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THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR, NO. 2250

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NEWS

‘Quiet buzz’
on Bay
Street about
Carney’s
‘nation-
building’
major
projects,
says Tobin

BY CHRISTOPHER GULY

As part of the federal government’s “plan to build one Canadian economy,” Bill C-15—introduced in the House on Nov. 18 to implement the 2025 budget—includes a provision to enact the High-Speed Rail Network Act, whose goal is “accelerating” the construction of Alto, Canada’s first high-speed railway from Toronto to Quebec City, according to a Department of Finance press release.

It’s a major project that would finally eliminate Canada as the only holdout among G7 nations without high-speed rail. It is also included in a list of other projects involving investments in nuclear power, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and critical minerals that Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has said have the potential to be “nation building.”

The High-Speed Rail Network Act will also give the federal government the power to speed up the acquisition or expropriation of land to build the \$60-billion to \$90-billion high-speed railway. The bill proposes it will be deemed approved by the Canadian Transportation Agency, but would have to go through Impact Assessment Agency, the *National Post* reported on Nov. 21.

“On Bay Street, there is a quiet buzz about what is being rolled out and an anticipation of opportunities in 2026 and beyond,” said Brian Tobin, who served as industry minister under then-prime minister Jean Chrétien and has been the

COMMENT

Never have 10 words so disgraced the United States



U.S. President Donald Trump, left, hosted talks with Saudi Arabian Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 19, and defended the prince over the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, saying the prince didn’t know anything about it. Trump’s assertion contradicts a 2021 U.S. intelligence report. Meanwhile, the prince called the killing ‘a huge mistake.’ Photographs courtesy of Wikipedia Commons/Gage Skidmore

Despite U.S. intelligence reports, U.S. President Donald Trump claims Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman didn’t know about Jamal Khashoggi’s killing, and that the journalist was an ‘extremely controversial’ figure. ‘Whether you like him or didn’t like him, things happened,’ said Trump. **Read Michael Harris’ column on p. 9**

NEWS

Bloc Leader
Blanchet’s
expletive about
government’s
budget
negotiation
strategy ‘not
suitable for
work,’ says
Government
House Leader
MacKinnon

BY ABBAS RANA

Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-Francois Blanchet’s colourful characterization of the government’s strategy on last week’s budget vote was

Continued on **page 34**

NEWS

True
representation
of constituents
requires MPs to
take principled
positions even if
it risks caucus
expulsion or
floor crossing,
says Bill Casey

BY ABBAS RANA

Crossing the floor, or even voting against one’s own party, is one of the hardest decisions an MP may have to make, but a

Continued on **page 35**

Continued on **page 32**

Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

Trump's tariffs 'just baseline stupid': American Scott Galloway offers huge defence of Canada in *Piers Morgan Uncensored* show



American public speaker, academic, and entrepreneur Scott Galloway, right, on the Nov. 15 episode of *Piers Morgan Uncensored* with the eponymous host, centre, and Canadian businessman Kevin O'Leary. Screenshot courtesy of YouTube

American public speaker, academic, and entrepreneur **Scott Galloway** called the White House's current tariff policy against Canada "just baseline stupid."

"Not only is this waving our middle finger at an amazing ally, it is just economically stupid what we have done," he said on the Nov. 15 episode of *Piers Morgan Uncensored*.

Galloway's comments came at the end of an hour-long episode featuring him, the eponymous host, and Canadian businessman

Kevin O'Leary on the topic of toxic masculinity.

"It is just striking to me that we would be this damaging and this hostile towards a nation that has been such an incredible friend to the United States," said Galloway.

"The Trump administration tariff policies are not only inconsistent and unpredictable, they are just baseline stupid."

Galloway said that, historically, tariffs have been "an elegant way to reduce prosperity," and that the current "flurry

of dealmaking" United States President **Donald Trump's** tariffs were supposed to inspire has done so—but with America frozen out.

"People are reconfiguring their supply chains to avoid the U.S. who they feel they can't count on," said Galloway. "They don't understand the tariff policy. It seems to be based on the blood-sugar level of a president and his chief economist who, quite frankly, is citing people who don't exist in economic papers."

Sergio Marchi launches book, part memoir and how-to guide

Former Liberal cabinet minister **Sergio Marchi** launched his new book, *Pursuing a Public Life: How to Succeed in the Political Arena* at Library and Archives Canada on Nov. 18.

During a conversation with columnist **Andrew Cohen**, Marchi regaled the audience with stories of his time in politics—he was an MP between 1984 and 1999—including his role as an honorary member of the Liberal "Rat Pack" that sparred with the governing Conservative party at the time, and his personal feelings about the critic and cabinet roles he was assigned.

Marchi told Cohen and the audience of 100 friends, former colleagues, and politicians that he wrote the book—part memoir and how-to manual for entering politics—because he's concerned that young people aren't jumping into politics. Acknowledging that politics is "nastier" than it used to be, Marchi also said that this is an exciting time for Canada, which needs young people's ideas.



Former Liberal MP Sergio Marchi, right, jumps up while telling a story about his time in politics during an interview with journalist Andrew Cohen. *The Hill Times* photograph by Tessie Sanci

In attendance were Liberal MP **Angelo Iacono**, former Liberal cabinet ministers **David Collette** and **Martin Cauchon**, journalist **Julie Van Dusen**, and former Bank of Canada governor **Stephen Poloz**.

Marchi will be holding a second book-launch event at the Métropolitan Brasserie on Dec. 2. Attendees should RSVP to Liberal MP **Yasir Naqvi's** office.

—Tessie Sanci

Budget vote distraction as House shifts into 'Hi, Gere!'



American actor and activist Richard Gere, top left, was on Parliament Hill on Nov. 17. MPs including Liberal Ryan Turnbull, second left, Conservatives Larry Brock, second right, and Mike Lake, bottom second left, posted photos with Gere on X. Liberal MP James Maloney, bottom second right, crashed Gere's interview with David Cochrane, bottom right, that evening. Photographs courtesy of X and screenshot courtesy of YouTube

American actor **Richard Gere** had Hillites starstruck on their way to a crucial Commons vote last week.

"Forget about the budget, Richard Gere is in the House of Commons," *The Toronto Star's* **Althia Raj** posted on X on Nov. 17.

In Ottawa as part of Tibet Day on the Hill, the 76-year-old actor—now based in Madrid, Spain, with his family—was chaperoned by Liberal MP **James Maloney**, who's not only a member of the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, but whose Ontario constituency is home to the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre.

Maloney was one of three MPs—including Bloc Québécois MP **Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe** and Ontario Liberal MP **Karim Bardeesy**—to read a statement in the House about Tibet, including a "special welcome" to Gere, "a true champion for the campaign for Tibet." Maloney also urged Parliament to declare 2025 as the "Year of Compassion" in honour of the **Dalai Lama's** 90th birthday this year.

Gere, who was in Ottawa to advocate for the rights of Tibetan

people, received a standing ovation in the House of Commons, and later sat down on CBC's *Power & Politics* with **David Cochrane** moments ahead of the confidence vote on the budget which narrowly passed 170-168.

"Not every day do you pass a budget and meet Richard Gere," posted Liberal MP **Ryan Turnbull** on X that day. Conservative MPs **Larry Brock** and **Mike Lake** posted photos of themselves with the actor. "Was struck by his genuine passion and the warmth with which he conveyed his powerful message," wrote Lake on X on Nov. 17.

Maloney and the Friends of Tibet group hosted a screening of the film *Wisdom of Happiness* in the Valour Building, where Gere, a longtime advocate for Tibet, and a practising Buddhist, was the special guest.

Some of Gere's films include: *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, *Days of Heaven*, *American Gigolo*, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, *The Cotton Club*, *Internal Affairs*, *Pretty Woman*, *Sommersby*, *First Night*, *Primal Fear*, *Runaway Bride*, *Unfaithful*, *Shall We Dance?*, and *Chicago*.

Freeland heading back to Oxford in July 2026

Liberal MP **Chrystia Freeland** has been appointed as the next Warden of Rhodes House and CEO of the Rhodes Trust, effective July 1, 2026.

The Trust is an educational charity best known for the Rhodes Scholarship, which Freeland herself received in 1991.

In a Nov. 19 press release, Freeland said it's "honour and privilege to return to Oxford."

That same day, Freeland attended the book event for former U.S. vice president **Kamala Harris** in Toronto.

"Wonderful to see Kamala Harris in Toronto—always inspiring to catch up with a friend whose leadership and personal journey continue to motivate so many of us," the former deputy prime minister posted on X on Nov. 19,



Liberal MP Chrystia Freeland, right, with former U.S. vice-president Kamala Harris in Toronto on Nov. 19. Photograph courtesy of X

along with a photo herself, Harris, and Harris' newly released book, *107 Days*, her memoir of "one of the wildest and most consequential presidential campaigns in American history," according to publisher Simon & Schuster's website.

Continued on page 3

HEARD ON THE HILL

Continued from page 2

Quebec Liberals' 'bad own goal' could 'hurt' leader Rodriguez, says Mulcair

Former federal cabinet minister **Pablo Rodriguez** is already having headaches in his new job as leader of the Quebec Liberal Party.

First came allegations suggesting that party members who supported him during this past spring's leadership race received cash rewards for their votes, *The Canadian Press* reported on Nov. 19. Rodriguez said the "allegations published today are serious," in a statement, and said he's open to an inquiry.

Then, **Geneviève Hinse**—his former ministerial staffer in Ottawa who followed him to Quebec City—was fired without reason by the Liberals' parliamentary leader **Marwah Rizqy** who herself was then "suspended from caucus by party leader Pablo Rodriguez for her firing of Hinse," reported CBC Montreal on Nov. 20. That same day, lawyers for Hinse said they were seeking an apology from Rizqy for not providing a reason for her termination. The story continues to evolve.

Speaking on **Andrew Carter's** podcast on Nov. 20, former federal NDP leader **Tom**



Quebec Liberal Leader Pablo Rodriguez, left, and former federal NDP leader Tom Mulcair. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Jake Wright

Mulcair said he thinks this all "could hurt [Rodriguez] in the long run," and called the way the crises are being handled "a really bad own goal that reminds people of the worst epoch of the Liberal Party."

Mulcair said the Quebec Liberals had been doing a good job of moving away from their past history of "misbehaviour" but "this just all brings it back to the public mind."

Justin Ling joins *Toronto Star* as columnist

Longtime Montreal-based freelance journalist **Justin Ling** is joining *The Toronto Star* as a full-time columnist.

"I'll be covering my usual beats: Security, politics, global affairs, policy, misinfo, etc, but with a new accent on Big Tech," he wrote on BlueSky on Nov. 17.

Ling called the move "a really great opportunity to crunch through big issues in

a major institutional outlet, particularly at a time when Canada's sovereignty is under threat and where its place in the world is in flux."

He noted this new job won't affect his newsletter or his new YouTube series, and that he will still do "some occasional writing for American/European outlets (as time allows)."

Denise Chong wins second Ottawa Book Award

Award-winning author and former Parliament Hill staffer and economist **Denise Chong** has won her second Ottawa Book Award.

As a ceremony at Meridian Theatres in Centrepoinette in Ottawa's Nepean neighbourhood last weekend, Chong won the English non-fiction category for *Out of Darkness: Rumana Monzur's Journey through Betrayal, Tyranny and Abuse*, published by Random House Canada.

The jury said Chong's book "deserves recognition for its honesty and unflinching portrayal of one of the darker sides of domestic life," and that "Denise offers a powerful description of **Rumana's** struggles that makes us feel as if we are sharing her trials and tribulations," according to a press release. The award comes with a \$7,500 purse.

"Domestic violence is a pervasive social problem," Chong told *Heard on the Hill* last week. "I have to believe that to sit with a book, to be immersed in such a story about a victim turned survivor, is to engender the empathy necessary for social change."

Chong is also the author of the critically acclaimed *The Concubine's Children* (1995), which was on *The Globe and Mail's* bestselling lists for 93 weeks; *The Girl in the Picture*, *Egg on Mao: The Story of an Ordinary Man Who Defaced an Icon* and *Unmasked a Dictatorship* (2009); and *Lives of the Family: Stories of Fate and Circumstance* (2013). Chong is considered "a renowned as a writer and commentator on Canadian history and on the family," according to *The Canadian Encyclope-*



Denise Chong won her second Ottawa Book Award on Nov. 15 in the English non-fiction category. Photograph courtesy of Roger Smith

dia. An economist, she worked in **Pierre Trudeau's** PMO, while her husband **Roger Smith** is a former CTV National News reporter on the Hill.

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NEWS

Health Canada's alcohol guidelines are 14 years old, despite new ones issued in 2023

With the department's support, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction developed new guidance, which it published in 2023. That information is not yet available through Health Canada.

BY TESSIE SANCI

Nearly three years after receiving updated guidance for alcohol consumption, Health Canada has not yet published that information on its website.

The department in 2020 provided funding so the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) could produce updated guidance. The federally-funded but independent CCSA published that update on its own website in January 2023, but Health Canada did not do the same. As of Nov. 20, 2025, a search for alcohol guidance on the government's website will lead to guidelines first published in 2011.

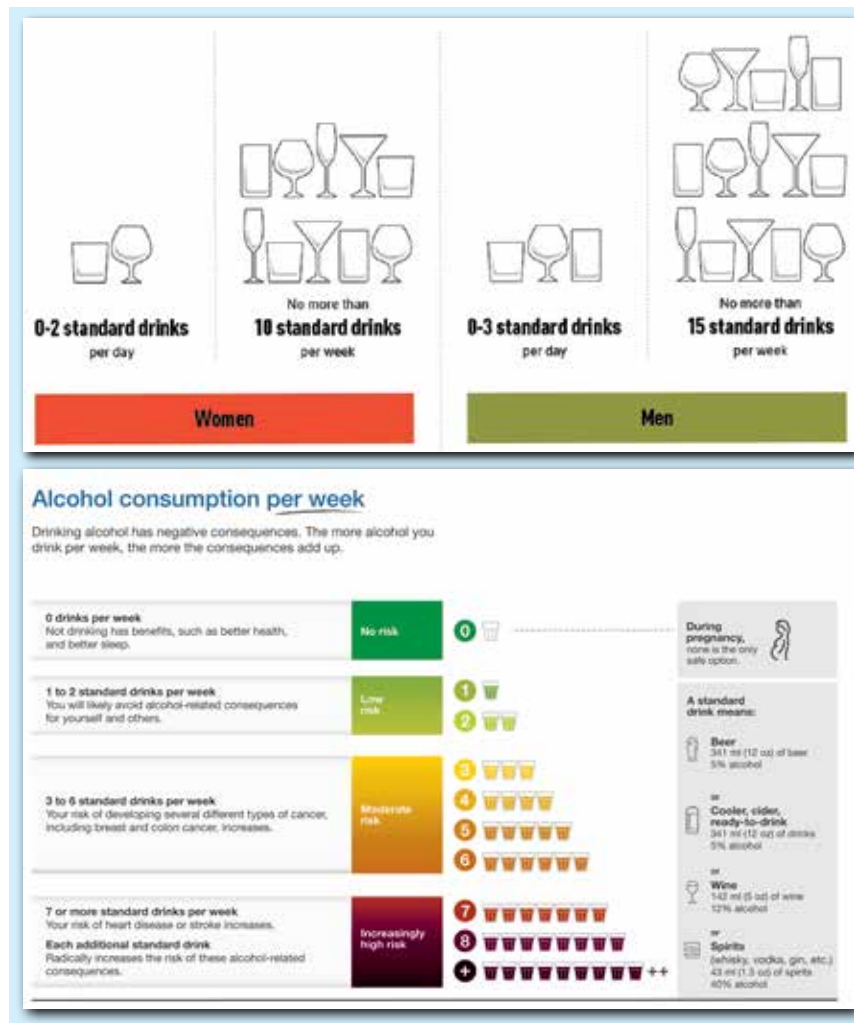
Brandon Purcell, advocacy manager at the Canadian Cancer Society, called the 2011 guidelines "out of date," and said Health Canada should publish the new guidance because "Canadians have a right to have a better understanding of the link between alcohol and cancer."

The 2023 guidance is available through an 89-page final report and a more digestible one-page summary. Key differences between the updated guidance and the 2011 information are that the former advises fewer "standard" drinks per week—one to two versus the older document's reference to 10 drinks for women and 15 drinks for men; a move away from customizing advice to gender; and links the consumption of alcohol to the risk of specific diseases, which is not in the 2011 guidelines though the older document does state that consuming alcohol can "have risks to your health."

For example, the update states that while one to two drinks per



The website for Health Canada, led by Health Minister Marjorie Michel, continues to showcase 2011 guidance on alcohol consumption even though it commissioned an update, which is available and public since 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The top image is the 2011 alcohol guidance currently available on Health Canada's website, while the bottom image is 2023 guidance developed by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. Images courtesy of Health Canada's website and the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction's website.

week will "likely avoid alcohol-related consequences," three to six standard drinks will increase the risk of developing "several dif-

ferent types of cancer, including breast cancer and colon cancer." Seven or more drinks per week is considered "increasingly high

risk" and increases the risk of heart disease or stroke.

Cancer charity suspects alcohol industry influencing government

As for his perspective as to why Health Canada has not gone ahead with publishing the 2023 guidance, Purcell said, "It's our understanding that the alcohol industry would prefer that this guidance not be adopted by the federal government, and we know they've been having conversations with certain folks in Health Canada and other parts of the government."

The Hill Times asked Health Canada why it has not published the 2023 guidance, what are the obstacles to moving ahead, and if it can respond to concerns that the alcohol sector has influenced the decision.

In an emailed response on Nov. 20, the department did not provide any explanation for the delay. Instead, it focused on highlighting other online Government of Canada resources that provide similar information such as a webpage entitled, "Health risks of alcohol," which cites an increased risk of cancer as one of those risks, or Canada's food guide.

It also said, "Efforts to address alcohol harms are guided by the Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy, which considers all substances and includes a focus on prevention, substance use services and supports, evidence and substance controls."

In response to the question of possible influence by the alcohol industry, the department said, "Health Canada's policies are grounded in a commitment to safeguarding the health and well-being of Canadians through evidence-based decision-making. ... We continue to work toward policies that empower Canadians to make informed choices about their health."

A Health Canada bureaucrat who was questioned about the guidance during the Senate Social Affairs Committee's Oct. 9 meeting cited a \$2-million communications outreach plan about the new guidance, funded by the department, as the reason why it is not available on the government's website.

In response to Senator Sharon Burey (Ontario), of the Canadian Senators Group, Aysha Mawani said that the outreach ended this past spring, and her department is "currently reviewing the results of this work to best understand how to communicate behaviour change." Mawani is a director general in the controlled substances and cannabis branch at Health Canada.

The federal lobbyists' registry shows that one industry organization and two alcohol companies are currently registered to lobby on the subject of alcohol guidance or guidelines: Beer Canada, Labatt Breweries of Canada, and Sleeman Breweries Ltd.

The Hill Times asked all three for an interview. Labatt did not acknowledge the request, Sleeman referred *The Hill Times* to Beer Canada, and Beer Canada declined an interview, but sent a statement.

Of the three active lobbying registrations, only Beer Canada has registered any meetings—a total of 10—in the last six months.

Although the registry requires that lobbyists are specific about what they intend to discuss with policy-makers, it does not require those reasons to be cited in communication reports about those meetings. Instead, broad subject areas, such as "industry," "health," or "finance," are cited as reasons.

In a statement, Beer Canada said in part, "Any review of Canada's Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines should be guided by a rigorous, transparent, and evidence-based process that reflects the full breadth of scientific research. The CCSA's 2023 recommendations, however, are out of step with international norms and appear to rely on less than one per cent of relevant studies."

The Hill Times directly asked Beer Canada by email if its representatives lobbied either the previous Liberal government, led by prime minister Justin Trudeau, or the current Liberal government under Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) to discourage Health Canada from publishing the 2023 guidelines. The organization did not respond by deadline.

COMMENT

Most Liberals believe Poilievre's their ticket to remain in government

While current popular support trends remain close between the two parties, Mark Carney's personal popularity is in the stratosphere relative to Pierre Poilievre's.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—The drama of a budget vote had every political animal in the country on the edge of their seat.

And in the end, it was a cliffhanger. But in reality, the outcome should not have been a surprise to anyone.

Having just come off an election this past spring, there was zero appetite to go back to the polls for most political parties.

The only leader who could have benefited from an election is Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre. A 'no' vote would have meant that his mandated January 2026 party review would be cancelled.

Poilievre is probably feeling fairly comfortable, given the party review vote will be held in the middle of winter in Calgary. That is the basis for his strength, and much of his support is from Members of Parliament whose purpose in politics is ideological.

Approximately 40 members of the Conservative caucus are rabidly anti-choice, while another three dozen have expressed their opposition to abortion during the election.

Politicians who are elected because of an ideology are less likely to care about winning.

The party members who do care about winning are circling the wagons in anticipation of the January opportunity to replace the leader.

Former party insider Dimitri Soudas has been openly critical of Poilievre, and as last week's events proved, Ontario Premier Doug Ford is also no friend of the official opposition leader.

When Ford was asked about a potential federal election, he basically threw his federal cousins under the bus. The premier said so many nice things about Prime Minister Mark Carney that an observer would have thought they shared a party.

Some have even written that Carney's budget is progressive conservative in nature.

Ford is obviously well-organized in Ontario, and Soudas' political roots in Quebec are deep. Both of these provinces are pivotal to winning any federal election. While Conservatives in Quebec and Ontario are not ideologues, they are used to winning at the provincial and federal levels.

If they have decided that Poilievre is not a winnable candidate, they could cause problems for him in the January vote.

Hence a federal election would have allowed Poilievre to focus on the external opposition to the government, not the internal opposition within his own ranks.

The New Democrats are in the middle of their own leadership race, so the potential of an election would be unthinkable for them.

Even though they publicly opposed the budget, they allowed

it to survive by securing two abstentions. NDP abstainers included Lori Idlout and Gord Johns. Idlout did not want to vote against the budget because it included a major investment in her riding of Nunavut.

Interim NDP leader Don Davies told the media after the vote that his party did not want for force an election; therefore, he approved the two abstentions.

As for the Tories, one of the abstainers, Shannon Stubbs, said she acting on doctor's orders while the other, Matt Jeneroux, has already disclosed his dissatisfaction with his party by announcing he will not be seeking re-election.

Some thought he might cross the floor to the Liberals, following the example of Nova Scotian Chris d'Entremont who left the Conservative caucus on Nov. 4 because he said he didn't feel represented there. Rumours swirled about other potential floor crossings, but none have materialized to date.

The Liberals will have to hope that some occur because, in minority government, there could be similar, but unsuccessful votes in the next budget, or on a supply motion in the fall.

Poilievre isn't the only one hoping that he wins his leadership review in the New Year.

Most Liberals believe he is their ticket to remain in government.

While current popular support trends remain close between the two parties, Carney's personal popularity is in the stratosphere relative to Poilievre's.

If the budget vote had failed on Nov. 17, there was a good chance that the current polling numbers could have led to a Liberal majority government.

Carney looked cool, calm, and collected on the day of the cliffhanger, probably because he was in a no-lose situation.

Had the election been called, his personal popularity would definitely have outstripped that of the leader of the opposition.

A budget win gives him a few more months to prove to the Canadian people that he is the leader best positioned to pivot away from dependence on economic integration with the United States.

Carney's global view, and business experience have helped capture the confidence of Canadians.

As long as Poilievre is leading the Tories, Carney has good reason to smile.

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

The Hill Times

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NEWS

Don't forget the kids, health advocates tell feds

Children are 'an afterthought,' 'get attention in a crisis, but not beyond,' say advocates as they push for strategic action and funding for kids' wellness.

BY TESSIE SANCI

Advocates recently gathered in Ottawa to make the health and business case to Health Minister Marjorie Michel that developing policy for children's specialized health needs is good for Canada.

"Chronic pediatric conditions impose a substantial and growing burden not only on children and their families, but on Canada's economy, [and] lack of access to optimal treatments for these conditions prevent future productivity and increase long-term health costs," said Matthew Stewart, a partner in the economic and financial advisory group at Deloitte, during a luncheon in Ottawa on Nov. 17.

