of 2022.

Joshua Mariampillai is an Ontario regional adviser to Anandasangaree, while **Patrick Mangan** covers Quebec, **Kara Thompson** tackles the West and North desk, and **Suren Kunasegar** serves as both Atlantic regional adviser and executive assistant.

Mariampillai was most recently working as a government and stakeholder relations specialist for the City of Pickering in Ontario, and is a former assistant to Anandasangaree as the MP for the then-named riding of Scarborough–Rouge Park, Ont.

Mangan returned to the Hill to join the public safety team after spending almost a year as a senior policy analyst with Farmers for Climate Solutions. A former MP's assistant, Mangan landed his first cabinet-level role in January 2022 when he was hired as an Ontario regional affairs adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to Bibeau as then-agriculture minister. Mangan stuck with the agriculture office—continuing after MacAulay took over the portfolio in July 2023—through to June 2024.

Kara Thompson is West and North regional adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Thompson joined Anandasangaree's team at the beginning of this month, and spent the previous roughly three-and-a-half years working for Environment and Climate Change Canada as a policy analyst for the Canadian Wildlife Service. She's also previously done co-op placements with Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada, and at Health Canada while working towards a bachelor degree in conflict studies and human rights at the University of Ottawa.

Joshua Mariampillai covers the Ontario desk. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Finally, Kunasegar is a former assistant in Anandasangaree's MP office. He interned with Mathews Condo Law earlier this year, and was originally hired as executive assistant to Anandasangaree as public safety minister before adding on responsibility for the Atlantic desk over the summer. According to his LinkedIn profile, Kunasegar did a 2023 summer internship in the federal sport minister's office; thanks to a mid-summer shuffle, he started under then-minister **Pascale St-Onge**, and ended under then-minister **Carla Qualtrough**.

lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Parliamentary Calendar

Health Minister Marjorie Michel to talk about children's health on Nov. 17 in Ottawa

Health Minister Marjorie Michel will participate in a panel discussion, 'Thrive: The Economic Case for Investing in Children's Health in Canada,' hosted by the Canadian Club of Ottawa on Monday, Nov. 17, 12 p.m. ET at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

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.

MONDAY, NOV. 17

House Schedule—The House of Commons will sit 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.

European Union Film Festival—The European Union Film Festival marks its 40th anniversary with two weeks of free, award-winning, and newly released films from 27 EU member states. Each film's respective embassy will host filmmaker talks and embassy-led cultural programming. Friday, Nov. 14, to Saturday, Nov. 29, at the Ottawa Art Gallery, Level 3, 10 Daly Ave., Ottawa. Details: cfi-icf.ca.

Book Launch: *A New Blueprint for Government*—Carleton University hosts the launch of Jim Mitchell's new book, *A New Blueprint for Government: Reshaping Power, the PMO, and the Public Service*, featuring a panel discussion with former Treasury Board secretary Graham Flack, Institute on Governance president and CEO Allen Sutherland, and Carleton professor Jennifer Robson. Monday, Nov. 17, at 11 a.m. ET at Carleton University, Dunton Tower, Room 2017, 1125 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

Minister Michel to Take Part in Panel—Health Minister Marjorie Michel will participate in a panel, "Thrive: The Economic Case for Investing in Children's Health in Canada," hosted by the Canadian Club of Ottawa. Other participants include Emily Gruenwoldt, CEO, Children's Healthcare Canada; Bruce Squires, president, McMaster Children's Hospital; and Matt Stewart, partner, Deloitte Consulting. Monday, Nov. 17, at 12 p.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Register: canadianclubottawa.ca.

Lunch: 'Perspectives on the Policy Process in IRCC'—Carleton University hosts a lunch event, "Perspectives on the Policy Process in Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada," featuring Carol McQueen, director general for Settlement and Integration Policy at IRCC. Monday, Nov. 17 at 12 p.m. ET at Richcraft Hall, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Register: events.carleton.ca.

AmCham's Thanksgiving Dinner—The Toronto chapter of the American Chamber of Commerce in Canada hosts its annual American Thanksgiving Dinner featuring an address by Ontario Premier Doug Ford and remarks by U.S. Ambassador to Canada Pete Hoekstra. Monday, Nov. 17, at 6 p.m. ET at Arcadian Court, 401 Bay Street, 8th Floor, Toronto. Details: amchamcanada.ca.

