The Hill Times

Dec. 8, 2025

100 BEST BOOKS 2025

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ALEX MARLAND, JARED J. WESLEY, & MIREILLE LALANCETTE

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Funny guy Mark Critch is goddamned serious about Canada. He talks about his new book, *Sorry, Not Sorry: An Unapologetic Look at What Makes Canada Worth Fighting For*.

Bob Joseph

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In his book, *21 Things You Need to Know About Indigenous Self-Government*, Bob Joseph breaks down many assumptions about the Indian Act and easily relating how this alternative can be used to circumvent this antiquated legislation.

Marsha Lederman

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Marsha Lederman's *October 7th* is a book that comes out of the Hamas attacks on Israel and Israel's military response, but it's not an account of the war in Gaza or how it is playing out in Israeli politics or in the Arab world. It is about how the conflict is being felt here in Canada, culturally.

Lyse Doucet

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BBC News' chief international correspondent Lyse Doucet's book, *The Finest Hotel in Kabul*, presents the stories of Afghans working in Kabul's first luxury hotel throughout decades of war.

Sirous Houshmand

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'If you have a purpose, then you become resilient. Then you want to fight for something. But if you don't have a purpose … I have seen people in isolation lose their mind because they just didn't want to be there and didn't know why they were there,' says Sirous Houshman, author of *The Darkest Night Brings Longer Days*.

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The Canadian historian says he was speaking to a group of high school students and none of them knew who Lester B. Pearson was, so he decided to write a book about every prime minister in Canada.

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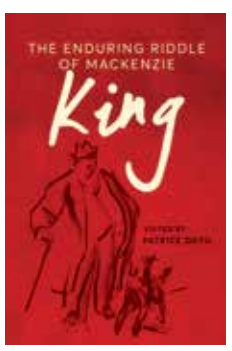
Andrew Coyne is right to raise his voice about the crisis of Canada. But the extinction-level political disaster he's so worried about hasn't happened over the span of this country's ungainly, unworkable existence. Which means that Coyne could be right tomorrow, but so far has been wrong for the past 158 years.



Patrice Dutil

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Editor Patrice Dutil's collection of essays in *The Enduring Riddle of Mackenzie King* dives into the former prime minister's personality, relationship with society, and policies—and why Canadian politicians 'need to re-learn King's statecraft.'

THE HILL TIMES
100 Best Books 2025

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EDITORIAL
CONTRIBUTORS
Christopher Dornan
David Herle
Irem Koca
Christina Leadlay
Kate Malloy
Alex Marland
Peter Mazereeuw
Neil Moss
Abbas Rana
Eleanor Wand
Samantha Wright Allen

ENGAGEMENT EDITOR
Christina Leadlay

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Sam Garcia, Andrew Meade, and Cynthia Münster

EDITORIAL CARTOONIST
Michael de Adder

ADVERTISING
VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING AND MULTIMEDIA SALES
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Irma Guarneros

SALES CONSULTANT
Puran Guram

DELIVERY INQUIRIES
circulation@hilltimes.com
613-688-8821

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100 Best Books 2025

The Finest Hotel in Kabul is a window into Afghan endurance through the eyes of locals working at the Intercontinental Hotel

BBC News' chief international correspondent Lyse Doucet's book presents the stories of Afghans working in Kabul's first luxury hotel throughout decades of war.

See story by Eleanor Wand, pp. 22–23

Canadian journalist Lyse Doucet, pictured recently at *The Hill Times*' office in Ottawa, lived for many years at Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel as a BBC News journalist. She's compiled the stories of the local hotel staff into a new book, *The Finest Hotel in Kabul*. *The Hill Times photograph by Eleanor Wand*

100 Best Books 2025

EXTREMITIES OF ANGER

Marsha Lederman's *October 7* is a book that comes out of the Hamas attacks on Israel and Israel's military response, but it's not an account of the war in Gaza or how it is playing out in Israeli politics or in the Arab world. It is about how the conflict is being felt here in Canada, culturally.

BY CHRISTOPHER DORNAN

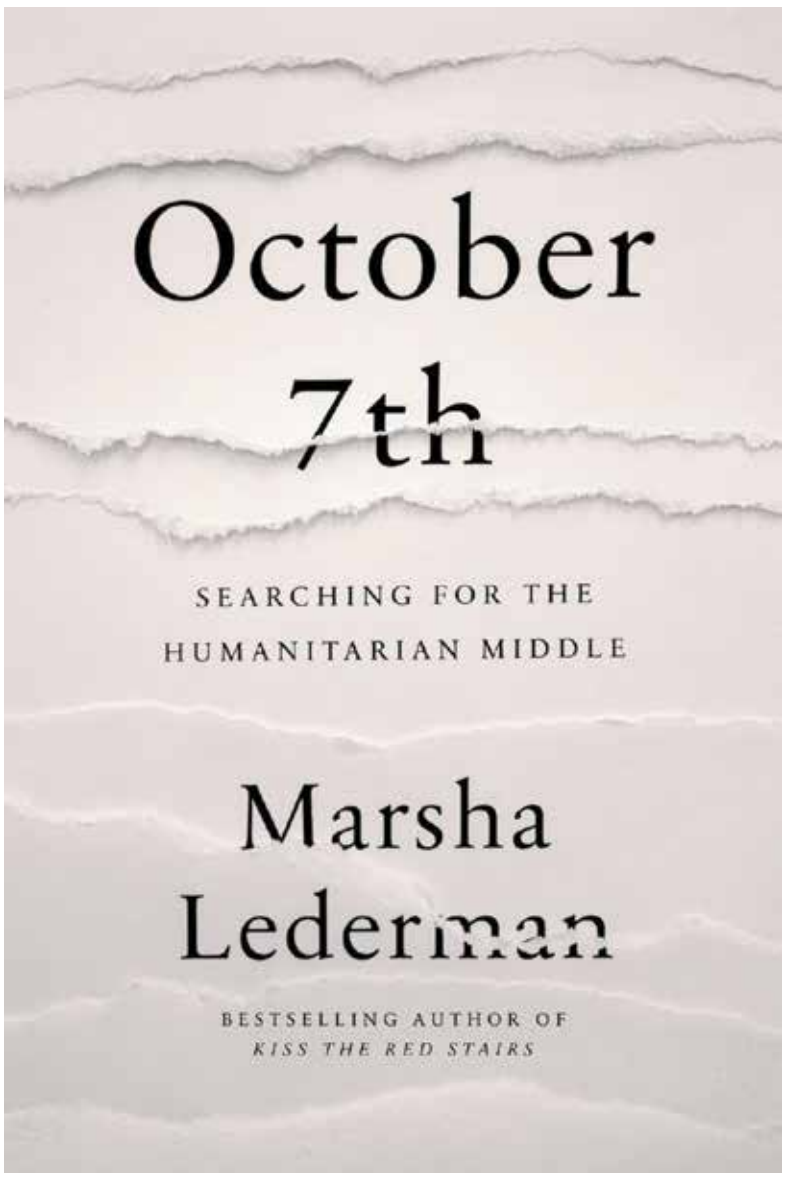
What does it mean, in a free society, to be "brave enough to speak up"? If nothing else, it implies there are others who are afraid to speak up. What are they afraid of? What hushes them into keeping their opinions to themselves?

To be brave enough to speak up means you have something to say that you know a lot of people are not going to like. They are going to lash out at you, but you have the courage to say it anyway in defiance of the outrage. You brave the consequences. And you do so because you believe that what needs to be said can make a difference in how people think. You can change minds. Even if you are mocked, despised, intimidated for what you say, you believe in your right to say it.

It is a heroic thing to stand against the majority, unless it is a vile thing to do. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Oswald Mosley were both jailed for speaking up.

Marsha Lederman's *October 7* is a book that comes out of the Hamas attacks on Israel in 2023 and Israel's military response, but it's not an account of the war in Gaza, or how it is playing out either in Israeli politics or in the Arab world. It is about how the conflict is being felt here in Canada, culturally. It is about protests and speaking up, student encampments, and campaigns of complaint. It worries about intimidation and a tense, fearful politics of confrontation that has nothing to do with Prime Minister Mark Carney or Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, Alberta or Quebec, right-wing or left-wing. The politics she describes runs underneath all that, like a poison. The book is about antisemitism, but not only about antisemitism.

Lederman is a columnist and arts correspondent for *The Globe and Mail*, and is the author of *Kiss the Red Stairs*, a memoir of the Holocaust and her grandparents. She abhors what Hamas planned and executed on Oct. 7, 2023, an unforgivable act of butchery. She also detests the politics of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the butchery of what his government has done in response in the name of Israel. And she is shaken by the fury and hatred stirred up by both.



Just as not all Palestinians were responsible for Oct. 7, not all Jews are culpable for what has happened to Gaza. Not even, by a long shot, all Israelis. In their intensity and persistence, the anti-Netanyahu protests in Israel dwarf anything the anti-Trump constituency in the United States has managed to muster. It is not a people or an ethnicity or a faith that has destroyed Gaza, it is a political faction. Just as it was not a people or an ethnicity or a faith that carried out the Oct. 7 attacks. It was a political faction.

This book is a collection of columns and articles Lederman wrote for *The Globe and Mail*, unspooling with events. We see things as she reacts to them. She comes to the problem not with policy proposals, but with vignettes. First and foremost, she wants us to *feel* what this means.

What is it like to go about your day in this liberal democratic society of tolerance and diversity, knowing there is hostility out there toward you that could catch you at any moment? Anything from a small slight to a gross injustice to an ugly scene. Maybe an encounter in a convenience store, maybe something that happened to your kid coming home from school, maybe a cop who just takes a dislike to you, maybe a crowd of people massed in the streets, chanting against you.

Lederman is well aware that this thrum of anxiety is shared by Arab, Muslim, Indigenous, Black, Asian, brown, gay, lesbian, trans, and every Canadian who has felt bigotry and spite from their supposed fellow Canadians. She knows the pain of Palestinians because she can feel it through the pain of what happened to her family. She uses antisemitism to illustrate every other vicious prejudice we have in Canada, of which—goddamn it—one is too many.


Marsha Lederman is a columnist and arts correspondent for *The Globe and Mail*, and also author of *Kiss the Red Stairs*, a memoir of the Holocaust and her grandparents. She abhors what Hamas planned and executed on Oct. 7, 2023, unforgivable act of butchery. She also detests the politics of Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, writes Christopher Dornan. *Handout photograph*

Any society that allows free speech is going to end up with antisemitism and Islamophobia. For that matter, any society that prohibits free speech will still have antisemitism and Islamophobia. The quandary is what to do about it. How does one respond to rage? How can one undo the unjust vilification of entire peoples?

The book is subtitled "Searching for the Humanitarian Middle," but there is no humanitarian middle between what Hamas did on Oct. 7, and what Israel has done in return. There is, though, perhaps a humanitarian middle to be found in how we in Canada speak about our differences on the Middle East and the issue of Palestine and Israel, how we can protest one another without threatening one another. That's what Lederman is advocating.

Her vignettes put the reader in the position of having to decide. She lays out the particulars and you must play along. What would you have done, for example, had you been on the board of a performing arts institution in the wake of Oct. 7 when an avalanche of angry opinion demanded that an upcoming engagement be cancelled because the author/artist/musician was Israeli/Palestinian/had expressed views that enraged Israelis and/or Palestinians? (It's interesting how many engagements were cancelled in the heat of the political moment. Then later, when temperatures cooled, how many statements of regret were issued for decisions that had been too hastily taken.)

Lederman is a calm, measured voice who writes for *The Globe and Mail*, whose readers are in the main calm and rational themselves. Even so, the subject matter of Israel and Palestine, antisemitism and Islamophobia, has become so incendiary that it takes a measure of bravery to speak up. The book's final chapter provides a sample of the hate mail Lederman received in response to these pieces when they were first published. She was called a self-hating Jew. Someone hoped she had a pager Mossad could detonate remotely so that she would be killed or severely burned. "It's become normal for me this year, this hatred," she writes.

Though an important institution, *The Globe and Mail* is an old-school media property with a much smaller footprint than the YouTube, Reddit, Discord, etc. platforms through which the discourse on Oct. 7 and Gaza is now playing out in all its fury. Lederman hopes to help find a middle ground between the extremities of anger, but that's not what the new-school media are interested in. For them, it's all about the extremities of anger. Speaking out in order to stir things up.

Christopher Dornan taught at Carleton University for 33 years where he served for nine of those as director of the School of Journalism and Communication, and six years as director of the Arthur Kroeger College of Public Affairs. He is the co-editor of The Canadian Federal Election of 2025 *(forthcoming, McGill-Queen's University Press) and eight previous volumes in this series.*

October 7: Searching for the Humanitarian Middle, by Marsha Lederman, McClelland & Stewart, 259 pp., $36.95.

The Hill Times

Did You Know?

Canadian-owned publishers produce roughly 80% of English-language books by Canadian authors, yet they are overshadowed by hundreds of multinational imprints competing for shelf space. In 2024, books published by Canadian companies accounted for **just 5.6% of reported sales across the country.**

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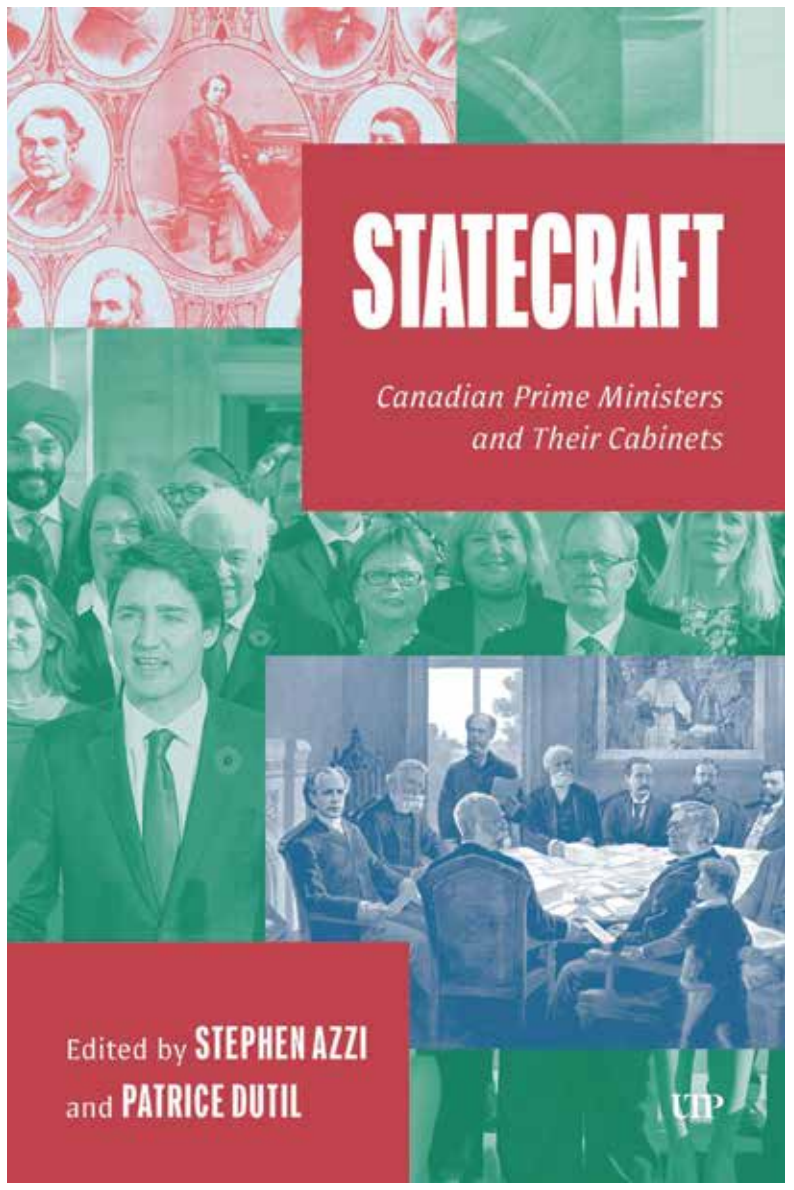
100 Best Books 2025

Statecraft opens the cabinet door on prime ministerial power in Ottawa

How do prime ministers create and manage their cabinets? That's the central question behind the new book, *Statecraft: Canadian Prime Ministers and Their Cabinets*.



Statecraft: Canadian Prime Ministers and Their Cabinets, edited by Stephen Azzi and Patrice Dutil, University of Toronto Press, 552 pp., $49.95. *Book cover courtesy of University of Toronto Press*

BY ALEX MARLAND

Editors Stephen Azzi and Patrice Dutil—professors at Carleton University and Toronto Metropolitan University, respectively—have spent years studying and publishing about Canadian prime ministers. In *Statecraft*, they introduce a novel lens to a literature that has traditionally focused on prime ministers as heads of government striving to advance an agenda without being derailed by political firefighting or character flaws. Normally, books about PMs are a deep examination of a single person's time in office. Other works examine a selection of PMs, sometimes attempting to rank all of them, often pitting William Lyon Mackenzie King atop the prime ministerial career ladder whereas those who were barely in office clutch to the bottom rung. There are also books that deliver a thematic twist on executive power, such as prime ministers and their foreign policy. But until now, we haven't seen a book exclusively about their statecraft, addressing a dearth of information about how prime ministers manage their cabinets.

Investigating the inner workings of cabinet is never easy, given that the institution is designed to operate in secret behind closed doors. *Statecraft* sets out to examine political leadership, the dynamics of cabinet collegiality, and the stewardship of government. These three elements blend the political sensibilities of popularity, the underappreciated skill of human resource management, and the demands of overseeing institutional structures of government. Each chapter profiling a prime minister features detailed lists of ministries and ministers, including portfolios, shuffles and even their prior occupation and age at appointment. This cataloguing will please historians looking for comprehensive reference in one place. Others will look for thematic patterns, where broad trends matter more than cataloguing individuals.

Azzi and Dutil have assembled a crack team of expert historians and political scientists to contribute chapters, among them Raymond Blake, Robert Bothwell, John English, Mari Janigan, J.P. Lewis, Lori Turnbull, and Paul Wilson. (Full disclosure: I co-authored the chapter on Justin Trudeau, alongside former PMO staffers Jeni Armstrong and Dan Arnold. For several years we were regularly updating the piece to reflect cabinet machinations as Trudeau's popularity eroded, right up to Mark Carney becoming prime minister.) Upon receiving the book, I immediately read Wilson's chapter about Stephen Harper, given that he too worked in the PMO. I was not disappointed: there's lots of rich insights into Harper's statecraft, including preparing for Question Period, the use of daily briefing notes to keep the prime minister and his senior staff informed, and the unintended consequences of sidelining memorandums to cabinet that did not include a clearly defined funding commitment.

Each chapter similarly has knowledge nuggets that will delight those who like prime ministerial history. We're reminded that diversity in John A. Macdonald's day meant balancing the number of Catholics and Protestants in cabinet, though region—particularly representation from Ontario and Quebec—dominated cabinetmaking, as it has with everyone who has sat in the big chair. Ministers in Wilfrid Laurier's cabinet were given ample opportunity to express their views, both in cabinet meetings and in public policy decisions. King institutionalized cabinet processes while managing ministers who were alcoholics; Louis St. Laurent prized administrative ability and team players. John Diefenbaker might have won by a landslide in the 1958 election, but he lacked support from his ministers: "The Ontarians in cabinet never liked him, the Quebecers did not trust him, the Westerners did not know what to make of him," (page 258). We also see the rise of the power and influence of political staff: Pierre Trudeau's cabinets featured former PMO staffers (page 295), while Brian Mulroney assigned a staffer to be his "personal representative" on free trade negotiations, thereby marginalizing Pat Carney, the minister of international trade (page 341). We also see that prime ministers gradually build institutional and personal influence over their cabinets, though the book adds further evidence that Canadian PMs have not been nearly as domineering as many scholars and pundits allege.

The effort required to piece together evidence of statecraft from more than a century ago is impressive. Historians invest considerable energy in tracking down old correspondence and archival fragments, which requires deciphering handwriting and establishing context. Across the chapters, there is a noticeable methodological shift: research on 19th-century prime ministers relies heavily on letters and newspapers; for 20th-century leaders, scholars draw more on books and academic articles; and for 21st-century counterparts, about whom far fewer books exist, the analysis often depends on online news sources and information from participants.

Each chapter ends with a perceptive summary of the prime minister's approach to statecraft. Political scientists might elect to gravitate first toward these concluding sections and the editors' framing chapters, while historians will likely prefer to immerse themselves in the richer detail found within each narrative. In my view, the editors' reflections on whether prime ministers have passed key managerial tests (pp. 446–457) are some of the book's strongest intellectual contributions because they generalize the findings across cases, thereby empowering us with a theoretical lens to assess past, present and future leaders. Throughout, chronologies about prime ministerial statecraft are interspersed with political cartoons and photographs of cabinets from yesteryear that bring the subjects and their politics to life.

All prime ministers have their shortcomings, and so do books (as do book reviewers!). A paragraph nestled on page 455 where the editors acknowledge the need to theorize about the impact of women on cabinet lays bare a striking omission in *Statecraft*. Kim Campbell receives only the briefest of mentions, a gap the editors attribute to her short 75-day tenure before the 1993 election campaign. Ellen Fairclough, who in 1957 became the first woman to serve in the federal cabinet, hardly registers, with no attention to the substantial barriers she confronted. The book would have been stronger had it mentioned some of these obstacles, ranging from Fairclough being asked to leave cabinet meetings during contentious policy discussions deemed too garish for a woman to the simple but telling fact that she had to walk a long distance, accompanied by a security guard, to reach one of the few women's washrooms on Parliament Hill.

Readers would likely appreciate learning, for example, how Judy LaMarsh had her speeches vetted by Lester Pearson's PMO in the 1960s—a constraint her male colleagues apparently did not face—or grasping the difficulties Karina Gould encountered when giving birth in 2018 while serving as a cabinet minister and taking parental leave in Justin Trudeau's government. A chapter dedicated to outlining the challenges that women have encountered in Canadian statecraft would have been a welcome addition to knowledge.

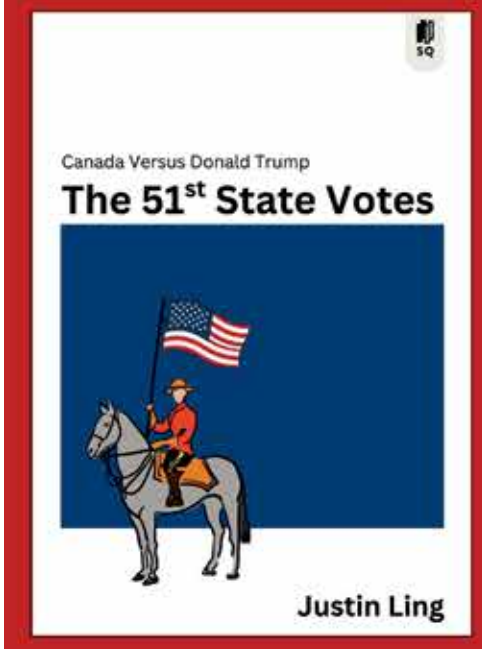
Statecraft is a smart, detailed, and highly welcome book that will appeal to anyone interested in Canadian prime ministers, political history, or the craft of executive leadership. It promises to be an essential reference for understanding how Canada's leaders have structured their cabinets and exercised power over time.

