

Coastal communities ‘running out of time’ without fisheries fund renewal: critics

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The one where the minister called the Senate racist

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Why the 11th-hour Conservative showdown isn’t going to happen

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The Hill Times'
Defence policy briefing



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THE HILL TIMES

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NEWS



Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand recently said it is ‘within the purview of U.S. authorities’ to decide if it has breached international law with its own strikes on alleged drug boats in the Caribbean. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Anand urged to reverse ‘wrong’ course of letting U.S. decide if it breached international law with boat strikes

BY NEIL MOSS

A former Liberal foreign affairs minister and a number of international law experts and advocates are urging Canada’s top diplomat to reverse course on pronouncing that

it is the United States that should decide on the legality of its own strikes on suspected drug boats in the Caribbean.

At the tail end of a recent G7 foreign ministers’ meeting, Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand

(Oakville East, Ont.) was asked by a reporter whether Canada had a view on whether the Americans’ strikes were a violation of international law.

“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 responded on Nov. 12. “Regarding the question that you

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NEWS

Skeptics say billions of dollars in AI-driven government efficiencies ‘fiscally dubious’

BY MARLO GLASS

The federal government’s lofty goal of saving billions of dollars through tech-driven efficiencies has been met with

skepticism from industry experts and budget watchdogs alike who say parliamentarians should push for concrete information on how money will be saved.

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NEWS

Did Canada’s G7 presidency ever emerge from the Trump shadow?

BY NEIL MOSS

With six weeks until Canada passes the Group of Seven presidency to France, the last major test of building consensus was once again impaired by the shadow of United States President Donald Trump.

Former diplomat Colin Robertson, senior adviser at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, said Trump’s shadow was all over Canada’s G7 presidency this year.

After a two-day gathering of G7 foreign ministers in Ontario’s

Continued on **page 40**

NEWS

Pivot to ‘economic reconciliation’ risks ‘squandering’ political goodwill as Indigenous social programs face funding gaps: observers

BY STUART BENSON

The Liberal government’s “pivot to economic reconciliation” framed around national projects and infrastructure investments risks sidelining core

Continued on **page 38**

NEWS

PSPC scales back sustainability measures for Centre Block project

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Public Services and Procurement Canada is scaling back sustainability measures previously included in plans for the Centre Block Rehabilitation Project, which will see its LEED certification rating downgraded from platinum to gold.

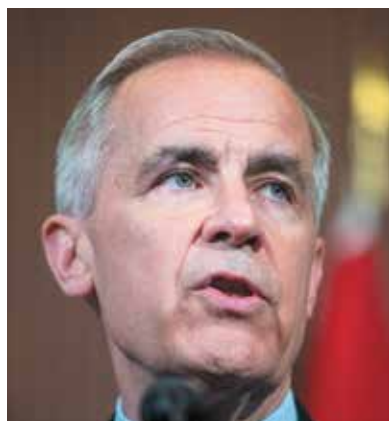
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Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

PM Carney, ministers Anand and Solomon make *Toronto Life's* list of influential people



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand, and AI Minister Evan Solomon appear on *Toronto Life's* annual list of the city's 50 most influential people. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Two Greater Toronto Area cabinet ministers and the prime minister made *Toronto Life* magazine's annual list of the city's top 50 most influential people, published on Nov. 13.

Foreign Affairs Minister **Anita Anand**, whose Oakville, Ont., riding is southwest of the city, and rookie Toronto Centre, Ont., MP **Evan Solomon**—who holds the fledgling AI portfolio—placed 10th and 16th, respectively.

Anand earned her spot for “repping Canada on the international stage,” wrote the magazine, while Solomon did for “charting Canada's AI path.” *Toronto Life* also noted Solomon's friends in high places: “In 2022, his pal **Gerald Butts** hired him as publisher of GZero Media, a subsidiary of Eurasia Group, the political

risk-analysis firm founded by **Ian Bremmer** (where **Diana Fox Carney** also works).” (Butts is **Justin Trudeau's** former principal secretary.)

But notable Ottawa resident Prime Minister **Mark Carney** topped the power list, placing ahead of Toronto Mayor—and former federal NDP MP—**Olivia Chow** (fourth place) and Ontario Premier **Doug Ford** (third place), whose “brand of brash may actually move the needle” on Canada-United States relations, according to the magazine.

Carney gave a 40-minute, sit-down interview with *Toronto Life's* editor **Malcolm Johnston** that's watchable on YouTube.

Wearing his trademark dark suit and shoes to match, Carney talked about Toronto real estate

“The city is a victim of its success, of so many people wanting to live here.”), his political rival Conservative Leader **Pierre Poilievre** (“His hair is impeccable. He's a hard worker. He loves his family.”), and Canada-U.S. relations (“We've learned a lesson as Canadians on the dangers of close integration.”).

Carney said it was U.S. President **Donald Trump** himself who “offered me his number when we first met in the Oval Office,” and that being on the receiving end of Trump's DMs is a “round-the-clock task: A lot of caps. And exclamation marks. And there is no time limit—there is a 24/7 element to it. In other words, it is not apparent how much the president of the United States sleeps,” Carney told Johnston.

Carney pitches ‘new age’ of diplomacy in *The Economist*

In addition to his one-on-one with *Toronto Life* last week, Prime Minister **Mark Carney** penned an opinion piece in *The Economist*.

Titled “The world is in a new age of variable geometry, says Mark Carney,” the former economist's more than 600-word essay muses on the state of geopolitics today, and how the world is reorienting itself away from the American nexus.

“We are entering an era of ‘variable geometry’ characterised by dynamic, overlapping, pragmatic coalitions, built around shared interests, and occasionally shared values, rather than shared institutions,” writes Carney in the Nov. 13 piece.

“It may seem unusual to apply a hard engineering term

to the soft arts of foreign policy, but each discipline is designed to build,” he writes, noting that “nostalgia is not a strategy” for international relations.

Carney pitches the idea that, instead of decades-long reform of the World Trade Organization, we could “bring together two of the world's largest trading blocs, the [European Union] and the Asia-centred [Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership],” assembling nations “that share a belief in free trade—grounded in basic standards for labour, the environment, and data sovereignty.”

This would “be a faster way to make progress.”

Liberal MP Lambropoulos had a baby

Congratulations to Liberal MP **Emmanuella Lambropoulos** who gave birth to a baby girl.

Lambropoulos's Hill office confirmed to **Heard on the Hill** on Nov. 17 that the 35-year-old four-term MP for Saint-Laurent, Que., had her baby girl, named **Matina**, on Oct. 8. Mother and baby are both doing well.

Lambropoulos and her husband **Dimitri** were married in 2024.



Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos in 2018. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

U of T Alumni honour ex-Grit MP Jean Augustine



Jean Augustine, left, University of Toronto chancellor Wes Hall, and U of T's assistant vice-president for alumni relations Barbara Dick in Toronto on Nov. 13. Screenshot courtesy of Instagram

Former Liberal MP **Jean Augustine** officially received the 2024 **Rose Wolfe** Award from the University of Toronto's Alumni Association at a ceremony last week.

The 88-year-old former deputy Speaker thanked the university and its chancellor, **Wes Hall**. “This recognition is a reminder that every act of service, every voice raised, and every door opened contributes to a legacy of inclusion and hope. We are all part of the ongoing work of building a Canada where everyone belongs and thrives,” wrote Augustine in a Nov. 13 LinkedIn post.

Hall posted on Instagram that same day that it was an “incredible privilege” to be with Augustine, who, in addition to being the first Black woman elected to Parliament and appointed to cabi-

net, is also responsible for having February officially recognized as Black History Month in Canada.

“How many of us have celebrated Black History Month, not realizing we were celebrating the legacy of Dr. Augustine,” wrote Hall.

“But her legacy is even deeper. She opened doors she was never invited through. She created opportunities in spaces where none existed. She stood firm in moments when silence would have been easier and because she did, generations of us walk a freer, wider path today [...] To honour her is to honour the truth that progress is not accidental. It is built piece by piece by people who refuse to accept ‘good enough.’”

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Ex-diplomat's hot take on *The Diplomat* season 3

Independent Senator **Peter Boehm** shared his evolving view of Netflix's show *The Diplomat*, which released its third season last month.

In “How I Learned to Stop Scoffing and Love *The Diplomat*,” published in *Policy* magazine on Nov. 12, the former career foreign service officer says that while he viewed the first two seasons as an “enjoyable fantasy,” he's found the latest season “less far-fetched.”

“Given the state of the world, including the machinations of the Trump administration, the ‘that'd never happen’ factor that I scoffed at in Season 1 is far less prevalent,” writes Boehm.

While Boehm unapologetically includes a few spoilers—“I'm a Senator, not a TV critic,” he notes—he likes this new season's “nimble tempo,” with the volatile relationship of leading couple **Kate** and **Hal Wilder** (played by

Keri Russell and **Rufus Sewell**)

“always entertaining,” and the political big wigs in both Washington and London “depicted with egos and hubris so mind-bending that they manifest almost as untreated personality disorders.”

And while Boehm still shakes his head at of the series’ “creative conceits including Ambassador Kate Wilder's lack of meetings with staff, and her easy access to the British prime minister,” he writes that “diplomatic life is at once glamorized but also shown to be tough, with



ISG Senator Peter Boehm, left, finds volatile relationship of *The Diplomat's* leading couple Hal (Rufus Sewell, centre) and Kate Wilder (Keri Russell) ‘always entertaining.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade, and screenshot courtesy of YouTube

high performance expected under unyielding working conditions.”

“The America on display in *The Diplomat* far more closely resembles the America I knew as an actual diplomat in multiple postings there,” writes Boehm.



WHO BETTER TO SHAPE THE FUTURE THAN THE FUTURE?

**CANADA'S YOUTH ARE
READY FOR CHANGE**

Tomorrow on National Child Day,
young leaders are calling on Canada's
policymakers to create space for youth
at the decision-making table.



Read their vision for
a stronger Canada.



#EveryRightForEveryChild

NEWS

Coastal communities ‘running out of time’ without fisheries fund renewal, say opposition critics as DFO faces \$544M in cuts

While the government is fast-tracking national projects, it’s ‘reducing DFO’s ability to assess the risks these projects pose to critically important species like salmon,’ says B.C. professor Michael Price.

BY STUART BENSON

Opposition critics are calling on the government to ensure that Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s ability to monitor Canada’s vital resources above and below the waves won’t be further eroded with hundreds of millions of dollars in spending cuts. And while the recent budget remains light on specifics, the Bloc Québécois and NDP say the government can’t wait until the next one to protect the progress it has made on marine conservation in the past decade.

To meet Prime Minister Mark Carney’s (Nepean, Ont.) 15-per-cent savings targets as part of the government-wide Comprehensive Expenditure Review, the recent budget proposes \$544-million in reductions over the next four years for Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), beginning with a decrease of \$54-million in 2026-27, and further reductions of \$193.8-million each in the 2028-29 and 2029-30 fiscal years.

To reach those targets, the budget says DFO will “wind down” research and monitoring activities that have already achieved their objectives or where alternative data sources exist, scale back policy and program capabilities, and reduce management and internal services.

DFO will also begin using AI and other digital tools to “modernize Canada’s fisheries management system,” and move away from “burdensome paper-based tools,” freeing up fisheries officers to spend more time in communities and on enforcement. The department is also planning to reduce the number of reviews and formal authorizations required for routine, low-risk projects, focusing instead on higher-risk projects that affect fish and habitats.



With Pacific salmon finally beginning to rebound in some regions of B.C. and the Yukon, NDP MP Gord Johns says Canada can’t slow efforts to rejuvenate the population as related funding sunsets early next year. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Following the transfer of the Coast Guard to the Department of National Defence, DFO will also see an additional \$500-million in savings from streamlined internal services and the elimination of “redundant functions” no longer required by the department.

Bloc Québécois MP Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie–Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine–Listuguj, Que.), vice-chair of the House Fisheries and Oceans Committee and his party’s critic, told *The Hill Times* he is concerned about the potential cuts, but noted that the budget is “sparse on details” as to where those will actually occur.

“What is clear” is the extent of the cuts to the department the government is proposing, Deschênes said, and, despite the assurance that the cuts to monitoring and research would only be done if there is an alternative, he will remain “vigilant” to ensure the department maintains scientific best practices.

Deschênes said it remains critically important for DFO to maintain quality data on the state of Canada’s marine resources to keep watch over everything happening both on and under the sea across all three coasts.

“I’ll be extremely vigilant as to the impact of the cuts that they want to do,” Deschênes said. “If we can find economies, that’s good, as long as we don’t compromise on quality.”

For Deschênes’ riding, one significant concern—alongside the region’s primary focus on lobster—is how the DFO cuts

will affect the monitoring of seal populations and the annual seal hunt, which his constituents hope to expand and develop. But that expansion requires sufficient tracking of not only the seal populations, but also the fish they depend on for food.

“We need to have the best tools to know the state of those resources,” Deschênes said, adding that the government’s decision not to renew the Quebec Fisheries Fund would only exacerbate the concerns over the province’s ability to monitor those stocks.

Established in 2019 and jointly funded by the Quebec and federal governments, the fund provided \$42.8-million over five years to support the province’s fisheries sector, including through scientific research and modernization.

Deschênes said the Bloc will be pushing the government to renew the fisheries funds—noting the government also did not mention the equivalent fund for the Atlantic provinces—adding that the Quebec fund has been vital to the Magdalen Islands’ fisheries association in determining the best time to open the lobster season, ensuring the best returns without harming the overall population.

Announced in 2017, the Atlantic Fisheries Fund provided more than \$400-million over seven years to support the fisheries and seafood sectors in the four Atlantic provinces.

However, while the government was unresponsive to the calls

to renew the funds, Deschênes noted that the budget’s reference to fisheries officers seems to address another of the Bloc’s main concerns on the file.

Deschênes explained that several witnesses who have appeared before the Fisheries Committee have expressed the view that fisheries officers have been limited in their capacity to do their jobs correctly, in some cases due to lack of resources, but more troublingly, due to allegations of political interference.

“If these changes help those officers do their job better, it’s a good thing, but the main obstacle seems to be political interference, and that is pretty concerning,” Deschênes said.

Alongside the lack of renewal for the fisheries funds, the government is also running out of time to renew critical support for Pacific salmon, NDP MP Gord Johns (Courtenay–Alberni, B.C.), his party’s fisheries and oceans critic, told *The Hill Times*.

Both the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative and the British Columbia Salmon Restoration Fund are set to expire next March. Both are critical to maintaining the progress made in protecting wild salmon populations in the last decade, Johns said.

“We saw the Harper cuts to science investments in habitat protection and conservation, and we saw the stocks collapse,” Johns said. “We’re finally seeing wild salmon bounce back in certain areas; now’s not the time to take the foot off the gas.”

Alongside the lack of renewed funding for the Ghost Gear Program, which removed abandoned and derelict fishing gear and marine debris from coastal waters, Johns said the government is “basically blowing off coastal communities and the environment” in its latest budget.

However, Johns said those communities can’t wait until the next budget, or even a spring economic statement, given the March funding sunsets.

“Time is running out on these programs, and we need the government to come out in the next month and announce what their plans are,” Johns said.

In response to *The Hill Times*’ request for comment, DFO said it will “continue to monitor species, conduct stock assessments, and study species and ecosystems following our established science processes, to best inform decision-making for the benefit of Canadians.”

“DFO fishery management decisions are based on the best available science, stakeholder perspectives, and the socioeconomic importance of fisheries,” wrote department spokesperson Naomi Librach.

Despite DFO’s assurances, Michael Price, an adjunct professor at Simon Fraser University’s department of biological sciences, told *The Hill Times* he finds it “extremely ironic” that research and monitoring were mentioned as areas to cut.

Pointing to a recent paper he co-authored in the *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* that examined the last two decades of Canada’s wild salmon policy and monitoring of wild populations, Price said, “monitoring is at an all-time low.”

“It’s the 20th anniversary of the policy, which was supposed to be conservation first ... but in those last 20 years, [monitoring] has gone down by a third,” Price said. “We’re now monitoring less than 30 per cent of all Pacific salmon populations in British Columbia and Yukon; we’re not even determining whether there’s even fish in these spawning streams anymore.”

Price noted that Carney travelled to Terrace, B.C., on Nov. 13 to name the Ksi Lisims liquefied natural gas project as one of latest “nation-building” initiatives, but the proposed gas and power lines will cut through the Skeena Watershed, which is the second-largest wild salmon-producing system in the country.

“At the same time as Carney is fast-tracking national projects, he’s reducing DFO’s ability to assess the risks these projects pose to critically important species like salmon,” Price said, noting that none of the language in the announcements has mentioned any extra layers of caution to monitor potential environmental or species degradation.

“Monitoring doesn’t seem to be a priority for this government and hasn’t been for this department since the mid-1980s,” Price said. “Regardless of where or how they’re cutting, at the very least, we know that monitoring is not going to improve and, at worst, it will continue to erode.”

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IT'S TIME TO MODERNIZE NICOTINE POLICY.

INSIGHTS FROM CANADA'S FORMER CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER

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***PASCAL MICHEL**, Sr Manager, Scientific Engagement,
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-  Provide adult smokers better access to alternatives by putting nicotine pouches back in convenience stores

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NEWS

PSPC scales back sustainability measures for Centre Block project

The official change in sustainability plans may come as a surprise to Senators, as the Senate's subcommittee on renovations indicated it has not yet given its approval.

Continued from page 1

Now-scrapped measures include the planned installation of solar panels, a battery-energy storage system, a greywater system to reuse non-drinking water, and rainwater harvesting.

The change in plans was presented to MPs on the House Board of Internal Economy (BOIE) for approval on Oct. 30 following endorsement by the BOIE's MP Working Group on the renovations.

The group's chair, Conservative MP Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, Alta.), said it made its decision in recognition of the need for "a balanced approach to reduce design and constructability risks while maintaining strong environmental performance."

"As a result the LEED target will shift from platinum to gold—still the highest certification for a heritage building in PSPC's portfolio," noted Kmiec.

Responding to questions from *The Hill Times*, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) said it—alongside parliamentary administrations—"regularly" evaluates project plans to ensure "funds are being spent to the greatest impact." The department said the elements in question were ultimately deemed to "either have a low return on investment, or have been identified as being premature from a technology readiness standpoint."

On the solar panels specifically, PSPC said "upon further study, it was determined that the amount of energy that could be generated was insufficient to justify the investment in this operational context."

"A separate and novel battery storage system that charges at night when electricity costs are low and discharges during the day was also proposed early in the design program for the Parliament Welcome Centre. PSPC has deferred pursuing this technology until the market is further

advanced but has future-proofed the design with electrical infrastructure so that it can be incorporated later once the technology is further advanced."

The Parliament Welcome Centre (PWC) being constructed underground in front of the Centre Block building is part of the overall Centre Block Rehabilitation Project, which also includes restoration of the 100-year-old building. As stated by PSPC in June 2021, the project has a total estimated budget of \$4.5-billion to \$5-billion, with construction expected to wrap up in 2030-31.

The presentation at the BOIE had also identified a snow-melt system among the sustainability measures being eyed "for removal or modification." In emailed responses to *The Hill Times*, PSPC indicated snow-melt systems will still be incorporated into landscape design plans to "keep selected entrances clear of ice and snow, improving accessibility and reducing reliance on salt, sand, and chemical de-icers that can damage heritage masonry, harm vegetation, and pollute soil and waterways." That includes all parliamentary entrances to Centre Block, including at the Peace Tower, and the PWC entrance.

The changes were ultimately approved by the BOIE on Oct. 30, and are now officially incorporated into project plans, according to PSPC.

As part of its responses, PSPC originally indicated that Senators—through their Internal Econ-

omy, Budgets, and Administration Committee (CIBA)—had given their OK to this rework on April 11, 2024.

However, *The Hill Times* could not identify any mention of Centre Block plans or sustainability measures in CIBA's corresponding meeting transcript and minutes.

The Hill Times put this to the Senate, and in an emailed response, CSG Leader Scott Tannas (Alberta), chair of CIBA's Subcommittee on the Long Term Vision and Plan, said PSPC had "presented an update" on the sustainability strategy for Centre Block and the PWC to his group in February 2024, but that "approval of the updated plan will be considered by the Senate when PSPC brings it before the subcommittee for endorsement."

Asked about this response, whether the changes have in fact been officially incorporated into plans, and why April 11, 2024, had been indicated as the date of approval by the Senate, PSPC confirmed it's going ahead.

Since presenting its update on the sustainability strategy to the Senate subcommittee in February 2024, "PSPC has not received any objections to the proposed approach and has proceeded with incorporating the sustainability strategy into the design. PSPC remains committed to working closely with the parliamentary administration to prioritize key decisions and ensure parliamentarians are engaged," said the

department in a Nov. 14 email. It did not address the previously mentioned April 11, 2024, date.

Centre Block infill escapes the chopping block

Among cost-optimization measures proposed by PSPC was to scrap the planned construction of a new three-storey infill above the Hall of Honour, which would connect to levels four through six of the historic building and offer roughly 636 square metres of new space for MPs and Senators, including seven meeting rooms, a "dedicated informal meeting space" for parliamentarians, and a proposed space for Indigenous ceremonial cultural practices.

Kmiec noted the working group did not come to a unanimous decision, but that a majority endorsed keeping the infill, which was its final recommendation to the BOIE on Oct. 30.

BOIE members ultimately agreed to keep the infill as part of Centre Block plans.

In voicing his support, Liberal House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) noted the need for co-working spaces for MPs and Senators, which "would allow better communication between the Chambers."

"I think all parties have seen the extensive use of the small, intimate working spaces that have been installed here temporarily around the Chamber courtyard [in the West Block]. That

Public Services and Procurement Canada has scrapped some sustainability measures previously included in Centre Block project plans. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



is the inspiration for this space as well, and I think we all know we're so constrained with respect to receiving guests, receiving visitors, delegations from ridings, stakeholders in the Precinct," added MacKinnon. "I would not want us to lose this opportunity to complete the job, and the savings are—in the context of the overall project budget—negligible."

The working group also weighed a PSPC design option to add trees to the "Centre Block forecourt"—a.k.a. the parliamentary lawns—which Kmiec said a majority of working group members voted against.

The inclusion of trees on the lawns is not part of the landscape design package approved by the National Capital Commission (NCC), meaning further approval would be required to add them. The slides that corresponded with Kmiec's presentation also noted



According to Senate LTPV subcommittee chair Scott Tannas, changes to sustainability plans for Centre Block have not yet been approved by the Senate. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon argued in favour of adding trees in front of Centre Block. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



the no-tree option was “consistent with security guidance.”

The BOIE ultimately put a pause on making a decision on the proposal, pending details on additional security costs that would result from adding trees.

MacKinnon, for his part, firmly advocated for the inclusion of trees on the lawns, arguing that “the design will never be complete until we return to the original inspiration” for Parliament.

While the site was covered in trees prior to construction of the Parliament Buildings and the Barrack Hill military outpost that preceded them, NCC documents on deliberations on the landscape design note that period photographs show the lawns “uncluttered by foundation plantings.”

Also discussed—and ultimately endorsed—by MPs at the BOIE on Oct. 30 was a specific proposal on the push to complete Confederation Building renovations in one phase.

Renovation of the aging Confederation Building—home to MP offices—is set to follow construction of the new Block 2 complex south of Wellington Street. Currently set to be renovated in multiple phases while still partly occupied, in May 2024, the BOIE gave PSPC the go-ahead to explore a potential one-phase approach, which would require finding swing space close to Parliament to house displaced MPs. One option discussed at the time was leveraging the Senate’s share of Block 2 offices.

In October 2024, CIBA gave a thumbs down to that idea—at least for the time being—and has not publicly discussed the matter since.

However, the BOIE officially greenlit a one-phase approach last June, and on Oct. 30, MPs endorsed a specific option that would see parliamentarians share the Block 2 East Complex—a.k.a. the Senate Office Complex—while the Confederation Building is renovated, and see the Senate extend its use of offices in the Senate Building at 2 Rideau St., and leased office space at 40 Elgin St. in the interim.

“We can save multi-multimillion dollars by utilizing the space ... as opposed to procuring new space or inconveniencing Members unduly. The Senate has ample and comfortable temporary arrangements,” said MacKinnon.

PSPC confirmed it has not yet “received confirmation of the Senate’s preferred swing space strategy.”

Also discussed at the BOIE on Oct. 30 was the relocation of the Robert Borden statue that currently sits west of the West Block, near where the Residential Schools National Monument is set to be constructed. PSPC has proposed moving the statue to the area in front of the current Visitor Welcome Centre, northeast of the West Block.

In an exchange responding to questions from Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina–Qu’Appelle, Sask.), PSPC assistant deputy minister Jennifer Garrett noted the monument won’t necessarily affect the existing site of the Borden statue, but, with its design not yet finalized—a design competition is underway as part of the project, which she highlighted is a Canadian Heritage, not PSPC, “supported initiative”—the final impact is currently unknown.

Ultimately, the Board deferred a decision on the statue’s relocation.

For its part, CIBA last mulled LTVP plans at an Oct. 23 meeting, which featured a brief rundown of final design plans for Centre Block outlined in more detail in a 100-plus page package provided to Senators.

Notable from that discussion was indirect reference to the fact that the Victoria Building, which is currently home to Senate offices and is also in line for renovation, will become a House of Commons space post-reno, after it was omitted from the list of spaces that will house Senators’ offices in the long term (Centre Block, East Block, and the Senate Office Complex).

