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NEWS

Two 'Conservative leaders,' one bank vault, and zero leaks: Poilievre's gallery dinner surprise



The first appearance of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, second right, at this year's press gallery dinner had been in the works since June when his new director of communications, Katy Merrifield, centre, suggested he team up with his *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* 'clone,' Chris Wilson, third left. Photograph courtesy of Katy Merrifield

This Hour Has 22 Minutes' Poilievre impersonator Chris Wilson shares how the Opposition Leader's Office landed its double punchline.

BY STUART BENSON

Have you heard the one about the two Pierre Poilievres in the bank vault? While the punchline landed with a double shot of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.) at this year's Press

Gallery Dinner on Nov. 29—after the leader skipped out on the last three—the set up began months prior and was executed in less than a week. In an interview with *The Hill Times*, one of those Poilievres, *This Hour Has 22 Minutes'* Chris Wilson, said that while the show

had been unsuccessfully attempting to get the real Poilievre on their set since he became Conservative leader in the fall of 2022, it was the Opposition Leader's Office (OLO) that first made contact on Monday, Nov. 24, with the idea for the doppelganger roast.

The following day, Wilson said his producer informed him of the OLO's proposal, and by Wednesday, he was packing his overnight luggage and booking a flight to Ottawa. "It all happened very quickly," Wilson told *The*

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NEWS

Surge in lost public property sees total federal losses reach \$730.4-million for 2024-25

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

The federal government reported a notable drop in lost revenue in 2024-25, and a modest decrease in lost public money. But a surge in lost public property—largely due to the 2024 Jasper wildfire—

means overall federal losses are up by almost 12.5 per cent, reaching \$730.4-million altogether. Lost federal revenue, money, and property is reported as part of Volume 3 of the annual Public Accounts, the 2024-25

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NEWS

Chief says feds' engagement with First Nations 'needs to improve' after 'very limited' contact on major projects

BY ELEANOR WAND

On the heels of adopting a resolution against Ottawa's new energy deal

with Alberta at an annual meeting of First Nations chiefs, a Manitoba grand chief says engagement with the government is

Continued on [page 35](#)

Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

Senate publishes new accessibility plan



Senate Clerk Shaila Anwar, left, says the Red Chamber's accessibility plan is 'a significant step toward eliminating barriers to participation for Canadians.' Photograph courtesy of the Senate of Canada and The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

The Red Chamber has published its new Senate Accessibility Plan outlining 31 goals aimed at "eliminating barriers," and making the institution "open to Canadians of all abilities."

The 2026-2028 document came after "extensive consultations" with the disability community, and a survey sent to Senators, staff, and administration—which was completed by 88 people—and outlines proposed changes to Senate buildings and

conducting regular accessibility audits.

The plan includes efforts to improve the "built environment," like completing a transformable lift pilot project at East Block, better digital signage, and making communications clearer, including training staff to ensure published documents—like committee and financial reports—meet current standards.

Other goals include a campaign to promote "a scent-aware

environment" by 2027, and expanding the use of live Communication Access Realtime Translation to public committee meetings that are currently only presented in audio format.

The 2026-2028 plan represents "a significant step toward eliminating barriers to participation for Canadians who have so much to contribute," writes Senate clerk **Shaila Anwar** in the opening message.

—by Samantha Wright Allen

MP Viersen spreads Dutch Sinterklaas tradition in the House

Conservative MP **Arnold Viersen** and his daughter **Claire** made MPs' days a little sweeter on Dec. 5 as they carried out the Dutch tradition of **Sinterklaas** in the Green Chamber, leaving chocolate treats for good parliamentarians.

"Today, Claire and I snuck into the House of Commons for our (**Dan Muys**) annual tradition of leaving chocolate letters on our colleagues' desks. Happy Sinterklaas!" posted the four-term Alberta MP on X on Dec. 5, noting it is a tradition he fulfills in partnership with fellow Conservative MP Muys.

The boxes include a chocolate version of the recipient's first initial (K for **Kelly**, for example) with a personalized message on the package explaining the story.

"December 5 is Sinterklaas, a traditional Dutch holiday celebrating the arrival of **St. Nicholas**. According to Dutch folklore, he comes bearing good tidings and gifts from Spain. It is a day of great rejoicing and charity as loved ones gather to exchange gifts including chocolate letters, *pepernoten* [small spiced cookies], and oranges. Please enjoy this chocolate letter in celebration of Sinterklaas!"



Conservative MP Arnold Viersen and his daughter Claire leave Sinterklaas treats in the House on Dec. 5. Photograph courtesy of X

Longtime public servant Yves Côté joins NSIRA

Former commissioner of Canada elections **Yves Côté** is the newest member of the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency.

Prime Minister **Mark Carney** announced Côté's five-year appointment to the group that makes sure Canada's national security agencies are complying with the law on Dec. 3.

Côté began his career in 1977 as a military legal officer within the Office of the Judge Advocate General at the Canadian Armed Forces. He joined the Department of Justice in 1981, and held a number of



Yves Côté in 2022. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

senior roles until joining the Privy Council Office in 2003 as counsel to the PCO clerk. Between then and now, Côté has served as ombud for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces, associate deputy minister of Justice, and commissioner of Canada elections from 2012 to 2022.

"More recently, he was a senior policy adviser to the Public Order Emergency Commission (the Rouleau Commission), and an executive in residence at the University of Ottawa," according to a government press release.

Radio-Canada's Louis Blouin gets mugged

Less than a week after Parliamentary Press Gallery members gathered for their annual gala dinner, more than 100 of them reconvened for a Christmas-y lunch late last week to honour now-former member **Louis Blouin** who received a silver mug to commemorate his many years as a PPG member.

The erstwhile bureau chief for Radio-Canada since 2023 and the outlet's Hill reporter since 2015, Blouin left Ottawa four months ago for his new assignment: Washington correspondent.

His successor in Ottawa, **Daniel Thibeault**, introduced Blouin to the lunching reporters gathered in Room 100 at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building on Dec. 5, recalling—in both official languages—how Blouin first arrived on the Hill the same week then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau's** first cabinet was sworn in in November 2015.

While describing Blouin as a "hard-working, excellent journalist" full of "flare and tenacity" who has left big shoes to fill, Thibeault noted Blouin is also an "eternal teenager," one who would routinely doodle on his colleague's notebooks and is known to take a sneaky bite of their sandwiches.

In his thank-you remarks to the gathering, Blouin said it's been a "privilege to work with you all," and listed a few things he doesn't really miss about Hill reporting, including technical briefings and budget lock-ups. What he does miss, he said, is how PPG members "lift each other up in this city," adding that he was sad to leave.

While reporting on the White House "is not boring," Blouin reminded his fellow journalists their work is "more important than ever" as governments both in Washington and in Ottawa "bulldoze their agendas," and how democracy is fragile.

Scott Simms is a sell-out ... actor

Former Liberal MP-turned-actor **Scott Simms** is back on stage in Ottawa, but good luck finding tickets, as all the performances for his play are currently sold out.

A *Sherlock Carol* is currently running at the Ottawa Little Theatre from Dec. 3 to 20 on Wednesdays through Saturdays, with a matinee on Sunday.

The play, written by **Mark Shanahan** and directed by **Josh Kemp**, is billed as a "Christmas mystery" incorporating characters from **Charles Dickens'** beloved short story *A Christmas Carol*, and **Arthur Conan Doyle's** iconic detective **Sherlock Holmes** "in a story of intrigue and suspense, with a giant scoop of holiday cheer."

"Big thanks and admiration to my cast mates in *A Sherlock Carol* as we share the stage in a story that gives me such joy and

merriment all wrapped up in a Victorian tale of mystery and fun!" Simms posted on LinkedIn on Dec. 5.

"Life after federal politics can be an interesting journey if you truly want it to be," wrote Simms, who is currently a senior associate at Hill & Knowlton.

This is Simms' second stint on stage in Ottawa; earlier this year he was part of the cast of *A Shawshank Redemption* at the Ottawa Little Theatre.

In its Dec. 3 review of *A Sherlock Carol*, *Ottawa Life Magazine* noted that Simms is among four actors who "juggle multiple roles with ease. Part of the show's charm comes from these quick changes: Simms is especially delightful as **Mrs. Dilber**, **Ebenezer's** elderly maid."

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NEWS

New rules authorize Poilievre to appoint eight candidates next election in ‘substantially revamped nomination process,’ say Conservative sources

At the Dec. 5 quarterly meeting, the Conservative Party’s national council approved nomination rules for the next election cycle, according to Conservative sources.

BY ABBAS RANA

In a break from its tradition, and for the first time in its history, the Conservative Party’s national council has authorized the party leader to appoint eight candidates in ridings across the country for the next election, say Conservative sources.

“The council has agreed to eight appointments [by the leader],” a senior Conservative told *The Hill Times*.

“Basically [there is] a very substantially revamped nomination process and system, with appointments, but also with much easier access for candidates to become candidates and to be have clarity right away.”

The revised nomination rules have not yet been publicly announced, but *The Hill Times* has learned that Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.) will be permitted to make these eight appointments under certain conditions, including identifying well in advance the electoral district associations where he intends to do so. The council has also proposed new rules to make the vetting process more efficient and transparent with specific time frames, according to Conservative sources who were not authorized to speak on the matter.

Until now, there was no provision in the nomination rules that would allow the leader to appoint candidates because the party viewed itself as a grassroots organization where all nominations should be decided through a contested process. Before this recent rule change, one of the tricks for the party brass to get their preferred candidates was to wait until the election was imminent and then invoke the nomination rules’ emergency clause to install candidates of their choice. With



The Conservative Party’s national council has authorized Leader Pierre Poilievre, centre, to appoint eight candidates in the next election cycle, say Conservative sources. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The Conservative caucus is expected to be briefed on Dec. 10 about the new nomination rules for held ridings, say Conservative sources. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the leader now allowed to appoint eight candidates, it’s hoped that the nomination process in the remainder of the ridings will be transparent, Conservative sources said. There are currently 143 Conservative MPs, representing just over 40 per cent of Canada’s 343 federal ridings.

“National council may alter, abridge or suspend any of the rules as it sees fit,” states Sec. 13 of the nomination rules.

Under the current rules, when a general election is called, the council authorizes the party’s executive director or designate as well as the council’s president to “alter, abridge, or suspend” any section of the rules “as they see fit,” if it’s “in consultation” with the chair of the national candidate selection committee and national councillors for the affected jurisdiction.

“Any such decision shall be final and binding and is not sub-

ject to appeal, challenge or review on any grounds whatsoever.”

The idea of authorizing the leader to appoint a certain number of candidates has been around for years, but this is the first time that the national council has decided to allow it to happen. This is because there were dozens of ridings across the country in the last election cycle where potential and unsuccessful candidates claimed that the nomination process was rigged so that the leader and his team could get their preferred candidates. Complaints about the nomination process and the resulting malaise is internally seen as one of the key reasons why the party failed to win the April 28 election, Conservative sources told *The Hill Times*.

The Conservative Party’s communications office was not available for comment by publication.

At its June quarterly meeting, the national council established a seven-member nomination rules committee for the next election. The committee is chaired by Ontario national councillor Christina Mitas. Other members include Matthew Conway (Quebec), Aaron Scheewe (Ontario), Robert Boyd (British Columbia), Amber Ruddy (Alberta), Judy Manning (Newfoundland and Labrador), and Tim Syer (Northwest Territories). Conservative MP Warren Steinley (Regina-Lewvan, Sask.), the caucus-party liaison, is a non-voting member of the committee.

Prior to finalizing its recommendations and sharing it with the council on Dec. 5, the rules committee held virtual meetings with riding associations across the country to get briefed on what they felt had worked and what hadn’t in the April 28 contest that

saw the Liberals secure a fourth consecutive government. The discussions focused on nomination rules and ways to improve the process for the next election.

On Oct. 14, the nomination committee also sent out a survey questionnaire seeking grassroots members’ input to improve the nomination process. The committee asked members questions like what would it “take to ensure the Party attracts the best candidates to form a strong majority government under Pierre Poilievre’s leadership,” for “any CPC candidates you are particularly proud to support,” and “what could the party do, if anything, to improve the nomination process,” among other questions. The survey also asked for feedback on whether incumbent MPs should be protected from nomination challenges or be required to meet certain conditions like they were ahead of the the last election. Each MP was required to raise \$15,000 annually and contribute the maximum allowable limit to the party and the riding association.

“We take your ideas seriously and appreciate your contributions to our party,” wrote Mitas in her note attached to the survey, and obtained by *The Hill Times*. “With your help, we will be well-positioned to form the next government.”

The Conservative caucus is expected to be briefed at a Dec. 10 meeting about the nomination rules for incumbent MPs for the next election. Before finalizing these rules, the national council received input from MPs about what they wanted in the new guidelines.

In the last election cycle, a significant number of potential and unsuccessful candidates in different regions of the country publicly accused the party of running unfair and opaque nomination elections. There was a lot of interest from candidates to run for the party because, based on the polls, the Poilievre Conservatives were leading by more than 20 points and were projected to win one of the strongest landslide majorities in Canadian history.

Potential and unsuccessful nomination candidates told *The Hill Times* in the lead up to and after the election that the party employed various procedural tactics to get their preferred candidates. Some said they couldn’t access the online portal to submit their applications, blaming persistent technical issues. Others said that in a number of cases, the party failed to provide the required 14-day notice before closing nominations. They said that party officials invoked the rules abridgement provision even when there was no expectation of an election in the near future.

Meanwhile at the party’s Jan. 29-31, 2026, biennial policy convention in Calgary, the Conservative Party’s delegates will vote on policy resolutions proposed by riding associations on a variety of subjects, including nominations, and will hold a mandatory review of Poilievre’s leadership.

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Canada Is Missing the Biggest Industrial Opportunity Hiding in Plain Sight

By **Michael Graydon**, CEO, Food, Health & Consumer Products of Canada

Canada is searching for a path back to stronger productivity, more resilient supply chains, and a more competitive economy. Yet one of the most powerful levers for achieving all three remains almost entirely overlooked in the national conversation.

Canada's food, health, and consumer products manufacturing sector is the country's largest manufacturing employer. It rivals the scale of sectors that receive far more political and policy attention, yet it operates in more regions of the country and is woven directly into the daily lives of Canadians. It anchors rural communities, supports immigrant entrepreneurship, and produces most of the goods families use every day.

Still, despite this reach and relevance, the sector is rarely treated as a strategic economic asset. That is a missed opportunity at a moment when Canada can least afford to miss any.

Today, more than half of the products in the centre aisles of grocery stores are imported, even though many were once made in Canada. The capacity exists here, the talent exists here, and the market certainly exists here. What is missing is the environment that allows firms to expand, modernize, and compete at scale. For two decades, a combination of cost pressures, regulatory misalignment, and slow approvals has pushed investment south. The result is not a crisis we can see, but a slow erosion that is becoming harder to reverse with each passing year.

If Canada is serious about diversifying trade, increasing domestic manufacturing, and improving productivity, then value-added agrifood and consumer goods manufacturing must be at the centre of the strategy. Exporting raw agricultural products alone will not double non-U.S. exports. The real opportunity lies in processing, innovation, and advanced manufacturing that build on Canada's natural strengths.

Rebuilding this capacity would deliver immediate returns: more diverse exports, more resilient supply chains, stronger regional economies, reduced exposure to global shocks, and more intellectual property and innovation anchored in Canada. Few sectors offer this mix of economic and strategic upside.



To unlock this potential, Canada does not need new subsidies or major new spending. It needs structural modernization.

First, Canada needs a national agrifood value strategy. Unlike other agrifood powers, our value chain is fractured across multiple departments, with no single place where competitiveness and growth are coordinated. Aligning Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Health Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Global Affairs Canada under a shared industrial objective would be transformative.

Second, Canada needs regulatory systems that keep pace with modern manufacturing. That means aligning with trusted jurisdictions, reducing duplication between federal and provincial reporting, and modernizing data and labelling rules. These steps alone would unlock immediate investment with no added cost to government.

Third, supply-chain infrastructure must be treated as strategic. Congested ports, limited rail flexibility, and outdated inspection systems do not just slow goods. They reduce investor confidence that Canada can deliver reliably at scale.

Finally, we need tax policy that encourages firms to scale, not stay small. Budget 2025 took important steps with the Productivity Super Deduction and improvements to Capital Cost Allowance rules. These changes help level the playing field with the United States. But to truly energize mid-sized manufacturers, Canada should introduce a nationwide manufacturing investment tax credit, modernize the

Science Research and Experimental Development program, and implement a federal patent box regime that encourages commercialization here at home.

The good news is that Canada has everything it needs to succeed. We have world-class agricultural production, abundant water, global leadership in potash, deep expertise in food safety, and a diverse and innovative consumer market. What we need now is an industrial strategy that connects these advantages to the manufacturing capacity that converts them into high-value exports.

The path to a more competitive Canada runs straight through value-added agrifood and consumer goods manufacturing. It is the country's most underleveraged economic asset, and the opportunity it represents is larger and more certain than many of the strategies dominating today's policy debate.

Canada can once again become a nation that builds things and feeds the world. We simply need to treat this sector with the same strategic seriousness we apply to others that are far smaller but far louder.

Michael Graydon is CEO of Food, Health & Consumer Products of Canada.

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NEWS

Minister called to de-haze budget math on cuts to veterans' medical cannabis reimbursement



Opposition critics and veterans are calling on Veterans Affairs Minister Jill McKnight to explain how only millions of dollars in reimbursement reductions for medical cannabis will amount to the projected \$4-billion over four years in savings for her department. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Retired lieutenant-colonel Dr. Nick Withers says many of his patients on disability pensions may not have the extra money to spend on the same quality products at lower reimbursement rates. *Handout photograph*



Conservative MP Blake Richards says the Liberals' 'numbers don't work,' and couldn't reach their proposed \$4-billion in savings over four years even if the government eliminated the entire medical cannabis subsidy. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The proposed \$2.50-per-gram reduction in reimbursements could 'fundamentally change' veterans' access to high-quality and affordable products, says Dr. Nick Withers.

BY STUART BENSON

The "human cost" to veterans caught in the crossfire of the more than \$4-billion in spending reductions expected of Veterans Affairs Canada will be far greater than any savings the department may find, says a physician and veteran, as questions are raised over how the proposed \$2.50

reduction to the department's medical cannabis program will actually achieve its savings goal.

"We have veterans who have given so much to their country and have finally found relief in medical cannabis," said Dr. Nick Withers, a 22-year veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) who is now a practicing emergency medicine doctor and clinical assistant professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of British Columbia.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Withers said that while he was initially skeptical about prescribing medical cannabis to

his veteran patients after his Armed Forces retirement in 2015, it has been "one of the few success stories" he has seen, and he's been prescribing it to his patients since 2020.



Pegging the veterans' reimbursement rate to the consumer market price for dried flower cannabis is 'like comparing apples to oranges,' says Dr. Withers. *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

"There will be a real human cost here, and I'm hoping we'll see some changes," explained Withers, now the national medical director for CannaConnect,

which provides medical cannabis treatments to military and RCMP veterans with chronic physical and mental health injuries attributable to their service.

The Nov. 4 budget proposes finding more than \$4-billion in savings from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), which is 15 per cent of its current spending. Those savings represent the second largest in terms

of dollars expected for a federal department, with the Department of Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities recording the largest proposed reductions at \$5.4-billion, followed by the Canada Revenue Agency in third with just under \$4.1-billion in proposed spending reductions.

According to the description of the changes to VAC in Annex 3 of the budget, those savings would be generated by reducing veterans' reimbursement for the medical marijuana products they purchase, going from \$8.50 to \$6 per gram with a maximum of three grams per day. Members of the RCMP who access the program would also see the same reduction in their reimbursements.

Withers explained that the proposed reductions would result in veterans choosing lower-quality products and a lower quality of life, or worse, as they turn to less effective or more risky medications like SSRIs or opiates to address their chronic pain or post-traumatic stress disorders.

Continued on **page 7**

Continued from page 6

The budget projects that VAC would save more than \$1.1-billion in the 2026-27 and 2027-28 fiscal years, and an additional \$1.06-billion in 2028-29, and \$788-million in 2029-30.

However, that math does not comport with the actual spending on reimbursements, as first reported by the cannabis industry-focused outlet StratCann.com, which noted that it took 13 years, from 2011 to 2024, for those payments to reach more than \$1.1-billion.

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, VAC reimbursed 24,146 registered clients for more than 24.3 million grams of cannabis for a total of \$206.7-million. That rose to 27,643 clients and 30.3 million grams the following year, for a total of \$257.6-million in reimbursements. For the latter year, a \$2.50-per-gram reduction would only save \$75.8-million.

Conservative MP Blake Richards (Airdrie-Cochrane, Alta.), his party's veterans affairs critic, has also criticized the changes in the budget, calling on Veterans Affairs Minister Jill McKnight (Delta, B.C.) to "come clean with what the Liberals are cutting."

Richards noted that, based on the government's own data, "there is no way" to save more than \$1.1-billion solely by spending less on cannabis reimbursements.

"Even if they eliminated all cannabis spending, they would save less than one-fourth of the target," Richards said. "Their numbers don't work, and fail to explain where their \$4.23-billion in cuts to VAC are coming from."

McKnight's parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP Sean Casey (Charlottetown, P.E.I.), was also questioned about the VAC budget math in the House of Commons by Conservative MP Alex Ruff (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Ont.) on Nov. 24.

In response, Casey explained the savings represent a reduction in "a future obligation to veterans," and that the "net present value is reflected in the budget."

In a statement to *The Hill Times*, VAC explained that the projected savings are calculated on an accrual basis and represent "the lifetime cost" of providing the benefit, and a "reduced government obligation that will no longer need to be planned for over the long term." The statement also notes that VAC is projected to save \$129-million annually on a cash basis due to the reduction, which represents less than two per cent of its current budget of \$7.8-million.

"The federal government is aligning the maximum reimbursement rate for cannabis for medical purposes with current market prices," the statement reads. "This ensures fair value for taxpayers while maintaining access to medically authorized cannabis for those who rely on it, ensuring the long-term viability of the program. This change will not impact a veteran's ability to access cannabis for medical purposes."

However, Withers said the proposed reimbursement reduction will have significant impacts on veterans' access to the medical cannabis products they need, and could fundamentally change the kinds of products that are available.

"Veterans with disability pensions often aren't thriving from a financial perspective, and don't have a lot of additional income to spend," Withers explained, adding that pegging the reimbursement to the consumer market price for dried flower cannabis is "like comparing apples to oranges."

"It's not a fair comparison at all," Withers said, noting that the majority of patients are prescribed topical or edible products like gummies or oils, and are generally discouraged from using combustible inhalants due to the related health concerns.

Rick Savone, senior vice-president of global relations at Aurora Cannabis,



Aurora Cannabis's Rick Savone says he is 'disappointed' in the government's lack of creativity in how it plans to achieve such a significant spending cut. Photograph courtesy of X

told *The Hill Times* that the claim that the reimbursement reduction would not impact access to or the quality of the products available to veterans is "misleading, bordering on illusory."

Savone explained that, unlike most cannabis products available for consumers or on the illicit market, medical cannabis

products are held to the same good manufacturing practices guidelines expected of other medical products in Canada.

Alongside product standards, Savone said medical cannabis products are chosen for their consistency of both potency and availability.

"Those products are made according to pharmaceutical standards because you have prescribers and patients that need to be confident they are taking medicine that has the intended effect," Savone explained. "You can't just swap that out with another product at a cheaper price set by a bureaucrat."

"When we make our medical products available for patients, we try to guarantee that they're going to be available to them wherever they are in Canada, whenever

they need them," Savone said, adding that the same consistency is "nearly impossible to find" on the general consumer market.

Savone said that while the veterans with whom his company works are rightfully confused and upset over the proposed changes, "taxpayers ought to be disappointed" as well.

"At some level, I'm disappointed that the people at Finance and VAC couldn't be a little more creative than pegging one of the largest spending cuts in the 21st century to cutting medical cannabis for veterans," Savone explained.

In response to the concerns raised by the proposed changes, VAC said that the "health, safety, and well-being of veterans is our top priority," and that "if the licensed seller charges more than \$6 per gram for most cannabis for medical purposes products, they [the veteran buyer] may choose to register with another licensed seller to avoid paying the difference."

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MONGOLIA AND CANADA: STRENGTHENING PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE TIES UNDER COMPREHENSIVE PARTNERSHIP

AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF MONGOLIA TO CANADA SARANTOGOS ERDENETSOGT

On November 30, Mongolia and Canada marked fifty-two years of diplomatic ties - more than half a century of solid relationship built through cooperation in many fields and now advancing into new promising horizons since the elevation of the relations to a Comprehensive Partnership in 2023.

Mongolia welcomes Canada's growing engagement in the region under its Indo-Pacific Strategy and values its commitment to strengthening ties between our peoples. The significance of cultural and people-to-people ties for better mutual knowledge and understanding was underscored in the 2023 Joint Statement of the Mongolian and Canadian Foreign Ministers. Such relations are guided not only by shared values and priorities but also by the cultural and spiritual affinities that link the peoples on the opposite hemispheres of the globe.

Mongolian throat-singing *Khuumii* and Inuit throat-singing echo each other in their origin of reflecting the rhythms and soul of the natural world through the human voice. In October of this year, renowned Mongolian throat-singer Ashit Nergui carried these resonances in Canada performing his unique concert "Melody of Khuur, Tune of Khuumii" and joining Inuit throat-singers in a rare exchange of voices and traditions during the 40th anniversary of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut College.

Throughout the year, the colours of Mongolia found vibrant expression at various events such as flag-raising at Ottawa City Hall, the *Mongol Naadam* festival in Alexandria, the illumination of Niagara Falls in the blue-red-blue, and Festival Orientalys in Montreal. Mongolia's first Cultural Envoy to Canada Yves Ballenegger has been introducing Mongolian heritage to Canadian communities by sharing the living heritage of Mongolian *gers* and continuously supporting diverse cultural initiatives to promote Mongolia in Canada.

Business exchanges, too, continue to reinforce the relationship. The Mongolia-Canada Business Forum held in Toronto in September 2025 brought together representatives of Mongolian and Canadian business communities. Mongolian cashmere and wool carry their warmth into Canada through "Yavar" and "Cashmere Casa" stores in Ottawa and the Toronto's "Mongolian Gallery" store which recently showcased Mongolian brand at the *Spruce Meadows* in Calgary.

At the same time, the provincial partnerships deepen people-to-people ties as the dialogue between Ulaanbaatar and Ottawa, the world's coldest capitals, is opening doors to new areas of cooperation. The province of Umnugovi and the province of Alberta explore collaboration in mining, tourism, education and forestry, while an unexpected thread connects them through re-discovery of a dinosaur specimen by the University of Calgary scientists in the Gobi Desert and renewed collaborative ideas in paleontology.



Mongolia continues longstanding cooperation with Saskatchewan in agriculture and education. The Mongolian Embassy attended the *Canadian Western Agribition* last November. It supports exchanges with the University of Saskatchewan, one of the well-known Canadian educational institutions in Asia and the world. Notably, the University of Saskatchewan is also the cradle of Mongolian studies in Canada and the initial host of the Canada-Mongolia Society, whose the legacy continues to inspire the scholars and researchers in Canada.

In October, the Mongolian Studies Forum honoured Professor Emeritus Wayne Schlepp, one of the founders of the field in Canada, reflecting on the past, present and future of Mongolian studies in Canada. The forum not only featured traditional themes of history and culture, customs and archaeology but also focused on new possibilities for deepening Mongolia-Canada relations amid a rapidly evolving geopolitical environment.