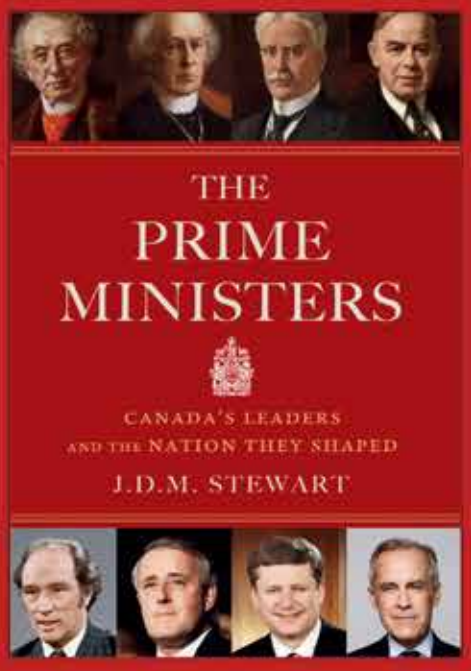
Alex Marland researches and teaches Canadian politics, specializing in party politics, leadership, and political communications. He is the author of Brand Command, Whipped, and No I in Team *(with Jared Wesley and Mireille Lalancette).*

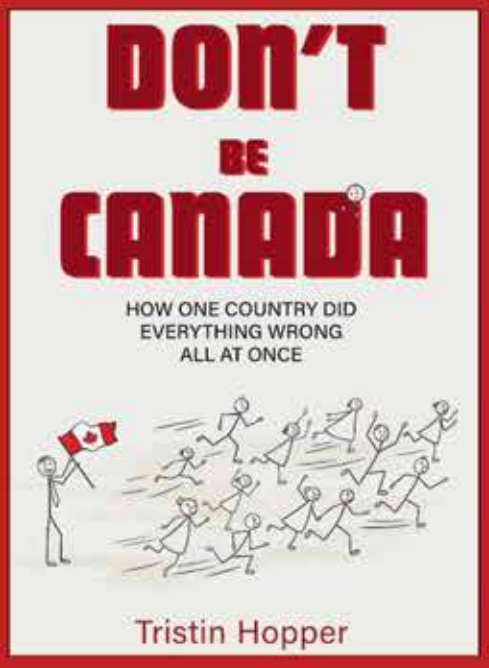
***Statecraft: Canadian Prime Ministers and Their Cabinets*, edited by Stephen Azzi and Patrice Dutil**, University of Toronto Press, 552 pp., $49.95.

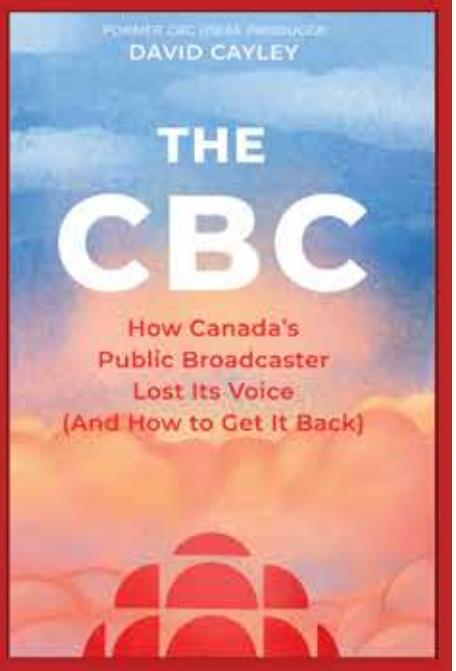
The Hill Times

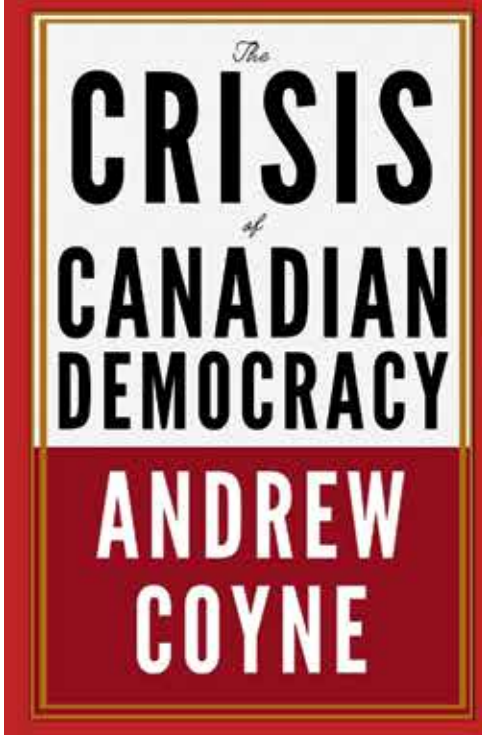
this year, give the gift of Canada's best political nonfiction

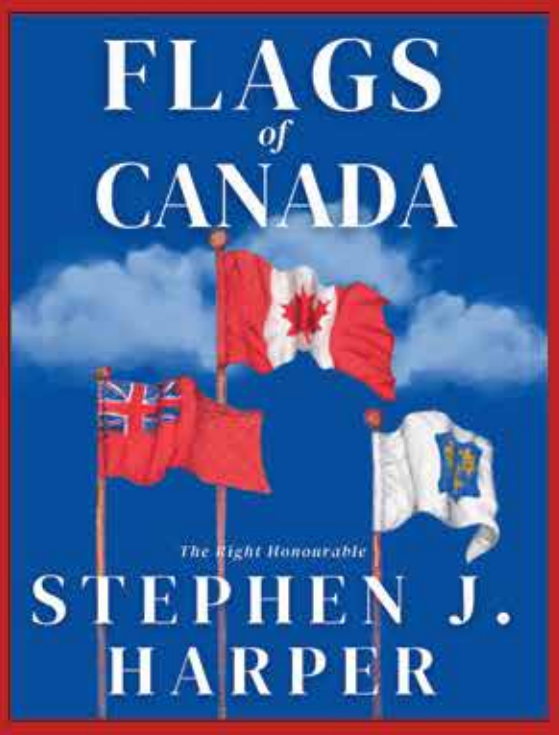


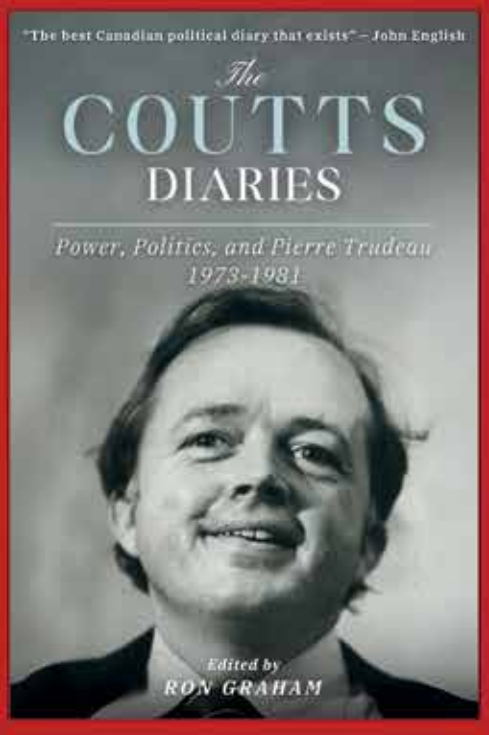


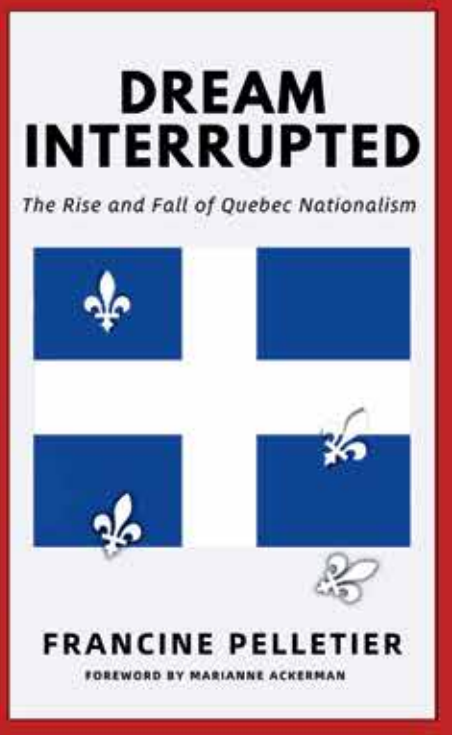


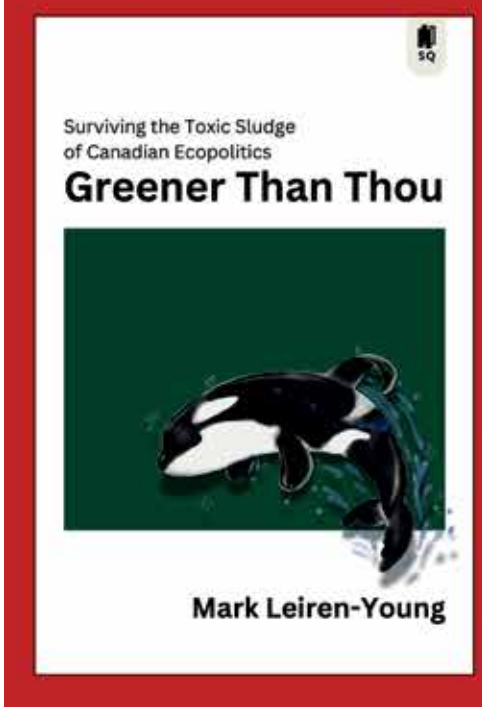


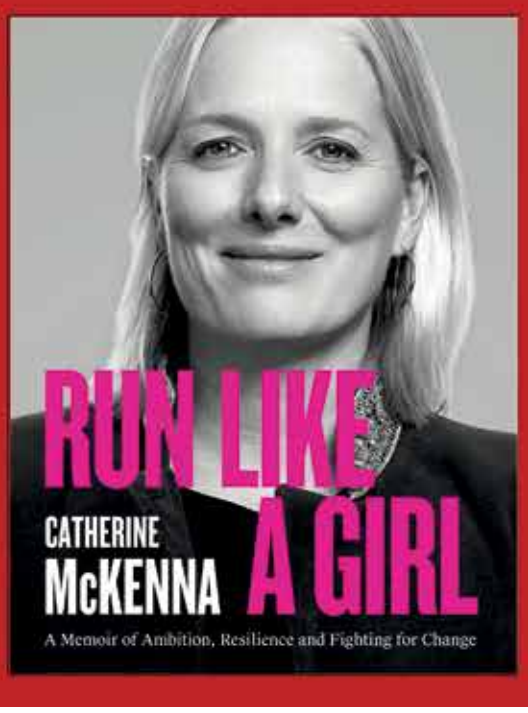


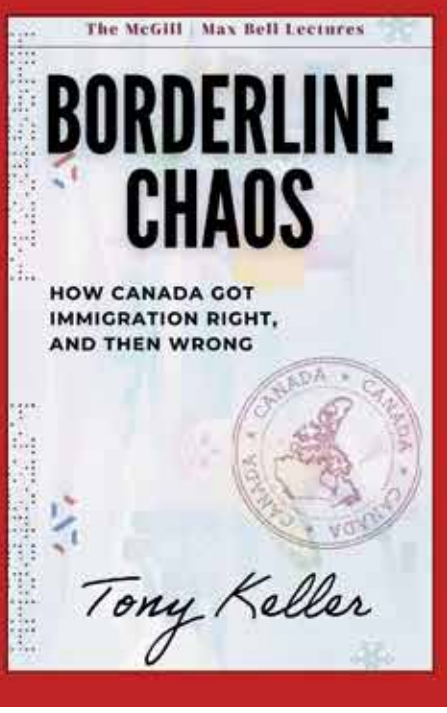












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100 Best Books 2025

The Coutts Diaries is the most revealing book ever written about Canadian politics

Then-U.S. president Richard Nixon, left, and then-prime minister of Canada Pierre Trudeau inside the Prime Minister's Office in Centre Block on April 14, 1972. *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

This is a previously unseen view of Pierre Trudeau, one that is sure to alter your opinions of him. It is an unvarnished look inside the government that brought you wage and price controls, the Charter of Rights, and the National Energy Program. And it is a darkly moving account of the life of a senior political staffer.

BY DAVID HERLE

TORONTO—*The Coutts Diaries: Power, Politics and Pierre Trudeau 1973-1981* is the most revealing book ever written about Canadian politics, and one of the most important. This is a previously unseen view of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau—one that is sure to alter your opinions of him. It is an unvarnished look inside the government that brought you wage and price controls, the Charter of Rights, and the National Energy Program. And it is a darkly moving account of the life of a senior political staffer. Coutts gave the best years of his life to Pierre Trudeau, and, at the end, concludes that their relationship had never graduated to that of 'friend'.

The events described in this book took place 50 years ago, and the subject of this book is no longer a household name. So, trust me when I tell you that no staff person in modern Canadian history has wielded more power than Jim Coutts did under Pierre Trudeau.

By the time Coutts joined Trudeau's PMO in 1975, the Liberals were already a 10-year-old government. Some of its best people—most notably John Turner—had left. Others, like Allan MacEachen, were past their political best-before date. A weak ministry combined with a prime minister who was interested only in a few discrete aspects of his job created a void of policy and authority that was filled by Coutts, working hand in glove with then-clerk of the Privy Council Michael Pitfield. Universally considered to be both brilliant and ruthless, Coutts' dominance of both the government and the party make him the most important Liberal, other than Pierre Trudeau, of the 1970s.

And he kept a diary. Almost daily. Unfiltered and raw. Names and all.

For those with an interest in this era of politics, the revelations come fast and furious. Some of the entries are delicious gossip, others detail nation-changing decisions. Pierre Trudeau comes off as prone to long stretches of ordinariness when he's not fundamentally changing the country. Famous names are revealed to have feet of clay. Here's a sampling.

"Friday, Oct. 23, 1978, (more than four years into the mandate): PM went on Friday night to the National Executive meeting. I had briefed him on the meeting and said all that is needed is for you to say we have tough work ahead, we're all Liberals, I need your help, etc. The PM was in a bad mood, didn't want to go to the meeting, did, but performed very badly. He was to respond to questions. The first was, 'what do we say as Liberals when we knock on doors in Vancouver?' The PM said, 'If you don't know that why are you on the executive?' The meeting went downhill from there, with the PM showing up the contradictions in what they said and generally making them feel quite unwanted and unloved. He finally got up and left without saying goodbye."

"Thursday, June 26, 1980, (four months after securing a majority government): Was up this morning at 6:00 to celebrate the beginning of the sixth day without cigarettes. This is the fifth or sixth time I've quit smoking. Spent about an hour before coming to the office at the apartment thinking about where we stood on a number of fronts. I have had the uncomfortable feeling for several weeks that the government and the party are quickly losing the punch that is needed by a new government and the direction and drive that is needed by a party to keep things progressing in a positive way. It seems to me that on the major economic issues, we have no real plan or goals to achieve. I would be much happier if there was any kind of a plan that we were pursuing but I do not see that and my experiences convince me that it will not come from officials and probably not from cabinet."

"Thursday, Oct. 2, 1980 (the day before Trudeau launched his bid to patriate the Constitution): When the PM hung up, he said Davis (Ontario premier Bill Davis) told him a number of things. First, he would phone [John] Buchanan but he didn't want to phone [Richard] Hatfield. Second, he had a long chat with [Joe] Clark and he had warned Clark, who wanted Davis to be critical of the whole process, that he was not going to be and he suggested to Clark that if he ever wanted to win seats in Ontario he should not oppose this whole matter. He suggested that [Allan] Blakeney was probably not trustworthy on the whole process."

If that doesn't make you want to read more, I can't help you.

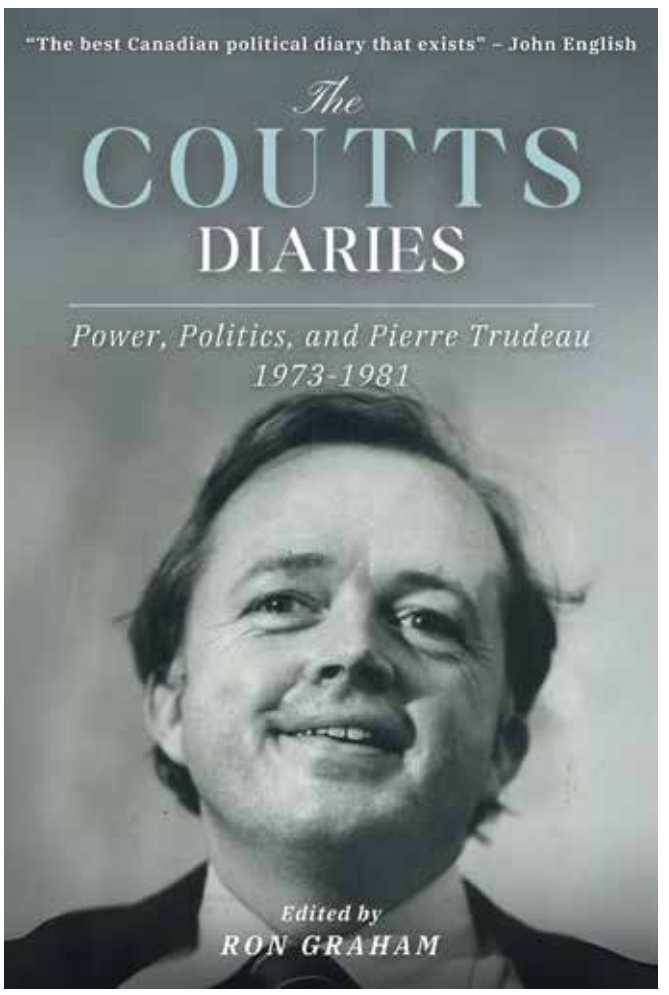
Fifty years later, what's the relevance? For one thing, a lot of the issues are the same. The separatist/nationalist drive in Quebec and the accompanying constitutional issues, the energy wars with Alberta and the seeds of Alberta separatism, the decline of manufacturing, and the reluctance of Canadian business to invest—they all started here. Secondly, this is a very compelling portrait of a full life in politics. The electoral highs and lows, the policy wins and losses, feeling like you are on top of the world, feeling completely lost, being certain of your cause at times and full of doubt at others, the weird impacts on your personal life. And it ends in defeat, rejection and bitterness. Coutts is a hell of a story.

We know of it primarily because of two people. Ron Graham artfully and thoughtfully edited the diaries into something digestible. Graham is as authoritative an expert on that period in Canadian politics as exists, having written a number of books and biographies on the principals of that era. It's one thing to write a book in Canada these days, another to get it published. If it is published, it is likely because of Sutherland House. Ken Whyte's publishing company is doing its best to keep Canadian non-fiction alive, and saw these diaries as the matter of the public interest that they are.

David Herle is a long-time Liberal campaigner, current host of The Curse of Politics *and* The Herle Burly *podcasts, and is a partner at Rubicon Strategy.*

The Coutts Diaries: Power, Politics and Pierre Trudeau 1973-1981, by Jim Coutts, edited by Ron Graham, Sutherland House Books, 463 pp., $50.

The Hill Times



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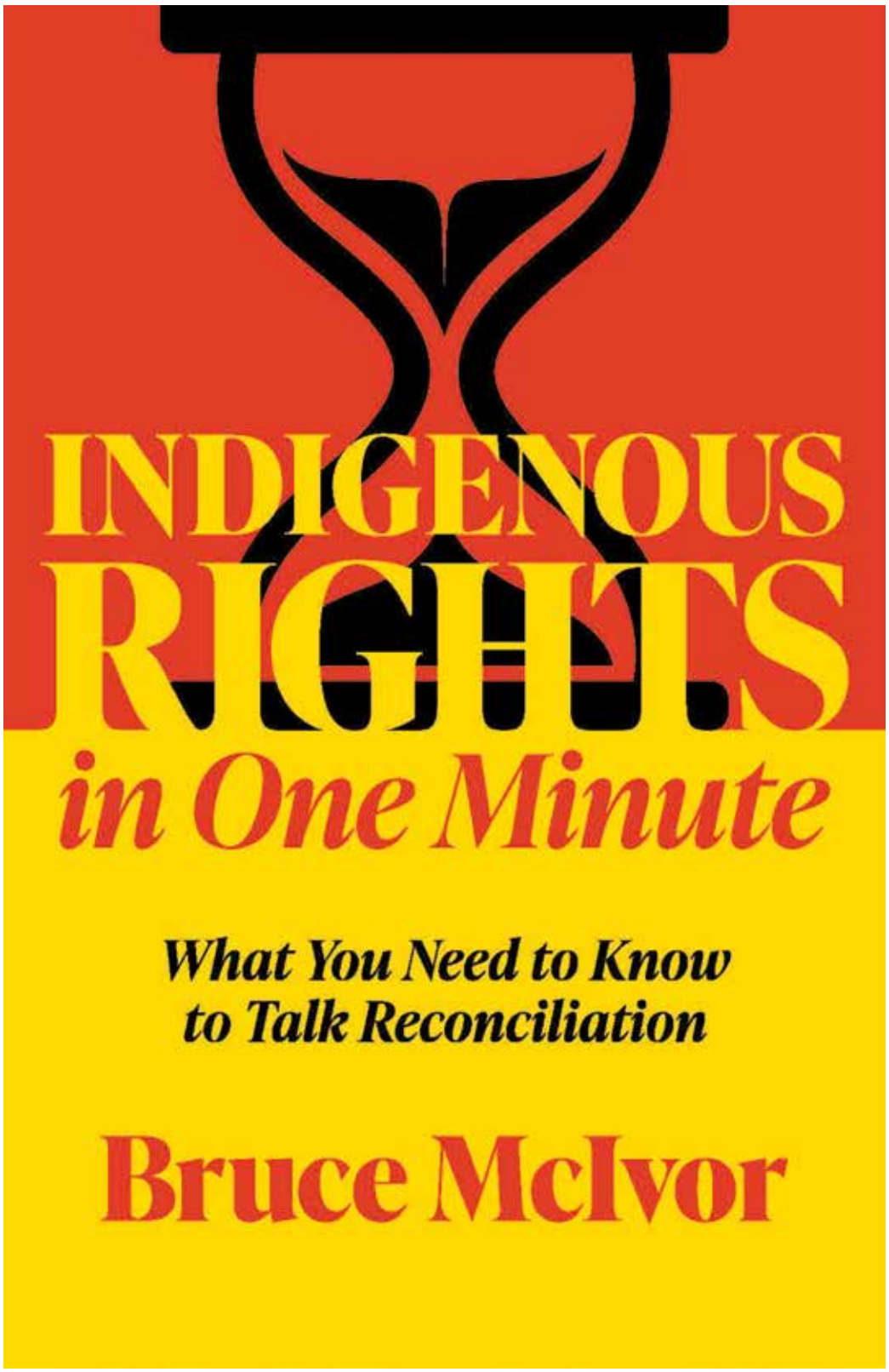

During his nearly three decades advocating for Indigenous rights and teaching Aboriginal law, Bruce McIvor has recorded the fundamental questions that Canadians from all corners of society have asked about reconciliation. In *Indigenous Rights in One Minute*, he provides answers.

McIvor's explanations of complex legal issues demonstrate a unique mix of a deep knowledge of the law, the ability to write clearly and concisely, practical experience from the frontlines of advocating for First Nations at negotiation tables and in courtrooms, and a profound passion for justice rooted in his work and personal history.

To ensure the country's reconciliation project progresses from rhetoric to reality, ordinary Canadians need straightforward answers to fundamental questions.

McIvor provides the context to support a thoughtful and respectful national conversation about reconciliation—and the fulfillment of Canada's commitment to a better future for Indigenous people.

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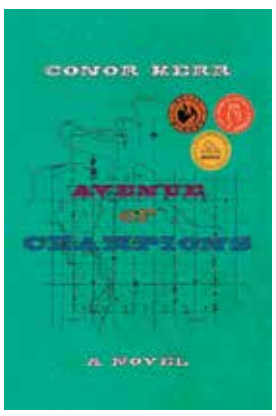

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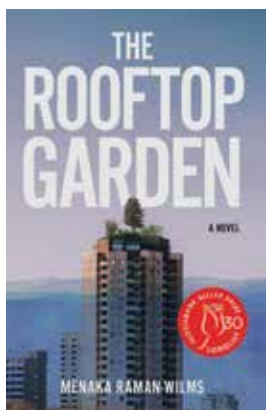

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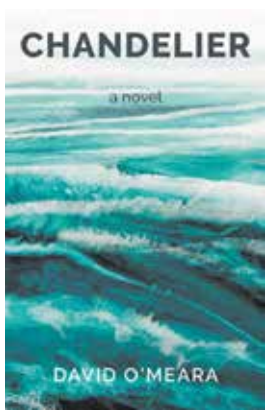

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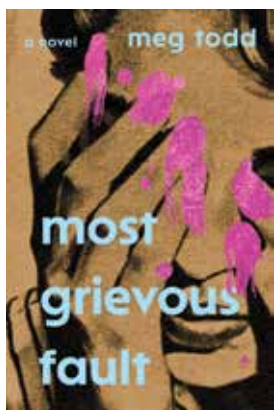

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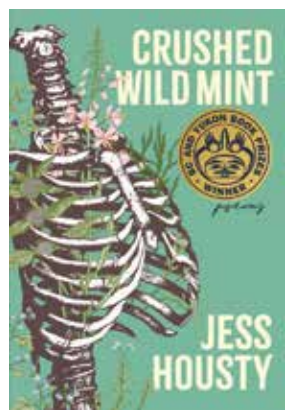


Crushed Wild Mint
poems
Jess Housty

The Big Melt
poems
Emily Riddle

100 Best Books 2025

The Finest Hotel in Kabul is a window into Afghan endurance through the eyes of locals working at the Intercontinental Hotel

The Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan, in the 1970s. *Photograph courtesy of Penguin Random House*

BBC News' chief international correspondent Lyse Doucet's book presents the stories of Afghans working in Kabul's first luxury hotel throughout decades of war.