MONDAY, NOV. 17— TUESDAY, NOV. 18

Indo-Pacific Strategy Forum—The Institute for Peace & Diplomacy hosts the fifth Indo-Pacific Strategy Forum. Senior policymakers, economists, corporate executives, diplomats, and academic experts from across Canada, the United States, and the Indo-Pacific region will examine how Canada can recalibrate its Indo-Pacific approach amidst shifting geopolitical and economic headwinds. Monday, Nov. 17, to Tuesday, Nov. 18, in downtown Ottawa. Details: peacediplomacy.org.

TUESDAY, NOV. 18

Report Launch: *A New Canadian Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean*—The Canadian Council for the Americas will launch its new report, *Beyond the Build: A New Canadian Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean*. Executive committee members Dr. Janice Stein, Jonathan Hausman, Amanda Lang, Ken Frankel, and Marta Blackwell; and principal authors Eric Miller, John Price, and Doug Saunders will provide comments. A Q&A session will follow. Tuesday, Nov. 18 at 10 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. RSVP by Nov. 7: marta.blackwell@ccacanada.com.

Arctic Research Foundation Parliamentary Reception—The Arctic Research Foundation hosts its annual parliamentary reception, an evening of networking and dialogue on advancing science, innovation, and sustainable development throughout Canada's North. Tuesday, Nov. 18, at 5 p.m. ET in Room 228, Valour Building, 151 Sparks St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

PSAC Day on the Hill—Join the Public Service Alliance of Canada and representatives of its nearly 240,000 workers in celebration of the public service. Tuesday, Nov. 18, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Ottawa Marriott Hotel, 100 Kent St. Register via Eventbrite.

Timothy Caulfield to Deliver IRPP Lecture—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts its fall lecture featuring University of Alberta professor Timothy Caulfield on "How to Escape the Fake: Making Good Policy in the Age of Misinformation." Reception to follow. Tuesday, Nov. 18, at 5 p.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

Ottawa Launch of Sergio Marchi's Book—Join former Liberal cabinet minister Sergio Marchi for the Ottawa launch of his new book, *Pursuing a Public Life*. Tuesday, Nov. 18, at 7 p.m. ET, at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

Lecture: 'The Secret Sauce of Canadian Immigration'—In the second of three 2025 McGill Max Bell Lectures, *Globe and Mail* columnist Tony Keller explores how modern Canada built an economically successful, politically popular immigration system, and what went wrong after 2015. Tuesday, Nov. 18, at 5 p.m. AT at the Canadian Museum of Immigration, Pier 21, 1055 Marginal Rd., Halifax. Details: mcgill.ca.

TUESDAY, NOV. 18— THURSDAY, NOV. 20

King of Sweden's State Visit—Their Majesties King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden will undertake a state visit to Canada from Tuesday, Nov. 18 to Thursday, Nov. 20. They will visit Ottawa and Montreal. Details to follow.

TUESDAY, NOV. 18— MONDAY, NOV. 24

Prime Minister Carney to visit UAE and South Africa—Prime Minister Mark Carney will travel to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, for a bilateral visit and to meet with UAE President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He will then visit Johannesburg, South Africa, for the G20 Leaders' Summit. Tuesday, Nov. 18, to Monday, Nov. 24. Details: pm.gc.ca.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 19

Palliative Care Coalition's Breakfast on the Hill—The Palliative Care Coalition of Canada hosts a breakfast on the Hill. Meet with palliative care providers and leaders, learn more about the federal government's role in palliative care, and experience the value of a palliative approach to care thanks to interactive photo opportunities. Wednesday, Nov. 19, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St. RSVP: daniel.nowoselski@cancer.ca.

Bacon and Eggheads Breakfast—The Partnership Group for Science and Engineering hosts its Bacon and Eggheads breakfast series, showcasing excellent Canadian research to key decision-makers. Dr. Jill Harvey from Thompson Rivers University will share insights from her research on wildfire resilience. Wednesday, Nov. 19, at 7:30 a.m. ET in Room 100, Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

Panel: 'The Political Future of Artificial Intelligence'—Carleton University hosts a panel, "The Ghost in the Machine: The Political Future of Artificial Intelligence," exploring how artificial intelligence is transforming Canada's political and public landscape. How do Canadians feel about AI in government, media, and politics? Can it serve the public good, or does it threaten democracy itself? Wednesday, Nov. 19, at 6 p.m. ET at Richcraft Hall, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa. Register: events.carleton.ca.