The event marked the launch of Deloitte's new report, *Thrive: the economic case for investing in children's health*, which analyzes the economic, social, and health impacts of not investing in children's health policy. The report was commissioned by Children's Healthcare Canada and Canada's Children Hospital Foundations.

The paper is one of a few initiatives in recent months aiming to encourage the new Liberal government to focus specifically on children's health. Others include a bill by Independent Senator Rosemary Moodie (Ontario), calling for a strategy focused on eliminating child poverty and raising their standard of living, and a call by Canada's Pediatric Palliative Care Alliance to renew funding for pediatric palliative care.

During the Nov. 17 event at the National Arts Centre, Michel (Papineau, Que.) provided opening remarks, noting that Nov. 20 is National Child Day. She said that commemorative day is about "ensur[ing] that all children are provided every opportunity to reach their full potential. It is a commitment our new government takes very seriously."

She spoke about the previous Liberal government's child-friendly initiatives that continue under her government. This includes the rare disease strategy, child care and early learning bilateral agreements, and a national school food program—the latter of which received funding in Prime Minister Mark



Health Minister Marjorie Michel recently touted ongoing support for child care and early learning, and a national school food program in remarks about how her government supports children. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) first budget, which was read on Nov. 4.

Michel also connected other budget announcements such as a \$5-billion health infrastructure fund and a plan to make it easier for provinces and territories to recognize the foreign credentials of health-care workers as a way to improve access to care.

What's missing is a comprehensive strategy to pull together those types of actions, according to Emily Gruenwoldt, president and CEO of Children's Healthcare Canada, who spoke with *The Hill Times* at the Nov. 17 event.

"All these interventions right now or investments or policies are *ad hoc*. There's a fire burning over here," she said, motioning to one side. "There's an opportunity here with a loud advocate; there's something else going on here."

What's required is a thoughtful plan with a specific goal that considers children's physical and mental health, and social needs such as housing, food security, and schooling, according to Gruenwoldt.

The Deloitte report is meant to make the economic case for increasing investments in children's health policies that prioritize early interventions.

The report calculates the economic and social "returns" of investing early, and pays particular attention to the multi-faceted costs of three diseases: epilepsy, Type 1 diabetes, and mood and anxiety disorders.

For example, approximately 26,000 children and youth between the ages of one and 19 years old have Type 1 diabetes. For families, the financial cost can be as high as \$18,306 per year in out-of-pocket costs.

Costs to the health system—hospitals, physicians, and drugs—was calculated as \$217-million for 2023.

As for economic and social costs, the report cites other studies that found that 15.1 per cent of mothers of children with Type 1 diabetes left the workforce completely, and 11.5 per cent reduced their working hours.

The Deloitte report used those statistics and income data to calculate lost income—what it deems as the "annual caregiving burden"—as \$75.9-million per year.

"There's a huge push to improve productivity across Canada, reduce spending where possible, and improve outcomes," Stewart told *The Hill Times* on Nov. 17. "Diabetes was a clear case: there's a lot of women that stay home because their kids get diagnosed with diabetes, and so they have to reduce hours."

Gruenwoldt's group has long advocated for a children's health strategy.

"Children are often an afterthought," Gruenwoldt said about why children's health requires dedicated funding and policy. "When policy and investment decisions are being made, often the assumption is that we don't need to worry about children's health or health care. 'The kids are fine,' and I think what you heard today would be evidence against that."

The report cites UNICEF Canada's 2023 report card on children's health that finds that Canada ranks in 19th out of 36 nations. The Netherlands claims the top spot, with France, Lithuania, and Romania among the other countries placing ahead of Canada. UNICEF's data states that Canada "ranks close to the bottom" in three specific indicators: adoles-

cent suicide (33rd), child mortality (25th) and social skills (28th).

Little 'direction' or 'ambition,' says Moodie about feds' thoughts on kids' well-being

Independent Senator Moodie, a pediatrician, is on her second attempt to legislate a child and youth strategy after a previous bill died when Parliament was prorogued this past January. The current bill, S-212, is now being studied by the Senate Social Affairs Committee.

Moodie testified about her bill before the committee, which she chairs, on Nov. 5.

"In all of my conversations with senior public servants and ministers, I am constantly alarmed by the lack of clear direction or ambition," Moodie said in her opening remarks about why Canada needs a strategy for children.

"Children get attention in a crisis, but not beyond. If you asked what outcomes were desired for children in areas like health, education, or safety, you would be met with blank stares and, frankly, evasive answers."

The bill in its current form calls for a strategy to "identify the objectives" of the federal government as they relate to children and youth with a goal to eliminate child poverty and produce a "high and consistent" standard of living. It should also be in compliance with the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The bill provides for a two-year timeline, following royal assent, for the development of a strategy.

Group seeks \$3-million for pediatric palliative-care work

Also looking for more action—and funding—from the feds is Canada's Pediatric Palliative Care Alliance, which is led by Roger Neilson Children's Hospice in Ottawa.

The hospice received approximately \$1-million in 2023 from the federal government to build a comprehensive digital resource hub that can be accessed by anyone and which includes guidance on providing pediatric palliative care. That funding will expire on March 31, 2026.

Palliative care in Canada is not well known, and children's palliative care is "even less well understood," said Kira Goodman, project director at both the alliance and Roger Neilson Children's Hospice.

Since launching on Oct. 9, the Pediatric Palliative Care Resource Hub has had 2,300 new visitors and close to 7,000 views.

"The appetite for this information is so big because pediatric palliative care is not even just about serious illness in infants, children and youth. It's also about grief and bereavement," Goodman said, adding that this care provides support to families who have experienced the death of a child, or children who are grieving deaths of family members.

The alliance is requesting an additional \$3-million over three years. So far, that funding has not been granted.

The funding would allow the alliance to create guidelines for pediatric palliative-care delivery, increase educational resources, and create a research and action plan to help "provinces and territories that have no resources, no attention being paid to children's palliative care, [to] come along with us to be able to deliver equitable access to care across the country," Goodman said. She noted that there are only eight children's hospices across the country.

Goodman said she still has hopes that the federal government "will continue to see the value" of their work and provide funding. However, if this doesn't occur, the alliance is looking at other possible sources of funding including applying for provincial grants and research funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. tsanci@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Statistics from *Thrive: the economic case for investing in children's health*

- Approximately 1.5 million children in Canada do not have access to primary care.
- More than half of children waiting for surgery are now waiting longer than clinically recommended wait times.
- Chronic pediatric conditions impose the following estimated costs on Canada's economy: \$483-million for Type 1 diabetes, \$6-billion for mood and anxiety disorders, and \$2.2-billion for epilepsy.
- \$1 invested in improved access to care leads to a positive social return of \$1.39 – \$4.89.



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Editorial

Editorial

Liberals should build a better working relationship with opposition parties, they need their support

To survive in a minority government, the Liberals must work cooperatively with the opposition parties. Prime Minister Mark Carney's Liberals eked out a win on the Nov. 17 confidence vote on the budget, but opposition parties have been publicly complaining that, despite leading a minority government, the Liberals did not meaningfully negotiate with them. After coming within a few seats of a majority in the last general election, the Liberals remain in a strong political position and are still enjoying their honeymoon period.

By contrast, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is preoccupied with his upcoming January leadership review, and recovering from an election he was expected to win handily. The NDP failed to secure recognized party status in the Commons in the April 28 vote, and are still reeling from their losses. In this environment, the Liberals continue to enjoy a healthy public support.

However, the governing party must know that every honeymoon eventually ends. The longer a government stays in power and the more decisions it makes, the more critics it attracts as a result. This phenomenon drags down every government's public support over time. Opposition parties will remember how they are being treated now while the government is strong.

Even though the Liberals are only two seats short of a majority, they still need the support of at least one

opposition party to get their legislative measures successfully through in Parliament. The budget cleared its first hurdle last week, thanks in large part to the abstentions of two NDP and two Conservative MPs—strategic choices made by both parties to avoid triggering an election that no opposition party wants right now. The final tally was 170-168.

Currently, the Liberals have 170 seats, the Conservatives 143, the Bloc Québécois 22, the NDP seven, and the Green Party one. In the 343-seat House, the required threshold for a majority government is 172.

Once the Liberal popularity falls in national public opinion polls, opposition parties will likely be unwilling in helping the government avoid an election. At that point, the Carney Liberals will be the ones looking to avoid the election, and the opposition will make things challenging for them.

For that reason, it would be smart for the Liberals to build a more cooperative working relationship with the opposition parties now, while they are strong. If successful, the government can rely on that goodwill when they need support later. And all opposition parties should remember that Canadians voted only seven months ago for a Parliament where they want both sides of the aisle to work together and deliver results. Ignoring that message could backfire at the ballot box when the next election is called.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor

Ecuador and Canada must respect life, inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples: KAIROS

Re: "Ecuador's fight is for peace, human rights, and partnership with Canada," (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 3.). In an op-ed to *The Hill Times*, the Ecuadorian ambassador rejects "any suggestion of systematic human rights violations" in his country. The sad reality is that the government of Ecuador is criminalizing Indigenous Peoples who are peacefully protesting mining operations—including from Canadian companies—in their territories.

Ecuador calls them "terrorists" for saying "no" to resource extraction that continues to endanger the ecosystems that sustain them. Labelling Indigenous Peoples as "terrorists" is a strategy used for too long by governments to justify the assassination of peaceful land and water defenders.

KAIROS works with Indigenous partners in Ecuador. I can attest that they are not terrorists. Their protest is not violence; it is desperation. It's not disorder; it's hunger. It's not hatred; it's pain. I can

hear their voices crack under teargas, bullets and fear.

As for Canada, its response to Indigenous Peoples is inconsistent. On one hand the government recognizes, as a signatory to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the significant contributions of Indigenous peoples as stewards of the world's biodiversity and intact ecosystems. On the other, Canada's support for mining companies includes lax corporate accountability measures that fail to stop companies from harming the very ecosystems that Indigenous People are trying to protect.

KAIROS calls on Ecuadorian and Canadian authorities to respect the life and the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples to defend their territory, to be heard and consulted, and to accept and protect their decisions.

Alfredo Barahona
KAIROS blanket exercise
global and newcomer
co-ordinator
Toronto, Ont.

Should disclose total cost for Scarpaleggia to live at Speaker's official residence: Thomlinson

Re: "House Speaker Scarpaleggia residing at an Ottawa hotel instead of official residence, 'The Farm,' for family reasons," (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 16 by Abbas Rana).

Olivier Duhaime, director of outreach and media relations for the House Speaker's Office, has a rather strained logic in his valiant attempt to defend the decision of his boss, Liberal MP and House Speaker Francis Scarpaleggia, who represents Lac-Saint-Louis, Que., to live in a hotel rather than in the official residence of the Speaker. The article reports, "Traditionally, once an MP is elected Speaker, they move into the official residence at 'The Farm,' and are no longer eligible for accommodation expenses by the House of Commons."

But in this case, "Duhaime said the Commons Board of Internal Economy approved giving Scarpaleggia the

standard MP housing allowance after he decided not to live at the Speaker's official residence."

Duhaime then goes on to argue "There are no additional costs involved—it is the same housing allocation provided to all 343 Members of Parliament, within the same overall budget approved for members. No new or exceptional expenses are being incurred as a result of this decision."

It sounds like Scarpaleggia is getting "the standard MP housing allowance" which he would not be getting if he had moved into the official residence. How is that not a "new or exceptional expense" incurred as a result of his decision to not live in the official residence?

Neil R. Thomlinson, PhD
Associate professor emeritus
Toronto Metropolitan
University
Toronto, Ont.

Politics

Never have 10 words so disgraced the United States

Despite U.S. intelligence reports, Donald Trump claims Mohammed bin Salman didn't know about Jamal Khashoggi's killing, and that the journalist was an 'extremely controversial' figure. 'Whether you like him or didn't like him, things happened,' said Trump.

Michael Harris



Harris

HALIFAX—Anti-Trump protesters recently strung yellow crime-scene tape around the White House.

No need to explain what they meant.

It would be tempting to call that clever move the work of "never-Trumper" zealots. It would be tempting to conclude that all United States President Donald Trump has to do is what he always does when under attack: tell his MAGA base that it is the work of evil and partisan Democrats, and the faithful would continue to support him.

Except that things are changing in big and small ways for the man who once boasted that he could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and not lose any voters. As Trump loses touch with ordinary Americans, his once iron grip on the GOP is beginning to slip.

Republican governors are no longer obeying when Trump says 'jump'. Two states recently declined his request that they redistrict their congressional seats to give the GOP an advantage in next year's mid-term elections.

And then there is the growing belief amongst his MAGA base that Trump 2.0 is a very different leader from what he was in his first term. In that first term, he presented as the champion of the little guy against elites who were oppressing them. He would do that by improving the econ-



U.S. President Donald Trump, left, hosted talks with Saudi Arabian Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 19, and defended the prince over the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Photographs courtesy of Wikipedia Commons/Gage Skidmore

omy for regular Americans. He would not only make America great again, he would make it affordable.

Trump 2.0 has strayed into other priorities that are foreign—and perhaps anathema—to his once rock-solid base. The president has shown more interest in tearing down the East Wing of the White House to make room for a \$300-million "ballroom" than in bringing down the price of groceries.

In an extension of his Marie Antoinette transformation, Trump threw a lavish party at Mar-a-Lago for the very elites he once portrayed as the problem with America. While he and his guests had their *Great Gatsby* moment in Trump's mansion, complete with a scantily clad woman gyrating in a huge champagne glass, millions of Americans were losing their Medicare and Medicaid benefits. And all the while, the economy Trump continues to boast about is sluggish.

Trump 2.0's dubious priorities at home have been matched by foreign policy that has sown confusion in the electorate. For decades, Americans have been conditioned to see Russia as their principal adversary on the world stage. In the past, Trump has mused that Russian President Vladimir Putin might become his "best friend."

Instead of denouncing Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, Trump has frequently suggested that Ukraine caused the war. It used to be the U.S. stood up for



Saudi Arabia's Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump. Screenshot courtesy of Fox 5

democracies facing authoritarian threats. Trump has reversed that paradigm.

There have been consequences for Trump's "let them eat cake" domestic politics and norm-busting international positions. Trump is now at the lowest point in the polls of any U.S. president at this point in their term. His approval rating is mired in the 30s.

Nor are his signature policies cutting the mustard. Trump's trade war is a good example. Recent polling showed that nearly two-thirds of Americans don't like the tariffs Trump has imposed on friends and foes alike. Nearly half of Republicans were found to feel the same way.

Why? Because while Trump boasts about the billions of dollars being generated by tariffs, ordinary Americans are footing

the bill with higher prices. In a stunning reversal of his economic policy, Trump just recently announced he is dropping tariffs on certain foodstuffs.

Where has Trump 2.0 been most out of touch with the electorate, including his MAGA base? The Jeffrey Epstein scandal. Epstein, with his monstrous sexual abuse of more than 1,000 girls and young women, has done something that almost nothing else has: he has united Americans in the demand that the complete Epstein files be released. And that includes the names of any powerful people who may have participated in his child sex-trafficking ring. According to a recent PBS poll, three quarters of Americans want the Department of Justice to release the entire Epstein file.

Up until very recently, there was one prominent exception: the president of the United States. For months, Trump has opposed the release of the Epstein files, using his sycophantic appointments in the DOJ to keep them under wraps. Whatever it may mean, Trump's name is mentioned hundreds of times in those files.

But Trump has isolated himself even further from what Americans want him to do by characterizing the Epstein affair as a Democratic "hoax." That stunning claim flies in the face of the painful evidence of scores of women who suffered under Epstein's abuse, and who have had the courage to come forward and demand justice. Trump's dismissal of their cause is ugly, unwarranted, and unproven. And it has been hugely costly to his personal credibility.

Trump not only pressured Congress not to vote for the release of the Epstein files, but he went to war with a champion of MAGA who stood with these long-suffering women in their fight for justice.

In a baseless assault that even offended the MAGA grassroots, Trump denounced U.S. Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene as "wacky" and a "traitor." He also cut all ties with the Georgia law-maker who had been one of his most ardent supporters.

If anyone was perfidious in the Epstein affair it is Trump. After it became clear that Congress, despite Trump's relentless lobbying, was going to overwhelmingly vote to release the Epstein files, Trump did one of the most egregious flip flops in recent political history. He instructed Congress to vote for the release, which he had opposed for months. The same release that he washed his hands of Greene for supporting.

If there is any doubt that Trump is failing the basic character test that every U.S. president must pass, his fawning reception of Saudi Arabian Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) removed it.

Despite the fact that the CIA and multiple other U.S. intelligence agencies told the president that MBS had ordered the murder and dismemberment of journalist and U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi, Trump jumped to the defence of the prince, whose net worth is \$18-billion.

Despite Trump's own intelligence reports, the president claimed that MBS didn't know about the killing. He then added that Khashoggi was an "extremely controversial" figure, whom a lot of people didn't like. "Whether you like him or didn't like him, things happened."

Never have 10 words so disparaged a murder victim. Never have 10 words so disgraced the United States. Is there any wonder that Donald Trump is on his way out?

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and columnist.

The Hill Times

COMMENT



The anxieties Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre taps into—including crime, economic precarity, and housing—are real. But where substantive solutions are needed, he defaults to hashtags, columnist Bhagwant Sandhu writes. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The Conservative leader's antagonistic instincts may help him survive a leadership review, but they're undermining his credibility as a national leader.

Bhagwant Sandhu

Opinion



OTTAWA – Few politicians get a second chance. After losing this spring's federal election as well as his seat, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's Alberta byelection win this past summer gave him a chance rarely afforded to defeated leaders: to recast himself as prime minister-in-waiting.

That opportunity is slipping away.

Rather than broadening his political vocabulary, Poilievre has doubled down on the oppositional reflexes that defined his earlier tenure: rapid-fire indignation, thin policy depth, and a politics

centred around enemies instead of outcomes. Soundbites have grown sharper; the scapegoating more intense. What's missing is a governing architecture to turn discontent into direction.

A leader emerging from defeat typically signals a shift, either in tone or seriousness. Poilievre has largely returned to the same slogans that failed to persuade voters the first time. "Jail, not bail" has resurfaced, as have inflammatory claims about migrants stealing jobs and an array of culture-war provocations. They do little to address the structural challenges facing the country.

Political theorists like Hans-Georg Betz argue that populism—the type that Poilievre practises—hinges on avoiding institutional responsibility. But once populists enter Parliament, their outsider persona fades. Attrition sets in as constant antagonism falters under the demands of responsible governance. Poilievre's predicament fits that pattern: a dogmatic outlook engineered for conflict, not construction. The result is ineffective opposition, and a sense of political futility.

The anxieties Poilievre taps into—crime, economic precarity, housing—are real. But where substantive solutions are needed, he defaults to hashtags. His bail-reform proposals ignore any root-cause analysis including addiction, income inequal-

ity, homelessness, and mental illness. Academic research has shown reducing homelessness by two-thirds can noticeably reduce recidivism rates. This kind of evidence rarely appears in Poilievre's policy prescriptions.

The pressures Canadians face are worsening. According to the National Housing Council, asking rents exceed 50 per cent of income in most Canadian markets. StatsCan reports grocery prices have risen 27 per cent since 2020, and youth unemployment sits at 14.7 per cent—the highest in 15 years. In Alberta, which Poilievre now represents in the House, the minimum wage is only \$15 per hour, the lowest in Canada. Meanwhile, the parliamentary budget officer estimates that the top 10 per-cent earners hold more than half of the national wealth, while the bottom 40 per cent hold just 3.3 per cent.

Poilievre's response to these structural inequities? Blame migrant workers.

His instinct to inflame also extends to democratic institutions. He champions, for example, mandatory minimum sentences despite Supreme Court rulings showing they disproportionately harm racialized and Indigenous communities, and undermine a core principle of criminal justice: the presumption of innocence. These constitutional safeguards exist to preserve institutional

legitimacy. An opposition leader should respect—if not strengthen—those foundations. When they are ridiculed as obstacles rather than essential pillars, the public trust erodes.

The real danger of Poilievre's politics, however, is how it distorts national priorities. Prime Minister Mark Carney's recent law-and-order package is a good case in point. It mirrors Poilievre's framing—more police, tougher sentences, tighter bail, increased surveillance—while mental healthcare, youth supports, and family services go underfunded. That's what happens when populist spin leads the discourse: government responses reinforce flawed assumptions.

Budget 2025 has exposed Poilievre's predicament. To address trade uncertainty, Carney's fiscal plan seeks stability. With no credible counterproposals, Poilievre defaulted to alarmism, turning debate into theatre. Predictably, the Conservatives lost the budget vote.

A Conservative MP defecting to the Liberals underscores how far the fatigue has spread in Poilievre's own ranks. His approval ratings trail Carney's by double-digits, and Conservative Party loyalists are openly wondering if outrage alone can sustain their party's future. With a leadership review approaching in January 2026, their concerns are less about Poilievre's stamina than the very

relevance of Canadian conservatism in national policymaking.

Others, like ex-Progressive Conservative prime minister Joe Clark, used defeat to cultivate humility and broaden policy horizons. Poilievre could, similarly, confront inequality through redistributive tax reforms, expanded social housing, or a unifying national vision. But that requires shifting from performance to purpose—an aptitude Poilievre has yet to demonstrate convincingly.

Still, there's a calculated logic to his behaviour. With his leadership review looming, Poilievre's focus on crime and immigration is not a misstep but a survival tactic, red meat for his base. He pushes it as the rock of Sisyphus, with perpetual defiance as his source of existential meaning.

Could it succeed? That's for the Conservative Party members to decide.

But the rest of us are asking a simpler question: given the rare second chance, is this really the best Poilievre can offer? The answer for now seems to be yes. Until that changes, his climb toward public confidence can be expected to grow.

Bhagwant Sandhu is a retired director general from the federal public service. He has also held executive positions with the governments of Ontario and British Columbia.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

The politics of Poilievre's personality

Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre should not pay attention to his critics.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—If Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre is going to stage a comeback, the first thing he needs to do is stop paying attention to his critics.

I say that because, from what I've seen, the overwhelming consensus amongst his critics—a group which includes journalists, pundits, pollsters and former Conservative Party “insiders”—is that Poilievre's problem is his personality.

They say he's too mean-spirited, too divisive, too abrasive, too uncompromising.

This, they argue, is why he lost the last federal election; it's why a couple of his MPs have recently quit his party, and it's why he's not doing so well in the polls right now.

Basically, the sentiment seems to be that unless Poilievre drastically changes his persona, his political career is all but cooked.

Some say he won't even survive next year's Conservative leadership review; others say, even if he does survive, there's no way Poilievre will ever defeat Prime Minister Mark Carney in the next federal election.

So why do I think Poilievre should ignore these critics?

Well, first off, we need to keep that in mind that, despite all his recent problems, Poilievre still seems to have the support of his base.

In that August byelection in Alberta, for instance, which saw him re-elected to the House of Commons, Poilievre won a whopping 80 per cent of the vote.

What's more, according to Abacus pollster David Coletto, 77 per cent of Conservatives have a positive impression of Poilievre.

Says Coletto, “Poilievre isn't just liked by Conservative Party supporters, he's close to adored.”

So, clearly, at least for rank-and-file Conservatives, it seems Poilievre's tough-guy routine isn't a bug, it's a feature.

Of course, I'm sure Poilievre's critics would respond by saying, “Sure, he might be popular with his base, but Canadians outside the Conservative Party will always spurn his harsh personality.”

And, yes, the polls do currently show that Poilievre is gaining little traction with non-Conservative voters.

But when it comes to politics, the public's mood can change quickly.

If the economy starts to falter, if public anxiety increases, if pessimism grows,

Poilievre will be well-positioned to tap into those negative feelings.

My point is even though a lot of people might view Poilievre as an SOB, sometimes, when things get rough, voters believe only an SOB can fix the problems they face.

This is why former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, whom many believed was too abrasive and divisive, won a majority government in 2011; this is why Ontario Premier Doug Ford, whom many believe is too abrasive and divisive, has won three majority governments in a row.