BY ELEANOR WAND

Lyse Doucet, BBC News' chief international correspondent who has spent decades of her career reporting in places of conflict, says her latest book, *The Finest Hotel in Kabul: A People's History of Afghanistan*, takes a different approach to storytelling that "goes beyond the kind of snapshots that we see in the news."

The Finest Hotel in Kabul tells the stories of Afghans working at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan, the country's first luxury hotel, and Doucet's home for many years as a correspondent posted in the country.

It's an easy but powerful read, chronicling the country's story via the everyday routines and lives of the Intercontinental Hotel staff devoted to keeping its doors open amid the changing rulership and wars shaping the nation.

Doucet said her ambition with the book was to offer "a different kind of storytelling" at a time when many are "turning away" from the news. People are presented with the worst moments when watching the news about places in conflict, she said—but she wanted to take a different approach in the book.

"It's people running from the bombs, people wailing in the rubble of their homes, in the hospital—the worst moment of their lives," she said in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "But of course, like all of us, no matter where we live, there are the spaces in between that they, too, have to get up in the morning, find an everyday courage to get through the day."

"Literature has a way to open our hearts," she said.

"This is a book, yes, it's about war, but it's also about a singing contest, *Pop Idol*. It's about women pop stars. It's about weddings and celebrations woven through these hardest of lives," explained Doucet.

The Finest Hotel in Kabul is structured like a narrative history, offering accounts told from the perspective of a cast of locals working at the Intercontinental Hotel. The book opens in 1971—in Afghanistan's "golden years"—and closes in 2021 with the Taliban's return to power.

"I could write a history of Afghanistan [with] watches of information but … I wanted to find a way to tell it as a story," Doucet said.

'I will never know it like an Afghan'

The Canadian journalist, originally from New Brunswick but who now lives in the United Kingdom, wrote the book from years of on-the-ground relationship-building and interviews, conducted alongside her Afghan colleague, Mahfouz Zubaide, who assisted with translation and interpretation.

Doucet said she spent "hours and hours and hours" verifying the translations, explaining she was "deeply conscious" about author authority and authenticity as a non-Afghan writing the stories of locals.

"No matter how long I spend in Afghanistan, I will never know it like an Afghan," she said.

Doucet began reporting in Afghanistan in 1988, arriving to cover the Soviet withdrawal from the region for the BBC, which she called "the most grievous war in the world" at the time. It's when she first began to live at the Intercontinental Hotel alongside other journalists working to capture the story.

She has continued to report in Afghanistan on and off since then, last visiting the country in January 2023. But she said securing a visa under the Taliban government has been more challenging.

"I have copies of the book to bring to them," she said of the people featured in the book, "and I keep pushing and pushing to get there. Hopefully. Now it's getting late in the year, [but] I keep being promised a visa."

Doucet said the places from which she's reported—including Pakistan, Jerusalem, and countries in West Africa—"are places which are not just stories that come and go." They are "places and people who are apart of my personal life," and that is "especially the case in Afghanistan."

The Finest Hotel in Kabul was written while Doucet was working full-time at the BBC. Doucet said she would sit down with the hotel staff after she had filed her stories for the day, listening to their testimonies to piece together her book. After it became more difficult to enter the country, Doucet was forced to move the interviews online.

"I was worried," she said, "but even people like Abida, the first female chef who's not literate—and I thought, 'Oh, is this going to be hard for her?'—and she was brilliant."

But Doucet said there were "one or two people who didn't want to be in the book because they feared there could be consequences." Others didn't want to go back though old stories.

"When they turned to sad stories, they found it too traumatic," she said, adding that, as a journalist, she finds it the "hardest thing" to ask people is about difficult topics.

But, "we always say that Afghans are natural storytellers," Doucet said.

"They're all poets, and they have this wonderful recall," she said. "My Afghan colleague and I would laugh after we finish[ed] an interview. We'd say that we

Hazrat, a housekeeper at the Intercontinental Hotel in Afghanistan, pictured at the hotel. *Photograph courtesy of Penguin Random House*

100 Best Books 2025

Abida, the first female chef at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan. *Photograph courtesy of Penguin Random House*

can't even remember what we had for lunch yesterday, and they are remembering 50 years."

"They were a gift for me in terms of writing the book."

'The hotel is a character, as well'

Doucet emphasized that though her book wields the "conventions of fiction," it is a true story, depicting the lives of real people, many of whom she's known for decades.

"It's an International Hotel. I've lived the re. It's a hotel which had foreign guests, including, in some periods, a lot of journalists, so I felt I had a corner on the story," she said.

But the author said she tried "very much" to present the narrative in the voice of Afghans, and not her own. Though Doucet herself is included in the book, she is not the focus, and she is primarily written about in the third-person.

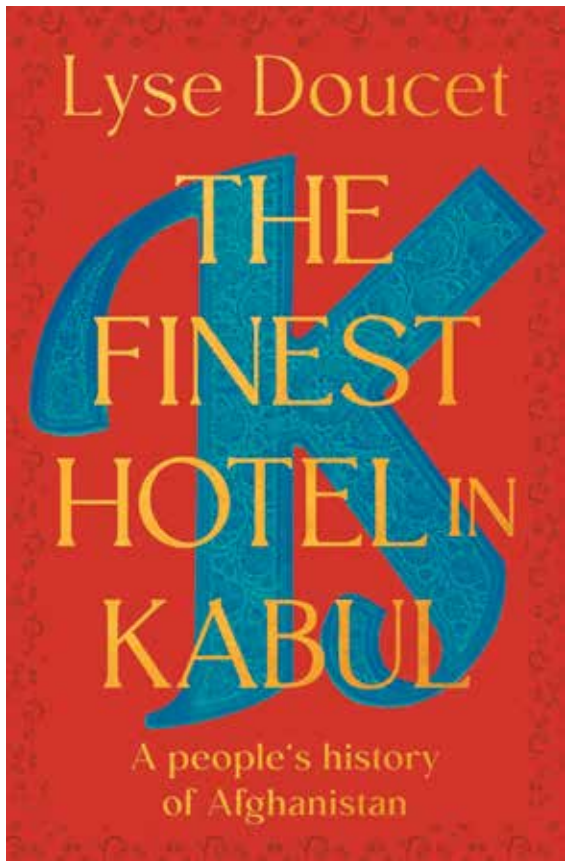
"I was writing in a way that would make more sense to me as a story in terms of a story I would be drawn to," she said. "And the hope, of course, was that others would also be drawn into this."'

Doucet said she was "struck" by the employees' dignity and pride in doing a job well, even though they were doing it through the "worst of times."

"For those like Hazrat, trained by the real Intercontinental Hotel—to this day, he still values that, that he had proper training and that he knows about running the hotel," she said. "I wanted to try to convey that dignity despite all of what was happening around them."

For Doucet, the human side of the story is the facet worth emphasizing.

"I often say in my job that I see it as trying to narrow the gaps between us and them and you and I, and to say that all stories, no matter how complex and consequential, when you drill down, what are they about? They're about mothers and fathers and families and streets and societies—things that all of us can understand."



The Finest Hotel in Kabul: A People's History of Afghanistan, by Lyse Doucet, Allen Lane Penguin Random House Canada, 448 pp., $39.

Doucet said she chose to use the hotel as a focal point for the story because it is a "familiar prism" that most people can understand.

"The hotel is a character, as well," Doucet told *The Hill Times*, "because so much of history has gone through Afghanistan's first luxury hotel, first five-star international hotel."

Throughout the book, the changes in governance and the periods of ongoing conflict are reflected in the Intercontinental Hotel itself, its interiors shifting to reflect new rulers.

Afghanistan is one of the few countries to have survived "every possible political system," Doucet highlighted.

"And, throughout it all, the hotel kept working," she said. "The cooks kept pots on the boil, the waiters kept waiting, the bell boys kept lugging luggage. They found ways to carry on while history went back and forth."

Doucet explained that the Intercontinental Hotel's leadership is tied to Afghanistan's. The hotel was originally part of the Intercontinental chain, but it hasn't been associated with it since Russia invaded Afghanistan at the end of the 1970s.

"As soon as the Soviet tanks rumbled in during the Cold War, the luxury international chain—a Western British-American chain—pulled out, so it became a government hotel," she said.

"Whoever rules Afghanistan sets the rules in the Intercontinental, so they kept changing. And so the staff had to keep adjusting to different rulers," she said.

Doucet said she doesn't think she could write another book about Afghanistan. If she were to write again, it will be something "closer to Canada," she said, focusing on the Acadian story.

"I think the Acadian story is a beautiful story of people rising up from great tragedy," she said.

Doucet has Acadian ancestry, coming from a French-speaking part of New Brunswick.

The Finest Hotel in Kabul: A People's History of Afghanistan, by Lyse Doucet, Allen Lane Penguin Random House Canada, 448 pp., $39.

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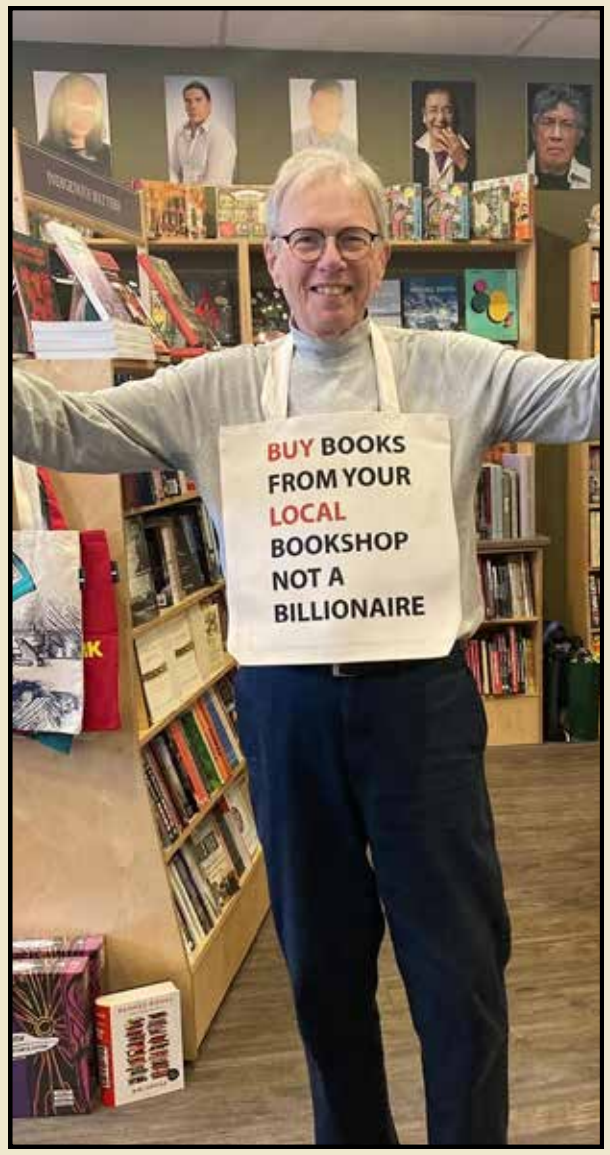
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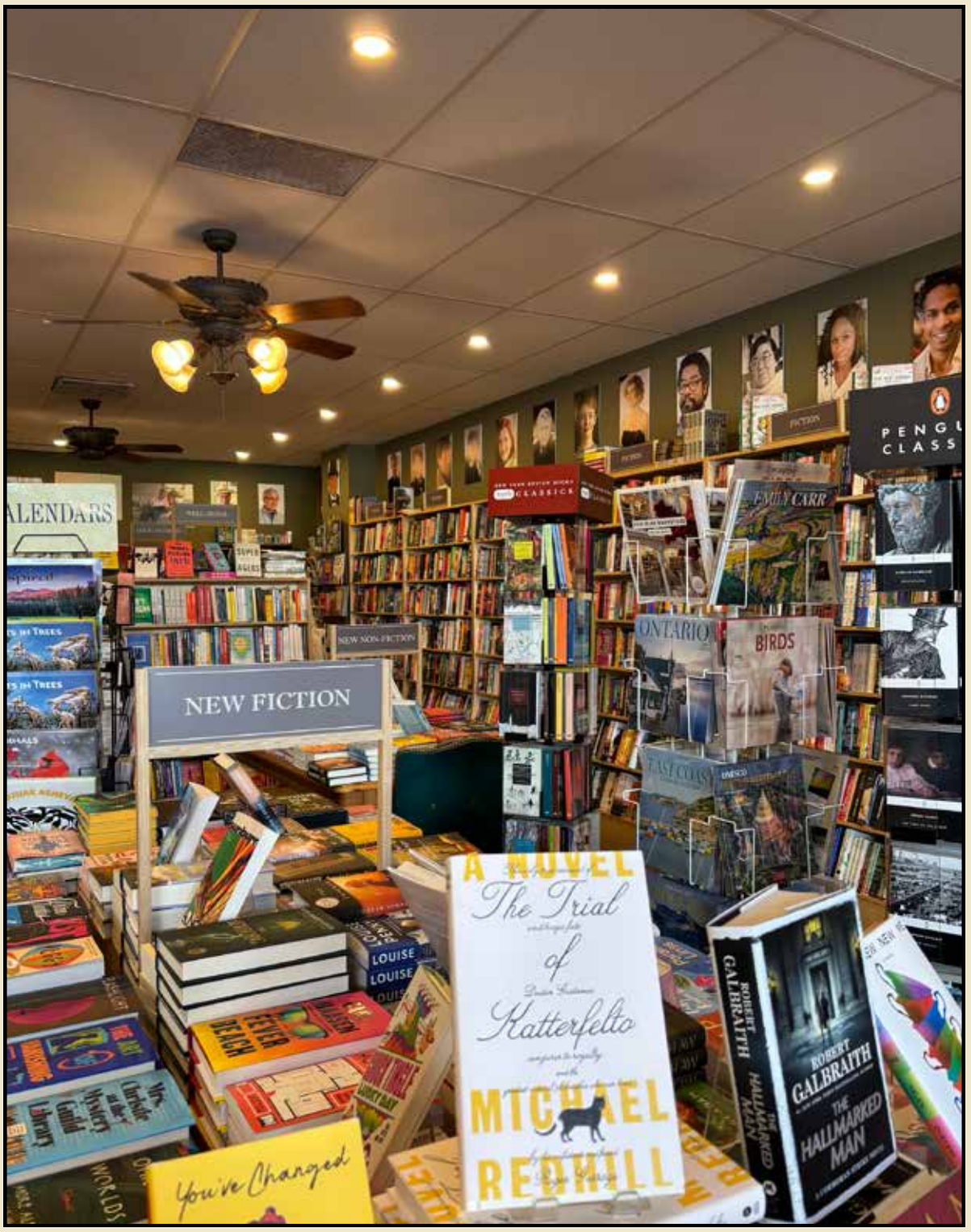
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100 Best Books 2025

‘Treating politics as a system of balance, not battle’: new book brings fresh insights into Mackenzie King and lessons for today’s leaders

Former prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, pictured in 1932 in Ottawa when he was opposition leader. *Photograph courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/Flickr*

Editor Patrice Dutil’s collection of essays in ‘*The Enduring Riddle of Mackenzie King*’ dives into the former prime minister’s personality, relationship with society, and policies—and why Canadian politicians ‘need to re-learn King’s statecraft.’

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT ALLEN

Canada’s longest-serving prime minister could offer a lesson for modern politicians who should study William Lyon Mackenzie King’s patient negotiation and political style that sought “balance, not battle,” and aversion for “ideological purity” in a regionally fractured country, says the editor of a new book dedicated to understanding the “captivating” statesman.

“In a new age of polarization, King’s instinct for coalition-building feels newly relevant,” Patrice Dutil told *The Hill Times* in an email interview about *The Enduring Riddle of Mackenzie King*, released on Oct. 1.

King led Canada for over 21 years—inconsecutively—between 1921 and 1948, with most of his governing occupied by minority Parliaments.

Successive Liberal prime ministers have “thrived by embodying King’s formula: flexible, pragmatic, and rooted in the middle. Their opponents often lose—not for lack of ideas—but for misreading Canada’s cautious temperament,” said Dutil, a professor of politics and public administration at Toronto Metropolitan University.

As Dutil explains in his introduction, King was a fascinating figure subject to both ridicule and praise. King’s innermost thoughts were mined thanks to a trove of diaries that he kept with “quasi-religious fervour,” allowing scholars to understand how a prime minister’s “personal attitudes can shape policy.” Chapters dig into that primary source and others, outlining how King was “a media manipulator,” skillful in handling “explosive issues,” central in re-establishing Canada’s role in Confederation,” and both “a political realist” and “opportunist when it came to issues of race.”

The understanding of King’s “views on race needed an update,” Dutil told *The Hill Times*. In chapters examining King’s “Chinese Exclusion” Act, jailing of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War, and indifference toward Indigenous communities and others, the book’s 18 contributors offer “new thinking on his racism, his political ideas, his relations with the press.”

The collection features a “who’s who of historians” selected to “push the envelope” of our knowledge of King, including Arthur Milnes, Mark Bourrie, John MacFarlane, Pierre Anctil and J.L. Granastein—“the dean of Mackenzie King scholars” as Dutil said—and two chapters by Dutil himself.

Patrice Dutil is the editor of *The Enduring Riddle of Mackenzie King*. *Handout photograph*

The following Q&A, conducted over email, has been edited for length and clarity.

What inspired you to pull together this collection of essays?

“There are many books out there on Mackenzie King, but I do see this book as the third in a trilogy of important volumes published at 25-year intervals. In 1974, on the 100th anniversary of King’s birth, a new generation of scholars, led by John English, a young University of Waterloo historian at the time, pulled together to produce a volume on Canada’s longest-serving prime minister. *Mackenzie King: Widening the Debate* was actually a remarkable accomplishment at the time because King was not seen as even slightly interesting. They did so again 25 years later, again with English in the lead, and *Mackenzie King: Citizenship and Community* was the product.

“We know so much more about King today, so I thought a volume of new thinking on his 150th birthday was in order. The King presented in *The Enduring Riddle of Mackenzie King* is even more multifaceted. New thinking on his racism, his political ideas, his relations with the press, the Indigenous, and with minorities is presented. His policy ideas—from city-building, the arts, even taxation—are explored in more detail and nuance than ever before.”

Isabel Grace Mackenzie and John King, left, with their son William Lyon Mackenzie King, right, at the Scarborough Fair in 1911. *Library and Archives Canada photograph by William James*

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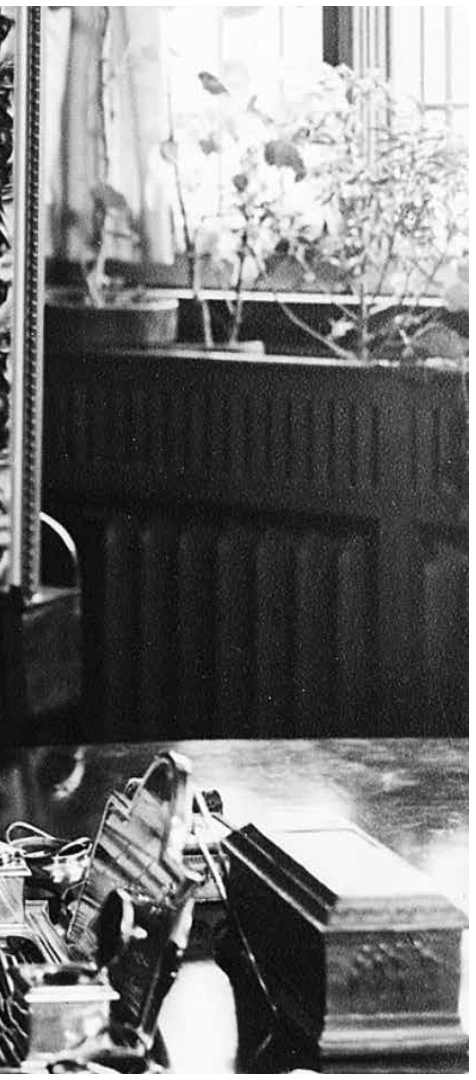


Then-Canadian prime minister Mackenzie King, left, and then-U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt on July 31, 1936. *Photograph courtesy of Library and Archives Canada*

Mackenzie King on the veranda of Kingswood Cottage, Kingsmere, Que. *Photograph courtesy of Library and Archives Canada*

What were some surprises you learned about King from your collection of the "who's who" of King historians? Were there notable angles of analysis that felt fresh?

"Each essay uncovers a surprise. It's a truism that King viewed the world through the eyes of a man born in a Victorian Protestant, English-speaking middle-class family that saw the world as its oyster. He was confident that the 'British' way of doing things had the best solutions for a country like Canada.

"One chapter scrutinizes King's dramatic changes to the income tax during the Second World War, showing how willing he was to break all precedent and go after Canadian salaries. The government needed the revenue, and not all Canadians were happy with his decisions, but he forged ahead. King saw himself as a connoisseur in matters of art, culture, and architecture, as a few chapters describe him. His relations with the press were another surprise. The lengths to which he applied himself to curry favour across many sectors and with so many varying personalities and groups made him unique. It may also explain his longevity in power.

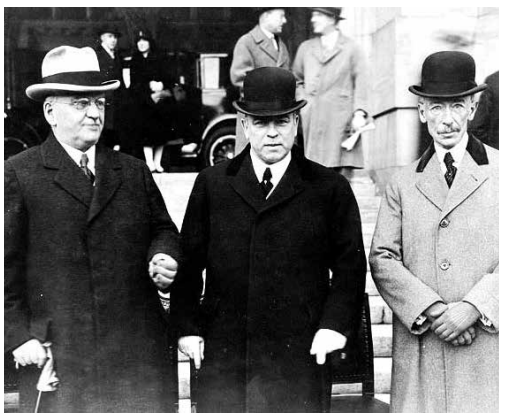
"He quickly learned that Canada was in substantial part also a French-speaking country and found a way to accommodate that reality, though I really doubt he ever warmed to the very Catholic French-Canadians. It was with the guidance of people such as Ernest Lapointe, Raoul Dandurand and, later, Louis St. Laurent, that King "conquered" Quebec. The province remained an indispensable pillar of support for him throughout his career. And I don't forget that King was the first prime minister to appoint an Acadian to cabinet: P.J. Veniot, a former Premier of New Brunswick, in 1926."

You opted for a deliberate focus away from the well-trod analysis of King's foreign policies, war management, or military relations. Instead, the essays dig into his ideas and personality, relationship with society, and policies. How did those three themes emerge?

"I did commission two essays on neglected aspects of foreign policy that needed more scrutiny: on international organizations, which King favoured as long as they did not commit Canada to any significant engagements; and on the personal rapport between King and president Franklin D. Roosevelt because it was so consequential and ironic. He was always wary of Americans though he deeply respected the U.S.

"Our understanding of King's views on race needed an update. For instance, it's easy to conclude that King was indeed a racist. He was deeply suspicious of Jews and Asians, that's for sure. One of the first things he did was legislate a 'Chinese Exclusion' Act, and notoriously jailed a good part of the Japanese-Canadian population during the Second World War. He was, at best, indifferent to Indigenous communities. That said, the authors who each deal with these issues conclude that King was no better or worse than the average Canadian in his rapport with minorities.

Miss Shirley Temple, right, with Mackenzie King at the opening of the sevent Victory Loan on Parliament Hill on Oct. 21, 1944. *Photograph courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada*



Then-prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, centre, with then-Ontario premier Howard Ferguson, left, and then-Quebec premier Louis-Alexandre Taschereau in Ottawa in 1927, one year after Mackenzie King's return to the House of Commons was made possible through a byelection in Prince Albert, Sask. *Photograph courtesy of Library and Archives Canada*

"Then again, King ended his career by passing the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1947. There are always two sides (if not three or four) to every question in King's mind, and how each of these considerations were weighed in his mind makes him captivating. The same man who limited Canada's international involvement in the 1920s and 1930s will fight a savage war and then take pride of place in the founding of the United Nations. What is fascinating is how he can justify to himself—and to a changing nation—that these contradictions could be accepted."