Senators are set to move out of the Victoria Building—which sits within the Block 2 site—in 2027, and will use offices at 40 Elgin St. in the interim.

In an email to *The Hill Times*, Tannas confirmed the Victoria Building will be used by the House, and won’t be re-occupied by Senators, in the future.

Centre Block project spending reaches \$1.4-billion

PSPC’s latest quarterly progress report on the Centre Block project, covering July 1 to Sept. 30, indicates that a total of \$1.412-billion has now been spent, up from the \$1.279-billion spent as of June 30.

A key highlight from the report is news that excavations began in Centre Block’s east courtyard in July—three months ahead of schedule, according to PSPC.

Excavation is happening under Centre Block in order to both install base-isolation seismic upgrades, and create new basement levels that will connect the historic building to the underground PWC. Digging began in Centre Block’s western courtyard last April. As of Sept. 30, roughly 770 truckloads of rock have already been hauled out.

Construction of the new Parliament Welcome Centre, pictured Oct. 16, is moving along.
Photograph courtesy of PSPC



Inside the 23-metre-deep PWC pit, construction of the new three-storey complex is moving along. In the most recent quarter, workers began pouring concrete for the lowest basement level, and continued pouring concrete to form the foundation walls, columns, and elevator pits on the east side of the site. As with excavations under Centre Block, work is moving from west to east in the pit.

PSPC estimates the structural build of the PWC is now 10-per-cent complete.

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The Hill Times

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Editorial

Editorial

Carney can only rely on so many environmental bargaining chips

Ottawa bubble occupants and political watchers across the country held their collective breath as MPs cast votes either in support of or in opposition to the Liberals' budget motion on Nov. 17.

The final vote of 170-168 was due to four MPs not voting (two Conservatives, one of whom is on medical leave; and two NDP abstentions), and Green Leader Elizabeth May siding with the government.

Yes, the Liberals can count this as a win, but it's by no means a true victory.

There was no opposition buy-in on the budget as tabled on Nov. 4. What happened during this week's ways and means motion was the result of a Commons that is politically weary, and didn't want to have to go back out and face the electorate again so soon after doing so this past spring. But Prime Minister Mark Carney can't keep banking on an opposition who just doesn't want to go into campaign mode every six months. It's a minority Parliament, and "my way or the highway" can't be the only gear.

The deliberations about the vote carried on into the 11th hour, with May making her decision a few hours before the vote was called. The Green leader said she was eventually swayed by finally getting what she called a "firm commitment" to Paris climate targets. It shouldn't have taken trying to get the budget to pass for her to nail Carney down on this.

"I heard a firm commitment to something I haven't heard before from Mark Carney, prime minister, that I had heard previously from

Mark Carney, former governor of the Bank of Canada, former governor of the Bank of England, former special envoy for climate finance to the secretary general of the United Nations," May told reporters following Question Period on Nov. 17. In the Chamber, her weeks of back-channel conversations paid off when she got not only a question off her normal rotation, but also an answer from Carney himself about committing to the goal of keeping to 2 C below pre-industrial levels.

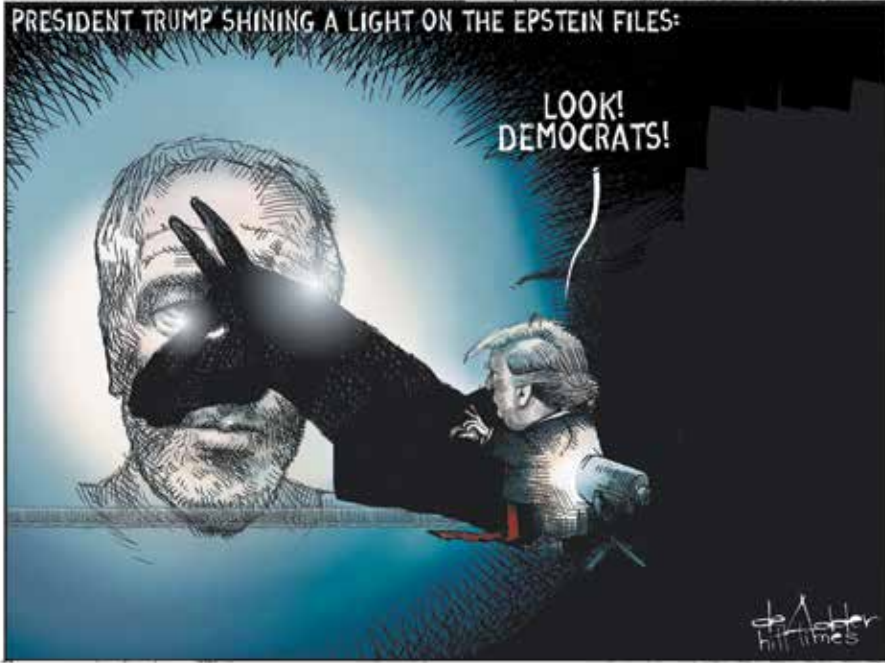
"I can confirm to the House that we will respect our Paris commitments for climate change, and we are determined to achieve them. I can confirm with the House that consistent with our Kunming-Montreal commitments, the nature strategy will be released in the coming weeks," Carney responded.

May said she will be closely watching what happens next.

"The Liberals can't count on me voting confidence in the government again without delivering on the words I heard," she said. "I heard a commitment, and if they want to parse it and say 'you didn't hear what you heard,' they'll pay for that because I'm trusting, but not gullible."

That's the stance that every Canadian should be taking with the government. Carney earned the electorate's trust, but if he can't work with the House and prove that his plans are sound enough to make it through the parliamentary gauntlet, then no one should be expecting much of a second chance.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor



Anand should stand in solidarity with Caribbean and Latin American leaders, says reader

Re: "Up to the U.S. to decide if it violated international law with Caribbean boat strikes, says Anand," (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 12).

Reporter Neil Moss did an excellent job of setting Foreign Minister Anita Anand's abdication of moral responsibility in legal and historical perspective. Instead of treating the United States boat attacks as purely an American affair, Anand should stand in solidarity with Caribbean and Latin American leaders who reject

the attacks and the Trump administration's threats of land strikes in Venezuela, Colombia, and Mexico.

In the 1980s and '90s, Canada largely supported efforts to rebuild peace in Central America after decades of civil war, and attempts to end U.S.-backed military dictatorships across Latin America. Using the "war on drugs" as an excuse to attack the people and the territories of that region risks igniting new wars.

Jim Hodgson
Summerland, B.C.

Democracy only works if it is respected: McElroy

United States President Donald Trump and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre are a danger to their own constituents and the world. I grew up (I'm now 76) in a country where partisan politics were fought hard in elections, but the operation of the House of Commons, and even the Congress in the U.S., had a sense that their job was governance—a word not often used any more. The point was that the two competing visions for the governance of the country were hammered out by compromise and mutual respect. And this was normally accomplished within committees, not by screaming nonsense insults in the House, with a TV audience watching, and making all politicians look unprofessional. (Remember, the main parties usually get about the same number of votes.)

I think it is fair to say that the fact the "right wing" panders to a small, wealthy, and powerful elite leads to them claiming to have a mandate to do whatever they want when elected.

The centre-left parties accept the responsibility for governing for all citizens—governance—something achievable only through civilized debate, mutual understanding, and compromise.

The horrible situation going on in the U.S., with Republicans hijacking democracy with a plethora of lies and vicious attacks on anyone who does not share their view on governing (not governance), is a lesson for us in Canada, as well played out by the Conservative leadership here recently. We need governance, not government, from our elected representatives. Government is something the public service is directed to do.

Right at the moment, I don't feel like this is the Canada I grew up in.

With Remembrance Day in the rearview mirror, it is time to respect the democracy for which all those allied servicemembers fought and many died.

Tom McElroy
Toronto, Ont.

COMMENT

Liberals' wide miss of the moment offers an opening for Poilievre

Whether or not Tory Leader Pierre Poilievre can take advantage of the Grits' ignorance depends on his skill as a politician.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—Last week, I argued that “the more they move to the right, the smaller the voter base becomes.” Let’s challenge that.

Recently, instead of the spotlight shining on the new federal budget, it shone on the apparent crash out of the Conservative Party. On political podcasts and panels alike, pundits, political analysts, and the Ottawa bubble claimed the end of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre’s career, that he must moderate, he hasn’t learned from his mistakes, etc. The assumption is that his style of leadership—his pettiness, his clashes with the media—will turn Canadian voters off. His own party’s schism between the populists and the progressive conservatives could not be more pronounced than the loss of two MPs—one to pending retirement, the other to floor-crossing. The Conservative Party looks like a hot mess that forgot to put its bonnet on at night (ask your Black friends, if you have any). I, too, have made this argument many times. It’s a great narrative for Poilievre haters, but not necessarily an accurate one.

I’m not sure that’s actual and factual. He enjoys mass popularity with his committed base who are ride-or-die supporters. They don’t care about his rhetoric, his leadership style, or his animosity towards the press. In fact, they love it. He channels their rage against a system they were sold, but never delivered.

Poilievre represents disaffected groups that feel left behind by both parties: youth, middle-aged, working-class men, and western Canada. There is growing resentment over the failure of the promise of Canada: if you work hard, you will achieve a high standard of living that will allow you to own a home, go on vacation once a year, and send your kids to higher education. In the past, one could work a blue-collar job and achieve all those things. Today, wealth inequality continues to rise, grocery prices are astronomical, housing is impossible, and utilities are increasing, again. The promise of Canada is increasingly out of reach for a growing proportion of the population. The fault lines of these political divisions come down to class, generation, and gender, where social patterns emerge from a system that rewards some but not others, along those lines.

While the election did focus on the economy, it did so at the international level, rather than the domestic one. A paper in the European Consortium of Political Research found that “where economic resources are distributed unequally, the rich may be able to exert more disproportionate influence on policy-makers.” For decades, federal governments have prioritized finely educated, economic

elites, more specifically technocrats, whose positions take the form of international capital accumulation rather than protecting workers. The incentives for politicians to take the workers’ side on any labour issue is unlikely, much recently exemplified by the Air Canada flight attendants’ strike. The Carney government’s approach to solve the issue landed in Air Canada’s favour, thereby protecting the airline’s practice of wage theft from primarily female attendants (hello, intersectionality). They are the working class, and they were betrayed by the government through a back-to-work order. The Liberals represent your boss, a.k.a. the senior management class.

Generational demographics play a large role in wealth inequality. Exit polls from the last election revealed that young Canadians (aged 18-34) prioritized affordability and voted Conservative, while those who were 55 years and older gave their votes to the Liberals who were stronger on the threat of United States President Donald Trump. This age bracket, 55-64 (generation X), possess the highest net worth in the country, which includes accumulated assets. It is almost impossible for young people to gain a footing on accumulating assets due to the price level of homes, which is the surest path to wealth accumulation. Without this avenue, young Canadians cannot begin to increase their standard of living and move up the class mobility ladder.

Unfortunately for Poilievre, women don’t like him. His working-class policies can alienate women. Smith School of Business at Queen’s University wrote an analysis on the gender divide: “The rhetoric was heavily masculine, including the ‘More Boots, Less Suits’ tagline. The policies in the plan were aimed at workers in sectors that are heavily male-dominated.” Women see a bully, an aggressive man who is threatening to the realities of securing our safety from men. His red-pill rhetoric doesn’t inspire confidence. In addition, Poilievre’s policies focus on the trades, in which female participation hovers around five per cent. He pays little attention to working-class female voters: people in retail, the service industry writ large, health-care attendants, etc. In fact, Poilievre has routinely ignored issues that affect women such as universal daycare and contraceptives. The numerous press conferences he’s had in manufacturing centres hardly feature women, and when they do, they’re at the back and invisible.

You’d think the Liberal government would take this seriously, but given their horseshit budget, they don’t seem to care as much about affordability as they do their foreign policy. One can infer from the aforementioned statistics that the Liberal Party responds to the policy demands of the upper class, rather than the middle and lower classes. With trade and defence as his *raison d’être*, it seems as though Prime Minister Mark Carney has spent more time outside of Canada than attending to domestic policies that are aimed directly at the affordability problems. The Liberals are missing the moment as they continue to ignore the demands of most of the electorate who are drowning. Whether or not Poilievre can take advantage of that ignorance depends on his skill as a politician.

Erica Ifill is host of the Bad+Bitchy podcast.

The Hill Times

Why the 11th-hour Conservative showdown isn’t going to happen

Recent drama led to an outcry that Pierre Poilievre’s days are numbered, but the headlines don’t reflect the fact that much of the fallout has largely been contained.

Josie Sabatino

Beyond the Headlines



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is actively managing the growing pains of the election loss within his caucus, while keeping the party infrastructure on a steady footing, writes Josie Sabatino. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

OTTAWA—Losing an election is a uniquely difficult experience. Campaign volunteers, professionals, and candidates put their lives on hold with the expectation that the long days, lack of sleep, and message discipline will translate into victory at the ballot box. Elections breed an all-or-nothing mentality where the ultimate prize is a chance to shape the history books.

In 2021, the Conservatives were considered the underdogs for much of the election period. The fact that a snap election was called less than a year into the mandate of then-leader Erin O’Toole, with an issue set revolving around COVID-19 policies, meant the opportunities to frame the narrative around economic recovery were few and far between. Except for a brief window at the beginning of the campaign when O’Toole took the lead, there was never an overwhelming groundswell of support to indicate a majority government was within grasp.

O’Toole indicated his desire to remain Conservative leader and stand in the next election, but his hold over caucus fell apart early in 2022. To an outsider, it may be easy to look back at this period of time and draw the conclusion that the current Conservative leader is dealing with a similar unrest brewing.

But the current situation bears little resemblance to the chaos in the ranks after the 2021 election when both named and unnamed sources aired their grievances in the media before mounting an effort to oust the leader. The fact that one of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre’s MPs would throw his hat in with the Liberals rather than trying to work within caucus to mount a similar coup speaks volumes about the current dynamics.

One of the crucial differences between O’Toole and Poilievre revolves around electoral gains. In 2021, O’Toole emerged from the five-week campaign with the same number of seats with which the Conservatives had started. While Poilievre may not have won the election earlier this year, his party did pick up more than a dozen seats in the suburban regions of Vancouver and Toronto. This success no doubt helped Poilievre solidify support for his leadership with the caucus early on, fending off

any concerns about his future during the post-election period.

Another important element is fundraising. When numbers began to slip in the post-election period in 2021, this provided fodder for a new attack line for skeptics of the former leader. Poilievre has so far managed to avoid this narrative altogether, which is a testament to the constant churn of communication across social and grassroots tactics used to bring dollars in. Despite 2025 being an election year when parties usually see a dip, the Conservatives continue to lead all political parties in fundraising.

In the last seven months, Poilievre has had to dust himself off after an election loss at both the local and national level, run (and win) in a byelection, get his office off the ground, convene and lead a caucus of 143, all while trying to counter the messaging of the governing Liberals who lifted several policies from the Conservative playbook.

The drama of the budget-day floor crossing may have stolen the show earlier this month and led to an outcry that Poilievre’s days are numbered, but the headlines don’t reflect the fact that much of the fallout has largely been contained.

Two things can be true at the same time: after 10 years in opposition, many people within the Conservative Party have been left reeling following the election results. This is a natural outcome in the face of electoral defeat, and these feelings are valid. However, it is also the case that Poilievre is actively managing the growing pains of the election loss within his caucus, while keeping the party infrastructure on a steady footing in advance of the next go-around at the polls. Anyone expecting an 11th-hour showdown on the margins of the national policy convention next January should think again.

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

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Heralding Hiscox: a storyteller for the ages

Recently retired CBC News anchor Heather Hiscox gave it her all to make sure the job was done right.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—In a time when mainstream media are regularly getting maligned, how about three cheers for the work of Heather Hiscox. Just under two weeks ago, she stepped down from *CBC Morning Live*, one of the national breakfast television shows worth watching.

For 20 years as host she did a fine job informing and engaging with Canadians on the matters of the day. She did her job with intelligence, grace, humour, and firmness when necessary. She didn't set out to be the story, but rather to tell it fairly and in a human way so the audience could understand it.

Whenever someone speaks about Hiscox they speak about



Heather Hiscox signed off from the CBC morning show on Nov. 6 after 20 years at its helm. Screenshot courtesy of CBC News

the preparation she did to make sure she was sharing with her audience the best and most accurate information that she could. You would always see examples of this if you were a regular viewer of *Morning Live*. Her news desk had an assortment of properly ordered papers with notes and markings on them. There were pens and highlighters nearby to make sure she captured what it was she wanted to say.

I had the opportunity to watch her prodigious work habits come to the fore on two occasions. The first was the Rio Olympics in 2016—one of the 10 she covered.

I was there as a member of a national sports organization, and she was reporting on the progress of our then soon-to-be bronze-medal winning rugby team. She immersed herself in everything she could both to understand the game and the members of our team.

She didn't read it off a teleprompter. In the end, she and others from the CBC crew were there as Canada won the first-ever bronze medal in women's rugby because she wanted to make sure she did justice to that storytelling. She knew it was more than just a moment about rugby, but rather

the journey of some amazing Canadian women who got to a place that years before would never have been possible.

Later, just before the arrival of COVID-19 in 2020, Hiscox was the driving force in making sure the state funeral of a nationally known former cabinet minister who served under prime minister Joe Clark and Brian Mulroney was broadcast across the country. She understood the unique place my relative John Crosbie held not just in Newfoundland and Labrador, but also in Canadian political history: the finance minister when Clark's government fell in

1979, and the trade minister in the Mulroney era who helped bring home the first Canada-United States trade agreement, and the fisheries minister who closed the historic cod fishery.

She flew to St. John's to cover the story, and spent hours meeting with Crosbie family members to get a more personal sense of the man. She didn't need to do that, but it spoke to her desire to always give more to a story and, in turn, to an audience. It also served to give history, colour, and context.

Hiscox always seemed to understand that news—and particularly broadcast news—was a first draft of history. She gave it her all to make sure it was done right.

At a time when morning news was often filled with glitzy, gimmicky components, Hiscox relied on hard work, straight-up coverage, and high-quality presentation to deliver arguably the top national morning newscast.

We are all pretty blessed to have Hiscox committed to delivering us the news over the last 20 years.

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

The Hill Times

Half a century of Radio Carleton

When it began, Carleton University's campus radio station had a limited range, but as it grew it became a career and life launching pad for many.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



Back in 1975, CKCU-FM was a community, indeed a family, and things haven't changed, writes Andrew Caddell. Photograph courtesy of Andrew Caddell

Fifty years later, it was hard to discern exactly who was who behind those aging faces, despite photos on our ID badges showing us as students in 1975. But if there was one theme of the evening among us old-timers, it was a sense of gratitude for what Radio Carleton had given us.

I can clearly state if I have had any success in my life, it can be traced back to my experience at Radio Carleton. Over the weekend, other CKCU alumni like Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe and former CBC broadcaster-turned professor Adrian Harewood provided their own testimonials.

When I first came to Carleton in the fall of 1974, I was return-

ing to university after more than a year as a waiter in an Ottawa steak house and at Chateau Lake Louise. I already had several strikes against me: I had eked through CEGEP in Montreal, and then dropped out of first year at the University of Ottawa. I was a new father of a one-year-old son. I could not type or take shorthand, so I could not meet the prerequisites for journalism school.

But Carleton had something few other universities offered: a radio station that welcomed volunteers. Although its range was limited to campus, its leadership had a dream: to become a legitimate FM broadcaster.

So, I walked into Radio Carleton and was quickly assigned to a weekly magazine program, *Parliament in Review*. It was a revelation: I was able to go to Parliament Hill every day, listen to Question Period, and join with others in the daily scrums. I applied what I learned in class to the experience on the Hill, and learned from the parliamentary correspondents.

In November of 1975, we got the desired FM licence, and began broadcasting to the National Capital Region and beyond. Once we were on the airwaves in Ottawa, we had genuine credibility. I covered the Progressive Conservative convention in February 1976, interviewing the candidates as well as former prime minister John Diefenbaker at his home.

I branched out into sports, attending Montreal Canadiens games. I joined the team and the media in celebrating the Stanley Cup. In 1977, I travelled around Quebec, and produced a documentary on the 1976 Parti Québécois election. Then I went to Washington, D.C., and reported on then-prime minister Pierre Trudeau's address to Congress.

That summer, I could no longer afford to go to university, so I took what I learned and applied it to reporting in cities across Canada. That led to a job in the 1980 Quebec referendum, and later as an assistant to opposition leaders

and a federal cabinet minister. Then I returned to Carleton and graduated.

Many years later, I went to Geneva as the spouse of a diplomat, and was brought on to read the morning news at the local English language station. A listener recommended me for a job at the World Health Organization, which opened the door to United Nations positions abroad, a master's degree in Journalism, and a career at Global Affairs Canada.

When I see the homeless on our streets, I think, "there but for fortune go I." I doubt I would have succeeded anywhere without the support of my colleagues at Radio Carleton. That small community was an island of sanity for me, and I tell Carleton students looking for a challenge to go to CKCU and see if that's where they belong.

The days when Radio Carleton was a rock 'n' roll station are in the past, and it is now a community radio station, playing music, and offering programming in a plethora of languages. Back in 1975, it was a community, indeed a family, so things haven't changed. In so many ways, Radio Carleton changed my life. Happy 50th to us aging Radioheads.

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

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Chief of defence staff in full retreat



One has to wonder what sort of advice Chief of Defence Staff General Jennie Carignan is getting from her current legion of public affairs experts, writes Scott Taylor. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

To try and deny or diminish your own comments once they have been ridiculed in public is not good leadership.

Scott Taylor



Inside Defence

OTTAWA—The latest media crap storm to hit the Canadian Armed Forces is clearly the responsibility of the very senior leadership tasked with steering Canada's military institution away from such pitfalls.

It started with a headline in the Oct. 31 edition of *The Ottawa Citizen*: "Canadian military wants mobilization plan in place to boost reserves to 400,000 personnel."

The story was based on an internal document issued on May 30, which established a top level "tiger team" to create a defence mobilization plan (DMP) with the goal of increasing the primary reserves from 23,561 to 100,000 personnel, and ballooning the current 4,384 souls listed on the Supplementary Reserve list to a

staggering 300,000. This plan had been hatched by none other than Chief of Defence Staff General Jennie Carignan and Department of National Defence deputy minister Stefanie Beck.

The details were scant in *The Citizen's* first story, and I wrote a commentary to the effect that the CAF are currently woefully understrength at present, and, according to the latest federal auditor general's report, they cannot properly house those still in uniform.

However, more details of the DMP have since been made public by *Citizen* reporter David Pugliese, who had obtained a full copy of the unclassified, nine-page DMP document. The second *Citizen* headline reads "Canadian military will rely on an army of public servants to boost ranks by 300,000."

Naturally, this served to scare the bejeezus out of the legion of Ottawa-based public servants as they read their newspaper at the breakfast table.

For those martial-minded Canadians who would welcome the notion of employing mandatory service to boost the ranks of the CAF, worse news was to follow. *The Citizen* story revealed that new recruits for the supplementary reserve would be given a one-week training course in how to handle firearms, drive trucks, and fly drones.

After their initial entry into the supplementary ranks, these

new recruits would be required to do one week's worth of military training each year, but would not be issued uniforms. Medical coverage would be provided for their annual military service, but that time would not count towards their public service pensions, according to the DMP.

For those not familiar with the terms "Primary" and "Supplementary Reserves," those in the Primary reserve are enrolled in active units and conduct part time training on a year-round basis. Traditionally, the Supplementary Reserve was a list of former regular and reserve personnel who pledged to return to duty in the case of a war or national emergency. Sadly, due to post-Cold War administrative neglect, that Supplementary Reserve list stands today at just 4,384 veterans willing to return to serve.

Just to clarify the point, in the past, all of those considered a "reservist" would have obtained actual experience and training in a military occupation. What this latest proposal calls for is for nearly 75,000 additional primary reserve personnel, plus nearly 300,000 one-week-Supplementary-Reserve-wonders, without uniforms.

Furthermore, the DMP document clearly states, "The entry criteria for the Supplementary or other Reserve should be less restrictive than the Reserve Force for age limits as well as physical and fitness requirements."

So I'm guessing they are not looking to recruit elite warriors to this new force.

For a direct comparison, the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires has a one-week (40 hours) entry-level training course to graduate a basic security guard. However, as the Commissionaires are the largest employer of Canadian veterans in the country, this nationwide legion of security guards would still have more collective military experience than the currently proposed one-week-wonder Supplementary Reservists. Plus, the Commissionaires supply their personnel with full uniforms.

But, I digress. In response to the details of the DMP being published in *The Citizen*, military-themed social media platforms exploded with a barrage of commentary filled with ridicule and incredulity towards the CAF leadership.

Other media outlets picked up the story, and during a CTV television interview on Remembrance Day, Carignan told host Omar Sachedina that her DMP plan was "not focused directly to public servants. Our public servants are already contributing extensively to the work we are doing in defence." Carignan then went even further by claiming that *The Citizen* articles about her mobilization scheme "are not quite correct."

In response, *The Citizen* subsequently called Carignan's bluff.

They published the exact quote from the DMP complete with a screenshot of the original document which she had co-authored. "It [the DMP] should initially prioritize volunteer public servants at the federal and provincial/territorial level," wrote Carignan.