Remember, to win the next

election, Poilievre doesn't have to convince Canadians to like him; he just needs to persuade them to reject the Liberals.

In my view, the real problem for Poilievre will emerge if he starts to heed his critics.

In other words, if he buys into their argument that his personality is an insurmountable obstacle to his success, it could put him on the path to failure.

For one thing, he might seek to change his personality by adopting a gentler, kinder image.



Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre, pictured holding press conference in the House of Commons to speak about Conservative MP Frank Caputo's private member's bill C-225 to strengthen responses to intimate partner violence in Canada on Oct. 28, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

But a leopard can't change its spots, nor can Poilievre; he is who he is.

And if he tries to act like something, he isn't; voters will detect the phoniness.

Plus, there's one more reason why Poilievre should ignore his critics.

Simply put, if he comes to believe, like they do, that his personality is a problem, something

he can't really change, then he might start doubting himself, losing the ability to inspire.

As former American football coach Vince Lombardi put it, “Confidence is contagious. So is lack of confidence.”

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

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ENGEL & VÖLKERS

COMMENT

Budget delivers measures to grow the economy, but fails to deliver urgently needed transformation and generational change



Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne speaks to reporters in the House of Commons foyer after the vote on the 2025 federal budget passes on Nov. 17. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

A new Council of Canadian Academies report underlines that bolder and more ambitious policies for innovation and productivity are needed now, more than ever.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



TORONTO—With the 2025 federal budget, Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne had the chance to do something big. The Carney government had been elected with a mandate to be bold and ambitious, and had promised to deliver economic transformation and generational change. This was to be a government that not only talked big, but acted big.

We got something much less. This year's budget fell short—the big transformative changes are yet to be addressed, leaving the budget as an incomplete agenda for a better future. If our well-being depends on our success as a true innovation nation—as it does—then much more change will be needed. To be sure, there are useful initiatives in the budget, and it correctly identifies the urgent need to boost Canadian productivity as the core challenge. But it falls short in getting us on the right track for economic progress.

Now, a new report underlines the urgency of bolder and more ambitious action. This is the report of an expert panel for the Council of Canadian Academies—*The State of Science, Technology, and Innovation in Canada 2025*. It spells out how far short we fall from being an innovation nation, and warns that our current efforts show we are declining, not improving.

While the report's main themes are certainly not new—the big issues have been well known for some time—its value lies more in its timeliness in highlighting, in strong language, where Canada stands today, and the barriers that must be overcome. It is a strong

nudge, not just to government, but also to business, the financial community, and academia to do much better. In fact, it is more than a nudge—it is a sharp and much-needed call for action.

“Canada is in a productivity crisis, compromising the country's ability to maintain and enhance the standards of living for people in Canada,” the report states. This, it stresses, “is compounded by the challenges related to housing affordability, food insecurity, and income inequality.” Without stronger action “low productivity is putting the standard of living at risk, driving down real wages, and compromising the ability of governments to maintain public services such as education and health care.”

This, in turn, is why this country's performance in science, technology, and innovation matter more than ever—innovation and technological progress are the key drivers of economic progress and improved productivity—and Canada rates poorly compared to the leading nations.

Our biggest weakness is in business R&D and innovation, the report says. “Spending on R&D is low and declining in key industries, and Canada is losing ground relative to comparator

countries.” At the same time, “Canadian post-secondary institutions often struggle to support the transfer of technologies to new companies” while “startups struggle to access capital domestically and end up relying on foreign sources.” Not only that. “While a revolution in AI is in full swing, bringing potentially game-changing opportunities, Canada's early advantages in AI are slipping away as other countries ramp up their efforts.”

That's not all. “Canadian firms are slow to adopt new technologies, and the rate of technology adoption is falling over time. Innovation by Canadian businesses has noticeably decreased in recent years.”

With the failures of Nortel, BlackBerry and Bombardier, there has been a decline in R&D-heavy large firms. Innovation has been weakened further by the difficulties in creating new large firms to grow business R&D and innovate. Canada needs large, highly productive firms, and needs to retain and build these anchor companies, the report says. Heavy reliance on foreign investment is not the answer. Foreign multinationals accounted for 44 per cent of business R&D spending in Canada

in 2022 which meant an outflow of intellectual property from this country, and fewer economic rewards from this innovation staying here.

This explains why much of the report focuses on the failure to grow Canadian firms with scale and scope for global markets. As the report says, this country has a strong base of startups, “but has trouble scaling them into large, impactful companies that maintain Canadian ownership and export globally.”

While there has been a growth in domestic venture firms, “Canadian investor participation declines sharply as companies scale, with domestic funds lacking the size and capacity to support later-stage growth.” This is where American private equity of multinationals take over. “Many companies founded in Canada are later acquired internationally due to limited available domestic financing for early-stage startups or companies looking to scale rapidly,” the report says. As investors from the United States fill this gap, over 75 per cent of returns from top exits go to international firms—leading to a loss of economic returns and intellectual property control for Canada.

There is, the report concludes, a need for action. “It is clear that Canada still lacks effective approaches to support the development and commercialization—across the continuum from research to deployment—of the most promising areas that could improve national competitiveness and provide greater economic and social benefits,” it says, warning that “Canada's economy will struggle to provide Canadians with a standard of living they have come to expect. Without improved governance, greater public-private collaboration, and effective execution, Canada's highly fragmented system will likely continue to underperform.”

As a result, “the nation's ability to deliver quality public health care and education, job opportunities, and affordable housing will be jeopardized. The set of societal challenges Canada faces today surely provides the burning platform needed to drive bold changes.”

While the Nov. 4 federal budget does deliver some measures to sustain and grow the economy, it fails to deliver the urgently needed transformation and generational change Prime Minister Mark Carney's campaign promised.

So as this new report underlines, the need for bolder and more ambitious policies for innovation and productivity are more urgent than ever. Our country has strengths and potential—including ambitious entrepreneurs—but we have to build on them, enhance them, and, in the process transition to the economic transformation, higher productivity and improved living standards that the Liberals promised.

David Crane can be reached at crane@interlog.com.
The Hill Times

OPINION



Canada's 2 Billion Trees program, axed in the federal budget on Nov. 4, garnered heat from all sides: opposing political parties, the auditor general and even conservation groups. Although 2BT was often portrayed as questionable, its roots were solid, writes Rachel Plotkin. *Image courtesy of Pexels*

The federal 2 Billion Trees program has been cut, what's next?

As is, the government's 'investment budget' leaves a nature deficit, which chips away at the foundation of a strong Canada. We must repair the harms caused by our collective actions. Happily, nature's regenerative arc compounds investments.

Rachel Plotkin

Opinion



Canada's 2 Billion Trees program, axed in the federal budget on Nov. 4, garnered heat from all sides: opposing political parties, the federal auditor general, and even conservation organizations.

Although 2BT was often portrayed as questionable, its roots were solid. It was consistent with the global pledge reached at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Montreal in 2022 to halt and reverse nature loss, and the commitment of 144 countries, including Canada, under the 2021 Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use to halt deforestation (conversion of forests to another land use) and forest degradation by 2030.

Canada has low deforestation rates, although it doesn't account for logging roads in its tally. (Sometimes logging roads are decommissioned, but usually they are not. According to CBC News, Canada has more than 1.5-million kilometres of logging and resource access

roads, almost enough to circle our planet 37 times.)

But industrial logging and other resource extraction impacts (such as seismic lines, wells, and mines) have extensively degraded forests throughout Canada, and driven forest-dwelling species that depend on mature, unfragmented forests—such as the boreal woodland caribou, an umbrella species—toward extinction. Caribou and many other species will not recover without significant habitat restoration at the landscape level.

The 2BT initiative was also on point as trees offer a great long-game strategy for combatting climate change. They sequester carbon when they grow, and store carbon when they're old. (Industrial logging, on the other hand, has been identified as this country's third-largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.)

Canada is not alone in advancing tree-planting as a restoration engine. Kenya launched a program to achieve the target of 15 billion trees by 2032, Pakistan has a Plant for Pakistan project aiming to plant 10 billion trees from 2018 to 2023, and China has announced that it aims to plant and conserve 70 billion trees by 2030.

That said, the 2BT program faced challenges, some significant. As the federal auditor general noted in 2023, the program did not require tree permanence—the commitment for managers to steward trees to old age, if possible. This cleared the way for future logging. The program also failed to incorporate a long-term monitoring program. Although it asked applicants to provide monitoring plans, it didn't include a monitoring standard.

Further, the auditor general found that "in the 2021 planting season, Natural Resources Canada funded more than 270 monoculture sites (that is, sites with plantings of only one species), covering 3,136 hectares. Of these sites, 78 had more than 10,000 trees."

Monoculture planting, often practised by forestry companies after logging, is a form of forest degradation. Monocultures degrade for-

est health and resilience, and reduce habitat quality for many forest-dependent species.

Where to, now that the program is cancelled and nature not mentioned in the budget?

To start, a national restoration vision is needed, one that acknowledges forest degradation and deforestation from resource-extraction practices, incorporates habitat needs of at-risk species, maps priority restoration areas and supports and integrates Indigenous leadership.

As is the case on many other conservation fronts, Indigenous stewardship, which supports natural regeneration, is leading the way towards real ecological repair in contrast to standard industry and government-led practices, which, in most contexts, are grossly insufficient—if they occur at all.

Examples of Indigenous leadership abound. Saulteau First Nations is collaborating on reclamation trials to determine best practices for restoring caribou habitat using lichen transplants.

Blueberry River First Nations have written about "reciprocal restoration" at the landscape scale, which focuses on "the enhancement, creation, or re-creation of habitats that aims to restore the environment, as well as Indigenous human relationships with the land. End goals for reciprocal restoration place emphasis on the revitalization of ecosystems and cultural practices; in other words, returning relationships between the environment and people to what they were prior to disturbance."

Fort Nelson First Nation has restored former oil and gas industry sites to their natural state "using ecologically suitable and culturally appropriate restoration techniques."

As is, the government's "investment budget" leaves a nature deficit, which chips away at the foundation of a strong Canada. We must repair the harms caused by our collective actions. Happily, nature leans toward propagation if we commit to creating the space for it to flourish. Nature's regenerative arc compounds investments.

Rachel Plotkin is a wildlife campaigner and boreal project manager at the David Suzuki Foundation.

The Hill Times



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OPINION

Bill S-232, the Can't Buy My Silence Bill, would protect federal workers and those employed at Crown corporations like the CBC, as well as entities funded by federal money such as Hockey Canada, from NDAs. It also protects private individuals who are asked by the federal government to sign an NDA, write Julie Macfarlane and Sen. Marilou McPhedran.
Image courtesy of Pixabay



How best to stop coverups: end government misuse of non-disclosure agreements

Bill S-232, the Can't Buy Silence Bill, forbids the federal government to sign an NDA covering up harassment, discrimination and violence with any individual or outside institution or organization, and not just its own employees. MPs and Senators should support this bill.

Independent Senator
Marilou McPhedran
& Julie
MacFarlane

Opinion



"I feel dirty for taking money to keep his crime secret. I

feel guilt that someone else will be his victim," (Story 6 in Can't Buy My Silence testimonies). "The proposed NDA was indefinite, silencing me completely. I felt trapped, isolated and financially cornered into agreeing, even though I know it's wrong. The toll on my health has been severe," (Story 132 in Can't Buy My Silence testimonies.)

Since Zelda Perkins refused to be silenced by her non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with Harvey Weinstein in 2017, the world has been waking up to the reality that NDAs are extraordinarily widespread, often employed to cover up harms caused by wrongdoing of the more powerful. Four international studies now calculate that one in three workers will sign an NDA during their working lives and are often damaged by them. Signatories are silenced forever and told they must keep the identity of the wrongdoer secret, or face being sued by employers and lose their compensation for harm.

The reason for this explosion in the misuse of NDAs is simple: allegations of wrongdoing, especially sexual misconduct and discrimination, damage the reputation of the organization where this takes place, whether government, a corporation, charity, sports club, church, university—the list goes on.

Social media's reach means that wrongdoing inside any organization can become common knowledge within minutes. An employer's response can be to shut down the victim's ability to speak to any third party—typically friends, family, co-workers and even a counsellor—in a default NDA. Often, this is accompanied by a non-disparagement clause ("no adverse comment.")

A contractual template designed originally to protect trade secrets has been imported into civil-settlement agreements and numerous employment agreements over sexual misconduct and discrimination. Even more bizarre, there are now "pre-emptive" NDAs in many hiring contracts, and even included in letters of severance where no complaint has ever been made.

When we say "employer response," we are including the federal government. We have been working together for three years now to raise awareness of the prevalence and misuse of NDAs throughout the public service, and in federally funded entities. Bill S-232 would protect federal workers and those employed at Crown corporations like the CBC, as well as entities funded by federal money such as Hockey Canada, from NDAs which cover up harassment, discrimination, and violence. It also

protects private individuals who are asked by the federal government to sign an NDA to cover up discrimination or harassment.

Can't Buy My Silence Canada, a campaign to ban the use of NDAs, has heard directly from numerous individuals working for the federal government who were required to sign NDAs and non-disparagement clauses to settle their complaints. These public-sector workers come from a wide range of agencies including the RCMP, Canada Post, Parks Canada, Health Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Canadian Border Services Agency, as well as parliamentary aides to ministers and department officials.

Refusing to sign has resulted in the withholding of compensation, including severance; in other words, holding on to a right to speak about one's experience has had severe economic consequences for a number of former federal workers. It is also important to note that Bill S-232, Can't Buy Silence Bill, forbids the federal government to sign an NDA covering up harassment, discrimination and violence with any individual or outside institution or organization, and not just its own employees.

Canada is falling behind other jurisdictions in preventing gov-

ernment from using NDAs. Eight American states have now passed such legislation. California and Wisconsin are trying to go further by forbidding NDAs that cover up any government decision-making in the interests of public transparency. In Canada, we have already seen NDAs being used to hide controversial decision-making by provincial and municipal councils (for example, the Greenbelt scandal in Ontario).

We believe the use of NDAs to cover up wrongdoing to be an egregious practice for many reasons, not least the perpetuation of harmful behaviours with the protection and "hiding in plain sight" of the wrongdoer. Their continued use threatens the transparency of government decision-making. It seems to us that it is critical for the federal government to take action on what is now a moral as well as a legal issue, and signal to provinces and territories they should move to protect their residents.

The Can't Buy Silence Bill (An Act Respecting Non-Disclosures, Bill S-232, by Senator Marilou McPhedran) comes to second reading soon. MPs and Senators alike should support this bill. Any remaining doubts could be eliminated by talking with and listening to affected individuals present at "Breaking the Silence: Conversations on NDA Legislation" on Nov. 26 from 10-11:30 a.m. ET in the Senate. Contact marilou.mcphedran@sen.parl.gc.ca to register.

Dr. Julie Macfarlane is director of Can't Buy My Silence Canada, and is an emerita distinguished professor of law at the University of Windsor. Independent Senator Marilou McPhedran represents Manitoba.

The Hill Times

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TRUMP'S
**'GOLDEN
DOME':**
SHOULD
CANADA
BECOME A
JUNIOR
PARTNER?

MISSILE DEFENCE
AND THE 'GOLDEN DOME'

BUILDING
HUMAN-CENTRED
FUTURE FOR
**CANADIAN
AVIATION**

ASSERTING
**CANADIAN
SOVEREIGNTY:**
AI AND DRONE TECHNOLOGY

THREAT OF
HYPERSONICS
IS NOT
HYPERBOLE

AEROSPACE Policy Briefing

Plans to boost defence industry must leverage aerospace, strong civil sector, says sector experts

A Defence Industrial Strategy, proposed with an initial investment of \$6.6-billion in the budget, is intended to develop Canada's defence industrial base with more procurement from domestic supply chains.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Plans to develop a strategy to help strengthen Canada's defence industrial base must be driven more by strategic considerations than political or "emotional" motivations, and it should take full advantage of the aerospace sector, say defence sector experts.

"[Aerospace] should be a centerpiece because one of the strengths in the defence world and in the civilian commercial world is the aerospace sector," said James Fergusson, a senior research fellow with the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at the University of Manitoba. "[Aerospace is] a strong part of our economy, and that's then what you focus on."

The federal government is currently developing a Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS) to help align defence procurement with industrial growth and technological innovation. The 2025 federal budget, released Nov. 4, promised an initial investment of \$6.6-billion over five years for the DIS which is intended to develop Canada's defence industrial base so that more of the country's military capabilities are procured from domestic supply chains.

The DIS will be released in the coming months, according to the budget.

Speaking with *The Hill Times*, Fergusson said that, in developing the DIS, Ottawa needs to have a "systematic understanding of what the realities of the global defence marketplace are," and reminded that Canada's defence industry is closely integrated with the United States.

Canada is the only country in the world that has "privileged

Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne said on Nov. 4 that the Defence Industrial Strategy and the Defence Investment Agency would build up this country's defence industry by strengthening Canadian businesses and supporting Canadian workers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



James Fergusson, a senior research fellow with the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at the University of Manitoba, says it's 'bad politics' if the general relationship with the U.S. is driving diversification in defence.

Photograph courtesy of James Fergusson



Mike Mueller, president and CEO of Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, says, 'The strength of Canada's defence industrial base will also depend on a strong civil sector.' Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

access" to the U.S. market, and the defence sector is also exempt from tariffs in the current trade war, according to Fergusson.

"If the politics of the general relationship with the United States is driving us—in the defence world—to diversify, that's bad politics. Politics have to recognize that, of course, they're spending taxpayer money, so they're accountable [and] responsible for this," he said. "They need to be pragmatic and think about not today and tomorrow, but think about

down the road. How can we sustain this?"

The DIS's operational arm will be a new Defence Investment Agency (DIA). According to the budget, the DIA's objectives will be consolidating the procurement process by removing duplicate approvals and red tape, and to target procurements to support strategic defence sectors in Canada. It will also ensure earlier engagement between the Canadian Armed Forces and the domestic defence industry so the military can better communicate

its needs, and so industry can provide realistic assessments of timelines, costs and technological operations.

The 2025 budget proposes \$30.8-million over four years, starting in 2026-27, to Public Services and Procurement Canada to establish the DIA, with \$7.7-million ongoing.

Mike Mueller, president and CEO of Aerospace Industries Association of Canada (AIAC), said the DIS is a welcome step towards clarity and accountabil-

ity in an emailed statement to *The Hill Times* on Nov. 19.

"For industry to be a true partner, we need a clear demand signal that translates into commitments through a defence industrial strategy, including the capabilities and capacities we need in Canada," he said by email. "This is something Canada has been missing, and we cannot afford further delays. We need to move from dialogue to delivery to turn commitments into capability."

Mueller said the AIAC is looking for details on how the DIS will leverage the aerospace sector as a strategic partner in delivering capability and strengthening the defence industrial base, adding that that base will also depend on a strong civil sector.

"Canada's aerospace ecosystem is deeply integrated. Dual-use technologies, exports and innovation all flow across civil and defence lines. That's why a broader aerospace industrial strategy, to complement the defence industrial strategy, is essential," he stated.

"The strength of Canada's defence industrial base will also depend on a strong civil sector. Canada's aerospace ecosystem is deeply integrated. Dual-use technologies, exports and innovation all flow across civil and defence lines."

F-35 decision delays an emotional response to Donald Trump: Fergusson

The House Industry Committee's meeting on Nov. 19 to discuss the DIS featured witnesses including Fergusson; Hugo Hodgett, CEO of H2 Analytics; and Richard Foster, chief executive and vice-president of L3Harris Canada.

Robert Huebert, a professor in the Centre for Military Security and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary, appeared by videoconference and emphasized to committee members the importance of defence purchases based on defensive considerations, rather than solely on cost-effectiveness.

"It's not about getting the best buck, I dare say. It is about ensuring that we have the best weapons systems to defend Canadians to ensure that deterrence is maintained, and if deterrence breaks down, that we are able to fight and defend Canadians. Not make the best dollars," he told the committee.

During the meeting, many MPs' questions focused on a pending Liberal government decision on the purchase of F-35 fighter jets from the U.S.

A federal review is currently underway in regard to plans to purchase F-35 fighter jets to replace Canada's aging CF-18 Hornets. Canada signed a contract with U.S. defence giant Lockheed Martin in June 2023 to purchase 88 jets, with 16 currently in production. However, Ottawa is now reconsidering acquiring the remaining 72 jets, following the increase in trade and tariff tensions with the U.S.

Industry Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.) told



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AEROSPACE Policy Briefing

Prime Minister Mark Carney told reporters in Ottawa on May 21 that Canada is looking into the possibility of participating in the U.S. President Donald Trump's 'Golden Dome' missile defence program. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Trump's 'Golden Dome': should Canada become a junior partner?

The Golden Dome could cost more than the entire current U.S. defence budget, for a system that will remain unproven.

Alistair Edgar

Opinion



It's a remarkably easy answer: No. The reasons mostly are similar to those that were raised for then-United States president Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative proposal four decades ago in 1983, with the new addition in this case of the absence of any good reason to trust U.S. leadership under President Donald Trump as a strategic ally and partner.

Echoing Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative and Israel's recently witnessed Iron Dome air defence system, the "Golden Dome" proposal was issued this past Jan-

uary, and initially titled 'The Iron Dome for America,' but renamed to reflect Trump's gaudy personal penchant for golden facilities of all kinds. The Trump administration's proposal is for a multi-layered air and missile defence system intended to detect and then destroy ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missiles—and presumably now also drone swarms—launched from any external sites against the U.S. mainland. Alaska and Hawaii would host some elements of the system.

Since 1958, Canada already partners with the U.S. in North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), and is investing some \$40-billion in much-needed modernization of that bilateral air- and missile-defence system primarily designed against Soviet and now Russian bomber and missile threats approaching North America over the Arctic.

Why not the 'Golden Dome'?

First, uncertain technological feasibility. Surveillance, detection, tracking and interception technologies and systems all have improved greatly since 1983, but the Golden Dome is vastly more

ambitious in scope. It aims to defend against peer, near-peer, and lesser military threats: Russia and China, as well as Iran, North Korea, and 'rogue state actors'. Potential attack vectors include land-, air-, and sea-launched missiles that presumably could come from anywhere, including from submarines (manned and unmanned) close to the U.S. coasts or in the Arctic. Could the proposed new system successfully detect, track, intercept and destroy hundreds—or thousands—of incoming threats, including decoys? How would real-world proof of concept testing demonstrate this capacity in any reliable way?

Second (closely connected to the first) is expected counter-responses. Would the Dome be as useful as France's Maginot Line? Every defence system invites an enemy to identify countermeasures and new tactics in a continuing cycle. In this case, as professor Andrew Latham recently noted in *The Hill*, those would include cyberattacks against the critical systems for detection and tracking, and command and control. We already see reports of Chinese and Russian state-sponsored hacking, searching for vulnerabilities in western critical

infrastructure and commercial enterprises. Meanwhile, the White House has reduced or eliminated offices charged with identifying and countering cyberthreats from known sources.

Third, weapons races and proliferation. With dozens or hundreds of new, linked high-orbit or space-based surveillance satellites (more contracts for Elon Musk, anybody?) being critical for early warning, these invite potential enemies to develop their own systems for launching disabling kinetic attacks which would need to be defended against. Space-based weapons for offence and defence would proliferate in a new, ever more expensive arms race, in a new domain.

Fourth, ever-rising costs. Trump has touted \$175-billion as the cost, with \$71-billion to come from Canada—or "free" if this country were to become the "51st state." Other sources suggest more than \$500-billion to build and operate the system over two decades. As with any new, state-of-the-art defence technology there is ample reason to expect research and development, production, deployment, and maintenance costs to escalate considerably into the trillions of dollars. The Golden Dome could

cost more than the entire current U.S. defence budget for a system that will remain unproven.

Fifth, strategic stability. While we can reasonably treat Russian or Chinese warnings as to-be-expected from a real or potential adversary, the possibility of even a moderately 'successful' defensive system could be strategically destabilizing as it creates an assumption of invulnerability that can lead to recklessness or to 'use it or lose it' calculations in crises.