Do modern-day politicians have lessons to learn from King?

"In a new age of polarization, King's instinct for coalition building feels newly relevant. He understood that in a country as regionally and culturally fractured as Canada, ideological purity was a liability. King built power by making room for difference and by treating politics as a system of balance, not battle. Today's leaders, from Ottawa to the provinces, could study his patience in negotiation and his respect for process. In my view, his belief that 'politics is the science of organized opinion' anticipated modern data-driven governance and the consensus politics of minority Parliaments.

"Secondly, King really did come to believe that institutional competence mattered a lot more than competence and devoted a lot of energy to building Ottawa's policy capacity—this was notable in Finance, External Relations and Military Affairs, and Public Works.

"Yet King's flaws are just as instructive. His aversion to risk sometimes meant paralysis. His policy paralysis during the 1930s—especially toward Jewish refugees fleeing Europe, his insensitivity to the plight of workers and his indifference to the League of Nations and building new institutions to deal with the Depression—remains a stain on his record. In a world demanding leadership on climate, security, and social inequality, King's style of incrementalism can look like avoidance. The lesson is that prudence, if left unchecked, becomes drift. Adaptation must not substitute for vision.

"King's long tenure built a template for Liberal dominance that persisted for a long time: a big-tent party anchored in the centre, balancing progressive rhetoric with managerial competence, and governing by accommodation rather than revolution. Liberal leaders have thrived by embodying King's formula: flexible, pragmatic, and rooted in the middle. Their opponents often lose—not for lack of ideas—but for misreading Canada's cautious temperament."

William Lyon Mackenzie King en route from Westminster Abbey to 10 Downing St. during the Economic Conference in London, U.K., on Oct. 19, 1926. *Photograph courtesy of the Library and Archives Canada*

This book kicks off with your essay "GOAT or goat?" What did you hope to capture with that framing of King?

"Surveys among historians and political scientists over the last 25 years have placed King on top—The Greatest of All Time—but at the same time, many agree that he had the personal manners of a goat. My task was to explain the contradiction. My answer is that King knew that, as a person, he was not a shining example of humanity. He struggled electorally—most of the time he only won minorities and he was personally defeated in his riding on numerous occasions. This shaped him more than what is commonly understood. He had to work hard to win the confidence of people and when that did not work, he looked for more people to convince that he was indeed up to the task."

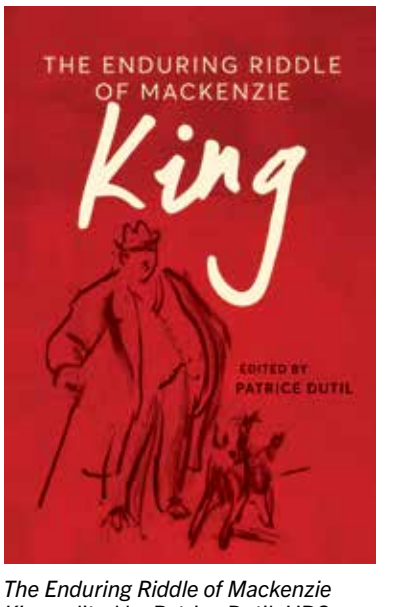
"As a manager," you write, "King was deliberate and demanding. He recruited exceptional civil servants and ministers and gave them room to act, provided they stayed loyal." Do you see this style of management persisting in politics?

"I think it's been lost. King's management style had a legacy with Louis St. Laurent, his successor, and Lester B. Pearson, who worked so closely with King. It had an impact on Pierre Trudeau and with Brian Mulroney but, I suspect, did not survive the 1990s. Mulroney was a keen student of political history and paid attention to those lessons. Jean Chrétien did too, to some degree. But I don't see these traits in our 21st-century prime ministers. They need to re-learn King's statecraft."

Do you think this collection helps solve some of "the enduring riddle"? If so, how so?

"I really think so. Of course, no answer is definitive, but these essays really do capture the state of thinking on Mackenzie King and its chapters are rich with clues to the riddle. I'm sure a new book will come out in 2050 with even better answers."

swallen@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



The Enduring Riddle of Mackenzie King, edited by Patrice Dutil, UBC Press, 402 pp., $49.95.

100 Best Books 2025

100 Best Books 2025

Andrew Coyne fears and foretells the fall of Canada

Andrew Coyne is right to raise his voice about the crisis of Canada. But the extinction-level political disaster he's so worried about hasn't happened over the span of this country's ungainly, unworkable existence. Which means that Coyne could be right tomorrow, but so far has been wrong for the past 158 years.

BY CHRISTOPHER DORNAN

The world is full of analysts, or at least it has been up until now. Let us consider what is about to become of them.

Analysts are people whose intellectual aptitude is keeping a close watch on a complex flow of events and information, and who then write up reports to help make sense of it all. If you work for an investment house, a law firm, a government department, are in the officer ranks of the military or the management echelons of any corporation, you have either read or written an analyst's report. A university is nothing but analysts endlessly writing reports to one another, from the undergrad whose paper is marked by the graduate student, to the doctoral student whose thesis is being examined, to the professor's paper under peer review.

Analysts are brokers between knowing what's happening and deciding what do about it. Unlike propaganda, analysis isn't supposed to do our thinking for us. It's supposed to make us think. Right now, the whispered selling point of generative AI is that the large language models can fulfill this function, the way the desktop computer killed the typing pool. We won't need analysts anymore.

Andrew Coyne is one of Canada's pre-eminent public political analysts, and we are lucky to have him. He's like one of the judges on *Canada's Got Talent*, but for parliamentary democracy and public policy. His métier is a form of political skepticism—like the Senate, but with more people paying attention to him.

I've been following Coyne's work for 30 years as he has opined in *The Globe and Mail*, the *National Post*, the CBC, then back to *The Globe and Mail*, etc. He's thoughtful, perceptive, astute, informative, quick-witted, and he writes really well. Sometimes he's persuasive and sometimes he isn't, but he almost always jogs you with some perception or point of argument you would not have thought of. He can get worked up, but he's never inflammatory. Quite the opposite: his rationality helps to keep things calm. He's everything we want in a political columnist.

In The Crisis of Canadian Democracy, Andrew Coyne fears and foretells the fall of Canada, not through annexation by some demented megalomaniac, but because of our self-worsening, writes Christopher Dornan. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Is he also the last of his kind?

Could an LLM trained on the 30-year corpus of Coyne's writing, speeches, radio and television appearances anticipate his reaction to a political turn of events sufficiently well that it could write the column without him and be close enough you couldn't be sure if he wrote it or not? Would it matter?

What might an AI version of Andrew Coyne look like, as a way to make money? Let's say you just want Coyne-like bursts of opinion on things. Is it theft if an AI company memorizes the entirety of Coyne's digital record in order to spit out imitations of him without compensation? Or would it be better if Coyne endorsed an AI franchise that generated on-demand political analysis in his name, if not by his pen, like a George Foreman Grill for politicos in a hurry?

I, a mere human, am not a large language model, but having followed Coyne over the years, I know something of his tics and tells. Don't get him started on public support for news journalism, for example. For him, any public money that goes toward news reporting means someone made a decision about who would get the money, hence commissars are in charge of how people will be politically informed, not the market. That's Coyne's big tell. He's an absolutist.

I figure it comes from his education in economics. To this day, he thinks economics trumps other ways of understanding current affairs and human history. Economists believe there are laws of trade and banking and the value of money that can no more be defied than the law of gravity. This is their mistake. It makes them absolutists, while those of us untouched by degrees in economics can see humankind as a living thing that creates its own laws, and then defies them.

Which brings us to *The Crisis of Canadian Democracy*, Coyne's analysis of the perilous state of present-day Canada. He has spent a career chronicling our partisan arena and the constitutional framework that is supposed to impose order on the whole ill-behaved mess. This is his summation of where we stand. An absolutist looks at Canadian politics, with its referendums and its shaky Constitution that Quebec didn't sign, its built-in friction between the provinces and the feds, and he sees only catastrophe ahead. There is no happy, prosperous Canada of tomorrow unless we repair the political structure that got us this far.

The complaint—not a new one—is that our democratic system is nowhere near democratic. It is a distorted, manipulated, untrue register of political will. The first-past-the-post system. The unfair weighting of votes from different ridings. The Senate. Party membership drives, leadership contests, and riding nomination procedures. The meaninglessness of being an MP, the end of government by cabinet, the rise of political consultants, and the consolidation of power in the Prime Minister's Office. It's all a sham democracy, really. We get the governments we ill-deserve, Coyne argues, because we are running 21st century politics through 19th century plumbing.

What he fears and foretells is The Fall of Canada. Not through annexation by some demented megalomaniac, but because of our own self-worsening. We take our stability for granted when it's not guaranteed at all, and it's the faith in ourselves that will be our undoing.

"Part of the crisis," he writes, exasperated as all get-out, "is that so many people do not see it as a crisis." If we don't fix the unfixable, either the country sleepwalks into constitutional collapse and dissolution, or pressure points in the electorate will tear the place apart.

In this way, Coyne helps to keep the place together.

Just as former British prime minister Winston Churchill said that truth, in time of war, must be protected by a bodyguard of lies, so a true and working democracy must be accompanied by a halo of complaint from serious people about how it's not as democratic as it wants you to believe. That's how you know it's a free society. Coyne has long been a resolute member of this bodyguard of complaint.

He has some suggestions about how we might un-worsen things. Some are worth considering, and some, I have to say, teeter on the cockamamie. He has a whole theory about how the incivility in this country's House of Commons could be undone by reconfiguring the Chamber in which they meet. He believes it is not sufficiently cramped, and he doesn't like the fact that our MPs have desks which, back in the day, they used to thump. He prefers the United Kingdom's model, where MPs crowd into tiered benches, from a time before lumbar support had been invented.

He nods quite a lot to the U.K. parliamentary system as superior to ours. But, measured by outcomes, is the U.K. a better governed country than Canada? No, it is not. (Ahem, Brexit.)

What Coyne admires about the American system is that its Constitution is a binding document in which the division of powers is written down and fixed, guaranteeing inviolable checks on arbitrary and unlawful executive privilege. Unlike our troublesome Canadian constitution, an unbinding document with the notwithstanding clause rattling around inside it like a weight in loaded dice.

The book clearly went to press before U.S. President Donald Trump reassumed office in 2025 and made arbitrary, unlawful executive privilege his signature move. Turns out a sternly worded Constitution is not by itself enough to keep a country from going off the rails.

Coyne is right to raise his voice about the crisis of Canada. But the extinction-level political disaster he's so worried about hasn't happened over the span of this country's ungainly, unworkable existence. Which means that Coyne could be right tomorrow, but so far has been wrong for the past 158 years.

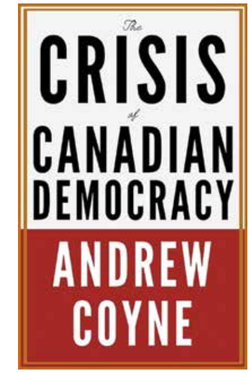
Perhaps the incompatibility of Canada's working parts is not a constitutional deathtrap, but a thing that must be negotiated forever, a reality where nothing is certain, everything is contingent, and decisions are deferred.

This is no country for absolutists.

And how will we know about our politics in the Canada of tomorrow? Who will inform us, how will they do so, and for whom will they work? An AI version of Coyne is conceivable, though an AI version of businessman Kevin O'Leary would probably make more money. But the real money, the tetra-billions of dollars, will come from the transformative machine takeover of the analysis function in every corporation and government ministry in the world. Isn't that right, AI Minister Evan Solomon?

Christopher Dornan is the co-editor of the upcoming volume The Canadian Federal Election of 2025 *(McGill-Queen's University Press), and eight previous books in this series, in which a roster of academics and journalists dissect the campaigns through which each successive Canadian government has come to power.*

The Hill Times



The Crisis of Canadian Democracy, by Andrew Coyne, Sutherland House, 266 pp., $28.95.

100 Best Books 2025

First Nations are 'ready' to move beyond the Indian Act, but time's running out, says author Bob Joseph

In his book, *21 Things You Need to Know About Indigenous Self-Government*, Bob Joseph breaks down many assumptions about the Indian Act and easily relating how this alternative can be used to circumvent this antiquated legislation.

BY CHRISTINA LEADLAY

Bob Joseph is in a hurry.

Throughout his 194-page best-selling book *21 Things You Need to Know About Indigenous Self-Government: A Conversation About Dismantling the Indian Act*, there's an underlying sense of urgency to get Indigenous Peoples out from under the yoke of the colonialist Indian Act.

So, what's the rush?

"Cultural survival," he tells *The Hill Times* in a telephone interview on Nov. 12 speaking from his home in Victoria, B.C., following a national tour for his new book, the follow up to his 2018 book *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act and Indigenous Relations*.

When he's not writing, Joseph educates the corporate world and governments in Canada about what reconciliation means, and how to live it.

"I will tell our business clients, 'You are not doing business with another business. You are doing business with a culture. You need to keep in mind that's their objective'."

First Nations "need to make money, but it's not to keep shareholders happy. It's to try to save their languages and their cultures and traditions," explains Joseph, who's a hereditary chief of the Gayaxala (Thunderbird clan) in his home province of British Columbia.

Joseph says the Fortune-500 companies he works with are open to having positive and respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

"They will say, 'Bob, we don't mind any of this stuff, we just want to know who we have to talk to.' They just want things to be clearer," says Joseph.

He gives the example of Coastal Gas Link's 2020 dispute with the Wet'suwet'en in B.C. which he says some knock-on effects (like the rail blockade) could have been averted had it been clear that hereditary chiefs and the First Nations community in general should have been included in any talks about projects affecting the people and their land.

"I think if we were to move to self-government, that [would be] clear," he says.

Joseph cites this 2020 dispute a handful of times across the 21 things he feels are key to understanding about how Indigenous self-government works, at once dispelling many assumptions about the Indian Act and relating, in un-technical terms, how the alternative of Indigenous self-government can be used to circumvent this outdated legislation.

'We have been self-governing since time immemorial'

Joseph says he wrote *21 Things* with a non-Indigenous Canadian reader in mind as the person with whom he's conversing about the Indian Act and self-government, but he's very pleased that First Nations people are taking an interest, too.

"I think this book is timely, even for First Nations people, because we really have to decide what we are going to do about this," he tells *The Hill Times*.

"This" is getting past the Indian Act's fiduciary duty to First Nations peoples tangled up in with racist, colonial policies designed to assimilate their cultures. Joseph says he takes inspiration from the Seminole tribe in Florida whose answer to that question started with a bingo game and ended up with the tribe of 1,200 people owning the Hard Rock Café franchise.

Joseph retells a story he shares *21 Things* where, in the early 1980s, whilst discussing Indian affairs at their tribal councils, the Seminole knew they were "not going to make it" if they sat around waiting for their federal government to look after them. "So [they] decided to get into business at that point. They started with a bingo night, and it turned into two, three, five, seven. They bought an adjacent bingo parlour, set up a casino, and basically Monopoly-gamed their way to the Hard Rock Café international gaming and food chain.

Author Bob Joseph, a Status Indian, feels Indigenous Peoples would thrive if there were more self-government agreements with Canada's over 600 First Nations. "We are totally ready. We just need to take that action," he told *The Hill Times*. *Photograph by Nathan Smith*

"And for me, I thought it's such a timely message for First Nations right now. That's really what we have to do."

Hence this book. It's Joseph's way of starting to "build comfort around this idea that we would dismantle this really old piece of legislation that was designed primarily to assimilate people'," he explains, clarifying that Indigenous Self-Government isn't a separatist movement, but "rather the next step to move beyond the Indian Act."

Curiously, it was the author's own father who sowed a seed of doubt. "His first question to me was 'are we ready?' And I laughed just like that and I said 'you know, it really concerns me that you have asked that question. Now I have got to go find out if we are ready.'"

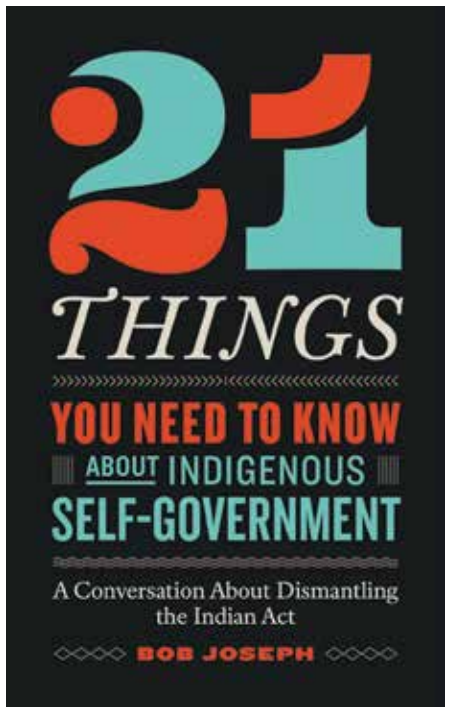
Joseph said a friend gave him the confidence that he was on the right track.

"I said, 'Here is a challenge I am having. From the Indigenous perspective, are we ready?' And my good friend Cheryl said 'Bob Joseph, we have been self-governing since time immemorial. The archeologists say it's 10,500 years we have been self-governing the whole time. We still look after our lands and resources.'

"It was such a great moment for me. It was like 'oh yeah, we have been doing this. We are totally ready.' We just need to take that action, like the Seminole, and really start to look after people and our cultures," says Joseph.

And with the Indian Act turning 150 years old in 2026, Indigenous Peoples in Canada will need to act quickly to make sure it's them and not this policy that will be thriving into the next century. The problem is: negotiating the self-government agreements takes time, which some cultures just don't have a lot of left.

"We have 25 self-government agreements with about 45 to 50 First Nations largely negotiated since the early 1980s," says Joseph. "And my feeling is that's just long considering there's just over 630 First Nations across the country."



21 Things You Need to Know About Indigenous Self-Government: A Conversation About Dismantling the Indian Act, by Bob Joseph, Indigenous Relations Press, 2025. *Book cover courtesy of Indigenous Relations Press*

Self-government could help save money at time of budget cuts

"Nothing about us without us" is the overarching theme, that First Nations need to be involved in *all* decisions that affect them, from education and health policies to band membership criteria and economic reconciliation and in between.

Joseph notes that Indigenous self-government is no cookie-cutter policy, as it has to suit each First Nation's regional, cultural differences and political differences.

For example, he explains how the Nisga'a Nation's 2000 treaty "break[s] from the chief and council system and replace[s] it with something that's more driven by them, and they dealt with citizenship as opposed to being Status Indians," while "Westbank First Nation was more interested in taking over ministerial responsibilities in their self-govt agreement."

It's this taking on of ministerial duties that pitches self-government as cost-saving measure for Ottawa, especially at a time when this year's federal budget forecasts cuts to Crown-Indigenous relations programs.

"If I were like a financial analyst, I would say we are in for choppy seas and strong headwinds," Joseph offered as his impression of the Carney government's first budget.

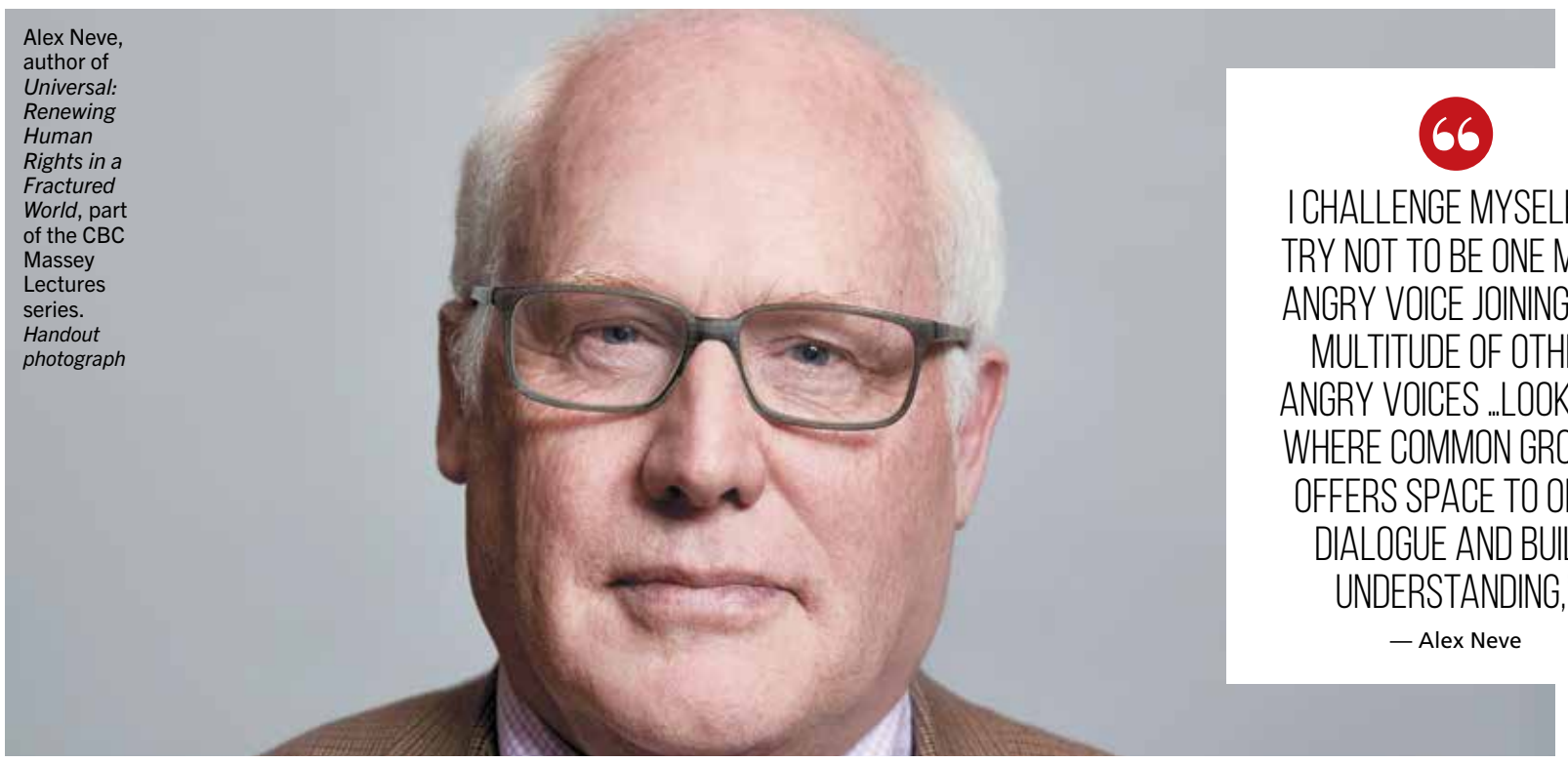
"We are still struggling with clean drinking water and mouldy houses and the socio-economic stuff has been slow to change. And then to chop over $2-billion from the budget [for First Nations programs], I don't know how you are able to move quicker. It seems like a step back."

Joseph says while he "would give the Carney government high marks for saying all of these big projects will be done in partnership with First Nations" and sees "some priority spending with First Nations who are going to be in the vicinity of the major projects, but there is a lot that don't fit into that."

21 Things You Need to Know About Indigenous Self-Government: A Conversation About Dismantling the Indian Act, by Bob Joseph, Indigenous Relations Press, 2025.

cleadlay@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

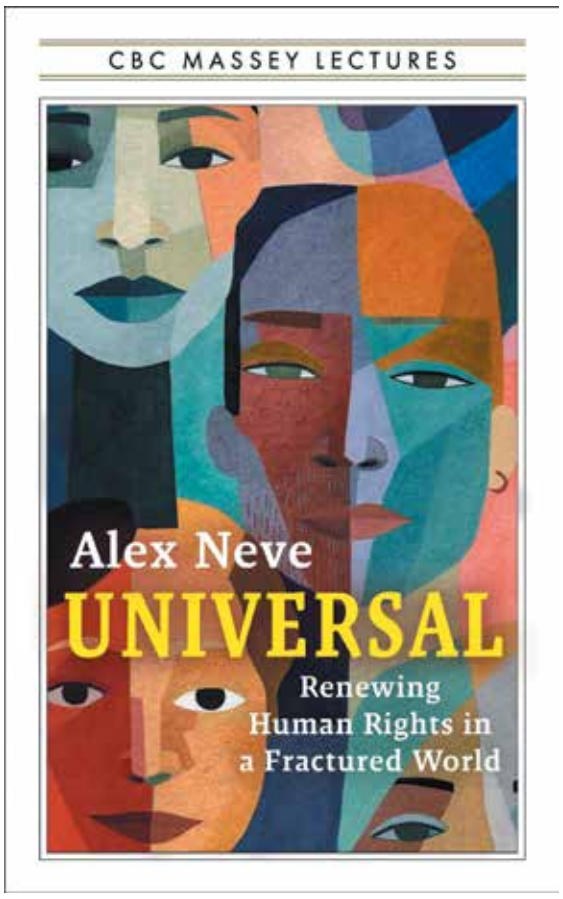
The 2025 Massey Lecture: silence is not an option



Alex Neve, author of *Universal: Renewing Human Rights in a Fractured World*, part of the CBC Massey Lectures series. *Handout photograph*

In *Universal: Renewing Human Rights in a Fractured World*, Alex Neve looks into why we should be fighting to preserve universal human rights. 'In a world permeated with crises many of which come right to our front door, that surely must mean going further, even when it takes us beyond our comfort zone.'