Another thread connecting the two peoples is woven through development cooperation projects funded by the Government of Canada such as ECCO-FARM in agriculture, MERIT in civil service, EJAM in judiciary, *SkillShift Mongolia* in technical and vocational education training as well as the gender-based violence response project.

Through these exchanges, whether cultural, academic, commercial, or communal, the peoples of Mongolia and Canada come to understand one another in ways that transcend politics and broaden the bilateral cooperation in tourism, education, business, and beyond. As Canada continues to diversify and expand its engagement with the Indo-Pacific, Mongolia stands ready to seize the momentum to nurture this relationship for the well-being of the two nations.



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Editorial

Editorial

Chumminess should be providing cover for CUSMA collapse

The American president was in fine form last week when Prime Minister Mark Carney made a quick trip to Washington, D.C., for the FIFA World Cup draw on Dec. 5.

Everything about the event at the Kennedy Center was meant to goose President Donald Trump’s ego: the Village People, the faux peace award, Wayne Gretzky. And Carney and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum were right to take advantage. From what we could see, everyone was chummy and in high spirits in order to keep on Trump’s good side when he was in such a pleasant mood to help grease the wheels of these protracted trade talks.

As reported by *The Globe and Mail*: Trump was “laudatory of his World Cup co-hosts” as he delivered his gold star FIFA peace prize acceptance speech. “We’ve had a tremendous relationship, working relationship, with Canada,” he said. “The co-ordination and friendship and relationship has been outstanding and I want to thank you both very much and your countries very much.”

Of course, contrast that with what the president said a couple of days prior when asked about trade talks—“Mexico and Canada have taken advantage of the United States like just about every other country”—and what he said earlier this week once his guests left town.

“A lot of [fertilizer] does come in from Canada, and so we’ll end up putting very severe tariffs on that, if we have to, because that’s the way you

want to bolster here,” Trump said on Dec. 8.

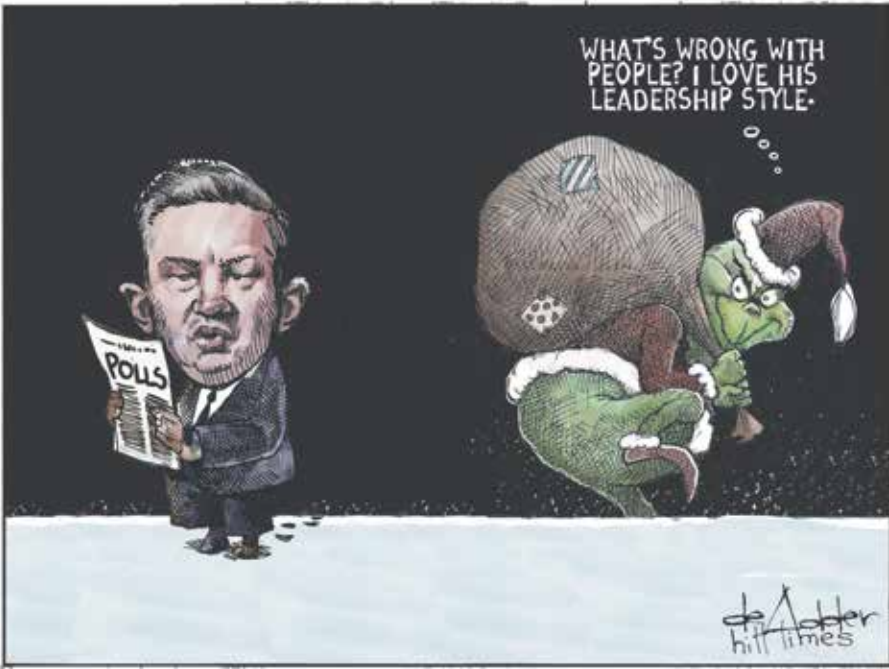
According to the Prime Minister’s Office readout of the 45-minute pull-aside the three North American leaders had following the soccer draw, “they’ve agreed to keep working together” on the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA). What are the odds that new “very severe tariffs” came up in that chat?

This all speaks to why we’ve all been watching Carney simply run out the clock with Trump. The president loves nothing more than to win, and he’s clearly frustrated that he cannot seem to secure more of prize out of Canada than he’s already got through outstanding tariffs. The last time Trump threw a tantrum and threatened to walk away, Canada dropped the controversial digital services tax. This time, crickets.

The CUSMA review formally begins in July 2026, and in the interim, Canada will undertake a trade mission to Mexico in February, led not by Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu, but Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc, who made a visit last week building on Carney’s trip to Mexico in September.

Trump has made no secret of his desire to see the end of a North American trade pact, and everyone seems to be laying the groundwork for the potential demise of the tripartite deal. All the onstage smiles can’t hide the fact that Canada can’t afford to be caught off guard and stabbed in the back again.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor

Mark Carney’s Alberta ‘deal’

From my perspective, many Canadians voted for Prime Minister Mark Carney’s party because of his clear position on the economic and environmental implications of dealing successfully with climate change. In fact, when he was the governor of the Bank of England and a United Nations lead on climate change issues, I sent him a positive note for his coining of the phrase “stranded assets” to describe the folly of continuing to hang our future on fossil fuels. He had one of his minions at the Bank write me a thank you for the kind words.

On Nov. 27, Carney was quoted in the press saying, “I’m the prime minister, and my role is to make decisions in the interests of Alberta and Canada.” What could be so wrong? As then-prime minister Stephen Harper found out, pumping up the Canadian dollar with oil exports gobsmacked the Ontario industry that Harper eventually recognized as the economic engine of Canada. GDP scales most directly on population, and Ontario has it—providing commerce is working. And what about the rest of Canada in

general? Looking after Alberta Premier Danielle Smith’s twisted view of economics and the environment should not be the most important task for our PM. There are nine other provinces and some territories, after all.

Using taxpayers’ money—not just Alberta’s—to fund the dangerous, short-term folly of carbon dioxide sequestration is daylight madness in the face of the growth in green energy at low cost. Who will pay for the growing toxic mess from tailing ponds in northern Alberta? I’m afraid Canadian taxpayers—not Alberta’s—know only too well. Not to mention the numerous “accidents” involving liquid carbon dioxide pipelines that have already occurred.

Instead of handing money over to Alberta to carry out developments that may see civilization disappear in 40 years, it is time to take control and negotiate a successful way forward so humans have a 1,000-year future, not one of a few decades.

Tom McElroy
Toronto, Ont.

It’s time to close the arms loophole with Bill-C-233: Ottawa letter writer

I am a concerned citizen who is asking for more transparency regarding our government’s complicity in the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Canadians were told our government stopped sending weapons to Israel. I was recently shocked to learn that was a lie.

A new report, *Exposing the U.S. Loophole*, documents hundreds of shipments of Canadian F-35 components and explosives flowing through the United States to the Israeli military completely unregulated. The so-called “arms pause” never covered high-value parts that bypass Canadian export controls entirely.

Worse, 433 shipments of live TNT travelled our highways with no public disclosure. Emergency responders weren’t informed. Communities weren’t consulted. We are all being put in danger.

Ministers Mélanie Joly and Anita Anand promised

Canadian arms wouldn’t reach Gaza. Evidence shows Canadian-made parts arrived at Israeli bases mere days after landing in the U.S. This violates the Arms Trade Treaty, and is a deliberate policy that lets our government claim innocence while arming atrocities.

At least 356 Palestinians have been killed since the so-called ceasefire began, and more than 70,000 in the last two years.

Bill C-233 would close this loophole by applying the same export scrutiny to U.S.-bound weapons as every other country. Parliament must pass it, and impose a full arms embargo on Israel.

Canada cannot claim to stand for human rights while maintaining a backdoor to genocide

Imad Eddin Tijani
Ottawa, Ont.

COMMENT



FIFA President Gianni Infantino, left, U.S. President Donald Trump, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, and Prime Minister Mark Carney participate in the FIFA World Cup drawing in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 5. *White House photograph by Daniel Torok*

Between a rock and a hard place

Canada's latest contribution to a Ukraine aid package will once again reward U.S. firms while the Trump administration is trying to force Ukraine to accept Russia's demands for a ceasefire agreement.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



Welcome to the 'Trade War World Cup'

All the countries sending athletes to next year's event have been struggling with the damage caused by Donald Trump's tariffs.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—Mark Carney has apparently wanted to be Canada's prime minister since he was old enough to seriously entertain such ideas. But you still have to wonder what he must have been thinking about his job as he sat under the global spotlight watching United States President Donald Trump get jiggy with it at the World Cup draw in Washington, D.C.

With the U.S. president, fresh from receiving the made-up FIFA peace medal, chatting with Carney and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum—both of whose countries' economies Trump has relentlessly imperilled—there was more than enough absurdity to go around on Dec. 5.

The moment was the culmination of a tortuous 12-year journey to establish the site of the 2026 version of the world's biggest sporting event. Interwoven into the long process was a huge FIFA corruption scandal, frantic globetrotting lobby efforts, and the unpredictable, vengeful, and xenophobic impulses of the U.S.'s two-time president.

Some people—Trump perhaps among them—believe the U.S. should be hosting next summer's World Cup on its own. But U.S. soccer authorities decided in 2017 that the best way to avoid a competing and likely strong challenge from Mexico (and a less formidable one from Canada) was to join forces in what became FIFA's first combined three-country bid.

It was seen as a potential showcase and economic windfall for the region encompassing North America, Central America, and the Caribbean. With many adequate soccer venues and extensive hosting experience, the North American proposal, called the United Bid, was a hands-down favourite over the lone competitor, Morocco.

The only stumbling block was Trump himself. His shocking 2017 entry ban on certain Muslim-majority countries put the North American bid at risk, and the president was forced to write to FIFA assuring it that athletes and fans going to the U.S. would not face discrimination. (That's still a pressing issue as the

president's new ban is poised to expand to 30 countries).

In 2018, he also threatened to cut off foreign aid to countries that supported Morocco's bid, tweeting: "The US has put together a STRONG bid w/ Canada & Mexico for the 2026 World Cup. It would be a shame if countries that we always support were to lobby against the U.S. bid. Why should we be supporting these countries when they don't support us. . .?"

In any case, FIFA awarded the soccer spectacular to the U.S.-led group in 2018, around the time when Trump was pushing ahead with the construction of a wall on the Mexican-U.S. border, and labelling then-prime minister Justin Trudeau "dishonest and weak."

Seven years later, with Trump in a second term, the co-operative North American framing of the whole FIFA project has become a joke, with the U.S. president musing as late as last week about scrapping the three-country free-trade pact that is the lynchpin of the continental economy.

While last Friday Trump was enjoying the role he has invented as the star promoter of World Cup 2026, Carney and Sheinbaum were waiting to take advantage of the chance afforded by the FIFA draw to get an urgent chat with the U.S. leader.

There was indeed a 45-minute, no-aides discussion between the leaders formerly known as the

"Three Amigos." But, although the president had used the glitzy ceremony to praise Canada and Mexico for co-operating on the FIFA extravaganza, there's no indication that anything has changed in his trade onslaught against his neighbours. Afterwards, Trump was non-committal on restarting negotiations with Canada, repeating his usual refrain that the U.S. has no need for Canadian-made products (Carney joked it was three hours he'll never get back).

Looking ahead, there will be ample opportunity for Trump to pursue his grievances with Canada and Mexico as the 2020 version of the three-country pact gets laid on the chopping block under a mandated sixth-year review.

Assuming the U.S. declines to withdraw entirely—allowed on six months' notice under the trilateral pact—Trump will be able to demand changes to advance his U.S.-first mentality as the price of keeping the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement alive—and, should he choose to do so, require annual reviews of the agreement going forward.

This high-stakes showdown under the auspices of a three-country commission of trade ministers will start next July just as the World Cup games hit their peak.

Of course, Canada and Mexico aren't alone when it comes to taking part in a sporting event supposedly channeling good will and global co-operation that is in fact overseen by a world leader who has worked assiduously to reduce the real life expressions of those concepts to rubble.

All the countries sending athletes to next year's Cup event have been struggling with the damage caused by the tariffs Trump has mobilized to disrupt the system of liberalized rules-based international trade that has helped foster global economic growth for half a century.

All in all, a better name for next summer's world soccer competition, as Aaron Timms suggested in *The Guardian*, would be the "Trade War World Cup."

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

Continued on page 12

COMMENT

There's no security without Indigenous sovereignty

The boost in defence spending won't amount to much without first ensuring Inuit prosperity, which is key to Canadian authority in the Arctic.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami president Natan Obed. The more control the federal government has in the North, the more likely those policies endanger Inuit communities, writes Erica Ifill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

OTTAWA—Prime Minister Mark Carney's commitment to defence spending is unmatched compared to previous decades; in 2013, Canada's defence spending was barely one per cent of GDP. The most recent federal budget carved out "\$81.8-billion over five years on a cash basis, starting in 2025-26, to rebuild, rearm, and reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces." The budget pledged to "put Canada on a pathway to meet the NATO Defence Investment Pledge of investing [five] per cent of GDP in defence by 2035." Carney's new Defence Industrial Strategy is intended to strengthen the defence industry from job creation to technologi-

cal investments to supply chain sovereignty. In fact, a Canadian company, Roshel, provides armoured vehicles for the United States' Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the agency responsible for kidnappings, involuntary detention without charge, and a whole host of human and civil rights violations. But I digress.

The White House's *National Security Strategy* dropped on Dec. 4, and it's not looking good for NATO. The U.S. not only wants European countries to "willingly take more responsibility for security," but also indicates a pullback from NATO through limiting security guarantees for the European nations right at a time when Russian aggression is

rising. The document promotes "[e]nabling Europe to stand on its own feet and operate as a group of aligned sovereign nations, including by taking primary responsibility for its own defense." In other words, America is pulling back like a love-bomber after three dates.

Without America what is the point of NATO? I have no clue. NATO is a walking corpse, and has shown its inherent weakness through internal divisions. However, Canada still has an interest in thwarting Russian aggression, and that's in the Arctic. What is surprising is that there is no mention of an Arctic strategy in America's national security document. Canada's alliance with NATO may

provide backup against Russian aggression in the North.

Why do we care about the Arctic? That's the next major battleground as Russia, Denmark (through Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the U.S. all claim territory. Canada claims approximately 1.2 million square kilometres of the region. As a result of the climate crisis, the Arctic glaciers are melting at an increasingly rapid rate. This provides an incentive for countries that have maritime borders in the North to open up to potential resource extraction, new trade routes, and military capabilities. The federal government explains: "With the Arctic warming at an unprecedented rate, new maritime routes are becoming accessible. The Canadian Armed Forces ... must recognize and fulfil its collaborative role in ensuring Canadian Arctic sovereignty." Sovereignty is primarily established through occupation of the disputed lands, hence military expansion. With increased access to strategic trade and resources, Carney's government is ostensibly investing in the future of Canada's economy. Basically, Carney is turning Canada into Canada, Inc.—a global energy superpower for which the Arctic is imperative to the future of resource extraction.

Another way to establish sovereignty is to establish settlements as a foundation of Canada's claim to Arctic maritime zones. Through Inuit communities' presence in the Arctic, Canada exploits the principle of self-determination to exercise its presence in the North. Canada using Indigenous people to perpetuate its economic interests? Colour me shocked.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national representative organiza-

tion for Inuit in Canada. Its June 2025 document regarding Arctic sovereignty within a security and defence framework states: "As Canada turns toward the Arctic, governments must prioritize Inuit prosperity and perspectives as the foundation of Arctic security, sovereignty and defence." In other words, Canada's success in claiming Arctic waters cannot be established until Inuit communities are properly resourced: "Securing the Arctic requires Canada to invest in the people that live here and the services and supports needed to develop the economy."

The document recalls that, in the past, "[m]ilitarization served as a precursor to other colonial policies, including residential schooling, forced relocations of Inuit families intended to strengthen Canada's sovereignty claims to the region, and the slaughter of Inuit sled dogs by the RCMP to terminate Inuit mobility." That is the danger for the Inuit: the more control the federal government has in the North, the more likely those policies endanger Inuit communities.

This is yet another reason the federal government should implement Article 3 from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which states: "Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." The implication is that Indigenous sovereignty is key to Canadian authority in the Arctic, and the vision for this country's economic future.

Erica Ifill is host of the *Bad+Bitchy* podcast. *The Hill Times*

The joys of winter biking aren't without politics

It's hard to believe something beneficial could be so controversial.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



MONTREAL—A recent cartoon by my friend Terry Mosher, a.k.a. "Aislin," caught my eye the other day. A cyclist, covered from head to toe, is biking through the streets of Montreal on a chilly winter day. The balloon above his head reveals he is counting the months he will endure this Sisyphean exercise: "December, January, February..."

When I posted it on social media, many of my friends asked if it was me. I replied that it could have been, except I have always cycled in winter with great enthusiasm. I know many people think I am crazy, but winter biking holds an appeal for those of us who do it regularly. For one thing, it is an inexpensive and efficient use of time.

For 30 years, I cycled to work year-round. The reason for this was simple: public transit could never get me to work faster or cheaper. For a five- or 10-kilometre commute in Montreal, Ottawa, Geneva, or Delhi, I would take 15 to 30 minutes by cycling. Public transit was at least 45 minutes, with another 15 minutes waiting.

In terms of cost, an average transit pass costs \$100 a month, or \$1,200 a year. Seasonal tune-ups and new parts for a bicycle might cost \$300 a year, and a good used bike around \$300. And you never pay for parking. Over the decades,

I have saved thousands of dollars in transit, gas, and parking. I own three bikes: one for the summer roads, one for touring long distance, and a mountain bike with studded tires for winter. In a year, I would cover more than 2,500 kilometres of commuting.

And there are the health benefits. Biking 30 to 60 minutes a day all year provides enormous cardiovascular benefits, shedding unwanted kilograms. Over the last several summers I have piled on the kilometres on the back roads of Kamouraska, Que., with Michel, Nathalie, and Gaston, who are charter members of our own home-grown cycling club.

This summer, almost without knowing, we pedalled more than 3,000 kilometres from June to the end of August. It was then I realized the magic figure of 5,000 kilometres was in reach. By the end of October, I was at 4,250, and November 4,490.

Then winter hit: instead of the dry Decembers of the past, we have seen snow everywhere in eastern Canada in the last few weeks. This left me with 500 kilometres remaining this month. Due to a break in Montreal and Ottawa, that meant urban cycling, which is very different from its rural cousin.

I piled on the layered clothing, and prepared to deal with the challenge of city biking: staying safe with vehicles close by as snow and slush on the curbs can cut into the space to ride, and one can be dependent on dedicated bike lanes.

This is where my mode of transport begins to enter the realm of politics: dedicated bike lanes are a hot potato. Montreal's then-mayor Valerie Plante was determined Montreal would be the bicycling capital of North America. To that end, there are now more than 1,000 kilometres and 17 dedicated lanes. The number of Montrealers who cycle to work has doubled to 11 per cent. But bike lanes were a contentious issue for drivers in the November election, and the winner, Soraya Martinez Ferrada, was perceived as a bike skeptic.

Meanwhile, in Ontario, Premier Doug Ford passed Bill 212, the Reducing Gridlock, Saving

You Time Act, resulting in the removal of bike lanes from busy streets. Earlier this year, the Ontario Superior Court ruled Ford's plan violates the Charter as it put cyclists at an "increased risk of harm and death." The premier has now threatened to use the notwithstanding clause to get his way.

It's hard to believe something beneficial could be so controversial. I am personally agnostic on the proliferation of bike lanes, despite benefitting from them. I don't feel there has to be one on every thoroughfare, and I don't mind going a kilometre out of my way for a dedicated lane.

It's not realistic to expect we will ever see hundreds of thousands of winter cyclists on our streets as there are in more temperate European cities. Nonetheless, I and other hardy Canadians will keep pedalling away in the cold, with a smile.

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

COMMENT

The MOU's real value may be for those on the outside looking in

It will not go unnoticed among those who move money around and make investments that the prime minister is currently not encumbered by the political conventions and practices of his predecessor.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—The Canada-Alberta memorandum of understanding setting out the conditions under which a new oil pipeline can be built has generated lots of reaction to a project that doesn't yet and may not ever have a proponent. The government is rightly being called out on the proponent-less project by the Conservative Party.

Key Indigenous leaders, the premier of British Columbia, a now-former federal environment minister, community activists, and others have offered a tanker load of criticism about the MOU. Everything from a disregard of established Indigenous rights, the abandonment of a Trudeau-era climate policy, to the potential removal of aspects of the B.C. tanker ban have gotten airtime. And so they should, but it is hard to conceive that this initiative and other efforts by the prime minister are more than they appear.

The MOU does three very wise things through a political

management lens. First, it creates yet another demarcation point between the Justin Trudeau and Mark Carney governments. Whether a Carney friend or foe, there seems to be universal agreement that this type of arrangement would have never happened under Trudeau. Much like the axing of the consumer carbon tax, Carney has been ruthless in shredding his predecessor's signature initiatives.

Second, at a very high level, you have the spectacle of the federal Conservative leader—long a proponent of pipelines—trying to argue against his provincial brethren that this isn't a real pipeline deal. Technically, he is right, of course, but technical arguments aren't often big opinion movers when the mouse has already stolen your cheese again. Carney has once again co-opted some Conservative policy, and at the same time put the federal Conservatives and Danielle Smith's United Conservative government at odds.

Third, doing a deal with this government of Alberta—previously seen as a mortal federal enemy—buys some peace for a period on the national unity front, at least as it relates to western separatism. It is not likely to buy a decade-long reprieve, but perhaps enough time to focus the government's current energies on the challenges with our southern neighbour, and some prep time to deal with tumult out of Quebec if the Parti Québécois assumes power in 2026.

None of these things are without risk, and there is a shake up with the way Carney is playing on the national political chess board, but his supporters would say that is why he was elected. To date, he hasn't taken any big political hits to either his personal political brand or that of his government. That can flip on a dime, but the prime minister is not showing he is outwardly worried.

Parking politics for a moment, what may be more important

to the prime minister is not whether the MOU succeeds, but the message it sends to the domestic and global investment community: that in Carney's Canada, the door is now open again to do business. It will not go unnoticed among those who move money around and make investments that Carney is currently not encumbered by the political conventions and practices of his predecessor. The value of this MOU may not be in the billions of dollars that could flow through a proponent-less pipeline, but rather the value of this advertisement to the global money changers in the temple.

From sitting down with the Saudis to chatting with the Chinese, Carney is telling the world it isn't 2015 anymore. Social engineering is not as important to this government as economic electric shock therapy. The prime minister wants the world to know.

So while we at home have a very Canadian debate about the federal-Alberta MOU, the rest of the world is having an entirely different discussion about our country.

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

The Hill Times

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COMMENT

Government agencies are hardly trying when it comes to transparency

We have a very tenuous and shaky situation with increasing setbacks in disclosures, and more creative avoidance, delays, and denials.

Ken Rubin

Opinion



OTTAWA—Many federal agencies would just prefer applicants go away, however routine, though important, their requests are.

Such was the case in October when the legal counsel at the Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC) tried to end advocacy group Project Ploughshares' long-standing annual receipt of a list of Canadian contracts for arms exports under access-to-information requests.

All of a sudden, the claim was that the list took too long to produce, and was voluminous.

What was strange about the CCC claim was that the requested variables—the names of arms

trade vendors, the amounts of contracts received, and the country of export—were matters management needed to keep track of, and that can in some instances be found in the public record.

But then, Project Ploughshares asked CCC informally for a list, and they were promised—in writing—that they would get the list using a different format shortly before year's end. Yet the informal route, at its best, is not a guarantee of regular and timely releases of data.

Project Ploughshares uses this data to do investigative research that, for instance, helps identify when foreign governments misuse exported Canadian weaponry.

So, was this pause in regular release a case of not wanting to endure more embarrassing publicity about CCC loans for arms exports, or was it simply an annoyed bureaucrat's overreach that led to CCC's initial can-not-do-formally response?

In another recent request, I sought fairly routine data from Employment and Social Development Canada (EDSC) about its cloud service purchase order costs with Microsoft.

At first, EDSC refused to release the cost of their orders, saying that Microsoft objected to release. When I pointed out—several times—that these were government purchases, not commercial data, EDSC finally agreed to release much of its cost data

on these million-dollar purchase orders.

So, was it wanting to cave in to Microsoft's pressure that made EDSC initially exempt the data, or was it a misinterpretation of access exemption/release directives that led to EDSC's initial do-not-release response?

Reluctance to provide responses to access-to-information requests these days leads to just saying there are “no records.”

For example, Global Affairs Canada declared they had no records on work Canada did in conjunction with some of their international allies towards recognizing the state of Palestine. Prime Minister Mark Carney made this planned statement of recognition Foreign Minister Anita Armand at his side. Anand has commented on this recognition move on several occasions.

Sometimes, too, government simply changes the nature of requested records, making it hard to assess responses. For instance, interim Parliamentary Budget Officer Jason Jacques indicated that his office has not gotten more transparency on public accounts because the Carney government changed the scope of capital accounting, blurring his office's ability to assess the available costing data.

And labour researchers have complained that EDSC has simply removed labour dispute and strike data from its website



Instead of a push towards more readily available information, governments are finding new ways to frustrate the access-to-information process, writes Ken Rubin. *Unsplash photograph by Matt Flores*

without indicating when or if the data will come back.

As well, recently the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee was not given the requested latest internal government review of high-value—and at times, controversial—contracts for their deliberations.

It took an access request to get the Treasury Board draft directive on handling informal information requests—as if this all could be remedied. But the bureaucratic wording left no doubt that such releases face obstacles, and that the practice is discouraged.

Mind you, one way of shutting down too many unwanted access-to-information requests is to make applications less of a right like Nova Scotia did in its recent amendments to its freedom of information legislation.

The amendment that removes the broad right to access provisions reads: “The purpose of this Act is ... to provide for the disclosure of all government information with necessary exemptions, that are limited and specific, in order to (i) facilitate informed

public participation in policy formulation, (ii) ensure fairness in government decision-making, (iii) permit the airing and reconciliation of divergent views.” It added excluding “frivolous” users.

Another amendment prolongs initial access-to-information response times to 30 business days instead of 30 calendar days. The passed legislation does give the new information commissioner broader review powers, but does not allow the commissioner to issue binding orders.

The amendments were pushed through in a week—tabling the changes on Sept. 26, and passing them without any new public input on Oct. 3, to come into effect in 2027.

Releasing more government information daily is not wanted, nor being encouraged or legislated. What we have instead is a very tenuous and shaky situation with increasing setbacks in disclosures, and more creative avoidance, delays, and denials.

Ken Rubin writes on transparency matters and is reachable at kenrubin.ca.

The Hill Times

Between a rock and a hard place

Continued from page 9

our “elbows up” in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's punitive tariff war, and the stated intention of Canada diversifying our defence hardware purchases away from the current near total reliance upon the U.S., here we are handing our tax dollars to the Trump administration to buy weapons for Ukraine.

Immediately following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Canada was quick to empty our own military's combat cupboard in order to shore up Ukraine's resistance. Despite not really having any surplus inventory, the Canadian Army furnished Ukraine with Leopard 2 main battle tanks, M777 155 mm howitzers, light armoured vehicles, ammunition, drones, medical supplies, and winter gear.

Canada subsequently purchased thousands of rounds of artillery ammunition from a U.S. supplier in order to send it directly to Ukraine.



Defence Minister David McGuinty. The money Canada and allies are donating to the Ukraine war effort is actually being spent in the U.S. to buy the weapons and ammunition that only the Americans can produce in the quantity necessary, writes Scott Taylor. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

To be fair, on paper it seemed that no matter the scale of international support and the defiance of the Ukrainian soldiers, this conflict was not expected to drag on for nearly four years, and counting. Early oddsmakers figured the numerical superiority of the Russian invader would soon force a negotiated peace.