Sixth, business potential. Individual Canadian firms might see potential new U.S. defence contracts as lucrative, valuable and enticing, even necessary for future growth. It is not clear how much competitive access these firms would have to new projects, or how secure any contracts would be over time. They might wish to be paid up front, given Trump's record with paying his bills.

And finally, the question of trust and autonomy. Unlike the situation under Reagan, under Trump the U.S. is no longer a trustworthy political, economic, or military ally. The White House issues threats, derogatory attacks, suggestions of abandonment or annexation against NATO allies, acting more as a bully rather than a partner. and at times appears to emulate rather than oppose the same threat sources against which the Dome would defend. Trump will be long gone from office before the Dome would be fully functional, but his time in power has demonstrated the essential flaw of Canadian dependence on, or too close integration with, an unreliable or abusive partner.

Alistair Edgar is an associate professor in the department of political science at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont.

The Hill Times

A person wearing a flight suit and helmet is shown from the chest up. The helmet has a blue grid overlay, and the person's face is partially visible through the visor. The background is a dark blue gradient with a large, glowing blue grid pattern.

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AEROSPACE Policy Briefing

Asserting Canadian sovereignty: integration of AI and drone technology

Development of a purely Canadian sovereignty capability for unmanned aerial vehicles would require the coordinated efforts of the country's aerospace research institutions.

Paul Walsh

Opinion



It is critical that Canada show control over the north and its resources through continuous surveillance as part of an overall strategy, writes Dr. Paul Walsh. Photograph courtesy of SHOX, Pexels.com

Most of these resources are spread over the sparsely populated regions of Canada's North, with little indication of this country's control or jurisdiction. Given the present state of global turmoil we find ourselves in, and the increasing demand for critical resources, it is not inconceivable that rogue agencies may take advantage of our less-than-obvious sovereignty over some parts of our land. Therefore, it is critical that this country show control over the North and its resources through continuous surveillance as part of an overall strategy. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), commonly

referred to as 'drones,' offers a pathway to develop a surveillance capability through domestic academic innovation.

Canada has a number of academic institutions with experts in various fields of aerospace research recognized the world over for their knowledge. Associated with these institutions are dedicated research centres that bring together resident expertise and young Canadian researchers working towards graduate degrees in engineering. As a director of one such aerospace research centre, I am frequently amazed by the limitless capacity of researchers and their mentors

to develop technologies that can best be described as exceptional.

It is my belief that this talent stems from the requirement to do world-class research with limited resources, leading to the reputation of Canadian aerospace researchers being able to achieve the most research impact per dollar spent. During the COVID pandemic, the advantage provided by this innovative efficiency became clear when the Canadian aerospace industry needed fast answers to pathogen mitigation, and those young researchers were able to deliver. The capability of these researchers combined with their UAV experience and the emerging field of AI presents an opportunity for a uniquely Canadian solution to the problem of asserting sovereignty in the North.

The Canadian North is characterized by vast distances, harsh flying conditions, and—at times—perpetual twilight. Any UAV platform used to show sovereignty would need to address these conditions and provide functionality over extended periods. Sovereignty UAVs would need to remain airborne for at least 24 hours, and be able to function in low temperatures and zero visibility. Home-grown AI technology can be used to pilot the platform such that navigation, communication, visual sensing, and electronic surveillance can

be automated. UAVs have the added advantage of being lower cost than piloted aircraft and generally would not be required to meet the same restrictive reliability requirements. Development of a purely Canadian sovereignty UAV capability would require the coordinated efforts of the country's aerospace research institutions. History is replete with instances when nations achieved their full potential when a national focus was realized and its citizens had a strong interest in the desired outcome.

The federal government has recently concluded it needs to invest more in national defence to safeguard the country and to support our allies. A national UAV strategy focussing on developing home-grown technology to exercise control over the North is a natural component. Our country has an abundance of talent in academic aerospace research centres with a track-history of exceptional outcomes, achieved in a cost-effective manner. A national focus would solidify resources, coordinate development and testing strategies, and generate more well-trained Canadian practitioners of evolving technologies such as UAVs and AI. Giving our young aerospace researchers direction and focus will no doubt have spillover effects for closely associated technical fields such as light-weight batteries and materials.

Ultimately, a national UAV strategy is entirely beneficial by focussing our talent, enhancing our high-tech capability, and ensuring our land and resources are preserved for future generations.

Dr. Paul Walsh, P.Eng., is professor of aerospace engineering at Toronto Metropolitan University, and director of the Centre for Advancing Engineering, Research and Innovation in Aerospace (AERIAS).

The Hill Times

Building a human-centred future for Canadian aviation

For more than a century, aviation has connected the world through human ingenuity. Aviation 5.0 calls us to renew that spirit for the next century.

Suzanne Kearns & Gülnaz Bülbül

Opinion



With coordinated action, Canada can lead the world in sustainable flight by preparing its people and systems to sustain it, writes Dr. Suzanne Kearns. Photograph courtesy of Stefan, Pixabay.com



In the coming years, Canada's aviation system will face increasing strain. Across airports, flight decks, hangars, and control towers, a wave of retirements and

a shortage of skilled replacements are on the horizon. Pilot training pipelines are unlikely to keep pace with demand, while maintenance engineers, air traffic controllers,

and flight instructors will remain in critically short supply. As passenger traffic grows and new technologies reshape the industry, the human infrastructure that

underpins aviation safety and competitiveness must evolve to meet this significant challenge.

Boeing's Commercial Market Outlook 2024–2043 forecasts a global demand for nearly 2.4 million new aviation professionals by 2043, 674,000 pilots, 716,000 maintenance technicians, and 980,000 cabin crew, which doesn't capture other essential roles like dispatchers and controllers. In Canada, the pressure is particularly acute: an aging workforce, lengthy and costly training, and limited simulator capacity have created a talent bottleneck that threatens growth. At the same time, the rapid integration of artificial intelligence, automation, and digital systems is transforming the skills and competencies required across the sector faster than traditional training systems can adapt.

A human challenge in a technological era

Technological disruption is not a challenge to resist, but a context to navigate. Automation and AI

Continued on page 25



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AEROSPACE Policy Briefing



Defence Minister David McGuinty reiterated Canada's commitment to North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) modernization, Arctic security, and initiatives such as Arctic Over the Horizon Radar and Integrated Air and Missile Defence, while visiting NORAD headquarters in Colorado on July 16, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Ragging the puck on the 'Golden Dome'

Canadian involvement in U.S. President Donald Trump's 'Golden Dome' would surely mean greater military integration between the two countries.

Kim Richard Nossal

Opinion



After returning to the White House, United States President Donald Trump moved quickly to resurrect an updated version of the Strategic Defense Initiative—former president Ronald Reagan's idea that Americans should be protected from missile attacks by a shield that would cover the entire United States. A week after his inauguration this past January, Trump issued an executive order announcing the creation of

an "Iron Dome for America" that would defend against missile and other aerial attacks.

Ottawa's reaction was immediately positive. In February, then-minister of national defence Bill Blair claimed that "an integrated missile defence system for all of North America is the thing that makes sense to everybody." Trump revealed Canada's interest in the project back in May when he formally announced the system's architecture, now rebranded as the "Golden Dome." Trump acknowledged that Canada wanted to join the shield—noting in a social media post some days later that Canada would be expected to pay \$61-billion of the cost of US\$175-billion (though he added that participation "will cost ZERO DOLLARS if they become our cherished 51st state. They are considering the offer!"). In July, David McGuinty, minister of national defence in Mark Carney's government, visited the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) headquarters, announcing that the "outdated restrictions" on Canadian participation in missile defence had been removed.

Such a positive reaction is, however, deeply paradoxical. It is

clearly at odds with Prime Minister Carney's oft-repeated argument since he took office that, as he said in March, "the old relationship with the United States, which was based on deepening integration of our economies and tight security and military cooperation, is over"—with the implication that Canada needs to reduce its vulnerability and dependence on the U.S. Canadian involvement in the Golden Dome would surely mean greater military integration between the two countries.

It also flies in the face of this country's long-standing bipartisan hesitation about missile shields that led then-prime minister Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government to offer a "polite no" to the Reagan administration's invitation to participate in Strategic Defense Initiative in 1985, and also led the Liberal government of Paul Martin to reject participation in the National Missile Defense scheme of then-president George W. Bush in 2005.

Given the design of the Golden Dome, participation would mean that Canada would have to abandon its historical advocacy against the militarization of outer space. A related concern is that

the deployment of a missile shield would trigger an arms race, leading to increased destabilization in global politics.

There are also questions about how effective a comprehensive missile shield would be given the vastness of the territory to be covered, and the equally vast range of aerial attacks that are to be defended against. Finally, it would appear that Trump has substantially understated the cost of the shield: rather than US\$175-billion, the Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the Dome could cost up to US\$542-billion; a report by the American Enterprise Institute in September concluded that the cost could be between US\$252-billion and US\$3.6-trillion, depending on the design. For Canada, even at the US\$61-billion Trump mentioned in May—or the US\$71-billion figure he raised this country's contribution to in June—the cost would be massive.

How to explain Canada's paradoxical response? One possibility is that the government's evolving approach to the Golden Dome has been driven not by any enthusiasm for missile defence, but by the same pragmatic calculus that we have consistently seen

from the Carney government as it has sought the holy grail of a comprehensive agreement with the Trump administration. In this view, the best way to achieve such a deal is to avoid picking fights that might increase the manifest hostility that the administration has towards Canada. Not expressing skepticism about the Golden Dome's effectiveness, its vast cost, or the implications for the weaponization of outer space, flows naturally.

Indeed, it would appear that the Carney government has decided to rag the puck on the Golden Dome: negotiating with the Americans without actually committing to a project that would tie Canada even more closely to the U.S. This has the advantage of being able to wait and see what the actual costs of participation might be, and whether the existing Canadian commitments to the modernization of NORAD would suffice as an appropriate contribution to continental defence. Importantly, it also gives Canadians an opportunity to see whether Trump's Golden Dome will suffer the same fate as the Strategic Defense Initiative, which was soon abandoned because of the huge technological obstacles and the prohibitively high costs associated with trying to erect an effective missile shield over such a vast territory as the U.S.

Kim Richard Nossal is a professor emeritus of political studies in the Centre for International and Defence Policy, Queen's University, and is the author of *Canada Alone: Navigating the Post-American World*.

The Hill Times

Policy Briefing **AEROSPACE**

Missile defence and the ‘Golden Dome’

The Carney Government needs to take a long view of continental defence to protect Canada and our vital national interests.

David Pratt

Opinion



In March of 1983, then-United States President Ronald Reagan announced the Strategic Defence Initiative. The plan was to incorporate the first ever space-based defence systems to protect against Soviet nuclear armed intercontinental ballistic missiles. It became known and subsequently derided as ‘Star Wars’ since its extraterrestrial vision might as well have been science fiction. In the end, it was shelved by the geopolitical thaw that ended the Cold War, its eye-watering projected costs, and by its mind-blowing technological complexity. Deferring to public opinion, the government of then-prime minister Brian Mulroney officially rejected participation in September 1985.

Ten years later, a secret CIA report entitled *Emerging Missile Threats to North America During the Next 15 Years* (a heavily redacted version of which was released last year) estimated that 18 countries either had ballistic or land-attack cruise missile programs underway, or had the technological capability to develop them by 2010. The proliferation of missile technology in countries like North Korea, Iran, and Iraq in the wake of the 9/11 attacks led America’s George W. Bush administration to re-float the idea of a ballistic missile defence (BMD) program with Canada in 2003. While that program theorized about including space interceptors, its actual missile deployments were limited to ground and sea-based interceptors. As minister of national defence in 2004, I suggested that Canada participate in talks with the U.S. However, a lack of political support scuttled BMD in 2005.

Rejecting Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) made sense, but one could argue that Canada’s rejection of BMD was short-sighted and weakened our role in continental defence. While the NORAD mission of Integrated Threat Warning and Attack Assessment continued, the new defence arrangement gave ballistic missile interception to NORTHCOM leaving Canada out of the loop when it came to decisions around how, when, and where these missiles would be intercepted.

In the 20 years since Canada rejected BMD, we have seen missile technology progress in leaps and bounds. The aerospace threat is now not limited to inter-continental ballistic missiles, but includes submarine and air launched cruise missiles, hypersonic missiles, hypersonic glide vehicles, as well as drones and un-crewed aerial vehicles. Meanwhile, the European members of NATO have actively pursued a system of Integrated Air and Missile Defences (IAMD) including programs such as the European Phased Adaptive Approach and the European Sky Shield Initiative, which integrates systems like the Patriot and the French-Italian SAMP/T.

As the only member of NATO that is not part of an IAMD program, Canada has

been a missile defence outlier. Over three years of missile strikes in Ukraine, and Russian and Chinese revanchism, have finally shaken us out of our complacency. That Prime Minister Mark Carney’s government has indicated a willingness to participate in IAMD with the U.S. is a step in the right direction in re-vitalizing NORAD and our role in continental defence. The question now is to what extent Canada will be involved in the “Golden Dome” initiative which takes as its model Israel’s Iron Dome.

There are many “known unknowns” regarding the Golden Dome. In general, it proposes a multi-layered air-defence system including space capabilities, intended to engage and destroy aerospace threats of every type from any place at any time. The differences between the Iron Dome and the Golden

Dome are massive. Israel has roughly the same land mass as the state of New Jersey, so protecting the entire continental U.S. with an IAMD system is mind-boggling both in its scale and technical complexity—not to mention the cost. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the space-based components of the system alone could reach \$542-billion over 20 years. Other estimates of the entire system suggest that it could run into the trillions of dollars.

U.S. President Donald Trump’s Golden Dome has a similar level of ambition as Reagan’s SDI program. It remains very far from certain that it will become a reality during this or subsequent American administrations. Still, Canada—like our other NATO allies—needs to engage with the U.S. on missile defence to determine what we

wish to protect, and what we are willing to pay. Having the bi-national command of NORAD assume full responsibility for all threat detection and interception would allow us to assert our sovereignty on missile defence. The alternative is to subject ourselves to U.S. decisions, and to forfeit our sovereignty.

Given the parlous state of Canada-U.S. relations—especially regarding trade—the Golden Dome discussions constitute a political issue of great hypersensitivity. Nevertheless, the Carney government needs to take a long view of continental defence to protect Canada and our vital national interests.

David Pratt is a former minister of national defence under then-prime minister Paul Martin, and is the principal of David Pratt & Associates.

The Hill Times

ADVERTISEMENT

One Canadian Economy Under Modern Skies

Canada’s prosperity has always ridden on the winds: prairie grain to Pacific ports, life-saving medevacs in the North, global investors and visitors arriving through our gateways. But the sky that binds this country together is changing fast. New defence realities, supply-chain pressures, climate disruptions, and the rise of drones and urban air mobility are reshaping how our airspace must work. If we want one Canadian economy – competitive, resilient, and more inclusive – we need modern skies to match.

NAV CANADA is ready to deliver that modernization in partnership with the federal government quickly, responsibly, and in a way that protects affordability for passengers and shippers. The choice is clear—lead the world in airspace performance, or allow friction in our sky to become friction in our economy.

A dual-purpose transformation

Canada manages one of the largest and most complex airspaces on Earth. Much of the backbone that keeps it safe and efficient is at a generational turning point. Upgrading it will do more than improve on-time performance. It will harden critical infrastructure, better integrate civil and military operations, and unlock measurable gains in productivity across trade corridors.

Through iTEC SkyNex, an advanced air traffic management platform Canada is adopting with European partners, we can shift to trajectory-based operations that are more predictable, fuel-efficient, and flexible. A national Canadian Network Management Unit will act as the nerve centre for gate-to-gate flow, integrating airspace, weather, airport capacity and demand in real time. And a RPAS Flight Information Management System will safely bring drones and future urban air mobility into the system for public safety, emergency response and economic uses.

Renewing surveillance radars, navigation aids, secure fibre links, and modern data centres will provide the critical infrastructure needed to modernize and support essential operations. These investments have the potential to support NORAD missions and day-to-day commercial operations alike.

A sky that works for everyone

Modern skies mean fewer bottlenecks, more direct routes, and faster recovery from disruptions; concrete productivity gains that ripple through supply chains, tourism, and the innovation economy. It keeps rural and northern communities connected and positions Canada to capture new aerospace opportunities.

NAV CANADA’s not-for-profit, user-pay model has served – and continues to serve – Canadians well. However, a co-investment approach mirrors successful national infrastructure programs in ports, rail and airports, and aligns with international practice. It delivers results at a pace while protecting affordability.

The payoff for Canadians is tangible: smoother trips, stronger supply chains, lower emissions from smarter routing, and more high-quality jobs in engineering, technology, and operations. Above all, a safer, more resilient system is able to respond to changes in demand and withstand extreme weather.

Nation-building in scope

Canada’s air navigation system is indispensable to national security. Modern platforms like iTEC create the potential for civil and military controllers to work from a common operating picture, with dynamic activation of airspace for exercises or urgent missions, and faster, clearer coordination from a national network management hub. These capabilities directly support NATO and NORAD commitments and strengthen our sovereignty across three oceans.

This is not a blank-cheque vision. It is a focused program built to deliver early, visible gains while laying the foundation for long-term leadership. The outcome is a system that is safer, greener and more efficient, without sacrificing affordability for Canadians or competitiveness for Canadian businesses at a pivotal moment for our economy.

From Coast Salish territory to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, from the Prairies to the Arctic Archipelago, aviation is how Canada knits itself together and connects to the world. When our sky works better, everything beneath it moves better: patients get care faster, exporters hit markets on time, visitors keep coming back, and military missions integrate seamlessly with civil operations. That is what one Canadian economy under modern skies looks like.

NAV CANADA stands ready to co-invest with the federal government to make it real, on time, on budget, and with clear, measurable benefits for Canadians. Let’s modernize the sky so the Canadian economy beneath it can fly farther, faster, and stronger.



AEROSPACE Policy Briefing

Diverse, local workforce can plug gaps and help Canada's aerospace industry thrive internationally

A diverse, local workforce which is currently being trained—or has recently graduated—remains untapped.

Catherine Mavriplis

Opinion



Canada's aerospace industry perennially faces a skilled labour shortage. The Canadian Council for Aviation and Aerospace, and Le Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre en aérospatiale au Québec both routinely predict shortages in the tens of thousands. While recent domestic graduates fill only a fraction of the open positions, the industry

continues to recruit abroad, looking to fill often highly specialized positions with professionals from Europe or beyond. Further, recent tightening of immigration policies and the reduction of student visas could accelerate the problems, and severely affect the industry.

A diverse, local workforce which is currently being trained—or has recently graduated—remains untapped. Women and other underrepresented groups still lag behind in this traditional industry. They also lag in the tech industry, which could be a natural feeder to the aerospace industry, especially as AI and other data-based technologies become integrated into design, manufacturing, and maintenance operations.

Research shows diverse teams produce better solutions to complex problems, and produce a better return on investment. Producing AI with non-diverse teams and feeding AI data that is biased can create and exacerbate significant problems. Most engineering students and engineers have not spent a lot of time thinking about the ethics of what they do, or those

of the AI or data-assisted technologies they use on a daily basis.

What is being done to diversify the aerospace workforce (and the STEM workforce, more generally) in Canada?

I was heartened to see Women and Gender Equality Canada is currently funding the grass-roots organization Women in Aerospace to conduct "gender equality audits in the aerospace workplace." The EmpowerHER project includes a survey to identify systemic barriers in the industry. While it is commendable to survey before you start a project, I believe the time for identifying systemic barriers is well past. We know what they are. It's time for action.

In 2007, Pratt & Whitney Canada held their first Women's Leadership Forum, and the company has run a very successful Women's leadership program since. While the percentage of women in management at Pratt & Whitney has increased over the years, aerospace conferences, executive boards and leadership teams still present a predominantly male image.

In 2016, with the help of Pratt & Whitney, we were able to establish a baseline for the participation rate of women in the larger original equipment manufacturers in the industry, with the expectation that future monitoring could refer to the baseline data. Little has been done—or even measured—for this industry. EmpowerHER now expects to "develop a scalable corporate auditing protocol to understand the driving factors within a corporation impacting the hiring, retention and progression of women in the aerospace sector." We look forward to the results.

In aerospace and beyond, the industry trend seems to be to quietly do away with equity, diversity and inclusion programs, while attacks on these efforts are coming fast and furious in the public sphere. Recently, the House Standing Committee on Science and Research ordered the Tri-Council funding agencies—the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and

the Canadian Institutes of Health Research—to hand over disaggregated data on student and faculty applications from 2000 to 2025, including data protected by privacy standards such as demographic data, responses to equity, diversity and inclusion questionnaires, and success rates. This appears to be a politically motivated, copy-cat version of what's occurring in the United States where grants with titles completely unrelated to equity, diversity, and inclusion have been canceled based on a single word which happens to intersect with politicians' understanding of gender and misunderstanding of science. The research community mobilized over a weekend—yes, we routinely work weekends and late nights—to produce a petition of over 5,000 names to defeat the order. Luckily, we succeeded, but that is not the end of it.

Just because political winds to the south of us are blowing hard, do we need to follow suit? Canada always stands up for what is right, and plays a key role on the international scene. Let's keep moving forward as a society by providing quality jobs and opportunities for all members of society, including in the lucrative aerospace industry in Canada.

Catherine Mavriplis is a professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering at University of Ottawa where she works on advanced numerical methods for aerodynamics simulations.

The Hill Times

From dialogue to delivery: aerospace is critical to building Canada Strong

Canada's aerospace and defence industries now need clarity, coordination and execution to be a true partner for government and delivering on the commitments laid out in the budget.

Mike Mueller

Opinion



Reflecting on the past year, 2025 has brought significant change and transformation for Canada. The federal election ushered in a new political era, a new prime minister, and a new vision: 'Canada Strong.' The mandate is clear: build economic resilience, strengthen national security, and restore this country's global competitiveness.

Few sectors sit more directly at the crossroads of these priorities than aerospace. The industry employs 225,000 Canadians, generates \$34-billion in GDP, and delivers the technologies that keep Canada's Armed Forces (CAF) capable and bolster our economy.

Over the past year, the government has taken meaningful steps: increased defence spending to meet evolving NATO targets and NORAD commitments; renewed international partnerships through initiatives such as ReArm Europe; and signalled clear intent through the 2025 federal budget, the forthcoming Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS) and the creation of the Defence Investment Agency (DIA). While industry has been supportive of this progress, commitments alone don't build aircraft, train workers, or strengthen sovereignty. It is time to move from dialogue to delivery and work together to build 'Canada Strong.'

The 2025 budget, titled *Canada Strong*, sends a clear signal that government recognizes aerospace as vital to both our economy and our national security. Removing aircraft from the luxury tax was a smart measure as it protects and grows domestic jobs and competitiveness to the benefit to our industry and workers. Perhaps

more importantly, it demonstrated political leadership, and a growing understanding that civil and defence aerospace are interdependent, that one cannot thrive without the other.

A strong civil aerospace sector drives innovation, exports and productivity. It provides the skills, infrastructure and technologies that underpin national defence and security. It is where we design, test, certify, and sustain aircraft and systems for both commercial markets and the CAF. A strong civil side means a stronger, more self-sufficient defence side. Both must sit at the heart of this country's industrial strategy if we are to build a resilient, future-ready economy capable of withstanding geopolitical uncertainty and protecting our sovereignty.

But recognition is only the first step. The real test will be how quickly government turns these commitments into capability. Canada's aerospace and defence industries now need clarity, coordination and execution to be a true partner for government and delivering on the commitments laid out within *Canada Strong*.

This is where the Defence Industrial Strategy and the new Defence Investment Agency must lead. They must identify which

capabilities Canada will build at home, how those priorities align with defence needs, and how procurement will accelerate to get critical equipment into service. Success will require early and ongoing collaboration with industry, alignment between capability needs and domestic capacity, and procurement processes that move at the "speed of relevance". A coordinated, predictable approach will allow companies to plan, invest, and deliver the technologies and systems on which our military and allies depend.

The industry can build the capability. We can recruit and train the workforce. We can innovate and export. But we cannot do so without clear defence signals and a steady, structured partnership with government. Transparency, early engagement and consistency must define Canada's new approach. Without these, we risk delays and missed opportunities while our allies and adversaries surge ahead.