BY JIM CRESKEY



Universal: Renewing Human Rights in a Fractured World: CBC Massey Lectures, by Alex Neve, House of Anansi Press, 336 pp., 2025 $24.99.

The people at House of Anansi Press, CBC's Ideas, and Massey College at the University of Toronto have been working together since 1961 to orchestrate the annual Massey Lectures. The lectures include a book, a cross-country reading tour, and a radio show. The first Massey lecturer was Remembering Barbara Ward, which speaks volumes about the quality and the moral insight behind the lectures from their very beginning.

"Human Rights" as a topic appears with some regularity in the lectures. This year, Alex Neve brings his own lifelong commitment to human rights to the theme. He blends his personal experiences and a wide-ranging historical knowledge of how the Golden Rule has been practiced—and how it has been betrayed.

Neve, a human rights lawyer, a senior fellow at the University of Ottawa and the two-decades secretary general of Amnesty International Canada, is now chair of Canadian Leadership for Nuclear Disarmament. There are few people in Canada who could create such a wide-ranging survey of human rights failures and successes. But *Universal: Renewing Human Rights in a Fractured World* also aspires to offer a modest path out of the torturous status quo "of inequality and the lucrative economy of war and conflict."

"We start in small places," he writes, "close to home. We start with Canada."

Universal human rights is hardly a new idea. Neve writes, "Paul Gordon Lauren beautifully suggests that 'all of the great religious traditions share a universal dissatisfaction with the world as it is and a determination to make it as it ought to be.'"

The Golden Rule, writes Neve, "is foundational in Islam: 'Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others that which you wish for yourself'; in Christianity: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself'; and in Judaism: 'Whatever is hateful and distasteful to you, do not do to your fellow man.'"

In 1948, as the world stood in the ashes of Second World War and witnessed the apocalyptic threat of newly created nuclear weapons, the United Nations began to set in motion a series of agreements and treaties dealing with refugee law, disarmament, aid, and international cooperation. Today, nearly every aspect of international law has been broken by many of the very nations that helped create it.

"The promise of the future," writes Neve, "used to be that each succeeding generation would be better off than the previous one: be wealthier and healthier, have more leisure, inhabit a more peaceful world, live longer lives. Now the very promise of a future is in question. Which is to say, will there be a future? When the only thing that is certain is the present, what is there to promise?"

> "I CHALLENGE MYSELF TO TRY NOT TO BE ONE MORE ANGRY VOICE JOINING THE MULTITUDE OF OTHER ANGRY VOICES ...LOOK FOR WHERE COMMON GROUND OFFERS SPACE TO OPEN DIALOGUE AND BUILD UNDERSTANDING,"
>
> — Alex Neve

Neve has two urgent suggestions about what to do in this singular present.

"I challenge myself to try not to be one more angry voice joining the multitude of other angry voices ...look for where common ground offers space to open dialogue and build understanding," he writes.

I take this to mean in part that we are ill-served by the innate disrespect of cancel culture in any form.

Neve's second plea is that "Silence is not an option."

He quotes the 1967 Massey lecturer, Martin Luther King, Jr.: "'in the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends,' wrote King. 'The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people."

Neve has a such a long list of human rights demands for Canada, both globally and domestically, that it feels overwhelming to take on so much at once. And then I remember that he has spent 20 years at the head of Amnesty International, investigating the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, of Palestinians, of migrants, victims of war, and witnessing the ravages of an earth tortured by climate extremes. How could he not present us with such a gaping chasm of moral dilemmas?

But, "Take a breath," he says. And he quotes the Persian poet Rumi: "Be a lamp, or a lifeboat, or a ladder."

"In a world permeated with crises," writes Neve, "many of which come right to our front door, that surely must mean going further, even when it takes us beyond our comfort zone."

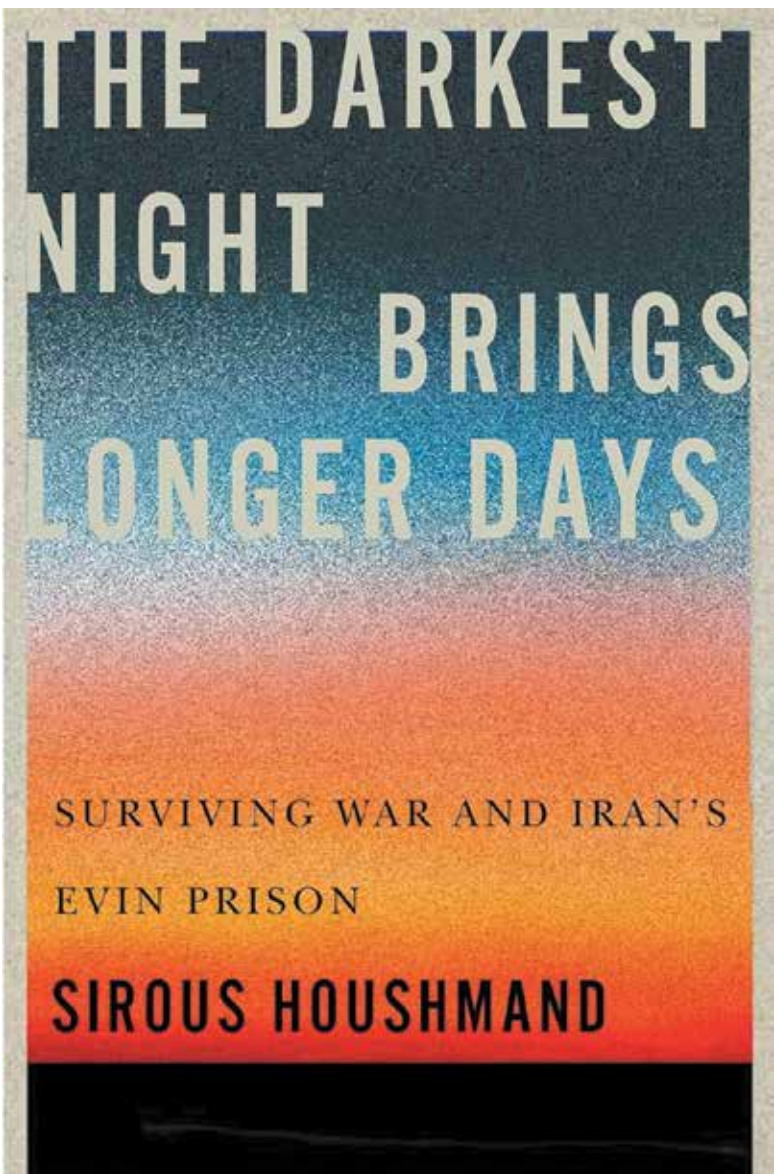
In other words, make yourself uncomfortable.

Universal: Renewing Human Rights in a Fractured World: CBC Massey Lectures, by Alex Neve, House of Anansi Press, 336 pp., 2025, $24.99.

The Hill Times

100 Best Books 2025

Author Sirous Houshmand features his life story through the 1979 Iranian revolution in his book *The Darkest Night Brings Longer Days*. *Photograph courtesy of McGill-Queen's University Press*



The Darkest Night Brings Longer Days: Surviving War and Iran's Evin Prison, by Sirous Houshmand, McGill-Queen's University Press, 228 pp., $24.95.

'Don't be indifferent': Iranian-Canadian author shares story of his life inside infamous Tehran prison in new book

'If you have a purpose, then you become resilient. Then you want to fight for something. But if you don't have a purpose… I have seen people in isolation lose their mind because they just didn't want to be there and didn't know why they were there,' says Sirous Houshmand, author of *The Darkest Night Brings Longer Days*.

BY IREM KOCA

"I was prepared to see the door open and hear one of the prison guards shout, 'All your belongings,' code for, 'You are coming with me to line up for mass execution.'"

In his memoir, *The Darkest Night Brings Longer Days*: *Surviving War and Iran's Evin Prison*, author Sirous Houshmand offers first-hand testimony of living through revolution, war, and incarceration.

Born in Iran and educated as a youth in the United States, the author returned home during the 1979 revolution. While he served as a medical aide during the Iran-Iraq War, he was captured and incarcerated in Tehran's infamous Evin Prison during the 1988 mass executions.

In his first book, Houshmand shares his life story, both the personal and the political, weaving stories from his boyhood spent between Iran and the U.S., to his time as a new father and a political prisoner.

Houshmand talks about his life as a small child surrounded by family in Iran, touching on feelings of familiarity and belonging. He then takes the reader to California where he lived with American families. He shares delicate moments of his life as a young boy, the first time he fell in love, his introduction to Western freedom and consumerism, his political awakening and ideas of revolution, and finding his identity and moral compass.

As the narrative moves between Houshmand's intertwined worlds, readers get a glimpse of life during America's anti-Vietnam War movement and 1970 Kent State shootings, and the Black Friday Massacre of 1978 that ignited the 1979 revolution in Iran.

The author's life between the two countries also showcases the duality between a capitalist, conformist society, and one fighting for civil rights and freedoms and social justice.

Writing as part therapy, part honouring influencial people

Houshmand told *The Hill Times* in a Nov. 11 video call interview that it took him decades to reconcile those memories, and put pen to paper. It took about six years to gather these memories that woke him up at night, and the historical facts supporting them, another four years and a rigorous back and forth with the editors at publisher McGill-Queen's University to get it right.

"It's just that the trauma and the experience was so difficult that I needed time to share my story. That's when I became aware that this is going to help a lot. That was one of the very important reasons for writing the book," Houshmand said.

Another reason was to tell the stories of the people who crossed his path, he said, from family members to the like-minded idealists he met in prison, some of whom were brutally executed for their beliefs.

Houshmand honours the stories of those influential figures throughout the book, like his father, a physician who refused to take part in corruption, and his feminist grandmother who embodied courage and defiance.

Caught in the regime's crackdown on the opposition as a follower of the revolution, Houshmand recounts the memories of his imprisonment from daily routines and whispered exchanges between prisoners to the interrogation, torture, and executions of his friends.

The book also zooms in on moments of hope, and acts of love and sacrifice, such as the time the author's mother wore a black chador, a veil covering her hair and body, in one of her prison visits in the hopes that the guards would treat Houshman better.

Houshmand said that despite it all, he's never lost his political fervour. However, these days that looks less like activism and more like studying philosophy and discussing politics in book clubs with friends, Houshmand said.

"My age is not a young age to be a very prominent activist," says the 76 year old,"but I love to know more and I keep up with current events constantly."

When asked what he would hopes Canadian readers will take from his book, Houshmand says

100 Best Books 2025

Evin Prison's main entrance, pictured in 2008. *Photograph courtesy of Commons Wikimedia*

he wants his audience to leave with more awareness and care for the life beyond their bubble.

'I don't want Iran's sovereignty to be destroyed'

"The first thing that is very important to me is not to be indifferent. That is huge. Because that's the only way that societies can really go towards positive change," he said.

In his memoir, Houshmand defines his values as rooted in democratic socialism, and himself as a non-violent secular activist. His criticisms about the world rooted in consumerism, capitalism, systemic inequality, as well as ideas against religious and political repression, and systemic cruelty appear throughout *The Darkest Night Brings Longer Days*.

While he does not directly comment on the current turmoil in Iran, Houshmand underlines that the most important thing is for the movement to be immune to influence of foreign political actors or "Western-elites" as he put it.

"Even if I'm in the opposition camp, I don't want the sovereignty of Iran to be destroyed," he told *The Hill Times*.

Houshmand argues that societies—mostly Western ones—have been moulded into living in a system where people get lost in their daily routines, focusing on their own lives and hardships, rarely looking outside their windows which he says leads them to detach from the rest of the world.

"As [French philosopher Albert] Camus says, 'this repetition of life becomes a little bit meaningless'… And, to me, it is a problem that creates indifference."

The author said he hopes his story will encourage readers to strive towards a goal, regardless of what that goal might be.

"That really helped me go through the prison," Houshmand said.

"If you have a purpose, then you become resilient. Then you want to fight for something. But if you don't have a purpose… I have seen people in isolation lose their mind because they just didn't want to be there, and didn't know why they were there," he said.

He also offers criticism of traditional media for reporting news events selectively, using biased language, and reporting half-truths.

Houshmand also argued that "legacy media" holds a lot of sway with those in power, which he says makes it difficult to know what is propaganda and what is real. In such an environment, democracy—which the author argues is a 'very theoretical word' to begin with— is hindered.

"We're talking about 'corporatocracy' rather than democracy in— at least— the United States, and the media is a huge part of it that helps that type of a system. So, to be honest with you, I feel that the real news is something that is not easy to find. You have to really work for it," he said.

The author also name drops the thinkers that shaped his outlook in life such as Camus, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jean-Paul Sartre. "Through the work of these intellectuals,I realized how a fabricated culture of consumption and immediate pleasures creates a false psychological need for material goods and services," he writes in his book, referring to American intellectual Noam Chomsky.

Houshmand observes that the West's perception of Iran has been changing over the last 15 years, with social media breaking through the monopoly on information.

The author says he hopes that an informed section of the international community understands that Iranians are being "pressed from two sides" with domestic issues as well as global pressure such as economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. as well as military attacks from Israel, while Iranians understand that their independence and changes they'd like to impose should not be in the hands of others.

Following his release from prison, Houshmand continued to live in Iran for almost another decade. He co-founded a factory with colleagues, and worked as an industrial engineer. He migrated to Canada in 1998 to prevent his son from having to join Iran's mandatory military service, and to be back in an English-speaking country.

Houshmand told *The Hill Times* that Canada, as a progressive, English-speaking country, was the best choice for him and his family, especially with Toronto being the home to the second-largest Iranian diaspora in the world—the first is in Los Angeles.

During the 27 years he has been residing in this country, Houshmand has only visited Iran once, in 2001, when his father passed away.

The Hill Times

Zahra Kazemi-Ahmadabadi, an Iranian-Canadian freelance journalist who was taking photographs outside the Evin Prison of family members of the missing, was arrested, raped, and tortured by Iranian officials and died in custody at the Evin Prison in 2003. *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

Q&A: Sirous Houshmand

Why did you want to write this book?

"My decision to write a memoir was challenging—painful, but also therapeutic. Before beginning it, I struggled with doubt and indecision. Ultimately, however, I had to come to terms with the memories of my horrific captivity, and after years of reflection I recognized the importance of sharing my extraordinary and tumultuous life story with the public.

"In the late 1980s, I was one of the political prisoners held at Tehran's notorious Evin Prison, where thousands of prisoners were executed in 1988, my prison friends among them. My memoir, *The Darkest Night Brings Longer Days: Surviving War and Iran's Evin Prison*, serves as a testament to their lives and the profound impact they had on me. It is also an eyewitness account of the momentous events surrounding the revolution. Through it all, my lives in two different worlds, the United States and Iran, affected the decisions I made.

"During my incarceration I realized that only by having a firm belief or conviction—regardless of its nature—could one endure the otherwise unbearable conditions. This made people both resilient and resistant. Less resolute prisoners often succumbed to pressure and grief; some lost their sanity.

"I was privileged to learn from, and live among, many principled, altruistic individuals who believed passionately in their cause. They represented, I believe, the best of society. They resisted the pressures of mainstream society that encouraged them to live a 'normal life' and turn away from the suffering of others. I aim to honour their memory by reanimating their aspirations and struggles. If this helps to inspire a more vibrant political discourse and challenge ennui, so much the better."

Why is this book important?

"My memoir provides a new perspective on the Iranian Revolution, and the subsequent mass executions because it explores the inner psyche as well as the public square. It thinks deeply about the nuances of human behaviour and reveals the emotions of prisoners facing the looming possibility of death. Given the plight of international political prisoners, a demographic that is growing at a concerning speed, this exploration helps guide readers behind the curtain of incarceration to develop empathy and, from there, to work towards a better world.

"Going beyond a narrow focus on imprisonment, the book also addresses universal themes such as marriage, parenthood, social relations, and understanding cultural differences. My familiarity with Western culture provides a unique lens to engage readers.

"Today, as young people are experiencing a significant political and ethical awakening, my story can provide a touchstone. My journey brought me from relative apathy to wanting to make a meaningful difference. I reflect on the heightened consumerism and individualism of the West—while buying things, travelling, and having casual relationships can be pleasurable, joy has an entirely different texture. I thus sought the more authentic and transcendent aspects of life: the delight of looking a loved one in the eye, the thrill of marvelling at an artistic creation, the excitement of knowing another person deeply, the importance of a philosophical search for meaning, the intrigue of being a rebel, and certainly the exhilaration of fighting for a cause larger than a single person.

"In recounting the early months of the Iranian Revolution, I draw out its valuable lessons for addressing the growing division between international progressive movements and the negative impact of sectarianism. I also use the moment to speak to women's struggles for liberation, emphasizing the need to break free from patriarchal constraint."

Who should read it?

"My memoir will interest readers curious about Iran's current situation and the long-standing tensions between it and the United States. These tensions escalated with [President] Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2018, the imposition of additional sanctions, and subsequent military actions from Israel and, later, the U.S.

"The political climate in many countries, particularly the United States, has become divisive, heated, and unequal. My book should resonate with those across the political spectrum, as it emphasizes how those with wealth and power have marginalized the voices of ordinary people.

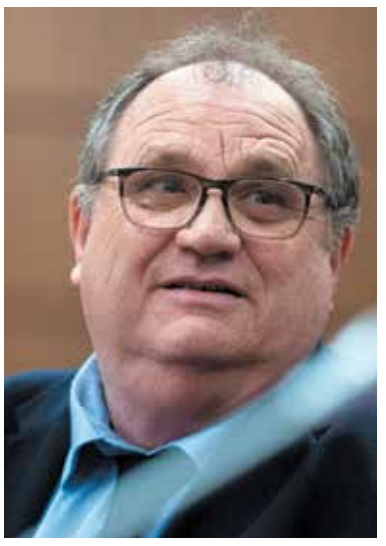
"Immigrants from many countries will find parts of this book relatable, as they will draw parallels between their experiences and struggles and my story. Diaspora Iranians (a sizeable group of approximately 3.1 million) will want to read this book, especially those who feel passionately about their country of origin or descent and are interested in these historical events."—*by Kate Malloy*

ikoca@hilltimes.com

The Hill Times

100 Best Books 2025

The *Ripper: The Making of Pierre Poilievre* focuses on Poilievre within the modern media environment in Canada



Author Mark Bourrie: 'The book is as much about the failings of modern political parties and the Canadian media as it is about Poilievre.' *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Mark Bourrie says *Ripper: The Making of Pierre Poilievre* is as much about the failings of modern political parties and the Canadian media as it is about the Conservative leader.

BY KATE MALLOY

Mark Bourrie wanted to write a book about federal Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre because he saw a need for a biography that focused on Poilievre within the modern media environment in Canada. He also wanted to look at the rise of the right in Western democracies, and the undermining of this country's democratic institutions. The result is *Ripper: The Making of Pierre Poilievre*, Bourrie's 430-page, gripping, and exhaustive look at one of the more controversial leading figures in federal politics today. The book is detailed, well-written, and was on *The Globe and Mail*'s bestselling Canadian non-fiction books list this year.

Bourrie, who is a lawyer, author, former Hill journalist, and a historian, has written numerous non-fiction books, including *Bush Runner: The Adventures of Pierre-Esprit Radisson*, which won the prestigious RBC Taylor Prize for non-fiction in 2020. He is also author of *Crosses in the Sky: Jean de Brébeuf and the Destruction of Huronia*; *Big Fear Me*; *The Killing Game: Martyrdom, Murder and the Lure of ISIS*; *Peter Woodcock: Canada's Youngest Serial Killer*; and *Kill the Messengers: Stephen Harper's Assault on Your Right to Know*.

Bourrie argues that Poilievre is "a ripper," a politician "who sees politics as a war that gives their lives meaning," and says rippers make "fantastic opposition leaders," but "awful" prime ministers.

Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre. Author Mark Bourrie argues that Poilievre is a 'ripper,' a politician 'who sees politics as a war that gives their lives meaning,' and says rippers make 'fantastic opposition leaders,' but 'awful' prime ministers. 'Poilievre is a classic political ripper. So is Charlie Angus. The Liberal Rat Pack were also pretty good rippers back in the day. The media has a few rippers who make important contributions to politics.' *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

This Q&A, originally published on April 21, 2025, has been edited for length and clarity.

How long did it take you to write this book?

"I worked on it from late May or early June 2024 until late February 2025."

Where do you write and what is your writing process for writing big biographies?

"I write at home. I buy every book that I think will be relevant, then normally use Library and Archives Canada for research. With the Poilievre book, I got a lot of material at the Ottawa City Library, which gives people access to huge, expansive media databases. I also use university online academic databases (though they weren't that useful in this project."

What were your sources of information (documents, books, newspaper stories, reports), and why did you decide not to interview people?

"I'm trained as a historian. I found the written record to be much more useful and accurate than interviews. Poilievre is a polarizing figure in ordinary times. By the time I started the project, he'd been leader of his party for almost two years and we were, supposedly, 18 months away from an election. Finding anyone in Ottawa who was non-partisan and fair was almost impossible.

"People who didn't want him to win *really* didn't want him to. I would spend hours listening to hours of rumour and come away with nothing usable. On top of that, there was a strong element of fear, especially in the media. I realized few people in Ottawa really know him. All this confirmed my bias against oral history. Poilievre's life is well-documented. He's been in the media spotlight since high school, and an MP for 21 years. I'm very comfortable with the written record. A lot of it was created before people became so polarized."

Why did you want to write this book?

"In 2016, I wanted to follow up on books about Stephen Harper's information control and ISIS's use of the internet as recruiting and communication tools. I hoped to start a book about the changing media environment and the creation of alternate media universes, but, at the time, no publisher was interested. Then I pitched a book about foreign use of the internet in asymmetrical warfare against Western democracies. No takers there, either. A proposal for a book on Pierre Radisson from 2004 was still kicking around and was picked up by Biblioasis, a boutique publisher that hadn't handled much non-fiction. So I did that.

"The book sold well and won a prestigious prize. That allowed me to do another project that had been on my mind for years, a biography of *Globe and Mail* founder George McCullagh. It allowed me to delve into modern anti-democratic thinking in Canada. I also did a legal text for journalists for a law book company, and a biography of the Jesuit mystic Jean de Brébeuf. I'd never intended to be a biographer, but I've realized you can use biography to make important points about politics and society. They're an awful lot of work, though, if you are serious about doing them well."

Why did you want to write a book about Pierre Poilievre, specifically?

"I believed there was a need for a book that centred Poilievre within the modern media environment in Canada and, to a lesser extent, the rise of the right in Western democracies. I've been concerned for a long time about the undermining of democratic institutions in Canada. [Former prime minister] Paul Martin tried to address what he rightly called the 'democratic deficit,' but politicians and the media lost interest when Paul Martin lost to Stephen Harper."

Why is this book important, and who should read it?

"Everyone should read it. What else would I say? The book is as much about the failings of modern political parties and the Canadian media as it is about Poilievre. It's a warning that political parties are no longer democratic organizations where like-minded people can debate policy, develop local followings, and run for office to represent the interests and values of their regions.

"They're election-campaign machines that are run by long-established cliques designed to elect whipped MPs to Parliament while 'The Centre' of unaccountable staffers and 'strategists' who propelled the leader forward takes real control of the country's administration. This has been happening for 40 years, in both major parties, and it is killing democracy. It's even worse here than it was in the United States. Though there, they now have a fascist in power who has no use for democracy and would get rid of it if he could."