Students on the Hill Reception—The Canadian Alliance of Student Association and Liberal MP Leslie Church host reception, "Building Canada's Future: Students on the Hill." Wednesday, Nov. 19, at 6:30 p.m. ET Queen St. Fare, 170 Queen St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

Webinar: 'Canada's First Chief Architect'—Heritage Ottawa hosts a webinar, "Thomas Seaton Scott: Canada's First Chief Architect," who, during his 10 years as chief architect at Public Works (1871-1881), saw a brief flourishing of Second Empire style and his personal responsibility for buildings such as the West Block Mackenzie Tower, completion of the Library of Parliament, the Parliament Hill Summer House, and the first Supreme Court. Wednesday, Nov. 19, at 7 p.m. ET, happening online: heritageottawa.org.

THURSDAY, NOV. 20

Briefing: 'AI and Neuroscience'—Brain Canada Foundation hosts a parliamentary briefing: "Future Forward: AI and Neuroscience." This event is open to staff and stakeholders. Thursday, Nov. 20, at 8:30 a.m. ET in Room 228, Valour Building, 151 Sparks St., Ottawa. RSVP: kate.shingler@braincanada.ca.

Conference: Defence Budgeting and Procurement—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a day-long in-person conference on "Defence Budgeting and Procurement" featuring policymakers, defence industry leaders, military officials, and academic experts to explore how Canada can adapt to increasing geopolitical tensions, shifting alliances, and the emergence of new military technologies. Thursday, Nov. 20, at 8 a.m. ET at the C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Register: cdhowe.org.

FRIDAY, NOV. 21

Minister Anand to Deliver Remarks—Foreign Minister Anita Anand will deliver bilingual remarks on "Canada's economic diplomacy and strategic autonomy in a multipolar world," hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Friday, Nov. 21, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 1255 Jeanne-Mance St., Montreal. Details: corim.qc.ca.

Lunch: Isotopes for Hope—The Economic Club of Canada hosts a lunch, "Isotopes for Hope: Canada's 2030 Promise," with James Scongack, chair of the Canadian Nuclear Isotope Council. Friday, Nov. 21, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Sheraton Centre Hotel, 123 Queen St. W., Toronto. Register: economicclub.ca.

FRIDAY, NOV. 21— SUNDAY, NOV. 23

G7 Interior and Security Ministers' Meeting—Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree will host the G7 Interior and Security Ministers' Meeting. Friday, Nov. 21 to Sunday, Nov. 23, in Ottawa.

MONDAY, NOV. 24

Parliamentarians of the Year Awards—*iPolitics* hosts the 2025 Parliamentarians of the Year Awards, a chance to honour excellence and dedication within the parliamentary community, and celebrate the end of session with drinks, food, and music. Monday, Nov. 24, at 6 p.m. ET at Queen St. Fare, 170 Queen St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

Lecture: 'Purging the Military of Sexual Deviants'—Carleton University hosts a lecture, "Purging the Canadian military of 'sexual deviants': The war on 2SLGBTQIA+ members and their partners from the 1960s to present," featuring Lynne Gouliquer, social sciences professor at Laurentian University; and Carmen Poulin, professor emerita in psychology, University of New Brunswick. Monday, Nov. 24, at 7 p.m. ET happening online: events.carleton.ca.

MONDAY, NOV. 24— TUESDAY, NOV. 25

Canada-Uganda Business Forum—The Uganda High Commission to Canada hosts the Canada-Uganda Business Forum on the theme "Strengthening Bilateral Trade, Investment, and Tourism Partnerships." The forum will bring together key stakeholders from Canada and Uganda in business, industry, government, and trade. Permanent Secretary of Uganda's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bagiire Vincent Waiswa, and Permanent Secretary and Secretary to the Treasury on Uganda Ramathan Ggoobi will deliver remarks. Monday, Nov. 24, to Tuesday, Nov. 25, at Courtyard by Marriott Brampton, 90 Biscayne Cres., Brampton, Ont. Contact: ottawa@mofa.go.ug.

TUESDAY, NOV. 25

CORD's Breakfast on the Hill—As part of its annual fall conference, the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders (CORD) hosts a Breakfast on the Hill to raise awareness of the challenges facing Canada's rare disease community, highlighting the progress made and the work that remains to be done to ensure the successful implementation and renewal of the federal rare disease strategy and funding. Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 7:30 a.m. ET in the House Speaker's Dining Room, Room 233-S, West Block, Parliament Hill. Details: info@raredisorders.ca.