The Aerospace Industries Association of Canada and our members stand ready to work closely with the new DIA and government to translate investments into capability, industrial strength and long-term prosperity. To achieve this, commitments

must be operationalized through clear programs, transparent timelines, and engagement with companies of all sizes. Government must act as a first buyer where appropriate and export enabler, creating domestic momentum that positions firms in this country, and investments to succeed here and internationally. With 70 per cent of what we produce exported, our home-grown aerospace has already proven its reliability to the world. The next step is ensuring those strengths serve Canada's own strategic needs.

The months ahead will be pivotal. Industry is ready to respond, innovate, and deliver. The onus now lies with government to move from dialogue to delivery. The political consensus is in place. The budget commitments are on paper. The DIA and the DIS are taking shape. What Canada needs now is follow-through.

That is the message we will bring to parliamentarians at our upcoming Aerospace on the Hill: the time for dialogue has passed. Canada's future competitiveness and security depend on turning words into work, plans into programs and strategies into sustained capability.

If government acts, industry will deliver. And the result will be more than stronger aerospace and defence industries—it will be a stronger, more secure Canada.

Mike Mueller is president and CEO of the Aerospace Industries Association.

The Hill Times

Policy Briefing **AEROSPACE**

The threat of hypersonics is not hyperbole

If we want to retain the agency to decide where to position the slider between cost and risk, we need to start planning and growing our hypersonic capabilities; otherwise, we will be forced to don an expensive, gilded dome that symbolizes dependence, not sovereignty.

Jean-Pierre Hickey

Opinion



In a multilateral world of peace and global stability, Canada has succeeded in advancing its shared values and interests. Within this context we have never had the need, or maybe ambition, to spend on defence. The geopolitical landscape is now changing.

Rising isolationism and growing foreign threats mean that, in the future, Canada cannot rely as heavily on the benevolent protection of others to advance its interests. The increase in defence spending in the recent federal



Researchers with the NASA-funded ICESCAPE mission examine melt ponds in the Arctic Ocean in July 2011. Photograph courtesy of Flickr/NASA Goddard Space Flight Center

budget is a direct consequence of these changes.

With the growing importance placed on defending our Arctic sovereignty and the constant drum roll of United States President Donald Trump's "Golden Dome", we face a dilemma most aptly summarized by Canadian Maj.-Gen. J.D. Smyth's recent comments: "You have infinite risk on one side and infinite cost on the other. Where do you put the slider."

Modern threats to our Arctic sovereignty are not hyperbole. They are hypersonics. Our allies—and, more importantly, our foes—have been advancing hypersonic technologies over decades. Russia has been operationalizing the use of hypersonic missiles in Ukraine, and China has built at least one large-scale hypersonic test facility every year since 2007.

Both China and Russia have hundreds of hypersonic weapons

capable of carrying nuclear warheads and striking North American assets.

NORAD's North Warning System of continental defence is designed to detect and track the predictable trajectory of intercontinental ballistic missiles. It does not protect us from the high-speed, low altitude, and high maneuverability of modern hypersonic glide vehicles or cruise missiles. Defence against emerging hypersonic technologies is one of our greatest vulnerabilities in the Arctic.

Despite this, Canada is still the only country in the G7 without meaningful hypersonic testing capabilities, and very little expertise in the area. When we consider these high-speed threats alongside our historical shortcomings in the area, we understand that Canada's participation in the "Golden Dome"

may be driven by necessity rather than choice.

Canada risks strategic irrelevance in hypersonics if it does not act decisively now. NATO recognizes hypersonic systems as emerging and disruptive technologies and the U.S. Department of War just recognized "scaled hypersonics" as a critical technology area, yet we continue to treat them as distant possibilities.

Strategic preparation is precisely the mindset Canada needs to adopt. Although it is true that we have committed to invest in NORAD's modernization—\$38.6-billion over 20 years—the most recent Defence Policy Update, *Our North, Strong and Free*, proposes that "Canada will harness innovation in hypersonic and cruise missile defence."

Innovation makes for appealing political rhetoric, yet it conceals the difficult reality

that Canada still has significant foundational gaps to close in hypersonics. Innovation works in other areas of this country's defence where we have historical and industrial strengths, but not in hypersonics. Now is not time for innovation; we need to rapidly compensate for our historical shortcomings in this critical dual-use area. This is not about fielding offensive capabilities.

Hypersonic research is about developing domestic capacity to identify hypersonic signatures, predict and model trajectories, and develop counter-hypersonic capabilities. This is also a dual-use area that is ripe for many burgeoning Canadian space launch companies. We should have, as our allies have done, been fostering these capabilities at our universities and research centres over the past decades.

In the U.S., the Consortium for Applied Hypersonics brings together over 120 academic institutions with hypersonic capabilities; many European nations have extensive hypersonic research activities. Canada has nothing equivalent. If we want to retain the agency to decide where to position the slider between cost and risk, we need to start planning and growing our hypersonic capabilities; otherwise, we will be forced to don an expensive, gilded dome that symbolizes dependence, not sovereignty.

Jean-Pierre Hickey is an associate professor in mechanical and mechatronics engineering at the University of Waterloo. He advances fundamental and applied research in hypersonic technologies, and is an active participant in a number of NATO Science and Technology working groups in hypersonics.

The Hill Times

Building a human-centred future for Canadian aviation

Continued from **page 20**

are shifting aviation roles from routine execution to oversight, analysis, and judgment. New roles are emerging in cybersecurity, unmanned air-system management, and sustainable aviation-fuel engineering. The risk lies in assuming that technology alone can close the talent gap. Without deliberate strategy, we risk advancing technology faster than people can adapt, and in directions that leave human values and skills behind.

Younger Canadians are also re-evaluating what makes a career meaningful. Post-pandemic, they prize flexibility, purpose, and visible climate action. Aviation's traditional hierarchies, lengthy licensing, and carbon-intensive image can look out of step. Unless the industry modernizes, it will struggle to compete

for talent against tech, energy, and logistics sectors.

Enter Aviation 5.0

Drawing from the Industry 5.0 movement, Aviation 5.0 offers a values-driven framework for aviation's next chapter, built on three pillars: human-centricity, sustainability, and resilience.

Rather than treating technology as a replacement for people, Aviation 5.0 positions it as an enabler of human performance. It reframes innovation—AI, extended reality, digital twins, smart materials—as a means to reduce cognitive load, prevent burnout, and empower the workforce to focus on uniquely human strengths: judgment, adaptability, and creativity.

It also tackles workforce sustainability. It calls for competency-based, adaptive training where extended-reality simulators

allow pilots and technicians to practice rare or high-risk scenarios. It integrates mental-health protection and equity, diversity, and inclusion into system design to ensure AI-driven hiring and training tools are bias-free. And it emphasizes upskilling and reskilling people as technology evolves.

Responsible innovation, not blind adoption

Emerging technologies demand governance that matches their transformative potential. Aviation 5.0 aligns with global calls for transparency and accountability in AI, such as the European Union's forthcoming Artificial Intelligence Act. In aviation, that means explainable algorithms, human-in-the-loop supervision, and clear responsibility when technology influences

safety decisions. It also means building digital systems that strengthen public trust in aviation's safety culture.

A national opportunity

Canada is well-positioned to lead this transformation. Our universities already integrate sustainability, psychology, and systems thinking into aviation education. Industry and government already collaborate on green-aviation R&D, but workforce policy remains fragmented across training, innovation, and health portfolios. Aviation 5.0 offers a unifying blueprint.

What Ottawa can do now:

- Launch a national Aviation 5.0 workforce strategy to coordinate training capacity, diversity targets, and workforce well-being;
- Fund innovation labs linking academia, government, and industry to safely test AI, extended-reality, and predictive-maintenance tools;
- Adopt an aviation AI accountability framework to ensure transparency, human oversight, and bias audits in all deployments; and

- Modernize financial supports by making flight training eligible for student aid, expanding paid training pathways, and aligning aircraft maintenance with the Red Seal trade framework to improve recognition and mobility.

The path forward

For more than a century, aviation has connected the world through human ingenuity. Aviation 5.0 calls us to renew that spirit for the next century, building innovation that serves people, planet, and progress. As Canada adapts to shifting trade dynamics and accelerating technological change, strengthening resilience will be essential. With coordinated action, Canada can lead the world in sustainable flight by preparing its people and systems to sustain it.

Dr. Suzanne Kearns is an associate professor of aviation, founder and director of the Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Aeronautics (WISA) at the University of Waterloo. Dr. Gülnaz Bülbül is an assistant professor of aviation and associate director at WISA.

The Hill Times

AEROSPACE Policy Briefing

Plans to boost defence industry must leverage aerospace, strong civil sector, says sector experts

Continued from page 16

reporters that the federal government is currently examining Swedish defence contractor Saab, which has promised to bring thousands of aerospace manufacturing jobs to Canada in the assembly of its Gripen E fighter jet, as CBC News reported on Nov. 18.

Regarding Saab's promised job creation, Fergusson said during the House Industry Committee meeting that the question isn't how many jobs could be provided in a year or two, but how many could be sustained over the next 10 to 30 years.

"The [F-35] provides us with a long-term sustainable capability for [the] Canadian defence industry, with ... access to a global marketplace, which is going to expand, I would suggest, over time, and which is really doing what we want to do with a defence industrial strategy. The Gripen side of the equation is, in my view, a big question mark, but it's never going to be as big ... and it's not going to be sustained, in my view," he told the committee.

Fergusson framed delays in the F-35 decision as an emotional decision in response to statements by U.S. President Donald Trump.

"The F-35 purchase should have been done 15 years ago ... then it got derailed and it was stalled and stalled and stalled. If you look at the fighter aircraft production environment for the allied world and others, the F-35, that was really the only choice," he told the committee.

"There are a variety of other reasons that this has just become emotional nationalism, and has been wrapped up in diversification of general economic patterns for Canada."

Later during the meeting, Liberal MP Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Ont.) argued that U.S.

tariffs, such as on critical minerals like aluminum, "put a huge strain on the F-35 supply chain in Canada."

The U.S. has imposed a 35-per-cent levy on all Canadian goods, with exceptions for items covered under the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement. Sector-specific levies have also been introduced, including a 50-per-cent tariff on metals, and 25 per cent on automobiles.

On Oct. 25, Trump announced on social media that he would increase "the Tariff on Canada" by 10 per cent, in response to an anti-tariff ad, sponsored by the Ontario government and featuring the voice of former U.S. president Ronald Reagan, that was aired on American television.

"Those are practical, realistic concerns. I don't believe those are emotional concerns," O'Rourke told the committee.

Regarding the DIS, David Perry, president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, told *The Hill Times* that "it's about time," adding that the aerospace sector is a big part of defence.

"I've heard lots of different positive comments from the government about trying to be much more intentional about what we do with our defence dollars, where they get spent, [and] to have more of them be spent at home," he said.



David Perry of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, says that, across the board, there hasn't been 'much direction across the different things that the Canadian military would buy.' Photograph courtesy of David Perry

"The defence sector is unlike other parts of the economy, because of the nature of government involvement either to purchase things domestically or to facilitate and allow exports abroad, and it's unlike most other parts of the economy because the government's really heavily involved, either with domestic sales or export."

Perry said it would be difficult to pass judgment on the DIS before it's finalized, but said his question relates to what the government will actually support through the strategy.

"The budget ... had a bunch of the early parts of spending announcements to put in some money towards private financing

supported through the Business Development Bank of Canada, trying to support quantum technology, trying to support small- and medium-enterprises and a few other initiatives. But across the board, [we] haven't seen much direction across the different things that the Canadian military would buy or that are currently being produced domestically in Canada," he said.

"What are the things that the government wants to focus on, making more of, making world class, focusing on having the government buy at home? I haven't seen much specificity."

Joly spoke at the Canadian Aerospace Summit in Ottawa

on Oct. 29, where she indicated that the aerospace industry could play a central role in the DIS, as reported on Nov. 4 by *Skies Mag*, an aviation, aerospace and aircraft news magazine.

During the summit, Joly said that Canada's National Shipbuilding Strategy has revitalized shipyards in Halifax, N.S.; Vancouver, B.C.; and Lévis, Que., and that a similar approach could secure a decade or more of steady aerospace production work in areas ranging from aircraft systems integration to space and surveillance technologies, according to *Skies Mag*.

Upon releasing the 2025 budget, Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Que.), said the DIA and the DIS would build up this country's defence industry by strengthening homegrown businesses and supporting Canadian workers.

"We will further build our security and defence capabilities, right here at home – creating new jobs for our engineers, technicians and scientists in sectors such as aerospace, shipbuilding, cybersecurity, and AI," he said.

jcnockaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Budget 2025 spending promises related to the Defence Industrial Strategy

- **\$68.2-million** over three years, starting in 2025-26, to the Department of National Defence (DND); Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED); the National Research Council (NRC); and the Communications Security Establishment to establish the Bureau of Research, Engineering and Advanced Leadership in Innovation and Science (BOREALIS);
- **\$1.0-billion** in 2025-26 to create a new Defence and Security Business Mobilization Program at the Business Development Bank of Canada to provide loans, venture capital, and advisory services to help small- and medium-sized firms contribute to Canada's defence and security capabilities;
- **\$656.9-million** over five years, starting 2025-26, to ISED to develop and commercialise dual civilian-military technologies in a range of industries, including aerospace, automotive, marine, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, biodefence, and life sciences;
- **\$334.3-million** million over five years, starting in 2025-26, to ISED, NRC and the National Science and Engineering Research Council for a suite of measures to help anchor quantum technology firms in Canada, and provide pathways to technology adoption in defence-related applications and industries;
- **\$443-million** over five years, starting in 2025-26, to Natural Resources Canada and ISED to support the development of innovative critical minerals processing technologies, support joint investments with allies in Canadian critical minerals projects, and develop a critical minerals stockpiling mechanism to strengthen Canadian and allied national security; and
- **\$182.6-million** over three years, starting 2025-26, to DND to establish a sovereign space launch capability.

Source: *Canada Strong*, the 2025 federal budget, released on Nov. 4



Liberal MP Dominique O'Rourke said U.S. tariffs, such as on critical minerals like aluminum, 'put a huge strain on the F-35 supply chain in Canada,' during a meeting of the House Industry Committee on Nov. 19. Screenshot courtesy of Parlvu

Policy Briefing **AEROSPACE**



Trade tribunal urges feds to redo multimillion-dollar defence bid after ‘valid’ complaint it favoured U.S. supplier

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

A new Canadian International Trade Tribunal ruling backs the complaint that highly restrictive technical requirements to supply night-vision binoculars effectively excluded all potential bidders except one American supplier.

BY IREM KOCA

The Canadian International Trade Tribunal is asking the government to change its criteria and reissue a multimillion-dollar bid for military night-vision binoculars after finding that the original terms favoured an American supplier over Canadian and European firms.

In a Nov. 17 ruling, the Canadian International Trade Tribunal (CITT) determined that the July

10 complaint filed by Canadian defence firm Cadex Inc. is “valid,” and that the solicitation “contravenes” rules outlined in the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA).

CITT recommends that Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), the central purchaser for the federal government—“revise and reissue” the tender for the supply of 17,000 binoculars to the Canadian Armed Forces, which was initially issued on March 4. The estimated cost of the binoculars is a broad range of between \$5-million and \$500-million. The original tender stated the contract would run for a three-year term, with the option to extend for nine, one-year periods.

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

Multiple European companies had previously raised the alarm on this procurement’s fairness, saying they were actively being excluded from the bidding process due to a combination of rigid technical specifications, an accelerated time-

line, and the limitations caused by the United States export control laws that dictate access to certain defence-related technology.

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

“The Tribunal finds that the government institution has not provided sufficiently transparent or intelligible justification that could underpin a conclusion by the Tribunal that the SNR threshold requirement is reasonable, in the circumstances,” reads the CITT’s Nov. 17 ruling.

CFTA articles 502 and 509 say governments must run fair and transparent procurement processes without giving any suppliers an advantage.

The Quebec-based company claimed the request for proposal (RFP) for the contract—which closed on July 8—contained highly restrictive technical requirements that effectively excluded all potential bidders except one American supplier.

Two European businesses had sent letters to the CITT in support of Cadex’s complaint.

Serge Dextraze, Cadex’s president and CEO, told *The Hill Times* by email that the company is “pleased” that CITT confirmed its standing as a potential supplier, and recognized and “the unreasonableness” of some restrictive technical requirements.

“We believe this decision will open the tender to broader competition, which ultimately benefits the Canadian Armed Forces and Canadian industry,” Dextraze said.

The Nov. 17 ruling says Cadex had a standing as a “potential supplier” to bring its complaint—which was timely filed—and that reasons for the determination will be issued at a later date.

Frédéric Guilhem, chief commercial officer of the night-vision department of Photonis—one of the most prominent European manufacturers of image intensifier tubes and night-vision systems who was also competing for this contract—said they “welcome” the CITT’s decision.

“We look forward to participating in a revised tender process with fair, transparent criteria to provide the Canadian Armed Forces with the best possible [binocular night-vision device] technology.”

While CITT cannot force the government to rewrite an RFP, its findings can lead to a procurement being reconsidered. Based on the ruling, PSPC is compelled to pay Cadex Inc. \$2,750 in costs for preparing and advancing this complaint. The costs are determined by the level of complexity of a complaint, but if parties involved disagree with that assessment, they can start a process to establish the final amount.

This past summer, CITT ordered the government to pause the procurement, and “postpone the award of any contract” following the complaint. At the time, a PSPC spokesperson told *The Hill Times* that “the process is ongoing, and no decisions have been made.” PSPC did not provide an update on its progress as of publication deadline.

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

ikoca@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

NDP environment critic pans Carney's commitment to Paris targets, but May says she has 'confidence' feds will soon release climate policy

Prime Minister Mark Carney's commitment to meeting Canada's Paris Agreement targets comes only days after the second round of projects being referred to the Major Projects Office was announced, one of which is an LNG project.

BY ELEANOR WAND

Prime Minister Mark Carney's commitment to meeting the Paris Climate Agreement targets may have been enough to woo one vote from the opposition, but the NDP's environment critic says the prime minister's declaration "means nothing."

NDP MP Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie, Que.), his party's environment critic, said Canada had already signed onto meeting the targets in the Paris Agreement, which seeks to limit global warming to well below two degrees above pre-industrial levels.

During Question Period on Nov. 17, ahead of the budget vote, Carney (Nepean, Ont.) said Canada remains committed to meeting its targets set under the Paris Agreement. Under the agreement, signed in 2015, Canada committed to cut emissions to at least 40 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, a target that has been forecasted to be out of reach.

"I can confirm to this House that we will respect our Paris commitments for climate change and we're determined to meet them," Carney said in the House of Commons, responding to a question posed by Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.).

Carney also said his government will be announcing a nature strategy "in the coming weeks."

But Carney's commitment to these targets means "there's nothing new there," Boulerice said in an interview with *The Hill Times*.



Prime Minister Mark Carney announced the second tranche of major projects being referred to the Major Projects Office on Nov. 13. The list included three mining projects and one LNG project. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"To say that during Question Period means nothing, in fact," he said.

Boulerice, along with four of his NDP colleagues, voted against the budget later that evening.

But Carney's commitment was enough to sway May to vote in favour of the minority Liberals' first federal budget, which passed by 170-168 in a squeaker of a confidence vote to "approve in general" the government's budgetary policy. May's vote helped tip the balance in favour of the Liberals, along with abstention from two NDP and two Conservative MPs.

Speaking to *The Hill Times*, May said she is "looking forward" to seeing the feds' climate policy, adding she had "confidence that we will see it."

"I believe in the words the prime minister spoke," May said. "I have no reason to doubt that he's a man of his word."

Carney's "firm commitment" means the government is starting to build a climate plan, May said, but "we need to design a strategy that reaches Paris targets while also ensuring that no province in this country, including Alberta, gets disadvantaged economically."

Since taking office, Carney has walked back a number of Trudeau-era climate policies. One of the prime minister's first moves in office was to axe the consumer carbon tax, and he later paused the electric vehicles sales mandate, pending a review, citing the



NDP MP Alexandre Boulerice said he is 'really, really concerned' about the government's climate policy direction. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

impact of the United States' tariffs on the Canadian auto industry.

Carney's climate pledge came days after the Nov. 13 announcement of the latest tranche of projects being referred to the Major Projects Office (MPO), which has drawn criticism from some environmental groups.

Those projects included three critical minerals projects: the New Brunswick Sisson Mine project; phase two of Matawinie Mine, a graphite mine in Quebec; and the Crawford Nickel project in Ontario. The list also includes the Ksi Lisims LNG project in B.C., the North Coast Transmis-

sion Line, and a hydro project in Iqaluit.

According to the government, the projects represent more than \$56-billion in investments.

Boulerice said the government shouldn't be moving forward with LNG projects as they will increase greenhouse gas emissions.

Boulerice told *The Hill Times* his primary concern is the graphite mine in Quebec. He said he has met with environmental groups about the project, pointing to a report produced by local and national environmental groups in May which warned about the

deterioration of the water quality in nearby rivers from the exploration phase of the project.

"They are really worried that it's going to go worse and worse if this project [goes] further ... without any proper environmental assessment because of [Bill] C-5," he said, referring to the provision in the legislation that gives Parliament the authority to bypass regulations for projects in the "national interest," including some environmental impact assessments.

The organizations are pushing for graphite to be subject to metal and diamond mining effluent regulations and physical activities regulations, which Boulerice said he supports.

"The government seems to have completely forgotten that preserving fresh water and the environment is a priority of national interest," Rébecca Pétrin, executive director of Eau Secours, said in a press release.

But Boulerice said he is "really, really concerned" about the government's climate leadership, generally.

"It was already not enough, and now they make it worse," he said of the Liberals' climate policy.

Boulerice said the government's climate competitiveness strategy, which was released in the budget on Nov. 4, consists of "a bunch of tax credits to big companies," calling it a "catastrophe" that the government is not imposing an oil and gas emissions gap.

The feds' budget opened the door to eliminating the proposed Trudeau-era oil and gas emissions cap, with Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) telling reporters on Nov. 4 the cap won't be needed once "conditions are met."

The budget says Canada is still committed to reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 through methane regulations and carbon capture and storage. It also proposes expanding critical mineral projects, strengthening industrial carbon pricing, and incentivizing clean energy with tax credits, including for carbon capture.

Boulerice said that though the government is considering the methane restrictions included "a big victory," that policy alone won't get Canada to its climate targets.

"It will not be enough if you consider that they have scrapped the carbon tax, that they are not meeting the targets, they are subsidising companies, and after that they will not impose a cap on the only sector that is still emitting more and more greenhouse gas emissions," he said.

Carney is also close to striking an oil pipeline deal with Alberta, as reported by *The Globe and Mail*. That project would run from Alberta to northwest British Columbia, and involve an exemption to the ban of oil tankers along the B.C. Coast.

But British Columbia's job minister, Ravi Kahlon, said the provincial government remains opposed to the pipeline. He indicated to *The Canadian Press* that

Continued from page 28

his government may have been out of the loop on the project, explaining they're "learning some of this stuff from the media." Some First Nations in the area are also against an exemption to the tanker ban.

On Nov. 19, May told reporters there is "no chance in God's green earth" that an oil tanker would ever enter the northern B.C. Coast, pointing to the dangerous water conditions in the area.

"You can't wish away the science," she said, adding that British Columbians "will never stand for it."

Indigenous consultation needs to 'happen in the boardroom rather than the courtroom,' says Liberal MP Grant

The Ksi Lisims has support of the Nisga'a Nation, on whose territory it will be built, but the project is beset with legal challenges from two nearby First Nations. The Lax Kw'alaams Band and the Metlakatla First Nation have gone to court to oppose it. Ksi Lisims LNG is being developed in partnership with Rockies LNG, Western LNG, and the Nisga'a Nation.

But Liberal MP Wade Grant (Vancouver Quadra, B.C.) told *The Hill Times* that there is still space for consultation.