Why was it important to publish this book now in the midst of an election campaign?

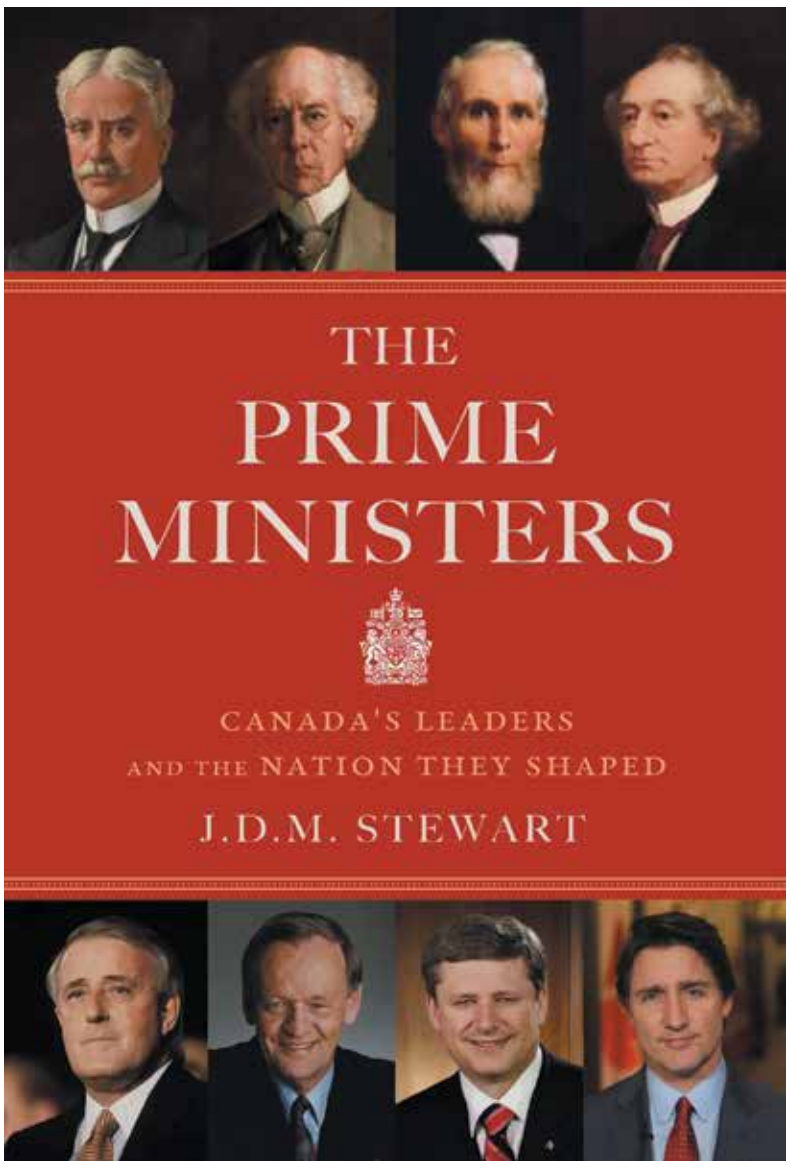
"It wasn't published in the midst of the campaign. It came out before the campaign started. We had planned for a late April or early May launch, with the late spring and summer to promote

Continued on page 43

‘I was speaking to a group of high school students, and none of them knew who Lester B. Pearson was’: historian J.D.M. Stewart wants to change that

Author and historian J.D.M. Stewart’s new book *The Prime Ministers: Canada’s Leaders and the Nation*, covers all of this country’s prime ministers from John A. Macdonald to Mark Carney. *Photograph courtesy of Sutherland House*

Learning and understanding Canada’s political history is ‘part of being an informed and civic minded citizen,’ says author and historian J.D.M. Stewart of his new book, *The Prime Ministers: Canada’s Leaders and the Nation They Shaped*.



Author J.D.M. Stewart says he decided to write his book, *The Prime Ministers: Canada’s Leaders and the Nation They Shaped*, after meeting a group of Ontario high school students who didn’t know who Lester Pearson was. *Photograph courtesy of Sutherland House*

Jean Chrétien, who was prime minister from 1993-2003, pictured in a Hill scrum. *The Hill Times photograph by Jake Wright*

Then-prime minister Stephen Harper campaigning at a rally at the Irving Oil refinery in Saint John, N.B., on Sept. 10, 2015. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

BY ABBAS RANA

If Canadians want to understand today’s Canada, they must first know the political history of the country and the leaders who shaped it, says historian J.D.M. Stewart, author of the new book, *The Prime Ministers: Canada’s Leaders and the Nation They Shaped*, in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

“As I say in the book, [author] Peter C. Newman once wrote that an hour in the Office of the Prime Minister is an hour in the history of the country,” said Stewart.

“So, if we want to understand what has made Canada into what it is today, we need to have an understanding of the people who have led the country and the decisions that they made and the consequences of those decisions. It’s part of being an informed and civic minded citizen to understand the history of the country.”

Stewart said that he decided to write his book on Canadian prime ministers after meeting a group of Ontario high school students who didn’t know who Lester Pearson was. This experience alarmed him because Ontario requires students to take history in Grade 10, a requirement not shared by most other provinces. If Ontario students lacked this basic knowledge about Canadian political history, Stewart said, students elsewhere likely knew even less. When he asked the group’s teacher why these students didn’t know anything about a Nobel Prize–winning former prime minister, the teacher said that “no one teaches about prime ministers anymore.”

In his newly released book, Stewart writes about all of Canada’s prime ministers, from John A. Macdonald to Mark Carney. He said this book will be a useful source of information for anyone interested in Canadian political history, whether they are a young student or an adult. This is Stewart’s second book. His first book was *Being Prime Minister*, published in 2018.

The following is a Q&A which has been edited for length and clarity.

Why did you decide to write this book?

“I was speaking to a group of high school students, and none of 35_09102015CPCrallySaint-JohnNbAndrewMeade014 them knew who Lester B. Pearson was. And I mentioned that to the teacher afterward, and she said to me, ‘Well, no one teaches about prime ministers anymore.’ And so I was a bit alarmed by that, and I feel that the political history of the country is very important, particularly as it runs through the Office of Prime Minister. It’s been more than 25 years since anybody has written a book about Canada’s PMs. And so it was past time due to get a new history of them in front of Canadians.”

What does this tell you about how political history is taught in Canada when students don’t know who Pearson was?

“It tells us we need to do a better job of teaching our history,

Continued on page 42

100 Best Books 2025

Former Liberal MP Sergio Marchi, right, pictured during an interview with journalist Andrew Cohen at the launch of his new book in Ottawa on Nov. 18, 2025. *The Hill Times photograph by Tessie Sanci*

Sergio Marchi says he regrets Rat Pack's contribution to loss of decorum in House

In his new book, Sergio Marchi recounts his time as a Hill staffer, alderman, opposition MP, cabinet minister, and ambassador.

BY NEIL MOSS

In the years after the federal Liberals a devastating electoral defeat in 1984, the Rat Pack helped rejuvenate the party, but also crossed red lines with their performance in the House, which Sergio Marchi says he regrets.

The group was composed of four "charter" members in then-Liberal MPs Don Boudria, Sheila Copps, John Nunziata, and Brian Tobin. In his new book, Marchi writes he was an "honorary" member.

"They were exciting to watch, but they were also controversial since not everyone agreed with their 'take-no-prisoners' approach," he details in the recently published *Pursuing a Public Life: How to Succeed in the Political Arena.*

Marchi notes that the government of then-Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney and his cabinet ministers found the group "unbecoming and dishonourable."

"Points of order and privilege regularly flew back and forth, and the poor Speaker had to constantly figure out how to keep order and decorum. Often, he ejected members for unparliamentary language. But inadvertently that only furthered the drama," Marchi writes.

"The wild scenes contributed to a greater degree of incivility in the House and no doubt deepened public cynicism."

It is that deepened public cynicism that has led young Canadians today not wanting to pursue careers in public life, Marchi says, and it's a problem that inspired the former Liberal MP and cabinet minister to write his new book.

Marchi told *The Hill Times* that the Rat Pack was a "two-sided coin" that both re-energized the Liberal caucus, but also crossed red lines.

"I do regret when we would cross the line because what that would do is that would then encourage the subsequent opposition to do the same thing," he told *The Hill Times.*

"The overly aggressive mindset," Marchi writes, "contributed to a poorer political culture. It created a race to the bottom. When the government went low, we in the opposition went lower. Everything seemed to constitute a scandal."

He recounts a line of questioning from Boudria over the country of origin of the wine that was served on the prime minister's plane.

"'Don, if we ever get to the promised land of the government, the opposition will undoubtedly rake us over the coals, as well,'" Marchi recounts in his book. "And that's precisely what happened."

Following his years on the opposition benches, Marchi was tapped by then-prime minister Jean Chrétien to join his cabinet—first as immigration minister, then as minister to the environment, and last as international trade minister. Marchi left the House in 1999 and was appointed Canada's ambassador to the World Trade Organization, where he also hosted soccer games played by envoys in Geneva.

The following Q&A was conducted by phone, and has been edited for length, style, and clarity.

What was the reason that you chose to write this book?

"This book was written because I was deeply concerned that so many Canadians—particularly young Canadians, which is my chief concern—are giving public life a pass. And that concerns me because for all the potential of AI [artificial intelligence], AI will never run a country, AI will never provide empathy, and AI will never safeguard our values."

"Public and political leadership requires good women and good men to step forward, to have bold voices, and to have new ideas. That's how we rejuvenate and sustain our politics and, more importantly, our democracy. But more and more people are not choosing to consider it. And I get it, politics hasn't become any easier or nicer. In fact, it's become, you know, increasingly more divisive and polarized and nasty. But that doesn't mean we don't need good people to roll up the shirt sleeves and obviously face the challenges as we grow our country."

At times, backbench MPs are looked at as trained seals in a way. You discuss the levels of subservience to the leader that MPs show, and you mentioned that has regressed. Is that something that is causing people to not enter political life because they lack agency? How do you fix that?

"I think in the long reasons for not running—perhaps it might not be at the top of the list—but if people think that an MP is a rather powerless position or always beholden to the leader or the prime minister or PMO or the leader's office, then they might say, 'Look, I want a position where I'm more independent, more in control, where I dictate.' And for that, the municipal level is terrific."

100 Best Books 2025

"I think it's a balance because on the one hand—as I say in the book—there's no question that people like strong MPs. …. So allow MPs to be strong, allow MPs to be able to work freely in committees [and] to give them a little more latitude in terms of national debates, in which they can participate.

"On the other hand, you also need some balance because Sergio Marchi didn't get elected as an Independent."

"The fact is that the pendulum has swung too much towards the leader, and we need to calibrate it a bit."

You talk about some of the Rat Pack's activities, the loss of decorum in the House, and scandal hunting-type questions—where you talk about Boudria's question on foreign wine on the prime minister's plane. Do you think that those Liberal opposition years have led to the state of the House we are in now?

"The Rat Pack was a two-sided coin. On the one side, the Rat Pack brought a lot of energy to our caucus because you have to remember that we were brutally defeated by Brian Mulroney in 1984. … We were down and out and trying to fight back. In that context, the Rat Pack provided a lot of oxygen, a lot of energy, a lot of enthusiasm, not taking no for an answer.

"But the flip side of that is the Rat Pack often crossed a so-called red line of good, acceptable political behaviour and the loser in that was political decorum. I don't think it was just the Rat Pack in that era that contributed [to the current state of affairs]. There are things that happened before and since, but I think those years where political decorum suffered. … No question that it didn't help the kind of relationships that are required in the House, regardless of who is in power and who is in opposition.

"So the Rat Pack had a two-fold impact positive for the party because it gave us some juice at a time when we were desperate, but the decorum suffered during those years."

Is there any amount of regret in terms of having been a part of that process where the red line was crossed?

Members of the Rat Pack included then-Liberal MPs John Nunziata, top left, Brian Tobin, Don Boudria, Sheila Copps, bottom left, and honorary member Sergio Marchi, bottom right. *The Hill Times file photographs*

"When you look back at it in a less partisan, less sharp way … I don't think everything the Rat Pack said and did was wrong, but the things they did say and do that were wrong, you do regret. Because what you do after a few years, is you put yourself in the shoes of a viewing public tuning into Question Period, and how do you think they would react to watching their politicians fight and pull their hair out and call each other names and get ejected."

"I do regret when we would cross the line because what that would do is that would then encourage the subsequent opposition to do the same thing."

You mention in the book that traditionally there has been consensus built around trade with support from both the Liberals and Conservatives. When you look at the last Parliament, the Conservatives had voted against the modernized Ukraine trade deal due to their opposition to language around carbon pricing in the deal. Is that consensus still here?

"It's a weaker consensus. Not only here, but across the world."

"When I got the trade portfolio, I would say to people, 'I think I've got one of the best portfolios in cabinet,' because it's hugely positive. You're working in terms of bringing down trade barriers. You're working trying to help companies sell their goods and services around the world. You're on trade missions with incredible, talented business leaders. What possibly could be negative about that?"

Sergio Marchi, pictured at a briefing with reporters in his ministerial office in Gatineau, Que., in the 1990s, served as Liberal minister of immigration, environment, and international trade. *The Hill Times photograph by Kate Malloy*

"Now, it's been turned on its head, not just because of what [United States President Donald] Trump has been up to, but preceding that, there's been, I think, a weakening of political leadership. Trade became known in many parts of the world as something that was hurting the economy, where jobs were being exported to developing countries because of cheaper labour. All of a sudden there were parades against trade, and the politicians, rather than fighting those parades, chose to lead them so it became much more politicized."

You mentioned the WTO hasn't recovered since the Battle of Seattle, where we have negotiations that haven't finished even after a quarter century. Have we reached a point where there are questions if the WTO will ever recover?

"It's a factor of leadership, right? If there's no leadership, they won't move. It's as simple as that."

"When you have the United States, with the leader that it has who actually has called for the elimination of the WTO publicly. Can you imagine? … It was just irresponsible."

"As they moved from the locomotive to the caboose, not only did they take themselves off the leadership front, [but] no one has filled the void. … If no one fills the void, it's just going to be stationary and you are going to just get the status quo. And that's where it is right now."

"It's a precarious moment, and it's going to likely be there during the duration of the Trump time because he's not going to change his attitude anytime soon. But that doesn't mean other countries don't have to."

To go back to cabinet and cabinet shuffles that you experienced: What was the ultimate decision that made you turn down the Defence Ministry offer that Jean Chrétien gave you?

"I just didn't feel an affinity. You don't have to be an expert when you become a minister because the biggest thing a minister brings is their judgment. … I just didn't feel that I had the affinity for a defence portfolio. I didn't have an intuition. I wasn't involved ever in military issues, *per se*. I said to myself, 'Jeez, I wasn't even a Boy Scout.'

"So I thought it wasn't going to be a good fit, and I thought I needed to be honest with how I felt with the prime minister."

Looking back at your political life, do you have any of any 'what ifs'?

"I mention in the book two regrets. … One is I probably overdid it in my early years being away from my family. I missed many birthdays, many anniversaries, many firsts of the kids because I was always either in a riding or somewhere in the country. Later when I was a minister, I was traveling abroad. So I now look back because you can't have those moments back—they're gone."

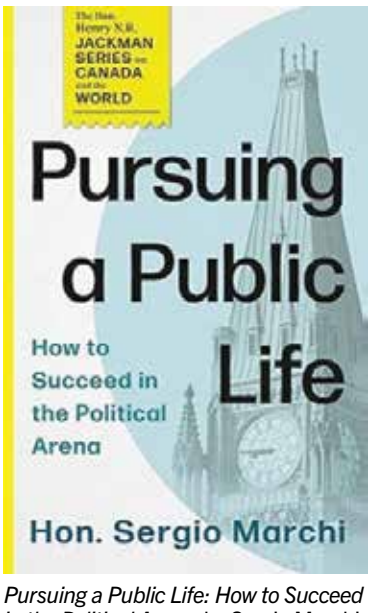
"And the second regret is I was one cabinet meeting away from changing the citizenship oath to go from swearing allegiance to, at the time, Queen Elizabeth II and her heirs and successors, to an Australian-type narrative, which was an oath to country."

"I thought there was support for it, and would have, you know, complimented our own flag, our own anthem, our own institutions in terms of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and our own constitution."

"At the last minute, the prime minister asked me to park it. Because of the [Quebec separatist] referendum, he didn't want to fight —he told me—monarchists and separatists at the same time."

"I just thought it was the right thing to do, and I still think it's the right thing to do. I hope one day, not too far away, that a minister of citizenship will make that move."

nmoss@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Pursuing a Public Life: How to Succeed in the Political Arena, by Sergio Marchi, Dundurn Press, $27.95

100 Best Books 2025

‘An upset tummy of a anger, humour, and why

The comedian reflects on his latest book’s inspiration, including Donald Trump, national identity, and the chaos of Canadian politics.

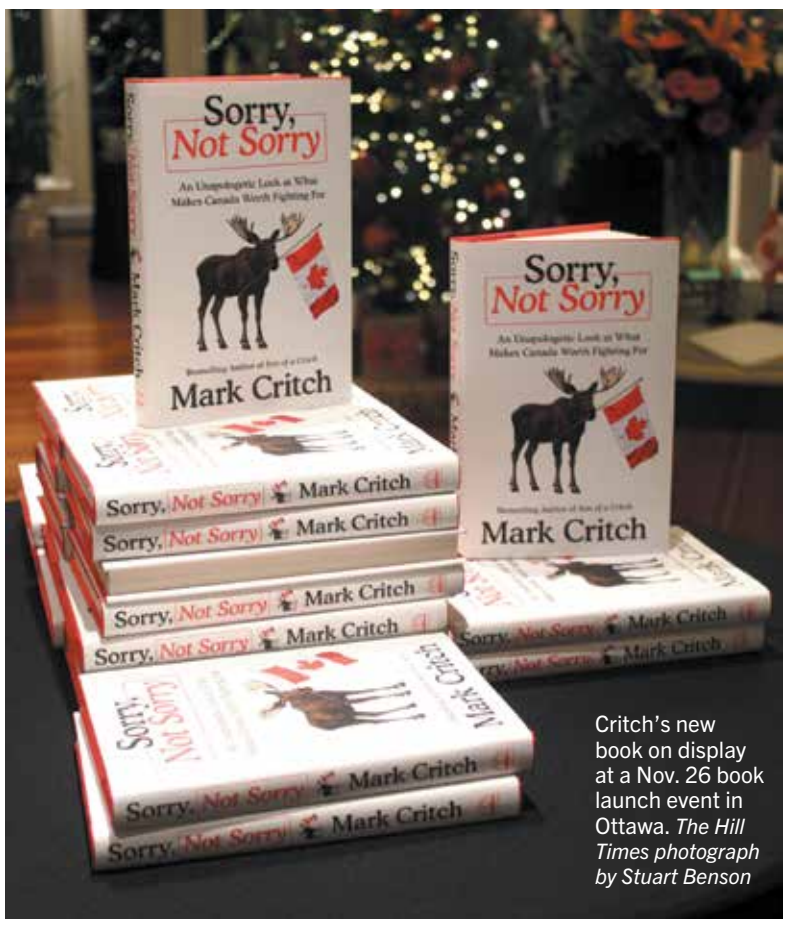
BY PETER MAZEREEUW

The star of the long-running Canadian sketch comedy show *This Hour has 22 Minutes* has a new book out, *Sorry, Not Sorry: An Unapologetic Look at What Makes Canada Worth Fighting For*, released on Nov. 25. In the essay collection, Mark Critch considers Canadian identity and rising patriotism, United States President Donald Trump, the monarchy, and more in comedic pieces that both offer his perspective and fictionalized scenarios.

The following interview first appeared in The Hot Room *podcast, and has been edited for length, style, and clarity.*

There are parts of the book that feel like a monologue you might give on *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, and then it goes into a history or civics lesson, or something biographical. I’m interested in the history. You’ve got Newfoundland entering Confederation, CanCon, and the creation of Bob and Doug McKenzie, Rupert’s Land, and historic U.S. invasion plans. Was that research that you did for the book, or are you secretly a history wonk?

“I’m a history nerd, you know? I’m really a 90-year-old guy in a 51-year-old’s body. And I’ve always been kind of 90, I think. So I’ve always been interested in history. My dad, he was born in the ‘20s. He’d be 100 and something now; he passed when he was 93. But he covered Confederation with Canada for *The Daily News* back in St John’s, Nfld. He was a reporter, and so I would always get these stories kind of from an older generation about life and growing up because I had an old dad. Dad was 50-something when he had me, and so I always kind of felt a little step out of time. So I very much loved history, Newfoundland history, especially. And then, you know, Canadian history as well. And some of these things, when you’re writing the book, you start to go down little rabbit holes. And so I’m learning a lot while I was writing it, as well.”



Critch’s new book on display at a Nov. 26 book launch event in Ottawa. *The Hill Times photograph by Stuart Benson*

You make a point in the book about the value of shared experiences in a culture. We seem to have less of that with each passing generation. Now content is very niche, endless choices. How do we keep Canadian culture alive?

“That’s a great question. Not too really sure, because it seems to be ever-evolving as well. I think when we were growing up, it was very different, because you had a table, a set, that people would come to at certain times, like *The Littlest Hobo*, like any kind of CanCon and MuchMusic, when we would have these great Canadian hits because that’s what was on while you’re waiting to see the *Thriller* video. And you had a shared experience. And when it’s presented to you alongside the other stuff, it’s good. So you do accept it, but it’s easy to get drowned out.

“Now I’ve noticed from the *22 Minutes* show I do, instead of something being on—and this is what is on, we’re all going to watch as a country—every now and then, things go viral. So the people kind of decide what those touchstone moments are, and the people decide what they’re really excited about or upset about or what have you. I went to the bank a while ago and the guy at the counter was like, ‘Hey, you’re the guy from TikTok.’ I said, ‘No, no. I don’t really have a TikTok account.’ And he started showing me *22 Minutes* videos that other people are sharing. So it’s still out there, but it’s floating in algorithms, but it is much different than it was when we were growing up. So I hope some of that Canadian identity doesn’t kind of float away into the ether now that the windows open.”

You say at the very end of the book that you wrote it because you were angry, and that definitely comes through in places. I think you got as far as page 3 before calling Donald Trump an asshole. You devoted a whole chapter to Canadians who you think have acted like traitors. Tell me what was going through your mind when you decided to write this book?

“Well, when I was writing the book, I was writing this other historical novel, actually, set in Newfoundland, and all this stuff was happening, and *22* was not at the time, and I had all these little things I’d want to say. I’d be writing, and in the background, you’d hear [Trump say] ‘the 51st state, quite frankly.’ And I go back to type in my thing, and it’d be like, ‘the governor of Canada,’

and then so I wrote a message to [publisher] Penguin. I said, ‘Look, I think I really want to write a little book of essays about Canada and what’s happening.’ And then they said, ‘Okay, yeah.’ And it’d be a bit of a mad rush to get it out, because, typically, you pitch a book, and it’s a year of this and that, and then another year, and then it comes out. And they’re like, ‘When can you have it by?’ This is probably April. And I was like, ‘End of May, June.’

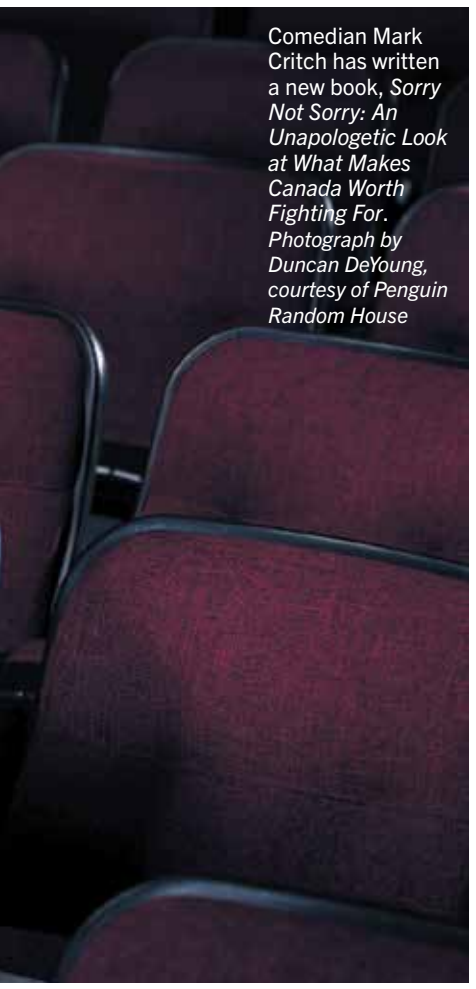
“[With essays] everything is different, each one, and the character ones are much easier to write because you kind of get lost in that world. And then I love reading about history. I just had to get it out of my head because it’s what I was thinking of. I always say, for *22 Minutes*, the sketches that are the best are always the ones I can’t get down fast enough because it’s coming through and it’s authentic. And if something is authentically what you feel, that’s what you should work [on] and so I thought, ‘well, I need to do this now.’ And I got it out. So this was really an upset tummy of a book.”