When asked by Pugliese to clarify which of his stories' facts were not accurate, Canada's top soldier declined to give additional comment.

Carignan's deflection response to CTV did not surprise retired Colonel Brett Boudreau, a former senior public affairs officer at DND. Boudreau told *The Citizen*, "The gut instinct, still, of most senior CAF leaders is to blame everyone but themselves, usually to scapegoat the media, for military-related coverage they do not like, for whatever reason, even if embarrassment is well and truly deserved," he said. "It's a curious feature of—and sad commentary about—a seriously dated institutional mindset toward the public communications function."

One has to wonder what sort of advice Carignan is getting from her current legion of public affairs experts. It should have been evident from the very first *Citizen* story that Pugliese had obtained a hard copy of the internal document from which he was quoting.

To try and deny or diminish your own comments once they have been ridiculed in public is not good leadership.

Especially when a reporter like Pugliese is only going to come back at you armed with the receipts.

As for the original plan itself, it begs the question: did we learn nothing from our experience in Afghanistan? We helped create an Afghan Security force of nearly 400,000 poorly trained, unmotivated individuals who at least had uniforms. However, when the balloon went up, the whole Afghan security force simply evaporated.

I hate to think of what would happen in a scenario where Canada had to go to war with a military reserve force of 300,000 public servants who only had one week of training, and no uniforms.

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

The Hill Times

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COMMENT

The laws of economics finally catch up with Trump

It is clear that the upward pressure on prices exerted by Donald Trump's tariffs is becoming a political liability for the United States president.

Les
Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—As is abundantly obvious, United States President Donald Trump has defied all the normal rules of political conduct, not to mention normal standards of decency, ethics, and empathy.

But the laws of economics appear to be finally catching up with the current resident of the White House.

Trump was re-elected—to a large extent—on claims he would subdue infla-



U.S. President Donald Trump recently broke with his usual patter by admitting tariffs may 'in some cases' drive up consumer prices, writes Les Whittington. White House photograph by Daniel Torok

tion. But despite that, he has since January been derisive when it comes to consumers' concerns about the impact of his tariff fixation.

In May, amid economic uncertainty and a trade war that could slow the usual flood

of Chinese goods into U.S. stores, the president said, "Well, maybe the children will have two dolls instead of 30 dolls."

On Nov. 7, he claimed—contrary to the facts—that U.S. living costs were lower, and attributed criticism of price levels to Democratic con artists: "So I don't want to hear about the affordability."

A week later, when the implications of the Democrats' stunning victories in off-year elections started to sink in, the Trump administration began to modify its unadulterated praise for Washington's strange trade policies.

"We just did a little bit of a rollback on some foods like coffee," Trump said aboard Air Force One shortly after announcing partial tariff cuts on a range of commodities on Nov. 14.

He broke with his usual patter by admitting tariffs may "in some cases" drive up consumer prices. At the same time, he nonetheless stuck with his barefaced fabrication that foreign countries—not American companies and U.S. consumers—carry most of the cost of his import tariffs.

More than 100 products saw reductions in U.S. tariffs last week, ranging from coffee and beef to tropical fruits, as well as dozens of nuts and grains, and some fertilizers that had been subject to import taxes.

The White House maintained this reversal on many tariffs was a natural outcome of the president's dealmaking with some of the 90-plus countries caught up in Trump's efforts to put a price tag on access to the U.S. market.

But it is clear that the upward pressure on prices exerted by Trump's tariffs is becoming a political liability for a president who habitually bulldozes through issues of all sorts that would sink most politicians.

"President Trump is finally admitting what we always knew: his tariffs are raising prices for the American people," Virginia Democratic Rep. Don Beyer said in a Nov. 14 statement. "After getting drubbed in recent elections because of voters' fury that Trump has broken his promises to fix inflation, the White House is trying to cast this tariff retreat as a 'pivot to affordability.'"

U.S. consumers have not felt the impact of Trump's global trade war as quickly or as painfully as many had expected. This has been the result of efforts by U.S.

companies to "front load" imported goods to beat the implementation of tariffs, the use of cheaper manufacturing inputs, and a hesitancy to raise price tags. "Companies seem to have absorbed the increased prices but may need to increasingly pass along higher input prices to consumers," the Charles Schwab financial house concluded in a recent analysis.

The non-partisan Tax Foundation says the president's tariffs—the largest effective tax increase as a percentage of GDP in 35 years—will slow the U.S. economy, and cost the average American household nearly US\$3,000 over two years.

Erica York, the Foundation's vice-president, said Trump's latest move on the trade front gives the lie to the claim that import taxes have not generated inflation: "Wait. If lowering tariffs lowers prices, what does raising tariffs do to prices?"

The so-called off-year voting for mayors and other positions on Nov. 4 marked the first election since Trump began his second term. Republican candidates and their issues suffered losses in Virginia, Maine, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and elsewhere as voters expressed dissatisfaction with the way the U.S. is going.

The complaints about grocery prices for coffee, meat, and other items have begun to raise concerns in the White House about Republican prospects in next fall's mid-term Congressional elections, which will shape the balance of power in Washington for the final two years of Trump's term.

So the president is still talking about US\$2,000 payoff cheques for tariffs for each non-wealthy American. He continues to do so even though the latest tariff reductions mean the U.S. Treasury will not be receiving enough money from import taxes to cover the rebates, as had been the original plan.

The president now muses about cheques possibly being sent out in 2026, but is iffy about exactly when it would happen, saying only "sometime during the year." One has to wonder in that case if the US\$2,000 tariff bonuses might end up going out across the U.S. just before the crucial Congressional elections on Nov. 3, 2026.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

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DEFENCE

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cannot exist
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sovereignty**

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DEFENCE Policy Briefing

Defence focus in budget signals turning point, but some defence experts wary about lack of detail



Prime Minister Mark Carney cited 'an increasingly dangerous and divided world' for why Canada must assert its sovereignty, build its defence industrial capacity, and meet a NATO defence commitment this year, in a June 9 statement. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Defence spending promises in the 2025 budget are 'seizing the moment,' but lack previous specificity, says Conference of Defence Associates Institute director of research Kevin Budning.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A "historic" focus on defence spending in the recent federal budget sends a positive signal to Canada's military allies, but questions remain about exactly where all the money is heading, and about the Liberal government's commitment to follow through, according to defence experts.

"A year-to-year breakdown has been in previous budgets, but it's quite evidently missing in



Kevin Budning, director of research and programs with the CDA Institute, says that 'the global threat landscape has evolved,' and that 'Canada needs to be better prepared to defend its interests.' *Handout photograph*

this budget," said Kevin Budning, director of research and programs with the Conference of Defence Associates (CDA) Institute. "In this budget, I think the numbers are presented, but largely in lump sums. It doesn't really offer the same kind of nuanced, comprehensive analysis of where the



National Defence Minister David McGuinty speaks with reporters after a Liberal cabinet meeting in West Block on June 10, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

money's going, [or] what it's going to look like in real dollars."

Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) Liberal government released the federal budget on Nov. 4 with significant spending announced in support of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). The budget promised a total

of \$81.8-billion over five years towards military weapons and infrastructure, "generational pay raises" for CAF members, as well as for the previously announced defence industrial strategy.

Many of the defence investments outlined in the budget were previewed by Carney this

past June when he announced that Canada would achieve a target of spending two per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defence this year, growing to five per cent by 2035 in accordance with a commitment to do so with NATO allies.

Budning called the budget "historic," representing a level of defence spending in Canada not seen since the Cold War. He said that this level of spending sends a signal to allies and adversaries that Canada takes its defence and sovereignty seriously.

"I think that the budget, and the government in general, is finally acknowledging that the global threat landscape has evolved, and that Canada needs to be better prepared to defend its interests and deter against emerging threats," said Budning.

Defence-related spending in the budget includes \$20.4-billion over five years towards recruitment and retention for the CAF; \$6.2-billion over five years to expand Canada's defence partnerships, which includes expanded military assistance to Ukraine; and \$6.6-billion over five years towards a defence industrial strategy, which is intended to develop Canada's industrial base so that more of the country's military capabilities are procured from domestic supply chains.

Budning described the budget as "seizing the moment," but argued the defence promises lack the level of specificity seen in previous budgets. As an example, he cited the 2024 federal budget, which included a bar graph of Department of National Defence (DND) spending up until 2030 on a cash basis.

"They list [in the 2025 budget], for example, \$6.6-billion over five years to strengthen Canada's defence industry through the defence industrial strategy. What does that really look like? Where is that going to go? How much is going to be going towards partnerships, how much might be going to research, how much might be going to purchasing specific kits and capabilities?" said Budning.

According to Budning, defence spending also has important implications for industry, the economy, civil society, and research.

"When you're not breaking it down in per-year, and then even more granular from that to where that money is going to be invested, it leaves a bunch of question marks. And this is really critical because the way that this budget was put forward is [as] a whole-of-society approach that the government's really pitching," he said. "There are tons of these periphery angles that are tied to this. When you have this big investment and this sustained long-term plan isn't there, that's one thing. I would have liked to see a little bit more tied to the budget, going beyond these defence investments."

Budning said that, because of the lack of detail, the budget is "not necessarily framed in the way that it's giving secure confidence for this guaranteed long-term investment," but also added

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DEFENCE Policy Briefing

Defence focus in budget signals turning point, but some defence experts wary about lack of detail



Professor Rob Huebert says a positive takeaway from the budget is that defence is playing a large role. Handout photograph



David Pratt says Ottawa will probably have more announcements to come in terms of defence spending details that might be lacking at this point. *The Hill Times* photograph by Samantha Wright Allen



ISG Senator Hassan Yussuff says he is 'quite satisfied' the federal government understands the urgency and need to resolve the decision regarding the purchase of F-35 fighter jets from the U.S. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



PSG Senator Andrew Cardozo says the federal budget is 'a golden opportunity' for Canada to focus on building industry, jobs, companies, and intellectual property. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued from page 14

that defence spending is often motivated by "inflection points."

"If you look at the Cold War or the Korean War, [or] 9/11, you get these injections of resources because they're really monumental moments, and I think we are experiencing one right now," he said. "Because this is a 10-year plan—at least with the GDP—will this inflection point be ... going on for the next decade? Or is maybe it is going to subside a little bit? No one could really tell, but my bet is on the former."

Rob Huebert, a professor in the department of political science at the University of Calgary and the interim director of the Centre for Military Security and Strategic Studies, told *The Hill Times* that his positive takeaway from the budget is it shows defence playing a large role.

"We always expect the Americans to take care of us, which, of course, is no longer an assumption that you can have," he said. "I think it's a signalling by Carney ... that his government is going to be different from the [Justin] Trudeau government on that."

In terms of criticisms about the budget, Huebert cited the lack of details regarding current major defence-related spending decisions Canada faces for fighter jets and submarines.

Canada is currently contractually committed to the purchase of 16 F-35 fighter jets from the United States. However, plans to purchase an additional 72 F-35 jets are currently under review, following recent rising tensions with the U.S.

Defence Minister David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Ont.) said Canada isn't ruling out diversifying its fighter-jet purchases from more than one company in

order to fulfil capability requirements, as reported by CTV News on Nov. 16.

In regard to submarines, Canada is in the process of replacing its aging fleet and has narrowed its choices to two companies for up to 12 new submarines: Germany's ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems and South Korea's Hanwha Ocean. Carney indicated in September that Canada would likely opt for a single supplier to avoid a mixed fleet.

"We can be making those financial decisions now. In fact, we should be making them now. Just those two things alone should have been included. They could have had a line item saying, 'We are getting submarines, and we have to start giving the Navy money to be prepared,'" said Huebert. "And I know the pushback is, 'Well, we don't know exactly what's up,' [but] you can still say 'We're starting to look at the general infrastructure,' because if you put a line item in the budget, that increases the confidence that at least the government says it's promising to do it."

David Pratt, principal of David Pratt & Associates and a former minister of national defence under then-prime minister Paul Martin, told *The Hill Times* that the budget shows the Liberal government is in a "hurry-up offence for defence."

"From my perspective, it's very positive, but I think that the government will probably have a whole lot more announcements to come, in terms of some of these details that might be lacking at this point," he said. "Past Conservative and Liberal governments have paid a lot of lip service to defence, but in terms of real investments ... to ensure that we met our NATO obligations, all the previous governments got a

failing mark, in my view. I'm just genuinely very pleased for the institution of defence in Canada."

Pratt agreed Ottawa will need to make a decision regarding the purchase of F-35s, and also what programs will be the responsibility of the new defence investment agency.

"There's no question that the fighter force, in defence of Canada and North America, is an absolutely critical part of the air-defence puzzle. Getting that clarified, I think, sooner rather than later, will be important," he said. "Whether we like it or not, we're—I think—largely committed to the F-35 at this point. And having two fleets of submarines, I think, is not in the cards, and having two fleets of fighters is not in the cards, just for a whole lot of very good cost, logistical, and training reasons."

Independent Senator Hassan Yussuff (Ontario), chair of the Senate's National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee, told *The Hill Times* that the F-35 decision is a political matter that Ottawa needs to consider very carefully.

"I think we need to think through what do we get for this? Clearly, it's a very expensive fighter jet. Can we do better with partnering with other countries and ... maybe we may want to split our investment in what we're securing here going forward," he said. "I'm not too worried about the F-35 decision. I don't think that matter should be addressed in the budget. I think that's a matter the government has asked for review. They'll get that review, and then they'll have to debate it and ultimately make a final decision on it. I'm quite satisfied they understand the urgency and the need to resolve this."

and other things that we're dealing with?" he said.

Ontario Senator Andrew Cardozo of the Progressive Senate Group, a member of the Senate's Defence committee, told *The Hill Times* that this year's budget represents a once-in-a-generation chance to build out Canada's defence industry.

"It's just a golden opportunity for us to really focus on building that industry, building the jobs, building the companies, and building the [intellectual property] in Canada," he said. "I'm not a big fan of rushing to get this done, because if we have to do this very fast, what we'll end up doing is just buying stuff off the shelf from other countries. I understand we have to do that some of the time, but as much as possible, we need to do that in Canada."

When asked about the level of detail in the budget regarding defence spending, Cardozo said he doesn't have a problem, adding that more specifics will come in time.

"I really want to make sure that we're building the jobs in Canada. I'm not of the belief that we've got to start spending really fast, really big, because that's not the best thing for Canada in terms of building the industry," he said. "I'm not saying we shouldn't buy anything from overseas. We're going to have to make some decisions about where we buy stuff in other countries."

The Senate's Defence Committee met on Nov. 17 to examine defence procurement in the context of Canada's commitment to increased defence spending, with scheduled appearances by witnesses including David Perry, president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute; Gaëlle Rivard Piché, executive director of the CDA Institute; and Peggy Mason, president of the Rideau Institute. jcnockaert@hilltimes.com

The Hill Times

Canada defence spending highlights in the 2025 budget

The 2025 federal budget promises \$81.8-billion over five years on a cash basis, starting in 2025-26, to rebuild, rearm, and reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). This includes more than \$9-billion in 2025-26 that was announced by Prime Minister Mark Carney in June 2025. Key investments include:

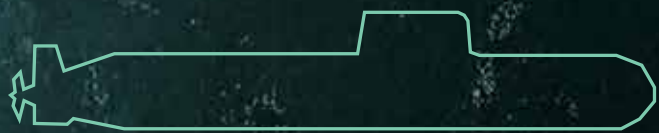
- \$20.4-billion over five years to recruit and retain a strong fighting force, including expanded generational pay raises for the CAF, and support for CAF health care.
- \$19-billion over five years to repair and sustain CAF capabilities, and invest in defence infrastructure, including expanding ammunition and training infrastructure.
- \$10.9-billion over five years for upgrades to Department of National Defence, CAF, and the Communications Security Establishment's digital infrastructure.
- \$17.9-billion over five years to expand Canada's military capabilities, including investments in additional logistics utility, light utility, and armoured vehicles, counter-drone and long-range precision strike capabilities, and domestic ammunition production, among other investments.
- \$6.6-billion over five years, starting in 2025-26, to strengthen Canada's defence industry through a defence industrial strategy.
- \$6.2-billion over five years to expand Canada's defence partnerships, including expanded military assistance to Ukraine and increased military training and international policy programming.
- \$805-million over five years to the Canadian Coast Guard, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, and Public Services and Procurement Canada for complementary initiatives to support Canada's defence capabilities.



Image courtesy of Unsplash

—Information courtesy of the Canada Strong Budget 2025, released on Nov. 4, 2025

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DEFENCE Policy Briefing

Arctic security cannot exist without Inuit sovereignty



After living through generations of Canada's colonial Arctic policies, Inuit and Nunavummiut are sending a clear message to Parliament that the days of unilateral decision-making in Ottawa are over, writes Lori Idlout. Photograph courtesy of Phil Squires/Flickr

The government must stop creating barriers for Inuit and northerners to be active in our communities.

NDP MP
Lori Idlout

Opinion



Joseph Idlout was my dad's dad. If you're old enough to remember the \$2 bill, you will have seen Joseph depicted in the Inuit hunting scene on the back of the bill. The photo was taken by Douglas Wilkinson, a filmmaker who recorded much of Joseph's adult life in the Arctic, including the time my grandfather became a human flagpole.

It is believed that my grandfather was born around 1912. During this time, Canada's Arctic policy was simply to claim the Arctic as part of Canada. Prior to his birth, interactions between Inuit and non-Inuit were primarily with whalers and fur traders. By the time Joseph was an adult, interactions had expanded to include RCMP and government agents. When Joseph moved from the Pond Inlet area to Resolute in the 1960s, Canada's genocidal policies were ravaging our culture as Inuit. These policies included relocating Inuit from northern Quebec to the High Arctic in the name of Arctic sovereignty. They were promised abundance, but



Joseph Idlout and his son prepare seal meat near Pond Inlet, N.W.T., in 1951. Photograph courtesy of Douglas Wilkinson/National Film Board of Canada/Library and Archives Canada

instead, Inuit like Joseph became human flagpoles, forced to live in an unfamiliar and hostile environment, never to return home. Many died.

My aunts, uncles, and the older generation experienced massive life changes as a result of the federal government's agenda to claim the Arctic as part of Canada. I can understand the intimidation they experienced. I can understand the fear they had to speak up. They were punished for speaking Inuktitut. They were relocated, and left to die in the harsh environment of the High Arctic. Inuit had been a nomadic people, but were forced into communities because the government slaughtered their dog teams used for hunting and living on the land. Inuit were also forced to send their children to residential schools.

To Inuit, Arctic sovereignty has historically meant government

lies, abuse, and broken promises resulting in intergenerational trauma. That trauma continues to this day.

The number of Inuit who have died by suicide is arguably the direct result of the government's colonial Arctic agenda and broken promises. I have experienced this in my own family. Many Inuit families live in overcrowded housing conditions, some in mouldy homes. There are many that cannot afford to buy groceries. A lack of job opportunities contributes to substance addiction. Basic living needs are being ignored in the name of Arctic security. How can Inuit help to defend their homeland when they are at risk of starvation?

Amazingly, Inuit continue to channel the strengths of their ancestors. I am very proud of those who keep our culture alive even through adversity. I am proud of those who speak

Inuktitut. I am especially proud of those who still go hunting to provide country food to families in their community. The caring of community members is integral in our societies. Inuit still teach traditional knowledge about snow conditions, migration of animals, dealing with skins, the importance of stars while navigating in long times of darkness. Now, they use modern implements like GPS, radios, and so much more.

Even though the federal government, churches, and others tried to erase Inuit in Canada, we are still here. We have brave Canadian Rangers, volunteers with search and rescue, and people who do amazing competitions like the Nunavut Quest that keep the tradition of using dog teams alive. I love that lighting a *qulliq* (seal oil lamp) is used at event openings, which helps Inuit share our heritage with family, work, and the public.

The strength of Inuit inspires me to speak out about the importance of investing in people, and allowing Nunavummiut to participate actively in Arctic security. Inuit must help decide what and how the Arctic will be kept secure. As much as we acknowledge that military defence may be needed, Inuit and northerners must be empowered to actively keep the Arctic secure, too. The government must stop creating barriers for us to be active in our communities.

Successive Conservative and Liberal governments continue to oppress Inuit by underinvesting in priorities such as housing and food security that would improve well-being. Members of Parliament that represent Yukon, Northwest Territories, northern Manitoba, and northern Quebec are all members of the Liberal government. It is such a shame that their influence is not strong enough to remove the barriers that prevent Inuit from thriving. I would have thought that they would fight for programs like the Inuit Child First Initiative, Jordan's Principle, and Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples to continue, rather than sunset as indicated by Budget 2025. This government still has an opportunity to show its true commitment to the North. It could amend extend these important programs.

Inuit and Nunavummiut are sending a clear message to Parliament that the days of unilateral decision-making in Ottawa are over. I witnessed the strength of the Inuit voice in Nunavummiut this past March when then-minister of Indigenous services Patty Hadju unilaterally cut the hamlet food voucher program that was feeding Inuit families. Inuit and northerners spoke up. Thousands of letters were written to the minister, media helped, and by working together, we were able to get a promise from the government to continue the program. Yet just a month later, during the election campaign, the Liberals reneged on this promise. With no warning and no replacement, the investment of \$89-million over two years was unilaterally cut. Decisions like this continue the genocidal policies of the past. This must stop.

As a descendant of Joseph Idlout, having lost my own dad to suicide, I want to be an agent of change. I will continue to raise my voice as Nunavut's MP to showcase the strength of Inuit. To truly keep the Arctic secure and sovereign, the government must replace barriers with opportunities and investments in basic life needs for Inuit, and cease their continued use of colonial and genocidal policies. Arctic security cannot exist without Inuit sovereignty. Military investments may be necessary for Canada's Arctic defence, but Nunavummiut are more than worthy of an increased investment by this government.

Lori Idlout is a Canadian politician who has served as an NDP MP for the riding of Nunavut in the House of Commons since 2021. Before her election, Idlout practised law in Iqaluit with her own firm, Qusagaq Law Office. The Hill Times



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DEFENCE Policy Briefing

Canadian defence: between promises and reality

National security is not measured in GDP percentages, but rather in the real capacity to protect our democracy and territory.

Bloc MP Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay



Opinion

Ambitious yet improbable budgetary pledges, a procurement system mired in delays, an inability to match the pace of emerging threats, and an Arctic sovereignty more declared than exercised: by announcing much and delivering little, the government is undermining the country's credibility with its allies and weakening its own capacity to act. If Canada genuinely intends to ensure its security and international role, it is time for strategy to replace showmanship.

Empty promises and illusory targets

Ottawa's recent commitment to reach five per cent of GDP in military spending by 2035 is a striking example. For years, Canada has been criticized for failing to meet the well-known two-per-cent threshold. Suddenly, the government claims it will hit that target this very year, even though half the fiscal period has already passed, and the personnel shortage remains unresolved. How can anyone believe we will reach not only two per cent, but also five per cent? This promise is more political gesture than credible objective. It is aimed primarily at pleasing United States President Donald Trump, who has turned this benchmark into a personal crusade. The choice of 2035 is no coincidence, either: it ensures the commitment will never be assessed by the person it is meant to appease, since he will no longer be president.

Let's be clear: the Bloc Québécois is not opposed to adequate defence funding. In the current geopolitical context, deterrence is essential. Russia, Iran, and other authoritarian regimes exploit the perceived weaknesses of democracies. But aiming for five per cent of GDP in peacetime—when the population is growing poorer and our public services are strained to the breaking point—is detached from reality.

The failures of military procurement

Canada's procurement system has become synonymous with delay and confusion. The creation of a new agency dedicated to military procurement could, in theory, simplify the process. But it may also eliminate one of the few tools available to support our domestic industry: Industrial and Technological Benefits.



Defence Minister David McGuinty. If Canada genuinely intends to ensure its security and international role, it is time for strategy to replace showmanship, writes Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Recent years have shown that the Liberal government pays little attention to such benefits when awarding military contracts. The replacement of the Aurora patrol aircraft with Boeing's P-8—without a genuine competitive process—is the clearest example. Bombardier, a flagship of our aerospace sector, never even had the chance to put forward its aircraft. The same scenario unfolded with the CF-18s: a process skewed in favour of the F-35, with no guarantee of economic returns for Canada.

Today, the government is trying to pick up the pieces by exploring other options to round out its fleet. It is paying the price for a policy that, by systematically favouring American solutions, has turned its back on our own industry. Yet national defence is explicitly exempt from free trade agreements; every country is entitled to support its strategic sectors. What is lacking is the will and the courage to do so.

New threats, old reflexes

While the government has spent years falling behind most of its allies, threats have evolved at lightning speed. Cyberattacks, drones, space warfare, psychological operations—the reality of modern conflict bears little resemblance to that of the past. Artificial intelligence is making disinformation more convincing than ever.

Imagine an AI-generated video showing a Canadian soldier committing some atrocious act abroad. A single credible-looking image could erode the trust of local populations, and discredit our forces. This threat is very real, yet Canada remains poorly prepared. The government is only just beginning to take foreign interference seriously; it will soon have to broaden that reflection to include the information battlespace.

For a credible and coherent defence

Canada does not lack means; it lacks coherence. National security is not measured in GDP percentages, but rather in the real capacity to protect our democracy and territory—especially in the Arctic where sovereignty must be exercised rather than merely proclaimed. It is time to abandon performative announcements and build a defence policy that is clear-eyed and credible.