"Myself and the Indigenous caucus are very straightforward



Green Party Leader Elizabeth May voted in favour of the Liberals' fall budget on Nov. 17 after Carney confirmed Canada would respect targets set under the Paris Climate Agreement. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

with that. Indigenous consultation, not just today, but tomorrow and into the future, needs to be upheld," Grant said. "And I think that we've shown that that's strengthening every day."

He said that even with legal challenges, consultation can take place.

"I've seen it happen with my own First Nation ... we went to court with the government," he said. "We stepped away from the litigation, and we were able to work out reconciliation agreements."

Grant was a Musqueam Indian Band councillor in B.C. from 2004

to 2014. The rookie MP was first elected to the House in April's federal election after former Liberal MP Joyce Murray did not run for re-election.

"There is that opportunity" for consultation, he said. "That dialogue needs to happen. I think we need to ensure that these things happen in the boardroom rather than the courtroom."

Grant was part of a House Environment Committee meeting looking at the Port of Montreal expansion project, which was included in the first tranche

of projects being referred to the MPO.

That project is also facing environmental concerns over its impact on the habitat of an endangered fish. Bloc Québécois MP Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, Que.), his party's environment critic, said there was inadequate consultation on the project, and brought forth a motion to call on the government to halt work in a meeting of the House environment committee on Nov. 17. The motion was defeated by the Liberals and Conservatives.

May also raised concerns about the Darlington New Nuclear project in Ontario, which was referred to the MPO in the feds' first list of projects. She noted that the project already received a loan of almost \$1-billion from the Canada Infrastructure Bank in 2022. Ottawa pledged an additional \$2-billion for the project in October.

She also noted that though the project is owned by Ontario Power Generation (OPG), foreign companies will also reap the rewards. The project is being delivered through a partnership with GE Hitachi, AtkinsRéalis, Aecon, and OPG.

May said she wants to see "functioning east-west-north-south electricity grid" as a project of national significance.

Not all projects referred to the MPO are set to be national-interest projects. The office's role is to make recommendations to cabinet about which projects should make the cut.

In a Nov. 17 environment committee meeting, Dawn Farrell, CEO of the MPO, said she was "assessing all" projects for the national-interest criteria, and that the office was working on "a number" of projects to see if they would fit in the category. She said that would happen "in the next year or so."

eward@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Health Canada's alcohol guidelines are 14 years old, despite new ones issued in 2023

Continued from page 4

Beer Canada has also been active in recent years in lobbying against an increase to the federal alcohol excise tax. The automatic tax hike, which is typically based on the previous year's inflation rate, was frozen at two per cent starting in 2023. That is expected to end next year.

The organization said in a Nov. 4 press release after the tabling of the federal budget that it was "disappointed" that the finance document did not put a permanent end to the annual increases to the tax. Beer Canada also said it "will continue working" with the government for a tax framework that "supports investment, protects jobs, and keeps beer affordable for Canadians."

Regarding Beer Canada's suggestion that the CCSA's research was faulty, CCSA CEO Dr. Alexander Caudarella said, "I think it's really unfortunate there's this



Brandon Purcell, advocacy manager at the Canadian Cancer Society, says that the new guidance should be published on Health Canada's website because it is a 'go-to' source for health information. *Photograph courtesy of Brandon Purcell*

attempt to confuse and misinform about science."

Caudarella told *The Hill Times* that two distinct teams were involved in the gathering and analysis of data for the 2023 guidelines. This includes one team of 23 scientists from 16 institutions across the country, "a number of whom" were involved

in the research for the 2011 document.

A part of this work involved a systematic review—a way of collecting empirical information on a subject based on a specific research question—of other scientific reviews.

A total of 5,953 scientific studies were analyzed to inform

the updated guidance, according to the CCSA, which provided additional information to *The Hill Times* following the Nov. 18 interview with Caudarella.

CCSA's CEO noted that the Public Health Agency of Canada signed off on the methodology, which adhered to two separate international standards—AMSTAR and GRADE—for evaluating the sources included in the systematic review. The review was also peer-reviewed and published in *Alcohol, Clinical and Experimental Research*, a multi-disciplinary journal focused on alcoholism and alcohol-related disorders.

CCSA focused on getting the word out

The decision to connect alcohol consumption and disease risk followed the CCSA's consultation conducted prior to developing the guidance, according to Caudarella.

Noting it occurred the year before he joined as CEO in 2022, Caudarella said that one of the biggest findings from the consultation—which included an online questionnaire completed by 4,846 people—is that respondents said they didn't want to be told how much to drink, but they wanted access to the facts and to make their own decision about what is an "acceptable risk."

No one is saying that Canadians shouldn't drink alcohol ever again, but "if you're going in uninformed, that's not fair to the consumer," he said.

Caudarella said he's not focusing on which website has the data

available, but about ensuring that the new guidance is accessible and understood.

The CCSA received \$2-million from Health Canada following the release to reach out to different communities, and to hold roundtables to educate the public about the update.

"It's a message that's resonating with a lot of people in Canada who are looking to be healthier, and so we were finding that more people know about it and more people are taking action with it than what we've seen before," he said.

Caudarella told *The Hill Times* that multiple health organizations and nine provinces and territories have shown their support for the 2023 guidance.

The four jurisdictions that have not published the new guidance are Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nunavut, and Yukon, according to information provided by the CCSA.

Purcell said that he has been told that the federal government's own decision not to publish the updated recommendations has impacted the decision of some of those jurisdictions—which he did not name—not to go ahead with the 2023 guidance.

The reason it's important for Health Canada to publish the new guidance is because the department's website "is seen as the go-to place for a lot of health care information in Canada," he said, adding that public health units and physicians turn to the Health Canada website as a resource.

tsanci@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

‘It’s a big concern’: MPs scrutinize head of Major Projects Office for past role in Trans Mountain contract

Dawn Farrell was CEO of the Trans Mountain Corporation when it issued a \$32.9-million sole-source contract to McKinsey and Company to help the pipeline expansion project save money as the multibillion-dollar price tag ballooned in 2022.

BY IREM KOCA

Opposition MPs say the fact the new head of the Major Projects Office was at the helm of the Trans Mountain expansion project as costs ballooned and a controversial contract was awarded to McKinsey has given them some pause.

Dawn Farrell, now CEO of the Major Projects Office tasked with stickhandling and streamlining multibillion-dollar “nation-building” projects, became CEO of the Trans Mountain Corporation in August 2022.

On Nov. 18, members of the House Public Accounts Committee heard from Trans Mountain’s current chief financial officer Todd Stack as part of its study into professional services contracts highlighted in a June 2024 audit by Auditor General Karen Hogan.

Hogan’s 2024 audit found that the Trans Mountain Corporation issued a \$32.9-million non-competitive contract to McKinsey and Company for professional services in October 2022 without a clear justification in an exception to competitive procurements.

“I do not know if she was the originator of recommending McKinsey, but the approval of the sole source to McKinsey was approved by the senior leadership team, including the CEO which was Dawn Farrell at the time, and the CFO, the chief project execution officer and the chief commercial officer,” Stack said. “So it was reviewed and approved by the senior levels at Trans Mountain.”

Stack told MPs the hiring of McKinsey was an internal decision, and he confirmed that



Bloc Québécois MP Sébastien Lemire said Dawn Farrell’s previous decision to approve a controversial McKinsey contract is concerning given her new position with the Major Projects Office. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Dawn Farrell was appointed CEO of the government’s Major Projects Office this past August. *Photograph courtesy of the Privy Council Office*



Trans Mountain Corporation chief financial officer Todd Stack testified at the House Public Accounts Committee on Nov. 18. *Screenshot courtesy of ParIVu*

Farrell was part of an executive team that approved the move.

“It’s a big concern, and now it’s an even bigger concern that she has the Major Projects Office,” said Conservative MP Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Ont.).

Farrell assumed her role at Trans Mountain Corporation two months before the McKinsey contract was awarded as the company was reportedly already struggling with ballooning costs and lengthy delays of the pipeline expansion project from Alberta to British Columbia’s coast.

The overall cost for the project spiked from an initial \$7.4-billion

price tag from 2018 when the federal government purchased the project to roughly \$34-billion.

MPs pressed Stack on how Farrell’s involvement affected procurement decisions.

“We want to see what happened and the role that [Farrell] could have played,” said Conservative MP Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, Que.).

Bloc Quebecois MP Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi–Témiscamingue, Que.) said Stack’s responses highlighted that, without McKinsey, Trans Mountain would not have been able to reduce its costs.

“This is concerning because Dawn Farrell will be working on energy and mining projects again. If the company was unable to reduce project costs without McKinsey’s assistance, then we should expect projects led by the Office of Major Projects to suffer the same fate,” he told *The Hill Times*.

In an email to *The Hill Times*, Liberal MP Jean Yip (Scarborough–Agincourt, Ont.) said she has “no concerns about Ms. Farrell’s ability to run the Major Projects office as she comes highly qualified.” Yip argued that Stack’s testimony has indicated that the value received from the

cost-reduction and productivity-improvement initiatives were greater than the amount it paid for the contract.

Stack told MPs that the initial engagement with McKinsey to find cost and productivity efficiencies was for a six-month contract worth about \$18-million, but the contract was extended for about a year due to “the success and the value created in the project.”

In December 2024, the Liberals said that for every dollar spent on the Trans Mountain McKinsey contract, \$20.60 in cost savings were realized, leading to more than \$700-million in cost savings overall.

The project’s overall costs are currently under review, but the corporation intends to pay back the government, including the controversial \$18-billion that came through TMP Finance in December 2024, Stack told MPs. He added that Trans Mountain is on track to return more than \$1.7-billion to Ottawa in interest payments and other disbursements this year, and \$10-billion by 2030.

“We do absolutely intend to return the entire amount of funds that the government has advanced to us both in the form of debt and equity,” he said.

Stack said that the sole-sourcing is an approved method of outsourcing, but that the firm also looks at competitive processes as much as it can.

When MPs pressed Stack about how Farrell’s leadership contributed to major cost overruns, he said Farrell is “very familiar with procurement policies,” and her tenure started well after that first \$7.5-billion cost was in place.

The decision to hire McKinsey was not influenced by any other government officials including Gerald Butts, who at the time served as principal secretary to then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, Stack told MPs when they inquired whether Butts was involved.

Stack also told MPs that the corporation has tightened conflict-of-interest declarations and training since the debacle.

When announcing her appointment, Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) called Farrell “one of Canada’s most experienced executives.” Farrell previously held senior executive roles at BC Hydro and TransAlta.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith previously praised Farrell for her success for getting the pipeline project to finish line, and said she counts her as “an adviser.”

The first wave of major projects to be shepherded by Farrell will include LNG Canada Phase 2, which would expand the liquefied natural gas export facility at Kitimat, B.C. Also on the list are modular reactors at Ontario’s existing Darlington Nuclear Generating Station; an expansion by the Port of Montreal in Contrecoeur, Que.; Saskatchewan’s Foran McIlvenna Bay copper mine project; and the Red Chris Copper and Gold Mine expansion in B.C.

ikoca@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Interim PBO says he is focusing on parliamentarians, not media

Liberal MP Pauline Rochefort says she's happy to hear Interim Parliamentary Budget Officer Jason Jacques is 'not making comments to the media,' noting the considerable press coverage of his previous appearances at OGGO.

BY MARLO GLASS

Canada's budget watchdog says he is shifting his focus to emphasize serving parliamentarians with less media engagement after generating a spate of unflattering headlines about the Liberal government's economic and fiscal outlook.

"Since the beginning of September, we have held more meetings with parliamentarians and their staff than we would typically host over the course of the entire year," Interim Parliamentary Budget Officer Jason Jacques told the House Government Operations and Estimates (OGGO) committee on Nov. 20.

This increase in outreach to parliamentarians has been offset by "declining a number of media requests for on-the-record interviews," he said.

Jacques called it a "strategic reorientation," an effort to prioritize his office's mandate of supporting MPs and Senators, and to "ensure people focus on the technical content of our work."

The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) functions as an agent of Parliament, and assists parliamentarians by providing transparency and accountability in the government's spending processes.

Jacques has previously been highly critical of the government's fiscal track, calling it "alarming," "stupefying" and "unsustainable" in previous OGGO appearances. In a Sept. 25 report, the PBO forecast weak economic growth for the

foreseeable future, and a sluggish GDP due to the prolonged trade dispute between Canada and the United States, its largest trading partner.

In a Sept. 16 appearance at OGGO, Jacques said what he saw as an apparent lack of fiscal anchors to keep Ottawa's debt spending in check causes the people he works with "a considerable degree of concern at this point."

Jacques was also publicly critical of the way he came to hold his interim position as head of the office. Jacques was notified that he would be offered the role just 72 hours before his predecessor Yves Giroux's term was due to expire at the end of this past August. Giroux has said that he was left in the dark about the government's plans for his successor. Jacques previously worked in the PBO under Giroux, and has called for changes in legislation to avoid repeating how he was hired.

Liberal MP Pauline Rochefort (Nipissing-Timiskaming, Ont.) said during the Nov. 20 meeting that she's happy to hear Jacques is "not making comments to the media," noting the considerable press coverage of his previous OGGO appearances.

She noted prior parliamentary budget officers Kevin Page and Yvex Giroux have had "slightly different viewpoints" than Jacques, despite all three coming from the same organization that emphasized fiscal sustainability.

"How could their comments have been different than yours?" she asked.

"You'd have to invite them to the committee to ask them how they reached the conclusions that they did," Jacques responded.

The Canadian Press reported on Nov. 12 that the federal government's list of governor-in-council appointments includes a posting for a new budget officer, and job listing said the successful candidate must show sound judgment, "tact and discretion," and communicate about complex policy issues in a "neutral way."

Jacques, who holds the interim position until March 2026, confirmed he will apply for the permanent role.

Conservative MP Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale-Langley City, B.C.) said that when she saw the government's job posting, she "thought it was fascinating" because "it kind of sounds like

they want to make sure that somebody is going to keep things on the lowdown."

"Are you concerned that is the personality trait that they're looking for?" she asked Jacques during the meeting.

Jacques told OGGO he understands the job posting's emphasis on tact and discretion.

He reiterated that he's had close to 100 meetings this fall with parliamentarians to answer their fiscal questions, and those meetings are kept private. That's where the emphasis on discretion comes from, he said.

As for tact, working on Parliament Hill means meeting Canadians from across the country who have "different cultural backgrounds, a lot of beautiful linguistic duality," he said. "And it requires tact to deal with people from all those different backgrounds and meet them where they are, and especially recognizing that parliamentarians are the client."

Jacques' OGGO appearance was to brief committee members on his Nov. 14 analysis of the 2025 budget. That report criticized Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) new budgetary structure, which separates day-to-day operational spending from capital expenditures. The PBO said the government is using an "overly expansive" definition of investments that classifies about \$94-billion in spending over the next five years as capital spending.

Furthermore, the report says the government's new framework "adopts a definition of capital investment that expands beyond the current treatment" used by other countries, and concludes "the government's definition of capital investment is too broad."

The 2025 budget lays out \$60-billion in spending cuts stemming from the government's comprehensive spending review, which tasked many departments in the public service with cutting spending by 15 per cent over the next three years.

The PBO's analysis said there is "a lack of detail" about the impact on programs within departments, along with job losses and potential service-level impacts. The report said it's not clear if or when the government plans to publish this information, or how progress will be reported.

Interim Parliamentary Budget Officer Jason Jacques told the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee that he is focusing on supporting parliamentarians and doing fewer media interviews. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



"In the absence of such detail, it is difficult for PBO to assess the fiscal and operational risks to achieving the stated savings," the report said.

Mark Mahabir, the PBO's director general and general counsel, said the office has the power to compel departments and Crown corporations to provide data in a timely manner. The PBO submitted information requests to five departments related to information in the budget, but the departments said they could not provide the data. The PBO notified both Speakers of the House and Senate, Mahabir said, but "we're sort of in limbo for the remedy" because the legislation that grants the PBO its powers does not cover what happens if departments or Crown corporations don't provide information to the PBO.

"I would say that is deeply concerning, not only to parliamentarians, I'm sure, but all Canadians who have come to understand the very important role your office plays in providing Canadians with impartial

advice and a review of what the government is proposing through their budget," responded Conservative MP Kelly Block (Carlton Trail-Eagle Creek, Sask.).

Rochefort suggested the PBO was asking for incomplete or speculative data from departments. However, Jacques said they were asking for forecast information prepared by departments for the budget.

"Because the \$60-billion worth of cuts is directly related to balancing the operating budget, which is one of the government's fiscal anchors ... it was something that was certainly pertinent and valuable for parliamentarians to have as they voted on the budget," Jacques said.

"Ultimately, it proved not to be the case, which is why we referred the matter to the Speakers, so parliamentarians could make the decision regarding what information they should have as part of their budgetary deliberations."

mglass@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

‘Quiet buzz’ on Bay Street about Carney’s

The potential impact of these projects is up for debate as many are located in individual provinces or territories, and were previously approved by those jurisdictions. Meanwhile, the federal government wants to accelerate the construction of the Alto High-Speed Rail, Canada’s first high-speed railway from Toronto to Quebec City.

Continued from page 1

Toronto-based vice-chair of BMO Financial Group since 2013.

“There is a strong response within the finance community, within the engineering community, within the construction community. People are awake, people are aware and are trying to understand what the timelines for a lot of these projects might be and are enthusiastic about making sure there’s good Canadian participation as these projects begin to roll out,” said Tobin.

“I just came back from a lunch where I had a CEO talking to me about ‘how do we get ready to participate as a Canadian business’ in the shipbuilding sector and defence spend.”

Tobin said he expects that Quebec and his home province of Newfoundland and Labrador will propose a project to further develop Labrador’s hydroelectric power.

Tobin said when he headed what was then known as the department of industry, science and technology, “we always had a list of projects that we thought were critically important,” but said the difference today is to articulate a list, refer to projects as having national importance, and to them a priority. This is taken seriously by the business community, he said.

“I think the demand on the trades community is going to be huge,” Tobin said.

The Globe and Mail reported on Nov. 19 that the federal and Alberta governments were close to a deal that includes an oil pipeline to British Columbia’s northwest coast with a possible exemption from the tanker ban imposed by then-prime minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government.

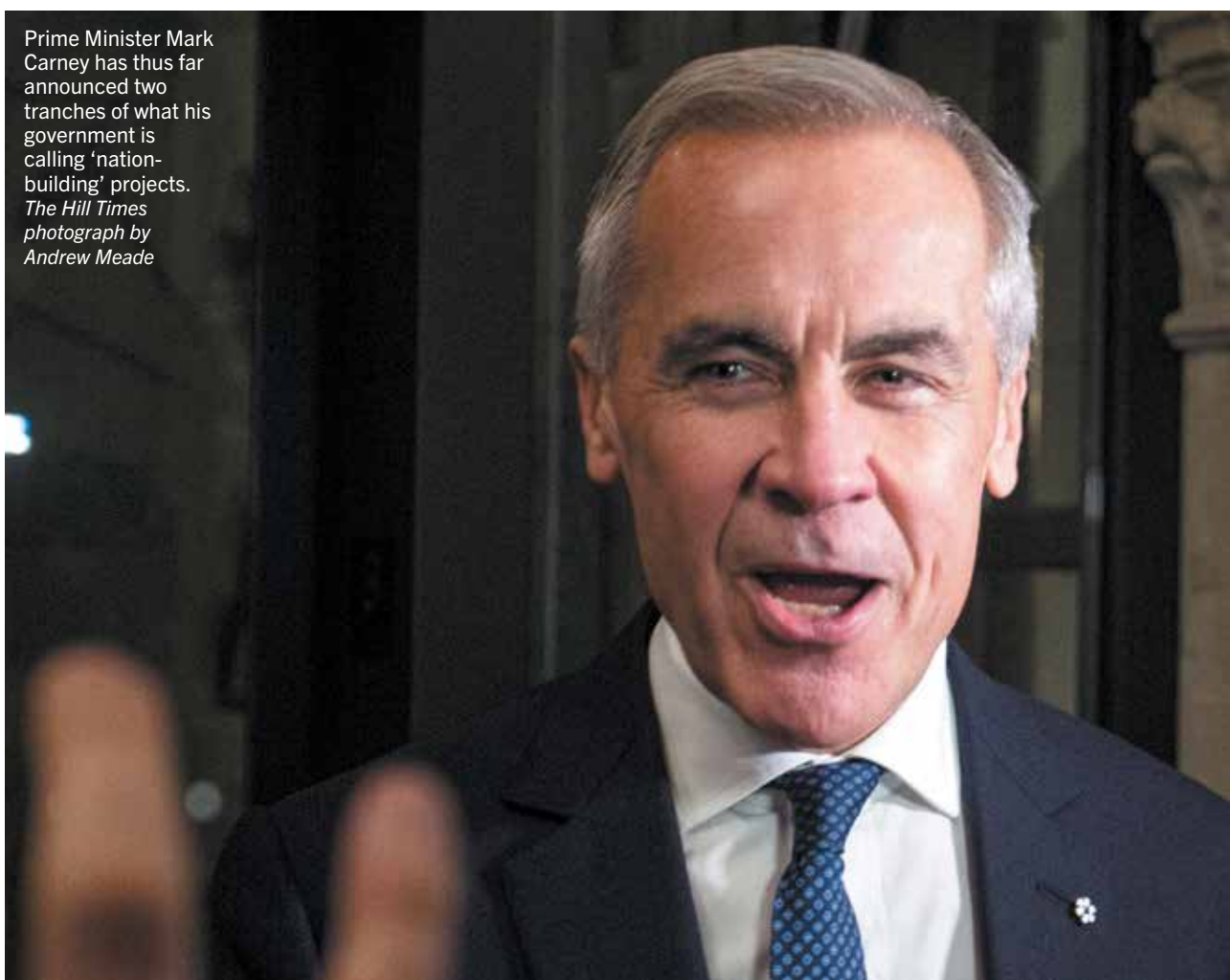
The current prime minister said as much when he launched the first tranche of projects back in September, noting that “for too long, the construction of major infrastructure has been stalled by arduous, inefficient approval processes.”

“We used to build big things in this country, and we used to build them quickly,” Carney said. “It’s time to get back at it and get on with it. That starts with getting out of our own way.”

Improving capacity to sell overseas part of nation-building projects, says economist

Julian Karaguesian, an economist who’s worked for Finance Canada and who now teaches economics at Montreal’s McGill

Prime Minister Mark Carney has thus far announced two tranches of what his government is calling ‘nation-building’ projects.
The Hill Times
photograph by Andrew Meade



University, said the projects could all be considered nation building.

“We’ve gone through a long period of not building anything,” he said. “The objective is not only to build internal trade corridors, but to expand our capacity to sell overseas.”

For instance, Karaguesian said the aim of the second phase of LNG production in Kitimat, B.C., which the federal government expects to attract \$33-billion in private-sector capital, is to “get gas to the Asian giants.”

“To the extent that it’s building out our economy, rather than just north-south supply routes and pipelines, it is a nation-building project,” said Karaguesian.

He credits the Carney government with “tapping into some kind of patriotic feeling about building out Canada as our economic model is under attack” from United States President Donald Trump.

“Trump’s disrupted us externally, and Carney is an internal disruptor in using public invest-

ment to catalyze private investment,” said Karaguesian.

When Carney announced the second tranche of major projects in Terrace, B.C., earlier this month, he referred to the *Building Canada Act*, which, as part of Bill C-5, received royal assent in late June and is intended to advance “projects of national interest,” according to the federal government.

The law, Carney said, “changes the government’s approach to building major projects from ‘why’



Former federal minister and former provincial premier Brian Tobin.
Handout photograph



‘The objective is not only to build internal trade corridors but to expand our capacity to sell overseas,’ says economist Julian Karaguesian about the so-called nation-building projects.
Photograph courtesy of Julian Karaguesian



According to pollster Nik Nanos, the announced projects are “realistically provincial projects” that fit into what the Liberals consider a national energy and national transportation strategy.
The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

‘nation-building’ major projects, says Tobin



ger rail that someone could get from ‘A’ to ‘B’ across Canada.”

However, she said that “individual mining and LNG projects are absolutely not nation building,” and that the term, along with the word, “transformational,” as Carney has characterized these major projects, is “over the top for what is essentially regional economic development across the country.”