You obviously spend a fair bit of time thinking about Trump. You have studied all of his mannerisms. I think comedians can often be sensitive gauges of what makes society tick. What is it about Trump, do you think, that draws Americans—and even some Canadians—to him?

“I think it’s, first of all, celebrity because he was a celebrity

100 Best Books 2025

book': Mark Critch on he was itching to write



Comedian Mark Critch has written a new book, *Sorry Not Sorry: An Unapologetic Look at What Makes Canada Worth Fighting For*. *Photograph by Duncan DeYoung, courtesy of Penguin Random House*

before, and people lean into that. Like with the [former prime minister Justin] Trudeau factor. When he was starting out, it was like, 'Oh, it's a dynasty kind of thing.' And love, like it, or lump it, people do lean into that a bit. And people say [Trump's] a straight-talker and he's a straight-shooter, and he tells it like it is. People get frustrated, and oftentimes when times are tough and when the economy's not doing great, a lot of people would like somebody to say, 'It's everybody else, somebody else's fault, and it's not me, it's not you, it's them, and it is going to be okay.' And then it becomes a gang.

"It's like all the Freedom Convoy stuff. After the 'F*** Trudeau' flags came down, and then up go the 'F*** Carney' flags. It's a lifestyle now. It's a culture. They're looking for a reason. And it's less about purpose and more about community. I think the more we're brought together by the internet, the less we're together as people and real communities. And upset, angry people will find each other in a group, and the only thing holding together is a dislike or blame of something. And then they find a personality there, a persona, and a status there, and then it kind of floats. And I think a lot of that is kind of MAGA, a lot of that is Freedom Convoy and stuff like that. The more I'd get frustrated with it, then you kind of go like, 'Oh, that's sad. They're lonely, I think.' And with Mr. Trump, I don't think he believes half the things he said.

"I think the problem with Canada was, he [Trump] liked Justin. He thought Justin was cool and handsome. His daughter really liked Justin, and then Justin was caught on a hot mic talking trash about him to other world leaders, and that really hurt him. I think he felt betrayed. And then when he was coming in the second time, he made that little joke about the 51st state and the governor, and then he bragged about doing it. And then people thought, 'Oh yeah, that's a good idea.' I think he does that a lot, where something happens, and then he just follows that path without really thinking of it. So I think all this kind of started with him being hurt and betrayed, and then, it becomes all this other foolishness. I think that the bigger the community, sometimes the lonelier the people in it."

Mark Critch in the studio where he and the *22 Minutes* cast record before a live audience in Halifax. *Photograph courtesy of This Hour Has 22 Minutes*

Mark Critch portrays U.S. President Donald Trump on screen for *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. *Photograph courtesy of This Hour Has 22 Minutes*

Mark Critch, left, former prime minister Justin Trudeau, his sons Hadrien and Xavier, Melissa Royle Critch, Irish Ambassador John Concannon, and Mary Concannon at the Critch's Ottawa book launch party. *The Hill Times photograph by Stuart Benson*

What do you make of the current state of Canadian politics?

"It's fascinating, because I always say, 'People often say, there'll be peace on earth when we find aliens because everyone will see themselves as people, and we're afraid of the green people now.' And I think that kind of happened with Trump in the White House, where it's like we're always fighting between ourselves and bickering, and then all of a sudden, people get together, and this is 'Team Canada' for a little while. Then all the old, little petty things come up again. Now they're there's this pipeline thing going forward. And I think we're looking more inward because of that because there was the thing that let people finally unite a bit more is this common enemy threat.

"It's been a whirlwind. [Conservative Leader] Pierre [Poilievre] is definitely going to be the prime minister. Oh, no, Justin is stepping down? Oh, [Mark] Carney is actually going to do it after tipping his foot in the water. Oh, wow, Carney won that. Oh, the budget, well, [Conservative MP] Andrew Scheer is hiding behind a curtain. Oh, okay, the budget passed. Now, what's going on? And is there an NDP? Green and the NDP can't you just get together and become a thing together? No? Okay, you're very different. I understand.

"And it's all this, this madness happening and this spiralling. And I think it's going to be very interesting because Mr. Carney is so different from Justin. It's very much, you know, like the company of Canada now. It's ever-changing. And I think we're probably going to be in for another big change before too long. It's so flippy-floppy, tenuous now. It seems like—especially this whole pipeline thing—seems like it's just going to blow up politically for politicians very soon. So it's interesting to watch. It's chaotic right now, and more so than normal. And I think more Canadians are paying attention than normal. I see that certainly with a reaction to some of our political sketches. Some of the more political stuff is doing better online because people are paying attention, they know about it, and they're interested."

As a comedian, you're looking out at the world, and a lot of the news is pretty bleak. How do you decide what subjects are worth poking fun at and which ones are off limits?

"Always kick up, you know. And that's the old thing with comedy. You have the Charlie Chaplin tramp and the cop. If Charlie Chaplin tramp kicks the cop in the bum, it's funny. If the cop kicks him in the bum, it's not. It's two people, the same action, right? So you have to look at that all the time. I will talk to a politician and I'll make a few jabs and stuff. I don't try to be cruel. I like to make a joke that if I said to the person to their face, I would feel comfortable doing it. You can disagree with someone, you can criticize someone, but if you're not comfortable, if you wouldn't say it to their face, don't say it. So that's kind of my role, and I get to say to a lot of faces. You can make fun of the situation. You can say 'prices are crazy.' You don't want to pick at a family struggle to pay the bills. But you can say, 'hey, I'm here too. Let's laugh at this situation together because we're in it together.' And comedy can be a great thing if you're not mocking somebody. If you're saying, 'Hey, we're both in the same situation, here's a laugh.' If you can share a laugh about it. It was a bit of life, and I think laughter is a great tool for that."

peter@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

100 Best Books 2025

Treachery' and 'troublemaker' MPs: why going against party leaders is verboten in Canadian politics

In the new book *No I in Team*, political scientist Alex Marland and his co-authors unpack why party discipline has gone too far.

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

Before MPs even make it to the House of Commons' hallways, political parties are "indoctrinating" their candidates to toe the leader's line, instilling fear that dissenting voices will face "serious consequences," says political scientist and author Alex Marland.

"We've just reached a point that somehow, if somebody says something that goes against their leader, it's treated like a dramatic episode of treachery," said Marland in an interview on *The Hot Room* podcast about his new book, *No 'I' in Team: Party Loyalty in Canadian Politics*.

Marland and co-authors Jared Wesley and Mireille Lalancette unpack why party discipline has gone too far in the 408-page book, outlining the centralization of control with the leader, and how criticism from backbench MPs is regarded with suspicion.

That elected officials are so reluctant to voice their opinions, and divert from party "message discipline," raises questions about the health of our democracy, he said.

"On anything that's high stakes, you can never be against your party or there's serious consequences," he said.

"It is simply a norm, it is an expectation, and if you don't toe the line, you are seen as a troublemaker."

The following interview has been edited for length, style, and clarity.

Tell us in a nutshell what your book is about.

"I think we need to pull back, even to just start with the question that I've been trying to figure out for so long: if Canadian democracy is so good and so strong, why do we have this normal expectation that if you are part of a political party, you can never criticize the party? You can never criticize the leader, you always have to be in lockstep together. It doesn't sound like free speech to me. It doesn't sound like good representation, and we've just reached a point that somehow, if somebody says something that goes against their leader, it's treated like a dramatic episode of treachery. Surely, in a democracy, we should have an ability to have good, constructive debates.

"Obviously, there's times that you're part of a party and you're not going to agree. This whole notion of the place to discuss things is in caucus meetings has turned out to be baloney because what's happening in caucus meetings now is there's an increasing number of staff there. It's performance. It's not about honest, good conversation, certainly on the government side, sometimes it is on the opposition side.

"So amidst all of that, and my research about how party discipline has become message discipline—and what I mean by that is it used to be about just making sure everybody voted the same way in the legislature, but now it's about making sure everybody says the same thing, whether they're in the legislature or anywhere outside it.

"That's what the book ended up being about. It's trying to understand what is it about Canadian party politics that in the House of Commons and in the 10 provincial legislatures, why is it that you have to constantly be on side with your party? I appreciate that there are exceptions, but when those exceptions occur, they're usually on low-stakes matters. So on anything that's high stakes, you can never be against your party or there's serious consequences. Doesn't sound very democratic to me."

I started my career when Stephen Harper was prime minister, and there was a lot of control going on from the Prime Minister's Office then. And the conventional wisdom was this is a Harper thing. He wants to really be in control of everything. It's his personality. Then we saw Justin Trudeau come in with a very different personality, and we heard a lot of the same things. Is personality part of it? Or is there another explanation behind this trend?

"When Trudeau first came in, he made a big deal about making everybody more accessible. And cabinet government was going to be back, but after the first year when they really got staffed up, the Prime Minister's Office just went back to its regular pattern. And even during the 2015 election campaign, Trudeau had said that he was really keen to reverse the trend of centralization that a lot of people say began with his father.

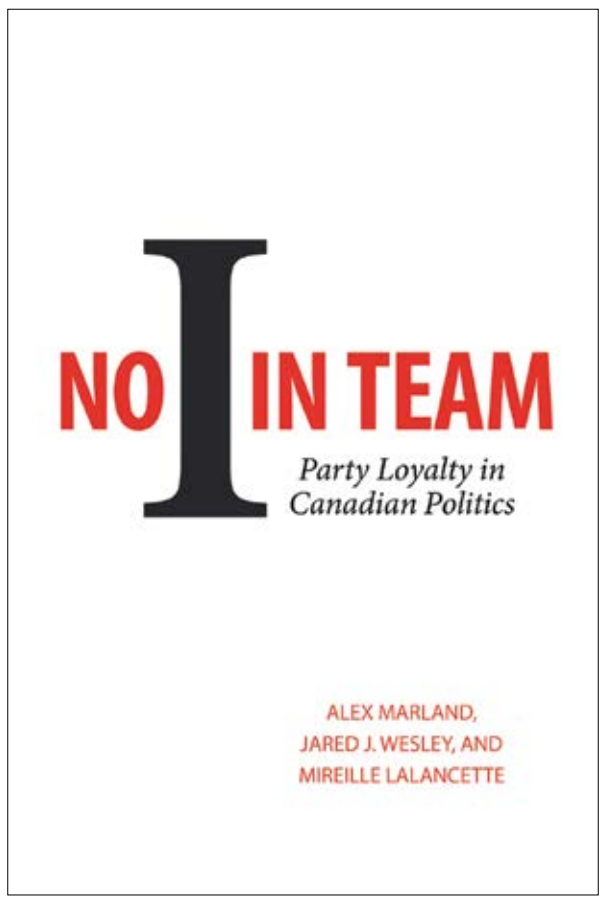
"The reality is that I think what's going on is in a world of fractured media, the ability for politicians to communicate directly with audiences through social media and websites, etc., and the fact that you know you can have a digital megaphone and say something and it goes viral and causes controversy and derails agendas and requires crisis communications, all of these things really emerged during the Harper government. Social media was still in its infancy in 2004 when [then-prime minister Paul] Martin was there, and 2006 when Harper became prime minister.

"And, over time, what has happened is political parties have realized, starting in an election campaign, you train your candidates to never say anything that is going to be controversial. And so we are indoctrinating our election candidates and our future elected officials to think that the party knows best, that the leader is always right, and that if you do anything that goes against the leader, that you are the anomaly, that you are the problem.

"There are lots of reasons why political parties are good. They do a lot of good things, especially in large legislatures. But why do we need to exist in a world where there are so many politicians who are afraid to speak out, and who really clam up, even in caucus meetings? It's not good."

How much of a role does the Parliamentary Press Gallery have in perpetuating this trend? I think of the stories we see on a semi-regular basis about MPs anonymously criticizing their leader. 'That's a really big deal. They shouldn't be doing that,' is the implication, right?

"Well, the first point is that they're anonymously doing it because they don't have the wherewithal to do it publicly because they know the consequences. And the consequences aren't even going to just start from what the leader has to say to you, or even the leader's chief of staff. The consequences are going to come from your peers. Other members of caucus are going to take you aside and say, 'What do you think you're doing? You're



No 'I' in Team: Party Loyalty in Canadian Politics, by Alex Marland, Jared Wesley, and Mireille Lalancette, University of Toronto Press, 408 pp., $39.95.

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Prime Minister Mark Carney, pictured at a Liberal caucus meeting on the Hill. We are indoctrinating our election candidates and our future elected officials to think that the party knows best, that the leader is always right, says Alex Marland. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

causing all sorts of problems. Stop it.' And it can really make life difficult, and it can upset relationships.

"You can look at how Justin Trudeau's tenure as leader and prime minister came to a slow end. And I'm just amazed at how few Liberal MPs were willing to say anything. I mean, there was Wayne Long in New Brunswick, Ken McDonald in Newfoundland and Labrador were the only ones really putting their names to things. And then the other one that I find just amazing is how Mark Carney becomes prime minister, and obviously leader of the Liberal Party, and just with a stroke of a pen theatrically cancels the price on carbon … that so many Liberals for so long had insisted was essential, and we didn't hear a peep. How is it that we didn't have any Liberal MPs willing to go out and say, 'I don't agree with this decision?' Surely, there were some of them who had real, grave concerns about it?

"The whole idea of this book—*No 'I' in Team*—it's an expression that is used all the time, not just in politics. But when we were doing interviews with politicians, it comes up a lot, and political staff will tell you the same thing, campaign managers will say the same thing.

"You are not the person to decide what the party's direction is. If you come out and say something that is controversial, that the press gallery will jump on you about because you are an aberration by saying something about the leader, you are a distraction. You are a troublemaker, and we need to stop that. And there could be serious repercussions for you doing that. So it just begs the question of, 'where are we going in a democracy when power is being centralized in the leader's office?' And the people who are meant to hold the leader to account—particularly on the government benches—are really the people who are saying very little because they're afraid to do so."

Let's talk about that centralized power. What happens to the MPs if they decide to go publicly against the leader or the prime minister?

"I think I should start by differentiating between if you're in opposition versus if you're on the governing party. Clearly, if you're a member of cabinet, you know you're going to need to support the prime minister. That's just a convention, and that's well understood. But if you are a member of the governing party who is a backbencher—so you are a parliamentary secretary, you are somebody with no title—your job is to hold the government to account.

"But what is happening is backbench MPs are being told that they are the government, and, really, the only people who are the government are members of cabinet. And so it creates this mentality that you shouldn't say anything, and if you do, there are different types of consequences.

"At a very basic level, you will get a call from a staffer somewhere saying, 'Why did you like this on social media? You should really think twice and not like that.' I've had many politicians tell me that happens, and it goes from there. I think a lot of us think, well, the worst possible outcome is you could get booted from the party. But that's usually only when something's egregious, or there being just so many episodes, that finally they cut ties.

"The reality is that there's a lot of other things that happen behind the scenes. There's social ostracization. That's a huge part of it. You're not getting favours that you would like. Maybe you want to go home on a Thursday after the House shuts because there's events going on in your constituency, and you live a long way away and have to travel.

"They'll tell you have to stay for your House duty on Friday. And they'll make your life difficult. And then, of course, you've got an election campaign going up, and maybe the leader won't visit you. There's a lot of consequences that can occur. So, again, there's positive reasons for being part of a political party, but the norm's that if you criticize the leader, you are in big, big trouble. It has gone too far."

The prime minister has carrots to offer, as well. If you're an ambitious backbench MP, you think, 'I'd like to be a cabinet minister: almost double my salary, better career prospects post-politics,'—you're depending entirely on the goodwill of the prime minister to get there, right?

"Well, that's the thing. It's not just the prime minister, but it's the circle of agents around the prime minister. And because we know that senior political staff are involved in conversations about who ought to be in cabinet and how they're performing and problems and this sort of thing. And so the presence of staff at caucus meetings, therefore, becomes a challenge because it becomes very hard for backbenchers who want to get into cabinet to be critical of what the Prime Minister's Office is doing, or what the government is doing because they know that the people who are making decisions about whether they should potentially get an appointment are right there in the room.

"I think one of the remedies to all of this is there needs to be a norm where backbenchers insist on *in camera* sessions with the prime minister. Staff need to be told to clear the room, and it should just be a standing regular thing. And the only way for that to happen is if backbenchers understand that they can ask for this and they can demand it. We've seen it happen sometimes with Justin Trudeau. Mark Carney said he was doing it initially. … Having opportunities to have one-on-ones or group discussions without the presence of staff is one step that needs to be considered."

Is it like this in other countries?

"Not to the degree that it is here that I can tell, certainly not in Western liberal democracies. I think the real question for me is: what is it about Canada that has led us to this point? Along the way, during this research for this book, part of me just thought, 'maybe it's part of the human condition to be a Canadian?' You want to be polite, you don't want to cause trouble, but there's obviously a lot deeper things going on there. So it's still a bit of a mystery, other than the fact that we've reached a point where it is simply a norm, it is an expectation, and if you don't toe the line, you are seen as a troublemaker."

You end the book with recommendations on how to fix the problem. Some would require people with power—the party leaders—to make changes to reduce their power. What's in it for them?

"Really, the only way that we can push back against the centralization of power is for backbenchers to work together as a team. Backbenchers, as an individual, it's really easy to pick them off, but when you have several who have a concern, it becomes a problem for the leadership circle.

"I don't think that backbenchers necessarily always know that. The experienced ones will, but also sometimes the experienced ones are the ones who have been around a long time and have bought into the system. A big challenge we have is there's political scientists who will say that Canadian legislatures are characterized by amateurism. What they mean by that is, at every election, there is a lot of turnover. There's a lot of people who don't run again.

"There's a lot of people who are brand new after an election, and it's really hard to come in a brand-new elected MP and try to disrupt norms. And so this is why it's essential, really, for the people who have some experience to mobilize and say, 'Look, we need to do something and work on the rules.' [Conservative MP] Michael Chong was able to do it with his Reform Act in 2014. It was a really rare case of a backbencher able to move something forward.

"But what we really just don't see is elected officials in Canada see[ing] this as a priority. They're so busy dealing with their constituency case work, they're trying to get through the day. They're faced with … all sorts of requests for their time. The last thing that they need is to start stirring trouble. So I think part of the answer here is really more civic education, so that the people who end up running for office have more awareness. And that's part of the reason behind this book. It's just to raise awareness so that hopefully in classrooms and other places, people can start saying, 'Listen, there are good reasons for political parties, but maybe sometimes it's not good for everybody to always agree with the leader.'"

Jared J. Wesley, left, Alex Marland, and Mireille Lalancette, authors of *No I In Team: Party Loyalty in Canadian Politics*, published by the University of Toronto Press, 2025. *Photograph courtesy of Angela Wagner*

No 'I' in Team: Party Loyalty in Canadian Politics, by Alex Marland, Jared Wesley, and Mireille Lalancette, University of Toronto Press, 408 pp., $39.95.

The Hill Times

100 Best Books 2025

‘I was speaking to a group of high school students, and none of them knew who Lester B. Pearson was’: historian J.D.M. Stewart wants to change that

Then-prime minister Justin Trudeau at a Black History Month event in Ottawa on Feb. 5, 2025. *The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia*

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and this was in Ontario, where we actually do require a high school history course in Grade 10. And as you may know, in most of the other provinces of the country, there’s no high school history requirement. So that’s a bit of a problem, if you ask me.”

Leaving aside high-school students, I’m not sure how many average Canadians would know who Pearson was.

“That’s another reason why I needed to write the book because even the average Canadian may need a refresher course in the political history of our country.”

Why is it important for Canadians to know about their prime ministers?

“As I say in the book, Peter C. Newman once wrote that an hour in the Office of the Prime Minister is an hour in the history of the country. So, if we want to understand what has made Canada into what it is today, we need to have an understanding of the people who have led the country and the decisions that they made and the consequences of those decisions. It’s part of being an informed and civic minded citizen to understand the history of the country.”

What were some of the most interesting things that you learned while researching this book?

“One of the interesting things was how much Indigenous history there was that went through the Office of Prime Minister. And I knew that I would find material on prime ministers and the Indigenous file, but I didn’t realize that it would be so extensive, and run through the office of virtually every prime minister. So that was a very interesting thing that I discovered. And I would say a similar thing about the environment. We often think of environmental history as only perhaps beginning with maybe the Brian Mulroney government, but it actually goes back to Sir John A. Macdonald who established the first national park.”

You have studied all the prime ministers of Canada. Any lessons learned from their successes and failures that you can share with this country’s current prime minister and future prime ministers?

“Plenty of them: pragmatism is a big part of being a successful prime minister. And we can look at any number of prime ministers to see who was successful because of the way that they approach the office in a pragmatic way. I think also there is a lesson to be learned in trying to understand the regional nature of Canada, because it is very much a regional country with different needs and different concerns, and you have to be very tuned into that. There’s a lesson to be learned from some of our better prime ministers who tried to inspire the nation with their speech and rhetoric. And we could use a little bit of an uplifting moment from our leaders by the power of their words. So those are just a few things off the top of my head.”

Which prime minister do you think is the most misunderstood, and why?

> If we want to understand what has made Canada into what it is today, we need to understand the people who have led the country, the decisions that they made, and the consequences of those decisions.

“I suspect Sir John A. Macdonald is one of the most misunderstood. And it’s funny to go back to the first prime minister because you might think he would be the best understood. But I think recent attacks on his legacy have showed that maybe he’s not as well understood as a man and a policymaker as maybe we think we should know him.”

Which prime minister had best political instincts?

“[William Lyon] Mackenzie King had excellent political instincts. When I spoke about pragmatism earlier, he was able to steer the ship of state through very difficult times and maintain his hold on power, particularly during the Second World War. So he would come to mind for sure. And Jean Chrétien, as well, had excellent political instincts. And I say that because he was able to win three majority governments, but he also had good political instincts in the way that he worked with other people, and that’s part of politics as well, and he had very excellent relations with his caucus, his cabinet, and foreign leaders.”

Do you think that the role of the prime minister has evolved over the years?

“It certainly has evolved. It’s become a much bigger job with a much bigger office, and it has become a job where you’re much more exposed as a leader now, whereas before, there was quite a bit of power spread out among cabinet and you weren’t exposed in the media like you would have been, or like you are today. In the days of [Wilfrid] Laurier and Mackenzie King and others from an earlier time, you were not seen on social media all the time. And so there’s a big focus just on the prime minister, even as not only as a government figure, but also as a political celebrity, and that has changed things quite a bit.”

How about the centralization of power? There’s been a lot of discussion over the years about how the power is centralized in the Prime Minister’s Office.

“It’s mostly true. It’s also important to understand that, in the end, prime ministers make the decisions, and so prime ministers have always had the power because of their position as the head of the executive branch, as the head of the cabinet. Now, there is a bigger entourage around the prime minister, but the prime minister has always been the person who makes the decision. He’s always been the person around which the power revolves.”

Based on your research, which prime minister did more than others to improve the lives of Canadians?

“That’s hard to just pin on one prime minister because many of them have made contributions. So if you look at somebody like Mackenzie King, he started the opening of the welfare state. Pearson contributed to it afterward and created some of the symbols of identity, such as the Maple Leaf flag. Pierre Trudeau gave the Charter of Rights, somebody like Laurier, if you go back to the turn of the 20th century, he gave Canadians a confidence that they could be one of the great nations of the world. So everybody makes a contribution. It’s hard to just pin it on one prime minister in terms of how they made life better for Canadians, because many of them have made a contribution. It’s a bit of a complex answer.”

In the chapter about Justin Trudeau, you wrote that as his time in office neared its end, the public’s dislike of him grew more intense. Why do you think it happened?

“Some of it was just that he and his government were past the best-before date. Some of it was a lack of self awareness on the prime minister’s part, that he didn’t seem to be able to change course or change message, a lot of his messaging that just didn’t seem genuine anymore.”