However, once it became clear after the first few months of conflict that the war in Ukraine

had become a bloody stalemate, Canada still did nothing to ramp up its domestic defence industry capacity to not only better assist Ukraine, but also to re-arm our own depleted military forces.

Former chief of defence staff General Wayne Eyre held a conference urging defence industries to put themselves on a war-time production schedule. Unfortunately for Eyre, defence contractors do not simply produce

weapons and munitions in the hope that a buyer will one day come along. They need signed agreements before they invest in production capacity.

That none were forthcoming from the Canadian government means that this latest PURL package will once again reward U.S. firms while the Trump administration is trying to force Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to accept Russia's demands for a ceasefire agreement.

Love him or hate him, one needs to admit that, in this instance, Trump has put the U.S. into a pretty sweet spot. By cutting their own aid to Ukraine, and pressuring Zelenskyy to essentially submit to Russian President Vladimir Putin's demands, the U.S. is forcing NATO countries—including Canada—to bolster their own support for Ukraine's war effort. The only way for these NATO supporters of Ukraine sovereignty to secure sufficient military hardware is to purchase it from the U.S.

This is exactly why Canada needs to act on Carney's stated objective of reducing our dependency on American weapons systems.

A great start to this would be to cancel the remaining 72 U.S.-built F-35 fighter jets that are on the order books at Lockheed Martin but not yet actually contracted. Instead, we should give the green light to Sweden's Saab to build 72 Gripen fighter jets here in Canada, thus investing in Canada's aviation sector.

One of the proposals floated was that Canada could in turn build an additional 100 Gripen fighters to re-equip Ukraine's air force. One would hope that this would fall under the PURL initiative, and therefore, other NATO allies would be funding the purchase of those Gripens for Ukraine.

It will not change things in the immediate future, but it would send a clear message that moving forward, Canada will stand on its own two feet for a change.

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

The Hill Times

OPINION

Reloading Canada's procurement weapon to accelerate innovation, diversification, and resilience

To survive U.S. trade volatility and escape its low-productivity trap, Ottawa must stop forcing agile Canadian innovators into the rigid moulds of incumbents.

Horatio M. Morgan

Opinion



As tariff threats and geopolitical uncertainty resurface, public procurement must become a strategic lever rather than a back-office routine. It is about how Ottawa spends billions of dollars annually. Done right, procurement can build domestic capacity, reduce dependence on the United States, unlock innovation, and strengthen security. Done wrong, it entrenches inefficiency and vulnerability, undermining the very integrity of the system its architects hope to preserve.

Today's procurement culture rewards process mastery over problem-solving. This forces agile Canadian innovators to pass on government contracts. Others might pursue those contracts by mimicking preferred incumbents. They adopt inappropriate business models, prioritizing headcount and bureaucratic templates over the intellectual firepower, expert networks, speed, and flexibility that set them apart.

These innovators include knowledge orchestrators, from academic entrepreneurs to expert-led firms optimized for speed and specialized networks. They can deliver innovative solutions anchored in intellectual property (IP), data analytics, and expertise. Yet they are treated as risky because they do not resemble incumbents. Instead of leveraging their asymmetric advantage, they are incentivized to chase process knowledge, staffing metrics, and established routines.

The result? Ottawa is sidelining the capabilities it urgently needs by buying "safe" undifferentiated inputs, and forfeiting frontier outcomes.

Avoiding waste from shady contracts is essential. But in the era of volatile global markets and the artificial intelligence revolution, the hidden costs of restrictive procurement practices are already too



Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound. In the era of volatile global markets and the artificial intelligence revolution, the hidden costs of restrictive procurement practices are already too high, writes Horatio M. Morgan. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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An Ocean of Openness: China Welcomes the World to Sail Together

By H. E. WANG Di, Chinese Ambassador to Canada

The 138th China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair) and the 8th China International Import Expo (CIIE) concluded successfully a few days ago. Multiple indicators of both events reached new historical highs, demonstrating the certainty of China's economy, the stability of China's opening-up, and the resilience of China's foreign trade. Amidst rising protectionism and frequent tariff disputes, the successful hosting of these two exhibitions showcases China's commitment to serving as an engine of global economic growth. The participation of over one million exhibitors and visitors from more than 200 countries and regions also represents a vote of confidence in China. In this context, I would like to highlight three aspects:

First, China's foreign trade has continued to grow against headwinds, with an accelerating pace quarter by quarter.

In recent years, China's economy has remained generally stable while making steady progress. As the world's largest trader in goods, China's trade in goods recorded a total value of USD 4.7 trillion in the first three quarters of 2025, achieving growth for eight consecutive quarters. Meanwhile, market access was newly granted to 135 agricultural and food products from 50 countries and regions, further enriching market supply. In the first seven months of the year, China ranked among the top three trading partners for 166 countries and regions, with the addition of 14 countries and regions compared with the same period last year.

China's foreign trade performance is attributable to its strengths as the world's largest manufacturing powerhouse and the second-largest consumer market. As the global manufacturing centre, China supplies abundant goods to the world, helping curb inflation and enhance global production efficiency. As a super-large-scale market, China provides enterprises from all countries with a business environment and development prospects featuring broad market potential, stable policy expectations, and a secure operating landscape.

Second, the Canton Fair and the CIIE are vivid embodiments of China's opening-up.

Both are major international cooperation platforms for China's foreign economic engagement. The Canton Fair, held continuously for more than 60 years, is a comprehensive international trade fair with the longest history, the largest scale, the most complete exhibit variety, the largest attendance by overseas buyers, and the highest business turnover in China, reflecting China's role as a global seller. The 138th Canton Fair attracted more than 310,000 overseas buyers

from 223 countries and regions, a 7.5% increase over the previous session and a new record. Among them, 4,060 buyers from Canada attended the Canton Fair in person, up 15.3% from the 137th session.

The CIIE is the world's first—and currently the only—national-level exhibition dedicated entirely to imports. It represents a major decision of China to promote a new round of high-level opening-up and a concrete step to proactively open its market to the world, embodying China's commitment to "buying globally." The 8th CIIE achieved an intended one-year purchase value of USD 83.49 billion, welcomed 922,000 visits, and hosted 4,108 exhibitors from 138 countries and regions—all record highs. At the 8th CIIE, Canada organized, for the first time, three thematic pavilions featuring natural health products, consumer goods, and agri-food respectively, with more than 120 participating companies—a new historical record.

Third, China has always adhered to the principle of mutual benefits and win-win cooperation with the rest of the world.

What values should guide international economic and trade activities has become an increasingly significant and practical question. China's answer is: upholding equality and mutual benefit and strengthening the foundation of legitimate common interests; upholding moral righteousness and truly safeguarding international fairness and justice; advancing governance reform and improving the international economic and trade rules system. China's development creates new opportunities for all countries, including Canada. China welcomes all partners to share the dividends of China's development through cooperation for common prosperity.

In late October, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China adopted the Recommendations of the CPC Central Committee on Formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development, which includes a dedicated chapter on opening-up and calls for expanding high-standard opening-up and fostering new prospects for win-win cooperation. China's economy is like a vast ocean, so is the world economy—both are interconnected, getting prosperous together and facing a common future. Choosing China is choosing the future; embracing China is embracing the world. China and Canada enjoy broad potential for cooperation in trade, energy, tourism, global governance, and many other areas. We welcome more Canadian friends to embark on the ship of cooperation, sail into the "deep blue ocean" of China's economy, and join us in navigating this sea of opportunity toward a more prosperous future for all.



Upper Left Photo: Canada Agrifood Pavilion in the 8th CIIIE
Upper Right Photo: Canada Natural Health Products Pavilion in the 8th CIIIE

OPINION

The new U.S. National Security Strategy poses hard questions for Canada

Canada should regard the new strategy as a strategic warning, and move quickly to build its own integrated policy frameworks that protect sovereignty, reinforce national security, and set the terms of our bilateral engagement.

Ann
Fitz-Gerald

Opinion



The newly released United States *National Security Strategy* is one of the most consequential documents of the decade. It sets the macro-strategic direction for U.S. foreign, economic, and security policy. Most concerning for Canada, it revives language echoing the Monroe Doctrine—a worldview rooted in U.S. hemispheric dominance and the subordination of neighbours' interests to Washington's priorities.

The strategy must be understood alongside a suite of recent White House actions: the *AI Action Plan*, which elevates artificial intelligence to a pillar of national power; the *GENIUS Act*, advancing U.S. leadership



A sustained posture of political appeasement or passivity would be a strategic error for Canada since U.S. President Donald Trump will not value its democratic stability or shared security commitments, writes Ann Fitz-Gerald. *White House photograph by Daniel Torok*

in digital currencies; the use of International Emergency Economic Powers Act tariffs to reshape global terms of trade; and a new willingness to assert march-in rights over intellectual property. Together, these initiatives form a coherent strategic posture designed to entrench U.S. economic dominance, extend regulatory influence abroad, and hard-wire American interests into the global economy.

But what is most striking about the new strategy is its decisive shift away from multilateralism. The U.S. now openly articulates a “win-lose” worldview, one that sees global politics structured around three major powers: the U.S., China, and Russia. This framing sidelines the role of democratic alliances, dilutes American commitments to international law, and weakens the normative foundations that have long underpinned the transatlantic community. The strategy signals a return to cold geopolitical transactionism without

the stabilizing constraints that accompanied earlier eras of great power competition.

We are already seeing this new doctrine play out in recent meetings between White House Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, Jared Kushner, and Kirill Dmitriev, head of Russia's sovereign wealth fund, to discuss an economic partnership involving Arctic critical minerals and energy co-operation. This business-led backchannel sidelines NATO, rewards territorial conquest, and seeks to settle the war in Ukraine not through diplomacy or justice, but through bundled economic incentives.

These manoeuvres point to a broader strategic aim: to fracture the Russia-China partnership and draw Moscow closer to Washington. But that goal rests on two fundamental miscalculations. First, it assumes Russian President Vladimir Putin views Ukraine as an economic bargaining chip rather than the centrepiece of a nationalist, civilizational, and imperial project. Second, it pre-

sumes that the deep structural alignment between Russia and China—cemented through energy, defence, and technology co-operation—is easily undone.

For Canada, the country most exposed to a unilateral, transactional U.S. foreign policy, the implications are profound. A sustained posture of political appeasement or passivity would be a strategic error. Trump will not value Canada for its democratic stability or shared security commitments; but only to the extent that Canada serves U.S. interests, particularly through the extraction of resources Washington deems essential.

This brings us to the most urgent concern: our critical minerals and northern resources. Despite sitting atop one of the world's most significant stores of critical minerals—indispensable for clean energy, defence technologies, and the digital economy—Canada has been left out of U.S.-led talks with other natural resource rich states to

date. A minerals-based economic agreement with Moscow could fundamentally reshape global supply chains in ways that leave Canada's economic future vulnerable. Without a secure allied supply chain for its northern minerals, Canada's ability to get its minerals to market becomes severely constrained.

Canada should regard the new U.S. National Security Strategy as a strategic warning, and move quickly to build its own integrated policy frameworks that protect sovereignty, reinforce national security, and set the terms of our bilateral engagement supported by essential capacity-building to compete in the intangibles economy. These frameworks should include an Arctic Governance Strategy that protects northern resources, asserts environmental and security leadership, and positions Canada—not foreign powers—as the principal architect of Arctic development; a sovereign digital infrastructure to secure data, AI systems, and intellectual property, ensuring that Canadian innovation is not absorbed into foreign strategic ecosystems; and a critical minerals industrial strategy that advances high-value refining and manufacturing, making Canada indispensable to global supply chains rather than a storehouse of raw materials.

Natural resource abundance is not enough. Canada must create the high-value products, technologies, and services that allies—especially the U.S.—will need in the decades ahead, such as clean technology, defence innovation, and AI-powered industries. Our economic decline to date is a consequence of low value-add and low sovereign control, and the impact of inattention to this changed global structure is about to get worse. But if Canada becomes a leader in what the world wants next, our value as a partner increases, and our sovereignty becomes far more resilient.

The new U.S. strategy marks a turning point. Canada should prepare strategically for its implications. The stakes could not be higher.

Ann Fitz-Gerald is a professor of international security, and the director of the Balsillie School of International Affairs.

The Hill Times

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OPINION

How Mark Carney can win back friends and influence critical outcomes

Ensuring women are present, visible, and influential in decision-making bodies has transformative potential on many fronts.

Shari Graydon

Opinion



In his ongoing efforts to distance himself from his predecessor, Prime Minister Mark Carney has made friends with Alberta, inspired his most ardent advocate on action against climate change to resign from cabinet, and rejected the notion that Canada's foreign policy reflects feminist values.

But having won his mandate on promises to secure our economy and protect us from the excesses of right-wing populism, and having benefited in the process from borrowed NDP votes, these may not be winning strategies in the long run.

Grumblings in British Columbia, Quebec, and among Indigenous communities reflect less audible concerns felt by a significant portion of the electorate throughout the country for whom environmental and equality issues are profoundly important. This includes left-of-centre voters who migrated to the Liberals because they loathed the Trump-adjacent pronouncements of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre.

But it also includes millions of women who—while they may not have loved Justin Trudeau—were aligned with his pronouncements on the critical importance of advancing both climate action and gender equality.

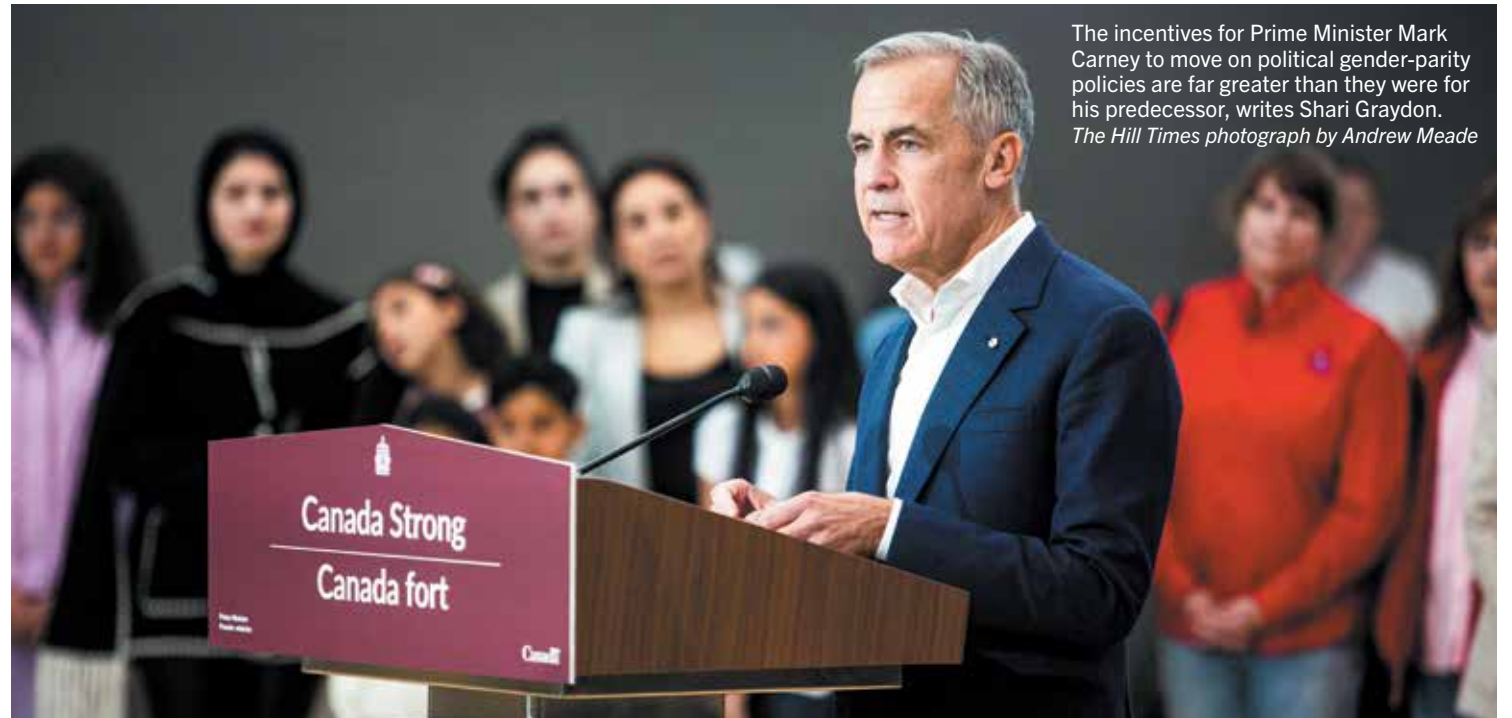
Yet even if, in this moment, economic concerns are primary, the argument for sustained action on these other issues remains clear. The federal government's own website cites research showing that the financial costs of "inaction on climate change significantly outweigh the costs of acting." And a recent McKinsey Global Development report estimated that closing Canada's gender gap could add \$150-billion to the country's economy.

Both issues are critical to our collective future.

For the past four years, Informed Perspectives—the national non-profit I lead—has been exploring ways to address gender inequality. Most recently, we commissioned research into the systemic investments other countries around the world have made in women's equality at the political level. Ensuring women are present, visible, and influential in decision-making bodies has transformative potential on many fronts.

But Canada lags 69 other countries on this metric because they have taken seriously the economic and social implications where we have not.

In recognition of that, we commissioned research from an international expert, Dr. Jennifer Piscopo, that assesses the levers other countries have used to advance women's equality in politics and identify those



The incentives for Prime Minister Mark Carney to move on political gender-parity policies are far greater than they were for his predecessor, writes Shari Graydon. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

most likely to be effective within Canada's first-past-the-post, single-member riding system.

Her report clearly lays out the various approaches implemented around the world, summarizing which ones are both most successful and applicable to our context. We're now sharing this research and the roadmap it offers with policymakers and politicians alike to support them in acting for all our benefit.

The short story is this: to ensure that women in our democracy are equitably represented in Parliament, and positioned to influence decisions on every issue that affects us, advancing gender equality more broadly, the government can and should:

- Mandate gender parity among parties' candidates across all ridings;
- Stipulate that parties must comply with the rules (rather than suggest they "should");
- Ensure the rules apply to parties' winning and swing ridings, not just the ones they typically lose; and finally,
- Impose meaningful enforcement mechanisms that penalize non-compliance.

Here's some instructive context: in France, parties that fail to follow the rules are financially penalized. But the back-room boys in the country's biggest political parties are happy to simply pay the fines to circumvent the rules. In contrast, in Mexico, parties have a time-limited opportunity to correct their candidate registries, after which they're prevented from fielding candidates in the election.

This is a policy solution that Canada's self-declared feminist former prime minister could have delivered. But the incentives for our current PM—focused as he is on the economy, and needing wins with the NDP voters who helped elect him, those who care about the environment, and the 51 per cent of the population who are tired of being sidelined by decision-making—are much greater.

Recent polling finds that 86 per cent of Canadians believe equal representation of men and women at all levels of government is important. And acting on the insights provided by this research would not only advance gender equality in this

country, but would also both deliver economic benefits and cost taxpayers nothing to implement.

Shari Graydon is the CEO and catalyst of *Informed Perspectives*. *The Hill Times*

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NEWS

Feds removed 643 more companies from its Indigenous business directory this year

The database that allows firms to access set-aside federal procurement opportunities ‘cannot be trusted ... until it is fully certified by an Indigenous group,’ says Shannin Metatawabin, CEO of the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association.

BY IREM KOCA

Indigenous Services Canada has removed nearly 650 companies from its business directory over the past year, barring those companies from competing for billions of dollars in federal contracts set aside for Indigenous procurement.

The removal of businesses stems from an October 2024 review launched by the department following years of growing scrutiny over the exploitation of procurement set-aside programs intended to benefit Indigenous Peoples.

As of Nov. 19, a total of 643 businesses have been removed from the government’s Indigenous Business Directory (IBD) in 2025, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) confirmed to *The Hill Times*. The department had scrapped nearly 120 businesses in 2024, and 1,100 companies between 2022 and 2024.

Of the businesses removed this year, 37 lost their access because they were “ineligible” due to not meeting the government’s criteria. The department said 423 of the removals were due to a “lack of response” from businesses, and another 104 firms were removed because they were “unreachable.” Meanwhile, 59 businesses “requested” to be removed from the list, and 20 were deleted due to “duplicate registrations.”

ISC did not share a list of businesses that have been removed from the directory with *The Hill Times*.

The directory lists eligible businesses from a wide range of sectors from construction to technology to gourmet food, qualifying

them for access to federal opportunities under the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB). As of Dec. 4, there are 2,861 businesses on the list.

“This just confirms what we’ve all been raising alarms about,” said Shannin Metatawabin, CEO of the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association and a member of First Nations Procurement Authority (FNPA).

First established in 1996 and revised in 2021, the PSIB defines an eligible Indigenous business as being at least 51 per cent Indigenous-owned and controlled, and requires that a minimum of 33 per cent of contract work is performed by Indigenous businesses. Federal departments and agencies have a mandate to award at least five per cent of the total value of federal contracts to Indigenous-owned and led businesses. That target was phased in over three years with full implementation expected by the end of fiscal year 2024-25. While some key departments such as Global Affairs and National Defence have met that target, Public Services and Procurement—the central purchasing agent of the government—has only awarded 3.16 per cent of the total value of all its contracts to Indigenous businesses. Meanwhile, ISC had exceeded the target, awarding over \$15-million to 38 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis businesses, representing 13.8 per cent of the department’s total procurement.

Over the past year, successive media reports and testimony from Indigenous community leaders revealed loopholes that have allowed non-Indigenous firms to benefit from the PSIB by self-identifying as Indigenous, or by using so-called “rent-a-feather” schemes where an Indigenous person fronts a non-Indigenous company to secure contracts.

“The IBD database needs to be certified by an Indigenous group, like the FNPA, to ensure its reliability and that it can be trusted to impact the community it was designed to to benefit ... And it’s not doing that,” Metatawabin said.

Metatawabin said the recent removals of businesses reads as the government’s commitment to reverifying its own database, which “inflates” the number of available Indigenous vendors. He noted that the process is not over, with more businesses likely to be removed in the future.

Metatawabin said he finds it concerning that 37 of the 643 businesses were removed due to ineligibility.

“The database in its entirety cannot be trusted, in my opinion, until it is fully certified by an Indigenous group working hand in hand with the government to ensure they are verifiably Indigenous and the business structures are eligible for what they say they are going to do.”

“It is concerning that, even today, businesses are being removed from the registry because they are not eligible, but we must also question what constitutes an Indigenous business,”

Bloc Québécois MP Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Que.), a member of the House Indigenous and Northern Affairs Committee that recently published a report looking into issues in Indigenous procurement, said he has always maintained that the IBD needed a “reform so that its improvement, management, and updating are driven by a First Nations, Inuit, and Métis approach.”

“It is problematic that ISC does not identify ineligible businesses and, more importantly, whether they received government contracts. These funds are intended for Indigenous businesses, not for businesses that pretend to be Indigenous or use schemes to meet the criteria,” Lemire told *The Hill Times*.

The Oct. 23 committee report recommended that ISC develop an interim policy and immediately begin work with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis for identification and verification of Indigenous businesses for the directory. Other members of the committee did not respond to *The Hill Times’* questions about removed business by publication deadline.

Auditor General Karen Hogan is “planning to audit” Indigenous procurement, but the timing for completing the review and reporting to Parliament has not yet been determined, according to Hogan’s office, which also noted that the scope of the audit could include areas related to the IBD.

When asked if it is concerning that the government does not disclose which companies were removed from the directory, Metatawabin referred to previous incidents where non-Indigenous companies fraudulently benefitted from billions of dollars in contracts set aside for Indigenous Peoples.

“It would be very helpful for the Indigenous community and suppliers to know which companies are no longer eligible, because they could still be out there benefiting,” he said.



Indigenous Services Canada, which is led by Minister Mandy Gull-Masty, removed hundreds of companies from its Indigenous Business Directory in 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

In the 2022-23 fiscal year, the government spent a total of \$1.6-billion on procurement with Indigenous businesses through multiple streams.

Carolane Gratton, a spokesperson for ISC, told *The Hill Times* in an email that the department reconfirms the eligibility of all businesses listed on the IBD every two years. The number of businesses listed on the IBD fluctuates over time due to these periodic verifications, along with new registrations and requests from firms to be removed, she said.

Businesses can be removed from the IBD if they have closed, no longer wish to be listed, experienced a change in ownership or control that affects their eligibility, or have been unresponsive during ISC’s verification process, Gratton explained. A business that was previously removed may be re-added to the list in the future if it can demonstrate eligibility.

Companies applying to the IBD are required to provide documentation such as shareholder information and corporate governance records demonstrating that they are Indigenous.

“Indigenous partners have consistently emphasized that Indigenous Peoples should be the ones to verify and validate which businesses are Indigenous,” Gratton said.

“ISC continues to work with partners toward transferring administration of the IBD so that Indigenous Peoples can set their own criteria for business qualification moving forward.”

“ISC engaged extensively with partners to identify core elements for a Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy between 2022 and 2024,” Gratton said.

Those partners include the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, and Canadian Council for Indigenous Business.

A May 22 ISC internal audit report says that the current monitoring process for the IBD relies pri-

marily on third-party audits, which appear insufficient given the large number of businesses registered.

The report says prior to 2023, business verifications were conducted by third-party firms; however, there was limited departmental oversight, which ISC says may have contributed to inconsistencies in the application of eligibility criteria.

Verification is now carried out by a combination of Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy employees and new third-party auditors, according to the report.

The audit identified gaps in IBD verification between 2020 to 2022. A random sample of 50 Indigenous businesses revealed that 68 per cent of cases had missing or incomplete verification documents.

Gratton said the department has strengthened its processes to protect the integrity of the IBD in 2025. These improvements include applying standardized processes for retaining applications, compliance reviews, audits, and supporting documentation; and strengthened verification guidelines for staff, including a checklist, approval template, record of decision for new registrations, and ongoing compliance tools.

She also highlighted that training within the department has also been enhanced to help public servants understand eligibility requirements, business structures, and indicators of potential fraud.

Then-employment minister Randy Boissonnault resigned from his post in November 2024 after a company he cofounded had reportedly competed for federal government contracts in 2020, describing itself as “a wholly owned Indigenous and LGBTQ company” and “Aboriginal.” Boissonnault—who previously identified himself as a “non-status adopted Cree” in public statements—has denied ever using his Indigenous ties to benefit from government contracts.

ikoca@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

ENVIRONMENT

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ENVIRONMENT Policy Briefing

Likelihood of reaching long-term climate goals unclear until more details emerge from Alberta MOU, say environment experts

The Canadian Climate Institute released data in September showing that Canada made no progress on reducing emissions in 2024, and predicted that the 2030 emissions reduction target is now out of reach.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Canada's climate direction under the current Liberal government is a roll-back of policies from the previous administration in favour of a strategy addressing large industrial emissions, which environmental policy experts find lacking in details to determine if it will allow Canada to reach its long-term climate goals.

"They're definitely rolling back [Justin] Trudeau-era climate policy. There's no doubt about that," said Rachel Samson, vice-president of research with the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP). "The question that we still don't know the answer to is whether what they're replacing it with will be equivalent in terms of the emission reductions, or the extent to which it puts Canada on a low-emissions pathway."

The 2025 federal budget released on Nov. 4 included a Climate Competitiveness Strategy with a pledge to "strengthen industrial carbon pricing." According to the strategy, Ottawa will improve the effectiveness of Canada's industrial carbon pricing system by engaging with provincial and territorial governments to set a multi-decade industrial carbon price trajectory that targets net-zero emissions by 2050. The strategy also said Ottawa will improve its application of the benchmark, or the minimum national standard each province and territory must meet through their industrial carbon pricing systems.