No announced projects fit nation-building definition, says Nanos

Veteran pollster Nik Nanos said he believes that none of the projects referred to the MPO are nation building, since they don’t cross provincial borders, and are instead “code for big projects that can stimulate the economy and might not technically meet the criteria for nation building as being coast to coast to coast.”

“Looking at the list, nation building is about investing in infrastructure in major projects that can help make the Canadian economy more resilient and allows the federal government to try to manage the risks related to our uncertain trade relationship with the United States,” said Nanos, founder and chief data scientist at Nanos Research.

“It’s not like building a railway from one end of the country to the other, which is the traditional view of a nation-building endeavour.”

Carney has likened his major-projects plan to the construction of a national railway, the Trans-Canada Highway, and the St. Lawrence Seaway.

“For him, he just means big infrastructure investments,” said Nanos. “I don’t think they are nation building from a political perspective. They are nation building from the perspective of projects across the country that are major initiatives that can help put investments in every single province.”

He said the projects, which combine energy and infrastructure, and energy and transportation, are “realistically provincial projects that fit into what I think the Liberals are trying to assert as a national energy strategy and a national transportation strategy.”

“The fastest way for the federal government to reduce the proportion of Canadian GDP that’s connected to the U.S. is through the energy sector,” said Nanos.

Ottawa-based historian and biographer Charlotte Gray said that “nation-building rhetoric is effective when voters feel under threat, usually from an external source such as threats from the U.S. or world wars. So, today is a classic of ‘never let a crisis go to waste,’” she said in an email to *The Hill Times*.

“An external threat allows Ottawa to cut through red tape and take risks,” said Gray, citing the example of actions taken by then-Liberal prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King’s



Green Party Leader Elizabeth May says that ‘individual mining and LNG projects are absolutely not nation building.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

so-called “minister of everything” C.D. Howe during the Second World War “when he brought to Ottawa dozens of ‘dollar-a-year’ businessmen and industrialists to get the war machine going.”

May said that the Carney government’s “‘build, baby, build’ mantra is a definite public-relations exercise to make sure as many projects are announced, and it’s easy to be confused with all the different announcements for different streams for development between the Major Projects Office, which is quite distinct from cabinet designating a project of national significance.”

Projects that “have been deemed to be of national impor-

tance and significance,” and which have been referred to the MPO could, following an assessment, “be designated in the national interest under the Building Canada Act,” said PCO spokesperson Pierre Cuguen in an email.

According to the MPO, projects that may be recommended for “national-interest designation” are assessed based on the extent to which they can:

- “strengthen Canada’s autonomy, resilience and security;”
- “provide economic or other benefits to Canada;”
- “have a high likelihood of successful execution;”

- “advance the interests of Indigenous Peoples;” and
- “contribute to clean growth and to meeting Canada’s objectives with respect to climate change.”

Michael Gullo, vice-president of policy at the Business Council of Canada, said the criteria is “helpful in that we are navigating in a productivity and investment crisis so we have figured out some way to advance projects as quickly as possible.”

However, he said that further clarity is required in terms of whether major project proponents need to be “under the MPO in order to move forward.”

The Hill Times

Projects referred to the MPO for consideration

The first tranche that were announced in September:

- LNG Canada Phase 2 in Kitimat, B.C., will double LNG Canada’s production of LNG and make it the “second-largest facility of its kind in the world,” with greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions projected to be 35 per cent lower than the world’s best-performing LNG facilities, and 60 per cent lower than the global average.
- Darlington New Nuclear Project in Bowmanville, Ont., will make Canada the first G7 country to have an operational small modular reactor (SMR). The first of four planned SMR units will provide power to 300,000 homes over 65 years, and will generate \$500-million annually into Ontario’s nuclear supply chain.
- Contrecoeur Terminal Container Project in Contrecoeur, Que., will expand the Port of Montreal’s capacity by about 60 per cent, and generate some \$140-million annually in economic benefits across Quebec and Canada.
- McIlvenna Bay Foran Copper Mine Project in East-Central Saskatchewan is expected to be Canada’s first net-zero copper project.
- Red Chris Mine expansion in Northwest British Columbia will increase Canada’s annual copper production by over 15 per cent and reduce GHG emissions by over 70 per cent once operational.

Total investments: more than \$60-billion

The second tranche announced in November:

- The Northwest Critical Conservation Corridor, which includes the Red Chris Mine expansion project and two others: the North Coast Transmission Line in northwest B.C. for which BC Hydro received a \$139.5-million loan from the Canada Infrastructure Bank for a project that will connect Yukon’s electrical grid to the Canadian grid through B.C.; and Ksi Lisims LNG on Pearse Island, B.C.—led by the Nisga’a Nation—which will become Canada’s second-largest LNG facility as part of a project expected to attract nearly \$30-billion in investment.
- Canada’s Nickel Crawford Project in Timmins, Ont., will produce low-carbon nickel for batteries and green steel, attract \$5-billion in investment, and have the potential for a net-negative carbon footprint.

Source: Prime Minister’s Office

- Nouveau Monde Graphite’s Matawinie Mine in Saint-Michel-des-Saints, Que., will integrate with the planned Bécancour Battery Material Plant, and attract \$1.8-billion in investment.
- Northcliff Resources’ Sisson Mine in Sisson Brook, N.B., will produce tungsten used for high-strength steel production.
- Iqaluit Nukkiqsautiit Hydro Project, located in Nunavut’s capital, will become the territory’s first 100-per-cent Inuit-owned hydro-energy project.

Total investments: over \$56-billion

The MPO is also working on six “transformative” projects, which include:

- A strategy to help more critical minerals projects get to final investment decisions within a two-year window.
- Wind West Atlantic Energy that will leverage over 60 gigawatts of wind-power potential in Nova Scotia and more across Atlantic Canada. This could include other projects, such as the further development of Churchill Falls and Gull Island by Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Pathways Plus, an Alberta-based carbon capture, utilization, and storage project and pipeline that will reduce emissions from the oilsands, and create the prospect of facilitating low-carbon exports to other markets.
- Arctic Economic and Security Corridor, an all-weather, land and port-to-port infrastructure project that will support Northern critical minerals projects while increasing the Canadian Armed Forces’ capability in the North.
- Port of Churchill Plus, a project with Manitoba’s proposed Crown-Indigenous Corporation, which will upgrade the Port of Churchill, and expand trade corridors with an all-weather road, an upgraded rail line, a new energy corridor and marine ice-breaking capacity.
- Alto High-Speed Rail, as Canada’s first high-speed railway, would span about 1,000 kilometres from Toronto to Quebec City, reach speeds of up to 300 km/hour and inject up to \$35-billion into Canada’s GDP while reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 25 million tonnes.

to ‘how,’” with a focus, in part, on strengthening “Canada’s autonomy, resilience and security.”

Karaguesian said the prime minister’s strategy to expand and modernize the ports and to renew the country’s transportation infrastructure “will allow us to diversify away from the United States.”

Under the *Building Canada Act*, cabinet will determine whether a project is of “national interest.”

Carney’s language about projects is ‘over the top,’ says Green Party Leader May

Federal Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.) said that the projects could be viewed “individually as parts of something that might be considered nation building.”

She explained that, for example, the Iqaluit Nukkiqsautiit Hydro Project—that would become Nunavut’s first totally Inuit-owned hydro-energy project and which has been referred to the MPO—could also become part of a national, carbon-free electricity-grid network that would be “absolutely essential for nation building and climate commitments.”

May said the high-speed rail line could also be considered nation building if it extended beyond the Quebec-Ontario corridor, and consisted of “a co-ordinated network to ensure that there was bus service and passen-

NEWS

Bloc Leader Blanchet's expletive about government's budget negotiation strategy 'not suitable for work,' says Government House Leader MacKinnon

The Liberals are polling much higher than the Bloc Québécois, and time will tell 'whose ass get bitten here,' says Liberal MP Marcus Powlowski.

Continued from page 1

inappropriate and not suitable for a professional work environment, says the government House leader.

"That's not suitable for work, is it?" said Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

In a scrum with reporters on Nov. 18, a day after the budget vote went through, Blanchet (Beloeil-Chambly, Que.) blasted the Liberals for failing to properly negotiate with opposition parties. He expressed his frustration in English by describing the Liberals as "bad partners" who used an approach that will "bite their ass."

"They were not good partners for anybody," said Blanchet. "They exploited the momentary weaknesses of everybody. And this is not how policy should be done. So, I believe it will come bite their ass."

The Bloc Québécois' communications office declined a comment for this article.

Speaking with *The Hill Times*, MacKinnon said that the Liberals did hold extensive negotiations with opposition parties, meeting with leaders and critics alike. In response to the observation that the government may have met with them but it's possible that the opposition parties did not consider them to be meaningful negotiations, MacKinnon said: "I don't know if it was meaningful for them, but it was certainly meaningful for us."

"We had extensive discussions with all of the opposition parties, not just the leaders, but including the leaders, with Members, with critics. Ministers had conversations on various items, and we'll continue to do that," he said.

The budget passed in the House on Nov. 17 by a razor-thin margin of only two votes. The final tally was 170-168. Conservative MPs Shannon Stubbs (Lake-



Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, centre, drew significant media attention last week after telling reporters that the government's strategy of offering no concessions while still expecting support will "come bite their ass" in the coming weeks and months. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

land, Alta.) and Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, Alta.), and NDP MPs Lori Idlout (Nunavut) and Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni, B.C.) abstained from voting.

Considering the voting patterns of the Conservatives and the NDP in that vote, it appears both parties cast their votes strategically to ensure that the government was not defeated. Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) Liberals won the last election only seven months ago, and are still popular in national public opinion polls.

According to a recent poll by Nanos Research, if an election were to happen now, the Liberals would receive 40.2 per cent of the votes, the Conservatives 28.2 per cent, the NDP 10.1 per cent, the Bloc 7.4 per cent and the Greens 2.2 per cent.

The Liberals currently hold 170 seats, the Conservatives 143, the Bloc Québécois 22, the NDP seven, and the Green Party one. In the 343-seat House, the required number to hold a majority government is 172.

In order to pass legislation through the House, the Liberals need the support of at least one opposition party.

In a minority Parliament, it's customary for the government to reach out to opposition parties ahead of the budget to request their support. Carney and other senior cabinet ministers did meet with opposition party

leaders, but the opposition has been saying that the government did not engage in meaningful discussions.

In an email to *The Hill Times*, NDP Interim Leader Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.), said that the government failed to "meet the moment" and deliver on the immediate needs of Canadians. He said that his party was against the cuts to the public service, and wanted the government to do more on issues like affordability, creating good jobs, health care and housing.

"Following the presentation of the budget, we spoke with Canadians and heard that the budget failed to meet the moment, deliver transformational change, or address the urgent needs of Canadians," Davies wrote in his email last week.

"On that basis, we engaged in conversations with the government about improvements that could strengthen the budget and earn our support. Unfortunately, the Liberals have not been willing to make those changes."

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, B.C.), in an interview with *The Hill Times*, said that the Liberals did negotiate with her, but only after they tabled the budget on Nov. 4. Before that, May said she sent a 13-page letter to Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) on Aug. 28, highlighting her party's ideas on how to generate

more revenue for the government, and what the Greens would like to see in the budget.

The letter mentioned seven priorities, including economic sovereignty; increased government revenue; a strong civil service; greater community resilience through a low-carbon economy; investing revenue in addressing social issues such as housing and health care; and investments in global responsibilities like peacekeeping, disarmament and development assistance.

May also said that she met with Carney on Oct. 2 as part of the prime minister's consultation with all party leaders. May said that as a result of her negotiations with the government, Carney said in the House that the government "will respect our Paris commitments for climate change and we're determined to achieve them." The Green leader said that she takes the prime minister at his word that the government will fulfil this promise.

"That was what happened as a result of persistent negotiations with multiple actors within cabinet and the prime minister's office, and I just can speak to my own experience, not that of other parties," May said. "I found a willing ear."

Liberal MP Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay-Rainy River, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* that based on the information he has, the government did reach out to opposition parties. However, he said that

the opposition was not interested in negotiating, but rather in having the government capitulate to their demands, which was not acceptable for the government.

He said that his party won a mandate from Canadians only a few months ago, and the Liberals ran on an agenda that they want to implement.

As for Blanchet's colourful comment about the Liberals, Powlowski said that he likes colourful language and didn't mind the Bloc leader's characterization of the Liberal strategy on the budget.

"Their popularity is pretty low at the moment, we'll see whose ass gets bitten here," said Powlowski.

"They say 'negotiate,' but they mean 'capitulate to our demands.' They want us to accept what they want. I mean, we are the elected party. We do have very close to a majority, and I don't think it's all about us compromising to meet the demands of much smaller parties who haven't got the same sort of voter support as we have."

Liberal MP Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Man.), parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, said that his party did consult opposition parties and will keep on doing that going forward. In the meantime, he said that government and opposition parties interact with each other all of the time in Parliament and the opposition can provide their feedback to the Liberals anytime they want.

"All discussions are, in fact, meaningful from my perspective, and I believe that the government House leader takes it very seriously also," said Lamoureux.

"So at the end of the day, those formal discussions no doubt take place between the House leaders and the respective leaders. ... I do know opposition Members sit inside the Chamber all the time, and you often get Members that will walk over and talk with ministers and so forth."

Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, said that given the Liberals' strategy during the Nov. 17 budget vote, it appears they would not have minded going to the polls had they been defeated and that they adopted this approach because they are currently performing well.

But, Lyle said that they should remember then-Progressive Conservative prime minister Joe Clark's election defeat in 1979 when the government fell only seven months after winning an election and then lost the 1980 election. He said the Liberals took a risky strategy last week by leaving the opposition parties with the impression that they were not consulted in a meaningful way.

"The truth is that the Liberals would have been more happy than unhappy to have another election," said Lyle. "And they were prepared to take the risk now. Next time they have a confidence vote, they may not be feeling so good about their chances in an election, and in that case, they may well change their strategy and be more co-operative."

arana@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

True representation of constituents requires MPs to take principled positions even if it risks caucus expulsion or floor crossing, says Bill Casey

MPs are in the House of Commons to represent their constituents, and if they believe their party's positions run counter to those interests, they should speak up, even if it means leaving the party or being kicked out, says former Conservative-turned-Liberal MP Bill Casey.

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former Conservative-turned-Independent-turned-Liberal MP says he has no regrets about breaking ranks with his own party three times in his three decade-long parliamentary career because he did it on a point of principle.

Bill Casey, who served as a Progressive Conservative, Conservative, and Liberal MP for seven terms under 10 party leaders between 1988 and 2019, told *The Hill Times* that during his parliamentary career, he voted approximately 2,000 times in the House and in committees on a wide range of issues. The former Nova Scotia MP, who represented Cumberland—Colchester, said that he voted against his own party on three occasions: once on a confidence vote in 2007, which led to his expulsion from the Conservative Party, and twice before that on non-confidence votes. The two non-confidence votes were about an abortion bill (C-43) in 1990, and the Clarity Act (C-20) in 1999.

First elected as a Progressive Conservative MP in 1988, Casey lost the 1993 election in Jean Chrétien's Liberal red wave in which then-prime minister Kim Campbell's Progressive Conservatives were reduced to only two seats nationally. Casey took the riding back in 1997 and won the four subsequent elections. He won the 2008 election as an independent. In 2015, he ran and



Former Conservative-turned-Liberal MP Bill Casey, centre, told *The Hill Times* that it was 'very stressful,' but he has 'no regrets' about breaking ranks and voting against the 2007 budget. *The Hill Times* file photograph

won as a Liberal but did not seek re-election in 2019.

In 2007, Casey voted against Stephen Harper's government over the budget, arguing that the federal government was in violation of the Atlantic Accords, costing the provinces of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. At the time, Nova Scotia premier Rodney MacDonald, and Newfoundland and Labrador premier Danny Williams made a strong public case in their respective provinces on the grounds that Ottawa was breaching the written agreement. Public opinion in both provinces rallied behind them, and the issue gained substantial traction in the press both provincially and nationally.

Casey made it known through media interviews before the vote that he was leaning toward voting against the government.

Before the 2007 vote, Casey told *The Hill Times* that he received many calls from high-profile sitting and former cabinet ministers and senior government officials within his own party, asking him not to break ranks. About three hours before the vote, Casey said, Elmer MacKay, his mentor and a former Progressive Conservative cabinet minister in Mulroney's cabinet, phoned to persuade him not to oppose the government, but Casey refused. Shortly afterward, former prime minister Brian Mulroney called Casey to urge him not to vote against the government, and he again declined.

"Brian Mulroney then called and said the same thing that sometimes we have to put a little water in our wine and you're going to have to vote for the budget," Casey told *The Hill Times*,

who is currently working on his memoirs.

"I said, 'Mr. Mulroney, would you break a signed contract?' He said, 'Absolutely not.' And I said, 'Well, don't you think you're talking to the wrong person?'"

Casey said that as soon as he voted against the government, then-chief government whip Jay Hill expelled him from the government caucus. His office computers were immediately disconnected from the government networks.

As an Independent MP, Casey said he enjoyed the freedom of not being subject to party discipline, and voted as he wished. Casey was re-elected comfortably as an Independent candidate, winning 69 per cent of the vote in the 2008 election.

"I hope all politicians read this and keep it in mind because people want the representatives to represent, and that's all I did," said Casey.

"I just represented the interest of my riding and my province, and for that they rewarded me with this incredible win as an Independent. I met with [former Liberal prime minister] Jean Chrétien after this, and he said, 'How did you ever win as an independent with 69 per cent of the vote?' He said, 'I could never do that.' I don't believe it. I think he could, but he wanted to know all about it."

Clark family convinced Casey to join Liberals in 2015

After the 2008 election, Casey said, his seatmate on one side was NDP MP Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.) and, on the other side, then-newly elected Liberal

MP Justin Trudeau. He jokingly added that each one of them later became party leaders, and in his case, he was a party of one as an Independent MP. Davies is currently the NDP's interim leader.

In those days, Casey said he had numerous conversations with Trudeau on a variety of issues and developed a personal rapport with both men. Casey stepped down from the House in 2009 because of a health scare which was later resolved after a surgery.

His vote against the government drew a mixed reaction from his former caucus colleagues in which some were disappointed and upset with him, while others understood his reasons and are still his friends.

In his home province of Nova Scotia, Casey was lauded for standing up for his constituents and received a warm welcome. He said that he was kicked out of his party at a time when social media was in its infancy, and was not as powerful as it is today. Now, the former MP said, floor crossing is even more challenging, especially for women who often face more hostility online than men.

"They're so vicious when it comes to attacking women in politics, and we've lost a whole lot of really good women politicians—municipally, provincially and federally—because it's so vicious," said Casey. "It's hard on men, too, but it's different [for women] because there are words that apply to women that do not apply to men, and they are nasty words."

About a year after Trudeau became the Liberal leader in 2013, Casey received an email from him asking if Casey would like to run as a Liberal in the 2015 election. He said no. In a follow-up email, Trudeau asked if this idea was worth a chat to which Casey said yes and planned to travel to Ottawa.

While at the airport in Halifax, N.S., Casey ran into Maureen McTeer, wife of former Progressive Conservative prime minister Joe Clark, who asked him why he was going to Ottawa. After hearing Casey's reason, McTeer encouraged him to run for the Liberals.

The next day, Casey received an email from Clark who sent him a detailed analysis of pros and cons for running as a Liberal candidate, concluding that the pros outweighed the cons, and that he should go for it. McTeer's

encouragement and Clark's analysis played a key role in Casey's decision to join the Liberal Party, he said.

"I had moved off of 'no' to 'maybe' after talking to Maureen McTeer and Joe Clark," said Casey. "[In meeting with] Justin Trudeau, I felt very comfortable, and we just talked about the different things that we could do together and not. So I went home, talked to my wife, and threw my hat in the ring."

Party affiliation only included on voting ballots since 1974

The issue of floor crossing has been front and centre on Parliament Hill in recent weeks. Earlier this month, Conservative MP Chris d'Entremont (Acadie—Annapolis, N.S.) crossed the floor to join the Liberals, and political circles were rife with rumours that Conservative MP Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, Alta.) might follow. In the end, Jeneroux announced he would step down from his seat by spring 2026. He has not been attending House proceedings, and has missed the last three confidence votes that could have brought down the Liberal government. The government of Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) survived the Nov. 17 confidence votes by a razor-thin margin of only two votes.

According to academic research, a total of 72 MPs crossed the floor to join another party between 1867 and 2015. This number does not include those who left their party to sit as Independents, or those who were expelled from their caucus.

"So, in most cases, politicians leave their party, or at least they say that they leave their party because they feel their values no longer align with those of their party that they once served," said Semra Sevi, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Toronto, who conducted this research.

"This idea that they switch sides purely out of opportunism, believing that they can't be re-elected otherwise, is rare," Sevi told *The Hill Times*.

Sevi said that, for most MPs, winning re-election after switching parties has become an uphill battle in recent decades. She said that the 1974 election was the first to include party labels on voting ballots. Prior to that, ballots listed only the candidate's name and occupation. Since party names began appearing on ballot papers, it has become much harder for party switchers to successfully win re-elections because voters now pay closer attention to party affiliation, she said.

"As parties consolidated and party discipline became stronger in Canadian politics, and also with the inclusion of party labels and ballots starting from the 1974 elections, this is no longer possible, because voters are voting for the party in addition to the candidate, and oftentimes they don't know who the candidate is," said Sevi.

"They're actually voting for the party."

arana@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

COMMENT

Iran: drought, incompetence, and maybe revolution

A prolonged drought in Iran might accomplish what other challenges failed to do: destroy the rule of the religious extremists who seized power in 1979 and have turned the country into an international pariah.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



Maharloo Lake, a hypersaline wetland in the highlands of Iran. Severe drought in the country could be the trigger for an uprising that finally dispatches a regime that has overstayed its welcome, columnist Gwynne Dyer writes. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

paign by Israel and the U.S. did not bring it to heel.

But the lack of water may do what all those other challenges failed to do: destroy the rule of the religious extremists who seized power in Iran in 1979 and have turned the country into an international pariah. The oldest part of every religion is purely transactional, and in Tehran the imams are praying for rain.

They should pray quite hard because President Masoud Pezeshkian warned last month that “There is no water behind the dams. The wells beneath our feet are also running dry....If it doesn’t rain, we’ll have to start rationing water in [November].”

Well, it hasn’t started raining yet and we are running out of November, so what should people do next? “If the lack of rainfall

continues past that, we simply won’t have water and will have to evacuate Tehran,” Pezeshkian said. All 10 million people? Where would the government put them, given that the other 80 million Iranians are also suffering from a drought now in its fifth year?

Nobody knows. If Pezeshkian sounds well-intentioned but hopeless and basically useless, that’s because he’s not really the government. For the past 45 years, all the big decisions in Iran have been made not by the elected parliament but by the unelected ‘Supreme Leader,’ a role that has been filled since 1989 by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Ayatollahs are the supreme religious authorities in the Twelver strand of Shia Islam that prevails in Iran and Iraq. They are not necessarily secular leaders, but in the

turbulent aftermath of the Iranian revolution of 1979 that overthrew the monarchy an ayatollah called Ruhollah Khomeini sought and gained absolute power in Iran.

Khomeini only lasted 10 more years, but his designated successor Ali Khamenei is still in office 36 years later at the age of 86. As one would expect, he heads a regime that sees matters of faith and morals (like ensuring that women’s hair is properly concealed) as more important than mere material concerns like looking after the water supply.

This general neglect of practical matters by the regime has also opened the door to widespread corruption among those in charge of the economy, which partly explains why Iran’s GDP per capita is still stuck at about the same level as it was in 1985. The other reason is the sheer incompetence of even those officials who don’t take bribes.

Iran is a mostly arid country with tens of millions of farm families, so it would make sense to import crops that need a lot of water like rice from abroad while growing less thirsty crops at home. After all, a well-run Iran would have lots of oil money to pay for food imports.

Instead, the government has aimed at “strategic self-sufficiency” including in food, and the amount of land being cultivated has

doubled in 30 years in some areas. There are around a million deep wells (80-200 metres) for irrigation, and groundwater is vanishing. Subsidence is now as big a problem in Iran as in the areas of the Arctic that are losing permafrost.