In the chapter about Harper, you wrote that he served as prime minister for about 10 years, but it is unlikely that many could name a signature achievement from his years in office. What do you think is the reason for that?

“Because the success of the Harper government was steady and unflashy management, and sometimes that works. Harper had a lot of successes, but they weren’t very flashy, and he was a little bit like Mackenzie King, a bit bland as a personality, but the management of government was pretty strong. … So if you give good government, that’s a pretty good achievement.”

arana@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

The *Ripper: The Making of Pierre Poilievre* focuses on Poilievre within the modern media environment in Canada

Continued from page 34

the book. By the start of the fixed-date election campaign, the book would have had most of the media coverage that it was going to get, and it would be around like, say, Stephen Maher's book on Trudeau (which I expected to be out in paperback by then).

"In the summer of 2024, I believed Justin Trudeau would be the Liberal leader and we'd go to the polls when we were scheduled to. Launching the book early to get it out before a spring election was not part of a plan, and it was bad for the book. Once the election was called, the CBC—the one media organization that can make a book a success—dropped its invitation for a major interview and the discussion of the book was caught up in the campaign."

As the book's title says, you argue that Pierre Poilievre is "a ripper," a politician "who sees politics as a war that gives their lives meaning." The entire book argues this quite forcefully, but can you explain here why Poilievre is a "ripper," and not a "weaver"?

"Rippers are fantastic opposition leaders. They find real and imagined scandals, force governments to defend policies, raise new issues, and are always challenging the status quo. Poilievre is a classic political ripper. So is Charlie Angus of the NDP. The Liberal Rat Pack were also pretty good rippers back in the day. The media has a few rippers who make important contributions to politics.

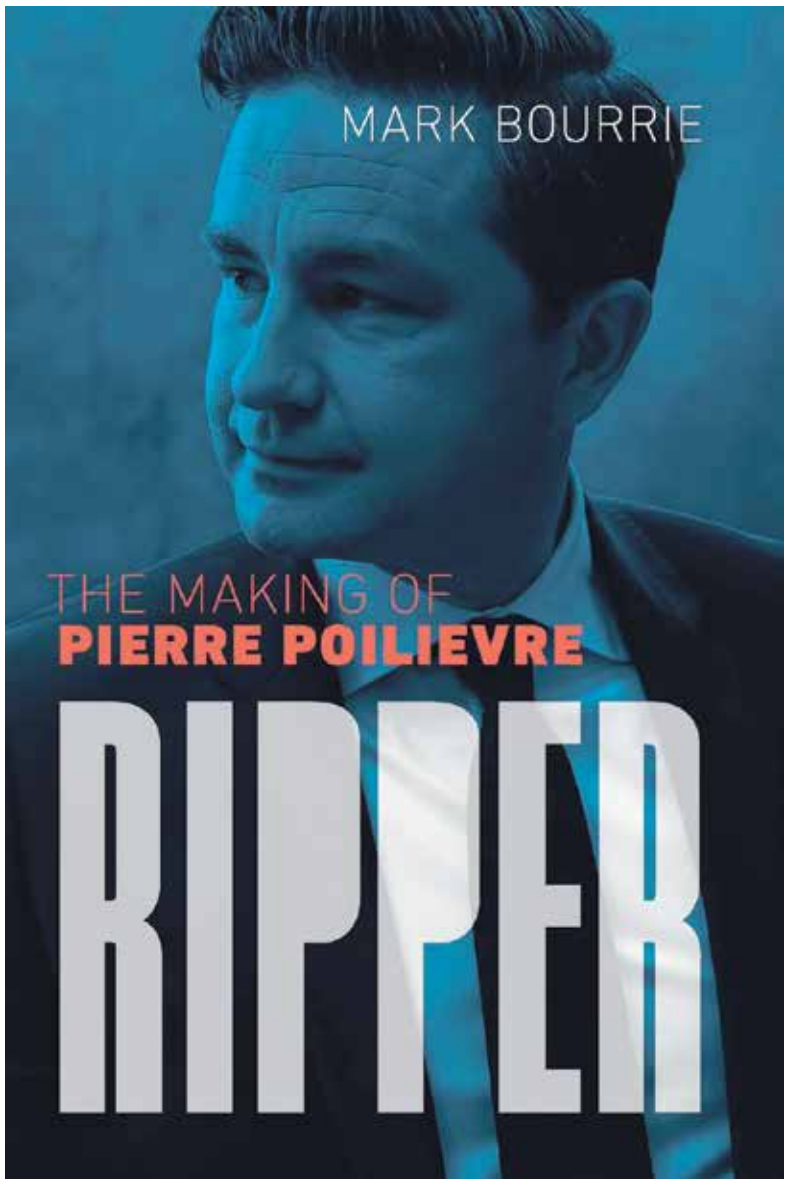
"Poilievre takes it farther by personalizing his attacks. Rippers, however, aren't good at developing policy, partly because they don't tend to socialize well, and they don't get the rush and quick political results that come from a tough attack. Weavers, on the other hand, get gratification from developing policies and putting together coalitions. I think Justin Trudeau has the empathy of a weaver, but not the organizational skills. Right now—and surprisingly, at least to me—Doug Ford has become the most vocal weaver in Canada, at least on the issue of saving our sovereignty."

***New York Times* columnist David Brooks was the one to first categorize between "rippers" and "weavers." Why did this column resonate with you, and did this inspire you to write the book?**

"It didn't inspire me to write the book. I saw Brooks' model as a way to explain Poilievre in a simple way. I wrote the book because, in the spring of 2024, I believed Trump would be back, [Nigel] Farage would gain ground in the U.K., [Geert] Wilders would continue to be at the centre of power in the Netherlands, [Viktor] Orban would keep his lock on Hungary. A neo-fascist was on the verge of power in Austria, a fascist had the Italian premiership, the AfD was the most dynamic party in Germany, and the hard-right was making big gains in France.

"I believed then, and I still believe, we are in the early stages of an anti-democratic revolution in the West.

"Democracy in Canada was already in a sad state at least in terms of real public participation and even interest. A Canadian government that made common cause with that movement would be a disaster."



Ripper: The Making of Pierre Poilievre, by Mark Bourrie, Biblioasis, 430 pp., $28.95.

Can "rippers" be good prime ministers, and has there ever been a "ripper" prime minister in Canada?

"No. They're awful. We've had two already: Arthur Meighen and John Diefenbaker. Meighen's nastiness doesn't show up in the history books because he never really got a chance to do much. He finished Robert Borden's term after the First World War and served a few weeks after the King-Byng affair, losing the 1926 election. You have to dig deep into the politics of the time to see how hard he was, and how he scared people.

"For example, in the mid-1930s, the Ontario Liberals and Conservatives came up with an admittedly strange plan to form a coalition provincial government to try to deal with the problems created by the Great Depression and to stop the spread of unions into Ontario factories and mines. Meighen, who was a Senator at the time, crushed the proposal in one meeting.

"Diefenbaker was a great opposition leader. He was a brilliant, compassionate lawyer. But he had no ability to tolerate anyone who disagreed with him or to listen."

How do you think Poilievre's style of politics has affected and changed federal politics today?

"Poilievre has made the never-ending campaign a real thing. I'm not sure that could continue through four years of a majority government, but I expect it to be normalized when we have minorities. It puts the prime minister at such a disadvantage since the PM's administrative work and security concerns prevent that much travel. This kind of politics requires a huge amount of fundraising and organizing. We could see the House of Commons become even more of a prop and less of a democratic institution where MPs debate about proposed laws and use committees to examine policy and administration.

"The bigger change is in the development of pseudo-media to replace what used to be the mainstream media. Poilievre and his campaign were always miles ahead on creating their own 'news' content on platforms like YouTube, and partnering with partisan organizations that run outlets that produce what can best be called propaganda disguised as news and analysis."

What were some surprises you learned about Poilievre?

"I'm amazed at his drive, his luck, his determination. I was also surprised at his rigidness. He's not a stupid man at all.

"I think he gives very little thought to policy. He just scans the political environment, looking for things that will sell. That could change. To a much lesser extent, and without the anger, Joe Clark was just as obsessed with strategy when he was young, then developed into a more thoughtful politician. But Clark never made politics personal the way Poilievre does."

Why do you think Poilievre distrusts the Hill media so much?

"I distrust the Hill media. They're the last people to realize they must get their act together very quickly. They need to stop seeing themselves as political players, spend some time outside their bubble, and end their craving for access, which never produces great journalism.

"At the same time, they made Poilievre. He's been a favourite dial-a-quote for decades. I find it odd that he so utterly despises journalists who fawningly covered his campaign against WE Charity in 2020-2021, and turned a fairly uncritical and a very lazy eye to his pro-convoy work in 2022. I suppose his disdain is grounded in the right-wing myth of a liberal press. Donald Trump and Stephen Harper believe it, too."

Why do you distrust the Hill media, especially as a former Hill journalist?

"I believe informing the public is not the top priority of many Hill journalists. I see far too much social climbing and status seeking with journalists more concerned about 'access' than bravely telling people what's going on. With some very notable exceptions, press coverage of the Hill is just the repetition of some interest group or politicians' talking points and analysis by people who have a minimal understanding of law, economics, history, and public administration and no research skills to speak of. Too often, public affairs are covered as sports or social events. I suppose that's what media managers in this country thinks sells, though it doesn't seem all that interesting to the vast majority of people."

What do you think of Poilievre's treatment of the Hill media? Does it work for him?

"If I were advising Poilievre, I'd suggest he give separate substantial interviews on policy to senior journalists from all the country's major media outlets to try to put to rest the idea that he's a policy lightweight, if, indeed, he isn't one. … All the party leaders seem to me to see all journalists as bad-faith actors, which is understandable, considering some of the recent big media failings.

"Still, I believe the campaign should be covered, and that candidates should have the self-confidence to deal with journalists. The situation has been getting worse over the years, and the public doesn't seem interested in punishing candidates and government leaders who shun the media. Nor do journalists stick together and push back, so I expect it to work.

"If real media want to survive in Canada, journalism needs to professionalize: real qualifications, professional standards, and a mechanism to enforce those standards in a meaningful way, including the discipline and, if necessary, expulsion of bad actors. So much of the media's problems are created by journalists themselves, and the door is wide open to propagandists and political actors claiming to be media. Without rebuilding credibility, it's impossible to get public support."

Ripper: The Making of Pierre Poilievre, by Mark Bourrie, Biblioasis, 430 pp., $28.95.

kmalloy@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

100 Best Books 2025

The Hill Times' 100 Best Books in 2025

1. ***After Redress: Japanese Canadian and Indigenous Struggles for Justice***, edited by Kirsten Emiko McAllister and Mona Oikawa, UBC Press, 302 pp., $34.95.

2. ***Against the Grain: Defiant Giants Who Changed the World***, by Terry O'Reilly, HarperCollinsCanada, 304 pp., $36.99.

3. ***A History of Photography in Canada, Volume 1: Anticipation to Participation, 1839-1918***, by Martha Langford, McGill-Queen's University Press, 600 pp., $85.

4. ***Ally is a Verb: A Guide to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples***, by Rose LeMay, Page Two, 179 pp., $24.95.

5. ***An Accidental Villain: A Soldier's Tale of War, Deceit and Exile***, by Linden MacIntyre, Penguin Random House Canada, 384 pp., $38.

6. ***A New Blueprint For Government: Reshaping Power, The PMO, and The Public Service***, by Kevin G. Lynch and James R. Mitchell, University of Regina Press, 224 pp., $29.95.

7. ***A Tight Grip: State Power and Control in Modern China***, by Wen-Hsuan Tsai, Contemporary Chinese Studies series, UBC Press, 226 pp., $39.95.

8. ***A Truce That Is Not Peace***, by Miriam Toews, Knopf Canada, Penguin Random House Canada, 192 pp., $34.

9. ***Bad Indians Book Club: Reading at the Edge of a Thousand Worlds***, by Patty Krawec, Goose Lane Editions, 232 pp., $25.95.

10. ***Ballots and Brawls: The 1867 Canadian General Election***, by Patrice Dutil, Turning Point Elections Series, UBC Press, 328 pp., $27.95

11. ***Banana Capital: Stories, Science, and Poison at the Equator***, by Ben Brisbois, University of Regina Press, 368 pp., $34.95.

12. ***Behead and Cure: Humanitarian Work in the Vietnam War***, by Susan Armstrong-Reid, McGill-Queen's University Press, 444 pp., $34.95.

13. ***Bloodied Bodies, Bloody Landscapes: Settler Colonialism in Horror***, by Laura Hall, University of Regina Press, 288 pp., $32.95.

14. ***Book of Lives: A Memoir of Sorts***, by Margaret Atwood, McClelland & Stewart, Penguin Random House Canada, 624 pp., $45.

15. ***Borderline Chaos: How Canada Got Immigration Right, and Then Wrong***, by Tony Keller, Sutherland Books, 101 pp., $23.95.

16. ***Breaking Point: The New Big Shifts Putting Canada at Risk***, by Darrell Bricker and John Ibbitson, Signal Penguin Random House Canada, 240 pp., $40.

17. ***Canada's Prime Ministers and the Shaping of a National Identity***, by Raymond B. Blake, the C.D. Howe Series in Canadian Political History, UBC Press, 414 pp., $39.95

18. ***Canada Under Siege: How P.E.I. Became a Forward Operating Base for the Chinese Communist Party***, by Michel Juneau-Katsuya and Garry Clement, Optimum Publishing International, 256 pp., $26.95.

19. ***Certified Beauties: More of Hockey's Greatest Untold Stories***, by James Duthie, HarperCollinsCanada, 320 pp., $36.99.

20. ***Challenging Exile: Japanese Canadians and the Wartime Constitution***, by Eric M. Adams and Jordan Stanger-Ross, UBC Press, 384 pp., $34.95.

21. ***Chrétien and the World: Canadian Foreign Policy from 1993 to 2003***, edited by Jack Cunningham and John Meehan, the C.D. Howe Series in Canadian Political History, UBC Press, 376 pp., $45.

22. ***Crackdown: Surviving and Resisting the War on Drugs***, by Garth Mullins, Doubleday Canada Penguin Random House Canada, 288 pp., $34.95.

23. ***Deciding on Death: Rodriguez, Carter, and Medically Assisted Dying in Canada***, by Kent McNeil and Wayne Sumner, UBC Press, 378 pp., $32.95.

24. ***Dream Interrupted: The Rise and Fall of Quebec Nationalism***, by Francine Pelletier, Sutherland House Quarterly, University of Toronto Press, 172 pp., $23.95.

25. ***Elbows Up! Canadian Voices of Resilience and Resistance***, edited by Elamin Abdelmahmoud, McClelland & Stewart Penguin Random House Canada, 312 pp., $25.

26. ***Encampment: Resistance, Grace, and an Unhoused Community***, by Maggie Helwig, Coach House, 176 pp., $24.95.

27. ***52 Ways to Reconcile: How to Walk with Indigenous Peoples on the Path to Healing***, by David A. Robertson, McClelland & Stewart Penguin Random House Canada, 240 pp., $25.

28. ***Foreign Affairs in the Canadian Constitution***, by H. Scott Fairley, UBC Press, 324 pp., $110.

29. ***Future-Generation Government: How to Legislate for the Long Term***, by Nicholas Chesterley, McGill-Queen's University Press, 274 pp., $34.95.

30. ***Hearts of Freedom: Stories of Southeast Asian Refugees***, by Peter Duschinsky, Colleen Lundy, Michael J. Molloy, Allan Moscovitch, and Stephanie Phetsamay Stobbe, McGill-Queen's University Press, 333 pp., $32.95.

31. ***Homegrown Radicals: A Story of State Violence, Islamophobia, and Jihad in the Post 9/11 World***, by Youcef Soufi, University of Regina Press, 272 pp., $29.95.

32. ***How To Survive a Bear Attack***, by Claire Cameron, Knopf Canada, Penguin Random House Canada, 304 pp., $34.95.

33. ***Is A River Alive?***, by Robert MacFarlane, Penguin Random House Canada, 384 pp., $39.

34. ***John Candy: A Life In Comedy***, by Paul Myers, House of Anansi Press, 376 pp., $34.99.

35. ***John Hart: A Businessman in British Columbia Politics*** by Patricia E. Roy, UBC Press, 238 pp., $34.95.

36. ***John Horgan: In His Own Words, A Memoir***, by John Horgan with Rod Mickleburgh, Harbour Publishing, Douglas & McIntyre, 256 pp., $38.95.

37. ***Knowledge, Power, and Migration: Contesting the North/South Divide***, edited by Yasmeen Abu-Laban, Mireille Paquet and Ethel Tungohan, McGill-Queen's University Press, 414 pp., $42.95.

38. ***Leading From the Heart: The Battles of a Feminist, Union Leader and Politician***, by Judy Darcy, Douglas & McIntrye, 312 pp., $40.

39. ***Little Deaths: Sex and Psychoanalysis in the Age of Pandemics***, edited by Ricky Varghese, University of Regina Press, 272 pp., $32.95.

40. ***Look Ma, No Hands***, by Gabrielle Drolet, McClelland & Stewart, Penguin Random House Canada, 272 pp., $24.95.

41. ***Maple Syrup: A Short History of Canada's Sweetest Obsession***, by Peter Kuitenbrouwer, Doubleday Canada Penguin Random House Canada, 328 pp., $36.95.

42. ***Mega Pipelines, Mega Resistance: Tar Sands, Social Movements, and the Politics of Energy Infrastructure***, by Amy Janzwood, UBC Press, 312 pp., $34.95.

43. ***My Fight for Canadian Healthcare: A Thirty-Year Battle to Put Patients First***, by Dr. Brian Day, Sutherland House, 458 pp., $39.95.

44. ***Needy Media: How Tech Gets Personal***, by Stephen Monteiro, McGill-Queen's University Press, 240 pp., $34.95.

45. ***1929: Inside the Greatest Crash in Wall Street History—and How It Shattered a Nation***, by Andrew Ross Sorkin, Viking Canada, Penguin Random House Canada, 592 pp., $48.

46. ***No 'I' In Team: Party Loyalty in Canadian Politics***, by Alex Marland, Jared J. Wesley, and Mireille Lalancette, University of Toronto Press, 408 pp., $39.95.

47. ***Nowhere Girl: Life as a Member of ADHD's Lost Generation***, by Carla Ciccone, Penguin Random House Canada, 288 pp., $35.

48. ***October 7th: Searching for the Humanitarian Middle***, by Marsha Lederman, McClelland & Stewart Penguin Random House Canada, 272 pp., $36.

49. ***On Book Banning: Or, How the New Censorship Consensus Trivializes Art and Undermines Democracy***, by Ira Wells, Biblioasis, $21.95.

50. ***One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This***, by Omar El Akkad, McClelland & Stewart Penguin Random House Canada, 208 pp., $36.

51. ***On Settler Colonialism in Canada: Lands and Peoples***, edited by David B.A. MacDonald and Emily Grafton, University of Regina Press, 384 pp., $36.95.

52. ***Precarious: The Lives of Migrant Workers,*** by Marcello Di Cintio, Biblioasis, $24.95.

53. ***Pursuing a Public Life: How to Succeed in the Political Arena***, by Sergio Marchi, Dundurn Press, 368 pp., $27.95.

54. ***Ripper: The Making of Pierre Poilievre***, by Mark Bourrie, Biblioasis, 430 pp., $28.95.

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57. ***Settler Colonial Sovereignty: Visions of Improvement and Indigenous Erasure***, by Liam Midzain-Gobin, McGill-Queen's University Press, 246 pp., $34.95.

58. ***Smartphone Nation: Why We're All Addicted to Our Screens and What You and Your Family Can Do About It***, by Dr. Kaitlyn Regehr, Knopf Canada, Penguin Random House Canada, 256 pp., $36.

59. ***Social Resilience and International Migration in the Canadian City***, edited by Valerie Preston, John Shields, and Tara Bedard, McGill-Queen's University Press, 312 pp., $39.95.

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61. ***Sorry, Not Sorry: An Unapologetic Look at What Makes Canada Worth Fighting For***, by Mark Critch, Viking, Penguin Random House Canada, 232 pp., $36.

62. ***Standing Up to Big Nickel: The Story of the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers' Strike, 1958***, by Elizabeth Quinlan, McGill-Queen's University Press, 228 pp., $34.95.

63. ***Statecraft: Canadian Prime Ministers and Their Cabinets***, by Stephen Azzi and Patrice Dutil, University of Toronto Press, 496 pp., $49.95.

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65. ***Theory of Water: Nishnaabe Maps to the Times Ahead***, by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Alchemy By Knopf Canada, Penguin Random House Canada, 224 pp., $35.

66. ***Territories of Inequality: How Federalism and Redistribution Interact***, edited by Olivier Jacques and Alain Noël, McGill-Queen's University Press, 370 pp., $44.95.

67. ***The Beaver and the Dragon: How China Out-Manoeuvred Canada's Diplomacy, Security, and Sovereignty***, by Charles Burton, Optimum Publishing International, 239 pp., $26.95.

68. ***The CBC: How Canada's Public Broadcaster Lost Its Voice (And How to Get It Back)***, by David Cayley, Sutherland Books, 252 pp., $26.95.

69. ***The Coutts Diaries: Power, Politics and Pierre Trudeau, 1973-1981***, by Jim Coutts, edited by Ron Graham, Sutherland House, 463 pp., $50.

70. ***The Crisis of Canadian Democracy***, by Andrew Coyne, Sutherland Books, 266 pp., $36.95.

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74. ***The Duel: Diefenbaker, Pearson, and the Making of Modern Canada***, by John Ibbitson, Signal, Penguin Random House Canada, 456 pp., $28.

75. ***The Enduring Riddle of Mackenzie King,*** edited by Patrice Dutil, UBC Press, 388 pp., $49.95.

76. ***The 51st State Votes: Canada Versus Donald Trump***, by Justin Ling, Sutherland House, 100 pp., $19.95.

77. ***The Finest Hotel in Kabul: A People's History of Afghanistan***, by Lyse Doucet, Allen Lane, Penguin Random House Canada, 448 pp., $39.

78. ***The Friend Machine: On the Trail of AI Companionship***, by Victoria Hetherington, Sutherland House, 330 pp., $23.95.

79. ***The Good Allies: How Canada and the United States Fought Together to Defeat Fascism During the Second World War***, by Tim Cook, Penguin Canada, 576 pp., $26.

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88. ***The Taking of Vimy Ridge: First World War Photographs of William Ivor Castle***, by Carla-Jean Stokes, Wilfrid Laurier-University Press, 166 pp., $64.99.

89. ***Times of Transformation: The 1921 Canadian General Election***, by Barbara J. Messamore, Turning Point Elections series, UBC Press, 366 pp., $27.95.

90. ***Trading on Art: Cultural Diplomacy and Free Trade in North America***, by Sarah E.K. Smith, UBC Press, 296 pp., $34.95.

91. ***21 Things You Need to Know About Indigenous Self-Government: A Conversation About Dismantling the Indian Act***, by Bob Joseph, Indigenous Relations Press, 194 pp., $24.95.

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93. ***Under Assault: Interference and Espionage in China's Secret War Against Canada***, by Dennis Molinaro, Penguin Random House Canada, 352 pp., $38.

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95. ***Unravelling MAiD in Canada: Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide as Medical Care***, edited by Ramona Coelho, K. Sonu Gaind, and Trudo Lemmens, McGill-Queen's University Press, 552 pp., $39.95.

96. ***Vanished Beyond the Map: The Mystery of Lost Explorer Hubert Darell***, by Adam Shoalts, Allen Lane, Penguin Random House Canada, 288 pp., $37.

97. ***Voices of Resistance: Diaries of Genocide***, by Batool Abu Akleen, Sondos Sabra, Nahil Mohana, and Ala'a Obaid, Biblioasis, 224 pp., $24.95.

98. ***Walking The Bypass: Notes on Place From the Side of the Road***, by Ken Wilson, University of Regina Press, 320 pp., $27.95.

99. ***We Breed Lions: Confronting Canada's Troubled Hockey Culture***, by Rick Westhead, Penguin Random House Canada, 408 pp., $38.

100. ***Wilful Neglect: The Federal Response to Tuberculosis Among First Nations, 1867-1945***, by Jane Thomas, McGill-Queen's University Press, 318 pp., $34.95.

—By Kate Malloy, The Hill Times'
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