Bloc Québécois MP Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay represents Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot, Que., and is his party's national defence and international trade critic.

The Hill Times

Budget cuts in defence: an opportunity to align needs and outputs?



The cuts announced in the budget are an opportunity for Minister David McGuinty, centre left, and the Department of National Defence to escape deeply entrenched beliefs about resource concentration and valuable military labour, writes Charlotte Duval-Lantoine. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The concern around cuts revolves around resources, but we tend to underappreciate the cultural and structural impacts.

Charlotte Duval-Lantoine



Opinion

Canada is entering a new defence chapter. On Nov. 4, Prime Minister Mark Carney unveiled his first federal budget in which he allocated \$81.8-billion to defence over the next five years. These are historical levels of defence spending, unseen in the 21st century. At the same time, the government is seeking to decrease its operating budget, and the Department of National Defence is no exception. Under the Comprehensive Expenditure Review, National Defence has to reduce two per cent of its review base.

Despite the fact that cuts will be in minimal in comparison to those faced by other departments, we ought to pause and examine what they mean for the organization. At their heart, budget cuts and their implementation are cultural. What to select for review and what to cut reveals the priorities of an organization, and what labour, outputs, and outcomes it values. In military circles, overhead—albeit not defined—is often pointed to as the root problem of the Canadian military's woes. After all, the Parliamentary Budget Office assessed that “about a third of every dollar spent on personnel, operations, and sustainment goes towards those elements that produce a direct military effect.” To some, this is unacceptable, and the Canadian military ought to reduce non-combat-related spending. This is misguided.

As we stand today, the way the military functions is completely disconnected from its own needs. And we ought to be careful not to let another set of cuts worsen the situation. Many of the issues facing defence today—particularly recruitment and procurement—are not strategic. They are organizational.

In the case of recruitment, the most recent federal auditor general's report refutes the strong-held belief that Canadians do not want to serve the country—but the military is too slow to let them. One of the issues is bureaucratic inefficiencies; the AG pointed to the parallel existence of

more than eight different, non-integrated IT systems involved in the recruitment of new aviators, soldiers, and sailors. The military also—until very recently—had all applicants who were permanent residents go through the same clearance process as if they came from or lived in a “high-risk country,” regardless of their origins and history. The Strategic Intake Plan—the tool the military uses to plan how many new recruits it will let in—is based on the capacity to process applicants, not how many it needs. And the removal of certain recruitment steps have pushed the problem further down the process, with new recruits failures and training backlogs increasing early attrition numbers.

A lack of resources worsens the situation. The military lacks instructors, and the increased compensation package seeks to incentivize individuals to accept an instructor position. We also see that in the context of defence procurement as well. Despite substantial increases in the number and sizes of our major capital projects, the workforce responsible for these projects has remained stagnant. The concern around cuts revolves around resources, but we tend to underappreciate the cultural and structural impacts. For instance, why are service members reluctant to be instructors?

The questions then turn to how budget cuts are done. What goes behind the exercise of balancing expense sheets? One can imagine power struggles over preserving certain tasks and responsibilities, but is there a real conversation about why the cost of said task is the way it is? Is it due to policies, biases the institution holds, or overcorrections of past mistakes? The answer is “yes.” For example, obsession over the tooth-to-tail ratio in militaries has impeded the development of AI. The perception of foreign-born residents as inherent risks to national defence and security has limited permanent residents' ability to join the military.

Paradoxically, the cuts announced in the 2025 budget are an opportunity for the Department of National Defence to escape deeply entrenched beliefs about resource concentration and valuable military labour. It is a chance to adapt to new realities, and put an end to this need-outcome gap. It is critical to address if we want the military to reach its authorized strength and get the equipment it needs.

As the adage says, “culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Can we avoid making budget cuts a side?

Charlotte Duval-Lantoine is vice-president of Ottawa operations at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, and a PhD candidate at Deakin University.

The Hill Times

A person wearing a flight helmet and oxygen mask, looking forward. A blue grid pattern is overlaid on the helmet and background. The CAE logo is in the top left.

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DEFENCE Policy Briefing



The Canadian Rangers serve as an example of how to facilitate necessary trust and communication, and the integration of Indigenous knowledge into security planning, write Grazia Scoppio and Federica Caso. DND photograph by Cpl. Andrew Wesley

Opening the pathway for greater Indigenous inclusion in the Armed Forces

The CAF must position itself as an employer of choice for Indigenous Peoples by improving cultural safety, and supporting long-term career development and leadership.

Grazia Scoppio & Federica Caso

Opinion



The Canadian Armed Forces has been making substantial efforts to attract, train, and develop leadership skills for Indigenous Peoples who constitute five per cent of the Canadian population, and comprise three distinct groups: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. As of March 31, 2.9 per cent of the Regular Force and Primary Reserve self-identified as Indigenous, and the CAF aims to achieve 3.5 per cent representation by 2026. This goal is supported by targeted programs and initiatives, including the CAF Indigenous Entry Program, the Indigenous Leadership Opportunity Year, and the Indigenous

Summer Programs. Indigenous individuals who join the CAF can find support through formal and informal networks and positions such as the Defence Indigenous Advisory Group and the Defence Team Champions for Indigenous Peoples, which help Indigenous soldiers navigate military life and represent Indigenous issues in the organization.

The participation of Indigenous Peoples in the CAF has two crucial roles. Firstly, it plays a strategic role in national security, particularly in the Arctic. Indigenous members strengthen operational capacity, and enhance Canada's ability to exercise sovereignty in the North. This is most evident in the Canadian Rangers, a subcomponent of the Canadian Army Reserve that operates in the remote northern regions, with 27 per cent of its personnel self-identifying as Indigenous. Indigenous Rangers are primarily from local Inuit communities, and offer the CAF their intimate knowledge of the land and water in support of surveillance and sovereignty patrols. This has heightened geopolitical relevance following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which disrupted international Arctic co-operation and raised concerns over increased Russian and Chinese activities in the region, including the transit of weapons. Indigenous Rangers also contribute to a broader conception of Arctic security that includes environmental protection, community wellbeing,

and economic sustainability. By serving as a bridge between the CAF and northern communities, Indigenous Rangers facilitate the trust and communication necessary for effective local co-operation, the integration of Indigenous knowledge into security planning, and the development of policies that reflect community priorities and lived realities.

Secondly, Indigenous inclusion in the CAF promotes national reconciliation and a more cohesive society. The participation and visibility of Indigenous Peoples in Canada's defence institutions help address the historical legacy of Indigenous exclusion, dispossession, and militarized confrontation that has shaped Indigenous-state relations since colonization. The recognition of Indigenous Peoples as contributors to national security strengthens state legitimacy and aligns with the federal government's broader reconciliation commitments under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous service in the CAF not only creates pathways for Indigenous employment, but also supports an approach to security premised on partnership, in which Indigenous knowledge, priorities, and leadership are recognized. It signals to Canadians that national security is a shared responsibility rooted in collaboration, thus making defence policy a site of reconciliation.

Yet challenges remain in achieving meaningful Indigenous participation in the Canadian military. Even with efforts to introduce culturally informed practices, some Indigenous recruits report experiences of racism, limited cultural awareness within the chain of command, and a sense that their identity and concerns are not fully understood or respected. Indeed, the CAF apology for racial discrimination and racial harassment delivered on Oct. 30 was an acknowledgment of past and recent actions of racism towards Indigenous and racialized persons in Canada's military. The stories recalled by Indigenous and racialized serving members and veterans nearly brought tears in the eyes of top soldier General Jennie Carignan. She said that the apology was just the beginning, and that the CAF must do better. Although the stories were difficult to hear, they were not surprising given Canada's history of colonialism, discriminatory policies, and exclusion towards racialized persons and Indigenous Peoples.

While policies have changed and there is zero tolerance towards racism, discrimination, and harassment, the CAF struggles with recruitment of under-represented groups. Indigenous representation continues to fall short of the 3.5-per-cent target set for 2026 by the CAF Employment Equity Plan, and there are challenges to fill all positions in Indigenous programs as well

as retain participants beyond the first year. The CAF, therefore, does not fully maximize the participation of Indigenous members across the organization aside from the Rangers in Canada's North who, as mentioned, have a significant Indigenous representation.

In spite of these barriers, for many Indigenous members, military service is pursued as a pathway to economic and social mobility. To achieve meaningful inclusion, the CAF must position itself as an employer of choice for Indigenous Peoples by improving cultural safety, and supporting long-term career development and leadership. Furthermore, the CAF should strengthen engagement with Indigenous communities through outreach and partnership programs to ensure that defence activities account for Indigenous perspectives, and how they may affect Indigenous Peoples.

Dr. Grazia Scoppio is professor emerita in defence studies at the Royal Military College of Canada, in Kingston, Ont., cross-appointed in the Queen's University department of political studies, and a fellow at the Centre for International and Defence Policy at Queen's. Her research on military personnel includes Indigenous participation in the military, immigrants in the Armed Forces, and diversity and gender in defence organizations.

Dr. Federica Caso is a lecturer in international relations and peace and conflict studies at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. Her research examines how efforts to include gender and racial diversity in the military shape defence and society, with a particular focus on Indigenous military inclusion. She is the author of Settler Military Politics (Edinburgh University Press), which analyzes the intersection of military affairs and settler colonialism in Australia.

The Hill Times



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Canada is making a once-in-a-generation decision about its next submarine fleet. The Canadian Patrol Submarine Project (CPSP) will shape the Royal Canadian Navy's capabilities and the country's defence industrial base for decades to come.

In August 2025, Hanwha Ocean's KSS-III was selected by the Government of Canada as a qualified supplier for CPSP. Since then, senior Canadian delegations have visited Hanwha Ocean's shipyard in Geoje, South Korea – one of the largest and most advanced shipbuilding facilities in the world – to see the active production line for the KSS-III submarine as well as the latest KSS-III submarine launched in October 2025 for the Republic of Korea Navy.



Participants in those visits saw and toured the exact same submarine Hanwha is proposing for Canada: a proven, in-service, and in-production platform that meets and exceeds all CPSP requirements, has the fastest delivery timeline, and offers the best economic package for Canada.

The KSS-III Canadian Patrol Submarine (KSS-III CPS) is South Korea's latest evolution in conventional submarine technology. It is not a design or a concept, but is already in active production, in the water, and in service with the Republic of Korea Navy. The KSS-III is designed to operate in some of the most complex waters in the world, including the Arctic, and is optimized for anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, as well as minelaying and support to special operations forces.

For Canada, the most pressing issue is time. If on contract in 2026, Hanwha Ocean can deliver

the first KSS-III CPS to Canada in 2032 and four submarines by 2035, fully replacing the current Victoria Class fleet. The remaining eight submarines would follow at a rate of one per year, delivering a full fleet of 12 by 2043. Earlier retirement of the Victoria Class would generate estimated savings of \$1 billion on maintenance and support costs.

Prime Minister Mark Carney, Minister of National Defence David McGuinty and Commander of the Navy Angus Topshee visited Hanwha's Shipyard for a first-hand look at the active KSS-III production line that will ensure this delivery schedule is met. No other option has put forward a schedule that comes close to Hanwha's timeline.

The KSS-III CPS reflects decades of spiral development of a modern, conventional, ocean-ready submarine. Equipped with lithium-ion batteries and an Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) system, the submarine offers the longest submerged endurance among conventional submarines in service. The KSS-III CPS meets and exceeds all of the Royal Canadian Navy's requirements for CPSP and is fully interoperable with allies, including NATO. As the second-largest supplier of defence equipment to NATO members, South Korea's defence industry has deep experience integrating complex systems into allied fleets while ensuring they are operated and sustained under each nation's sovereign control – in Canada's case, the KSS-III CPS will be fully maintained in Canada by Canadians.



Hanwha is committed to establishing a robust and long-term strategic partnership with the Government of Canada and Canadian industry in a variety of strategic areas, including defence, space, sustainable energy and critical minerals, that will create jobs and economic growth, accelerate Canada's defence capabilities, and enhance cooperation, partnership and supply chains between Canada and South Korea – a relationship that is becoming more and more important, and one that supports the objectives of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Since 2023, Hanwha Ocean has signed Teaming Agreements and MOUs with more than a dozen Canadian companies, including Babcock Canada, BlackBerry, CAE, Curtiss-Wright Indal Technologies, Des Nedhe Group, Gastops, J Squared Technologies, L3Harris Canada, ModestTree and PCL Construction for long-term cooperation on CPSP, and has entered into contracts with three Canadian firms.



For Canada, CPSP is a national program that will determine how quickly the Royal Canadian Navy can field a new, modern, proven and capable submarine fleet, how well that fleet is supported at home, and how much long-term economic value is created for Canadian workers, companies and communities. Hanwha's KSS-III CPS is a proven, in-service and in-production solution that offers the fastest path to a modern fleet and provides the best jobs and economic package for Canada.

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Policy Briefing **DEFENCE**

To maintain a healthy social contract, the government must be clear about why the military needs extra dollars while ensuring strict accountability of the extra funds, writes Benjamin Zyla. DND photograph by Sailor Third Class Mckayla Ryce



We need you! Canada's NATO commitment extends beyond defence to its people

It does not have to be an either/or choice of investments between refurbishing the military and investing in Canadians.

Benjamin Zyla

Opinion



Once characterized as a brain-dead institution by French President Emmanuel Macron, NATO has been revitalized by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Now in its fourth year, the war has revived great-power competition in Europe by pushing NATO to rethink its strategies, and adapt its military capabilities to new eastern threats amid uncertainty about United States commitments. The war in Ukraine has driven demand for new defence investments to match technological advancements (such as

drones) and modernize aging equipment, neglected since NATO allies benefited from the post-Cold War peace dividend.

How much investment are we talking about? Let's look at some numbers.

The NATO alliance has committed to investing five per cent of its GDP annually on defence and security by 2035, of which 1.5 per cent should be spent on "protecting critical infrastructure, defending networks, ensuring civil preparedness and resilience, innovating, and strengthening the defence industrial base." Canada was one of the allies that committed to this target, and the new Carney government announced that it would meet the old two-per-cent target already by this year (NATO data shows Canada has).

By 2024, total military defence spending by NATO members amounted to \$1,506-billion, which represents roughly 35 per cent of global military spending. Around \$454-billion of that amount came from European NATO members.

Even more significant is the rise in defence spending over time. NATO allies spent 8.9 per cent more on defence in 2024 compared to the year prior, and

31 per cent more compared to 2015. NATO members have increased defence spending by 107 per cent on average since 2015, with Lithuania increasing its own by 272 per cent.

A significant portion of that money will be or has been used to offset rising inflation costs, such as procurement purchases, personnel salaries, and maintenance. However, there will still be a significant amount of new defence dollars pumped into the system, which is necessary when one reads independent reports on the status of military infrastructure across NATO allies, including in Canada.

However, a problem arises when these military investments are not flanked by a clear rationale that outlines the added value and benefits for Canadians. Poor communication turns these investments into elite political projects that risk losing their legitimacy to Canadians, and could fuel populist sentiments over inefficient politicians. Canadians are struggling with rising costs of living, food, housing, and health care, and they want to know why the government is making huge investments into refurbishing the military and not

these domestic issues. These are legitimate concerns politicians cannot simply ignore, especially since the Department of National Defence has not been able to spend the budget allocated by the Treasury Board over the past years.

But this does not have to be an either/or choice of investments between refurbishing the military and investing in Canadians. To maintain a healthy social contract, the government—and especially DND—must be clear about why the military needs extra dollars while ensuring strict accountability of these extra funds. Moreover, the extra funding that we need to borrow from capital markets should be used for long-term investments instead of consumptive items that don't promise long-term returns. Part of that narrative is the decline of the so-called "West," once bound together by shared values and principles like freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. Equally, the government must also invest in Canadians through improved public infrastructure, more efficient delivery of public goods, and by addressing the skyrocketing costs of living. It would do no harm to

develop a strategy with Canadians through various civil society engagements on how to procure more military equipment and tools within Canada as opposed to buying it from the Americans. Repurposing empty civilian auto manufacturing plants in southern Ontario into long-term defence investments could be an important element of acceptance of this by providing laid-off auto workers with new jobs. Such a "Buy Canadian" slogan would go a long way.

But this is not a one-way street where the government must do more than Canadians. Indeed, the social contract asks for citizens to play an active part. Canadians need to overcome a decades-long disinterest in security and defence issues, and actively educate themselves on the changing geopolitical tides and their implications for us. This includes peacekeeping, which many Canadians continue to support, but which has been dying a slow death in recent years. Moreover, security and defence problems require a whole-of-society approach that focuses on strengthening the resilience of the country against external political, military, diplomatic, and economic shocks, much like the ones we have experienced since the change of guard in the White House earlier this year. But defence is only one element of resilience. Societal resilience is another, essential element.

Benjamin Zyla is a full professor in the School of International Development and Global Studies at the University of Ottawa where he teaches in the field of peace and conflict studies.

The Hill Times

DEFENCE Policy Briefing

‘Period of fluidity’: feds signal procurement transition as Defence Investment Agency ramps up

At least 50 procurement specialists from PSPC are moving over to the new Defence Investment Agency, according to Siobhan Harty, PSPC senior associate deputy minister of defence and marine procurement.

BY IREM KOCA

Top government officials say they feel “huge pressure” to move faster and overhaul defence procurement as the new Defence Investment Agency gets rolling, and are asking companies to work with the government through the transition period.

Arianne Reza, deputy minister at Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), told industry representatives gathered for the Nov. 12 Defence Procurement Conference that she sees a “sense of urgency,” and is approaching things with a “sense of national and global crisis” similar to during the pandemic when she led urgent procurements for critical goods.

“We will need private sector leadership and public sector leadership in a way that we have to rethink and have different negotiation styles, different commercial terms,” Reza said during a panel at the event organized by the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

Reza said she has been receiving questions from industry about how the defence procurement mechanism works as departments go through a transition period. She said that “there is no one side and no other side” when it comes to how defence procurement is currently being handled, noting she is the deputy minister accountable for both the new Defence Investment Agency (DIA) and PSPC.

The DIA launched on Oct. 2 with a mandate is to fast-track military and Coast Guard procurements worth more than \$100-million.

“It’s all going to be a period of fluidity. But the underlying foundation of it is that we have to be able to execute and do things differently,” Reza said.

While Reza told industry not to get “hung up” on those departmental structures, she noted that Doug Guzman, chief executive



Secretary of State for Defence Procurement Stephen Fuhr will act as the point of accountability for the Defence Investment Agency at the top of the structure like a minister. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

officer of the DIA, officially started in his new role on Nov. 13.

Appointed by Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.), Guzman—a former Royal Bank of Canada deputy chair who has expertise in delivering major financial projects—will lead the agency on a day-to-day basis in a deputy minister-like role. He will have associate deputy ministers reporting to him.

Mujtaba Hussain, press secretary for Secretary of State for Defence Procurement Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna, B.C.), said Guzman’s immediate focus will be on fulfilling key priorities for the agency. Those are “delivering the equipment the Canadian Armed Forces need faster and leveraging Canada’s defence industry to the fullest extent,” he said in an email to *The Hill Times*.

Siobhan Harty, PSPC senior associate deputy minister of defence and marine procurement, told the conference audience that she’s looking at about 50 procurement specialists moving over to the DIA from her 600-person team. Harty said that transition is driven by projects, and is being done on a voluntary basis.

“We’ve selected and identified some procurements that we are in the process of moving over, and with that procurement specialist going with them,” she explained. “We’re starting small ... We’re setting up the DIA with some new ways of operating.”

Harty said there is “huge pressure” on public servants to move quickly. “There is strong direction to reduce dwell time. There is no appetite for any of that,” she said.

The DIA is set to receive \$30.8-million over four years, starting in 2026-27, with \$7.7-mil-

PSPC deputy minister Arianne Reza says there is going to be a period of ‘fluidity’ as the new Defence Investment Agency starts up. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



lion ongoing, according to the 2025 budget. The agency is meant to “overhaul and streamline” defence procurement, which is “currently fragmented across several departments, slow to consult industry, and too complicated to respond to evolving military needs,” states the budget document.

The oversight of military purchases is shared between several federal departments. PSPC acts as the government’s central purchasing agent, and manages the contracting process for most major military acquisitions. The Department of National Defence (DND) defines the technical requirements and operational specifications for those acquisitions. The Treasury Board provides oversight by approving most—if not all—major defence contracts, and ensures compliance to federal procurement rules and policies. Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Can-

ada enforces the government’s Industrial and Technological Benefits policy requiring contractors to deliver economic benefits to the country.

DND deputy minister Stefanie Beck told the conference that with the recent changes to streamline procurement, departments are able to involve industry in conversations much earlier, which means there’s less guesswork as to what the Canadian military needs and will invest in.

Beck said the department is “deeply concerned” about taxpayers’ dollars with NATO commitments to spend two per cent of GDP on defence this year, and five per cent by 2035.

“This money is taxpayers’ dollars. We are deeply concerned about getting to 2030, and a good chunk of the money being spent on inflation, on defence inflation, indeed, on foreign exchange rates ... I’d really like it if companies

kept this in mind: this is not an opportunity to increase profits. This is an opportunity to increase the readiness levels of the Canadian Army to fight,” she told the room.

Beck also said that there is “big change in mindset” in the defence procurement space, and “more appetite for risk” compared to the past. “I’ve never had so many banks come to see me, or pension plans. With this market signal that’s underway, there is definitely more funding available,” she said.

Budget 2025 promised \$6.2-billion over five years to expand Canada’s defence partnerships. It also set aside \$52.5-million over five years and \$12.2-million ongoing to PSPC to modernize and increase capacity for the Industrial Security Program to meet the needs of the DIA, and support the defence industry.

The federal government will also release its highly anticipated defence investment strategy before Christmas, Defence Minister David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Ont.) said last month. The new strategy is expected to be the anchor for the DIA.

David Perry, defence procurement expert and Canadian Global Affairs Institute president, told *The Hill Times* after the conference that there seems to be progress on a number of things—though most of it is not fully defined yet.

“But a very clear direction [was] on that, at least initially, the DIA is not taking over everything. It is taking over a defined basket of projects and other things are going to keep working as they have in terms of the structure and responsibility and who does what, [and] there are improvements happening and changes being made to some of the process,” he said.

Other industry representatives who spoke with *The Hill Times* agreed that the government officials’ messaging, as well as the work underway at the DIA, is promising.

David Pratt, former federal defence minister and the principal of David Pratt & Associates, said the PSPC officials’ statements indicate they “clearly understand the problem,” and that the creation of the DIA and the defence industrial strategy is “still very much a work in progress.”

“It is definitely a time of transition, and I suspect there will be a lot of trial and error,” he said, but added that Carney’s orders and Fuhr’s direction show that this transition needs to be quick and efficient.

Keelan Green, spokesperson for South Korean defence manufacturer Hanwha, which is competing to win the multibillion-dollar submarine contract, said the DIA’s establishment is a “clear signal” that the government is committed to move more efficiently on defence procurement.

“What we are hearing from the government is good news for domestic firms here in Canada, and also for international companies like Hanwha,” Green said.

Kristen Leroux, vice-president at Lockheed Martin Canada said the American defence giant is “energized” by what it’s hearing from the government about the DIA and its goals to streamline and accelerate the processes.

ikoca@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

A Canadian military helicopter, likely a CH-149 Cormorant, is shown in flight over a dark, textured landscape. The helicopter is olive green with "Canada" written on its side and a Canadian flag on the tail. The background is a dark, blurred landscape, suggesting high speed or a night operation.

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DEFENCE Policy Briefing

Budget 2025 could have enhanced Canada's military mobility by investing in roads and rails

Without key defence infrastructure, the task of deterring, confronting, and combatting adversaries that pose a threat will be insurmountably difficult.

Andrew Erskine

Opinion



In the 2025 budget, Ottawa showcased its determination to reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces by proposing \$81.8-billion in spending over the next five years. Given the geopolitical hurdles Canada faces—from foes and allies alike—and the diminished status of the CAF, the new increases to Canada's defence spending are a welcome first step towards rebuilding our military. Of the key defence investments outlined in the budget, the increased amount of \$19-billion

for defence infrastructure is notable.

While the Carney government has signalled an intent to reinvest in Canadian ports, air, and operational bases, and push critical mining infrastructure as part of our national security, Ottawa could have honed its defence infrastructure spending on projects that can rapidly mitigate our dwindling military mobility. After all, without key defence infrastructure to enhance our military mobility, the task of deterring, confronting, and combatting adversaries that pose a threat will be insurmountably difficult.

At first glance, the prime minister should have focused on improving the military road network in Canada's Arctic territories. While the Arctic Infrastructure Fund proposes substantial project funding for Transport Canada, these dual-use infrastructures will further complicate the military's mobility by needing to balance civilian use—especially during emergency evacuations—with logistical operations.

Instead, Ottawa should have improved northern road networks by funding new all-season roads fit for military purpose. By having roads that are structurally capable of withstanding and meeting the military's mobility needs, the CAF would have more manoeuvrability options to deploy and sustain



Ottawa should have improved northern road networks by funding new all-season roads fit for military purpose, writes Andrew Erskine. DND photograph by Master Corporal Jax Kennedy

a credible force in the Canadian Arctic outside the traditional methods offered by sea and air.