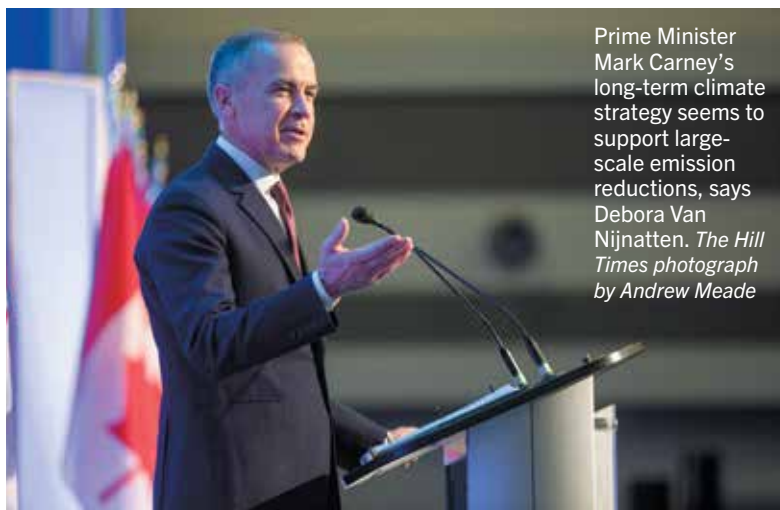
Samson told *The Hill Times* that it would be difficult to say



Environment Minister Julie Dabrusin told the House Environment Committee on Dec. 1 that the Liberal government remains committed to its 2030 emissions-reduction targets, despite the MOU deal outlining conditions for a new bitumen pipeline. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Rachel Samson, IRPP vice-president of research, says 'We need to see specifics [on the MOU]. We need to see the deal on industrial carbon pricing.' Handout photograph



Prime Minister Mark Carney's long-term climate strategy seems to support large-scale emission reductions, says Debora Van Nijnatten. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

if the strategy will help reduce emissions over the long term until more specific details are released regarding a recent major energy deal between Ottawa and Alberta.

Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Nov. 27, which set out a series of conditions that could result in a private-sector proposal bringing forward a pipeline—that would carry a million barrels of oil per day—from the province's oilpatch to British Columbia's coast.

Some details from the MOU that are yet to be worked out include a new carbon pricing agreement, and a methane equivalency agreement between Ottawa and Alberta that are to be finalized by April 1, 2026.

"We need to see specifics. We need to see the deal on industrial carbon pricing. We need to see the specifics on the methane regulations. We need to also see what sort of enforcement mechanism is going to be in place for the private companies that are involved, as well as the Alberta government, to be held to account for

the things that they've committed to," said Samson. "I think people are really looking for some guarantees and some measures in place that that will ensure that those commitments are met."

Canada's long-term climate goal is net-zero emissions by 2050. In the short term, Canada has also committed to reduce emissions by 40 to 45 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Samson wouldn't go so far as to say the short-term target is impossible, but said "it is looking less and less likely that Canada would meet its 2030 target."

The Canadian Climate Institute (CCI) released data this past September showing that Canada made no progress on reducing emissions in 2024, and predicted that the 2030 emissions reduction target is now out of reach.

After the release of the 2025 budget, CCI president Rick Smith described the climate competitiveness strategy as "a good first step" towards helping Canada succeed in the context of a global economic activity generated by decarbonization, in a press release.

"The budget proposes actions and delivery timelines to bolster Canada's climate competitiveness—especially on core policies such as industrial carbon pricing, stronger methane regulations, sustainable investment guidelines, and tax credits for expanding clean electricity. We look forward to working with the federal government to ensure these essential policies result in more abundant and affordable energy, attract new investment to Canadian industries, support more well-paying jobs and economic growth across the country, and help make communities more secure and resilient," said Smith in the press release.

To help offset emissions from a new oil pipeline, the MOU includes a commitment by the province to extend the Alberta Carbon Capture Incentive Program to support Pathways Plus, a proposed, large-scale carbon capture, utilization, and storage project in the province.

Samson told *The Hill Times* that it's not clear that carbon capture and storage technology will sufficiently offset emissions from pipelines. Carbon capture technology has only captured 0.001 per cent of global emissions since its implementation five decades ago, according to the David Suzuki Foundation.

Samson described Carney as an "economist and an investor," and said that addressing Canada's long-term climate goals through that lens involves reducing the risk factors for Canadian businesses and the economy. Canada is currently engaged in a trade war with the United States, and "we need some cards," according to Samson.

"Right now, almost 80 per cent of our oil production goes to the U.S., and that is our highest value export," she said. "If we are looking at the cards we have in negotiations with the U.S., having an alternative export pathway for that high-value export is really critical for those negotiations—even if it never comes to pass."

Debora Van Nijnatten, a professor of political science, North American studies, and environmental studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, told *The Hill Times* that "it's been a little perplexing to figure out where the Carney administration has been headed on climate policy."

Carney's long-term climate strategy seems to support large-scale emission reductions, according to Van Nijnatten.

"He's chosen to put large scale, big money, and support behind carbon capture technol-

Policy Briefing **ENVIRONMENT**

Forging a stronger future: protecting Canada's economy and environment in a changing climate

We are building an economy which protects Canadians from climate impacts, creates opportunities for every region, and ensures that Canada remains a reliable and responsible energy producer and global leader in clean innovation.

Liberal MP
Wade Grant

Opinion



Growing up in the Musqueam First Nation where the mouth of the Fraser River meets the Salish Sea, I was taught by my elders the importance of stewarding the land, air, and water which make our home so beautiful. I carry these teachings with me, and am so proud to pass them on to my children so that they, too, can safeguard our planet for future generations. I am doing this because, unfortunately, in my lifetime I've seen the impacts of climate change devastate not only British Columbia, but also Canada.

In the past five years alone, our country has experienced more than \$11-billion in insured damages from extreme weather. Just this summer, we once again saw wildfires burn through the B.C. community of Lytton, and surrounding First Nations communities. Tragic events such as these have become far too common. We have seen that, in countless communities across Canada, climate change is doing lasting, irreparable damage to lives and livelihoods.

In my capacity as parliamentary secretary to the minister of environment and climate change, I know Canadians want us to be building a country which is reliable and resilient in a changing world, but also one that is affordable. As a member of the Musqueam First Nation, I also know that there is no economy without the environment.

Through the Climate Competitiveness Strategy, our government is bringing the economy and the environment together, understanding that growing our economy means taking climate change seriously. We are building an economy that is strong, resilient, and ready for the future; one which protects Canadians from climate impacts, creates opportunities for every region, and ensures that Canada remains a reliable and responsible energy producer and global leader in clean innovation.

The global market for clean energy technologies is expected to exceed \$650-billion annually by 2030, and it's



Canadians want us to be building a country which is reliable and resilient in a changing world, but also one that is affordable, writes Liberal MP Wade Grant. *Pexels photograph by James Wheeler*

predicted that by 2035, the global clean technology market will triple to US\$2-trillion, spanning solar, wind, batteries, green hydrogen, electric vehicles, and heat

pumps. The value of low-carbon materials like steel, aluminum, and cement

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ENVIRONMENT Policy Briefing

We know how to fight climate change. So let's actually do it

Kowtowing to the billionaire class and transnational corporations has never built a strong nation or healthy communities. We know how to do this.

Green Party
Leader
Elizabeth May

Opinion



By his actions if not his words, Prime Minister Mark Carney has made it abundantly clear that reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and living up to our international commitments is not his priority, writes Green Leader Elizabeth May. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

An environmental activist since Grade 10, I have lived through numerous waves of urgent environmental threats. My Grade 10 activism was spurred the April 1970 *Life* magazine cover—"Lake Erie is dead." The cause was eutrophication, the result of over fertilization by phosphates and nitrates from laundry detergents and agricultural run-off. Action was taken and over time, waterways recovered. We fought DDT, spurred by Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring*, then acid rain caused by building higher smokestacks to reduce localized air pollution. The 1970s mantra, "the solution to pollution is dilution," was proven wrong and dangerous to ecosystems thousands of kilometres away. By the mid-1980s, action was taken by the Mulroney government to cut acid rain-causing pollution in half

with subsequent treaties with the United States to end the threat of acidifying lakes, streams, and forests. By 1987, Canada led the world in negotiating the Montreal Protocol that literally saved all life on Earth by protecting the ozone layer.

Increasingly, what we call "environmental issues" are really fundamental threats to our security. The climate crisis threatens millions of lives globally, as well as ecosystems from the Arctic to coral reefs. It is no longer a "future threat" as it was when Canada hosted the first international conference on global warming back in June 1988. But even then the conference title was "Our Changing Atmosphere: Implications for Global Security." In the 21st century, we live in a world in climate crisis. Last year,

Canada experienced \$8.5-billion in insurable losses from climate-induced events. Now, one-in-four Canadians say a climate event has personally affected them. From extreme weather events like heat domes, to hurricanes, wildfires, drought, and windstorms, the climate crisis is devastating communities and families. Over four days in July 2021, 619 British Columbians died in the heat dome, and a few months later, more died in the flooding caused by atmospheric rivers.

And somehow we still act as though this is an "environmental" issue—marginal, a "nice to have," as opposed to an urgent imperative.

Our new prime minister, by his actions if not his words, has made it abundantly clear that reducing our dependence on fossil fuels

and living up to our international commitments is not his priority.

Greens agree that we must protect Canada's economy from the erratic behaviour of U.S. President Donald Trump, but it is a logical fallacy that reversing action on climate change somehow helps our economic health.

Nation-building projects that reduce the costs of living for every Canadian while cutting pollution are possible. We need affordable public transit, electric trains and buses including in rural and remote Canada. We can cut the costs of heating and cooling our homes and powering our transportation by electrifying everything, relying on the cheapest and most reliable electricity from solar, wind, and geothermal. Once installed, the marginal cost for wind and solar approaches zero. We can build out an effective smart grid that runs east-west and south to north, allowing that grid to act as a giant battery—storing excess power until it is needed. We can break the assumptions of the past that renewable energy cannot meet base load demands. It can. And it is the cheapest form of electricity.

Yet, we have less connectivity between provinces than the European Union has between nations.

Norway and Denmark have it figured out with excess Danish wind energy sold to Norway, and when not needed in Norway's grid, it pumps water to higher elevations, in elegant "pumped storage." When the wind is not blowing in Denmark, Norway opens the sluices and generates electricity from the water power, only to pump it back to storage until needed again.

These are no longer techno fantasies. But the Major Projects Office and the Prime Minister's Office clearly prefer the improbable, unproven, and expensive over the proven and reliable. We are wasting billions of dollars on unproven, so-called "small modular reactors," and carbon capture and storage, yet failing to fund essential emergency preparedness for Canadians. We have not acted for climate adaptation while we continue to accelerate the threat of unstoppable, irreversible runaway global warming by promising expanded production of fossil fuels. We stand on the very edge of too late, but it is only too late if we throw in the towel and embrace suicide pacts like the Canada-Alberta memorandum of understanding.

I think back over nearly 60 years of battles won. Learning from those lessons, progress was made through political will and moral courage. Governments need to take the hard decisions. None of our battles won involved complex pricing systems to trade in pollution. When leaded gas threatened health, it was banned. We made ozone-depleting substances illegal. Kowtowing to the billionaire class and transnational corporations has never built a strong nation or healthy communities. We know how to do this.

We need to embrace the opportunities by embracing the innovative spirit of entrepreneurs who are building in Canada for Canadians. We need to ensure no raw resources are exported without value added to benefit our economy. We need strategic reserves to protect our economy from Trump's unhinged trade war. We can keep our elbows up, expand trade with those with whom we share common values, and get through this challenging time together.

Elizabeth May, O.C., has served as MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C., since 2011. She is the leader of the Green Party of Canada.

The Hill Times

Forging a stronger future: protecting Canada's economy and environment in a changing climate

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could reach \$1.2-trillion by the same year.

The Climate Competitiveness Strategy is designed to target these growing industries and drive smart investments by governments and businesses—capitalizing on a global trend which is already underway. Its goal is to have Canada lead the pack in producing, developing, and selling the technologies, products, skills, and services needed to reduce emissions. It is

a strategy focused on investment and results, designed to meet Canada's current circumstances while setting up the country for long-term prosperity.

We are building for the future, and investing in industries that create good jobs and drive down emissions at the same time. From cleantech innovation in my province of B.C., to electric vehicle manufacturing in Ontario, to hydrogen and biofuels in the Prairies, to wind energy in Nova Scotia, and much more, we are creating the foundation for long-term

economic strength. Through a reinforced industrial carbon pricing plan, investment in innovation-spurring investment tax credits, and the finalizing of powerful emission-reducing regulations, we are taking targeted action to build a competitive Canadian future.

This couples with the major projects we are building which are laying the groundwork for a net-zero Canada, like the North Coast Transmission Line here in B.C., and the Iqaluit Nukkiqsautiit Hydroelectric Project in Nunavut.

The global shift towards industries powering the clean economy is reshaping trade, investment, and jobs at a pace not seen since the industrial revolution. Canada is well positioned to seize the opportunities of the emerging low-carbon economy, to lead, and to leapfrog economies choosing to focus on the status quo. By leveraging these advantages now, we attract global capital, drive innovation, and create the high-skilled jobs that will define the next generation of growth.

As the representative of Vancouver Quadra, living by and on

the water, I often think about how I can ensure that I'm handing off to my kids a clean environment and a prosperous future. Through the Climate Competitive Strategy, I believe my government is doing just that, building a stronger Canada for today, and for generations to come.

Wade Grant is a lifelong resident of Vancouver Quadra, B.C., and a proud member of the Musqueam Indian Band. Grant has dedicated his life to building bridges between people and strengthening ties that connect us. He studied political science at the University of British Columbia, and continues to live, work, and raise his two children in the same neighbourhoods that shaped his values. Now serving as parliamentary secretary to the minister of environment and climate change, Grant is bringing his real-world experience and deep local knowledge to Parliament.

The Hill Times

Policy Briefing **ENVIRONMENT**

Can Carney answer for his climate track record?

The energy agreement with Alberta builds on top of a dangerous pattern of climate policy rollbacks since the spring election.

Laura Tozer

Opinion



Governments traditionally use their first months in office to tackle their highest priority initiatives. Prime Minister Mark Carney has used that window to retreat on federal climate policies across the board. That says a lot about where his priorities lie. No sector of society has been spared from rollbacks, including buildings, electricity, transportation, oil and gas—and even private jets and yachts.

When the winter semester starts next month, I need to stand up in front of my University of Toronto graduate students in my Climate Change Policy course and undergraduate students in my introductory climate course, and explain the Carney government's extensive retreat on climate policy over the last six months. I'd like to invite Carney, who once had a reputation as a climate leader in the finance sector, to my class to explain the following track record.

The memorandum of understanding between the federal government and the Government of Alberta is just the latest effort to gut climate policy. It delays the deadline on long-expected methane regulations, despite this being the biggest no-brainer we have in cost-effective climate policy. The MOU also scraps the cap on emissions for the oil and gas sector, allowing the fossil fuel industry to grow its pollution while the rest of the country works to cut it. The MOU suspends the Clean Electricity Regulations in Alberta. This is a dangerous precedent that will lead other provinces to demand equal treatment. And it reverses course to offer tax credits to fund carbon capture used to extract even more oil. All of this was apparently "traded" for a stronger industrial carbon price in Alberta. But a carbon price was already required in Alberta by federal law. Action was needed to enforce that law and close countless loopholes, but no MOU was needed to do so.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. This latest move builds on top of a dangerous pattern of climate policy rollbacks since the spring election. Carney's government has abandoned this country's consumer carbon pricing system, ended the Canada Greener Homes retrofit programs to electrify and improve household efficiency, allowed Canada's Incentives for Electric Vehicles program to expire, delayed implementing Canada's zero-emission vehicle mandate, and even announced plans to eliminate a luxury tax on private jets and yachts.

The federal government simultaneously weakened checks and balances protecting accountability. It has committed to claw back Canada's anti-greenwashing legislation so that companies are free to return to lying to you about the climate impacts of their initiatives. The Liberals have also

passed Bill C-5, the Building Canada Act, to allow the federal government to override 12 laws and seven regulations, including the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, for designated projects of national interest.

By February 2026, Carney's government is required by Canadian law to release a credible plan on how it will achieve our climate change targets, which includes a detailed plan for how we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions 45 to 50 per cent by 2035. That target and the deadlines for a real plan to achieve it are enshrined in the Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act. Nearly all of the pillars of the previ-

ous plan have been shredded in just half a year, making it hard to see how the federal government could meet this requirement. Is the Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act next on the chopping block?

Perhaps Carney would like to share an explanation with my students in January. Seventy-eight per cent of young Canadians report that climate change negatively affects their mental health. Every single semester, a student raises their hand in my class and asks: "Professor, is there any hope on climate change?" How about this time, when the new semester starts in January, it is Carney's turn to look them in the eye and answer.



Prime Minister Mark Carney has used his first few months in office to retreat on federal climate policies across the board, writes Laura Tozer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Laura Tozer is an assistant professor of climate policy and energy transition in the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences at the University of Toronto. *The Hill Times*

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ENVIRONMENT Policy Briefing

Likelihood of reaching long-term climate goals unclear until more details emerge from Alberta MOU, say environment experts

Continued from page 18

ogy. He's got Alberta to agree that there's got to be ... significant methane reductions in the oil and gas industry," she said. "There are pieces there of what seems to be his emerging climate industrial strategy. Does it look like it's going to add up to enough? I would say at this moment: not enough, and not fast enough."

However, Van en said that Ottawa needed to come to an energy and emissions agreement with Alberta in order to address a political standoff and potential threat to national unity.

"[Carney] had to figure out something in order to continue to move forward on climate policy in a way that included all parts of the country, including Alberta, and Alberta is for sure the biggest challenge there," she said. "I really believe that there had to be some kind of agreement with Alberta. Is this what we need to meet our 2030, targets? No, it's not."

Following the MOU announcement, Liberal MP Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) resigned as minister of Canadian identity and culture with responsibility for official languages, nature, and Parks Canada. In a letter posted on X, he argued that a pipeline to the West Coast would contribute significantly to climate pollution, and move Canada away from its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

In an interview with CTV News on Nov. 29, Environment and Climate Change Minister Julie Dabrusin (Toronto-Danforth, Ont.) said she disagrees with the characterization that the Carney government has been rolling back on climate policies from the Trudeau administration. She argued the current government is committed to measures such as strengthening the industrial carbon price and methane regulations, extending the methane regulations to landfills, and also to building out infrastructure that will allow for the transition to a cleaner electricity grid over the long term.

Lisa Gue, national policy manager with the David Suzuki Foundation, told *The Hill Times* that the Carney government has rolled back several environmental policies since the spring, including a repeal of the consumer-facing carbon tax and a pause placed on the mandate for automakers to meet the 2026 Electric Vehicles Availability Standard, which was announced in September.

"It's just simple math, right? If we remove the instruments



Professor Debora Van Nijnatten says the prime minister has an emerging climate industrial strategy, but at the moment it doesn't look like it will add up fast enough. *Handout photograph*

that were supposed to achieve those reductions and replace them with nothing, it, unfortunately, becomes obvious that the target will not be met," she said. "A government that's serious about achieving those targets would surely be building on the existing measures and looking to strengthen them, not taking a step backwards."

On Dec. 1, Dabrusin told the House Environment Committee that the Liberal government remains committed to its 2030 emissions-reduction targets, despite the MOU deal outlining conditions for a new bitumen pipeline.

During the meeting, Conservative MP Branden Leslie (Portage-Lisgar, Man.) referred to climate-related policies introduced by the Liberals that have been "delayed, watered down, or abandoned entirely," and listed the consumer-facing carbon tax, the Two Billion Trees Program, the sales mandate for zero-emission vehicles, and the emissions cap on oil and gas.

He asked Dabrusin what Canadians should conclude from a pattern of her "supporting a policy and then having to step back from them?"

Dabrusin responded that the Carney government is moving forward on policies that are collaborative, that meet the needs of Canadians, and that fight climate change.

"We have very much set forward—and it says it in the Climate Competitiveness Strategy, which was in the budget—that we are working to strengthen the industrial carbon price, [and] strengthen methane regulations. We're working on a taxonomy for investment guidelines," she told



Conservative MP Branden Leslie recently questioned the environment minister about the Liberals' climate policies. *The Hill Times photograph by Stuart Benson*

the committee. "We're ... taking real actions and we're doing that in collaboration with provinces and territories and making sure that Canadians are at the centre of our policies."

When asked to respond to criticism that the Carney government's Climate Competitiveness Strategy isn't a strategy at all, Dabrusin said that "we have a climate strategy, which is our emissions reduction plan."

She described the new framework as "a tool to move forward on climate competitiveness."

"The Climate Competitiveness Strategy is really the economic piece putting in place things that were envisioned by the emissions reduction plan, but also going further in some places. It is not the emissions reduction plan—that is a separate document," she told the committee. "What I have said ... is that we always knew that the targets would be ambitious. We could set low targets. We could have stood by lower targets and they would be easy to meet, but this requires us to stretch. We're determined to keep doing the work to meet them."

Gue said she takes some comfort in Dabrusin's reassurances, but she also questioned the minister's influence when the MOU allows Canada to move forward on another oil pipeline project.

"I'm concerned that the minister of the environment is not central to the government's decision-making on major projects that will be setbacks on Canada's quest to achieve net-zero and our near-term climate commitments," said Gue.

Anna Kanduth, senior climate policy analyst for Climate Analytics, told *The Hill Times* that the MOU represents another



Lisa Gue, national policy manager with the David Suzuki Foundation, says she is concerned the environment minister is 'not central to the government's decision-making on major projects.' *Handout photograph*

setback to Canadian climate policy. Kanduth said she couldn't speak about Dabrusin personally, but added that "in a very short period of time, this government and this file under her leadership has seen a significant undermining of Canadian climate policy progress."

"I think we've seen a number of indicators that show that this government is deprioritizing climate policy and climate policy progress, from signals that they've been sending in terms of a general unwillingness to recommit to the 2030 and 2035 emissions reduction targets," she said.

The Carney government is expected to release a second progress report on climate

emissions before the end of the year. Kanduth said that report will provide an opportunity for Dabrusin and the Liberal government to show their commitment to addressing climate change.

"I think there's an opportunity for some clarity and some honesty from the government about how their current plans ... and arguably major changes to Canadian climate policy really match up to Canada's climate commitments—and not just for 2030, but also for 2035 and 2050," said Kanduth. "I think we've seen this interesting shift in minister Dabrusin and Carney talking about net zero by 2050, instead of those other milestones, but if you miss those other milestones, it's very, very difficult to get to that net-zero target."

Etienne Rainville, vice-president for Central Canada with Clean Prosperity, told *The Hill Times* that he would describe the Carney government's climate strategy as a pivot rather than a backslide on Trudeau-era policies.

"The Trudeau era ... initially started with carbon pricing being at the fore, and then eventually it became more regulatory-centric," he said. "The MOU puts the emphasis back on the industrial pricing, ... and it takes a little bit of the emphasis off of the regulations. The regulations are still there—like the clean electricity regulation is noted in the MOU—but the understanding seems to be that it's an equivalency agreement that's going to shape up around it."

Rainville said Dabrusin has shown herself to be "clear in her conversations with stakeholders," and committed to the federal government's environmental objectives.

"I think we're seeing some willingness to revisit exactly how things were being approached at the tail end of the Trudeau government, and I think that's positive," he said. "The Carney approach to things is a little bit different, and, ultimately, I think we have to bear that out and see how it goes for a little bit before we before we pass judgment."

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The Hill Times

Canada greenhouse gas emissions statistics



- Canada's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2023 were 694 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO₂ eq), a 0.9-per-cent decrease from 700 Mt CO₂ eq in 2022.
- From 2005 to 2023, Canada's GHG emissions decreased by 8.5 per cent (-65 Mt CO₂ eq).
- Between 1990 and 2023, Canada's GHG emissions increased by 14.4 per cent (+88 Mt CO₂ eq).
- While the overall trend between 1990 and 2023 was an increase in GHG emissions, some sectors saw a decrease. Canada's overall emissions growth over the 1990 to

2023 period was driven primarily by increased emissions from the oil and gas as well as the agriculture and transport sectors. The 8.5-per-cent decrease in GHG emissions between 2005 and 2023 was mainly a result of emission reductions from the electricity and heavy industry sectors.

● The effects of the pandemic created an industrial slowdown, and significant reductions in trade and travel by air and land. This contributed to the GHG emission decrease, especially in the transport sector where a 16-per-cent decrease was observed between 2019 and 2020.

—Source: Environment and Climate Change Canada

Policy Briefing ENVIRONMENT

As the Paris Agreement turns 10, Canadian policy must align to protect our health and future



Despite 89 per cent of people worldwide supporting climate action, this is a largely silent majority underestimated by policymakers, which delays critical climate action, writes Mili Roy. *Unsplash photograph by Markus Spiske*

Paris-aligned policy can position Canada's economy as one of the future rather than a failing, uncompetitive relic of the past in a decarbonizing world.

Mili Roy

Opinion



Being on the ground at the recent United Nations Conference of the Parties, birthplace of the landmark global Paris Agreement a decade ago, was a reminder of Canada's opportunity and obligation to secure the health and future of all Canadians.

Ten years ago, nearly every nation in the world signed the Paris Agreement, which included a commitment to urgently cut greenhouse gases to prevent global warming exceeding 1.5 C above pre-industrial levels.

A decade later, and we are seeing the consequences of insufficient action: 2024 and 2023 were the two hottest years in recorded human history, with 2025 also projected to be record breaking. Deadly heatwaves, wildfires, floods, and storms make headlines with numbing regularity, causing massive damage to human health, health systems, and economic systems. The climate crisis, driven by burning fossil fuels, is now humanity's greatest threat—

simultaneously our greatest health and economic crisis.

Yet although it has been slow to respond, the world is indeed now phasing out fossil fuels. Last year, 92.5 per cent of all new electricity worldwide was renewable. Gas prices have plummeted, temporarily hitting the negative range earlier this year, and are expected to remain low for years.

Yet Canada is headed in the opposite direction of this trend. The latest Parliamentary Budget Office report confirms Canada is not meeting its Paris targets. Of all G7 nations, Canada demonstrates the worst emissions reductions, even worse than the United States. At the recent COP30 negotiations, Canada refused to join the 87 other countries calling for fossil fuel phaseout.

Not only that, but recent announcements show our government doubling down on a regressive path. So where will Canada hope to market the fossil fuels being prioritized in "major nation-building projects," and in the recent memorandum of understanding with Alberta? While Canada plans to expand liquefied natural gas (LNG), the current U.S. government resorted to threatening tariffs on reluctant Asian countries to force their purchase of American LNG.

Furthermore, any economic gains from fossil fuel projects are expected to be eclipsed by their negative consequences. As we continue to export and burn fossil fuels, climate-related damages across Canada will total \$25-billion this year—or about half of our entire GDP growth—while air pollution health costs total more than \$146-billion yearly. Climate change and air pollution from fossil fuels are linked to diseases ranging from asthma, heart attacks, dementia, birth defects and cancers, to rising rates of infectious diseases and antibiotic resistance. Our lives

are on the line while health-destroying MOU's and nation-building projects are being hammered out with disregard.