Now add in an unprecedented multi-year drought that is hitting city dwellers as well as rural people. Rainfall was down by almost half in last year’s rainy season, so there was very little water left behind the dams when the winter rains failed to arrive in late October this year.

The great unspoken fear in the minds of Iranians who are paying attention is that this may not be just wayward weather. It could be the leading edge of permanent climate change: five years is a long time for a random deviation from the norm.

In the shorter run, however, it could be the trigger for an uprising that finally dispatches a regime that has overstayed its welcome. All the other challenges to the regime over the years could be blamed on wicked and godless foreigners who were stirring up impressionable locals, but this problem is entirely home-grown. No excuses available.

There are no reliable opinion polls in Iran, but the best guess is that, after 45 years, at least half the population of Iran actively dislikes the regime while most other people just accept it as inevitable. If the rain doesn’t come soon, and especially if they start evacuating cities, a decisive shift in the balance of opinion is entirely possible.

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

The Hill Times

OPINION

It’s time to help stop the spread of STBBIs throughout the country

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments need to undertake immediate and concerted action to provide everyone with access to sexual health prevention, screening, treatment, and education.

ISG Senator René Cormier

Opinion



Ever since my appointment to the Senate of Canada in November 2016, I have remained steadfast in my commitment to public health and safety, namely by raising awareness and promoting the fight against HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs).

In this geopolitical context, as the Global Fund’s Eighth Replenishment Summit recently ended and as we approach World Aids Day on Dec. 1, shedding light on these sometimes-overlooked issues is of upmost importance, as they deeply affect our country’s economic, social and cultural prosperity. Canada cannot effectively assume its sovereignty and strive in becoming one of the strongest economies in the G7 if it does not adequately address its public health issues, such as curbing the alarming rise in STBBIs rates.

The statistics are staggering. During the last decade, chlamydia cases have increased by 49 per cent, gonorrhea cases by 81 per cent, and syphilis cases by 178 per cent. In 2017, the number of reported cases of HIV reached its highest level since 2008.

On Oct. 22, I tabled in the Upper Chamber a data-driven publication entitled “Toward Fair and Equitable Public Health: Ending HIV/AIDS and STBBIs,” in which are presented a status review of STBBIs in Canada and 34 strategic recommendations stemming from a debate that took place in the Senate during the 44th Parliament. Amongst these recommendations are calls to increase federal funding for combatting HIV/AIDS, the inclusion of traditional knowledge and Indigenous voices, recognizing syphilis as a modern public health issue, and the decriminalization of HIV nondisclosure.

In a spirit of collaboration and solidarity, eight senators from different parliamentary groups and area of expertise contributed to this debate. These are Senators Joan Kingston, Rosemary Moodie, Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler, Kim Pate, Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, Paula Simons, Kristopher Wells, and myself. I wholeheartedly thank them for sharing their wisdom on this important matter for the benefit of Canadians. The resulting publication would not have been possible without their valuable contributions, a document that underpins an upcoming roundtable discussion organized by my office in partnership with the HIV Legal Network. Indeed, on Nov. 27, experts will share their perspectives about HIV/AIDS and other STBBIs in Canada, commenting namely on the conclusions of the publication.

STBBIs are preventable, treatable, and, in many cases, curable. Yet, they are continuing to cause serious social and economic impacts. It is a public health issue that affects all communities, particularly marginalized populations. Many challenges, such as deployment of technological innovations related to STBBI prevention, screening, and treatment, may be remedied with appropriate concerted efforts.

Although the Government of Canada has undertaken steps to curb the progression of STBBIs and HIV/AIDS, much more needs to be done. Federal, provincial, and territorial governments need to undertake immediate and concerted action to provide everyone with access to sexual health prevention, screening, treatment, and education. As the publication correctly states: “Failure to act will have serious repercussions for public health in Canada.”

It is with great hope that this publication may inspire others to effectively stop the spread of STBBIs throughout the country.

New Brunswick Senator René Cormier is a member of the Independent Senators Group.

The Hill Times

Blanchard defends Carney's ethics screen as a 'rigorous process'

'When Canadians hear that the prime minister has divested, I think what they expect is that there's been a sale of those controlled assets,' Conservative MP Michael Barrett told the committee.

BY MARLO GLASS

Prime Minister Mark Carney's chief of staff is defending his boss' decision not to sell his holdings in Brookfield Asset Management, even though the top public servant responsible for administering Carney's conflict-of-interest system did so.

"It's one of the most rigorous processes I've seen in my career," Marc-André Blanchard told the House of Commons Ethics Committee in French on Nov. 20.

Blanchard and Privy Council Office Clerk Michael Sabia, the government's top bureaucrat, are in charge of administering Prime Minister Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) ethics screen. The firewall ensures Carney doesn't make decisions that can benefit him financially, and was put in place due to his substantial financial assets, which have been placed into a blind trust.

Appearing before the House Ethics Committee on Nov. 19, Sabia said he was informed by Ottawa's ethics commissioner that he had investments in Brookfield shortly after he took the reins as the top public servant and a key adviser to the prime minister. Sabia said in order to "better manage" Carney's conflict-of-interest screen, he decided to get rid of those investments immediately.

Carney, meanwhile, put his own assets into a blind trust, which Blanchard said amounts to divestment, as Carney doesn't know what is in the trust.

Prior to entering politics, Carney led Brookfield Asset Management, which has US\$1-trillion in assets under management. He was also on Stripe's board of directors. Carney agreed to a conflict-of-interest screen between himself and Brookfield Asset Management, Brookfield Corpo-



During a two-hour ethics committee meeting on Nov. 20, Marc-André Blanchard, Prime Minister Mark Carney's chief of staff, was repeatedly questioned on how the prime minister's ethics screen is implemented. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ration, Stripe Inc., and 100 other related countries, *The National Post* reported, as ruled by federal Ethics Commissioner Konrad von Finckenstein back in July.

The Canadian Press reported when Carney became Liberal leader this past March, he put all his assets—other than his personal real estate—into a blind trust. In that process, Carney's assets are managed by a third party with whom he has no pre-existing relationship. This person can make trades and buy new investments without Carney's knowledge as long as the trust is in place. The ethics screen is meant to shield Carney from conflicts of interest in dealing with the companies that were put in the blind trust when it was formed earlier this year.

"When Canadians hear that the prime minister has divested, I think what they expect is that there's been a sale of those controlled assets," Conservative MP Michael Barrett (Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands-Rideau Lakes, Ont.) told the committee. "I appreciate within the laws, it's currently written that placing them in a blind trust satisfied that requirement."

But Canadians are "in the dark" about the decisions Carney is making and how they might impact his future wealth, Barrett said.

"It's a lack of transparency that gives rise to this concern," Barrett said.

The House Ethics Committee is studying the Conflict of Interest Act to find areas where it could be improved.

During a two-hour meeting on Nov. 20, Blanchard was repeatedly questioned on how the ethics



Michael Sabia, Privy Council Office clerk and secretary to the cabinet, said he got rid of his personal investments in Brookfield Asset Management as soon as he became aware he owned them, in order to better manage the prime minister's conflict-of-interest screen. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

screen is implemented, and if Carney's meetings, phone calls, and texts are monitored for any conflict of interest.

Blanchard said the goal is to ensure Carney does not find himself in a conflict of interest, and said he and Sabia, as the people responsible for the application of the ethics screen, "need to be aware of what's going on, both on the political side and for the public service side," in order for conflicts to be avoided.

Blanchard reiterated that there is a "rigorous" process shielding Carney from conflicts of interests, with "many people aware of it, sensitive to it, raising flags at the right time. There's rigour to the system."

Barrett asked if the current process in place is "more transparent" than just selling his assets.

"It's very transparent," Blanchard responded. "What has

been set up for the prime minister is actually the highest level of standards and ethics."

But Barrett pressed if there were ways for the system to be improved, and if there were concerns or loopholes that could give rise to Canadians' loss of confidence in democratic institutions.

"It's not necessarily an indictment against Mr. Carney," he said. "Wouldn't it be cleaner, simpler, and improve the confidence Canadians have in the process if the requirement was for the prime minister and party leaders to sell all controlled assets?"

In a separate exchange, Liberal MP James Maloney (Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Ont.) took issue with Conservative MP Michael Cooper (St. Albert-Sturgeon River, Ont.) saying Carney's conflicts of interest are "vast."

Maloney countered that it all amounted to nothing more than "a flurry of allegations," and said

the committee should focus on reviewing the Conflict of Interest Act.

"I leave the political game to you parliamentarians," Blanchard responded.

Blanchard cited the example of former prime minister Stephen Harper's chief of staff, the late-Nigel Wright, who also used a similar ethical shield to avoid a conflict of interest with the company Onex, which he left to work for Harper. Wright then later returned to Onex while Harper was still in office.

Conservative MP Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, Alta.) said politics and business can sometimes become "a messy business," and he noted Wright's firm, Onex, was "more narrowly focused" than Brookfield, which is involved in a variety of sectors across the country.

"So, I think it's a very different standard for the prime minister who decides, versus a very senior adviser who advises," he said, noting that in other countries, public officials are expected to sell their interests in order to avoid any conflict, as Sabia did.

"I say this with great affection to those who serve, but Mr. Sabia, Mr. Carney, Mr. Hodgson and you, Mr. Blanchard, all know the same people," Majumdar said, referring to Natural Resources Minister Tim Hodgson (Markham—Thornhill, Ont.), who has an extensive private-sector background.

"You come from the same investment world. You have many of the same friends. Who's screening who amongst each other here?"

Blanchard reiterated that in his 30 years of experience, "I've always applied the highest ethical standard," he said.

"I understand all four of you believe that you are serving the public interest," Majumdar replied. "You've come from on high to serve the people of Canada. We should be grateful. But this is a very small world of investment institutions. They all operate in major sectors that are critical to the success of Canadian workers. So among all of you, who's screening who?"

Blanchard again repeated that everyone mentioned by Majumdar have "irreproachable" careers in both the public and private sector, and "follow the highest ethical norms."

As previously reported by *The Hill Times*'s Politics This Morning, Carney was kept from being involved in matters that could potentially further his personal interests in six instances, Sabia told the Ethics Committee on Nov. 19.

The Privy Council Office clerk was grilled on his decision to get rid of his Brookfield assets, and if Carney should have followed suit.

Sabia said his move was meant to "simplify" the decision-making process for him as he became aware that he would be dealing with matters involving Brookfield. Carney did not need to do the same because he had the screen preventing him from benefitting from any decisions involving Brookfield, he said.

—With files from Riddhi Kachhela
mglass@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Hill Climbers



By Laura Ryckewaert

The staff behind Government House Leader MacKinnon's office

The office currently includes 17 staffers, including Arielle Morin as director of parliamentary affairs and Silvia Barkany as director of operations.

Plenty of eyeballs have been glued to wranglings in the House of Commons Chamber of late—those of the 17-member team in Government House Leader **Steven MacKinnon's** office undoubtedly among them.

As reported by **Hill Climbers** back in May, longtime chief of staff to the House leader **Rheal Lewis** remains in his post, as he's been since 2016.

Supporting him is deputy chief of staff **Daniel Arsenault**. Arsenault has been working for Liberal House leaders since 2018, starting during Liberal MP **Bardish Chagger's** turn in the role. Previously director of issues management in the office, he was promoted to his current title in 2023. He'd earlier been parliamentary affairs director to Chagger as then-small business and tourism minister, and has been overall working on the Hill since 2008. Arsenault's past jobs include a brief stint as an assistant in then-chief government whip **Andrew Leslie's** office, and time spent as an assistant to then-Liberal MPs **Brent St. Denis**, **Anthony Rota**, and **Frank Valeriote**.

Another veteran staffer, **Hugo Dompierre** remains steadfast as executive director of parliamentary affairs. While "executive" has only been part of his title since 2023, Dompierre has been the senior-most staffer running parliamentary affairs work in the government House leader's office since 2015, and has overall been working for Liberal House leaders on the Hill for nearing on three decades.

Now in place as director of parliamentary affairs to MacKinnon is **Arielle Morin** who joined the office this past summer. A one-time House of Commons page, Morin spent the first half of this year as a parliamentary affairs adviser to then-Treasury Board president **Ginette Petitpas Taylor**. Before then, Morin had been a part-time assistant to Quebec Liberal MP **Jean-Yves Duclos**. According to her LinkedIn profile, she graduated from the University of Ottawa



Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon, who's also currently juggling the transport portfolio, has a number of experienced parliamentary hands in his office. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

last December with a bachelor's degree in political science and communication.

Courtney Demers remains as a senior adviser for parliamentary affairs. She's been with the team since June 2022, beginning under then-House leader **Mark Holland**, and added "senior" to her title in 2023. Demers is also a past assistant to then-Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal MPs **Yvonne Jones** and **Scott Simms**.

Nicholas Moody was elevated to senior parliamentary affairs adviser this past summer, having previously been a parliamentary affairs adviser

in the office since the fall of 2023. He's a former special assistant for parliamentary affairs to then-Treasury Board president **Mona Fortier**, and a former field organizer with the federal Liberal Party, among other past jobs.

Samuel Leduc is a parliamentary affairs adviser. A new addition to the office, Leduc joined this past summer after more than half a year working as a parliamentary affairs adviser and executive assistant to then-public safety minister

David McGuinty, beginning in December 2024. Leduc is also a past aide to Toronto Liberal MP **Ali Ehsassi**.

Also currently on deck as a parliamentary affairs adviser is **Dima Kalander**.

No doubt working closely with the parliamentary affairs team is director of Senate affairs **Kornelia Mankowski**. She's been with the office overall since 2017 when she was hired as a policy adviser to Chagger as then-

House leader, and stepped into her current role when it was first created—amid the shifting grounds of the now multi-group Senate—at the start of 2020. Unsurprisingly, Mankowski brings

experience working in The Other Place, and is an ex-assistant to then-Liberal senators **Joan Fraser**, **Bill Rompkey**, and **Sharon Carstairs**.

Kelly Banks is now a special assistant in the office. Banks first joined the House

leader's team in the spring of 2022, originally as assistant to now-Liberal Whip **Mark Gerretsen** as the House leader's then-parliamentary secretary for the Senate—a role freshly carved out in the 44th Parliament that disappeared from the org chart in 2023 when Gerretsen was instead made deputy House leader. Banks has since been assistant to Liberal MP **Kevin Lamoureux** as parliamentary secretary.

Izabel Czuzoj-Shulman continues as director of policy. She's been with the House leader's team overall since the 2019 election, beginning as a senior adviser for parliamentary affairs under then-House leader **Pablo Rodriguez**. After Holland took over the post following the 2021 federal election, Czuzoj-Shulman was named director of operations, and in 2023 she stepped into her current title as policy lead. Czuzoj-Shulman has also been a parliamentary affairs adviser to then-justice minister **Jody Wilson-Raybould**, and is a past assistant to Quebec Liberal MP **Anthony Housefather**.

Working closely with Czuzoj-Shulman is policy adviser **Patrick Quinn**, a new addition to the House leader's team who is focused on the democratic institutions file. There's also policy advisers **Isabelle Sabourin** and **Thierry Normand**.

Sabourin is a former assistant to

MacKinnon as the MP for Gatineau, Que., who more recently served as director of regional affairs in his offices as then-labour and seniors office, and then-employment, workforce development, and labour minister. For his part, Normand

is a current student at McGill University, where he's studying law, and has been working for MacKinnon—previously part-time—since 2024, starting in MacKinnon's labour and seniors office.

Silvia Barkany has followed MacKinnon back to the House leader's office as director of operations.

She's been working for MacKinnon since 2022, beginning as executive assistant in his office as then-government Whip. Bar-

kany joined the House leader's team in 2024 when MacKinnon stepped into the role on an acting basis, continuing as executive assistant. Later that year, after MacKinnon was shuffled into the labour and seniors portfolio, Barkany followed, becoming director of operations—a role she continued in through MacKinnon's subsequent run as employment, workforce development, and labour minister.



Mark Kennedy is director of communications to the government House leader. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Mark Kennedy remains director of communications to the House leader, supported by press secretary and senior communications adviser **Marie-Justine Torres**.

Kennedy is an ex-journalist and former parliamentary bureau chief for *The Ottawa Citizen*, and has been working for the Liberal government since 2016, beginning as a communications adviser for parliamentary affairs and democratic reform to then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau**. He's been tackling communications under various titles for the government House

leader since 2017, starting as communications director to Chagger.

Torres, who recently added senior communications adviser to her business cards, has been in the office since the fall of 2024, beginning as press secretary to then-House leader Gould after roughly a year spent doing the same for then-tourism minister **Soraya**

Martinez Ferrada (who was just elected as Montreal's new mayor). Torres has also previously worked with Quebec's Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie.

Hill Climbers understands that Torres currently supports MacKinnon in both his cabinet roles, as both House leader and transport minister. Stay tuned for an update on the

latter team soon. lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Arielle Morin is director of parliamentary affairs. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Nicholas Moody is a senior parliamentary affairs adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Kelly Banks is a special assistant. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Samuel Leduc is a parliamentary affairs adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Izabel Czuzoj-Shulman is director of policy. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



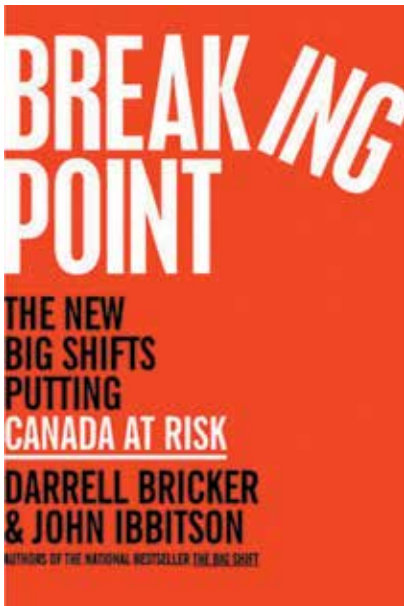
Marie-Justine Torres is press secretary and senior communications adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



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.

Bricker, Ibbitson to talk about their provocative new book, *Breaking Point: The New Big Shifts Putting Canada at Risk* on Nov. 25 in Waterloo, Ont.



The Centre for International Governance Innovation hosts a conversation with authors Darrell Bricker and John Ibbitson 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. Photographs courtesy Signal Penguin Random House Canada, *handout and The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

MONDAY, NOV. 24

House Schedule—The House of Commons will sit 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.

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 House Speaker's Dining Room, Room 233-S, West Block, Parliament Hill. Details: info@raredisorders.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 Ibbitson Discuss Their Book—The Centre for International Governance Innovation hosts a conversation with authors Darrell Bricker and John Ibbitson 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, at 7 pm ET in Montreal. Details at ndp.ca.

Creating Pan-Domain Continental Defence—Defence Minister David McGuinty and Secretary of State for Defence Procurement Stephen Fuhr

are scheduled to take part in this full day conference on Canada's role in continental defence, bridging NORAD and aerospace continental defence, and looking at defence in the CAF from a pan-domain perspective. Thursday, Nov. 27, at 8:30 a.m. ET at Westin TwentyTwo, 11 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Details: cgai.ca.

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 Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba hosts an exclusive networking 5 to 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.

Lecture: 'The Future of Canadian Immigration'—In the final of three 2025 McGill Max Bell Lectures, *Globe and Mail* columnist Tony Keller explores the options for restoring the Canadian immigration consensus, rediscovering the immigration middle-ground shared by most voters, and building a model immigration system that will benefit Canadians, the Canadian economy, and immigrants. Thursday, Nov. 27, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street, Toronto. Details: mcgill.ca.

FRIDAY, NOV. 28

2025 Democracy Awards—The Parliamentary Centre, Engage-ParlDiplo, and the British High Commission host the fourth annual Democracy Awards, honouring individuals who've made significant contributions to strengthening democracy. Featured speakers include: former Conservative cabinet minister Lisa Raitt, former Liberal cabinet minister Anne McLellan, and the

Parliamentary Centre chair Yaroslav Baran. Friday, Nov. 28, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the British High Commission, 140 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Contact: heather@pendulumgroup.ca.

PEN Canada Awards Night—PEN Canada hosts its annual event celebrating a year of advocacy, literature and free expression, featuring poetry readings from emerging Toronto voices, and the celebration of the recipients of three prizes: RBC/PEN Canada New Voices Award, the Ken Fikow Prize, and the Marie-Ange Garrigue Prize. Friday Nov. 28, at 6:30 p.m. ET at the William Doo Auditorium, University of Toronto. Register: pencanada.ca.

SATURDAY, NOV. 29

Press Gallery Dinner—The Parliamentary Press Gallery will host its annual gala dinner. Saturday, Nov. 29, at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, Ottawa. Details: collin.lafrance@parl.gc.ca.

TUESDAY, DEC. 2

Panel: 'Art of Compromise or Trap of Concession?'—The Montreal Council on Foreign Relations hosts a hybrid panel discussion in French: "The art of compromise or the trap of concession: How to revive a quality relationship between Canada and the United States?" featuring former Canadian ambassador Louise Blais, former Quebec cabinet minister Pierre Fitzgibbon, and Richard Ouellet, professor in international economic law, Université Laval. Tuesday, Dec. 2, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Fairmont Le Reine-Elizabeth, 900 Blvd René-Levesque W., Montréal. Register: corim.qc.ca.

'Redefining Primary Care in Canada'—The Economic Club of Canada hosts a keynote and fireside chat with David Markwell, interim president of Shoppers Drug Mart, titled, "Redefining Primary Care in Canada: Insights from Shoppers Drug Mart." Tuesday, Dec. 2, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Hilton Toronto. Register: economicclub.ca.

Sergio Marchi's Book Launch—Former Liberal cabinet minister and ambassador Sergio Marchi is hosting a launch of his new book, *Pursuing a Public Life*, for parliamentarians and their staff in Ottawa. Tuesday, Dec. 2, from 5-7 p.m., at Metropolitan Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. To RSVP, please contact the office of Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi.

Panel: 'How to Defend Ourselves'—The Canadian International Council's national capital branch hosts a panel discussion, "World on Fire: How to Defend Ourselves," featuring Norway's Ambassador to Canada Hanne Ulrichsen, deputy minister of national defence Stefanie Beck, and Royal Military College professor Christian Leuprecht. Tuesday, Dec. 2, at 5:30 p.m. ET at KPMG Conference Facility, 150 Elgin St., Suite 1800, Ottawa. Details: thecic.org.

Pathways to Indigenous Prosperity Reception—The National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association hosts a reception, "Pathways to Indigenous Prosperity," bringing together Indigenous economic leaders, members of Parliament, and key sector partners for discussions on access to capital, entrepreneurship, and the evolving Indigenous economic landscape. Tuesday, Dec. 2, at 6 p.m. ET in W-180 Committee Room, 1 Wellington St. RSVP: nolan@sandstonegroup.ca.

TUESDAY, DEC. 2—THURSDAY, DEC. 4

AFN Special Chiefs Assembly and Gala—The Assembly of First Nations hosts a Special Chiefs Assembly from Tuesday, Dec. 2, to Thursday, Dec. 4, at the Rogers Centre Ottawa, 55 Colonel By Dr. A Winter Gala, "Celebrating the Solstice," will take place on the final day at the Westin Hotel Ottawa. Details: afn.ca.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 3

Dinner with Former MP Chris Alexander—The Kingston and the Islands Conservative Association hosts a dinner featuring special guest Chris Alexander, former MP for Ajax-Pickering, Ont., and past minister of citizenship and immigration, who will deliver remark on issues of interest to modern Conservatives. Wednesday, Dec. 3, at 5:30 p.m. ET at 285 Queen St., Kingston, Ont. Register via Eventbrite.

The Hill Times' 100 Best Books

Issue date:
Monday, December 8, 2025

IN 2025

Advertising deadline:
Tuesday, December 2, 2025

In this special pull-out section, *The Hill Times* publishes its **Top 100 BEST Books in Canada 2025**, showcasing some of Canada's most influential and important books.

We'll also publish excerpts, Q&As with authors, and book reviews, offering insights into some of the biggest challenges facing Canada and the world today.

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