By having a more expansive network of military-grade roads, the CAF would have more direct, resilient, and reliable ground transport options capable of moving missile-defence systems, coastal artillery, and critical supplies by land more frequently and without interruption. Moreover, roads are drastically more affordable and easier to repair when

damaged or destroyed when compared to procuring new supply ships or tactical airlifts—a crucial consideration should the CAF want to strengthen its military mobility as a core anchor of its deterrence and combat capability.

Military-purposed roads can also double as runways for Canada's future fleet of fighter jets. Following the Swedish and Finnish example, military roads in the North must be constructed to support the landing and takeoff of fighter aircraft. By having such infrastructure at its disposal, the CAF would have a more dispersed operational threshold to expedite its air power through improved resilience and mobility options to refuel, rearm, and repair aircraft closer to forward operating environments.

The Carney government could have also addressed the limitations posed by inadequate rail infrastructure on Canada's military mobility. Whereas roads are well suited to the rugged terrain of Canada's North, rail networks are ideal for connecting the country's urban, industrial, and coastal landscapes with CAF's mobility needs.

By having land-based systems capable of transporting heavy, oversized, and dangerous logistical items—ranging from heavy and light utility vehicles, armoured carriers, engineer vehicles, artillery, tanks, and radar systems to arma-

ments, supplies, food, and energy—the large-scale capacity of railcars provides preferable management and delivery odds to handle surges of materials during wartime across our vast country.

To make Canada's rail infrastructure fit for military purposes, Ottawa needs to construct new railway lines and signalling systems, as well as acquire specialized boxcars, container transporters, and low-loader and heavy-duty flat wagons capable of handling heavy military equipment, and large amounts of containerized supplies, ammunition, and fuel. Expanding these rail assets would allow Canada to run multiple military trains simultaneously, reducing delays and logistical bottlenecks.

More military-grade rail infrastructure can also assist in bridging Canada's west-east connectivity by having military terminals link within existing and planned port facilities and other multimodal and intermodal transportation networks. Crucially, these rail lines can provide the military with more accessibility to the industrial heartlands of Central and Western Canada—vital hubs for manufacturing, assembling, and storing the wartime materials needed to sustain and project high-levels of combat capabilities.

Amplifying Canada's military mobility by expanding military-grade road and rail networks is not only central to modernizing our combat capabilities, but it's also key in meeting NATO's defence spending target of five per cent of GDP by 2035, of which 1.5 per cent of GDP must be allocated to defence infrastructure.

Andrew Erskine is a research fellow at the Institute for Peace & Diplomacy, a 2025 Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leader, and a 2025 Young Leader with the Pacific Forum.

The Hill Times

Why Canada should oppose Trump's Golden Dome proposal

A comprehensive ballistic missile defence system is viewed by many defence analysts as potentially destabilizing as it could be perceived as enabling a nuclear first strike by one side.

Erika Simpson

Opinion



The "Golden Dome" is a proposed United States-led strategic ballistic missile defence (BMD) system, described by President Donald Trump as a "missile shield to protect all of North America." Reports indicate that the Government of Canada is considering participation in elements of this program, and may remove restrictions on Canadian involvement in U.S. strategic BMD initiatives. Negotiations on co-operation are reportedly underway; however, no formal parliamentary debate, committee study, or public consultation on the proposal has taken place in Canada.

The Golden Dome is conceptually based on prior U.S. missile defence projects, including the Strategic Defense Initiative of the 1980s, and subsequent space- and ground-based interceptor systems. Historically, these systems have faced persistent technical limitations, including challenges

in intercepting long-range, nuclear-armed missiles equipped with decoys or countermeasures. The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 restricted such defences because both superpowers recognized they could undermine deterrence and provoke arms races. The U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the ABM Treaty in 2002. Independent technical experts have repeatedly stated that strategic missile defence remains untested under realistic operational conditions and has achieved limited success even in controlled tests.

U.S. cost estimates for the Golden Dome vary widely: Trump referenced a US\$175-billion price tag for full deployment (ground and space components). The U.S. Congressional Budget Office estimated US\$500-billion for a space-based interceptor system covering only North Korean intercontinental ballistic missiles. Canadian participation has

been projected at approximately US\$61-billion to \$70-billion, exceeding Canada's entire annual defence budget. Comparable past defence projects—like the F-35 fighter program—have shown substantial cost overruns relative to initial estimates.

The concept of mutually assured destruction during the Cold War established strategic stability through "second-strike" capability—deterring nuclear first strikes. A comprehensive BMD system is viewed by many defence analysts as potentially destabilizing as it could be perceived as enabling a nuclear first strike by one side, prompting adversaries to expand or modernize their arsenals.

The ABM Treaty was originally designed to prevent this destabilizing dynamic. Similar missile defence systems like Israel's Iron Dome have demonstrated limits when faced with large numbers of projectiles and low-cost drones.

Expanding BMD systems into outer space could contribute to the weaponization of space, a development contrary to Canada's long-standing support for space non-weaponization and arms control.

In 2005, Canada declined to participate in U.S. strategic ballistic missile defence, citing cost, technical feasibility, and space weaponization concerns. Canada is currently investing in the modernization of NORAD, focusing on early-warning and surveillance capabilities for cruise and hypersonic missiles—areas based on existing technology. The Golden Dome's strategic BMD elements go well beyond NORAD modernization and would represent a major policy shift in Canada's defence posture.

Participation could commit Canada to hundreds of billions of dollars in spending over decades. Defence contracts would primarily benefit U.S. defence firms such as Lockheed Martin, affiliated research institutions, and the burgeoning U.S. military-industrial complex. Once integrated, withdrawal from the program could prove politically and financially impossible. Critics have noted

Continued on page 33

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Edmonton is a northern powerhouse defined by resilience, resources, and a relentless drive to build greatness. The region has long been an essential northern economic gateway and continues to be the backbone of the Western Canadian economy.

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The Edmonton region is ready to protect the North, secure supply chains, expand advanced industrial capacity and accelerate defence innovation.

The Edmonton region is home to hundreds of businesses active in defence and dual-use supply chains. Anchored by Alberta's Industrial Heartland, the country's largest energy, plastics, and petrochemical cluster—and Nisku Industrial Park, North America's second-largest industrial fabrication zone—the Edmonton region has deep expertise in manufacturing and carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS). One in five Canadian engineers live in the Edmonton region, and our engineering and fabrication firms regularly deliver some of the largest infrastructure projects in North America.

Innovation is central to our region's defence ambitions. The University of Alberta is ranked as Canada's top university in artificial intelligence, and a designated NATO Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) test centre. It is also home to Canada's only university research centre dedicated to defence and dual-use technologies: the Centre for Applied Research in Dual-use Defence Technologies. CARDD-Tech currently operates more than \$25 million in defence projects with prime contractors, Canadian supply chain partners, Defence Research and Development Canada scientists, and the Canadian

Armed Forces. These nationally significant assets support defence research and development, rapid prototyping, and advanced testing, enabling full-scale testing and certification of next-generation systems keeping Edmonton at the forefront of defence technology innovation and advanced skills training.

It's a young and growing population with net migration proving that Canadians see opportunity in Alberta's capital region. As a UNESCO learning city, there are roughly 100,000 post-secondary students graduating with the skills needed to protect, secure and grow our capabilities. Diverse, educated and friendly, it's a great place to live, work and invest.

Edmonton is the closest major city to Canada's northern strategic locations. The region offers multimodal connectivity, low cost of living and a skilled workforce. The Edmonton International Airport (YEG) is Canada's largest airport by landmass, offering shovel-ready, secure sites with built-in access to transportation and logistics infrastructure. As the planned location for the Western Main Operating Base for the Royal Canadian Air Force's CC-330 Husky Fleet (MOB-West), YEG becomes a critical extension for defence operations for CFB Edmonton, Wainwright and 4 Wing Cold Lake, strengthening our country's ability to defend the North.

As Canada's Western Hub for Defence, the region works closely with defence contractors, Canadian suppliers, technology innovators, partners across the government, and end users in the Canadian Armed Forces to drive value for investors, foster collaboration and build international partnerships across defence and dual-use sectors. In a time of shifting global dynamics, Edmonton is re-emerging as the country's North Star—a beacon of opportunity, resilience and strategic readiness.

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DEFENCE Policy Briefing



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, left, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Chinese President Xi Jinping. Getting creative with the defence budget is not only prudent, but it is also essential because the world has changed, writes Michael Cholod. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade, and photographs courtesy of Flickr/World Economic Forum and Wikimedia Commons

The consumer industrial complex

The war in Ukraine heralds a new future for killing machines—and that future belongs to China and Ukraine.

Michael Cholod

Opinion



KYIV, UKRAINE—Open war has been raging in Ukraine for nearly four years. More than 100,000 lives have been lost along with billions of dollars of equipment. Watching the war unfold from the relative comfort of my hotel Bursa in Kyiv since August 2022, I've witnessed this country develop from a peasant army begging for advice, arms, and assistance from NATO to a leading innovator—especially in drone technology, now the envy of the Coalition of the Willing.

Russia started this war with superpower arrogance. Overwhelming numbers of men and Soviet-era equipment focused on countering the Cold War enemies of the United States and NATO were deployed promising a quick victory. Conventional wisdom holds that any future war between superpowers would never have a victor because nuclear war would be inevitable, so best to simply overwhelm a neighbour quickly then draw new borders on the map. Russian President Vladimir Putin promised to take Kyiv in three days because his army had far more tanks, helicopters, and artillery.

When Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy asked for “more ammo instead of a ride,”



Prime Minister Mark Carney's government has committed to \$80-billion in new defence spending over the next five years, so perhaps we need to consider spending the money smarter, writes Michael Cholod. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the U.S. and NATO knew that war was changing—but they didn't know just how much.

To make up for a lack of manpower and dwindling ammunition, Ukraine focused on small disposable drones. As Russia spent the first winter of the war digging trenches and planting mines, Ukraine trained thousands of drone pilots and developed specifications for first-person view (FPV) killer drones to bomb those Russian trenches. They also started to build the world's most advanced drone-based military industrial complex.

Ukraine's transformation from drone buyer to drone seller has been incredible, but they didn't do it without help. For the first few years, every component of Ukraine's drone army was shipped from China via friendly transit countries. Most were paid for by gen-Z kids raising money on Instagram. These same kids then spent hours at the kitchen table assembling and soldering, while others spent hours learning to pilot tiny drones around their apartments. A new Defense City technology incubator was established under the auspices of the Ministry of Digital Transformation to ensure a steady supply

of money and skills flowed to companies building drone tech. Being part of Defense City even allows startups to register their key techies, exempting them from military service on the frontline.

As Russian casualties and equipment losses continued to mount, they were forced to innovate. Russia began with bed frames welded to tank turrets to minimize drone damage, but advanced to building portable electronic warfare jamming systems from components stolen from Ukrainian washing machines.

Rather than watching and learning, NATO spent the next three years arguing which weapons to supply to Ukraine, how they were allowed to use them, and who would pay. Ukraine is still not authorized to buy or use long-range missiles like Tomahawk and Taurus rockets to strike any targets within Russia—even though that is exactly what they were designed for.

All this innovation on both sides has exposed just how dated the traditional Cold War dogma is. Billions of dollars have been spent by companies like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Thales, and BAE to lobby politicians

into building a military aimed at countering a highly sophisticated, nuclear-armed enemy. As a result, the scions of military manufacturing have created immensely lucrative engines focused on very expensive and complex systems to outperform Russian Cold War military technology.

The Pentagon and U.S. President Donald Trump know this, that's why Trump was so forceful and adamant that all NATO countries increase their military spending to five per cent of GDP. After all, it's the U.S. military industrial complex that stands to benefit most from the hundreds of billions of increased military spending.

Why do you think Trump exploded when the American intelligence report suggested his immense bunker-buster bombs didn't destroy Iran's nuclear enrichment capabilities? Perhaps because the 14 bombs used cost \$5-million each, and can only be delivered by \$2-billion B2 Stealth bombers.

Ukraine and Russia now have the most agile and inventive armies on the planet. They have changed the doctrine, training, and equipment necessary to win a conventional ground-based war. Employing thousands of ground troops and cheap drones is the new reality. So where does this leave Canada and NATO?

Western democracies are at a disadvantage because they focus on expensive and sophisticated stealth technology. But how good is a \$50-billion aircraft carrier if it can be sunk by a \$10,000 FPV drone made from an old Sea-Doo and piloted by a teenager? What's the advantage of High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and Tomahawk missiles when they can be jammed by electronic warfare systems made from stolen washing machines?

Today's war is all about cheap, disposable drones; however, NATO is being left behind because they have little capability in this regard. Don't get me wrong, the U.S. and European countries are true innovators in drone technology, but their expertise has been focused on a traditional and similarly armed Cold War enemy. General Dynamics makes impressive jet-powered unmanned airborne vehicles not much smaller than a fighter jet,

but they're definitely not cheap nor are they plentiful enough to make a difference in the trenches.

China, on the other hand, focused on manufacturing cheap consumer grade drones by the millions. Any remote-control hobbyist who has flown a drone over the past 15 years has been flying a Chinese-designed product. A generation of civilian drone pilots have been trained by the Chinese consumer industrial complex.

Companies like China's DJI improved consumer drones by adding 3D cameras, auto navigation, and virtual-reality (VR) goggle-based FPV interfaces. VR goggles make it possible to fly a drone over great distances because you are literally piloting from the drone itself. It's this Chinese consumer innovation that makes kamikaze drones and bomb dropping possible. Ukrainian drone tech is very advanced, but all their pilots are flying them using DJI consumer-grade VR pilot goggles.

If Ukraine loses this war, Russia will next target Europe because they have an advantage on the ground and in the sky. Thanks to the apparent friendship between Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russia will have millions of drones to soften up NATO frontlines. The recent drone incursions across European airports are just a hint of what's to come. Waves of \$20,000 Russian kamikaze drones launched at Warsaw and Krakow in Poland; Prague, Czech Republic; Helsinki, Finland; and the Baltics will quickly deplete all the defenders' US\$4-million Patriot missiles.

The war in Ukraine has illustrated that NATO military procurement needs to adjust to a new reality. It's not about sophisticated and expensive equipment that requires a computer science degree to operate, it's about cheap battlefield innovation on the fly, boots on the ground, and affordable consumer-grade drones.

Prime Minister Mark Carney's government has committed to \$80-billion in new defence spending over the next five years, so perhaps we need to consider spending the money smarter. Recruiting 18-year-old gamers to pilot drone squadrons would undoubtedly be much easier than recruiting and training crews and support personnel for a dozen new submarines and hundreds of new fighter jets—it would also help reduce youth unemployment which is at record levels.

Canada is embarking on generational investments in energy, infrastructure, and defence, and racking up generational debt in the process. Getting creative with the defence budget is not only prudent, but it is also essential because the world has changed. The new consumer industrial complex suits Ukraine and China just fine, and that means it could be good for Canada, too.

Michael Cholod is executive director of *The Peace Coalition*, an international, non-profit association of NGOs, academic institutions, and independent experts coordinating a variety of initiatives aimed at seizing Russian money to pay for Ukraine's resistance and recovery.

The Hill Times

Policy Briefing **DEFENCE**

Why Canada should oppose Trump's Golden Dome proposal



U.S. President Donald Trump's Golden Dome goes well beyond NORAD modernization, and would represent a major policy shift in Canada's defence posture, writes Erika Simpson. *White House photograph by Joyce N. Boghosian*

fiscal, and strategic implications of Canada joining the Golden Dome initiative. At a recent Pugwash-sponsored consultation in Ottawa, experts cautioned that such a system could prompt China—currently maintaining a no-first-use nuclear policy, and a smaller arsenal of about 600 warheads—to adopt a launch-on-warning posture like Russia and the U.S., whose combined arsenals exceed 12,000 warheads.

Canada's then-United Nations ambassador Bob Rae called the Golden Dome program a protection racket after Trump said Canada must pay \$61-billion to join—or risk annexation, which would allow free inclusion. Rae noted that “threats to sovereignty” violate the UN Charter, though his influence as outgoing ambassador was limited. Space arms races would weaken global governance reforms. To advance security, demilitarization, and constructive co-operation with China, Canadians should oppose Trump's Golden “Doom” initiative.

Erika Simpson is associate professor of international relations, and president of the Canadian Peace Research Association. She recently presented at the Canadian Pugwash Group expert roundtable and on ‘The Reform and Improvement of Global Governance’ at the Symposium on China-Canada Relations held at the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa.
The Hill Times

Continued from **page 30**

that major technological initiatives—like the small modular reactor concept—often stimulate industrial lobbying and research funding incentives, regardless of foreseeable technical success.

Analysts warn that comprehensive missile defence could encourage other nuclear powers—especially China and Russia—to expand or adapt their arsenals to maintain deterrence. The potential erosion of “no-first-use” policies and adoption of

launch-on-warning postures could increase the risk of accidental nuclear escalation. Expanding space-based interceptors could challenge existing international space and arms control norms. The diversion of vast resources to this system would occur at

the expense of addressing global environmental and humanitarian crises.

Both the Canadian Pugwash Group and Science for Peace are urging immediate parliamentary scrutiny, supported by expert testimony on the technical,

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DEFENCE Policy Briefing

Avro Arrow ambition is needed to meet this moment



We did not develop the capacity that led to the Avro Arrow program in a single budget cycle, so we shouldn't expect Canada to rebuild its modern defence sector in 12 months, writes David Pierce.
Photograph courtesy of Ken Mist/Flickr

Defence industrial capacity grows when government sends clear and sustained market signals coupled with firm long-term contracts.

David
Pierce

Opinion



At the end of the Second World War, western leaders set out to build a defence system that would stand the test of time. Military readiness, industrial capacity, and strategic infrastructure were treated as national imperatives. In the process, Canada developed the world's most advanced military aircraft: the Avro Arrow.

But in the decades since, Canada has allowed our defence industrial capacity to diminish. With domestic priorities competing for attention, politicians across the board chose to rely too heavily on the United States for our national security. Today, we face the consequences of two generations of ambivalence: capability gaps, procurement delays, and an innovation ecosystem that is now being asked to scale rapidly to meet the new world's demand.

Canada cannot afford to treat national defence as an episodic priority as authoritarian states re-arm; supply chains, technology, and intelligence are weaponized; and our closest allies accelerate defence spending to meet the reality of a dangerous world. We must take a long-term view. We did not develop the global-leading aerospace talent we currently have, nor the capacity that led to the Avro Arrow program, in a single budget cycle. So we shouldn't expect Canada to rebuild its modern defence sector in 12 months.

Defence industrial capacity is not simply purchased—it's cultivated. It grows when government sends clear and sustained market signals coupled with firm long-term contracts; when institutions align procurement with national interest; and when policymakers champion domestic capability as fiercely as our allies do.

Across Europe and the U.S., federal and state governments are unapologetically assertive in backing domestic firms. Canada must do likewise, and stand up for our companies, jobs, and investment.

But first, we must address our procurement system infrastructure before we try to force through it billions of dollars in new spending. What's the point of inspir-

ing a new generation of Canadian innovators if they are forced out of a request for proposal because their security clearance has been pending for eight months and it's required before bid submission? What kind of defence supply chain can we really build when contract decisions take longer than the life of a typical minority government? Canada's famous procurement delays used to deter small firms—now, even global players aren't prepared to accept the opportunity cost. The success of the Defence Industrial Strategy shouldn't be measured only in dollars spent and to whom, but also in how decisively Canada is prepared to reform our broken system.

Canada is home to world-class firms in cybersecurity, defence software and training capabilities, artificial intelligence, space and satellite systems, drone and counter-drone technology, shipbuilding, advanced materials and critical minerals, quantum science, and aerospace. Canadian engineers design some of the best propulsion systems on Earth, power aircraft worldwide, and contribute to NATO and allied systems every day. Where Canada has a proven capability, our companies deserve to be at the front of the line. When an international defence contract becomes available and a Canadian firm is competitive, our government should be on the next plane helping secure that deal, and our Canadian Armed Forces should be championing it as a first buyer. Our trade commissioners and diplomats should be advocating aggressively. Team Canada cannot mean cheerleading from the side lines. We must finally see defence contracts at home and abroad as the wins for national security, innovation, jobs, and investment that they are.

But this doesn't have to be a zero-sum game. Canada can champion home-grown firms while maintaining strong partnerships with global primes who employ thousands of Canadians and invest deeply in our economy. The domestic divisions of these companies are, after all, led mostly by Canadians with Canadians working on the shop floors. Partnership does not mean passivity. We do not need to choose between nurturing the next generation of Canadian innovators and protecting the skilled workforce already serving our national security. We can—and must—do both.

Our ambition outside of a World War period has never been higher. Let's take lessons from so many years ago when we led the world in aerospace design. Our future and indeed our sovereignty depends on getting this right. The playing field has changed, and we simply must evolve with it.

David Pierce is vice-president, government relations, at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

The Hill Times

Outpacing AI-speed threats: why Canada must rethink defence innovation

Canada has the momentum to be a world-leader in adapting behavioural AI to the electromagnetic warfare space, but needs to focus on a few keys to success.

Deepak
Dutt

Opinion



In October, unidentified drones were seen over military and energy infrastructure in Denmark and Germany, triggering national security investigations and raising fresh concerns about hybrid threats far from the battlefield. The northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein reported the sightings in its capital, Kiel, near a power plant, the factory premises of TKMS—a maritime defence technology provider and shipbuilder—and other critical infrastructure points. Similar sightings in Denmark within that 24-hour cycle also raised alarms. This happened again on Nov. 4, only this time in Belgium over the Brussels and Liège airports where unknown drones closed down the surrounding airspace for hours, disrupting commercial, military, and cargo aircraft. For those not aware of the location of the Brussel Airport, the proximity to NATO Headquarters is about two kilometres. This is troubling.

Critical infrastructure has always been the target of military campaigns in kinetic warfare, and in the gathering of intelligence through a variety of tactics. However, drones represent a unique challenge.

In response to recent drone incursions into its members' airspace and over civilian infrastructure, NATO nations are launching a co-ordinated "drone wall," a cross-border initiative using AI, detection systems, and jamming technologies to safeguard critical infrastructure.

Canada has already committed \$168-million toward counter-unmanned aerial systems (UAS). But with drones being manufactured at scale—one every second in China alone—we must ask: can our traditional multi-year procurement cycles keep up with threats evolving at software speed?

We've seen this before in cybersecurity with deepfakes, synthetic identities, and AI-powered fraud. Static defences fail. Only adaptive systems can keep pace, and prevail.

In the counter-UAS domain, there are three principal challenges:

1. Drones constantly shift tactics and signatures;
2. Current procurement requirements are written for decades-long lifespans; and
3. The innovation gap: hardware-only approaches can't keep pace with the evolving threat environment.

For those in the defence and security realm, these challenges are what keep future capability planners up at night. How do we procure technology that won't become obsolete before a country's request for proposal rolls out the door? How do we engage with industry, especially the small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are working in this challenge space, without tipping our hand to the enemy?

The answer is simpler than it looks: use-case development, prototyping, and testing can all be achieved for relatively low dollar values. There are small-to-large pots of money that have been entrusted to government departments—beyond the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces—to invest in the development of such technology. While Canadians should expect this money to be spent with care, it can be argued that apportioning funds to be spent in a more timely manner could actually serve to de-risk procurements—delivering faster, more capable, adaptive solutions while guarding against cost overruns.

Let's return to the counter-UAS example. In order to counter the real-time threats that they present, we need to focus on:

- Having AI that learns and adapts in real time to counter the shifting in tactics and signatures;
- Creating procurement requirements that allow for agile innovation cycles built for disruption; and
- Reorienting to a software-defined defence that updates as fast as the threat does.

At Zighra, we're applying behavioural AI to radio frequency signals, enabling systems to detect anomalies without relying on known signatures. When the next threat doesn't look like the last, you need systems that can recognize it anyway. We may be the only Canadian company doing this type of work, but over the last few years, I have been both impressed and encouraged by the SMEs across this incredible country actively working to address the defence and security challenges of tomorrow.

I am also encouraged by the recent commitments in the 2025 budget for the government to increase defence spending, and to buy Canadian whenever possible. This will give industry an opportunity to scale innovation, fast-track dual-use technologies, and build a defence posture that adapts in real time. Expanding this capacity would help build an export market for the Canadian defence industry, enhancing our ability to protect partners and allies across the globe.

This isn't just about drones. It's about defending our infrastructure, our sovereignty, and our future.

Deepak Dutt is the founder and CEO of Zighra Inc., a 100-per-cent Canadian innovator with more than 15 international patents in anomaly detection, adaptive AI, and sensor intelligence. With a decade of experience deploying advanced AI across high-risk sectors, Zighra is now applying its proven expertise to support DND and CAF in an evolving battlespace.

The Hill Times



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DEFENCE Policy Briefing

Science, cyber, engineering and tech experts will defend our sovereignty in the 21st century

Universities are ready to partner to train the next generation with the skills needed to advance new technologies to better protect our sovereignty.

Gabriel Miller

Opinion



Prime Minister Mark Carney's first federal budget sets an ambitious course to build Canada strong—devoting roughly 42 per cent of new spending to sovereignty and security, and charting a path to invest five per cent of GDP in defence by 2035. This marks the largest commitment to national security in a generation.

Canada's challenge is turning that spending into modern military strength. Ships, satellites, and cyber defence systems won't keep us safe without the talent to develop, run, and maintain the technology. Our ability to defend the country now depends as much on scientists, engineers, and innovators as on soldiers and hardware.