As climate breakdown accelerates, it's clear we must massively change course. Paris-aligned policy can position Canada's economy as one of the future rather than a failing, uncompetitive relic of the past in a decarbonizing world. Policy can push back against disinformation, and sectors such as fossil fuels, nuclear, carbon capture, and corporate agriculture seeking to hold back national progress and public well-being for their own profit. It can support already-existing solutions ranging from inexpensive, abundant clean energy to sustainable agriculture, transportation, and buildings.

Despite 89 per cent of people worldwide supporting climate action, this is a largely silent majority underestimated by policymakers, which delays critical climate action. It's time to recognize the silent majority, acknowledge the existential threat of climate breakdown, and take urgent action.

The Paris Agreement remains our clearest path to a livable future. Cana-

dian policy must be the driving force to implement it. The 1.5 C target is not just a number, as every additional 0.1 degrees of warming represents 100 million additional human lives lost. Policy that ignores evidence-based climate science deprives us of our fading chances for a safe, healthy, and sustainable world. Meeting Paris targets isn't optional; it's survival. We are the last generation with the opportunity to deliver this for future generations.

Dr. Mili Roy is co-chair of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), Ontario Regional Committee. She is a practicing Canadian physician, assistant professor in the faculty of medicine at the University of Toronto, and section editor at the Canadian Journal of Ophthalmology. Her advocacy work with CAPE involves education, lobbying, and policy work centred on environmental protection to protect public health. She recently attended COP in Belem, Brazil, with the CAPE team.

The Hill Times



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ENVIRONMENT Policy Briefing

Canada must find its climate path beyond fossil fuels



Environment and Climate Change Minister Julie Dabrusin has reaffirmed Canada's commitments to its climate targets, but Canada is no longer seen as a leader in international climate effort, writes Damon Matthews. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Nation-building starts in rural Canada

The country cannot meet its goals or maintain its economic edge without fully integrating the land that sustains us.

Bryan Gilvesy



Opinion

The 2025 federal budget presents itself as a nation-building plan, emphasizing resilience, competitiveness, and long-term economic security. Yet it overlooks one of Canada's most powerful nation-building assets: rural landscapes stewarded by the more than 200,000 farms that manage over half of the country's settled land. These working landscapes are not only foundational to our food security, but they are also among our most valuable forms of nature-based infrastructure.

Despite the budget's emphasis on climate competitiveness, it underestimates a fundamental truth: Canada cannot meet its nation-building goals or maintain its economic edge in a climate-impacted global economy without fully integrating the land that sustains us into national strategy.

In a world where market access increasingly depends on climate performance, countries that fail to align land stewardship with economic policy will find themselves at a disadvantage. Canadian farmers sit at the centre of this opportunity. Through stewardship of land, water, and ecosystems, they reinforce Canada's global climate credibility and strengthen its long-term economic competitiveness in a rapidly decarbonizing world.

Extreme weather is already placing measurable pressure on Canada's economy. The Canadian Climate Institute estimates that climate impacts will slow economic growth by \$25-billion annually as early as 2025, representing nearly half of projected GDP growth. These pressures are felt through flooding, drought, erosion, and shifting growing conditions, with farmers responding first to protect both production and natural landscapes.

Continued on page 25

We are falling behind on climate targets and obligations because we continue to believe we can achieve our goals while continuing to support and grow the oil and gas industry.

Damon Matthews

Opinion



We can do our part to achieve a stable climate, or we can retain an economy based on fossil fuels.

We cannot do both. These are two alternate realities that represent incompatible visions of the world's future.

Canadian political and economic discourse has once again taken up the incomprehensible claim that we can continue to support and grow the oil and gas industry while meeting our domestic climate targets and international climate mitigation responsibilities.

Prime Minister Mark Carney has repeatedly stated the goal of Canadian leadership in both con-

ventional and clean energy, and has openly supported liquefied natural gas projects in the initial rounds of infrastructure projects sent to Canada's Major Projects Office. The recent memorandum of understanding signed with the province of Alberta speaks of a "grand bargain" that would trade federal support for oil and gas infrastructure expansion for provincial support of industrial carbon pricing.

Meanwhile, Environment and Climate Change Minister Julie Dabrusin has reaffirmed Canada's commitments to its climate targets, including a 45-to-50-per-cent cut in emissions from 2005 levels by 2035. Since 2005, national emissions have decreased by less than 10 per cent, and recent analyses have demonstrated that current policies are insufficient to achieve our 2030 and 2035 reduction targets.

Canada is no longer seen as a leader in the international climate effort. We are not among the 35 countries globally who significantly decreased their national emissions between 2015 and 2024 while growing their economies. We were awarded a Fossil of the Day award at COP30 this year for the first time in more than a decade.

We are falling behind on our domestic emissions targets, and are not meeting our international climate obligations. The reason for this is simple: we continue to believe that we can achieve our climate goals while continuing to

support and grow the oil and gas industry in Canada.

The International Energy Agency recently reported that world demand for oil and gas could continue to grow until 2050 under current policies. This is not a prediction of the future: rather it is an indictment of the failure of the world's climate policies. A world in which oil and gas demand continues to grow is a world in which we exceed 3 C of global warming by the end of this century. This is a world in which climate damages reach levels without historical analogue.

Fundamentally, we do not appreciate the potential damage that unmitigated climate changes could wreak on our economies and environmental systems. If we did, there would be no rational argument that could be put forward to do anything other than to phase out fossil fuel use globally as fast as humanly possible. Here in Canada, the political and economic conversation would be laser focused on the challenge of how to rapidly build out renewable energy generation, enable a just transition of the oil and gas workforce to other sectors, and build resilience to those climate damages that we will not be able to avoid.

The question we need to ask ourselves is not "are Canada's emissions targets achievable?" but rather "how much do we really want to achieve them?" This is what is implicitly being debated among our political leaders: not whether we are on track to

meet our targets, but rather how important this effort actually is. Continuing to support the expansion of oil and gas infrastructure in this country is equivalent to stating that Canada and the world's climate ambitions are unimportant enough to be pushed aside in favour of short-term economic gain.

Canadians want ambitious climate action. In April, more than 180 mayors, councillors, and other elected local officials signed an open letter calling for continued and strengthened federal climate leadership. In November, more than 500 scholars and academics from across Canada added their names to a second open letter articulating the importance of strong federal climate action and the potential to align climate policy with many other national policy priorities.

Fundamentally, we need to acknowledge the difficult truth that continued oil and gas expansion in Canada is not compatible with a stable and safe climate. There are available pathways forward to a resilient and prosperous Canadian economy that do not include fossil fuels: to realize our climate goals, these are the pathways that we must find.

Damon Matthews is a professor in the department of geography, planning, and environment at Concordia University; fellow of the Academy of Sciences of the Royal Society of Canada; and interim director of the Future Earth Canada Hub.

The Hill Times

Policy Briefing **ENVIRONMENT**

Canada's PFAS opportunity: why smart chemicals policy is smart trade policy

At a time when Canada is actively seeking deeper trade relationships with reliable democratic partners, regulatory harmonization with Europe advances core economic security objectives.

Rémy Alexandre

Opinion



January 2026 marks the third annual Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month. It's a moment to recognize the occupational cancers that cause 94 per cent of the line-of-duty fatalities suffered by Canadian firefighters. It's also the moment when Canada should finalize its proposed order to list PFAS—per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances—as toxic under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA), unlocking critical risk management tools that would phase out PFAS-containing firefighting foams.



For firefighters exposed through fire suppression foam and PFAS-treated protective gear, the health consequences have been severe, writes Rémy Alexandre. *Pexels photograph by Tim Eiden*

PFAS are a class of more than 14,000 synthetic chemicals that resist heat, oil, and water. These properties made them invaluable to industry, from Teflon cookware to firefighting foam. They're also what makes them "forever chemicals" that persist in the environment for thousands of years.

PFAS is ubiquitous in our drinking water, our environment, and our bodies. More than 99 per cent of Canadians have PFAS in their blood. These toxic chemicals are linked to cardiovascular disease, multiple cancers, liver damage, and developmental impacts. For firefighters exposed through fire suppression foam and PFAS-treated protective gear, the health consequences have been severe.

The result is a contamination crisis that Canadian municipalities and provinces are now scrambling to address. But there's another

cost to delayed action: economic isolation from our most important trading partners.

There is an urgency to act now. Europe's new regulations for PFAS in firefighting foams begin to take effect in April 2026, establishing transitional periods that will reshape how the chemical industry operates across the Atlantic. Just three months later, this country will enter the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) renegotiations. The question facing policymakers is straightforward: will Canada harmonize its chemical regulations with its most reliable trading partner, or will we allow regulatory divergence to create barriers for the domestic industry?

The answer should be equally straightforward. Aligning Canadian PFAS regulations with the

European Union isn't just sound environmental policy—it's essential trade strategy.

The EU has established clear timelines for phasing out PFAS-containing firefighting foams, with transitional periods beginning in 2026. The regulations include disclosure requirements, labelling standards, management plans for existing stocks, and defined thresholds for the incidental presence of PFAS, which provides industry with clear compliance pathways when procuring materials or retrofitting old firefighting systems.

Canada's proposed approach mirrors the EU framework. This isn't coincidental—it's strategic regulatory design. When Canadian products and processes are interoperable with European standards, our industries gain seamless market access. When we diverge, we create compliance costs, supply chain complications, and competitive disadvantages.

At a time when Canada is actively seeking deeper trade relationships with reliable democratic partners, regulatory harmonization with Europe advances core economic security objectives. The alternative—regulatory isolation—makes Canadian products harder to export and Canadian processes more expensive to maintain.

Some industry stakeholders have expressed reluctance about transitioning to fluorine-free foams. These concerns deserve acknowledgment, but they miss a

fundamental reality: alternatives already exist and have regulatory approval. In stakeholder consultation, the government itself has concluded that nothing has been identified to suggest that safer alternatives cannot be made to work for all required scenarios.

What industry needs isn't more time to develop alternatives—it's regulatory clarity about transition timelines. Providing that clarity through strong federal regulations would benefit Canadian firms by ensuring their products remain compatible with European markets. Delay, by contrast, extends uncertainty and widens the regulatory gap with our trading partners.

The current proposal would allow some high-hazard facilities to continue using PFAS-containing foams until 2039. That's not ambitious—it's an invitation to regulatory divergence that will disadvantage Canadian industry as European markets move forward.

January 2026 offers the federal government a perfect opportunity to demonstrate leadership on multiple fronts. Announcing the finalized CEPA listing during Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month, alongside an ambitious timeline for phasing out PFAS-containing firefighting foams, would recognize the disproportionate harm these workers face.

It would also position Canada for the CUSMA review by signalling our commitment to evidence-based regulation, and alignment with our European partners.

And the economic case is clear. Canadian industry needs regulatory certainty to compete in global markets and trade seamlessly.

All that's required now is political will.

Rémy Alexandre is toxics project lead at Ecojustice, Canada's largest environmental law charity, where she leads federal policy and campaign strategy to combat toxic pollution.

The Hill Times

Nation-building starts in rural Canada

Continued from [page 24](#)

Farm-level stewardship delivers tangible national outcomes. Wetlands restored on agricultural lands reduce downstream flooding and store carbon. Natural vegetation along streams and rivers filter nutrients before they enter waterways, improving drinking water quality. Native grasslands and rows of trees that protect fields from wind and erosion provide critical habitat for pollinators and species at risk while stabilizing soils and moderating microclimates. These practices do not simply protect individual farms; they strengthen surrounding municipalities, infrastructure systems, and regional economies.

Farmers are ready to lead through these efforts, yet the systems that support agricul-

tural stewardship remain poorly aligned with on-the-ground realities. The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute's *Matching Conservation Programs to Canadian Farm Realities* report found that only seven per cent of producers feel "very familiar" with existing conservation programs. A follow-up workshop led by the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute and Ducks Unlimited Canada described Canada's conservation program landscape as "fragmented" and "frustrating"—too centralized and too distant from local contexts to drive widespread adoption.

This is not a question of willingness. It is a question of meeting farmers where they are.

Where stewardship is designed and delivered in step with local realities, progress is already clear. Across the Prairies and rural

Ontario and Quebec, regionally led approaches are reducing flood risks, improving water quality, enhancing biodiversity, and strengthening rural economies. Watershed partnerships, Indigenous communities, municipalities, and farmer-driven initiatives demonstrate a simple truth: when nature-based infrastructure is delivered locally, it can be scaled to deliver nationally.

This represents precisely the kind of nation-building opportunity the federal budget seeks to advance. Stewardship on the farm supports competitiveness by making our landscapes and economies more resilient, protecting communities, and reducing the long-term fiscal burden of climate impacts. It aligns with the government's framing of climate action as economic strategy, but it requires a redirecting

of federal investment: farmers must be positioned not as passive beneficiaries of policy, but as strategic partners in delivering Canada's climate and economic future.

Models such as ALUS, which support community-led stewardship partnerships with farmers, reflect the kind of locally grounded approach that aligns with Canada's climate competitiveness ambitions.

As the government moves to implement the 2025 budget, it should prioritize: recognizing farmland stewardship as a core pillar of Canada's climate resilience and competitiveness strategy; integrating nature-based infrastructure into national planning; and strengthening regionally designed, outcome-based delivery models led and shaped by farmers themselves.

Canada's farms are more than production engines. They are ecological and economic systems that underpin long-term resilience and prosperity. If the 2025 budget is truly a nation-building plan, agricultural landscapes must be part of its vision. The next generation of infrastructure investment will be defined not only by concrete and steel, but also by the stewardship of the land beneath our feet.

Bryan Gilvesy is the chief strategy officer of ALUS, a charitable organization that supports communities in engaging farmers and ranchers to create nature-based solutions on their land that build climate resilience and enhance biodiversity for the benefit of communities and future generations.

The Hill Times

ENVIRONMENT Policy Briefing

‘I don’t know if she’s playing any role’: NDP critic slams Environment Minister Dabrusin’s ‘rubber stamping’

‘The minister can say she commits whatever she wants about [Canada’s emissions], but the physical reality of climate science is that building pipelines and extracting more oil increases emissions,’ says environment advocate Caroline Brouillette.

BY ELEANOR WAND

Environment and Climate Change Minister Julie Dabrusin is “rubber stamping” the prime minister’s agenda and allowing climate policy backsliding, say critics, after the minister was noncommittal about whether a pipeline would increase emissions.

“I don’t know if she’s playing any role at the moment because we don’t see her, we don’t hear her,” NDP environment critic Alexandre Boulerville (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, Que.) said in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

In a Dec. 1 meeting of the House Environment Committee, Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Ont.) was pressed on the new energy deal between Ottawa and Alberta, which has drawn fierce criticism from First Nations and climate activists, but she was noncommittal on her stance.

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) lays a path for the construction of a new oil pipeline running from Alberta’s oil sands to British Columbia’s coast. It also exempts Alberta from clean electricity regulations, and opens the door to an exemption from the oil tanker ban on the B.C. coast, “if necessary.”

Bloc Québécois environment critic Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, Que.) pressed Dabrusin on whether the proposed pipeline would increase or decrease emissions in the meeting, repeatedly asking for a response.

But Dabrusin didn’t give a clear answer, pointing to the agreement’s commitment to carbon capture and storage. The minister was also noncommittal



Environment Minister Julie Dabrusin did not answer questions about whether a new pipeline would increase emissions in a recent parliamentary committee appearance. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

regarding her support for the pipeline project as a whole, saying that it is not up to her, but rather the provinces and Indigenous people.

“The minister has no power over physics, and new fossil fuel infrastructure resulting, thereby, in further oil extraction we know will result in more emissions,” Caroline Brouillette, executive director of Climate Action Network Canada, said of Dabrusin’s comments.

“The minister can say she commits whatever she wants about this, but the physical reality of climate science is that building pipelines and extracting more oil increases emissions.”

“We have to look at the facts,” Independent Senators Group Senator Rosa Galvez (Bedford, Que.) also said of the feds’ approach to development. “We have to look at the math. ... I see the probability of a lot of problems, a lot of litigations, a lot of obstacles.”

‘What is the plan?’: NDP MP Boulerville

The controversial MOU spurred the resignation from cabinet of then-culture and identity minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, Que.), who was also Quebec lieutenant and responsible for Parks Canada. The longtime climate activist, who was also an environment minister under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, said the agreement was “the last straw,” when he appeared on Radio-Canada’s *Tout le monde en parle* after his resignation on Nov. 30.

“Over the past few months, several elements of the climate action plan I worked on as minis-

ter of the environment have been, or are about to be, dismantled,” Guilbeault wrote in his resignation statement, pointing to the oil and gas emissions cap, the consumer carbon tax, and the elective vehicle sales mandate, among others.

Since taking office, Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has ditched a number of Trudeau-era climate policies. The former United Nations special envoy on climate action and finance removed the consumer carbon tax; paused the electric vehicle sales mandate, pending a review; and has decided not to go ahead with the proposed oil and gas emissions cap, as per the Nov. 27 MOU signed with Alberta.

Boulerville said that while Guilbeault took “too much time” to make his decision, it was “the only honorable thing to do.”

But the NDP MP stopped short of saying Dabrusin should resign, too.

“Maybe one day, I will go there. But now, at least show me that you take that seriously,” he said.

“What is the plan? What is the plan to be effective, to respect the Paris Agreement, to reduce and tackle our pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, because you’re just rubber-stamping what the prime minister is doing right now.”

Dabrusin did not point to any hard lines when asked by Conservative MP Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, Man.) if there was any piece of policy being axed that would cause her to resign, too, in the Dec. 1 committee meeting.

The minister has committed to respecting Canada’s 2030 target

to reduce emissions by at least 40 per cent below 2005 levels. That target has been forecast to be out of reach by both the parliamentary budget officer and the Canadian Climate Institute.

Galvez said the lack of clear mandate letters makes it harder to judge the minister’s performance. Carney opted to hand his cabinet a single letter of direction earlier this year, rather than the minister-specific list of priorities handed out by his predecessor.

“Without mandate letters, how can we know whether she’s doing right or wrong [in] her job?” said Galvez in an interview with *The Hill Times*. “So, what we have is the platform that was sort of described before the election.”

But the Senator said what she’s hearing from Quebecers “is very clear” that “lots of people are very disappointed.”

“The general feeling is that we want to give a chance to [Dabrusin]. We want to give the benefit of the doubt, but time is passing very fast,” Galvez said, adding that projects are being proposed without “traditions” being respected.

She highlighted B.C. Premier David Eby and Indigenous leadership being excluded from talks, which she said could spell trouble for the proposed pipeline project. The Assembly of First Nations voted in favour of a resolution demanding the withdrawal of the deal during their special chiefs assembly, held in Ottawa starting Dec. 2, after coastal First Nations in B.C. denounced the deal.

“The fact that B.C. was not in the table and that Indigenous people were not consulted initially, that will put pressure at the end of the project,” Galvez said.

Boulerville also pointed to Quebecers’ opposition to the deal, saying that it would be a “dangerous” road to try in that province.

“Quebecers, in general, are really opposed to oil and gas exploitation ... and they are afraid that if the federal government is ready to do that to British Columbia, maybe they can try to do the same thing with Quebec,” he said.

Constituents ‘felt comfortable with the answers I gave’: Liberal MP Grant

Brouillette said the only climate action seen under Carney’s government has been “backwards,” adding that she “would be curious to see the dynamics at the cabinet table right now.”

“Climate action is being sacrificed to fulfill some very short-termist political goals,” she said. “In this case, appeasing the oil and gas industry and its key political spokesperson, [Alberta Premier] Danielle Smith.”

She pointed to the resignation of Simon Donner as co-chair of the Net-Zero Advisory Board, and Guilbeault’s cabinet departure as the “political consequences” of the approach.

Donner resigned on Dec. 3, writing on LinkedIn that he was leaving with a “heavy heart” after “the situation became more difficult this year as the government, and its priorities, changed.”

“I was comfortable chairing an appointed body whose advice is considered but ultimately rejected—after all, no one elected us,” the statement reads. “I was not comfortable with the process becoming neglected or performative, and it had begun to feel that way to me.”

Dabrusin has pushed back on the assessment that the feds are rolling back climate policy, telling host Vassy Kapelos on CTV’s *Question Period* that Ottawa has “committed to strengthening the industrial carbon price, strengthening methane regulations, extending the methane regulations to landfills, and also to building out infrastructure that, in the long term, does help us to move towards a cleaner electricity grid.”

Those commitments are part of the feds’ climate competitiveness strategy, which was released with the Nov. 4 budget and is intended to put Canada on a path to reach the target of net-zero by 2050.

But the MOU could spell bad news for some B.C. Liberal MPs, some speculate, as the project is not popular in the province. Rookie MP Wade Grant (Vancouver Quadra, B.C.), who also sits on the environment committee, dismissed suggestions that he was concerned for his seat in the wake of the agreement.

“I had a Christmas party yesterday with a number of constituents and I had a very constructive dialogue with them, letting them know that, as a new MP, I am committed to being transparent with them ... They felt very comfortable with the answers that I gave,” he told *The Hill Times* after the Dec. 1 committee meeting.

Asked if he supports the MOU, Grant said only, “I am in support of First Nations’ title and rights and being ... part of the economy, as well.”

Galvez, who attended COP30 alongside Dabrusin, said that many of the environmental regulations that have been walked-back under the minister were “not perfect,” but some “could have been modified” to make them “more efficient.”

She emphasized that not addressing climate change will cost Canadians more money in the future, saying Carney seems to have forgotten “where we were going with the climate.”

“Every day of inaction cost us billions,” she said. “We’re going into [a] chaotic transition if we don’t handle very well this transition.”

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The Hill Times

Policy Briefing ENVIRONMENT

To protect Canadians from rising climate costs, restoring natural infrastructure is essential

Wetlands, dunes, shorelines, and forests absorb floodwaters, buffer storm surges, stabilize soils, filter pollutants, recharge aquifers, and lower temperatures in surrounding areas.

Anabela Bonada

Opinion



Climate disasters are becoming a major financial burden for communities across Canada. Taxpayers are now paying an average of \$10-billion each year for damage from flooding, wildfires, and coastal erosion—costs that are driving up municipal budgets, and accelerating the deterioration of public infrastructure. One of the most effective tools to reduce these risks remains underused: natural infrastructure.

Wetlands, dunes, shorelines, and forests deliver essential



As climate impacts intensify, restoring and protecting key systems is one of the soundest fiscal, environmental, and public-safety decisions the country can make, writes Anabela Bonada. *Pexels photograph by James Wheeler*

climate-security services. They absorb floodwaters, buffer storm surges, stabilize soils, filter pollutants, recharge aquifers, and lower temperatures in surrounding areas. These benefits are well-documented. Research from the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo shows wetlands can reduce flood-related damages by up to 38 per cent in urban settings, and 29 per cent in rural areas during extreme rainfall. In cities, expanded tree canopy can reduce local air temperatures by as much as 5 C, lowering heat-related health risks and easing pressure on energy systems.

The economic case is equally clear. According to analyses by the World Resources Institute, each dollar directed toward adaptation measures can yield more than \$10 in benefits within a decade. Natural infrastructure consistently

delivers these returns by reducing disaster damages, and supporting municipal service continuity.

Our work at the Intact Centre shows that natural systems play a critical role in limiting climate-related damage and supporting faster recovery. The national shoreline guidance we developed with the Standards Council of Canada underscores that shoreline management must be regionally tailored, reflecting the very different physical and governance conditions of the Atlantic, Pacific, Arctic, and Great Lakes coasts. The report identifies where natural and hybrid approaches can offer durable, lower-cost protection compared to hard infrastructure when matched to local shoreline processes.

Despite their value, Canada continues to lose wetlands, forests, and shorelines. Fragmented regulation, development pres-

ures, and short project funding cycles all contribute to the erosion of these climate-protective systems. Strengthening natural infrastructure also aligns with Canada's international commitments: the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework calls for restoring at least 30 per cent of degraded ecosystems by 2030. The recently released report by Canada's Infrastructure Council likewise underscores that natural infrastructure should be optimized before new grey infrastructure is built.

Federal policy increasingly recognizes this opportunity. The Natural Infrastructure Fund supports projects that use natural or hybrid solutions. The Canada Water Agency advances co-ordinated watershed restoration. Programs under the Nature-Based Climate Solutions initiative help conserve and rebuild key ecosystems.

However, analysis from the International Institute for Sustainable Development finds that natural infrastructure remains only partially integrated into major federal programs. Definitions vary, incentives are inconsistent, and funding structures often do not match the multi-year timeframes required for ecological restoration.

Scaling natural infrastructure requires several federal actions:

- Expand and stabilize funding for long-term restoration of wet-

lands, dunes, and forests—particularly in high-risk regions.

- Require natural or hybrid solutions to be evaluated first in federal infrastructure, disaster-mitigation, and adaptation investments.

- Modernize codes and standards to ensure clear, consistent design and maintenance requirements for nature-based solutions.

- Address capacity gaps in smaller and rural communities by providing technical support and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, which strengthen understanding of watershed dynamics and shoreline change.

Canada's wetlands, dunes, shorelines, and forests are not just part of the landscape—they are essential components of our national infrastructure system. As climate impacts intensify, restoring and protecting these systems is one of the soundest fiscal, environmental, and public-safety decisions the country can make. Investing in natural infrastructure is ultimately an investment in Canada's climate security, economic stability, and long-term resilience.

Dr. Anabela Bonada is the managing director of climate science at the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo where she leads national research and policy work advancing evidence-based strategies to reduce climate risks across Canada.

The Hill Times

The Alberta energy deal is worse than you think

Canada's clean electricity regulations—finally published less than 12 months ago—are on the chopping block as part of this deal.

Stephen Thomas

Opinion



It's easy to make a deal when you're willing to compromise on everything.

That's what November's memorandum of understanding between the governments of Alberta and Canada demonstrates.

This moment may represent a new low for climate politics

in Canada. Much has been said about the catastrophically bad idea of a new bitumen pipeline to the Pacific coast. However, there are many other details, compromises, and conditions in this memorandum that have important climate and economic implications.

After three years of consultations, development, and revisions, Canada's clean electricity regulations were finally published less than 12 months ago. But they're on the chopping block as part of this deal.

Alberta's electricity system is by far the most polluting in Canada, with 59 per cent of the total emissions reductions from the federal regulations coming from the province. But last week's MOU created a pathway to potentially exempt Alberta from these regulations.

The deal contemplates the immediate suspension of the regulations in Alberta pending a new carbon pricing agreement. A vague and unenforceable commitment to net-zero greenhouse

gas emissions by 2050—as the moratorium seems to suggest—would be a poor substitute for the federal regulation in Alberta, which sets requirements starting in 2035.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith has been talking in recent weeks as though the province will get a straightforward exemption, while federal Environment, Climate Change, and Nature Minister Julie Dabrusin continues to defend the memorandum, saying the clean electricity regulations are still in full force.

So, which is it? Former Canadian identity and culture minister Steven Guilbeault seems to have made his determination clear, citing this policy betrayal on clean electricity clearly in his resignation letter—pointing to the 182 million tonnes of emissions savings and more than \$3-billion in avoided health-care costs that would have come with the regulations.

It's difficult to trust that the Alberta government would act in good faith to reduce electricity

sector emissions—especially after the province spent more than \$8-billion of public money on misleading attack ads against the regulations and imposed investment-killing moratoriums and other barriers on renewables.

Alberta is also challenging the regulations in the Alberta Court of Appeal. Will the province rescind the court challenge now that it has its way?

The federal government seems willing to cancel or delay its own laws and regulations to allow a new bitumen pipeline. What will it get in return? A plan to make a plan to fix Alberta's broken industrial carbon pricing system, and a condition that a \$16.5-billion carbon capture and storage project be built—with up to 60 per cent of the capital costs being covered by taxpayers as part of a federal tax credit.

This rollback on climate action is in addition to Canada's existing climate stance, which is bleak. This month, Climate Action Tracker updated Canada's climate stance to “highly insufficient.” Canada also won the infamous “Fossil of the Day” award at COP30, and the Parliamentary Budget Office said that Canada could be 102 million tonnes of emissions short of its 2030 targets.

Leaning into a hockey analogy—as our prime minister loves to do—we need to skate to where

the puck is going, not to where it has been.

As experts have routinely pointed out, the future is electric. Wind and solar are the cheapest forms of electricity in history, and virtually every modelling study that considers cleaner electricity, better connected grids, and more energy efficiency shows that this transition will bring down the cost of energy for Canadian households.

There's still time for the federal government to recommit to a future that sets Canada up for the long game. A pan-Canadian, east-west electricity grid is part of that future—one that creates tens of thousands of good union jobs, and supports sectors like aluminum and steel. One that saves billions of dollars on health-care costs. One that highlights and supports existing Indigenous leadership in clean electricity from coast to coast to coast.

The federal government has the opportunity to make better choices, and show up for people struggling with the cost of living and mounting climate impacts. We just need government to leave oil lobbyists behind, and start building the Canada we know is possible.

Stephen Thomas is the clean energy manager at the David Suzuki Foundation.

The Hill Times

ENVIRONMENT Policy Briefing



Alberta's new energy MOU could kick-start a race to the bottom on climate

Giving Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and her province special treatment invites copycat demands from other provinces and territories, write Rick Smith, Dale Beugin, and Dave Sawyer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canadian climate policy has now become the art of the deal, moving from rules-based policy to deal-based bargaining.

Rick Smith, Dale Beugin & Dave Sawyer

Opinion

The recent agreement signed by Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and Prime Minister Mark Carney in Calgary risks fracturing the foundation of Canada's entire approach to tackling climate change and narrowing the pathway to achieving climate goals.

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been hailed as a "historic reset" of the relationship between Ottawa and energy-rich Alberta; it outlines the conditions by which the federal government would support a new bitumen pipeline to tidewater, and grants Alberta special treatment on a suite of federal policies. Those range from a province-specific suspension on the clean electricity regulations, to a promised but to-be-determined equivalency agreement delaying tougher limits on methane pollution, and

a pledge to adjust the tanker ban on the West Coast "if necessary" to enable bitumen export.

Other provinces, like Ontario, wasted no time getting in line to request their own special treatment.

Is this the start of the race to the bottom on Canadian climate policy?

We've seen this dynamic before: most recently, when the Trudeau government granted a carve-out removing the consumer carbon tax from home heating oil in response to political pressure from Atlantic Canada. Within short order, Alberta said it would sue the federal government for unfair treatment. Saskatchewan stopped collecting the carbon tax altogether.

That carve-out was the start of the unravelling for consumer carbon pricing. And it's a textbook example of why minimum national standards, applied fairly across the country, are critical to the effective functioning of federal policies and regulations within the federation. Giving Alberta special treatment in this case invites copycat demands from other provinces and territories. The likely result is an erosion of national standards, greater economic fragmentation, and less coherent and effective policy overall.

That's a problem in a world where Canada is working hard to reduce trade barriers, diversify its economy, and attract new investment. Policy certainty is among the deciding factors companies and investors take into account when making long-term invest-

ment decisions. When the rules of the game become negotiable on political grounds, it puts a chill on investment—because who's to say the rules won't change again a few years down the road when the political calculus or players change?

There is, however, one potentially major step forward amidst the maze of red flags in this MOU: namely, Alberta's commitment to improve its industrial carbon pricing system, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Regulation (TIER). This system covers roughly 25 per cent of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions, so modernizing TIER is one of the most important and cost-effective steps Alberta can take to reduce emissions.

The MOU includes commitments for Alberta and the federal government to collaborate on developing "globally competitive, long-term" carbon prices, revenue recycling protocols and sector-specific stringency for large emitters, while promising to "ramp up to a minimum effective credit price of \$130 per tonne"—though without locking in a specific timeline for doing so.

Whether these changes live up to their potential will be contingent on the details that will be worked out in the coming months (mark your calendars for April Fools' Day, 2026, the agreed-upon date for these details to be finalized).

Modernizing TIER would increase and stabilize incentives for reducing emissions and investing in low-carbon projects, and establish a precedent for

carbon market transparency. Unfortunately, by framing these elements as part of a negotiated deal with Alberta, the MOU undermines the credibility of the federal industrial carbon pricing benchmark and backstop as an objective, consistent minimum standard across all provinces—a principle the Supreme Court has explicitly recognized as central to effective national carbon pricing.

That's why, in parallel to working out the details on these changes with Alberta, the federal government should move quickly to fix the federal benchmark that defines minimum standards for all provincial systems, strengthen the federal backstop, apply it decisively in jurisdictions that do not meet the benchmark, and work with provinces to develop a long-term price trajectory and a nationally consistent price "floor" for industrial emissions credits. These changes are essential to bring greater credibility and certainty to carbon markets both now and beyond 2030 so that businesses can make big investments in low-carbon projects.

Time will tell just how slippery a slope the Alberta-Canada MOU has carved into Canada's climate policy landscape. But the outlook is clear: Canadian climate policy has now become the art of the deal, moving from rules-based policy to deal-based bargaining.

To counteract that trend, the federal government should reinforce its role in setting clear, rules-based minimum standards. It should clearly define the terms for provincial equivalency for

methane regulations. It should ensure that improvements to industrial carbon pricing, especially for electricity, can make up for any concessions on the Clean Electricity Regulation in Alberta and other provinces. And it should update the carbon pricing backstop to require all provinces to maintain a rising minimum carbon price.

Rick Smith has led the Canadian Climate Institute since 2021, growing it into the country's most respected climate policy research organization. A biologist by training with expertise in the human health impacts of pollution, he has, over his 25-year career, played a central role in major provincial and federal policy advances, from Ontario's Greenbelt to Canada's Species at Risk Act.

Dale Beugin, executive vice-president of the Climate Institute, previously served as executive and research director of Canada's Ecofiscal Commission, worked as an independent consultant advising governments across Canada, and internationally, and was a policy adviser at the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

Dave Sawyer, principal economist at the Institute, is a leading environmental economist with more than three decades of experience, including senior positions at Environment Canada, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, and major Canadian consultancies.

The Hill Times

Policy Briefing **ENVIRONMENT**

Jump-starting a Canadian power grid

Canada needs a forum for provinces to co-ordinate planning on a regional or national level, and a process to help provinces work together to get electricity projects built.

Madeleine McPherson & Peter Fairley

Opinion



On Nov. 28, the Manitoba government signed on to an Ontario-led initiative to work towards a national electricity grid, and called for “all provinces and territories across Canada” to sign on to their memorandum of understanding. It’s a welcome development given the enormous potential of stronger electricity connections between provinces to propel energy investment. As provinces build generation based on their own resources and needs, expanding interprovincial power links offers a true nation-building and cost-reducing opportunity that merits far more attention than the divisive bitumen pipeline proposal that dominated the energy agenda last month.

While transmission expressways run south, strongly plugging provincial grids into the regional power systems in the United States, the electrical equivalent of two-lane parkways interconnect the provinces. In reality, there is no Canadian power grid. But here’s the real rub: this country lacks all of the mechanisms required to build one.

In fact, in Canada, we don’t even think about the power grid at national scale. That makes us an outlier. Europe and Australia plan on a continental scale. Most planning in the U.S. occurs within regions spanning over a dozen states each.

Narrower thinking leaves our electricity systems more vulnerable to extreme weather, such as the storms that took down the Texas grid in 2021, and South Australia’s in 2016. In both cases, weak interconnections were blamed. In Australia’s case, the blackout spurred a new planning process to build bigger grids.

Lack of interconnections also makes our electricity bills higher. We’re building more expensive generation because each province behaves like an island, rather than complementing its neighbour’s natural endowments.

But we can develop a plan to change that. As laid out in a recent C.D. Howe Institute report, the keys are planning and governance. Canada needs a forum for provinces to co-ordinate planning on a

regional or national level, and a process to help provinces work together to get projects built. This wouldn’t replace provinces’ authority—broader co-ordination can co-exist with provincial jurisdiction.

It’s not that provinces can’t connect on their own. That does happen when neighbouring provinces seize an opportunity of mutual benefit.

Recent examples include the Maritime Link between Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia—completed in 2016—and the beefier connection New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are gearing up to start building next year.

But this ad-hoc process is slow, and lacks a sense of where each opportunity fits in the bigger picture. Given the pace at which energy systems are changing today, Canada needs a dedicated team that’s using the best tools available to peer ahead and create a portfolio of projects to meet needs and opportunities of the system as a whole.

Recently, for the first time for a Canadian study, one of us applied the methodologies that are standard practice elsewhere, and looked at the full suite of benefits that a bigger grid offers—cutting operating costs and the price of building new generation to power Canada’s future needs, sustaining grid reliability in a more extreme weather world, and cutting pollution.

When given free rein to find the lowest-cost pathway for our grid, the simulations tripled the electrical bandwidth between British Columbia and Alberta, and quintupled the capacity between Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

What drove the model to prescribe was the variability of wind and solar power, and the opportunity to firm it up with B.C. and Manitoba’s abundant hydro. By giving all of the western provinces access to the hydro capacity, all of the provinces could add better generation at lower cost. In our model, that yielded an estimated \$4-billion in net benefits by 2050.

The C.D. Howe commentary lays out a blueprint for grid integration in Canada drawing on international best practices and detailed modelling of the power system. We need new institutions: a Grid Planning Council to run national planning, following the lead of Australia and Europe; a Power Exchange to facilitate cross-border trades across the provinces’ disparate market structures; and a Grid Co-ordination Forum to harmonize regulations and foster innovation.

It’s a no-brainer that provinces seeking to expand energy exports, lower costs, and meet climate goals should plan their power grids together. But making that happen will require a sharper national focus than what the 2025 budget offers.

Madeleine McPherson is associate professor at the University of Victoria, and Peter Fairley is an award-winning journalist who has covered global power systems for a quarter century.

The Hill Times

Canada’s chance to lead the critical minerals race should be based not only on extraction, but also on tech

Fast-tracked reclamation projects can transform waste into wealth, and secure global supply chains.

Apoorv Sinha

Opinion



Do you know where the copper in your microwave came from? Or the rare earth elements that make your TV or laptop screen capable of high definition? Chances are they traveled thousands of kilometres, extracted from remote mines in countries with fragile supply chains.

Meanwhile, millions of tonnes of critical minerals lie dormant in Canada’s own backyard—locked in mine tailings, coal ash, and industrial residues.

With Prime Minister Mark Carney’s recently tabled budget and announcements of major projects, Canada has declared its ambition to become a critical mineral superpower. The federal strategy rightly points to our geological abundance. But the reality is stark: most domestic deposits are remote, expensive to access, and years away from production.

Canada is decades behind building the infrastructure we need to unlock our growth in this sector. We also consistently miss economic targets and climate commitments, and struggle with volatile unemployment—especially for our youth. We need solutions that deliver impact on all three fronts now, not in 15 years.

One answer is hiding in plain sight: industrial waste streams.

Across Canada, legacy mining sites and coal plants hold billions of dollars’ worth of rare earth elements (REEs), nickel, cobalt, and other critical metals. These resources are co-located at existing industrial hubs, meaning they can be tapped without long-drawn permitting processes.

Most importantly, recovering these minerals can go hand in hand with environmental remediation, turning liabilities into assets and helping local communities restore and reinvent themselves.

This is not a pipe dream. Canadian innovators are already proving it works. Calgary’s Carbon Upcycling Technologies, as one example, has developed an advanced mineral recovery process that can extract up to 75 per cent of critical metals and 50 to 80 per cent of REEs from waste streams.

The residual material? It doesn’t need to go back to landfills; it can be transformed instead into low-carbon building materials, reducing emissions in one of the world’s most important heavy industries.

Circularity in action, this process can enable building local infrastructure in Canada’s most remote communities.

Global momentum is clear. Countries like Australia, South Korea, Japan, and the United States are accelerating investments in critical mineral extraction and processing. Australia has committed billions of dollars to rare earth projects, while the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act is catalyzing domestic supply chains for EV batteries.

Korea and Japan have gone further, creating long-term market signals through structured incentives for hydrogen and clean fuels, paired with ramp-down timelines similar to carbon capture, storage, and utilization investment tax credits.

These policies don’t just subsidize, they also create urgency and conviction for private capital to deploy at scale.

Canada needs a similar approach: clear, time-bound incentives that reward early movers and taper over time, signalling that the window for advantage is now.

Canada has always been a nation defined by its natural resources—forests, oil, minerals—often exported as raw materials to fuel prosperity elsewhere. Fur trade between the 1600s and 1800s formed the economic foundation of early Canada, centered on beaver pelts used in European hat-making, while the discovery of gold and silver in the 1850s, and subsequently, uranium, nickel, and other base metals shaped Canada’s economy for much of its history.

Onshoring critical mineral production through circular, fast-tracked projects like waste reclamation offers a chance to rewrite that story.

We have an opportunity to evolve from a resource exporter to a technology-driven economy, launching another generation of productivity and wealth while meeting climate commitments.

The question is simple: Does Canada keep exporting raw resources, or build the next economy from yesterday’s waste? If we get this right, Canada won’t just kick-start the future economy, build productivity, and growth for its citizens, but will also lead the world in building a circular economy powered by innovation, not just extraction.

Apoorv Sinha is the founder and CEO of Carbon Upcycling Technologies (CUT) based in Calgary. CUT is building the world’s first integrated, commercial-scale carbon dioxide-to-value plant in Mississauga, Ont.

The Hill Times

OPINION

Canada's plan to boost its economy must include rebuilding wild fisheries

When wild fish populations are abundant, they support employment, export diversification, food security, and stable regional economies.

Josh Laughren

Opinion



Prime Minister Mark Carney has made his priority clear: rebuilding Canada's economic strength through projects of national significance—invest-

ments that deepen resilience, improve productivity, and strengthen competitiveness. Yet one of the engines for long-term regional growth and resilience remains overlooked: wild fisheries. Most of Canada's wild marine fish populations that sustain coastal economies are now depleted or in decline, with only about one-third considered healthy. That's not an environmental footnote—it's an economic and ecological fault line.

Wild fish sustained Indigenous Peoples from time immemorial and drew the first settlers to our shores. Today, more than 72,000 people make their living directly from commercial fishing, generating \$4.6-billion in landed value. Few sectors are more tied to coastal communities, or capable of delivering economic renewal with the right federal leadership.

Healthy wild fish populations also offer something rare in public policy: a renewable, low-carbon

source of growth that does not require new infrastructure or major public investment. When wild fish populations are abundant, they generate returns year after year—supporting employment, export diversification, food security, and stable regional economies.

But the economic base of our fisheries is precariously narrow. Four species—lobster, shrimp, snow crab, and scallop—account for 77 per cent of national landed value. In Newfoundland and Labrador, 96 per cent of snow crab is exported to the United States. When prosperity hinges so heavily on a few species and markets, communities become vulnerable to shifts in demand, environmental conditions, and stock fluctuations.

The good news is that Canada is not powerless. With federal leadership, wild fisheries can once again drive coastal economic renewal. Research shows that rebuilding northern cod alone could support up to 16 times more jobs and

generate five times more economic value than it does today. Wild fish populations rebound when managed for long-term health, providing more for communities, industry, and future generations.

Canada has the tools to restore abundance. What's missing is execution. Here are four key steps:

Fully implement the Fisheries Act. Of nearly 200 major fish populations, only 30 are formally listed under the Act's Fish Stock provisions, which include legal obligations to manage them sustainably. At the current pace, it could take more than a decade before all depleted fish populations are covered under the Act. Early evidence indicates that stocks listed under these provisions are better managed for long-term health than ones that are not.

Commit to timely and transparent science assessments. Reliable information is essential for good decisions. That includes more consistent stock assessments, improved monitoring, and better integration of observations from harvesters. It also means pairing western science with Indigenous knowledge systems—an approach already delivering results in parts of British Columbia and Atlantic Canada.

Rebuild the foundation of the food web. Forage fish—small fish like capelin, herring, and mackerel—feed everything from cod and salmon to seabirds and

whales. Rebuilding these populations is one of the most cost-effective actions Canada can take to support long-term ecosystem health and the sustainability of commercial fisheries.

Prioritize long-term fisheries prosperity. Several recent fisheries decisions—including the more-than-doubling of the northern cod quota—ignored the government's own scientific advice. The government's own analysis shows a 71-per-cent chance the northern cod population will decline further within three years, risking a return to the critical zone as early as 2028.

Today, only about 35 per cent of Canada's fish stocks are considered healthy. With effective management, that could increase to nearly 80 per cent within a decade. That is achievable, evidence-based, and aligned with the government's priorities of productivity, long-term value, and structural renewal.

If Carney wants an economic recovery with real staying power, he can seize one of the lowest-cost, highest-return opportunities available: restoring the natural capital of Canada's oceans. Wild fish helped build this country. With leadership, wild fisheries can help rebuild our coastal economies once again.

Josh Laughren is the executive director of Oceana Canada.
The Hill Times

Effective nation-building starts with the people and places where it happens

Strategic place-based industrial planning that attracts new investment and aligns workforce development with regional economic diversification can help spur community renewal.

Shaimaa Yassin, Abigail Jackson & Noel Baldwin

Opinion



Canada's major projects agenda will be judged not only by the dollars it mobilizes, but also by what it leaves behind in communities, especially those that host those projects. National resilience depends on community and individual resilience. That means putting people and

communities at the heart of every "nation-building" investment.

Ottawa's list of major projects seeks to support our economy, industries, and communities through a changing global economy marked by trade disruptions, energy transition, and technological change.

But if local workers lack the training to access new employment opportunities, and communities are missing the tools needed to adapt projects to their realities, those federal investments risk passing them by and the projects risk not achieving their intended transformative impact on local jobs and community well-being.

The Sustainable Jobs Action Plan is one opportunity to embed a place-based approach across Canada's major projects agenda by starting from the specific needs and strengths of each community, rather than a one-size-fits-all model.

The Institute for Research on Public Policy, in collaboration with the Future Skills Centre, has published new research focused on place-based approaches that can help local workers, sectors, and regions build the skills and workforce needed to participate in

and help steer large projects, and targeted investments in new and emerging industries. Drawing on eight international case studies from the net-zero transition, the research highlights lessons that Canada can apply to support people and places most susceptible to disruption to take advantage of new opportunities on the horizon.

Four key takeaways emerge that can guide governments, project stakeholders, and rightsholders on the design and delivery of projects: community-led planning, proactive skills development that builds on local strengths, tailored social supports, and place-based industrial policies that drive diversification.

From the case studies, Spain's Just Transition Agreements, New Zealand's Taranaki 2050 Roadmap, and Australia's regional transition plans show how participatory planning can maximize local and national benefits and strengthen long-term local commitment and buy-in. Co-developing strategies with diverse coalitions that include workers, unions, employers, Indigenous communities, community organizations, and municipal leaders fosters trust and shared ownership of the economic path ahead.

Proactive, co-ordinated skills development works best when it builds on local strengths and assets, and opens pathways into new and growing industries. Workers often already have skills that can be adapted to emerging sectors. Examples include oil and gas workers moving into offshore wind through Denmark's Offshore Academy, and auto mechanics retraining in the United Kingdom's Electric and Hybrid Vehicle Training Centre.

Short, modular training programs like these reduce financial barriers, and build on workers' experience to turn existing skills into new opportunities. Canadian coastal regions with shipbuilding, offshore oil and gas, or other maritime experience could similarly adapt existing assets and skills to accelerate a transition to offshore wind; Nova Scotia's Wind West proposal, for instance, offers an opportunity to proactively integrate skills development into a broader economic agenda.

Social supports are not a "nice to have," but need to be included in the design of interventions appropriately. Flexible employment insurance, paid training, childcare, mental health support, financial counselling, and other wraparound services make it possible for people and communities to participate in, and take up, new opportunities. Examples from Denmark, Spain, and the United States show how integrating social protections and supportive services with workforce strategies can improve program outcomes, especially in rural and distressed areas.

Strategic place-based industrial planning that attracts new investment and aligns work-

force development with regional economic diversification can help spur community renewal. International examples include Future Made in Australia investments, and Spain's investment incentives tied to Just Transition Agreements. These provide potential roadmaps for Canadian communities such as Cape Breton in Nova Scotia, and Estevan, Sask., that are shifting from coal power to offshore wind and small modular reactors.

Combined, these elements help ensure that workers and communities can fully participate in and benefit from major projects and the jobs, infrastructure, and community assets they bring. These benefits are greatest when communities are supported with the appropriate technical, financial, and administrative tools and when strategies are continuously monitored and adapted to changing realities on the ground.

The Sustainable Jobs Action Plan is an opportunity for Canada to retool for a fast-changing world. By aligning place-based skills development with industrial planning, and pairing it with real social supports and local capacity, major projects can maximize local benefits, strengthen national competitiveness, and make every "nation-building" project an investment in long-term community resilience, too.

Shaimaa Yassin is senior research director at the Institute for Research on Public Policy. Abigail Jackson is research associate at the Institute for Research on Public Policy. Noel Baldwin is executive director of the Future Skills Centre.
The Hill Times

COMMENT

Venezuela strikes are nothing but performative murder

We are all back in the 19th century when the Western Hemisphere was the exclusive domain of the U.S.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—“If you’re on a boat full of cocaine or fentanyl or whatever, headed to the United States, you’re an immediate threat to the United States,” U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in September. So it’s perfectly reasonable for the American armed forces to kill everybody on that boat (including a “double tap” on any survivors in the water).

That’s a good place to start unraveling what the Trump administration is really up to because it is literally impossible for a motorboat off the coast of Venezuela to be heading to the U.S. All 22 boats destroyed, and all 87 people killed by American missiles were going somewhere—or more likely many different places—but the U.S. was not one of them.

The shortest distance between the Maracaibo region of Venezuela and the Florida Keys, the nearest bit of the U.S., is about 1,000 nautical miles. Most of the boats are twin outboards of various designs, so their maximum fuel capacity cannot be much more than 200 gallons.

Assuming that the boats have 125-horsepower motors, and are doing 20 knots (seems about right, from the drone footage), they will run out of fuel after something between 120 and 200 nautical miles. So they will need to stop between five and eight times to refuel. That’s a major nuisance because it would mean many detours and many different customs to clear.

Alternatively, they could just fill lots of jerry cans and carry at least 1,000 gallons of extra fuel on the boat. Unfortunately, 1,000 gallons of fuel weighs about three tonnes, which is a lot more than those boats are built to carry.

This is basically a stupid idea, and definitely not the way that drugs reach the U.S.

Everybody who grew up in countries where they teach basic geography knows that, and so do many Americans. But even if U.S. President Donald Trump does plan to escalate to air strikes on Venezuela (as he says he will) or an actual invasion of the country (not yet confirmed), why would he start by killing random people in small boats?

It is performative murder, and the intended audience is not just Venezuelans. We are all back in the 19th century when the Western Hemisphere was the exclusive domain of the U.S. As then-American secretary of state Richard Olney said in 1895, citing the Monroe Doctrine: “The United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law.”

Since the other people who share “the Americas” with the U.S.—from Canadians to Chileans and Argentines—have grown unfamiliar with this perspective, they have to be reminded of it. Indeed, they have to be re-taught it, and how better than by giving the uppity Venezuelans a good thrashing? Not only instructive, but enjoyable, as well.

Trumpworld is going to be a place in which the great powers do what they want, limited only by the strength of other great powers, while the lesser countries do what they are told. If you prefer that in a more diplomatic format, it’s all there in this week’s U.S. *National Security Strategy*—33 pages setting out how the Trump administration sees the world.

The Western Hemisphere section offers us a “Trump Corollary” to the old Monroe Doctrine: “After years of neglect, the United States will assert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine to restore American preeminence, and to protect our homeland and our access to key geographies throughout the region.” (“Key geographies”? Hmm. Like mines and stuff, maybe?)

“We will deny non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to ... own or control strategically vital resources in our Hemisphere. This ‘Trump Corollary’ to the Monroe Doctrine is a common-sense and potent restoration of American power and priorities, consistent with American security interests.”

There’s no need to read between the lines. It’s right there on the page: “We’ll do what we want, and you’ll do what we want, too.” But, for slow learners, the U.S. armed forces will be staging a series of demonstrations in and around Venezuela in the coming days. Stay tuned.



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, left, President Donald Trump, and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth. Trumpworld is going to be a place in which the great powers do what they want, limited only by the strength of other great powers, while the lesser countries do what they are told, writes Gwynne Dyer. *White House photograph by Daniel Torok*

If this analysis is right, then we may have an answer to the question “why bother?” that normally bedevils debates about a U.S. invasion of Venezuela. After all, nobody really needs its oil, and nobody in the Trump administration gives a toss about bringing justice, democracy, or “freedom” to Venezuelans.

But if Trump—or whoever is doing the thinking for him—needs a horrible example of what happens to any country that

defies the U.S., Venezuela will do fine. In that context, some performative murders as an opening act for the main event makes perfectly good sense.

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

The Hill Times

THE HILL TIMES CAREERS

Senior Advisor, Government Relations (Telework/Hybrid) JR00006236



Position Title:
Senior Advisor, Government Relations (Telework/Hybrid)

Status of Employment:
Permanent

Position Language Requirement:
English, French

Language Skills:
English (Reading - C - Advanced), English (Speaking - C - Advanced), English (Writing - B - Intermediate), French (Reading - C - Advanced), French (Speaking - C - Advanced), French (Writing - B - Intermediate)

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NEWS

Surge in lost public property sees total federal losses reach \$730.4-million for 2024-25

Public property losses increased almost tenfold between 2023-24 and 2024-25—once again driven by a natural disaster—to total \$374.8-million.

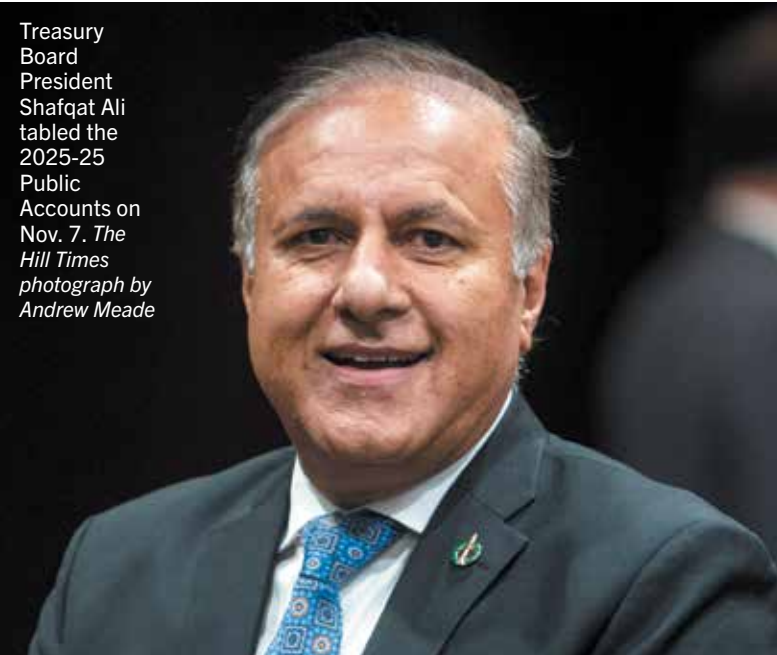
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version of which was tabled in the House of Commons by Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali (Brampton—Chinguacousy Park, Ont.) on Nov. 7.