Delay is no longer an option. The assumptions that once anchored our safety have evolved.



Maintaining our technological edge in areas like cybersecurity, quantum, and AI can lead to meaningful work that strengthens the nation, writes Gabriel Miller. *Unsplash photograph by ThisEngineering*

Wars in Europe and the Middle East, rivalries in the Arctic and the Pacific, loss of trust in our largest trading partner, and a global race for control of advanced technologies have ended the long-held belief that geography and our relationship with the United States are sufficient to protect us.

Universities are central to strengthening Canada's defence capability, from developing vaccines that protect troops and civilians during global outbreaks, to advancing clean-energy technologies that reduce military supply-chain risk, to supporting Arctic communities that anchor our sovereignty in the North. Engineers, analysts, and cybersecurity specialists are as vital to national security as pilots or infantry.

In the 21st century, defence and sovereignty are defined as much by our capacity to withstand

global shocks as by the strength of our military. Protecting Canadians means ensuring the security of our energy systems, health infrastructure, and northern communities—all of which are now front lines in national defence.

Yet, the Canadian Armed Forces face a shortfall of more than 14,000 personnel, and the deepest gaps are in the roles that define power today, including artificial intelligence, robotics, quantum security, and cyber operations.

Addressing those gaps will require a national focus on talent. That is where Canada's universities come in. They train the scientists, engineers, and cybersecurity specialists who are advancing dual-use technologies such as AI, quantum, and advanced materials—fields that serve both security and economic well-being. With the right support, connecting academia and industry can

accelerate practical defence solutions, create quality employment opportunities, and expand a more effective skills pipeline.

Canadian universities are already leading this work. From quantum breakthroughs at the Université de Sherbrooke, Simon Fraser University, and Toronto Metropolitan University to nanotechnology advances at the University of Alberta, researchers nationwide are developing the talent and technology that modern defence demands.

To build on that momentum, universities need stable funding and stronger co-ordination with industry and government. The creation of BOREALIS is a chance to do both—linking labs, firms, and public agencies to move discoveries from research benches to real-world deployment. With the right support, it can expand economic opportunity, create skilled

jobs, and give Canada a coherent strategy for building its own defence capacity. Strengthening Canada's defence capacity means building pathways to high-skilled, high-purpose work that keeps talent—and security—at home.

The country's drive to increase our defensive capacity can also provide good-paying, purpose-driven jobs for Canadians. Maintaining our technological edge in areas like cybersecurity, quantum, and AI can lead to meaningful work that strengthens the nation. Universities are ready to partner to train the next generation with the skills needed to advance new technologies to better protect our sovereignty.

Our allies already understand that national security begins in labs and classrooms. The U.S., United Kingdom, and Australia pour resources into university and industry research aligned with defence priorities. Canada has the foundations through Defence Research and Development Canada and academic partnerships, but to stay competitive and secure, we must scale up and connect these efforts through the government's forthcoming defence industrial strategy.

The government's decision to boost defence spending is a vital step toward strengthening Canada's security. But lasting capability requires the people, training, and innovation that turn investment into readiness. Canada's sovereignty now rests on three commitments: the money we invest, the people who serve, and the innovation we develop. Universities are where those three meet—and where investment, ingenuity, and purpose become our strength.

Gabriel Miller is the president and chief executive officer of Universities Canada. With more than 22 years experience in not-for-profit leadership, he has developed expertise in member relations, advocacy, stakeholder engagement and public policy. Previously, he served as president and CEO of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

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Policy Briefing **DEFENCE**

We better start thinking of a UN-centred global peace system

What's missing is a coherent plan to develop a unity of purpose and effort, and a sequence of viable policy options to deliver on it.

Peter Langille

Opinion



Insecurity is spreading. The western "rules-based international order" ended with a breakdown. An unprecedented level of armed conflict now combines with climate change to drive desperation and migration. So much for "never again" to genocide; it's on again and again.

Military spending is skyrocketing—quadrupling in Canada alone. Militarism will follow,

deepening a culture of violence, poverty, and new extremes.

The old Roman dictum "*sis vis pacem, para bellum*"—"if you want peace, prepare for war"—has a peculiar hold over national security establishments and politicians. Most governments know that no amount of military spending can guarantee a reliable defence or provide security in the nuclear era. Wars have seldom been winnable over the past 80 years, even for the most powerful. But that stops neither the wars nor the extravagant spending to get ready for more war. And, who seriously invests in peace?

Instead, governments rely on nuclear deterrence, with a threat of total destruction held in check by rational leaders. Oh, oh! Well, both are supposed to maintain a system of mutually assured destruction in what then-prime minister Lester Pearson called "a balance of terror."

Like it or not, the unwarranted influence of the military-industrial complex is now everywhere, diminishing political autonomy to the point where leaders believe they can't say

"no." And this complex delivers profits, careers, and control, as well as further conflict to keep the old game alive.

In short, people everywhere confront a dysfunctional war-prone system at ever higher costs and risks. And this system is the primary impediment to progress on a shared climate emergency and need for sustainable development. For now, the human trajectory is toward more war and a climate tragedy—a lose-lose outcome for all. After all, there is a strong probability that countries, like people, eventually get what they invest in, plan and prepare for.

So, what might be done? Failing to think of a better plan is planning to fail. Could a different approach encourage co-operative, win-win approaches for people and the planet?

Possibly. The United Nations was founded in the aftermath of the Second World War as the foundation of a global peace system. Created to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war," the UN works on all the shared global challenges. But the UN system remains a

work in progress, underfunded, unprepared, and unequipped, constrained by its 193 member states, and hamstrung by the Security Council's veto power. As it stands, the UN cannot prevent violent conflict, enforce international law, or protect people effectively.

Thankfully, these impediments are not insurmountable.

A new *Guide to a UN-Centred Global Peace System* outlines 27 steps to strengthen the UN's capacity to prevent war, uphold human rights, protect the environment, and promote disarmament. Included is a UN Charter review conference, a financial transaction tax, another decade focused on a global culture of peace, defence transformation, development of a UN Emergency Peace Service, economic conversion, and a boost for the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons.

Many of these initiatives are already underway, supported by committed individuals and organizations. To date, most efforts are siloed, narrowly compartmentalized, and without a shared objective. Communication

and co-operation seldom happen between distinct initiatives, although all aim to make the UN more effective.

Yet if combined and implemented, the result is likely to be a UN-centred global peace system.

What's been missing is a compelling vision—"peace on earth is possible"—a coherent plan to develop a unity of purpose and effort, and a sequence of viable policy options to deliver on it. This is primarily a call to aim higher, pull together, and prepare now for that moment when new possibilities emerge.

Of course, this guide will be dismissed as naive, wishful thinking. But as the political pendulum swings toward worse, the corrective swing back is likely to open the space and generate support for substantive shifts, or even a safer system.

Within five years, peace on earth—mission impossible—could become not just desirable, but widely supported, then possible. Imagine: we prepare for war no more. Millions of lives and trillions of dollars saved.

The challenge now is to build the understanding, support, and solidarity required. Ideas don't work unless we do.

Dr. H. Peter Langille specializes in peace and conflict studies, independent defence analysis, alternative security, and UN peace operations.

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NEWS

Pivot to ‘economic reconciliation’ risks ‘squandering’ political goodwill as Indigenous social programs face funding gaps: observers



Prime Minister Mark Carney's focus on nation-building projects and infrastructure funding demonstrates 'reconciliation means something very different' to his government than that of his predecessor, say strategists. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

First Nations and Inuit leaders say the 2025 budget is a ‘missed opportunity’ with financial sunsets looming for critical education, health-care, and urban programs.

Continued from page 1

commitments to Indigenous Peoples and creating friction with the nations with which it hopes to partner, observers say.

“Reconciliation means something very different to this government than it did to the previous government,” said Dan Pujdak, chief strategy officer at Blackbird Strategies and former director of policy to then-Crown-Indigenous relations minister Carolyn Bennett.

“There’s an incredible amount of collaboration now between Canada and governments and communities that didn’t use to happen, and the potential for



The Assembly of First Nations, led by National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak, said the Nov. 4 budget ‘falls short in meeting the urgent and long-term needs.’



Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, led by president Natan Obed, is ‘deeply concerned’ about the federal budget’s lack of funding for the Inuit Child First Initiative. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canada to build and do fantastic things,” Pujdak said. “But there is also the potential that a government squanders a lot of good

political will, and ends up in a very difficult circumstance where it can’t complete the objectives that it was hoping to.”

Prime Minister Mark Carney’s (Nepean, Ont.) first budget marks a “stark” departure from those of his predecessor Justin Trudeau, particularly in its framing of Indigenous issues with its lack of a dedicated reconciliation chapter, and an overall shift toward economic reconciliation.

Both Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) will be spared the full 15-per-cent savings reductions expected of other departments, but their two-per-cent reductions still total roughly \$2.3-billion by 2029-30, including \$69.3-million annually from CIRNAC and \$494-million from ISC.

In response to the budget, many Indigenous groups and First Nations expressed disappointment despite welcoming the economic commitments.

The Assembly of First Nations’ (AFN) National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak called the budget a “missed opportunity,” noting that while it includes significant spending commitments to First Nations, there are “significant gaps” in social spending, including no specific investments in First Nations language, health, job training, or delivering on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action.

“There is no Canada Strong without strong First Nations,” Woodhouse Nepinak wrote in a Nov. 5 statement, warning that the proposed cuts to ISC and CIRNAC “must not come at the expense of programs and services for First Nations.”

Within the budget, the AFN highlights the \$2.3-billion over three years, beginning next year, for the First Nations Water and Wastewater Enhanced Program; the confirmation of \$2.8-billion—the remainder of a previous \$4.3-billion commitment in 2022—for Indigenous housing; the tripling of the Indigenous Infrastructure investments through the Canada Infrastructure Bank to \$3-billion; the doubling of the Indigenous Loan Guarantee program to \$10-billion; \$10.1-million over three years for Indigenous consultations on fast-tracked national-interest projects listed under the Building Canada Act; \$40-million over two years through the Strategic Partnerships initiative; \$1-billion for the Arctic Infrastructure Fund; as well programs with broader applications that will also benefit Indigenous communities, including the National School Food Program and the \$51-billion over 10 years for the Build Communities Strong Fund.

However, the AFN said the budget “falls short in meeting the urgent and long-term needs” that it identified in its pre-budget submission, including mental health and addictions treatment, policing, First Nations procurement, and education.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) also gave the budget a failing grade, though it acknowledged “encouraging commitments,” pointing to the renewed investment in clean water, Indigenous infrastructure, and expanded access to loan guarantees.

However, despite “good words and some important investments,” AMC Grand Chief Kyra Wilson said “good intentions” are not a substitute for reconciliation.

“Canada cannot call this a generational budget while reducing the very investments that ensure First Nations children have housing, clean water, and safety today,” Wilson said in a statement.

The Chiefs of Ontario also said in a Nov. 5 statement that it is “closely monitoring” the proposed budget reductions to ISC and CIRNAC, and the “limited First Nations specific investments and lack [of] clarity on how new programs will be implemented in partnership with First Nations.”

“It is important that fiscal restraint does not come at the expense of the duty to consult, essential services, or the progress that has been made toward improving the well-being, health, security, and prosperity of First Nations,” wrote Ontario Regional Chief Abram Benedict.

Pujdak, also a senior fellow with the Macdonald-Laurier Institute focused on Indigenous and northern issues, told *The Hill Times* that the budget’s overall framing of Indigenous reconciliation and its “stark” lack of emphasis on social infrastructure is already creating tension.

Pointing to Table A1.18 in Annex 1 of the budget, which details policy actions taken since the 2024 fall economic statement, the majority of the social initiatives listed under “Indigenous Reconciliation” indicate funding that sunsets after 2025-26, including support for Urban Programming for Indigenous People and funding for First Nations elementary and secondary education.

Of particular concern is the lack of continued funding indicated for Jordan’s Principle, receiving \$1.033-billion in 2025-26, but no additional funding in the following years.

Jordan’s Principle is a legal requirement implemented following a 2017 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling to eliminate gaps or delays in accessing government services and health care for First Nations children.

Additionally, the Inuit Child First Initiative (ICFI), an Inuit-specific equivalent to Jordan’s Principle, will see its funding sunset with \$61-million this year and \$122-million in 2026, but no further funding after March 31 next year.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) said it is “deeply concerned” by the government’s decision not to allocate additional funding to the ICFI, but noted that it views the federal government’s years-long commitment to replace the program with a “demand-driven policy” and the engagements to co-develop that replacement this year as “a welcome alternative to costly legal action.”

“Inuit will consider all options—including legal options—to ensure our children can access the critical services they need when they need them,” reads the statement by ITK president Natan Obed. “Inuit-Crown partnership is not symbolic—it is

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Anand urged to reverse 'wrong' course of letting U.S. decide if it breached international law with boat strikes

Experts say that Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand has erred in proclaiming that it is up to the U.S. to decide if it has violated international law.

Continued from page 1

asked, I would say it is within the purview of U.S. authorities to make that determination."

At the G7 gathering in Ontario's Niagara region, French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said the strikes are in violation of international law when responding to a question on if his country would share intelligence with the U.S. after it was reported the United Kingdom had ceased doing so.

A month earlier, a French diplomat speaking at the United Nations Security Council also suggested that the strikes violated international law.

"The fight against drug trafficking must also be conducted in accordance with international human rights law. In this context, states must refrain from any unilateral armed initiatives," Jay Dharmadhikari, French deputy permanent representative to the UN, said on Oct. 10.

According to an NPR report, the U.S. has conducted 19 air-strikes against alleged drug boats, killing 75 people.

Former Liberal foreign affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy told *The Hill Times* that Anand's comments don't align with international law.

"I hope she was just making a mistake and not expressing Canadian policy because what she said is wrong," he said. "There is no question that under international law ... actions taken are subject to legal standards, and they are not adjudicated by the offending party."

Anand is a faculty professor at the University of Toronto law school and is on leave as she serves in cabinet.

"The whole idea that the United States would decide what's legal and not legal is wholly and

completely sort of a new interpretation of international law," said Axworthy, who served as Canada's top diplomat in the cabinet of then-prime minister Jean Chrétien from 1996 to 2000. "Unless it's corrected, it's going to suggest that we're kind of abdicating our responsibility to uphold the legal norms and standards—something that has been part of the Canadian international DNA since [former prime minister Lester] Pearson."

"I hope it's a mistake. In fact, if it's reflecting a point of view then I think that becomes disturbing," he said.

Axworthy said he is surprised that Global Affairs Canada hasn't already made an effort to course correct.

"That makes me feel just a little nervous that maybe that particular version of international law is coming from them, and she is just repeating it," he said.

He said Anand's comments need to be "clarified," and suggested that a statement to Parliament should be made to "make sure that people don't get the wrong idea that we are on the side of the children of darkness."

Asked if Anand stood by those comments, her office did not respond before publication deadline.

Two days prior to her comments at the G7, Anand had signed onto a joint statement calling out "abhorrent violations of international humanitarian law" in Sudan.

Global Affairs Canada's recently released departmental results for 2024-25 noted that Canada "collaborated with allies and partners on upholding international law," citing its interventions at the International Court of Justice against Russia and Myanmar, as well as sanctions on Russia, Israeli settlers, Hamas, Belarus, China, Guatemala, Haiti, Iran, Myanmar, Sudan, and Venezuela.

The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development Act lays out the powers, duties, and functions of the minister, including to "foster the development of international law and its application in Canada's external relations."

Axworthy said if Canada is choosing to abandon its position as a major defender of the application of international law for the protection of people, then it should say so.

"If that's being done as a way of appeasing the American president, then that becomes all the

more objectionable considering that we had an election where Canadians said that we want to stand up to this guy," he said.

After his election win on April 28, Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) said that U.S. President Donald Trump's annexation rhetoric was not "idle threats," and that the American president was "trying to break" Canada so the U.S. can "own" it. In the months since, Carney has taken an increasingly placating approach to dealing with the American president amid trade shocks in the bilateral relationship.

Axworthy said Canada has been willing to stand up to the U.S. in the past, citing opposition to the Iraq War, its advancement of the Land Mine treaty, as well as its relationship with Cuba and on South African apartheid.

"We've taken stands when it comes down to those principles of rights, and I'm just hoping that we're not sacrificing those right now," he said.

Canada creating 'level of permissiveness': Amnesty International

Ketty Nivyabandi, secretary-general of Amnesty International Canada's English section, said that international law only works if it is upheld by all states.

"It is a collective responsibility to uphold international law. It is not up to a country to focus on itself and decide whether or not it is applying international law—in that case, nobody would," she said.

She said that given Canada's history of upholding international law, Anand's comments are "quite striking and concerning."

Nivyabandi said that Canada and all states have to be concerned about the "blatant violation of international law" seen through the U.S. strikes.

"What the United States is doing is truly making a mockery of international law. It is normalizing what are, in effect, extrajudicial killings," she said.

She said that Anand's comments send a message to all states that this type of action is acceptable, and that Canada will not hold them to account for partaking in extrajudicial killing.

"We're also creating a level of permissiveness which is extremely dangerous—not only for interna-



Former foreign affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy says Anand's comment would represent a 'new interpretation' of international law. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

tional law—but for people around the world," she said.

"It is absolutely not enough for Canada to say that Canada follows international law, but it is up to the U.S. to determine what's appropriate," she said, remarking that it was a "missed opportunity" for Canada to lead on human rights.

Nivyabandi noted that the use of force in external waters or maritime waters is only permissible as a last resort, and against someone posing an imminent threat.

"This is not the case in this situation," she said. "There is very little information that the U.S. has provided that points towards an imminent threat—so the use of force was not justified."

She said that there is a second issue of using military force to conduct law enforcement.

According to a CNN report, the U.K. has stopped sharing intelligence 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."

Anand told reporters on Nov. 12 that the U.S. has "made it clear" that it is using its own intelligence, and that Canada has no involvement in the operations.

International human rights lawyer Alex Neve, a former longtime Amnesty International Canada secretary-general, has also called on Anand to walk back her comments.

He said that not only is Anand "wrong" about the role of U.S. authorities to determine if it breached international law, but he said Canada also has an obligation to do so.

"The very premise of the international legal system is that it is states who are going to hold each other accountable to their international legal obligations," he said.

Neve said there are no double standards in international law, and that it applies to all governments, including Canada's closest allies.

He said that the next time Anand raises an issue of an international law violation, it will be "completely inconsistent" with the test that she has set for herself.

He added that it is "very troubling" that Anand has "hamstrung" herself to not being able to raise the issue if the situation becomes even more serious.

Anand's approach to international law 'simply wrong': experts

International law experts told *The Hill Times* that Anand's interpretation of international law related to the U.S. is wrong.

Sabine Nölke, who was a leading practitioner of international law during a 30-year career in Canada's foreign service, said she was "sad," "disappointed," and "deeply disturbed" in response to Anand's comments.

"International law is international law, which means that it is not for a single state to determine what it says," she said.

Nölke said that the idea that the foreign minister is only responsible for upholding Canada's compliance with international law is "not only wrong, but it is not in accordance with how we have been acting."

She said that she understands the sensitivities in dealing with the Trump administration, but added that ignoring the American president's approach to the rule of law is a "very dangerous precedent."

Under the Geneva Convention, there is an obligation on state parties to promote and protect the tenets of the convention, Nölke said.

University of Ottawa law professor John Packer, past director of the Human Rights Research and Education Centre, said that it is "plainly" not up to the U.S. to decide if it is complying with international law.

"Canada doesn't really have an obligation [to speak out], but since these are pretty profound questions in our hemisphere, we surely have an interest and arguably we probably should have something to say about them," he said.

University of the Fraser Valley criminal justice professor Mark Kersten, an expert on international law, said Anand's approach is "incorrect," and is not how international law works.

"An absolutely critical component of international law is state practice and the opinion of states," he said, remarking that is how international law gets its basis.

"It is absolutely and entirely incorrect to suggest that it is up to potentially offending states to determine whether or not their actions are legal or not," he said.

He said that it is "transparent" as to what Anand is doing, and fits the approach of the Carney government to grant the Trump administration a "massive carveout" of international law to not irk the American president, citing that Canada has refused to condemn U.S. sanctions against officials—including Canadians—at the International Criminal Court, as it did when Trump applied sanctions in 2020.

"It's clear that what she is saying only applies to the United States and not to others," Kersten said. "It is clearly intending to prevent any kind of adverse reaction from the United States."

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NEWS

Did Canada's G7 presidency ever emerge from the Trump shadow?



Prime Minister Mark Carney, pictured left at the June G7 Leaders' Summit in Kananaskis, Alta., with U.S. President Donald Trump, said at the time that the 'G7 is nothing without U.S. leadership.' Photograph courtesy of the Government of Canada

Canada's G7 presidency was more about convening than setting a thematic agenda, says foreign policy observer Adam Chapnick.

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Niagara region Nov. 11-12, a lack of consensus was behind a joint statement that rehashed much of what was agreed to seven months ago when top diplomats met in La Malbaie, Que.

"We probably got more than some thought that we would get [as] [U.S. Secretary of State Marco] Rubio had to run everything back through the White House," Robertson said, remarking that the U.S. top diplomat doesn't have "a lot of rope" to manoeuvre.

G7 foreign ministers didn't find new ground to address the war in Ukraine. The joint missive also contained a middling statement on peace in the Middle East, which backed Trump's peace plan, but didn't address settlers in the West Bank.

In the end, they still found consensus on a limited set of items, which was a positive gain from what occurred at the Leaders' Summit in Kananaskis, Alta., this past June. At that meeting, Trump stayed for a single day before departing, and Canada chose to put out a chair's summary on contentious issues.

The trade off was reduced ambition for avoiding an implosion from Trump that became the legacy of Canada's G7 presidency of 2018 and a chaotic leaders' meeting in Charlevoix, Que.

As in 2018, Canada had to juggle its 2025 presidency with addressing trade shocks in the bilateral relationship with the U.S.



European Commission top diplomat Kaja Kallas, left, Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Noël Barrot, Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, German Foreign Affairs Minister Johann Wadephul, and Italian Foreign Affairs Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Antonio Tajani pose for a family photo on Nov. 11. *The Hill Times* photograph by Neil Moss

Leaving the second and final foreign ministers' meeting, Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand (Oakville East, Ont.) said trade wasn't addressed in her bilateral meeting with Rubio, telling reporters that jurisdiction belongs to cabinet colleague Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.).

At the Leaders' Summit in the spring, it was Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) who remarked that the "G7 is nothing without U.S. leadership," also citing Trump's personal leadership. But examples of any U.S. direction were hard to find throughout Canada's Group of Seven presidency.

Robertson noted that Trump has shown no interest in multilateralism.

"That's not just what he's interested in. When he does come to these things, he sees the people he wants to see," Robertson said.

Rubio's docket at the foreign ministers' meeting was similarly self-interested, holding few bilateral meetings. Unlike other foreign ministers, Rubio didn't speak to his travelling press at the site of the gathering, instead doing so when he reached the Hamilton, Ont., airport.

Royal Military College professor Adam Chapnick, an expert on Canadian foreign policy, said that having the meeting this month—even without breaking new ground—was still a positive.

"If handed lemons, you make lemonade, and that's good diplomacy," he said. "The G7 didn't fall apart even if it couldn't make very many meaningful, comprehensive statements."

Chapnick said observers knew from the early days of Canada's presidency that it would be more difficult this year to get a significant statement with all members signing on.

"The fact that relationships didn't break, the fact that the organization is still there, and therefore, if the United States chooses to use it more actively in the future, [then] it will be available," he said. "This is all—relatively speaking—good news given that real progress couldn't be made because the United States wasn't interested."

Chapnick said keeping the G7 alive is in Canada's interest since it adds diplomatic access and influence that Ottawa wouldn't have in a G20 format.

Chapnick said the convening ability shows that the presidency has a number of benefits.

"What the Canadian government has tried to do is use its ability to convene G7 meetings and to invite additional countries as a way to enhance and improve bilateral and smaller multilateral relationships that it has with a number of significant allies and associates," he said. "In some ways, the G7 became a convening tool for Canadian diplomacy as much if not more than it was an international organization in of itself."

The March foreign ministers' meeting was restricted to the G7 members, but that was broadened at the Leaders' Summit as Australia, Brazil, India, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, and Ukraine joined as outreach countries. Saudi Arabia was also invited, but didn't attend.

At the final foreign ministers' meeting, top diplomats from those same outreach countries were in Canada for bilateral and multilateral meetings. This time, Saudi Arabia chose to attend.

"The old argument was that the presidency provides the president with the opportunity to set the thematic agenda. If the

G7 isn't going to be able to act as an organization very much on any issue, then the thematic focus becomes much less important," Chapnick said. "On the other hand, by virtue of being president of the G7, you can probably issue invitations that other states might not necessarily accept if they were bilateral invitations, but because of the opportunities available to those states to meet with multiple other major economic and security players, they'll say yes."

Chapnick said the fact that Canada has kept the G7 working is a positive, but it doesn't mean that it will work any better when it will be handed over to France, noting that it is likely to encounter the same issues that Canada did.

"The G7 works best when all seven states agree on the general aims of the organization, and agree that there is strength in numbers," he said. "If one of the members doesn't buy into the idea of strength in numbers, it is a lot harder for the organization to maximize its effectiveness no matter who the president [of the G7] is."