The feds brought in almost \$511-million in revenue in 2024-25, but missed out on another \$10.2-million due to “fraud of willful misrepresentation.” That’s down from the notable high of \$252.9-million in lost revenue reported in 2023-24, and the almost \$14.3-million in lost revenue flagged for 2022-23, thus marking the lowest level reported in the last 10 years of Public Accounts.

Revenue losses for 2024-25 include almost \$5.9-million related to the GST/HST, of which an estimated \$4.9-million is tied to cases still before the courts, and roughly \$2.7-million is related to income tax payments, of which \$261,280 is still before the courts.

Public money losses, which can range from fraudulent benefit claims to overpayments to service vendors, and more, totalled \$345.3-million in 2024-25, down



Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali tabled the 2025-25 Public Accounts on Nov. 7. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

roughly 4.1 per cent overall from the \$360-million reported the year prior.

Employment and Social Development—which oversees Employment Insurance, Old Age Security, Canada Pension Plan, and Canada Student Loan claims—once again reported the highest level of public money losses at \$284.2-million, an increase of almost 14 per cent from the \$249.4-million in such losses reported by the department last year.

Some 95,556 cases of fraudulent EI benefit claims contributed a total of \$279.2-million in lost money, of which only \$59.5-million has been recovered, with all but \$59,779 expected to ulti-

mately be returned. Next highest were the 258 cases of fraudulent student loan claims totalling \$4.6-million, of which only \$548,169 has so far been recovered, with almost \$1.4-million not expected to be returned.

Supplanting the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in the No. 2 spot in the category for 2024-25 was Public Works and Government Services, which reported a total of almost \$46.1-million in lost public money. The year prior, Public Works had ranked third.

Canada’s Receiver General, which issues payments on behalf of federal departments and agencies, falls under Public Works, and among the money losses reported by the department for 2024-25 are 8,221 cases of misdirected electronic payments valued at roughly \$12-million, all but \$3.9-million of which is expected to be reclaimed (with \$6.6-million already back in the feds’ hands). Almost all of the roughly \$31.6-million in money lost due to 9,904 cases of “forged or fraudulent endorsement of payment instruments or other” reported by the department for the fiscal year has already been reclaimed, with just \$203,947 not expected to be returned.

Public property losses surged tenfold from just \$36.5-million in 2023-24 to \$374.8-million for 2024-25—a roughly 926.7-per-cent jump, and the highest level in the last decade. The next-highest year in the last 10 was 2022-23 when public property losses totalled \$236.6-million, largely as a result of federal property damages incurred on the East Coast as a result of Hurricane Fiona. The most recent year’s jump is once again due to a natural disaster: the Jasper wildfire.

Across the different property loss categories, the largest increases between 2023-24 and 2024-25 were seen in relation to federal buildings or other real property; Crown vehicles or other transportation; and other



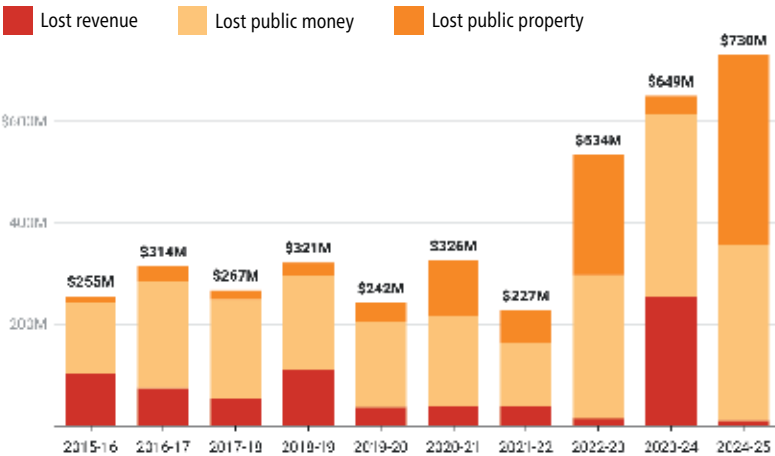
telecommunications, informatics, or electronic equipment. Also contributing to the spike was the loss of a “pharmaceutical product inventory” reported by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and valued at \$20.4-million.

PHAC has said the loss is tied to “a single incident experienced by the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile in December 2024, and involved a drug that can be used to treat a biological threat,” which was lost due to “temperature fluctuations in freezer units.”

“The impacted product could not be recovered as the drug needs to be maintained at a specific temperature at all times to retain integrity,” said the department in an email. “While we cannot provide further details as to the nature of the product, we can confirm that PHAC is replenishing the drug, and the incident has not affected Canada’s ability to

Public Accounts: lost revenue, public money, and property

This chart lists total lost revenue, public money and property reported by federal departments over the last decade, from the 2015-16 fiscal year up to 2024-25.



Source: Public Accounts of Canada

2025 Public Accounts—Lost property, totals by category						
Category	# Stolen/ Vandalized	\$ Stolen/ Vandalized	# Lost/ Damaged	\$ Lost/ Damaged	Overall Total #	Overall Total \$
Materials, tools, or supplies	95	\$87,037	1,739	\$2,324,476	1,832	\$2,411,513
Crown vehicles or other transportation equipment	306	\$1,693,763	888	\$32,900,508	1,194	\$34,594,271
Computers, tablets, or laptops	136	\$167,938	1,199	\$1,081,021	1,325	\$1,248,959
Cell phones	170	\$164,329	1,200	\$1,127,719	1,370	\$1,292,048
Other telecommunications, informatic, or electronic equipment	216	\$743,825	2,568	\$10,092,163	2,784	\$10,835,988
Machinery, equipment, furniture, and furnishings	1,745	\$468,698	1,999	\$3,857,519	3,744	\$4,326,217
Access card or security badge	78	\$1,201	2,093	\$30,359	2,171	\$31,560
Buildings or real property	3,761	\$1,724,082	695	\$297,549,812	4,455	\$299,273,894
Weapons and accessories	4	\$5,875	2,919	\$64,009	2,923	\$69,884
Uniform	36	\$8,329	653	\$80,395	689	\$88,724
Combat outfits	15	\$1,105	2,063	\$227,755	2,078	\$228,860
Miscellaneous	1	\$6	13	\$20,439,973	14	\$20,439,979
TOTAL	6,563	\$5,066,188	18,029	\$369,775,709	24,579	\$374,841,897

Source: 2025 Public Accounts of Canada

NEWS



Roughly \$282.1-million in public property damages due to the Jasper wildfire were reported by Parks Canada as part of the 2024-25 Public Accounts. Photograph courtesy of Jasper National Park

respond to that threat as overall capability has been maintained.”

The incident has caught the attention of Conservative health critic Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, Man.), whose office confirmed he intends to call for an investigation into the matter in the “near future.” Health Minister Marjorie Michel’s (Papineau, Que.) office has said the minister is aware, and is working with PHAC “to ensure such an incident can be prevented in the future.”

The highest increase in losses across all categories was in terms of damage—accidental or otherwise—to federal buildings and other real property, which reached \$299.3-million in 2024-25 compared to just \$11.6-million the year prior.

Parks Canada reported the bulk of these losses at \$285.2-million, all but \$55,452 of which was tied to 26 cases of accidental damage. Most significant among them was roughly \$282.1-million in damages to Parks Canada buildings and other real property due to the Jasper, Alta., wildfire, which began in July 2024.

Ultimately sweeping through 33,000 hectares of the Athabasca Valley, it destroyed an estimated 30 per cent of structures in the town of Jasper, forcing more than 20,000 residents to evacuate. Some 255 Parks Canada “infrastructure assets were destroyed or damaged during the wildfire,” of which 132 were deemed a total loss, as noted in the agency’s 2024 annual report for Jasper National Park.

Parks Canada said roughly \$155.7-million in damages was related to buildings (for its operations, staff housing, and for public use), \$63.3-million to roadways, \$27.4-million to bridges (including culverts and pedestrian bridges), \$20.5-million to grounds (including camping areas and trails), \$7.6-million to utilities systems, and almost \$7.5-million to “other.”

Second in the category was Fisheries and Oceans Canada, which reported a total of almost \$9-million in damage or vandalism to federal buildings or other

real property. All but \$42,425 of that total was tied to 11 cases of accidental damage valued at \$8.9-million.

According to the department, those 11 cases “mostly involved small craft harbour infrastructure such as wharves, docks, and breakwaters.”

The most notable such incident was a June 2024 fire at the Grande-Entrée harbour in Quebec’s Magdalen Islands, which caused an estimated \$8.75-million in damages to federal property. Along with damages to the wharf, five local fishing boats were destroyed in the incident.

Incidents of lost, stolen, damaged, and vandalized Crown vehicles and other transport totalled \$34.6-million in 2024-25, up from \$9.5-million the year prior.

For the most recent fiscal year, that total includes 306 cases of theft or vandalism valued at almost \$1.7-million, and 888 cases

of accidental loss or damage valued at \$32.9-million.

The Department of National Defence (DND) leads the pack in this category, with 11 cases of loss or damage contributing a \$25.5-million hit to the bottom line, along with one case of theft or vandalism valued at \$225,000. By comparison, in 2023-24, DND reported just \$212,398 in losses in this category. According to DND, the one case of reported theft was an armoured SUV that “was reported stolen during an operation.”

“The vehicle did not contain any military assets,” said the department, which declined to provide further details citing “security reasons.”

On the accidental side of things, the bulk of the \$25.5-million reported by DND this year was tied to two incidents: major damages sustained to a Polaris aircraft following an accident on



The office Conservative health critic Dan Mazier says he will be calling for an investigation into the losses at the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

a U.S. Air Force base in Guam in July 2023 valued at \$15.1-million, and a Cormorant helicopter that crashed at the airport in Gander, N.L., during a 2022 training mission valued at \$10.4-million and reported as part of the 2024-25 books.

The RCMP, which reported the highest losses tied to Crown vehicles and other transport in 2023-24 at \$7.3-million, came second in the category in the most recent fiscal year, with \$6.1-million in such losses. That includes 166 cases involving theft or vandalism valued at \$1.1-million, and 533 cases of accidental loss or damage valued at almost \$5-million. The RCMP did not respond to *The Hill Times’* questions about the losses by publication deadline.

Looking to other telecommunications, informatics, or electronic equipment, losses in this category jumped from about \$1.2-million overall in 2023-24 to \$10.8-million in the most recent fiscal year. Shared Services topped this category with a total of \$9.1-million in such losses reported, including 16 cases of theft or vandalism valued at \$676,325, and 16 cases of accidental loss or damage valued at almost \$8.5-million.

According to Shared Services, that tally is the result of its 2022-23 “comprehensive asset validation exercise,” focused on assets acquired or put in operation between 2011 and 2018, to align its “financial records with [its] actual inventory.”

“These figures do not represent losses from a single incident or physical damage. Instead, they reflect the value of assets that have been decommissioned, are outdated, or could not be accounted for,” said the agency in an email. “Examples include IT cabling, support equipment routers, mainframe and server components, communications equipment, switches, routers, firewalls, and air-conditioning units.”

While it ranks near the bottom of the pack in terms of the value of overall losses, there was a notable jump in lost combat outfits—all reported by DND—in 2024-25 at \$228,860 compared to \$140,333 the year prior. Largely driving that increase were 2,063 cases of accidental loss or damage, altogether valued at \$227,755.

Other property loss categories that increased in cost in 2024-25 compared to the year prior were: materials, tools, or supplies, which totalled \$2.4-million compared to roughly \$1-million in 2023-24; access card or security badges, at \$31,560 compared to \$27,753 the year before; weapons and accessories, at \$69,884 compared to \$28,897; and uniforms, losses of which totalled \$88,724 compared to \$37,870 in 2023-24.

Three categories saw decreases in costs incurred as a result of lost public property in 2024-25: computers, tablets, or laptops, which dropped from almost \$1.8-million in 2023-24 to \$1.2-million; cell phones, which went from \$1.4-million to \$1.3-million in 2024-25; and machinery, equipment, furniture, and furnishings, which dropped from \$9.7-million to \$4.3-million in the most recent fiscal year.

Overall, there were 6,563 cases of theft or vandalism of public property valued at almost \$5.1-million in 2024-25—of which \$3.9-million is not expected to be recovered—and 18,029 cases of accidental loss or damage valued at roughly \$369.8-million, of which \$359.6-million isn’t expected to be recouped.

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The Hill Times graphic

NEWS

Two ‘Conservative leaders,’ one bank vault, and zero leaks: Poilievre’s gallery dinner surprise

This Hour Has 22 Minutes’ Poilievre impersonator Chris Wilson shares how the Opposition Leader’s Office landed its double punchline.

Continued from page 1

Hill Times, noting that the most challenging part of writing the speech had been managing his schedule for the TV show and finding moments to write in the short time frame.

Thankfully, Wilson had help from *22 Minutes’* team of writers, whom he said helped “cobble it together” during their lunch breaks over the next few days, before sending it back to the OLO for review.

Other than suggesting the initial format—with Wilson first on stage to do his impersonation before being interrupted by the man himself—and a request to review the final draft to ensure he and Poilievre weren’t doubling up on the same jokes, there were few notes or limits placed on what jokes made it into the final speech, the actor said.

The only joke that Poilievre requested be removed from the speech was one about Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich–Gulf Islands, B.C.) as Poilievre had written one of his own, Wilson said.

Sources within the OLO who spoke with *The Hill Times* on background said Poilievre wrote most of his own jokes with input from his director of communications, Katy Merrifield, who had first pitched the idea to her boss shortly after joining his office last June, and who also contacted *22 Minutes* with the pitch. They added that while the decision to have Poilievre deliver his speech had been made months before, the plan was only set in motion just days before the dinner to avoid ruining the surprise in a town known for being full of leaks.

Both Poilievre and Merrifield declined interview requests from *The Hill Times*.

In a statement to *The Hill Times*, Parliamentary Press Gallery president Mia Rabson confirmed that the gallery “received word a few days before” regarding the plan for the sketch. The night’s emcee, *Le Journal de Québec’s* Guillaume St-Pierre, also confirmed he had only learned of Poilievre’s attendance on Nov. 26.

Rabson said the gallery sends invitations to party lead-



22 Minutes’ Chris Wilson opened his speech with a joke about mistaking his notes with the long ballot from Poilievre’s Battle River–Crowfoot byelection. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



Katy Merrifield, OLO director of communications, right, and Sam Lilly, media relations manager, were both in attendance on Nov. 29, alongside the party’s new campaign manager and several members of caucus. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



Wilson, left, and Poilievre rehearse their Press Gallery Dinner sketch in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building’s former bank vault as guests enjoyed their dinners upstairs. Photograph courtesy of John Lehman

ers months in advance, and had not received confirmation from Poilievre before that week, but had remained hopeful he would participate despite his previous absences.

“The gallery was pleased that all the party leaders attended at least part of the event this year. In the future, we would hope all party leaders will attend the entire event,” Rabson wrote in a statement. “The gallery dinner is an important evening for the [PPG], and we much prefer it when all the parties are represented by their leaders and as many members of Parliament as possible.”

However, both Poilievres were technically in attendance for a portion of the dinner, though they weren’t physically present in the ballroom as both had been snuck

into the Sir John A. Macdonald Building just after 8:30 p.m., and kept hidden in their own very special greenroom: the building’s old bank vault.

“I had just been on a flight, and that was less security,” Wilson said of the RCMP checks he had to pass to get into the building through the back door.

For the next roughly 90 minutes, both Poilievres got in some last-minute rehearsals, particularly the mirrored apple bite, which they had practiced together for the first time just hours before during their first face-to-face meeting inside a conference room at the Holiday Inn Express on King Edward Avenue.

Wilson said that, while the general rule for his impressions is that they should be the kind he is

comfortable delivering directly to the subject, he was still nervous about meeting Poilievre.

“I had been playing this guy, assuming I’d never meet him face to face,” Wilson said, but added that since it had been Poilievre’s idea, there was a decent chance he was going to be a “good sport” about it. Wilson also noted that he may have benefited from his impersonation of former prime minister Justin Trudeau, which he believes was, at times, far harsher than his Poilievre.

Ironically, Wilson explained that the key to both impressions is a fixation on Trudeau.

When Wilson was first approached to do the Poilievre impression just over a year after joining *22 Minutes* in 2020, he said he hadn’t previously been

very familiar with him, but became a quick study of his mannerisms and voice. While it was initially suggested to him by head writer Jordan Foisy that he play him like *The Simpsons’* character Milhouse Van Houten, Wilson said the basis of his impression is centred on a particular “disdain” for Trudeau, more akin to that of famous Homer-hater Frank Grimes.

“My cue word was ‘Justin,’” Wilson explained, transitioning seamlessly into his Poilievre impression on the final word.

However, Wilson’s nerves were eased upon meeting Poilievre, whom Wilson said was confident the sketch would be “a lot of fun” for everyone involved, recalling that the politician predicted the audience would “lose their minds.”

Hours before the dinner, Poilievre was still working to maintain the charade and was considering posting to social media that he would be spending the night “pulling out my own fingernails” at home, as it would be a more enjoyable experience than attending the dinner, Wilson recalled.

In the lead-up to the dinner, the OLO informed inquiring journalists that Poilievre would not be “attending the dinner.” Even journalists seated with Conservative caucus members or OLO staffers told *The Hill Times* they were caught off guard when the real Poilievre took to the stage, despite early rumours circulating at the beginning of the night that he would be making an appearance.

Wilson said he wasn’t confident how the sketch would land, but said it had been “surreal” to walk out to a minor standing ovation for a “fake Pierre.”

“That’s when I was like, ‘Oh, this is going to go great,’” Wilson said.

Despite some remaining nerves over having to follow Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.), in hindsight, “luckily, I didn’t have to follow the NDP guy,” Wilson said of New Democrat interim Leader Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.).

“It was so tight, so funny, so many jokes,” Wilson said.

While Poilievre has rebuffed the press gallery dinner in all previous years since becoming party leader, observers have suggested that his appearance may be a concrete attempt at a “new tone,” as referenced in his closing punchline at the dinner.

In a social media post the day after the dinner, Merrifield thanked *22 Minutes*, Wilson, and Rabson for the collaboration on a “hilarious evening with my Boss and [Poilievre].”

“Let’s all bring the humour, crack the jokes, [and] have the fun,” Merrifield wrote. “Politics needs more of it.”

In response to emailed questions about whether the gallery can expect more from Poilievre at future dinners, Merrifield declined to comment, but said she was “very pleased” with how his appearance was received.

“Everyone got to see the hilarious side of Poilievre, which I’m fortunate to experience every day,” Merrifield told *The Hill Times*.

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Chief says feds' engagement with First Nations 'needs to improve' after 'very limited' contact on major projects

'If First Nations need to challenge some of these processes, we will do that if necessary,' says Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Grand Chief Kyra Wilson.

Continued from page 1

"very limited" on a major project proposed in that province.

"There's a lot more work that needs to be done in terms of consultation; duty to consult; free, prior, and informed consent," Kyra Wilson, grand chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, said in an interview with *The Hill Times* at the Assembly of First Nations' (AFN) special chiefs assembly, explaining that engagement with First Nations in her province has been "very limited" thus far.

Consultation "has not really occurred to the extent" that it should have, she said, pointing to the province's Port of Churchill project, which the feds referred to the Major Projects Office (MPO) in its first list of projects on Sept. 11.

Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew, who is himself Anishinaabe, supports the project. Kinew, who has committed to creating a Crown-Indigenous corporation for consultation between Manitoba and Indigenous leaders on major projects in their territories, met with Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) on Nov. 16, where he said the project was a "major priority." A joint statement from that day reads that the project will be "[r]ooted in partnership with Indigenous Peoples."

Wilson made note of that dialogue between the federal and provincial governments.

"But the thing is, the province of Manitoba does not speak for First Nations leadership, and they do not speak for First Nations people within the province."

"Canada is wanting to have the provinces lead these discussions," she added, "and we know that hasn't worked, and it won't work, and so we are making it very clear that First Nations leadership and the communities are going to be making these decisions."

The Port of Churchill project is not the only proposed project



Prime Minister Mark Carney, right, and Assembly of First Nations National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak met with First Nations chiefs at a summit in Ottawa on Dec. 2. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to spark concern from communities around the level of federal engagement. Most recently, Carney signed an energy deal with Alberta, laying out a path for a pipeline project running from Alberta's oilpatch to British Columbia's coast. That memorandum of understanding (MOU) also opens the door for the pipeline to be submitted to the MPO by July 1, 2026.

Coastal First Nations in B.C. have said they were not properly consulted and denounced the agreement, which also says that should the MPO approve the pipeline, Canada could make an "adjustment" to the oil tanker ban in place on the west coast "if necessary."

Carney pledges to meet First Nations leaders in new year

On Dec. 2, chiefs gathered for the AFN's annual special assembly in Ottawa voted unanimously to adopt a resolution calling for the withdrawal of the agreement.

AFN National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak said the unanimous support demonstrates that First Nations are united.

"We've seen through the assembly that even though our rights are, again, under attack in new ways, First Nations are stronger than ever, very united on many, many fronts," she said in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

At the assembly, Carney sought to quell some of those fears. He promised to meet with Coastal B.C. First Nations, and also pledged to hold a meeting with federal, territorial, provincial, and First Nations leadership in the new year, where he said chiefs will "set the agenda."

Wilson said she is "hopeful for this meeting," adding that First Nations need to be "prepared" to "ensure that we see some action and tangible results."

Woodhouse Nepinak also said she is "glad" Carney will meet with B.C. nations, adding that she hopes the federal-provincial-territorial meeting will "reset some parts of the relationship."

"We're not going to fix everything with a one-day meeting, but we can begin to start to find a path forward together between First Nations [and] the provinces in this country," she said.

Historically, First Nations have been largely excluded from the meetings, Woodhouse Nepinak explained.

"We see year after year that ... the federal-provincial-territorial meetings happen over and over every year on every issue. First Nations are allowed in for an hour the day before, and then they're kind of kicked out," she said. "And I think things have to change."

'Very different' approach to talks, says strategist

Olivier Cullen, director of strategy for Blackbird Strategies and a former chief of staff to then-minister of Indigenous Services Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Ont.), said the current government's approach to consultation is "very different" than the previous Liberal government under Justin Trudeau.

"Our clients and others feel as though there's a bit of a new gatekeeping element where the access just isn't there in the same way that it was before," Cullen said in an interview, adding that

"jamming [Bill] C-5 through" was "perhaps a bit of a misstep," as it "didn't start that new relationship on the most positive way."

The Liberals' controversial legislation, passed into law in late June as the Building Canada Act, grants Parliament the authority to fast-track projects considered in the national interest. The legislation has sparked concerns among some First Nations leadership who fear it could be used to impose projects on their territories.

But in his remarks, Carney highlighted that the engagement thus far with the MPO does not count as consultation. He said consultation "only starts once projects are referred as possibilities to the Major Projects Office," adding that the Building Canada Act commits that there "must be consultation, consistent with free, prior, and informed consent before a project can be designated in Canada's national interest."

Though two rounds of projects have been referred to the MPO, none of them have yet been granted national-interest status—something the prime minister highlighted in his remarks.

MPO CEO Dawn Farrell told MPs her office is working on "a number" of projects to see if they would be granted the status, saying that would happen "in the next year or so," during a Nov. 17 House Environment Committee meeting.

Woodhouse Nepinak reiterated that First Nations support development, and that was clear during the assembly.

"We were very clear: First Nations support economic development," she said. "They support prosperity for all, but not at the expense of our rights."

Cullen echoed Woodhouse Nepinak, saying the government is "side-stepping" consultation and engagement.

"These communities and organizations are not a barrier to getting things done, but they will be a [barrier] to getting things done if there isn't the level of conversation that needs to be had," he said.

"We heard during the election ... that this was going to a government that was all about building big things," he also said, "so that part didn't come as a surprise. But what comes as a surprise is the process by which these things are happening."

Cullen said there have been a lot of good words from the government—pointing to the commitment to free, prior, and informed consent in the Throne Speech, as well as Carney's remarks at the assembly—but "we haven't seen it in action."

Woodhouse Nepinak said she wants to "give [the government] the benefit of the doubt that they're going to do the right thing."

"I do lift up the prime minister for ... coming to see us," she said.

"I think they're realizing that they could create all the MOU offices that they want, they can create any entity that they want ... but there's no getting around rights holders."

Hodgson comments 'quite disrespectful,' says Cullen

Cullen added that Indigenous communities are not afraid of "using every tool that they have at their disposal," including the court system. He noted that there are "a lot" of court challenges, some legacy and some new.

"We're trying to ... speed through the process, but in doing so it's really actually going to slow things down," he said.

"If First Nations need to challenge some of these processes, we will do that if necessary," Wilson also said, adding she remains "hopeful" that the way engagement and consultation takes place will improve.

Energy Minister Tim Hodgson (Markham—Thornhill, Ont.) recently came under fire for saying "it's called Zoom" on CBC's *Power & Politics* in response to a question about First Nations' concerns that a meeting was too short notice. The minister met with AFN's B.C. regional chiefs on Dec. 4, but he did not speak at the AFN assembly after being removed from the agenda the morning he was scheduled to speak.

"It's all part of the same problem," Cullen said of Hodgson's remarks.

"There's a proper respectful way to do things, and we just haven't seen it. ... And when ministers say things like that that just sound very flippant, it's really, honestly, it's quite disrespectful."

Woodhouse Nepinak said the AFN "encourage[s] ministers to come face to face," noting that some First Nations communities don't have internet access.

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OPINION

Steel tariff missteps threaten Canada's energy future

Without the domestic capacity, this new measure will instead drive up costs, delay critical infrastructure, and undermine the clean energy transition.

Vittoria Bellissimo & Fernando Melo



Opinion

A well-intentioned tariff policy is about to create serious problems. Renewable energy projects worth billions of dollars are at risk. Indigenous and local communities could lose major economic opportunities. And building the electricity infrastructure Canada needs will become significantly more expensive.

On Nov. 26, the federal government announced a sweeping 25-per-cent tariff on imported wind towers and other steel-based products. The goal is to strengthen domestic manufacturing in response to United States trade pressure. Prime Minister Mark Carney has said Canada must become its own best customer. This is a worthy ambition Canadians can rally behind, and the Canadian Renewable Energy Association (CanREA) has been advocating for two years for a bonus under the Clean Economy Investment Tax Credits for companies buying made-in-Canada components.

But without the domestic capacity, this tariff will instead drive up costs, delay critical infrastructure, and undermine the clean energy transition Canada needs to remain competitive.

This policy needs an urgent overhaul. Here's why:

1. Domestic manufacturing cannot meet demand. Canada does not have the wind turbine manufacturing capacity needed to power its economy from coast to coast. The Canadian International Trade Tribunal confirmed this in 2023: logistics make it nearly impossible to ship turbines built in Quebec further west than Ontario. Tariffs may eventually incentivize new manufacturers, especially if they are coupled with bigger tax credits for Canadian-made cleantech. But without industry input and a phased approach, they will raise costs and risk current project execution in the short term.

• Tariffs slow the race to electrify. Canada needs to build the electricity infrastructure needed for tomorrow's economy, including electric vehicles, data centres, the mining industry, and clean manufacturing. Wind energy is one of the fastest, least expensive options available. But a tariff on wind turbine towers will add tens of millions of dollars to individual project costs, and these extra costs flow directly to those who pay for electricity: families and businesses. Even

major industrial consumers like steel producers will face higher power costs—hardly an incentive for the new domestic manufacturing the tariff is supposed to create.