A year of upheaval

Since Canada inherited its G7 presidency at the start of the year, more than half of the group have new governments.

That includes Canada's own change from a government led by Justin Trudeau to being led by Carney, plus a late April election—which put a pause on the presidency for 36 days during the writ period.

The changeovers created a dynamic of many new leaders having to figure out how to operate on one of the world's top stages.

In just seven months between the foreign ministers' meetings in March and November, there were four new top diplomats at the gathering.

Along with Anand, who assumed her current role in May, German Foreign Affairs Minister Johann Wadephul, Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, and United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper are new to their portfolios. Motegi previously served as his country's foreign minister from 2019 to 2021.

In addition to Trump, Canada's presidency had the added difficulties of adjusting to the new governments—many with domestic pulls preventing a larger focus on geopolitics, Robertson said.

"Most countries all have major concerns now," he said, with a new government in Japan, as well as politically vulnerable leaders in France and the U.K.

"I don't think this will be remembered as an epic G7 as it might have been in earlier days," he said, citing the loss of heavy hitters around the table compared to days of prime ministers Brian Mulroney and Jean Chrétien.

Canada will close out its G7 presidency with two more ministerial gatherings. Interior and security ministers will meet in Ottawa from Nov. 21-23. That will be followed by a meeting of industry, digital, and technology ministers in Montreal from Dec. 8-9.

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Skeptics say billions of dollars in AI-driven government efficiencies ‘fiscally dubious’

Despite the budget’s projections, grand promises of technology heralding big savings and government efficiency is evoking the memory of the disastrous Phoenix pay system for some observers.

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Leveraging technology, particularly artificial intelligence, as a tool to boost productivity is mentioned several times throughout the budget document. With a goal of cutting nearly \$60-billion in government spending by 2030, the budget says \$7.75-billion would be achieved by “optimizing productivity in government,” in part through AI adoption.

The 2025 budget offers a few indications of how that could happen: Shared Services Canada will use AI and automation on some common IT support requests; the Department of Justice will integrate AI to “streamline routine tasks and enhance decision-making,” and Transport Canada will use AI and automation on some repetitive back-end tasks, for example.

Additionally, the budget lays out \$100-billion in spending this year for “productivity and competitiveness.” Though it’s not immediately clear on what that money will be spent, it’s billed as one of the areas where the government will make “generational capital investments.”

Ana Brandusescu, an AI governance researcher and policy analyst at McGill University, said the government has made promises about technology driving efficiencies for years, citing the government’s first pan-Canadian AI strategy that was launched in 2017.

“We’ve been waiting for almost a decade to see examples of that, and we have not,” she said in an interview. “We keep talking about potential. I think it’s been long enough to not call it potential anymore.”

She said the argument of boosting efficiency is one that is “hard to go against,” due to general fears that the government doesn’t use money or resources in an efficient way, but “it has not been proven, and we continue to use it as a major reason to invest



After the federal budget laid out billions in cost savings via tech-fuelled efficiency, Digital Minister Evan Solomon was pressed to explain how AI will increase efficiency in the federal public service without cutting jobs. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Ana Brandusescu, an AI governance researcher and policy analyst at McGill University, says the government has made big promises about technology driving efficiency for years, but they haven’t come to fruition. *Handout photograph*



Sahir Khan, executive vice-president of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa, says the government should disclose more details about how spending cuts, and potential job losses, will happen. *Handout photograph*

so much money in these technologies that are opaque.”

Earlier this spring, the government announced \$240-million in funding for Canadian AI company Cohere to help fund the company’s domestic computing capacity, and to build AI infrastructure. Later in the summer, Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) announced the government had partnered with Cohere to accelerate the adoption of AI in the public service.

Sahir Khan, a former assistant parliamentary budget officer and now executive vice-president of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa, said he often advises governments that program cuts are politically difficult, but fiscally reliable. “Efficiency” savings, meanwhile, are “politically easy, but fiscally dubious.”

AI-driven efficiencies will also require upfront spending, he said, “and then the savings often are kind of dubious when we look at some of the technology things.”

Khan said the government will “have to do some hard

thinking” about how those cost savings will come to fruition, and strike a balance between technology-driven efficiencies, program cuts, consulting costs, and other expenses of government operations.

However, the spectre of the Phoenix pay system fiasco haunts this new commitment to technology-based efficiencies.

The theory of saving money through technology-based efficiency is not a new one, Khan said, noting the Stephen Harper government proposed the Phoenix payroll system as part of its Deficit Reduction Action Plan, which saw a roughly 10-per-cent reduction in the size of the public service. Phoenix went on to cost the government billions of dollars, and caused payment issues for thousands of bureaucrats, some of which are still not resolved, though it’s been nearly a decade since the disastrous pay system was rolled out.

Khan noted the budget makes many references to AI implementation, but it’s light on precise dollar figures and details.

“From Parliament’s perspective, this is the type of stuff they should be asking for, as the government implements this budget,” he said.

The same criticism has been levied against the government for its scant details on how the comprehensive expenditure review will cut government spending by \$44-billion. It’s not yet known precisely which programs are on the chopping block, nor the impact on jobs in the public service.

The budget projects the federal public service will shrink by 40,000 jobs when compared to its peak of approximately 368,000 roles in 2023-24, but it’s not clear how many jobs will be lost through attrition, voluntary early retirement, or via layoffs.

Khan said there’s “expectations” that the government will disclose more details about how the spending cuts—and potential related job losses—will happen.

The government’s pledge to release fall budgets going forward means these funding measures will be incorporated into main estimates next spring, but “that also puts a responsibility on the government to explain where these cuts are, which departments,” Khan said.

“That’s the kind of disclosure that Parliament needs to be able to better process the main estimates when they roll around in the spring, and be looking for the government to actually provide that transparency.”

AI and Digital Innovation Minister Evan Solomon (Toronto Centre, Ont.) was pressed about AI, productivity, and cost-savings on CTV’s *Power Play*. On Nov. 7, host Mike Le Couteur asked Solomon to specify exactly how much money will be saved via implementing AI tools across the government.

“We gotta save more on our government so we can invest more, I think that’s fair,” replied Solomon, who previously hosted the political news program when he worked as a journalist. “And I think we’ve got to get more productive. I think Canadians want the government to serve them better and more efficiently, because they want to see more affordability.”

Le Couteur pressed Solomon for concrete examples of how AI would increase efficiency in the public service without cutting jobs. Solomon called the technology a “job multiplier,” citing the number of jobs in the tech sector and growing number of jobs in the AI field.

Le Couteur said he was asking about how AI is going to make the government more efficient because “a lot of people have a memory of technology being ushered in by the government, namely the Phoenix pay system, and obviously, that was not something that went over so well.”

When asked again how the implementation of AI would result in actual cost savings, Solomon said he’s working closely with Government Transformation, Public Works, and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Que.), who is in charge of the Office of Government Transformation, an initiative announced in the budget with scant details.

The office is about utilizing the maximum efficiency, as well as “serving Canadians better and saving money,” Solomon said.

When pressed again for more details, Solomon said “AI will play a role” in the public service, but “it’s not just the savings ... it’s about serving Canadians better.”

He cited long wait times when dealing with the Canada Revenue Agency and Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. Both departments have seen staffing cuts numbering in the thousands in recent years.

Anindya Sen is an economics professor at the University of Waterloo, and fellow in residence and inaugural scholar in AI and digital policy at the C.D. Howe Institute. He said the government’s savings goals are “hard to understand” because the precise benefits of AI adoption aren’t yet known.

“In the back end, if there’s processes to automate to be more efficient, such as in procurement, for example ... yes, absolutely there are huge efficiencies, which are possible,” he said. “But without any further details, it’s difficult to say if \$7.5-billion is plausible, or reachable.”

Sen said the government needs to be “very explicit” about how the workforce is being trained to use AI efficiently, and to develop skills in a manner which preserves public trust that information is secure and protected.

“I think those are kind of critical pillars which are not articulated in the budget, for good reason,” he said. “The follow-up will hopefully be more transparent and elaborate.”

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OPINION

Bridging Canada's divide on consent

Sixty-eight per cent of Indigenous respondents say Indigenous approval should be essential before a project proceeds; only 42 per cent of the general population agree.

Megan Buttle

Opinion



On the heels of renewed national conversation around projects of “significance”—from major infrastructure builds to cross-country energy corridors—Prime Minister Mark Carney is charting a new path. Carney’s early posture has been more focused on national-interest timelines and economic urgency. Yet in the Nov. 13 announcement regarding the second tranche of major nation-building projects, he

went out of his way to highlight Indigenous equity, shared decision-making, and the principle that projects must move forward “with” First Nations rather than “to” them, signalling an effort to balance accelerated processes with meaningful engagement. And still, beneath that shift, our research suggests the challenges ahead are profound.

Since 2017, Earncliffe Strategies has been at the forefront of *Indigenous Insights*—Canada’s only quarterly syndicated study capturing the perspectives of First Nations (living on and off reserve), Métis, and Inuit peoples. From late July to mid-August of this year, we asked more than 500 Indigenous respondents about the principle of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), as well as opinions on the federal government’s Bill C-5—legislation designed to fast-track “national interest” projects through streamlined approvals and new federal powers. We then asked the same questions of more than 2,000 respondents in a nationally representative sample of Canadians in September.

The results point to a persistent disconnect. On procedural questions, Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents often agree. Roughly eight in 10 from both groups believe FPIC requires shar-



As Prime Minister Mark Carney embarks on a suite of national-interest projects, he will inherit a credibility gap where members of the general population and Indigenous Peoples do not see consent through the same lens, writes Megan Buttle. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ing clear, complete information in advance and setting transparent consultation timelines. But when it comes to substantive questions—who defines consent, whether projects should proceed without it, and who holds decision-making authority—the gap widens. Sixty-eight per cent of Indigenous respondents say Indigenous approval should be essential before a project proceeds; only 42 per cent of the general population agree. Similarly, 73 per cent of Indigenous respondents say Indigenous Peoples themselves should define what constitutes consent, compared with 57 per cent of the general population.

This divergence reflects the tension at the heart of Canadian law: courts have affirmed a *duty to consult* but not an obligation to secure consent. International law, through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, says otherwise. Bill C-5 brings this fault line into sharp relief. The Major Projects Office’s (MPO) new role of co-ordinating permitting, financing, and consultation “in parallel, not sequentially,” as Carney put it, places even more pressure on the clarity of what consent means. Acceleration without alignment risks widening the gap our data reveals.

Respondents in our general population survey largely support efficiency. Two-thirds favour two-year approval targets, and a “one-window” permitting system. Indigenous respondents, however, are far more cautious. Half oppose skipping or shortening environmental reviews, and 40 per cent oppose letting Ottawa override provincial rules. To many, reforms framed as consultation without consent risk deepening an already fragile trust gap.

The only real point of consent at this moment? Transparency. There was strong support for setting clear timelines for consultation and making results public in both of our surveys—a signal of accountability, not speed alone, is where trust is built, or rather rebuilt.

As Carney embarks on a suite of national-interest projects, he will inherit a credibility gap: members of the general population and Indigenous Peoples do not see consent through the same lens. How his government, and the MPO, choose to bridge that gap—by privileging efficiency, or investing in true partnership—will define whether the next generation of nation-building is seen as shared or imposed.

Megan Buttle is president of data, digital and design at Earncliffe Strategies.

The Hill Times

Canada's ZEV mandate will leave 450,000 drivers stranded

The legal and economic constraints of the zero-emission vehicle mandate could reduce supply by thousands of vehicles, leaving significant consumer demand unmet.

Brian Livingston

Opinion



Prime Minister Mark Carney’s 60-day review of the federal zero-emission vehicle mandate, and the waiver of its 20-per-cent sales requirement for next year, has sparked plenty of debate. But what does hitting the brakes really mean for Canadians? It’s a chance to reflect and to ask whether the mandate, as designed, is realistic.



The 2023 federal mandate threatens to distort Canada’s auto industry, and should be suspended indefinitely, writes Brian Livingston. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

A recent Nanos poll for the C.D. Howe Institute found that 61 per cent of Canadians view the zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate targets as unreasonable or somewhat unreasonable. They may be right. An upcoming Institute forecast projects that in 2026, ZEV sales will reach only 14.2 per cent of new vehicle sales—far short of the 20-per-cent government target. Without the waiver, as many as 450,000 Canadians would have been prevented from buying a gasoline vehicle they needed to live their lives. Unlike abstract fiscal or monetary policy, this mandate directly affects households.

The ZEV mandate, in effect since December 2023, is one of

Ottawa’s most ambitious industrial and environmental policies in recent decades. It requires automakers to meet rising sales targets for ZEVs—beginning with 20 per cent of new light-duty vehicle sales in 2026, rising to 60 per cent in 2030, and reaching 100 per cent by 2035. In practice, this caps the number of gasoline and diesel vehicles that can be sold in Canada, with compliance enforced through a combination of penalties and tradable credits.

But reality is already colliding with ambition. In 2024, ZEVs made up 14.5 per cent of the 1.85 million light vehicles sold in Canada. After federal and provincial rebates expired, sales plunged

to just eight per cent in the first eight months of 2025. Against this backdrop, reaching 20 per cent in 2026 looks implausible. Projections show automakers selling 1.9 million vehicles that year, with only 270,000 of them ZEVs—well below the 380,000 required. It further examines the distribution of compliance costs across companies, the incentives created by the credit-trading system, and the potential effects on consumers and manufacturers.

When companies miss their targets, the rules force them into costly workarounds. They can buy compliance credits from ZEV-heavy producers such as Tesla and Hyundai—a transfer that generates windfalls for those firms while raising costs for Canadian-based producers like GM and Toyota. Or they can fund ZEV charging infrastructure. Even after collectively spending more than \$200-million on these measures in 2026, many companies still won’t meet their targets. The result: a shortfall of up to 450,000 vehicles available to Canadian buyers.

This shortfall cannot be ignored. It represents hundreds of thousands of families who could be locked out of purchas-

ing the vehicles they rely on for work, childcare, or simply getting around. It also means higher prices, fewer choices, and mounting frustration for consumers.

As a result, such companies would be forced to restrict sales of non-ZEVs. Together, the legal and economic constraints could reduce supply by as many as 450,000 vehicles, leaving significant consumer demand unmet.

Meanwhile, the mandate threatens to distort Canada’s auto industry. Firms with ZEV-heavy portfolios gain windfall revenues, while others absorb higher costs and reduced competitiveness. This uneven playing field could accelerate the hollowing out of Canada’s domestic auto sector. Add in a constitutional challenge already underway, plus mounting United States trade tensions, and the risks only multiply.

What should Ottawa do? The waiver of the 2026 target was the right move, but it’s only a start. Adjustments are needed for the years beyond—from modifying targets, to rethinking credit rules, to reconsidering how hybrids are treated. Right now, it would be a good idea to suspend the ZEV mandate indefinitely until light vehicle trade matters with the U.S. and China are resolved. Canadians deserve a mandate that reflects market realities and consumer needs, not one that risks leaving almost half a million drivers stranded.

Brian Livingston is a senior fellow with the C.D. Howe Institute.

The Hill Times

OPINION

Bill S-209 is needed to protect children from pornography

Committee testimony about PSG Senator Julie Miville-Dechêne's bill highlighted that Canada must do better in protecting children from online pornography alongside other countries.

Daniel Zekveld

Opinion



Shortly after the federal election this past spring, Senator Julie Miville-Dechêne introduced Bill S-209, a public bill that would require companies distributing pornography online

to verify the age of potential viewers.

The Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs began studying Bill S-209 in October, hearing from many witnesses including individuals, advocacy organizations, pornography distributors, age-verification companies, and regulators that oversee international age-verification regulations. Despite concerns raised in opposition to the bill around areas like privacy and effectiveness, testimony at the committee highlighted the need to protect children from pornography through age verification.

Witnesses from France, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany appeared before the committee to explain age verification in their jurisdictions. While Germany has had age verification in some form since 2003, France, the U.K., and Australia have recently passed laws and begun implementing their own regimes. These countries have taken action against online pornography, and are encouraging Canada to do the same.

In a May 2023 study, French digital regulator Arcom found that 28 per cent of minors visited adult sites at least once a month

in 2022. Nine per cent visited adult sites daily. In December 2022, Pornhub was the most popular adult site, and was visited by 1.4 million minors, accounting for 17 per cent of Pornhub's total audience. The Children's Commissioner in the U.K. found that children see pornography as early as age seven or eight, with an average age of 13. Many of these youth report seeing pornography unintentionally. Overall, 79 per cent of 18- to 21-year-olds had seen violent pornography before the age of 18.

Evidence suggests that consumption of pornography is related to harmful attitudes towards women and girls, sexual coercion and aggression, and an increased likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviour.

One commonly cited concern about age verification is privacy. Laurence Pécaut-Rivoli, a member of Armcom, affirmed that there are secure solutions to protect minors from accessing pornography, and that third parties are liable to criminal sanctions if they don't respect privacy.

James Bethell of the U.K. likewise believes privacy is important, but said the experience in his

country is that, in practice, age verification has not threatened privacy, using systems similar to those used in banking, gambling, and alcohol sales. German regulator Tobias Schmid noted that there are 100 systems for age verification in Germany, and that there have been no privacy breaches. Likewise, 50 technologies have been tested in Australia. These jurisdictions are demonstrating that user privacy and protecting children from pornography are not mutually exclusive.

Regarding effectiveness, experts from other jurisdictions acknowledge that age verification can be circumvented through VPNs and other means. But they also note that it's not typically younger minors who do so. Bethell said that ways of circumventing age verification are often costly and intrusive, and that "the idea that this renders the policy [of age verification] ineffective is a myth." Schmid likewise noted that it's not 13-year-olds who are circumventing age verification. Even partial barriers limit children's exposure.

Through age-verification systems, governments are

holding pornography companies accountable as they crack down on sites that refuse to comply with the law. Canada is home to Pornhub, the world's largest porn producer, and a site that is in the middle of many of the legal battles around the world as other countries implement age verification. Australia's eSafety commissioner notes that the reason they speak to other parliaments is that when countries do not have strong laws around online pornography, it spills over into their own borders. We must do better in protecting children from online pornography alongside other countries.

Schmid, when asked about the challenges of implementing age verification, notes: "The technology exists. There are in reality no problems with data protection and privacy. It works. The only change for the industry is that they earn a little less money because they are not putting children into danger ... Just do it. It will work."

Of course, each jurisdiction approaches the issue somewhat differently. But laws need to be passed so that regulations can be implemented and kept up to date relative to new technological and technical developments. We must not fail Canadian children simply because some adults want ease of production and access to pornography.

Daniel Zekveld is a policy analyst with the Association for Reformed Political Action Canada. The Hill Times

Canada's AI imperative: go big and bold

By rapidly implementing initiatives and scaling collaboration, Canada can shape AI's global future on its terms.

Sara Clodman

Opinion



Canada continues to stand at a crossroads.

The 2025 federal budget was a step in the right direction as the government invested millions of dollars in artificial intelligence, and recognized the opportunities AI can create for businesses and the economy.

However, Canada must turn ambition into scalable solutions that secure prosperity, competitiveness, and sovereignty, while ensuring adoption is responsible, ethical, and trusted by Canadians.

Data from Statistics Canada signals momentum: information and communication technology firms have reached 36 per cent AI adoption, professional services 32 per cent, and financial services 31

per cent, all reflecting dramatic one-year growth. Together, these sectors contribute \$340-billion to GDP, representing 406,000 businesses and 2.8 million jobs.

Beyond these leaders, AI adoption remains limited. Only 12 per cent of businesses use AI, while two-thirds have no plans to. This highlights adoption challenges and untapped potential.

Momentum is an advantage

Business Data Lab reports that one-in-seven Canadian businesses (14 per cent) are early GenAI adopters, establishing a strong foundation, but international competitors are investing billions, creating pressure.

AI adoption is central to solving Canada's productivity challenge. McKinsey research suggests GenAI could deliver 0.1 to 0.6 per cent annual labour productivity growth, potentially enabling Canada to reach the United States' productivity levels by 2030.

The marketing profession illustrates what's possible: research by the Canadian Marketing Association and Twenty44 reveals that one year ago, 74 per cent of marketing professionals were already using AI weekly, significantly higher than the 28-per cent adoption rate in professional services shown in Business Data

Lab's analysis. Linking AI to measurable business outcomes can accelerate adoption.

Building on strong federal foundations

Recent government actions have created a powerful launchpad for AI growth. The government's investments into AI in the federal budget, appointment of Canada's first minister of AI and digital innovation, and the new AI Strategy Task Force are significant steps.

Four priorities will accelerate Canada's AI advantage:

1. Skills development at scale: Nearly half (48 per cent) of technical executives identify talent gaps as the primary adoption hurdle. Canada leads the G7 in AI research but must expand literacy beyond technical roles into business and leadership.

2. Infrastructure acceleration: Federal investments are a strong start, but rapid deployment of compute access, connectivity, and small and medium-sized enterprise-focused data centres will maximize impact and participation.

3. Commercialization enhancement: Canada's AI research must translate more effectively into business outcomes. Enhanced public-private partnerships can bridge the commercialization gap,

ensuring Canadian innovations scale globally.

4. Regulatory clarity: With 60 per cent of Canadian firms citing compliance as the top barrier, clear, common-sense standards are critical. Flexible partnership-driven policies, not overly prescriptive regulation, will drive adoption while protecting the public interest. Harmonizing voluntary AI guidelines across federal and provincial jurisdictions will further support innovation. While Europe has strict regulations (though they are considering easing the regulatory burden), the U.S. government wants no regulation and less enforcement. Canada must forge a distinctive regulatory path that champions innovation while upholding ethics, transparency, and public trust.

The economic imperative

AI adoption is not optional: it is central to solving Canada's structural economic challenges. By bridging skills gaps, raising productivity, and boosting competitiveness, AI supports the government's ambition to grow Canada.

International rankings reinforce this. Canada ranks ninth out of 33 countries on Capital Economics' AI Economic Impact Index, measuring countries' adaptability, innovation, and diffusion of AI technologies.

The partnership opportunity

Marketing's AI leadership demonstrates that when businesses see how AI drives revenue, customer experience, and competitive differentiation, adoption accelerates.

The government's enabling approach, supporting innovation while safeguarding the public, sets a solid foundation. Partnerships between government, industry, and academia will ensure policy evolves with technology and amplifies capabilities.

Canada's AI opportunity is within reach. With 1,500 AI-specialized firms, 20 public research labs, and 75 AI incubators, the ingredients for global leadership already exist.

We must go beyond invention and focus on acceleration. By rapidly implementing initiatives and scaling collaboration, Canada can shape AI's global future on its terms, anchored in Canadian values, aligned with responsible AI, and grounded in ethics, transparency, and consumer trust.

As AI Minister Evan Solomon said, this is Canada's "Gutenberg moment."

We need to act with urgency and ambition. To go big and bold.

Sara Clodman is the chief public affairs and governance officer of the Canadian Marketing Association. The Hill Times

COMMENT

The one where the minister called the Senate racist

In looking to fast-track amendments to Bill S-2, Senators were upholding the rights of First Nations women, and there is nothing racist about that—period.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



OTTAWA—A curious story about reconciliation has been churning through the Senate, and some context is required. First Nations can rhyme off the varieties of being a 6(1) status First Nation or a 6(2) according to the 1985 changes to the Indian Act. Significant changes were made to address the Indian Act's built-in patriarchy and bias against First Nations women who more easily lost status. In 1985, Bill C-31 addressed this gender-based bias thanks to the work of Sharon McIvor to whom we owe so much thanks. It used to be that a First Nations woman who married a non-Indigenous man would lose status (but not a First Nations man who married a non-Indigenous woman). So C-31 fixed that. Although there's some strict language here as the wording is all about the woman marrying a man—apparently Two-Spirit women have a get-out-of-jail-free card here?

Anyhow, C-31 added a new twist: the second-generation cutoff. Status is lost at some point when First Nations marry non-Indigenous people and then their children do so, as well. This is the recipe for the total extinguishment of smaller First Nations communities, but let's not look too far into this future.

Ever since 1985, there's been serious talk about fixing this little "oops" of the second-generation cut-off. There have been reports, consultations over decades, and then there are the numerous people and groups who have testified to the Senate Indigenous Peoples Committee recently. Bill S-2 is the next attempt to remove this second-gen cut-off, and, if passed, about 3,000 First Nations women would be eligible to apply for status, plus their children, etc. The truth is these individuals are already rights-bearers as First Nations—this is simply about the federal government removing their mistake.

Back to the story where Indigenous Services Minister Mandy Gull-Masty, the first Indigenous woman to hold the post, testified at the Senate Indigenous Peoples Committee on Nov. 5. One would expect the minister to strongly support the bill, and to strongly support recognizing the inherent rights of First Nations women across the country who have been unfairly excluded. But no, this is where the story gets convoluted and words were said. The committee wanted to strengthen the bill to uphold human rights of First Nations women, and get it done ASAP.



Indigenous Services Minister Mandy Gull-Masty. This government would be well advised to find some humility, and work with the strong allies in the Senate who advocate for the well-being of Indigenous Peoples, writes Rose LeMay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The minister demanded that the Senate give her department time to consult ... yet again. Over the past few months, Gull-Masty has communicated that consultation has started, but also that consultation will start in the spring; she has said consultation must be done, and has given the impression to not get in her way. When pushed to clarify, the minister then threw down the gauntlet: she described the committee's position to move this bill now—because enough consultation is enough—and the implication that an outsider would know what to do as racist.

"When this solution is driven from a group that is not of Indigenous descent, that does not realize the impact of second gen, is racism itself. I'm sorry, I will not proceed with that," Gull-Masty said in response to a non-Indigenous Senator on the committee.

The minister said she needs to talk to chiefs to make sure they agree. Human rights are not open to consultation, or you risk somebody refuting those human rights. Consulting on human rights is a mistake.

Well, now, let's call a spade a spade. Senators were upholding the rights of First Nations women, and there is nothing racist about that—period. Protecting human rights is not racist. Taking the slow walk to addressing the government's decades-old error: that's the offence.

This is co-opting the demand to consult. It's like demanding to spend a few million dollars on consulting First Nations women who are hungry, and asking "do you want food in a year or five years?" instead of feeding them. It's a bad look for the government, and it's even worse for First Nations who would rather wait than welcome back their cousins.

This government would be well advised to find some humility, and work with the strong allies in the Senate who advocate for the well-being of Indigenous Peoples. Ottawa runs on relationships, or it doesn't run at all.

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

NEWS

Pivot to 'economic reconciliation' risks 'squandering' political goodwill as Indigenous social programs face funding gaps: observers

Continued from page 38

a practical requirement for effective governance in the Arctic."

ITK also said it was "disturbed" by the lack of renewed funding to eliminate tuberculosis in Inuit Nunangat, and raised concerns over "the lack of specific reference to Inuit in the budget's emphasis on Arctic sovereignty and national security," calling the document "a notable departure" from past progress on respecting Inuit rights holders that has been made in the last decade.

In a written statement to *The Hill Times*, the office of Indigenous Services Minister Mandy Gull-Masty (Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou, Que.) said that the government's savings objectives will be achieved by identifying duplicative and inefficient spending, and "does not mean annually funded programs will be affected."

Additionally, it said that the government's reduced savings targets for ISC and CIRNAC reflect its "commitment to reconciliation," and that it "recognizes the vital role that the [ICFI] and Jordan's Principle play in supporting Inuit and First Nations children."

The minister's office also noted that the funding in Annex 1 comprises time-limited budget measures that have not received new fiscal decisions beyond their current end dates, and that if those programs were not intended to be renewed beyond 2026, that would amount to more than a 15-per cent cut in program spending for both departments.

"True partnership and shared decision-making with Indigenous Peoples are the foundation of real transformation, advancing social, cultural, environmental, and economic progress," the statement reads.

Pujdak said that even if the government does intend to renew those programs' funding—or replace them with new policies as it has vowed to do with the ICFI—the framing of critical social programs with multiple \$0 columns beside them is already creating friction with Indigenous groups with whom the government is hoping to work to build national projects.

"If the government continues down this path, it might find out very quickly what a court has to say when section 35 of the Constitution doesn't align with the government's view of national interest," Pujdak said, pointing to the section which recognizes and affirms the existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada.

'Nations want a seat at the table': former PMO Indigenous policy adviser Koostachin

Katherine Koostachin, a former Indigenous policy adviser to Trudeau and several

Liberal cabinet ministers, told *The Hill Times* that the "pivot" to economic reconciliation risks overshadowing Canada's broader commitments to Indigenous self-determination.

"Economic reconciliation can mean different things to different people, and it's just a sub-category of the broader reconciliation and self-government that nations want addressed," explained Koostachin, now vice-president of Indigenous relations and reconciliation with Sussex Strategy Group.

Koostachin also raised concerns about how initiatives will move through the Major Projects Office, and how the new Indigenous Advisory Council will be used.

On Nov. 13, Carney unveiled the second round of "nation-building" projects, including the \$30-billion Ksi Lisims liquefied natural gas facility on Pearse Island, B.C., which is being co-developed with the Nisga'a Nation. The project includes an 800-kilometre pipeline from Prince Rupert and a 95-kilometre transmission line to a floating platform, expected to process up to 22.4 billion cubic metres of gas annually, and export 12 million tonnes of LNG. The project is co-developed alongside Rockies LNG Ltd. Partnership and Western LNG, based in Houston, Texas.

Four of the six First Nations whose territories would be affected have not given consent. The Lax Kw'alaams Band and the Metlakatla First Nation have filed legal challenges alleging their concerns were ignored and asserting outstanding title claims over the Mylor Peninsula where construction of the transmission line is needed to power the facility.

The prime minister also announced five other projects and initiatives at a press conference in Terrace, B.C., on Nov. 13, including the North Coast Transmission Line, which will support the Ksi Lisims project; three mines in Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick; and the Iqaluit Nuk-kiksautit Hydro Project, an Inuit-owned hydro energy project, that will help replace the territory's reliance on 15 million litres of imported diesel each year.

Koostachin said she believes Ksi Lisims will be a "testing ground" for future projects requiring Indigenous and First Nations consent, and whether the government will be able to move quickly or be delayed in the courts.

"What nations want is a seat at the table; they want to be a part of the decision-making on these projects that come into their territories, with a say on locations, monitoring, and oversight," Koostachin said. "If only one nation is at the table to the exclusion of others, that will create the perception of a 'divide-and-conquer' tactic if they don't do a better job of including Indigenous participation upfront."

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Hill Climbers



By Laura Ryckewaert

Notable updates to office of Trade Minister Sidhu



International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu has named a new acting policy director since Hill Climbers' last check in, among other changes. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Changes to the trade office include Beata Nawacki taking over as acting policy director following Sarah Manney's exit for the Prime Minister's Office.

Some notable staffing changes have been made to International Trade Minister **Maninder Sidhu's** team since **Hill Climbers'** last update on the office's senior staff roster in mid-July, including the exit of **Sarah Manney** as director of policy and **Beata Nawacki's** appointment as acting policy head.

Manney, as noted in **Hill Climbers'** recent breakdown of Prime Minister **Mark Carney's** office, is now at 80 Wellington St. as a global affairs adviser, having made the switch last month.

In turn, senior policy adviser Nawacki has been tapped to lead Sidhu's policy team, at least for now.

Nawacki has been working for the federal trade minister since January 2024, starting as a special assistant for policy and Quebec

regional affairs under then-minister **Mary Ng**. She became a policy adviser in the office under Ng, and was elevated to "senior" status after being rehired by Sidhu post-election.

Prior to joining Ng's trade office, Nawacki had most recently earned a master's degree in international political economy from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Between 2021 and 2022, she worked for the TAMID Group—which describes itself online as a non-profit founded by students "that seeks to forge a strong connection to Israel for the next generation of business leaders"—last as its director of consulting at McGill University. Nawacki holds a bachelor's degree in political science and international development from McGill.

As first reported by **Hill Climbers** in June, **Kevin Lemkay** is chief of staff to Sidhu. Also still in place in their previously reported roles are director of operations **Meghan Pritchard**, director of parliamentary affairs

Frank Tersigni, director of stakeholder relations **Neeraj Bhalla**, director of communications **Huzaif Qaisar**, and ministerial driver **Spencer Knight**.

Among those unmentioned in these pages to date is

David Burkholder as a senior operations adviser to Sidhu.

Burkholder has been working on the federal trade file since late 2023 when he was hired as a special assistant for Ontario regional affairs to then-minister Ng.

A former constituency assistant to Toronto Liberal MP **Chrystia Freeland** from 2017 to 2020, Burkholder landed his first cabinet-level role near the end of 2020 when he was hired as executive assistant to both then-middle class prosperity and associate finance minister **Mona Fortier** and her chief of staff. A year later, Fortier was shuffled into the Treasury Board portfolio and Burkholder followed, becoming a special assistant for operations and executive assistant to the minister—a role he continued in



Richard Duke is an issues and West and North regional adviser to Minister Sidhu. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Duke first joined the trade office under Ng as a parliamentary affairs adviser in September 2024, and before then worked as an assistant to British Columbia Liberal MP **Taleeb Noormohamed**. According to his LinkedIn account, prior to getting into politics, Duke pursued acting in Vancouver, where he also worked as a director and producer. He's also previously worked for the Kaizen Creative Group, amongst other past experience.

Covering the Atlantic desk for Sidhu is **Jack Jenkins**, who also serves as executive assistant.

for a time after now-Foreign Affairs Minister **Anita Anand** became Treasury Board president in July 2023.

Richard Duke is an issues management and West and North regional affairs adviser in the trade office.

Jenkins similarly was originally hired to the trade office under then-minister Ng, in his case as executive assistant to the chief of staff as of July 2024. Jenkins had previously worked for Ng as the then-MP for Markham-Thornhill, Ont., and is a former underwriter with Better Mortgage Select.

Finally—at least for now—**Holly Johnson** is in place as a strategic communications adviser to Sidhu.



Holly Johnson is a strategic communications adviser to Minister Sidhu. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Johnson was originally hired as a digital content creator to then-trade minister Ng in April 2024, right after graduating from the University of Ottawa with a bachelor's degree in conflict studies and human rights.

That adds up to 11 staff total for Sidhu at present, but **Hill Climbers** understands that's expected to soon change with the impending hire of a press secretary to the minister, so stay tuned for an update.

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The Hill Times

NEWS

Liberals ‘live another day’ narrowly win budget vote, avoid election

Four abstentions and a last-minute Green olive branch from Elizabeth May helped shepherd the Liberals’ budget through the House with a vote of 170–168.

BY MARLO GLASS, ELEANOR WAND, RIDDHI KACHHELA & STUART BENSON

PARLIAMENT HILL—The Liberals squeaked through a confidence vote on their budget on Monday evening, avoiding an election thanks to last-minute co-operation from the Green Party leader and the abstentions from at least four MPs.

Interim NDP Leader Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.) said his party chose “stability over political games,” and voted against the budget motion without triggering an election.

Though five of the seven NDP MPs voted against the budget, two abstentions came from Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni, B.C.) and Lori Idlout (Nunavut)—and another two from Conservative caucus MPs Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, Alta.) and Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, Alta.). A last-minute Yea vote secured by Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich–Gulf Islands, B.C.) also helped get the vote to pass 170–168.

Davies made it clear that though two NDP MPs abstained from the Nov. 17 vote, New Democrats did not support the Liberals’ budget.

“We’ve opposed this budget. That’s why we stood up. We were voting against the budget. We can’t support it,” Davies told reporters after the vote.

Idlout, one of the two NDP MPs who abstained, told reporters the NDP is constantly being “accused” of “propping up the government,” but she “couldn’t live with that, not with this budget.”

But when asked about budget promises affecting her riding, Idlout said that “there were things for my riding, and that’s why I have to abstain.” The federal budget will spend \$1-billion over four years, beginning in 2025–26, on an Arctic Infrastructure Fund.

Johns, who was heckled by opposition MPs in the House when he abstained his vote, told reporters the NDP MPs are “being the adults in the room”

Minister of Finance and National Revenue François-Philippe Champagne speaks to reporters in the House of Commons foyer on Nov. 17, after the vote on the 2025 federal budget passed. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Interim NDP Leader Don Davies said his party chose ‘stability over political games.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Green Party leader Elizabeth May voted in favour of the budget after Carney committed to sticking to the Paris Agreement’s climate targets in Nov. 17 Question Period. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



and listening to constituents who don’t want an election. He said he listened to local mayors and Indigenous leaders in his riding who told him they did not want an election.

The Liberals appeared cool and confident going into the vote despite their minority position, with Prime

Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) saying the budget would pass, and that “more people are going to vote for it than against it.”

Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu’Appelle, Sask.) and Conservative MP Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, Ont.), chair of the national

caucus, were initially absent from the House, but arrived late, saying they had technical difficulties with remote voting, and that they were voting “no.”

Conservative MP Matt Strauss (Kitchener South–Hespeler, Ont.) was one of the few Tories who offered their thoughts following the vote. Unsurprisingly, he was not pleased with the result.

“It’s a terrible budget, and it should not have passed,” Strauss told *The Hill Times*.

After the vote, Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice–Champlain, Que.) was hugged and congratulated by Liberals in the House Chamber. Out in the Commons foyer, he told reporters the budget “speaks for Canadians” and that the successful vote indicated parliamentarians “supported Canadians.”

Chief Government Whip Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Ont.) told reporters all 169 of the Liberal members voted in favour of the budget. With the support of May and those who abstained, the Liberal government “lives to see another day.”

Though the Liberals picked up one seat with the Nov. 4 floor-crossing of former Conservative MP Chris d’Entrement (Acadie–Annapolis, N.S.), the party remains a minority government. The Liberals have 170 seats in the House of Commons, but only 169 voted, as House Speaker Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Que.) only votes in the case of a tie. Opposition parties hold 173 seats total. The Conservatives hold 143, the Bloc Québécois have 22, New Democrats have seven, and May holds the sole Green seat.

In the lead-up to the confidence vote, May said she couldn’t

support the budget in its current form, but was open to negotiations. But hours before voting, May did an about-face.

“Against what I had expected to say to you today, I’m going to vote yes,” she told reporters. “For the country, for the planet, and for my hope in the future.”

She told reporters she was confident Carney was committed to hitting Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions under the Paris Accord. During Question Period earlier in the day, May asked the prime minister if he agreed that the absence of mention regarding Canada’s climate commitments was a “deficiency” and if he would commit to holding to the Paris Agreements, funding climate adaptation, delivering on the nature strategy, and continuing to engage in meaningful Indigenous reconciliation.

In response, following a smattering of jeers from across the aisle, Carney rose to thank May for her climate advocacy and encouraged her to vote for the budget, which he said already included those commitments. He confirmed the house will “respect” the Paris Accord commitments to climate change and will soon release a strategy to that end.

May also said she’d heard from constituents and “Canadians from coast to coast” that “they wanted someone to stop an election happening by accident” following Question Period. However, she said she still believes parts of the budget remained “so very deficient.”

Ahead of the vote, the floor of the House of Commons was abuzz with non-partisan chatter, with many MPs from both the government and the official opposition chatting in the middle of the aisle.

NDP MP and leadership candidate Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, Alta.) chatted with Conservative MP Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, Ont.), and Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.), Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali (Brampton–Chinguacousy, Ont.), and Foreign Affairs Anita Anand (Oakville East, Ont.) were all chatting with Tory colleagues.

After the vote, Conservative Assistant Deputy Speaker John Nater (Perth–Wellington, Ont.) chided both Conservatives and Liberals, including cabinet ministers, for taking pictures on the floor of the House of Commons, and told the MPs to delete their photos.

The Liberals’ Nov. 4 budget has drawn sharp criticism from Conservatives for its projected \$78-billion deficit and what the party considers irresponsible spending, with the budget proposing a \$90-billion increase over the next year alone.

The budget has also been criticized by the NDP for its proposed cuts to the public service, as the budget projects the size of the federal bureaucracy will shrink by 40,000 jobs from its peak of nearly 368,000 in 2023–24. All told, the government proposes to cut \$44-billion in spending over the next five years, which federal unions have decried as austerity measures.

The Hill Times



Parliamentary Calendar

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

Public Safety Minister Anandasangaree welcomes G7 counterparts to Ottawa for three-day meeting on Nov. 21



Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree will host the G7 Interior and Security Ministers' Meeting from Friday, Nov. 21, to Sunday, Nov. 23, in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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.

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

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.

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., Ottawa. 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 a 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's 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

Conference: Defence Budgeting and Procurement—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a day-long in-person conference on "Defence Budgeting and Procurement" featuring policy-makers, 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.

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.

Bob Rae to Deliver Remarks—Queen's University hosts Bob Rae who will deliver his first public remarks since wrapping up his tenure as Canada's envoy to the United Nations. Part of

the Donald Matthews Lecture Series, Rae will give remarks titled "1984 Was a Warning, Not a Guidepost: The World We Are In." Thursday, Nov. 20, at 12 p.m. ET at Queen's University, Kingston, Ont. Contact brown.julie@queensu.ca.

'Government, Rewired': In Conversation with Jim Mitchell—In this time of global change and institutional strain, Jim Mitchell, co-author of *A New Blueprint for Government: Reshaping Power, the PMO, and the Public Service*, offers a fresh look at how power and decision-making has shifted inside government, and what this means for public servants, particularly at a time of workforce reductions. Thursday, Nov. 20, at 5:15 p.m. ET, at 60 George St., 2nd level, Ottawa. Register: ipacn-cr-iapcrn.ca.

FRIDAY, NOV. 21

Lunch: Isotopes for Hope—The Economic Club of Canada hosts a lunch, "Isotopes for Hope: Canada's 2030 Promise," with James Scougack, 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 sitting with drinks, food, and music. Monday, Nov. 24, at 6 p.m. ET at Queen St. Fare, 170 Queen St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

Liberal MP St-Pierre to Attend Fundraiser—Montreal area Liberal MP Eric St-Pierre will attend a party fundraiser in Toronto. Monday, Nov. 24, at 6 p.m. ET, at Taco Taco, 319 Augusta Ave., Toronto. Details: liberal.ca.

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 Bagire 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 Hill to Speaker's Dining Room, Room 233-S, West Block, Parliament Hill. Details: info@raredisorders.ca.

Creating Pan-Domain Continental Defence—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts a conference, "Creating Pan-Domain Continental Defence," a day-long discussion on Canada's role in Continental Defence. Tuesday, Nov. 25 at 8:30 a.m. ET at Westin TwentyTwo, 11 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Details: cgai.ca.

'Strengthening Taiwan's Resilience'—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office host a breakfast event: "Strengthening Taiwan's Resilience:

Canada's Strategic Role." Taiwan's Deputy Minister Ming-chi Chen will deliver a keynote address, followed by a one-on-one discussion with MLI's managing director Brian Lee Crowley exploring Taiwan's evolving role in the Indo-Pacific and the growing importance of Canada-Taiwan collaboration. Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 9 a.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

Darrell Bricker and John Ibbittson Discuss Their Book—The Centre for International Governance Innovation hosts a conversation with authors Darrell Bricker and John Ibbittson on their provocative new book, *Breaking Point: The New Big Shifts Putting Canada at Risk*. Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Erb St. W., Waterloo, Ont. Register via Eventbrite.

Canadian Parks and Recreation Association Luncheon—The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association hosts a parliamentary luncheon. Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 12 p.m. ET, at the 100 Lord Elgin Hotel, Elgin St., Ottawa. RSVP: Kimberely@Homewardpa.ca.

Roundtable: 'National Defence and Critical Minerals'—The Conference of Defence Associations Institute and Quebec's Chamber of Commerce and Industry host a roundtable in French on "National Defence and Critical Minerals" featuring former deputy minister at Global Affairs Canada Daniel Jean, president and CEO of the Quebec Mining Association Emmanuelle Toussaint, and former Conservative cabinet minister now mayor of Lévis, Que., Steven Blaney. Chatham House rules in effect. Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 3 p.m. ET at Cercle de la garnison, 97 Saint-Louis St., Quebec City. Register: emmylou@cdainstitute.ca.

Canadian Lung Association Anniversary Party—Celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Canadian Lung Association. This networking event will bring together key stakeholders for an evening of reflection and insight featuring presentations looking back at our journey and highlighting new data that will inform our future efforts. Tuesday, Nov. 25 at 5-7 p.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 15th floor, 99 Bank St., Ottawa. RSVP by Nov. 15 via Eventbrite.

Fall Harvest 2025 Reception—The Canadian Produce Marketing Association and the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada host their annual Fall Harvest reception, part of their Hill days from Nov. 24-26. Fall Harvest 2025 will provide produce industry members with the chance to meet with parliamentarians and officials, and hear from guest speakers. Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 6 p.m. ET at the Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details: rsvp@fallharvest.ca.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 26

Virtual Remarks with Canada's Envoy to Russia—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a virtual event featuring Canada's Ambassador to Russia Sarah Taylor. Wednesday, Nov. 26, at 10:30 a.m. ET happening online: cdhowe.org.

THURSDAY, NOV. 27

NDP Leadership Debate—The first leadership debate as part of the New Democratic Party's Leadership Race is tonight, and will be held mainly in French. The second leadership debate will take place in February 2026, with the new leader to be announced in Winnipeg on March 29, 2026. Thursday, Nov. 27, in Montreal. Details to follow.

Build Canada Homes CEO to Deliver Remarks—Ana Bailão, CEO of Build Canada Homes, will deliver a keynote address entitled "Building Canada's Future: A New Era for Housing Delivery," hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Thursday, Nov. 27, at 11:30 a.m. ET happening online and in person at a location to be announced. Details: empireclubofcanada.com.

Student Networking with Liberal MP Ntumba—Liberal MP Bienvenue-Olivier Ntumba hosts an exclusive networking 5 à 7 event with students and young leaders from across the region. Featuring candid conversations about Ntumba's journey from community engagement to the House of Commons, and inspiring exchanges with other Black MPs. Thursday, Nov. 27, at 5 p.m. at 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

If Adaptation Is the Priority, Water Infrastructure Must Lead the COP30 Conversation



Adnan Qader

Manager, Water Governance and Resilience, WaterAid Canada



As COP30 enters its final stretch in Belém, one truth is becoming impossible to ignore: water, our most climate-vulnerable resource, remains present in the conversations filling corridors and negotiating rooms, but is nowhere to be found in the political decisions that matter.

For those of us working in adaptation, this gap is not just puzzling. It is dangerous.

WaterAid is responding to a problem seen around the world, but we understand that in Canada and across high-income countries, water's invisibility has been decades in the making. It functions and flows through systems of pipes most people will never see. COP30 is exposing the cost of that invisibility, namely the illusion that water security is solved when, for millions, it remains the crisis beneath every crisis.

Climate change is dismantling this illusion in real time. Every major climate hazard such as floods, droughts, or hurricanes, disrupts water systems first. And the communities most affected, whether in northern Canada or across the Global South, are those whose systems were historically underfunded, colonially shaped, or governed without their participation. Indigenous delegations in Belém are making this visible, reminding negotiators that water is not infrastructure alone, but governance, identity, and survival.

Ministers Julie Dabrusin and Steven Guilbeault were in attendance, however Canada has yet to signal clear, meaningful, support for the emerging Belém Action Mechanism (BAM), a proposal that would embed workers, communities and Indigenous Peoples in a coordinated global Just Transition framework. With the G77+China backing this direction, and the European Union proposing its own institutional arrangements, Canada's hesitation is increasingly noticeable.

Water's invisibility is also playing out in climate finance. Canada's \$392 million adaptation announcement supports important initiatives yet draws entirely on Canada's existing 2021–2026 climate-finance envelope. The world is watching for Canada's next pledge and for clarity on how adaptation finance will increase and prioritize local resilience. Canada can either spend strategically now to keep climate risks manageable or pay exponentially more later in disaster response, health emergencies, and economic volatility, international adaptation finance is a cost-avoidance tool for Canada's future stability. Aligning with this same logic used in trade policy, defense spending, and global health initiatives only makes sense.

Civil society is equally clear: a fossil-fuel phase-out will fail without public, grant-based finance for communities already absorbing climate losses and damages. Without that, we ask frontline communities to adapt without the tools needed to survive, including water and sanitation.

Canada has made valuable contributions, adopting the G7 Water Coalition 3-year workplan, defending scientific integrity at the IPCC, and signing the Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change.

John H. Matthews, Executive Director of Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA) who attended the Baku Water Dialogues and has been attending COPs since 2009 admits that "water in climate negotiations has always felt like it was sitting underground, untapped." This

year, he witnessed the echoing of water in those corridors, a welcomed signal of progress:

"As adaptation and resilience have grown in importance in the COP, so has the need for seeing and managing water as the medium for resilience. The purpose of the Baku Water Dialogues is to maintain a consistent flow of negotiations around water between COPs, where water is in effect surfacing from its hidden aquifer. Canada in particular has been a vocal advocate of these issues in sessions."

All of the countries in attendance strongly supported the need for a BWD, though specifics on what the process will look like remain uncertain. Nonetheless, the seepage of water into COP30 should become a fountain, and I have high hopes for what comes next. We are all thirsty."

But these efforts coexist with signals that risk weakening public trust, including proposed dilution of anti-greenwashing rules.

It is in this context that water and sanitation infrastructure and services must be recognized as central to building resilience, not side events.

Sanitation rarely enters climate headlines, yet it is the fault line where climate impacts rapidly become public-health crises. Today, November 19th, on World Toilet Day, we're reminded that billions of people still lack safe access to sanitation, making it one of the most persistent and politically neglected development challenges. When floods contaminate drinking water, when storms overwhelm wastewater systems, or when prolonged rains or heat waves accelerate disease transmission, sanitation failures become health emergencies.

If Canada wants its climate-finance pledge to be strategic and measurable, climate-resilient water and sanitation systems are among the most effective investments it can make. These are investments to protect health, stabilize communities during shocks, safeguard drinking water, and strengthen economic participation, all while reducing the long-term costs of emergency response and building resilience for people and planet.

More importantly, such investments challenge climate decisionmakers to confront what has long been missing: Indigenous water governance grounded in the lived realities of communities whose water stewardship traditions offer models for resilience that modern systems are only beginning to rediscover.

As COP30 labours towards its conclusion, it is clear climate action must start where climate impacts are felt most, in our water and sanitation systems. Adaptation that does not strengthen water and sanitation systems is adaptation in name only. To move from political speech to practical resilience, water must return to the center of the conversation, in Belém, in Ottawa, and around the world.