• Risk and uncertainty drive away investment. Renewable developers plan supply chains years in advance. Towers and components ordered long ago under existing trade rules now face a sudden 25-per-cent tariff. That means cost overruns of tens of millions of dollars per project, potential project cancellations, and job losses. Indigenous and local communities who are equity partners and co-owners in renewable projects will bear these impacts directly. Meanwhile, major electricity procurements in Ontario and British Columbia have deadlines in December and January. Contracts have been signed across the country with utilities, governments, and system operators. Developers cannot redesign billion-dollar projects on a month's notice. The federal government must establish a remission process to exempt projects that are already contracted, under construction or in the final stages of approval.

• Tariffs may backfire on supply chain goals. Instead of encouraging domestic production, these tariffs could push buyers toward cheaper Asian tower and product suppliers despite higher shipping costs, rather than European manufacturers. That concentrates supply chains rather than diversifying them—an unintended consequence that undermines the resilience the government needs.

Canada's renewable energy industry wants to work with our government to build a stronger, more resilient economy. We share that goal. But the current approach threatens to cancel and delay critical projects, raise costs for Canadian families and shake investor confidence in the electricity sector's ability to power our evolving economy.

The fix is straightforward: consult industry before implementing tariffs, phase them in responsibly, exempt projects already contracted or under construction, and protect Indigenous partners who planned investments in good faith.

Canada can be its own best customer, but not by kneecapping the industries trying to build our energy future. This tariff won't put Canadians back to work, and it won't create new jobs.

Carney's ambition is right. But ambition without careful execution backfires, and implementation details matter. We can choose Canadian steel, but we cannot create a market overnight.

The government must overhaul this steel tariff policy now.

Vittoria Bellissimo is president and CEO of CanREA, leading a member association focused on ensuring that wind energy, solar energy, and energy storage play a central role in transforming Canada's energy mix.

Fernando Melo is CanREA's senior director of public affairs and federal policy, leading federal advocacy work, and supporting members on federal government engagement priorities.

The Hill Times

Reloading Canada's procurement weapon to accelerate innovation, diversification, and resilience



Industry Minister Melanie Joly. Canada cannot foster innovation, diversify markets, raise productivity, or strengthen security with a procurement model optimized for administrative comfort, writes Horatio M. Morgan. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued from **page 13**

high. They include missed opportunities for evidence-based strategic change, especially on trade diversification and defence modernization.

Other jurisdictions have moved ahead. The U.S. and United Kingdom have embraced challenge-based procurement to accelerate innovation in defence and digital services. Finland and Estonia have streamlined processes to empower end users to define problems and co-develop solutions. Canada has experimented with Agile Procurement 3.0, but these pilots remain exceptions rather than the rule.

Meanwhile, our productivity gap widens. Canada continues to rank near the bottom of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development for research and development investment, and we remain over-exposed to concentrated trade with the U.S. Concurrently, some of the most innovative Canadian firms with low bargaining power struggle to secure ownership of intangible assets when innovating in foreign-led value chains. Others struggle to specialize, innovate quickly, and go global at a sufficient scale because they lack early access to large, sophisticated buyers at home.

Procurement can help solve this. But only if we stop treating young and small firms as defective versions of big firms.

What Ottawa must do

To better align procurement with national innovation, diversification, and security priorities, Ottawa must pivot from a compliance fixation to a focus on capability and outcomes. This requires a cultural and structural shift:

• Focus on outcomes, not paperwork. Replace rigid requests for proposal with challenge-based competitions that define the problem and evaluate the solution, not primarily the firm's size or input factors. Agile Procurement pilots show this works, but it must become the default for complex problems.

• Qualify expertise and methodology, not static rosters. Academic entrepreneurs

or expert-led ventures should be assessed on their IP and proven methods. Allow post-award team finalization, so specialists can be assembled after the methodology is approved.

• Measure total value, not just lowest cost. Adopt value-based procurement to prioritize lifecycle impact, innovation potential, and economic development over short-term savings.

• Secure Canadian ownership of intangibles. Contracts should ensure firms retain commercialization rights to IP, turning government spending into exportable assets.

• Increase transparency to widen participation. Publish contract data and performance benchmarks to reduce incumbency lock-in and allow new entrants to compete.

These reforms are not theoretical. They work elsewhere, and have been recommended by Canadian industry groups. What is missing is the political will to scale them.

The bottom line

Canada cannot foster innovation, diversify markets, raise productivity, or strengthen security with a procurement model optimized for administrative comfort. Challenge-based competitions, value-based evaluation, and IP-savvy contracting can turn procurement into a formidable lever. One that is pragmatically calibrated to build national capacity, lower trade risk, and deliver frontier outcomes in defence, AI, and beyond.

Procurement is not just about buying safely; it is about accessing frontier insights to strategically reposition the economy we cannot afford to lose.

Horatio M. Morgan is an economist and associate professor of international strategy and entrepreneurship at the Conrad School of Entrepreneurship and Business in the faculty of engineering at the University of Waterloo, and the author of the upcoming book Asymmetric Advantage (University of Toronto Press).

The Hill Times

FEATURE

Czech Republic marks national day with song

The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia



1. Pianists Mikolaj Warszynski, left, and Zuzana Simurdova; Czech Ambassador Martin Tlapa; and vocalist Whitney Leigh Sloan at a concert to mark the Czech Republic's national day at Knox Presbyterian Church on Oct. 25. **2.** Simurdova, left, and Miloslava Minnes of the Czech Embassy's political and cultural department at post-concert reception at the Embassy. **3.** Czech goulash and sausages were part of the delicious menu for the guests. **4.** Ales Opatrny, deputy head of mission at the Czech Embassy, left; Bulgarian Ambassador Plamen Georgiev; Efi Mouchou, and her husband Markos Tripolitakis, deputy head of mission of the Greek Embassy. **5.** Simurdova and Sloan.

Japanese Embassy delves into cultural diplomacy



1. Japanese Ambassador Kanji Yamanouchi, left, and Davis Jane, vice-president of the International House of Japan's North America office, attend a reception following the Japan-Canada-U.S. Partnership Through Culture and Diplomacy panel discussion at the official residence on Oct. 23. **2.** A variety of sushi was on offer during the reception. **3.** Euijung McGillis, assistant curator, National Gallery of Canada, left; Rie Kijima, assistant professor, Munk school of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto; Colin Robertson, vice-president and fellow, Canadian Global Affairs Institute; Noriko Yamamoto, executive director, Japan Foundation in Toronto; and Matthew Millar, North American Advisory Board member, International House of Japan. **4.** Jane, left; Senator Krista Ross, vice-chair of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group; Yamanouchi; Isabelle Mondou, deputy minister of Canadian Heritage; and Millar. **5.** Yamanouchi delivers remarks.

Hill Climbers

By Laura Ryckewaert



Policy, regional advisers added to Agriculture Minister MacDonald's team

Plus, there are a couple of staffing changes to note in Prime Minister Mark Carney's office, including Hilary Martin's exit.

There's much to catch up on in Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister **Heath MacDonald's** office, including **Serena Smith** taking over as director of policy following **Hilary Peirce's** summer exit from the role.

Hill Climbers' last update on MacDonald's team from mid-June had noted Peirce as director, and Smith as a senior adviser to the minister.

Peirce's LinkedIn profile indicates she's now working as a senior policy analyst with the federal public service.

Prior to joining the agriculture office post-election, Smith had been a senior legal adviser to then-Treasury Board president **Ginette Petitpas Taylor**.

A former associate with Prince Edward Island-based law firms Cox & Palmer, and McLellan Brennan, Smith first landed on the Hill in the spring of 2024 when she was hired as a senior policy adviser to Petitpas Taylor as then-veterans affairs minister.

Smith's CV notes internships with the New Brunswick government, including with the province's attorney general, and time spent as a page at the provincial legislature, among other things. Along with a juris doctor degree from the University of New Brunswick (UNB), Smith studied for a bachelor's degree in social work at St. Thomas University, and a bachelor's in history and political science at UNB.

In another director-level change, **Annie Cullinan**, whom **Climbers** noted was in place as director of communications to MacDonald back in June, left the office—and the Hill—in September. In a LinkedIn post about her exit, Cullinan wrote that she "said goodbye with a heart full of gratitude (and maybe a touch of disbelief

that I now only have one phone)."

"I'm excited to take everything I've learned into this next chapter," she said.

Jennica Klassen has since been hired as communications director to the agriculture minister, having stepped into the role last month. She's most recently been communications manager for the Canadian Meat Council, and previously did communications for the Canadian Pork Council.

Klassen is also a former account manager with Kit Public Affairs in Ottawa, among other past jobs.

As first reported in May, **Guy Gallant** is chief of staff to MacDonald, following roughly four years as chief of staff to **Petitpas Taylor** through her turns as minister for official languages, veterans affairs, and most recently as Treasury Board president. And, as noted in June, **Bradley Henstock** is director of parliamentary affairs to the minister, while **Mikaela Harrison** serves as director of operations.

Currently working on policy under Smith are: **Jeremy Keats**, senior policy adviser; recent hire **Jack Lewis** as a policy adviser; and policy and British Columbia regional adviser **Olwyn Parkinson**.

Keats previously worked in the agriculture office under then-minister **Lawrence MacAulay**.

Keats started out as a Hill assistant to MacAulay as the then-MP for Cardigan, P.E.I., in April 2022, while also working part-time as an administrative assistant in MacAulay's office as then-veterans affairs minister. Keats went with MacAulay to the agriculture portfolio after the July 2023 cabinet shuffle, becoming a policy adviser. He was promoted to senior policy adviser in the office in late 2024.



Jennica Klassen is director of communications to the agriculture minister. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Parkinson joined MacDonald's team in October after completing a six-month internship focused on policy and interprovincial affairs at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Her online resumé includes time spent as a content writer for Farm Radio International, and co-op placements at Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada; Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada; and Indigenous Services Canada, among other things. **Par-**

kinson graduated from the University of Ottawa with a bachelor's degree in international development and globalization last year.

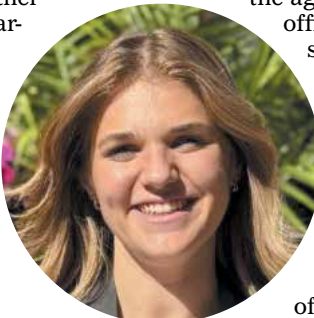
Also added to MacDonald's team in October is **Prairies and North regional adviser Richard Davies**.

Davies is a former constituency assistant to Winnipeg South Centre, Man., Liberal MP **Ben Carr**, and to former Manitoba Liberal MLA **Dougald Lamont**. **Davies** has also worked to support the Manitoba Liberals at the provincial legislature—including almost three years spent as director of research and legislative affairs with its caucus office—and is a past part-time assistant to

MLA **Cindy Lamoureux** (daughter of Liberal MP **Kevin Lamoureux**), and an ex-aide to then-Manitoba Liberal MP **MaryAnn Mihychuk**, among other past jobs.

Jake Godfrey tackles Atlantic regional affairs for the agriculture minister, while **Jason MacDonald** covers the Ontario desk, and **Yasmin Veiga** tackles Quebec regional affairs.

Jason MacDonald has been with the agriculture team since December 2024 when he was hired as an Ontario regional adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to then-minister **MacAulay**. He's since dropped the latter duties. Active with the



Olwyn Parkinson is a policy and B.C. regional adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Ottawa Centre provincial Liberal riding association, his CV includes time spent both working and interning for Liberal MPs. (For those wondering, **Hill Climbers** understands there's no relation between him and the minister.)

Veiga joined the agriculture office this past summer—originally as a special assistant for operations—after briefly covering Atlantic and Quebec regional affairs for new Veterans Affairs Minister **Jill McKnight** post-election. **Veiga** had worked in the veterans office since September 2024; beginning as a special assistant to then-minister **Petitpas Taylor**, she was soon after made a Quebec adviser.

Veiga has also previously interned with Ontario Liberal MP **Iqbal Ghaheer**.

Axandre Lemours continues as a communications adviser with the agriculture office, as he's been since October 2024. **Lemours** previously worked as an administration and communications assistant with the Ottawa Arts Council, and has worked at Liberal Party headquarters in Ottawa tackling both fundraising and national events-related work.

Rounding out the team is special assistant for parliamentary affairs and issues management **George Williams**.

Williams originally joined the agriculture office under his current title in 2023, and before then had been a special assistant for parliamentary affairs to then-trade minister **Mary Ng**. **Williams** had previously worked



Jason MacDonald is an Ontario regional adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Axandre Lemours is a communications adviser to Minister MacDonald. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Kieran McMurchy is now a senior communications adviser in the PMO. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

in Ng's Ontario Liberal MP office, and is also a former assistant to P.E.I. Liberal MP **Robert Morrissey**.

For those counting, that's 14 staff in all currently working for the agriculture minister.

One in, one out for PM Carney's office

There have been a couple of changes to Prime Minister **Mark Carney's** staff roster recently, including the exit of senior manager of research and advertising **Hilary Martin** late last month.

A former Queen's Park staffer and senior consultant with the Earncliffe Strategy Group, **Martin** was first hired to lead the public opinion research team at 80 Wellington St. as a manager under then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau** in 2022. **Martin** was promoted to her most recent title in 2024.

She was kept on in the top office after **Carney** took the Liberal Party helm in March, and again in the post-election staff shakeup this past spring, but was joined by now-PMO director of research and advertising **Rosalie Nadeau**, who previously worked for Data Sciences, the firm founded by **Carney's** now-principal secretary **Tom Pitfield**.

Martin touched on her departure from the office after "[t]wo different governments, one historic election, and many research presentations and ad campaigns" in a recent LinkedIn post.

"I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity I have had to study public opinion at such a crucial time in Canadian politics," she wrote.

In a comment responding to her post, one of **Martin's** PMO predecessor's, **Dan Arnold**, now chief strategy officer at Pollara, lauded her for the "amazing work" she'd done in the office. "I know everyone relied on your advice!" he wrote.

Headed in the other direction is **Kieran McMurchy**, who has been hired as a senior communications adviser in **Carney's** office.

McMurchy is an ex-producer and senior writer with the CBC, including a past writer for CBC's *Power & Politics* show, and spent the last two-and-a-half years, roughly, working as a senior consultant with Navigator in Toronto. **Jane Deeks** is director of communications to **Carney**, whose office is overall run by chief of staff **Marc-André Blanchard**.

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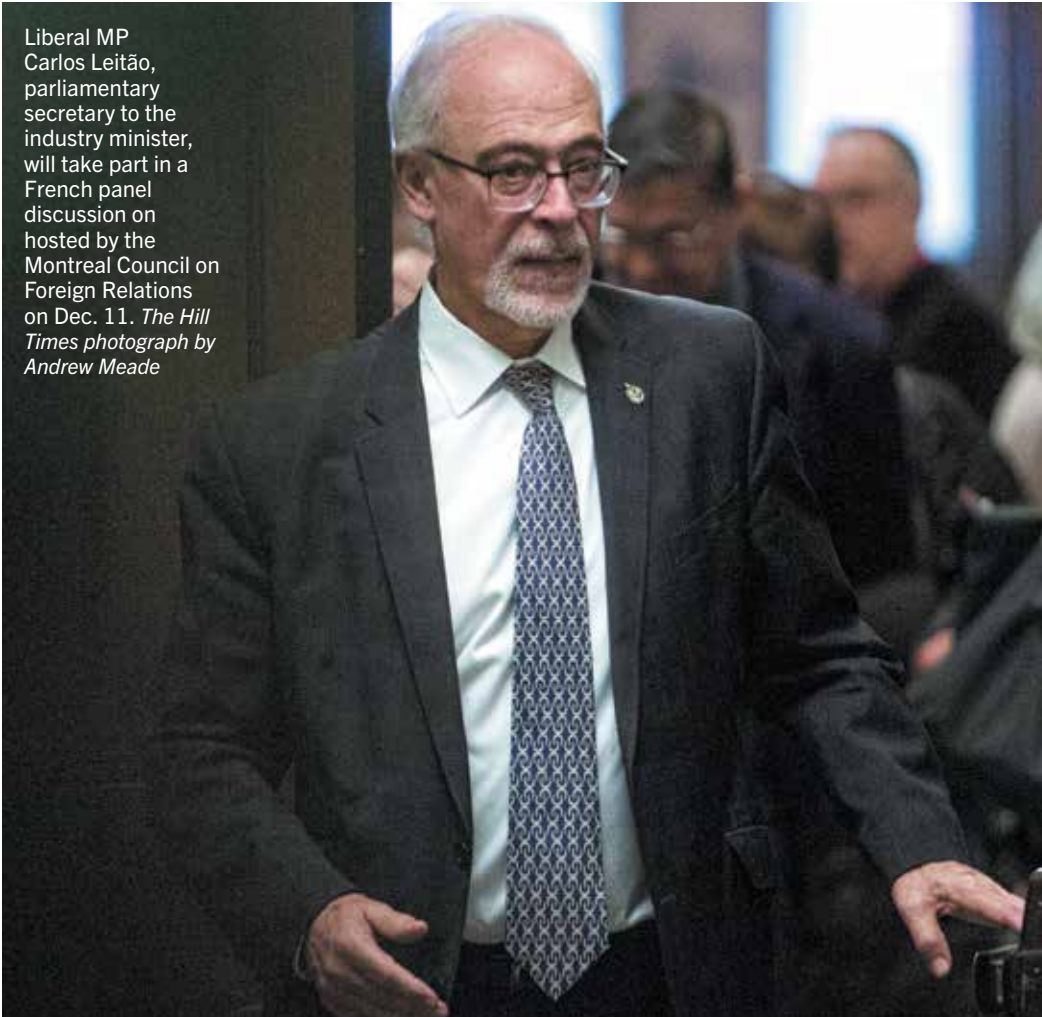


Parliamentary Calendar

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

Parl Sec Carlos Leitão talks globalization under pressure in Montreal on Dec. 11

Liberal MP Carlos Leitão, parliamentary secretary to the industry minister, will take part in a French panel discussion on hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations on Dec. 11. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10

House Schedule—The House of Commons will sit Dec. 8-12. In total, the House will have sat only 73 days this year. Last year, it sat 122 days, and in 2023, it sat 121 days. In 2022, it sat 129 days, and in 2021, it sat 95 days.

Equal Voice Gala 2025—Equal Voice hosts its annual fundraising gala, bringing together leaders from across political, business, and community sectors to support Equal Voice's mission of advancing gender parity and inclusion in political representation. Wednesday, Dec. 10, at 6 p.m. ET in Canada Hall, Rogers Centre Ottawa, 55 Colonel By Dr. Contact: justine@equalvoice.ca.

THURSDAY, DEC. 11

Parl Sec Leitão to Take Part in Panel—Liberal MP Carlos Leitão, parliamentary secretary to the industry minister, will take part in a French panel discussion on "Globalization under pressure: how can we prosper in 2026 in an unstable world?" hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Thursday, Dec. 11, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Le Reine-Elizabeth, 900 Blvd René-Levesque W., Montréal. Register: corim.qc.ca.

Webinar: 'Trump's Middle East Peace Plan'—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute hosts a webinar, "Trump's Peace Plan: Assessing the Future of Canada-U.S. Relations in the Middle

East" featuring Dr. Michael Doran, senior fellow and director, Center for Peace and Security in the Middle East at the Hudson Institute; Dr. Ronen Hoffman, former Israeli ambassador to Canada; and Dr. Casey Babb, director of MLI's Promised Land Program. Thursday, Dec. 11, at 1 p.m. ET happening online. Register via Eventbrite.

'Trump and the Revenge of Geopolitics'—Canada 2020 hosts a discussion on "Trump and the Revenge of Geopolitics" featuring Edward Luce, U.S. national editor and columnist at *The Financial Times*. Thursday, Dec. 11, at 4 p.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details: canada2020.ca.

Book Launch: *Un village au Parlement*—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts the launch of IRPP associate director Valérie Lapointe's new book, *Un village au Parlement: La mobilisation LGBTQ+ dans l'arène partisane canadienne*. This book traces the history of the relationship that the LGBTQ+ movement has built and maintained with political parties in Canada from 1960 to 2019. Thursday, Dec. 11, at 6 p.m. ET at IRPP offices, suite 200, 1470 Peel St., Montreal. Details: irpp.org.

FRIDAY, DEC. 12

Minister Anand to Deliver Remarks—Foreign Minister Anita

Anand will deliver remarks on "Charting Canada's Path on the Global Stage" hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Friday, Dec. 12, at 11:45 a.m. ET in Toronto. RSVP for location details. Register: canadianclub.org.

MONDAY, DEC. 15

GRIC 2025 Holiday Party—The Government Relations Institute of Canada's Board of Directors hosts its 2025 Holiday Party. Enjoy some festive fun with friends and colleagues. Monday, Dec. 15, at 5:30 p.m. ET at Starling Restaurant and Bar, 2nd floor, 54 York St., Ottawa. Tickets: gric-irgc.ca.

Liberal MP Zahid to Attend Fundraiser—Liberal MP Salma Zahid will take part in a party fundraiser hosted by the Scarborough Centre and Don Valley East Federal Liberal Association. Monday, Dec. 15 at 6:30 p.m. ET at the Kennedy Convention Centre, 1199 Kennedy Rd., Scarborough, Ont. Details: liberal.ca.

TUESDAY, DEC. 16

Minister Chartrand to Deliver Remarks—Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs Rebecca Chartrand will deliver remarks at a breakfast event hosted by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 7:30 a.m. CT at the RBC Convention Centre, 375 York Ave., Winnipeg. Register: business.mbchamber.mb.ca.

Bank of Canada Governor to Deliver Remarks—Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem will deliver remarks mainly in French on "Insights on the Canadian Economy," hosted by the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal. Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Palais des congrès de Montréal, 1001 place Jean-Paul-Riopelle. Details: ccmm.ca.

Minister MacKinnon to Deliver Remarks—Transport Minister and Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon will deliver remarks on federal priorities shaping Canada's transportation network, strengthening supply chains, and supporting economic growth at a lunch event hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 11:30 a.m. PT at the Fairmont Waterfront, 900 Canada Pl., Vancouver. Details: boardoftrade.com.

Panel: 'ASEAN-Canada Relations in a Disrupted World'—The Canadian International Council's National Capital Branch hosts a panel, "Finding Our Footing: ASEAN-Canada Relations in a Disrupted World," featuring Malaysia's High Commissioner to Canada Dr. Shazlina Z. Abidin, Indonesia's Ambassador to Canada Muhsin Syihab, and the Philippines' Ambassador to Canada Victor V. Chan-Gonzaga. Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 5:15 p.m. ET at 150 Elgin St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

THURSDAY, DEC. 18

Minister Joly to Deliver Remarks—Rescheduled from Dec. 9, Industry Minister Melanie Joly will deliver remarks in French and English on "Strengthening industrial capacity in a changing world," a breakfast event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Thursday, Dec. 18, at 7:45 a.m. ET in Montreal at a location to be confirmed. Register: corim.qc.ca.

FRIDAY, DEC. 19

Forte Trio in Concert—The Embassy of Kazakhstan in Canada hosts a special performance by Forte Trio, the State Trio of Kazakhstan. One of Kazakhstan's leading chamber ensembles, Forte Trio is known for its expressive musicianship and a unique blend of classical tradition and Kazakh cultural elements. Friday, Dec. 19, at 6 p.m. ET, at the Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre, 290 Lisgar St. RSVP kazakhembassy@gmail.com.

SATURDAY, DEC. 20

Liberal MP Chang to Take Part in Fundraiser—Liberal MP Wade Chang will take part in a fundraising dinner hosted by the Burnaby Central Federal Liberal Association. Saturday, Dec. 20, at 6:30 p.m. PT at Five Sails Restaurant, 999 Canada Pl., Vancouver. Details: liberal.ca.

THURSDAY, JAN. 25, 2026

'Big Stories of 2026 that Will Shape Canada'—The Empire Club hosts "Empire Nights: The Journalists' Forecast – Big Stories of 2026 that Will Shape Canada." *Globe and Mail's* Ottawa bureau chief Bob Fife, *Toronto Star's* Ottawa bureau chief Tonda MacCharles, and Sabrina Nanji, founder and lead journalist with *Queen's Park Observer*, will forecast the big political stories that will shape Canada in the year ahead. Ipsos Public Affairs' Global CEO Darrell Bricker will also take part. Thursday, Jan. 25, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. ET at a location to be announced. Details: empireclubofcanada.com.

THURSDAY, JAN. 29—SATURDAY, JAN. 31, 2026

Conservative National Convention—The Conservative Party of Canada will hold its the National Convention. Thursday, Jan. 29, to Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026, at the Telus Convention Centre, Calgary.

FRIDAY, JAN. 30, 2026

Minister Anand to Deliver Remarks—Rescheduled from November, Foreign Minister Anita Anand will deliver bilingual remarks on "Canada's economic diplomacy and strategic autonomy in a multipolar world," hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Friday, Jan. 30, 2026,

at 11:30 a.m. ET at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 1255 Jeanne-Mance St., Montreal. Details: corim.qc.ca.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 4, 2026

Gala Dinner to Mark 20 Years Since Harper's First Election—Former prime minister Stephen Harper is celebrating the cabinet, caucus, staff and officials who served Canada's Conservative government from 2006-2015 with a gala dinner. Wednesday, Feb. 4, in Ottawa at a downtown location to be confirmed. Details: harperx20.ca.

THURSDAY, FEB. 5, 2026

Bank of Canada Governor to Deliver Remarks—Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem will deliver remarks on "Forces Reshaping Canada's Economy in 2026," hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Thursday, Feb. 5, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. ET. Details: empireclubofcanada.com.

MONDAY, FEB. 9, 2026

An Evening with PS Blois and Kim McConnell—The Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network, and the Government of Canada host "In a World of Tariffs, What Does the Future Hold for Canadian Agri-Food?" a discussion featuring Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister Kody Blois, and Kim McConnell, founder and former chief executive officer of AdFarm, on the technology and policies needed to keep Canada atop the global ag ecosystem. Reception to follow. Monday, Feb. 9, 2026, at 6 p.m. ET at the Rogers Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Register: bit.ly/CAAINFireside.

TUESDAY, FEB. 10, 2026

'Diagnosing and Combatting Health Misinformation'—The Empire Club of Canada and the the Canadian Medical Association host "Diagnosing and Combatting Health Misinformation: 2026 CMA Health and Media Tracking Survey Launch" featuring Abacus Data's David Coletto, Dr. Jen Gunter, Vass Bednar, and Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tuesday, Feb. 10, in Ottawa (location to be confirmed). Details: empireclubofcanada.com.

TUESDAY, FEB. 10—WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11, 2026

AFN Natural Resources Forum—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its second annual Natural Resources Forum under the theme "Strengthening Our Sovereignty." Tuesday, Feb. 10, to Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2026, in Calgary. Details: afn.ca.

TUESDAY, FEB. 24, 2026

Chief Justice Wagner to Deliver Remarks—Rescheduled from Jan. 27, 2026, Chief Justice Richard Wagner will take part in a roundtable luncheon hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Feb. 24, 2026, at the C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Register: cdhowe.org.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4—FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2026

2026 Progress Summit—The Broadbent Institute hosts its 2026 Progress Summit on the theme "Defending Democracy Across Borders." Wednesday, March 4, to Friday, March 6, at the Delta Hotel City Centre Ottawa, 101 Lyon St. N. Details: broadbentinstitute.ca.

SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2026

NDP Leadership Election Results—The results of the election for the federal NDP's new leader will be announced today in Winnipeg.

THURSDAY, APRIL 9—SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2026

Liberal National Convention—The 2026 Liberal National Convention will take place from Thursday, April 9, to Saturday, April 11, 2026, in Montreal, Que., featuring policy discussions, guest speakers, training sessions, and the election of the next national board of directors. Details: liberal.ca.



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